

MUZEUL NAȚIONAL DE ISTORIE A ROMÂNIEI

**CERCETĂRI
ARHEOLOGICE**

XVIII–XIX

ISSN 0255-6812

**CERCETĂRI
ARHEOLOGICE**

XVIII–XIX

BUCUREȘTI
2011–2012

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Coperta: Brățări dacice (MNIR). Coperta I: nr. 11; Coperta IV: nr. 6.

Această publicație poate fi consultată și on-line la adresa www.mnir.ro

Volum editat de Muzeul Național de Istorie a României
Calea Victoriei nr. 12, București, 003246, România

Printed in Romania

Editura Cetatea de Scaun, www.cetateadescaun.ro, email editura@cetateadescaun.ro

ISSN 0255-6812

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AN ARCHAEOLOGY OF THE CONTEMPORARY PAST: EXCAVATIONS IN THE GROZĂVEȘTI PARK, BUCHAREST

Sorin OANȚĂ-MARGHITU

O ARHEOLOGIE A TRECUTULUI APROPIAT: SĂPĂTURI ÎN PARCUL GROZĂVEȘTI, BUCUREȘTI

Articolul prezintă rezultatele săpăturilor arheologice preventive din București – Parcul Grozăvești desfășurate în 2005 și 2007. Parcul a fost amenajat pe o movilă formată prin depunerea în anii 1980 de resturi de materiale de construcții, pământ, deșeuri și diferite obiecte. Este discutat raportul dintre discursurile modernității care au structurat peisajul urban de-a lungul timpului și discursul arheologic. Arheologia trecutului apropiat construiește durata timpului prin imaginile dinamice ale unui prezent – amestec de diferite timpuri, materialități cu biografii și vârste diferite, cu distrugeri și refaceri. Se referă la modul în care memoria este manipulată prin producerea spațiului și dezvăluie starea nudă a modernității, de proiect veșnic nefinalizat. Arheologia spune o poveste a diferitelor „clase-obiect”, a căror istorie a fost scrisă întotdeauna de altcineva.

CUVINTE CHEIE: arheologia trecutului apropiat, București, funcționalism, comunism, ideologie.

KEY WORDS: archaeology of the contemporary past, Bucharest, functionalism, communism, ideology.

“We are obstinately looking for material traces of 1,000, 2,000, 3,000 years ago. This high archaeological spirit should watch also certain more immediate actions. The past of yesterday is also past, hardly past present and continuity; by destroying its materiality we are moving it into prehistory.”¹

BUCHAREST–VASILE MILEA BOULEVARD
NO. 5D, 5E AND 5F (GROZĂVEȘTI PARK)

At this “address” (between an OMV gas station, a fire station, the fence of the Cotroceni Water Plant and the pedestrian underpass connecting the Politehnica metro station to the buildings of the Polytechnic University) the Grozăvești Park is still to be found – the only green area to break the monotony of the rows of buildings erected during communism and after December 1989. It was built on a land which from the boulevard looks like a hill brow (Pl. 5/2), a part of a prolongation raised from the tall right terrace of the Dâmbovița river at the border between the river meadow and the Grozăvești and Cotroceni hills. When looking at the hill slope from the gas station

forecourt (Pl. 5/1) one would never know that this is in fact an artificial hill, a lawn-covered waste dump. In 2005 and 2007, when a team of the National Museum of Romanian History conducted here preventive excavations, the landscape (Pl. 6), fragmented by a few paved paths and a hardly visible flowerbed among the tall grass, was a contradictory one, bearing the vague aspect of a park where the image of a clean and pleasant looking lawn-covered area met vacant land, trees surrounded at times by weeds and garbage dumps. We took into consideration the fact that in the immediate vicinity there is the Cotroceni complex, built at the end of the 17th century². Also, the rescue excavations³ conducted around the complex, as well as on the Grozăvești Hill (the land on which the Polytechnic Institute buildings were erected) and at Cotroceni-Leu, Grozăvești Road, the Grozăvești pumping station (near the power plant), have documented several

² Ionescu 1902, 32–173; Iorga 1939, 99; Stoicescu 1961, 47–50, 188–192; Cantacuzino 1968; Cîho *et alii* 1993, 22; Marsillac 1999, 153–154; Ștefănescu, Lazăr 2004.

³ Panait 1969; Ștefănescu 1981; Cîho *et alii* 1993, 15; Poll, Mănușu-Adameșteanu 1997, 25; Ștefănescu, Lazăr 2004; Hanganu, Negru 2005.

¹ Sorescu 1985, 156–157.

findings dating from the Neolithic, Bronze Age, the 9th–11th and 16th–19th centuries.

GROZĂVEȘTI–COTROCENI: THE MATERIALITY OF TIME

The recently inaugurated Basarab Overpass and the two metro stations (Politehnica and Grozăvești) provide an organic connection with the rest of the city, but at the same time also consecrate the transit feature of the area. The pace of the city hides the natural configuration, as the previously firm limit between the plateau, the meadow and the river is blurred by the smooth slopes of the embankments of the two roads: the Vasile Milea Boulevard and the Grozăvești Road. Together with the Iuliu Maniu Boulevard (on the Cotroceni plateau) and the Independenței Causeway (on the bank of the river Dâmbovița), they are the main elements structuring the urban texture. Especially around the Dâmbovița river, towards the Polytechnic University, they align tall buildings of metal and glass, a stylistic mark of the post-Revolution period. Beyond this front, through a few side streets (Plt. Ion Topor, Lt. Ștefan Marinescu, Economu Atanase Stoicescu), one enters an entirely different area, a mixture of houses and villas hidden and overwhelmed by the new buildings. Several periods of time merge within the same area.

“Time is immaterial only in appearance. On the contrary, both time and space are made of a solid matter on which every passage leaves traces and marks. The vaults of time are fringed by bushes on which pieces of our days and our youth are left hanging.”⁴

Within historical and archaeological writings there is an aspiration to seek sequences of static, photographic images of the past, which are characteristic for the ambience of certain periods of time – a narration unfolding over linear time about standstills frozen in the distance. The church of Cărmidarii de Sus, a trace of the 19th century neighbourhood, together with

military and industrial images⁵, and homes grouped around the Royal Palace, were completed during the communist period by apartment buildings erected on the Iuliu Maniu Boulevard (formerly the Armata Poporului Boulevard) and by an academic touch, emphasized in its post-1989 private (privatized) version.

The new buildings (Ayash Center, Global Business Center, the Ecological University, the Artifex University, the OMV gas station) blend the ages of the other buildings into an “old time” which, from the point of view of people’s biographies, can be attributed to the communist period. In fact, many buildings represent in this area the very beginning of the modernization of Bucharest during the late 19th century and early 20th century, and their own biography is marked by reconstructions, consolidations, additions: the buildings and tanks of the water plant⁶, the hydraulic power plant (CET Grozăvești)⁷, the Pirotehnia Armatei/Military Pyrotechnics (concealed under the current name PUMAC)⁸. Also, the Dâmbovița riverbed was systematized and regularized at the end of the 19th century⁹ at the same time as the construction of the two roads “with trees on each side and with sewerage”¹⁰. The area is also connected to the beginnings of the electric tram in Bucharest and to the building of the first boulevards¹¹. A great part of the biography of the Elena Doamna Asylum (established in 1862)¹² and of the Botanical Garden (set up in 1887)¹³, took place around the Ștefan

⁵ Ionescu 1902; Popescu-Lumină 2007, 150–153; Chelcea 2008, 103–104, 176–190.

⁶ Ionescu 1969, 89; Târnă 1997; Pănoiu 2011, 140–142.

⁷ Ionescu 1902, 390–391; Georgescu *et alii* 1965, 274, 299; Giurescu 1979, 139; Silvestru 1997, 147; Damé 2007, 213–214, 294.

⁸ Ionescu 1902, 311–323; Marsillac 1999, 256–257; Chelcea 2008, 189.

⁹ Caranfil *et alii* 1936, 197–203; Pănoiu 2011, 130–139; Lascu 2011, 19–22.

¹⁰ Licherdopol 1889, 143.

¹¹ Lascu 2011, 23–30, 138–140.

¹² Slavici 1884; Borș 1932; Harasim 1992, 168; Marsillac 1999, 253–255; Damé 2007, 403–404.

¹³ Ionescu 1902, 191–195, 398–424; Giurescu 1966, 397; Toma 2001, 136; Popescu-Lumină 2007, 359–362; Pănoiu 2011, 164–165.

⁴ Voronca 1973, 71.

Gheorghiu Academy, the APACA factory and the communist apartment buildings. During the long communist period, the Cotroceni Palace was given various functions, which erased from many people's memory the previous significance connecting it to the royal family. With the exception of the Vasile Milea Boulevard (built in 1986 as an extension of the former Ho Chi Minh Boulevard to the Grozăvești Bridge), the other access roads to the area were built during the same modernization period: the Iuliu Maniu Boulevard (formerly Armata Poporului, formerly I.G. Duca, formerly Bolintin Road), the Cotroceni Road¹⁴, the Grozăvești Road, and the Geniului Boulevard. At present, they align new buildings, of standardized monumentality that refuses attention, and buildings belonging to a homogenized "old time": commercial billboard support, sometimes democratically assigned to be demolished or repurposed. The archaeology of the contemporary past dismantles the mechanism by which memory is manipulated through the production of space.

On the Global Business Center building, which, from the edge of the plateau, dominates the area towards the Dâmbovița river, several names of companies were displayed successively from 2005 to the present moment: Connex, Vodafone, IBM. In the vicinity, on the plateau, through the tall weeds growing on the PUMAC factory premises, one can find scattered around pieces of the brick and mortar walls of the Military Pyrotechnics building, erected in 1873 and recently demolished, as well as the tile flooring of a former slot machine pub opened after 1989. On the other side of the Iuliu Maniu Boulevard, the buildings of the Faculty of Electronics, Telecommunications and Information Technology (the former Ștefan Gheorghiu Academy building) were erected in 1975 on the spot where the headquarters of a military engineering unit used to be during the interwar period¹⁵. The monument in front of the faculty, dedicated to Panait

Donici, commander of the first engineering battalion between 1859–1862, refers to the now lost military significance of the area. The palace built by Constantin Șerban in 1680, the Ypsilantis's pavilion, built in 1780, and part of the fortification walls of the Cotroceni Palace were demolished between 1893–1896 to build the new palace designed by architect Paul Gottereau¹⁶. In the same location, the church of the Cotroceni Monastery, founded at the end of the 17th century and demolished in 1984, was rebuilt in 2004. The landscape is permanently undergoing change, making it impossible to pinpoint a still instance, a frozen image of specific moments. Urban space homogenizes and manipulates times, blends the biographies of places into a present time of functionality and people's subjective time, vaguely oriented towards the future. The archaeology of contemporary past builds the length and depth of time through dynamic images of a present time where various times meet – materialities of different biographies and ages, with their destructions and rebuilds¹⁷.

GROZĂVEȘTI–COTROCENI: A PREHISTORY

A few published texts and a few illustrated sherds represent the prehistoric past (Neolithic and Bronze Age) of various places in the area: the Military Pyrotechnics¹⁸, the Cotroceni Church and Palace area¹⁹, behind the Electrical Machines Plant²⁰ and on the Grozăvești Hill²¹. The names of these sites only enrich the catalogues of finds of "cultures" monographs²²; on a map, they acquire a strange materiality, as illusory nodes of a vague network of sites in the Bucharest sector of the Dâmbovița river. The Dridu ceramics from an early medieval settlement on the Grozăvești Hill were only useful for dating it to the 9th–11th centuries. This

¹⁶ Ionescu 1902, 174–195; Damé 2007, 403–404.

¹⁷ On the relationship between archaeology and memory, see Olivier 2008.

¹⁸ Rosetti 1929, 7.

¹⁹ Cihă et alii 1993, 14–15.

²⁰ Panait 2005, 250.

²¹ Panait 1969, 36–39; Ștefănescu 1981, 275–278.

²² Schuster 1997, 176 nr. 27–28; Leahu 2003, 27.

¹⁴ Popescu-Lumină 2007, 149–150.

¹⁵ Stoica et alii 1999, 148, 183.

discourse style translates social practices of the past – the action of digging pits, depositing items that have concluded their biographies, particular moments of the biography of constructions, the materiality of the long duration of debris and ruins – into the scientific time, linear and segmented, tiered, of the sequence of various ages, cultures, stages: Neolithic, Glina, Tei, Dridu. This time can be compressed, if necessary, to give a meaning to historical scenarios of interpretation of the past, or expanded in order for the various “layers” defined by archaeologists to acquire chronological relevance.

THE GROZĂVEȘTI PARK: RESEARCH METHODS

In 2005, before beginning the excavation, surface research established that the park paths were probably cast in 1989 (Pl. 6). None of the found materials were older than contemporary. Considering the results of the first prospections and the geoelectric measurements (see *Annex*) conducted in the Western side of the park we used a backhoe to excavate 29 trenches (Pl. 1); their location, density, orientation and size depended on the land configuration, the routes of the paths, the presence and density of groups of trees (many of which were removed during our research by Public Domain Administration workers, to be relocated to a new residential district). The excavated depth (3.5–4 m) depended on the technical limitations of the machinery. Subsequently we also took into consideration the fact that the walls of the soundings excavated to that depth collapsed due to the instability of the filling. Information was recorded by notes in the field journal and by digital photography of the soundings and their profiles. We also photographed on site the items found in various trenches.

GROZĂVEȘTI, COTROCENI, LUPEȘTI: AN OBJECT-CLASS

On what is nowadays the territory of Bucharest, among other villages²³, medieval documents also mentioned, starting with the 15th–16th centuries, Grozăvești, Cotroceni, and Lupești²⁴. The Cotroceni estate was described as follows in a charter issued in 1660 by the ruler Gheorghe Ghica, granting the estate to Șerban Cantacuzino for his services:

“the whole village with all its land and all its income, from the field and the forest and the river and the village households, of everywhere, as much as it may amount to, and with as many people as dwell in this village, and with the vineyards and the mills and the orchards.”²⁵

Two decades later, the ruler Șerban Cantacuzino donated the estate to the Cotroceni monastery:

“the whole village with all its land and all its income, from the field and the forest and the Dâmbovița river, with its millruns and the mills on the river, and with the vineyards, orchards and the village households, of everywhere and throughout the land, by the old borders and landmarks.”²⁶

In 1672, Șerban Cantacuzino bought from Ianaki Logofătul the part of the estate at Lower Cotroceni, located immediately to the East of our research area, “the field, the forest with millruns and a broken mill and the orchards and vineyards that belonged to the village”²⁷, and later donated it to the Cotroceni Monastery.

²³ Giurescu 1966, 255–259; Panait 1978, 170; Giurescu 1979, 209–214; Panait, Ștefănescu 1981; Ghinea 1992; Panait 2005.

²⁴ Ionescu 1902; Giurescu 1966, 255; 255 fig. 174; Panait 1969, 34–39; Giurescu 1979, 210; Cihă et alii 1993, 13; *Istoria Cotrocenilor* 2001; Panait 2005, 247; Velescu 2007.

²⁵ *Istoria Cotrocenilor* 2001, 18.

²⁶ *Istoria Cotrocenilor* 2001, 28.

²⁷ Ionescu 1902, 14.

The village documented on the Grozăvești Hill by the 1966–1970 rescue excavations included several pit-dwellings and “bread baking ovens” scattered around a cemetery of which 12 graves were investigated²⁸. Approximately 300 m away, towards the crest of the hill, there were other pit-dwellings and another cemetery. It was hypothesized that at a certain moment during the 16th century the village moved up, on the high terrace, due to repeated floods of the Dâmbovița river²⁹. Grain storage pits were found in the vicinity of the Culture House on Grozăvești Road³⁰. Also, rescue excavations conducted in the 1960s on the Eastern side of the Spirii Hill (Dealul Spirii) provided the fragmented image of a village (identified as Lupești) from the 14th–16th century, of which only one pit-dwelling was researched; its filling revealed animal bones and pottery fragments. A small group of seven inhumation graves and a “mass grave” found on the Western side of the headland probably belonged to this village. There is also mention of a few “grain storage pits” outside the cemetery³¹.

Knowledge of the medieval past of Cotroceni and Grozăvești is mediated by texts, charters by which estates were granted, confirmed, purchased or recovered. Documents mirror facts but also create their own reality, constructing a landscape that was important for the estates consisting of villages, people, orchards, vineyards, rivers, forests, mills. Historians have repeated in their work the same discourse of documents, and the only debated process was that of enslaving free villages and dividing up common property³². Archaeology does more than just complement written information, despite the fact that the excavation reports were limited to identifying on site villages mentioned in medieval documents and the found items were only important as regards their function in establishing a chronology. Archaeology tells the story of the

underground architecture of pit-dwellings and ovens, of grains stored in pits, of the practice of discarding food waste and disused vessels in abandoned pit-dwellings, of incorporating the world of the dead into domestic life. “[L]es classes dominées ne parlent pas, elles sont parlées”³³: there is an ethical side to archaeology when it speaks of “object classes” whose history has always been written by others.

COTROCENI–GROZĂVEȘTI: THE EYELASH OF BUCHAREST

The orchards, vineyards and mills mentioned in medieval documents also depict the landscape of the Cotroceni–Grozăvești area in the 18th century. To these touches we must add the Vlășia Forest, in the middle of which Constantin Șerban built between 1679–1681 the Cotroceni Monastery with its church, royal houses, abbot’s houses, monks’ cells and other annexes³⁴. The first Bucharest maps dating from the end of the century³⁵ recorded the monastery’s position outside the city, on the terrace plateau on the right bank of the Dâmbovița river, while the river meadow was occupied by gardens. In 1759, for Kesarie Dapontes the Cotroceni Monastery was an element of an anthropomorphic image of Bucharest: “Bucharest has the very famous monasteries of Mihai Vodă and Radu Vodă for eyebrows, the Cotroceni and Văcărești for eyelashes and for a nose Plumbuita, the famous cloister of the Xeropotam”³⁶. Cotroceni as an “eyelash” of Bucharest suggests the ambiguity of the perception of this area, a monastery in a natural environment – still preserved during the 19th century, as revealed by prints and descriptions dating from that time³⁷ –, half an hour away from the city, but at the same time an important religious and political

³³ Bourdieu 1977, 4.

³⁴ Ionescu 1902, 35–36; Iorga 1939, 99; Stoicescu 1961, 188–192; Cantacuzino 1968; Cihă et alii 1993, 22; Ștefănescu, Lazăr 2004.

³⁵ Florescu 1935; Stoica et alii 1999, 119; 131; Pănoiu 2011, 26–27.

³⁶ Ionescu-Gion 1899, 82.

³⁷ Macovei, Varga 1993; Cihă et alii 1993, 36; Harasim 1993, 21; Marsillac 1999, 155–157.

²⁸ Panait 1967, 13; Panait 1969, 36–39; Panait 1992b, 79; Ștefănescu, Lazăr 2004, 16; Panait 2005.

²⁹ Ștefănescu 1981, 275–278.

³⁰ Ștefănescu, Lazăr 2004, 14; Panait 2005.

³¹ Panait 1969, 34–36.

³² Velescu 2007.

center connected to Bucharest. The image of Bucharest itself is marked by this ambiguity of the relationship between the very city, developed in the Dâmbovița river meadow, on the left bank, around the Royal Court, bordered to the West, at the beginning of the 18th century, by the Lupești village on the Spirii Hill³⁸ and the hills on the right river bank (Mihai Vodă, Mitropoliei, Radu Vodă, Lupeștilor, Cotrocenilor), a church erected on each of them. On these hills, wealthy city dwellers and monasteries administered their orchards, vineyards, crops. Monasteries also owned the mills on the Dâmbovița river³⁹. The river, “in the northern Grozăvești plain”, as described by Dr. Constantin Caracăș in a paper written between 1820–1828 and printed in Greek in 1830, “provides an enjoyable view when it gushes roaring towards the mills”⁴⁰. The metaphor of Cotroceni as Bucharest’s eyelash is a part of the idealised image of a “natural city”, designating in fact a sort of functional spatialization and, moreover, a certain lifestyle characteristic to wealthy townspeople.

COTROCENI–GROZĂVEȘTI: THE CONCENTRIC CIRCLES METAPHOR

At the beginning of the 20th century, F. Damé noted that this lifestyle had disappeared about three decades before, at the same time as the vineyards that covered the Cotroceni Hill all the way to Vitan, through the Spirii Hill and through Filaret⁴¹. Also, the meadow gradually turned its natural scenery, dominated by the Dâmbovița river and its mills, by spring and autumn floods when water would often reach the Cotroceni Hill⁴², into a suburban landscape. Some of the still visible ruins belonged, according to G.M. Ionescu, to

mills that had been deactivated in 1865⁴³ (together with all the rest, with the dams and bridges on the Dâmbovița) in order to prevent floods, a measure that preceded the correction of the river route⁴⁴. The name Cărămidarii de Sus replaced the historical toponym Lupești and was later extended (partly due to a document dated 1814, which ruled that all brickmakers – *cărămidari* – should move outside Bucharest) to cover the Lower Cotroceni and the Grozăvești⁴⁵. The memory of this suburb is nowadays preserved by the name of a church near the Grozăvești Bridge – built in 1805 and rebuilt several times⁴⁶ – and by the name of a street on the Western border of the premises of the faculties area in the Politehnica complex⁴⁷. Grozăvești and Cotroceni are thus an ambiguous suburb as regards the function of various locations, an area that juxtaposed during the modern age the ruler’s (and later on the king’s) residence, warehouses, factories, an asylum, military headquarters, and a botanical garden. The same area hosted the vegetable gardens mentioned in passing in 1861 by Nicolae Filimon⁴⁸ and the solemnity of military ceremonies during which new flags were distributed, as well as the celebration of Prince Cuza’s name day in 1863, in the proximity of suburban houses and vineyard plots⁴⁹. In 1907, Grozăvești, the suburb that the painter Ștefan Luchian moved to, had the appearance of a village:

“Ropes and bridles hanging outside, the crate of coarse salt by the door, and especially the white lime wood pole standing in front of the ‘Yellow Inn’ topped with a handful of curled wood shavings

³⁸ Panait 1992a, 47.

³⁹ Ionescu-Gion 1899, 241, 301–306; Giurescu 1973, 144–145; Panait 1992a, 49.

⁴⁰ Șerban 1978, 244.

⁴¹ Damé 2007, 91.

⁴² Mușteanu 1935, 11–13; Bilciurescu 2003, 41; Damé 2007, 205.

⁴³ Ionescu 1902, 363; see also Popescu-Lumină 2007, 151.

⁴⁴ Ionescu-Gion 1899, 241, 301–306; Georgescu *et alii* 1965, 299; Duțu 1967; Damé 2007, 209–210.

⁴⁵ Ionescu 1902, 107, pl. II; Mușteanu 1935, 5, 11–14; Popescu-Lumină 2007, 148, 156; Giurescu 1966, 258; 1979, 213.

⁴⁶ Ionescu 1902, 552–557; Mușteanu 1935; Stoicescu 1961, 181–182; Giurescu 1979, 213.

⁴⁷ Stoica *et alii* 1999, 197.

⁴⁸ Filimon 2005, 1054.

⁴⁹ *Cotroceni* 1867.

ruffled by the wind, complete the rustic scenery.”⁵⁰

At the same time, H. Stahl noted the “numerous abandoned and vacant plots, especially below the Cotroceni hills”⁵¹. Until the 1930s, Grozăvești remained one of the least densely populated neighbourhoods (48 inhabitants/hectare)⁵².

The suburb, synonym to the outskirts, is one element of the concentric areas metaphor that accompanied, since mid 19th century, Bucharest’s progress towards modernity. Ulysse de Marsillac, while looking at an old map, was fascinated by this space structure:

“In the centre stands the royal palace, a fortress rather than a usual residence. The houses of the nobility are grouped around it like satellites around the main star, and next there are the miserable wooden shacks, poorly placed, collapsed over one another in the mud and serving as shelter for workers destined to manual labour.”⁵³

A half a century later, to F. Damé Bucharest was also a sum of three concentric areas: the city center had an appearance similar to Western cities; “next to it, and beginning to be influenced by it” there was the “area occupied by the population of workmen and by the small industry”, where buildings multiplied, streets were outlined and lighting was extending⁵⁴. In the third area, the outskirts were

“composed of immense plots of land where poor neighbourhoods were formed here and there, of Romanians, sometimes of Gypsies, who practice their crafts, such as wheelmakers, carpenters, blacksmiths, bricklayers, day laborers or workmen at some factory nearby. Close to these suburbs there are several factories, and their number is increasing every year, and then there are

vineyards, orchards, vacant plots, sand quarries etc.”⁵⁵

The three concentric circles represent the metaphor of a landscape that texts described as structured somewhat naturally, organically, by the natural evolution of things⁵⁶. By a decision of the 1847 city council⁵⁷ in order to prevent fires such as the one of that year, Bucharest was divided into three concentric circles, “three circles of three ranks”⁵⁸, each with its own construction regulations. Only in the first circle all buildings had to be “built of masonry and covered with roof tiles or iron” and to have “solid chimneys”. The transition from the medieval town’s random development to the regulated urban construction took Bucharest into modernity, together with the legitimization of such division⁵⁹. Until the communist period, constructive efforts, often associated with demolition⁶⁰, were mainly oriented towards the city center, a monumental space⁶¹ of new ministry headquarters, palaces, boulevards, an area meant for display, “for parade”⁶², and prestige⁶³, a symbol of modernization and of the affiliation of the political class to Western values: “Bucharest – a great Western capital at the gates of Orient” (advertising slogan from the interwar period)⁶⁴. At the same time, the outskirts continued to expand, with houses made of wood and adobe, covered with “cardboard, wooden planks, sometimes with reeds, straw, husks”⁶⁵. “Anything that misery can imagine and anything that the poor can invent to combat misery takes shape in our suburbs”⁶⁶. The materiality of the landscape tends to be structured by writing, by discourse, by

⁵⁰ Cioflec 1966, 64.

⁵¹ Stahl 2002, 81; Pippidi 2002, 62.

⁵² Sfințescu 2002b, 211.

⁵³ Marsillac 1999, 84.

⁵⁴ Damé 2007, 344–345.

⁵⁵ Damé 2007, 344–345.

⁵⁶ On the space dynamics of this model, see Mihăilescu 1925, 150; 152–163; Mihăilescu 2003, 11–15, 84–85, 113–123, 125–135, 153–155.

⁵⁷ Lascu 1997, 65; Cinà 2010, 186.

⁵⁸ Georgescu 1969, 64–65.

⁵⁹ On the systematization plans of 1914, 1916, 1919–1921, 1935, see Pănoiu 2011, 186–193, 202–215.

⁶⁰ Iorga 1939, 310, 312; Derer 1995.

⁶¹ Iorga 1939, 312, 320.

⁶² Voronca 1972, 237.

⁶³ Pippidi 2002, 9–10.

⁶⁴ Pippidi 2002, 10.

⁶⁵ Vîrtosu n.d., 41–42; Mușțețeanu 1935, 13.

⁶⁶ Vîrtosu n.d., 15.

systematization and zoning plans as means of “city improvement”⁶⁷. Modernity marked for Bucharest the transition at the discourse level from the functional space structure of a lifestyle characteristic to a social class to the “population polarization”⁶⁸, where the aristocracy and the merchants’ neighbourhoods were grouped in the centre⁶⁹. Engineering (“in order to know what our capital can provide in the future, we must know it scientifically”)⁷⁰, discipline (for an “anarchic and rural population”; “the general social Orientalism generates social anarchy, general indiscipline, anarchy of values, lack of pride, political cowardice, the nostalgia of filth and the all-corrupting politicianism”)⁷¹, classification and segregation (“class hatred stems precisely from close knowledge of the lifestyle of the rich classes, and if hatred is already there it intensifies even more”)⁷² materialized in concentric circles – gradual transitions from the centre to the outskirts. Projects were aimed both at functional and social zoning: “the central district”, the military area, cheap housing districts around the industrial districts (“The number of hands warrant the life of an industry, as much as the capital and the markets”)⁷³, residential neighbourhoods (“in the elevated parts of the city, the more picturesque and less densely built ones, with more parks, where there would be no industry and no unsanitary houses”)⁷⁴. Even the image of the future, the Bucharest utopia, is outlined in concentric circles: “the commercial and administrative centre, then the central residential area, the area of cheap houses and industrial districts etc.”⁷⁵.

The city and its circles continued to expand, partly for the reason that “the majority of the population lead and leads a very modest life”⁷⁶, and few had the means to live in the centre; according to a law

from 1894, the Western limits were marked by the Ghencea Cemetery, the Military Pyrotechnics, and Macedon’s Mill (Ciurel)⁷⁷. This marginal position of Grozăvești and Cotroceni encouraged various writers who were influenced by the city’s capitalist changes to look back nostalgically at the times when the hills around Bucharest were covered in vineyards and orchards. In 1902, G.M. Ionescu was under the illusion that “after the completion of the Dâmbovița channel between the Hydroelectric Plant and Ciurel – which is under intensive construction – Cărămidarii de Sus will become, – once the now vacant plots are drained and planted – an entertainment area like the ones that were once popular with the old and merry Bucharest townspeople.”⁷⁸

THE GROZĂVEȘTI PARK: THE “STRATIGRAPHY”

Each trench has its own “stratigraphy”, a sequence of deposits of black, brown and grey soil. The construction materials found here did not belong to buildings or paths. They were not positioned in any order; sometimes they were next to each other, other times scattered or associated to other items or waste. The observed “layers” can only be interpreted as marks of consecutive depositions on the surface of the researched land. We were generally able to note that in the Eastern and Western sectors the filling consisted mainly of soil and building material debris, waste, and a few items. In the trenches of the central part of the investigated area there were thick deposits of massive concrete pieces as well as other building materials.

GROZĂVEȘTI–COTROCENI–MILITARI: THE MONUMENTALIZATION OF THE OUTSKIRTS

“Houses can no longer remain scattered disorderly on the edge of muddy lanes. Houses must be built solidly, in a constructivist manner, wholly marking the

⁶⁷ Sfințescu 2002b, 177.

⁶⁸ Pănoiu 2011, 99.

⁶⁹ Iorga 1939, 286; Marsillac 1999, 125.

⁷⁰ Dobrescu 2002, 269.

⁷¹ Dobrescu 2002, 274, 297.

⁷² Sfințescu 2002b, 252.

⁷³ Sfințescu 2002a, 123.

⁷⁴ Sfințescu 2002b, 253; see also, Dobrescu 2002, 282.

⁷⁵ Iancu 1934, 14–15.

⁷⁶ Sfințescu 2002a, 115.

⁷⁷ Georgescu *et alii* 1965, 362.

⁷⁸ Ionescu 1902, 547–548.

harsh sensitivity of our time”⁷⁹. During the interwar period, the avant-garde architect Marcel Iancu dreamt of a Bucharest with a centre of “tower residences where 60 stories would house almost 30,000 living souls” with a 400 m distance between them, amidst generous parks. Towards the outskirts there would be “cheap apartments in immense buildings measuring 400 x 200 m, and housing 25,000 living souls each, also enclosing gardens with pergolas, areas meant for sports and for strolls, almost as big as our Cișmigiu Garden”. “An iron will and an iron fist, such as Bucharest has known before, and the utopia will become reality”⁸⁰. During the communist period, the outskirts were monumentalized, and transformed into the “New City”⁸¹. “Massive constructions are especially foreseen for the marginal city areas, which shall form well-aggregated self-contained units, ranked structurally”. The housing districts accompanied the monuments of socialist industrialization⁸², and 32,600 apartments were built only between 1958–1961⁸³. The decision of the November 1952 party assembly was to issue a Bucharest systematization and reconstruction plan that would ensure the “unitary and harmonious development, the good organization and allocation of land, and the end of the contrast between the centre and the outskirts”⁸⁴.

A guide dating from the interwar period mentioned in the Cotroceni-Grozăvești area the channelled Dâmbovița river, the Cărmidarii de Sus church, the Botanical Garden, food markets on the Independenței Causeway and at the Grozăvești Bridge, the Central Power Plant, Primary School No. 38, a Popular Athenaeum, the “Light of Grozăvești” credit co-operative, some second-rate restaurants (“Marinescu N.”, “Parcul Grozăveștilor”, “Parcul Pascal”, “Parcul

Mateescu”). On the plateau there were the various military headquarters, the Royal Palace and the Cotroceni train station nearby, and the “Leul”/“Lion” monument (dedicated to the fallen soldiers of the engineering battalion)⁸⁵. Various city guides dating from the communist period restricted this list to the Culture House, Botanical Garden and former royal palace⁸⁶, the “Military Engineers Monument” (“Leul”) and the Grozăvești power plant⁸⁷. Initially, in this part of town the communist project continued, incorporated, manipulated and transformed the old significance of the liberal modernist project. The names of some streets were changed (for example the I.G. Duca Boulevard became the Armata Poporului/People’s Army Boulevard). The Cotroceni palace functioned between 1949 and 1976 as the Pioneers’ Palace⁸⁸, “the place where our fatherland’s future citizens grow up and are being educated”⁸⁹. After the 1977 earthquake, until 1988, the building was restored “in order to be used for high-level representation”⁹⁰. In 1968 the church was transformed into a Museum of Old Religious Art⁹¹. Moreover, the church was omitted from a city guide issued in 1962⁹², and was later demolished in 1984. Texts published during the communist period celebrated the socialist industrialization⁹³, the new apartment buildings on the Armata Poporului Boulevard⁹⁴ together with the mythical birth of the new era, “the anti-fascist uprising”⁹⁵. The area acquired a mixed appearance, blending together the image of a district of apartment buildings (especially on the Armata Poporului Boulevard)⁹⁶ and

⁷⁹ Voronca 1972, 205.

⁸⁰ Iancu 1934, 15–16.

⁸¹ Mihăilescu 2003, 165–166.

⁸² Boia 1968, 368; Lascu 1995, 173.

⁸³ Cebuc 1964, 116; for additional data, Zahariade 2011, 44.

⁸⁴ Daiche 1965, 144; on the importance of this document, Zahariade 2011, 25–33.

⁸⁵ Ghid 1934, 25, 26, 70, 72, 77, 114–115, 120.

⁸⁶ Vintilă 1961; Ionescu, Kiriac 1982.

⁸⁷ Georgescu *et alii* 1970, 168–170.

⁸⁸ Giurescu 1966, 395, fig. 237; Opreș 1993.

⁸⁹ Stoicescu 1961, 50.

⁹⁰ Opreș 1993.

⁹¹ Cihău *et alii* 1993, 174.

⁹² Stoica *et alii* 1999, 114.

⁹³ Giurescu 1966, 218; Giurescu 1979, 188; Ionescu 1982.

⁹⁴ Vasilescu 1967.

⁹⁵ Vintilă 1961, 11.

⁹⁶ Giurescu 1979, 319.

the industrial and academic landscape⁹⁷: a clothing factory built in 1948 around a core consisting of military clothing workshops (APACA)⁹⁸, the Electrical Machine Plant⁹⁹, the Polytechnic Institute and the student dorms on the quay, which were erected in several stages starting from 1962¹⁰⁰, and the Ștefan Gheorghiu Academy, built in 1975¹⁰¹. In the 1980s, the decision to transform the Cotroceni complex into the presidential residence led to the diversion of the tram routes on the Grozăvești Road towards the West, on Ho Chi Minh Road, which separates the area we investigated from the Polytechnic Institute. During the same period, Dâmbovița was rearranged as a river flowing through a concrete channel. Simultaneously, the Bucharest metro construction works (begun in 1975) was conducted; various metro lines were inaugurated in several stages¹⁰².

Although official discourse assumes that texts reflect reality, in fact they rather reshape it. “The socialist city is the carrier and the propaganda agent of communist ideology”¹⁰³. “The city development is organized by party and government decision, in functional directions that correspond to urban life: work, living, rest, education and recreation”¹⁰⁴. Neighbourhoods of apartment buildings divided by green areas and industrial platforms connected by public transport lines: the concentric circles metaphor was replaced by the transport network city. V.I. Lenin wrote in an article published in 1902 that the modern world was the theatre of confrontation of two ideologies: bourgeois and communist, and there was no place for a third ideology¹⁰⁵. This confrontation also materialized in the change of the urban landscape. The functionalism that structures the city in practice was overcome by

discourse. To Lenin, industrialization was not a technical issue, but a materialization of social progress¹⁰⁶. Apartment buildings are not just dwelling spaces, and factories are not just steel producing units. They are also monuments that create a specific space¹⁰⁷. Apartment buildings are symbols of faith in technology and in the progress brought about by industrialization, of the official preference for the nuclear family, of the ideology of social equality¹⁰⁸. Industrial monuments mapped on economic maps in geographic atlases and textbooks define a harmonious space built by the party¹⁰⁹.

THE GROZĂVEȘTI PARK: ARCHAEOLOGICAL EXCAVATIONS RESULTS

The Bucharest map made by the Military Geographic Institute between 1895–1899, as well as the one of 1914¹¹⁰, show the land currently occupied by the Grozăvești Park in the river meadow area, occupied by gardens. According to a map from 1911¹¹¹, the land was approximately 10 m lower than the prolongation of the hill on the route of the Grozăvești Road (**Pl. 2**). It was a part of the meadow, a “pit” also shown by an updated map from 1965 (**Pl. 3**). This was confirmed by archaeological excavations. The park was built on an artificial mound, a location covered with large quantities of landfill, pieces of concrete (**Pl. 7/1**) mixed with truck parts, wires, plastic and other kinds of waste. Geoelectric research (see *Annex*) indicated that the filling layer reaches a depth of 8 m (corresponding to the difference of level revealed by the above-mentioned maps; **Pl. 3–4**). Thus, an area of the Dâmbovița river meadow, a “pit” was transformed into a hill, as the ground was elevated to the level of the hill prolongation descending from Cotroceni. An image of the “aesthetics” of such landfill can be given by the immense

⁹⁷ Mihăilescu 2003, 182–185.

⁹⁸ Giurescu 1966, 218; Giurescu 1979, 188; Ionescu 1982, 609–610; Chelcea 2008, 189–190.

⁹⁹ Giurescu 1966, 218; Chelcea 2008, 190.

¹⁰⁰ Daiche 1965, 156; Giurescu 1966, 255 fig. 174; Ionescu 1982, 630, fig. 448.

¹⁰¹ Ionescu 1982, 631.

¹⁰² Olteneanu 2005; Cinà 2010, 238–239.

¹⁰³ Velescu 1995, 184.

¹⁰⁴ Stănescu 1972, 422.

¹⁰⁵ Lenin 1954, 165; see also Besançon 1977, 7–8.

¹⁰⁶ Hannemann 2004; Zahariade 2011, 35–36.

¹⁰⁷ On the monumentality of the communist space, see Mihali 2009, 271.

¹⁰⁸ Hannemann 2004.

¹⁰⁹ Daiche 1965; Boia 1968.

¹¹⁰ Sâmboteanu, Moldoveanu 1938; Sâmboteanu, Moldoveanu 1939; Stoica *et alii* 1999, 183.

¹¹¹ Chelcea 2008, 103 map no. 7.

mound of soil and construction materials produced by the works on a building foundation next to the Ecology House, under construction at the time of our research in 2007 (Pl. 7/2) or by the photographs of the debris of buildings that collapsed during the 1977 earthquake¹¹². In short, our research was conducted in a waste dump covered in grass, paths and trees. The gathered information revealed that this radical change of the land was due to the works on the Bucharest metro, between 1977–1981/1983, when the Grozăvești and Politehnica metro stations were built; the 1977 earthquake also occurred during the construction of the Politehnica metro station: many of the materials deposited in the “pit” might have originated from the buildings that were destroyed by the earthquake (information provided in 2005 by engineer Gheorghe Todoran of the metro company). Probably in 1989 (Pl. 6) trees were planted in a layer of the deposited filling and several concrete paths were cast, as well as a flowerbed. The vegetation, the planted trees, the concrete pavement paths, the now dilapidated flowerbeds concealed the industrial effort to modify the landscape. The park built on this waste dump gives “archaeological quality” to construction materials, pieces of concrete and bricks, annihilates their connection to the communism of the grey world of inhabited apartment buildings, of administrative-academic buildings constructed during the same period, but still continuing to exist to this day. Reconfiguring materials into a waste dump hidden from view by a park confers the waste a communist aura. On the other hand, the academic buildings and the apartment buildings erected during the communist period, with bank offices established on their ground floors after 1989, are integrated to a continuous present time, to an advertising billboard space. In the park, the archaeologist’s eye opens when it comes across the materiality of ruin and of this present time.

THE GROZĂVEȘTI PARK: MACHINERY AND BUILDING MATERIALS, OR ON THE BUCHAREST UTOPIA

In the excavated sections we found:

Steel wire, large pieces of concrete (including some with reinforcing bars), fragments of rail sleepers, pieces of cloth, marble tiles of the kind that can be found in metro stations, bricks, some of which were held together with mortar, pavement stones, pieces of pipes, pipes similar to those used for fountains, Terracotta oven tiles, a tube belonging to a well shaft, three truck tires, one cinder block, rubber fragments, plastics, three small infantry shovels, tractor parts, one engine oil filter produced by CARFIL-Brașov, one street elbow, cables from a fuse box, pieces of burned wood, an iron beam used for the metro constructions as support for slopes, the plastic cover of a fuse box, pitch used to insulate electric cables, aluminium cables, a piece of plywood, a cable and a rectangular section metal pipe, yellow and black plastic pipes, one lever, one line valve, copper transformer cables, a sidewalk block, an iron pipe and a clutch disk, tiles, stones, pieces of tin, a PVC conductor pipe, furnace chamotte.

The artificial mound of soil, pieces of concrete and cement, asphalt, discarded items rapidly became a “natural” form, eternal as the Earth itself. The park displays a solid foundation, a symbiosis of natural and artificial, as well as a materiality of the general mobilization of tools, machinery and materials. Drivers, workmen, soldiers. Production heroism is the defining feature of a socialist citizen, “the essential education factor” according to Nicolae Ceaușescu¹¹³. The presidential decree regarding the state of necessity after the 1977 earthquake mobilized party activists, army units and Interior Ministry units, patriotic guards, socialist production units, the whole able bodied population¹¹⁴. However, in the communist regime daily life, total mobilization for production was a common situation.

¹¹² Buhoiu 1977.

¹¹³ Buhoiu 1977, 5.

¹¹⁴ Buhoiu 1977, 8–9.

In the case of Bucharest, there was a perpetual state of emergency as regards rendering space representative. Since 1850-1860 (which marked, according to N. Iorga, the end of the old town)¹¹⁵ all eyes were on the future and the past was left to only a few nostalgic voices. “Striving towards the utopia compels the city to permanently overcome itself and to permanent self-destruction”¹¹⁶. “The material available to the city planner is immense, the means are revolutionary and the plan must be utopic”¹¹⁷. “We find ourselves nowadays in a stage of complete recovery. The commercial centre grows vertically, the uncomfortable old houses make room for blockhouses in the centre, and the few yards and gardens are disappearing every moment”¹¹⁸. “[T]he ruthless demolition of the centre is necessary in order to allow for circulation speed and for free space for hygiene”¹¹⁹. “Levelling. Cutting the Mihai-Vodă Hill in order to open a new boulevard”¹²⁰. Projects that seemed forgotten were resumed unexpectedly. The Government Palace and the ministries that were to surround it were imagined by Ulysse de Marsillac in the 19th century¹²¹. The idea to build a National Redemption Cathedral appeared in the interwar period; “the first attempt to dig a 60 km navigable channel supplied with water by a stream deviated from the Argeș river in order to connect the Danube to Bucharest belonged to Charles II”¹²². C. Sfințescu had previously envisioned a navigation channel on which barges would carry materials as far as the Grozăvești dam¹²³. On the other hand, the former mayor Dem. I. Dobrescu pleaded for covering the Dâmbovița river “in order to transform it into a channel” with “stations build underground”¹²⁴.

The urban space modernity discourse was oriented both towards a past that needed to be demolished or remodelled and especially towards the future. It celebrated its finished or imagined state, the visible features, the monumentalized landscape, the official cultural and political buildings, the residential districts, the factories. Models of factories or of apartment buildings neighbourhoods served not only for building project presentations (a stage prior to construction) but were also reproductions, miniature monuments that often became gifts for Ceaușescu. The archaeology of the contemporary past reveals the destruction process concealed by the discourse. It reveals the nude state of modernity, that of a perpetual unfinished project, subject to metamorphosis, the construction, destruction, and reconstruction, for which the world has become more ephemeral than a human being.

THE GROZĂVEȘTI PARK: OBJECTS OR ON SOCIALIST HUMANISM

In the landfill layers, together with building materials (**Pl. 8**): one yoghurt jar, two cans of fish in tomato sauce, canned in the USSR in 1982, a fragment of a green one liter bottle neck, fragments of porcelain dishes, the bottom of a clay pot (probably a flowerpot), the bottom of a clay bowl, a fragment of a glazed decorative plate, a plastic lid of a cup of “Făgăraș” cottage cheese and cream, an oyster shell, a fragment of a can labelled in Polish and Czech (with egg shells stuck to the lid), green glass sherds, the bottom of a porcelain mug, fragments of plastic sacks and bags, a mirror sherd.

During the first years of popular rule, official discourse emphasized the proletariat dictatorship and the class struggle. Production heroes were celebrated in poems, became novel characters, were monumentalized by realist-socialist literary and artistic works. Official discourse celebrated construction sites, construction workers, masons. Paintings gave tribute to

¹¹⁵ Pippidi 2002, 42.

¹¹⁶ Groys 2007, 71.

¹¹⁷ Iancu 1934, 7.

¹¹⁸ Iancu 1934, 10.

¹¹⁹ Dobrescu 2002, 273; see also Iancu 1934, 17–20.

¹²⁰ Stahl 2002, 131–135.

¹²¹ Ionescu 1999, 20.

¹²² Caranfil *et alii* 1936, 12–15; Nemetescu 1943, 21–28; Pippidi 2002, 10–11.

¹²³ Sfințescu 2002a, 143–149.

¹²⁴ Dobrescu 2002, 276, 284.

the Bucharest metro builders¹²⁵. The Thesis of July 1971 (Ceaușescu's discourse on political-ideological activity) inaugurated a democratized image of proletarians, now transformed, beside the peasants and intellectuals, into working class members (*oameni ai muncii*). The class struggle was replaced by socialist, revolutionary humanism¹²⁶. In 1973, the writer Alexandru Monciu-Sudinski provided a few characters (*Caractere*)¹²⁷, working people whose biographies revolved around work and machines. A person's value was measured by his/her profession, job, skill, qualification, age. They went to night school and some still vaguely dreamt of college education. All those not doing physical work were considered intellectuals: phone operators, People's Council cashiers. An individual's development stages also revolved around work: (1) initiation, meaning "getting the hang" of a profession, (2) undergoing various stages of qualification, (3) teaching apprentices. Workmen appreciated landscapes to the extent to which they belonged to communist mythology: constructions, apartment buildings, new neighbourhoods. Attention, enthusiasm, intuition, consciousness, furnace, valve rocker, lathe, electrical oven, converter, Turbosol pump, meet the plan, confidence in the party. "We don't need embellishments. We need people, we need cast iron, we need truth". Monciu-Sudinski caricatured the ideal working man type that communism was trying to create¹²⁸. The valve rocker reality from the point of view of Monciu-Sudinski's characters is closer to the music of the synchrophasotron and its "thirty-six thousand ton electromagnet", "the first cosmic organ" that sounded to Geo Bogza like Bach's and Beethoven's music¹²⁹. Writers, historians, archaeologists, architects, philosophers, artists and filmmakers enrolled amongst the intellectuals that spread, popularized, aesthetized party

politics – they belong to the world of *Caractere*. The working people who subscribed to the party's vision only existed in works which intellectuals attempted to make compelling enough to transform reality into the ideal world of official documents, filtered through artistic vibration and scientific accuracy. The works that mirrored the civic non-involvement ethics, dwelling in the sphere of pure ideas, which some nowadays call resistance by culture, by mimicking and delivering the illusion of normality, all these also contributed not only to the legitimation but also to the reproduction of communism (the literary critic M. Nițescu asked intellectuals to participate in a "silent strike for a decade": "writers should either curse or be silent")¹³⁰. After 1989, the dominant neoliberal discourse, which many intellectuals contributed to build, gradually turned against this class of working people, considered to have been mainly responsible for the perpetuation of communism, of obsolete mentality, dependent on the state and incapable to adapt to market economy. Its very identity was cancelled when socialist economy was destroyed. The term "worker" now refers to those working in factories, in the field, at the Post Office or for the secret services, including the former Securitate/Secret Police.

The archaeology of the communist past goes beyond such discourse and into the anonymity of daily life, of simple actions and rituals overlooked by words, to tell the story of eating canned fish on lunch breaks (moments of standardized industrial time), of discarding eggshells in an empty fish can, of mobilizing the military into the production field, of the yoghurt jar, of cottage cheese, glass containers, of souvenir sea shells, of the decorations and mirrors adorning private space. It reveals how these objects are incorporated in waste dumps, larger constellations that juxtapose cement and concrete (associated by official discourse to progress, industrialization, standardization, systematization) to bricks (elements of private space, of a backward

¹²⁵ Cârneli 2000, 133.

¹²⁶ Ceaușescu 1981.

¹²⁷ Monciu-Sudinski 1997.

¹²⁸ On other interpretations of *Caractere*, see Manolescu 2005.

¹²⁹ Bogza 1959, 498–499.

¹³⁰ Nițescu 1995, 378–379.

nature, the materiality of ineffective manual labour)¹³¹.

“History is natural selection. Mutant versions of the past struggle for dominance; new species of fact arose, and old, saurian truths go to the wall, blindfolded and smoking last cigarettes. Only the mutations of the strong survive. The weak, the anonymous, the defeated leave few marks: field-patterns, axe-heads, folk-tales, broken pitchers, burial mounds, the fading memory of their youthful beauty.”¹³²

Archaeology writes the story of those who never wore “the skin of a lion” (to paraphrase the title of Michael Ondaatje’s novel), a faded remembrance of those who could not tell their own history.

DEEP-SEA FAUNA AND THE SAILORS’ SIREN TATTOOS

There is, as has been noted, a paradox of modernity: “having been founded on the myth of *technology in itself*, all the more durable as the critical spirit of modernity allowed itself to be enticed by it in the most irrational manner”¹³³. “The mechanism of technology is only preoccupied with itself, with its own strictly technological issues. *Any other human dimension is either swallowed and assimilated or rejected and destroyed*”¹³⁴. In this tautological universe, the archaeology discourse in Romania is narcissistically oriented towards celebrating its own “methods”, lured by pluridisciplinarity running at idle, failing to explain phenomena by themselves – Paul Veyne’s definition of functionalism¹³⁵. The “framework” of an age can be reconstituted, according to avant-garde author Ilarie Voronca, from a single verse, as well as from a mere metal screw¹³⁶. The dominant archaeological discourse in Romania has become trapped in the functional-

technological description of the metal screw and in the ecstatic contemplation of the act of finding a metal screw. Technology standardizes to the same extent the past, denying its alterity, and the writings about the past. By its propensity for tautological judgments (“a pit is a pit”, “garbage is garbage”), in dialectical relation to “*le refus de l’altérité, la négation du différent, le bonheur de l’identité et l’exaltation du semblable*”¹³⁷, this effort could be included in what Roland Barthes called petit-bourgeois mythology. Our excavation of a “filling” of the communist period revealed that, beyond its appearance, it is more than just a mere “filling”. The pit turned into the hill on which the Grozăvești park was built is a fragment of the communist landscape, structured by a discourse that pointed both towards the past of the “bourgeoisie and landlords”, striving to annihilate its remains, and the future, the time when communism would finally be built through heroic production. The pit was an illustration of the suburb concept, a metaphor of backwardness, a vestige of the old society. The socialist remodelling of the landscape needed to be vertical and uplifting, filling up the pits. The writer Ștefan Bănuțescu, perched on the scaffolding of the 16th floor of the future skyscraper at Sala Palatului, the tallest building in Bucharest at that time, saw the tops of socialist buildings, blocks of flats that he associated with light, air and colour, but his gaze also fell on the old “non-systematized” neighbourhoods, with their humid and hazy atmosphere, with old houses with “wrecked and damp” foundations¹³⁸. “In Soviet communism, any commodity became an ideologically relevant message, just as in capitalism any message became a commodity”¹³⁹. The monumentality of the landscape built through discourse was a material proof of the construction of the new society, a wish to project it into eternity, cast in durable concrete. The city was “a long term investment, namely a vision of the future;

¹³¹ Ioan 2000, 76–77; Hannemann 2004.

¹³² Rushdie 1984, 124.

¹³³ Vais 2005, 77 (original emphasis).

¹³⁴ Hurduzeu 2005, 95 (original emphasis).

¹³⁵ Veyne 1999, 347.

¹³⁶ Voronca 1972, 199, 249.

¹³⁷ Barthes 1957, 81.

¹³⁸ Bănuțescu 1960, 24–25.

¹³⁹ Groys 2009, 8.

the synthesis of durability, a materialist ideology, the history of a country, the philosophy of existence”¹⁴⁰. The steel whirlwinds of production transformed people together with the daily performance of urban landscape¹⁴¹. Ideology erected “monumental buildings, around which man himself becomes monumental”¹⁴². Words acquire a certain materiality, whereas the object becomes “narrative” taking the shape of message. A kind of object-words, word-objects, cities with eyelashes, concentric circles, monuments that sometimes give life a meaning and more often than not crush people’s destiny, shrill cries that stifle the utterance of people’s own stories.

“Analysing history from the literary perspective is rather hazardous. It is like studying sailors’ siren tattoos in order to learn about deep-sea fauna”¹⁴³. However, archaeology is indeed a means of learning by the images of sailors’ siren tattoos, by mirror reflections, by looking at the deep-sea fauna through a glass, darkly. Seeking direct knowledge of the fauna by overlooking such interpretations that twine together the sea, the woman and the fish into one, namely the stories materialized into images which in their turn perpetuate the stories, is the surest way of transforming the past into an image of the present. This is exactly the difference between myth and science from Ernst Jünger’s perspective: “Here the world is interpreted, and there it is explained. If Palinurus fell asleep at the tiller, it was because a god touched his eyelids. A chemist would simplify this phenomenon down to the formation of lactic acid inside the tissue”¹⁴⁴. Only such stories, narrations, myths, representations provide an image of the alterity of the past, the difference between various places and times which is, according to Philippe Ariès, similar to the “difference between two paintings or two

symphonies”. “*La méconnaissance de la nature esthétique de l’Histoire a provoqué chez les historiens une décoloration complète des temps qu’ils se sont proposé d’évoquer et d’expliquer*”¹⁴⁵. The methods, the pluridisciplinary research, as well as the employed concepts and theoretical approaches, need to permeate archaeological writings durably but discreetly. They should no longer be their own purpose, but rather become what they are: instruments for learning about such stories. The literary space created by Melville for the white whale is closer to archaeology than a zoology study would be.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Preventive excavations conducted in 2005 and 2007 in the Grozăvești Park in Bucharest were co-ordinated by Paul Damian, and I hereby thank him for the permission to publish the results. I am also grateful to my colleagues who helped me, both on site and with compiling the necessary documentation for drafting excavation reports: Valentin Bottez, Cristina Drăghici, Mihai Florea, Silviu Oța, Elvira Safta, Andra Samson. I wish to express thanks to engineer Gheorghe Todoran of Metroul S.A. for providing information on the context of the formation of the waste dump on which the Grozăvești Park was built; I also wish to thank Silviu and Emanoil Cristian Ene for the data on the communist past of the area. I am grateful to Viorel Petcu, who performed the test excavations in 2007, for the determination of the industrial items. Versions of this text have been read by Rodica Oanță-Marghitu, Alexandru Dragoman, Tiberiu Vasilescu, Corina Borș, and I thank all of them for the corrections, notes and bibliography entries. Last but not least, I express my gratitude to Maria Krause for the English translation.

¹⁴⁰ Stănescu 1972, 421.

¹⁴¹ O’Neill 2009, 93, 98–101.

¹⁴² Bogza 1959, 367; on the importance given by ideology to material culture as a transforming force that can shape the new man, Buchli 1997, 162; Buchli 2000; Tarlow 2002; Humphrey 2005.

¹⁴³ Sorescu 1985, 232.

¹⁴⁴ Jünger 2004, 72.

¹⁴⁵ Ariès 1954, 285.

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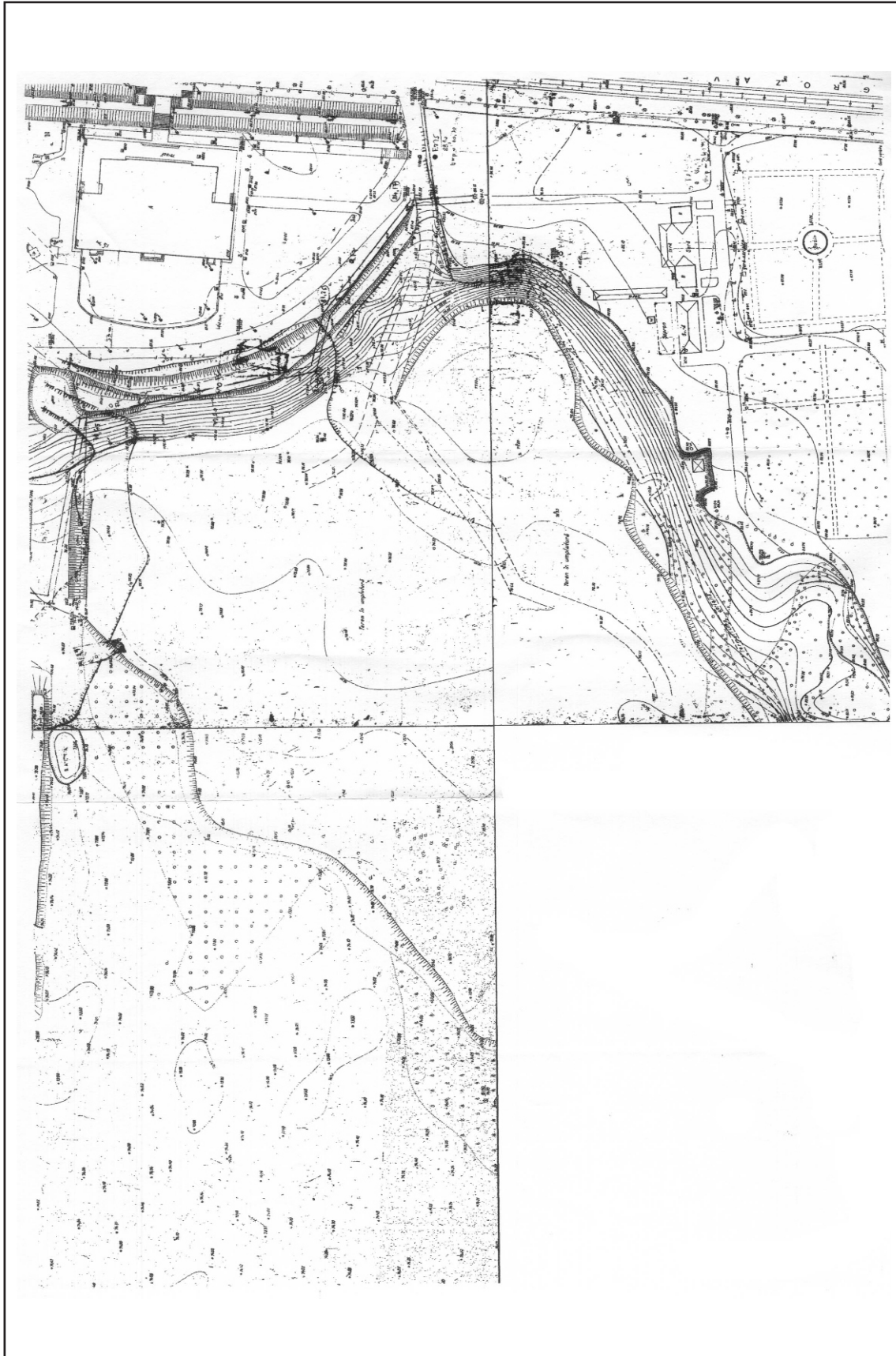
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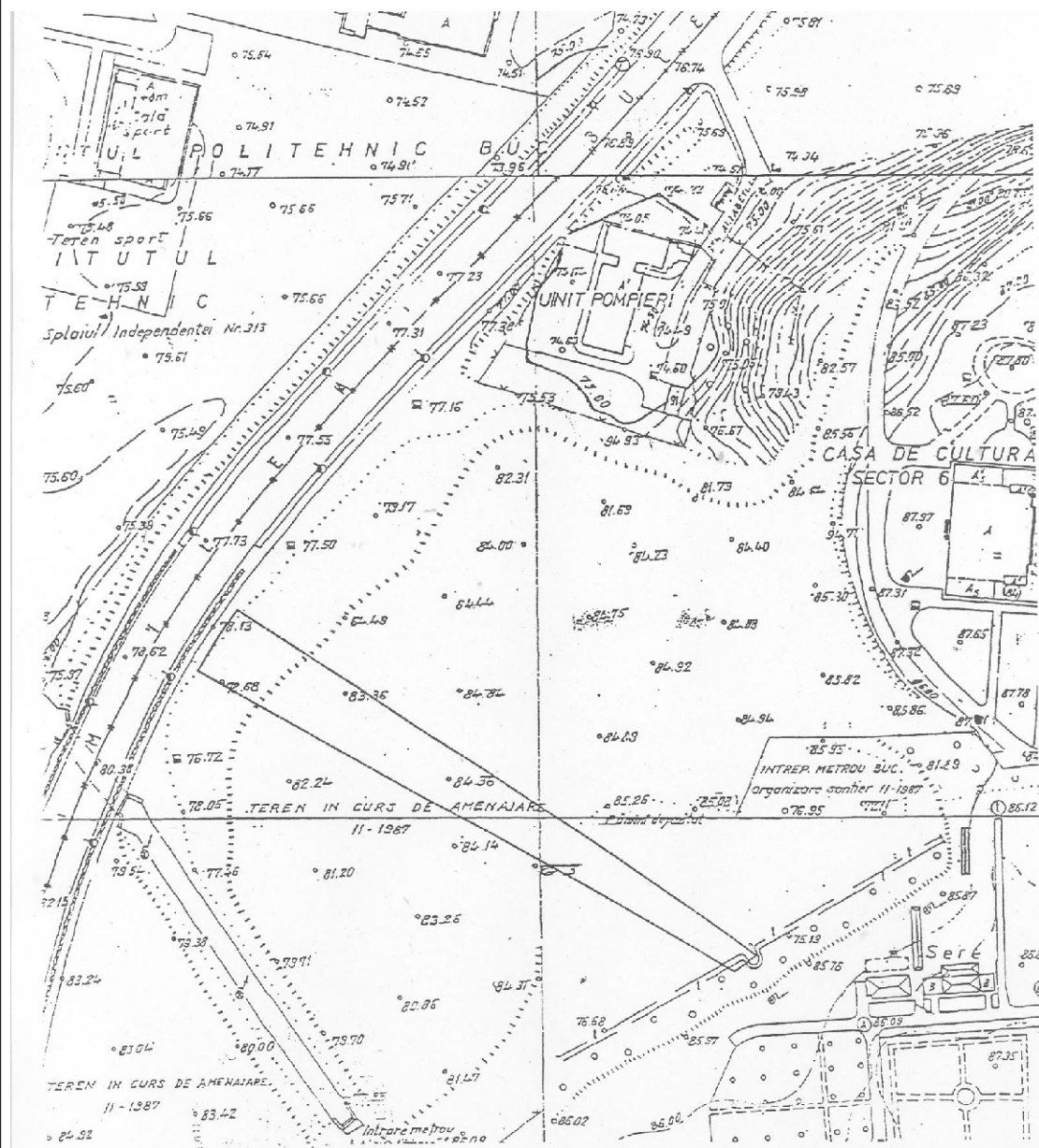
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Pl. 2 — The field on which Grozăvești Park was made. Plan from 1911.



Pl. 3 — The field on which Grozăvești Park was made. Plan from 1965 which was updated during the construction of the subway line.





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2

Pl. 5 — Bucharest – Grozăvești Park. **1.** View from the OMV gas-station and. **2.** from Vasile Milea Boulevard.



Pl. 6 — Bucharest – Grozăvești Park. Images from 2005.



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Pl. 7 — Bucharest – Grozăvești Park. **1.** „Filling” of S04/2007 sounding.
2. Configuration of a dump resulted from the works around the Ecology House (2007).



Pl. 8 — Bucharest – Grozăvești Park. Objects discovered in different soundings (2005, 2007).

ANNEX GEOELECTRIC RESEARCH IN THE VASILE MILEA BOULEVARD AREA

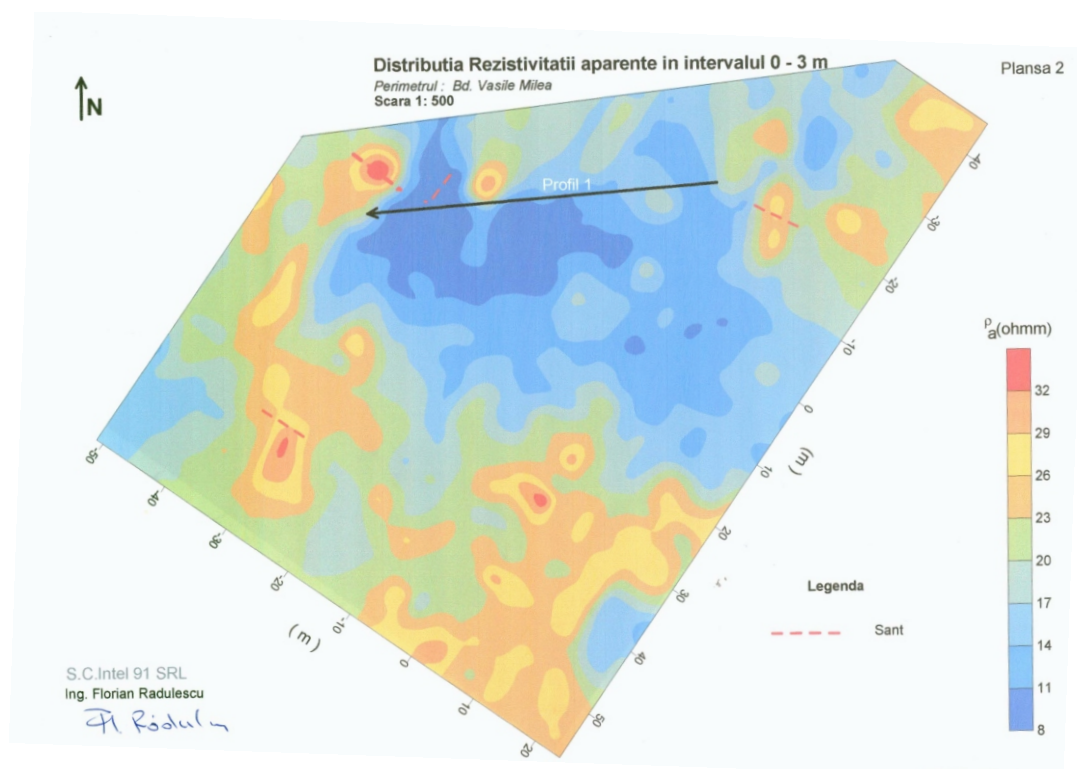
Florian RĂDULESCU

Geoelectric measurements were conducted between 19.10.2005–22.10.2005 in the Vasile Milea Boulevard area (**Pl. 1**) covering 7500 m². The information obtained by prospecting covered a depth interval of 0–3 m. The distribution of apparent resistivity in the 0–3 m interval is illustrated in **Pl. 2/1**. Recorded resistivity ranged between 10 and 35 ohmm, and the anomaly areas were situated at an interval of 25–35 ohmm. The maximum values areas represented inhomogeneity within the above-mentioned interval. A minimum value area was recorded on the E-W axis; this was due to high soil humidity, and possibly to the presence of a former valley that was covered up.

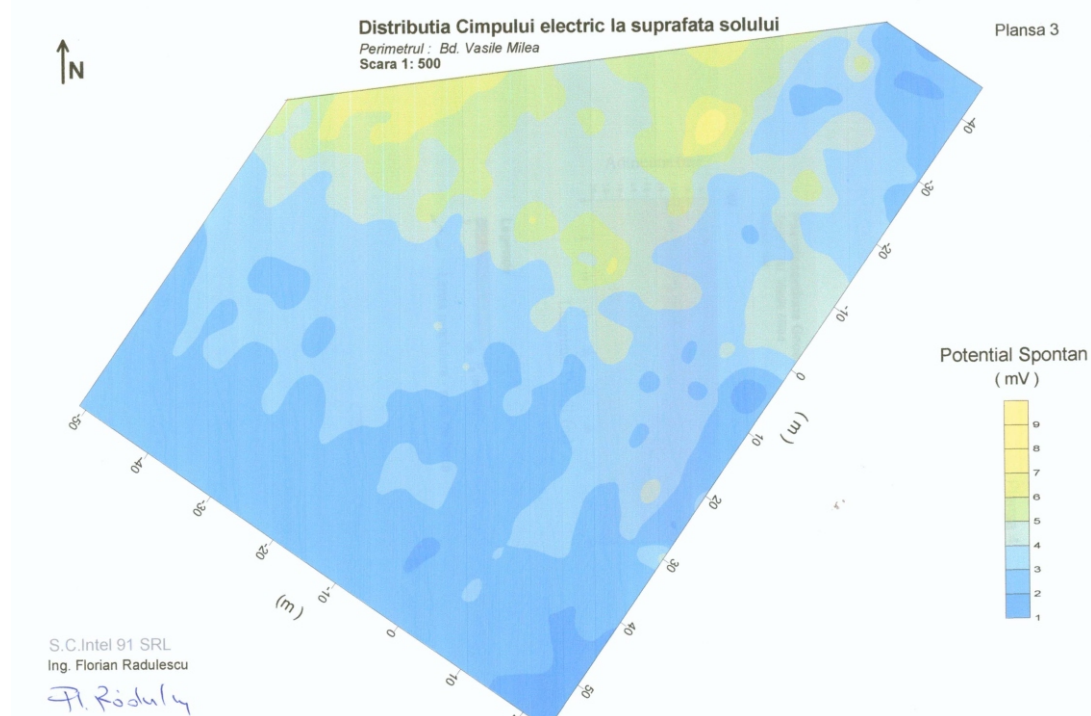
In order to determine the baseline, a geoelectric profile was conducted on the E-W axis (**Pl. 4**); in this case the investigated depth

was 20 m. Data processing revealed an average baseline depth of 8 m. This section revealed the presence of a covered valley around m 25–40. A map of the electric field distribution in the area was made based on spontaneous potential measurements (**Pl. 2/2**). An increase of the electric field was recorded from the North to the South. We made this map because the electric field distribution might also provide useful information.

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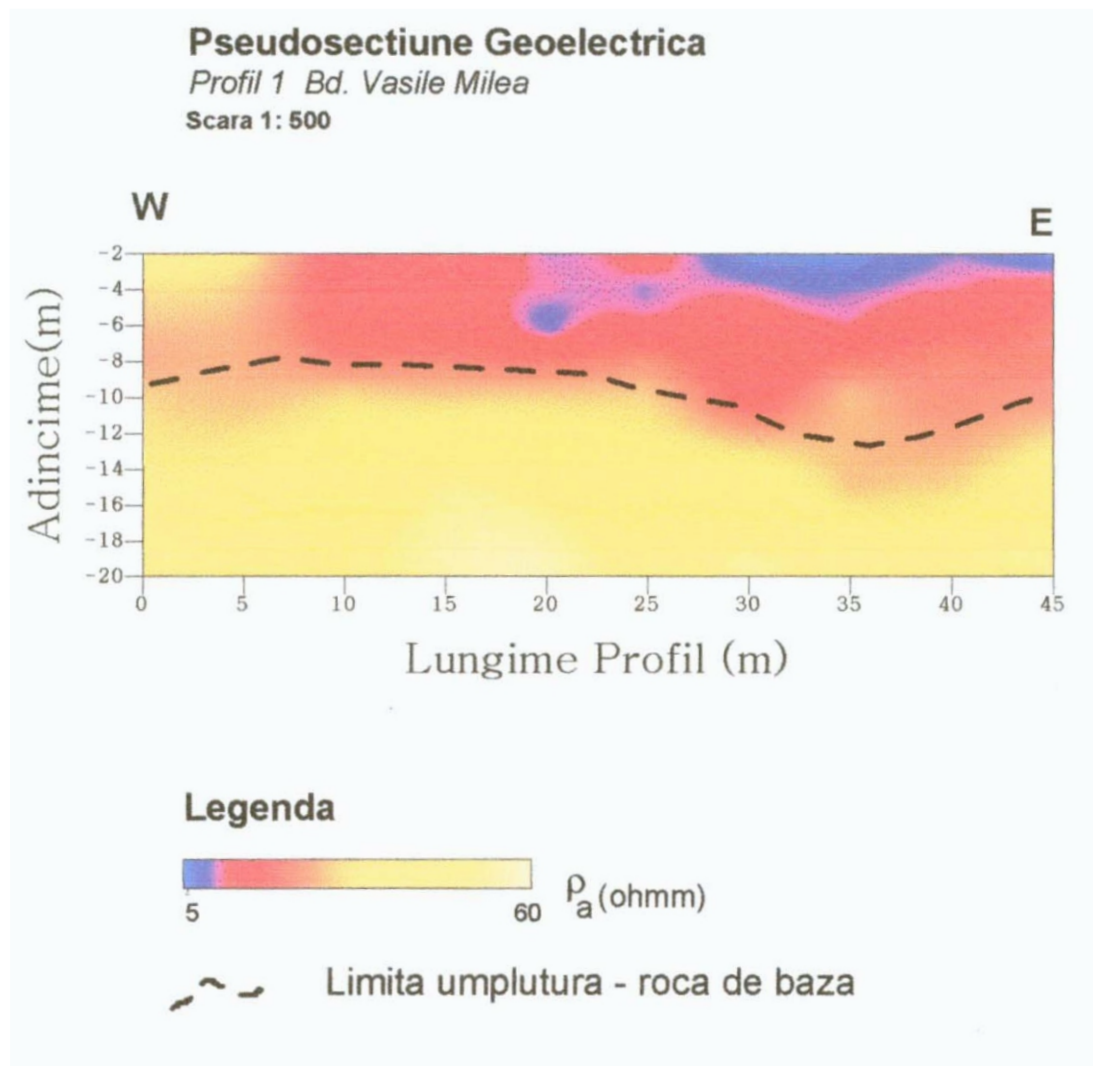


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Pl. 2 — Annex.



Pl. 3 — Annex.