

## **EAAE – ENHSA NETWORK ON CONSERVATION**

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### **III° workshop on Conservation**

organized by:

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## **MODERNIST NEIGHBORHOODS: CONSERVATION/ REGENERATION**

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The urban fragment proposed as study area is situated in the northern part of Bucharest and bordered by three major boulevards: Iancu de Hunedoara (part of the main ring), Aviatorilor and Calea Dorobantilor. The whole area became part of the administrative perimeter of the city in 1895.

The current configuration of this urban area resulted from the parceling of the former extensive proprietaries. The entire area was completely modified through several planned parcelings, between 1895 and 1940: the Blanc parceling (1895), Filipescu Park (1912), Bonaparte Park (1913), the parceling of the Communal Company for Low-cost Buildings (1916), the parceling of “Edilitatea” Company (1922), Mornand and eng. Teodorescu parceling (1922), the Gherghel parceling (about 1925), the Zamfirescu parceling (1925), Mornand II parceling (1928), the parceling of “Moara” Company (1935), the parceling of “Tesatoria Mecanica” Company I (1935) and the parceling of the “Tesatoria Mecanica” Company II (1940, the only one that was never actually built). The parcelings are very different in matter of urban composition (more or less elaborated), the size and shape of plots differing too, thus reflecting the social status of the population they were done for: from villa developments for the well-off (for instance Filipescu Park), to low-cost housing developments for the employees of various companies.

The coordination of the parcelings was done by the Municipality having in view the regularity and continuity of the streets’ paths through the whole urban area. Except for the oldest parceling (Blanc), all the other ones were subject to building regulations

established by the Municipality at the time when the parcelings were designed; they regarded the minimum sizes of the plots, the buildings' positions, the land use rate, the buildings' heights, the fencings, the vegetation etc.

Most houses are one family villas or buildings with multiple apartments, isolated on their own parcels or grouped by two, with variable heights, from ground floor buildings to 4-5 floor buildings. The best part of them were built in the interwar period and display a large variety of architectural languages, from late eclectic and neo-Romanian, to Art Deco and high quality Modernism. Among the authors, one can find some of the most prominent architects of the period: Horia Creangă, Duiliu Marcu, Petre Antonescu, Grigore Cerchez, Tiberiu Niga, Marcel Iancu etc. Considering their exceptional cultural significance, some of these buildings were listed as historic monuments.

The predominant functional character of the whole area has always been the residential one. Concomitantly with the first parcelings, "Saint Vincent de Paul" Hospital, run by nuns of charity was built along with its still standing church; later the building of the hospital was transformed in the I.C. Parhon Institute. In time, the apparition of some new buildings with various functional destinations progressively altered the character of the area; in most cases, these buildings were made by unifying several plots, thus changing the morphological structure of the area as well. During the interwar period, two major edifices were erected: the building currently hosting the State Treasury of the 1<sup>st</sup> District (originally designed for the headquarters of the local financial administration) and the imposing building of the I. L. Caragiale High School, whose main façade overlooks Calea Dorobantilor boulevard. In 1945, the first important office building was constructed within Filipescu Park, today hosting the Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (originally designed to house the headquarters of the Central Committee of the Romanian Communist Party). In the early 1960s, on an extensive part of the Mornand II parceling, the headquarters and the studios of the Romanian Television Society were built, occupying a large area along Calea Dorobantilor boulevard; in the same period the I. C. Parhon Hospital was erected on Aviatorilor boulevard. The ample urban restructurings done in the 1960s along Iancu de Hunedoara boulevard and in the 1970s on Calea Dorobantilor boulevard substantially changed the configuration of the adjacent urban space due to the

insertion of new blocks of flats with commercial spaces on their ground floors; they form a massive screen along the boulevard, hiding the “domestic” image of the older neighborhood.

The changes in the functional character of the area which first appeared in the interwar period were accentuated after WWII and later, after 1990, when a large number of residential villas were converted into embassies or ambassadors’ residences, consulates, cultural institutes of some European countries, including the Romanian Cultural Institute, in political parties’ headquarters etc. Some new buildings for institutions have been recently inserted in the area, such as the German Embassy, as well as buildings for offices and luxury dwellings. At the same time, several restaurants were arranged in some of the existing villas.

The defining characteristics of the whole area – planned parcelings, homogeneity of the urban fabric due to the morphological regularity of the plots and the coordinated construction of the buildings – to which the historic value should be added (as material testimony of the residential neighborhoods belonging to the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century) led to the listing of seven parcelings as “protected urban areas” among the other ones with the same status in Bucharest. The related documentation was approved by the General Council of the Municipality of Bucharest in 2000, along with the Urban General Plan. The special Regulations drawn up for each of these protected areas aimed to preserve their specificity by setting restrictions for the interventions on existing buildings and for new buildings to be inserted in.

Later it was found that in practice the regulations were not sufficient, as proven by the various new buildings that contrast with the overall specificity of the area as well as by the interventions that altered the architectural character of some existing buildings. At the same time, it was found that the status of “protected urban area” is not enough to prevent the demolition of certain buildings unlisted but having obvious architectural and contextual values. Consequently, in 2005-2007, the studies concerning the protected urban areas Filipescu Park, Bonaparte Park and Mornand parceling were revised; on this occasion, the architectural value of the buildings and their role in defining the character of the considered urban areas, were reconsidered. The revised Regulations for the mentioned protected areas were approved by the General Council

of the Municipality; thus, the necessary conditions for a more restrictive control of the interventions were ensured.

As it looks today, one could say that the whole urban area is characterized by a (still) stable equilibrium between its initial functionality that has been preserved to a great extent, and various kinds of aggressions of the modern city development which led to different dysfunctions. The latter could be summed up as follows: the increasing pressure of the real estate speculations; the insertion of new functions that contrast with the residential character of the area; the construction of new buildings, sometimes violently contrasting with the general character of the area; the alteration of the original architecture (through arbitrary and often unauthorized transformations – as adding of new levels, total or partial removal/simplification of façade moldings and decorative elements, inappropriate finishing changes and sometimes garish façades colors etc.); the poor maintenance of the public green spaces and the lack of necessary parking places could also be added as common problems.

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