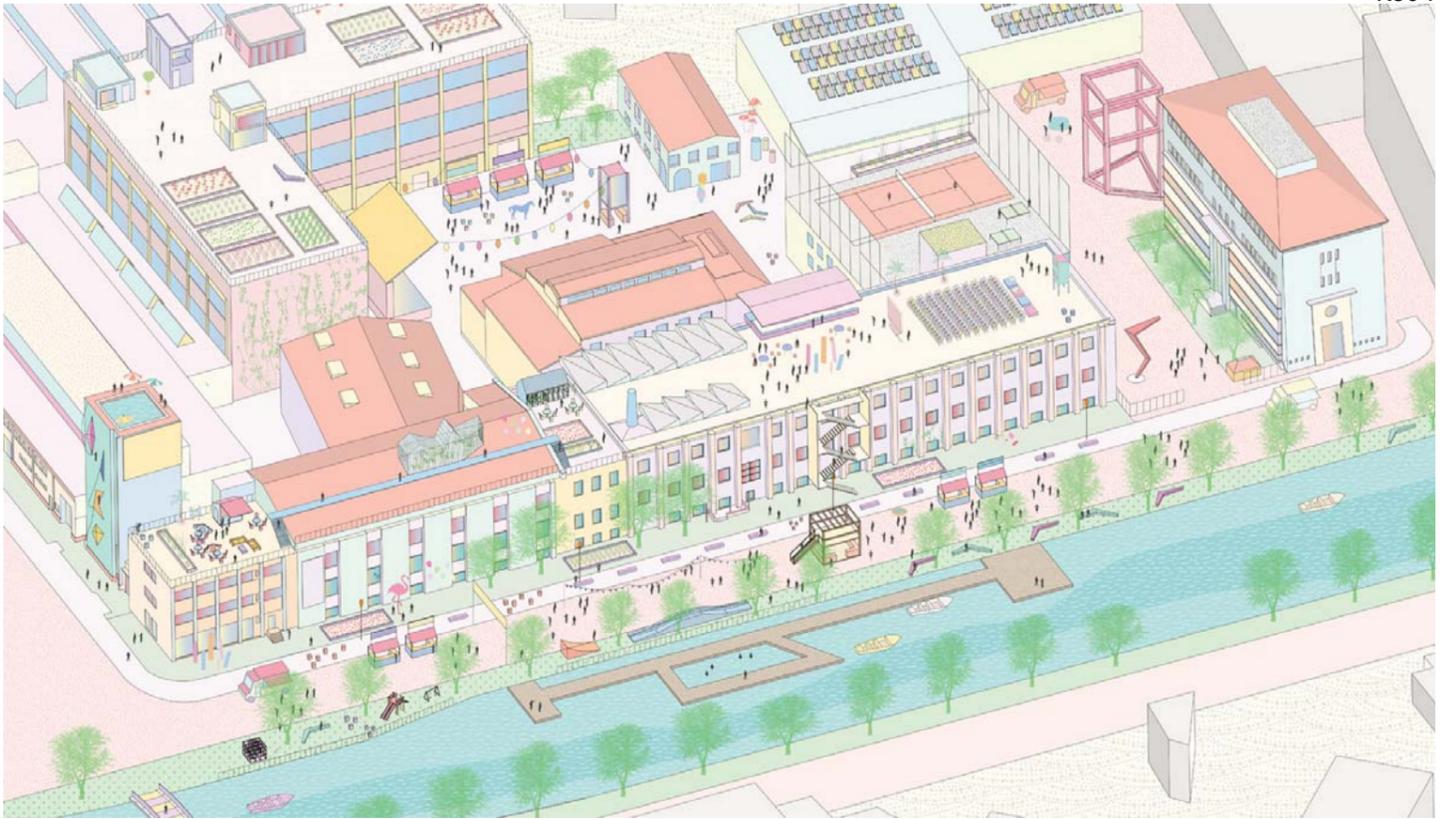
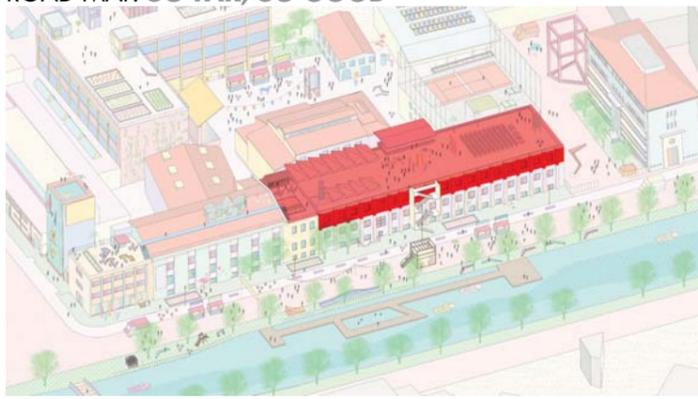




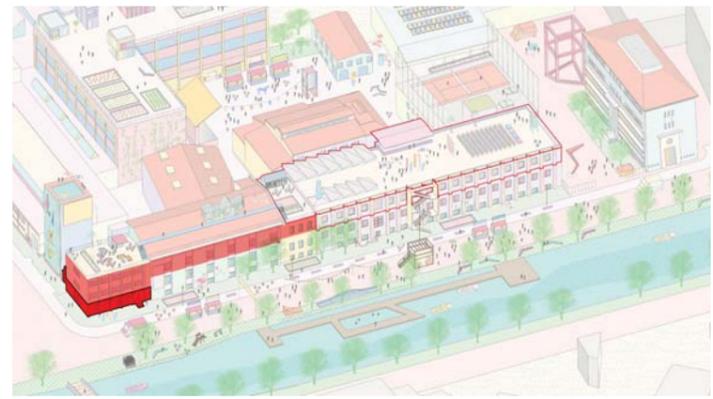
DERELICT COTTON FACTORY (2014)  
ROAD MAP. *SO FAR, SO GOOD*



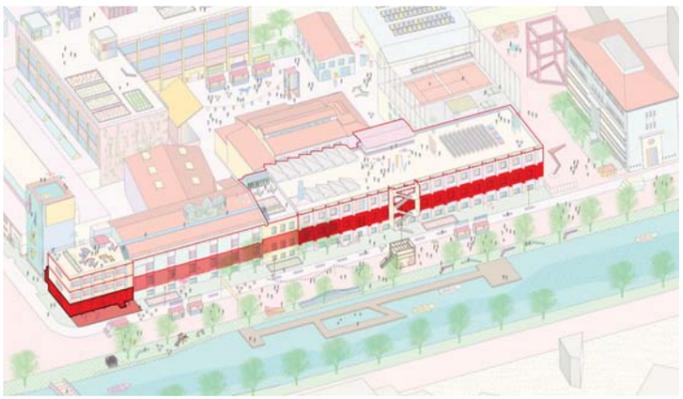
KIND OF AN AMBITIOUS VISION (2025)



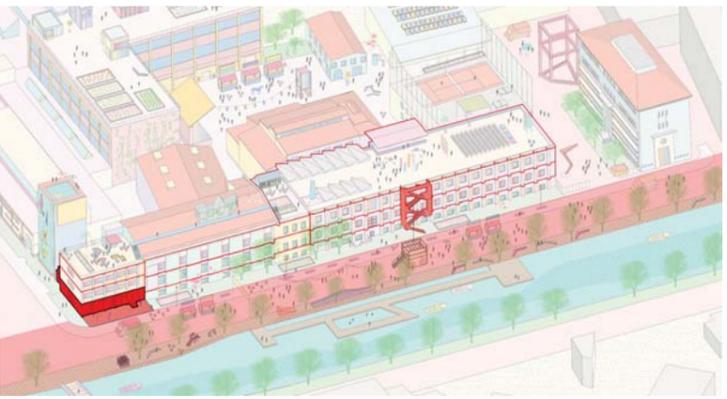
IN 2015, WE STARTED WORK ON THE VISION WITH A MAKERSPACE  
+ a rooftop bar (for afterhours and community events)



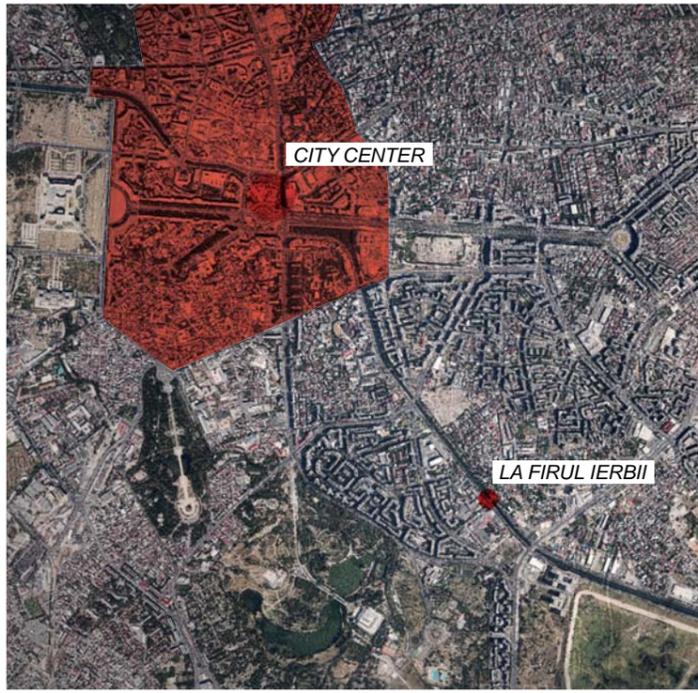
IN 2016, WE OPENED "LA FIRUL IERBII" - THE COMMUNITY CENTER  
+ we get new neighbours (a restaurant and a coworking)



IN 2017, WE CONTINUED WITH A MATERIAL'S LIBRARY  
+ an events & concert venue moves in



IN 2018, WE ARE PLANNING A STREET FESTIVAL, ALONG THE RIVER  
+ build a stair for better connectivity



PREVIOUS STATE

This industrial complex was the largest cotton factory in Romania. It is situated in a neighbourhood dominated by derelict industries and large residential complexes, ironically named "Timpuri Noi" (Eng. New Times) – the area is poorly equipped with public functions and services. Like most industrial facilities in the city, the Cotton Factory has stopped production in the early 2000's. Since then it has been slowly decaying. While some of its buildings are still rented out as storage facilities, the former factory was essentially an unused property, on the banks of the river, just south of the city center (1.8 km).

The Cotton Factory's potential for a functional reconversion as a center for the creative industries has been tested as early as 2010, when its buildings have hosted parties and independent art shows. But without a long term vision, these endeavours have had mixed success and little impact in the city.

Since 2015, a group of young professionals (planners, designers, engineers, artists, inventors and entrepreneurs) has decided to build on the former factory's potential to become a major center for the creative industries in Bucharest.

AIM OF THE INTERVENTION

Based on the experience of the previous projects developed here, the group proposes a bold vision for a bottom-up reconversion process in the area. By attracting new partners and corporate sponsors, the group has initiated a series of high profile projects dedicated to the local creative industries. The former Cotton Factory has quickly become, not only an attractive hub for young creative minds, but a hotspot on the mental maps of locals that were rediscovering this former industrial complex.

Quite soon, we realised that, if this bottom-up process is to have a long term impact, it needed to reach out to a wider audience – besides de creative industries – and develop a relationship with the local community. Thus, "La Firul ierbii" (Eng. Grassroots) has been established, in 2016, as the main instrument to build local connections within the community and co-generate civic engagement.

La Firul ierbii is an experimental community center, designed to host public meetings, debates and grass-roots civic initiatives. It aims to strengthen the relationship between the (newly arrived) creative professionals and the (existing) local community, it is also a pilot project for the development of similar community centers in other neighbourhoods of Bucharest - capitalizing on a growing local trend for civic engagement.

DESCRIPTION

Work on La Firul Ierbii started with a small budget from a private call for projects. Then, by attracting cash or in-kind donations and also relying on volunteer work (as much as possible), we managed to transform 250 sqm of the derelict laboratories building into a community center. With these resources, we set out into a conversion project that aimed to create an open, attractive, universally accessible and multifunctional public space.

The interior layout is very simple, with the main spaces dedicated to a multifunctional hall, connected to a lobby and co-working area that is also equipped with a small library. There is also a kitchenette, bathrooms, administrative offices and storage. The small, adjacent garden functions as a popular meeting place during the summers. The simple, almost "bare bones", interior design is a result of budget constraints, but also of the need to create a friendly atmosphere, that also resonates to an audience – not necessarily – design oriented. The furniture is designed and built within the creative community in the Cotton Factory. Its main components are 15 wooden modules that can be used as coffee or cocktail tables, dividers, theatre stage, or assembled into a children playground.

We believe this space should be an attractive public resource for all community members, thus universal accessibility and inclusive design principles were paramount for this project. They influenced the general layout, proposed materials and lighting solutions.