Bojan Borić
The Ghost Boulevard
I dedicate this book to my children Inez, Adrian and Matei.
Bojan Borić

The Ghost Boulevard
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Introduction
Introduction

When urban activists from Chisinau’s Young Artist Association Oberliht\(^1\) conducted a survey of public spaces in Chisinau in 2012,\(^2\) they determined that there was a linear pattern of empty or abandoned sites as well as new tower constructions which revealed the path of the Soviet-planned, never-realized Boulevard D. Cantemir\(^3\) (see Figure 0:1). These findings were some of the first evidence that the boulevard project was being materialized although there was no legally-approved plan being followed. After looking more closely at the results of their findings, the activists realized that the project could have serious consequences for the fabric of the historic city neighborhoods and the population who lives in them, and concluded that the eventual realization of this project should be an urgent matter of concern for Chisinau citizens.

The plan for Boulevard D. Cantemir originates from the 1949 Master Plan for the capital of the SSR of Moldova Chisinau (see Figure 0:2), developed by the Soviet Architect Alexey Viktorovich Shchusev (Алексей Викторович Щу́се́в)\(^4\) and his team. This plan was a part of an urban renewal effort following the extensive destruction of Chisinau during WWII, and it represents a vision for the expansion of the city center towards its suburbs. The plans for Boulevard D. Cantemir re-appeared in the General Urban Plans for Chisinau in 1968, in the 1970s, and again in the General Urban Plan of 1989. While two separate sections of the boulevard were built in the mid 1960’s and during the 1970s, most of the boulevard, which extends through the center of the old town, was never completed (See appendix A).

While I was conducting empirical research on various locations in Chisinau in the spring of 2014, activists from Oberliht Association invited me to a workshop with local residents from around Zaikin Park, located in the oldest northeastern area of Chisinau. Zaikin Park was where I first heard stories about what the activists and residents called “the threat of the Red Lines of

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3 The boulevard was named after Dimitrie Cantemir, (1673–1723), Moldavian statesman, writer, philosopher, historian, composer, musicologist, linguist, ethnographer, and geographer. He was also twice voivode of Moldavia (March–April 1693 and 1710–1711).
4 Alexey Shchusev is also well known as the architect who designed the Lenin Mausoleum in Moscow. Alternate transcriptions of his surname include Ščusev and Ščusev.
Boulevard D. Cantemir. As they explained, the plan for the boulevard in form of Red Lines first appeared in the General Urban Plan approved by Chisinau Municipality in 2007. The Red Lines represent a renewed initiative for the construction of the Soviet-planned boulevard, the realization of which would cause large-scale evictions and the demolition of Zaikin Park, as well as many neighborhoods and historic buildings that lie in its path. Another key planning document, the Local Land Use Plan for the center of Chisinau, was developed by the planning office Chisinau Project and presented to the public in 2012. The plan was rejected by the Moldovan Parliament however, mainly due to the negative response from the public upon learning that Boulevard D. Cantemir would pass through the historic city center. As a result, the realization of the project for Boulevard D. Cantemir was put on hold indefinitely.

Because one of the two main planning documents was approved while the other, more detailed plan, was rejected and is no longer in force, the status of the main urban plans for Chisinau is locked in legal ambiguity. Controversies about the Red Lines affect planning of the entire city center. The negative public reaction to the plans for the boulevard prompted the mayor of Chisinau to declare a moratorium on all new constructions until the controversies regarding the plan for the boulevard have been resolved and the planning documents have been legally approved. At the time of writing, how and when the dispute will be resolved remains uncertain. As a result of the planning moratorium, planning authorities could deem any new projects currently being built in the city center to be illegal construction. The situation also has repercussions for what is regarded as legal and illegal and people’s perceptions of the legitimacy of new building projects, both from the perspective of authorities and from the perspectives of Chisinau’s citizens.

I gradually came to realize that even without having been built in all of these decades, the boulevard has affected social relations of power and transformed the city. Although the future of the plan for Boulevard D. Cantemir is uncertain, the Red Lines of the planning documents still linger above the city and have an effect on urban development. Furthermore, Boulevard D. Cantemir is partially materializing, flickering into visibility in an almost ghostlike fashion. I find this condition intriguing and worthy of further investigation, especially in terms of looking for different ways in which such materializations occur. I began to wonder what the implications of the phenomenon could be for contemporary urban planning practice and whether this case could provide some valuable clues about how the practice of urban planning has changed since the collapse of the Soviet Union. I decided to shift my focus towards finding out more about the effects of the plan of Boulevard D. Cantemir on city planning. The ambiguous legal status of the Red Lines and the planning documents mean that various stakeholders, the citizen groups, activists, municipal planners and architects, develop-
operators, and politicians interpret the Red Lines differently and according to their own agendas, participating in an ongoing contest over the meaning and purpose of the Red Lines in the planning documents.

The period of transition after Socialism was a time of rather complex process of institutional and social change that maintains both the remains of Soviet- as well as recently introduced economic policies, and resulted in a mix of urban regimes and conflicting past and present bureaucratic planning routines. The social and cultural tendencies from the Soviet times that still exist sometimes conflict with new policies, but in this shifting and unstable relation, they shape institutions and their roles in managing urban development. Post-socialist urban theory scholars discuss social tendencies to retain institutions and politics do not change as much as expected, and that history matters.9 When applied to urban theory, I discover that this term has its limitations, focusing as it does on the macro scale of economics and politics and scratching only the surface when it comes to explaining the multiplicity and complexity of the city.

The complexity of spaces and phenomena in the path of the Red Lines of Boulevard D. Cantemir call for additional conceptualizations that can add another layer of understanding to explorations in urban theory. With the circumstances of legal ambiguity during the period of waiting and the uncertainty about the future, the power relations among diverse actors are shifting and the terminology based on binary definitions no longer applies. For example, the distinctions between terms such as legal-illegal, planned-unplanned, and formal-informal are unclear, and the boundaries between private and public space are thus blurred. There is a need for new terminologies, concepts and interpretations. Furthermore, I argue that when the official planning process is not functional, other unacknowledged ways of planning become more pronounced, and that these are in fact part of urban planning. The inquiries into the post-socialist context of Chisinau provide an opportunity to interrogate conditions under which conventional urban planning practices have been rendered ineffective, and where the ambiguous legal status of plans for the city provides a window into the complex layering of hidden relations among diverse actors such as the residents of the city, the municipality, real estate investors, artist activist groups and others involved in spatial production.

Through the explanatory concept of the ghost, which is related to other similar concepts such as specter and hauntings used by various scholars,10 I provide another explanatory layer that can contribute to a more nuanced understanding of complex and difficult to categorize urban phenomena in Chisinau. I argue that the planning process in Chisinau is haunted by the presence of the Red Lines of the Cantemir boulevard. The politics and ideologies that lie behind the 1949 Master Plan still haunt the city like ghosts. The ghosts represent various interstitial, liminal relations where conditions of uncertainty and anticipation that exist in the path of the Red Lines serve as a motivating force for action and engagement in spatial practices. Like ghosts, the Red Lines of Boulevard D. Cantemir are both imaginary and real, present and absent at the same time. I do not regard these notions as completely antithetical to each other in this study. Furthermore, I utilize the concept of ghost as a method of analysis that helps me explore the agency and strange afterlife of unrealized plans that linger and materialize in urban space.

The theoretical exploration in this dissertation is based on interdisciplinary research methods. I situate this thesis in relation to a broader field of urban studies; more specifically, I intersect the fields of architecture and absent at the same time. I do not regard these notions as completely antithetical to each other in this study. Furthermore, I utilize the concept of ghost as a method of analysis that helps me explore the agency and strange afterlife of unrealized plans that linger and materialize in urban space.

Whilst collecting empirical data, I found a substantial amount of research and analyses of Chisinau that focused on different effects of social, economic, institutional transformations on urban planning. There are a number of reports

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and studies concerning transformations in governance that also include recommendations for improving urban planning processes in the post-socialist transition. While I regard such research material as very valuable, I also argue that there are other crucial contextual, cultural and vernacular aspects of cities that are commonly omitted from the kind of research that is based primarily on the political economy discourse. In this dissertation, I discuss aspects of urban development that planners often do not acknowledge; the components of the city that are real but that cannot be represented through urban plans or statistics.

The Red Lines represent bureaucratic infrastructures from the past with social and spatial consequences on today’s planning. The hauntings I speak of are both social and material in nature, and the effects they produce are real. In this thesis, I enquire into the role of the residues of the past ideologies, politics and planning in the present time, and the ways in which plans from the past still have an effect on contemporary planning practices.

The controversies surrounding the Red Lines have caused a standstill in official urban planning for the entire city center of Chisinau. Paradoxically however, this has not caused building activity to cease, and has instead even encouraged it. Under these circumstances of anticipation and uncertainty about the future, the Red Lines can be assigned a multiplicity of meanings in order to suit different personal agendas. What kinds of processes and social forces maintain the presence of the plan of the boulevard during the interim period of waiting? and Why does the plan for the Boulevard D. Cantemir keep returning?

In the present conditions where the legal status of urban plans is ambiguous, the power struggle between multiple actors for control of the planning process intensifies and there are shifts in agency. I thus enquire: How does the presence of the red lines impact these shifts, and what are the forces that motivate people to action?

Despite the main urban plans being suspended indefinitely, the boulevard continues to materialize, and the city is transforming as new residential towers emerge and different permanent and temporary structures appear in the path of the red lines. Therefore, I ask: What kind of materializations are produced in the process? What are the other unacknowledged ways to do planning besides official planning in the path of the Red Lines?

The Ghost Boulevard

Chisinau is the capital city of Moldova, a country positioned in between two global geopolitical spheres of interest – the EU and Russia – directly bordering with Ukraine in the north. Today, the country is in a liminal space, in the void in-between potent spheres of political and economic influences in time and space (see Figure 0:3). A former Soviet Republic, it is situated in an unstable and shifting ground of multiple identities and various global and regional power claims. Its borders were further contested and destabilized when the autonomous region of Transnistria (Pridnestrovie) declared independence from Moldova in 1990; currently, the region is neither recognized as a state by the United Nations nor is it functionally an integral part of Moldova.

Moldova gained its independence from the Soviet Union on the 27th August 1991. The process started with the first free elections in February of 1990, and immediately after the new government declared sovereignty it changed the name from the Soviet Socialist Republic of Moldova to the Republic of Moldova.

The political administration of the Republic of Moldova is divided into 32 districts and five municipalities, one of which is Chisinau. There are two regions with special status: Autonomous Territorial Unit Gagauzia and Transnistria. Chisinau Municipality is the country’s main economic, political and administrative engine as well as its industrial and cultural center. With its population of 814,000, Chisinau Municipality represents 18% of the total population of Moldova and contributes about 60% of the total GDP of the country. Furthermore, Chisinau’s significance as the economic engine of Moldova is illustrated by its total share in the country’s industry production – about 50% – while the consolidated tax revenue contribution to Moldova is 60%.

After the break with the Soviet Union, the Moldovan economy experienced a significant decline and poverty levels increased, partly due to the
loss of trade connections and the chaotic economic reforms. Furthermore, the massive emigration to other countries as well as the movement of population from rural to urban areas transformed the country’s demography and economy; this has rendered the practice of urban planning less predictable and more difficult to control. Today, there is significant economic input from immigrants who send money home and invest in real estate in Moldova. During the early years of the transition, the country’s GDP declined by 65% and the legal economy was substituted by a “shadow economy” that became a dominant economic factor keeping the society afloat. The proportion of the country’s GDP derived from the “shadow economy” has reached about 70% of the official GDP figures based on the country’s legal economy.\textsuperscript{18}

The enquiry into phenomena encountered in the path of the red lines across Chisinau exposed complex relations between different actors, some of whom engage in urban planning from the shadows and behind the scenes. In this context, in this dissertation I also discuss how shadow economy also leads to shadow planning.

\textit{Institutional Reforms and their Impact on Urban Planning}

The major shift from a centrally planned state economy to market economy was effectuated through institutional, legal and social transformations in the early years of the transition in Moldova. This was above all an institutional transformation based on the introduction of new policies conducted through a process of trial and error.\textsuperscript{19} While the country’s legal framework was in transition, there was an inconsistent application of laws and regulations related to urban development; this is particularly evident in Chisinau, where illegally built structures dominate the contemporary urban landscape. After the break-up of the Soviet Union, the future became highly unforeseeable, and to the frustration of urban planners, “the traditional links between past present, and future less explicit and predictable.”\textsuperscript{20} During this period, an individualized and more permissive approach focusing on the “managing of investment decisions” made it almost impossible for urban

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\textsuperscript{19} Kiril Stanilov, “Urban development policies in Central and Eastern Europe during the transition period and their impact on urban form,” in The Post-Socialist City, ed. Kiril Stanilov (Springer, 2007), 347.

planners to develop planning strategies for urban development.\textsuperscript{21} As a result of these changes and the weakening of planning institutions in Chisinau, diverse social and economic actors became involved in the urban development process. According to professor of urban planning Sasha Tsenkova and urban planner from Chisinau Svetlana Dogotaru:

The municipal reform process in Moldova has emphasized decentralization, deregulation and local autonomy. In the new fiscal reality, local governments are seen as ‘crises managers’ charged with a lot of responsibilities related to the provision of infrastructure and services, but without the corresponding resources to address those problems.\textsuperscript{22}

Today, Moldovan municipalities compete for resources as they are left alone to invent ways in which they can attract investment. Chisinau Municipality’s responsibilities include territorial planning and urban planning, as well as the construction and maintenance of infrastructures and more.\textsuperscript{23} However, the reality is far more complex, because the responsibilities between public and private actors are shifting and there are differences in what one might expect from the official planning and what is actually taking place. As I will discuss later, in the path of the Red Lines, Chisinau Municipality delegates many of its responsibilities to maintain, manage and finance maintenance of public infrastructures and urban spaces in the city to other actors.

\textit{The Current Governance and Planning Environment of Chisinau Municipality}

Chisinau Municipality’s public administration is primarily regulated by the Law of Special Status of Municipality and Law on Public Administration. It has a directly elected Council and a mayor who is elected at-large.\textsuperscript{24} The municipality consists of a group of territorial administrative units: Chisinau city is divided into five districts, six urban mayoralties and 26 urban localities, which are also organized in 11 mayoralties. All administrative-territorial units except for the Chisinau Central Historic District enjoy autonomy in regard to local public finances, patrimony, and provision of public services.\textsuperscript{25} Chisinau City Hall is the main administrative authority responsible for the preparation of general urban plans, issuing planning permits, and authorizations for construction in Chisinau Municipality. Chisinau Municipality comprises five administrative sectors (see Figure 0:4).

In June of 1993, the Moldovan Parliament declared the zone of the city center of Chisinau a historic district (decision No. 1531-XII, June 22, 1993) and therefore protected by the state\textsuperscript{26} (see Figure 0:4). This decision established the city center as a zone with special status, and a monument of cultural and historic significance. The Chisinau Central Historic District falls under the municipality’s jurisdiction, but its local land use plan is a concern of the Moldovan state and must be approved by Parliament in order to become a legally binding document. Furthermore, each construction permit in this district has to be reviewed by the Ministry of Culture.

\textsuperscript{21} Ibid, 414.
\textsuperscript{23} UNICEF report, “Institutional Framework,” in Country Profiles on the Housing Sector Republic of Moldova, (Geneva: United Nations Economic Commission for Europe, 2002), 43. According to this report, the functions of municipalities and villages include: Territorial planning, urban planning, management of the settlement and its administrative territory; building and maintaining roads, streets, bridges and public spaces; constructing and operating water supply, sewerage, water-treatment and sanitation systems, and sites for deposing and processing household waste; building and maintaining housing stock.
\textsuperscript{24} Ibid, 8.
\textsuperscript{26} Ion Stefanita, Cartea Neagra a Patrimoniului Cultural al Municipiului Chisinau, (Ministerul Culturii Al Republicii Moldova, Biroul UNESCO-Veneția, Agenti de Inspetcare si Restaurari a Monumentelor, Chisinau 2010), 7.
Despite these restrictions, a substantial number of historic buildings in the city center have been demolished since Moldovan independence, and many new residential towers and commercial properties continue to be developed although they do not comply with the regulations. The boundaries of the central district cross three municipal administrative units: Centrum, Riscani and Buiucani. The Red Lines of Boulevard D. Cantemir pass through the local Riscani sector within the Central Historic Urban District. The Riscani District represents the local administrative authority responsible for issuing Certificates of Urbanism27 for new construction in this district. Upon approval, this document is sent to Chisinau City Hall for further review and permit approvals.

The Legally Ambiguous Status of Urban Plans for Chisinau

During the early period of institutional restructuring, the Soviet General Urban Plan for Chisinau from 1989 – which included the plans for Boulevard D. Cantemir – was never fully implemented. However, the initiatives by Chisinau City Hall architects and urban planners to realize the plan for Boulevard D. Cantemir gathered new momentum during the development of the General Urban Plan from 2007. This plan is the main planning instrument for Chisinau’s urban development developed by Chisinau Municipality (see Figure 0:5 and 0:6).

The project was primarily promoted by diverse groups comprising the old- and the emerging social and political elite of the then-newly independent Moldova.

The General Urban Plan was developed from 2002-2006 with the assistance of UNDP Moldova and approved by the municipal council in 2007. It represents the first post-Soviet long-term development plan for Chisinau and was meant to be in force until 2025. In 2006, the Committee for Sustainable Development and Public Debate was established as a forum for open discussions and debates organized at City Hall that would involve political party leaders in discussion with citizens, NGOs, civil society representatives, and media. In addition, the Citizens Center was established to inform

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27 The Certificate of Urbanism is a first and a very important step in obtaining a construction permit; it shows the description of the project and its use on the site plan of the property and relations to its immediate surroundings. It is common for builders to make certain extra commitments in order to obtain this certificate, including improvements to public spaces, but they do not always follow through with them.
FIGURE 0:6 – The Red Lines of Boulevard D. Cantemir from planning regulations in the 2007 General Urban Plan also means changes in land use and density along their path in Chisinau old town.
citizens and invite open consultation regarding development initiatives and projects. According to the UNDP report however, the implementation of these programs is “facing serious difficulties and efficiency problems” due to insufficient coordination between local public agencies and directorates.28 Furthermore, the same report states that the legal regulatory framework that governs Chisinau is not fully implemented and that there are many overlapping responsibilities between Chisinau Municipality and its subordinate districts. Furthermore, Chisinau Municipality has no power to use all of the locally generated financial revenues to implement the maintenance of public and infrastructure projects.

The state institutions are not unanimous in their stance on the plan for Boulevard D. Cantemir. There are differences in how officials from Riscani sector view the future of the boulevard, opposing or seeing no strong interest in favor of the project, while Chisinau Municipality largely supports the project. Furthermore, at least publicly, the mayor of Chisinau, Dorin Chirtoaca,29 does not support the boulevard project, but he appears to have only limited influence over architects and urban planners from the City Hall, who continue to advocate the plans for the boulevard.

When the idea to build Boulevard D Cantemir re-emerged, the main argument in its favor was that it would allow for more “fluid” traffic in the central district, and that it would better connect Buiucani District with the highway leading to the airport. In the latest General Urban Plan for Chisinau from 2007, the old/new Boulevard D. Cantemir is presented primarily as a solution to the problems caused by traffic congestion in the city center (see Figures 0:7 and 0:8).

The current General Urban Plan for Chisinau also represents the opportunity for more open-ended zoning in city planning, allowing for taller structures to be built in the city center. In this way, the municipality is extending a welcome to large-scale real estate investment in the city. According to the UNECE report:

There were some additions to the plan that were approved in 2008.

This is the fourth plan developed for the city since 1991. Time span

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29 Dorin Chirtoaca was the mayor of Chisinau from 2011-2018 and thus at the time of writing.
of 15 years, until 2022. It includes a transport scheme with provision for developing tram lines. It also specifies functional zoning (e.g., for residential or commercial purposes) but in practice this is not enforced. It does not include a requirement on the height of buildings.30

The second key planning document, the Local Land Use Plan31 from 2012, is a more detailed elaboration of the General Urban Plan from 2007, developed for the Chisinau Central Historic District. In this document, which is presented to the public as an “urban renewal” project, the streets and boulevards are drawn as Red Lines and superimposed over the unruly pattern of old streets, houses, and public parks (see Figure 0:9). The Red Lines of Boulevard D. Cantemir are depicted as an integral part of a system of red lines forming a grid pattern in which it is difficult to discern which streets and boulevards already exist and which are planned for future construction; the ambiguity implies that the Boulevard D. Cantemir project is a necessary component in the completion of the street grid pattern from the last Soviet General Urban Plan from 1989 (see Figure 1:0).

In the Local Land Use Plan from 2012, new zoning is proposed along the path of the Red Lines of Boulevard D. Cantemir. These new rules allow for more commercial functions and encourage property speculation and a higher degree of contingency between the domains of private and public responsibilities. Urban planning for one political and economic system is used to encourage another as the Soviet plans from the past serve to facilitate investments today.

When it was presented to the public, the Local Land Use Plan from 2012 provoked significant public opposition to the construction of Boulevard D. Cantemir. Many Moldovan architects, artists and historians objected to the plan because it would destroy parts of the historic district, which is regulated by national laws for protection of historical areas and international conventions. It was also criticized by the Moldovan Academy of Arts and Science and the Ministry of Culture, as well as Chisinau’s mayor; as a result, the Moldovan Parliament rejected the plan in 2012. The main reason for this rejection were the Red Lines of the boulevard and their potentially negative impact on the historic heritage of the city.

The legally ambiguous status of urban plans where one comprehensive planning document has been approved and deemed valid while another, more detailed, local plan for the city center is rendered invalid poses a challenge for decision-makers, who are unable to move forward when making planning decisions. They have two options: to continue with the status quo until those who oppose the boulevard change their mind, or to completely revise the General Urban Plan from 2007 and present the alternative plan without the plan for Boulevard D. Cantemir. Both options appear unlikely, at least in the near future. Furthermore, the fact that the Local Land Use Plan was rejected undermines the legitimacy of any development in the central city and in the path of the Red Lines of Boulevard D. Cantemir. Because of the Red Lines, the zone inside the Red Lines is excessively regulated, and it is extremely difficult to obtain permits for any type of construction. Paradoxically however, urban development is flourishing along the zone defined by the Red Lines.

Although the boulevard itself is not being built according to the plans, the Red Lines persist. Their presence in people’s imaginations impacts shifting power relations between different actors and has an effect on processes of urban development. Furthermore, the Red Lines continue to materialize in urban spaces. The concrete skeleton structures of several new residential tower projects, abandoned sites and diverse temporary and permanent structures emerge following the path of the boulevard. The spaces through which the Red Lines pass are sites of ambiguity, where anything seems to be possible. Rather than projecting plans for the future, the Red Lines create a sense of ambiguity, uncertainty and anticipation in the path of the unbuilt boulevard.

FIGURE 0:9 - The red lines superimposed over the existing urban pattern in the Local Land Use Plan for the Central District from 2012, which was not approved by the Moldovan Parliament.

FIGURE 1:0 - A model of the center of Chisinau and its suburbs from the last Soviet General Urban Plan, from 1989. This photograph of a model is courtesy of Chisinau Project, who allowed me to take photographs of the plans in their archives.
I visited Chisinau for the first time as a consultant for Färgfabriken, a Stockholm-based Center for Contemporary Art and Culture, in 2010. After this visit, I became interested in writing a doctorate thesis that focused on exploring Chisinau as a case study. While there, I met Vladimir Us from the art association Oberliht, who became a close contact and my “port of entry” to Chisinau.

The initial interests into the themes of this project and working methods are related to my earlier research based on the transformations of Belgrade in the 1990s. My work in Belgrade resulted in the video installation “Parallel Urbanities,” in which I, with two other architects and a film director, Jelena Mijanovic, Maja Lalic and Igor Stoimenov experimented with analysis of urban complexities through multimedia installation that explores different visual and narrative methods. The lessons learned from this work equipped me to better understand the context of Chisinau and to arrive at an initial understanding that there are endless complexities that require me to dig deeper into the context and experiment with diverse methods of data collection and analyses such as audio-visual technology, photography, installation work, and more. My perspectives and interpretations in the process of analysis are shaped by my experience as an architect and urban designer, and by my previous academic research. Throughout the process of research, my views do not represent an all-seeing perspective, but are rather discussed from the perspectives of the participant in the events whose observations carry a certain bias. The aim of this exploration is not to provide all the answers and offer up universally applicable knowledge, but rather to initiate further enquiry into ambiguous conditions that emerge through the contest for spaces and memories in the path of the Red Lines. Rather than providing a totaling narrative, my intent is to provoke questions and open up discussion. The themes, concepts and interpretations in this analysis have emerged through the process of empirical analyses of the diverse material collected in the field. In order to gain an intimate knowledge of the specific context and to uncover complexities of the phenomena in the course of this research, I combine ethnography with architectural methods of analyses and representation in a process of on-site data collection and fieldwork through interviews, field notes, the review of official planning and historic documents, and the current news media reports, etc. The results are interpretative mapping studies composed of diverse material in the form of drawings, photographs, collage images and analytical diagrams interrogated through theoretical discourse.

In my ethnographic approach, I relate to Martyn Hammersley and Paul Atkinson’s conceptualization of the ethnographic research that comprises fieldwork where “people’s actions and accounts are studied in everyday contexts” and the combination of diverse quantitative and qualitative material is collected on-site. No particular type of ethnographic data is privileged over the others in the data collection process, and interviews, participant observations, visual materials, and life histories are all discussed. Ethnography involves participation of the researcher “overtly or covertly in people’s daily lives for an extended period of time.” Furthermore, according to Clifford Geertz, ethnography is not merely a method, but rather an “intellectual effort” and an “elaborate venture” he defines as “thick description.” According to Geertz, in order to go beyond superficial understandings, the researcher needs to have a role in the field and spend time with people as a participant and not merely as an observer. The “thick description” takes into account a rich palette of interactions that make up the daily pattern of human life, such as making a living, building a future, maintaining habitats and understanding different regimes of value that people may have. The historical methods of research and the reading and analysis of plans and

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other documents are not sufficient to gain deeper insight into the complexity of the phenomena I am trying to uncover in the path of the Ghost Boulevard. Furthermore, the thick description approach can help reveal some hidden aspects of urban development, expose complex layering of different agendas, shifts in power relations among different actors and their evolving mutual relations of codependency. Furthermore, in the process of data collection, I relate to organization scholar Barbara Czarniawska’s definitions of the fieldwork as a data collection method during which very diverse material is collected and used to write the interpretative narrative. In the process of data collection, Czarniawska argues that “the methods and the techniques must be adapted to the research problem”\(^{38}\) and that “the collection of field materials, coding, analyzing and theorizing are simultaneous, and continue throughout the entire study.”\(^{39}\)

The fieldwork in Chisinau was conducted over the course of six years. During this period, I visited Chisinau frequently, often staying for one to three weeks at a time. Whilst collecting data, I acted as a participant observer and worked closely with local organizations, gaining an intimate knowledge of society, life and culture in Chisinau. An in-depth approach of this kind enabled me to meet and interview a variety of members of civic society, local residents, activists, NGOs, artists, representatives of the state such as real estate developers and others. I recorded and documented numerous events and conducted interviews with diverse expert and non-expert actors.

The structure and content of the empirical analyses consisted of mappings of the path of the Red Lines conducted through descriptive and analytical text and analytical drawings, photographs, collage images, diagrams and clips captured from video recordings of events I recorded on site. This data was further juxtaposed with analyses of official reports and reviews of contemporary- and Soviet planning documents obtained from the archives at the municipal planning office, the “Chisinau Project.”

Furthermore, I reviewed published studies and reports on urban governance from Chisinau Municipality and global organizations such as UNDP\(^{40}\), UNECE\(^{41}\), the World Bank\(^{42}\), NALAS\(^{43}\) and other international organizations present in Moldova. I also collected data on property structure from the local cadaster online database. It is also important to mention a paper by Sasha Tsenkova and Svetlana Dogotaru entitled: “City Development Strategy for the Municipality of Chisinau, Housing Concept Paper.”\(^{44}\) It was developed for UNHABITAT and the World Bank and focuses on the relationship between transforming urban governance and transforming housing policies in Chisinau. I also visited municipal archives, where I could view some of the historic planning documents.

**Mapping the Path of the Red Lines across the City**

The lingering presence of the plans from the past open a window onto the city’s endless complexity. In my method of exploration, I follow cultural theorist María del Pilar Blanco, who argues that besides ghost and haunting, the other meaning of “specter” has to do with obtaining “visibility and vision, to that which is both looked at (as fascinating spectacle) and looking (in the sense of examining), suggesting their suitability exploring and illuminating phenomena.”\(^{45}\) In their path, the spectral presence of the Red Lines in the city stir up conflicts and compel people to act in many different ways. Furthermore, their presence provides a window on social relations and practices that may otherwise remain invisible. For these reasons, I utilize the Red Lines as a mapping instrument that enables me to explore diverse material and spatial conditions in relation to the social forces that lie behind them. The Red Lines are extracted from the official planning documents and drawn across plans and three-dimensional drawings and images of urban spaces (see Figure 1:1).

In the process, I explore how the Red Lines materialize both spatially and socially, at different scales and from different vantage points. The

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\(^{38}\) Barbara Czarniawska, Social Science Research: From Filed to Desk, (SAGE Publications, 2014), 25.

\(^{39}\) Ibid.

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\(^{41}\) “National Action Plan on Housing Urbanism and Land Management,” UNECE, accessed April 20th, 2019, https://www.unece.org/housing/housing-moldova.html (Citation)


"INBETWEENNESS" as a strong topic

“Materialization and materializations”

A strategy towards overcoming gaps in urban space by K. Farkas. (LVA online)

FIGURE 1:1 – Early conceptual sketch depicting the method of three-dimensional mapping based on tracing the red lines of Boulevard D. Cantemir across the urban context. Sketch by Bojan Boric.
mapping starts by tracing the path of the red lines over plans of the historic city center and continues by zooming in on a local neighborhood park where conflicts are taking place between different actors. This park’s existence is threatened by the presence of the Red Lines – this is where their presence leaves tangible traces. Furthermore, by exploring different ways in which various actors interact in response to their presence in the park and its surroundings, I examine shifts in relations of power, motivations behind people’s actions, and spaces that are produced in the process.

Urban phenomena identified in the mapping process are discussed from the perspective of relevant themes and interrogated from different theoretical angles; for example, I explore how the presence of the Red Lines reflects the conflicts between the top-down urban policies and different ways local residents and activists relate to public spaces in the city from the perspective that takes into account the planning practices of the past.

Whilst mapping, I learned that there were many different and often contradictory versions of the past in Chisinau, and that urban planning is complicit in rewriting histories of the city. The evidence of conflicts over who owns the past are often materially present and visible in urban form as well as in the personal stories people tell about the past and their visions of the future. For these reasons, I also explore the relationships between urban history and planning in relation to Dolores Hayden’s notion of “public histories” and “place memory,” as Hayden emphasizes the importance of storytelling and memory of the people in determining the public values of a place.

Interviews – Listening to Different Voices

I conducted around fifty interviews over the course of six years of research. The interview process involved a wide range of actors, and it represents the most important aspect of my fieldwork and data collection in Chisinau. Barbara Czarniawska defines the method of interviewing as “a common enterprise in knowledge production” and “an occasion for eliciting narratives (stories)” with the purpose of understanding the “reality behind [them],” and not necessarily as a way of collecting different views and opinions. Through the interview process, I explore a range of perspectives regardless of the starting position of power, and diverse vantage points are discussed on a more level field. In other words, the stories told by the broad range of local residents, public space activists, real estate developers, and artists are regarded as equally important as the interviews with government officials, planning professionals and politicians. These different testimonies from various expert- and non-expert actors are juxtaposed in order to provide insight into agendas or motives behind people’s actions. On certain occasions, I noticed that the more relaxed conversation over coffee after the official interview often provided much more valuable and in-depth insights that went beyond the basic answers to my questions. I later dubbed this “the cup of coffee method,” finding that it helped defuse the power asymmetry and reduce the formality of the interview process but also opened up the conversation to give a broader picture of events and the agendas behind people’s actions. I decided to conduct interviews in different formal and informal settings depending on the specific circumstances – often spontaneously during specific events in public spaces where I was able to meet people of different backgrounds.

While collecting the empirical material, I quickly discovered that different sources provided different versions of same events. When I was reviewing interview transcripts, I recognized that analyses of interview material demand a certain degree of caution and skepticism. In Akira Kurosawa’s film Rashomon from 1950, there was no dominant version of the story that was being told. Instead, the cinematic narration was structured around a series of different versions of the same event presented by various participants. These different stories are shaped by diverse personal agendas and motivations, beliefs, ideology, position in the social hierarchy, etc. Awareness of that affected my mindset during the interviews. My approach to analyses and interpretation of empirical data was also influenced by the Russian philosopher, literary critic and semiotician Mikhail Bakhtin’s notions of polyphony and multivocality, defined as “a plurality of independent and unmerged voices and consciousnesses, a genuine polyphony

References:

48 Ibid.
49 Ibid.
50 During my introduction to each person I interviewed I clearly explained that the purpose of the interview is the doctorate thesis research and that I come from KTH School of architecture in Stockholm, Sweden. Pseudonyms are used for all non-public individuals in this research.
of fully valid voices.”\textsuperscript{51} Bakhtin challenges the notions of a single reality in the process of defining truth and knowledge about the world. He argues that even when speaking with each other, different people can have different understandings of the events taking place, and how voices of different individuals often conflict and overlap.

During the years of my involvement with this research, I was also able to gain a longer-term perspective on how spaces and social relations changed, as well as how certain events later unfolded. Here, perspective helped me reassess some of my initial assumptions and affected the evolution of my research method and how I interpreted different phenomena over the course of the study. My key contact during the entire process of research was the Young Artist Association Oberliht, led by Vladimir Us, who introduced me to Chisinau, facilitated further contacts and arranged some of the meetings with city officials, researchers, local residents, artists and others. This connection also allowed me personal meetings and interviews with some of the key participants involved in shaping the city from the Soviet period until today. Some were representatives from institutions such as the Ministry of Construction; urban planning and architecture offices (both public and private); former and current municipal architects; building inspection agents; the Agency for Inspection and Restoration of Historic Monuments; city council members; activists and artists; citizens of Chisinau and numerous residents from the area around Zaikin Park; real estate developers, and lawyers involved in resolving planning issues. Some of the interviewees have been involved in developing current urban plans for Chisinau and have been influencing the shaping of urban policies since the transition period after the fall of the Soviet Union. The chief city architects and other high ranking officials of Chisinau Municipality I interviewed were Iuri Povar\textsuperscript{52}, Vlad Modirca\textsuperscript{53}, and Ion Carpov\textsuperscript{54}. Even today, they hold important posts in private and public organizations in Chisinau. Another series of interviews was conducted with Moldovan government officials such as the Director of the General Division of the Ministry of Regional Development and Construction Elena Bejenaru, the Head of the Department for Architecture, Urbanism and Territorial Planning Serghei Munteanu, the building inspector Vasile Radu, and the chief building inspector Ion Popa. I also met Tâmara Nesterova, an expert in conservation of built heritage, in her office in the Moldovan Academy of Science in Chisinau; Associate Professor of History Virgil Paslauric from the State University of Moldova; Ion Stefaniita from the Agency for Historic Preservation, as well as Vitalie Sprinceana, a sociologist from Chisinau.

During the research in Chisinau, I was also inspired by the work of Leonie Sandercock and Giovanni Attili, who experiment with film and photography as a tool of investigation in the field of urban planning. In line with their thinking, my motivation to work with these different media was to assemble and grapple with “a macro-political framework (that carried one narrative) and a micro sociological and psychological set of field data (that carried a myriad of individual stories).”\textsuperscript{55} I used film and photography both as tools for constructing interpretative narratives and as devices for capturing social gatherings, performances and events that take place in reaction to the presence of the Red Lines. Whilst mapping, I attempted to “depict a complex and unsettled urban reality composed of many stories, images, sounds, music, a multi-sensory experience, a complex tapestry.”\textsuperscript{56} The video and photographic material was recorded on-site. The process of editing and analyses of this material was part of the interpretative analyses of the phenomenon encountered on-site. For example, as part of the research process, I produced a ten-minute film entitled “The Ghost Infrastructure of Boulevard D. Cantemir,” visually mapping the red lines across the city as I explored their different materializations. Through video narration, I combine the visual footage of different environments in the path of the Red Lines with the maps and interviews with people who gathered to obstruct the passage of cars through their neighborhood park.\textsuperscript{57}

In the analysis and mapping process, I used photographs and clips from


\textsuperscript{52} General director of the “Urbanproiect” Institute who worked on the development on the 2007 General Urban Plan for Chisinau Municipality.

\textsuperscript{53} One of the former Chief City Architects.

\textsuperscript{54} The interim Chief City Architect at the time of writing.


\textsuperscript{56} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{57} The video can be viewed at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S4Rk2U4mkQs&t=39s
The Ghost Boulevard

The word ghost in itself entails connotations of a phenomenon that exists in the contemporary reality of urban spaces in the path of a never-completed project for the “Highway of Brotherhood and Unity” which was meant to both symbolically and physically interlink the cities of socialist Yugoslavia. Furthermore, they discuss how today new meanings are attributed to the unrealized projects from the past.

The Ghost

I explore how contemporary urban planning is conducted through competition for the past between Chisinau Municipality, private citizens, local residents, artist collectives, urban planners, politicians, and other actors. I argue that in Chisinau, the planning process and urban spaces are both haunted. Through the explanatory concept of the ghost, I discuss how the past has the capacity to linger and return to the present.

In their path across the city, the Red Lines conjure other ghosts that are mobilized in the contest for planning hegemony. In my analysis, I argue that the ghosts can have many forms, and I continuously reveal, identify and explore specters with different origins. At the same time however, their elusive and transient nature does not allow me to fully define them. As I discover a range of diverse institutional and social residues of former regimes, unrealized utopias, ideologies and histories that transform the contemporary city and haunt urban plans and spaces, I do not seek definitive answers, and my focus is on the journey of exploration. On this journey, the evidence of the presence of the Red Lines is found in the material and immaterial traces they leave behind. I discuss how diverse spatial practices evolve in reaction to the Red Lines in liminal space and time; as a reaction to materializations that disrupt idealized notions of the unity of public space.

The word ghost in itself entails connotations of a phenomenon that exists in the contemporary reality of urban spaces in the path of a never-completed project for the “Highway of Brotherhood and Unity” which was meant to both symbolically and physically interlink the cities of socialist Yugoslavia. Furthermore, they discuss how today new meanings are attributed to the unrealized projects from the past.

In this regard, I follow Jacques Derrida’s theory of Hauntology through which he challenges linear concepts of time and understanding of history. When he quotes Shakespeare’s Hamlet, saying that “the time is out of joint”, Derrida is questioning readings of history based on traditional “ontology” where identity and power mechanisms are assumed to be always present and there. I relate the notion I call anticipation in uncertain spaces of Cantemir Boulevard to Derrida’s argument that the specter is from the past since it is
“no longer,” but it is also in the future since it hasn’t happened yet. According to Derrida, the specters always return to haunt us:

What does it mean to follow a ghost? And what if this came down to being followed by it, always, persecuted perhaps by the very chase we are leading?

Here again what seems to be out front, the future, comes back in advance: from the past, from the back.62

In his interpretation of Derrida’s concept of Hauntology, cultural theorist Mark Fisher asserts that what has not happened yet “is already effective in the virtual” and serves as an “attractor, an anticipation shaping current behavior.”63 As such, the ghosts of past planning practices serve as a motivating force that puts society into action. I argue that the Red Lines of the boulevard can be perceived as both imaginary and real, present and absent, and from the past and from the future. I relate this idea to Michel Foucault’s “temporal heterotopias” which he describes as “counter sites” or “the effectively enacted utopias” where multiple realities collide, and where the “mythical” and the “real” coexist.64 Furthermore, I follow Foucault’s argument that we live inside a set of relations and not in a void. The spaces are heterogeneous and need to be thought of and conceptualized in relation to other spaces.65

Scholars conceptualize the notion of the ghost that I find relevant differently in a wide range of theoretic discourse on cities. For example, Reinhold Martin uses the notion of utopia’s ghost66 to discuss the effects of unrealized or lost ideals of modernism on contemporary architectural practice. He argues that utopia as a system of representation and production is no longer available to architects, and what remains is a Ghost of Utopia that keeps coming back to haunt the present in unexpected ways.67 I argue that this thinking is also valid in relation to urban planning, and not only to architecture. I follow cultural geographer Tim Edensor’s claim that contemporary cities are haunted spaces. As a result of hauntings, the transforming spaces in the path of the Red Lines evade clear definition, “like all ghosts, they cannot be grasped and are apt to evaporate when we try to explain them away.”68 Edensor argues that haunting is the result of modernism’s imperative of progress, which has caused many erasures of the past in cities. According to Edensor, “cities are invariably haunted by a host of failed plans, visionary projects, and sites of collective endeavor and pleasure that have been superseded by more modish projects.”69 I argue that the path of the Red Lines exposes discontinuities, tensions and overlaps between different periods of planning that have only partially materialized in urban spaces and coexist today in diverse layers of fragmented and discontinuous urban patterns. I relate this thinking to the post-socialist urban theory researcher Kiril Stanilov, who argues that the two main urban patterns, “the socialist and the post-socialist – coexist as layers of new development,”70 and these layers are “superimposed over the old urban fabric.”71 The hauntings in Chisinau occur as a result of the competition over the future of urban spaces, and when new urban plans ignite social and political conflicts over different versions of the past, economic agendas, ideologies, personal desires and expectations. I refer to such conflicts as the struggles between many different ghosts. The Soviet plan for the boulevard is conjured by the Red Lines in the new plans, but at the same time they conjure many other ghosts as their presence triggers diverse forms of resistance to the planning hegemony. For many residents of Chisinau, the Red Lines represent a threat of demolition and disappearance of their communities, and the threat compels citizens to react. I conceptualize hauntings not as a mysterious phenomenon or a product of imagination, but as a social force calling people into action and a catalyst for the change of planning policies. In my explorations of

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65 Ibid.


71 Ibid.
how different social groups and individuals in space resist the relics of the functionalist rationality of planners and bureaucrats, I relate to Michel de Certeau’s notion of ‘ghost of society’ as practices of everyday life by people who use spaces as active participants in spatial production. De Certeau argues that “like the ‘spirits’ of former times, they constitute the multiformal and occult postulate of productive activity.” 72 Furthermore, I relate to Michael Mayerfeld Bell, who talks about “the ghosts of place” in the city, which describes as “fabrications, products of imagination, social constructions”73 that give meaning to and constitute places. The ghosts, he further argues, are also political, because they “make claims about the territories of social life” with real consequences for society.74 I do not talk about the ghost as part of an abstract and distant historic narrative, but instead explore this concept through an investigation of the social forces that are active and present today in politics, economy, culture and urban planning.

The Spaces of Anticipation

The legal ambiguity of the Red Lines results in the liminal space and time condition that I discuss as spaces of anticipation. Different actors interpret the meaning and purpose of the Red Lines in these spaces differently. For some, the Red Lines represent a promise, whilst others perceive them as a threat. I argue that the Red Lines serve as devices for a reconfiguration of agency and place-making. Under these circumstances, relations between publicness and privacy shift and are complex. I link the notion of anticipation to architectural historians Kenny Cupers and Marcus Miessen’s definitions of “spaces of uncertainty.”75 Cupers and Miessen explore the nature of spaces that lack clear definition, subjected to the forces of privatization linked with economic and politically powerful actors who are creators of “public culture” today.

Following Leonie Sandercock’s argument that “contemporary cities are sites of struggles of life space over economic space,”76 I link this thinking to David Harvey’s definition of processes of “accumulation by dispossession.”77 When I argue that the Red Lines have multiple purposes. The Red Lines serve as instruments of dispossession, threatening the displacement of people who live in their path. The struggle between different actors for control of urban spaces and planning processes intensifies as a result. Even the plan for the boulevard – which is presented as a public project – encourages large-scale property privatization and real estate speculation.

I argue that the spaces of anticipation are spaces where various actors interpret the ambiguous legal status of the Red Lines differently in order to claim ownership over space and to gain legitimacy in the planning process.

In the context of post-socialist urban theory, I relate to Sonia Hirt and Kiril Stanilov, who argue that contemporary urban planning is primarily based on an “entrepreneurial approach.”78 Hirt and Stanilov argue that the shift is linked to the withdrawal of governments from centralized planning accompanied by “the dominance of economic concerns ruthlessly trumping the notion of public interests.”79 I argue that there are powerful interest groups in Chisinau who support the plan for the boulevard and whose aim is to gain power over the planning process in order to promote their own personal interests. In anticipation of the boulevard, Chisinau Municipality has withdrawn investments from urban spaces and infrastructures. Various groups of residents and activists, real estate investors and others fill the planning void left by the municipality and engage in the planning process. Different spatial practices emerge in response to the Red Lines in the struggle for the “life space” of the city. The distribution of power among different stakeholders, the planners, citizens, activists and real estate investors in this contest are unevenly distributed, but it remains uncertain who will prevail. I argue that in the transforming planning process, the roles and responsibilities of Oberliht Association have evolved to become far more than their proclaimed public or civic activism. I follow sociologists Michel Callon and Vololona Rabeharisoa’s definitions for new roles in society and politics which can be applied to urban theory; they use the term “concerned interest groups” for forms of social, political and economic engagement beyond the...

74 Ibid.
75 Kenny Cupers and Markus Miessen, Spaces of Uncertainty, (Verlag Muller+Busmann KG, 2002), 24.
76 Leonie Sandercock, Cosmopolis II: Mongrel Cities of the 21st Century, (Continuum, 2003), 4.
79 Ibid.
The Ghost Boulevard

The Production of Public Space

is unable to enforce the realization of urban plans – has changed into a participant role in the urban planning process, and that there are also effects on their methods of planning. In addition, the definitions of what is recognized as the practice of urban planning are changing. In this regard, I follow a definition provided by Oren Yiftachel, who argues that even “selective non-planning” is included as “part of planning, and as a form of active or negligent exclusion” by those in power. When the Parliament rejected the plan for Boulevard D. Cantemir, rather than proposing an alternative plan, the Chisinau Municipal Planning Authority began to practice selective non-planning in order to realize the plan for the boulevard in the future. I also follow Sasha Tsenkova, who describes “the paradigm shift from central planning to markets” and the effects of reforms in governance and institutional reforms in Moldova such as decentralisation, deregulation and local autonomy. These shifts resulted in a transformation of the role of local municipal authorities who are responsible for urban planning and the provision of infrastructures and services but have limited resources and are instead acting as “crises managers.” Similar reforms are not limited to the post-communist societies however, but are part of a global process.

I argue that urban planners seek to reassert greater control over urban planning, but that the unresolved legal status of the Red Lines of Boulevard D. Cantemir has led to many of the municipal planning authorities’ responsibilities being delegated to diverse actors such as artist collectives, various citizen groups, developers and others who thus gain a higher degree of legitimacy as stakeholders in urban development.

The Red Lines also serve as devices for asserting various ownership claims over urban spaces. Chisinau Municipality utilizes the Red Lines to establish a zone in the city reserved for the future construction of the boulevard. In urban plans, the Red Lines represent border lines that divide public- and privately-owned land. In reality however, the Red Lines prompt the opposite effect; the boundaries are blurred by the complex power relations between multiple actors who anticipate a different future of urban spaces. In the contest over space, the responsibilities and positions of power between urban planners, architects, concerned interest groups, and residents also shift. I relate my understanding of relations between the notions of public and private space to Ted Kilian’s conceptualization of “public” and “private” as “expressions of power relations” where each space contains elements of both public and private.

The notion of “public” in the post-communist context of Chisinau is different than in the West. In Chisinau, cultural organizations and activist groups who take control over the planning of Zaikin Park have adopted contemporary Western public space ideals. As a result, their visions and ideas and plans for Zaikin Park conflict with how most citizens of Chisinau relate to and conceive of public spaces. I argue that different hauntings – the ghosts of the Soviet Union – contribute to a complexity in the ways the citizens of Chisinau relate to the notion of public in their city: the residues of former cultural attitudes about public and private during the Soviet era affect how society relates to public spaces in the city today. I follow Sonia Hirt’s concept “ethos of privatism,” which she describes as the effects of cultural attitudes towards public and private realms that are carried over and still linger from the Soviet era. Hirt argues that under Communism, the “private” was understood as the intimate world of self, family, and friends also associated with freedom of expression. The private sphere and private space however, were the main targets of control and surveillance by the state. On the opposite end, sharply divided from the private, was the “public,”

state, the public sphere, or narrowly defined as private interest. Callon and Rabeharisoa define “emergent groups” who evolve and assume an instrumental role in government decisions by becoming “legitimate stakeholders” in the planning process. In their reaction to the Red Lines and through spatial practices in Zaikin Park, Oberliht Association takes over the planning, control and management of public spaces, even acting as a general contractor as they transform spaces in the city.

In this investigation, I discuss how the position of Chisinau Municipalitv – which is unable to enforce the realization of urban plans – has changed into a participant role in the urban planning process, and that there are also effects on their methods of planning. In addition, the definitions of what is recognized as the practice of urban planning are changing. In this regard, I follow a definition provided by Oren Yiftachel, who argues that even “selective non-planning” is included as “part of planning, and as a form of active or negligent exclusion” by those in power. When the Parliament rejected the plan for Boulevard D. Cantemir, rather than proposing an alternative plan, the Chisinau Municipal Planning Authority began to practice selective non-planning in order to realize the plan for the boulevard in the future. I also follow Sasha Tsenkova, who describes “the paradigm shift from central planning to markets” and the effects of reforms in governance and institutional reforms in Moldova such as decentralisation, deregulation and local autonomy. These shifts resulted in a transformation of the role of local municipal authorities who are responsible for urban planning and the provision of infrastructures and services but have limited resources and are instead acting as “crises managers.” Similar reforms are not limited to the post-communist societies however, but are part of a global process.

I argue that urban planners seek to reassert greater control over urban planning, but that the unresolved legal status of the Red Lines of Boulevard D. Cantemir has led to many of the municipal planning authorities’ responsibilities being delegated to diverse actors such as artist collectives,
which still carries negative connotations and associations with state oppression today. According to Hirt, today the ethos of privatism is expressed through animosity towards anything public. I argue that in the streets of Chisinau, there is abundant evidence of such cultural residues where many public spaces have been appropriated, abandoned and devastated since the end of Communism. I further draw upon the process that David Stark calls “from clan to plan,” based on the argument that a caste of powerful elites emerged in the post-communist transition and benefited from the transfer of power from the public to private sphere. He calls these groups “the clan networks of institutional owners.” Stark describes how a “former managerial elite” of the Soviet regime – who have now become new owners – promote their own interests through state institutions and today assert their influence on urban planning and development. Stéphane Tonnelat argues that traditional conceptualization of public space as “open spaces” (that we perceive as streets, parks, squares) as opposed to the “private domain” can no longer serve as a paradigm for “public space.” The argument is valid even in Chisinau because the meaning of public space is more complex and diverse, constantly changing along the path of the red lines. These concepts are important for understanding the complexity of relations that emerges beyond the public-private dichotomy and different forces that interact in the path of the Red Lines.

In my analysis, I argue that what is at stake in the contest over space needs to be discussed in terms of who has the right to occupy urban spaces and who is included in or excluded from them. I argue that actors such as artist collectives and local residents, who oppose the realization of the plan for the boulevard, interpret the appearance of temporary structures, activities and spaces in the path of the Red Lines as materializations of the boulevard. They perceive some of these materializations as ruptures that materially and socially divide, destabilize, and interrupt public use of spaces in their neighborhood. As a result, much of their activity is concentrated on weaving these spaces back together and reactivating them in the effort to make them public again. I explore the spaces of anticipation through analyses of

shifts in power relations over control of a neighborhood park that is bisected by the Red Lines and has thus been appropriated by numerous actors. In their attempt to claim ownership over the park and planning process, the three main actors – the municipality, the real estate investor and the Oberlicht Association – are obliged to legally formalize their responsibilities, which are interdependent and overlapping. In the process, they attempt to define their mutual relationships in ways that go beyond more conventional public-private contractual agreements, and there is a triangulation of the public, private and civic sectors. The content of the contract reveals how the roles, responsibilities and positions of power have shifted and produced new exclusions of people through the privatization of public services.

The Materializations of the Red Lines through Spatial Practices

In this thesis, I investigate how different social groups create their own social spaces in response to the effects of the Red Lines using Henri Lefebvre’s concept of the “trialectics of spatiality,” which consists of three types of spaces: “Spatial Practice”, “Representations of Space” and “Representational Space”. All three types of space coexist in dialectic tension. According to Lefebvre, each society produces its own space through spatial practices. I discuss the zone in the city along the path of the unbuilt Boulevard D. Cantemir not as a single space, but as layers of conflicting social spaces where people imagine the meaning of the Red Lines differently. Various material structures that have appeared in Zaikin Park – such as the dirt road which now passes through the park along the path of the Red Lines and divides it in two – are the result of different spatial practices performed daily by local inhabitants such as driving along the dirt road, garbage collection and disposal, car repairs, and other everyday activities. The people who oppose the plan for Boulevard D. Cantemir (concerned groups of local residents, artist collectives, and activist groups) and who perceive such structures in the park as the effects of the presence of the Red Lines respond to these structures in Zaikin Park by building temporary obstacles and organizing artistic performances in the park in an attempt to re-attach the park’s divided social spaces and thus obstruct the realization of plans for the boule-
The ambiguous nature of the Red Lines, which are at once both real and imaginary, allows them to be discussed as “Representations of Space,” or as the abstract scientific space projected through urban planning. At the same time, they can be also conceptualized through the concept of “Representational Space,” because the Red Lines represent a symbolic space of the imaginary boulevard with real impact on spatial practices. On one level, the Red Lines represent the abstract force of the plan, but on another, various social groups imagine the Red Lines differently and assign them symbolic meanings far beyond what is written in the planning documents. For example, some groups of people, such as urban planners and Chisinau’s city architects, associate the Red Lines with the Soviet plan from 1949; for others such as real estate developers and politicians, the future space of the boulevard represents improved traffic infrastructure in the city and a prospect for large-scale real estate development. On the other hand, for many other citizens of Chisinau, such as local residents and activist groups, the Red Lines represent an invisible planning power that hovers threateningly over the city because it could result in the demolition of historic urban fabric and mass evictions of local residents. The ways these different members of society imagine, perceive and react to the Red Lines affects how their spatial practices evolve and the different ways in which the Red Lines materialize.

Lefebvre’s conceptualization also opens a possibility for exploring more complex spaces when binary definitions are not helpful for explaining the phenomena. I further link Lefebvre’s “trialectics” with the related concepts of “urban interstices” and “in-betweenness.” Sociologist Frederic Thrasher defines the concept of “interstitial” as spaces that “intervene between one thing and another” and as “fissures and breaks in the structure of social organization.” This concept is helpful in exploring how certain social processes manifest in urban spaces. Through the notion of urban interstices, Stéphane Tonnelat discusses spaces that lack attributed function as suspended in time between their “functional past and future.” Tonnelat also argues that due to this appearance of a temporary absence of function, urban interstices become available as “spaces of opportunity,” much as the space between the Red Lines of Cantemir boulevard, where different actors take control over the park from the municipality. I also relate interstices to sociologists Andrea Mubi Brighenti and Christina Mattiucci’s definition of in-between, which they describe as the spaces in the city that exist under the threat of future plans for urban renewal. I also link these concepts with the notions of liminality and temporality as discussed by Mattias Kärrholm and Gunnar Sandin, who argue that the time of waiting has agency of its own, and I argue that due to the prolonged time of waiting and uncertainty in the path of the Red Lines, the time of waiting itself affects shifts in power relations among actors in the planning process and produces materializations of its own.

Memory Management

I use the notion I call memory management to investigate conflicts between different actors who are using the Red Lines to build the monument to Ivan Zaikin in Zaikin Park. I refer to these conflicts as battles between ghosts that also conjure other ghosts, analyzing how the changing relationship between what belongs to memory and history affects other ways of practicing urban planning. Throughout the discourse on how post-communist societies relate to their past, I utilize the distinction between “history” and “memory” as proposed by the philosopher Boris Buden, who discusses how non-expert and individual narratives about the past are included in historic accounts on equal terms with the historian’s expert knowledge today. Buden warns that these conditions pose the risks of history being rewritten under the influence of populist politicians.

I explore other memories that did not make it into the official history of planning from the Soviet and post-Soviet period. These are the hidden histories that are revealed along the route of the Red Lines. I argue that

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urban planning is a practice of writing histories and an instrument of power in continuous contest over the past and follow Michel Foucault's discourse on power when he emphasizes connections between the power over memory and the control of society. Foucault argues that “Memory is a very important factor in a struggle. If one controls people’s memory, one controls their dynamism. It’s vital to have possession of this memory, to control it, to administer it, tell it what it must contain.” 94 I argue that histories are selected and shaped when they can promote a particular political agenda. The choice of which stories to tell can be powerfully instrumental in planning practice. I also link the notion of memory management to David Harvey’s argument that knowledge about the past is a “political resource related to power differentiations and the legitimation of authority.”95 Under the threat of the boulevard’s Red Lines, the built historic structures and monuments are perceived as fragile, perceptions of power and permanence in the city are inverted, and the future of built monuments is uncertain. Different ghosts and materializations that appear to be ephemeral and temporary wield greater power and have more permanence than the built monuments in the path of the Red Lines. I link these observations to architectural historian Thordis Arrhenius’ argument that the contemporary discourse on conservation is affected by the narrative of loss, and that the notion of monuments changed from a symbol communicating permanence to an object that is perceived as fragile and in need of protection.96 I argue that the ambiguous status of the Red Lines and the uncertain future of urban plans inspire conflicts over history and the meaning of heritage. Pyrs R. Gruffudd’s definition of “heritage” as “mediation between society and its past”97 is useful here, as is critical heritage studies scholar Feras Hammami’s conceptualization of heritage as an expression of power and a political instrument.98 I further relate the notion of memory management to Feras Hammami’s concept of “mobilization” and “reuse of the past” and urban historian Eve

Blau’s concept of “cultural recycling” in public spaces.99 This is particularly relevant because I discuss how, in the case of the plan for Boulevard D. Cantemir, past and present political, ideological and economic forces still have a role in shaping public spaces by bringing back and recycling the past. I further argue that contemporary urban planning is conducted via different forms of memory management, and that the sources of power that control planning are not very visible. Today, the conceptualizations of the past are fluid and more easily transformed. The past is an instrument of legitimization for current political agendas that are often presented via visions for the future of urban spaces. In this thesis, I explore various ways in which different knowledge about the past can relate to transforming planning practices. I argue that the main struggle for hegemony in urban planning in contemporary Chisinau concerns who has the right to tell history and the ways in which different actors with plans of their own struggle for control over the planning process. I also follow Chiara de Cesari and Michael Herzfeld’s argument that the right to heritage is linked with the right to the city in a struggle over how the past is interpreted and mobilized.100 I follow philosopher Boris Buden, who argues that in the post-communist context, political power and its legitimacy rely on “the power of memory.”101 Furthermore, in discussions concerning the role of official planning in struggles over memory, I follow Dolores Hayden’s argument that the practice of planning has a specific role in writing histories of place. Through planning, certain memories are prioritized over others that are to be erased or suppressed.102 I also relate Hayden to Leonie Sandercock, who emphasizes the importance of planning’s role in shaping an understanding of history through the notion of “insurgent planning histories”103 that challenge the “autocracy of the official story.”104 Sandercock argues that there are “other ways to do planning” besides official urban planning.

In this thesis, I maintain that the relations between heritage and
place-making are conflicted and diverse, and what is at stake is who wins the battle over urban planning. Furthermore, I investigate how many other diverse ways of planning become activated when the official planning documents are ousted. I have also found the definition of urban planning by Oren Yiftachel useful; Yiftachel argues that even the strategies of “selective non-planning” should be considered “as part of planning, and as a form of active or negligent exclusion.”105 After the plan for Cantemir boulevard was rejected by Parliament, the municipal authorities used selective non-planning to maintain a legally ambiguous space established by the Red Lines. Paradoxically, planning through non-planning along the path of the Red Lines invites diverse actors to engage in urban planning. In the analysis, I introduce notions of Hijacking, Smuggling and Thievery-in Law, which represent forms of shadow planning that are strongly linked with the shadow economy and politics. Through these concepts, I investigate how certain actors who operate in the shadows of society exploit diverse ways of claiming ownership over history and memory by literally hijacking the character of the local hero Ivan Zaikin as a means to gain power and legitimacy in urban planning along the Red Lines of Boulevard D. Cantemir.

Chapter Overview

This dissertation consists of four chapters and an epilogue.

Chapter 1: The Ghost Boulevard

In the first chapter, I focus on mapping the path of the Red Lines through Chisinau, investigating different moments in Chisinau’s urban history in the process. Through a juxtaposition of interviews with urban planners, historians, local residents and activists, and others, I explore how Alexey Shchusev’s 1949 Master Plan for Chisinau acquired new meanings over time, and how various narratives about origins of the plan for Boulevard D. Cantemir were linked to Shchusev in order to provide legitimacy to later plans, including the most recent General Urban Plan from 2007. Furthermore, by mapping the path of the Red Lines of the boulevard across the city, I explore their diverse materializations in urban spaces through different built and unbuilt sections of Boulevard D. Cantemir, and I discuss how urban planning engaged in writing histories of the city during different periods of Chisinau’s planning history. The mapping begins at Negruzzii Circle with the second built section of the boulevard. As I follow the Red Lines through the boulevard’s unbuilt and built sections, I peel off layers of history and discuss how the Red Lines conjure other ghosts in the city and reveal many hidden histories. The mapping ends at Zaikin Park, where conflicts between the plan to build the boulevard and the activists who oppose its construction gain momentum and are most visible. This is where I meet Oberliht Association, who engage in efforts to stop the plan, affect planning policies and constitute an obstacle for the realization of the boulevard by re-activating Zaikin Park as community park.

Chapter 2: The Spaces of Anticipation

In this chapter, I discuss how multiple actors who are involved in urban development anticipate different kinds of future for this space according to their own interests and agendas. I explore how the Red Lines serve as tools in a territorial contest between different actors in the ambiguous planning environment during an interim period of uncertainty. I begin by exploring a broader view on how the processes of privatization and institutional transformations have changed conditions for urban planning in Chisinau since the end of the Soviet Union until today, and how these processes blur the traditional boundaries between private and public spaces. The exploration continues by zooming in to the scale of Zaikin Park, where I discuss three residential tower developments that were recently built in the path of the Red Lines. During the process of construction, the developers appropriated surrounding public spaces and began to appropriate urban spaces outside their properties in a variety of ways. These different encroachments and appropriations of spaces in Zaikin Park, especially by developers, prompted reactions from residents of the area and activists, who become involved in conflicts over control of the park. Regarding Zaikin Park specifically, there are struggles for dominance over the planning process that result in shifts in agency among different participants.

Chapter 3: The Haunted Streets

In this chapter, I investigate different ways in which the Red Lines of Boulevard D. Cantemir materialize inside the space of Zaikin Park by exploring interactions between local residents, artist collectives, activists, and Chisinau Municipality. Various actors interact with each other by responding differently to the presence of the Red Lines in Zaikin Park. The chapter begins with an analysis of the dirt road that bisects Zaikin Park. Different actors relate to this road—which is strangely aligned with the path of the Red Lines—in different ways. Chisinau Municipality goes along with the flow of cars through the park and uses the road as a legitimate access route for municipal garbage collection trucks. On the other hand, Oberliht Association, artist collectives and local residents who join them concentrate all their activities on stopping the traffic through the park, as if the dirt road represented the actual materialization of Boulevard D. Cantemir. They struggle against the Red Lines, trying to stitch the park back together both socially and spatially. In their efforts, they build temporary structures and organize artistic performances across the path of the dirt road. As result of their activities, Zaikin Park becomes the focal point in the battle over the legacy of the Red Lines, the past, and existing planning policies.

Chapter 4: Urban Planning as Memory Management

In this chapter, I explore urban planning as a practice of writing history through the analysis of a struggle between two ghosts: the plan to build the monument in the middle of Zaikin Park in honor of the local neighborhood hero Ivan Zaikin, and the Red Lines of Boulevard D. Cantemir. Through this conflict, I delve deeper into other, unacknowledged ways of planning conducted by groups of civilians who operate from the shadows both legally and illegally. In the analysis, I discuss how struggles over spaces and memories can also serve as tools for the legitimization of political and social power. Furthermore, I investigate ways in which diverse claims of hegemony over heritage and contests over history also affect future uses of public space in the path of the red lines of Boulevard D. Cantemir.

This research explores how different layers of political and economic processes produce different, colliding urban plans. This is not necessarily unusual or unique to Chisinau. However, the case of Boulevard D. Cantemir, where the plan appears ghost-like because it is both material and immaterial at the same time, offers insights into the human dimension of these different conflicts and their transformative effects on the urban planning practice. The explorations of spatial and social relations in the path of the unbuilt Boulevard D. Cantemir open up to the endless complexity of social relations behind processes of urban development in Chisinau.
CHAPTER I

Ghost Boulevard
In the most recent general urban plan for Chisinau – from 2007 – Red Lines show the path of a planned but never-finished Boulevard D. Cantemir. The Red Lines cut across the city and materialize in a variety of ways. Many different actors in Chisinau seek to assert hegemony over urban planning through their own interpretations of the past, and many different ghosts are conjured through contests over memory and meaning of place; so many that I argue that the planning process in today’s Chisinau is haunted.

Defined by the path of the Red Lines, the city center is a space in which many different ghosts compete. Some of these ghosts – and by ghosts, I mean lingering residues of past ideologies, politics and planning with the power to materialize and affect present planning practices – turn up when various actors attempt to claim their roles as legitimate stakeholders in urban planning; others act in resistance to the Cantemir boulevard. The Red Lines from the plans can be interpreted in different ways and used by variety of stakeholders, all in pursuit of their own urban development agendas. As a result, the Red Lines also affect shifts in power relations among different stakeholders over time.

The ambiguous legal status of the two main planning documents has caused a planning lock-down, and urban planners in Chisinau are thus unable to implement plans for the city center. As I will clarify later in greater detail, in 2007 the General Urban Plan for Chisinau Municipality\(^\text{106}\) was approved by the Moldovan Parliament as a valid planning document, but Parliament rejected the subsequent Local Land Use Plan\(^\text{107}\) for central Chisinau from 2012 (see Figure 0.2). As a result, the mayor of Chisinau has put a moratorium on the implementation of the General Urban Plan for Chisinau city center pending resolution of the disputes and disagreements regarding the Red Lines of Boulevard D. Cantemir. Primarily, the lock-down is due
to controversies regarding the presence of the Red Lines of the boulevard shown in both planning documents, which conflict with the city center’s status as a historic district.

In 1993, the city center was declared a historic district, all buildings of historical significance are included in the register of state-protected monuments. A special service for the protection of architectural heritage, however, has not been established. Hence, perhaps, the problem: in the beginning of the twenty-first-century, Chisinau is being destroyed with the tacit approval of the urban population and negligence of the City Hall officials: buildings have been demolished or crippled and monuments destroyed, damaging the spirit and integrity of the historic center. Where yesterday there were buildings, villas, and mansions with unique expression, today many new skyscrapers are aggressively taking over the space.  

There are some contradictory statements in both planning documents. On one level, the plans propose the construction of the large Boulevard D. Cantemir – which would require demolishing a significant deal of old urban fabric – whilst also stipulating that in the areas of the city through which the boulevard passes “preservation of heritage will be strictly regulated.”

The spatial strip along the planned boulevard is highlighted as “the urban regeneration area with heritage protection.” The primary reason for which the plan was rejected is that in the document, the boulevard is presented as part of an urban renewal project that will result in an extensive demolition of a great number of protected historic buildings in central Chisinau. Commercially-driven urban development has continued in spite of the lockdown, and Chisinau is transforming as different actors invent ways to act on the fringes of the formal planning process.

The ambiguous legal status of the two main documents – one has been approved and the other rejected – cast doubt on the legitimacy of urban plan-

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110 Ibid.
ning. The moratorium on planning and the unresolved legal status of the Red Lines activate materializations of the ghost of Boulevard D. Cantemir, because the Red Lines continue to be present, both in plans and in the collective imagination. Due to their potentially destructive effects on the historic district, the controversies concerning the ambiguous legal status of the Red Lines are also the main cause for a planning standstill for the entire city center. Furthermore, for many citizens of Chisinau, the Red Lines in the planning documents also cause a sense of uncertainty and anticipation regarding the future of their local communities and neighborhoods. As I will discuss later in greater detail, people anticipate different kinds of spaces: many local residents who live in spaces adjacent to the planned boulevard perceive the Red Lines as a threat, whilst others see them as representing opportunities for real estate development. The Red Lines symbolize not only a threat of demolition of the built urban fabric, but also the erasure of the social milieu and histories of local people and their lives. The Red Lines haunting the current planning documents not only trigger reactions in those directly affected by them; they also activate heated political discussions in the streets, in Parliament, in the media and in scientific institutions about the need to preserve the city’s remaining historic monuments and prompt questions about the purpose and legitimacy of the planning practice. According to Tim Edensor, the twentieth century has numerous ghosts. He argues that the imperative of progress is the driving force of modernism that attempts to erase and re-write urban history through urban planning, but that such erasures are only partial and the ghosts they conjure continue to linger in space. These ghosts emerge to resist urban planning. The ambiguous legal status of the Red Lines leave them open for interpretation. Like ghosts, the Red Lines exist somewhere between the worlds of the real and the imaginary, but to some extent, these ghosts are real. While they can be used by urban planners and developers to exercise power and control over planning, the Red Lines also inspire and provoke many different forms of resistance to the implementation of urban master plans.

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The Layers of Chisinau’s Urban History

The earliest mention of Chisinau is in historic documents from 1436 as a human settlement located in the Bic River Valley. A relatively limited part of the original village street system remains. The river Bic was an important spatial organizer; there were only a few points at which the river could be crossed, and the old streets were also oriented in the direction of those crossings (see Figure 0:3). Beyond the local scale of the town of Chisinau, the old Ilinski Market was located at the intersection of the roads that connected Chisinau to other towns and to


113 Ibid, 141.
Turkish Ottoman fortresses in today’s Ukraine.

Many overlapping layers of urban memories are still evident in the northern section of Chisinau through which the Red Lines of the Boulevard D. Cantemir pass. According to research conducted by the Moldovan Academy of Science, the streets of the original village were circular in shape, and their intersections often formed triangular patterns. Furthermore, the old curvilinear street pattern follows the topography closely, which also facilitated easier access for ox carts used to transport goods between the town and the countryside (see Figure 0:4). Several triangular street intersections and parks, such as Zaikin Park, whose shape originates in these older layers of street patterns, still exist in Chisinau.

Chisinau was integrated into the Russian Empire in 1812, and the rural settlement became a regional town that was expanded and modernized according to the planning norms of the Russian Empire. In this period, the trading village was transformed into a provincial capital of Bessarabia within the Russian Empire. The most important mark of urbanization still visible today is a rectangular gridiron plan of Chisinau developed according to the Tsarist Russian prototype for provincial capitals. It was during this period that Chisinau received some of its first urban and architectural attributes. (see Figures 0:6 and 0:7) Chisinau was focused around two central urban spaces – the Church of St Ilie and the agricultural market Ilinski Market – the latter of which was a focal point of economic activity (see Figure 0:5).

In the 19th century, Chisinau was a multicultural town with a predominantly Jewish population and a place in which many different ethnicities coexisted. Between 1812 and 1856, the population of Chisinau grew from 7 000 to 63 000, and by 1914, as the city became an important connection and trading center on the route between the Russian Empire, Europe and Asia, Chisinau’s population of 125 000 made it the fifth largest town of the Russian Empire after St. Petersburg, Moscow, Odesa and Riga.¹¹⁴

In 1918, Moldova declared its independence from Russia and was integrated into the Kingdom of Romania¹¹⁵. During this period, Chisinau was an administrative center of Lapusna, Nistru Region. The Romanian rule

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¹¹⁴ Ibid, 143.
FIGURE 0.6 - A master plan for Chisinau from 1834 [http://www.monument.sit.md/old-views/] shown with the overlay of the approximate location of the Red Lines from the most recent plans for Boulevard D. Cantemir.

FIGURE 0.7 - Chisinau, the provincial capital in the Russian Empire. This plan from the early 19th century depicts four urban districts and city limits, marked with red lines. Furthermore, the only partially developed gridiron plan covers the southwestern zone of the city, while the so-called lower town maintains the irregular street pattern from earlier periods. The character of urban village remains still today.
The Ghost Boulevard

lasted until the Soviet Socialist Republic of Moldova was established in 1940. However, shortly after, in 1941, the territory was once again annexed by Romania; and then near the end of the Second World War, in 1944, Moldova became a part of the USSR.  

During World War II, Chisinau was almost completely destroyed by aerial bombardments and street battles, as well as by a devastating earthquake in 1940. Furthermore, Chisinau holds a tragic record for this period of its history: after Stalingrad and Kharkov, it was one of the top three most heavily destroyed cities of the Soviet Union. According to records, around 70% of all the city’s buildings were completely demolished during the war.

In this photographic collage (see Figure 0:8), the contours of the old Ilinskiy market and irregular street pattern are visible beneath the red lines.

The Plans and the Built Structures of Boulevard D. Cantemir during the Soviet Era

The history of the plan for Boulevard D. Cantemir starts with the post-WWII Soviet Master Plan for Chisinau developed by Alexey Viktorovich Shchusev and his team between 1945 and 1947 (see Figure 0:1). Shchusev was a well-known and respected Russian imperial as well as a Soviet-era architect. Before the communist revolution, Shchusev designed a Kazansky railway station in Moscow and the Holy Protection Cathedral at the Martha and Mary Convent. His Soviet-era projects include the Moscow Hotel, the reconstruction of the infamous NKVD (later KGB) headquarters building on Lubyanka Square, the Ministry of Agriculture or Narkomzem in Moscow, and Vladimir Lenin’s mausoleum on Red Square; he was cherished by communist authorities for his design for the Lenin Mausoleum.

Shchusev’s master plan for Chisinau was conceived during a peak period of restructuring Soviet society and urban renewal after WWII. The plan represents a vision for the future in which Chisinau is transformed into a new regional capital of the Soviet Union. It also shows possibilities for urban expansion and incorporation of the rural suburbs with the city center. In the decades after Shchusev’s death, new generations of Soviet planners relied on his master plan, returning to it to develop later versions whilst also making their own interpretations of Shchusev’s visions and intentions. The subsequent general urban plans for Chisinau from the late 1960s and 1970s depicted Boulevard D. Cantemir as a key aspect of the original master plan (see Figures 0:9 and 1:0). Only two sections of the boulevard were built since then however, while the rest remain unbuilt. The first section was built between Cosmonauts Street to Calea Iesilor and the other extended from Negruzzi and Ismail Streets (See appendix A and B).

I met with Ludmila Nastase, the director of the Memorial House “Alexey Shchusev” on a visit to the National Museum of History of Moldova. Ludmila briefly presented Shchusev’s biography, describing how after Shchusev’s death in 1949, his successors used his authority to promote...
The Ghost Boulevard

The project for the new boulevard by reinterpreting the 1947 Master Plan for Chisinau. In fact, she states, “Shchusev had nothing to do with the design for Boulevard D. Cantemir”; Shchusev’s master plan for Chisinau was very general and his original proposal is very different from later designs for the boulevard from the 1960s and 1970s.

Anatoli Gordeev is the last chief architect of Chisinau Municipality from the Soviet Era who opposes the construction of Boulevard D. Cantemir today. In our correspondence via email, he explained that according to the drawings by Shchusev’s atelier from 1947, the new boulevard was to be built over the historic Ilinski Market. For centuries, this old urban market with its elongated shape, almost like a wide street, was one of Chisinau’s central commercial, cultural and social spaces. Gordeev also describes how Shchusev’s master plan was based on a central ray system consisting of three boulevards that converged at a single point; and this is where these axes meet the large boulevard that Shchusev called Novo-Ilinskaya Street. This street, Gordeev said, was supposed to become a “prototype for all future boulevards,” and in later plans it evolved into Boulevard D. Cantemir. 121 Gordeev sent me the image of a detailed plan drawing depicting a central ray system of boulevards developed by Atelier Alexey Shchusev (see Figure 1:2). In it, the neoclassical plan can be seen in greater detail with its central ray system and the trapezoidal geometry of its urban structure.

121 Anatoli Gordeev sent me the copy of this plan via email (see Figure 3). He wanted to show that Shchusev intended to develop a large urban boulevard in place of the old Ilinski Market.
of his master plan for Chisinau, Shchusev was inspired by other cities in Europe with great rivers traversing the city centre. The three ray-structure was intended to integrate the river Bic with the city center whilst also connecting to the then-rural district of Riscanovca across the river. After Shchusev’s death, the architect Robert Kurtz further developed the schematic General Urban Plan from 1947.

Virgiliu also had an explanation for why Soviet planners never fully realized their planning ambitions in this old part of the town. The boulevard, he says, was probably not completed for a few different reasons; one was that the capital funds were insufficient, the other was that, as he said, “They tried, but the population was very conservative and they didn’t permit the city to expand into this area”. In addition, political changes may have also influenced planning priorities over different time periods.

It is likely that various Soviet planners from the 1960s and 1970s linked their plans to Shchusev’s 1947 Master Plan in order to strengthen the legitimacy of their later plans. According to most of the people interviewed for this study, Alexey Shchusev’s master plan was simply a general concept that was developed and differently interpreted by other planners over time. They also describe how Alexey Shchusev’s reputation as one of the most prominent Soviet architects was used to promote the project for Boulevard D. Cantemir. However, Shchusev’s intentions in the original plan were different than those of Soviet planners who succeeded him. Shchusev conceived the boulevard as an important public space in the city rather than a functionalist plan to resolve issues of traffic and a crucial infrastructural connection in the city.

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abandoned, but the plan to build Boulevard D. Cantemir was carried over from one master plan to the next. Vitalie also discussed possible reasons for Soviets to build Boulevard D. Cantemir. Central Chisinau had been planned by the Soviets as a political and industrial nexus. The political institutions were located along Boulevard Stefan Cel Mare, and the industry was based along the Bic River together with the railroad infrastructure, defining the confine of the central city to the northeast.

According to Vitalie, this was a form of ideological planning where the politics and industry would be integrated in close proximity. Boulevard Stefan Cel Mare was intended to serve political purposes, and Soviets widened the broad boulevard to serve their system of power; it accommodated parades and spaces for large political gatherings, all of the state- and cultural institutions. However, while politics and ideology were dominant factors for planning, the built street infrastructure was not sufficient to serve industrial areas close to administrative functions in the city center. The result was an increase in pollution and traffic congestion from the heavy trucks along Boulevard Stefan Cel Mare. Boulevard D. Cantemir was planned to separate the industrial processes from political administration and systems of power by diverting heavy industrial traffic away from Boulevard Stefan Cel Mare (see Figure 1:3).

While it is unclear exactly why Boulevard D. Cantemir was never finished, Vitalie believes that changes in political priorities during the Cold War probably also affected city planning policies. The industrial race between competing world powers had an influence on city planning, and traces of these time periods are reflected in the interruptions in the urban fabric of Chisinau. Furthermore, according to Vitalie, “the simple fact that the Soviets moved the fate of this boulevard from one five-year plan period to another show that they believed that the Soviet Union would last forever. Of course, history tells us otherwise.”

While the past and the future were certain during the Soviet period, today the sense of history is based on uncertainty about the future, the loss of the sense of permanence, and attempts to legitimize plans for the city by giving priority to some histories over others.

FIGURE 1:2 - The detailed plan drawing of the central ray system of boulevards developed by Atelier Alexey Shchusev. The plan shows three rays, but only the middle ray was later built according to the General Urban Plan from 1951.
When I met the interim chief city architect Ion Carpov with a group of his colleagues who had worked with the city’s built environment after the fall of the Soviet Union, they made it clear that they supported the project to build Boulevard D. Cantemir. The lobby of Chisinau’s Municipality Planning Office is adorned with a large-scale physical model of the 1989 General Urban Plan; this last Soviet plan was still in force until the latest GUP was approved in 2007. According to this plan, upon completion of Boulevard D. Cantemir, the historic urban structures that lie in its path would be obliterated. The lobby of the planning offices seem haunted by the presence of this large-scale model. This lobby is where the members of the public wait to meet planning officials. In front of the large model stands a table with two empty chairs, almost like seats of institutional power waiting to be filled (see Figures 1:4 and 1:5).

As Ion Carpov sees it, the historic area of Chisinau in question would need to be demolished even if we imagined that we wanted to preserve it, because it needs to be accessible with trucks and buses, for new sanitary infrastructures, etc. He explains that this entire new infrastructure needs space and can’t be accommodated in the narrow and chaotic alleyways and streets. Today, “It’s like Shanghai”, he says. “I suppose that you understand better now what I mean”. Architects, he continues, understand that the area’s buildings are very low quality; sanitary conditions are poor; and there is very little high quality old cultural heritage to preserve in this area.

The city hall architects say that they do not understand why the Ministry of Culture does not approve the boulevard project. Mr. Carpov has his own vision for the city. He believes that in essence, there are only two areas of Chisinau that need to be ‘preserved’: those that he claims to be the most representative of the cultural heritage of Chisinau. The rest of the city, – such as the area along the planned Boulevard D Cantemir – needs to be demolished and completely rebuilt. He also sees an economic aspect: “This way, the city would concentrate its finances for restoration just in

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126 Ion Carpov has held the post of the interim Chief City Architect since 2013.
127 Ion Carpov refers to two areas in the grid city to the southwest from Boulevard Stefan Cel Mare.
two historic areas and keep them as two champions, representative of the historic heritage of the city.” According to this vision, these areas would be “preserved” in such a way that they would attract tourists, the buildings’ facades embalmed with fresh paint. Dark, intimate streets would become lively shopping streets selling souvenirs. These historic heritage districts would become what he calls “an artificial reserve for tourism.” He asserts that the condition of many older historic buildings has been complicated by illegal renovations and additions:

Over many years of neglect and the accumulation of problems, many illegal structures – mostly additions – have been built in these areas, and they cannot be legalized since they do not conform to the norms of the historic district. However, these illegal structures cannot be demolished either, simply because there are too many of them and they are actually very well built and solidly constructed.

Mr. Carpov concludes with resignation that the Ministry of Culture would prefer to keep things as they are instead of solving problems. “They don’t want to touch anything”, he concludes. The historic value of old urban neighborhoods in the path of the Red Lines, he says, is not significant enough to prevent the construction of the boulevard. He believes that he and other city architects are struggling against a planning system that does not work because it does not allow the city to transform and accept new investments and urban developments. In the documentary film Autopcity,128 one of the more prominent Soviet-era architects from Chisinau even claims that Alexey Shchusev’s unrealized master plan for Chisinau represents a historic artifact of greater value, and that constructing the boulevard would be an act of conservation of cultural and historic heritage. He also makes an anti-Semitic remark in reference to the history and culture of the old part of the city:

I don’t consider that there is a historic district here. Even Shoiihet said that no, there is no historical district there. Only Jews lived there…whatever, some architects think that it’s a historical area. My opinion is that it’s not. The historical district is what Shchusev projected.129

The activists, planners, historians, and city architects with whom I spoke were almost unanimously negative regarding this part of the city, considering it space that was difficult to control and govern, as well as dirty and in need of renewal or some kind of intervention to bring things in order.

The rhetoric of almost all involved parties is consistent and very critical. Regardless of whether people support or oppose the boulevard, they find the area almost equally unacceptable and problematic. Even the activists used similar rhetoric:

A sort of “Shanghai” of roofs followed by some new blocks, which can be seen behind us…it doesn’t look like a historical area anymore, it’s more like an outdoor mall and we see how this type of logic of expansion of the market and commercialization of public space reaches Boulevard Cantemir; we see how some houses which once were considered monuments have been turned into shops and warehouses and we can pass through the entire area, to see how it looks. The old city, the city of Chisinau, becomes nothing more than a market, a city of an Oriental type, and it’s a kind of effect on a smaller scale of the commercialization of the city…. and what we see here is that the city itself vanishes and is replaced by streets, full of merchandise, full of stalls, where the set of relations is limited to economic exchange. The sidewalks vanished; they were replaced by stalls like these improvised ones.130

Historic records indicate that city authorities from almost every period have described this area as a slum. They used the word “Oriental” as a derogatory adjective to describe the urban environment as chaotic, with unpredictable street patterns, spaces of street trade, abandoned and decaying urban structures that were difficult to control and understand. Attitudes have changed little, even today. Although some city authorities are in favor of the boulevard being constructed, others are vocal about their opposition to it. What they have in common is the rhetoric they use to describe the street markets – many are disgusted by the consumerism of urban markets – and their perception of urban chaos, generally in a negative sense.

Even the activists and historians who mainly advocate “historic preservation” use almost the same rhetoric as the city architects and planning officials.

If speaking about the lower part of Chisinau, since its inception, since the year 1800, 1774 and to the present day, absolutely all authorities considered this part of the city to be abandoned, dirty; in need of destruction and demolition in order to build a new city.131

However, this urban structure, with the temporary and informal appearance that characterizes this area of the city, appears to be the most persistent over time (see Figures 1:6 and 1:7).

129 From the testimony by Oleg Vronski, architect and author of “The Romanita,” one of the iconic examples of Chisinau’s Soviet architecture. From the documentary film “Autopcity,” Director: Stefan Rusu, Production Association Oberliht 2015.
130 Testimony by Vladimir Us, Oberliht, from the documentary film ‘Autopocity’ by Stefan Rusu.
131 Testimony by Anatoly Gordeev, former chief city architect. From the documentary film “Autopcity,” Director: Stefan Rusu, Production Association Oberliht 2015.
The Red Lines conjure many different ghosts in their path as they encounter and bring to light many of the hidden memories of the people of Chisinau. The many historic preservation initiatives and the intensification of the debates about planning processes are reactions to the Red Lines in the General Urban Plan and the Land Use Plan.

As political rule has changed in various periods in Moldova, many attempts have been made to erase politically inconvenient past from memory through urban planning practice. Virgil Paslauric explains that Shchusev’s master plan was so radical and extensive that if it had been fully realized, it would have eradicated all traces of the city’s previous historic fabric. Virgil views the plan as a part of the extended authoritarian rule that he saw as representative of the “imperial and totalitarian Soviet regime.” According to Virgil Paslauric, the implementation of Soviet master plans in the 1960s resulted in the demolition of two of the city’s largest cathedrals: the old church of St. Ilie, and the old Mitropolie Cathedral. Furthermore, since the Soviets wanted to eliminate any evidence of the existence of churches, they also changed street names bearing the names of churches: for example, Ilinskaya Street (which referenced St. Ilie Church) was changed to Cosmos-nautilor Street. Today, all that remains of the old church and the existence of the old market are a short segment of the old St. Ilie Street and an old, faded plaque with the name of “St. Ilie” that somehow managed to survive all of the different periods.

According to Virgil Paslauric, Shchusev was strongly opposed to the demolition of religious building; for this reason, the demolitions were carried out after his death. In the Soviet Union, churches were especially “uncomfortable for the authorities,” and thus many were closed, re-purposed, or demolished. The other two rays were never realized, Virgil Paslauric says, because their construction would cause further destruction of the rest of the historic town.

Furthermore, during the Soviet period, the maps of the city were also used to manipulate public perception of the city by ignoring the real existing conditions of urban space. Tourist maps were used to augment perception of reality by omitting the existing old town and replacing it with an image
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of the non-existent Boulevard D. Cantemir (see Figure 1:8). The old town was not considered a worthy representation of a shining, prosperous city. It thus had to disappear, first by being rendered invisible and erased from memory – its actual physical existence and material reality were of lesser importance.

Sometimes however, even lesser known memories return to the present. According to Leonie Sandercock, the struggle for power in urban planning, as the practice of history writing, is the struggle over memory.

The novelist Milan Kundera once said that the struggle of people against power is a struggle of memory against forgetting (quoted in Appleby, Hunt, and Jacob 1994:270). For historians, the struggle of particular omissions or suppressions also involves power. Stories about the past possess and bestow power.132

Furthermore, the past can be experienced not only through storytelling, written historic records and maps, but also through interaction with the found artifacts left behind by previous inhabitants.

When I interviewed a group of local residents, a woman in her thirties named Ioana133 and her husband Nicolae recounted memories of life in their home and their neighborhood near Zaikin Park. Their one-story house was built in 1918, and they told me that the Turkish Oriental style of their home reflected the multiethnic and largely Jewish character of the population who lived there prior to the Second World War. Ioana and Nicolae moved there in 2000, when many of the houses in the area were standing empty. They told me that the few Jews who had escaped extermination and remained in the area had abandoned their homes about twenty years ago. Shortly after they moved into the house, Ioana and Nicolae began to discover fragments of the past through old artifacts they found in the cellar of their home. As Ioana explains:

When we moved to our house, we found a lot of old things in the cellar...We found for example an old key dating back to the 1920s, old spoons and other kinds of objects. The most interesting thing we found were 6 or 7 old wine bottles, probably more than a hundred years old. We didn't know what to do with the wine so we threw the bottles away; we didn't think the wine was drinkable. Later, a wine collector found out about it and offered to buy the bottles for €200 each. I regretted having thrown away the bottles; I could have used the money to fix up the house.

History cannot be erased completely; some evidence of the people and their past will somehow always find its way into the present. For many citizens of Chisinau, the Red Lines represent a threat to erase memories

133 Pseudonyms are used for all non-public individuals.
of the old neighborhood, and the threat itself brings many histories and
different ghosts back to life. As a result, different institutions and
social groups intensify their initiatives to bring up the public debates about
memories and events that have been kept in the shadows of the official
historic narrative.

Tamara Nesterova describes how during the Second World War, the
area of the old Iliev Market – which lies directly in the path of the Red Lines
– formed part of a larger urban ghetto for Chisinau’s Jewish population (see
Figures 1:9 and 2:0). She says that there is history hidden in this area that
is barely visible today; there are no traces in built form and no memorials or
monuments to mark that certain events or places ever existed:

The story that would be lost with the boulevard if it was built is the
story of the Jewish ghetto. One end was at the Central Market,
there was an entrance there and the other entrance of the ghetto
was at the national bank, Grigori Viero Boulevard. This is one of
the local stories here.

During the period between the two world wars, the Jewish population
of Chisinau comprised about 46% of the town’s total population; by the
start of the Second World War in 1941, there were around 60,000 Jewish
people in Chisinau.134 During the German occupation, the population was
completely decimated, and after the war there were only 86 Jews left.135

According to Nesterova, the new residents of these parts of the old city
moved in after WWII, when the area was virtually emptied of its previous
inhabitants. Besides the erasure of the previous population and the demo-
lition of many architectural and other cultural memories of their presence,
there is also discontinuity in terms of property ownership that has carried
over to the present. After the war, much of the land was nationalized, and
as new people moved in, they took over the properties of previous owners.

The complexity of the property situation grew during the fall of the
Soviet Union in the 1990s with the chaotic manner in which the privatiza-

virtuallibrary.org/jsource/Holocaust/MemKishIntro.html
135 Ibid.

FIGURE 1:9 - One of the two gates of the Chisinau Ghetto in 1941. The gate was located at the present location of the National Bank of Moldova, on the short stretch of the built section of Boulevard D. Cantemir.

FIGURE 2:0 - The border of the Chisinau Ghetto in 1941 shown in dark blue. One section of the fence passed along today’s Pedestrian Eugen Doga Street and across today’s Constantin Tanase Street. The red lines indicate the position of the planned Boulevard D. Cantemir.

The Ghost Boulevard

CHAPTER 1 93
tion process was conducted. Today, Tamara Nesterova explains, there is a total lack of transparency about who owns the land, and property information is very difficult to obtain. These spaces are now threatened by the Red Lines of the boulevard. The Red Lines further destabilize spaces in this part of town and represent ways to transform already fragile property relations.

I met with Ion Stefanita, the director of the Agency for Restoration and Inspection of Monuments in Chisinau (see Figure 2.1). Prominently displayed on one of the walls of his office, where the interview was held, was a map of nine hundred and seventy-seven historic buildings in the center of Chisinau, registered in the National Register of Monuments in 1993. Early in the interview, Ion stated that his agency is subject to great pressure from certain powerful political figures and government officials who feel that the agency operates against their interests. To illustrate this pressure, he told me that his office had recently received a visit from an anti-corruption agency that examined all of the agency’s paperwork and transactions. “Obviously they could not find anything wrong,” he said; the action was a tactic to exert pressure and intimidate him and his staff.

Ion described the agency’s working method and central goals, which are primarily to document the current situation and educate the public about the great losses of built historic heritage that occurred during the post-independence period.

In an attempt to raise public awareness about the rampant demolition of Chisinau’s historic heritage, the Agency for the Restoration and Inspection of Monuments collected data from the past seventeen years and summarized their findings in the report “The Black Book of Chisinau’s Cultural Heritage,” published in 2010. The book presented specific cases of demolished and ruined structures as well as illegal interventions and additions. It classifies the types and extent of destruction and describes what Ion Stefanita calls “crimes against built urban heritage” during the post-Soviet period. According to this study, one historic building in the city was demolished every month to free up land in the city center for new construction. About one quarter of all historic buildings were damaged or partially destroyed during the so-called reconstructions; this adversely affected their authenticity or led to their complete destruction.

According to Ion Stefanita, the current General Urban Plan for Chisinau contradicts national standards and all international conventions signed by the Moldovan Government regarding historic preservation. Today, twenty-six buildings along the path of the red lines are designated as protected monuments (see Figure 2.2). Ten of these buildings are national monuments, and another sixteen are considered to be local heritage. If Boulevard D. Cantemir was ever built, it would not only cause the demolition of these buildings, but also the entire “street structure of the medieval city.” In 2012, Chisinau Municipality organized public hearings where the Local Land Use Plan was presented, but Stefanita claims that during these meetings the plan was promoted rather than discussed or challenged.

This situation and the initiatives by the Agency of Historic Preservation sparked the public debate focused primarily on the development of Boulevard D. Cantemir and the destructive effects on historic heritage of

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136 The interview was held in Stefanita’s office at the Agency for Restoration and Inspection of Monuments in the spring of 2014.

137 Ion Stefanita, Cartea Neagra a Patrimoniului Cultural al Municipiului Chisinau, (Ministerele Culturii Al Republicii Moldova, Biroul UNESCO-Veneto, Agenti de Inspectare si Restaurare a Monumentelor, Chisinau 2010), 7.
the neighborhoods in its path. For the civic organizations and the Ministry of Culture who oppose this plan, the question of historic preservation is the key issue. In Ion Stefanita’s words:

The Red Lines in the plan for this boulevard are one of the main reasons why there is a moratorium on all construction in the city center. The prohibition is signed by the government, another is signed by the mayor himself, stating that no construction is permitted in the center until the Land Use Urban Plan has been approved at the local level.”

The physical destruction of the city after the fall of the Soviet Union is the result of several factors. In order to maximize returns on their property, investors – often the property owners themselves – find ways of navigating the legal system, and rather than restoring historic structures, they end up completely destroying the original structure with a necessary “reconstruction” (see Figure 2:3). A newspaper article in the newspaper Ziarul de Garda entitled “Chisinau Slaughter Scheme” described the essence of this strategy of legal manipulation, which involves several actors. Each actor’s contribution is perfectly legal and contributes to the final result. At the end of the article, the journalist asks:

“…and who is guilty of the disappearance of historic Chisinau: City Hall, the Ministry of Culture, the Ministry of Construction, the prosecutor, or all of them together?”

The process described is as follows: A firm decision is made by the City Hall that the given historic building requires “restoration” and no “reconstruction” is allowed. There is a great difference between these two words: legally, the term reconstruction leaves much more room for interpretation. The building’s owners then intentionally remove the roof and leave the building unprotected from the elements until it deteriorates to such an extreme extent that the structure can easily be deemed impossible to restore. Finally, the City Hall issues the permit for the building’s reconstruction. If the project receives media attention, the City Hall may revoke its decision, but in such cases the investor challenges the City Hall in the Court of Appeals and usually wins the case in court. At this point, the owner has the court decision in their hands and begins the so-called “reconstruction” of the historic monument, which often means a complete destruction of the original structure. Any further attempts at lawsuits are regularly rejected by prosecutors.


139 Ibid.
I have mapped two built and two unbuilt sections of the Ghost Boulevard following the path of the Red Lines through Chisinau (See appendix A). Through the mapping, which starts at the scale of the city, I explore how the presence of the plan for Boulevard D. Cantemir affects urban environments along its path differently. The mapping starts with Boulevard Dacia, which connects the city center with the Chisinau Airport and leads to the second built section of Boulevard D. Cantemir starting at the Negruzzi Circle. I continue along the path of the red lines, zooming in to a local scale of Zaikin Park in the old part of the city, and set the stage for an in-depth exploration in the coming chapters.

**The Second Built Section of Boulevard D. Cantemir**

The built section of Boulevard D. Cantemir is connected to Boulevard Dacia, which links the city center with Chisinau Airport (see Figure 2:4). Boulevard Dacia was built together with the Chisinau City Gate Towers in honor of Leonid Brezhnev for his visit to Chisinau to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the Moldovan SSR in 1975.140 Two residential towers of monumental proportions, the Chisinau City Gate Towers form a symbolic entrance to the city and embrace Boulevard Dacia (see Figure 2:4 and 2:5). They were built to impress Leonid Brezhnev141 when he was en route to central Chisinau from the airport. The towers are among the most iconic architectural symbols of Chisinau and are often pictured on Soviet-era postcards of the city.142

Beyond the Gates of the City in the direction of central Chisinau is the traffic circle Piata Libertatii, from which traffic continues along two large urban streets: one is Chisinau’s main road – Boulevard Stefan Cel Mare –

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141 Leonid Brezhnev was the General Secretary of the Communist Party of Moldova and later became the General Secretary of the Soviet Union, and he is a very important figure for Chisinau and Moldova. The legacy from Brezhnev’s mandate in Moldova on urban development of Chisinau is strong; he was responsible for the construction of the large Valea Miorița Lake, one of the most important public projects in Chisinau during the Soviet era.

142 When it was built, Boulevard Dacia was called “The Boulevard of Peace.” After Moldova became independent from the Soviet Union, it was renamed “Boulevard Dacia,” referring to the mythical and medieval region of origin of all Romanian-speaking Moldovans. Streets throughout the entire city were renamed in the early 1990s. Ancient names from Moldovan and Romanian history were adopted for the Soviet-built area around the Gates of the City; the new names referred to a.g. kings of Dacia (Burebista Street and Decabla Street); Sarmizegetusa, the ancient capital city of Dacia; and the Roman emperor Traian, etc. The Soviet-built city suddenly intersected with ancient symbols and mythology, appropriated to strengthen the sense of national identity.
and it is lined with public monuments, government buildings, cultural institutions, public parks and commercial spaces (See appendix A). The other continues to another traffic circle – the Piata Constantin Negruzzi Circle – and becomes Boulevard D. Cantemir (see Figure 2:6).

This second section of the built boulevard, designed for industrial truck traffic, has been well received by speculative developers, who have built new offices and shopping malls – often by retrofitting existing Soviet buildings. As a result, the buildings along the boulevard represent hybrids of Soviet architecture and more contemporary commercial development. Two large structures along this stretch of the boulevard will be used here to illustrate the convergence of different periods in planning history in the built section of Boulevard D. Cantemir. These structures are located near the starting point of Boulevard D. Cantemir at the Piata Negruzzi traffic circle (see Figure 2:7).
The first of these structures is the iconic Soviet Cosmos Hotel. Constructed in 1983, the hotel building is deteriorating but still functional today. The structure itself has been invaded by two parasitic additions: the massive Grand Hall Shopping Center, built in 2002, and the Napoleon Palace Casino building from 2008 (See Figure 2:8). All three structures appear to be fused together in a motley collage of three completely incompatible environments.

The second structure, located across the Piata Negruzzi traffic circle, is the Atrium Tower, also known colloquially among Chisinau’s citizens as the “Tower of Sauron” (see Figure 2:9). Built in the 1980s, the 86 meter-high, 16-story tower is the tallest building in Moldova, and is owned by Tower Group LL.

In the 1990s, the tower was renovated and expanded at the base level with new functions. Today it is a combination of an office building and a large shopping mall. The tower also houses a food court with cafés and restaurants “with a view” on the 14th floor. Once a symbol of the Soviet regime’s power and prosperity, it has now been converted into a symbol of capitalism. The original Soviet tower was designed to house the headquarters of the Ministry of Transport and Communication, and its original design intention was to embody the power of the Soviet regime and the advances of technology. Immediately following the collapse of the Soviet Union, construction of the tower came to a screeching halt, and the tower remained unfinished for almost twenty years. According to Vitalie Sprinceana, there are different versions of the story about this building. There were rumors that a group of expert engineers had inspected the tower and deemed that it was leaning, unstable, and in danger of collapsing. Another version is that the tower had been abandoned in anticipation of privatization of this property in the early 1990s, left to decay so it could be privatized at a lower price.

The 700-meter-long stretch of Boulevard D. Cantemir ends at the broad intersection with Ismail Street; only the Red Lines continue across the old town.

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The First Unbuilt Section of Boulevard D. Cantemir beyond Ismail Street

Further along the Red Lines, the environment begins to resemble that of a village in the middle of the city. The irregular street pattern and low-rise buildings of the zone contrast with the large-scale development seen along the built section of Boulevard D. Cantemir. The many interruptions and discontinuities in the street patterns expose many layers of urban history. Heading southeast, the Red Lines meet Vasile Alecsandri Street (see Figure 3:0). This broad and long avenue gradually narrows and is interrupted suddenly at the intersection with the Red Lines of Boulevard D. Cantemir, becoming more of a local street. Interruptions are also reflected in the contrasting functions of buildings and urban development patterns in the path of the Red Lines. Vasile Alecsandri Street is lined with newly built commercial structures, office buildings, parking lots, a strip club, empty sites and ruins, reminders of the Holocaust (see Figures 3:1 and 3:2). Parallel to Vasile Alecsandri Street runs the shorter Rabbi Tirilson Street, a remnant of an old Jewish neighborhood, today used mainly for parking. Along Rabbi Tirilson Street are the ruins of the Yeshiva (the Jewish seminary) building, destroyed during the Second World War; today, only the façade remains standing. This structure is one of the architectural fragments that still remain as evidence of Chisinau's former Hebrew community in the city – yet another ghost haunting Chisinau (see Figure 3:1). During my walks in the area, I was guided by a young architect from Chisinau, Vlad Moldovan, who explained that Vasile Alecsandri Street was also an unfinished large boulevard project from the Soviet period. It was built according to an old five-year plan, after which the construction moved elsewhere, leaving the project unfinished. Such interruptions in urban fabric are the records of time, as well as spatial evidence of shifting politics and planning priorities.
The First Built Section of Boulevard
D. Cantemir at Constantin Tanase Street

The first built section of the boulevard is now called Constantin Tanase Street. It starts at Octavian Goga Street and extends northwest until it ends at the intersection with Mitropolit Banulescu Bodon Street (see Figures 3:3 and 3:4).

During the Soviet period, the street was known as Cosmonautilor Street (Cosmonauts Street). It was built on the site of old Ilinski Market, the 19th century bazaar and an urban center of the old neighborhood; this was also the place where the three rays planned by Alexey Shchusev would intersect (see Figure 1:2). According to Vitalie Sprinceana, the 450-meter-long stretch of the boulevard was partially realized in 1952 and several five-story Soviet modernist structures – mainly government buildings – were built in 1965. Constantin Tanase Street is broad enough to accommodate two lanes of traffic in each direction. Today, this space of the built section of the boulevard has become a peculiar oasis, a zone occupied by temporary structures, some of which partially block the flow of traffic.

The street is also the site of the most ambitious public infrastructure project of recent years: the pedestrian street which intersects with it and connects with Boulevard Grigore Vieru.

The blue metal carwash structure is located in the middle of Constantin Tanase Street, between Pushkin and Cosbuc Streets (see Figure 3:5). The carwash occupies the territory of the street in an odd way, partially blocking traffic whilst at the same time providing convenient access for its clients. Between the structure and the edge of the street, a narrow passage has been left open for passing traffic and pedestrian flow, and the area near the entrance has been carefully arranged for customer convenience with parking spaces, and decorated with plants (see Figure 3:6). Though located in the middle of the public street, this structure has a degree of legitimacy; it is defined as property and registered in the national cadaster of Moldova.

145 In his version for the plan for the new boulevard in this location, Alexey Shchusev named the street “Novo-Ilinskaya.”
146 This part of the city was once the location of one of Chișinău’s oldest markets, and it was a central point for urban life in old Chișinău.
According to the National Geospatial Data Fund,\textsuperscript{147} the land use of the property is labeled as industrial, while the building itself is classified as office space. Furthermore, the blue carwash is registered in the official planning documents on the Chisinau Municipality website, and it is also included in the tourist maps of Chisinau. Vlad Modirca, a former city architect, explained however that “this structure is allowed for a temporary period only. This carwash must be demolished when the planned Boulevard D. Cantemir is constructed.”

A hundred meters further, Constantin Tanase Street intersects with the “pedestrian street,”\textsuperscript{148} which has been one of Chisinau Municipality’s landmark projects in recent years (see Figures 3:7 and 3:8).

According to Vitalie Sprinceana, the pedestrian street represents the largest public investment project in Chisinau Municipality since Moldovan independence. Positioned along the axis of the Soviet Boulevard Grigore Vieru, the street represents one of the three rays envisioned by Alexey Shchusev in his 1947 plan. Sprinceana says that the approximately

\textsuperscript{147} \textcite{National Geospatial Data Fund, Geoportal.md, accessed September 13, 2018, http://www.geoportal.md/en/default/map#lat=210004.848864&lon=233501.055181&zoom=9

\textsuperscript{148} During its construction, the Mayor of Chisinau changed the name of the pedestrian street from Alexandru Diordita to Eugen Doga Street.

\textbf{FIGURE 3:5 - The blue carwash building between the Red Lines on Constantin Tanase Street. Interactive web-based map from the General Directorate Architecture, Urban Planning and Land Relations, Chisinau City Hall website (http://map.chisinau.md)}

\textbf{FIGURE 3:6 - The blue carwash in the middle of the street.}
400-meter-long street is part of the “city beautification project,” and it is Chisinau Municipality’s showcase project, developed to attract tourists and encourage commercial activity in the city center. According to Sprinceana, in Chisinau, public projects are rare, and this is the largest street infrastructure project in the central city of the recent era; it took four years to complete and it is still in production, and repairs are being done to it.

The example of the pedestrian street illustrates how difficult it is to realize any public infrastructure project in Chisinau and shows that the construction of much larger Boulevard D. Cantemir would be a daunting task for city officials.

The built section of the boulevard ends in front of what appears to be a no man’s land between the Red Lines. In this space between the ASEM University and the ASITO company are countless boundaries defined by fences, surfaces, paths, functions and structures that appear to negotiate the property lines between public spaces, institutions and private businesses (see Figure 3:9). This zone appears to be a combination of a green park and a parking lot. It has been left as a transient space, with no clear organization, lacking public utilities, street lighting and benches. Due to the proximity to the university and businesses, there are several kiosks along the street offering variety of services and products, from photocopies and stationery to fruits and vegetables.

Beyond this area and past Anton Pann Street, the Red Lines traverse the irregular and intersecting pattern of old streets and low-rise neighborhoods towards Zaikin Park.
The Second Unbuilt Section of Boulevard D. Cantemir: Zaikin Park

Following the path of the Red Lines towards the northwest is an old historic neighborhood, the village-like character of which is reflected in the pattern of irregular and narrow streets, low-rise houses with gardens, and triangular public spaces and parks (see Figure 4:0). One such triangular park is a central public space of the local neighborhood, named after a local legend called Ivan Zaikin. Today, the Red Lines of Boulevard D. Cantemir bisect Zaikin Park (see Figures 4:1 and 4:2). Because of the Red Lines, many low-rise houses around the park are being replaced by ten-story towers whilst numerous stakeholders compete for control of the park, all of them with different ideas about how it should change.

Chisinau Municipality has been unwilling to invest in the rebuilding, construction and maintenance of Zaikin Park and its surrounding road infrastructure. The likely cause for their attitude are the Red Lines and the anticipation of Boulevard D. Cantemir cutting through the park.

In the following chapters, I will discuss how Zaikin Park became one of the main obstacles for the boulevard’s construction as it was activated by social groups working to stop the plans for the boulevard.

Responding to the threat to the park and surrounding neighborhoods posed by the red lines, a group of young artists and architects led by Oberliht Association started a revitalization project for Zaikin Park. The activists did not wait for the question of the boulevard to be resolved by the City Coun-

![FIGURE 4:0 - The second unbuilt section of Boulevard D. Cantemir in the neighborhood around Zaikin Park.](image)

![FIGURE 4:1 - The Red Lines pass directly through the old neighborhood and Zaikin Park.](image)

![FIGURE 4:2 – The bird’s-eye view of the Red Lines passing through Zaikin Park: collage with perspective drawing and drone footage by Bojan Boric.](image)
cil – a process that may take years – but instead decided to act pre-emptively, believing that “vibrant, organized community” would activate this small green park and render it a formidable obstacle to the Red Lines.\textsuperscript{149}

The project to rehabilitate the park includes constructing temporary furniture such as stages, benches that support cultural activities, playgrounds, sports facilities, a public water source and an open-air community center. The efforts to consolidate community in Zaikin Park were prompted by the Ghost Boulevard. They consist of organizing events, workshops and artistic performances with the participation of architects, activists and the residents from the area around the park. The Oberliht activists are also putting pressure on Chisinau Municipality’s planning authorities in these processes to become involved and act “both as a partner (via a civic-public partnership) and a mediator among many actors – residents, developers, civic society, etc.”\textsuperscript{150}


\textsuperscript{150} Ibid.

The Young Artist Association Oberliht is a “non-governmental, voluntary, non-profit and politically non-affiliated society constituted as a Public Youth Organization”\textsuperscript{151} established in 2000. Since 2012, Oberliht has been one of the key stakeholders involved in the activities that take place in Zaikin Park. This organization has also been my main contact for research and a conduit through which I was able to enter the complex planning environment in Chisinau. Oberliht helped me obtain access to a number of different actors from diverse spheres of society and politics in Chisinau, from local residents to urban planners, a number of former and present chief city architects, activists, artists, lawyers, government officials, and more.

Vladimir Us is an artist and a director of Oberliht and my primary contact at Oberliht. He invited me to numerous workshops in Zaikin Park and facilitated my access to sources of information during this research over several years. I also conducted more formal interviews with him on several occasions.

According to Vladimir Us, Oberliht Association started its activism by operating outside the main institutional framework as “an independent cultural actor” engaging in artistic work in the public spaces of Chisinau. Over time, Oberliht evolved into an important stakeholder in urban planning able to adopt to the transforming urban governance, and it was able to assume many different new roles and responsibilities. Vladimir emphasizes the importance of raising public consciousness about the significance of public space in society today by arranging activities and public campaigns, temporary exhibits, installations, public performances, etc. Oberliht’s working method often involves occupying abandoned structures and urban spaces in Chisinau and converting them into venues of artistic as well as political and cultural expression. Furthermore, Vladimir Us explains that the main aim of Oberliht is to “subvert the logics of marketization and consumption of space,” which he defines as the mainstream of urban development in Chisinau today. In this effort, Oberliht initiated different projects to stop opaque and often illegal spatial appropriations by private investors.

and became a trusted partner and an intermediary able to resolve disputes among stakeholders.

Vladimir describes how early on in the project in Zaikin Park, Oberliht’s members understood that the community activism in the park represented an opportunity to resist the plan for the boulevard as well as to influence planning policies. The appropriation and activation of devastated areas in the city by “claiming-occupying its spaces makes it possible for activists to challenge the dominant symbolic order, mobilize and concentrate their own symbolic, social, and material power, and make the case for alternative possible worlds.” For many citizens, the Red Lines of Boulevard D. Cantemir represent the dominant order and power structures which are often invisible and difficult to grasp by the people who live in local neighborhoods and who are affected by the decisions made elsewhere. According to Vladimir, one of the main motivations for resisting the Red Lines is the need to “counterbalance ongoing massive appropriations of public spaces in the city and predatory forms of urbanization that are uncontested by the state.”

Vladimir explains that bringing the space of Zaikin Park back to the people of the neighborhood and activating it would strengthen the neighborhood’s collective identity – which had been lost over several years of neglect – and create a formidable obstacle for the construction of Boulevard D. Cantemir. According to urban political geographer Byron Miller and urban sociologist Walter Nichols, “the territory, in particular the neighborhood is conceived as the basis for creating common collective identities.” They argue that the territory of their neighborhood is where citizens are able to assert claims to their “rights to the city” in the most immediate and direct way, and it is where they are most able to unite around a common cause.

From the start of their engagement in reclaiming public spaces in Chisinau, Oberliht has occupied spaces and structures that have been left abandoned and devastated by privatizations linked to the withdrawal of the state from the public domain. One example is Project Chiosc: “Flat Space” (see Figure 4:3), where Oberliht occupied a contested urban space – a public square in front of a hotel on Alexey Shchusev Street – that had become a

FIGURE 4:3 - Project Chiosc: “Flat Space,” Oberliht Association Project, designed by Moldovan artist Stefan Rusu. Photo: Bojan Boric

FIGURE 4:4 - Diagram composed by Oberliht depicting how the organization describes its own diverse roles and its engagement with different aspects of social, cultural and urban practices. These different practices include educational and advocacy roles, public space research, and political engagement. Source: www.oberliht.com
parking lot after the fall of the Soviet Union. The activists constructed a steel and concrete structure in the center of this parking space that today serves as a cultural info point and public platform for participation.

The practices of Oberliht Association are haunted by the past and represent another ghost in the path of the Red Lines. Oberliht’s activism was initially inspired by the dissident movements of the Soviet era, as they were involved in different forms of artistic performances with political connotations that promote democracy in public spaces, but their spatial practices have evolved and changed significantly. In many ways, they have made a certain occupational shift away from activism by providing expert and professional services in the process (see Figure 4:4). Furthermore, in some instances, Oberliht’s role is closer to that of an urban planner’s, and the association assumes responsibilities for construction and management of urban space.

Over time, Oberliht’s spatial practice moved from a fringe position, becoming part of complex power network and a force that could not be ignored. At the same time, the association is also economically vulnerable, since their work largely depends on EU-sponsored grants.

In the coming chapters, I will be focusing on the relation between the Red Lines and the different activities and events that take place in and around Zaikin Park. I will explore various manifestations of the ghost of the boulevard and how it is materialized through shifts in power relation among different stakeholders in their struggle for control of urban planning.
CHAPTER II

The Spaces of Anticipation
The Spaces of Anticipation

When Olga moved to the neighborhood near Zaikin Park in 2000, the area along the boulevard was full of one- to two-level houses. “It looked like a village in the countryside, right in the middle of the city.” Now she feels nostalgic for those days. Back then, Olga recalls, she had a garden where she could sit peacefully and grow fruit and vegetables. She describes what Zaikin Park looked like when she moved in: “there were few small houses in the middle of the park, around where the garbage containers are now, but after the incident with the gas explosion all the houses were cleared from the park.”

Olga has seen her neighborhood change significantly because of the Red Lines of the General Plan of 2007, which mark the path of the unbuilt Boulevard D. Cantemir. When we met for an interview in Zaikin Park in October 2015, she told me that local residents are highly restricted when it comes to making any improvements to their own homes and influencing the planning process in the zone of the red lines:

I would like to get a permit to build a larger house. Because of the red lines there are a lot of restrictions on what one can do, and the red lines mean that everything that was built in the area is illegal. There is a total stop on any issuance of permits. One can only build illegally in this area. The developers are building those towers [referring to the construction of new residential tower blocks]; they don’t fit into the context. They were supposed to ask the residents for their opinions, but that never happened. The people who move into these new buildings have no outdoor space since the buildings occupy the entire site. There is no way for fire engines to access them, either. Developers had to clean up the spaces next to their properties for fire code compliance. They tried to negotiate with the next-door neighbors, but they didn’t want to move, so developers built right against that neighboring house. There were a lot of problems and conflicts between developers and neighbors.

For many people who live near Zaikin Park, the Red Lines represent the threat of evictions, demolition and the complete destruction of the neighborhood’s social fabric.

The locals whom I interviewed perceived the Red Lines as a threat, having witnessed how their presence encourages the construction of new towers. Furthermore, residents describe how this new large-scale urban development will result in greater traffic pressure on the existing street infrastructure, which now consists of narrow streets and alleyways.

“I try to imagine Chisinau destroying itself”, says Alexandru with a sinister smile. “It’s a difficult thing for you to understand as a foreigner.” Alexandru is a young architect and artist/musician who often volunteers at the public events organized by Oberliht. During one of our interviews in Zaikin Park, Alexandru described how he felt about the unrestrained urban development in the zone along the Red Lines and the consequences this has for spaces of Zaikin Park at different times of the day and night.

In late afternoons, on workdays, the park is empty. This is not a place where you want your kids to play at night. There are people smoking and drinking and it’s dark out here at night. Many parents would like to move away from the area with their children; they see it as a ghetto. Perhaps that’s because people build and do whatever they want here; there is a lot of improvisation. People have built new structures and have never asked for permission from the municipality to build them. There are no penalties for illegal construction and because of the disorganization, nobody cares.

Alexandru is concerned about what he describes as the commercialization of every aspect of society and how this process dramatically reshapes public spaces, fearing that the whole city will become a “theme park for consumerist culture.” As an example, he mentioned a “big business” of weddings and the “kitsch culture madness” that threaten to invade every space in the city, including the space of this park.

The space along the path of the Red Lines of Cantemir boulevard is suspended in time, awaiting resolution. The space of anticipation is a zone within which everyone lives under the threat or the promise of the plan.
Its presence compels some to seek ways to take action to oppose the plan and mobilize citizen alliances, whilst others seek to maximize future profits. Seen thus, the Red Lines serve as a triggering mechanism for social engagement or speculation.

In this space, Chisinau Municipality is unable to enforce the plan for the boulevard and has backed down in its role in the planning, management and control of urban spaces. Municipal planners are seeking new ways to regain the lost control. In the process, they implement a planning strategy similar to what urban studies scholar Oren Yiftachel calls strategies of “selective non-planning,” as another form of planning; he describes it as “a form of active or negligent exclusion.” Instead of proposing alternative plans that would help resolve planning disputes concerning the plan to construct Boulevard D. Cantemir, the municipality is establishing a zone along the route of the Red Lines where power over the planning process can be exercised arbitrarily in the interim. I connect the notion of spaces of anticipation to Kenny Cupers and Marcus Miessen’s definition of “spaces of uncertainty” as spaces that lack clear definition, where forces of privatization shape contemporary understanding of public culture, and where the domain of culture and politics is monopolized by corporate actors. As they write: “Following current urban developments, one can easily trace the rapidly increasing forces of privatization. Those private powers that hold today’s economic or political power have become the creators of a so-called public culture.”

I discuss the spaces of anticipation in Chisinau as places where a multiplicity of actors are interpreting the situation in different ways, utilizing the Red Lines as devices for appropriation or dispossession. In their claims, they contest ownership over urban spaces – and such contests transform the relations of power among different stakeholders in spatial production. The Red Lines can be perceived both as legal and illegal, and this unresolved status contributes to another dimension of uncertainty. Furthermore, I explore who has control over planning processes today and ways in which the Red Lines contribute to contemporary understandings of the relationship between the public and private nature of urban space in the specific post-Soviet context of Chisinau. The testimonies of different actors illustrate that the boundaries between private and public spaces are rendered unstable by the uncertain nature of the Boulevard D. Cantemir project, and that the Red Lines serve as real estate development instruments.

Natasha is one of the three young female planners whom I interviewed at Chisinau Project, the main public urban planning and architecture consultancy from Chisinau Municipality. She recounts her personal experiences as an urban planner in Chisinau:

With the developers, the dialogue is more difficult. They construct at a higher density than permitted. For example, if the property’s occupancy allowance is 50%, they always breach those limitations; this creates an inhumane context. In contrast to that, during the Soviet era, public spaces were protected from development and well maintained. Today, the developers occupy as much space around the buildings, mainly for parking; they build in public spaces and maximize the density of the area. Even when their contract obliges them to allow for an open public space, they don’t comply. This leaves no room for playgrounds, parks and other public areas. The result is a congested and unhealthy urban environment generally lacking public functions. In places where only one- to two-story houses are allowed, there is a huge hand hovering overhead; it’s really intimidating. People in the surrounding area are in a permanent shadow. So, a lot of people try to protest, talk to journalists – but when a project like that is built, it’s already too late.

Natasha is openly critical of the way the city is transforming with the real estate development encroaching upon public spaces in the city. She says that the influence and power of developers and investors over urban development has drastically increased, and that this is a great challenge for urban planners. According to Natasha, Chisinau is structured around well-planned green parks left from the period of Soviet Urban Planning, which contributes to the city’s unique character. Today however, many of these parks are being eroded by the construction of theme parks, housing towers, shopping

158 Kenny Cupers and Markus Miessen, Spaces of Uncertainty, (Verlag Müller+Busmann KG, 2002); 24.
malls, churches, hotels, and parking structures.

Vlad Modirca\textsuperscript{159} is a former chief city architect at Chisinau Municipality and an advocate for construction of Boulevard D. Cantemir. He is frustrated by the strong opposition to the project by some politicians, the Ministry of Culture and locals:

Some people still oppose the project for Boulevard D Cantemir – Dorin Chirtoaca, the current Mayor of Chisinau, for example. Even Baron Haussmann’s project for Paris faced some opposition in the beginning, but when it was built, people realized its value. Today, the people of Paris are all enthusiastic about and proud of their boulevards.

Mr. Modirca believes in a higher degree of control and regulation of urban development in the city. When Boulevard D. Cantemir is finally built, he says, all of the temporary and illegal structures that fill the space between the Red Lines today will certainly be demolished. Furthermore, he explains that during his first term in office as chief architect of Chisinau in 1997, he wanted to evict everyone who lived in the zone along the Red Lines in order to free space for the boulevard. To make this possible, he reserved land for new temporary housing to which these residents would be relocated. His plan failed however, because he was “pushed out of his office, and some other investors took this reserved land and developed these valuable properties for their own purposes.”

In anticipation of the boulevard, some developers started to build new residential towers along the Red Lines, while the residents who live in their path became acutely aware that they were under permanent threat of eviction.

I interviewed Valentina, a real estate developer, in her office; I will return to this interview in greater detail later in this chapter. Valentina represents Coloana Mecanizată Mobilă SA,\textsuperscript{160} a development company building one of the residential tower projects next to Zaikin Park that will be the subject of discussion later in this text. During our meeting, Valentina stated that when her company was looking for the new construction site, they were well aware that the Red Lines passed through this neighborhood. The information about the land suitable for construction was obtained by contacting Chisinau Municipality, which indicated this old neighborhood. According to Valentina, the Red Lines are attractive to new apartment buyers because for them, the prospect of the boulevard represents urban renewal and improved accessibility:

…today it is very difficult to find land to build buildings of this height in the city center, so we found two neighbors who were willing to sell their land here. We also found the land with perfect dimensions to build here…When we announced apartments for sale in this building, in our advertisement we specified that there would be a boulevard built through the area in the future. The boulevard was a good amenity that attracted buyers.

However, Valentina also offered another perspective about how the presence of the Red Lines affects the locals who live in constant anticipation of the boulevard not knowing if they are going to be displaced:

Ten years ago, I was talking with a woman I know whose daughter lived near the red lines close to the completed section of the boulevard.

Logically, one assumes one’s area will be next. Authorities told her that they would be building the boulevard, her building would be demolished, and she would need to move to new housing. This lasted for a long time; she lived with her bags packed, ready to move, for ten years – she was thinking that the day after tomorrow she would

\textsuperscript{159} On one of my early research trips to Chisinau in March 2014, I met with a group of prominent Moldovan architects at the offices of the Architects Union. They were: Iurie Povar (architect, director of the Urban Project Office and president of the Architects Union); Vlad Modirca (the chief architect at the City Hall for two terms: 1989-1997 and 1999-2011); Ion Carpov (the current interim Chief City Architect at the City Hall of Chisinau), and Kiril Asimov (architect and a member of the Architects Union. A pseudonym has been used here as he is not a public figure). In the interview, they reflected on the state of urban planning during the shift towards new economic and institutional reforms in the early 1990s, when Moldova gained independence from the Soviet Union.

\textsuperscript{160} According to Valentina, in pre-Perestroika Soviet times, Coloana Mecanizată Mobilă SA was state-owned. It was estab-
lished in 1976 as part of the Ministry of Industry and was involved in building factories in and around Chisinau and through-
out Moldova. During this period, the name of the company was Mobilă Mecanizată (Mobile Municipal Unit). The company was privatized in 1994, shortly after the Moldovan Law on Privatization was passed in 1993. Valentina has been working for the company since 1984, and says that while she owns a certain number of shares in the company, she is not the main shareholder.
move somewhere else— but nothing happened. Then one day she just moved away to another house in a different neighborhood.

Residents, planners, the chief city architect, a young activist, and a real estate developer describe the effects of the Red Lines of the boulevard on the spaces of the city from their different vantage points. For different people, the prospect of the boulevard can have a completely different meaning.

The resident living in the shadow of the newly built tower blocks felt powerlessness and unable to influence urban development processes. The urban planner from Chisinau Project, who is involved in producing the plans for the boulevard, voiced concern about ongoing appropriations and the disappearance of green public spaces in the city, as well as the powerlessness she feels as a planner in the face of profit-driven urbanization. For the young activist, the Red Lines define a zone of extraordinary lawlessness, abandonment, and marginalization; he also expressed fear about the commodification of the Zaikin Park space. For the city architect who talks about the boulevard project as a visionary undertaking, the Red Lines represent a way to reinstate control and regulation over city planning by eliminating all illegal construction in the area, as well as a solution to the city’s traffic problems. The developer perceived the Red Lines as a tool that worked in the past to attract new real estate development, but felt that uncertainty about the project’s realization had stalled progress. She also describes the zone in the path of the Red Lines as a space of anticipation where people live under pressure to move out of the area.

According to Leonie Sandercock, there are two kinds of struggle in today’s cities, which are essentially dominated by mobility of capital and migrations of population. One is “a struggle of life space over economic space, the other a struggle over belonging.”161 The Red Lines serve as instruments in this struggle because they play roles in the reconfiguration of ownership of the land in their path.

Nishat Awan, Tatjana Schneider, and Jeremy Till emphasize the importance of understanding the underlying process of urban transformations in terms of social action.162 They argue that understanding the privatization of land is key for understanding the social dynamics in space, and that “one’s perception and occupation of space is profoundly affected by the underlying ownership of that space.”163

I argue that one key to understanding contemporary social dynamics and their impact on the planning practice lies in better understanding of privatization processes and their effect on the changing relationship between public and private spaces. According to geographer Don Mitchell, “public space represents the material location where the social interaction and political activities of all members of ‘the public’ occur.”164 The social and political aspects of understanding public space today are also transforming through processes of privatization. The architect and social scientist Stéphane Tonnelat argues that the traditional paradigm of public space as “open spaces” such as streets, parks, squares or other publicly-owned spaces, as opposed to “private domain,” is no longer relevant because the meaning of public space is becoming more complex.165 According to Neil Smith and Setha Low, “public space has different meanings in different societies, place and times.” They also assert that it is impossible to “conceive of public space today outside the social generalizations of private space as a product of modern capitalism.”166

One way to understand the effects of privatization processes is to explore the contemporary social dynamics in the specific context and discuss their effects on urban environment. The effects of privatization on the evolving nature of public spaces need to be explored through rigorous analytic inquiry that takes into account past and present social and cultural processes in cities.

163 Ibid.
Exploring Tensions Between the Red Lines and the Processes of Privatization

Different stakeholders envision different kinds of spaces in the path of the Red Lines. The spaces of anticipation result in diverse materializations resulting from these different expectations and competing private agendas. This shows how urban planning can have uneven effects on different groups of people depending on their relative wealth, education, social status and their mutual relations of power. I argue that one of the functions of the Red Lines is to reassert planning authorities’ control over processes of privatization and urban planning. The uncertainty of the plan and its unresolved legal status, however, also produce different and (perhaps for planners) unanticipated effects where the Red Lines are concerned. Against this background, I investigate how the Red Lines serve as instruments in a territorial contest that involves a broad range of stakeholders.

Although the physical structure of Boulevard D. Cantemir has not been built, there is material and immaterial evidence of its presence in the city. The traces of the Red Lines are visible in the position of the newly built residential towers, in demolished or abandoned buildings, and in the construction fences erected in transformed urban fabric, as well as in the changing ownership relations of urban space.

Both the processes of privatization and the Red Lines of Boulevard D. Cantemir are instruments used by various social groups and individuals to assert hegemony over the planning process. In various ways, the Red Lines also represent instruments of resistance to planning when they are manipulated and strategically used by local citizens and activist groups.

As a result, over time different spatial practices in this space also change, and their effects have repercussions for specific people in specific ways.

When the Red Lines of Boulevard D. Cantemir were drawn in the General Urban Plan from 2007, they were not only the representation of a plan to build a physical infrastructure in the city; more importantly, they performed as an instrument of spatial division determining which spaces may be considered as public or private as well as legal or illegal. In order to preserve and free space for the construction of the boulevard, no construction and no new privatizations of state-owned land are allowed inside the space between the Red Lines. Despite this ban, there is a complex milieu of fluid property ownership relations between residents, the municipality, private companies, and a variety of organizations, and these continue to evolve. In this thesis, I aim to show how property appropriations continue to take place anonymously and are concealed from public scrutiny, even as new construction sites emerge.

Different reactions to the Red Lines also illustrate that the notions of public and private are evolving due to changing legal definitions of ownership and cultural attitudes towards privacy and publicness that still linger from the Soviet period.

The planners, city hall architects, government officials and members of citizen groups whom I interviewed spoke of the massive waves of privatization since the early 1990s – a time when institutional and legal frameworks were still in flux. They assert that what they call the “uncontrollable processes of privatization” are one of the main causes for the disappearance of many public spaces, such as green areas in Chisinau, as well as the municipal authorities’ loss of control over urban planning. Furthermore, according to various actors, during these privatizations in Moldova there was a large-scale relocation of population from rural to urban areas, as well as emigration from Moldova. As many moved to cities from the countryside and became new urban dwellers, others who lived in cities moved to the countryside, and it became more difficult to predict and control the economic process and the mobility of population and resources, as well as to secure sustainable project financing. A large number of Moldovans went abroad to seek work; today, there are about 753,800 Moldovans living abroad. They are a significant economic factor for the country, since they send remittances to their relatives in Moldova and invest in the construction of new real estate development projects there.

The period since Perestroika has been important – not only as a milestone, but even more as the moment in time when legal definitions that define ownership in the Eastern European countries went through a series

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169 Ibid.

170 The period of “restructuring” initiated by former Secretary General of the Communist Party Mikhail Gorbachev in the final years of the Soviet Union.
of changes. Architect and urban planning theorist Sonia Hirt discusses how new kinds of boundaries emerged in an ironic twist after the fall of the Berlin Wall. According to Hirt, in the context of Eastern European post-socialist cities, “there are now all kinds of new walls, material and immaterial, economic and political, legal and social, which separate the newly rich from the newly poor.” Hirt also talks about the intensification of boundaries between public and private realms, between which there is no middle ground. However, the Red Lines in contemporary Chisinau provoke spatial contestations that result in urban environments that are different from sharply divided spaces such as gated communities. Claims to ownership are continuously contested in the spaces of anticipation, and boundaries between notions of public and private are unstable.

Sonia Hirt emphasizes the lingering effects of cultural attitudes from the Soviet Era regarding the relation between public and private, referring to them as “the ethos of privatism.” According to Hirt, during the Soviet Era, the “private” was understood as the intimate world of self, family, and friends. The private sphere was never fully conquered and controlled by the state, and it gained cultural status as a place of refuge and increased withdrawal into the safety of privacy. As mentioned earlier in this thesis, on the opposite side sharply divided from the private with no middle ground was the “The socialist public – understood as the resources, institutions, and functions that constitute the state.” As Hirt further explains, today there is still a culture of animosity towards anything “public;” this is associated with oppression and control inherited from the Soviet period.

In summary, then, one may speak of late capitalism as an era marked by an ethos of privatism – a culture that entails diminishing appreciation of broad-based collective narratives and actions, and a growing interest in issues centered on the personal and the domestic, the individual, the family and the narrowly defined interest group.

As evidence of effects similar to Hirt’s ethos of privatism in Chisinau, urban public spaces such as public squares, parks and cultural centers from the Soviet Era are subjected to pillaging and appropriations. As Vladimir Us explained, these processes compelled Oberliht Association to act and make attempts to give “the public urban spaces back to the citizens.”

Both the plan for the boulevard and privatization policies represent top-down, government-driven projects. As a part of greater state restructuring project, processes of privatization in Chisinau affected social relations and reshaped institutional context within which planners could influence urban development. According to Kiril Stanilov, the privatization was a part of a large-scale, top-down process of societal restructure. He calls this process “the leitmotiv of urban spatial restructuring in the cities of Central and Eastern Europe” that made it much harder for local governments to control the use of land. According to Sasha Tsenkova, during the institutional changes in Moldova – which, besides privatization, included “decentralization, deregulation, and local autonomy,” the local authorities acquired the status of “crises managers” with a broad range of responsibilities, but without the financial resources to support their efforts to address the problems at hand. As a result of these changes, each municipality in Moldova today competes for resources because they are often constrained to invent ways in which they can invite investment on their own.

The Republic of Moldova declared its independence from the Soviet Union on 27 August 1991. According to former city hall architect Vlad Modirca, this is when the assembly of the reform government decided that by the year 2000, every citizen would own an apartment or a private house. As a result of these policy changes, the privatization process during those early years since independence was rapid: “90% of all state and municipal housing has been privatized, with nearly 2/3 of the sales completed between 1993-96.” The government’s main objective at the time was to establish favorable conditions for privatization in Moldova, as well as to create an

172 Ibid. 4.
173 Ibid. 18.
174 Ibid. 22.
175 Ibid.
178 Ibid.
179 Ibid. 178.
active real estate market by regulating and protecting equal rights between public and private ownership.\textsuperscript{181} An additional objective was to remove “macro regulation,” as well as subsidies for housing in order to reduce state deficit.\textsuperscript{182} During the Soviet Era, urban planning was an effective tool for managing the population, or a social and technological machine of sorts embedded in the “circuit resource flow,” and part of the economic planning system that was required in order to obtain a greater sense of certainty within the larger scheme of Soviet Planning.\textsuperscript{183} Privatization of state property was accompanied with the elimination of Soviet policies such as Propiska,\textsuperscript{184} which signaled a new freedom of movement of population; people gained the ability to choose where and how they should live and work.

According to Vlad Modirca, the privatization of state-owned land in central Chisinau was a much slower process than in the outskirts of Chisinau or in the countryside. The municipal authorities attempted to maintain greater control and limit the privatization of property in the city center; the old city contains a great number of buildings considered to be a part of Moldovan “built historical heritage,” and many of the buildings and public spaces there are of vital interest to the state.

Despite efforts to control the patterns of privatization in the center of Chisinau however, non-transparent processes of privatizations from the shadows continue, many of them conducted via legal loopholes. For example, one commonly implemented machination is the use of “temporary rental agreements” that allow the sale of property without public tender and at prices more than twenty times under market price.\textsuperscript{185} Legal loopholes such as these allow buyers to gain access to property simply by renting it for a certain period of time. This agreement allows the renter to become a buyer, avoid price competition, and acquire the property under market price. This is counter to the main intentions of open public tender,\textsuperscript{186} a transparent bidding process developed to attract multiple bidders and thereby increase a property’s sale price. In addition, privatizations conducted subversively remain hidden from any eventual public scrutiny, reducing public oversight over the distribution of land resources.

According to a report published by Chisinau City Hall Department of Land Architecture and Urbanism in 2007, publicly-owned land in the central historic district has decreased by two percent annually. In 2007, the municipal authority owned 68% of land; 21% was owned by the Moldovan state, and 11% was in the hands of the private sector.\textsuperscript{187} The map in Figure 1 depicts the extent of privatization at the time when General Urban Plan of 2007 was developed (Figure 0:1). However, the map does not reflect the contemporary situation years later (in 2019), and it is likely that current land privatization in the center of Chisinau is far more extensive than shown.

According to the General Urban Plan of 2007,\textsuperscript{188} all properties within the zone of the Red Lines must be preserved as land owned by the municipality, while land zoning regulations designate the areas in the historic old town following the path of the Red Lines as the zone for urban renewal, labeled “Re” for “areas of urban revitalization.” The same space is seen in diverging ways, and different stakeholders – the municipality and the developers on one end and Ministry of Culture, Moldovan Academy of Arts and Science, art collectives and others on the other end – anticipate different spaces and interpret the Red Lines differently. Furthermore, planning documents indicate that the zones designated Re allow for a certain flexibility at City Hall’s discretion, specifying that it is possible for the investor and project designer to negotiate their proposal with the municipality.\textsuperscript{189} The Red Lines in the documents indicate that one of the intentions with the plan for Boulevard D. Cantemir is to bring new real estate development, residential towers and other larger developments to the old city center of Chisinau.

This hopeful interpretation of the Red Lines views the zone of urban revitalization as attractive for real estate investment, but the uncertain status of land ownership continues to provide challenges.\textsuperscript{190}

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\textsuperscript{181} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{182} Sasha Tsenkova, “Moldova” in Management of Privatized Housing: International Policies & Practice, 174.


\textsuperscript{184} Propiska was a system to control e.g. the population’s movements in the Soviet Union.


\textsuperscript{186} Open public tender is a bidding process open to all qualified bidders in which sealed bids are opened in public for scrutiny and are chosen on the basis of price and quality; the process is also known as competitive tender or public tender.

\textsuperscript{187} See Chapter 1 for more details about the General Urban Plan from 2003.


of the plan also affects the stability of existing legal ownership. When public land is appropriated in these areas, the municipality plays the roles of facilitator and intermediary between stakeholders who see the Red Lines as an opportunity for new development.

Although the plan for the boulevard is presented as a public project, the ostensibly public entities represented by Chisinau Municipality, the city architects and even the plan itself also represent different private interests that often operate behind the scenes. However, the presence of the Red Lines also disrupts and restructures existing property relations, whether public or private. As a result, some groups of citizens affected by these conditions are compelled to take action to oppose the boulevard plan. Groups of citizens who have organized in opposition to the Red Lines perceive the boulevard not only as a public infrastructure project, but rather as the means to encourage large-scale privatizations for purposes of urban gentrification in the city center, believing that the boulevard will displace the local population and violate their right to the city. The Local Land Zoning Plan from 2012, developed by the Chisinau Municipality planning consultants Chisinau Project, was rejected due to broadening opposition to the plan of the boulevard, which has extended to reach the upper echelons of national government.

Urban planners, architects and various interest groups I interviewed who oppose the plan for the boulevard lament what they describe as the loss of “public spaces” in Chisinau as a consequence of massive privatizations. They all have different ideas about the notion of public space however, because they represent different social groups with diverse interests. Margaret Crawford argues that “by eliminating the insistence on unity” of “the rigid concepts of public and private that underlies these narratives of loss,” it is possible to gain another level of understanding of multiple “public interactions that are restructuring urban space,” as well as to understand how different publics are constituted through lived experience. The conflicts over the ownership of urban spaces triggered by the presence of the Red Lines near Zaikin Park result in a certain degree of incorporation of the

FIGURE 0:1 - Privatized properties in Central Chisinau according to analyses from the General Urban Plan from 2007. Privatized properties are color-coded in orange; the ownership by Chisinau Municipality is yellow, and property of the Moldovan Government is violet. In 2007, publicly-owned land largely dominated the overall ownership structure in the city center.
chapter II

The Ghost Boulevard

artist collective and other groups of activists into a web of interactions between stakeholders with competing interests. En route through the city, the Red Lines destabilize relations of ownership and power over control of the planning process. I argue that the plan for Boulevard D. Cantemir cannot be regarded as a “public” project simply because it was developed by Chisinau Municipality. The question of importance is rather whose interests the Red Lines really serve.

In my analyses of the effects of the Red Lines on Zaikin Park, I find it more useful to follow Ted Kilian’s caution that “public” and “private” do not exist separately, but instead must be conceptualized as “expressions of power relations” that see each space as containing elements of both public and private.193 I analyze entangled relationships of power between stakeholders in Zaikin Park and the surrounding development properties where it is difficult to discuss spaces through private public dichotomy. Furthermore, the Red Lines affect power relations between stakeholders such as real estate developers, artist collectives, local inhabitants and the municipality, all of whom anticipate different futures for the spaces in their path. As I explore interactions among different actors in the process of restructuring urban spaces, I begin to expose many layers of entangled interests, whilst aware that the full complexity of these relations will remain undiscovered.

Through the empirical analyses of three different residential tower developments (see Figure 0:2) that have emerged in anticipation of the boulevard, I discuss how the boundaries between the notions of public and private spaces overlap and dissolve. Furthermore, I examine the ways in which the Red Lines of the planned boulevard affect power relations between stakeholders who claim ownership of urban spaces beyond the limits of their private properties. From the three project development sites, the analyses converge on Zaikin Park, which exemplifies a kind of intermediary urban zone in which social tensions and unresolved ownership claims from surrounding properties are contested, negotiated and disputed. The park is a microcosm of transforming planning governance in Chisinau, where different interest groups, locals, Chisinau Municipality, and real estate developers interact as they transform their own roles and positions of power.


FIGURE 0:2 - The map of the area around Zaikin Park depicting the passage of the red lines in relation to the selected three case study projects.
Site 1: The Yellow Construction Fence built around Plots #225 and #332

In one part of the zone between the Red Lines, adjacent to a small triangular park on Sfântul Andrei Street 17/1, is a yellow construction fence. The fence serves as a temporary barrier shielding the construction site from the public gaze. There are plans to build a new ten-story residential tower on the site. On my many visits to Chisinau over several years, I noted the existence of the fence and the absence of any signs of ongoing construction since the end of 2016. The yellow temporary fence has become a permanent feature in the neighborhood. Since my first visit in 2013, it has changed colors, and it is now covered with graffiti. The position of this property is precarious – in part because of its location in the middle of the path of the planned boulevard. Juxtaposing the network of Red Lines from the zoning plans over the map of the site, I could see that one of the Red Lines passes precisely through the construction fence at one corner of the property. The position of the Red Lines determines the boundary between what belongs inside and outside the space of the boulevard (see Figures 0:4 and 0:5).

There are many ambiguous aspects to the property. The developer was not available for interview and it was thus impossible to obtain more detailed information about the property and permits directly; however, I

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FIGURE 0:3 - The yellow construction fence around the new construction site is partially cut by the Red Lines. This site is one of only two privatized properties within entire length of the zone defined by the red lines of Boulevard D. Cantemir. Photo by Bojan Boric

FIGURE 0:4 - Privatized land (in blue) along the path of the red lines. According to the cadaster, lot #225 is private land, and lot #332 is designated as municipal land. The red lines cut through the private lot #225. Along the entire path of the boulevard, there are only two cases in which private land occupies the space between the red lines.

FIGURE 0:5 - A photo taken with a drone in October 2016 shows the status of the construction process at that time. Nothing has changed since. The red lines cut through the site and the building. The property lot lines are drawn in black. Drone photo and collage by Bojan Boric.
spoke with Anatol Gordeev, a former city architect who opposes construction of Boulevard D. Cantemir, and Pavel, the lawyer from Chisinau, both of whom offered their opinions about the possible status of this property. In addition, I was able to draw on an earlier interview with the director of the Agency of Historic Preservation, Ion Stefanita.

While I was also able to read about the developer and the property in the local media and an online cadaster database, it was difficult to view the current status of the construction since the property is hidden behind the construction fence.

In order to overcome this obstacle and observe what was behind the fence, I used a prototypical device of surveillance and warfare of our time: a drone with an inbuilt camera, which recorded the physical characteristics of the construction site from the sky as I traced the imaginary path of the Red Lines across the city (see Figure 0:5). In this way, I could see that only the foundations and the ground level of the new residential tower had been built. I later learned in news media that the developers of this particular property were in prison and awaiting trial. In essence, the zone of the Red Lines is a space with potential for continuous litigation, which contributes to an even higher degree of uncertainty about the future of this space located in the path of the Red Lines.

The sign on the yellow construction fence announces the sale of new apartments developed by “Armoson Invest.”195 According to the developer’s website, the project is:

Set in a quiet, green area near a park and businesses on Andrei Street 37. There is one entrance and 56 suites that are designed for efficient use of space and comfort in a miraculous combination.

There are one-, two- and three-bedroom apartment units being offered at €550 per square meter.

The advertisement also promises additional amenities: a play area for children in the adjacent small triangular park, parking on the lower level, a central location, earthquake-resistant construction, and commercial spaces on the street level of the building.

The Fence as a Camouflage for Legal Ambiguity

According to the Moldovan national cadaster,\textsuperscript{196} one of the two lots that comprise this property is private land, and the other belongs to Chisinau Municipality (see Figure 0:9). The footprint of the new residential tower partially covers both lots. Visible from the street, the yellow construction fence camouflages the ambiguous legal status of the property, which contains invisible overlapping boundaries. The temporary fence is a way to communicate to the public that the site is legitimate, but the enclosure conceals the highly unstable ownership conditions within.

Over the prolonged period of anticipation along the path of the Red Lines, this temporary fence obscuring legal ambiguity gradually gained the appearance of permanence.

The yellow fence has been there long enough to have become a canvas for public expression. Covered in graffiti, it now successfully blends in with other temporary structures and abandoned sites inside the zone between the Red Lines.

When I described my findings about this property to Anatol Gordeev, a former city architect, he replied that he was completely surprised to hear about this site; he had not been aware of its existence and believed that the project could not possibly be legal. He wrote: “I can’t believe it! In my opinion, it is illegal from many aspects. The Red Lines of the future boulevard, land properties, the historical aspect. I am sure they [the developers] have no permission from the Ministry of Culture. How can it be possible?”

In order to build in this area in accordance with the General Urban Plan also requires a permit from the Ministry of Culture. Whether such a permit was ever obtained for this project is not something I or any of my informants could determine. I discussed the matter with the lawyer Pavel, who was drafting a contract between different parties involved in maintaining and rebuilding Zaikin Park. I asked him if it was at all possible that the use of this site and construction project could be legal, seeing as half of the site was owned by the municipality and the other half was private property. Furthermore, I wondered how a residential tower could be built in the space between the Red Lines. Whilst he could not answer the second question, he explained that besides than the Red Lines, the construction on this property could be legal:

According to national law, such situations can exist. The law does not prohibit the building owner and the landowner from being different entities. There are many cases where the landowner builds a building on his land and the building crosses the border of his land, occupying part of the adjacent land belonging to another owner (private or public). Other cases could be condominiums (most of them built during the Soviet Union) where the construction belongs to certain owners, but the land belongs to the municipality. It is not forbidden to build on land that does not belong to you; what is important is ensuring that the developer has properly defined rights of use.

Ion Stefanita, the director of the Agency of Historic Preservation, explains however that everything depends on different periods of time; institutional transformations have been constant since the 1990s. He describes how people were able to receive permits for construction before the Red Lines were charted in the General Urban Plan of 2007, and this could be the case with this property as well: “Many of these pieces of land were bought many years ago and received authorization 10 to 20 years ago. They are buildings based on documents issued a long time ago. Behind City Hall...
were the interests of big developers.” He was referring to the early years of the transition and the massive waves of privatization, when many individuals were able to obtain greater power and mobility as property was transferred from state to private ownership.

Another important factor that has perhaps prompted this development could be the scarcity of land for new construction in the city center and the uncertain status of the plan for the boulevard.

In December 2017, I learned from local news reports that the trial against the owners and investors from the development firm responsible for this project was approaching. After having read a number of different news reports, I still found it very difficult to piece together the full picture of who was involved and who the owners of the development company were, not to mention the status of the project. However, I learned that the primary developer for the residential tower at the Andrei Street project is the investment company “Top Level LLC”, founded by Oleg Morozov and Nicolai Sparatel. Both now stand accused of fraud. The company Armoson Invest, allegedly owned by Oleg Morozov’s wife, is a subcontractor for the project. According to the new reports, the residential tower should have been completed in April of 2017, but the construction never progressed beyond the initial phase. According to another news article, the permit documents allowed the construction of a three-story building, including the mansard roof, but the real estate advertisement for apartments for sale in the building depicts a ten-story residential tower.

In October 2017, the developers asked buyers who had already paid for their units to make additional payments to another development company that would complete the construction. However, the buyers refused because it violated the agreement they had with the original developers. To coordinate their efforts in pressing charges against the developers, the apartment buyers set up their own Facebook page. This shows how, in their effort to assert their property rights, a “narrowly defined interest group” of apartment buyers practice a form of activism organized through the use of social media. It is important to note that the legal dilemmas concerning the site did not begin with building inspections, although the project appears to breach planning regulations. Instead, legal action against the developers commenced when buyers made coordinated efforts to bring them to court. Complicating things further however, the news media reported that buyers included some politicians who could be implicated as accomplices in the case. One article alleges that deputies of the Socialist Party were seen attending board of trustee meetings for Top Level LLC, which makes them complicit with the developers. For this reason, according to the article, it is in the interest of these politicians to maintain the legal status quo in this trial. It appears that the future of this property will not be resolved anytime soon, because the entangled interests, corruption and competing agendas among various stakeholders can bring urban development to a standstill in the spaces of anticipation in the path of the Red Lines.

The concrete skeleton and foundations behind the fence will remain on the site for the foreseeable future – depending on the outcome of the trial.

In effect, both the future of the construction site and the plan for the boulevard are uncertain and mutually exclusive. It is not known which project will win in the end. While many large property developers anticipate the construction of the boulevard, paradoxically, the Red Lines also create material, legal, and economic obstacles for the realization of the plan for Boulevard D. Cantemir.

This first example of the residential tower developments near Zaikin Park discusses how the construction fence on a site inside the zone of the Red Lines, originally built as a temporary structure, became a permanent feature defining the site’s boundaries and image for many years despite there being no visible signs of new residential tower construction from the street.

The simultaneous intensification and erasure of borders is achieved through different means. This sometimes happens when an enclosure that relies on the psychological image of bordering simulates a legitimate construction site. Over a prolonged period, the fence becomes a permanent feature that defines the relationship between the site and its surroundings. When people become accustomed to its existence, it draws less attention.

199 Ibid
Site 2: The New Apartment Building Aligned with the Red Lines

Another new ten-story residential tower facing Zaikin Park was completed in 2016. In order to build this tower, the developer purchased two adjacent lots and demolished the low-rise homes on them. This new tower is positioned on the property just outside of the zone defined by the Red Lines. It is also parallel to rows of Soviet-era apartment complexes located to the northwest, which also appear to have been built in anticipation of the boulevard.

As mentioned earlier, in order to learn more about this development project, I met with Valentina, a representative of the company Coloana Mecanizată Mobilă SA, which is developing the new apartment tower. When I walked into her office, I noticed right away that she seemed nervous – probably because there is a great deal of local opposition to such developments, and perhaps because of the numerous rumors of corruption associated with the construction of new towers in the area.²⁰³

²⁰³ Valentina was very open and answered all of my questions during the interview. I found that Valentina was most forthcoming in the informal conversation after the interview, when we were drinking coffee and eating cookies together (see the introductory chapter of this thesis for more on the “cup of coffee method”). Valentina also allowed me to view and photograph some of the construction permit documents.
The residential tower accommodates a total of 57 one-, two-, and three-bedroom apartments, rental spaces on the ground level, and a subterranean garage. Valentina told me that when purchasing new homes, prospective buyers look for at least one parking space per apartment. However, there are only a total of twelve parking spaces, all of which have already been sold, and new residents have problems finding parking places in the area. In general, the site is very narrow, and there is hardly enough space to accommodate for the on-site garbage disposal that the municipality requires for the occupancy permit.

Valentina explains that she does not personally think that Boulevard D. Cantemir will be realized, but that the advertisements for the sale of apartments nonetheless mention the boulevard because she believes that potential buyers find the project attractive. “The boulevard is a fairy tale. No one actually believes in it anymore,” she says. However, Valentina also explains that the boulevard might become a necessity as a consequence of construction of new towers and the increase in traffic they will bring. She explains:

In a way we’re waiting for the boulevard, because it would solve the area’s traffic problem. Having the high-rises in this area requires this sort of boulevard. We are developers, so we don’t really care about what happens after we build and sell the apartments; that’s the residents’ problem.

The developer submitted the permit documents to Chisinau Municipality in 2012. It took about four months for them to be approved. Chisinau Municipality treated the site like many others along the Ghost Boulevard – enforcing the private property boundaries and repositioning new structures in relation to the Red Lines – even though the boulevard’s legal status remains disputed. For example, new construction permits are only issued if the building does not interfere with the Red Lines, and this new tower lies just outside of the zone.

The municipality demanded that the developer revise the original proposal submitted, and the new building front was realigned and is now parallel with the position of the Red Lines (see Figures 1:4 and 1:5).
Valentina also showed me several pages from the Certificate of Urbanism, which defines the final location and orientation of the building (see Figure 1:3). She said:

Previously we wanted to build closer to the street, but when we submitted the plans to City Hall, they said that they would not approve the permit unless we readjusted the position of the building to follow the red lines.

According to Valentina, the municipality initially approved a permit for a nine-story building with a basement and underground parking for twelve cars, but later showed flexibility by allowing the construction of an additional penthouse level. The mere presence of the Red Lines and the anticipation of the boulevard was enough to motivate developers and prospective buyers to invest in properties along their path. As mentioned above, whether or not the boulevard would ever be built was of little importance; even the developers had ceased to believe that it would. The new towers along the path of the Red Lines may precede the boulevard and define its path. As the developer explained, it is likely that the towers being built will eventually make the construction of the boulevard necessary, because the existing local street infrastructure is under pressure from the new development.

Although the legal status of the Red Lines is ambiguous and the plan for Boulevard D. Cantemir itself is not being realized, in this situation, the Red Lines are being enforced via the permit process. The municipality thus ensures that the route of the planned boulevard remains clear and that no new buildings interfere with its future path. In return, the developers are permitted to build higher buildings than what was initially agreed upon.

Site 3: The Tower and the Park

A third new ten-floor apartment tower was recently completed next to Zaikin Park (see Figures 1:6 and 1:7). Frezia-Com is the developer, and Casa de Piatra205 provided design services. The structure comprises apartments, two stories of commercial spaces at street level, and subterranean parking for residents. The property is located close to the Red Lines on a site that was privatized many years ago, probably during the first privatization wave in the early 1990s. The single-story home that was previously on the site was demolished by the developer.
The Ghost Boulevard

When the developer began to exploit the maximum physical limitations of the property, he gradually appropriated municipally-owned land on the adjacent street and Zaïkin Park illegally. During construction, the developer began using Zaïkin Park to park and store construction materials. He also made plans to build a sizable paved parking area and private garbage station inside the park itself.

In direct response to the developer’s actions, a group of local residents and the Oberliht Association joined forces to exert pressure on Chisinau Municipality and the developer to free the space of Zaïkin Park for the use of all residents. They wrote letters and petitions that were sent to the mayor, and their efforts eventually resulted in compromises and agreements between the disputing parties. The developer was forced to negotiate new terms according to which he would rebuild the street and partially restore the space of Zaïkin Park at his own expense. After verbal agreements were reached, Oberliht Association recommended that all parties involved, the municipality and the developer, enter a contractual agreement clarifying their specific obligations, responsibilities, and roles related to the reconstruction project of Zaïkin Park and Sf. Andrei Street.

One evening in October 2016 at Oberliht’s office, I met with Vadim, a middle-aged representative of the development company Frezia-Com. Vadim had come for a meeting with the contract lawyer Pavel and the director of Oberliht Association, Vladimir Us. I had been invited to take advantage of the opportunity to meet all of the stakeholders involved in the project. The agreement being discussed concerned the developer, Chisinau Municipality and the Oberliht Association, but was also indirectly a representation of the limited interests of some residents. After the meeting, Vadim gave me a detailed account of the project’s background, the developer’s motivations, and his personal perspective on the current process of negotiations, as well as the nature of his contractual obligations to the municipality, the tower’s residents, and the activists.

On the report of Vadim, when Frezia-Com was looking for a building site, the developers followed the Red Lines from the General Urban Plan of 2007 and were attracted by the prospect of the new boulevard as well as the central location of this site. They believed that construction of the boulevard would improve the city’s overall infrastructure and accessibility to this part of the urban center and make it a very attractive area to live in. However, the developer also wanted the project site to be a certain distance from the Red Lines in order to avoid noise and pollution from future passing traffic.

The boulevard project is not yet confirmed, and whether it will be built is uncertain. The idea is more than forty years old. I knew someone at the Chisinau Project who was working with the idea of the boulevard a long time ago, and it was already an old idea back then. Now I no longer believe that it will be built. Of course, when we built the tower project we were counting on the red lines, but today we can no longer be sure about it…Usually, developers plan to build closest to the red line. We thought that it would be good to build a bit further away from the red lines; it’s less noisy, you have more distance from traffic, it’s less polluted…We received the authorization for construction, which is a third step in the permit process after the Certificate of Urbanism and the project approval. There were some signed approvals which you could receive and have signed later in the course of construction, for example during the inspections for ecologic compliances, etc.
According to Vadim, the structure’s scale is typical for most new residential developments in Chisinau. Such structures are most often built close to larger infrastructure nodes, boulevards, and larger street arteries. New residential towers are usually nine- to ten-stories high; another common building height is sixteen floors. There are three primary determining factors: the cost of construction, fire code requirements (buildings exceeding ten floors require more emergency exits and additional, potentially costly equipment to comply with regulations), and, as Vadim stated, people in Chisinau generally do not like to live in very tall buildings for “psychological reasons.”

As Vadim sees it, “in the city center, the Certificate of Urbanism is becoming one of the most challenging documents to get. This is because of City Hall; they are more thorough in their examination of every point of the certificate, which was not the case before.”

Vadim describes the extensive process of obtaining permission. The first step was to acquire a Certificate of Urbanism for new construction, a document issued by Riscani District in 2011. After initial approval by the district, the document was sent to Chisinau Municipality for further review and construction approval.

When the apartments were advertised for sale, the developer made specific promises to buyers that were impossible to fulfill given the size restrictions of the property. After procuring all approvals for construction for the residential tower from City Hall, the developer was also obligated to fulfill several contractual obligations to the apartment buyers.

Some of the amenities promised to those buying the apartments were one parking space per apartment unit and access to the children’s playground in Zaikin Park. In addition, in order to obtain the occupancy permit for the building from Chisinau Municipality, the developer is obliged to provide for a proper space for on-site trash disposal and collection.

In order to be able to receive the permit documents, the developer made a commitment to Chisinau Municipality to finance the street renovation, as well as build parking spaces and the new garbage disposal station along the edge of the park as part of the first phase of work. According to Ober-206

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206 Riscani District is a local administrative authority responsible for this part of the central district. It is required to communicate and coordinate any permit approval with Chisinau Municipality.

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FIGURE 1.8 - A typical floor plan of the tower depicting the layout of different apartment units. Source: http://www.casadepiatra.md
the Liht Association, the second phase is yet to be negotiated; they hope that it will include the new playground according to plans developed by Oberliht. Furthermore, the developer abandoned the plan to build the parking lot in the middle of the park.

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, the “Re” label for spaces along the path of the Red Lines in the local land use plan for the old city center regulations as the zone for urban renewal implies a high degree of flexibility in design, allowing the extent and size of the proposal to be defined through negotiations between the municipality and the investors.\footnote{Regulamentul Local de Urbanism al Orasului Chisinau” (Local Urban Regulations of the City of Chisinau), Directia de Arhitectura si Urbanism a Consiliului Municipal, Chisinau 2007, accessed September 13, 2018. https://www.chisinau.md/public/files/Uploads/Regulamentul%20Functional%20Urban%20rom_New.AB80D1A5D59A4AC2A3D71F8B72A432.pdf} Furthermore, the approval of the Certificate of Urbanism for this project also indicates that the municipality is encouraging tower and commercial development of this kind in the historic district, despite other historic- and cultural district-related restrictions in the zone where the Red Lines are present. According to the approved permit documents for construction, the new tower is specified thus: “an apartment block with social facilities housing cultural and commercial spaces, offices and underground parking.”\footnote{According to Certificate of Urbanism for new construction, a document issued by Riscani District.} In reality, the term “cultural use” may include a broad range of functions such as boutiques and other forms of commercial use that are somewhat loosely interpreted under the category of cultural use.

In spite of the existing permit documentation, explains Oberliht member Evelina, these documents are not sufficient, since they are based on agreements between the planning authorities and the developer that were conducted through a non-transparent negotiation that excluded residents. According to Evelina, the planning documentation and Certificate of Urbanism are not fully binding in practice, and they could still be open for further negotiations. In her words, “In reality, these documents represent only one step in the real estate development process; the means to push the project forward.” That is to say, the permit documents are not a guarantee that the developer will indeed fulfill the obligations to which s/he has committed.

According to Vladimir Us, Oberliht began to work with neighborhood residents when they encountered what they perceived to be the “devastating...
The Ghost Boulevard

effects of the Red Lines of Boulevard D. Cantemir.” Initially, they noticed that Zaikin Park was not well maintained. There was a lot of trash laying around, it was dangerous at night, and cars and trucks were driving through it. Because of the Red Lines and the uncertain status of the planned boulevard, Chisinau Municipality has relinquished a significant amount of its direct control over planning to other actors who will maintain and manage the zone inside the Red Lines, including Zaikin Park. Oberliht’s main motivation to act was based on their belief that instead of being a neglected space, Zaikin Park could become an important local “public space” for social and cultural activities. Some local residents who live near the park are very actively engaged in resisting the plan for the boulevard, and the members of Oberliht are helping them to organize, set goals, and focus their tactics of engagement – for example, via the aforementioned letters and petitions, which are sent to the municipality via Oberliht. They are also involved in building playground structures, organizing cultural events in the park, and protesting the use of the park as a throughway or a parking area.

Despite the improbability of the boulevard, the respect of the Red Lines makes the boulevard’s construction more likely. The residents whom I interviewed expressed concern that the current street infrastructure was insufficient to withstand the pressures of residential towers and many more new residents, parking lots, etc.; they anticipated that the construction of large projects would render Boulevard D Cantemir inevitable because of the pressure the new tall buildings and many new residents on the existing street infrastructure; the argument could serve as another excuse by the municipal authorities to build the boulevard. Already today, most of the letters and petitions written by local residents concern requests for improvement of services in their neighborhoods, and there are also many complaints about the deteriorating infrastructure.

In an effort to make their voices heard, the residents express their opinions and needs regarding any new plans for the park and the neighborhood. For example, one disabled resident, an older woman who lives close to Zaikin Park, wrote a letter to Oberliht to contribute to their project entitled, “A Park for The Community:”

-“Taking into consideration that I often receive help from the medical emergency services, will it be possible for the emergency vehicle to directly access my house?

-“In the case of fire, how would a fire engine directly access my home?

-“How will the provision of the periodic access of the special sewage pump vehicle be implemented? This vehicle needs to evacuate the wastewater and fecal masses from the fountain sewer near my backyard.

-“Will the parked cars of our neighbors and those of the aforementioned special service vehicles affect the rights of my family and me to circulate freely?

-“How does your design address rainwater drainage and collection, and how do you solve the problem of water from my neighbors who wash their cars in their backyards, running from Sf. Andrei Street to the valley along the access road to my house?

-“Where will the public toilets be installed, so that the guests of the park no longer urinate in my yard and in the yards of my neighbors?”

As one could conclude from this letter, the greatest concerns of the property owner who lives adjacent to the park relate to how the plan for the park would relate to other surrounding spaces. In addition, for the locals, the functionality of the infrastructures that connect the space of the street, the park, and private properties are closely correlated.

Furthermore, Oberliht Association sent petitions signed by a number of people who lived around Zaikin Park. An excerpt from one of these petitions illustrates the main points and how Oberliht has framed the discussion around legal and public safety issues:

Aiming to ensure transparency in the decision-making process, on the 4th of September at 18:00, residents were informed and consulted on the above-mentioned issues of concern. From the discussions, it was determined that a large majority of the residents agree with the removal of all the driveways from the park area (both from the
center of the park and the roundabout way); this should be done at the same time as the repair of Sf. Andrei Street (the section from Serghei Lazo St. to the intersection with Sf. Andrei Street.). This should be done immediately, and stop the traffic on Sf. Andrei St. to ensure pedestrians’ and children’s safety. The same residents – namely those from no. 35 and 31 on Sf. Andrei St. – approve of removing the waste collection point from the park and locating it alongside Sf. Andrei St., opposite the above-mentioned houses. All details of this proposal, as well as the observance of safety distances from the electric transformer, are available in the attached plan.

The Role of the Contract in Regulating Ownership Relations

According to Vladimir Us, this contract defines only the first phase of work on public space of the park and the street. For now, Oberliht and the developers from Frezia-Com have reached a common agreement for the construction of the new bypass road and the garbage collection area at the edge of the park.

The aspirations of Oberliht Association and the locals evolved over time, as did their methods of engagement. Initially, their primary concern was removing the garbage collection station from the center of the park and stopping the flow of traffic through the middle of the park. At some point during the negotiations, they managed to reach a compromise, enabling the developer to fulfill his obligations to the apartment buyers as well as to receive an occupancy permit.

According to the lawyer Pavel, upon completion this binding agreement will be the first of its kind in his practice, and it has been a great challenge for him, mainly because of the unusual division of responsibilities among the parties involved – particularly with regard to the question of management and maintenance of the work after construction is complete. Pavel explains the complications: his task is to translate real life relations into legal agreements and to assign and regulate the duties and obligations of the three main parties involved: the developer, the municipality, and Oberliht. The contract would likely represent a way to implement ground rules that would regulate relations of temporary ownership in the park among these three stakeholders, albeit in limited ways.

An additional aim is to define each party’s roles and responsibilities, even after construction has been completed. As Pavel explained:

I assist Oberliht in this project. They are trying to make the park a good public space. This is more than simply a form of public/private partnership; it is complex because it is the first time such an organization, an NGO, is taking on the reconstruction of a park. Legally, this is a bit challenging for us.

According to the lawyer, the contract is an attempt to clarify and legally define the stakeholders’ responsibilities, e.g. who will finance the public infrastructure works, who is responsible for planning and design, construction coordination and management, who will be responsible for maintenance of the street infrastructure and the park when the work is completed, etc.
The contract stipulates that the primary responsibility for managing the reconstruction of the park and the street is entrusted to Oberliht Association, which has been the principal intermediary between the municipality and the developer as well as groups of concerned citizens. For this reason, their role in the agreement is essential.

Pavel made an effort to describe the details of the contract, which was still being formulated, and each party's role:

Chisinau Municipality issues documents such as the authorization for construction of this work. At this stage, the work includes the new road with street parking and a place for garbage bins. In fact, the municipality has granted broader authorization to Oberliht that also includes the complete refurbishment and reconstruction of Zaikin Park. The authorization means that the city authority is entrusting Oberliht with the responsibility to construct, manage, and act as the chief of reconstruction of this park. However, the main beneficiary in this contract is the municipality, or the public in that sense. The land, the property of the park, and the street are registered with the municipality.

As Pavel describes it, the problem is that representatives of Chisinau Municipality claim that they do not know how to manage the property. Oberliht’s role is that of: “the owner of the title of authorization to conduct the construction.” According to the contract, Pavel said, Oberliht will control the construction process, ensuring that everything is done according to plans and permits, within budget, and on time; they will act as the general entrepreneur, but without any financial or material benefits at the end of construction. This is a challenge when it comes to writing the contract: Oberliht has responsibilities, but will not receive property rights after the construction is complete.

They don’t have the right of use or the right to take rent or anything else; they don’t have the right to privatize or to manage the property after construction, nothing. They just took the authorization, and that’s a problem for me. I don’t see any transfer of responsibility in this project. Who is going to take this park to the administration in order to preserve its value? Because ultimately this is an investment, and there is a lot of work there and that work has value; we need to maintain that value afterwards. If we just build it and leave it without control, it will be wasted and destroyed within a short time. If there is no owner, it will disappear.

The developer’s involvement extends well beyond the confines of the property on which their building stands. As Pavel sees it, this is most likely due to the agreement with the tenants of the new tower; they will all be the building’s new owners, and when all the work is completed, it will be in the developer’s interest to carry out the reconstruction of the street to avoid future disputes with the new apartment owners regarding promises made earlier, e.g. new parking spaces, garbage disposal, and improvements to the street and in the adjacent park. The latter of these is important primarily for the occupancy permit: at present, the property lacks access to a proper, onsite garbage collection facility. The street, parking spaces and the garbage disposal area are a first step, and whether he will commit to making all the improvements in Zaikin Park after this stage remains to be seen. Frezia-Com will sign a contract with the municipal sanitation company responsible for garbage removal, and they plan to build a new disposal and collection station at the edge of the park along with the new street. According to Pavel however, it is unclear who owns the land in the area of Zaikin Park to which the garbage bins will be moved, and this further complicates the contract: “They just placed the garbage bins there as a quick solution to the problem of getting the occupancy permit.”

While the responsibilities in the contract during construction are clearly outlined, what will happen when the work is complete is not well defined, and there are many uncertainties about who will own the land in the park that will be used by the residents of the new tower. The line separating private and public ownership is unclear. Pavel asserts that the aspect of time is important in terms of how different roles and responsibilities will be defined when the work is complete. Today, unknowns include who will be responsible for the costs of future maintenance of the street, utilities, the parking spaces, and the spaces of the park the developer is rebuilding and which are affected by the contractual agreement: “that’s a problem of transfer of responsibility, is it the condominium association or maybe the special municipal enterprise? Nobody knows, and that’s one of the points...
we need to solve.” Probably, he continues, the solution will be to involve another party in the contract, for example Exdrupo, a municipal company responsible for road management in Chisinau. However, it all needs to be coordinated with Oberliht Association, “we need to write in the obligations of the contract that the developer should act in cooperation with Oberliht and Exdrupo to fulfill their obligations.”

Some residents might perceive the contract to move the garbage and the dirt road from the center of the park as a step in the wrong direction, as they will possibly be deprived of free services. In addition, the park may lose certain qualities as a space where different groups enjoy unmediated interaction — even if their activities may be deemed as inappropriate by others. Even residents who petitioned for park improvements may be unaware that this contract stipulates that they will need to pay for garbage removal in the future, and they will not be allowed to park on the street, because it is likely that the parking will be reserved for residents of the tower. Although in principle the “improvements” are promoted by Oberliht with the best of intentions, they are based on compromise solutions between the developer, the municipality, and Oberliht, all of whom claim to be acting on behalf of the “public” whilst also trying to resolve conflicts between private and public interests.

Ted Kilian claims that “we are constantly within both” public and private, since these notions coexist as power relations in every space. In that sense, both the park and the property of the tower also represent different degrees of both publicness and privacy. When appropriating the space of Zaikin Park for example, the developer’s activities become a public matter; he would not receive an occupancy permit if he did not agree to fulfill specific demands from the locals, the municipality, and Oberliht. Critically, it is impossible to discuss anyone’s role in these changing power relations independently because all of them operate in relation to the others and to the spaces affected. Furthermore, the developer serves his own interests, but he is also committed to making a financial investment in the park and the street on behalf of the new residents who have purchased apartments in his building. These residents also represent a “public” bound by narrowly defined interests. This complicates any possible contention that his is a solely “private” view.

Indirectly, this group of citizens also participates in appropriations of the “public” park through activities of the “private” developer. The developer’s inability to provide for the needs of these new apartment buyers leads him to claim ownership of Zaikin Park, and these claims become legitimized by the municipality and Oberliht through the official contract. In this way, the interests among stakeholders and those groups are based on layers of dependencies and correlations that cannot be contained in a single property. The results of these tense relations are appropriations that spill over into the adjacent urban spaces, ultimately blurring the borders between public and private spaces.

Participating stakeholders also define their own positions and societal roles through this contract, shifting the traditional boundaries of which groups are public or private actors. For example, Oberliht Association representatives describe their role as a “civic partner” and claim to represent the interests of locals who live in the vicinity of the park – another “public” – while Chisinau City Hall represents the broader public, at least nominally. The third party is the developer committed to financing the project. Numerous groups of residents thus form different publics, and their interests may be partially represented or not represented at all. The terms of the contract also suggest new ways of thinking about public and private partnerships. According to Vladimir Us, Oberliht is looking for a new way to define the partnership between the participating main stakeholders through the special contractual agreement in order to ensure their long-term commitment. Instead of a private-public partnership, Vladimir explains, the contract is an experiment in public-civic partnerships, which he describes as “public-private-civic partnerships.” However, different interest groups of citizens represent a fragmented rather than a unified public sphere. Setha Low argues that the public sphere “is a forum for new social and political encounters.” However, Michael Edwards asserts that the term “civil society” is an “elasticsearch,” subject to different interpretations since many aspects of what it actually means vary depending on how the notion is perceived.


in different contexts.\textsuperscript{212} It is thus also important to define more specifically the differing notions of civil society between Western ideals and the transforming post-communist social and institutional environment in Moldova.

In effect, Oberliht Association is an NGO, acting as an art- and cultural organization that claims to represent a “public sphere,” and a part of “civil society.” In the words of Michael Edwards, “civil society is the sphere of uncoerced human association between the individual and the state, in which people undertake collective action for normative and substantive purposes, relatively independent of government and the market.”\textsuperscript{213} Therefore, it is important to note that civil society operates independently of the state. However, it is unclear whether this is entirely possible in Chisinau; in many ways the relationship between Oberliht and Chisinau Municipality reflects a complex network of codependences and power shifts that also complicate the boundaries between private vs. public space.

Following Edwards, I consider it important to understand how organizations such as Oberliht Association interact “with the institutions of the state and the market in complex civil society assemblages, ecologies, or ecosystems, which vary widely in their details from one context to another.”\textsuperscript{214} David Stark argues that when the “society” was in the process of reclaiming space from “the state” during the transition period, this movement also represented a kind of a “civil society in infancy.”\textsuperscript{215} In other words, the early years of privatization could be also understood as the process leading to the development of civil society. As state power was being transferred to private actors, the process was an opportunity for the establishment of a new middle ground of political activism during the post-Soviet period. This also presented an opportunity for organizations such as Oberliht to emerge, but they had to adapt to the evolving circumstances.

In an interview, Vladimir Us described how the current working methods of the Oberliht Association had actually been inspired by Soviet-era dissident movements. During the period of Soviet rule, dissident artists retreated from the all-seeing public eye into the realm of private homes and kitchens. It was in these private spaces that art exhibitions took place and free artistic and political expression could be exercised. During the Soviet Era, dissidents and others associated the notion of public with control by the state. Today, in the act of insurgency against the rapid privatizations of public spaces in the city, rather than withdraw to the private spaces of homes and kitchens, Oberliht operates in the urban spaces in which they perceive a need to reclaim spaces for uses such as recreation, leisure, cultural activities and open public debate.

According to my analyses however, Oberliht is ultimately also involved in privatization of a kind when they take control over Zaikin Park. The new contract for the reconstruction of Zaikin Park will likely result in the exclusion of different social groups, and Oberliht will be taking key elements of control over this space and its management. Furthermore, for the duration of the park reconstruction, Oberliht is the legal owner of the park. By virtue of the contract, Oberliht, the developer, and the new apartment owners are “empowered by the state to exert exclusionary control over space.”\textsuperscript{216} Furthermore, the contract defuses dissent among locals and reduces the possibility of protests and other more radical forms of political contestation in Zaikin Park. This is because the tension caused by the anticipation of the boulevard is deactivated by the temporary resolution of conflicts and disputes between different citizen groups. Furthermore, Oberliht serves as the intermediary in most of the communications between the residents, the municipality and developers, and it is in their interest to keep the tensions low.

Don Mitchell discusses visions and different ideals about public space represented by different publics. Furthermore, as Mitchell argues, public space is “the product of competing ideas about what constitutes that space—order and control or free, and perhaps dangerous, interaction—and who constitutes ‘the public.’”\textsuperscript{217} The contract serves to replace and replicate many functions of urban planning and regulations as it works as another mechanism of control, coercion, inclusion, or exclusion in regards to access to the privacy and publicness of spaces. Instead of allowing for “unmediated

\textsuperscript{213} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{214} Ibid.
interaction,” which Don Mitchell considers to be a necessary component of democratic public space, it sets the stage for another system of exclusion. Furthermore, Oberliht transforms their spatial practice in their efforts to become legitimate stakeholders and part of the mainstream of the planning process. In Ted Kilian’s words: “So long as ‘spatial practice’ remains marginal, it can lead only to marginal and easily absorbed or deflected changes, but it must enter the mainstream (on its own terms) to be effective.” The problems of the developer have opened a window of opportunity for Oberliht to achieve some of their own goals and offer solutions to the developer and the municipality.

As they accommodate the needs of the developer and Chisinau Municipality, this compliance and collaboration reduces Oberliht’s capacity to live up to the Soviet-era dissident movement, as they facilitate stakeholders’ various agendas by making many compromises and arrangements that are not in line with their ideological beliefs. Rather than a group in opposition to the planning system, they are rendered a legitimate stakeholder in urban planning and processes of privatization. Oberliht has made a choice between remaining marginal or entering the mainstream by becoming an actor and in some ways a public service provider with greater power over decision-making.

The contract greatly reduces the possibility of unmediated political contestation in Zaikin Park however, since it represents an attempt to translate unresolved real-life relations of power, exclusion, and dominance and to channel the potential for future conflicts into formal legal language. As Pavel the lawyer explains, there is no precedent for the contract itself in the formulations defined in the state legislation, and new formulations are necessary to redefine the role of the municipality and the other participants.

Sociologists Michel Callon and Vololona Rabeharisoa use the term “concerned interest groups,” which corresponds better to Oberliht. Callon and Rabeharisoa discuss ways in which similar “emergent groups” have become legitimate stakeholders. Such groups, as Callon and Rabeharisoa explain, originate in “passive exclusion” and evolve into “active inclusion” where they are able to demonstrate extensive influence and an instrumental role in government decisions. In the spaces of anticipation however, by virtue of the contract, those who do participate perhaps unwittingly also exclude other social groups who are neither represented by the contract nor included in the visions for public space that Oberliht promotes.

It is difficult to make clear distinctions between groups of civilians engaged in appropriations of Zaikin Park. It is likely however that many groups and their interests overlap in a variety of ways. Based on my own observations, on-site analyses and interviews, I designated a loose grouping of residents, a subjective determination based on ways in which people participate or do not participate in spatial contests, and how they react to the presence of the Red Lines in their neighborhood (see Figure 2:1). Many people from the neighborhood appear disinterested or are unwilling to engage in organized activities in the park; these are the undesirables. Their ability to “go and just be” in Zaikin Park will probably be restricted when the terms of the contract are fully implemented and the park has been renovated. Their everyday actions and motivations are perhaps somewhat more spontaneous, as they are accustomed to the old routines. Often, the activities of these groups appear to be based on opportunistic attitudes about the use of the park and in the spirit of the “ethos of privatism.” They anticipate another kind of space in Zaikin Park than the others do, and they sometimes utilize the park as an extension of their private properties. My assumption is that they regard the park as space without any owners and potentially owned by everyone. These residents have occasionally appropriated portions of the park for their own use, and they build structures in similar ways as the developers do: they frequently park and drive cars straight through the park, as the municipality does with its garbage trucks.

I had heard rumors from some older residents from the neighborhood around Zaikin Park who recall how Zaikin Park was full of shacks during the late Soviet Era and resembled a shantytown. As Olga, one of the older residents from this neighborhood, recounts, it was only after these shacks
The developer Frezia-Com and Oberliht are included in the contract.

**THE NEW TOWER RESIDENTS**
- These residents have a contractual agreement with the developer, FREZIA-COM. They expect that the developer will fulfill their obligations in accordance with prior agreements.

**CHISINAU MUNICIPALITY**
- Issues planning and building permits
- Issues Authorization for Construction
- Planned to build parking lots in the park
- Began to appropriate Zaikin Park
- Has obligations towards New Tower Property
- Started to use adjacent municipal land for construction and storage of materials
- Requested to appropriate Zaikin Park
- Planned to build parking lots in the park
-Temporary structures built by local residents on the territory of the park.
- The permit to build the new residential tower (Site 3: The Tower and the Park) was issued under the General Urban Plan from 2007 of Boulevard D. Cantemir according to the Red Lines
- The Red Line is a formal plan for the boulevard which was translated into the formal plan for the boulevard which was created by OBERLIHT.
- The Red Line was considered a no-man’s-land by those who ultimately saw an opportunity to occupy it.

Today, some residents engage in “illicit” activities in Zaikin Park, such as chopping down trees for firewood and connecting illegally to the electric transformer in the park. There are also homeless people who sleep on benches there. These residents are mostly unaware of the idea of “public space” being promoted by Oberliht as the space for recreation and cultural activities. These residents, who are also members of the public, are perceived as undesirable because they do not fit into any plan or vision for the park. They will be left out from the benefits of the contractual agreement.

According to Ion Popa from the State Building Inspection, the period during which privatization was being integrated into Moldovan policy in the early 1990s was also the period when the notion of illegal construction was introduced into national ideologies of urban planning. During the Soviet Era, all privately-built construction – mainly in rural areas – was based on agreements with local Soviet committees. None of these “illegal” structures were written in plans, and almost all agreements were reached verbally. As a result, immediately after independence, when most of the Soviet institutions were abolished and new laws and regulations emerged, everything that had been built in this way was suddenly categorized as illegal by default. There was no written documentation to verify or prove the legal status of any of these structures, built according to verbal agreements with institutions that no longer existed. As a result, many people found themselves outside the law. When privatization was introduced during the early years of transition, the process was accompanied with the transformation of legal framework while the formal plan for the boulevard was also translated into zoning plans, codes, and regulations. Another function of the Red Lines is that they act as a dividing line between legal and illegal urban space. Since

223 During my recent walks through the existing neighborhoods in the path of the Red Lines, I noticed a great many complete-ly exposed gas pipes on façades, sometimes even hanging suspended by wires, connecting different homes across the narrow streets.

**FIGURE 2.1** The diagram depicting different stakeholders and their responsibilities in the space of Zaikin Park in relation to the new residential tower (Site 3: The Tower and the Park). Chisinau Municipality, the developer Frezia-Com and Oberliht are included in the contract.
the plan was never fully approved however, the Red Lines have lost their capacity as a legitimate tool for imposing legal norms, leaving questions of private and public in limbo. In other words, the laws are applied selectively, and the criteria is determined arbitrarily by those working in the municipal offices. The spaces of anticipation appear to require specific contracts because there are so many unresolved relationships and contested claims over public spaces in the city.

The Increase in Surveillance of Zaikin Park as an Anticipated Outcome

While many people who currently live in the area around Zaikin Park see advantages to repairing the park and renovating the street, it is likely that some of them will be negatively affected; one consequence of the contract is that the infrastructural improvements favor the residents of the new apartment tower, who can pay for the services that are increasingly becoming privatized, while the other local residents will lose their privileges. Currently, free access to garbage disposal and access for cars are convenient amenities for residents and others. In the future, the appropriation of public spaces, accompanied with provision of services, will be reserved exclusively for paying residents from the new tower. For example, the contract relocates the garbage station to the edge of the park; this change also implies that according to the agreement, the new tower tenants will have the contract with the municipality for garbage removal.

This issue would not be so important if the garbage removal station was not being placed outside of the residential property boundaries at the edge of the park, and if the “public” garbage services – for which no one pays today – would not become privatized and fee-based. Residents who do not live in the new tower would either need to sign the contract with the municipality and pay for garbage removal or dispose of their garbage elsewhere. According to Pavel the lawyer, many people from the local community are unwilling or unable to pay for such services – and nor do they expect to, as they were previously provided by the municipality. In Pavel’s view, these residents would most likely continue to dispose of their rubbish in the same containers as the residents who pay for the service, and the privatization of services may lead to the need for increased surveillance in the park. Pavel cited examples of unauthorized garbage disposal by locals in other parts of

FIGURE 2.2 - One of three surveillance camera signs installed by artist Serhiy Popo. Photo courtesy of Vladimir Us, Oberliht Association.
The property owners who paid for the service installed surveillance cameras and contacted the police when the bins were used without authorization. Sometimes, locals would receive notification by mail that they were being fined for illegal garbage disposal or summoned to court. The same situation could emerge when the private garbage station is built in Zaikin Park and the sanitation services become an exclusive right of the paying residents.

Interestingly, many locals seem to appreciate increased security and surveillance in public spaces. Oberliht organized the event Chisinau Civic Center – People’s Park Project – in Zaikin Park. Between the 11th of August and 6th of September 2014, artists experimented with installations as defensive measures against undesirable activity in the park, for example posting signs featuring the symbol of surveillance camera, erecting barriers obstructing car passage in the park, etc. The artist Serhiy Popov installed three signs featuring surveillance cameras (see Figure 2.2). The installation aimed to provide more security in and around the poorly lit park area in the evenings, and it was also an experiment to test how residents responded to the presence of surveillance cameras in the park – no real cameras were actually installed.

A striking finding was that locals welcomed the idea of installing surveillance cameras in Zaikin Park, because they made them feel more secure.

Sonia Hirt emphasizes the shift in power from the public to a private sector in the post-communist Eastern European context, as well as the retreat from the public into the realm of the private. According to Sonia Hirt, the middle ground between public and private space was eliminated in Soviet times due to a sharp division between what was considered public and private, and this eliminated the free and open notion of the public. She writes that “contrary to conventional wisdom…socialism did not obliterate the private; it obliterated the public – not as institutions, but as an ideal.” But what kind of private and what kind of public are we talking about from today’s perspective when the underlying conditions of the shifts in power are neither universal nor permanent? In the spaces of anticipation today the process is the opposite; the ideal of the private as a place of refuge from control and coercion is what is obliterated through processes of privatization.

Possible consequences of the contract as described by Vladimir Us represent a lesser evil in comparison to the current situation in which, as he explains, the entire public space of the park is threatened by the Red Lines as well as by the appropriations by the developer who had planned to build a parking lot. The contract, however, may also result in the dispossession of some groups of residents for the benefit of the others because it goes in line with the privatization of public services, privatization of park spaces and the street infrastructure. Furthermore, consequences could be a greater control of activities in the park by private, public and civic authorities, introduction of video surveillance, and future uncertainty about who is responsible for maintaining the park and the street, etc.

The Red Lines as “Devices” for Claiming Ownership

Boulevard D Cantemir is as a ghost, suspended somewhere between a real and imaginary existence. The Red Lines produce spaces without clear definition; spaces of anticipation defined by the ambiguity of boundaries between public and private spaces and uncertainty about the future. Though never built, the boulevard creates tensions in space where legal, political, social, and economic forces collide and establish the social order which becomes visible and materialized in the path of the Red Lines. In this constantly shifting environment, the purpose of the Red Lines from the perspective of its proponents is to structure a new set of hierarchic relations where the most power is wielded by planners and developers, ostensibly representing the public at large. The plan for the boulevard serves the interests of certain networks of power that span both public and private realms. During the early years of the transition to capitalism, privatization consisted of “government policies of ownership transfer, as the fundamental step toward the creation of a market economy.” The Red Lines serve to centralize planning hegemony around private networks of power whose origins can be traced

224 The art installation with surveillance camera signs is part of the Chisinau Civic Center – People’s Park Project. The road blocks pictured in Fig. 2.2 are part of an installation entitled “Defensive Fruit Tree” by the artist Angela Candu that actually blocks the passage of cars through Zaikin Park. Photo by Vladimir Us.

225 Vladimir Us told me that he was considering installing a real surveillance camera at a later date in order to observe and analyze activities in the park at different times of day and night as part of a research project.

back to the Soviet Union and the early years of the transition.

The transition to capitalism does not occur in an institutional void. David Stark argues that the new institutional frameworks in post-communist Eastern Europe were constructed from the existing building blocks and from the ruins of past policies combined with the social structures established during the “institutional legacies of the transitions themselves.”

According to Stark:

> It is in the ruins that these societies will find the materials with which to build a new order; therefore, differences in how the pieces fell apart will have consequences for how political and economic institutions can be reconstructed in the current period.\(^{229}\)

This thinking is particularly relevant for achieving a better understanding of how Chisinau Municipality and other stakeholders such as Chisinau Project operate. David Stark also uses the expressions “from clan to plan” and the “clan networks of institutional owners”, I mentioned earlier in this dissertation, to explain how the elite of the party apparatus of the old system from the transitional economy “worked hand in glove,” and how planning and clanning went together.\(^{230}\) It is often the “former managerial elite that have become new owners” today.\(^{231}\) There are established networks of power pulling the strings from the shadows, and they are often the new elite who promote their interests through institutions.

According to Veaceslav Bulat, who is a member of Chisinau City Council, the plan for Boulevard D. Cantemir represents an “inherited Soviet urban thinking” because of its large scale. The main institution pushing the project, he says, is Chisinau Project\(^{232}\) — an office still led by former Soviet architects and planners. There are also several other interests involved, including a number of private investment companies that plan to develop projects following the path of the Red Lines. Furthermore, according to Bulat, many of

\(^{228}\) Ibid.

\(^{229}\) Ibid.


\(^{231}\) Ibid, 390.

\(^{232}\) Chisinau Project is a public planning institute responsible for developing most of the planning documents, such as the General Urban Plan from 2007 and the rejected Land Zoning Plan from 2012.
The Ghost Boulevard

The construction permits for new tower developments build along the path of the Red Lines were issued by Vlad Modirca during his mandate as chief architect of Chisinau Municipality. Modirca’s private office is allegedly also responsible for the design of some of these new residential tower projects.

Thus, some of the main advocates for the boulevard today are groups of emerging economically powerful elites, several former chief city architects, the municipal planning office Chisinau Project, real estate developers, and property owners whose sites are located close to but outside the space delineated by the Red Lines.

There are also speculators who understand that they could benefit greatly from the construction of the boulevard because their land is likely to increase in value in anticipation of the boulevard. The project is advocated by various constellations of actors who support what David Stark calls “the centralized coordination in planning” that benefits more narrow interests and not necessarily the broader spectrum of different “publics” in Chisinau.

Whilst Cantemir Boulevard is presented as a public project by the municipality, it serves also as a tool of control over the privatization of municipally-owned land. This complicates the boundaries between public and private spaces in the neighborhood around Zaikin Park and the role of the municipality as the sole actor representing “public” interests is in question. More control over planning does not mean serving the broader public; it is rather a question of whose private interests will be prioritized. This is probably one of the main reasons that advocates of the boulevard support the plan whilst also using the Red Lines as a device to assert control over privatization. Their efforts to serve the “public good” consist of arguments that the boulevard will solve major traffic problems and help generate new investments in the city center.

Chisinau Municipality is responsible for developing the plans for the boulevard, but the municipality does not function as a uniform organization and there are differences within the institution itself. For example, the city mayor233 has publicly opposed the plan for the boulevard and has faced criticism by many city architects and urban planners for his stance on this issue. However, I also suspect that the municipality is closely linked to formerly established networks of power stemming from the late Soviet period and the early years of transition. These forces utilize some sort of shadow power concealed in the rhetoric of “public good,” working in support of the boulevard and seeking ways in which they can reap personal benefits from its construction.

Whether a piece of property is situated inside or outside the zone of the Red Lines can make a huge difference that can be measured in centimeters, and the sense of anticipation inside versus outside the zone is vastly different. The position of the Red Lines also determines the level of mobility, visibility, or invisibility of people and their capacity to participate in urban development. Immediately outside of the zone defined by the Red Lines, the building regulations regarding building height and use are flexibly interpreted; high-rises emerge and real estate development is encouraged. Within the space between the Red Lines, people are paralyzed with regard to improving their living conditions, as regulations are stricter. Residents are not permitted to rebuild their homes, and there is a lack of public infrastructure improvements by the municipality in their neighborhood; thus, people’s capacity to assert their right to the city is limited, and when they disobey the rules imposed by the Red Lines, they are placed at odds with the law.

I asked Vadim the developer why residents cannot receive permits from the municipality to rebuild or renovate their homes in areas near the Red Lines, while developers receive all required permits for construction. He replied: “It really depends on where the Red Lines pass. The Red Lines overlap and chart the future lots. They are in fact reconfiguring the land ownership lines.” In his criticism of neoliberalism, David Harvey describes policies and practices he calls “accumulation by dispossession,”234 which aim to centralize power and wealth while dispossessing both private and public entities. For other, more powerful interests, the Red Lines serve to justify decisions and actions. Furthermore, all three examples of tower development are somehow related to the anticipation of new real estate development where the Red Lines pass in the city center. However, the ambiguous legal status of the plan for the boulevard renders all property inside the zone –

233 Dorin Chortoaca was the mayor of Chisinau at the time of writing (2011-2018).

regardless of whether it is legally designated as privately- or publicly-owned – more vulnerable to the logic of dispossession.

Owners whose properties are outside the zone defined by the Red Lines have opportunities to sell their land to developers at a higher price; for the time being, those whose property is inside the zone of the Red Lines are unable to build legally, sell, or otherwise benefit from their ownership. Furthermore, many residents who own or rent their homes are under the threat of eviction.

According to the maps from the National Cadaster of Moldova, there is evidence that many new property subdivision lines have been readjusted and positioned to align exactly with the Red Lines. An example can be seen in the second instance of tower development, where the developer had to relinquish a portion of land positioned inside the zone of the Red Lines to Chisinau Municipality after joining two separate properties (see Figures 1:4 and 1:5). In addition, in order to receive construction permits, the developer was required to reposition the footprint of the new tower so the front façade would align with the Red Lines. According to Vadim the developer, in other situations, the Red Lines slice through existing properties in a way that makes it impossible to build on them; the remaining area of the lot outside of the boundary of the Red Lines is too small for any construction. In such situations, many owners of adjacent lots negotiate new property subdivisions and purchase properties from each other in efforts to configure new buildable lots. In this process, much depends on the size of the lot and the extent to which the Red Line cuts through the property area. For example, according to Vadim, most existing lots are around 400m2. If the property is cut in half, it becomes difficult to build on, and the municipality will not issue approval. Construction is prohibited on properties positioned between the Red Lines, because new buildings would interfere with construction of the boulevard. However, as seen in relation to the first tower being built, such illegal construction takes place within the zone of the Red Lines as well.

These new property reconfigurations affect land value. According to Vadim, it is common for the owners of lots positioned near but outside of the zone defined by the Red Lines to drastically increase the price of their land. Furthermore, inside the zone of the Red Lines, there is a sense of unresolved ownership that is contested and continuously negotiated, often through the everyday use of spaces. The presence of the Red Lines causes greater interdependence among the residents, developers, and other actors because they create unresolved spaces that become focal points in the struggle over urban space.

As with the tower and the park, such contests for the control of urban space involve negotiations among stakeholders like developers, the municipality, and other interest groups. The negotiations can be resolved through deals, and in some cases with particular agreements rather than broad institutional solutions.

The municipality may thus be selectively passive or active in different situations, as it appears to assert control over planning and impose regulations arbitrarily. The spaces of anticipation must also anticipate this additional ambiguity. This ability to negotiate and to refuse or grant permits for construction selectively, behind the closed doors and at the discretion of the municipality is another way to assert power and dominance over planning and urban development. In some cases, planning officials strictly enforce regulations; in others, they may be extremely flexible. Furthermore, there is a power imbalance between small owners, who are often excluded from the clan networks. If negotiations fail, the unresolved spaces become zones of quiet anticipation and uncertainty, empty or abandoned construction sites. There is a vast difference in the capacities of locals who also own property and those of the developers of towers, and the power is distributed unevenly.

Concluding Remarks

One of the main purposes of the Red Lines in the General Urban Plan for Chisinau is to present opportunities for developers who anticipate future investments in the old part of the city center. This is the real shift from the Soviet period: a variety of economic interests emerge and then attempt to control planning processes. Rather than planning for the population or social reorganization, the role of planning today is to facilitate future growth and investment. However, the developers of the towers whom I interviewed are not equally concerned about the realization of the plan of the boulevard. The presence of the Red Lines attracted investments because they were more important when the apartments in the tower were advertised for sale. It was
unmistakable from the developer’s testimonies that whether the boulevard will ever be built is now immaterial, and they admit that they do not really believe that it will. On the other hand, the city architects and urban planners from the municipality express frustration and powerlessness since the boulevard project is on hold, and the Red Lines have begun to contain a variety of other meanings and purposes, while the ability to push the plan forward is restrained. Nevertheless, one way in which they are still able to exercise some control over planning is via the selective application of laws and planning regulations and the transformation of ownership relations in the space between the Red Lines.

A n apparent common factor in all three examples of residential tower development are different degrees of spillover of the private realm into public spaces and vice versa – where the public makes claims on the private. As one could surmise from the example of the third tower and the park, the developer’s appropriation of the spaces of the park is in the spirit of the pervading culture of ethos of privatism. His actions are also driven by circumstances such as the need to fulfill his contractual agreement with the new tenants or to satisfy the occupancy permit requirements. These spatial appropriations consist out of stretching the boundaries of ownership as they encroach upon the more vulnerable spaces between the Red Lines. However, this encroachment also prompts a reaction from other groups, who form new alliances and establish common platforms of interest that can lead to new spatial configurations and even new types of temporary ownership that challenge the existing legal formulations. In the spaces of anticipation, the legally defined property boundaries do not represent an obstacle for different ownership claims, as they do not constrain private interests to limit their activities within their own property limits. The boundaries that define who controls urban spaces are constantly being re-drawn and re-negotiated, and the property division lines are blurred or eliminated through negotiations between various stakeholders.

The contract drafted by the lawyer in Zaikin Park is an attempt to resolve and – for a while at least – to cement various ownership claims among the three main stakeholders. Although Oberliht’s initiatives in Zaikin Park represent attempts to reclaim the abandoned public space of the park under the threat of disappearance, the association managed to appropriate the park through the legal agreement. In the process, they assumed completely new roles and responsibilities, e.g. for the management of urban spaces, construction management, and the development of new plans for the park. As a result, their responsibilities are very different from the NGO for artistic and cultural political activism they advocate and for which the organization stands.

From the analyses of events in Zaikin Park, one may conclude that the lawyer who was hired to write the contract struggles to precisely determine and legally define the stakeholders’ different roles and responsibilities. Pavel maintained that there is no existing legal format that could properly describe the new relations and roles between the stakeholders, since their actions do not fit many of the predefined legal formulations related to the concept of property ownership.

This is also evidence that the blurred lines between the private and public realms challenge established legal norms and formulations. Furthermore, most of the stakeholders’ previously assumed public and private roles and positions in society are no longer valid, because their responsibilities and allegiances overlap and grow in complexity.

Oberliht, the municipality, and the developers become parts of a constellation of participating agents with various overlapping groupings and memberships whose common ground in restructuring the urban environment builds on shifts in responsibilities for and ownership of the public space of the park. The developer probably has the most to gain from the contract, since many of his problems concern his contractual agreement with those purchasing the apartments. These different actors are also bound to subcategories of membership, such as the homeowners who are connected with the developer through another separate contractual agreement, or locals who have organized to protest the construction of the boulevard. Through their engagement in the contract, Oberliht have become rather complicit in the decision-making process, as new forms of exclusion are reinforced and the capacity for free and unmediated interactions by citizens in Zaikin Park is in danger of becoming more restricted. Furthermore, previously contested territorial claims over the street and Zaikin Park are legitimized with the (sometimes unwitting) help of Oberliht and the municipality. The municipality is also enabled to find an alternative source of funding for the reconstruction of the street, and with Oberliht’s help, it can hinder political
and social unrest from escalating among those who are negatively affected by the uncertainty of planning in the zone of the Red Lines: the status quo is maintained. The exclusively “public” and “private” actors in this scenario are hard to pinpoint.

Whilst indicating that the boulevard’s path is used as a legal instrument for its implementation, the Red Lines also function as new property division lines. Owing to the situation of the planning status quo and the uncertainty of the realization of the boulevard project, the Red Lines continue to define a sort of no-man’s-land in which the interests of different public spheres and private spaces intersect, merge, or collide, and where different stakeholders see opportunities to claim ownership over urban spaces for a variety of purposes whilst also enabling, subverting, and contesting one another.

The plan for the boulevard is presented as a public project, but the Red Lines become spaces of anticipation for new forms of control and privatization. They represent intrusions into the public realm as much as the existing private ownership relations. During the Soviet Era, the ideal of the public was obliterated when the state apparatus focused on diminishing private ownership and free expression. Ironically perhaps, today the ideal of the private is being obliterated through new means of coercion, surveillance, and co-option that take place within civil society.

Regardless of whether the boulevard is ever built or not, the very presence of the Red Lines has been sufficient to encourage large-scale commercial development in its path. Most people were powerless in decision-making about urban planning in Soviet times, and they are still powerless today. The Red Lines, however, produce unexpected outcomes. Anticipation affects everyone, and there is still potential for different groups to stake their claims and disrupt the concentrations of power that exist in urban development today. In their suspended state between the real and the imaginary, the Red Lines alter the present reality in ways that are quite different than those originally intended. They create new possibilities for destabilizing and challenging planning hegemonies. Different stakeholders perceive the plan for the boulevard as a threat, an opportunity for change, or both at the same time. Within the spaces of anticipation, these possibilities coexist, intertwine, and even trade places.
CHAPTER III

The Haunted Streets
The Haunted Streets

At 10am on March 10, 2014, Sofia, a young activist from the art association Oberliht, was talking to a group of residents who had gathered in Zaikin Park in central Chisinau (see Figure 0:1). Sofia worried that the dirt road passing through the middle of the park was dangerous for playing children. As we walked through Zaikin Park, Sofia recounted the history of plan to build Boulevard D. Cantemir in a social and political context.

Turning off towards the dirt road that bisects Zaikin Park and connects to Sf. Andrei Street, Sofia pointed towards the park, as if to trace the Red Lines onto it. A car sped by and disappeared in the distance, raising dust that lingered for a few moments, obscuring our view.

A year later, in October 2015, I conducted an interview with a group of residents from the area around Zaikin Park. The first to speak was Anastasia, a woman in her thirties who lives in an old house facing Zaikin Park with her husband and children (see Figure 0:2). They moved to the area in 2003, and she is one of many residents who recently moved to the neighborhood. Concerned about the present situation and what the boulevard could mean for the neighborhood’s future, Anastasia became very actively involved in the efforts to reclaim and restore the park for the community.

She described this park as a space of transit for children between school and home and a place where adult residents spend some time on their way home from work. According to Anastasia, the dirt road and the cars passing through make Zaikin Park a dangerous place, especially on warm and sunny days when the park is full of people. Cars and municipal sanitation trucks use the dirt road for routine daily passage as if it were a legitimate road and part of the city’s infrastructure.

The dirt road through the park was created by years of car traffic; the people I interviewed recall that the road had previously been a footpath. While its origins and transformation were unclear, most of people with whom I spoke with claimed that the road had emerged during the early 20th century.

FIGURE 0:1 - Meeting in Zaikin Park on March 10th, 2014. Sofia talks about the Red Lines of the boulevard, which pose a threat to the park and the local neighborhood.

FIGURE 0:2 - Locals from the area around Zaikin Park during the interview in 2015. They share a concern that the park will disappear beneath the red lines of the boulevard. In the background is the dirt road.

235 Pseudonyms are used for all non-public individuals in this research.
236 The red lines were drawn in the Planning Regulations as part of the General Urban Plan of 2007 for central Chisinau, the nation's capital. See the Introduction and Chapter 1 of this thesis.
narrow stone blocks that have eroded over time and sunken deeper into the ground. The position of this curb is a record of the time that has passed; it tells the story of how the path in the park became a dirt road. While the road is aligned with the Red Lines on one side, on the other side it has expanded beyond the concrete curb of the footpath by the cars and trucks that have passed over the years. This edge is irregular in shape, perhaps because the road encountered resistance from residents as it negotiated its way through the park before finally reaching its optimal width and shape. The passage of cars, the tires which raise dust and make wet grooves in the mud after the rain carve the material trajectory of the road, but they also leave traces in the memory of people. As it evolved into a part of everyday life, the dirt road grew enmeshed in the neighborhood’s collective memory, like thickened scar tissue in the park, foreboding the future boulevard.

FIGURE 0:3 – The dirt road passes through Zaikin Park and is aligned with the Red Lines of Boulevard D. Cantemir.

Chisinau Municipality gave legitimacy to the dirt road and rendered it more permanent when they designated it as a service route for garbage collection (see Figures 0:5 and 0:6); this shows that the municipality adapts to evolving circumstances while also using their authority to selectively assign legitimacy. Urban theorist Ananya Roy argues that the power of the state is “reproduced through the capacity to construct and reconstruct categories of legitimacy and illegitimacy.”237 Although the municipality did not build the road through the park according to approved regular planning procedure, it actively encourages its use by using it as part of the city’s public infrastructure. When superimposing the General Urban Plan over aerial photographs of Zaikin Park, I noticed that one of the two Red Lines that passes through the park is aligned with one side of the road (see Figures 0:3 and 0:4). The memory of the former footpath is discernible as a low curb made of long and narrow stone blocks that have eroded over time and sunken deeper into the ground. The position of this curb is a record of the time that has passed; it tells the story of how the path in the park became a dirt road. While the road is aligned with the Red Lines on one side, on the other side it has expanded beyond the concrete curb of the footpath by the cars and trucks that have passed over the years. This edge is irregular in shape, perhaps because the road encountered resistance from residents as it negotiated its way through the park before finally reaching its optimal width and shape. The passage of cars, the tires which raise dust and make wet grooves in the mud after the rain carve the material trajectory of the road, but they also leave traces in the memory of people. As it evolved into a part of everyday life, the dirt road grew enmeshed in the neighborhood’s collective memory, like thickened scar tissue in the park, foreboding the future boulevard.

At one end of the dirt road, the municipality placed garbage containers from which local sanitation trucks collect garbage daily. Chisinau Municipality built the cement block wall and placed garbage containers in the space along the red line. Claiming the park space as a node designated for

provision of public service, accessible only by driving along the road in the park, resulted in a degree of legitimacy for the dirt road.

Two more women joined the discussion that day in Zaikin Park. One of them – Daria – had been living in this neighborhood for about 15 years; the other, Valeria, had been there for about 6 years. They told me that in 2015, locals began sending letters to the municipality asking them to close off the dirt road in the park and to restore the park as a recreational space. Usually, the municipality’s reply to the letters was that while the residents’ concerns were understandable, there were insufficient funds in the city budget for restoration of the park at the time. However, Chisinau Municipality representatives also explained to the residents that if another economic agent were to appear who was willing to sponsor the renovation of Zaikin Park, they would be more than happy to rebuild it. The residents and activists with whom I spoke said that their main concern was that by allowing the cars to pass through, Chisinau Municipality was neglecting Zaikin Park in anticipation of the building of Boulevard D. Cantemir.

The dirt road in the park prompted reactions by different social groups, some of which organize events to reconnect and activate the park. Here, social groups refers to Oberliht Association, urban planners, local entrepreneurs, developers, activists and diverse groups of residents including children. People relate differently to the road passing through the park, and various actors – public, private and civic – have different needs and agendas. For local entrepreneurs, the municipality, and some residents, the dirt road represents street infrastructure that provides access to homes and businesses and facilitates garbage removal services for the community. For others like Oberliht Association, StudioBASAR,238 and concerned groups of residents, the dirt road serves as a metonym for much larger abstract project that looms over the park as the Red Lines. These groups focus on interrupting the flow of traffic through the park, and their aim is to stitch the park back together. To do this, they have built temporary structures such as the

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238 “StudioBASAR is a Bucharest based architectural studio and a public space practice founded in 2006 by Alex Acinte and Cristi Borcan. Preoccupied with the dynamics of urban culture and the disappearing importance of public spaces, StudioBASAR initiates and develops actions and projects within public space. Ranging from temporary to permanent, these processes include practice based research, participatory action research, community activation, co-production and co-design, urban design, live education and civic pedagogy. StudioBASAR’s projects range from art installations, urban research, educational formats, public space interventions and community projects, to competitions and different typologies of residential and public buildings.” Source: http://www.studiobasar.ro/?page_id=3&lang=en
The Ghost Boulevard

When Oberliht Association started their involvement in Zaikin Park, they have maintained an active dialogue with the locals. However, the communication has been complicated by many different conflicting interests regarding the use of the park. Oberliht Association thus often plays the role of intermediary, trying to balance the interests of residents, planning authorities and developers.

Over the years, Oberliht has organized events, forged contacts with the residents from around Zaikin Park, involved residents in writing petitions to politicians and the municipality, etc. In a letter sent to City Hall, Oberliht Association informed the mayor Dorin Chirtoaca of the existence of illegally built structures in Zaikin Park that required removal. They were referring specifically to the road passing through the park and the garbage collection station installed in the middle of Zaikin Park:

According to the Law on the Protection of Monuments no. 1530 from the 22nd of June 1993, art. 59, as well as in accordance with the Decision of the Government of RM on approving the Regulation on the Protected Natural and Constructed areas, no. 1009 from 05/10/2000, published in the Official Gazette of RM from 12/10/2000, this park is located in the historical Nucleus of Chișinău, with a national interest category included in the Monuments’ Register of RM, at no. 308, which means that this green area can neither be transited by a driveway for vehicles, nor serve for depositing waste.

Although the park is a protected area and by law may not be utilized by cars, the dirt road is still there. The existing legal framework is insufficient, and other kinds of action are necessary to reconnect the park.

As Daria sees it, Oberliht Association brought more public attention to Zaikin Park when they began to organize events and meetings with the residents, the municipality, developers and others. As a result, Chisinau Municipality began to respond to some of the requests from residents. Today, “Green Spaces” – the municipal park maintenance company – provides some basic services and repairs in the park. According to Daria however, the dirt road and the garbage containers are still there, and the municipality is not investing in building playgrounds in Zaikin Park.

The legal status of the Red Lines of Boulevard D. Cantemir is ambigu-
uous, and this ambiguity and uncertainty sets in motion shifts in agency and destabilizes power relations among different social actors. The power of planners to impose the plan has been disrupted and distributed to other actors in the uncertainty created by the unresolved legal status of the two main planning documents.

The events and performances organized in the park by Oberliht Association are all concentrated on the dirt road. This unruly and mutating space is difficult to classify and control, and there is thus potential for critical theoretical enquiry about instability and the shifts in power among social groups involved in the production of space.

The phenomenon I encountered through analyses of events in Zaikin Park defies explanations based on binary opposites such as formal and informal, legal and illegal, permanent and temporary, real and imaginary, present and absent, etc.

While the dirt road has not been formalized by the planning authorities since it was not built according to legally approved planning processes, it cannot be defined simply as an informal road, because it is also utilized by the municipality as an access route to the containers. Furthermore, distinctions between powerful actors in a position of authority and actors who are powerless are neither clear nor obvious, and their agency changes from one situation to the next. I argue that under these circumstances, many actors – including Chisinau Municipality, the art collectives and the residents – implement what I call different “strategies of interruption” in social, physical and legal infrastructures when people are made aware of the presence of the Red Lines in Zaikin Park in one way or another.

Re-stitching the Social Spaces of Zaikin Park

I investigate the ambiguous environment in the path of the Red Lines, where power relations are not distinctly differentiated between those who control planning and urban development and those who resist power; instead, there are many more complex and shifting relations that are contingent on specific circumstances. In the process of analysis, I set the stage for analytical enquiry into different non-binary relations in Zaikin Park by critically addressing the theoretical framework of Henry Lefebvre’s “dialectics of spatiality.” Lefebvre defines three concepts – three types of space involved in spatial production. The first concept is “Spatial Practice,” also defined as space between the everyday reality routine and urban reality. He argues that each society produces its own spaces through spatial practices. I discuss how the dirt road represents a spatial, material and temporal space of contest that sets into motion the formation of diverse spatial practices. According to Lefebvre, “we are confronted not by one social space but by many – indeed by an unlimited multiplicity or unaccountable set of social spaces which we refer to generically as ’social space.’” Through everyday use of the park and the staging of events and performances, different social groups in Zaikin Park such as Oberliht, the residents, the municipality, and others create their own “social spaces” in response to the dirt road. The presence of the dirt road in the park generates tensions between people and conflicting social spaces. Even driving a car along the dirt road is a spatial...
practice performed by social groups such as residents and local entrepreneurs who construct social spaces of their own in Zaikin Park.

The second component of Lefebvre’s trialectics of spatiality is “Representations of Space”. These are the idealized projections of spaces through maps and plans; the utopian visions conceived by scientists, social engineers, planners, and other technocrats who are not bound by physical and objective space. The 1949 Master Plan for Chisinau by Alexey Shchushev, the General Urban Plan from 2007 and recent plans for reconstruction of Zaikin Park developed by Oberliht Association are coexisting different representations of space. The Red Lines of Boulevard D. Cantemir however have a life of their own beyond the physical paper plan. Through the third concept, “Representational Space”, Lefebvre discusses “complex symbolism” of spaces, where meaning and symbolic value are assigned to space by its inhabitants. Lefebvre also describes this as political, religious and imaginary space. I investigate how diverse groups of people interpret the Red Lines differently and assign various meanings to spaces, and how these are continuously contested in the material space of Zaikin Park. The unrealized plan of the boulevard is imagined differently by diverse actors. For example, from the perspective of those who actively resist the plan for the boulevard, the dirt road through Zaikin Park represents a strange materialization of Boulevard D. Cantemir. Furthermore, due to the ambiguous nature of the relationship between the real and the imaginary, the Red Lines of Boulevard D. Cantemir can be discussed as representations of space, representational space, or both. Since they originated in urban plans, the Red Lines are part of the codified scientific space, but they could also be discussed through the concept of representational space because they hover above the city as a symbolic and imaginary space of the boulevard whose realization is uncertain. Other scholars explore related concepts of “urban interstices”242 and “in-betweeness”243 to discuss different non-binary relations in urban spaces. Sociologist Fredric Milton Thresher, for example, defines interstitial as “pertaining to spaces that intervene between one thing and another. In nature, foreign matter tends to collect and cake in every crack, crevice and cranny – interstices. There are also fissures and breaks in the structure of social organization.”244 According to Stéphane Tonnelat, an ethnographic studies researcher who focuses on urban public spaces, “the main property of the interstice is its temporary absence of attributed function; the interstices definitionally exists between functional past and future.”245 Planners, he continues, perceive interstices as “unused by de jure designation” and regard them as empty lots or problematic and abandoned spaces in the city. Furthermore, Tonnelat describes how interstices represent “resourceful environments,” or spaces of opportunity for the users, or as what he describes as “available spaces in-between other more functionally defined places.” The attempts to re-stitch Zaikin Park can be viewed as efforts to project various – and often competing – symbolic representations of public space by different social groups who produce their own social space in response to the dirt road. Different social groups in Zaikin Park react to the dirt road as if it was a “fissure,” a space that cuts through and divides public space and that must now be reconnected in a legal, spatial and social sense.

The legal ambiguity of the Red Lines, uncertainty, and anticipation lead to various interstitial conditions, such as the interim period until the resolution of the boulevard’s status. According to Mattias Kärrholm and Gunnar Sandin, the time of waiting can give the space itself a certain agency. “Waiting situations as a specific form of in-between time-spaces can, in short be given a transformative role, i.e. it can have agency.”246 The temporal materiality of the dirt road, the fact that it has not been finished and that it has not been paved indicate another in-between situation, something that is temporary, transient and not fully institutionalized, but that will remain in place for the foreseeable future.

Sociologists Andrea Mubi Brighenti and Cristina Mattiucci describe in-between spaces in the city as a “leftover condition” resulting from “heterogeneous elements in the built environment or from discontinuous planning


acts.” 247 As in Chișinău, where the Red Lines hover above the city, and where Zaikin Park and the surrounding neighborhood exist under the threat of disappearance, Brighenti and Mattiucci talk about spaces threatened by planning and urban renewal projects. Furthermore, according to Brighenti and Mattiucci, the city’s in-between spaces appear as unplanned, marginalized, and less institutionalized in relation to other areas in the city.248

The plan for the Ghost Boulevard haunts the present, but it also represents a project from the past for a future that was never realized. I discuss the Red Lines, whose material existence is limited to paper, as bureaucratic infrastructures with social effects that set in motion a series of events and influence spatial production processes.

When a group of participants place their fingers on a planchette249 to communicate with a ghost via a Ouija board, it is evident that the object (the planchette) is moving on the board, but no one can be sure of the origin of the force directing this movement. Many scholars refer to haunting as result of something re-emerging from the past. Tim Edensor for example discusses the notion of hauntings in the city by exploring traces of what he calls “the haunted realms of everyday mundane space” that linger in urban spaces with the power to resist plans for urban renewal. Edensor describes how “traces of the past linger in mundane spaces by the side of the road to renewal, haunting the idealistic visions of planners, promoters and entrepreneurs,”250 He discovers traces of society that linger in material artifacts, the ruins of a working-class neighborhood left behind. I argue that in the case of the dirt road in Zaikin Park, the haunting occurs because of social forces that operate in the present. One of the questions I explore concerns identifying the forces that compel people to act, and what motivates them into action. I talk about haunting as a social force and a catalyst for action that consists of many agendas, desires and expectations of different social groups acting in the present.

Furthermore, through the notion of haunting, I explore how social groups emerge in reaction to the project from the past through spatial practices in the present in this particular circumstance, where the abstract force of the plan for the boulevard hovers suspended over the city. Furthermore, the ambiguous legal status of the plan for the boulevard contributes to an institutional environment in which it is not easy to identify the origin of the main sources of power; this also makes it difficult to resist authority. The roles and responsibilities that are conventionally the domain of the state have been distributed among multiple actors. In such a deinstitutionalized environment – where centers of financial, political, administrative and planning authority are dispersed – there are no visible and distinct centers of power. Over a prolonged period of time, the unresolved planning policies intensify contests over the control of urban space and establish new kinds of relations and codependences among actors.

Spatial practices that are concentrated on interrupting the flow of cars along the dirt road are the most immediate reaction to the plan for the boulevard as representations of space many groups do not accept. Through the analyses of events and performances I observed and recorded over the course of five years, I explore different spatial practices that evolved in reaction to the presence of the dirt road in Zaikin Park. In this process, I discuss how different social groups (e.g. residents, Oberliht Association, and StudioBASAR) construct their own social spaces, and the kinds of materializations that have been produced.

Since 2012, Oberliht Association has organized workshops, performances and art installations in Zaikin Park. The following timeline presents some of the main events between 2012 and 2016:

In 2012, Oberliht Association identified ten abandoned urban spaces in the path of Boulevard D Cantemir. They chose Zaikin Park as the most critical site for their activities and the one most in need of intervention. The following year, joined by a group of anthropology students, Oberliht investigated problems of infrastructure in the city in relation to urban exclusion in the neighborhoods along the Red Lines.

The same year, during the project “Chișinău Civic Center – Beyond the red lines,” StudioBASAR held a workshop called “Recovered Places” where the locals were involved for the first time in repairing dilapidated urban furniture such as benches and street signs in Zaikin Park.
In 2014, Oberliht organized the project “Chisinau Civic Center – A park for the community,” which involved the community as well as activists from other parts of the city and international artists and architects. A series of organized picnics and workshops that blocked or slowed down the passage of cars along the dirt road were held in Zaikin Park. With the help of StudioBASAR, a temporary stage and other structures were built in the park. Since its construction, the temporary stage structure has hosted many events: picnics, performances, concerts, theater plays, dances, games, film projections and workshops for children.

In the same year, Oberliht organized another sociological research project in which the main categories of Zaikin Park’s users and their needs were identified. The users were children, youth, students, and homeless people, and according to the research findings, they all expressed the need for a functioning public space where they could socialize. In December 2014, a Christmas party was organized with the children in the park. In 2015, a workshop was held entitled “Städte Denken – Städte Machen” (Thinking Cities – Making Cities), coordinated by an international and interdisciplinary student academy at the State University of Moldova. The project involved inhabitants and their children and recycling in Zaikin Park. In the autumn of the same year, Oberliht Association organized a community picnic and a puppet show for children in Zaikin Park. Furthermore, the Romanian artist Ovidiu Anton built an installation entitled “A Monument for Nobody” in Zaikin Park using materials donated by locals.

In the summer of 2016 a ten-day summer school held in Zaikin Park brought together architects, artists, and urbanists from Moldova, Romania, Spain and France, who participated in the rehabilitation of Zaikin Park together with locals. During the event, art and building workshops were organized for local children. On the children’s initiative, stop signs and other obstructions were placed to stop traffic along the dirt road through Zaikin Park.

I begin this analysis with the first day of the picnic during the project “Chisinau Civic Center – A park for the community;” this was the day on which StudioBASAR began construction of the roadside stage. I then continue to examine three later events selected from the timeline, namely “The Puppet Theater,” “Stop the Traffic,” and “Building the Playground,” which I observed and documented in Zaikin Park between 2014 and 2016.
inau Civic Center” insinuates something institutional and permanent – quite the opposite of ephemeral events, performances or temporary structures. The name of the project communicates that there is a larger-scale agenda at stake here, which also sends a message about the durability and permanence of Zaikin Park as a re-unified public space, and as such an obstacle to the Red Lines.

This inversion of appearances about what may be permanent or temporary related to the inversion of power relations is reminiscent of Italo Calvino’s tale of the town of Sophronia.251 Sophronia is the city composed of two parts: one half is a temporary city, and the other half is permanent. The temporary city houses all the institutions and is built of stone and marble, while the permanent city is constructed out of perishable materials with ephemeral functions like a circus or a market. The space of the dirt road in Zaikin Park is the site where temporary structures and ephemeral events are associated with permanence and the power of institutions.

Throughout Chisinau Civic Center - A park for community, a number of events were organized as picnics as part of opening and closing ceremonies to mark the beginning and the end of performances and other important events. StudioBASAR contributed to the project with a series of events;252 their installation involved the construction of temporary objects concentrated along the dirt road. The overarching event structure was organized around a series of picnics conceptualized as moments of the repeated inauguration of Zaikin Park as a unified public space.

Each picnic announced the start of activities in Zaikin Park, and it usually took place along the dirt road. Following the picnic, there were organized workshops during which temporary structures such as the roadside stage, the wooden bench, the picnic table, and other “things” were built. These structures facilitated later events and performances and allowed for repeated obstructions of the traffic along the dirt road. Furthermore, some of the existing infrastructures in the park – such as the electricity transformer – were utilized to provide lighting and electricity during the picnics, workshops and performances.

252 The events organized by StudioBASAR took place between August 14th and 28th, 2014.
As part of the summer camp of 2014, StudioBASAR organized a series of events in Zaikin Park under the title “Recovered Spaces – Workshop for Interventions in the Public Space.” These events were accompanied with social gatherings, concerts and other performances.

StudioBASAR’s homepage provides a brief description of the stage and the role of a “picnic” in the process of “inauguration:”

“The stage and the events it hosted had the force of a re-inauguration of the park itself, by opening a temporary community center in open-air that still remains to be validated by future actions and people’s involvement.”

The events started early on a Saturday morning with a picnic involving artists, activists, residents and their children. A clean, white tablecloth measuring several meters was spread across the dirt road. The participants positioned fruits and other food on the clean white cloth, and people gathered around it for a picnic (see Figure 1:3). This act interrupted the flow of traffic along the dirt road and represented a symbolic reunification of the social space of the neighborhood park.
The spatial practices conducted by those groups who oppose the construction of the boulevard conflict with spatial practices of driving cars through the park. Furthermore, the dirty tire tracks on the pristine tablecloth remain as evidence of a violation, of the intrusion of things that Oberliht and many others maintain do not belong in the park.

Exposing the white tablecloth to dirt communicates to the locals gathered in the park that cars have no place there. In her discussion on “the politics of dirt,” anthropologist Mary Douglas argues that the notion of dirt represents “a matter out of place” and a part of “systematic ordering and classification of matter.” In the space of legal ambiguity where there is also an absence of “systematic ordering of things,” the notion of the dirt road being out of place in the park is not that obvious; for this reason, only the residents and interest groups who oppose the plan for the boulevard are compelled to demonstrate that cars do not belong in public parks. For them, the sullied white tablecloth is a small-scale representation of Zaikin Park and other public spaces in Chisinau which are under the threat of destruction by the Boulevard D. Cantemir project (see Figure 1:4). The repeated activations of the space of the road through performances are meant to send the message to car drivers and to Chisinau Municipality that the roads, the cars, and garbage removal services are out of place in the park. At the same time, staging these ephemeral events is meant to re-inaugurate Zaikin Park as a green public space in the city.

The Roadside Stage Building Workshop

Following the morning’s picnic on the same day, people gathered to build the roadside stage, a temporary and flexible platform designed by StudioBASAR. The stage structure was one of the first objects to be built adjacent to the dirt road. It was intentionally positioned in such a way that it partially encroached on the space of the dirt road (see Figure 1:6), its immediate purpose being to interrupt the passage of cars during organized events when people were gathered in the park. Made from crates and wooden planks, the stage was built with the help of residents, activists and children from the neighborhood as a platform for cultural events, social gatherings,
concerts, picnics, puppet theater for children, film screenings, and various other types of artistic performances. The construction of this flexible and transformable platform represents an act of resistance to the urban planning policies that prioritize the plan for the boulevard over the space of the park.

The roadside stage was built legally and according to plans that had been approved by City Hall as “temporary furniture.” Oberliht Association, which had submitted the plans to the municipality, acted in full compliance with the planning regulations; all of the temporary structures they built in Zaikin Park received legal permits. According to Vladimir Us, it had been possible to interpret the legal classification “temporary furniture” flexibly and stretch the boundaries of this definition during the communication with the planning office, which enabled Oberliht to legally construct a range of artifacts at different scales to support their activities in Zaikin Park. In the permit documents (see Figure 1.7), the roadside stage structure is classified as “temporary furniture” that could be easily removed at any moment. Oberliht and StudioBASAR often refer to the temporary stage as the “temporary community center in open-air.” It is not the materiality of the structures or their legal status that determine the level of legitimacy and permanence; what matters is the continuity of future spatial practices that would establish Zaikin Park as civic space.

Many of the activities organized by Oberliht in Zaikin Park center on this platform. Usually, they take place on weekends, and they sometimes comprise longer festivities and events that may last several weeks or longer. The roadside stage has become one of the more permanent features in the park over the years, functioning as a social anchor point and a core infrastructure to which other installations, constructions and equipment could be plugged in and assembled.
"Inauguration Day" and the Long Wooden Bench

"Inauguration day" was on August 27th, the final day of the workshops held by StudioBASAR in Zaikin Park. A series of concerts, performances, games and picnics were held that day, all of them centered on the space between the roadside stage and the wooden bench.

When construction of the roadside stage was complete, many people gathered to watch the "opening ceremony" while sitting on the long wooden park bench built on the opposite side of the dirt road. From there, people watched the inauguration festivities on the stage (see Figure 1:8). The completion of the roadside stage was also the “inauguration” of Zaikin Park as a car-free public space and a community center.

Although the bench was built primarily for watching different kinds of performances on the stage, it can also be used simply for sitting on and relaxing, and while watching performances taking place on the roadside stage, spectators on the bench are unaware that they are seated in alignment with the Red Lines. The sense of uncertainty and ambiguity about which functions belong in the park and who has priority results in conflicts between different social groups. When people are gathered in the park during performances, tensions arise each time a car passes through the liminal space between the bench and the roadside stage. Residents and activists who oppose the construction of the boulevard usually express their dismay at each passing car through angry looks, shouts and gesticulations.

Festivities continued until late in the night on inauguration day, ending with film projections that groups of residents watched as they enjoyed a picnic (see Fig 1:9). After having blocked traffic for the whole day, the people who had gathered celebrated a reunified park space. The musical instruments, sound equipment, the lighting and the film projector were connected to Zaikin Park’s existing electrical infrastructure, which consisted of a transformer and a network of cables and lampposts. When the performances had ended, the cars resumed undisturbed use of the dirt road. Tire tracks and shoeprints on the dirt road remained as memory traces of the day’s events.
The Link Between the Electricity Transformer in Zaikin Park and the Red Lines

Many of the performances on the stage depended on electricity from the transformer maintained by the municipally-owned electrical company Lumteh (see Figures 2:0 and 2:1). Oberliht Association had obtained the necessary permits from City Hall to allow them to use electricity for the roadside stage, and according to Vladimir Us, they pay for the electricity every month.

The transformer is connected to the street lighting and the lamps that illuminate parts of the park at night. Some of the electrical posts are aligned directly with the path of the dirt road, while others are positioned along the park’s outer edges.

On evening visits to Zaikin Park, I noted that the area of the park near the roadside stage is better illuminated than other areas, which are kept dark (see Figure 2:2). There are many cables and wires coming out of the transformer, spreading along the lampposts and across the street and continuing in many different and unknown directions to homes and businesses outside the park. Besides the municipal street lighting and the stage built by Oberliht, it is unclear who else is legally or illegally connected to the transformer.

The flow of electric current through the transformer, posts and cables connects many different social actors. The transformer is not a neutral infrastructural artifact, as it plays many different roles. It functions as a support system for many different actors regardless of their social status and power. It even supplies electricity to the structures built in the park to resist the Red Lines. Anthropologist Brian Larkin discusses infrastructures as symbolic instruments of rule that structure relations of power, politics and culture, while political theorist Langdon Winner argues that technologies, infrastructures and material artifacts have “political properties.” Winner argues further that the material arrangements and systems of distribution in space not only reflect, but also influence “arrangements of power.”

The transformer in Zaikin Park mediates the presence of the Red Lines in different ways; it is not only a conduit – an electricity supply line – but it is also linked to the planning bureaucracy and political struggle over the planning approvals in the Moldovan Parliament. The electrical connection

257 Ibid., 132.
The permit process is contingent on the status of the planning policies regarding the plan for the boulevard. The current legal status of the plan for the boulevard is directly linked with the process of issuing electrical connection permits. The access to electricity for the inhabitants in the neighborhood around Zaikin Park also depends on changes in planning policies and the current legal status of the plan for the boulevard. The municipal electric company can turn electricity on or off or to grant or refuse connection permits and in this way affect residents’ ability to continue to live in the neighborhood, or force them to move out and make space for the boulevard if their electricity is turned off for a longer period of time. In times when the political consensus shifted in favor of the boulevard, the issuance of electric installation permits was stopped and the municipality used the transformer as an instrument of power. Some of the locals I interviewed recalled that when the latest land zoning plan was rejected by the Moldovan Parliament in 2012, the freeze on issuing new permits for connections to electricity in the neighborhood was lifted. Residents worried however that if the planning policies in Chisinau were to change in favor of the boulevard, the plug could be pulled once again. The Red Lines are instruments of bureaucracy and a component of planning infrastructure suspended between different realities, oscillating between the worlds of the material and the imaginary, permanent and temporary, with real impact on urban environment. The transformer connects the spatial practices in Zaikin Park to a web of political, social, and infrastructural codependences. It also serves as the material link between different spatial practices in the path of the dirt road, as it helps different social groups to construct their own social spaces through performances. Architectural historian Reinhold Martin talks about the notion of “infrastructural properties” as a term that transcends a more conventional thinking about infrastructures merely as objects or material systems in space. He discusses the “city” by focusing on the power relationships consisting of sociotechnical processes on all scales considering “technical, spatial, social relations.” He describes how the infrastructures – or in Martin’s words, “what repeats” – are rendered visible when interrupted; when the system is turned off and no longer works. When Chisinau Municipality stops granting permits for new electric connections near Zaikin Park and disconnects the electricity, those affected become more aware not only of the existence of the electricity infrastructure, but also of the power of the plan for the boulevard and the planning infrastructure. These are the strategies of interruption implemented by Chisinau Municipality, which I also relate to Oren Yiftachel’s “selective non-planning,” discussed in the previous chapter.

Without the dirt road, Zaikin Park would no longer have a status of an ambiguous space and an urban interstice characterized by the “temporary absence of attributed function.” By re-stitching the park, Oberliht intends to institutionalize it, rendering it space fully recognized by the municipality and other authorities – public space where turning off electricity would be more difficult to justify.

The Children’s Puppet Theater Performance

Approximately one year later, on the morning of Saturday October 10, 2015, I sat watching the children’s puppet show in Zaikin Park, an event organized by Oberliht Association and groups of activists on the reconfigured roadside stage. The performance was a part of “Public Space Days,” a series of events, exhibitions and artistic performances organized by Oberliht Association that lasted from October 6–10, 2015. As during the series of workshops held by StudioBASAR in 2014, the day started and ended with a picnic next to the dirt road. While the events of that day unfolded, I observed how the roadside stage transformed quickly – first into a picnic space, and later into a puppet theater with all the fittings. A mid-size van parked alongside the back of the stage; it was a mobile plug-in infrastructure, furnishing the stage structure with the additional equipment necessary for the performance including a sound system, a set with colorful curtains, puppets, etc. Soon after the van had reached the platform, the theater structure was assembled and children, parents, grandparents and other visitors gathered to watch the performance.

The spectators were seated facing the stage on the long wooden bench positioned along the edge of the dirt road (see Figure 2:3). Before the performance began, a heavy flow of cars and motorcycles passed by on the dirt road, crossing the space between the spectators and the puppet theater (see Figure 2:4). People standing on both sides of the dirt road watched the cars pass as if their passage was also a kind of a performance. A large Mercedes Benz suddenly stopped in the middle of the road, right next to the garbage containers, just a few meters from the roadside stage. Smoke streamed out of the overheated engine; the car needed a repair. The driver looked back from the engine at a group of twenty to thirty people who stood waiting for the theater performance to start. The driver seemed more focused on them than on his car; judging from his puzzled expression, he didn’t quite know what to make of the “intruders” gathered there, obstructing the road (see figure 2:5).

The dirt road can also be described as a space between the spaces of movement, transition, and circulation juxtaposed over other social spaces that define the park.


FIGURE 2:3 - Spectators waiting for the puppet performance in Zaikin Park. A white van was plugged into the structure of the stage, supplying it with the props and other infrastructure needed for the performance. Photo by Bojan Boric.

FIGURE 2:4 - Heavy traffic passing through the congregation in the park a few minutes before the puppet show. Still from video footage taken by Bojan Boric.
While the dirt road links the network of streets in the neighborhood as it passes through the park, it is at the same time also a space of separation that divides the park. The social space of the puppet theater acts against the space of mobility of the dirt road.

Social studies and cultural theory scholar Ana Luz discusses the liminal, in-between spaces that exist on the borderline where boundaries are diffused due to the overlap and juxtaposition of different spaces. She describes this phenomenon as “a dialectic interaction between things (objects, subjects and spaces).”

The experience of crossing a boundary or a threshold defines an in-between condition. When a car passes through the park, it violates someone else’s space – and vice versa: when residents trespass the boundary of the road, they alarm the drivers.

With the start of the puppet performance, the space between the roadside stage and the bench became a place of tension and conflict. During the event, the configuration of the park space changed; some drivers attempted to continue along the dirt road, directly through the performance, but then they proceeded with some hesitation.

Apparently confused by this new and unexpected situation, some drivers either stopped their vehicles or slowed down for a longer period; others tried to bypass the event by driving behind the stage, but there proved even more obstacles there. In one moment of confusion about how to act, the driver of a red car gesticulated to the audiences before cautiously driving through the space between the long wooden bench and the puppet theater (see Figures 2:6, 2:7, and 2:8).

In these moments, the passage of cars in front of the dismayed audiences became a part of the performance as well. At times, the gaze of people sitting on the bench stopped the driver and his car. The driver sensed a powerful invisible barrier, a strange force field whose origin he could not explain. The audiences expressed their irritation by jeers and hand gestures indicating that the driver should turn back and drive around the park.

Despite its limited duration, the event intensified interactions between people. All participants experience tensions in space and are compelled to react in some way.

Furthermore, when the sense of normalcy and the habitual passage of cars through the park is interrupted, the conflicting nature of the plan for the boulevard becomes visible through close encounters between people on the scale of a small park. Such strategies of interruptions of social habits and in the functioning of electrical infrastructure make people aware of the Red Lines and the planning infrastructure behind them. The social conflicts in Zaikin Park are played out by people interacting with material artifacts such as the bench, the electricity transformer, the van, the dirt road, and the roadside stage, and they reveal the potential for space that can be imagined differently.

FIGURE 2:5 - A driver making a pit stop in the middle of the dirt road and looking at the uncustomary events in Zaikin Park. Still from video footage taken by Bojan Boric.
FIGURE 2:6 – Moments after the performance started, a car approached, then stopped. The driver hesitated, uncertain of his right to pass. The moment of tension lasted 24 seconds. From a video sequence recorded by Bojan Boric.
FIGURE 2.7 – After a while, the driver slowly continued on through the space between the audience and the performance on the roadside stage. From a video sequence recorded by Bojan Boric.

FIGURE 2.8 – The audience cheers, happy that the car has finally left. From a video sequence recorded by Bojan Boric.
Stop the Traffic

The “International Architecture Summer School” organized by Oberliht Association took place in Zaikin Park from June 22 until July 31, 2016. During the event, local children tried to completely stop the traffic through the park using temporary traffic signs (see Figure 2.9). The summer school was part of a series of events and workshops that represent a continuation of the “Chisinau Civic Center – A park for the community” project from 2014. One of the aims of the summer school was to construct different kinds of urban furniture built by locals and their children in Zaikin Park. The traffic stop signs and other means of obstruction were placed strategically to completely block traffic (see Figure 3:0). According to one of the activists I interviewed, Alexandru, the event was initiated at the request of local children and with consent from Chisinau Municipality. However, the signs were taken down in the night by unknown perpetrators after just two days. The signs were reinstalled, but then torn down again (see Figure 3:1). When the attempts to stop the flow of traffic through the park become more direct the tenuous mutual tolerance between different groups of residents from the area gave out and the response was a more violent one that resulted in the traffic signs being torn down; apparently, some of the locals accustomed to driving through the park felt provoked by the obstructions and showed their opposition by taking them down.

The efforts led by Oberliht to reclaim the park from the cars also encountered resistance from some residents for whom the road comprised part of the urban infrastructure. For people who relied on the route through the park to travel to work, for pit stops, for trash disposal etc., the structures and people disturbing their usual daily routines were the intruders. These residents acted in resistance to what they saw as an imposition of authority and control over the dirt road. The tearing down of the signs was driven by a reaction against representations of space promoted by Oberliht and others who had put them up.
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One of Oberliht Association’s main efforts in Zaikin Park over the years has been focused on the construction of a permanent playground that would unify the park and completely obstruct the passage of cars. At present however, there are no funds available for such a project, and an aim of various workshops and events over the years has been to develop quick and immediate responses to the “precarious state” of Zaikin Park in the interim period. Many workshops have thus focused on building a playground from donated and recycled building materials with the help of the local inhabitants. In March of 2014, with the help of locals and a few volunteers – including myself – Oberliht Association built an informal playground in the park from large tree trunks donated by a local lumberyard (see Figure 3:2). When the material had been transported to the park, volunteers sawed, assembled and painted tree trunks into climbing structures for children. It was necessary to chain the structures to nearby trees and utility boxes to prevent them from being stolen by locals and used for firewood.

Oberliht’s early activities in Zaikin Park were based on smaller-scale informal interventions. Over time, these small-scale interventions evolved into more formalized initiatives that required construction permits. One step at a time, Oberliht has taken over the role of planning and management of urban space in Zaikin Park from the municipality and developed clear planning strategies to develop the park according to their vision.

Recently, Oberliht Association developed drawings for a project entitled “The Community Center Park – Rehabilitation and revitalization project for Zaikin Park in Chisinau” (see Figures 3:3 and 3:4). The project was developed by the Moldovan architect Ion Andrușceac and has received building permits from the municipality.

During the planning phase, the architect conducted comprehensive site analyses and an inventory of the existing park furniture and other features in collaboration with Oberliht Association. The project includes new landscaping with trees, paving and benches, as well as architectural plans for various playground structures including a basketball court, and facilities such as a water fountain, etc. Since there are currently no financial resources to realize this project, a revised version of the plan with a somewhat reduced scope of work has been submitted to Chisinau City Hall’s participatory budgeting program.

These legally approved plans for the new playground are Oberliht Association’s representations of space through which the members of this organization show their vision of a harmonious community of urban dwellers who use the park for recreation and leisure and are undisturbed by the threat of Boulevard D Cantemir. According to Vladimir Us, the playground project serves as a legal tool that has delayed attempts by local developers to appropriate spaces in the park and use it for their own needs. Furthermore, by obtaining all legal permits, Oberliht Association is also accumulating leverage in relation to the municipal authorities and planners who anticipate construction of the boulevard.

During this interim period, Oberliht is attempting to institutionalize the park by strengthening its legitimacy and legal status by a variety of means. Re-stitching the rupture created by the dirt road is also an interim strategy until it becomes possible to build the playground. Oberliht’s ultimate goal is to stop the plan for Boulevard D. Cantemir, and the construction of the playground and removal of the dirt road from Zaikin Park would be an important step toward reaching that goal.
FIGURE 3.3 – A comprehensive plan for Zaikin Park designates playground areas, new pedestrian paths, green zones, a basketball court, and public facilities such as a new water fountain. Image courtesy of Oberliht Association.

FIGURE 3.4 – Detail drawings for a new water fountain in Zaikin Park. Image courtesy of Oberliht Association.
Concluding remarks

The haunting in Zaikin Park is real. It consists out of social and material processes that motivate the re-stitching of interrupted public space in the city. The act of re-stitching also is one of the strategies of interruption of social habits that make people aware of the presence of the Red Lines. The dirt road becomes the main target of activities, as if the road itself was a materialization of the plan for the boulevard. Social groups attempt to re-activate the park through activities that focus on reconnecting it, and their real agenda is to stop the plan for the boulevard. The diverse spatial practices that concentrate on the space of the dirt road juxtapose the social spaces of activists and residents with those of locals who drive cars through the park, but there is also a confrontation with the plans, utopian visions and technocratic spaces of the Red Lines. In comparison to the contractual agreement discussed in the previous chapter, the re-stitching of Zaikin Park represents engagement in spatial practices in a completely different way: the contract among the three stakeholders represents engagement on a political level and includes lawyers, the municipality and the real estate developers, while the re-stitching of the park is conducted more spatially as a kind of resistance to official planning through artistic practices.

For those who organize to resist the Red Lines, the dirt road is no longer just another informal road in the city. When they attempt to re-stitch the tear in the fabric of Zaikin Park that is the dirt road, these social groups associate the dirt road with the representational space of the unbuilt boulevard through spatial practices of their own and thus assign to it a set of more complex symbolic meanings. The dirt road gains greater symbolic meaning after it has become the focus of civic action. When activists and residents act to re-stitch the space of the dirt road by interrupting the flow of traffic, they are also bringing back to life the plan for the boulevard. The unplanned dirt road thus plays the role of the unbuilt boulevard while Zaikin Park plays the role of urban space threatened by planning. This is what differentiates Zaikin Park from any other neglected spaces in the city and the reason why the dirt road is not just another informal road in the city.

Furthermore, Oberliht activists envision the park as an open-air civic center which they hope could become a more permanent condition over time. During picnics and other moments of inauguration, Zaikin Park is represented as unified public space, even if the actual material re-stitching in this space is ephemeral and temporary, and cars continue to drive through the park.

The repeated inaugurations of the park over the years also represent moment of interruptions of social habits by people who drive through the park or appropriate it in other ways. The picnics and other performances are meant to re-stitch what Oberliht and StudioBASAR members perceive as the broken social spaces of the park.

The waiting period and the sense of uncertainty caused by the legal ambiguity of the Red Lines motivate the activities in Zaikin Park. The roles change and different actors’ positions of power are not stable. Until the legal status of the plan for the boulevard is resolved, Chisinau Municipality has withdrawn from the financing and management of Zaikin Park. However, the municipality enforces regulations through the permit process as they allow only temporary construction in the path of the Red Lines. The dirt road exists probably because the planners perceive its presence in the park as temporary condition. People who use the park – including Oberliht Association, the inhabitants and others – understand that the temporary status of objects and ephemerality of events is a ticket for survival in this space during the interim time. Oberliht has seized the opportunity to assert authority over the park by devising plans for temporary structures that obstruct the dirt road and by continuously reactivating the social spaces in the park. Oberliht sees the plan for a playground as the final stage in the reunification of Zaikin Park. The fact that the project has been legally approved and that there are permits for its construction also help Oberliht gain leverage over other actors including the municipality, although funding for it cannot be obtained for the time being. Oberliht’s goal in the intervening time is to assign institutional meaning to the park by calling it a “civic center” and organizing outdoor community activities there, but when the dirt road has been removed and the playground is built, their plan is to establish Zaikin Park as a formidable material, social and legal obstacle to the plan for the boulevard.

If the dirt road through Zaikin Park had never existed, the situation would be different. Without this dirt road, Oberliht and other activists would be less likely to recognize a significant threat to the space of the park.
Under the current circumstances, they perceive the dirt road as a wound, a fissure and a break in the social and material space of the park. Without the dirt road, this traumatized tissue would be less visible, and the target of direct action would thus be even less identifiable.

In such hypothetical circumstances, it is far less likely that the space of the park would become as contested as it is today, although the threat of the Red Lines would still be present. It is also likely that most of the activities aimed at opposing the plan for the boulevard would not take place in Zaikin Park, but elsewhere in the city, where the threat of the Red Lines to the existing urban and social fabric appeared more pronounced.

The exploration of events that unfold in Zaikin Park can prove valuable for understanding similar situations in other contexts where the legal status of plans is disputed, and where planning practice requires a more nuanced and deeper contextual understanding of diverse social forces engaged in the production of urban spaces. Critical exploration of spatial practices that emerge when urban plans become ineffective but still haunt society and compel people to action can reveal unacknowledged aspects of urban development and facilitate assessment of shifts in power among the stakeholders who operate in the city.
CHAPTER IV

Urban Planning as Memory Management

The Case of the Zaikin Monument

The Ghost Boulevard
The Case of the Zaikin Monument

One evening in the early spring of 2014, I met the young local activist and architect Alexandru in Zaikin Park. Alexandru told me stories about the neighborhood around Zaikin Park, reflecting on the many times when Chisinau had been almost completely destroyed and how often it had been rebuilt during its tumultuous past. He explains that the history of Chisinau was repeatedly erased and recreated as the country’s boundaries and politics changed, but that there is one character that persists and looms large over this neighborhood.

It’s funny, because you know the last important historical person who lived here was Zaikin. He was a sportsman, I think this was about a hundred years ago, and he was a really strong guy, he was an athlete. He won a few world championship medals in Paris and in other places as well. So even today, you see some guys who come to this park to work out because of Zaikin.

He is famous because he was a world wrestling champion, a great fighter and one of the first aviators in the big Russian territory. He was also involved in many different stunts and sport disciplines. The most important thing about him was that he was a great athlete with enormous strength. For example, he performed circus stunts where he would demonstrate his strength by letting a car drive over his chest.

After a brief pause, Alexandru continues:

The story is that he fell in love with a Moldovan girl and stayed here in Chisinau. This part of Moldova was Romanian at the time, and after that it was Russian for some years, and then Romanian again,
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with new monuments, abandoned or destroyed. Empty urban spaces are a main characteristics of Chisinau today, as are abandoned structures and neglected parks – powerful and haunting evidence of repeated attempts to erase the city’s past. Today, Chisinau is a city of voids where absences and suppressed and omitted memories are brought back in the uncertain spaces along the path of the Red Lines of Boulevard D. Cantemir.

In Chisinau today, where the authority over urban planning is contested, diverse actors are involved in shaping history through the planning process. I explore which histories and legacies are celebrated and represented in the struggle for memory and the meaning of heritage in the city.

In this chapter, I discuss urban planning as a practice of writing histories through the notion I call “memory management.” Urban planning as memory management entails a struggle for hegemony over heritage and contested histories in the city. Scholars Pyrs R. Gruffud, David Herbert and Angela Piccini define heritage as “mediation between society and its past,”267 while heritage scholar Feras Hammami emphasizes that the notion of heritage is an expression of power, and as such sees it as “political instrument in deliberate building of imagined community.”268 Furthermore, Hammami argues that the notion of heritage is a socially constructed, fluid and unstable concept. When I discuss memory management in Chisinau, I am referring to a contest over memories and identities of place in which different groups negotiate meanings of the past and foreground different values.

Much of the material in this exploration includes subjective testimonies, hearsay, unproven allegations from news media, and legends – all of which can be considered partly fictional and partly based on real events. In the words of David Lowenthal, “the truth in history is not the only truth about the past; every story is true in countless ways, ways that are more specific in history and more general in fiction.”269

and then Russian again. So, the people living here were confused. They would say, “Oh, today I am in Romania, and tomorrow I’ll be in Russia.” Ivan Zaikin was Russian, but one day he realized that without having moved anywhere he lived in Romania. His character was interesting because he promoted a healthy lifestyle and inspired others to do sports so many years ago.

There is a funny legend about Zaikin as an aviator. He was a large man and weighed about a hundred kilos. He and his friend, another big guy who was a writer, tried to fly together in a small biplane and they crashed. Even though the plane was completely destroyed, they survived. Can you imagine they crashed because they were too heavy for the plane?

The many legends about the local hero Ivan Mihajlovic Zaikin (1880–1948) reflect a specific urban character of Chisinau as a city composed of urban villages, where the sense of community identity and pride are perpetuated through narratives that glorify this local figure who lived in the neighborhood.265 It is well documented that he left Russia in 1917, during the Bolshevik Revolution. In 1927 he settled in Chisinau, which was a Russian-speaking town at the time, and he married Anna Fominichna.266

When geopolitical shifts led to the annexation of the region of Bessarabia by the Soviets in 1940, Zaikin found himself living within the borders of the Soviet Union. Shortly after, in 1941, the country was invaded by German troops and Moldova was integrated into the Kingdom of Romania. When Moldova became part of the Soviet Union again in 1945, Zaikin was invited to Leningrad to participate in the 60th anniversary of national athletics in the USSR. Zaikin lived in Chisinau until his death in 1948 at the age of 69.

Famous ghosts who are attached to specific urban spaces – like that of Zaikin – reveal memories of past traumas from social, political and economic transformations. Nearly 70 percent of the buildings in Chisinau were destroyed during WWII. Since 1989, many Soviet-era buildings and ideological monuments have been moved to peripheral locations, replaced in 265 Different historic sources describe Zaikin as a man of many talents: he was a weightlifter, a circus performer, one of Russia’s first aviators and a very successful wrestler. Although Zaikin had no formal education and was illiterate, many of his friends were well-known artists, writers, poets, engineers, etc. According to some legends, Zaikin even knew the Russian mystic and healer Grigori Rasputin, who was closely connected to the tsar family.
Appropriations of Memory

On May 5, 2016 the International Foundation for Assistance to Veterans and Invalids of Sport (IFAVIS) presented the project for a monument to commemorate the legendary Moldovan athlete Ivan Zaikin (see Figure 0:2). It was the second day of public meetings organized by Oberliht Association for the discussion of different visions for the renewal of Zaikin Park (see Figure 0:3). The meeting brought together locals, representatives from Chisinau Municipality, local real estate developers, and activists. IFAVIS had selected Zaikin Park as the monument’s location because of its proximity to the house where Ivan Zaikin had lived for many years, which is also registered as one of Chisinau’s local historic and cultural monuments.

With their proposal, IFAVIS promotes the vision that the house and the new monument to Zaikin in the park would be integrated in a single spatial concept and function as a memorial complex to commemorate deceased Moldovan athletes. According to the proposal, the memorial would occupy the entire space of the park and feature a bronze sculpture of Ivan Zaikin in its center. The monument’s position in the original proposal is in direct conflict with the path of the Red Lines of Boulevard D. Cantemir.

I met the deputy chairman of IFAVIS Valery Vladimirovich Zabolotny for an interview at Café Propaganda on Alexey Shchusev Street in October 2016. Valery is a man in his early forties, and like Zaikin, a former wrestler. During the interview, Valery presented the proposal for the monument, which he says would “honor Ivan Zaikin and all deceased athletes of Moldova.” Valery is an ethnic Bulgarian living in Chisinau. IFAVIS was established in 2007, he tells me, and is what he describes as a non-governmental, non-profit organization supported by many public figures such as athletes from Russia, Bulgaria, Ukraine and Moldova. IFAVIS is run from its headquarters in Moscow by its founder and chairman Grigory Ivanovich
Karamalak, a former free style wrestler. According to Valery, most of the residents of the neighborhood around Zaikin Park are familiar with the legends of Zaikin, and his fame extends far beyond national borders. When the monument is built, he says, the house and the monument to Zaikin would complement each other and create a memorial complex for visitors. “The idea is to make the house a museum and the monument a pilgrimage site for young athletes from the whole country.” Valery says that during the Soviet Era and until the early 1990s, there was a large-scale wrestling competition in honor of Zaikin every year in Chisinau. Lasting for about a week, the competition drew hundreds of wrestlers from the Soviet republics. After hearing this, I began to wonder how much of the Zaikin legend is truly an authentic local story; perhaps Zaikin’s identity was in fact incorporated into different official histories over time.

During our meeting, Valery showed me a promotional video depicting how IFAVIS intends to transform the park (see Figures 0:4 and 0:5). According to the animation, the monument to Zaikin would stand in the middle of the park. The fly-through depicts green landscaped areas with rows of trees lining ceremonial foot paths that lead to a plaque with the names of deceased Moldovan athletes and the Zaikin monument. The Zaikin sculpture itself is around three-meters-high and will be cast in bronze. The author of the memorial concept and the monument is a local artist by the name of Andrej Dohoteru. According to Valery, the artist has designed many monuments sponsored by the Moldovan state and Chisinau Municipality.

His previous works include smaller artistic sculptures, most of which are in metal; several public monuments celebrating Romanian cultural heritage and history; and monuments commissioned by the Moldovan intelligence agency. One example of his work is the recently constructed monument to Moldovan law enforcement officers who fell in the armed conflict on Dniester in 1992, when the Trans-Dniester region broke away from Moldova. This state-sponsored monument secured the event its place in

FIGURE 0:4 - The original proposal. Zaikin monument stands in the center of Zaikin Park together with a memorial dedicated to deceased Moldovan athletes.

FIGURE 0:5 - Zaikin Park, envisioned by IFAVIS as a “pilgrimage site.” The existing dirt road would be replaced by a ceremonial foot path leading to the monument to Ivan Zaikin.
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Valery also describes IFAVIS’ plans to purchase the house on Strada Ivan Zaikin 7 where Zaikin lived from 1927-1948 and convert it into a museum. “Besides becoming a pilgrimage site, when converted into a memorial space, Zaikin Park would attract international tourists to this part of town and everyone in the neighborhood could benefit from this project.” The conversion of Zaikin’s former house into a museum is an important component of IFAVIS’ plan to monumentalize the park.

Today, Zaikin’s former house is a privately-owned home, and the land on which it stands was privatized in 1989. This one-level structure is one of the twenty-six historic architectural monuments that are located in the path of Boulevard D. Cantemir. As mentioned above, it is officially considered a monument of local architectural value. The position of the masonry wall bordering the site is aligned with one of the red lines, indicating that the property boundary was realigned to coincide with the path of the future boulevard (see Figure 0:7). In the many years since Zaikin’s death, the house has been adapted for use by different inhabitants. It is debatable whether the historic significance of the house is reflected through its present material condition because much of the original appearance, structure, material ornament and detail have been altered over the years.

Valery describes his vision for the house when IFAVIS has bought the property:

The house has been transformed into a new contemporary home; it has been made comfortable for living. The windows are new; it’s not a museum – it’s a new house. We need to make it look like an old historic house again using materials, objects and furniture from the time period. The roof is still the original construction; the fireplace is original and so is the façade. But the windows need to be changed so that the house looks old, and so does the wood floor, which is also new. We need to artificially make things look older, to make it “retro.” We also need to gather artifacts associated with Ivan Zaikin: medals, photographs, old portraits, etc.

In other words, the house would be “conserved” via simulated historic authenticity.


Valery expressed his frustration with the many “bureaucratic obstacles” facing the entire memorial project today. Chisinau’s current municipal government does not support the monument to Zaikin, he says – according to Valery, City Hall’s main objection is the location of the monument, which interferes with the position of the boulevard’s Red Lines. This is where the conflict begins over which ghost will become materialized in the space of the park: the boulevard, or the monument to Zaikin.

IFAVIS modified their original proposal somewhat, moving the monument away from the center of the park to the area outside of the Red Lines. Even in the revised plan however, it is evident that IFAVIS has not abandoned their plan for the entire memorial complex: the ceremonial paths leading to the monument remain inside the zone defined by the Red Lines (see Figures 0:9 and 1:0).

Valery believes that political changes and new elections could improve IFAVIS’ chances to obtain all required approvals for Zaikin’s monument because the political climate is crucial when it comes to decisions regarding the construction of monuments; political support from the highest instances...
Valery is convinced that the Zaikin memorial project would be easier to realize if it were incorporated into Oberliht’s project to revitalize the park. IFAVIS sees Oberliht Association as a legitimate actor whose initiatives in Zaikin Park have received municipal support in the past; furthermore, Chisinau Municipality has assigned Oberliht Association a certain degree of control over planning and management of the park space for the liminal time of waiting for the boulevard.

The neighborhood community group and Oberliht Association consider the memory and the legends of Zaikin part of the area’s local heritage, and they have also mobilized the memory of Ivan Zaikin in their opposition to the Red Lines. They do not, however, share IFAVIS’ vision regarding memorializing the figure of Zaikin and representing it in public space, and nor do they share their ideas about the future use of Zaikin Park.

During one of the events organized by Oberliht Association in Zaikin Park, artist Jan Svoboda conducted an artistic performance entitled “The Monument to Ivan Zaikin.”280 He gathered groups of people in front of Zaikin’s house who lifted weights together (see Figure 1.1). Tiny barbells made from chestnuts were scattered everywhere around the park in front of Zaikin’s house, and the participants – which included local children and young men and women – giggled and feigned difficulty, as if picking up very heavy objects. According to the artist, the performance was intended to challenge the conventional notion of monuments as expressions of posterity and power.

The kind of monuments that materialize in the path of the Red Lines in Zaikin Park today are temporary events and performances where people gather for only a few hours. Today, the ephemeral power of the unbuilt outperforms the appearance of permanence and posterity of built material monuments. Instead of being cast in bronze, they are recorded and posted on YouTube.


FIGURE 1:0 - The revised permit drawings submitted to the local Riscani District, where the monument to Zaikin is outside of the zone defined by the red lines.
“Hijacking” and “Smuggling in” as Planning Practice

Shortly after meeting Valery Vladimirovich from IFAVIS, I met with Vitalie Sprinceana, a sociologist and a member of Oberliht Association. Vitalie is against the idea of building the monument to Zaikin and an entire memorial complex in the park, and his frustration with IFAVIS’ efforts to build the memorial were increasingly evident during our conversation.

Vitalie spoke of what he called “difficulties dealing with many different people and organizations who invent methods to claim control over the park in one way or another.” The park space, he said, is constantly under various “threats” and “attacks”:

While there are developers who want to build parking spaces in the park, there is a road with garbage trucks and a trash disposal installed by the municipality, and at the same time someone else is trying to take over the park by building a monument.

Visibly irritated by the idea of the memorial, Vitalie lists negative consequences of building the monument to Ivan Zaikin, arguing it would render the park exclusive and monofunctional. Vitalie imagines a scenario where international wrestling delegations come to visit and place flowers on the monument—he is certain that they would hold ceremonies and forbid others to use the park for other purposes. According to Vitalie, the plan to convert the park into a memorial site where hundreds of people would gather to pay homage to Zaikin and where they would hold processions along the broad ceremonial paths to the monument interferes with the activists’ concept for the space of the park as an “open multifunctional democratic space.” Furthermore, IFAVIS is attempting to push forth an agenda by what he calls “hijacking” activities by other groups and civic initiatives. He recounts his experience of when IFAVIS joined the participatory project for renovation of Zaikin Park:

They wanted to smuggle it in, to insert their project for the monument into our project. We said no, no, no. It’s a monument, something totally new, it has its own regulations, and it is very hard to erect a monument. You need a permit from the Ministry of Culture; it is completely a different thing. It is not like a temporary stage that you could remove in a day. So, they wanted to get the permit—they are these old school guys, sports guys. We’ve suggested putting the monument closer to the house. But they want to put it right in the middle of the park. We feel that the monument would kill the park: if you put this sacred place in the middle of the populated area, you’re suddenly banishing people from it; you’re preventing other activities, children will not be able to play in the park because it is a monument: there are flowers here, how dare they play here?!

According to Vitalie, Oberliht has held a series of meetings with IFAVIS. He describes how they “appeared out of nowhere” in 2014 and then disappeared for a couple of years. Then they showed up again in 2016 with the slightly modified proposal. They were willing to meet the neighbors and other actors and present the monument project during the organized events when discussions were being held about possible improvements in the park; by joining the discussion, they sought to avoid planning regulations. When they realized that building the monument would require numerous permits and many legal procedures, IFAVIS seized the opportunity to participate in the civic rehabilitation project for Zaikin Park. IFAVIS was using all kinds...
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of “bluffs” according to Vitalie:

They thought they could bypass the planning system if they inserted the monument in our plan and jumped on the activism bandwagon. Another time, about two years ago, they claimed that the sculpture of Zaikin was already finished, that they had gotten all the permits and it was ready to be installed on the site. None of this was true. Two years ago, they proposed exactly the same plan; very little or nothing had been changed except that the monument had been moved slightly to outside of the red lines.

I asked Vitalie Sprinceana whether he had any recollection of the large-scale sporting events and pilgrimages in honor of Ivan Zaikin during the Soviet Era of which Valery had spoken earlier. To the best of his knowledge, he said, there were no such officially organized events, because the Soviet state prosecuted any allegiances other than those to the State, and Zaikin was not considered a Soviet political icon. On the contrary, he was a thoroughly apolitical figure.

If there were any kind of pilgrimages they were not official, and if there were pilgrimages I’m certain we would have known about them. I didn’t know anything about the organization before they started trying to build the monument. When they told me that IFAVIS has hundreds of members and that there would be large-scale pilgrimages with thousands of people, I began to wonder: Who are these people, and where do they come from?

As Vitalie says, officially organized pilgrimages in the Soviet Union would have been possible only under the auspices of the state apparatus.

I don’t think that Valery is old enough to remember the Soviet rituals from the 1970s; he appears to be in his early 40s. I don’t know what he is trying to do; Is he trying to retroactively build the history of his movement from different stories and events and to exaggerate some aspects of the story? Or maybe he is right and there is an underground history of the Soviet Union we still have to uncover because it didn’t leave any traces.

Other sources indicate that there are some competitions that honor Zaikin. According to one local news blog, every year weightlifters from around Moldova still compete for the Zaikin prize in Chisinau.281

In the end, Vitalie said, the vision for the Zaikin monument reached critical levels when the strategies to build it began to involve attempts to “deify” Zaikin. According to Vitalie, the discussion with IFAVIS became “really weird” when members of IFAVIS asserted that Zaikin was a saint for them.

As one can conclude from the interviews, in their attempt to bypass the mainstream legal planning process, IFAVIS is seeking to hijack the participatory project to renovate Zaikin Park by making a heritage claim on the figure of Zaikin and by “smuggling” their agenda into Oberliht’s project.

In the struggle between the ghosts, IFAVIS looks for different ways to claim planning legitimacy, claiming ownership over the park by appropriating the local community’s collective memory. Here, we can also see how different heritage claims affect the ways in which the space of Zaikin Park could be used. The heritage contest not only frames how the ideas about the past are constructed and what is accepted as official history, but it also frames the future use of urban spaces. Furthermore, IFAVIS is attempting to re-write the history of their own organization by tracing it back to the Soviet Era; the large-scale sports events, processions and pilgrimages in honor of Ivan Zaikin that may or may not have happened serve to establish historical continuity and a link to the history of the Soviet Union, much like the origin of the boulevard’s Red Lines is traced to Alexey Shchusev’s 1947 Master Plan to legitimize the latest plans for urban development in Chisinau.

If the monument and the memorial to Ivan Zaikin were ever completed, the park would become a monofunctional space and displace any other activities. By dedicating a place to only one interpretation of history, claims are made about what happened, as well as about who can use and interpret the future of that place.

The Ghost Boulevard

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On one of my trips to Chisinau, I came across a map that could only be bought at a kiosk on Boulevard Dacia. This very functional and detailed urban street map was made especially for Chisinau’s taxi drivers. It not only helps them find addresses, but it also enables them to navigate through a complex layering of memory of the city. Assembled in book format and copied as blueprints, the past and present street names from the Tsarist, Romanian, Soviet- and post-Soviet periods are printed side by side in the carefully hand-drawn maps of Chisinau, which have been reproduced as guides through the living memory of Chisinau (see Figure 1:2). This map reveals “complications of the temporal and scalar heterogeneity of the now since people coexist within increasingly different temporal regimes and irregular scales.”

The name of the street on which Zaikin’s house is located changed names a few times through its history: under pre-WWII Romanian rule, it was called Dragoș-Vodă. In the preceding Russian empire, it had been Kamenolomnaia (Quarry Street); this is an indication that the Soviets had named the street in acknowledgement of Ivan Zaikin, although he was not considered an important political figure for them. In 2010, the Moldovan postal service issued a postage stamp with an image of Ivan Zaikin to commemorate the 130th anniversary of his birth (see Figure 1:3); presumably, this was because as a figure, Zaikin is also part of Moldovan national

Memory Management in the Politicized Context of Chisinau

In contemporary Chisinau, the past is treated as what the urban anthropologist Francisco Martinez calls a “living memory” rather than as history. In other words, the past is part of everyday reality where the “gap between past and present is continuously contested.” Social scientist and geographer Doreen Massey argues that in different readings of the past, the perception of time needs to be regarded as inseparable from the notion of place, “[p]laces as depicted on maps are places caught in a moment; they are slices through time.”

The street names in Chisinau have changed so often that the city maps show the old and new names of the same street next to each other; this makes it easier for citizens from all generations to navigate the city – not only through space, but also through time and memory. Different generations of urban dwellers remember the names of streets and places differently; their points of reference, feelings and attitudes towards the communist past of Moldova are diverse.

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identity, representing a unified state.

There are multiple meanings attached to the character of Ivan Zaikin. His legend survived many periods of historic turbulence and political turmoil in the 20th century – wars, shifting borders and population displacements. In a similar way, the plan for Boulevard D. Cantemir keeps returning to haunt the present. The figure of Zaikin shares certain qualities with the present character of Zaikin Park: the park is a contested space, defined by uncertainty, and different groups are trying to define and appropriate it; like Zaikin, its deeply complex identity makes different people and groups feel entitled to latch on to it.

The figure of Ivan Zaikin is unique, because he is an apolitical figure in the politicized public memory of Moldavia – this also leaves his character more open to interpretation and has made it possible to assign him different personalities and include him in different national and ideological frameworks. If Ivan Zaikin’s had been a strong political identity, he would be far less adaptable – but as it is, he is a very well-suited figure for understanding the complexity of conflicts between different forces in space.

Vitalie Sprinceana reflected on his knowledge about the “real” Zaikin and his role in collective memory of the city:

The first time I heard about Zaikin was in the 1990s in a Soviet book written in Cyrillic. It featured a lot of people from the beginning of the twentieth century – inventors, engineers, writers, etc. There were also some people who were difficult to put in a category – Zaikin was one of them.

However, he said, Zaikin was never fully embraced by any regime, and his role was limited:

Even if the legend of Zaikin lives on, he never became an important national figure in any period. Nowadays this is perhaps because he belonged to the Russian-speaking minority of this urban village, which is not so appealing to Romanian nationalists, who were hesitant to adopt him as one of their important historic figures. The presence of the Red Lines makes it possible for organizations such as IFAVIS to project their ideas about the past onto the figure of Ivan Zaikin in Zaikin Park. The powerful sense of uncertainty about the future in the post-Soviet era is another reason why the legend of Zaikin is still so strong.

The perceptions of time, the past, present and future have transformed since the fall of the Berlin Wall. According to historian Pierre Nora, during communism, the notion of time was organized around the concept of “revolution,” and in order to prepare for the future it was clear which pasts had to be “suppressed, forgotten, and destroyed.” After the fall of communism, Pierre Nora continues, the linear conception of time was disrupted and “the unity of historical time” became “shattered.” I argue that today, in times of change and uncertainty, the traditional bonds from the present and future to the past are broken, and the importance of memory has gathered new momentum.

Furthermore, a sense of loss, uncertainty and anticipation in the path of the Red Lines intensifies contests over memory. Boris Buden discusses how a sense of permanence has been replaced by an experience of constant change and a sense of loss and the “exaggerated importance of memory.” When there is uncertainty about the future, societies become more oriented towards sorting out the past. As Boris Buden writes, “since there is nothing we can do about the future, let’s change the past!” According to Pierre Nora, the “obsessive recovery of memory” in Eastern Europe was what led to “the age of ardent, embattled, almost fetishistic memorialism.” Furthermore, Nora talks about the period after the fall of the Soviet Union, when the “recovery of memory” often involved “settling scores with the past.” During this period, memories were managed through urban planning in Chisinau via selective erasures of the past, e.g. the demolition of buildings and monuments and changed street names. At the same time, there were efforts to revive memories that suited the dominant ideological narratives of the present. For example, when Moldova gained independence from
the Soviet Union, the city’s monument to Lenin was moved from in front of the parliament building and placed on the parking lot of Mold Expo, a fairground on the edge of the city; it was not destroyed or buried under ground, which was the fate of many monuments in Eastern Europe after the fall of the Berlin Wall. In Chisinau, the Lenin monument was simply moved to a less visible location, away from the central focus of public attention. Moving the monument to a suburban parking lot, a site on the periphery of social visibility, displaces its prominent position in the official history—both literally and figuratively.

Avery Gordon describes how “what’s been suppressed or concealed” remains “very much alive and present.” She argues that “haunting raises specters, and it alters the experience of being in linear time, alters the way we normally separate and sequence the past, present and the future.” The fact that the monument was not completely destroyed is also a reflection of Moldovan society’s ambiguous relationship to its Soviet past, leaving as it does some space for a possible return of the specter of communism.

Today, issues of identity and representations of power in public spaces are highly politicized in Chisinau. The moment of time from which the past is perceived affects how perception of the past is shaped and “the impulse to tell new stories about the past shows that time itself is a perspective in the construction of histories.” Instead of histories being re-written, the past is re-presented and invested with contemporary meaning. In other words, we not only perceive the past with a certain bias, but we also shape it through the contemporary ideological perspective reflecting the needs of current politics. Eve Blau discusses how public places in the city become highly contested territory between different ideologies, and she critically examines how changing political power and ideological transformations are spatialized through the unstable relationship between monuments and the public spaces they occupy. Blau argues that social and political struggles in society are reflected in public spaces and that public spaces are “barometers of political change,” but also that public spaces are where history can be made. When different ghosts confront each other in Chisinau, a local, neighborhood park becomes a focus of a larger political contest for control of the planning process. The practice of planning aims to draw boundaries and differentiates not only spaces but also memories. The practice of planning can thus serve as a tool for the legitimization of political and social power. The story about IFAVIS and their monument to Zaikin also shows how the past can find its way into the present in different ways. Eve Blau describes a similar practice that she calls “cultural recycling,” which involves looking to the past and recomposing memories to suit contemporary purposes. Perhaps even the less known histories of the Soviet Union are recycled when members of IFAVIS attempt to frame the history of their organization by connecting the figure of Ivan Zaikin to the rituals of the Soviet Union.

According to Dolores Hayden, the practice of planning has a specific role in writing the history of places. For example, some memories are to be prioritized, while others are to be erased or suppressed through planning.

Those with hegemony over urban planning also control the official history. David Harvey defines “the knowledge of the past” as “a political resource, and that control and interpretation of a particular version of the past is related to power differentiations and the legitimization of authority.” Boris Buden also argues that the legitimacy of political power relies on the power of memory, and the past is mobilized to achieve those ends.

Earlier, I discussed how, history has been re-written through urban plans by each successive political regime in Chisinau’s different historic periods. This has often been done by selective erasures of built urban memory and the removal of traces of previous politics and ideologies in the city through the implementation of new urban plans. Due to the presence of the Red Lines, Zaikin Park is in danger of vanishing, and many other places, buildings and monuments around it have already disappeared.

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295 Eve Blau and Ivan Rupnik, Project Zagreb: Transition as Condition, Strategy, Practice. (Harvard University, Actar, Barcelona, 2007), 46.
296 Ibid.
298 David Harvey, “Continuity, Authority and the Place of Heritage in the Medieval World,” Journal of Historical Geography 26:1 (2000), 49.
300 Even today, the plan for Boulevard D. Cantemir is presented as an urban renewal project in the 2012 Local Land Use Plan.
The Red Lines are the main cause for the resistance to urban planning in the neighborhood around Zaikin Park. A key aspect of this contest are struggles over who has the power to write history and assign meaning to places. Furthermore, suspension of the official planning process has negatively affected the credibility of an effective realization of urban plans, and many actors are reviving different aspects of the past to gain legitimacy and agency over the planning process.

As mentioned elsewhere in this thesis, Chisinau Municipality is losing control over urban planning. According to anthropologists Chiara De Cesari and Michael Herzfeld, the contemporary socio-physical reorganization and marginalization of state and municipal responsibilities result in increased “alienation and monumentalization.” Furthermore, de Cesari and Herzfeld link the right to heritage to the right to the city, asserting that the struggle to protect these rights is a struggle over how the past is interpreted and mobilized.301 Heritage scholar Rodney Harrison argues that politics focusing on the preservation of heritage often intensify when historic environments are under threat of “demolition and destruction.”302 Locals and artist collectives in Chisinau organize to preserve Zaikin Park by summoning the ghost of Ivan Zaikin through artistic performances and campaigning to save the park in the name of preserving their city’s cultural heritage. For them, the Red Lines not only represent the threat of destruction of their homes and the built urban fabric, but also the threat of their identity and the history of their community being erased.

According to Leonie Sandercock, planning professionals have a special role in shaping the subject by molding their understanding of history. She argues that this is the best way to change the “very definition of what constitutes planning.” She adds also that there are other relevant forms of planning that exist outside official urban planning because “the alternative traditions of planning always existed outside of the state and sometimes opposed to it.”303

Today, in the context of transforming and ambiguous urban governance in Chisinau, different actors, the municipality, Oberliht Association and IFAVIS are competing to determine who has the right to interpret the past and which groups have the power over planning. In their resistance to the Red Lines, these three main actors engage in memory management through planning practices based on their different agendas and divergent readings of history. For example, Oberliht Association mobilizes the legend of Ivan Zaikin as another means to stop the Red Lines of the boulevard. IFAVIS has proposed building a permanent monument to Zaikin in their attempt to appropriate the entire park. The analyses of conflicts between different ghosts in Zaikin Park shows that relations between heritage and place-making are diverse and conflicting. What is at stake in this contest over collective identities of the neighborhood are the future of the park or the boulevard and the control over urban planning – by Oberliht Association, IFAVIS, or the municipality. In Zaikin Park, the struggle over the ghosts concerns the contest over who will have power over planning and who or what will take control of the park – the construction of the boulevard or the monument.

The two ghosts – the figure of Ivan Zaikin and the plan for Boulevard D. Cantemir – have persisted through different times and have survived many regimes and ideologies. However, neither the monument to Zaikin nor the Red Lines have materialized in built form, and they remain suspended as specters in space and time, returning to reality in different ways, haunting the city. As literature and cultural studies scholar Maria Pilar del Blanco argues, “the ghost is a figure of surprise that does not necessarily appear in exactly the same way, manner or guise. Moreover, it provokes the one it haunts to a response or reaction.”304 As they keep coming back into the present, the specters materialize in new ways and rather than solidifying in the urban environment as built monuments and infrastructures, they play a part in the transforming planning practices.

Thievery in Law as Planning Practice

In May 2017, a few months after meeting with the vice chairman of IFAVIS Valery Zabolotny, I read reports from different Moldovan and international

news media that the leading members of IFAVIS had been arrested after being caught planning to assassinate Vladimir Plahotniuc, a prominent Moldovan politician and businessman, in his office on the built section of Boulevard D. Cantemir. Reports in Romanian, Russian and English popped up one after another: the news portal Balkan Insight announced: "Mystery Surrounds Moldova Assassination;" Radio Free Europe declared: "17 Arrested in Plot to Assassinate Leading Politician." Media reports describe how a collaboration between Moldovan and Ukrainian police resulted in the arrest of an international group of suspects on April 8, 2017 – eight in Moldova and nine in the Ukraine. The police seized money and weapons including a grenade launcher. The main suspects were two Moldovans suspected of planning and ordering the murder in exchange for 200 000 USD. The newspaper articles point to the key role of IFAVIS in organizing the alleged assassination plot:

Later reports showed that one of the detainees was Valery Zabolotny, the deputy chairman of the IFAVIS (International Foundation for Assistance to Veterans and Invalids of Sport). IFAVIS' chairman is no other than Moscow mobster Grigory Karamalak, nicknamed Bolgar. The same news report describes the chairman of IFAVIS Grigory Karamalak as an "influential crime lord" with links to Solntsevskaya Brotherhood, Russia's largest and most powerful organized crime syndicate. Furthermore, according to the article, the interests of this large criminal organization in Moldova are represented through their influence on Moldovan politics. However, some of the articles I read raise doubt regarding whether the assassination plot was real:

The perpetrators were photographed drawing a plan of attack on the Global Business Center in Chisinau, where Plahotniuc has his office, but Nescutu said that it was unlikely that real professional assassins would do such a thing.

The alleged assassination victim, Plahotniuc, is considered Moldova's wealthiest oligarch and is popularly known by the nickname "The Master Puppeteer." He is seldom seen in public, and he gives very few interviews. "He has the image of a controversial character who pulls the strings from the shadows."

Reports in Forbes indicate that Plahotniuc is suspected of having orchestrated the theft of about one billion dollars from three Moldovan banks between 2012 and 2014; that is equivalent to about half of the total reserves of the National Bank of Moldova. He has allegedly also been involved with financing a number of presidential campaigns and has great influence over the country's politics.

After reading the news, I contacted Vitalie Sprinceana. Vitalie claimed to have been surprised by the arrests, but believed that the assassination attempt had been staged. Vladimir Plahotniuc is known in Moldova as a former communist who is trying today to present himself as an advocate of democratic reforms and a pro-EU politician.

As Vitalie saw it, because of Plahotniuc's "rich biography" and many corruption scandals, he could benefit from the role of a victim: as the least popular politician in the country, he was probably trying to whitewash his image by faking the assassination attempt.

The Global Business Center is an office complex with a black glass façade and the place where the assassination was allegedly to be carried out, located on the built section of Boulevard D. Cantemir (see Figures 1:4 and 1:5). According to Vitalie Sprinceana, many Chisinau residents perceive the building as an informal center of political power in Moldova, calling it "the unofficial presidential palace":

308 Ibid.
309 Ibid.
310 Nescutu is the surname of one of the police officers interviewed.
312 Ibid.
Sometimes even political protests and demonstrations are held in the parking lot of this building instead of in front of the parliament building or the presidential palace.

While reading the news reports, I couldn't help but notice common features between the alleged assassin and his victim. According to the media, Plahotniuc also has links to the same crime organization – Solntsevskaya Brotherhood – as Grigory Karamalak, the man who allegedly planned to assassinate him.314 Both own several legitimate businesses, and both contribute to a number of charitable projects. Besides being the chairman of IFAVIS, Karamalak is a sponsor of Moldovan Olympic athletes, while Plahotniuc is a founding partner of the non-profit Edelweiss Foundation315 and numerous other charitable projects throughout Moldova.316

The contemporary Russian organized crime organizations have their origins in the Soviet Union. The term “thief in law” (in Russian: Vory v Zakone), is used to describe someone who is camouflaging his illegal

activities by posing as a legal and legitimate actor in society. According to Serguei Cheloukhine, a social scientist focusing on transnational organized crime and corruption, thieves in law emerged as critical players in the shadow economy of the Soviet Union. The shadow economy, he argues, emerged as the result of “inadequacies of central planning,” supplying products and services the state could not provide, but also serving as the “main catalyst in the formation of organized crime.”

Established in Stalin’s prison camps, these organized crime syndicates grew and eventually spread out into society. Furthermore, they were allowed a certain degree of privilege by the state and they held the exclusive right to criminal activities within the existing regime. In some ways, their function was also to maintain a certain degree of order in Soviet prison camps and later in the rest of society. In the Soviet Union, the criminal underworld enjoyed an exclusive privilege of governing the ungovernable spaces in society. As one of the news articles describes, “they governed the dark gaps in Soviet life beyond reach of the KGB.” According to Serguei Cheloukhine,

Criminal groups appear capable of managing of some social problems. For a number of years, the godfathers of small Russian towns have been considered the highest authority. Criminal money has supported sports, children’s homes, retirement houses, hospitals, drug clinics, and so forth. In Moscow, there is even a theater functioning on grants from criminal groups; some gangsters also supply local police with vehicles, fuel, and clothing.

Professor of public policy Louise I. Shelley writes that organized crime has penetrated all levels of government in the newly independent states of the former Soviet Union. She describes how citizens have traded one form of control for another:

While Shelley argues how during the post-Soviet period in the 1990s, post-Soviet organized crime penetrated the state and has influenced politics at all levels, Serguei Cheloukhine goes even further to claim how “the organized crime groups did not corrupt the state, but rather... in essence became the state.” When political demonstrations take place in the parking lot of the Global Business Center instead of in front of the Parliament, perhaps one could conclude that the citizens of Chisinau perceive the true centers of economic and political power as residing somewhere else in the shadows beyond conventional spaces of democratic representation such as the Parliament.

According to several interviews held with urban planners in Chisinau, in the northern part of the city through which the Red Lines of the boulevard pass there are many illegally built structures, and shadow economy is thriving in the old city. I relate what I call “thievery in law” to a form of shadow planning by IFAVIS in Zaikin Park. Placing the monument in the park through strategies of smuggling and hijacking the participatory planning process is a form of thievery of both the memory of Ivan Zaikin and the space of Zaikin Park, and it is made visible by the presence of the Red Lines.

In Chisinau, organized crime is trying to take over domains that are usually under government control, including urban planning. Today, one of the main struggles concerns hegemony and who has the right to define spaces, and this is a significant part of the planning process. Through memory management, ghosts are becoming legitimizing authorities as with the figure of Zaikin. The space of Zaikin Park is part of this thievery: a small measure meant to influence larger projects that will have a greater impact on urban planning.

Boris Buden argues that the time when a professional historian had

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319 Ibid.
the sole authority to deliver the “truth” about the past is over, and what has replaced history is memory based on “new respect for the past-sense of belonging, collective consciousness, memory, identity, cultural heritage.” However, Buden warns, the absence of authority over history and what he calls “prevailing culture of memorialization” can be misused by various actors who seize the opportunity to claim power and hegemony over society. He refers specifically to the revival of the concept of heritage in the post-Soviet Eastern Europe and criticizes the upsurge of populism and nationalism, where the focus is on the past rather than the future. Early on in this dissertation, I define memory management as battles between ghosts - different actors whose conflicts change relationship between what belongs to memory and history. These conflicts that involve the use of the Red Lines also affect the practice of urban planning.

When it comes to the appropriation of memory and the culture of memorialization in other post-communist contexts, one prominent example is the monumentalization of the entire city center of Skopje in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. The project, entitled “Skopje 2014,” was first presented to the public by the conservative nationalist party VMRO in 2010 and later realized. The grandiose project, comprising architectural edifices and various monuments representing an assemblage of different themes and fragments from antiquity and medieval history, was developed to establish Macedonian identity after the breakup of Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.

According to cultural anthropologist Fabio Mattioli, Citizens in Skopje witnessed, with a mixture of awe and terror, the re-fashioning of their city center in baroque and neoclassical style. In the computer rendering they saw the once socialist, open, and squarely grey buildings replaced by neoclassical columns meant to evoke the Parthenon...hundreds of bronze statues commemorating a range of national heroes – including a bronze depiction of Alexander the Great on horseback in the center of the main square. Accompanying the victorious warrior were a triumphal arch and a monumental church.

When the plan for the boulevard was rejected by the Parliament, the Red Lines of the Boulevard D. Cantemir were no longer legally enforceable. Because of the unresolved status of the main planning documents for a prolonged period of time, ephemeral structures, the garbage disposal plant, the electrical installations, the dirt road, and ghosts such as the Red Lines and Ivan Zaikin dominate the space of Zaikin Park. The existing historical monuments in the path of the Red Lines are fragile and endangered. In its current state, the space of Zaikin Park is continuously contested, and the power relations between the stakeholders are unresolved and ambiguous.

Concluding Remarks

As the ghosts of Zaikin and the Red Lines face each other, they conjure other ghosts that haunt the city and society. These specters have begotten other specters and made them more visible. From the efforts to monumentalize Zaikin Park emerge the specters of communism, organized crime, neoliberal capitalism, corruption, gray areas of economic transaction, histories of past planning practices and institutions of society in transformation that also expose other power relations and hidden spaces of power in Chisinau. The character of Ivan Zaikin is significant because both his figure and the Red Lines of Boulevard D. Cantemir elude definitive political, historic and planning categorizations. Because of their ambiguous characters, their memory can be appropriated by various actors who assign to them different meanings in accordance with their own agendas. Contests over memory reflected through attempts to monumentalize urban spaces mirror society’s political and ideological transformations in many cities. In Chisinau, the sources of power involved in urban planning are dispersed, fragmented and often invisible. When it is unclear whose politics and which social forces...


324 The name “Macedonia” has been a subject of international dispute between Greece and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia that lasted over decades since the break-up of Yugoslavia. The conflict was only recently resolved – in late 2018 – and the new name, Northern Macedonia, was accepted as a compromise by both countries.


326 See Chapter 1 for a discussion on the planning dispute over the future of Chisinau.
have control of the planning process, different memories are revived, mobilized, and recycled as a force to shape the present. The conflicts over control of the planning process concern whose version of the past will be included in the official history. In the circumstances of an uncertain future, the proposition to monumentalize Zaikin Park represents a way to appropriate and shape memory from the perspective of the current individual agendas of actors. The explorations of social forces behind the conflict between the Red Lines of Boulevard D. Cantemir and efforts to build the monument in Zaikin Park reveal diverse and complex relations of power among actors. The exploration of the events in Zaikin Park reveals actors that operate from the shadows of society and engage in planning practices via memory management. In their attempts to appropriate the space of the park, they first claim ownership of the figure of Ivan Zaikin and his legend. In the process, they diffuse the boundaries between official planning and other ways of planning and the boundaries between historical facts and fiction, personal memories and official history by deriving their own empowerment and legitimization from the character of Ivan Zaikin.

The unresolved conflict between the two ghosts – the monument to Zaikin and the Red Lines over the space of the park – reveals that the process of urban planning is haunted by a complex layering of social forces that struggle for hegemony over urban planning together with the state, civic activist groups, locals and diverse economic interests. Realizing the monument to Ivan Zaikin would legitimize the continuous existence of the park space, and it would thus be more difficult to construct the boulevard through the memorial site, even if the statue itself no longer interfered with the path of the Red Lines. However, if built, the monument would also transform the park, rendering it a monofunctional space, and in the future its presence could be used to pressure Oberliht Association and locals who resist the plan for the boulevard to move out of the park. The construction of the monument would have almost equally negative effect on the residents of the neighborhood as the construction of Boulevard D. Cantemir, since it would deny them access to the park. The placement of the monument, ceremonial paths and carefully arranged greenery are likely to restrict and even eliminate other activities in Zaikin Park. The uncertainty about the future caused by the ambiguous legal status of the Red Lines is the motivating force for the continuous contest over memory of place. All parties involved seek legitimacy, and to date, there is no clear resolution to the struggle over space and memory in sight. The final outcome is uncertain, and the monument to Zaikin and the boulevard project are on hold. In the path of the Red Lines, the ghosts possess more power than the real and material structures in space, because within the ghosts is the potential for what could happen in the future, while the built structures are threatened with demolition by the prospect of the planned boulevard.

The events taking place on the scale of the local neighborhood are set against the backdrop of larger-scale economic, political, cultural and social processes that affect urban development. In many cities around the world, different groups of people are engaged in conflicts regarding which memories should be preserved; this is not uncommon. In Chisinau, the main dispute regarding the urban plans for the city has erupted over conflicts about the past, but the urban planning through memory management is more about how the conflicts over heritage determine the future use of public spaces.
Epilogue
The Exorcism of Chisinau’s Spectral Layers

How do ghosts of planning practices from the past shape contemporary urban development? The post-socialist context of Chisinau, Moldova, suggests that there are a number of ghosts of this kind haunting planning, planners, and the planned.

I argue that there are different ghosts haunting the planning process in Chisinau. The unrealized plans live on in the path of the Red Lines of Boulevard D. Cantemir, where the residue of past politics, ideologies and economic processes still remains in planning documents and practices, but also in people’s memories and imagination. Soviet planning has proven to contain particularly resilient specters that haunt today’s planning as they are put to new uses that serve contemporary political and economic agendas, which are often realized through different forms of shadow planning. These ghosts are at once real and imaginary, material and immaterial, and their effects are tangible. My inquiry into the materializations of the Red Lines exposes seemingly endless complexities within the planning process and diverse social and economic forces that lie behind urban development. The Ghost Boulevard does not exist as a built infrastructure in the city; instead, it materializes in different ways through various spatial practices conducted by stakeholders who are involved in contests for control over the planning process.

Because the municipality is unable to enforce the plan for Boulevard D. Cantemir, there are a variety of stakeholders in the small open space known as Zaikin Park, operating in the vacuum left by the lack of institutional control. These stakeholders create their own tactics and invent diverse planning practices in their struggle for control of the planning process. My investigation of how the Red Lines affect social relations between stakeholders in Zaikin Park shows that there is no single powerful actor in charge of the planning process, and that the ghosts persistently wreak havoc, even

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327 See Chapter 4 for a discussion of shadow planning as a form of urban planning related to the shadow economy.
The Ghost Boulevard

when attempts to create new urban spaces are developed for the site.

Rather than rational and unquestioned models for future development, the planning practices used both by professionals and non-professionals in the path of the Red Lines become entangled networks of shifting political interests and diverse private agendas in which various stakeholders compete to make claims on urban development. Furthermore, anticipation and uncertainty about the future generated by the ambiguous legal status of the red lines and the planning moratorium have led to conditions that cannot be adequately explained with the vocabulary available in planning literature. These forces are not structured by binary oppositions such as legal versus illegal, planned versus unplanned, formal versus informal, private versus public, and civil society versus the state. Instead, the explanatory concept of the ghost explicates diverse non-binary relations and spatial phenomena that exist in the liminal spaces in the path of the Red Lines and the times of waiting that they have repeatedly created. The ghost concept also sheds light on the shifting power relations between competing stakeholders and investigates complex planning processes in ways that reveal their true nuances. My inquiries into various materializations of the Red Lines in Zaikin Park in fact reveal a contested planning environment in which a variety of social groups such as local residents, artist collectives, developers, urban planners, city architects from Chisinau Municipality, and shadowy figures from an alleged criminal underground all take part in planning practices – overtly or covertly.

Through a “trialectics of spatiality” defined by Henri Lefebvre, I interrogate the nature of these different conflicting spatial practices in Zaikin Park, which are a response to the Red Lines of Boulevard D. Cantemir. The Red Lines can be related to Lefebvre’s definition of “Representations of Space” since they are the result of official, professional urban planning, but at the same time they can be discussed as “Spaces of Representation” because the various stakeholders imagine them differently and attribute diverse symbolic meanings to the spaces in their path. Furthermore, in response to the imaginary presence of the Red Lines, each social group with a stake in Zaikin Park creates its own social space through conflicting spatial practices. When Oberliht Association and StudioBASAR organize performances and events or build temporary structures to stop cars from passing through Zaikin Park, they are reacting to what they perceive as materializations of the Red Lines in urban space. When local residents and artist collectives attempt to re-stitch Zaikin Park into a “public space” by stopping cars from passing through it, the true motivation behind their actions – stopping the plan for the boulevard from materializing – is quickly revealed.

People anticipate the future of spaces in the path along the Red Lines differently: some perceive them as a threat, while others see them as an opportunity. The anticipation of different outcomes is what drives people to react in various ways, yet the Ghost Boulevard is repeatedly revived through the actions of these diverse competing stakeholders, whatever their view of the future. Although the boulevard may never be built as planned, it continues to materialize and affect planning practices.

When official planning practices are on hold, other ways of planning that have been discussed in this thesis begin to gain momentum. The ambiguity of the Red Lines makes them a useful instrument with which actors with completely different agendas can gain different kinds of legitimacy and access to the planning process. Like ghosts, the Red Lines are imagined and interpreted differently by people because a variety of meanings can be read from their mostly ephemeral presence. For example, for developers, planners, and architects who anticipate future real estate development in the path of the planned Boulevard D. Cantemir, the Red Lines serve as an instrument for property dispossession and privatizations. Locals living near Zaikin Park on the contrary perceive the Red Lines as an abstract force that looms menacingly above the city, threatening the community, and they anticipate that they will be forced to move elsewhere when the boulevard is built.

The red lines define a zone in the city where urban planners from City Hall attempt to reassert control over urban planning by preventing the issuance of permits and via disinvestment in public infrastructures, revealing their own anxieties about their authority over urban spaces in the city. When architects and planners from Chisinau Municipality are unable to enforce plans in the path of the Red Lines, they implement what Oren Yiftachel calls strategies of selective non-planning as a form of urban planning.


Furthermore, City Hall has ceased issuing permits for construction and electricity access in the zone between the Red Lines; in other words, some control over urban development is maintained by strategically turning the switch on or off. Whether permits can be issued or not depends on the present status of the plan for Boulevard D. Cantemir. Thus, as I showed through my notion of the “strategies of interruption” in social, physical and legal infrastructures in Chapter 3, people who live in the path of the Red Lines are made aware of their presence, the potential and actual materialities. Similar strategies of interruption in the functioning of infrastructures are implemented when Oberliht Association stops the traffic along the dirt road passing through Zaikin Park in order to reconnect the social and physical spaces of the park. During these moments, the Red Lines materialize through conflicts between different actors.

The Red Lines show that working against larger plans may mean acting on a small scale. The sources of power that control planning processes are neither clear nor visible today. This often makes it difficult for activists and concerned groups of locals to choose the target of their resistance. For this reason, people act in the most immediate environment of their neighborhood against what they perceive as a threat of the Red Lines of Boulevard D. Cantemir. Furthermore, inside the space between the Red Lines, everyone is awaiting the resolution of the decades-old planning dispute. In liminal times of uncertainty and waiting, the rules continuously change along the path between the Red Lines. Who has most control over the planning process? It remains uncertain who will prevail. Today it may be the artist collectives, the developers, or the planners from Chisinau Municipality; tomorrow corrupt political and economic figures or crime organizations may gain dominance. Gilles Deleuze distinguishes between two systems of society, the disciplinary society and the society of control. In disciplinary societies there is a beginning and an end to a process; in the control society, there is always an ongoing transition, a transformation, a place where nothing is ever finished. The space in the path of the Red Lines is suspended between these two societies. One is the relic of the disciplinary society, determined by disciplinary judicial norms expressed through the state of the “apparent acquittal-between two confinements,” and the other – the control society – is defined by “limitless postpone-

ment,” constantly changing characteristics. By recasting some forms of urban planning in Chisinau as selective non-planning, it becomes evident that the continuous postponement of decisions regarding changes to existing urban plans can also be seen as a way for planners who advocate the construction of the boulevard to retain control over the process of urban development, and also as a disciplinary measure of sorts with the help of the red lines. Furthermore, the establishment of an interstitial zone in the city between the Red Lines, where planning regulations only allow temporary construction and where building permits are selectively approved or denied, is a way to reserve land for the construction of the boulevard and larger scale urban developments. The very presence of the Red Lines in the planning documents invites development, for instance, of new residential towers immediately outside the space defined by their path. The mostly temporary structures that exist in the path of the Red Lines could be demolished easily, while disinvestment in street infrastructures and parks creates a sense that this interstitial zone in the city is a no-man’s-land, abandoned by planning authorities and even left to decay.

Whilst awaiting a resolution to the ongoing planning dispute regarding the plan for the boulevard, Chisinau Municipality has delegated some responsibilities for developing detailed urban plans, financing public infrastructure works, and managing urban spaces to other stakeholders such as Oberliht Association and the developers; this enables the municipality to maintain control of urban development at a comfortable distance during the time of uncertainty where the time of waiting gains agency and produces materializations of its own.

Through the engagement in Zaikin Park, Oberliht Association is also developing urban and architectural plans, acting as general contractors and consultants, and claiming ownership of and control over the future of Zaikin Park.

Furthermore, the organization has taken over the role of managing urban planning and development of Zaikin Park and the surrounding street infrastructures and utilities from Chisinau Municipality. Among other things, they organize public events and performances in the park in addition to their political engagement.

330 Gilles Deleuze, “Postscript on the Societies of Control,” October 59 (1992), 4-5.
Through Oberliht’s involvement in Zaikin Park, the association no longer fits the mold of a civic activist organization acting simply in public or private interests, but nor can they be narrowly defined as acting for civic interests. Through activities, planning proposals and performances and events in Zaikin Park, Oberliht imposes their own ideas about public spaces inspired by various contemporary Western discourses concerning “democratic” notions of public space that contradict the aspirations and attitudes of many Chisinau’s inhabitants;331 many locals wonder for example what the artist collectives are, and what they and other activists are doing in the park.

Oberliht transforms the way it operates as it adapts to the transforming circumstances and adjusts its strategies along the way. They act both with and against Chisinau Municipality. Furthermore, in spite of Oberliht’s opposition to the boulevard plan, the municipality includes Oberliht Association as a legitimate stakeholder in the planning process, as can be seen in the example of the contract to renovate Zaikin Park discussed in Chapter 2 of this thesis. The contract also renders Oberliht an agent of privatization when the collective’s role becomes more complex and involves interests of the developer.

Oberliht’s diverse forms of political, social, and economic engagement show that this emergent organization operates as a “concerned interest group” in urban planning between the state, the public sphere, and private interests. The association’s tactics and operations vary from one circumstance to the next and their artistic practice grows intertwined with political practice as they work with planning bureaucracy and through direct action. Oberliht’s involvement in negotiating a contractual agreement with real estate developers and Chisinau Municipality illustrates their complex and entangled role in the urban planning process. The contract that regulates the roles and responsibilities of the three main stakeholder’s parties goes beyond the public–private partnership and is defined by overlapping responsibilities and through the triangulation of public, private, and civic sectors.

In the interstitial no-man’s-land defined by the path of the Red Lines, all of the stakeholders are engaged in appropriations of urban spaces. Developers build paved parking lots on land adjacent to their properties; the municipality’s garbage trucks drive through Zaikin Park; and locals use public spaces for car repair, parking, storage and garbage disposal. Even Oberliht Association is privatizing Zaikin Park in their own way by organizing events and proposing new plans based on their visions of public spaces and the future of this small neighborhood park.

The way people relate to and use public spaces in post-Soviet Chisinau is affected by residues of the Soviet past. Sonia Hirt has argued that lingering “cultural attitudes” are expressed through dominance of what she defines as a rampant “privatism” and an “animosity towards anything public.” It is not only economic and political processes that are important but also cultural conditions. Hirt argues that understanding the ways in which people relate to public spaces in the post-socialist context is therefore key to understanding what forces shape urban spaces today – something that the Red Lines and the Ghost Boulevard that they define can illuminate. Indeed, many people in Chisinau associate the notion of public space with power and control by the state. There is evidence of this animosity in the lack of resistance and even public encouragement of massive privatizations and various kinds of individual appropriation, even when they result in the devastation of public spaces, buildings, and infrastructures in the city.

Whilst exploring the effects of the Red Lines on Zaikin Park and peeling off different spectral layers in their path, I have encountered the ghosts of rampant neoliberalism and corruption, the political specters of communism, privatizations, and organized crime, and the cultural specters of anti-Semitism and more. Memories of the urban past are not only confined to municipal, corporate, or private planning archives. According to Jacques Derrida, the archives of urban memories are located somewhere between the arkheion – the official city of statistics or well-categorized forms and numbers – and the domus – expressed through the vernacular world of stories and narratives. The ghosts of urban plans, ideologies, and politics are manifested in urban spaces, but also in public memory through virtual worlds, which often appear in media and through storytelling. As Derrida cautions, the archives of memory have more to do with the present and the

331 The people who engage in activities organized by Oberliht represent a narrowly defined group of residents who live in the vicinity of Zaikin park and are directly affected by the threat of the plan for the Boulevard D. Cantemir.
future than the past, “the question of the archive is not […] a question of the past […] but rather a question of the future.”

By exploring different ways in which the Red Lines materialize in Chisinau, I also argue that practices of urban planning have a critically important role in writing histories and that the Red Lines of Boulevard D. Cantemir serve as instruments in the contest over the future urban development of Chisinau, when the red lines are used to prioritize certain memories over others in the urban planning process; this happens for example when the histories of people who lived in the old town and their memories of the Holocaust are suppressed, or when municipal architects seek to legitimize their planning proposals for Boulevard D. Cantemir simply by associating the red lines with Soviet planning heritage and the 1947 Master Plan. In the case of the plan to build the monument to Ivan Zaikin, local history is appropriated by a suspicious organization that stakes its own heritage claim on Zaikin Park. In other words, the presence of the red lines in two of the main planning documents has sparked debates over competing visions about preservation of urban heritage, as well as sparked conflicts within the government. These disputes are one of the main reasons for the legally ambiguous status of the urban plans and for the ongoing planning moratorium in Chisinau.

The battle over urban planning in the path of the Ghost Boulevard is being fought by many actors who are making their own heritage claims. The examples I discuss in the final chapter of this thesis show how the relations between heritage and place-making are complex and diverse. In reaction to the Red Lines, diverse stakeholders engage in planning practices by mobilizing different ghosts. I analyze different forms of shadow planning that are not only linked with shadow economy and politics but also with urban planning in what I call practice of memory management. The Red Lines’ presence wakes to life local histories and personal memories from the neighborhood around Zaikin Park, offering insights into the human and vernacular dimensions of different conflicts that are integral to the transforming practice of urban planning. Through their involvement in planning, the actors who operate from the shadows – both licitly and illicitly – take advantage of the ambiguous status of the red lines to make their own heritage claims, seeking to appropriate and write the history of their own organization by turning the park into a monofunctional memorial space. To gain power and legitimacy in society and politics, different stakeholders and mysterious political figures claim ownership as they attempt to hijack the history and memory of a local hero by reviving the past and recycling it for their own purposes.

When I started seeing the thickness of the spectral layers I came across in the path along the Red Lines, I realized that the complexity is infinite. I could never gain access to everyone; there are things that I could not understand and that will remain unknown. I am fully aware that I have only touched the surface and that there are still many ghosts that I have not been able to exorcise. While I would not suggest that I have revealed the complete picture of the forces that operate behind the scenes, I have certainly opened the doors and added to these layers.

The Red Lines have created a situation of conflict and liminality that has motivated people to act. In the process of my investigation, different stories also emerge which may not have done so otherwise. Arriving in Chisinau at this particular moment in time and in the midst of these planning conflicts as I did, the Red Lines themselves rendered visible a great deal of the situation to me, a visitor with the perspective of an outsider.

The many controversies triggered by the Red Lines made people open up and speak freely about things that they otherwise might not have had reason to discuss. The example of the Ghost Boulevard is not necessarily unique; there are cities around the world where the contemporary processes of urban development are haunted by masterplans from the past that have not been fully materialized, but that are still present. As I show, the ghosts are not only the plans from the past. In this sense, my investigation of complex processes of urban development in the path of the Red Lines of Boulevard D. Cantemir in Chisinau could lead to further research on different specters that haunt planning processes in other cities around the world.
Bibliography
Bibliography


Appendix A, Appendix B
The Map of the Red Lines Across Center of Chisinau

The Ghost Boulevard
Nearly 70% of buildings in Chisinau were destroyed during WWII.

The post WWII master plan for Chisinau developed by Atelier Alexey Shchusev

The General Plan developed by Robert Kurtz

General Urban Plan for Chisinau by R. Kurtz and S. Shoihet

The Local Land Use Plan for the center of Chisinau rejected by Moldovan Parliament, planning standstill

The autonomous region of Transdnistria declares independence from Moldova


This is when the assembly of the reform government decided that by the year 2000, every citizen would own an apartment or a private house

The first free elections in Moldova

The city center of Chisinau designated as historic district with special status by Moldovan Parliament (June 1993)

The last Soviet General Urban Plan for Chisinau approved: It was in force until 2007

Rapid population growth and industrialization during the post war period. Under the Soviet leadership of Nikita Kruschev who succeeded Joseph Stalin in 1953, large scale construction and urban expansion of the city continues towards suburbs under slogan “good, cheaper, faster”

74% of all housing units that exist today in Chisinau built during this period (1977-1990)

The Law on Ownership and the Law on Privatization approved in Moldova. The start of the transfer of state property into the hands of private owners at large scale.

The Law on Privatization of Housing in Moldova was approved by Moldovan Parliament. 90% of all state and municipal housing has been privatized, with nearly 2/3 of the sales completed between 1993-96.

The intense period of large scale investment and development of residential towers and commercial properties

Start of the construction of 400m long “Pediaterian Street” in the center of Chisinau, the largest public project in Chisinau since independence from Soviet Union.

Chisinau Civic Center - Park for the Community, the roadside stage and other temporary structures are built in Zaikin Park

The Ghost Boulevard Timeline

Mayors of Chisinau

The office of Mayor of Chisinau was abolished in 1941. It was re-established in 1990.

APPENDIX B
Svensk sammanfattning
Svensk sammanfattning:


Boulevardsen ambivalenta juridiska tillstånd har också fått konsekvenser för vilka byggprojekt som betraktas som legitima (lagliga eller olagliga) ur myndigheternas eller medborgares perspektiv. De röda linjernas existerande och den gamla stadskärnan som den tunna linjen utfyller, har inte slippats bort och fortfarande är osäker, har de röda linjerna existerat i stadens planeringsdokument och påverkat stadsutvecklingen i över 70 år. Under de senaste decennierna har delar av boulevarden materialiserats och avhandlingen undersöker den ambivalenta status som boulevarden har som både juridiskt gällande och icke-gällande och vilka effekter detta fått på stadens utveckling: hur, var och varför har vissa delar av boulevarden materialiserats? Genom att utforska dessa ”spökiga” kategorier hos boulevorden och hur de framträder längst de röda linjerna från planeringsdokumenten, synliggörs underliggande och ofta motsidliga politiska och ekonomiska krafter vilka medverkar till dagens komplexa planeringsprocesser.

Det post-socialistiska sammanhanget i Chisinau, Moldavien, antyder att det finns ett antal olika ”spöken” av denna typ som hemsöker planeringsprocesser, planerare och de planerade. De realiserade planerna av Boulevard D. Cantemir lever vidare och aktiverar tidigare politik, ideologier och ekonomiska processer, inte bara genom planeringsdokument och planeringspraxis utan påverkar också människors minnen och fantasi och får därför också stor betydelse för synen på kulturarv.

Eftersom stadsplanerarna i Chisinau inte kan genomföra planen för Boulevard D. Cantemir skapas ett vakuum där ingen institutionell kontroll längre finns över planeringen. I det lilla öppna offentliga rum i Chisinau som kallas Zaikin Park har idag ett starkt motstånd uppstått mot boulevorden och här blir en mängd aktörers intressen som mest synliga. I kampen om att få kontroll över planeringsprocessen utvecklar dessa aktörer sina egna taktiker och uppfinner olika planeringsmetoder. Avhandlingen studerar hur de röda
linjerna påverkar sociala relationer mellan diverse aktörer i Zaikin Park.

I stället för rationella modeller för framtida utveckling skapar närvaron av de röda linjerna intrasslade nätverk som styrs av politiska och olika privata intressen.

I den existerande litteraturen inom planering saknas analyser av, och begrepp för, de förhållanden, präglade av förväntan och osäkerhet om framtiden, som planeringsmoratoriet gett upphov till. Dessa krafter är inte strukturerade av binära motsatser, som lagliga kontra olagliga, planerade kontra oplanerade, formella kontra informella, privata kontra offentliga och civila samhället kontra staten. I avhandlingen får begreppet "spöke" (ghost) stå för icke-binära förhållanden och rumsliga fenomen som finns i det liminala rum de röda linjerna skapar. Det liminala rummet skapar en osäker situation kring vad som är legitim att förverkliga och stegrade förväntningar på framtidens stad då beslut om förverkligande av projekt skjuts upp på obestämd tid.

Avhandlingen syftar till öka förståelsen för villkoren kring vad som här kallas för "skuggplanering", alltså den situation som uppstått när officiell planering upphört gälla. Undersökningarna av de röda linjerna i Zaikin Park upprors en omvistad planeringsmiljö där olika medborgargrupper som lokala invånare, konstnärskollektiv, utvecklare, stadsplanerare, stadsarkitekter från Chisinau kommun och skuggfigurer från en påstådd kriminell underjordisk miljö deltar i planeringsprocessen – på både öppet och hemligt sätt.
The Ghost Boulevard

English summary.
In 1947, Soviet architect Alexey Shchusev developed a large-scale urban renewal project for the post-war city of Chisinau, the then-capital of the SSR of Moldova. Part of the master plan was the construction of Boulevard D. Cantemir, which would cut through the city’s historic fabric. Only two sections of the boulevard were built before the project was abandoned. In the aftermath of the fall of the Soviet Union, during the period of radical institutional, political and economic shift towards a market economy, initiatives to build the boulevard re-emerged through plans to improve traffic in the city, zoning documents, and planning regulations which depict the boulevard in form of the red line drawn across the old city center.

One of the two main planning documents the general urban plan was approved in 2007 while the other, more detailed land use plan for the city center was rejected by Moldovan Parliament in 2012 due to the negative response from the public upon learning that Boulevard D. Cantemir would pass through the historic city center. As the result, the status of the main urban plans for Chisinau is locked in legal ambiguity and the realization of the project for Boulevard D. Cantemir was put on hold indefinitely. Furthermore, the lack of political consensus about the plan for the boulevard caused planning paralyses over the entire city, creating a legal void where different actors compete to appropriate spaces.

The situation also has repercussions for what is regarded as legal and illegal and people’s perceptions of the legitimacy of new building projects, both from the perspective of authorities and from the perspectives of Chisinau’s citizens.

The ambiguous legal status of the Red Lines and the planning documents mean that various stakeholders, the citizen groups, activists, municipal planners and architects, developers, and politicians interpret the Red Lines differently and according to their own agendas, participating in an ongoing contest over the meaning and purpose of the Red Lines in the planning documents.

Exploring the trajectory of the “Ghost Boulevard,” by following the Red Lines from the planning documents I reveal conflicting political and economic agendas and the many forces that constitute complex processes of planning today.

I gradually came to realize that even without having been built in all of these decades, the boulevard has affected social relations of power and transformed the city. Although the future of the plan for Boulevard D. Cantemir is uncertain, the Red Lines of the planning documents still linger above the city and have an effect on urban development. Furthermore, Boulevard D. Cantemir is partially materializing, flickering into visibility in an almost ghostlike fashion. I found this condition intriguing and worthy of further investigation, especially in terms of looking for different ways in which such materializations occur.

How do ghosts of planning practices from the past shape contemporary urban development? The post-socialist context of Chisinau, Moldova, suggests that there are a number of ghosts of this kind haunting planning, planners, and the planned.

I argue that there are different ghosts haunting the planning process in Chisinau. The unrealized plans live on in the path of the Red Lines of Boulevard D. Cantemir, where the residue of past politics, ideologies and economic processes still remains in planning documents and practices, but also in people’s memories and imagination. Soviet planning has proven to contain particularly resilient specters that haunt today’s planning as they are put to new uses that serve contemporary political and economic agendas, which are often realized through different forms of shadow planning. These ghosts are at once real and imaginary, material and immaterial, and their effects are tangible. My inquiry into the materializations of the Red Lines exposes seemingly endless complexities within the planning process and diverse social and economic forces that lie behind urban development. The Ghost Boulevard does not exist as a built infrastructure in the city; instead, it materializes in different ways through various spatial practices conducted by stakeholders who are involved in contests for control over the planning process.

When official planning practices are on hold, other ways of planning that have been discussed in this thesis begin to gain momentum. The ambiguity of the Red Lines makes them a useful instrument with which actors with completely different agendas can gain different kinds of legitimacy and access to the planning process. Like ghosts, the Red Lines are imagined and interpreted differently by people because a variety of meanings can be read from their mostly ephemeral presence.

Because the municipality is unable to enforce the plan for Boulevard
D. Cantemir, there are a variety of stakeholders in the small open space known as Zaikin Park, operating in the vacuum left by the lack of institutional control. These stakeholders create their own tactics and invent diverse planning practices in their struggle for control of the planning process. My investigation of how the Red Lines affect social relations between stakeholders in Zaikin Park shows that there is no single powerful actor in charge of the planning process, and that the ghosts persistently wreak havoc, even when attempts to create new urban spaces are developed for the site.

Rather than rational and unquestioned models for future development, the planning practices used both by professionals and non-professionals in the path of the Red Lines become entangled networks of shifting political interests and diverse private agendas in which various stakeholders compete to make claims on urban development. Furthermore, anticipation and uncertainty about the future generated by the ambiguous legal status of the red lines and the planning moratorium have led to conditions that cannot be adequately explained with the vocabulary available in planning literature. These forces are not structured by binary oppositions such as legal versus illegal, planned versus unplanned, formal versus informal, private versus public, and civil society versus the state. Instead, the explanatory concept of the ghost explicates diverse non-binary relations and spatial phenomena that exist in the liminal spaces in the path of the Red Lines and the times of waiting that they have repeatedly created. The ghost concept also sheds light on the shifting power relations between competing stakeholders and investigates complex planning processes in ways that reveal their true nuances. My inquiries into various materializations of the Red Lines in Zaikin Park in fact reveal a contested planning environment in which a variety of social groups such as local residents, artist collectives, developers, urban planners, city architects from Chisinau Municipality, and shadowy figures from an alleged criminal underground all take part in planning practices – overtly or covertly.
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School of Architecture
KTH Royal Institute of Technology
Stockholm, Sweden