

THE VETERAN.
ON THE ART AND SCIENCE OF SURVIVAL
WITH THE MEDICINE FACULTY
IN BUCHAREST*

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Keywords: survival, adapting, case study, Medicine Faculty, Carol Davila Medicine and Pharmacy University.

Abstract: Often enjoying a longer life than human beings, buildings are opposing more and even more intense critical moments. Natural catastrophes are joined by anthropogenic ones and the inevitable deterioration is accompanied by the damage made by man. Major events, such as earthquakes or wars, alternate with by far less dramatic situations that are followed however by effects much more serious. And those edifices that manage to withstand all these types of aggression owe their subsistence to the same feature that also ensures the endurance of living creatures – the capacity to adapt. Seen from this angle, the first (and culturally main) headquarters of the current Carol Davila Medicine and Pharmacy University in Bucharest proves to be a telling demonstration of what an initial high quality concept means, one able to sustain the perpetuation process of its identity despite two world wars, two major earthquakes, as well as a continuous series of interventions that were well-meant but not seldom undermined by various factors. The sacrifices made – nothing but the price paid for surviving – offer an outstanding occasion for repeated reflection on the manoeuvre margin for changes that the cultural resource can bear, a manoeuvre margin the present is beholden to define as precisely as possible.

Rezumat: Bucurându-se frecvent de o existență mai îndelungată decât ființele umane, clădirile se confruntă cu momente de cumpănă mai numeroase și uneori chiar mai intense decât acestea. Calamităților naturale li se alătură cele antropogene, iar uzura inevitabilă, datorată timpului, este însoțită de deteriorările făcute de mîna omului. Evenimente majore, precum cutremurele sau conflagrațiile, alternează cu situații sensibil mai puțin dramatice, urmate însă adesea de efecte cel puțin la fel de grave. Iar acele edificii care reușesc să reziste tuturor acestor tipuri de agresiuni își datorează subzistența aceleiași însușiri care asigură și dăinuirea viețuitoarelor și anume capacitatea de adaptare. Din acest punct de vedere, sediul inițial (și, din punct de vedere cultural, principal) al actualei Universități de Medicină și Farmacie „Carol Davila” din București constituie o demonstrație grăitoare a ceea ce înseamnă un concept originar de calitate,



Fig. 1. The first headquarters of the Carol Davila Medicine and Pharmacy University, the former Medicine Faculty of the Bucharest University, headquarters at 8 Eroii Sanitari Boulevard. (The author.)

apt să susțină perpetuarea identității în ciuda a două războaie mondiale, a două seisme majore, dar și în ciuda unui șir practic neîntrerupt de intervenții bine intenționate dar nu de puține ori subminate de factori dintre cei mai diverși. Sacrificiile făcute – prețul plătit deci pentru supraviețuire – oferă un prilej ieșit din comun pentru reflecții repetate cu privire la marja de modificări pe care o poate suporta resursa culturală, marjă pe care prezentul este dator să o determine cât mai precis.

Without aiming to be complete or rigorously structured, the following presentation is a review of the possible mechanisms employed by cultural heritage items to oppose critical situations and disasters. The working hypothesis adopted to this end is based upon the analogy with living beings that, among others, survive due to their power to adapt. The Venice Charter itself pleads in favour of this conjecture, through article 11 which claims that “Valid contributions of all periods ...” must be respected. Only these contributions are, in fact, valid fruits of transformation processes underwent by the historic monument (to use a brief name). The case study advanced to illustrate the given idea consists in the first headquarters of the current “Carol Davila” Medicine and Pharmacy University, situated in 8 Eroii Sanitari Boulevard, by the time of its establishment the Medicine Faculty of the (only and therefore with a capital “u”) University in Bucharest.¹

* The present contribution elaborates on the paper presented at the Symposium „Architecture, Restoration, Archaeology” ARA/17, 21 - 23.04.2016.

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¹ Derer *et alii* 2015.