Research Article

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Fluxus Spaces as Alternative Cultural Spaces. A social cartography of the urban cultural scenery

Abstract: There is a growing research interest in cultural spaces and their urban regeneration potential. Discussions about these spaces can be found in the literature under concepts such as: art spaces (Grodach, 2011), cultural spaces (Alexander, 2003), creative spaces (Becker et al, 2009), cultural laboratories, free spaces (Polleta, 1999), yet little research examines them from a dynamic perspective which integrates approaches from different disciplines. Through the methodological lens of bricolage and by mixing methods from mental geography, psychology and sociology, this study explores the alternative cultural spaces in terms of its pluralism, managing to identify a new conceptual framework, the fluxus space. Fluxus spaces are cultural spaces situated at the intersection of public-private, old-new, informal-formal, legal-illegal expressions, playing an important role in artistic development and in the urban and community regeneration processes.

Keywords: alternative space, fluxus, mental maps, cultural consumption, bricolage, urban regeneration

Introduction

There has been an increasing interest in studying the urban spaces from the cultural expression and consumption perspective, focusing the discourse around Florida's (2004) creative class but also around a micro perspective, channeling the debate around community initiatives like the alternative cultural spaces. The literature is expanding on this subject talking about free spaces (Polleta, 1999), art spaces (Grodach, 2011), creative spaces (Backer et al, 2009) and their impact on artistic development, urban

regeneration and their potential in community and economic development. Drawing on Lefebvre's (1991) work on social space and inspired by Fluxus artistic movement, this paper discusses alternative space in terms of its pluralism, proposing a new theoretical concept resulted from mixing methodologies and different perspectives from different disciplines: *fluxus spaces* as cultural spaces. Looking at the alternative cultural scenery also as an artistic enterprise, the connection with an important artistic movement from the '60 (Fluxus) became visible. Maciunas, Fluxus coordinator of this artistic movement, defines it as "a way of life not a profession in which people must obtain their 'art' experience from everyday experiences"[1]. Also, this artistic movement was labeled by Maciunas as an anti-art directed against "art as a profession, against the artificial separation of a performer from (the) audience, or creator and spectator, or life and art; it is against the artificial forms or patterns or methods of art itself; it is against the purposefulness, formfulness and meaningfulness of art; anti-art is life, is nature, is true reality – it is one and all"[2]. It was defined most often as laboratory for art, architecture, design, and music, as another way of doing things, another way of seeing life and society, the aim of this artistic movement being to deconstruct art and to combine everyday life and the ordinary with the artistic process of creation (Friedman, 1998). Fluxus art was inspired by the ordinary and by everyday life and was practiced by a creative community[3] which conducted their artistic experiments in Soho (USA). Soho, the headquarter of this artistic movement, is an example of social resuscitation of old, industrial buildings through and for artistic purposes. Until the '60, Soho was seen as an abandoned neighborhood until Maciunas bought a building and gave it to the artists to

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1 Available at: http://georgemaciunas.com/about/cv/manifesto-i/ Accessed at [20 February 2016]
2 Available at: http://georgemaciunas.com/essays-2/dada-to-diy-the-rise-of-alternative-cultures-in-the-twentieth-century-by-john-held-jr/ Accessed at [20 February 2016]
3 Some of the Fluxus artistes: George Maciunas, Yoko Ono, George Brecht, Ray Johnson.

be transformed both for dwelling but also for working (Ranny, 2012). So, these creative lofts became creative spaces developed to combine housing with artists' workshops, and sometimes spaces for public exhibitions.

Coordinates underlying the Fluxus artistic movement are interdisciplinary, experimentation, simplicity, transformation and play.[4] I consider that a hybrid artistic and social movement, similar to fluxus movement, can be traced in the urban Bucharest scenery. The innovation proposed by this paper consists in developing through methodological and theoretical bricolage a new conceptual framework for understanding the alternative cultural spaces. Using a qualitative perspective I propose a new conceptual framework for studying the alternative cultural spaces: Fluxus spaces. Drawing on the artistic movement from the 60's, I choose to name the alternative spaces investigated in this paper "Fluxus Spaces" to illustrate the methodological and theoretical bricolage of my research, research that is at the intersection of sociology, psychology, mental geography and anthropology.

Social spaces and Alternative cultural scenery

Understanding alternative cultural spaces demands for an understanding of social space. Leaving aside the vast literature on social space, for my purpose it is important to underline the conceptual framework introduced by Lefebvre (1991). Rather than thinking about the social space as a physical, passive, neutral territory, Lefebvre puts forward the idea of understanding it pluralistically as a relational framework concept. Thus, social space becomes a space of social interactions and practices that involves social actors' cognitive, emotional involvement in the process of their investing and assigning specific meanings (Lefebvre, 1991). Addressing space in terms of

social practices coincides with a shift from a naturalistic and neutral perspective to a more comprehensive one. Social space is thus perceived from a cognitive and symbolic perspective (Ingold, 2000, pp.189). On the other hand, the major drawback of this approach is that it does not take into account the embodiment process that contributes to the relationships established between social actor and space.

Previous research has documented the tendency of the subcultures to create their own geography by claiming different spaces. Alternative cultural spaces may be associated with certain subcultures, becoming spaces for social practices of certain categories of individuals. Gelden (2007) assigns subcultures the tendency to create their own geography by claiming that some spaces have an important role in achieving cohesion, underlying their nonconformity discourse. However, his study does not take into account a more individualistic perspective on the relationship between individual and space. In this line of thinking I find a matter of interest to introduce Foucault's (1986) concept of heterotopia, which is a more individualistic perspective. In my opinion thinking about alternative cultural space as *heterotopia* (Foucault, 1986) revels the capacity of these spaces to allow individuals to explore alternative identities and escape from their daily routine. The place identity is a core concept in understanding the relationship established between social actor and space, Dixon (2004) underlying that: "Moving beyond a disembodied and abstract notion of subjectivity, the term denotes how individuals' sense of self arises in part through their transactions with material environments." (Dixon *et al*, 2004, p. 457). The connection between self and space reveals "restorative qualities" of places, which capture the ability of spaces to detach the individual from the daily routine and to offer an emotional engagement (*apud*, Dixon et al, 2004). The meanings attributed to such escape places are also due to the embodiment processes that take place through social practices, establishing a powerful and meaningful relationship between social actor and space. In this framework, Tuan (2001), recovering the phenomenological tradition of "being in place", labeled this process as "the intimate experiencing of the space" which creates the "*fell of a place*". According to Tuan (2001) the social actor builds his self through the social practice of constructing place meanings.

To my knowledge, the alternative cultural scenery is a recent matter of interest but has been scarcely investigated. Art spaces (Grodach, 2011), cultural spaces (Alexander 2003), creative spaces (Becker et al, 2009), cultural laboratories, free spaces (Polleta, 1999) - all

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4 More information about Fluxus could be found in the Fluxus Reader (1998) which is one of the most illustrative books that underline Fluxus artistic movement. In 1966 George Maciunas asked Ken Friedman to write a history of Fluxus and more than 20 years after, The Fluxus Reader was born. Ken Friedman had the opportunity to work and to get a more realistic picture about what Fluxus was and about what Fluxus did. He wrote that: "Fluxus is, indeed, the name of a way of doing things It is an active philosophy of experience that only sometimes takes the form of art. It stretches across the arts and even across the areas between them Fluxus is a way of viewing society and life, a way of creating social action and life activity (...)Fluxus was created to transcend the boundaries of the art world, to shape a discourse of our own. A debate that ends Fluxus with the death of George Maciunas is a debate that diminishes George's idea of Fluxus as an ongoing social practice" (Friedman, 1998, p.9-10).

represent attempts to classify and to understand the alternative spaces from the cultural perspective and from their impact on the urban and community regeneration processes. Basset (2002) discusses art spaces as channels used by social actors to exchange knowledge, channels that support innovation and "help to create shared identities that roots the cultural cluster in place" (*apud*, Grodach, 2011, p75). Another important role played by cultural laboratories was approached by Backer and Bennett (2009), their article examining the role of creative spaces in shaping such notions as identity, locality and regionalism. Analyzing the creative youth discourse, they approached the urban regeneration problem through cultural community practices as popular music activity. Autonomous spheres of culture, alternative culture spaces are characterized by intimacy, nonconformity and change. Malatjie (2013) outlines as a fundamental characteristic of the alternative spaces, the freedom of creation that it provides to the young artists, offering a context free of institutional constraints. Investigating six spaces from Johannesburg, Malatjie (2013) defines them as alternative cultural spaces in terms of the experience, cultural content, location but also in terms of their role in shaping local artistic map. If in Malatjie (2013) study the research interest lies in investigating 6 alternative art spaces from Johannesburg that can be labeled as alternative art galleries, Chatterton (2002) for decoding plays-capes propose a theoretical development between the concept of "urban space" and "youngster". An area of interest was also to analyze the night cultural consumption from England that is the cultural consumption localized especially in the inner city. Chatterton (2002) observed an important relationship between production, regulation and consumption of "nightlife", how these areas interact determining the opposition between *mainstream nightlife* and *alternative, underground nightlife*. Alternative spaces appear as spaces that from the point of view of *production* are characterized as experimental and local, in terms of *regulation* they are informal and self-regulated and in terms of *consumption* they are more oriented towards creative, alternative events. The location of these spaces is an important issue for understanding their importance in the urban regeneration process. The results obtained by Chatterton (2002) in her study indicate that the alternative cultural spaces tend to be localized in liminal spaces of the metropolis. In this paper, I found also important to investigate this spaces also from the point of view of the localization, but the focus was different from Chatterton's study, managing to identify a new type of liminal spaces which is no longer at the edge of the city but at the edge of the city center. An important implication of my finding is that

through cultural movement such as alternative cultural spaces, the concept of "liminal space" is reconfigured and now we can also talk about it in the context of city center and not in the context of periphery. Also, according to most recent cultural consumption study conducted by National Institute for Cultural research and training[5] (2016) the Cultural consumption from Bucharest is concentrated in the city center with very low level in other districts. In this context, these clusters of creative communities found in Fluxus spaces can become important actors in extending the local cultural map.

Another approach on alternative spaces can be found in Polleta's (1999) work on free spaces. Polleta (1999) defines the alternative cultural spaces as free spaces referring to "small-scale settings within a community or movement that are removed from the direct control of dominant groups, are voluntarily participated in, and generate cultural challenge" (Polleta, 1999, p.1). In this work and in related references it was observed that alternative cultural spaces provide individuals with the necessary context to build resistance to highly regulated and institutionalized culture but most of the previous studies do not take into account the underground network of cultural agents that propose alternative solutions to the urban and social issues.

The impact of these cultural spaces on the urban regeneration process but also on the community gentrification and regeneration processes is a matter of further interest, several authors trying to underline their potential for the creative economy. However, most of the previous studies do not take into account spaces that are at the intersection of formal/informal, legal/illegal expressions, focusing especially on creative communities formalized under NGOs or associations. For instance, Grodach (2011) addresses this matter by stating that "there has been growing recognition of the role that arts and artists play in economic and community development and an associated interest in how governments can capture and enhance their positive spin-off effects" (Grodach, 2011, p74). Recent policy developments come also into such a framework. In the Europe 2020 strategy the urban development area is considered a central one for the

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5 The study was conducted by Bucharest National Institute for Cultural Research and Training (INCFC), the aim being to evaluate consumer cultural practices and consumer cultural profile. The data were collected during July-August 2015 and the study was a part of the process for elaborating the Bucharest cultural strategy for 2021. Available at: http://www.bucuresti2021.ro/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/25.11.15_Sinteza-studiu-de-consum-cultural-pentru-municipiul-Bucuresti.pdf Accessed [24 February, 2016]

future direction of economic and social development[6]. Also a report prepared by the OECD[7] (2012) emphasizes the need for analyzing urban areas as strategic points of sustainable development and for improving the quality of life and reduce social inequalities. I consider that the necessity of urban development can also be addressed from a cultural point of view, alternative cultural spaces becoming important scenes for the urban regeneration process. Attempting to study the relationship between alternative cultural spaces and urban regeneration implies the need of understanding how these places appear on the local cultural map, how they function, what their characteristics are and also why and how they disappear. Also, the recent literature on alternative cultural space analyses and compares various aspects of these spaces characteristics but, nevertheless, there are still some interesting and relevant problems to be addressed.

In the search for new cultural spaces

The search for alternative cultural spaces is a wide undertaking. It takes shapes that vary locally and globally and provides plenty of opportunities for newly emerging cultural productions and expressions. For instance, due to Bucharest candidature to act as the European Cultural Capital, the local cultural urban scenery is in a reconfiguration process that implies the mobilization of social actors from different areas of expertise. Such an emerging context does provide opportunities that demand for a special analysis. Due to this social and political context, I consider it relevant to conduct explorative research for understanding cultural changes that appear in this emerging scenery and to identify future directions both in public policy and in research. Despite the growing interest in Bucharest cultural urban scenery, the research on the topic is still scarce. The Research and Consultancy Centre in Culture published in 2010 a study on "Alternative spaces for cultural consumption". Focusing the study on independent cultural spaces (bars, restaurants, pubs), its main objective was to understand if the new spaces can be framed in the cultural infrastructure or they are part of the independent cultural consumption. It looked also for

the ways such spaces would influence the cultural-artistic content and aimed to decode the new relationship between the consumer and the artist. Approaching a qualitative methodology in order to answer the research questions, the authors labeled these spaces as sensescapes (Urry, 2001) that provide for the influence of sensorial components when experiencing these spaces. The need for this new form of cultural expression and cultural consumption was explained through Scott Lash's (1995) theory according to which a characteristic of the postmodern society is the tendency for art to migrate from formal spaces (museums, theatre, art galleries) to informal spaces[8]. For The Research and Consultancy Centre in Culture the concept of alternative spaces is regarded as: "alternative to the public cultural infrastructure, addressed especially to the mass consumption (...) and they can be seen as part of the independent sector because of the way they are organized but also because they are part of the creative industry[9]". Such places come to be sites of socialization and networking, places where the cultural events tend to create the places identity and also a new type of consumer.

For me The Research and Consultancy Centre in Culture's study acts as an important starting point for understanding Bucharest alternative cultural scenery. However, one of its limits is that it does not include the underground spaces, those that are not legally and financially regulated. Another attempt to understand the Bucharest alternative urban cultural spaces is provided by Nagy and Plecadite (2009) ethnographic study. Pointing out the need for more studies about cultural consumption in Romania, the authors investigated the clubbing phenomenon from the point of view of the consumers and the organizers. They classified alternative spaces from the point of view of the organizational frame (formal/ informal), the frequency of events or the prices, and identified certain coordinates as modes of classifying a cultural space as alternative or mainstream. In this paper, while we refer to the earlier work the focus is different, my main interest being the alternative/underground cultural scenery.

Methodology

In what follows, I examine Bucharest alternative cultural urban scenery by investigating the relationship between consumers, artists and space, while also looking at the role of the newly emerging cultural spaces in the process

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6 Available at: http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/sources/docgener/studies/pdf/citiesoftomorrow/citiesoftomorrow_final.pdf   Accessed at: 24.10.2015

7 Available at: http://www.keepeek.com/Digital-Asset-Management/oecd/urban-rural-and-regional-development/redefiningurban_9789264174108-en#page3 Accessed at: 24.10.2015

8 *apud* Research and Consultancy Centre in Culture (2011)
9 Research and Consultancy Centre in Culture (2011), p. 11

of urban and artistic development. A particular attention is paid to the following questions: Which are the social and physical characteristics of the alternative cultural spaces? What are the relationships established between social actors and space? Do these relationships influence the cultural consumption? What urban and community revitalization potential have these spaces? The study focuses on fluxus spaces as cultural alternative spaces in the sense of Polleta description: "small-scale settings within a community or movement that are removed from the direct control of dominant groups, are voluntarily participated in, and generate cultural challenge" (Polleta, 1999, p.1). In identifying these cultural laboratories I found useful a map made in 2014 for an event called "Houses night"[10]. The event was promoted as a "domestic circuit of cultural spaces in Bucharest", and those spaces were described as:

> "*Each and every one of them came to be an innovation and a free spirit source, which inject purpose into the lives of those involved. Together, they can spawn a decentralized cultural network, which fills the gap left by the official cultural institutions. It is easy to decapitate an institute but an informal network is more powerful as long as its communities are alive.* (translation A.M.)"[11]

Having a theoretical sampling, I selected nine spaces from the map developed for the "Houses night" event and conducted in depth interviews on the spot both with owners, artist but also with consumers. For the sake of a methodological bricolage, I mixed the results from in depth interviews with results from a participant observation and with the technique of mental map. Such an approach offered new directions to my exploration, by using its multi-methodological and multi-theoretical stand and by allowing the subject of research to be put into a more complex framework of analysis (Kincheloe, 2005). I had also relied on what Kincheloe (2005) emphasized as the complexity of bricolage: "bricoleurs move into the domain of complexity. The bricolage exists out of respect for the complexity of the lived world." (Kincheloe, 2005, pp. 324). The process of knowledge production from the perspective of bricolage is an active process involving the creative capacity of the researcher, being forced to interpret, reconstruct, analyze and negotiate the context investigated, this being achieved by a combination of

techniques and different theories. The necessity to better understand the individual relationship with the alternative cultural spaces stimulated the methodological innovation proposed by this paper which is the combination of mental map techniques coming from mental geography with projective techniques coming from psychology

The mental map of experience involves offering the respondents some helpful tools for expressing relationships, thoughts, experiences otherwise difficult to verbalize. Respondents were given a blank sheet of paper, markers and pictures of abstract images that do not have a precise and well defined meaning. The photos were intended to allow the respondent to make affective associations with places marked on the white paper. A very important role in building this map way played by the researcher, asking questions as this map is built, asking the standard questions used in the projective techniques. Thus the respondent is able to interpret the image and verbalize relational issues with the space, illustrating what Tuan (1977) termed "the intimate experience of a space", experience that transforms the space into a place. The mental map of experience becomes a pretext for the respondent to verbalize the intimate relationship that is being built between him/her and the spaces experienced.

-*Example of a mental map of experience-*

Validity

The validity technique proposed by bricolage is considered a new element in the field of social methodology. In this line of thinking, through bricolge the standard triangulation is deconstructed, being replaced with crystallization as a method for validity (Richardson *et al*, 2005). If by using triangulation you mix methods from the same discipline, in crystallization you mix both theories and methods from different disciplines. Thus, this study is a result of mixing

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10 Informations available at: https://www.facebook.com/noaptea. caselor?fref=ts

11 „Houses night" event description, avaible at: https://www.facebook.com/noaptea.caselor/info?tab=page_info , Accessed on: 26.04.2015

theories and methods from sociology, mental geography, anthropology and psychology but also theories from art history. Also, triangulation is considered to be insufficient for providing a holistic and comprehensive perspective, since it is constructed on the premises that there is a single social fact that needs triangulated. Analyzing a social phenomenon involves more than three aspects that need to be regarded. As the crystal reflects and is reflected, creating different patterns and colors, so the bricolage permits to the social researcher to have an extensive and comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon investigated. Through bricolage the empirical process goes beyond the boundaries of a single discipline methodology, deconstructing the classic idea of validity. So, according to the bricolage, the center of qualitative research should be the crystal and not the triangle (Richardson, St. Pierre, 2005, pp.963).

The aim of this study is not to quantify the contribution of fluxus spaces in the creative economy or in the urban regeneration process, but it does provide a deeper understanding of this kind of spaces and of their possible potential in urban and artistic development. Thus, this study may become useful in opening further research topics but also in eliciting public policy debates around the role of alternative cultural spaces in strategies of urban development.

Results

As previously mentioned, in the context of Bucharest candidature to European Cultural Capital title[12], I found useful to investigate the underground network of cultural agents that generate cultural content through resuscitating old buildings for artistic purposes. The originality of my

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12 "The European Capital of Culture (ECoC) title is assigned to the EU city of a candidate or pre-candidate countries, for one year. By 2019, 60 cities will have held the title of European Capital of Culture. The program is considered to be a EU flagship cultural initiative. Since 1985 the European Union designates one or two cities, from candidate or pre-candidate countries, as European Capital of Culture. Throughout a year, chosen cities are expected to present a constant innovative cultural program that emphasizes the richness, the diversity and the similarities of European culture to an international audience (...)Often, cities that aim for the European Capital of Culture title participate in the competition for the regeneration and transformation benefits associated with this initiative, that improve the cultural life of the city — not only at program levels, but involving the infrastructure and the skills acquired during the application period or prior to obtaining the title." (What does the European Capital of culture stand for?, n.d) Available from http://www.bucuresti2021.ro/bucharest-european-cultural-capital/european-capitals/?lang=en [22 February, 2016].

paper lies in the fact that by using the bricolage method of investigation, I have identified a new form of alternative cultural space, the fluxus space. Identifying this new hybrid space may be useful in stressing the richness and the diversity of Bucharest cultural life and can constitute a starting point for more articulated strategies of cultural development in the context of European strategy Bucharest2021. To my knowledge, this is the first study to examine the alternative cultural spaces from a multi-theoretical and multi-methodological point of view, using as a measure of validity crystallization instead of triangulation. The next section describes the new conceptual framework proposed by this paper: "fluxus spaces" followed by a section dedicated to outline the urban and community regeneration potential of fluxus spaces.

Fluxus Spaces

The bricolage methodology revealed fluxus spaces as being at the crossroad between public and private, old-new/modern, formal-informal, legal-illegal expressions, these spaces being alternative cultural spaces that play an important role both in the artistic development process and in the urban regeneration process. Fluxus spaces are an expression of new patterns of cultural consumption, born from the need of surpassing formal art promoted by institutions such as museums, art galleries or theatres. Also, the fluxus spaces represent a new way of looking both at cultural consumption but also at cultural production. Born from the need for "something new", need for artistic experimenting and surpassing ways of expression promoted by formal institutions, the Fluxus spaces were created by communities of young artists from areas like visual arts, music, architecture, journalism or urbanism. The will to work and live together in an informal space in order to generate alternative cultural content gives birth to these spaces that represent a form of resistance to the highly institutionalized culture and they tend to reproduce alternative moral orders. The Fluxus spaces are configured as autonomous cultural spheres, economically self-sustained, that launch cultural challenges refusing the mainstream culture promoted by institutionalized cultural spaces. They are spaces for young artists that want to exhibit, spaces where they find freedom of artistically experiment without rules for aesthetic norms: *„It has other rules than the rest. We wanted a space where we would do anything without restrictions." (Cetatea Artelor).*

-Artist drawing a basement wall from Casa Jurnalistului 13-

The respondents relationship with the mainstream cultural content promoted by formal cultural agents illustrate the tendency of this cultural content not to answer to current cultural needs, being evaluated as discordant with the quotidian and with current social trends. Thus, the mainstream cultural products can no longer establish direct relations with the young creative communities, fact that creates the need for a place free of classic constraints (ex. constrains imposed by cultural managers such as museums, art gallery, theatre). In this context the fluxus spaces become a manifest towards the mainstream culture, promoting freedom of artistic creation but also a different relationship between the artist, the cultural product and the consumer. Therefore in these spaces, by living together, artists from related fields (such as visual arts, urbanism and architecture) come to develop an interdisciplinary dialogue which leads to artistic experimenting, which is reflected in redefining ways of exhibiting: *"When I go to Elisabeta is totally different than going to an art gallery. At Elisabeta when is an exhibition you can find art works in the most unusual places, like in the bathroom or in the hallway. It's*

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13 Picture taken during participative observation

a different experience. It's not that stiff atmosphere like in an ordinary gallery where everything is white and no one is talking with no one (I, 24 y.o)". A new way of cultural consumption is born that resonates more and more with young people in between 25 and 30 years old. Also, fluxus spaces are characterized by a performative dimension which influences how the cultural products are consumed and how the consumer interacts with it and also with the artist. In these alternative cultural spaces, there is a fine line between artist, consumer and artistic product/performance, these social categories being constructed and deconstructed in interactions. The performative dimension of fluxus spaces breaks the distance between artist and consumer, creating a platform for dialog between them: *"I remember that once I went to X exhibit in an art gallery and after one month I went to another of his exhibition in Plantelor. Here (in Plantelor) I had the chance to talk to him and to drink a beer with him, it was so cool and natural to know him also as a normal person and not just as an artist. (R, 26 y.o) "*.

From an economic point of view, Fluxus spaces are self-managed, this offering the freedom to interact with the space and to promote forms of alternative cultural content, without any restrictions. The financial resources for the maintenance of these spaces come both from the artists that live there but also from donations. The projective techniques used in the mental mapping of experience allowed the individuals to verbalize the role of the donations in strengthening the relations between the members of the community: *"I chose this picture with the man that plants seeds and grows plants because that is how I feel when I go to such events. I feel I directly contribute to the development of these spaces and that I support with what I what those can people do there. I feel directly involved." (I, 24 years) (Map of experience 1)*. By mental mapping the experience of individuals with this kind of alternative cultural spaces I managed to identify the role that these spaces play in strengthening the relationships between members of creative communities but also in portraying a certain group identity: *"If I think of myself in relation to these spaces I chose the picture with the guy lying on the grass with the balloon, because these places make you feel good that there are more people that think like you and what a change like you do. It makes you feel good that you are amongst people like you that you can learn from. It's like you're floating, more free and different"* (I, 24 y.o.) (map of experience 1).

These self-managed cultural laboratories come to draw a new pattern of cultural consumption and also a new way of experiencing cultural products or performances. Another important feature of these spaces

-Map of experience 1-

is the ability of the social space to generate reflexivity. From the participative observation I have identified a certain structure of the events that took place in the Fluxus extents; at the beginning of the evening, a cultural event takes place (exhibition, film projection, theatre show) followed by a party that becomes the context of debating the event. Because of the informal framing, the debates take place not only between those who know each other (groups that came together) but anyone can join. They are informal discussions, interdisciplinary ones that create a reflexive context of approaching certain social problems: *„You meet new people. Interesting characters appear, when you go in such a place you meet a lot of people, find out new things. It's the people from my world, cool people that do cool things, its creative people."(A. 23 y.o)*. In the next section I am going to describe Fluxus Spaces both from the urban regeneration component but also from the community regeneration component.

Recycling space (Urban Regeneration)

As social products, the Fluxus spaces imply community and urban regeneration processes. By recycling abandoned domestic spaces, cultural laboratories are born, generating alternative cultural content. The process of observing and deciphering these spaces implies joining the perceived spaces with the quotidian and urban reality. The resuscitation of disposed urban spaces such as old abandoned houses from Bucharest is put together by transcending the urban, quotidian reality in that certain physical spaces, where the antique is combined with the modern: *"The house didn't even have a ceiling in the kitchen when we moved in, it was super trashed. But we started to take care of it, we inserted modern stuff, we drew and taped newspapers on the walls. We took it in a different zone, we interpreted the space and we adapted it"(Elisabeta)*.

For creative communities that generate fluxus spaces, the site selection is driven by two motives: the urge to save building with historical charge and the low rents associated with these buildings. Because of the buildings advanced degradation state, the owners tend to rent them at very low prices, facilitating the access for these creative clusters to these spaces: *"There are lots of houses that remain unused in Bucharest and could be turned into a project-house. Just the simple fact that you're there and you don't let it die gives you a huge satisfaction" (Elisabeta)*. The degradation level of these houses is very high, thus the physical work for restoration leads to the embodiment of the space but also to a symbolically reconfiguration of it. *"When we found the house in the first place and we entered, in these 2 rooms there was a lot of garbage. Nobody lived here for about 7 years. Some families lived here and*

-Cetatea Artelor (picture from the respondent's archive)-

-Plantelor (still renovating)

the owner used this as a storage place, it was chaos. All the pipes were broken, nothing worked. ”(Plantelor), “The house was built in 1912 by a lawyer, Pascarul (..) It became a dumpster and the basement a huge toilet. Before we got here they threw the railing on fire, they sold a lot of iron from the house, it was full of rats. ”(Carol 53). Through the process of restoration and by actively experiencing it, the space is transformed into a place. By direct involvement in the renovating process, these socially dead spaces are revived and reintegrated in the urban landscape. Rehabilitating these spaces and transforming them from spaces into places implies a collective work that drags the small community in actions and reinforce the group cohesion allowing a personal relationship with the physical space: *“When we started to take out the trash from the basement we used to rub lotions on our nose so we won’t feel the smell. After the first half hour we realized it was really bad and we bought 2 slugs of beer and got drunk. You could only enter drunk in there, we were always cheerful, it was quite fun. We started having a blast and that’s how friends of friends started to join in to help and after that, the team expanded”(Carol53).* The advanced degradation state of the house generates social practices that engage the community in the renovation process, increasing the group cohesion and achieving the place feeling (Tuan, 1977) but also a spatial identity which reinforce the nonconformist discourse. Therefore, the Fluxus spaces as alternative culture spaces are born through recycling old abandoned spaces which are symbolically transformed into active social spaces.

-Group of people working together for renovation[14]

14 Available at https://www.facebook.com/casacarol53/photos/a.17 9078255559217.42299.166243446842698/179078435559199/?type=3&th eater Accessed [23 February, 2016]

The edge of the center (Community Regeneration)

Another characteristic of the Fluxus spaces as alternative culture spaces is the location, these being found in areas from *“the edge of the center”: “I like that I’m placed at the edge of the center. In the center there’s too much chaos and you need quiet to work. It’s good to be at the edge of the center, you’ve got access to everything and you can go anywhere and it’s more quite.”* (F, 23 y.o). In this way, Fluxus spaces bring a new conceptualization of the liminal space: *The edge of the center*. The mental mapping of the city center reveals a new subdivision associated with Fluxus spaces. This *edge of the center* is an illustration of the migration of the liminal space in the heart of the city. Also, the edge of the city can be described as spaces connected with the city center but at the beginning of the gentrification process, spaces where touristic, commercial or cultural attraction are not visible. This edge of the city becomes the main point of attraction for this rising cultural community that seeks for accessible old building to gentrify them into cultural laboratories, free from institutional constrains. Also, choosing areas that are less transited has the purpose of community regeneration and expansion of the local cultural map. Through fluxus spaces, these clusters of creative communities try to extend the cultural local map also to the districts connected with the city center, by involving the “local” community in the reactivation of old building in artistic purposes. Therefore, by extending the cultural consumption to other parts of the city, fluxus spaces tend to insert cultural and artistic elements in these districts and to involve the “neighbors” in cultural practices of consumption. Thus, the community regeneration process takes place in interaction with the local community (the neighbors): *“Why Mătăsari? Because I thought as long as we’re building a community let’s see if the micro community can influence a larger one. In other words, an insertion of art, culture, social ideas, if put together, can generate social content that can change the area. (...) There was a nice story on Mătăsari that I could relate to. The community from Mătăsari appeared to me as infamous as Ferentari, Sălăjaln, Colentina.” (Home Mătăsari).*

The temporality of Fluxus Spaces

The name of Fluxus also illustrates a certain time period in the development of an alternative culture space. The growth process of such a space implies more stages, one of them being Fluxus. This stage is the first stage, a stage

-Home Mătăsari. The yard transformed for a theatre show-

of exploration in order to find and consolidate the spaces identity. Fluxus is a moment in time, is the beginning point of these spaces, a finite period of exploring both cultural content and also social practices that will portray a social space well described and finally well regulated. The alternative culture spaces are born from rejecting the formal/institutionalized forms of cultural products and from the need to find new ways of art/culture that illustrate better present social realities. Also, I have observed the fact that some alternative spaces in Bucharest that started as Fluxus spaces turned into better regulated establishments, both legally and financially, like NGOs or associations. The Fluxus space is, in fact, the incipient phase of a larger cultural project, like an NGO, but it can also turn around into a different direction, which is being closed down.

Discussion

In this paper, the focus of attention was on identifying new forms of alternative cultural spaces from Bucharest and their impact on urban and community regeneration. Also, I have addressed not only the urban and regeneration matter but also the new form of cultural consumption and production that can be found in fluxus spaces. The originality of this study lies in the fact that using a multi-theoretical and multi-methodological approach, a new conceptual framework was identified: *Fluxus Spaces*. The concept of fluxus spaces is a result of this research

and refers to alternative cultural spaces that can be found at the crossroad between public and private, old-new/modern, formal-informal, legal-illegal and they play an important role both in the artistic development but also in the urban regeneration process. Particular attention was paid to understand the urban cultural scenery from the point of view of the underground cultural agents. The data obtained from mixing methods from sociology, anthropology, psychology and mental geography revealed a new type of cultural space that illustrates the tendency of the youngsters and of the young artists to look for alternative artistic content, free from aesthetic norms. Identifying this new alternative cultural space may be useful in stressing the diversity of Bucharest cultural life and can constitute a starting point for more articulated strategies of cultural development in the context of European strategy Bucharest2021.

The main limitation of this study is the explorative character of the findings. The results presented in this paper are descriptive, the main limitation of this being that the results cannot be generalized to the entire population, but I consider it necessary to conduct explorative research to understand the cultural changes that appear in this scenery, results that can generate future directions both in public policy but also in cultural research. Also, policy makers can develop on the existing strengths of these spaces to boost community and urban development opportunities.

Conclusions

Based on the results, it can be concluded that the research into the urban alternative cultural scenery revealed new forms of cultural consumption and productions that influence urban and community regeneration process. Fluxus spaces reinterpret formal art promoted by old and well-established museums, art galleries or theatres. Autonomous cultural spheres, economically self-sustained, fluxus spaces generate cultural challenges both for the artists and consumers. While being involved in such fluxus spaces, young artists find freedom by artistically experimenting without any subordination to aesthetic norms, freedom to exhibit whatever they want in what way they want. Deconstructing the cultural mainstream through artistic performances and other cultural products, fluxus spaces propose freedom of artistic creation and also a different relationship between the artist, the cultural product and the consumer. Also, an important characteristic of these spaces is the role they play both in cultural development and in the urban and community regeneration process. The urban regeneration dimension of these spaces is illustrated by the resuscitation of disposed urban spaces such as old abandoned houses from Bucharest for artistic purposes. Another characteristic of the Fluxus spaces as alternative culture spaces is the location, these being found in areas around *"the edge of the center"* which implies the expansion of the cultural artistic map to districts connected with the city center. By involving the neighbors in the renovation process but also in the artistic performances, fluxus spaces become agents in the community regeneration and gentrification through art and culture. On the basis of the promising findings presented in this paper, in my future research I intend to present a typology of the alternative cultural spaces in order to have a better understanding both on the concept of "alternative cultural space" but also on the local artistic scenery. Further study of the issue is still required in order to provide a clear view of the creative and cultural possibilities of Bucharest.

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