

BUCHAREST'S PUBLIC BUILDINGS OF TODAY AND YESTERDAY: THE TOWNHALL OF THE GREEN DISTRICT IV, CURRENTLY THE TOWNHALL OF DISTRICT 1

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Abstract: By their very nature, public buildings belong to those properties that are invested without any difficulties with all the types of cultural values. As edifices that serve and represent communities (and not only some of their members), this category of buildings inherently enjoys all those features that necessarily bestow their cultural identity, as it is always endowed with those attributes that embody relative artistic and technical values; also, due to their use, such architectural products are rare or unique. Being looked into from the viewpoint of its cultural relevance, the study that substantiates the complex restoration design drawn up during the same year of 2010, the Town Hall of District 1, Bucharest is no exception to any of the previously mentioned perspectives. On the contrary, when explored through less common lenses as, for instance, its impact on the context in the past, the investment value or the echoes in the period publications, this property allows a more refined definition of its significance at the time it was conceived and erected, a kind of significance that we should probably integrate more profoundly within the system of values we assign to it today.

Rezumat: Prin natura lor, edificiile publice fac parte dintre bunurile imobile cărora li se atribuie fără dificultăți toate tipurile de valori culturale. În calitate de clădiri care servesc și reprezintă comunități (și nu doar pe unii dintre membrii acestora), această categorie de edificii se bucură practic automat de caracteristicile necesare din punctul de vedere al identității culturale, după cum este întotdeauna înzestrată cu trăsăturile în care rezidă valorile artistice și tehnice relative; de asemenea, cel puțin grație funcțiunilor, astfel de produse de arhitectură sunt de serie mică sau unicate. Obiect al unui studiu de evaluare culturală care fundamentează proiectul complex de restaurare din același an 2010, Primăria Sectorului 1 din București nu constituie o excepție din nici unul din punctele de vedere semnalate anterior. Dimpotrivă, dacă este investigat din perspective mai puțin obișnuite, precum, de exemplu, impactul în epocă asupra zonei înconjurătoare, valoarea investiției sau ecourile în presa vremii, acest imobil permite definirea mai precisă a semnificației sale în perioada concepției și a execuției, un gen de semnificație pe care ar trebui probabil să îl integrăm mai profund în sistemul de valori pe care i-l atribuim în prezent.

According to period publications, in 1936 the Town Hall of District 1, Bucharest,¹ the Town Hall of the Green District IV (Ill. 1²), was then the sole edifice in the capital that was designed and erected as the headquarters of local authorities; its 56 m tower was the tallest building in town.³ Considering only these two features, we understand how significant it was deemed to be back then and even today, since the edifice has been listed as historic heritage building.⁴ What is more, the edifice, with its conspicuous silhouette located close to a major junction in the northwest of the settlement, has become a city landmark owing to its function, being colloquially called “The Banu Manta Town Hall”, which signifies that the “place” is familiar to most city dwellers.

Zone and location

This “place” is situated in that part of the city which underwent urban modernization quite recently. The previous statement is firstly supported by the fact that by the mid 19th century⁵ that particular zone (Ill. 2.1) was exclusively crossed by two traffic routes, namely, the current Banu Manta Boulevard and Nicolae Titulescu Road, if we are to consider the fact that anything located northwest of the former was situated off the city limits. This condition was shown indeed by the parceling structure that back then was composed of sizeable lots mainly used for agricultural purposes. However, in less than fifty years,⁶ the situation had been significantly

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¹ The current text is mainly based on Derer *et alii*, 2010.

² Răpeanu 1937, p. 3.

³ Nădejde 1936, p. 29.

⁴ The building has been listed under the code B-II-m-B-18073, at no. 348 of the List of Heritage Buildings, updated, approved by Order 2361/2010 of the Ministry of Culture and Cults (to modify annex 1 to OMCC 2314/2004), published in the Official Monitor of Romania, Part I, no. 670 bis of October 1, 2010, Bucharest, 2010, volume I, p. 211.

⁵ Borroczyn 1846.

⁶ București 1895-1899.



Ill. 1. Town Hall of District 1, originally Town Hall of the Green District IV, Bucharest, in 1937. Excerpt from Răpeanu 1937, p. 3.



Ill. 2. Town Hall of District 1, originally Town Hall of the Green District IV, Bucharest. The location as it is shown on the historic reference plans of the town of Bucharest – 1846 / 1852 (1), 1895-1899 (2), 1911 (3) – and according to guidebooks from the first half of the 20th century – 1923 (4), 1933 (5), 1934 (6). Excerpt from Derer et alii 2010, drawing 05.

changed (Ill. 2.2). Hence, besides the two existing thoroughfares, a multitude of side streets had developed; they ran crosswise as to the former and served a large number of plots that had become part of the urban fabric in matters of size and destination, and which had been already built upon. The only notable exception was the ground of the future town hall, occupied by a sand pit at that time, a real natural barrier against the densification process of the built environment. Nonetheless, beyond this urban waste, the rhythm of changes taking place in the second half of the 19th century had been so powerful that in the first decades of the following century⁷ the landscape was altered but insignificantly (Ill. 2.3). It was only later, yet before 1923,⁸ that the sand pit vanished, being replaced by a green area identified as “The Gherasse Vineyard” (Ill. 2.4). During the next decade⁹ the “Voevodul Mihai” High School and the Town Hall of the Green District IV were built upon the vine land (Ill. 2.5). Briefly, in less than a century the area that initially included every possible feature of Bucharest’s periphery unequivocally defined both its street fabric and parcel regime (Ill. 3) and, what is more, its functional significance as local centre, an attribute that was decisively highlighted by the high school and the district town hall. Consequently, due to its amazing development this side of the city has enjoyed a high cultural identity, locally at least, although at the time of its designing and building processes the object of our scrutiny stood for the northwestern quarter of Bucharest¹⁰ (and today it does stand for a sixth of it;¹¹ therefore, one cannot leave out the fact that its importance, according to the aforementioned criteria, should go beyond both the historic and physical limits.

⁷ București 1911.

⁸ Pântea 1923.

⁹ Constantinescu 1933 and Wahnig 1934.

¹⁰ For instance, see the master plan of the Green District in Nădejde 1936, p. 120.

¹¹ As the headquarters of one of the current six districts of the capital.

Its identity significance is all the more powerful when related to the speedy pace at which (again) the processes, actions, and events were carried out. The division of Bucharest into four districts was decided on March 1, 1926; within this framework, the local authority of the “Green” district were given their own budget beginning with 1927, when they also purchased the terrain on Banu Manta Boulevard.¹² The bill of sale, dated May 3, 1927, stipulates that the terrain was of 24,632.36 sq. m and was sold together with the orchard and the element that limited it as to the neighbouring properties; the existing buildings were to be demolished within a year from the signing of the agreement by the heirs to Aristița Elefterescu (mother and grandmother). The bill also describes the way in which it had been acquired (as early as 1871) and stipulates that it is being purchased for public use according to the Communal Council decision no. 53 of December 23, 1926.¹³ At that time the parcel at no. 15 was to house a truly multifunctional compound in which, besides the headquarters of the local public administration, they planned to build also a high school, two cultural institutions (a cultural house and theatre), a sport facility, and three social buildings (a public bath, a hostel, and a public house) depending on their financial possibilities¹⁴. As one may notice today they could only erect the district town hall and the high school, the construction of both starting in 1928. Thus, the foundation stone of the high school was laid on July 6, 1928, and the inauguration took place on November 10 of the very same year in the presence of Queen Marie and Princess Elena. The school yearbook mentions Stănescu and Pompilian as authors, as well as the architect Daniel Renard as entrepreneur.¹⁵ The high school was to be extended with two wings; in one of them the auditorium was to function as communal theatre, yet the financial agreement for this additional purpose was never carried out.¹⁶

Financial resources

The work on the town hall building started in the same year, 1928, yet probably more discreet than it happened with the high school, since there was no actual press release in this case. For instance, it did not mean that the building was deemed to be less important, although no mention was made in the period dailies. There is an interesting hint in this respect: a very luxurious candelabrum was purchased in the same year, an object



Ill. 3. Town Hall of District 1, originally Town Hall of the Green District IV, Bucharest. The location considered from the viewpoint of the evolution of the street fabric and parcelling: the green hues show the old parcels, from the lots created between 1846/52 și 1895-99 (dark green) to the most recent ones, configured after World War II (light green), and respectively the old traffic routes, from the existing ones by the mid 19th century (purple) to those materialized after 1934 (light grey). Excerpt from Derer et alii 2010, drawing 02.

¹² Nădejde 1936, p. 15, p. 20, respectively.

¹³ T. H. M. B. Green District IV, file no. 235/1941.

¹⁴ T. H. M. B. 1928, p. 277.

¹⁵ Mironescu 1929, p. 5. The reference is probably made to architect Nicolae Stănescu who, according to Professor Traian Stănescu, his son, was an employee at the Ministry of Cults and Public Instruction (see Derer 2007, p. 104, note 63), as it is also possible that the reference is made to architect Jean Pompilian. The first name and name of the entrepreneur are mentioned in T. H. M. B., 1930, in chapter “Payment of debts in difficulty according to art. 495 of Local Administration”.

¹⁶ Mironescu 1929, p. 40 și p. 82. Details about the construction, including the agreement to extend it between the district town hall, Labour House of Romanian Railways and Ministry of Public Instruction is to be found at the T. H. M. B., Green District IV, file no. 893/1928.

that had belonged to Marghiloman,¹⁷ one of the country's tycoons. Other proofs testifying to its importance were the amounts spent on its building. From this viewpoint, the main wing was completed in 1929 after 6,300,000 Lei were spent; further amounts were planned (1,500,000) for the next stage, when the offices were to be already functional.¹⁸ However, between 1933 and 1934, a budget overrun was found due to some extra expenses for various utility works such as street paving or investments in several buildings, among which the funds for the town hall building for which a separate funding line amounting to 2,500,000 Lei¹⁹ was opened. In fact, some 14,000,000 Lei were necessary in 1934-1936 to complete the works started in 1928.²⁰ Even in the absence of a thorough financial analysis²¹ one is struck by the fact that despite such difficulties, the building site was neither abandoned nor limited but, instead, the work was carried out at all costs.²² For instance, if we compare the last amount to those spent during the same period for any other of the 26 (types of) works funded by local authorities, we find that the only investment that could be actually compared to the building of the town hall was the Justice Court of Borough 8.

The investment reported in the period media

There is no doubt that such a costly and long process caught the attention of the media. Firstly, the whole story began by being published in the "Communal Monitor", which on April 8, 1928 mentioned on page 13 the acquisition of the Elefterescu property and the bid for the town hall building,²³ later, on December 2 of the same year, they made the opening of the site public through a release inserted only on page 10.²⁴

Later, in 1933, the "Municipal Gazette" published on its first two pages a long comment: "Started on Mr. A. D. Mincu's initiative, the Palace of the Green District was supposed to be a building able to gather under one roof all the offices a citizen actually needed. The architectural design stipulated that this grand building on Elefterescu Street should house not only the town hall offices but also a postal office, a firemen station, the tax service for the surrounding neighbourhoods, an emergency station. The wing housing the current town hall offices was built under the mayorship of Mr. A. D. Mincu, while during Mr. Mayor Anghelescu's the works were carried on, and some were also done under Mr. Algiu's. However, as it now looks, the Palace of the Green Town Hall cannot honourably shelter any kind of authority. Although the interior looks quite good, the exterior shows rather an abandoned building. By taking into account the need to make room for further communal services and the ambition to render a respectable aspect to the building itself, Mr. Dem. Rădulescu has thought seriously about the completion of the palace, which means that one has to build even more extensively than it has already been done. He has initiated some talks with the Ministry of Finance and having obtained the approval of Mr. Minister Virgil Madgearu, has reached the following solution: the Ministry of Finance will give up on the extra amounts the Town Hall has collected already from the communal and additional fund during the previous mayorships; thus, the money will be used to complete the palace. The new wing to be built according to the master plan will be given in exchange to the Ministry of Finance to be used for its financial district offices. Thus, the citizens will have almost all the offices available within one single edifice. In order to begin the works on the new wing and the completion of the façade, Mr. State Ciortan, the architect-in-chief and director of the architectural department at the Ministry of Finance has visited the site with a view to take all the necessary steps. Once the palace of the Green District is over, it will look like in the slide attached (Ill. 4), which is the photograph of the architectural design

¹⁷ T. H. M. B., Green District IV, file 900/1928; the pair of that candelabrum was dedicated to St Maria Church, yet we could not identify the destination of the two bronze pendants in the documents we looked into.

¹⁸ T. H. M. B. 1930, chapter "Expenditure – New works", crt. no. 81.

¹⁹ T. H. M. B. 1933/1934, chapter "Extraordinary expenditure", crt. no. 93.

²⁰ Nădejde 1936, p. 119.

²¹ Which does not only imply the identification of the period prices in order to make an estimate but also the reference to some key extrinsic factors, such as the inflation rate.

²² According to Nădejde 1936, p. 29, in 1936, the amounts spent for the building of the town hall headquarters amounted to cca 35.000.000 Lei.

²³ Monitorul Comunal no. 15, 1928, p. 13 (announcement about the acquisition of the Elefterescu property and bid for the execution of the Town Hall of the Green District IV).

²⁴ Monitorul Comunal 1928, no. 49, p. 10 (announcement about the site opening of the Town Hall of the Green District IV).



Ill. 4. Town Hall of District 1, originally Town Hall of the Green District IV, Bucharest. A sketch printed in the period media. Excerpt from the Municipal Gazette, 1933, p. 1.

authored by the architects Cristinel and Georgescu. (...) This part of our capital will be given a westernized touch by paving of Colonel Mihail Ghica Boulevard²⁵ between Banu Manta Street and the Sanitary Warehouse, which as you know looks like a village road. Both sides of the boulevard will be paved and civilized walkways will be also arranged. The pavement from the point where the new pavement ends to the Grivița Road, started three years ago, will be completed. By paving Colonel Ghica Boulevard a new thoroughfare will be opened which will relieve traffic congestion on both Grivița Road and Kiselleff Avenue. On Thursday morning, when Mr. Dem. Dobrescu, the mayor of the capital, visited the site, a possibility was considered as to include the Banu Manta Market within the systematization master plan of a new marketplace to be designed in front of the Town Hall. If this plan fails even if new and civilized compartments are built, then the new location will be given up and the Banu Manta Market will be moved elsewhere.”²⁶ Despite the scathing criticism²⁷ against the stage of the works and the financial situation, it is but obvious that the headquarters of the district town hall was deemed to be the major engine of local development which was able not only to trigger the modernization of traffic infrastructure but also to bring about further and more complex urban operations. In

fact, in order to reshape the Banu Manta Market (Ill. 5) – a plain, one-floor building located back then at the junction of the homonymous boulevard with the current Nicolae Titulescu Road – a not only complex but also a state-of-the-art (pre) design (Ill. 5) was considered in 1936.

By recognizing the capacity of the Town Hall of District 1, originally the Town Hall of the Green District IV, of being not only the heart of a local centre, but also the engine able to have a serious impact on closer and farther areas, one acknowledges its additional identity value.

About destiny and destination

Probably the critical tone of the 1933 press was dictated by one's eagerness to see this highly significant building completed. No matter how impatient the press was, the construction was completed much later, a thing demonstrated by the inscription on the interior face of the north-eastern attic of the secondary wing. Chiseled into a mortar layer laid for this particular purpose, the inscription immortalized the initials A. T. and the year [1]935 (Ill. 6). Under such circumstances, the press could write about the two official inaugurations only later; the first took place on June 1, 1936 during the Week of the Green District²⁸, while the second much later, on November 3, 1937. When discussing about these events, the press published either the speeches made on the occasion or harsh criticism against the representatives of local administration who had appropriated their predecessors' merits²⁹ for this building.

Then, in less than an year and a half after the final inauguration, more precisely in April 1938, the Town Hall of the Green District IV, whose secondary wing had been promised to the Ministry of Finance, was made

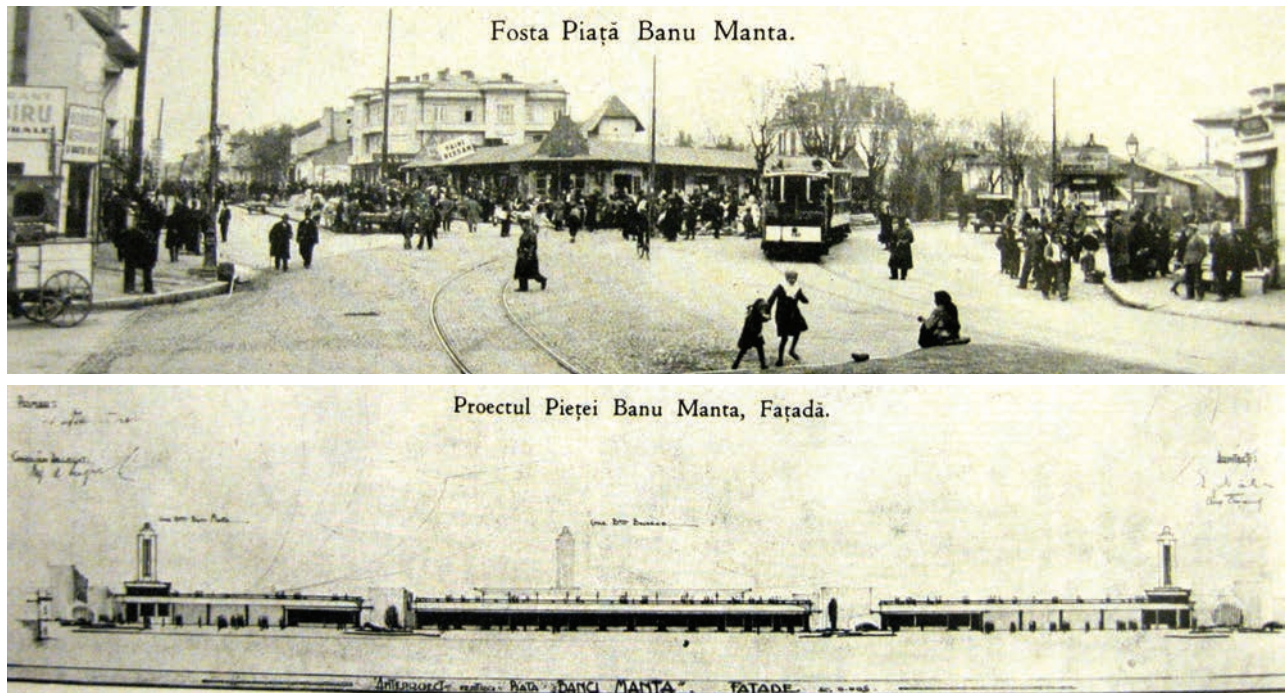
²⁵ Today's Ion Mihalache Boulevard. The name is not mentioned as such in Teodorescu 1933, yet it appears in Pântea 1923.

²⁶ *Gazeta Municipală*, 1933, p. 1.

²⁷ In certain cases at least, the critical voice was influenced by the political views held by papers in relation to the then local authority.

²⁸ *Gazeta Municipală*, 1936, p. 6.

²⁹ To the first category belong Râpeanu 1937, p. 3, *Inaugurarea Palatului primăriei de verde. Cum a decurs solemnitatea. Asistența. Cuvântările*, Prezentul: economic, financiar, social, 1937, p. 6 or *Universul* 1937, p. 3, and in the second, “M. D.” 1937, p. 3.



Ill. 5. Banu Manta Market in 1936 and the design of its reshaping. Excerpt from Nădejde 1936, p. 78.



Ill. 6. Town Hall of District 1, originally Town Hall of the Green District IV, Bucharest – The inscription “A. T. 935” on the interior face of the northeastern attic of the secondary wing. Author’s photograph of 2010.

available instead to the Ministry of Internal Affairs that would occupy it at least until 1940,³⁰ when the headquarters of local authorities was located at no. 7 Basarabia Boulevard.³¹ Following World War II, on September 14, 1949, the State Commission for Planning approved the transfer to the same ministry; the decision was based on Decree no. 326 of the same year. The minute was dated January 15, 1950 and, probably, following this procedure the Inventory Office of the Administrative Section of Bucharest’s Provisional Committee demanded that its own patrimony should be relieved of this asset.³² Apparently, they resorted to such procedures in order to return to the initial commissioner and user, that is, the local authorities of the district. The allegation is supported by the statement issued by the Ministry of Internal Affairs³³ on July 2, 1998 that stipulates that according to decision no. 35 of February 9, 1951, the government authority (the then Ministry of the Internal Affairs) decided that it should be transferred to the local authorities, the then People’s Council of Grivița Roșie District. This new status was later proved by an image published in 1953,³⁴ a postal card of

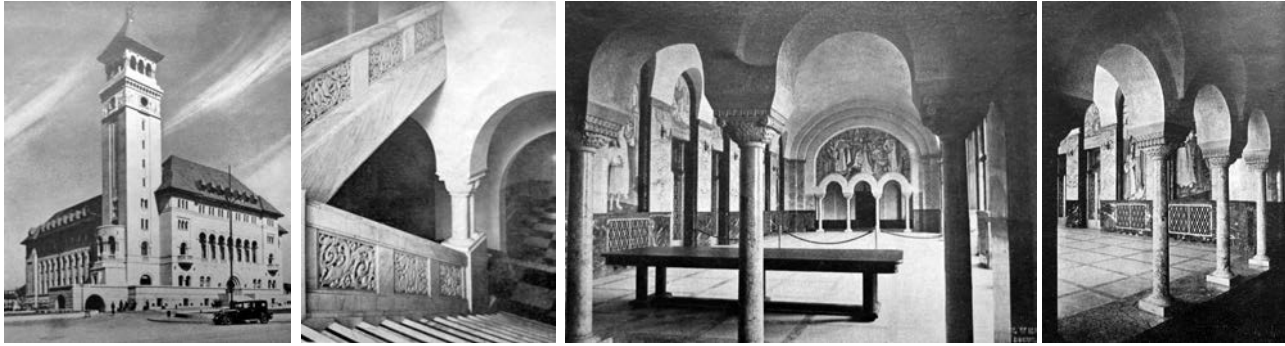
³⁰ T. H. M. B. Green District IV, file 235/1941.

³¹ S. A. R., 1940, p. 133.

³² T. H. M. B. Green District IV, file 235/1941.

³³ The statement was issued for the local authorities who were kind enough to publish its content.

³⁴ Bucarest 1953.



Ill. 7. Town Hall of District 1, originally Town Hall of the Green District IV, Bucharest, in the photographs published in the jubilee volume of "Arhitectura": a southeastern view of the building, the grand scale and the so-called "Festive Hall". Excerpt from "Arhitectura", 1941, pp. 196-197.

1961³⁵ and the text: "The People's Council Grivița R." belonging in the illustration "BUCHAREST BETWEEN THE 23RD OF AUGUST 1944 AND 1966" inserted in C. C. Giurescu's³⁶ volume. Thus, starting with the first decades the Town Hall of District 1, originally the Town Hall of the Green District IV, was used for 13 years, which is half the period, by the central authorities represented by the Ministry of Internal Affairs. Given this framework, the cultural significance of the building should be judged accordingly.

The building between past and present

As the period media had noted, the authors of the building, subjected to heated "transactions", are the architects N. Georgescu and G. Cristinel, whose merits were confirmed by "Arhitectura" magazine, which published a few photographs in their jubilee issue (Ill. 7).³⁷ In fact, the latter was a familiar name in the pages of the magazine in which, besides other designs, he published his first prize winning design for the town hall of Craiova (never built).³⁸

However, the experience must have been useful in the competition for the Town Hall of the Green District IV, for which the two architects met, at least in the jury's opinion, the condition regarding "...a personal style able to show the function of the building from the construction viewpoint".³⁹ Thus, G. Cristinel and N. Georgescu foreshadowed in a way the ideas of the competition theme for the Town Hall of Bucharest: "The monumental character of the building will show its sumptuousness, yet not too much. Its cladding will be studied at length so as to be completed through several stages. The service area will be as sober as possible. The architecture of this monument will bear the mark of today, being at once monumental and representative of the executive power of the Municipality. Competitors are free to express these generous principles through a monument breathing in the atmosphere of today by appealing to appropriate materials and relating it as close as possible to the Romanian milieu."⁴⁰ As for the Town Hall of District 1, originally the Town Hall of the Green District IV, owing to its clock tower and projected and recessed elements as to the main vertical planes of the façades, both its silhouette and volumetric shape (Ill. 8) are eclectic; they combine indeed the imposing sobriety of the neo-Romanesque with the then modernity and the specificity of the neo-Romanian style. Given this level of perception, the iconic character and, inherently, the strength of the executive power

³⁵ L. R. A., Stamps, P.I. 19B (former press mark P.I. 114636).

³⁶ Giurescu 1966, between p. 224 and p. 225.

³⁷ Cristinel, Georgescu 1941; probably it is worth noting that the volume referred to is called "*Architecture 1891-1941. The Semi-Centenary of the Society of Romanian Architects*".

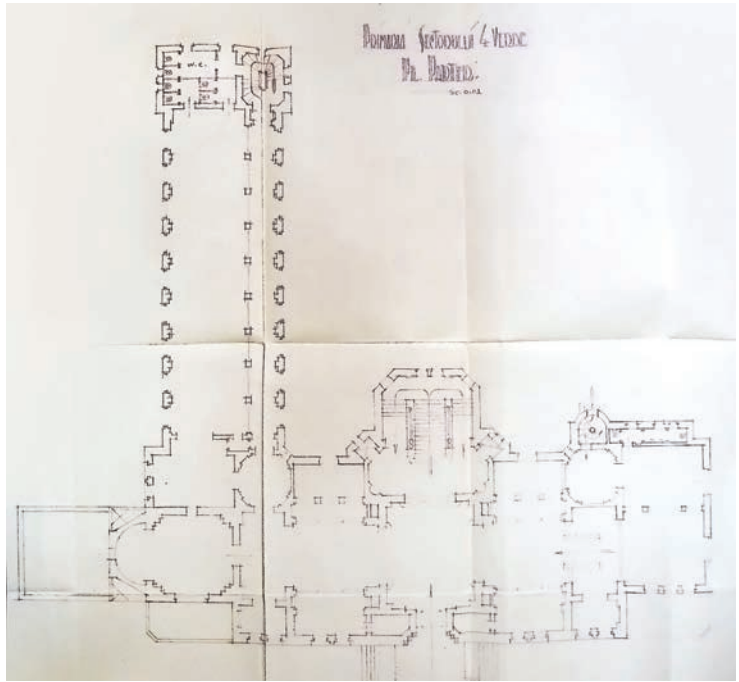
³⁸ See "Arhitectura" between 1924 and 1941; the design for the Town Hall of Craiova was published in 1930, pp. 23-24. The intense quality and quantity of his work led to George Cristinel's mentioning by Constantin 1986, pp. 79-80.

³⁹ Negoescu 1930, p. 31.

⁴⁰ Urbanismul 1935, p. 231.



Ill. 8. Town Hall of District 1, originally Town Hall of the Green District IV, Bucharest, in 1938-1941. Excerpt from Town Hall of Bucharest Municipality, Green District IV, file 235/1941.



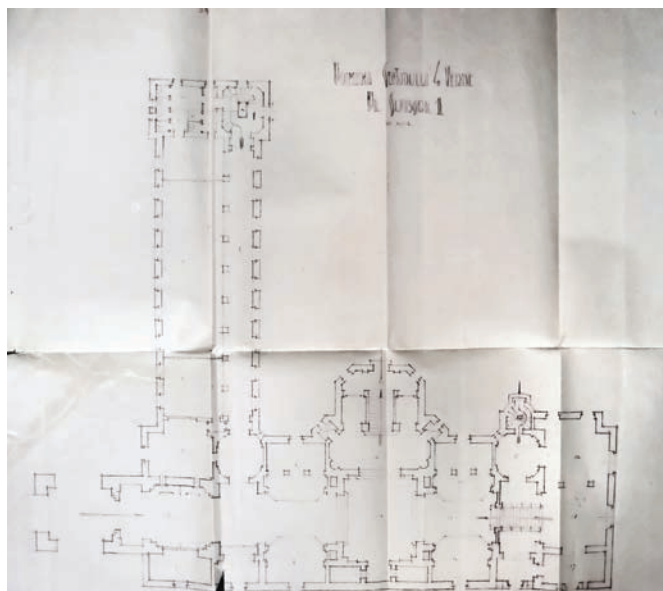
Ill. 9. Town Hall of District 1, originally Town Hall of the Green District IV, Bucharest, in 1938-1941 – plan of the (high) ground floor. Excerpt from T. H. M. B., Green District IV, file 235/1941.

(of the district) are rendered through the balance between the vertical accent of the very same tower and the wing mass, particularly the main one.

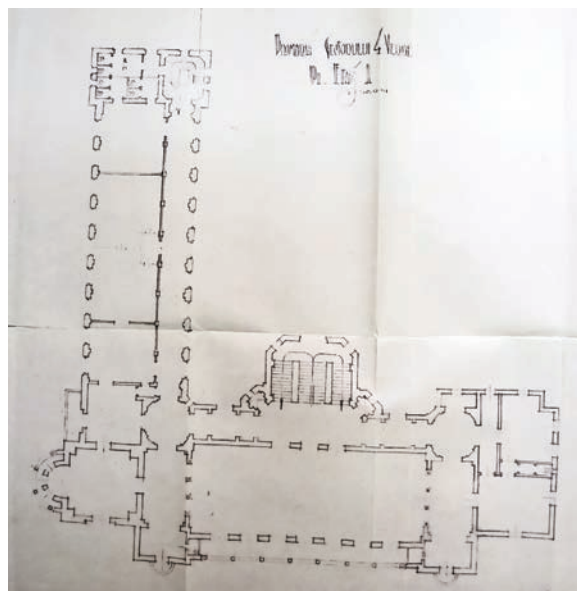
At the same time, the designers complied with the demand of sobriety in matters of “service area”. From this viewpoint, one can see the clear-cut hierarchy between the two wings of the edifice; the main one (parallel to Banu Manta Boulevard) is not only tall but also three-dimensional owing to its loggia in *piano nobile* and balconies, while the secondary wing shows rather bi-dimensional façades. What is more, the hierarchy is supported by the fact that the elevation of the main wing is perfectly symmetrical, unlike that of the secondary wing which, since it does not house a significant access to the building, can do and it does without this compositional principle of monumentality.

The hierarchical structure materialized in its silhouette and volumetric shape was flawlessly reflected by its interior, at least in the way it was organized in its projection in horizontal plane. We find it useful to resort now to the only existing set of historic plans (Ill. 9-13), even if they are copies of the original one which, prior to World War II, were archived “at the Municipality”.⁴¹ From this viewpoint, the main wing is noteworthy not only due to the relative position of the grand access and vertical circulation, but also to the symmetry of interior compartmentalizations on the high ground floor (Ill. 9), of the semi-basement (Ill. 10) which corresponds to the access placed under the clock tower, and also to the first floor where the Board Room, also called back then “Festive Hall” is situated. The latter holds, within the interior space, the supreme symbol of local authority, and stretches over two levels, which turns the second floor of the main wing into a simple corridor uniting both ends (Ill. 12), and which probably adds to the useful area the area of the third floor (Ill. 13). However, the secondary wing (Ill. 9-13) had not only a modest vertical circulation in terms of dimension

⁴¹ T. H. M. B. District IV Green, file 235/1941; this particular document is the first verification minute drawn up by the Commission for the Inventory of Public Buildings for the headquarters of the Town Hall of the Green District IV from Banu Manta Boulevard.



Ill. 10. Town Hall of District 1, originally Town Hall of the Green District IV, Bucharest, in 1938-1941 – semi-basement plan. Excerpt from T. H. B. M., Green District 1, file 235/1941.



Ill. 11. Town Hall of District 1, originally Town Hall of the Green District IV, Bucharest, in 1938-1941 – first floor plan. Excerpt from T. H. B. M., Green District IV, file 235/1941.

but also one displayed according to strict functional criteria, which allowed only uncompartmentalized spaces where the majority of toilets were located.

It is worth noting the contrast between the architecture of interior, representational spaces all being located in the main wing, where the Board Room and the grand staircase are (Ill. 7), and the secondary wing (Ill. 14).⁴² The simplicity of the latter is very close to minimalism and it was meant to inspire aseptic, technical, modern efficiency specific to the interwar period by exposing the reinforced concrete structure, intense lighting, absence of decoration and the rawness of components (the lighting devices, for instance). Such characteristics of the secondary wing were the expression of sober architecture bespeaking of the then trendiness and were equally highlighting the richness of the main wing.

The (tempered) richness of the building was enhanced by the murals of the tower façades which, from the height of the clock (Ill. 8), harmonized the exterior and the interior, because the Board Room was decorated in a similar fashion.⁴³ The artistic murals of the building were painted by Olga Greceanu, which was not an incidental choice because on the one hand, the artist was an outstanding personality and on the other she was favourable to mixing artistic work and research, very much in the spirit of the age.⁴⁴ Accordingly, owing to these murals, the monumentality of the edifice was enhanced in the modern vein ... at that time.

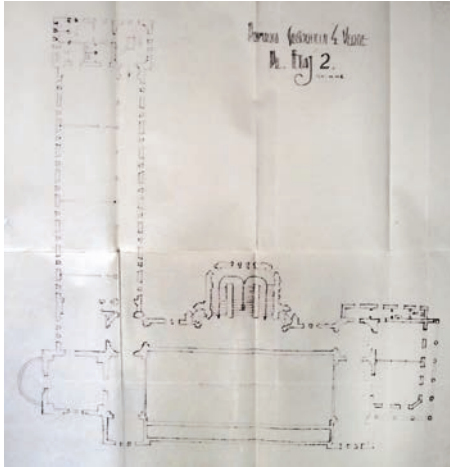
However, since then both the relative artistic and technical values that grew with the building met different destinies.⁴⁵ Its silhouette and volumetric shape, though temporarily affected by the fire that damaged the roof framework on September 4, 2009, have been restored to their initial form. Equally, the hierarchy

⁴² Nădejde 1936, p. 60.

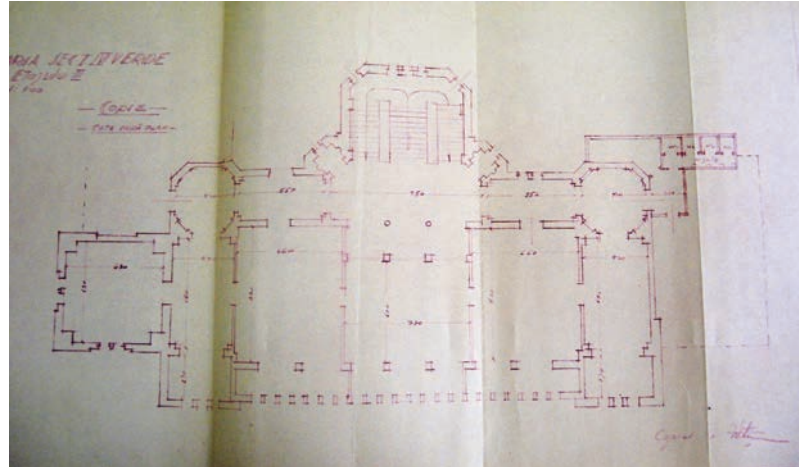
⁴³ In the aftermath of World War II all the murals were eliminated probably because of their iconography; a team guided by D. Mohanu (Nanu 2005) cleaned the layer that had hid the ones inside for six decades. According to the documentation made available by Professor Mohanu, the intervention commissioned to the National University of Arts, Conservation-Restoration Department, Bucharest, was endorsed by the Ministry of Culture and Cults under 124/CA/24.06.2004, and was coordinated by E. V. Martin, specialist restorer, who worked with P. G. Baranovschi, specialist restorer, I. Stănculescu who at that time was undergoing licensing procedures, C. D. Birzu, A. Pintilie, restorer specialized in the field of “tempera on wood”, and R. C. Gondoș, a beginner in the field (Martin *et alii* 2005).

⁴⁴ Deac, Octavian 2007, p. 30.

⁴⁵ See Derer, Cârstea 2012 about the recent history of the building.



Ill. 12. Town Hall of District 1, originally Town Hall of the Green District IV, Bucharest, in 1938-1941 – second floor plan. Excerpt from T.H. B. M., Green District IV, file 235/1941.



Ill. 13. Town Hall of District 1, originally Town Hall of the Green District IV, Bucharest, in 1938-1941 – Third floor plan, exclusively in the main wing. Excerpt from T. H. M. B. Sector IV Verde, dosar 235/1941.



Ill. 14. Town Hall of District 1, originally Town Hall of the Green District IV, Bucharest. The corridor of the secondary wing. Excerpt from Nădejde 1936, p. 60.

of the two wings has fortunately been preserved, because at the 2008 consolidation only the rear elevations were coated and so, the three-dimensionality of the main wing and, respectively, the bidimensionality of the secondary were maintained. Needless to say that the contrast between the solemn symmetry of the former and the pragmatic minimalism of the latter was preserved, both on the façade overlooking Banu Manta Boulevard and, in general, within the interior space. As a consequence of the 2008 consolidation, some parts of the arches and vaults of the main wing, executed on wire lathing, were not only damaged due to interior coatings, but also affected as initial spans. Consequently, the cultural evaluation study and the complex design drawn up by a new team in 2010 proposed that one should mend the damaged curved elements by observing the initial geometry and adjusting it to the new dimensions resulting from the thickening of the load bearing elements. It is only in this way that, once the execution is completed, the hierarchy of the two wings will be reflected also in the complexity of the roofing systems. This will be equally true for Olga Greceanu's murals for the main wing, which mural should regain its metaphorical radiance through a new restoration.

Only when the relative artistic and technical values are retrieved as much as possible,⁴⁶ the Town Hall of District 1, formerly the Town Hall of the Green District IV, will be able to reflect the high cultural identity that encapsulates it. The latter is inherent to

⁴⁶ For other types of cultural values that were identified and defined in the building of Town Hall of District 1, initially the Town Hall of the Green District IV, as well as for intervention regulations to preserve and enhance them see Derer *et alii* 2010, and for the design based on them, see Derer, Cârstea 2012.

the role it had to play in the configuration of a local complex centre, and even if the key edifice failed to carry out this mission, being unable to generate the planned ensemble in the interwar period, one should not ignore the way in which people felt it to be back then. The extent to which the building of the Town Hall of the Green District IV was prized at that time, both as an object and for its potential role, was clearly manifested in the financial efforts to have it completed and in the way the period media approached it; moreover, its importance was also reflected in the fact that for over a decade it housed governmental offices. What is more, the significance of the building is also indicated by the possible/probable impact it had on other edifices of this kind.⁴⁷ The Town Hall of the Green District IV was one of the two headquarters of local authorities from Bucharest that were designed and built in the interwar period,⁴⁸ at the same time it was the only one designed in the Neo-Romanian style, which could have made of it an example for the architectural competition for the Town Hall of Bucharest Municipality, as we understand from the brief. If this is true, the significance the building held at that time is all the more important and should influence even more today's cultural evaluation.

Bibliographical abbreviations:

- T. H. M. B. Town Hall of Bucharest's Municipality. Financial Department, General budget of incomes and penditure.
- S.A.R Telephone Directory of Bucharest and Ilfov County.
- L.A.R. Library of Romanian Academy.
- T. H. M. B. Green District IV Archive of the Town Hall of Bucharest Municipality, document stock of Town Hall of District 1, originally Town Hall of the Green District IV.
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⁴⁷ The hypothesis (sustained in this text and in the study on which it is grounded) regarding the 1935 competition theme for the Town Hall of the Bucharest Municipality, is quite similar with the one through which the Town Hall of District 1, initially Town Hall of the Green District IV influenced the volumetric shape of some major administrative buildings from various towns (Celac et alii 2005, 131).

⁴⁸ Giurescu 1966, p. 340. However, we should emphasize the fact that the narrative published in "Arhitectura" (Georgescu 1935, pp. 22-23) does not mention that at the time the building was to house also the headquarters of the district town hall.

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