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Modernist Heritage in Romania: management, protection, and recovery challenges

Daniela Calciu,
“Ion Mincu” University of Architecture and Urban Planning BUcharest

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2025

VICTORIEI SQUARE

INTERNATIONAL
DESIGN
COMPETITION
TIMIȘOARA

6/10/2023
H 16.00

SUBMISSION DEADLINE

1ST PRIZE

THE DESIGN SERVICES CONTRACT
WITH AN ESTIMATED VALUE OF
1.500.000 EUR
VAT EXCLUSIVE

2ND PRIZE

30.000 EUR
VAT EXCLUSIVE

3RD PRIZE

15.000 EUR
VAT EXCLUSIVE

1ST HONORABLE MENTION

7.500 EUR
VAT EXCLUSIVE

2ND HONORABLE MENTION

7.500 EUR
VAT EXCLUSIVE

CONTRACTING
AUTHORITY:



Primăria
Municipiului
Timișoara

ORGANIZER:



ORDINUL
ARHITECTILOR
DIN ROMÂNIA

oar.archi

Jury

Full members



arch. Ana Šverko



arch. Maria Chiara
Pozzana



arch. Maruša Zorec



urb. Gruia Bădescu



arch. Dragoș Oprea



arch. Ciprian Silviu
Cădariu



arch. Titus-Gabriel
Almăjan
Representative of the
Contracting Authority

Deputy members



arch. Monica
Sebestyen



Vice Mayor Ruben
Lațcău
Representative of the
Contracting Authority

Professional advisors



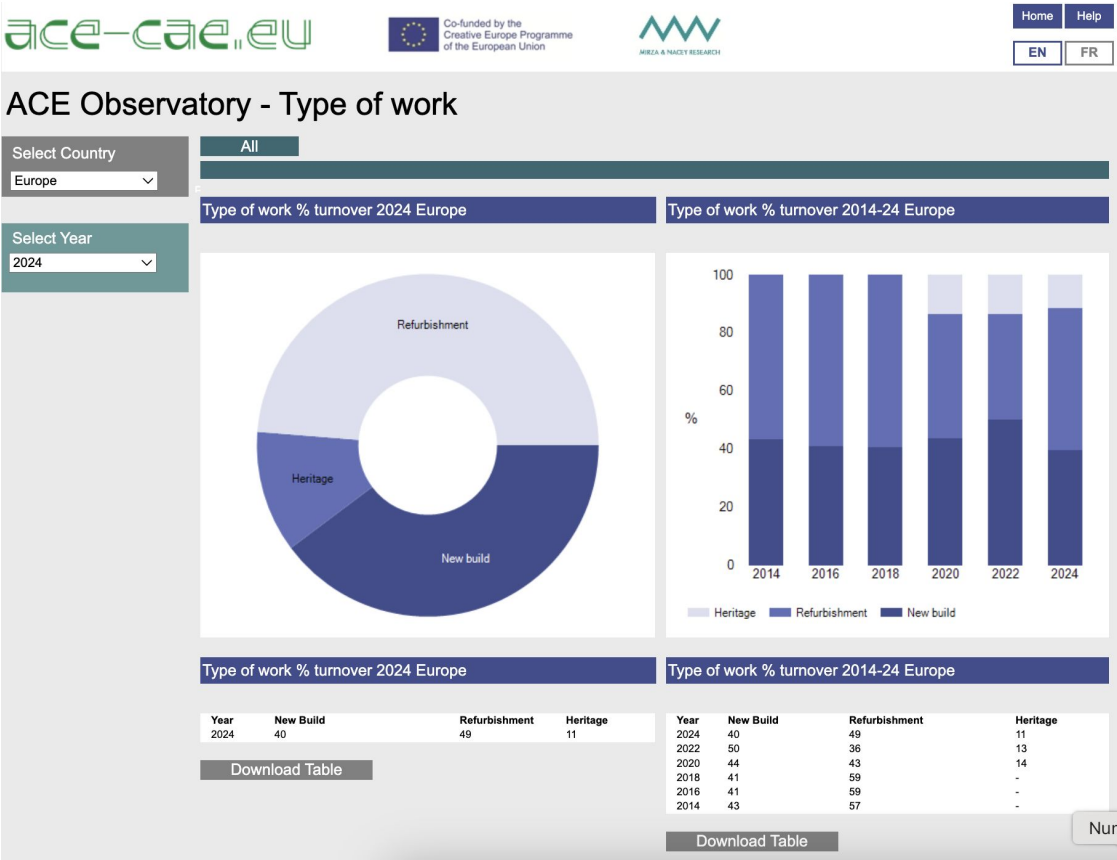
arch. Daniela Calciu



arch. Kázmér Kovács

How much do we refurbish in Romania and in Croatia?

Romania: 22% in 2024, 28% over the past 10 years
Croatia: 22% in 2024, 33% over the past 10 years
Europe: 49% in 2024, 50% over the past 10 years



What are the barriers to refurbishment in Romania?

National Museum of
Contemporary Art
(MNAC) Bucharest

Association for
Urban Transition

Order of Architects
of Romania



**Observations from
underneath three
professional hats**

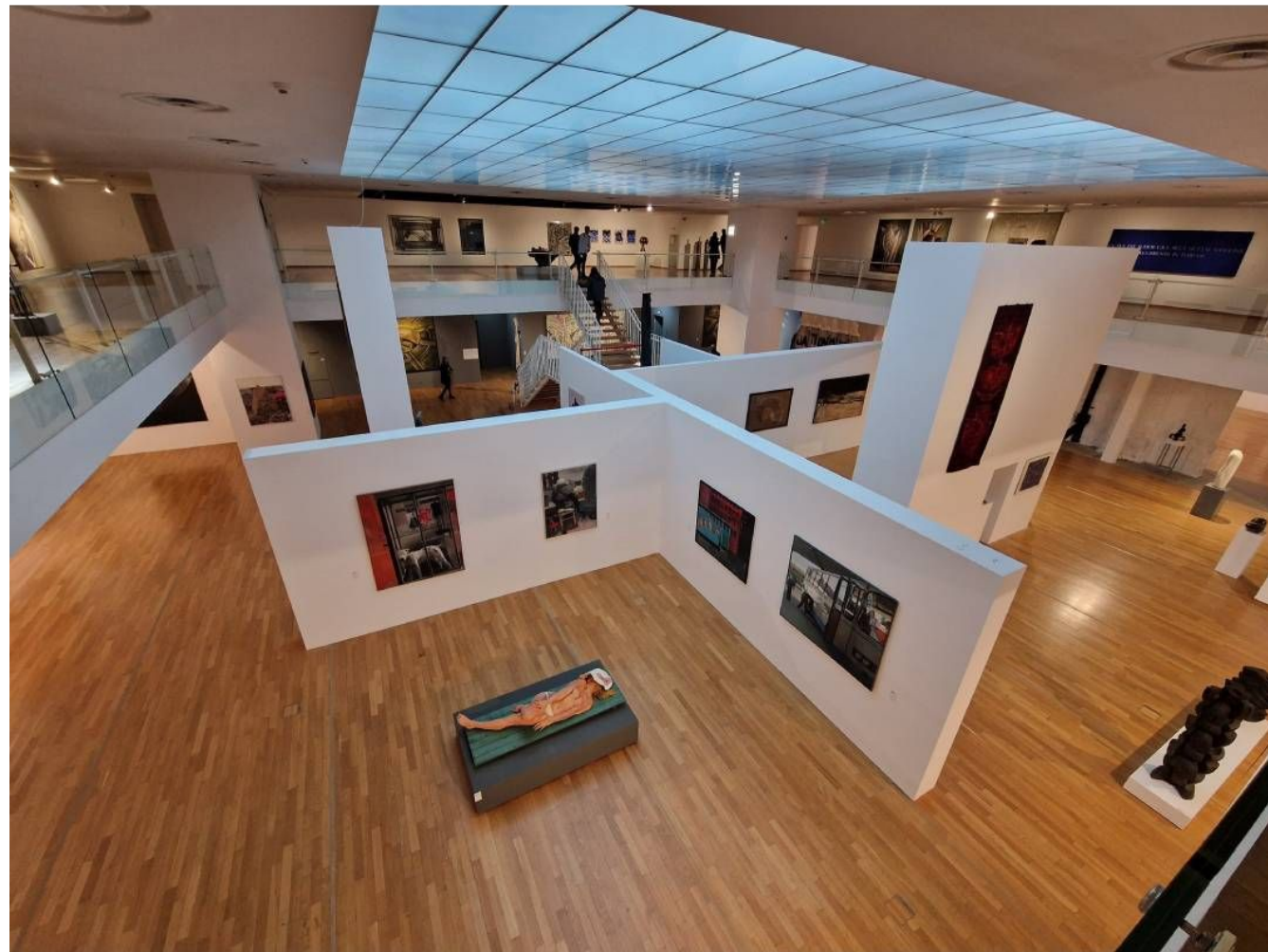
MNAC Bucharest (National Museum of Contemporary Art of Romania),
located in the Palace of the Parliament, widely known as The People's House

1





MNAC Bucharest



The exhibition *Parallel Lines / High Modernism in Croatia 1949 – 1998*, from the collection of the National Museum of Modern Art (of Croatia) - based on the curatorial concept developed by the NMMU Director, Branko Franceschi.

(Sala) Dalles Hall

landmark of the Romanian arts in the 20th century



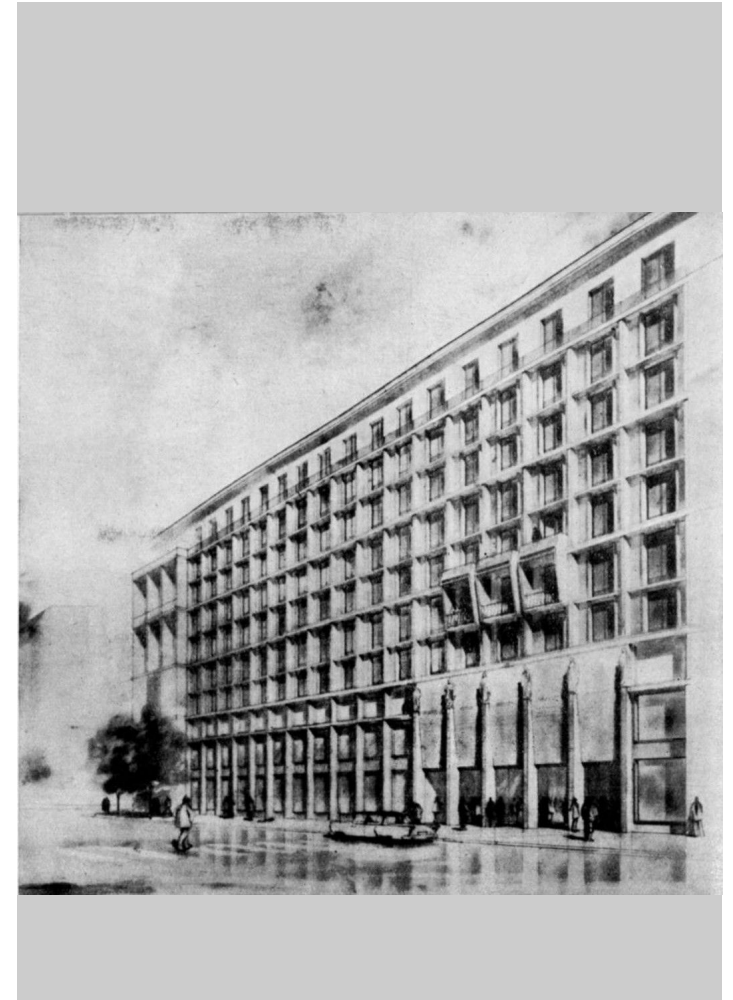
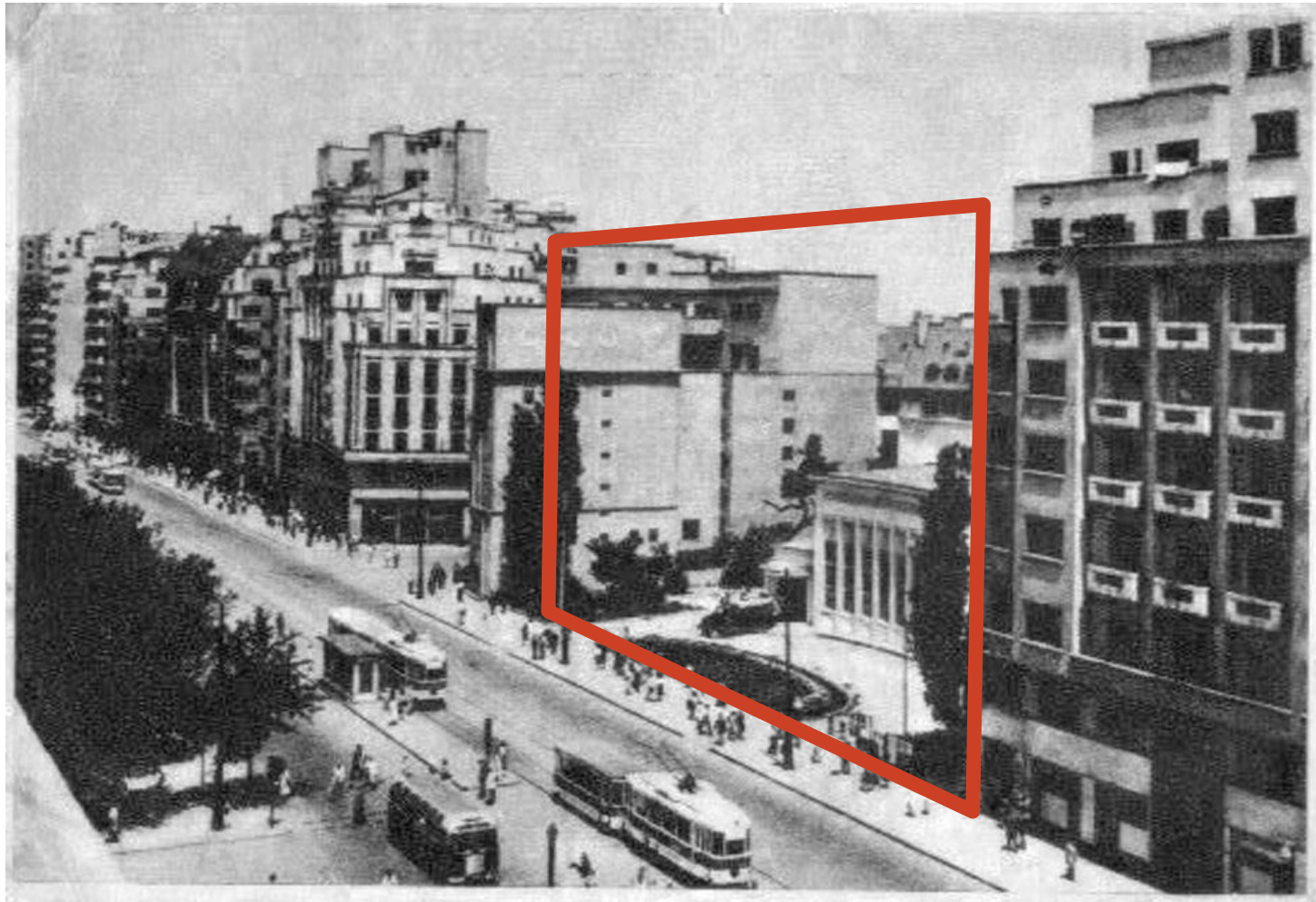
Biennial of Painting and Sculpture, Dalles Hall, Bucharest,
Opening, May 9, 1972, Photo credits: Eugeniu Lupu



The Bucharest Architecture Annual, 2019,
guided tour explaining the structural problems of the building

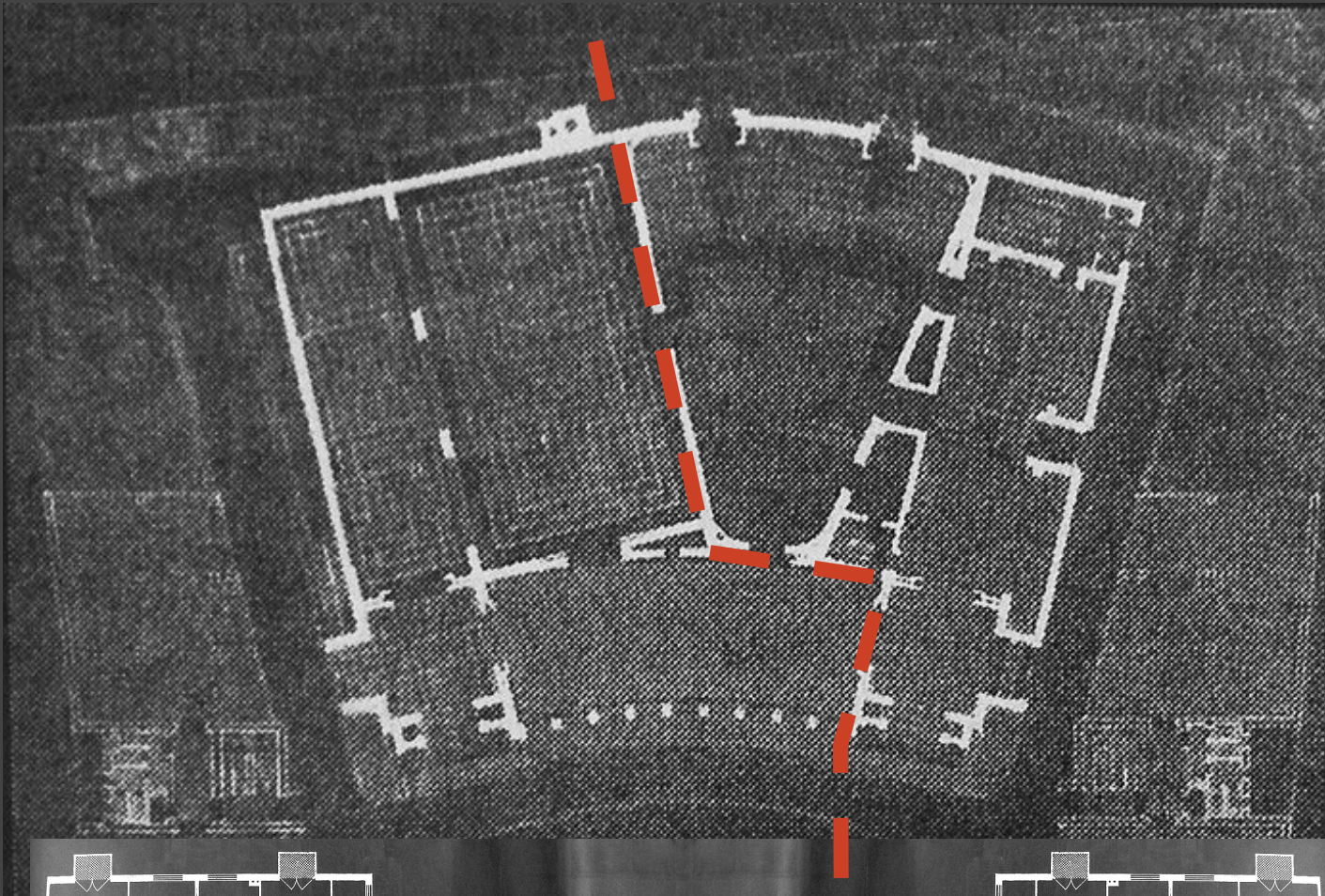
(Sala) Dalles Hall

built 1929-1932 | nationalised 1948 | annexed 1959-1961 | closed for public in 2016

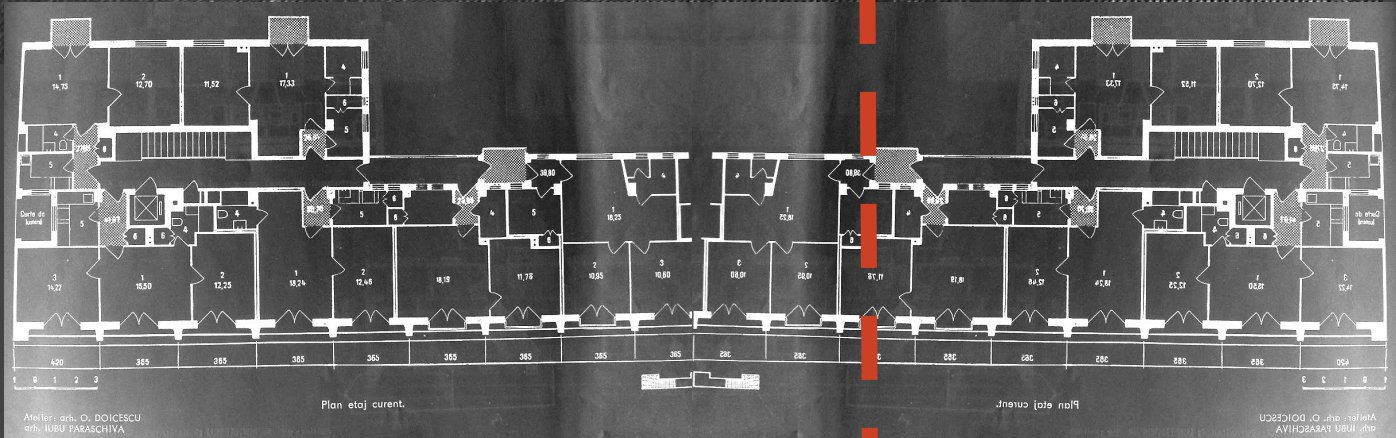


(Sala) Dalles Hall

built 1929-1932



built 1959-1961

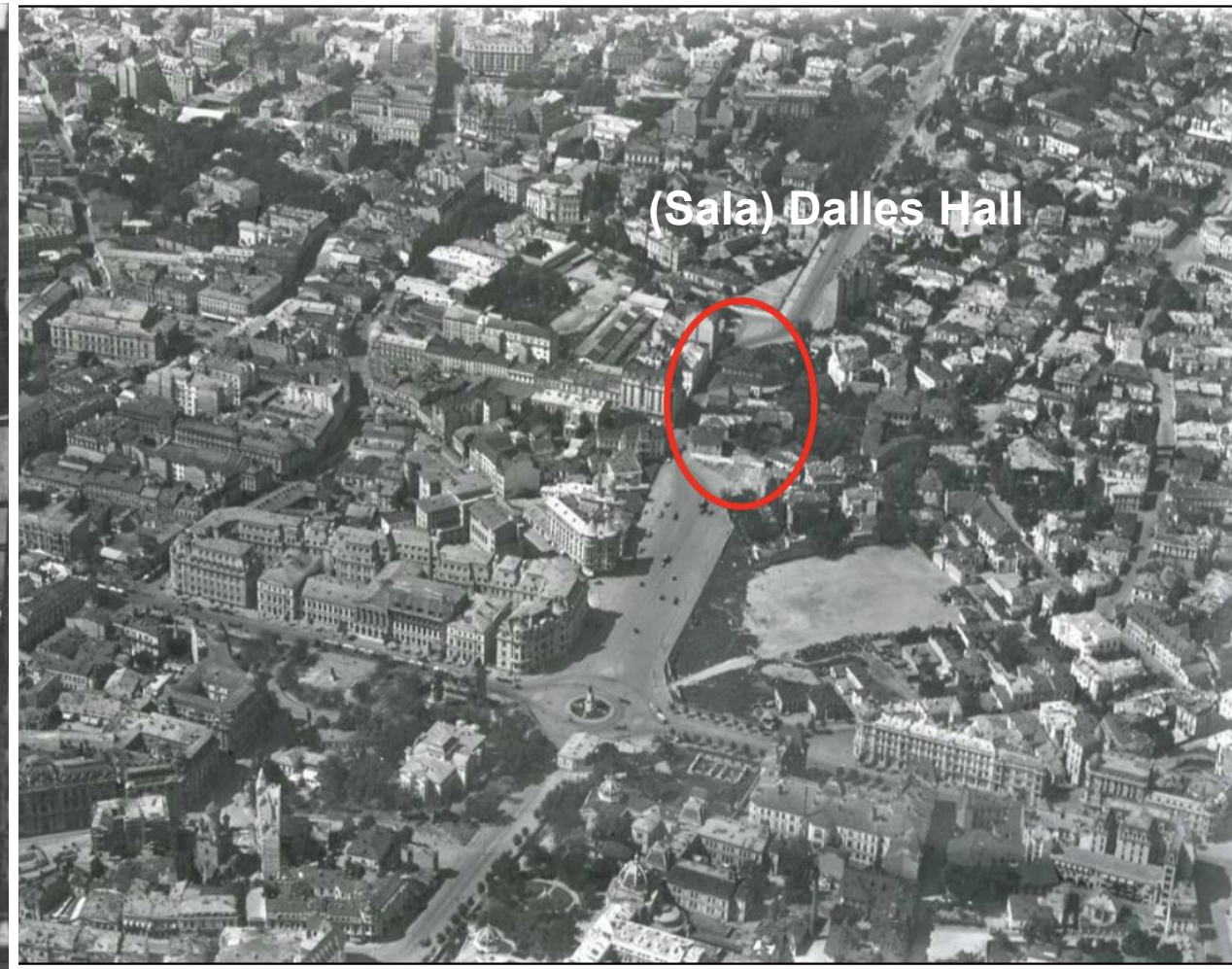
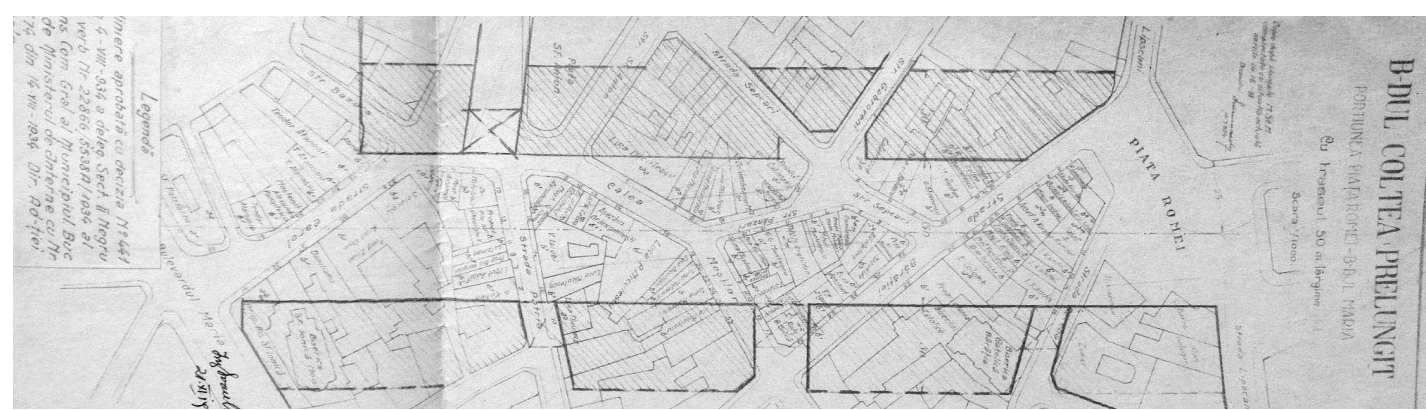


Property Ownership and Legal Barriers:

- Complex ownership structures (public - central and local, and private)
- Disputes over ownership rights (1991-2025 onwards)
- Unclear property limits and diffuse responsibility (constant negotiations of use)

Magheru - Brătianu Boulevard

a modernising axis of the city



Magheru - Brătianu Boulevard

considered a benchmark of modern interwar architecture in Bucharest – and perhaps throughout Romania – a synthesis of it, through the quality of the buildings, the notoriety of the architects and the architectural and urban unity of the ensemble (N. Lascu, architectural historian)



Technical and Structural Barriers:

- Building age and condition
- Small spaces by design
- Lack of skilled workforce



The *Casata Building* after the earthquake of March 4, 1977 (7,2 Richter)

Social and Cultural Barriers:

- Low awareness of benefits
- Social acceptance and Denial of risks
- Resistance to change
- Reluctance towards collaboration

*In progress
(MNAC Books):*

*an editorial project
gathering the research
supported by the Order of
Architects of Romania
from the stamp duty tax*

(Sala) Dalles Hall

At the intersection of its cultural, social, urban, artistic, and political histories



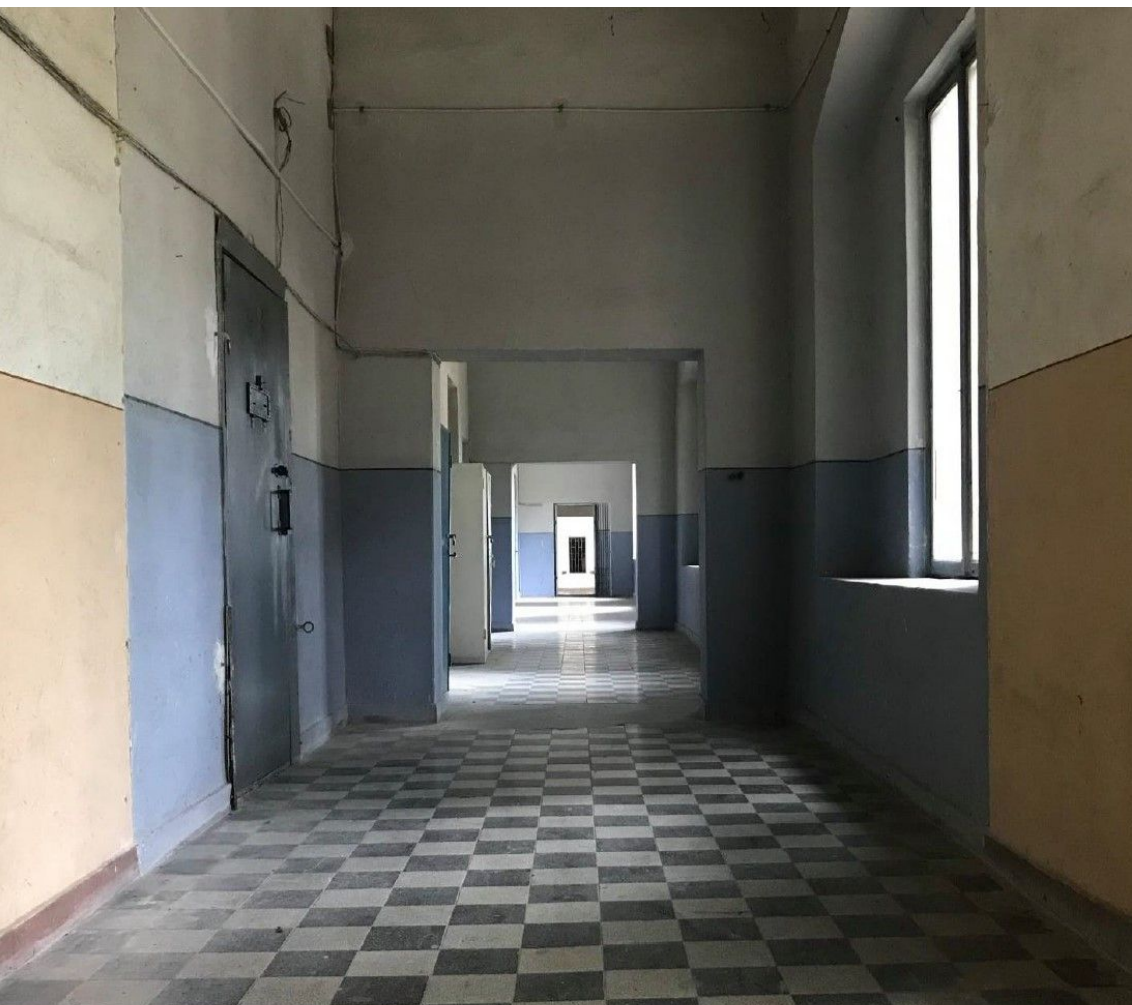
Association for Urban Transition - ATU, in collaboration with Malmaison Studios - an artistic community in a former garrison and political prison

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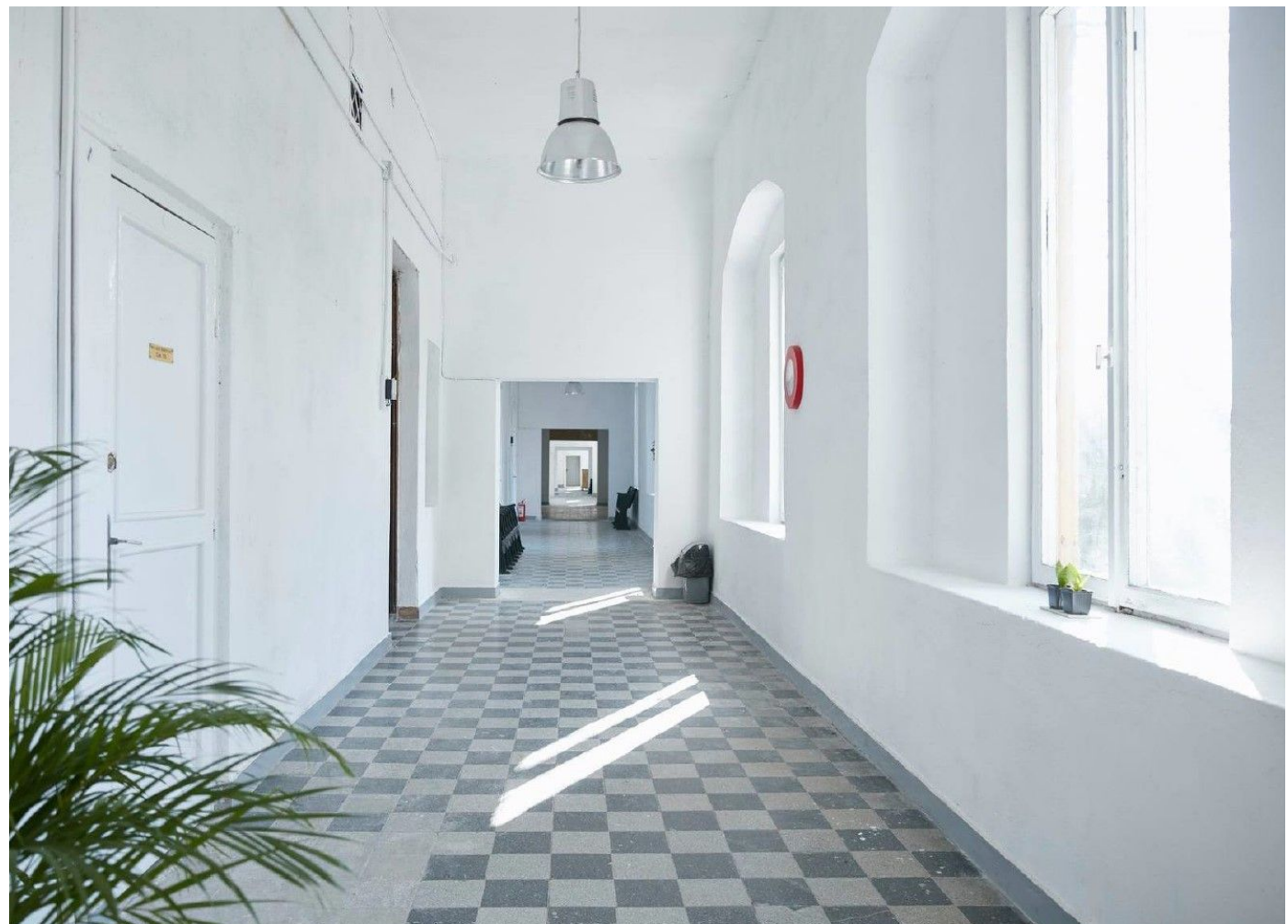


“I've been going through this for 20 years. That's pretty much what happens. You stay 2-3 years, the factory is bought, it's demolished, residential is built, you move on, the next one is demolished and so on.”

Dan Vezentan, visual artist



Malmaison before the artists moved in



Malmaison after renovation by artists



Edi Constantin's workshop, before and after renovation/ photo: Atelierele Malmaison



“Most artists have come here from situations where they had studios in former factories that were demolished, like I had at the former *Republica Factory*. It was demolished and the land occupied by a real estate developer.”

Virginia Toma, visual artist

Financial Barriers:

- High Initial Costs
- Limited Access to Financing
- Uncertain Return on Investment
- Preference for predictable quick gains

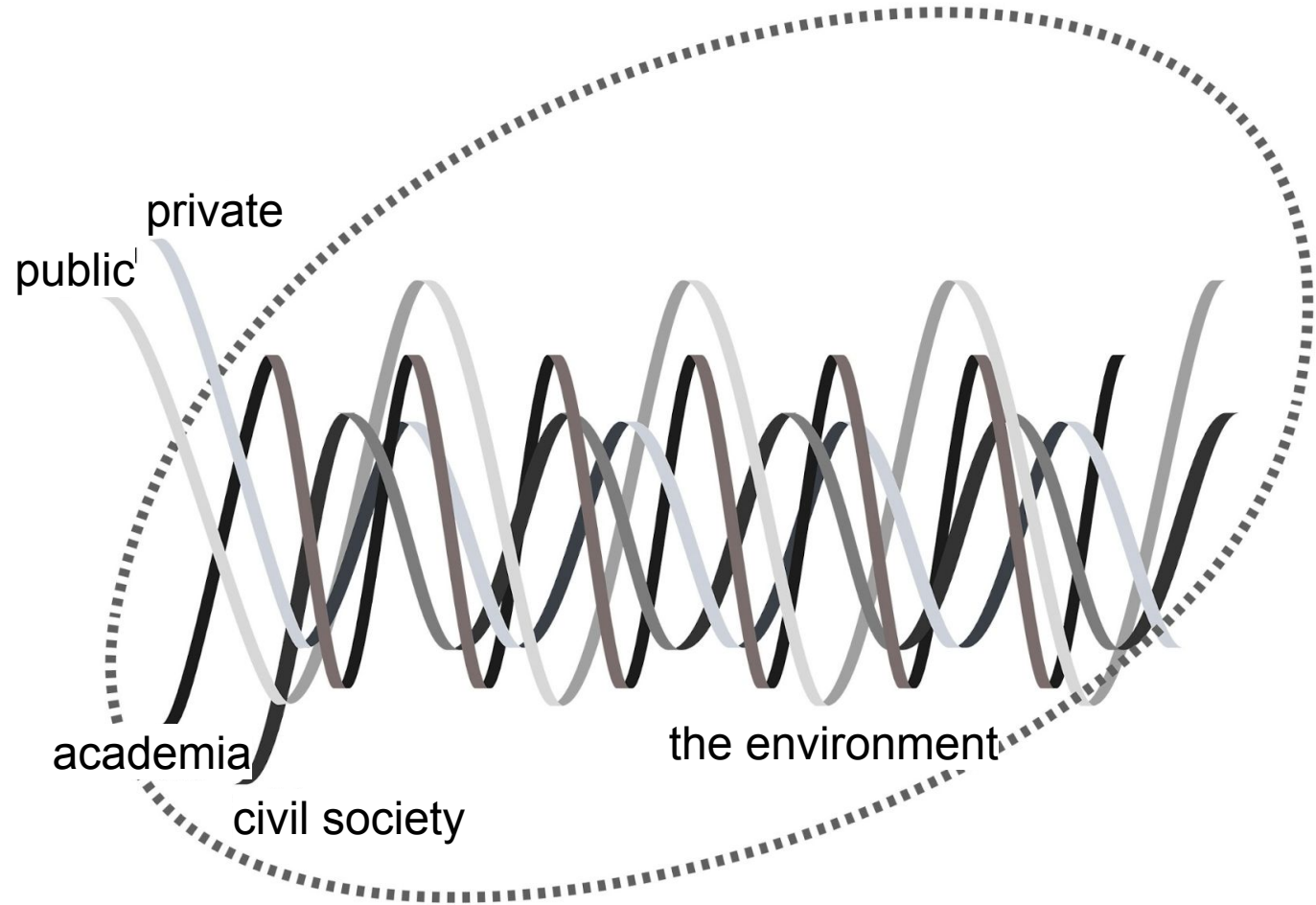
Economic and Market Barriers:

- Unstable construction costs
- Market perception and value
- Economic uncertainty

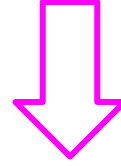
*In progress
Association for Urban
Transition - ATU*

*Multi-helix collaboration
mechanisms to support artists
take on underused spaces
and turn them into cultural
destinations in the city*

*Advocacy for Urban Rooms /
Urban Living Labs for
multi-actor involvement and
integrated approach to the
built environment*



Disconnect between policy intentions and practical implementation
Power imbalances and funding limitations
Conflicting visions of development (community vs. commercial)



Building alliances between local
actors and institutional stakeholders
Developing frameworks that integrate
both perspectives

Top-down: European policies
emphasizing sustainability,
resilience, and heritage
preservation

Grassroots perspective:
Community-driven efforts,
local knowledge, social
inclusion

Order of Architects of Romania - OAR: a connector that empowers grassroots initiatives while aligning with European policy and goals

3

Key approach:

Mediate between grassroots initiatives and top-down policy frameworks

Facilitate dialogue among architects, policymakers, investors, and community groups

Funding mechanism:

The architectural stamp duty tax (0.05% of the investment value of projects requiring architectural services) supports initiatives that enhance architectural and urban culture, including adaptive reuse projects, heritage conservation efforts, and experimental urban interventions

Annual calls for projects that align with public interest and architectural culture, fostering collaboration between civic actors and authorities.