

The neoclassical Gh. Pleșa Palace from Obîrșia de Câmp and its lack of “ownership”

Failed Practices – Cultural Heritage

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Detailed information on the practice:

"Gheorghe Pleșa Neoclassical Palace" is located in the village of Obârșia de Câmp, about 65 km from the county seat, Drobeta-Turnu Severin municipality. The building was apparently built at the end of the 19th century on the model of French architecture. According to information provided by the locals, the building was inhabited sporadically, with the owner spending most of the year in Paris; it seems that in 1948, the palace was left to the villagers from Obârșia, through a donation deed.



The change of the political regime, produced at the end of the Second World War, had detrimental consequences on the Palace, the domain being nationalized and the residence transformed into the headquarters for the local Agricultural Machinery Station.

After 1989, for almost two decades, the building had an uncertain status. An initial attempt was made to take over the castle by Agromec, but the local mayor's office had intervened and, by a decision of the Local Council, passed the castle into the public domain.

Shortly after though, the ceilings began to crumble, and terracotta fireplaces and stoves have long since disappeared. It was later granted for use for 49 years to a Belgian citizen, following an auction in which three people participated. This happened on February 25, 2004. Along with the castle, the Belgian also leased 32 hectares of land, on which he undertook to arrange a golf course, the largest in Europe. Unfortunately, the Belgian did not keep his commitment and, after a series of lawsuits, the City Hall terminated the contract in court.

In 2013, following a specialized evaluation and a decision of the Local Council, the palace was assigned in consignment to a local resident who is obliged to pay annually for 25 years the amount of approximately 4,000 lei, to restore the building to its original shape in a maximum of 3 years and to maintain its tourist destination. The local resident promised to renovate the palace with the help of a US investor, in order to integrate it into the tourist circuit. In addition to renovating the palace, the plan also included the construction of a golf course and the implementation of leisure activities for tourists (carriage rides through the area, sport fishing). Unfortunately, this initiative was not successful either, and the palace remains in ruins.



The various owners during this period did not use the building properly causing severe damage. Finally, in 2018, the neoclassical Gh. Pleșa Palace passed from the property of Obârșia de Câmp City Hall to that of Mehedinți County Council.

The first step undertaken by Mehedinti County Council was the procedure of Emergency situation intervention to the roof's monument (it had literally holes in it, raining, snowing inside) in order to stop the degradation process.

Resources needed:

- *A complete evaluation of the resources needed for rehabilitation and re-use has not been completed yet;*
- *Funds 2021-2027.*

Timescale (start/end date):

- Ongoing.

Challenges encountered (optional):

The challenge undertaken in the last years by the Mehedinti County is to rehabilitate and use the building as a Cultural Hub. The spaces of the building will have to be interpreted according to a flexible scenario, which would allow the development, in optimal operating conditions, of various cultural-educational activities, permanent, temporary or seasonal: permanent and temporary exhibitions, debates on different topics; creative camps (art, literature, music), workshops, shows and other cultural activities or events.



Potential for learning or transfer:

The potential lesson to learn from this practice is not how only to properly assess the importance of heritage for the local social and economic environment but also how a lack of clear ownership of heritage creates unforeseen and challenging problems.

Although under the administration of the Ministry of Culture, the historical monument was ignored. Subsequently, in 2007-2008, the property passed into the ownership of the local authority, which tried, twice, to lease it in order to put it in value. Unfortunately, these concessionaires carried out interventions with a destructive end on the palace.

The existing damages were not removed and it was not possible to prevent the production of others, being operated several unfortunate interventions. The contracts were terminated, leaving behind a mutilated historical monument: the fireplaces were demolished, the thermal power plant and radiators disappeared, the mirrors disappeared, most of the murals covering each surface of the interior were deliberately destroyed, the original roof covering was removed and replaced with a poor-quality material that came off over time.

Today, although it retains much of its original grandeur, the building bears the traces of a decade in which water flowed through ceilings, the walls became a support for scribbled texts and the interiors became a shelter for crows and wildlife.

Further information:

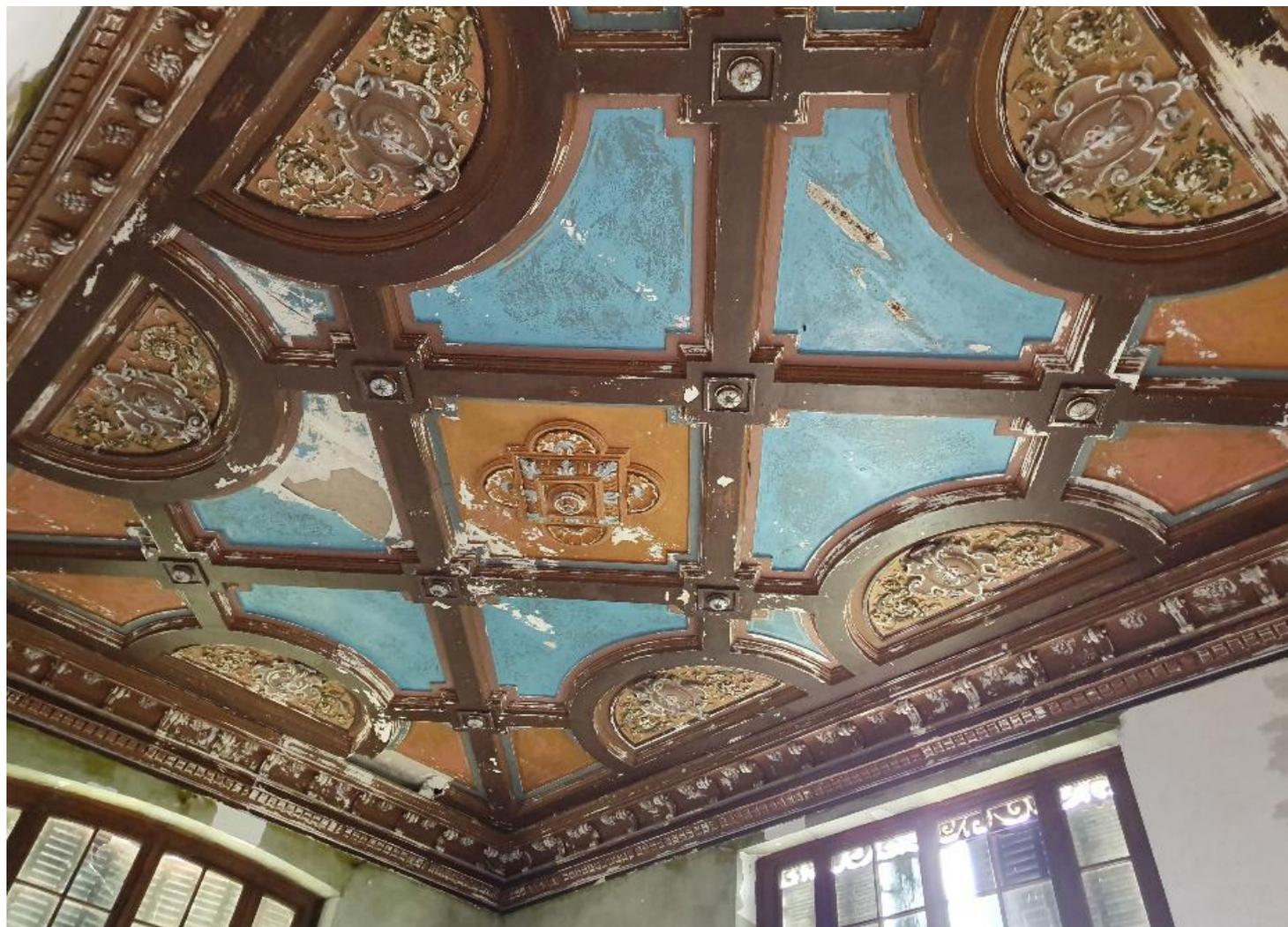
<https://artificiiblog.wordpress.com/2019/09/26/castelul-plesia-din-obarsia-de-camp-mehedinti/>

<http://www.monumenteoltenia.ro/palatul-neoclasic-gh-plesa-obarsia-de-camp/>

https://adevarul.ro/locale/turnu-severin/boierul-gheorghe-plesa-ridicat-castel-obarsia-camp-bogata-frantuzoaica-1_54c16676448e03c0fddc8879/index.html

<https://www.zf.ro/ziarul-de-duminica/familia-plesia-2975900>

<https://www.facebook.com/palatulplesia/>





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