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# PALIMPSEST CITIES

PALIMPSEST CITIES: GAMIFICATION AND STORYTELLING FOR ARCHITECTURAL HISTORY AND CULTURAL HERITAGE AWARENESS  
ÇOK KATMANLI ŞEHİRLER: MİMARLIK TARİHİ VE KÜLTÜREL MİRAS FARKINDALIĞI İÇİN OYUNLAŞTIRMA VE HİKÂYE ANLATICILIĞI

# Workshop Plan

for “Heritage Everywhere”  
organized by De-a Architectura  
and conducted by  
Laura Tomşa & Alexandra Lulache





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# WORKSHOP PLAN: HERITAGE EVERYWHERE / PATRIMONIU ORIUNDE

ORGANIZER: DE-A ARHITECTURA

TRAINERS: LAURA TOMŞA AND ALEXANDRA LULACHE

## A.1. Brief Description

*The workshop was created to bring youth closer to the concepts of tangible and intangible heritage by understanding how we individually and collectively relate to the built environment of the city and how that reveals insights about society and history. Starting from the premise that heritage is a resource of clues and stories about society today, its past, as well as a mirror in which each of us can reflect, participants receive the tools necessary to “read” the layers of the city, research, extract and analyze information about how particular heritage sites or areas, and express their own thoughts and opinions about it. Every participant is encouraged to have an individual and unique approach when investigating the city, that results in an output: a documentation of a place in audio/visual/written form that is posted on the Instagram page [patrimoni.oriunde](#) (translation: heritage.everywhere). The workshop gathers on the Instagram page the diversity of approaches, voices and observations of the participants, all while creating an online archive that collects stories about identity, explains places and (re)discovers the essence of living spaces.*

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## A.2. Presentation for High School Students

How do the cities we live in transform? What do they say about us? How can we explain a place and what identity stories are hidden in the way a space is inhabited? And perhaps most importantly - why should we care about heritage?

During the workshop, you will learn to see the city as a palimpsest of historical and contemporary layers. Through interactive games, exploratory walks, and brainstorming sessions, you will discover methods of researching the built environment and the complex social dynamics of a city using tools from architecture, anthropology, sociology, journalism and more. A transdisciplinary approach will help your understanding and processing of the world around, but also to find your own voice and preferences. Thus, you will practice critical



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thinking and argumentation and use your creativity by working in teams to create online content for the Instagram page Patrimoniü.Oriunde (Heritage.Everywhere).

## B. Acquired Skills

### Informational/Cognitive

Knowledge about places in the city, a general understanding of how cities can evolve and of the behaviors of urban life that are constantly changing, an integrated transdisciplinary understanding of complex processes in the life of a city, understanding the connections between tangible and intangible heritage, as well as those between the built environment and identity.

### Attitudinal

Supporting a vision of heritage, supporting a point of view, accepting different scenarios, supporting a personal research process, and expressing results.

### Aptitudinal

Developing negotiation and teamwork skills, public speaking skills, critical thinking skills, and creativity.

**C. Target Group** - High School Students (can be easily adapted for university students)

**D. Duration** – minimum 6 - 8 hours, ideally divided into two days of workshop

## E. Necessary Materials

Printed maps with the adjacent area of the workshop with the notation of local landmarks for the exploratory walk

A4/A3 sheets + writing instruments for individual and team work

Flipchart + flipchart papers for noting the course ideas and for noting the structure of the workshop

Projector and laptop connected to the internet with the ability to take images and text from participants and post them on Instagram + for theoretical presentations.

Other materials to facilitate exercises or to propose other exercises (e.g., printed images with different types of heritage for participants to put in order of relevance or categories before delivering objective information about types of heritage and types of its values)



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## F. Stages of the Workshop

Introductory Session -participants presentations and workshop objectives (30 minutes)

Warm-up Exercises and Presentation - introducing the notion of personal/affective heritage and expanding the notion to other types of heritage (45 minutes)

Exploratory Walk - free discussions and active observation (1 hour)

Freeflow writing session and debriefing - drawing individual conclusions from the walk and forming themes (45 min)

Presentation of tool-kits - research and expression methods (1 hour)

Teamwork and project development - individually guided working session (2 hours)

## G. Detailed Description of Activities

### Step 0: Workshop Preparation

**Duration: 1h - 5h**

This sequence takes place before the workshop starts and aims to prepare the materials necessary for the activities - theoretical presentations, route, and documentation package.

Facilitators will adapt the structure and content of the workshop to the number of participants, their age and background, but also to the urban landscape adjacent to the space where the workshop takes place.

Also, facilitators will prepare/adapt presentations with theoretical content about heritage (definition and meanings), types of heritage, values, etc. + research kit and communication kit - a brief listing and description of the ways in which a place can be analyzed and the media in which a research can be expressed.

Facilitators will study the area adjacent to the space where the workshop takes place - the perimeter of the study area will be established, the formal and informal landmarks of the area, places that contain stories and essence for meaningful discussions - and based on this data, the (approximate) route of the exploratory walk will be established. The purpose is to identify 3-4 landmarks to unpack – their cultural and social significance for different groups of people, detail about its construction, architecture, politics and values, events of note, etc.- to serve as an example for the participants about the kind of thinking they will need to do in later stages of the workshop.



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Ideally, the facilitators should walk in the area and carry out a brief research on historical, architectural, cultural, social or political aspects. The quick study will find local stories relevant for understanding the concept of tangible/intangible heritage and to establish a minimum presentation/research package - historical maps, articles, archive photos, specialized information, etc.

**Examples from the workshop:**

**Maps of the Berzei neighbourhood thorough history-** how did it shift from the mahala style (houses built around religious landmarks), to the pre-war French style of urban planning, to the systematized urbanism of the communist period.

*Ideas: historical layers, global influences, politics of space, what is recognized as heritage*

**Transmuted church** – landscape and architectural analysis, historical factfinding about the last church in Bucharest that was moved in the communist period (from a visible public space to being hidden behind newly built housing blocks).

*Ideas: types of heritage (religious, architectural), politics of space, historical layers and shifts, symbolism in space*

**National Opera and Opera Park** – classical example of architectural heritage but also an important point on the map of the LGBT community in communism. *Ideas: Who is*

Based on the information collected, the presentation about heritage and its values can be adapted with relevant examples from the area, or a brief introductory presentation of the study area can be made.

Some example posts can be made on the instagram page as a guide. The posts should investigate historical clues, reasons for spatial changes, and current uses. They will serve as a model during the workshop, but also as an impulse for potential participants to register for the workshop.

**Step 1: Participant Registration and Preparation of the Place**



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**Duration: 15 minutes**

Before starting the presentations and exercises, this time will be taken to receive participants and familiarize them with the space where the workshop will take place.

## **Step 2: Introductory Session**

**Duration: 15 minutes**

Welcome speech and brief presentation of the facilitators. The facilitators explain what they do and how it relates to the built environment/city, etc. The participants also tell their names in turn, in a circle, along with a fun fact about themselves.

(10 minutes)

Presentation of the structure and objectives of the workshop (output, purpose, learning objectives, expectations). (5 minutes)

## **Step 3: Warm-up Exercise and Introduction of the Notion of Heritage**

**Duration: 20 minutes**

**Icebreaker:** The game with questions about personal places. (10 min)

A ball is passed. When a person throws the ball at someone, they say their name and ask a question. The question should do with a place that matters to them personally, e.g., What's your place where you go when you want to be with yourself? Where did you last cry/have a laughing fit in public space? What's your meeting place with friends in the city? - the answers will speak about personal heritage and the affective memory of a place.

**Free discussion about the notion of heritage / Heritage identification game** (10 min)

What does heritage mean? We talk about how the places we mentioned are part of personal heritage through affective memory and through the accumulation of meanings they contain for us. When these meanings are relevant for a larger group of people – the place contains more and more relevant stories (for our understanding as a community/society).

This discussion can be supported by another game, that needs preparation in advance. A series of 20 postcards with images of buildings/sites will be printed and scattered randomly on the table. The images should represent different types of heritage (industrial, historical, personal, religious, immaterial, etc.) and participants should try to identify what kind of heritage they represent and organize them by type.

## **Step 4: Presentation on Notions of Heritage + Study Area**



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**Duration: 30 minutes**

Facilitators will deliver a powerpoint presentation and discussion about tangible and intangible heritage - presentation of types of heritage and values according to different meanings and uses. The main idea is that the built environment is a reflection of who we are, understanding it is a reflection of oneself. The discussion can be supported by maps and examples from the study area.

*Key concepts:* tangible and intangible heritage, types of heritage, categorization and protection of heritage, how do we decide what we count as heritage (e.g. shared meaning, uniqueness and rarity, age, etc.).

### **Step 5: Exploratory Walk**

**Duration: 1 hour**

Guided walk in the study area - observations and open discussions about architectural and historical elements - transformations, social customs, personal triggers, etc.

Participants can mark on the map the places that intrigue them.

The walk aims to suggest various new lenses through which participants can look at the city in the depth of its layers of interpretation. Active observation, questioning the built environment, and attention to the connections between the visible city (the built environment) and the invisible one (behaviors, policies, etc.) can create a new and fruitful perspective for analyzing the city.

### **Step 6: Freeflow Writing Session and Debriefing**

**Duration: 45 minutes**

- A) Free writing inspired by the walk. (15 minutes)  
It is recommended to find places and aspects of the city with which they can connect on a personal level. Participants can propose personal questions as triggers for research themes.
- B) Group discussions about individual and collective perspectives on the visited places, about what connects us to certain topics or what intrigues us about certain places, about what themes of thought and research appeared during the walk or in the free writing session.
- C) Deciding on topics and stories for the final project. (30 minutes)



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Depending on the number of participants, it will be agreed whether the research project will be carried out in teams or individually. In either case, participants can have discussion sessions and knowledge sharing exercises between each other, and if the research overlaps, they can do some of the research together, complementarily, but create separate communication outputs. Team division is recommended to be done based on complementary skills, role distribution and common vision (e.g. a photographer and a writer interested by the same concepts).

## Step 7: Presentation of the Tool-kits

Duration: 45 minutes

### *Presentation of research and communication tools + presentation of references*

- A) Powerpoint presentation of research tools they can use in their research project, from various disciplines. Examples given from architectural analysis, historical comparison, journalistic investigations, ethnography and anthropology. Some of the methods presented were interviews, document analysis, photographic documentation, analysis of maps, participant observation.

Exercise: everybody wrote on a piece of paper what tools they feel a) comfortable b) uncomfortable 3) intrigued to use in their research project; it was followed by an open discussion on how everyone could use these tools in practice

- B) Powerpoint presentation of communication tools they can use in their research project to deliver the instagram posts, the importance of producing own content, the relevance of a personal perspective on the topic, and necessity of mentioning the source of the materials taken from the internet and the bibliography of study. Examples were given from: public performances, photography and visual arts, writing in different voices (journalistic, narrative, poem), collages.

## Step 8: Teamwork and Project Development - Individually Guided Working Session

Duration: minimum 2 hours

- Division into teams based on interests and complementary skills. If they work individually, set up a "buddy system" – someone they can consult with, share information with, or go out together for the research walk. Describe the role of the advisors (facilitators) who will be there to discuss ideas and overcome blockages.

- Development of the concept for the project through mindmap - ideas, methods, ideal output- discussed with everyone. Targeted feedback from the advisors and the creation of a customized to-do list - what, where, with whom.



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A possible structure of the work process:

- Work strategy + discussion (each team)
- Exploration + research + gathering materials (research walk in the study area)
  - Research, revisit, urban exploration. Searching for clues, searching for information, searching for sources (walk, talk, document)
  - Archive + online search (read)
- Group discussion - putting together - analyzing information
  - Experience exchange, mutual help, finalizing research
  - Sources, extra information - collaborative moment
- Production time! Everybody works on their outputs
- Feedback and editing – the participants show a first draft and receive additional comments before delivering their final draft. Each participant needs to make 3 posts for the *patrimoniu.oriunde* page, with a maximum of 10 images or videos per post.

*Examples from the workshop:*

*“Power Trip” - an analysis of Casa Radio, a communist-era building that started to be built after the demolition of a hippodrome and nearby homes, but was never finished after the revolution. Interviews, online research and architectural analysis was used to find out the story of the place and the “violent” way its perceived by people in the city. The output was a series of photographs and a rap song telling the story of the building.*

*“Is Graffiti Heritage?” – a series of interviews with pedestrians and photographs of graffiti in the study area to find out their views of graffiti, which images everybody knows, and if they see it as heritage.*

*“Sensory Analysis of a Tram Route” – using auto-ethnographic techniques and observations, the participant analyzed her feelings and perceptions of the city as she followed the route of a local tram, looking at the textures, light, colors, temperature, crowdedness and other aspects of the neighborhood. The result was a series of poetic images and texts about the feel of the city.*

*“Berzei 21: A manifesto” – using photo documentation and observation, the participant documented the chaotic changes in the city, particularly related to heritage buildings (e.g. white plastic insulation windows). She ended the trail at the Berzei 21 industrial site and imagined what she would like as an integrated and functional reconversion in the city, based*

## Step 9: Posting and feedback



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- The facilitators post each participant's output on the instagram account, paying attention to include a description of the workshop organizers and umbrella project (Palimpsest Cities).
- The participants receive individual feedback of their evolution in the workshop, from the facilitators
- The facilitators receive feedback about the workshop from the participants, via an online questionnaire.

These plans are indicative and can be adjusted depending on the dynamics of the group and the evolution of activities in real-time.

## EXTRACTS FROM THE PRESENTATION: LESSONS ON HERITAGE, RESEARCH AND COMMUNICATION

### What is heritage?

#### 1. Tangible Cultural Heritage

Physical objects or places with cultural significance. Includes artifacts, monuments, buildings, archaeological sites, cultural landscapes.

#### 2. Intangible Cultural Heritage

Living traditions or expressions inherited from the past. Includes oral traditions, performing arts, rituals, social practices.

#### 3. Natural Heritage

Significant natural elements. Includes ecosystems, geological formations, natural landscapes.

#### 4. Digital Heritage

Digital information with cultural, educational, scientific value. Includes digital data, digital arts, online educational resources.

### Cities Come in Layers





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Each stage has brought significant changes in the organization and appearance of Bucharest, reflecting the social, political, and economic evolutions of the respective era. These layers of the built environment provide a window into the complex and dynamic history of the city.

#### 1. Ottoman Period and Organization in Mahalas (until the 19th century)

- Characteristics: Narrow streets, wooden houses with gardens, organization around mosques and churches.
- Influences: Traditional Romanian architecture, Ottoman and Balkan influences.
- Relevance: This period laid the foundations for the city's later development, with the mahalas forming the cores of communities.

#### 2. Modernization and Europeanization (second half of the 19th century)

- Characteristics: Construction of new buildings, wide streets, European architectural influences.
- Influences: French and Austrian architecture, Bucharest being nicknamed “Little Paris”.
- Relevance: Transformation of the city into a modern urban center, with the introduction of Western styles in architecture.

#### 3. Interwar Period (1918-1940)

- Characteristics: Growth and expansion of the city, Art Deco architecture, and modernism.
- Influences: Modern European architecture, nationalist styles.
- Relevance: The golden age of Bucharest urbanism, with significant architectural and urban development.

#### 4. Post-War and Communist Period (1945-1989)

- Characteristics: Extensive systematization, massive block constructions, demolition of parts of the old city.
- Influences: Socialist architecture, centralized planning.
- Relevance: Rewriting the urban landscape, focusing on functional buildings and communist ideology.



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## 5. Post-Communist and Contemporary Period (1990-present)

- Characteristics: Architectural diversification, renovations, real estate development.
- Influences: Globalization, capitalism, contemporary architectural trends.
- Relevance: A period of transition and redefinition of the city, with a blend of old and new styles.

### Why is Heritage Valuable?

#### Which heritage is the most valuable? Which value is the most valuable?

#### 1. Historical and Cultural Values

- Historical Value: Importance of associated historical events.
- Cultural Value: Role in cultural identity and traditions.
- Symbolic Value: Symbolic or representative significance.
- Representational Value: Capacity to represent an era, style, or culture. / Rarity. Uniqueness - The extent to which an object or place is rare or represents a unique example of a particular culture or historical period.

#### 2. Architectural and Artistic Values

- Architectural Value: Importance of architectural style or design innovations.
- Artistic Value: Presence of artistic elements, such as frescoes, sculptures.

#### 3. Social and Community Values

- Social Value: Importance to the community and as a meeting place. / Association with major historical events or significant historical figures.
- Sentimental or Emotional Value: Community's personal or emotional connections to the building.

#### 4. Functional and Utilitarian Values

- Use Value: Usefulness and functionality of the building in the current context.
- Economic Value: Economic benefits, such as tourism or urban revitalization.



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## 5. Scientific and Educational Values

- Scientific and Educational Value: Contribution to scientific and educational knowledge.

## 6. Sustainability and Ecological Values

- Ecological Value: Contribution to the environment and sustainability.
- Conservation Value: Efforts for sustainable conservation and restoration.

## 7. Authenticity and Integrity Values

- Authenticity Value: Maintaining original characteristics.
- Integrity Value: Degree of preservation of the building in its original form.

## Research Purpose

*To find identity stories*

*To explain a place*

*To identify the essence of inhabiting a space*

*To find out how it represents us/what it says about us*

*To find out why we care/for whom it matters*

## Types of Analysis and Research

### 1. Architectural Analysis

- Study of architectural styles, materials, construction techniques.
- Urban analysis of city plans and spatial development.

### 2. Anthropological Research



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- Study of culture, customs, and social interactions in a particular place.
- Cultural and symbolic meanings of spaces and objects.
- People's stories and perceptions.

### 3. Journalistic Research

- Investigating the history of the place and relevant events.
- Interviews with locals and experts to gather personal stories and opinions.
- Documentation in the press.

### 4. Comparative Studies

- Comparing the place with other similar places to understand unique characteristics.
- Comparison between types of sources to capture multiple perspectives.

### 5. Historical Analysis

- Examining historical documents, photographs, maps to reconstruct the past of the place.

### 6. Socio-Economic Analysis

- Study of the economic and social impact of the place on the community.

### 7. Artistic Research

- Understanding a subject beyond information, self-reflection, diverse means of expression.

### Research Toolkit

Geospatial analysis and urban mapping, comparative maps, analysis of routes / heights / green spaces / boundaries / etc.

Databases and Digital Archives

Access to historical documents, architectural plans, old photographs, press.

Audio / Visual Recording Tools



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For documenting interviews, oral stories, and field observations, photographs.

Ethnography Techniques

Participant observation, field journals, case studies, personal drawings and maps, autoethnography.

Sound, olfactory, sensory, affective analysis

### **Analysis Tools**

Data analysis – statistics – for demographic, economic data analysis, or survey responses.

Text analysis – various types of documents, sources (specialized literature, prose, etc.)

Social Networks and Online Platforms

To gather opinions, stories, and perceptions of residents.

Interviews

Free or structured discussions with people – experts or locals with direct experiences.

### **Communication Toolkit**

Encouraging multiple languages and means of expression

What is the target audience? What is the tone of voice?

Collage

Intervention in space

Photography

Video

Illustration

Drawing

Recordings

Site-specific performance

Choosing your voice

Fictional short story

Narrative journalism



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Documentary journalism

Storytelling

Poetry

Essay

## FEEDBACK QUESTIONNAIRE FOR PARTICIPANTS

- Name
- Age
- What high school do you attend?
- What did you like about the heritage.anywhere workshop?
- What didn't you like about the heritage.anywhere workshop?
- What do you wish had been done differently? (place, people, timing, anything)
- What did you want to learn that you didn't?
- Would you like to continue the research you started? Why?
- What feedback do you have for Ale? What feedback do you have for Laura?
- How did you find the workshop time structured? Would you have liked more time for certain components of the workshop? Which ones? Did you want to go through certain topics more quickly? Which discussions were less useful for you?
- What did you leave with after the heritage.anywhere workshop? What did you gain and what did you lose that weekend?
- How could we attract more high school students to attend the workshop in the future?