

THE CONSERVATION PROCESS ADAPTING THEORY TO A NEW CONTEXT

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Abstract

In Romania historical garden conservation is a new discipline. Often the professionals involved in this process have to rely on their own intuition or on case studies of projects undertaken in countries with a richer tradition in this field. It is obvious that a unitary and professional approach is needed. We propose in the present study a possible methodology for approaching the conservation process, based mainly on the rich experience of the English National Trust.

In the first part, this study will attempt to draw from this accumulated knowledge a set of principles, which is by no means exhaustive, and does not represent a guarantee for successful conservation. Rather, this is a list of procedures which have become widely established in England. They have been verified by experience, and can be adapted to a new context. The approach to conservation can and does vary, depending upon the subject of study, and its context as the practice of the National Trust proves. The second part of the study deals with the way these principles have been adopted, adapted and applied on a school project during the Historic Garden Restoration classes at the USAMV Landscape Architecture department. The methodology of working with the students on a conservation project involving the regeneration of the Florești Estate focused on those procedures which would help the students develop the basic skills needed when dealing with a heritage asset.

Key words: heritage, historical gardens, garden conservation, restoration, regeneration.

INTRODUCTION

When heritage is mentioned, most people would probably think about buildings and monuments, art collections, maybe literature and music. However, the value and importance of historical gardens¹ as part of the common heritage is increasingly being recognised, hence a new and unprecedented interest in garden protection, conservation and regeneration has emerged. In Romania **garden conservation** is a very new discipline, and the professionals pioneering this path often have to rely on their own intuition and common sense when dealing with it. Publications on this subject are few, the legislation is lacking, and there is little unity of approach. In this study ‘garden conservation’ refers to a much more complex process than the

term ‘conservation’ seems to suggest. The Burra Charter defines conservation thus: ‘Conservation means all the processes of looking after a place so as to retain its cultural significance’ (Burra Charter, 1999, Article 1.4).² Simply put, cultural significance means ‘aesthetic, historic, scientific, social or spiritual value for past, present or future generations’ (Ibid, Article 1.2.). Thus, conservation has come to mean, especially for professionals, retaining the meaning and importance of a place, and not only preserving its physical matter, or fabric. Conservation can encompass a wide variety of interventions, ranging from maintenance to repair, restoration, reconstruction,³ or more complex processes of regeneration.

¹ In this article a **historical garden** will be defined according to the Florence Charter: ‘A historic garden is an architectural and horticultural composition of interest to the public from the historical or artistic point of view.’ (Florence Charter, 1982, Article 1). It includes notions like private and public garden or park, country estate, etc.

² The definitions proposed by the charter have become established, at least in England, having been adopted by Historical England and other institutions dedicated to heritage protection; they also have the advantage of being simple and short. (Watkins and Wright, 2007);

³ ‘**Maintenance** means the continuous protective care of the fabric and setting of a place, and is to be distinguished from repair. **Repair** involves restoration or reconstruction. **Preservation** means maintaining the

In countries like England, garden conservation has become a well-established practice, indeed, a tradition.

The National Trust, founded by some of John Ruskin's disciples at the end of the nineteenth century (Waterson, 1995), and at present the greatest owner of historical gardens in Europe (cf. National Trust website), has been a major pioneer of garden conservation, and its experience has helped define today's standards of good practice within this field. As the history of the trust illustrates, approaches to garden conservation have undergone many changes, from restorations 'in spirit,' or just creating 'appropriate' gardens for historical buildings, restoring to 'the last significant phase' according to thorough research, or the approach of 'conserve as found,' to ample regeneration projects (Cook, A., 2004).⁴ Although approaches to garden conservation are likely to continue changing, this on-going process has led to the accumulation of a valuable mass of knowledge and practical experience, to the establishment of standards of good practice, and to the formation of a dedicated vocabulary.

In the first part, this study will attempt to draw from this accumulated knowledge a set of principles, which is by no means exhaustive, and does not represent a guarantee for successful conservation (understood in the wider sense stated above). Success depends on other factors as well, not least on the competence of all the people involved, from specialists to workmen, and their dedication

fabric of a place in its existing state and retarding deterioration. **Restoration** means returning the existing fabric of a place to a known earlier state by removing accretions or by reassembling existing components without the introduction of new material. **Reconstruction** means returning a place to a known earlier state and is distinguished from restoration by the introduction of new material into the fabric. **Adaptation** means modifying a place to suit the existing use or a proposed use. [...] **Setting** means the area around a place, which may include the visual catchment. [...] **Meanings** denote what a place signifies, indicates, evokes or expresses. Meanings generally relate to intangible aspects such as symbolic qualities and memories. **Interpretation** means all the ways of presenting the cultural significance of a place.' (Ibid, Article 1.4.-1.17.)

⁴ For a brief account of the history of the changing approaches to garden conservation see also 'Hartwell House and Apafi Manor: Conservation through conversion' (Comanescu, 2013).

and commitment. Rather, this is a list of procedures which have become widely established in England.⁵ They have been verified by experience, and can be adapted to a new context. The approach to conservation can and does vary, depending upon the subject of study and its context, as the practice of the National Trust proves.

The second part of the study deals with the way these principles have been adopted, adapted and applied during the *Historic Garden Restoration* classes at the USAMV Landscape Architecture department.

The methodology⁶ of working with the students on a conservation project involving the regeneration of the Florești Estate was based on the stages listed below, but focusing on those procedures which would help the students develop the basic skills needed when dealing with a heritage asset: site survey, documentary research, analysis and reconstruction of the site's design and history, assessing the present condition, and developing a project based on the results of their research.

Part 1. The conservation process

The aim of a conservation project is to retain the 'cultural significance' of the heritage asset, in this case the historical garden. This means understanding what is important and valuable about it, and deciding what to do in order to preserve it. After assessing the significance of the place, its current condition and the issues involving it, one should decide the level of intervention needed in order to preserve this significance.

Some well-preserved places might require only maintenance, others might be threatened by loss of significance due to decay, and might require works of repair and restoration. In other cases, revealing and highlighting the significance of the place might require reconstruction.

Often, historical gardens need to undergo a process of revitalisation and regeneration in order to be integrated into the contemporary context. This might mean being assigned new viable functions and uses, or allowing new development within the protected areas, which, whilst sensitive to preserving the character and

⁵ See below footnote 7 and the accompanying text.

⁶ See Materials and methods.

significance of the garden, will help bring it to life in the new environment. Most often, a number of kinds of intervention will be applied on the same site.

Thus, the stages of the conservation process could be surmised as follows⁷:

- **Understanding the site:** its complete history, what it is today, and its current condition.
- Assessing its **significance:** why is it important and for who?
- **Risks and opportunities:**
- Identifying issues and vulnerabilities: this should result from the above two stages. Of particular importance are the factors that may endanger the significance of the place.
- Defining a vision: aims and policies. Explaining what should be done; this section may include recommendations for procedures like maintenance, restoration or reconstruction, as well as setting out directions for more complex processes like regeneration or revitalisation.
- Developing a **project** and an action plan: this section details the proposed interventions, and sets out the stages in which the proposed work should be undertaken. It may include a master plan, a management programme, a maintenance checklist, etc.
- **The implementation stage.**

A. Understanding the site. Survey and research.

The first step when dealing with a heritage asset is understanding what it is. This means knowing as much as possible about its history, from the earliest times to the present date, about the people who contributed to its creation

and subsequent evolution, about the ideas it might embody, about what it is today and the problems and issues which might threaten it. The first and absolutely necessary steps toward understanding the heritage asset are survey and research.

It is important to bear in mind that in the case of historical gardens surveying techniques will be a little different than for buildings. They include specific procedures like vegetation surveys, ecological assessments, hydrological and geological surveys, garden archaeology, as well as identifying each hard feature of the garden (paths, bridges, garden buildings, water features, etc.), mapping them and assessing their condition. The type and number of surveys undertaken will depend upon the site, its importance, complexity and state of preservation.

A. 1. Site visits

Site visits. When starting the survey and research stage, the first step is visiting the site, in order to form initial impressions, and to get a ‘feel’ of the place. Subsequent site visits will be needed for detailed surveys, and later on for confrontations with the results of documentary research. Important points to be kept in mind on site visits include: the coherence and unity of the place, or the lack thereof, the condition of the garden, the relationship between the house or other buildings and the garden, identifying significant features and their condition, views, blocked views, things that have a negative impact, planting, the condition of the trees, how the place is used and by whom, accesses, etc.

A. 2. Documentary research

The next important step is **documentary research**, which, combined with site survey, should result into a **history of the place**, a chronological, complete scheme of the site’s development from the earliest times to the present day. It will also set the garden into a **wider context**, answering questions like: are there similar gardens? What are the other works of the garden’s author(s)? Is it a rare or early example of a garden of this type? Documents to be consulted include: maps, design proposals, pictures, photos, aerial photos, drawings, descriptions, journals of the owners, chronicles, lists of materials and plants to be bought for the garden, and also already published studies

⁷ This list is largely based on and adapted after recommendations by Historical England, the Heritage Lottery Fund and the National Trust on how to develop a Conservation Management Plan (CMP). The CMP is a widely used document, an instrument which in essence describes what a heritage asset is, its significance, its current condition, issues and vulnerabilities, and sets out long term management policies, as well as short term (3-5 years) prescriptions, including maintenance and restoration project works. The CMP is required for funding and development applications, and is extensively used by the National Trust in order to provide continuity of management for their properties. The CMP usually represents the bases for a project. See: National Planning Policy Framework, Heritage Lottery Fund, (Watkins and Wright, 2007, pp. 25-39);

about the place, articles, and other records. These are only some of the documents to be gathered and examined. There is desktop research, at the local and district town hall, at the records office, at libraries, archives, museums, private collections. Finding documents requires time and skill, and sometimes travelling. All these documents should be organised into an accessible data base, which should then be permanently updated with results of new research or records of new work. From this research, a history of the place will be built. It will help identify the main phases of the site's development, and divide the site in areas with a specific character. One of the most recommended procedures at this stage is map overlay and comparison. Documentary research will always be confronted with site surveys.

A. 3. Site surveys

Site surveys include identifying, assessing and mapping all the elements on site: buildings, garden buildings, water features, earthworks, terraces, paths, landmarks, walls, fences, vegetation, hydrological and geological surveys, tree surveys (besides mapping the existing trees, drawing up files for each outstanding specimen), ecological and wildlife surveys, where necessary archaeology and garden archaeology. Surviving and lost historical views and borrowed landscapes will be identified in order to explain the **local context**.

Surviving features assessments, as well as tree surveys specifying the species, age, condition, aesthetical value, and importance, are of particular importance. Site survey and documentary research are the basis for reconstructing the significant phases of the site's design, and for later works.

B. Assessing significance

It is essential to specify why the heritage asset is significant, for whom, and how this significance is linked to the actual fabric of the place. In some cases assessing the significance of a place can be pretty straightforward and simple. However, in more complex cases there can be many layers of significance, and all of them should be considered when proposing a project which might have impact upon them. Significance can refer to historical, evidential importance, artistic qualities, spiritual

associations, importance due to association with an outstanding person or event, rarity, age, condition, superiority to objects of a similar kind (an outstanding example of a garden of a particular style, an impressive collection of rare trees), wildlife and ecology, archaeology, etc. The importance to the local community or other groups of people such as enthusiasts should not be forgotten.

C. Risks and opportunities

Once the significance of the place has been established, real or potential threats to it can be identified in view of the research previously done. Thus, **issues and vulnerabilities** concerning the site will be assessed. They might be related to decay, danger of loss of fabric, fragmentation, loss of character and meaning, danger from development, lack of finances to maintain the place, lack of visitors, or conflicts between different types of heritage, but also loss of authenticity, lack of sustainability, over-commercialization.

As the risks concerning the site are analysed, and solutions are sought, a certain **vision** will emerge. Thus certain **general aims and policies** will be established: the kind of interventions that are necessary in order for the significance of the place to be preserved, and, if possible enhanced. These interventions may range from works of maintenance and repair, to restoration, reconstruction, and the integration of new features such as cafes, souvenir shops, cultural centres, or others.

The general attitude towards change when dealing with heritage assets should be reserved; however in some cases the regeneration of a place requires a creative, but sensitive and respectful approach and it is always necessary to make the place functional, responding to contemporary needs.

D. The project

The project will be based on the above research and conclusions, and can include a **master plan**, an **action plan** with specifications regarding the **stages of the project**, how it should be implemented, which procedures have priority. The proposal should take into consideration things like how the project will be financed, what qualifications are required of the staff, once the main stages of the project are completed, how will the property be maintained and financed in the future.

Like the previous stages, the project will most likely be the result of collaboration between experts. At this point it is very important to make sure that all the participants have a clear understanding of the aims of the project viewed as a whole. The coordinator of the team, in particular, should integrate the input of other specialists into a coherent scheme, making sure that the resulting garden is a harmonious whole.

E. The implementation stage

As part of the conservation process, the implementation stage is of crucial importance for the success of the conservation project, and should be addressed, especially in Romania, where the staff employed for on-site works is usually not trained in work on heritage sites.

The manner in which the proposed interventions and works are executed is of great importance, and if inappropriately done, can ruin not only the project, but the historical garden itself. This is why it is recommended that the execution should be supervised by the person who was in charge of the project. Likewise, the staff and other professionals should be familiar with the aims of the project, the significance and character of the garden, with the specific terminology employed in garden conservation, and should have the skills and competences for this type of work. The same should be true of the people who will be in charge of the future maintenance and management of the garden.

Part 2. The conservation project

MATERIALS AND METHODS

For a thorough understanding of the methodology of historical garden conservation (in the broad sense specified above), we propose applying it to a specific, complex, and for many reasons significant case study: the Cantacuzino Estate in Florești, Prahova.

The subject of the regeneration of this site was addressed in a school-project during the 2014-2015 *Historic Garden Restoration* classes at the Landscape Architecture Department at the USAMV, Bucharest. The *Historic Garden Restoration* classes take place during the first semester of the 3rd year of study (14 weeks) and are usually organised in 2 taught course hours

and 2 hours of practical activities per week. For the Florești case study, the students had 9 weeks for research and 5 weeks for project work.

The abovementioned methodology was adapted to the school-project, some of the points being necessarily omitted, being outside the sphere of tasks that the landscape architecture students could accomplish. The activity of the students was organised in two stages: research and project work. For the research stage, due to the multiple and diverse research directions which had to be covered, the students were organised into groups of two to five. For optimal involvement, they were given the opportunity to approach the directions of research of their choice, according to their own preferences. At the end of the first stage, an indispensable data base was created, comprised of the results of the research work. For the second stage, the students were organised into larger groups of eight to eleven members. Although the number of students in a group was determined by the professors, the members were not. We opted for this approach to favour good communication in each group. The groups were encouraged to develop different solutions for their projects. These would encompass various types of interventions, including: preservation, repair and restoration, reconstruction and, on a broader scale, regeneration. The projects were meant to organise the proposed interventions into stages, which would allow the concomitant use of the site for cultural, sportive or other activities, which in turn, would financially support the future works. To avoid mistakes, these stages of the school-project were closely guided by supervisors competent in the field of historical garden protection, conservation and restoration.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The research stage was preceded by a presentation of the already known information about the Cantacuzino Estate in Florești, Prahova: a topographical survey, the surveys of the 'Little Trianon' palace, photographs from various historical periods, data on the original owner, about the architect of the palace and about the supposed designers of the garden, and a historical study of the palace.

In order to become directly acquainted with the object of study, the students' first activity was a site visit. The students were organised in groups after that visit. They were assigned tasks according to their own preferences regarding research directions. The students undertook research at the National Archives, at the Academy Library, at the History Museum of the Ploiești Municipality, at the Florești Village Hall. This endeavour was really successful. A whole archive of documents reflects daily life on the Florești estate, although these documents are apparently dry and uninteresting. Historical plans dating from before the construction of the present palace have been found, identifying the main areas of the estate: the pleasure grounds and the hunting park. The 1905 plan already shows a clear division into specific areas: the pleasure grounds, the hunting park with the mills' pond and the river meadow, as well as the Cap Roșu Park at the northern end of the estate (Figure.1).



Figure 1. Florești Estate plan, 1905, Detail
Source: Arhivele Naționale, Planuri, Județe lit. O-V, Inventar 2343, Cota 248.

At the National Archives, a 1906 'Boundray Book for the Florești Estate' has been found.⁸ It encompasses a complete inventory of the

estate, and shows a clear division into specific areas: the pleasure grounds, the hunting park with the mills' pond and the river meadow, as well as the Cap Roșu Park at the northern end of the estate.

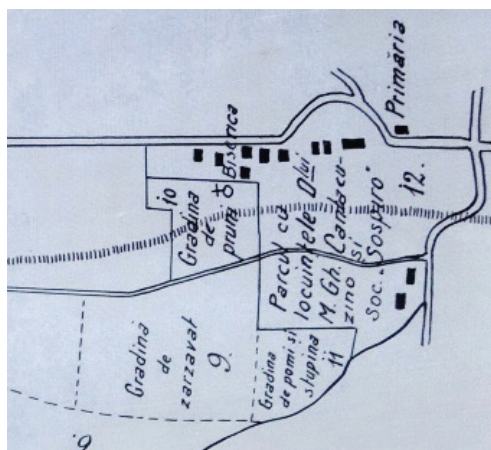


Figure 2. Florești Estate plan, 1924, Detail
Source: Arhivele Naționale, G.Gr.Cantacuzino, Inventar 1829, Cota 608.

A 1924 plan shows a plum tree orchard and a vegetable garden, bee hives in an orchard, a wilderness, hayfields, and poplar and alder woodland (Figure 2.). Other documents mention: buildings in the 'garden in the Park', two glasshouses, beehives and fruit bearing trees, a mill, a cattle farm and 'an orderly dairy.' The most important plan was found at the Central Archives of the Bucharest Municipality, and it represents a restoration proposal for the park, signed 'Pinard' and dated July 1912. Worthy of mention are the important views marked on this plan (Figure 3.).

Other students have elaborated a site survey recording all the trees and the built elements, like buildings, walls, bridges, ponds and other water features. Comparative studies regarding the wider context of the 'Petit Trianon' as archetype were also undertaken, by analysing places that are also named after and likened to the French original.

The studies showed that most of these places were situated in urban areas, with evident consequences upon the dimensions of the gardens. A comparative study on the Cotroceni ensemble highlighted a series of similarities concerning the decorative features, such as a rectangular pond and the balustrades from the

⁸ Arhivele Naționale, Hotărnicii inv.2473 Jud. PH Cota 53 - "Cartea de Hotărnicie pentru moșia Florești" din 1906, publicată în 1908.

Palace garden, which were erected at the beginning of the twentieth century, like the ones at Florești estate.

The studies revealed the fact that the ensemble at Florești is a late example of a nineteenth century garden, with a geometrical area around the main building, transitioning into a landscaped pleasure garden, and then into the wider parkland. It should be underlined that, except for the 'Petit Trianon' itself, no other Versailles feature was used as model for the Florești estate. The eighteenth century gardens of the Petit Trianon present an idyllic view on village and pastoral life. They have no connection with the public parks of the nineteenth century, like Buttes Chaumont, Monceau or Montsouris, which, on the other hand, have a great number of elements in common with the pleasure grounds at Florești.

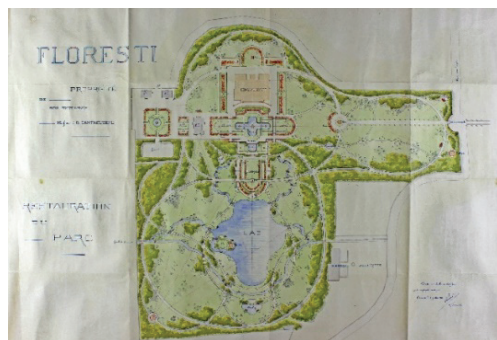


Figure 3. Plan of the park of the Florești Palace, belonging to I. G. Cantacuzino, no. 90, 1912
Source : Arhivele Centrale ale Municipiului București, Inventar 2343 vol. II, Planuri O-V, Județul Prahova.

The most important and useful information about the site was found in two articles published in contemporary periodicals: 'A day at Florești,' published in *România Ilustrată* magazine, (Antemireanu, 1905) and 'Disposition en terrasse. Aménagement d'un Jardin régulier, d'une large facture, à flanc de coteau, devant une demeure de style Trianon (Domaine de Florești, au Prince Cantacuzène, Roumanie)', published in *La vie à la Campagne*, (Maumené, 1914). The first article describes the estate in detail, mentioning specific areas, and providing photographs. It also mentions the author of the first landscaped layout. 'The Pleasure grounds at the artfully crafted Florești estate date from around 1830. They were laid out, in their present form, by

Meyer, the famous gardener who was also commissioned by General Kiselef to realise the eponymous, and most admirable boulevard in Bucharest, the most exquisite adornment of the Capital.' (Antemireanu, 1905). The plan published in 'La vie à la Campagne' shows the superior terrace, the geometrical garden around the palace, and also the link to the 'pleasure grounds,' to the edge of the lake (Maumené, 1914).

The current heritage legislation has also been studied, as well as the List of Historical Monuments, according to which the estate is a category A listed heritage asset, that is, of national importance. The Cantacuzino Estate (PH-II-a-A-16490) is an ensemble of national importance, which lies parallel to the Prahova River, from North to South, on a distance of 3 km. The main elements of the ensemble are: the buildings, the most valuable of which is the Palace called the 'Little Trianon' (PH-II-m-A-16490.01), built between 1910 and 1916, designed by the architect Ion D. Berindey, the water tower (PH-II-m-A-16490.02), built between 1910 and 1916, the enclosure wall (PH-II-m-A-16490.04), and the 'Holy Trinity' and 'Nativity' Church, with the Governor Grigore Cantacuzino's family crypt (PH-II-m-A-16491), 1887. The park (PH-II-m-A-16490.03) has naturally been the main object of our study.

The students surveyed the existing vegetation (Figure 4), and analysed the important views for the general composition and for emphasizing both the palace and the grounds.



Figure 4. Vegetation Survey of the formal gardens and the pleasure grounds.

Authors: the students from the third year of study

All this documentary research was corroborated with all the other information provided by

plans, other documents, and most importantly, the survey of the site. Other surveys such as excavations or other archaeological works, and ground investigation, which are in principle recommended, were not undertaken, this being a school-project. At present, the condition of the buildings in the ensemble is poor, the palace being in an advanced stage of degradation; it is a ruin in fact. The enclosing wall has also collapsed in various places. Some of the gates have disappeared, while the water tower needs to be consolidated and restored.

Assessing Significance

According to the Historical Monuments List (2010 and updated in 2015), the whole ensemble at Florești, as well as its main features are of national importance. Even some of the unlisted features, such as the buildings of the present sanatorium are important due to their association with the Governor Grigore Cantacuzino (1800-1849) and his wife Luxita Kretzulescu (Figure 5). He is also the founder of the Florești church (1826-1830), which was later rebuilt by his wife. It is said that within the present tuberculosis asylum buildings, previously the villas of Gh. Gr. Cantacuzino's children, there are murals by Gh. M. Tattarescu, who also painted the church built by Luxita Kretzulescu – Cantacuzino in 1887.



Figure 5. The Little Trianon mirrored in the lake.
Inset: Vornicul Grigore Cantacuzino and Luxita Kretzulescu, the parents of Gh. Gr. Cantacuzino, called 'the Nabab' (Ion, 2010)

The estate has belonged to one of the most prominent and interesting figures of the beginning of the twentieth century, Gh. Gr. Cantacuzino (Figure 6), called 'the Nabab', due to his enormous fortune. He was one of the most appreciated political figures, Member of Parliament and Prime Minister. 'The Nabab' was renowned for his authentic patriotism, which is remarked upon in the article 'A day at Florești,' (Antemireanu, 1905).

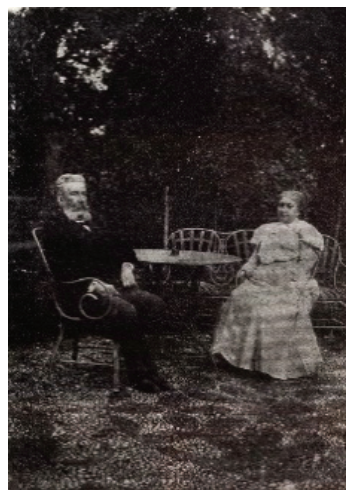


Figure 6. Mr. and Mrs. Gh. Gr. Cantacuzino in the park at Florești (Antemireanu, 1905, p. 259)

Even today, there are many legends about this charismatic man, with a strong but warm personality. The Florești estate has been a favourite place for many personalities, including King Mihai (Fabra Bratianu, 2012) (Figure 7).



Figure 7. King Mihai I, Ileana Brătianu and two cousins on the deck of the lake in the pleasure grounds.
Source: (Fabra Bratianu, 2012, p. 103).

Apart from its association with the Cantacuzino family, and especially with Gh. Gr. Cantacuzino, the Florești estate is important due to the exceptional quality of the palace architecture by I. D. Berindey (Figure 8), and to its relationship with the designed landscape, which has survived to a great degree.

The site is associated both with W. F. C. Meyer, and with E. Pinard, two of the most prominent garden designers in Romania. Further site surveys are needed to determine

more precisely what input each of them had and how much of their designs survives.



Figure 8. Details of the 'Little Trianon' Palace
Photo: Mihaela Radu

Most of the parts of the ensemble have survived, including: the pleasure grounds, the hunting park, the villas, the utility areas, and various important features: earthworks, water features, the general planting scheme, and some of the main views. All these elements are still in place, and although deteriorated, they are identifiable and can be restored. Thus, the ensemble is valuable as an example of late nineteenth century and early twentieth century country estate.

Although this type of estate is fairly common in Europe, in Romania they have become rare, which adds to the site's importance on a national level. The refinement and luxury of Pinard's design for the formal terraces are underlined by Maumené, in his presentation of the gardens.⁹

Moreover, the reinforced concrete features testify to Emile Pinard's intervention, whose project for the terraces (Figure 10) was praised at the end of the article 'La vie à la Campagne'.¹⁰ Pinard was familiar with the

⁹ « On descend sur la deuxième terrasse par des escaliers latéraux accompagnés, comme l'est le mur de soutènement, de balustrades qui ont été prolongées latéralement. Un nouveau bassin est disposé contre le mur de soutènement et sur toute la largeur de la partie saillante. Il est alimenté par l'eau du bassin supérieur. Le mur de soutènement de cette seconde terrasse, qui se retourne en pan coupé, sera maintenu bas avec des caisses à fleurs posées sur les pilastres, cela pour éviter la répétition de la balustrade supérieure ; dans les pans coupés s'encastrent des bancs de pierre, abrite chacun par un portique recouvert de plantes grimpantes. » (Maumené, 1914, p. 188).

¹⁰ « Par la dominante de ses grandes lignes, sa facture sobre et élégante, son encadrement libre de massifs et de grands arbres, cet ensemble doit parfaitement

appreciation of the contemporaneous French landscape architects. The project of the Bibescu (today Romanescu) park in Craiova was awarded the Golden Medal at the 1900 Paris International Exhibition and its authors were Edouard Redont, Jules Redont and his brother, and Emile Pinard.

Although the pleasure grounds at Florești are not a veritable arboretum, they do accommodate a collection of rare trees, and a plane tree, remarkable for its age, dimensions and aesthetic value (Figure 9).



Figure 9. The Pleasure Grounds, October 2014
Photo: Andreea Soare

Risks and opportunities

The most noteworthy feature of the ensemble is the palace called the 'Little Trianon,' which is at present in a ruinous state, and in danger of collapsing. Urgent consolidation works are imperiously needed so that this most important element of the park should not be lost. The whole composition revolves around this central element, and depends upon its presence. Works undertaken in the immediate proximity of the palace can induce vibrations which may affect and further deteriorate the monument. As it is, major and irreversible deterioration of the palace's fabric has already taken place. The retaining wall, the staircases, the inferior pond are also in a poor state, while only dispersed fragments of the balustrade have survived.

The lack of funds for a complete restoration has led to the need to find alternative solutions: for the park maintenance works a contract between USAMV Bucharest and the Cantacuzino Florești Foundation was signed.

s'harmoniser avec le Parc paysager dans lesquels il s'encastre. Il est digne en tout point des créations de l'école française des Jardins contemporains, dont, en Roumanie M. Pinard est l'excellent représentant. » (Maumené, 1914, p. 188).

For the consolidation and restoration of the palace, an idea competition was organised, which will be followed by developing a project and applying for EU funding.

The Florești estate is full of life even in its present state. The international horsemanship competition, Karpatia Horse Trials is annually organised here and enjoys great popularity. Although it is a great opportunity to bring people on the site, it has some drawbacks too: a few huge trees from the hunting park have been cut, new land works were undertaken in order to build water obstacles for the horse races, and, not least, new works involving reinforced concrete were undertaken on the geometrical pond in front of the palace.

The grounds can be visited anytime. One of the main problems is that at present no effective security can be provided for the site. This leads to further deterioration of the built edifices, as well as of the poplar woodland, through uncontrolled cuts. This situation can lead to loss of authenticity.

Another threat is uncontrolled young tree growth. Thus, clearing works are needed, as well as maintenance works for old, rare and spectacular specimens. Likewise, the hard elements of the pleasure grounds should be restored: ponds, staircases, bridges, and water features. The research undertaken by the students revealed the fact that the area around the palace is situated on the crest of the *Florești Anticline*, on a salt massive, which can provoke landslides. This is important to know, because it will influence the types of future work which will be undertaken on the superior terrace, where the palace is situated.

For the conservation of an ensemble as complex and valuable as the Florești estate, a vast variety of interventions are required. Apart from the classical maintenance, restoration and revitalization works, a creative and sensitive approach will be needed in order to make sure that the ensemble will be functional in the future. This type of approach, called regeneration, allows for new functions to be introduced, and for new features such as: new accesses, parking lots, cabins for security staff, restrooms, resting places, belvederes, and event dedicated areas. These features should be integrated so as to affect neither the substance nor the spirit of the place.

The project

By studying the materials accumulated during the research stage, both documentary, and site surveys, we concluded that we have the possibility to elaborate a simplified classical conservation project. In the future these materials will be completed with archaeological surveys, which are needed for uncovering lost artefacts, as well as for finding the fragments of features that have been destroyed in time.

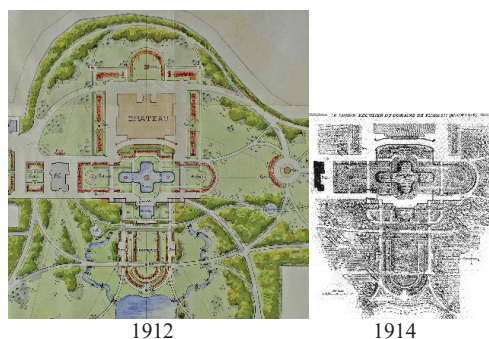


Figure 10. Florești Estate, *the geometrical gardens*
Plans by Emile Pinard

The owners have expressed a few requirements concerning the conservation project: they would like the restoration of the pleasure grounds to be as exact as possible, but with the addition of a parking area; the project should be sustainable and easy to implement; they are looking for proposals of activities which should take place both on the superior terrace, and on the pleasure grounds. These activities should bring in revenues which would then be used for further restoration of the park and palace. These sensible suggestions transform the project in something more than just revitalization. It will become a regeneration project, which involves not only a resuscitation of the place, but its rebirth. This is why the students have been organised in large groups of eleven, eight, and respectively ten members. As in the case of establishing the teams for the research stage, the preferences of the students were taken into consideration, keeping in mind a certain vision of the project. The supervisors adopted this attitude with the aim of obtaining the best possible results and of inducing the students the pleasure of working in this field. The students were encouraged to elaborate diverse projects, starting from the same data. Each group has had full access to the materials

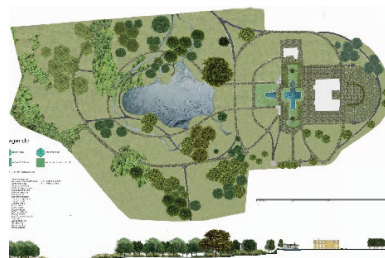
resulting from research, as well as to the requirements of the owners. Each group has drawn their own set of conclusions, which led them to diverse solutions. The plans of each stage of the site's development were juxtaposed, in order to be examined and analysed, and on this basis a strategy of approach to the project was decided. Each group was encouraged to elaborate stages of the implementation of the project, so that the park would function continuously, bringing in revenue and attracting visitors.

The aim of this school-project was helping the students develop the basic skills needed when dealing with a historical garden as a heritage asset. This includes: becoming familiarised with undertaking research at libraries, archives, etc. in view of understanding the asset and developing a project, organising a database with all the accumulated information, understanding the importance of a sensitive and sensible approach, adopting an 'in spirit' intervention, but avoiding pastiche, dealing both with teamwork and individual work, inducing a positive, empathic attitude toward the condition of heritage assets in general, and also the actual involvement in salvaging endangered assets.

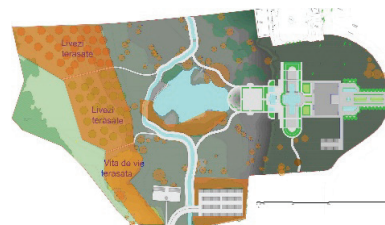
CONCLUSIONS

The resulting three projects have many points in common, but they also present substantial differences. The spectacular trees will be retained and highlighted, while the valuable surviving features such as bridges and water features will be restored. The differences between the projects revolved mainly around the way the area around the palace was resolved, the connection between the palace and the gardens, and the connection between the terrace and the lake (Figure 11). Only the second team proposed a formal access from the east. This proposal was unfortunately not sustained by convincing arguments. The project work of the students has not been sustained financially either by the Cantacuzino Foundation or by the owners of the estate, but it has been facilitated by the convention between the University and the Foundation, which allowed all the students, from every year to conduct their practical activities on the site.

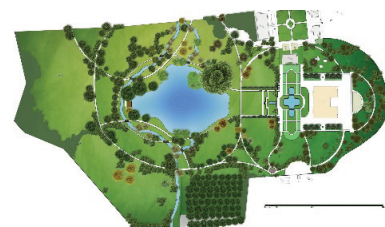
The initiative of approaching this subject during the Historic Garden Restoration classes belonged to the professor of this subject.



Group 1



Group 2



Group 3

Figure 11. The projects of the students

The research stage has been difficult due to the distance of approx. 85 km to the site and also due to the unfavourable weather (October, November, and December). Another difficulty was linked to the students' timetable and the programme of the archives, libraries, museums where the research was undertaken. The students were given the opportunity to have intercourse with the owner of the estate and to participate in the 'Karpatia Horse Trials' event. During the project work the students have become affectively involved in their work, which has greatly contributed to the outcome of the projects. We strongly believe that a scholastic approach to conservation is less efficient, and cannot benefit from the same level of involvement, without which exceptional results are impossible.

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MISCELLANEOUS

