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A model of development strategy encompassing creative industries to reduce visual pollution - Case study: Strada Franceză, Bucharest's Old City

Andreea-Loreta Cercleux[a,]*, Florentina-Cristina Merciu[a], George-Laurenţiu Merciu[b]

[a]*The Interdisciplinary Center for Advanced Researches on Territorial Dynamics, Faculty of Geography, University of Bucharest, Regina Elisabeta 4-12, Bucharest 030018, Romania*

[b]*Faculty of Geography, University of Bucharest, Nicolae Bălcescu 1, Bucharest 010041, Romania*

Abstract

The study is presenting a model of strategic approach of creative industries development in the Old City of Bucharest and more specifically, in the street called Strada Franceză (the French Street), having as purpose the diminution of visual pollution in the area. Among a wide range of parameters used in the interpretation of visual pollution, the analysis focuses on the condition of the abandoned buildings, as a whole or just partially. By using a complex methodology including various analysis criteria in relation with the history of the area, the legislative context, the spatial planning policies and the current socio-economic profile, two potential areas that hold resources for the development of creative industries are proposed for intervention. Forwards, a model of development strategy was shaped, together with the project stages that should be considered in order to achieve the objective of changing Strada Franceză into an important creative area of Bucharest's Old City, thus leading to a reduction of the visual pollution.

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* Corresponding author. Tel.: +40-313-84-10; fax: +40-313-84-10.
E-mail address: loretacepoiu@yahoo.com

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1. Introduction

The visual pollution [1, 2] has a significant impact on residential areas evolution and it is related to different sources, from which the abandoned buildings represent an important element generating negative effects on the living environment. In general, the sources of visual pollution are connected to various fields, such as: commerce [3], industry [4, 5, 6], transports [7] or advertising [8] and they may conduct to land use conflicts [9].

The creative industries, carried out in abandoned buildings, may represent an important share of the creative economy and contribute to the visual pollution blur: such an example is the Republic of Užupis, a district in the vicinity of Vilnius Old City. This became, little by little, an important creative area of the city; inside this, the creative industries started their evolution after 1990, relying on the historical past of the city: the 2nd World War period and the abandoned dwellings belonging to the Jewish population; the communist era and the housing degradation due to the takeover of the abandoned dwellings by vulnerable categories of population; the economic transition process started in 1990, conducting to the ruin of the constructions from the communist industry - represented particularly by the knitting factory and the electric power station.

The creative industries represent the overlap area between culture, technology, science and commerce, involving the supply of goods and services represented by a substantial element of artistic and intellectual activities associated with an important role in social and human development [10]. Thus, the benefits of the creative industries are various: they have an important potential in the development of social and economic changes; they contribute to the diminishing of squatting areas; they make possible an increase in the creative employment; they may become a new source of competitive advantage because creativity means innovation; and last, but not least, they develop the possibilities to reassess the notion of culture, an important theme to modernity.

The aesthetic production has become more integrated into commodity production [11]. The creative industries may be defined as a set of knowledge-based activities focused on the production of meaning, contents and aesthetic attributes by means of creativity, skill and talent [12]. These qualities make the creative industries to be appreciated by all the segments of the population, but noting that the cultural involvement and spending are affected by the age structure of the population [13], reflected in theirs options in terms of the most desired creative industries.

The activities included in the structure of the creative industries category differ from one approach to the next, partly because of the meaning and complex phrasing used in order to define that concept. The creative industries include the category of cultural industries [14] or, on the contrary, may mean a nucleus typically represented by traditional creative arts (music, dance, theatre, literature, the visual arts, the crafts, video art, performance art, computer and multimedia art), around which develop a first layer of cultural industries (media, cinematography, book and magazine publishing, television and radio, newspapers, film and digital media) and a second layer of activities outside the cultural sphere but with some products having some degree of cultural content (advertising, tourism and architectural services) [15].

The creative industries may be divided into heavily industrialized and commodified industries [16, 17]. The former category refers to enterprises such as advertising and marketing, broadcasting, film industries, internet industry (including website creation and portal providers), mobile content industry, music industries (recording, publishing and live performance), print and electronic publishing (including books, CD-ROMs, on-line databases, information services, magazines and newspapers), video and computer games. The commodified industrialized cultural and creative activities include traditional cultural activities (visual arts - painting, sculpture), performing arts (theatre, opera, concerts and dance), museums and library services and other creative activities: crafts, fashion, design industry, household objects, architecture, cultural tourism and sport.

Another approach [18] considers a particular category of the cultural industries as an activity within the field of creative enterprises, described as a complex of activities that give birth to non-material products, mainly or even entirely sold under copyright. This refers to: publishing books, daily newspapers, magazines, periodicals, audio recordings; other publications; the creation and distribution of software; marketing; exhibitions, fairs, congresses; design; cinema and video production; radio and television; art creation; market research and mass-media; internet data services.

The development of creative industries in Bucharest is linked to an urban economic process, the tertiarization, interpreted as the natural course in the economic evolution of the cities and characterized by a permanent dynamic of enterprises. Moreover, there emerge and develop creative cities, which involve a mobilization of the “creativity”, inherent in art and culture, to create new industries and employment opportunities [19]. The trend that has emerged in the past few years, together with the increasing number of creative-industry companies that open offices in

diverse areas of Bucharest, can be interpreted as an alignment to the changes introduced by the transition to a different type of economy and subsequently by the process of globalization. The creative industries are considered more flexible, dynamic and innovative [20] and it is well known that innovation is becoming an important factor for companies' competitiveness [21].

In the article is analyzed a vision in construction - the idea of creativity in Strada Franceză. The objective of the study is to create an example of development model for the creative industries in the analyzed area which can reduce the visual pollution caused by the existing abandoned buildings. This may start from the idea that the future creativity is the driver for the Bucharest's Old City. Although the study relies on the present economic parameters, the project of developing creative industries in Strada Franceză should not be seen as an economic strategy, but as a planning strategy with the participation of all the sectors in which the creative industries represent a means to give value to an area without an economic particularity.

2. Methodology

The used methodology has included documentation about the history/evolution of the street, legislation and the existing databases at various institutions involved in the historical monuments field and the security in building management, field research and economic databases.

The documentation about the history of the street was realized in order to obtain more information about its importance for the city development: the first documentary attestation of the street is from 1649 and the route passed right by the front of the Royal Court (Curtea Domnească), known as Ulița Curții; In 20th May 1798, the Consul Charles Flury is received in audience to Hangerliu Vodă as citizen of the French Republic and the street will be named Strada Franceză (the French Street), where the French Consulate had its premises. After changing its name into Carol I (in 1867), 30th December (in 1948), Iuliu Maniu (in 1990), the street will regain the name of Strada Franceză in 2007.

The analysis of the legislation and the existing databases from various institutions involved in the historical monuments and the security's buildings management was important in the investigation of the actual situation of the built environment in Strada Franceză. This research was assisted by the field research, essential in the identification of the buildings with abandoned areas (at least one floor/apartment abandoned) and of the economic reality in this very dynamic area of the city in which the functional changes of some buildings may occur several times per year.

The classification of the creative industries resulted from analyzing different approaches and taking into account the Romanian creative activities, based on the activity classes listed in the CAEN (Classification of National Economic Activities), referring to the following fields: Advertising; Architecture; Arts and Antiques; Crafts; Design; Fashion; Film, image and photography; Software, games and electronic publishing; Music, visual arts, performing arts; Publishing; Television and radio.

A set of economic indicators were analysed, including the total number of companies in the Bucharest's Old City and the total number of companies specialized in creative industries in the studied area. The economic indicators were then correlated with the lists of buildings in Bucharest with the technical expertise regarding the seismic risk and the one of the buildings with the historical monuments statute. In the end, this complex methodology participates in the shaping of some potential areas for the development of creative industries with a role in diminishing the visual pollution for which can be applied a general model of development strategy.

3. Results

Strada Franceză has a large number of aesthetic characteristics that made it appreciated over time: it is the heart of the city where its history began; this advantage is reflected in the significant socio-economic and cultural life that characterised the area throughout time, for many decades being the most important one of the capital; today, it is one the few streets in Bucharest that kept the characteristics of the 18th and 19th centuries: the buildings are placed at the street, presenting a normal location and architecture for the stores function; most of the constructions are from the 19th century, built in neoclassical, eclectic and romantic style; during the time, it benefited of some important investments, given its historical importance (e.g., between 1860-1862 there took place the first experimental systematic pavements of carved stone, cubic (using granite from Scotland). Despite these advantages, some negative

aspects should be mentioned about Strada Franceză. These are reflected all along its length by the architectural testimonies of different stages of Bucharest history. Unfortunately, they are mismatching today with the rest of the area, despite their known status of historical monuments for most of them, due to the negative effects caused to the environment, urban image and population. These disadvantages are related in general to: the urban transformations in the area during the communist period and the loss of important architectural elements; the authorities' lack of involvement, in growth after 1990, to the preservation of these buildings and the illegal demolition and incorrect restoration of some buildings; absence or disrespect of the rules regarding the economic functionality in the area and emergence of disorder and disparities; gradual degradation in connexion to the destination of the buildings as public rented dwellings.

The diagnosis of the creative industries in Strada Franceză (Table 1) shows that 45% of the total number of buildings from Strada Franceză have at least one floor/apartment abandoned, among which 60% of these buildings are historical monuments (almost 53% of the buildings from this area are nowadays historical monuments). 68% of the buildings have security problems: almost 58% are included in emergency categories, but not in proper seismic risk classes; 27% are included in seismic risk class I and public danger; 15% are included in seismic risk class I. Only one building from Strada Franceză appears on the list of Bucharest's consolidated buildings.

From the total number of economical units which have been registered in the study area, 8% develop creative industries, with specializations in: other printing activities; book publishing activities; activities of cinema production, video and television programs; activities of advertising agencies; artistic interpretation activities (performances); other amusement and recreation activities. 42% of the total number of economical units has the headquarters in buildings with security problems (Table 2).

Table 1. General diagnosis of buildings from Strada Franceză, in connexion with their seismic risk security

	Total number of buildings	Total number of buildings with historical monument statute	Buildings with at least one floor/ apartment abandoned	Buildings historical monument with at least one floor/ apartment abandoned
TOTAL	38	20	17	10
Buildings with security problems (total and in order of the emergency degree):	26	15	13	9
- buildings included in seismic risk class I and public danger	7	5	6	5
- buildings included in seismic risk class I	4	3	1	1
- buildings which are included in emergency categories, but not in proper seismic risk classes (U1=Emergency 1)	4	2	3	1
- buildings which are included in emergency categories, but not in proper seismic risk classes (U2=Emergency 2)	5	2	1	1
- buildings which are included in emergency categories, but not in proper seismic risk classes (U1=Emergency 1 and U2=Emergency 2)	1	1	0	0
- buildings which are included in emergency categories, but not in proper seismic risk classes (U3=Emergency 3)	5	2	2	1

Data source: List of Historical Monuments (2010) – Municipality of Bucharest (Ministry of Culture and Natural Heritage, Natural Heritage Institute), published in Official Gazette of Romania, Part I, no. 670 bis/1.X.2010; Field research.

Taking into account these results, there was shaped a prognosis of the area. Two potential areas that hold resources for the development of creative industries have been identified. Both areas already include activities from the creative industries and have apartments/floors abandoned.

In the first case, A) - Fig. 1, it is about an area relying on an economy specialized partly in restaurants and bar activities, alongside with creative industries: *Animafilm*, a film studio with activities in cinema production, video and television programs. The second area, B) - Fig. 2, is represented by a publishing company with activities in books publishing, *Irecson*, located in an abandoned area that needs urgent restoration.

Table 2. Economic units in Strada Franceză in buildings with security problems

	Total number of economical units	Total number of economical units specialized in creative industries
TOTAL	128	8
Headquartered in buildings with security problems (total and in order of the emergency degree):	54	5
- buildings included in seismic risk class I and public danger	28	3
- buildings included in seismic risk class I	3	1
- buildings which are included in emergency categories, but not in proper seismic risk classes (U1=Emergency 1)	10	0
- buildings which are included in emergency categories, but not in proper seismic risk classes (U2=Emergency 2)	9	1
- buildings which are included in emergency categories, but not in proper seismic risk classes (U1=Emergency 1 and U2=Emergency 2)	1	0
- buildings which are included in emergency categories, but not in proper seismic risk classes (U3=Emergency 3)	3	0

Data source: The lists of buildings in Bucharest with the technical expertise regarding the seismic risk updated on 29.12.2015 (Bucharest City Hall, General Direction Development and Investments, Investment Direction, Consolidations Service) - http://www.pmb.ro/servicii/alte_informatii/lista_imobilelor_exp/docs/Lista_imobilelor_expertizate.pdf); National Office of Trade Register; Ministry of Public Finance of Romania; CAEN (Classification of National Economic Activities); Field research.



Fig. 1. Case A) - Strada Franceză no. 6-20, from right to left



Fig. 2. Case B) - Strada Franceză no. 64-68, from right to left

The two locations present a set of strengths: presence already in the area of creative industries, stock of spaces for conversion, proximity to cultural institutions, buildings that still have the original architectures elements that can be valorised in activities as movies décor, pedestrian zone etc. Beside these, the statute of historical monument may act, on one hand, as an advantage taking into account the historical importance and, on the other hand, as a disadvantage in the situation where a large part of these are buildings with seismic risk. Some weaknesses are given by the

important investments that are necessary in order to restore the historical monuments and to regain their image that they once had and by the reduced number of parking spaces nearby. Relying on the results obtained, a model of strategy has been shaped (Fig. 3), which can be applied in a future project for this area. The final objective of the project is to transform Strada Franceză into an important creative area of Bucharest's Old City which will present all the advantages in order to reduce the visual pollution.

4. Discussions

The creative industries can be catalysts of change and "rule-producers", capable of bringing a new economic order [22]. Taking into account that two key concepts are included in virtually every definition of creativity, novelty and value [23], we could assert that nowadays creativity is striving to become a quality the cities need, even more so at the level of metropolis-cities. The current situation of the creative industries in Bucharest reflects the general economic changes introduced by the phenomenon of globalization in a former communist country, explaining the particularities in which these activities progressed in a city where the dynamic and innovative activities are important for its development.

The trend of Bucharest's creative industries that has emerged in the past few years may be considered as a response to the changes that modern capitalist economy brings about at the level of the metropolis. The development of creative industries in Bucharest's Old City is in an incipient stage in comparison with other European capitals or cultural cities by tradition, being particularly more visible in areas that have undergone a functional reorganization.

The proposed model of project to reduce the visual pollution in Strada Franceză has as strength the possibility of using various data, some inventories and results of studies already conducted in the area which may facilitate its management, by reducing the implementation period, the energy consumption and the costs. The project model is structured in: inputs, activities, outputs, first objective project and final objective project. The inputs are represented by the abandoned buildings, but undoubtedly accompanied by financial resources and work force. They should be analysed not only in terms of visual characteristics (architectural style), but also in terms of sometimes "invisible" aspects (nevertheless of which depend the subsequent functional changes) as the year of construction, the share of buildings with at least one floor/apartment abandoned (this last aspect offering information about the potential areas to be transformed) and the statute of the historical monument. This last indicator, rigorously linked to the building security and the maintenance and consolidation work status, may act from time to time as a limiting factor of intervention or as a barrier for the future actions of functionality changes.

The activities refer to changes in the economic functionality, generating new creative industries. This phase focuses on the functional economic unit analysis, including their specialisations and the share of actual creative industries. The outputs are represented by the new creative industries which are in connexion with the socio-economic general development of the area and the generated positive urban image. The first objective project is to create a functional creative area which makes possible the final objective, seen as the development of a creative area that may participate to reduce the visual pollution in Strada Franceză.

The external environment acts as a sum of factors that may hinder the project evolution or, on the contrary, it may encourage its results: the physical infrastructure, the seismic risk of the area, the policies on spatial planning, the legislative context etc. In Bucharest's Old City, the physical infrastructure may possibly participate, for example through the road repair works, to delays in the setting up of future creative industries in the area. The importance of the seismic risk factor is reflected in the significant number of buildings presenting high seismic risk. The policies related to culture and creativity are instrumental in achieving not only cultural ends but also greater social cohesion and economic growth.

In general, the creative industries in Bucharest are not encouraged by means of special policies and development strategies. The inconsistencies in the spatial planning policies, in patches caused or accentuated by the economic transition process, may block the creative industries evolution in the area. The recent law [24] concerning the new measures for the constructions presenting seismic risk and with other destination than living will have an impact on the creative industries development in the next years. More specifically, the law refers to buildings with the purpose of conducting activities involving crowds of people and for which there are provided measures in order to reduce their seismic risk.

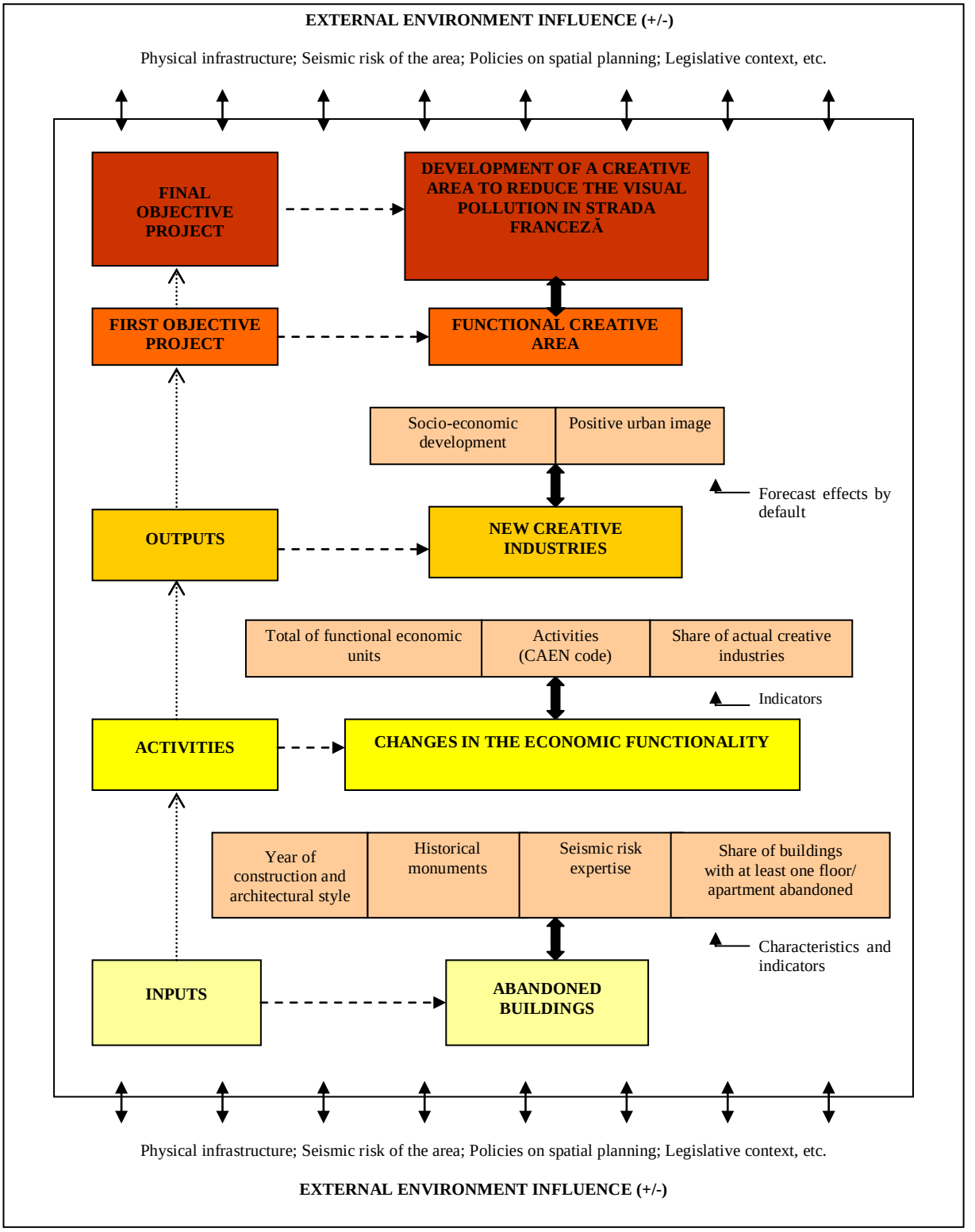


Fig. 3. Model of development strategy encompassing creative industries to reduce visual pollution in Strada Franceză, Bucharest's Old City

One of these measures states that: inside these buildings it is forbidden to organize and conduct permanent and/or temporary activities (theatres, exhibitions and reading halls, spaces for commerce, tourism accommodation and catering services, medical and social assistance, public administration and other buildings) until proper intervention works are carried out in order to increase the safety level of the existing constructions in cases of seismic actions.

5. Conclusions

Developing creative industries, a source of local revenue, harmless for the environment and, quite the contrary, an antidote to the visual pollution, ensure the continuity in functioning of certain areas with a special material cultural significance for Bucharest. According to the results obtained in the study, Strada Franceză seems to be at the beginning of its journey to assert itself on the creative industries market, although it has the necessary resources, possible suitable locations and a past in the creative field (former Casandra Theatre, for example). In the context of the need for the development of creative and innovative spirit in Bucharest, the identified possible suitable locations would enable the perpetuation of the most important area for Bucharest's history and the sense of belonging to this place. The implementation of the proposed model of project for creative industries development would bring a number of advantages in terms of participation in the development of Bucharest's competitiveness, reducing visual pollution and, thereupon, improving the city's image.

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