

Report as an Administrative Tool

Case Study: Reports for the Reform of the Bucharest Municipal Laboratory of Chemical and Bacteriological Analysis (1908)

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IN THE decades preceding the First World War, the use of a new tool, the report, became the norm in the Romanian administration. This development was mainly driven by the need for managers to effectively handle the information necessary for decision-making. In the nineteenth century, the amount of information available in society grew rapidly and at an accelerated pace, playing an increasingly important role in the decisions taken by municipal authorities. Advances in science, together with the gradual differentiation of the fields of knowledge and their professionalization, were crucial in this respect. Moreover, the growing amount of technical information became impossible to ignore from the perspective of urban management. Cities rapidly evolved into complex technological systems. Scientific and technological information became intrinsic to the functioning of cities and their management emerged as a daily and fundamental activity of municipalities.

Cities experimented with and implemented many new administrative practices. An increasing number of laws, regulations and ordinances were enacted at the local and national level.¹ All this led to a rapid increase in the legal and administrative information to be managed by municipalities.

Another phenomenon worth mentioning is the much easier circulation of information. Whether it was books and journals coming from the West, or Romanian municipal officials going on fact-finding trips, access to information existing in cities and town halls outside Romania became easier and its use more frequent. In other words, the Bucharest municipal authorities had access to at least a significant part of the information created in the cities of the more advanced European countries.

It is obvious that around 1900 a mayor or a city councilor could no longer master all aspects (some of them highly technical) of the many activities carried out by the municipal services. Even civil servants in knowledge-based services (doctors, engineers, architects, etc.) no longer had the time to keep abreast of new developments and the ability to acquire all the knowledge of rapidly expanding scientific fields. But staff in urban administrations had to make decisions based on the abovementioned knowledge. One of the solutions frequently used at the time was the report: a text written by an expert, which had to provide the reader with all the information on a particular problem in a concise manner, so that the right solutions could be chosen on the basis of this information. Whether we are talking

about ministries, county-level institutions or city halls, the report played a fundamental role in administrative practices in the Romanian Old Kingdom in the decades preceding the First World War.

Today, the report is a primary source for many fields of historical research, as Constantin Bărbulescu demonstrated in his book *România medicilor*, analyzing the sanitary reports from the second half of the nineteenth century.² There was no ministry, city hall, prefecture, or educational, hospital, military, or other institution that did not produce reports in the decades preceding the First World War. With the exception of the aforementioned work, we lack an analytical effort highlighting characteristics and problems specific to this type of source. Our study aims to contribute to this discussion by examining a group of reports produced in 1908 for the Bucharest municipal administration.

Case Presentation

THE REPORTS analyzed here (published by Dr. Botescu)³ were written in a particular context. In 1907, Vintilă Brătianu was elected mayor of Bucharest, and he asked the City Council to elect a person “competent in matters of hygiene and public sanitation” as deputy mayor. The Council chose Dr. Haralambie Botescu.⁴ From the beginning, the mayor and especially the deputy mayor launched a solid campaign to improve the sanitary conditions of Bucharest.

One of the major problems that the new team identified was the unsatisfactory state of sanitary control, and in particular the control of the food sold on the Bucharest market and of the premises where food and drink were served.⁵ In 1907, this control was exercised by the municipal doctors and veterinarians, and by three laboratories. The municipal chemical-bacteriological laboratory, set up in two stages in 1893 and 1898, was the most important.⁶ Its operation left a lot to be desired, as can be seen from the overall number of analyses, that had fallen drastically in previous years.⁷ A second laboratory was intended solely for the control of milk and was subordinated to the veterinary service.⁸ The last laboratory, located in the abattoir, was used to control the meat of the animals slaughtered there, concentrating on tracing specific diseases such as bovine tuberculosis or trichinosis.⁹ This laboratory was planned as a part of the abattoir, and therefore it was not discussed in the reports analyzed in our paper and was not affected by the 1908 reorganization of municipal laboratories.¹⁰

Under these circumstances, in 1908 the City Hall took the first measures for restructuring these institutions. The Municipal Laboratory for Chemical and Bacteriological Analyses and the Laboratory for Milk Control were merged, a new scheme of organization of functions and activity was introduced, the number of specialists increased, a new building was constructed, and the equipment (laboratory instruments, materials, and reagents) was completed.¹¹

This major reorganization entailed addressing a series of issues, most of which required highly specialized scientific knowledge and extensive experience in laboratory work in the field of chemical and bacteriological analysis. Although Deputy Mayor Haralambie Botescu was a physician, the knowledge needed to reform the laboratory was beyond his area

of competence, let alone that of the mayor or the municipal councilors. As it had done in similar cases, in December 1907 the City Hall called in outside experts to write reports.¹²

What makes this case stand out is the large number of reports (seven), which discuss the measures needed to revitalize the work of the laboratory.¹³ Usually, the City requested one or two reports for a single issue. There are also situations when the number of reports is higher, as in 1897 when the municipal authorities had to make a decision on the source from which Bucharest would draw its water supply in the following decades. But that was a very large investment, with long-term effects; more importantly, it required information from different areas of expertise: geology, engineering, chemistry, and bacteriology, which explains the numerous reports.¹⁴

Who Were the Experts Called in for the Municipal Administration?

IN THIS section we discuss the specialists invited to provide their expertise on solving the pending issues and reorganizing the Municipal Chemical Analysis Laboratory. As a first step, the City Hall asked for reports from its own specialists: the three chemists and the bacteriologist who worked in the two laboratories whose reform was under discussion.¹⁵ Further on, three experts from outside the City Hall, all three with extensive experience in laboratory work and chemical analysis, were requested to give their opinion. The first was August Polzer,¹⁶ deputy-director of the University Institute of Chemistry, the main such institute in the country, and a close collaborator of the director of this institute, Dr. Constantin I. Istrati. The City Hall had collaborated with Polzer before, especially in the years 1893–1898, when the nucleus of the future Municipal Laboratory of Chemical Analysis functioned as a “municipal section” subordinated to the University Institute of Chemistry.¹⁷

Another report was drafted by Dr. N. I. Angelescu, a well-known personality of the time, president of the Romanian Pharmacists Society.¹⁸ The third external report was requested from Ștefan Minovici, professor of chemistry at the Faculty of Medicine and Pharmacy, author of works and textbooks in analytical chemistry.¹⁹ It is important to highlight that, with the exception of the laboratory bacteriologist, all invited experts were chemists. This reflects the significantly greater role that chemistry played in food analysis during that period. Additionally, bacteriology was a relatively new science, and in the early twentieth century the number of Romanian specialists in this field remained limited.

The Structure of the Reports

A. POLZER’S succinct report is atypical because it contains basically one idea: in Bucharest there should be only one laboratory (clearly the one where he was deputy director) because he argued that only a large, well-staffed, and well-equipped laboratory with a complete library could be a satisfactory solution to the city’s needs. According to

Polzer, the laboratories set up at the various institutions, which were always small, for financial reasons, could have neither the staff nor the resources and inevitably could not fulfil their mission. Polzer proposed that the city should make the first gesture by providing the University Institute of Chemistry with staff and an annual grant. To give more weight to his ideas, Polzer stated that he had consulted with his direct superior, Dr. Constantin Istrati (one of the most important personalities in Romanian chemistry), and that the latter had supported his position.²⁰ The city of Bucharest did not accept this proposal, which was to be expected given that for the last two decades the efforts of the municipality had been directed in the opposite direction, towards the creation of a chemical and bacteriological analysis capacity directly subordinated to the City Hall and independent of other institutions.²¹

All the other six reports are considerably more extensive and contain more diverse ideas. These ideas can be grouped into three broad categories: appeals stressing the importance of chemical analysis, a criticism of the situation at the time, and measures to redress the situation. The pleas were intended to convince the municipal authorities that they should make more resources available to the laboratory and do more to ensure sanitary food control. The criticisms were to convince the City Hall that it was impossible for the laboratory to continue to operate under these conditions, highlighting the seriousness of the problems and the urgency of radical remedies. The criticisms were almost always accompanied by proposals for solving the problems, which is why we will discuss them together. The reports put forward numerous measures which, according to the authors, could make the future laboratory a model institution.

The pleas and arguments present in the vast majority of the reports emphasized the particularly important role that chemical and bacteriological analysis—and consequently the municipal laboratory—should play in food sanitary supervision and in the work of the municipality in general. The experts appealed mostly to the argument that food hygiene of the population was an issue to which developed countries devoted significant resources, having made rapid progress in recent years, and it was therefore the duty of the Bucharest municipality to align itself with the standards of the civilized world. The work of the laboratory was not to be perceived as a financial burden, but as an investment that was to bring important benefits:

It is today a universally accepted axiom that no expenditure is more productive and more necessary to a nation than that which is made for the improvement of hygiene. This is because it has been established that good hygiene prolongs human life, that it increases a man's strength and therefore his power to work, and that, as it preserves the health of the citizen, it increases his intellectual and moral power.²²

The experts especially emphasized the public health hazards present in the markets, especially concerning the food trade. The absence of a specialized laboratory or its insufficient activity exposed the citizens to significant risks. A number of reports pointed to the frequent cases of poisoning caused by foodstuffs (containing toxic substances) which, in the absence of specialized controls, could be sold freely.²³ Advances in chemistry had made available to unscrupulous traders a wide variety of new, cheap but harmful chemicals that penetrated all areas of human activity. They could only be eliminated from the market by

the sustained control by a chemical analysis laboratory. In his report Gh. Dumitrescu gave various examples of products containing toxic substances, ranging from children's toys to kitchenware and cosmetics.²⁴ Adulterated food and products affected both the consumer and the honest merchant, and the Bucharest merchants even resorted to their own methods of counterfeiting, which were not found in the West.²⁵ Food adulteration was not an accident, but a common and widespread practice, Ștefan Minovici said: "the spread of fraud is not an occasional occurrence, but a constant symptom of the food trade in the current social organization."²⁶ It was therefore imperative that the municipal authorities should also equip themselves with permanent instruments capable of combating increasingly sophisticated falsifications.²⁷

By contrast, the experts constructed a positive image, which highlighted the benefits of an extensive control activity and especially of an efficient chemical-bacteriological analysis laboratory of a size corresponding to the demographic dimension of Bucharest. According to the experts, dishonest traders, once penalized, would have to abandon their practices. Some rapporteurs presented elaborate solutions, which were intended to clean up the trade in frequently adulterated products such as milk, wine, or butter.²⁸ The work of the laboratory was also to have a moralizing role, enforcing "fair trade" and penalizing unscrupulous traders. By ensuring the quality and safety of the products, the control activity made consumers more confident and increased consumption, which led to higher revenues (an argument intended to allay the municipality's fears about the expenditure necessary for running the laboratory). The work of the laboratory protected the poor, who were much more tempted to buy very cheap, often counterfeit and harmful products.²⁹

Identified Problems and Proposed Solutions in the Reports

THE UNIFICATION of the two laboratories subordinated to the City Hall (the Municipal Laboratory for Chemical-Bacteriological Analysis and the Chemical Laboratory for Milk Control) was suggested in all reports. "As far as milk control is concerned we think it absolutely advisable to differentiate the role of the chemist and that of the veterinarian, and consequently to entrust the chemical analysis to the municipal laboratory."³⁰ The need for a single laboratory was supported even by the Director of the Milk Control Chemistry Laboratory, who stood to lose his status as director if his laboratory became a section of a single laboratory for chemical-bacteriological analysis.³¹ The arguments for concentrating all activity in a single laboratory were strong enough to convince the City Hall; moreover, a few years later, a proposal to separate the bacteriological section was rejected by the municipality using the same arguments.³²

In the same logic, there were proposals to create a post of director to lead the laboratory's work. Without a unified management, each section operated as a small independent laboratory, which generated additional costs by duplicating equipment and materials, and thwarted potential savings brought by larger orders. Worse still, the sections were not using the same analytical interpretation rules, sometimes leading to contradictory results and discrediting the profession and the laboratory authority. The most vocal proponent

of a united management of the laboratory was the acting administrator of the municipal laboratory, who was dealing with issues caused by the lack of a general director every day.³³

One question where the opinions were unanimous and quite similar, but the proposed solution divergent, concerned the organization of the laboratory. Some experts envisaged complete structures of the future laboratory, detailing the tasks, staffing and sometimes salaries required for each section. Most of the reports proposed more extensive staffing schemes than the existing one.³⁴ The authors were aware that this would imply an additional budget that the city could not cover with ease. They therefore insisted on the impossibility of carrying out a real control with the existing staff, on the advantages that the larger staff would bring, and last but not least emphasized that the scheme proposed by them brought savings by eliminating duplication, redundancies, and unnecessary expenditure.³⁵ The municipality adopted some of these ideas, as the laboratory structure after the 1908 reorganization was larger than the previous one, even if not at the maximum size proposed in the reports.

Raising the wages of specialized staff was recommended by all the authors,³⁶ but those who were not employees of the City Hall formulated it in a much more categorical manner. Ștefan Minovici described the current salaries as ridiculous and “a real pittance.”³⁷ More importantly, he demonstrated with credible arguments that could be easily understood by non-specialists that the city was losing out by paying too low salaries, which forced these employees to find work elsewhere. As a result, the city increased the wages of the specialists, even if not to the level required by the reports. In order to make these positions more attractive (which required at the time highly qualified staff), some authors also suggested a system of promoting the specialists, or small wage growth every five years,³⁸ which would have encouraged staff stability, giving them a slow but sure way to improve their material situation. The most elaborate promotion system was the one proposed by Dr. Angelescu, which involved written and practical examinations before a committee of specialists.³⁹ This proposal does not seem to have been adopted by the municipality, and it is certainly not to be found in the detailed regulations of the Municipal Laboratory enacted in 1913.⁴⁰

The collecting of samples from traders and their laboratory analyses generated a long list of criticisms, accompanied by multiple and varied solutions. The problems ranged from inadequate transportation (chemists travelled with kits of equipment and vials in which to collect the samples) to the inefficiency of the city’s lawyers when the offenders were brought to trial.⁴¹ One issue that was not resolved and continued to create tensions was the question of who should do the sampling:

*should only chemists belonging to a particular, specialized section of the laboratory, all laboratory chemists, or should the chemists be joined by the City Hall’s veterinary and human doctors? In particular, the human doctors (who dominated the Board of Hygiene of Bucharest) and the chemists of the municipal laboratory viewed very differently the tasks that each should have in terms of control and sample collection.*⁴²

Another proposal presented in several reports and supported by an elaborate argumentation was not implemented with the reorganization of the laboratory in 1908, and would later come up again in the debates of the Board of Hygiene.⁴³ The idea was to create an

anonymous path for the sample, so that the person who checked the trader and harvested the sample did not also analyze it, and the specialist who analyzed it received it anonymized, individualized only by a number.⁴⁴ The purpose of this method (adopted in France, Germany and other countries) was to eliminate any suspicion of bias in the result of the analysis.

The situation of the building of the Municipal Laboratory was criticized by several of the authors. The complaints were numerous: insufficient space, rooms unsuitable for the activities carried out, lack of a pen for the animals used by the bacteriology department and, perhaps with more serious consequences for the results, the lack of “experimental animal isolation rooms.” The laboratory building appears to have been very poorly maintained, with one rapporteur likening it to an abandoned house with a courtyard full of “blisters like a dog’s yard.” The rapporteurs also point out the impossibility of expanding the analysis activity in the current premises.⁴⁵ As we have already seen, this was, together with the unification of the laboratories and the appointment of a single director, one of the first problems solved by the City Hall.

The day to day activity of the laboratory required numerous expenses: equipment, laboratory materials, animals for the bacteriology department, specialized journals, maintenance of the premises and payment of utilities, etc. In the years preceding the reorganization of 1908, the amounts allocated in the annual budget of the City Hall were reduced. The head of the bacteriology department complained in his report that sometimes even this money was not approved “preferring to give budget surpluses,” as he was working on wooden tables that could not be disinfected!⁴⁶

The Laboratory’s Relationship with the Board of Hygiene

THE RELATIONSHIP between laboratory chemists and the doctors on the Board of Hygiene was not always smooth. This is a subject that cannot be addressed in detail in this study. What needs to be mentioned is that all the specialists who discussed the subject supported the need for functional autonomy of the laboratory. They emphasized that chemical analysis is an independent field of activity, with its own specialists, and demanded that the positioning of the laboratory within the City Hall structures should take this into account: “to the doctor the hospital, to the pharmacist the pharmacy and to the chemist the laboratory is an axiom.”⁴⁷ In 1910, according to its director, the laboratory was directly subordinated to the mayor, thus becoming a service similar to the Health Service, with which it was collaborating closely.⁴⁸

The rapporteurs proposed that the director of the laboratory, the assistant director and the bacteriologist should henceforth be members of the Board of Hygiene of the capital, which would allow them to defend their views and the Board to have direct access to expertise that human and veterinary doctors did not possess.⁴⁹ It should be noted, however, that the laboratory administrator, the bacteriologist and at least one of the chemists were also members of the Board of Hygiene before the reorganization of 1908.⁵⁰

Unachieved Projects Concerning the Reorganization of the Laboratory

AS WE have already seen, some of the proposed measures, undoubtedly useful, were not implemented, most probably due to the lack of funds. Examples include the creation of a conference room and a museum, both aimed at educating the public and the traders about the dangers of poor hygiene and food adulterations.⁵¹ Budget constraints were not always the obstacle to reform. There was poor cooperation with the City Hall's lawyers, which meant that the efforts of the laboratory specialists were negated by inadequate representation before the courts that had to try the offenders. The reports offered solutions,⁵² but these were not implemented and were proposed again years later in the reports presented by the laboratory director.⁵³

The Role of the Report as a Tool for Transmitting the Western Model

AT THE BEGINNING of the twentieth century, the Western model was the self-evident path to follow for the Bucharest administration. It was all the more important in the case of a relatively new institution such as the Municipal Laboratory of Chemical and Bacteriological Analysis. The reports we are analyzing here contain numerous examples of Western solutions and best practices proposed to the City Hall. The most modern control and analysis practices were described in them, as well as the organization of laboratories in major European cities. The rapporteurs emphasized the scale of the control effort (number of chemists, number of annual analyses) in cities such as Paris, Berlin, and Brussels.⁵⁴ They emphasized the role played by laboratories in Western cities, where they were essential tools in the authorities' efforts to ensure food safety. In addition to analyzing marketed foodstuffs, municipal laboratories in major European cities had developed rules and standards that underpinned the food controls. The authors of the reports also mentioned the important scientific work carried out in these laboratories.⁵⁵

The rapporteurs did not limit themselves to creating a positive image of the situation in the West, but took concrete elements that they wanted to introduce in Bucharest. The French regulation of 1906 was seen as a model for the way in which the activity of collecting samples from controlled traders should be devised.⁵⁶ The laboratory in Brussels offered models for the education of the traders, through courses held in the amphitheater of the laboratory, and Gh. Dumitrescu (director of the Milk Analysis Laboratory) insisted on the benefits that the introduction of these courses would have had on the milkmen of Bucharest.⁵⁷ Other reports use the Western model to support important organizational decisions, such as the independence of the chemists or the role of bacteriologists.⁵⁸

But the reports go beyond a simple transfer of information. The West was transformed into a role model and a target to be reached for the Bucharest municipal administration.⁵⁹ Conversely, lagging behind neighboring countries was turned into an argument that was supposed to drive the authorities to action. The criticisms of foreigners were emphasized,

such as the chief physician of Prague, who pointed out that the laboratory was far inferior to the one inspected in a neighboring country, to which “we are pleased to consider ourselves [*the Romanians*] superior.” “But since we claim to be the most civilized in Eastern Europe, I believe that in order to deserve this title with which we like to flatter ourselves, we must use all the means that civilized countries use.”⁶⁰ Appealing to the noble sentiments of Bucharest’s authorities, to their patriotic duty, the authors of the reports try to convince the City Hall of the need for substantial investment.

The West plays another role: that of legitimizing the experts called upon to produce those reports. Study trips abroad and visits to laboratories in the major European capitals enabled the rapporteurs to acquire a specialized knowledge that allowed them to make authoritative pronouncements on the reorganization of the Bucharest laboratory.⁶¹

The Report as an Instrument of the Rapporteur

THESE REPORTS were a tool for information management, but at the same time they were also a tool through which the authors could exert influence on the authorities. The case of Polzer’s report is a very good example in this respect: the deputy director of the University Chemical Institute used the opportunity to promote the interests of his own laboratory and to try to concentrate as much as possible of the chemical analysis work carried out in Bucharest under his subordination. His report is worded in categorical terms, ruling out any possibility that an independent laboratory could function properly and bring the expected benefits.⁶² Just two years later, Polzer took a different position. Speaking of the project that was to bring all the chemistry laboratories in one place, he set aside a pavilion for the Municipal Laboratory, but now the proximity was only physical, as from an institutional point of view “is well understood that each is preserving its individuality and character.”⁶³ This radical change of opinion is easy to explain. Shortly after this report was written, Polzer was appointed director of the Municipal Laboratory (while retaining his position as deputy director of the University Chemical Institute), which made him invested in preserving the individuality of this institution and also his freedom of action and the prestige conferred by a leading position.

Lab employees also had their own agenda to promote. The severe criticisms voiced by all the rapporteurs revealed the totally inadequate state of the laboratory in which they had worked in recent years, and which could easily be blamed on them. The laboratory specialists tried to protect their professional reputation. On the one hand, they insisted on the conditions created by the lack of interest from higher authorities and the lack of funds, which prevented them from carrying out their work properly. On the other hand they presented the achievements of the laboratory at length. They emphasized the countless analyses carried out, the scientific work done in the laboratory.⁶⁴ The head of the Bacteriology section emphasized the numerous original scientific studies carried out in this section, appending to the report a list of 44 such researches.⁶⁵

The Rhetoric of the Reports

THE AUTHORS used a variety of discursive techniques in their reports. When data, administrative structures and technical processes were presented, the language was rigorous and free of stylistic effects. Technical expressions, numerical values, tables were used. The expression was concise, revealing people familiar with the scientific language of the time.

When it was necessary to mobilize the City Council, the texts became more rhetorical. Whether their aim was to portray the unacceptable situation of the laboratory in black ink or to emphasize the important role of sanitary control, the authors wrote a much more personal text, which was meant to involve the reader. The reporters frequently drew contrasting comparisons:

*the efforts and progress in the West were contrasted with the worrying situation in Bucharest, the enormous quantities of food and other products traded in Bucharest were contrasted with the very small number of chemists who had to control them.*⁶⁶

From the way the texts were constructed, the City Hall was placed in a position in which, morally, it could not refuse the sums needed to rebuild the laboratory. Thus, Ștefan Minovici contrasted the much greater expenses made annually for the beautification of the city or given as a subsidy to the National Theatre “for the benefit of the rich” with the financial sacrifice of maintaining the laboratory, more modest but essential for the great mass of city dwellers.⁶⁷

Another rhetorical technique, designed to give more weight to the reports, was to emphasize the training and experience that these experts brought to City Hall. The rapporteurs emphasized their study trips abroad, visiting laboratories in Europe, participation in conferences or international committees, original research, and, last but not least, the vast experience gained through long practice.

Conclusions

THE REPORTS analyzed enabled the municipality to manage a complicated problem in a highly specialized and rapidly changing professional field. They helped the City Hall to identify the most important aspects of the laboratory’s work, which was a prerequisite for successful reform. On the other hand, these reports represent only part of the issues that City Hall took into account, as evidenced by the numerous proposals put forward by most of the reports, but which are partially or not at all reflected in the new organization.

The reports are a complex source, and we cannot limit ourselves to seeing them merely as a vehicle for the transfer of information. They create models, propose objectives and standards that the recipients of the report were expected to achieve. By requesting a report, the authority cedes power to the reporter, and, as we have seen, the reporter can use it to his own advantage. Reports are discursive constructions, using various rhetorical means to persuade readers to adopt the suggested measures.



Notes

1. Constantin Zătreanu, *Noul codice comunal sau Culegere de legile și regulamentele în vigoare privitoare la comunele urbane și rurale cum și la alte ramuri de administrațiune publică*, (Bucharest: Tipografia Carol Göbl, 1888). Iuliu I. Roșca, *Ordonanțe de poliție*, (Bucharest: Tipografia I. Binder, 1887). Iuliu I. Roșca, *Cartea oficerilor și agenților de poliție. Legi, regulamente și ordonanțe de poliție administrativă și comunală cu un supliment: Diferite ordine circulare și instrucțiuni asupra datorităților lor ca agenți ai poliției administrative și comunale și ca oficeri ai poliției judiciare*, (Bucharest: Editura Institutului de arte Grafice “Eminescu,” 1903). Ioan Roban, Petre G. Bucovineanu: *Colecțiune de legi și regulamente privitoare la toate administrațiunile comunale și în special la acea a municipiului București*, (Bucharest: Primăria capitalei, 1928). Ioan Roban, Christea Istodor, *Codul legilor și regulamentelor financiare și administrative aplicate de administrația comunală a municipiului București*, (Bucharest: Tipografia Ioan C. Văcărescu, 1933).
2. Constantin Bărbulescu, *România medicilor. Medici, țărani și igienă rurală în România de la 1860 la 1910* [Physicians’ Romania. Doctors, peasants and rural hygiene in Romania from 1860 to 1910] (Bucharest: Humanitas, 2015), also in English translation as *Physicians, Peasants, and Modern Medicine. Imagining Rurality in Romania, 1860-1910* (Budapest: CEU Press, 2019).
3. Primăria orașului București, Serviciul Sanitar – Laboratorul Comunal: *Considerațiuni asupra represiunii fraudelor alimentare la noi și în alte părți. Organizarea laboratorului – rapoarte și dări de seamă, 1908 – 1910* [Considerations on annihilating food fraud in our country and elsewhere. The laboratory, reports and accounts] (Bucharest: Tipografia G. A. Lăzăreanu, 1910). [Henceforth *Considerațiuni* (1910)].
4. “Consiliul Comunal, ședința extraordinară din 26 iunie 1906” [The local council, extraordinary meeting] *Monitorul Primăriei București*, 27 (8 July 1907): 374.
5. “Consiliul de Igienă, ședința din 20 mai 1908,” *Monitorul Primăriei București*, 24 (15 June 1908): 344. [Haralambie] Botescu, [no title], *Considerațiuni* (1910): 5.
6. Simion Câlția, “Scientific expertise as a tool for urban administration: Chemical and bacteriological analyses of the municipality of Bucharest, 1877-1914,” in *Towns between Empires. Good Governance and “Police” in Case Studies from Transylvania, Wallachia, and Moldavia, 1500s-1800s*, edited by Mária Pakucs-Willcocks and Julia Derzsi (Amsterdam: CEU Press, 2025), 289-309.
7. N. H. Stinghe, “Memoriu și proiect pentru organizarea laboratorului comunal și activitatea lui în anul 1907” [Memorandum and project for organizing the communal laboratory and its activity in 1907] *Considerațiuni* (1910): 49-50.
8. Gh. Dumitrescu, “Legislația străină relativ la comerțul de lapte” [Foreign legislation on milk trade] (Bucharest: Tipografia G. A. Lazareanu, 1906): 4. “Consiliul de Igienă, ședința din 4 iulie 1906,” *Monitorul Primăriei București*, 29 (30 July 1906): 355-356. “Publicațiune” [no number, no date], *Monitorul Primăriei București*, 18 (4 May 1908): 273-275.
9. “Consiliul Comunal, ședința extraordinară din 23 decembrie 1906,” *Monitorul Primăriei București*, 6 (11 February 1907): 77.
10. This laboratory was modernized in 1913 as part of the complete reconstruction of the abattoir. Nicolae Slăniceanu, *Description du nouvel abattoir de Bucarest, construction, agencement et exploitation*, (Bucharest: Imprimerie de la Cour Royale F. Göbl Fils, 1914):

- 5, 7, 27-8; “Consiliul de Igienă, ședința din 16 octombrie 1912,” *Monitorul Primăriei București*, 9 (3 March 1913): 156.
11. “Consiliul Comunal, ședința extraordinară din 28 martie 1908,” *Monitorul Primăriei București*, 15 (13 April 1908): 231-232. “Consiliul Comunal, ședința extraordinară din 26 aprilie 1908,” *Monitorul Primăriei București*, 21 (25 May 1908): 312. [“Anunț pentru licitație publică”], *Monitorul Primăriei București*, 15 (13 April 1908): 242.
 12. [Haralambie] Botescu, [no title], *Considerațiuni* (1910): 17.
 13. The available sources do not allow us to determine whether the City Hall requested reports from others, but they did not respond.
 14. “Consiliul Comunal, ședința din 7 iunie 1897,” *Monitorul Primăriei București*, 28 (12 October 1897): 298-307.
 15. Gh. Dumitrescu, “[Raportul nr.] II,” *Considerațiuni* (1910): 37-45. N. H. Stinghe, “[Raportul nr.] III. Memoriu și proiect pentru organizarea laboratorului comunal și activitatea lui în anul 1907,” *Considerațiuni* (1910): 46-62. V. Vasilescu, “[Raportul nr.] IV. Laboratorul comunal. Secția bacteriologică,” *Considerațiuni* (1910): 63-74. M. Popescu: “[Raportul nr.] V,” *Considerațiuni* (1910): 75-83.
 16. A. Polzer, [untitled report], *Considerațiuni* (1910): 34-36.
 17. Serviciul Municipiului București al Arhivelor Naționale [Bucharest Municipal Department of the National Archives], Coll. Bucharest City Hall – Sanitary service, file 8/1897, p. 13-14.
 18. N. I Angelescu, “[Raportul nr.] VI, Memoriu,” *Considerațiuni* (1910): 84-93.
 19. Ștefan Minovici, “[Raportul nr.] VII,” în *Considerațiuni* (1910): 94-111.
 20. A. Polzer, [untitled report], *Considerațiuni* (1910): 34-36.
 21. Câlția, “Scientific expertise.”
 22. Minovici, 95-96. Vasilescu, 70-71.
 23. Dumitrescu, 41. Minovici, 95.
 24. Dumitrescu, 43-44.
 25. Popescu, 79.
 26. Minovici, 96.
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 28. Dumitrescu, 41-42, 44-45.
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Abstract

The Report as an Administrative Tool
Case Study: Reports for the Reform of the Bucharest Municipal Laboratory
of Chemical and Bacteriological Analysis (1908)

The Romanian administration used reports written by specialists to manage various types of information, from organizational models used in the West to scientific knowledge. Bucharest's administration was no exception: mayors and councilors, City Hall employees or external experts

produced reports on many of the problems facing the capital. This important category of sources has been insufficiently investigated by historians. Our study aims to analyze an exceptional case. In the context of the reorganization of the chemical analysis laboratories under the City Hall in 1908, several reports were produced, on the basis of which the municipal administration decided how this sector was to operate in the future. The paper answers several questions. Who were the experts commissioned? How were the reports structured? What were the main problems identified and what measures did the reports propose to improve the situation? Why did City Hall not implement all the measures proposed by the experts? We show that the report is more than a conduit for transmitting information. The report creates models, objectives, and standards for the municipality to achieve. It is also an instrument of the rapporteurs, which use the report to promote their own interests.

Keywords

municipal administration, knowledge management, report, chemical-bacteriological laboratory, food hygiene, Bucharest