



FROM IDEAS TO PROTOTYPES: CO-CREATING URBAN TRANSFORMATION IN BUCHAREST'S DISTRICT 2

Urban regeneration becomes **truly meaningful** when it is shaped not only by plans and technical solutions, but by the **ideas, creativity, and lived experiences of the community**.

In Bucharest's District 2, the UTCB campus area has become a **living laboratory** where students, residents, schools, and local organisations actively contribute to the transformation of their neighbourhood. Through a combination of hands-on activities, creative initiatives, and collaborative learning, the area is evolving into a space where ideas are continuously tested, refined, and implemented.

FROM VISION TO ACTION

One of the most impactful contributions has been the **direct involvement of students in real-life interventions**. Through the Campus Verde initiative, a multidisciplinary student competition invited participants to develop circular and sustainable solutions for the pilot area. The winning teams have moved beyond conceptual proposals and are now actively building and testing their ideas within a newly established fab lab on the UTCB campus, an open space for co-creation between students, NGOs, and the wider community.

This transition from design to implementation has been a key milestone, turning abstract ideas into

tangible interventions. It has also opened the door to intergenerational exchange. Workshops with children from nearby School No. 31 allowed younger residents to share their perspectives, inspiring **new ways of thinking about sustainability and neighbourhood design**.



As one student, Radu, shared: *"I think the experience was a pleasant one. Given our very practical nature, meeting children, who are much more dreamy, allows you to see your own proposals in a different light. Ideas you might not consider feasible start to gain meaning when expressed by them. You begin to explore ways to make them possible. People living in the community know exactly what they are missing and what they want."*

CREATIVITY AND SYMBOLIC CHANGE

Community engagement has also taken creative forms. A mural art competition, organised by the local NGO **ClimatoSfera**, invited artists to reflect on climate change and local transformation. The winning artists transformed an unused technical building into a **vibrant landmark through three large-scale murals**.

This building carries strong symbolic value: once part of the old heating system, it will now host components of the **WeGenerate Energy Sharing Centre**, marking the transition from fossil fuel-based heating to renewable energy solutions. The transformation illustrates how physical spaces can embody broader environmental and social change.

LEARNING BEYOND THE CLASSROOM

Collaboration with School No. 31 has extended across a wide range of activities, addressing everyday sustainability through interactive sessions on **food systems, zero-waste lifestyles, energy use, and sustainable mobility**. Additional support from **NBSeduWORLD** has enabled further exploration of urban regeneration and nature-based solutions through urban games, AI-supported design activities, and hands-on workshops.

These initiatives reveal a strong curiosity among younger generations and a **growing awareness** of how daily choices connect to wider environmental challenges.

COMMUNITY ACTION

An essential element of the process has been the involvement of a **local civic group**, which has supported the recovery of a community garden within the UTCB campus. Located close to the pilot area, the garden serves as a shared space for collaboration and engagement.

The group is also advocating for the pedestrianisation of Dorin Pavel Street, promoting



the idea of a “school street” that prioritises safety and accessibility. This effort is closely linked to the project’s energy infrastructure, as the street sits above thermal connections within the future Energy Sharing Centre, reinforcing the connection between community action and sustainable systems.


FROM TEMPORARY ENGAGEMENT TO LASTING IMPACT

The process has also demonstrated **how short-term initiatives can lead to long-term involvement**. During a community festival, a landscape architecture student discovered the activities taking place in the area. Inspired by the experience, she chose to remain involved and now contributes as a volunteer, supporting the selection of plants and trees for the pilot area.

CONTINUITY AND COLLABORATION

Across all these activities, one key element stands out: continuity. Rather than isolated events, the Bucharest demo area has become a space where **ideas evolve**, from workshops to competitions, from drawings to prototypes, and from discussions to real interventions.

Here, the voices of the community are actively shaping the transition, turning shared visions into concrete actions that contribute to a more sustainable and inclusive urban future.

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