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## ГРАДИТЕЉСКО НАСЛЕЂЕ КВАРТА КОТРОЧЕНИ: КАКО ГА САЧУВАТИ

### Апстракт

Котрочени је име председничке палате у Румунији, али и добро познатог дела Букурешта. Ово насеље, данас углавном резиденцијално, изграђено у оквиру урбане обнове града почетком 20. века, за становнике Букурешта представља оазу у граду оптерећеном историјским недоследностима урбанистичких прописа. Није реч само о удобности становања нити о луксузним стамбеним објектима; већ је реч о улицама, осветљењу, тихом шапутању које прати шетаче у јесењи сутон. Грађевине еkleктичне архитектуре говоре о првобитним власницима, понајпре о њиховим сновима: у трену, посетилац прелази из Венеције у Аугзбург, док пролази крај белог неовенецијанског здања које стоји поред неоготичке грађевине, а то је понекад само предворје амбијента Версајске палате. Међутим, Котрочени се континуирано мења: сваке године све више првобитних грађевина, које носе трагове земљотреса, претвара се у нове резиденције, што се оправдава ефикаснијим инвестирањем у некретнине, па се проблеми ових здања одражавају и на цело насеље Котрочени.

У фокусу рада је борба посебног дела града да сачува своје градитељско наслеђе. Нема ничег необичног у тој борби, иста је као и свуда. Верујемо, међутим, да је за Букурешт то кључно бојно поље – уколико ту дође до помака, биће то снажна симболичка основа за очување целокупног румунског градитељског наслеђа.

**Кључне речи:** наслеђе, атмосфера града, грађевински прописи

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## **BUILT HERITAGE OF COTROCENI NEIGHBOURHOOD: WAYS TO PRESERVE IT**

### **Abstract**

Cotroceni is the name of the Romanian Presidential Palace, but also a very distinctive neighbourhood in Bucharest. Born in an urban renewal of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, now mostly the residential neighbourhood, for the citizens of Bucharest Cotroceni is an oasis in a city stifled by historical inconsistency of urban regulations. It is not about comfort or stately residences; it is more about streets, lights, the quiet whispers that accompany people strolling in an autumn dusk. The buildings, reminiscent of eclectic architecture, tell stories about the original owners and most of all about their dreams: in an instant, one can step from Venice to Augsburg as passing by a white Neo-Venetian residence standing near a gloomy Neo-Gothic one, and that might only be the gate to a Versailles Palace atmosphere. However, the city is continuously bent on altering it: each year, more and more old residences, bearing major earthquakes wounds, become, in the name of a real-estate efficiency investment, new residences, and the neighbourhood starts reflecting the wounds of these buildings.

The focus of this paper is on the struggle of a particular neighbourhood to keep its heritage. There is nothing particular about this struggle, it's the same as everywhere. However, we believe that, for Bucharest, it is the major battlefield – if progress is made there, it will be a very strong symbolical base for preserving the whole Romanian architectural heritage.

**Keywords:** heritage, atmosphere, building regulations

## **Introduction**

Over the last sixty years, built heritage in Romania, suffered two consecutive instances of aggression: the first one, during the communist era, that stemmed from politics, and was performed in the name of "the new socialist man", systematically destroyed large historical areas, especially city centres. The second period of aggression, which was done on a smaller scale, began in 1990s, but has affected the urban image in the same way as the first one. In the latter case, the roots are to be found in the lack of specific legislation and above all in the absence of control.

The Cotroceni neighbourhood, from our point of view, is the epitome of this process, but also of the struggle against it, and on a small scale, can serve as a pattern for opposing destruction by adopting building regulations aiming not only to stop the decay of heritage, but also to preserve a specific character of the area that is at this point being lost.

## **Methodology**

The paper focuses on presenting the possible ways of keeping this valuable heritage intact by analysing, first of all, the present state of the built heritage in Cotroceni and studying the possibilities for intervention for each category of buildings. Categories imply the level and kind of aggression.

In this paper, we will refer only to the residential building in the neighbourhood, excluding its various public facilities of national interest, which, although part of the neighbourhood, do not have a community character and thus do not participate functionally in the residential area system. Also, the study mainly focuses on the streets inside the neighbourhood, because the perimeter and major transit routes, due to the pressure of investors, have developed a different character of construction, being much more connected to the city than the streets inside the neighbourhood.

## **Documentary data**

The Cotroceni neighbourhood occupies a preferable part of the territory of Bucharest: it is located in the central area, but at the same time, unlike the rest of the central residential areas, it is spared from transit between the city centre and the peripheral residential neighbourhoods.

Although it seems that the first documentary proof of the Cotroceni settlement dates back to the early 17<sup>th</sup> century<sup>1</sup>, the area started to really participate in the life of Bucharest much later, towards the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, with the appearance of three major complexes, around which gradually small block of houses were built. The residence of the rulers of Muntenia, the southern historical province of Romania, once stood at the site of the nowadays Presidential Palace and the Cotroceni Palace Garden around it, now a park. Establishment of the Cotroceni Monastery<sup>2</sup> was a proof of secular power, and the third major structure was originally monastic Church of St Eleftherios,<sup>3</sup> built at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. These complexes were built, at first without affecting Cotroceni, in the particular natural setting formed by

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two major elements: a dense forest, hence the name of the area,<sup>4</sup> and the second element, which developed over time – the genesis axis of the city itself, the Dâmbovița River that passes through Bucharest from west to east.

Seasonal floods turned the area into a swamp unsuitable for construction<sup>5</sup>; the church of St Eleftherios, the only building in this area, was erected on an island, being surrounded by the Dâmbovița riverbeds with changing flows. It was not until the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century that the regulation works on the Dâmbovița riverbed began<sup>6</sup>, and with them, the drainage that turned the southern part of the river bed into the dry land.

### **19<sup>th</sup> century**

The residential complex that appeared around the old royal court underwent major changes, having been turned into the premises of the Faculty of Medicine and the Cotroceni Park. Most of the buildings that formed the ancient royal residence and court were demolished to make way for the current Cotroceni Palace, built at that time as the royal residence of the first king of the newly united Romania – King Carol I.

At the same time, the garden was sectioned by an important transit artery that connected the west of the country with the centre of the capital. The northern area of Cotroceni Park became the Botanical Garden belonging to the University of Bucharest.

Except for the groups of peri-urban dwellings erected along the roads near the center of the area, on the east, and at the site of some pre-existing border structures, the locations which with the drainage of swamp became built environment, the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries did not bring much change to the neighbourhood.

### **The interwar period**

Although we are not talking about a single investor<sup>7</sup> as in the case of other housing areas built in the vicinity during the modern history of Bucharest, 80% of this neighbourhood was erected in just 20 years.

In 1920s, the first signs of interest of local authorities for this area appeared. Returning of large areas of land, which added to those already owned by the state and those resulting from donations,<sup>8</sup> was the starting point in achieving a coherence of the neighbourhood, whose borders had already been defined in that period by a series of endowments as well as topographic elements.

The process of dividing the land brought with it building regulations common to the whole neighbourhood, the essence of which generated the unitary character of the area today. The location near the Cotroceni Palace, but also the centre nearby, with easy access to it, due to the Haussmannian boulevards traced at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and especially the character of a brand-new neighbourhood, brought with it an increased interest for this land. The works began in 1925 and by 1940 the neighbourhood had gained the character that defines it today, a character resulting precisely from the compliance to this urban regulation, but at the same time following a diversified personal stylistic approach to each building.

## **Features – lots, houses, streets**

First of all, all the lots were rectangular, with an area between 300 and 500 square meters, and 10–15m wide. As for their location, most of the buildings were built as detached; however, in some areas it was not forbidden to connect the buildings and build smaller fronts, to take advantage of a side yard. As regards the height, the houses were rarely two-storeyed plus the ground floor. In most cases, they comprised a basement, a ground floor, one upper floor, and an attic; the height at the eaves was 7 to 9m, and the maximum height did not exceed 12m, except in the depth of the lots, in the ridge area. The foundations of the houses were around 150m<sup>2</sup>, rarely falling below 100m<sup>2</sup>, and sometimes, in the corner lot, reaching 200m<sup>2</sup>.

The relationship between the building and the street was conditioned by two elements: first of all, and most importantly, the buildings had to be built 4m away from the street, and the fences had to be transparent, made of metal mesh or wrought iron. That is how each house got a front garden, visible from the sidewalk, with flowers, shrubs, and usually one or two larger trees, so characteristic of the neighbourhood. The sidewalk was thus visually widened by these spaces and discontinuous front, not affecting the public space.

The public space comprised two sidewalks of 1.5m and an 8m-roadway, the same profile being used uniformly in most streets in the neighbourhood, offering air and tranquillity that could not be found in crowded Bucharest public spaces with oriental reminiscences. The streets lined with trees, especially oaks, chestnut and lime trees, also contributed to this atmosphere. Some tree lines were cut down, leaving those streets bare.

The houses, being detached, did not affect each other, and due to the positioning of the main interior functions towards the street and to the back yard, they did not affect the privacy of adjacent residents. Usually built for a single family, most of the buildings revealed a particular configuration, with separate access from the yard to the first floor and to the ground floor, and sometimes also to the attic, the fact that provided the possibility of dividing houses into separate units. At the time of their construction, only the first floor and the ground floor were considered living spaces, the basement being used for storage and the attic for related domestic functions of the house in connection with the daily work of servants.

Sometimes the servants had a space reserved for them in the attic, other times the servants' bedrooms were in the detached buildings nearby the main house, along rear borders of lots.

## **Architectural Style**

In terms of architectural style, there are three directions in this regard, each related to the architectural trend of the time: first, the neighbourhood of Cotroceni benefited from the international Functional Modernism, quite present in Romania, with artistic designs today designated as monuments. They are very easily recognizable because they follow most of the famous Corbusier principles: roof terraces, geometric façades, horizontal window strips, the absence of decorations, etc.

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Then follow the eclectic-style buildings, with historical allusions reflected in shapes, decoration and various architectural elements: there are classical structures with rigid symmetry, robust ledges, and renaissance mouldings; there are also Neo-Baroque buildings with planimetric niches, ovoid openings and vertical ascents on façades; there are Neo-Gothic villas, with small isolated vertical recesses and dominant masonry; there are exuberant Rococo houses, with plenty of detail and fragmented façades.

Art-Deco constructions are fewer, but still existing, brought by Viennese Secession, others resulting from the absolutist approaches of Italian fascist architecture, then interpretations of regional styles, ranging from Mediterranean – Moorish, Greek, Venetian, to Nordic – German, British, Scandinavian.

However, the local specificity can be seen in the constructions based on the Neo-Romanian Style. This architectural national style appeared in the years of the late Romanticism at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, adopting chiselled elements of traditional vernacular architecture and the architectural achievements from the early 18<sup>th</sup> century. Besides, at every step, as a professional, you are struck by contradictory images: oriental-inspired buildings with Renaissance frames, a modernist composition of volumes with decorative abundance, Western European chalets with Mediterranean terraces. Such were obviously the choices of owners, to imprint certain images of Western European cities on their houses, but it would not have been possible without the unfortunate existence of catalogues, from which the owners chose their window frames, cornice details, as well as the entrance door designs. The resulting houses thus became a stylistic collage specific of each house owner, a collage which, today, for a passer-by, in the absence of the possibility of relating it to the original, does not affect the homogeneous character of the general image.

### **1940–1989**

The 1940 earthquake was the first test for the newly built houses. Due to its small amplitude and long duration, the houses resisted. In the absence of particular studies, however, we cannot conclude that they were not affected at all. The war also left no marks on the neighbourhood, as Bucharest was not a battlefield, and especially went well in the bombing of 6 April 1944, when only two stray missiles hit its southern border, since the neighbourhood was at a considerable distance from the targeted facilities.

During the communist period, the neighbourhood did not undergo major changes that would affect its integrity, although much of the central area of Bucharest fell to bulldozers, which cleaned the land for the famous People's House, today the Palace of Parliament, with its suite of institutions and collective housing for the ruling class, all in a composition modelled on the Royal Court of Versailles.

There are, therefore, some particular features of this neighbourhood that saved it from the fate of the neighbouring areas, and among them, the political factor stands out. In the years that followed the World War II, the new ruling class that came to power with the help of the Soviet army urgently needed an organized residential area the comfort of living in which would show their high status. We do not have precise figures, but about half of

the houses in Cotroceni were nationalized and their owners either emigrated to Western Europe or ended up in communist prisons.

Once installed, this political class brought with it a change in the profile of the neighbourhood, affecting its community character, but at the same time raising its status from the middle-class neighbourhood to the luxurious neighbourhood of the ruling class.

At the time, the topographic elements limited both the expansion of the neighbourhood towards the city centre and the aggression of the city centre towards the neighbourhood.

Situated on the outskirts of the city until 1960s, between the green belt, reminiscent of the Cotroceni forest, on the west, the north-eastern course of the Dâmbovița River, and the steep hill of Romniceanu Park to the southwest, built both at the foot of the hill and on the slope, the neighbourhood boasted strong demarcation lines for the extensive development, limiting the possibility of the neighbourhood to expand towards the western outskirts.

Over time, the system of public endowments of national significance formed radially on the perimeter of the neighbourhood. Starting from the North – the Romanian Opera House that guards the main access to the neighbourhood, then a series of educational and research institutions – the Faculty of Biology, Cantacuzino<sup>9</sup> National Research Institute, it continues to the southeast, with the national sport facilities including a football stadium and a complex of tennis courts hosting today the major tennis tournaments<sup>10</sup> in Romania. In the western corner, there is the Military Academy Complex, built in the years before World War II<sup>11</sup> and expanded with a square in rigid Stalinist organization, consisting of block of flats for military personnel engaged in the education of officers.

Then follows the Cotroceni Palace Garden, with a troubled history that began with its abandonment, reducing it to a state of degradation, and losing its symbolic role in the society – the role of the last monarchical residence, succeeded by the Palace of the Pioneers,<sup>12</sup> erected in the 1980s to include a series of exhibition space. Bordering the garden of the Cotroceni Palace, the Botanical Garden kept its perimeter intact, even benefiting from the local extensions and the Faculty of Medicine with the University Hospital built in the 1970s, the largest hospital complex in the country. The location of the People's House was a determining factor in the preservation of the neighbourhood – with its back turned to the neighbourhood and facing the strong eastern axis, it limited the expansion of the city towards Cotroceni.

All these major endowments, so densely built as to exceed the topographic limits, formed a physical boundary that limited the spatial relations of the neighbourhood to the city. This fact, generally seen as negative, was positive for Cotroceni, considering the destructive urban activities of the time.

After the World War II, there were still some unbuilt areas. These were occupied by small blocks of flats for collective housing, which, even if they did not correspond to the type of single-family buildings, largely followed the lot regulations, and did not negatively affect the homogenous character of the neighbourhood.

Most of them were built after 1977. The March-4<sup>th</sup> earthquake seriously affected the Bucharest interwar buildings, primarily due to the construction rules of the period, imported mostly from Western Europe, which did not take into account the destructive effect associated with the horizontal forces resulting from the earthquake.

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Due to the low height buildings and the swampy soil that absorbed the vibrations, the neighbourhood suffered less than the rest of the city, with only a few houses destroyed. Because of such soil, only detached buildings were erected, unlike the usual technique of the time of attaching several lots in order to build densely situated blocks-of-flats. However, most of them were affected and the structural consolidation interventions carried out in a hurry did not manage to stop, in many cases the degradation of the structural system.

### **1990–2010**

Although the communist years were a calm period in the evolution of the neighbourhood, still the seeds of the future aggression were sown, the aggression that had its effects especially in 1990–2010. First of all, the nationalization of private properties: although the communist regime made the residential spaces available to the ruling class, it did not simultaneously transfer the property rights. They remained the property of the state and those who lived there were regarded as tenants. Being a tenant meant the lack of maintenance of buildings, a fact visible especially after 1977, when many homes that required complex consolidation works did not go through the necessary stage of renovation: cracks in masonry, incompletely insulated roofs, faulty storm drains, all these remained as negative factors that visibly affected the heritage buildings of Cotroceni.

The second direction was much more serious and reflected personal interests emerging in the decade 1990–2000, simultaneously with the legislation enabling the restitution of property to their former owners. This was a set of laws by which the tenants had the right based on the rent paid over the years to the state to buy out the house they live in, since the state became the owner of the properties after illegal post-war dispossessions. The outcome? Hundreds of lawsuits between tenants – now rightful owners of homes, and the Romanian state, have left the buildings without maintenance for 20 years, and their state was additionally affected by the earthquakes of 1986, 1991 and 2004.

These properties could not participate in the estate market since the property rights over them were in dispute, which caused additional problems. These two issues affected decisively the present image of the neighbourhood.

### **Category 1 – dilapidated buildings**

These buildings, in different stages of degradation, still reflect the history of the neighbourhood. Some buildings have kept their features made 100 years ago. We are talking about a beneficial contribution to the general image, especially due to the comparison of this category with the next two, which are really harmful to the homogeneity of the neighbourhood;<sup>13</sup> namely, buildings were renovated in a way that destroyed the original identity and, on the other hand, some both functionally and stylistically alien facilities were introduced.





Figure 1. Categories 1, 2, and 3 (2021)

## Category 2 – incoherent renovations

The first category, that of worthless renovations, occurred mainly between 2000 and 2010, with the view to increasing the real estate value in the area.<sup>14</sup> Both few real owners and the investors from outside of the neighbourhood, used the loose legislation to increase the value of the property as a whole. We are talking here about two categories of aggression: the first, the most obvious one, refers to the treatment of the facing, which in most cases meant cladding the facade with well-known insulation-system (polystyrene and structured plaster); such interventions stripped the buildings of their moulding frames, resulting in approximations and interpretations of the original frames made from polyurethane rods. The rest of the details were affected as well, especially the fittings, with the original double-glazed wooden fittings being replaced with the PVC ones, with large areas of glass, unlike the original wrought-iron and steel windows. The roofs, mostly made of ceramic tiles, have been replaced with light metal roof coverings, without respecting, in some cases, even the stereotomy or colour of the original material.

The second category of interventions was even more harmful – extensions and superstructures built to the detriment of the two basic elements that define the atmosphere of the streets in Cotroceni: the front gardens and the height regime.

In particular, immediately after 1990s, with the boom of small businesses, some buildings, especially those on the busier streets, were expanded with a small store or office space toward the street, thus affecting the local sidewalk. The garages were also brought to the front, facing the street. So, those small ground floor constructions, without any ambient value, became the first ones to be seen, putting in the background the main body of



Figure 2. Categories 4, 5, and 6 (2021)

the house. Today, many of these street annexes are without any public function that could animate the sidewalk. The extensions, on the other hand, affect not only the architectural discourse, but also locally destroy the coherent image of the street front by sticking out, although the position in a row does not require it.

### Category 3 – alien inserts

Insertions that are alien to the place are not many, but due to the distorting effect, they are visually ubiquitous over large areas, disturbing the peace of a coherent street organisation. The lack of care for the integration into the built surroundings shows itself in the use of modern materials non-compliant to the surroundings – glass, metal, plywood, in the façade compositions that do not respect the masonry - openings ratio characteristic of load-bearing masonry architecture, and in the use of aggressive shapes and colours. Beyond these, perhaps the most harmful are the inserts made on another scale, those that do not respect the size of the area, both in height and in its base. These elements suffocate the surroundings, literally removing from the atmosphere of the neighbourhood their areas of visual and functional influence.

Functionally, this impact is felt not only on a formal level, but also in the essence of the insertion, namely the density that generates, both quantitatively – collective housing brings with it the concentration of several residents on a lot, and qualitatively – company headquarters that bring life the neighbourhood, but are so large in scale that the surrounding cannot absorb them. Here we refer to the entire office buildings, not to small artisan shops that do not affect the general residential character of the area.

## **Protected Area no. 45**

These two categories of impact happened in the context of loose legislation, especially in the absence of control mechanisms. The first decisive step made in this direction was the adoption of the General Urban Plan of Bucharest and the definition of heritage protection areas; Cotroceni neighbourhood is marked as the Protected Area no. 45.

A series of construction regulations apply in this area; it is beneficial that, for the most part, they were taken from the original regulations, aiming to preserve the specific basic characteristics of the neighbourhood:

- perhaps the most important provision is the term “parcel reservation” by which the land lots cannot be attached together or dismembered, which would change the overall building regime;
- then the front gardens, retreated 4 metres from the street, behind some transparent fences, as well as the express specification of the use of this area as a green space;
- limiting the percentage of land occupation (POT) and the coefficient of land use (CUT), the height regime and the effective height of constructions with effects both in limiting the overall exaggerations and in limiting the density of users related to a structure.<sup>15</sup>

The status of Cotroceni as a protected area, brought with it the need to approve the building design by the Heritage Commission, consisted of the multidisciplinary team, with the presence of architects specialised in the field, should be the guarantor, not only of compliance with these rules but of the design quality that takes into account the determinant value of the pre-existing context.

Beyond this major direction of struggle for heritage preservation, in recent years some civil and professional organizations, ranging from the Order of Architects of Romania to neighbourhood community organizations,<sup>16</sup> have taken over from the authorities the task of monitoring the area. At the moment, without many legal levers, the results are minor, but some voices are heard in the public space, putting the situation of the neighbourhood in the limelight.<sup>17</sup>

## **Category 4 – value restorations**

These organizations go beyond the social-community character and try to revitalise the area by organizing tours, periodic annual events, and exhibitions, as opposed to two negative categories presented above. Under the title “So (possibly) yes”, they struggle for the consolidation of buildings, but also for the correct restoration and inserts ranging from “do not adversely affect the context” to “are beneficial to the surroundings”. Regarding the restorations, it is encouraging that the most valuable buildings in the neighbourhood were restored thanks to the owners who see in it the possibility to gain personal recognition.

## **Category 5 – curative inserts**

In another category, as in any architectural criticism, opinions can become subjective. However, we conclude that a new insertion, which respects the position on the lot in terms

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of size, the adjacent overall image, is a possible insertion. In this context, in recent years, many unbuilt places have required interventions to heal the urban image, bringing with them valuable solutions, which bring the contemporary touch within the limits set by the initial rules.

### **Category 6 – wagon dwellings**

Cotroceni houses can be put in the sixth category for two particular reasons. First, they are different type of buildings than the general interwar ones, and second, these houses constitute a potential curative fund for the area.

These are, for the most part, ground-floor dwellings, built before the time of the interwar subdivision, in older streets, constructions that resulted from an organic-vernacular way of building a house of the time. The “wagon housing”, a linear sequence of functions deployed in the depth of the plot, positioned usually on the northern property border, is the basic typology of urban peripheral housing in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century in southern Romania, being a model taken from traditional rural housing and adapted to the deep plots with a reduced front to the street, thus becoming characteristic of the peri-urban slums of Bucharest.

On these lots, it is practically impossible to build respecting the dominant character of the neighbourhood, due to the shapes of the lots and also due to the existence of constructions on adjacent lots. Here, therefore, it is not possible to build respecting the elements of the main regulation since most of these houses were built next to the sidewalk. These lots cannot remain in the current state because of the investment pressure manifested at the neighbourhood level. In their case, the subsequent construction could be done only by respecting the spirit of the adjacent area.

### **Conclusion**

After all, the exceptional value of Cotroceni does not lie in the houses taken individually but in the overall ambient value of the area, in a special atmosphere that makes this neighbourhood both a promenade area with cultural tourist character, but also a central residential area offering high level of comfort for living.

Therefore, a person walking the streets of Cotroceni can enjoy in special architectural diversity that seems to be a history lesson. Apart from the buildings of the International Style and Neo-Romanian Style, the rest are in fact copies of valuable European architectural treasures, but the way they are lined up tell its own story. The fact that they are copies does not tarnish the image of the neighbourhood – the value of the architectural exhibition offered by Cotroceni is not in the individuality of the exhibits, but in the unity and coherence of the times.

### **Notes**

- 1 According to the deed of Prince Radu Mihnea Voda – 27<sup>th</sup> November 7123 (1614) (Ionescu, G: *Istoria Cotrocenilor*, Bucuresti, \*, 1902, p. 3).
- 2 Cotroceni Monastery was built by Prince Serban Cantacuzino between 1679 and 1681 (Curinschi-Vorona, G: *Istoria Arhitecturii în România*, Editura Tehnica, București, 1981, p. 236, date of access 14<sup>th</sup> March 2021).

- 3 The Church of St Eleftherios was built on an island around 1741–1744 by Metropolitan Theofil, thanks to the financial donation of Constantin, son of Maxim, a famous merchant of the time (Danalache, T: *Biserica Sfântul Elefterie Vechi*, 2021. <https://www.crestinortodox.ro/biserici-manastiri/biserica-sfantul-elefterie-vechi-68031.html>, date of access 14<sup>th</sup> March 2021).
- 4 The local term “acotroci” disappeared from the current language. It meant “to search”, but also “to hide.” However, the etymological source is not universally accepted. The neighbourhood also possibly derives its name from a founder of the area: “cotroc” or “cotrocea” (Ionescu, G: *Istoria Cotrocenilor*, Bucuresti, \*, 1902).
- 5 Such geological position still affects today’s residences, since their basements are often flooded by groundwater. Following the floods of 2006, in many basements water reached a height of 2 meters, affecting installations and even garages (Diamandi, I, *Casele vechi, o importantă moștenire culturală. Cotrocenii, cartier al cărui șarm trebuie păstrat*, *Romania Libera*, 10 02 2018, date of access 14<sup>th</sup> March 2021).
- 6 The works were executed in 1880–1883 by entrepreneur A. Boisquerin, according to the project of engineer and architect Grigore P. Cerchez (Giurescu, C: *Istoria Bucureștilor*, Editura pentru Literatura, Bucuresti, 1966, p. 157)
- 7 However, there were attempts to erect several units at the same time. For example, until 1935, the Autonomous House of Constructions, founded in 1930, had built about 70 individual houses in the Cotroceni neighbourhood (Giurescu, C: *Istoria Bucureștilor*, Editura pentru Literatura, Bucuresti, 1966, p. 195, date of access 14<sup>th</sup> March 2021).
- 8 Dr Gen Carol Davila founded the Faculty of Medicine, Pharmacy and Veterinary Medicine, and most of the neighbourhood developed on his estate donated to the state. Hence the names of the streets in Cotroceni mostly bear the names of doctors who worked with dr Davila at the time the faculty was founded, with the exception of Joseph Lister and Louis Pasteur (Grigore, V. *Bătrânul cartier Cotroceni și casele lui. De la vechea burghezie la nomenclatura comunistă*. <http://www.webphoto.ro/diverse/batranul-cartier-cotroceni-si-casele-lui-de-la-vechea-burghezie-la-nomenclatura-comunista.html>, date of access 14<sup>th</sup> March 2021).
- 9 The main hub of the national COVID vaccination system in 2021.
- 10 Unfortunately, this complex has several access areas, most of them from the inside of the neighbourhood, which turns into a periodic invasion of the neighbourhood during major sporting events.
- 11 The War School, the Academy of Military Studies, the National Defence University Carol I (current title) was designed in 1936 by architect Duiliu Marcu and executed between 1937 and 1939 ((Curinschi-Vorona, G: *Istoria Arhitecturii în România*, Editura Tehnica, București, 1981, p. 306).
- 12 Pioneers were the Communist Party children’s organization. The building served for various extracurricular educational activities.
- 13 In the file of the protected area no. 45 – Cotroceni parcelling in terms of aggressions on the built space, the two categories are identified as follows: “transformations of the existing buildings, usually not in the spirit of the original architecture” and “the appearance of new buildings (stately buildings with luxury apartments) that do not comply with the rules according to which the entire area was built (alignment, height regime, architectural quality) leading to the degradation of the urban qualities of the area” (PUG-Bucharest, Zona Protejata 45, *Parcelarea Cotroceni*, 2010).
- 14 According to prof. Razvan Luscov in the interview given for Free Europe, the financial value of the area derives from four elements: the abundance of vegetation, the withdrawal of houses from sidewalks, the low height regime, the charm of “history” of houses (Luscov, prof. dr. arh. R, interviu Sabina Fati, *De ce cladirile vechi nu sunt doar niste ziduri darapanate*, 26<sup>th</sup> June 2020, date of access 14<sup>th</sup> March 2021).

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- 15 Maximum allowed POT = 95%, the area left free must be at least 30m<sup>2</sup>; Maximum CUT = 1.8; maximum height 10m, minimum height 7m (PUG-Bucharest, Zona Protejata 45, *Parcelarea Cotroceni*, 2010).
  - 16 Incotroceni – local civic organization, which according to the website „...aims to make Cotroceni a better living space, a more welcoming and harmonious neighbourhood, where the quality of life can increase. Our goal is the development, promotion and support of the community in the Cotroceni neighbourhood and its identity, in two directions: (I) socio-cultural, and (II) architectural, urban planning and infrastructural one” (Asociația Incotroceni, 2019, <https://incotroceni.ro/despre/>, date of access 14<sup>th</sup> March 2021).
  - 17 A publicised case was the demolition of a villa in perfect shape in Joliot Curie Street in order to build a block-of-flats. The petition of the InCotroceni association against this action was signed by 170 civic organizations and cultural workers in Romania, including architects Șerban Sturza, Mihai Șora, Andrei Pleșu, Mircea Paraschivescu (Archip, A, *Un arhitect acuza Cotroceniul pierdut, Libertatea*, 8<sup>th</sup> August 2020, date of access 14<sup>th</sup> March 2021).

