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Planting patterns and exotic plants in nineteenth-century Bucharest public gardens

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ABSTRACT

The first two public gardens in Bucharest, as well as some of the oldest in the South and East regions of nowadays country of Romania, were designed, built and planted around the mid-nineteenth century by a German-born landscape gardener named Carl Friedrich Wilhelm Meyer. These two public gardens were designed according to modern nineteenth century landscaping concepts and were planted with exotic species of flowers, shrubs and trees not common at that time either in Bucharest or anywhere in the Romanian provinces south or east of the Carpathians. To better understand the design, development, and meaning of these gardens, this paper aims to analyze the specific palette of ornamental species of plants and the planting patterns that were used for the Kiseleff and Cișmigiu gardens in Bucharest and to outline the importance of their use.

Keywords: Public gardens, Planting designs, Kiseleff, Cișmigiu, Exotic vegetation

ARTICLE

Introduction

In the nineteenth century, especially during the second half of the century, Bucharest witnessed a series of unprecedented urban, architectural, artistic and social changes. These changes came as direct results of events such as the city becoming the capital of The United Principalities of Wallachia and Moldavia (later Romania) in 1862 and the intentions of the elites and of the municipality to modernize Bucharest according to western European urban models such as Paris and Vienna. To this end, many renowned as well as promising French, German, Swiss, Belgian and Austrian architects, engineers and gardeners were employed both by municipalities and by the wealthy elites to create modern private and public works: Karl (Carol, Scarlat) Benisch (Beneș), Vladimir Moret de Blarem-

Abbreviations:

ANIC – Arhivele Naționale Istorice Centrale (The National Archives of Romania)

DMBAN – Direcția Municipiului București a Arhivelor Naționale (The National Archives of Romania – the City of Bucharest's Archives)

PMB Tehnic – Primăria Municipiului București – Serviciul Tehnic (The Bucharest City Hall – Technical Archives)

REAZ – Registrul Exploatărilor Agronomice și Zootehnice (The Register for Agronomic and Zootechnic Exploitations)

Jud. – Județ (County)

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berg, Rudolf Arthur von Borroczyn, Getano Augustiono Burelly, Heinrich Feiser, Johann Fraywald, Josef Hartl, Anton Hefft, Luigi Lipizer, Jacob Melik, Moritz von Ott, Michel de Sanjouand, Xavier Villacrosse, Karl (Carol) Wahlstein, Josef Weltz, Johann Schlatter, Paul Gottreau, Albert Galleron among others (for further information, see MOLDOVAN 2013 and www.e-architecture.ro). A direct result of the employment of these foreign specialists, Bucharest's urban identity and physical appearance would begin to change from a more or less rural aspect to a modern urban landscape. These urban transformations accelerated especially by the end of the century.

As it happened in other major European cities, industry also played a part in these transformations. Although by 1914 Bucharest was the most industrialized urban center in the region — outscoring Sophia, Belgrade, Athens and Thessaloniki (MIHĂILESCU 2018) — this was a slow process: the first factories opened starting with 1843 (Niculae Băleanu's cloth factory) and 1853 (Assan's Mill), and they only came to evolve rapidly by the end of the century. Thus, we cannot argue that the design of the first public gardens by the mid-nineteenth century in Bucharest came as a direct result of rapid industrialization and/or rapid urbanization, as was the case in other parts of the continent.

Public parks represent another component of the urban modernization of Bucharest. During the nineteenth century, five were designed and opened in Bucharest: Kiseleff (1847), Cișmigiu (1854), St. Gheorghe (1860), Episcopiei Râmnicului (1872) and Icoanei (1872/1873). The first two were designed by a German garden designer and were planted with large numbers of exotic species of trees, shrubs and flowers, some of which were used for the first time in the Romanian provinces. To this end, in the following pages I will first analyze the early history of the first two public gardens in Bucharest from the point of view of planting patterns and the planting palette, to then discuss about their role in the modernization process of Bucharest.

A garden-city without public gardens

By the time the first public gardens were being laid out in Bucharest, much of the city's surface was covered by private vegetable gardens, orchards and vineyards, while the city's skyline was defined mostly by numerous church towers. Even 60 years after the opening of the first public garden (Kiseleff, 1847), 67.5% of the city's surface was still covered by planted spaces and mostly by vegetable gardens and orchards (MIHĂILESCU 2018).

This aspect made many foreign travelers to misinterpret and perceive it as a garden-city (see BUȘĂ 2017 and POTRA 1992); it also made artists such as Amedeo Preziosi to paint it in a romantic manner, surrounded by wild nature (see SILVAN IONESCU 2003). However, there were no public parks in this city until the late 1840s. Until then pleasure gardens that belonged only to the wealthy were opened for public use during important religious holidays and even, from time to time, after the Sunday service (TOMA 2001). Until the opening of the *Grădina de la Șosea* (The Garden by the Road, nowadays Kiseleff garden) on the 12th of September 1847 and the opening of the Cișmigiu Garden in 1854 (see MEXI *et al.* 2018), the inhabitants of Bucharest had used nearby forests, lake shores and even orchards for a Sunday stroll or a picnic. Some of these spaces were owned by the Church or by the rich families, but they were usually freely opened to the general public.

Some of the most common spaces for public use were the Cișmigiu swamp (after 1854 – the Cișmigiu garden), Câmpia Libertății/ the Filaret field (transformed in 1905-1906 into an exhibition ground and afterwards into a public park – Park Carol I), Herăstrău (remodeled in the 1930s and transformed into Bucharest's largest urban park – Herăstrău Park), and the Snagov and Băneasa forests, among others. These spaces were neither designed nor equipped for public use, but they all had in common fountains or lakes with fresh and relatively clean drinkable water – an amenity highly appreciated, especially since very few fresh water fountains would have been found in Bucharest at that time. Sometimes, in places with large numbers of visitors such as the Cișmigiu swamp or the

Filaret field in the south of Bucharest (site of the first Romanian International Exhibition in 1906 and afterwards a public park), archbishops, aristocrats, and country rulers built gazebos and/or fresh water fountains in an effort to show their gratitude to God and/or to gain favor of their subjects (TOMA 2001 and MARCUS: 1958).

The reasons for designing public gardens in Bucharest in the mid-nineteenth century are still debatable, as there seemed to be no need of them since, on the one hand, the entire city enjoyed the benefits of vast vegetable gardens and orchards, and on the other, some private pleasure gardens were frequently opened to the general public and natural areas, such as the ones emphasized before were free for all to use. In a city with a low density of people – with about 80 000 people scattered on a surface of approximately 3200 hectares in 1898 (LAHOVARI 1898) – and only a handful of fountains with fresh water (POTRA 2016), a fountain would have been probably more appropriate than a public garden. Furthermore, in a city prone to earthquakes, with poor sanitation, improvised sewage systems, where small springs were used as sewage systems (POTRA 2016), and roads were made out of battered soil, or very rarely paved with oak wood (POTRA 2016), public parks did not fit Bucharest's most pressing needs.

Be that all as it may, there were official reasons to build and design both the Kiseleff and Cișmigiu gardens. In the case of the Kiseleff garden, Russian general Pavel D. Kiseleff, Governor of the Romanian provinces in between 1829 and 1834, refused the honor of having a monument erected in his name, and he asked for the money to be used for a “public good;” as a result, the municipality decided to design a public garden in his honor. As for the Cișmigiu garden, its design and development responded to the fact that the former more or less central urban swamp was unhealthy and unfit for the city (see PĂNOIU 2011). Another official reason to design public gardens was that an early 1830s' Russian-imposed document, perceived as the first Romanian Constitution, implied that cities should have public planted spaces (PĂNOIU 2011). However, since many of the specifications from the early 1830s' documents were not applied, it is difficult to say that the public gardens of Bucharest were designed specifically to be in accordance with the Russian-imposed pieces of legislation. What is known about the “Organic Regulations” is that along with them, the urban management models and tools were established and they contributed to urban modernization. These regulations were officially certified by means of imposed urban regulations and laws, guiding plans etc., the gradual evolution of urbanization contributed to a more clear vision and understanding of formal and functional urban design and management. Bucharest, capital of the new national state, became the main theater of modern urban interventions and a model for other cities in the county (www-architecture.ro). It is possible that in the endeavor to modernize Bucharest according to European models, the municipality would have decided to create public parks. However, since the Cișmigiu and Kiseleff gardens were designed and opened more or less as the same time as the Victoria and Battersea parks in London and the Városliget park in Budapest, and before the renowned public parks of Paris (Montsouris or Buttes-Chaumont etc.) or the Stadtpark in Vienna, it is difficult to consider that the creation of these parks was that much influenced by the European model and the European parks. Moreover, since specific mentions in the “Organic Regulations” about the need to create public planted spaces were not referring to Bucharest but rather, to the city of Iași in Moldavia (see Section III – art. LII, Organic Regulations), there are even more doubts regarding the real reasons behind the design of public parks in Bucharest in the first half of the nineteenth century.

Designing the first public gardens in Bucharest

Designing the first public gardens in Bucharest implied bringing specialists from abroad, since neither Bucharest nor any other Romanian city had trained specialists who were able to design and build public parks. Also, as previously mentioned, it was common and well perceived for foreign specialists (architects, gardeners, engineers, artists

and many more) to be invited to work for both the wealthy as well as the public administration. To this end, Carl Friedrich Wilhelm Meyer (1817-1852), a German-born specialist, was hired by the municipality to design the Kiseleff garden and shortly after he began to work he was commissioned to design the Cișmigiu public park.

Carl Meyer was born in 1817 in Ostrof, Neoklemburg. Although details about his life and education are unknown, archival documentation refer to Meyer as working as a landscape gardener in Vienna in 1843, just before he was brought to Bucharest. The same documents refer to him as being „the right hand” of baron Hegal, administrator of the royal gardens in Vienna. (ANIC, FOND FRITZ REBHUHN).

Before receiving the projects for the two public gardens Meyer had supposedly worked nearby Bucharest; in fact, some historical documents refer to him as being the author of some of the private gardens that belonged to the very rich and influential Cantacuzino family (ANTEMIREANU 1905). Thus, it may be possible that his projects for the local aristocrats may have favored him to be called and design the public gardens of Bucharest, but since little information about Meyer’s work, life and education exist, it is difficult to state which were the real reasons that favored Meyer and not someone else.

In an archival document that dates back from the 1920s, it is argued that Meyer was brought to Romania by Prince Bibescu, then the country’s ruler, after one of his journeys to Vienna. However, no details, nor any justifications for Meyer’s employment are given by the document’s author and since this information comes 80 years after Meyer’s arrival to Bucharest, it is difficult to argue about the reasons that stood behind his employment. (ANIC, FOND FRITZ REBHUHN). Moreover, there are no historical references about other specialists who might have been considered for designing Bucharest’s first public gardens.

In Bucharest, Meyer designed the Kiseleff garden right outside the city perimeter and relatively in the same period of time he made the plans for the Cișmigiu garden, a public pleasure ground within the city perimeter, towards its Western limit. He designed both gardens in a *gardenesque* manner, common by the mid- and second half of the nineteenth century for most public and private gardens throughout Europe. Apart from curving paths, typical urban furniture and romantic surprises, the *gardenesque* style included a specific palette of exotic vegetation mostly composed of trees and shrubs (see TAYLOR 2006). Since information neither about Meyer’s work in Vienna nor about his education were discovered, I argue that his work might have been influenced and inspired by the works and/or publications of Humphry Repton, John Nash, John Claudius Loudon, Prince Hermann Ludwig Heinrich von Pückler-Muskau and others alike. Meyer’s projects were designed in the same period of time or pre-date by only a handful of years similar ones made by James Pennethorne for London’s Victoria park (opened in 1845) and Battersea Park (opened in 1848), Adolphe Alphand for Paris’s Monceau Park (redesigned and opened in 1861), Parc des Buttes-Chaumont (opened in 1867), Montsouris Park (opened in 1869) etc., or the ones by Josef Selleny and Rudolf Siebeck for Vienna’s Stadtpark (opened in 1862). Both the Kiseleff and, even more so, the Cișmigiu garden share many similarities with most of the abovementioned examples, including planting patterns and some exotic plant palettes.

Both public gardens were opened to all people to enjoy; what was different from other public parks and gardens from Western Europe is that both Cișmigiu and Kiseleff were not fenced at that time. The first reference about fencing the Cișmigiu garden dates back from 1867 (ANIC, REAZ), while for the Kiseleff garden no mentions about fences are ever made and up until this day, the garden is fenceless.

At that time, this made it possible for these gardens to be used all day long. However, police gazebos were eventually built inside the Cișmigiu garden in order to ensure public safety especially during night time, but none were ever built in the Kiseleff garden.

Fig. 1. The 1852 plan of Bucharest with detailed mapping of the Kiseleff (north) and Cișmigiu (center-West) public gardens (ANIC, PLANURI ȘI HOTĂRNICII)

The Kiseleff garden

According to the plans of Carl Meyer, the Kiseleff garden was a pleasure ground designed and built roughly in between 1843 and 1847 (MARINACHE 2016 and MEXI *et al.* 2018). The garden was created right outside the city perimeter on both sides of one of the main roads that led into the city. The Kiseleff garden, originally called *Grădina de la Șosea*, was designed with multiple curving paths for strolling, a small lake, a central gazebo, statues and a couple of ornamental fountains and thus resembled similar public parks that were being designed more or less in the same time all over Western Europe.

For its planting, the landscape gardener decided to use both young and mature trees from the nearby forests. For the plants which needed to be brought from nearby forests, archival documents offer detailed descriptions not only regarding the quantities, but also about the height of trees, trunk circumference and even the minimum and maximum number of branches. (ANIC, REAZ, and Mexi *et al.*)

Apart from the indigenous species he choose to take and replant in the public garden, Meyer added a couple of exotic species of plants uncommon at that time both in Bucharest, and everywhere else south or east of the

Carpathians: *Acacia Julibrissin* [probably *Albizzia julibrissin*], *Aralia japonica* [*Fatsia japonica*], *Bignonia catalpa* [*Catalpa bignonioides*], *Celtis australis*, *Celtis occidentalis*, *Celtis orientalis*, *Cercis canadensis*, *Calycanthus florindus*, *Koelreuteria paniculata*, *Liriodendron tulipifera*, *Sophora japonica*, *Ulmus americana*, *Zizyphus sp.* to only name a few. (ANIC, REAZ). These species of plants would have been brought from a handful of nurseries from Bucharest, but especially from Braşov (then Kronstadt), Vienna and northern Italy (ANIC, REAZ). Meyer also added different varieties of native and indigenous species that were grafted and bred in nurseries and grown for their ornamental qualities (bicolored leaves, big bright colored flowers, different growing characteristics etc.): *Acer Pseudoplatanus f. arg. varieg.* [*Acer pseudoplatanus* ‘Argentea Variegata’], *Fagus purpurea*, *Fraxinus aurea*, *Fraxinus pendula*, *Sambucus nigra laciniata* (*Sambucus nigra* ‘Laciniata’) etc. (ANIC, REAZ) Since even private pleasure gardens were usually planted not with ‘decorative’ species of plants but mostly with fruit trees and vines, such exotic and breded species of plants were a novelty for the city of Bucharest (see STAN and MEXI 2017 and ANIC, FOND FAMILIAL FILIPESCU).

However rich in the variety of the planting desing, the most appealing parts of the newly opened public garden were the fountains and the main road that split the garden in half and connected the city of Bucharest with a nearby eighteen century former royal residence. This road was planted with an alignment of double rows of accacia trees (later with linden trees) which provided shade to all the visitors curious to watch the carriages passing by and connecting the former royal summer residence with the city. Although very richly planted with exotic and colourful vegetation, almost no press articles praised the planting design, but the very pleasant, well-shaded road and the interesting show of carriages, the clothing and habits of the passers-by and the later May flower parades. Neither foreign travelers such as the English woman Maude Rea Parkinson (PARKINSON 2014) nor other French, Russian, Austrian, German or Italian travellers described the garden; at once, they were fascinated by the daily life on the road (see BUŞĂ 2015, ANDREESCU 2016 and BUŞĂ 2017). Although the Kiseleff garden and its plants were not as appealing to the public as the road that split it in half, in the case of the Cişmigiu garden, the situation is different.

Fig. 2. Plan of the Kiseleff garden (at that time called Le Jardin National/ The National Garden), 1860 (ANIC PLANURI ŞI HOTĂRNICI)

The Cişmigiu garden

The Cişmigiu garden was, as previously mentioned, designed and built over a former urban swamp that was frequently flooded by the nearby Dâmboviţa river. The name of the garden derives from *Mare Cişmigiu* (“The Great Cişmigiu”), which was the title of the person who took care of a fountain built there by Alexandru Ipsilanti, former country ruler, during the late eighteenth century. This was one of the few urban fountains that provided fresh drinkable water for the people of Bucharest and the former swamp was a place where the rich sometimes hunted birds and small mammals, people gathered after religious celebrations, and where goats and pigs from nearby households used to graze (ANIC, REAZ). Unlike the grounds where the Kiseleff garden was created, the former Cişmigiu swamp was a green space used by the people before the public parks were designed and built.

Fig. 3. Accacia tree alignment on the Kiseleff road (ANIC, REAZ)

However, ever since the beginning of the nineteenth century, the municipality wanted to drain the swamp (PĂNOIU 2011) and by March 1845 a plan for the draining of the swamp was designed and approved by a commission of foreign specialists such as engineer Balzano, engineer Marsillon, major Borroczy, architects Villacrosse and Schlatter and landscape gardener Meyer (MEXI *et al.* 2018). The drainage of the swamp was done soon afterwards.

Later that year, Carl Meyer was hired to design, build and plant a new public park on the site of the swamp. Compared to his project at Kiseleff, the Cișmigiu project was far more difficult and more complex and, although he started working on it since 1845 until his premature death in 1852, the garden was not yet finished by the time of his death. The works initiated under Meyer's command were afterwards continued by a long series of gardeners, architects and engineers all of whom modified the original plans, to a certain extent: Engineer Lalane, architect Frei, gardener

Hoffman, architect Orăscu, gardener Leyvraz, landscape gardener Knechtel, architect Hartl, landscape gardener Rebhuhn, to only name a few (see MEXI and CULESCU 2017). Since 1852 and until the mid-twentieth century when no more significant changes were made to the garden, Cișmigiu had lost most of its original design and features, and its surface was both enlarged after the purchase of the nearby lots and decreased after the creation of the Elisabeta avenue (LASCU 2011). Due to a number of reasons that include, among others, plant diseases, improper plant management, illegal cutting of trees, the garden was also replanted a couple of times (ANIC, FOND FRITZ REBHUHN).

Meyer's ongoing project at Kiseleff helped him to better understand the needs and the expectations of the inhabitants of Bucharest. Favored by the surroundings of the Cișmigiu garden and the rich soil, and by being offered better working conditions, he was able to create different spaces within the garden; with these, he offered the public the possibility to stroll, to row, to listen to music and even to skate during winter time – many activities that people were not able to perform in the Kiseleff garden. All of the different spaces of Cișmigiu were differently planted according to the atmosphere that the author intended to create for each of them. Thus, a main axis going from one end of the garden to the other and its three parallel walking alleys were planted with double rows of elm trees (*Ulmus sp.*); this created a cathedral-like cupola and offered thick shade (very appreciated during the hot and dry summers of Bucharest) to all the people strolling on the middle alley or sitting on the benches placed on the side ones. Tall white poplars (*Populus alba*) were planted on one of the entrances in a roundabout built for the carriages that brought visitors to Cișmigiu, thus creating a focal point both from within and from outside the garden. In the center of Cișmigiu many trees were planted in order to create a place where thick shade would provide the opportunity for people to meet and spend time during hot summer days. Next to it, Meyer designed the only

Fig. 4. Plan of the Cișmigiu garden, cca. 1860 (Simetria)

species were for the first time introduced in the capital city of nowadays Romania. Apart from white poplars, elms, oaks (*Quercus cerris*) and other similar trees, common for Bucharest and its vicinities, exotic and/or bred species of trees and shrubs such as *Acer Negundo* [*Acer negundo*], *Aesculus Hippocastan fol. varieg.* [*Aesculus hippocastanum 'Variegata'*], *Aesculus Hippocastan fl. Rubra* [probably *Aesculus x carnea*], *Crataegus oxyachanta fl. rubra plen.* [*Crataegus oxyachanta 'Rubra Plena'*], *Diospyros virginiana*, *Fraxinus nana*, *Gleditschia polysperma* [*Gleditsia polysperma*], *Hibiscus syriacus fl. rosea plena* [*Hibiscus syriacus 'Rosea Plena'*], *Platanus occidentalis*, *Platanus cuneata*, *Syringa crenata*, *Tilia americana rubra* [*Tilia americana 'Rubra'*], *Tilia americana alba* [*Tilia americana 'Alba'*], *Quercus fastigiata*, *Salisburia adiantifolia* [*Ginkgo biloba*], *Pavia macrosclachya* [*Pavia macrostachya*] (ANIC REAZ) amongst other species and varieties of plants were planted in different areas of the garden. While the indigenous species of plants would be procured from local nurseries and nearby forests, the exotic trees and the bred species of plants were imported from nurseries from Central Europe. The exotic and indigenous vegetation created surroundings highly appreciated by the inhabitants of Bucharest, and the garden became one of the most frequently used outdoor spaces of the capital city. By the end of the nineteenth century, and especially during the first half of the twentieth century, major remodeling works took place in Cișmigiu, and much of the original species and the planting patterns were removed.

Plant selection and planting maintenance

The most important criteria for the plants selected by Meyer to be used for planting the Kiseleff and Cișmigiu public gardens are represented by the plants available in nurseries from Bucharest and its vicinities, from Transylvania, from northern Italy and from Vienna (ANIC, REAZ) and also by the design characteristics that Meyer favored: “The plantations will be made, in general, with indigenous trees and shrubs, except for the main alleys and other important corners of the garden which will be planted with trees and shrubs used in modern gardens. These trees and shrubs will serve to break the monotony and while some of them can be procured from local nurseries, others will have to be brought from other countries.” (ANIC, REAZ)

It is most likely that Meyer’s selection of plants was also influenced by his experience as landscape gardener in Vienna and by his knowledge about different species to which he was accustomed. After Meyer’s use of exotic and bred decorative species of plants, most of the specialists who followed him and designed both public and private gardens, as well as public promenades, in Bucharest and elsewhere in Romania, started to use trees, shrubs and flowers according mostly to their aesthetical appearance.

Both in terms of plant selection as seen in Meyer’s personal description, planting patterns and garden archi-

flower garden of Cișmigiu (ANIC, REAZ). The humidity created by the nearby surroundings thus emphasized the fragrance of indigenous and exotic flowers, and their perfume would have been powerful enough that the people who were listening to music played in the nearby music pavilion and the ones sitting in the heavily planted center of the garden would have been able to smell it.

The selection of the plants to be used in Cișmigiu was, as in the case of Kiseleff, a novelty for Bucharest and a series of spe-

Fig. 5. The flower garden in Cișmigiu, cca. 1852 (ANIC)

ture, the Cișmigiu and the Kiseleff gardens were following the models of similar public planted spaces created elsewhere in Western Europe. However, one of the main differences between all of these gardens is the fact that the plant selection and planting patterns from Cișmigiu and Kiseleff were used for the first time in Bucharest and they represented a new and uncommon urban feature of a north-Balkan city, especially for one where private gardens planted with fruit trees and vegetable, vines and orchards covered much of its surface.

Introducing exotic species implied the risk of the plants not adapting to the new environment, and although the exotic and bred vegetation was the one favored for highlighting different corners of the gardens, most of the plantings were made with indigenous vegetation. Regarding indigenous vegetation, a large number of tall trees were brought from nearby forests in order to rapidly create shade in the new gardens and thus make them more appealing for the visitors (ANIC, REAZ).

Due to the high costs of maintaining the gardens and replanting them each season with different species of flowers, and also shrubs and trees whenever some died, Meyer decided to create one nursery for each of the two gardens and to grow all the species, indigenous and exotic, which he wanted to plant Kiseleff and Cișmigiu with. This implied lower costs and a much wider selection (especially of flowers) that could have been used for the decoration of the two public gardens. While a nursery for the Kiseleff Garden was designed by the mid-nineteenth century, it took many more years for the Cișmigiu Garden to have one.

Alongside other mid-nineteenth century public and private gardens planted with exotic and bred species of plants, the Cișmigiu and Kiseleff gardens offered the premises for a paradigm change regarding the way gardens were perceived and needed to be designed and planted. Especially by the late nineteenth century and before the First World War, Romania would witness a rapid evolution of pleasure private and public parks and gardens, almost all of which would be planted with exotic and/or bred species of plants and would be designed by German, Austrian or French landscape gardeners.

Plants and planting patterns today

Meyer's selection of plants, planting patterns and garden architecture and decoration was a novelty for the city. Soon after these two gardens were designed and built, other Romanian cities followed the example of Bucharest and allocated funds for public gardens to be designed and opened. These gardens created the premises for a rapid and fruitful urban public park evolution in the Romanian provinces. Although not much of the original components of both gardens have survived to this day, the importance of these gardens and their role in the cultural history of Bucharest and of Romania is critical, for it underlines the first steps taken towards the creation of public planted spaces designed for all the inhabitants of urban centers and financed by the municipalities. While in

Kiseleff one finds only a handful of ash trees that might have belonged to the original planting of the garden, in the Cișmigiu Garden a couple of plane trees, one ash, probably one ginko, and some red chestnut trees have survived since the mid-nineteenth century. Both gardens have lost most of their original plants due to several redesign projects (MEXI and EL-SHAMALI 2015), aerial bombings during the Second World War (ARMĂ 2016), several pests and diseases (especially during the 1920s) and, sadly due for the most part to poor maintenance and lack of specialized care — especially during and mostly after the Communist era.

Today both gardens suffer severe damages that cover both their architectural and plant components; although there is a public interest in restoring the two heritage gardens, no funds have been allocated to that purpose. Besides these issues, the Romanian legislation lacks the methodology necessary to address the needs of heritage gardens, and the laws meant to protect green spaces are poorly designed and contribute to further damaging planted spaces (see MEXI and CULESCU 2018).

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