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***Viața urbană în Moldova și Muntenia, 1830-1916* [The Urban Life in Moldova and Wallachia, 1830-1916] Exhibition**

The public is invited to watch an exhibition at the National Archives of Romania proposing a retrospective of the modernization of the Romanian cities at the East and South of the Carpathian Mountains through their alignment to the Western standards. It was about a long standing process with considerable social involvements. The documents selected for this project illustrate the gradual transformation of the urban settlements from the stage of “large villages”, as they are described at the end of the 18th century by the foreign travellers that wander through, towards modern European towns. This tendency was more visible around year 1900, when Bucharest and Iași could very well be compared with the Western metropolitan centres, from which only an acceptable development difference separated them.

The change in the urban evolution appeared after 1830, once with the implementation of the stipulations of the Organic Rules, which imposed the Western norms of urbanism; actually, the first panel of the exhibition groups some of these stipulations. It was in Wallachia where *Departamentul Trebilor Dinăuntru* [Minister of Interior] was “*însărcinat cu ocârmuirea tuturor municipalităților* [in charge with the government of all the municipalities]”, meaning the development of the sanitary system, the control over the prices, the repairing and preservation of the main roads, the construction of bridges in order to improve the ways of communication and the encouraging of the commercial activities. The trade of the aboriginal goods was exempted from the custom taxes, so that the products were sold in fairs, cities, “în

zile hotărâte ale săptămânii [in well determined days of the week]”. The setting up of primary schools was mentioned in every county residence, while a college and an asylum were opened in Bucharest¹. It was in Moldavia where the state assisted financially the public schools in the capital and in the other “*orașe de căpetenie* [leading cities]”, a printing house and a public library, a theological seminary. It also allotted funds for the preservation of the roads and bridges, but also “*pentru închisoarea publică și ținerea celor închiși* [for the public prison and the maintenance of those kept in them]”. The members of the city “*eforii* [ephors]” in Moldavia were yearly renewed through elections and they are not paid for this activity. The city of Iași, along with its “*mahalale* [suburbs]”, was divided in four “*cvartale* [districts]”, under which circumstances all the “*ulițe* [narrow streets]” and public squares would have been macadamized with “*piatră vârtoasă* [strong stones]”, while the *Eforia* took actions for the streets’ lighting, “*de neapărată trebuință și nevoie într-un oraș bine organizat* [of indispensable necessity and need in a well organized town]”. Among the stipulations in the Organic Rules destined to embellish the capital, one could refer to: the sold of the food exclusively in two particular markets disposed by the authorities, the motion of the hospital in a outlying and of the prison “*la un loc mai cuviincios* [to a more convenient place]”, the arrangement of a promenade area downtown and of a public garden in the neighborhood².

The second topic approached in the exhibition refers to the extension of the **urban area**. It includes plans, maps and statistics illustrating the city development demographically and territorially. The ancient cities (Bucharest, Iași) were systematized, while the new ones (Alexandria, Drobeta-Turnu Severin) were built relying upon modern architectural plans. Some others (Drăgășani, Călărași) emancipated themselves and became free towns. The urbanistic rules were combined with a planned extension and improved the life standard and the external aspect of the urban settlements, although during the whole 19th century the contrast between sumptuous buildings and shabby houses was maintained. The cities were transformed by the rectification of the street structure, since the streets were aligned and the buildings were related to it. New major axes of circulation are mapped out – the Bucharest boulevards – the Haussman pattern of urban systematization is put into practice³. The city extension was under control, by being divided in various dimensions, a system put into practice in Galați or Constanța. Emphasizing the intermediary stages of the urban evolution, the maps offer the possibility for those visiting the exhibition to make comparisons between the structure of the cities around year 1850 and the one at the beginning of the 20th century: Bucharest (1852 – Borroczyn Plan, 1895-1899 and 1912), Iași (1857, 1896-1897, 1819-1936), Drobeta-Turnu Severin (1836 and 1893). Another dimension of the urban expansion is offered by the conscriptions and census that registered the demographic evolution of the Romanian cities. Among the documents selected by the organizers in this sense, one

¹ *Regulamentul Organic*, Bucharest, 1832, p. 95-105, 193-194.

² *Reglementul Organic a Prințipatului Moldovei*, Iași, 1846, p. 18-19, 97, 110-111, 115-117.

³ http://www.uniunearestauratorilor.com/istoria_arhitecturii_in_romania.doc

could note: the statistic table set up by the Office of civil status in Brăila regarding the motion of the city's population in 1887, the "*Obșteasca catagrafie* [General census]" referring to streets, narrow streets and houses in the city of Râmnic (1858), the surface of the city of Câmpulung Mușcel including the number of population and houses (1911), the census in 1894 of the population in Bucharest set up by the statistic office of mayoralty.

The exhibition at the National Archives continues with the section related to **Architecture and urbanism**, which approaches several architectural referring points of the period. After 1850, the favorable historical context that led to the union of the Romanian Principalities in 1859, to the Constitution in 1866, the independence proclaimed in 1877 and the setting up of the Kingdom in 1881 boosted the economic and cultural life of Romania and hastened the city development. For the Romanian space on the East and South sides of the Carpathian Mountains, the urban modernization was a synonym for Westernization, since the cultural transfer was facilitated by the presence of foreign architects originated especially in France, but also Germany, Austria, and Italy, by the training of the first Romanian architects in the schools abroad and by the setting up in 1891 of the Architectural School in Bucharest, on the pattern of the education practiced at *École des Beaux Arts* in Paris⁴. The edifices built in this period varied depending on their use. A first category represented in the exhibition is the one referring to the civic buildings: in Bucharest, the Royal Palace and Cotroceni Palace are accomplished by images with Elisabeta Boulevard in that period, guarded by impressive edifices in classical style, by Lipsani Street and Victoria Course; for Iași, The Union Square and the stylish Prince Ferdinand Palace are illustrative. Beside them, one could admire city hypostases with a gentle country feature in Ploiești (*Câmpina Course*), Galați (*Strada Domnească*), Constanța (Ovidiu Square), Târgu-Jiu (general view), Giurgiu (*Strada Sf. Nicolae*) and Vaslui (*Strada Ștefan cel Mare*). Another category is represented by the religious buildings, some edifices being proposed in the exhibition: the Metropolitan Seat, the church and inn of *Sfântul Gheorghe*, the Greek Church, the Lutheran Church, the Russian Church, the Synagogue, the Armenian Church, and the Cathedral of St. Joseph in Bucharest, the Metropolitan Seat and the Lippovan Church in Iași, the Catholic Church in Brăila, and also the church in Curtea de Argeș, bishopric seat and royal residence at the beginning of the last century. Among the military buildings, the organizers of the exhibition have selected the barracks of the infantry and firemen in Călărași and the barracks in Copou (Iași). A particular position inside of the city architecture is taken by the monuments placed in parks, public gardens or squares, often built by well known artists and provoking a significant visual impact on the pedestrians. The exhibition includes representative pictures in this sense: the statue of Mihai Eminescu in Galați (masterpiece of the sculptor Frederic Storck), the statue of Miron Costin in Iași and the monument devoted to C. A. Rosetti, built by the Pole by birth sculptor Wladimir C. Hegel, the statue of Pake Protopopescu, built in white marble of Carrara by the sculptor Ion Georgescu.

⁴ Ibidem.

Real 'palaces' were built by famous architects for the state institutions and dominate the surrounding space. Among them, the exhibition presents the Ministry of Domains, the Faculty of Medicine in Bucharest and "Al. I. Cuza" University in Iași, built by the famous Swiss architect Louis Blanc, the administrative palaces in Focșani, Brăila or Bacău, the Palace of Justice in Bucharest, Sturdza Palace that would become the seat of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "Sf. Spiridon" hospital and church in Iași, and also Traian High School in Drobeta-Turnu Severin.

Another section of the exhibition is dedicated to the **works of modernization** that led to the improvement of the lifestyle in the Romanian cities. The documents reflect the building of railway stations (Iași, Giurgiu, Bucharest – North Station), harbors (Giurgiu, Constanța, Galați) and bridges (Cernavodă), the developments of the railways and the telephone and telegraph nets, the systematization of the river flows (Dâmbovița), and also the building of modern hotels ("Bulevard" in Bucharest, "Caraiman" in Sinaia, "Splendid" in Brăila, "Traian" in Iași).

Another feature of the urbanism of the 19th century Romanian Principalities was the opening of the public space, because of the coherent measures taken by the local mayoralties, according to which funds were allotted for the arrangement and preservation of the public gardens and parks, ideal places for the appointments and promenade of the citizens. This tendency is visible both in the big cities – in Bucharest the Cișmigiu garden is set up, while the Copou park remains illustrative for Iași – and in the smaller ones. The documents offer to the visitors various states of the Romanian parks, as they were sketched around year 1900; the English Park (Lacul Sărat), the Pavilion in the public Garden (Alexandria), the Music Pavilion in the public Garden (Brăila), the Pavilion of Cozla Park (Piatra-Neamț) or the public Garden (Slănic-Prahova), the parks in Călimănești and in Sinaia are only few examples.

A particular place in the exhibition is taken by the section devoted to the **leisure time**. The new concept associated to the idea of "*loisir*" that is imposed to the end of the 19th century in the Romanian cities supposes a new division of time and new priorities, so that a clear distinction between the leisure and the working time is made. People begin to have a different perception over space, time, inter-human relationship and henceforth the centre of gravity of the urban social life moves from the private to the public space. The coffee houses and restaurants achieve new features by becoming the most preferred places for socialization; among the most famous Bucharest public houses one could note Monte Carlo, *Caru' cu Bere* and *Bugetul de la Șosea*. One could add here the casinos, destined especially to the aristocracy, the exhibition presenting images with the locals in Constanța, Călărași and Lacul Sărat, along with the racecourse in Bucharest, a kind of standard for the *belle époque* period. The documents selected in the exhibition also reflect some of the popular entertainments of the citizens: the acrobatics, football games, displays of fire-works, parades, but also the French movies and the opera performances. For the expanding cultural life, one could refer to the modern buildings of the theatres in Bucharest, Iași and *Ateneul Român*, built at the end of the 19th century by relying upon the plans of the Garnier Opera in Paris.

Another topic approached in the exhibition refers to the **social types**. Through images, it exemplified the diversity of the activities that the citizens undertook at the end of the 19th century. Because of the implementation by the mayoralties of the urban rules, the citizens become visible as a distinctive social category, adapted to the new urban realities; at the same time, the areas at the cities' periphery continued to be settled by villagers. The exhibits draw the attention to some of the most known urban activities – the military (police soldiers, firemen, *roșiori*) and the civil servants (magistrates, commercial employees) –, to which one could add the representatives of the aristocracy (the Royal family, Rosetti, Mavrogheni, and Bibescu families). A particular place is dedicated to the merchants, a different social typology, represented in the exhibition by the milkman, *plăcintar* [pie man], *bragagiu* [seller of millet beer], *sacagiu* [water carrier], *negustorul de cireșe* [cherry merchant], the seller of poultries, the haberdasher of oil, the haberdasher of meat, the gypsy flowergirl, and the costermonger.

The exhibition organized by the National Archives offers to the public aspects of the Romanian urban life presented in photos, plans, maps, documentary movies, acts issued by the authorities and private documents, which reflect the deep changes that the cities and their inhabitants travelled through in the period between 1830 and 1916. The collaborators to this exhibition were the National Museum of History of Romania, the Museum of the Municipality of Bucharest, “Moldova” Museal Complex in Iași, “Teohari Georgescu” Museum of the County of Giurgiu, the County Museum of Teleorman, “Regele Ferdinand I” National Military Museum, the National Archive of Films, and the National Archives of the Republic of Moldova.

Opened on January 10, 2012, the exhibition was inserted in the event of the “Night of Museums” (May 19, 2012), being well appreciated by the almost 2,000 visitors.



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