

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.