

THE CONTEMPORARY DILEMMA OF THE CULTURAL LANDSCAPE. THE CASE OF IASI MUNICIPALITY

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Abstract: The article explores the cultural dimensions of the landscape of post-revolutionary Romanian cities, with an application on Iasi as a study case. The relatively rapid succession of contrast political regimes determined the development of a mixture of landscapes, sometimes atypical. Following the intervention of the state and the non-involvement of citizens, there were dramatic changes in the old city centers, so-called historical centers gathering, generally, the elements considered representative of the population for the city's image. These zones are present today in the form of warped spaces, of desecrated spaces. Starting from the results of some field surveys, the article shows that the urban landscape of Iasi remains above all a cultural landscape, this picture being present in the collective mind, with the ability to hide or at least to leave behind all tributaries of modernization and globalization imperfections.

Key words: Cultural landscape, Iași, Metamorphose, Perception, Image

Introduction

It talks about the transition over the past decade: economic transition, social transition, political transition, ideological transition. A painful process of transition (Kenneth Rogoff, professor of economics at Harvard University) that has lasted for 20 years and does not seem to end too soon. Why don't we talk about a landscape transition or a cultural transition? Passing from a specific communist landscape (a faded rural area, non-customized, organized by the same principles, industrial cities, with giant industrial platforms and worker's quarters) to a specific landscape of liberal-democratic societies (dynamic landscapes, full of personality), the passing from a closed culture, which required excessive veneration of the president, to a culture open to ideas from abroad, seems as slow as the transition from a socialist economy to the market economy. A mixture of landscapes, sometimes

atypical, in conflict with the physical-geographical and cultural area.

The definition of landscape concept proves to be right from the beginning a difficult task, because as awarded by different sciences and arts (geography, sociology, philosophy, landscape, urbanism, architecture, ethnology, ecology, etc.), it becomes rather an apple of discord than a head stone or a platform for dialogue between stakeholders in its defining and building (Tudor, 2009). There is a high mobility and polysemy of this concept determined by the emergence of different disciplines dealing with its study, at different levels.

In general, the landscape is defined as an area, a territory that appears before an observer, thus becoming the subject of a painting or an artistic act, or subject of contemplation. Beyond this general understanding, relatively elastic, gathers a series of segmentary understandings of a continuous construction concept.

In geography, the concept of landscape has emerged since the nineteenth century

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with the starting point to German studies, *Landschaft* being viewed initially as a result of the evolution of object maps. Gradually, the landscape becomes the basic unit of geographical study (Groza, 2003). The landscape free of bias was reduced to a space type (mountain scenery, hilly landscape of the plains), which changes with the development of human and cultural geography. Significant progress on the definition of landscape has been achieved in the VII decade, by using the systemic concepts in schools like: Russian (by VB Soceava), German (E. Neef), Canadian (J. Racine and H. Reymond), French (G. Berstrand).

Geographical landscape is a dual reality, equally subjective and objective: objective reality because it contains measurable evidence, which becomes subjective in human perception. Geographical landscape can be defined as a "spatial structure expressed by its own physiognomy, individualized as a result of interaction of abiotic, biotic and anthropogenic factors, valued differently, depending on how it is perceived" (Pretty, 2000). Thus, the geographical landscape represents the visual projection of a rather psychological relation that people maintain with their habitat. A definition proposed by J.B. Jackson (1984), highly synthetic but which has the ability to embrace all aspects of the landscape: geographical, ecological, aesthetic, social and political aspects. These aspects have the ability to highlight the relationship between vernacular and political, between functional and symbolical, suggesting perpetual and dynamic elements of stability: "a composition of spaces created or modified by man to serve as infrastructure or background for our collective existence ". In addition to this, we could cite A. Bailly (1986), who believes that the role of landscape is "to seize the relationship between man and his territory," to overcome the morphological and functional analysis of the space. "So "the landscape, represents at the same time a natural environment [...], a human environment (history, culture), a territory lived (*vécu*) of a group, a creative place (aesthetic, symbolic), constantly changing" (Bailly, 1986).

Why talk so much about the landscape? What purpose is landscape? The answer is multiple: on the one hand, it is necessary in terms of landscape aesthetics, landscape being able to provide information on quality of life (landscape offered by a bidonville provides information on poor living conditions of residents, or returning to the domestic realm, the landscape of a village Gypsy coppersmiths, etc..), on the other hand, landscape is closely related to the image of that place, imagine that becomes its business card that can attract, or, contrary, reject the visitors, investors and residents.

The Urban landscape: between social and cultural

"The city is what we decide to make it based on an objective analysis' (Reissemann, 1964). So, we decided to make the city a place of cultural landscape transformation analysis, historical and cultural center of the Romanian city, focusing on the city of Iasi (the former cultural capital of Romania). The city is the essence of a nation's culture. Historical changes, cultural influences (and the Romanian territory has been subjected to simultaneous influence over its becoming: Roman, Slavic, Austrian, Russian, Ottoman, German, Hungarian, Byzantine, French, American, etc.) territoriality, ethnic and religious diversity, cohesion or segregation, political changes, are all part of the unique urban landscape (Voiculescu, 2009).

Social urban landscape

Arrangement for housing the urban area provides a social landscape. Using different parts of the city, in terms of housing, over time, allowed the succession and experimentation of more types of urban landscapes. The city has always been the theater of action of the two vectors, spatial segregation factors: the center and periphery. Initially, the center of the residential areas surrounding it belonged to those with a certain social status, the periphery being inhabited by poor and people without

identity. With the onset of the industrialization process, the periphery has expanded to encompass the surrounding rural areas, population included, who woke up urbanized. Industrial sites which were mixed with urban spaces, from the highest to the lowest, in those two waves of industrialization (1950 and 1970), all required manpower. Thus, increased migration to rural areas to urban areas, peasants become urban overnight. To accommodate such a large mass of people great working-class neighborhoods were built, "urban tumors" (Ianoş, 2004), that have completely changed the urban landscape. The center has not escaped the wave of socialist modernization, being constructed buildings without personality, in clear contradiction with the architectural styles of the area, to house state institutions. The center continues to belong to kulaks, while the periphery becomes an area for industrial workers. After 1990, the extension of localities, individual freedom, financial power and willingness to live in a villa, moves the richest families in a chaotic suburb, developed in the absence of a coherent plan for urban growth, and formation of relatively rapid, so-called neighborhoods residential. Buildings in downtown and adjacent areas, which originally belonged to Jews (in the cities of Moldova) and Germans (in the cities of Transylvania) were gradually occupied by a population with weak financial and social power. There was such an abandonment of the historic center/ civic spaces for city conquered new spaces. After two decades in which we witnessed to the degradation of the historical and cultural center, we witness a new process that attempts to remove these areas of clinical death, gentrification. It remains to be seen whether it will succeed.

Returning to the scene of large habitats (with reference to working-class neighborhoods here built during the socialist system) must be noted that they offer dull gray views, almost xeroxed, regardless of district / city you look. Gray blocks of concrete formwork, with as many levels as possible (8-10), with as many "boxes with matches" apartments, repeating endlessly, in a perfect monotone. By design, the major habitats are characterized by a high density apartment

blocks, children's play areas, parks and green spaces being extremely low. However, these areas were devoid of administrative and cultural institutions in order to create a dependence on the city's civic center. Most often, working-class neighborhoods were devoid of tourist / cultural objectives.

Immigrants (people arriving from rural areas, employed on industrial sites), residents of new neighborhoods, they brought with them family traditions, social and cultural ways of living, social behavior and a particular interpretation of space, the village, in its social way, and moved to the city. In this respect, it is very suitable "wolf changes his hair but not his vices" Romanian proverb, because the bourgeois transformation of a peasant title has not meant a change in mentality and behavior.

Urban Cultural Landscape

Landscapes, in general, describe a history of the image. The cultural landscape means areas in which the past has placed its stamp. Cultural landscape, such as the industrial landscape, is part of the anthropic landscape, the result of human creativity. Newly built areas, areas that have not a story to tell can be classified only social. Assimilated urban cultural landscape may have significant differences, depending on the typology of physical and social framework to which it refers: it is a palimpsest, and a kaleidoscope of styles and mode (Stan, 2010).

Urban cultural landscape isn't defined outside the city, it reflects the political, social, economic, territorial state of the environment in which it evolves and its history.

Each city is composed of several landscape determined by the objectives and construction group and the formation of relatively compact and homogeneous areas. In Iasi can be identified five landscapes: a specific landscape of historic center, a landscape of cultural institutions, a recreational facilities one, an industrial landscape and a "big Habitats" landscape.

Grouping the most valuable cultural and touristic north-west - center, overlapping largely on the city's civic center, determine us to perceive this area as being representative

for calling Iasi - Romania's cultural capital. The perception of the landscape evolves. Landscape supports interpretations of the idea of beautiful, useful, valuable, the latter being influenced by historical time, circumstances, ideology, etc. The cultural landscape of post-socialist cities in Romania has undergone radical changes and not always so fair in the period before 1989 but especially after.

The old town center was the most severely affected, presenting today like a mixed shop, with everything (XVII - XVIII century buildings and churches - rigid construction of the twentieth century, socialist-era, glass high-rise buildings, iron and concrete buildings, all mixed together and having a general aspect of kitsch).

In terms of cultural institutions (schools, universities, libraries) they have managed to maintain its old sites and have escaped largely specific modernization communist and post-communist society. Increasing the number of pupils and students determined to build new bodies that were seen in a total mismatch between parent and new construction building (geometrized, impersonal, gray).

Through its functions, the center is not only culturally but also socially. The social dimension is well defined, is linked to both the historical past and the active present, because that is where social contacts are at the highest intensity, where the population knowledge, in the most profound and complete way, the scale and the dynamism of the city (Lazarescu, 1977).

The metamorphosis of the urban cultural landscape

Continuing the above idea, that the urban cultural landscape is composed of elements that are considered representative by the inhabitants of the settlements, majority grouped in the old town, I will try to present in a structured way the transformations suffered by the center. Romanian Urban Experience shows us that the problems of the center of can't be approached than in the general context of understanding the whole

urban area, being an integral part of all urban good or bad decisions taken locally or nationally imposed.

The organization of this center is conditioned by the geographical location of the city, its size and historical context in which it evolved. Cultural and administrative center of the city doesn't always coincide with the geometric center of the territory, becoming the result of a voluntary process of urban development (the example of Constanta, with an almost peripheral position within the territory, as eloquently).

The idea that history forges the present and that historical heritage of a city counter socialist lifestyle stood to the vast socialist town-planning programs. As a result, on the one hand, remove the items compared with the past (buildings, mansions, memorials houses, religious buildings), and on the other hand, gave free rein to the application of Ceausescu's megalomaniac ideas in urban practice (Ianoș, 2004). Implantation of new "modern" construction in existing areas has led to assault and desecration of their heritage.

According to the drawings of systematization, in big and medium cities they have demolished the central areas, to build "civic center" in which administrative palaces, houses of culture unions and youth and other buildings with less than a typical architecture dominated the new urban landscape. The interventions have often been brutal, causing functional ruptures obvious even today, and even deepened by the newest urban projects. Depending on the intensity of these fractures can be distinguished fundamental rupture cities (grouped by county residence towns whose in habitants number tripled after 1966), cities with significant ruptures (in this class being included regional cities: Bucharest, Iasi, Craiova, etc.), towns with minor tearing (represented by small and medium-sized cities) and towns without functional tearing (gathers small agriculture towns and resorts).

Central areas of cities overlap, mostly, to the historical centers, in more or less happy preservation options, reflecting a history that retains only convenient episodes, being also support tourism activities (Iancu, 2003). Central areas meet not only the positive

aspects (grouped buildings and monuments which tell us about the life and culture of communities whose existence has exhausted physically, but still left with tangible signs in town) but also negative, such as congestion and conflict situations (for example, inadequate street texture to the necessities of modern car traffic).

What we now call the old historic center it is the old functional core that preserved itself in functional urban areas over time. The historic center is defined as the place that has accumulated in a given time history, a substantial amount of urban values characteristic for the existence of such community (Lazarescu, 1977).

The historic center is characterized by concentrating most valuable tourist attractions around the old city center. Their position to the old urban core shows the amplitude and the main directions of growth.

In Iași, the old city is contained within a quadrilateral bounded by the current Ștefan cel Mare street (Broad Lane), Alexandru Lăpușneanu, Independence Blvd (Hagioaiei Bridge), Elena Doamna and Grigore Ghica (Russian lane), the core city being in the Palace of Culture (Royal Court) and Costache Negri Street (Old Lane). The new city expanded in all directions, including in the first stage (XVIII-XIX centuries) Copou neighborhoods, Sărărie, Țicău, Tătărași, Ciurchi, Galata, Păcurari, Nicolina and partly, in the second phase (twentieth century), were included neighborhoods Păcurari (the new west), Nicolina (the new south part, now called CUG), Frumoasa, Poitiers, Socola, Bucium, Canta, Mircea cel Bătrân, Alexandru cel Bun, Dacia and Grădinari, plus the Industrial Zone.

By 1940 the city has developed mainly according the location and geographical features of the site: buildings along the river Bahlui were built on high ground portions, and the city does not extend to the hills. After this period, these principles have been forgotten, and development after the war had not connected with the landscape and the historic city center (Horizon 2020). Iași 2011 presents an amalgamated image: old building (formerly bohemian, now sitting drop, plus a few renovated buildings) with curtains of gray

concrete blocks of flats, built during the communist era, modern iron and glass buildings, abandoned industrial sites, industrial buildings and green spaces.

"Golden platform "of Iasi, as it is known in tourist language the area which brings together the monuments around old Princely Court (1434) (Palace of Culture, Royal St. Nicholas Church, Dosoftei House, Church Three Holy Hierarchs (including the Philharmonic building), the Metropolitan Cathedral, the Palace Roznovanu, National Theatre Alecsandri) can be extended to south-east /east, embracing also "the hexagon of former or present monasteries " (Church Barnovschi, Zlataust Church, White Church, Golia Monastery, Bărboi Church, St. Sava).

Civic center of the town partially overlap on historic center, grouping the state institutions (City Hall - Palace Roznovanu, Prefecture, Public Finance Division, the Court - with a less typical architecture). The dynamics of this area is complemented by the presence of banking institutions (BRD, Raiffeisen Bank, CEC, Banc, Bank Millennium, etc...), schools (V. Alecsandri School, College of Arts), the business objectives (Moldova Mall, Central Hall, etc..), the accommodation(H. Moldova, H. Ramada, H. Europe etc..) and food (restaurants, bars, pizza places, cafes, etc..), Travel agencies and tourist advice (Atlantic, Giramondo, United, etc...), medical centers and pharmacies (St. Paraskeva Medical Center, Hospital of Obstetrics and Gynecology).

To accommodate all these new buildings (hotels, shopping areas) interventions were required on the initially landscape, being sacrificed even Gardens (Grădina Beilicului), fancy boxes, testimony to the city heavily bourgeois life of another time (the example of the demolished area for construction of Hotel Europa) but also the royal or noble mansions (Ghica Vodă's mansion).

Another way of aggression of the center is its modernization. The main reasons were physical and moral wear of built, historical and architectural monuments impairment due to physical degradation and poor land use. Active framing of the historical into the contemporary center of the city has meant not

only a process of recovery but also a process of completion, leading to a distortion of space.

The idea that the central function is incompatible with the function of residence dominated for a long time the planner's thoughts. It was noted however that no resident population center remains poor as the physical and social presence, its specific functions only intermittently engaging the public interest. Accordingly, the Law 58/1974 requires construction of buildings housing settlements from the center towards the periphery, ensuring high-density assemblies. Thus, there began the process of garnishing the historical center with assembly blocks, xeroxed (Bd. Ștefan cel Mare și Sfânt, Str. Anastasie Panu, Bld. Independenței, all intersecting main streets of the historical center of Iași).

The perception of the urban landscape of Iași as a cultural landscape

The perception refers to a complex psychological behavior by which an individual organizes his feelings and becomes aware of the real. The perception is a relation between the subject and the object: the object has its own characteristics, but I perceive them with my subjectivity (Sillamy, 2009).

Known for a long time as the cultural capital of Romania, Iași seems to maintain, at least in the collective mind, the attribute of cultural city. In the context of an inter-city competition more accentuated, building a brand image based on culture may be inspired. An urban marketing strategy based on clear cultural dimension of the municipality – with its specific projections in the city area – would allow finding the correct

proportions between the affection and the respect and would lead to the structure of a city lovemark (Figure 1) in the true sense of the word (Groza, Coudroy de Lille, Paftală, 2010). City lovemark assumes that cities can build a relationship based on love, warmth and respect with the potential customers, gradually becoming indispensable to the consumers. The cities of the future are those who integrate this system of values based on love and respect for the potential consumer, allowing the combination of the emotional and the rational preference.

People who participated at this survey responded to a questionnaire with 29 closed questions, semi - closed and opened, structured in such a way to enable the referral the main characteristics of the area of Iași. The analysis of the responses highlights the cultural dimension of the space of Iași (Figure 2). Hereby, the most respondents think that the image of Iași is based on culture. The second figure concerning the factors

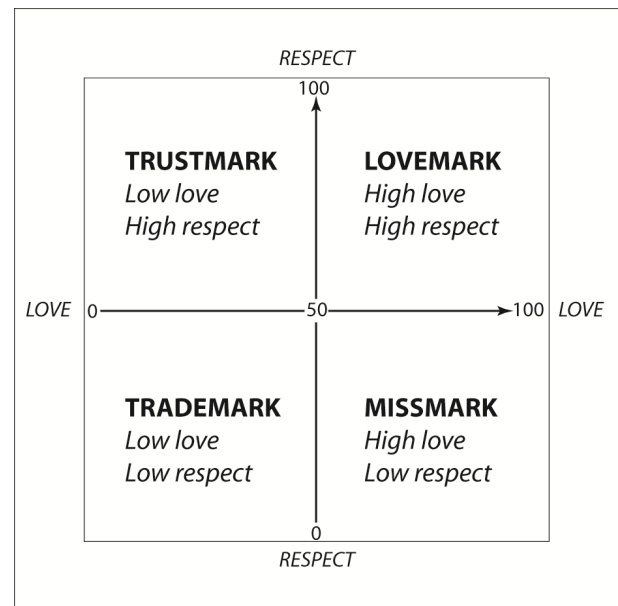


Figure 1. Marks categories (Samama, 2003, modified)

Table 1. Sample structure

Ages (years)	Number	Level of education	Number	Profession	Number
18 – 25	50	Elementary school	4	High skilled professions	76
26 – 35	39	High-school	21	Intermediate professions	5
36 – 45	26	University	79	Office employees	14
46 – over 60	20	Postgraduate	32	Workers	6
				Students	26
				Unemployed	6
				Retired	2

Source: Groza et al. 2010

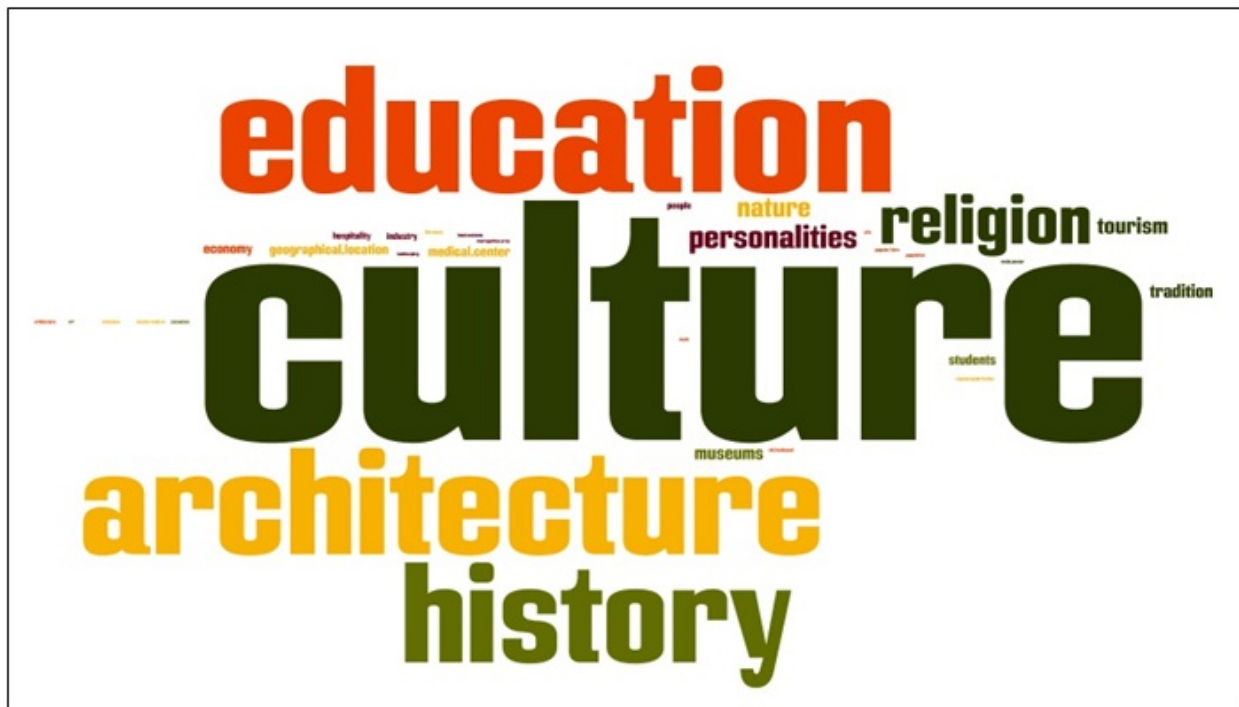


Figure 2. The mapping of the elements underlying the image of Iași

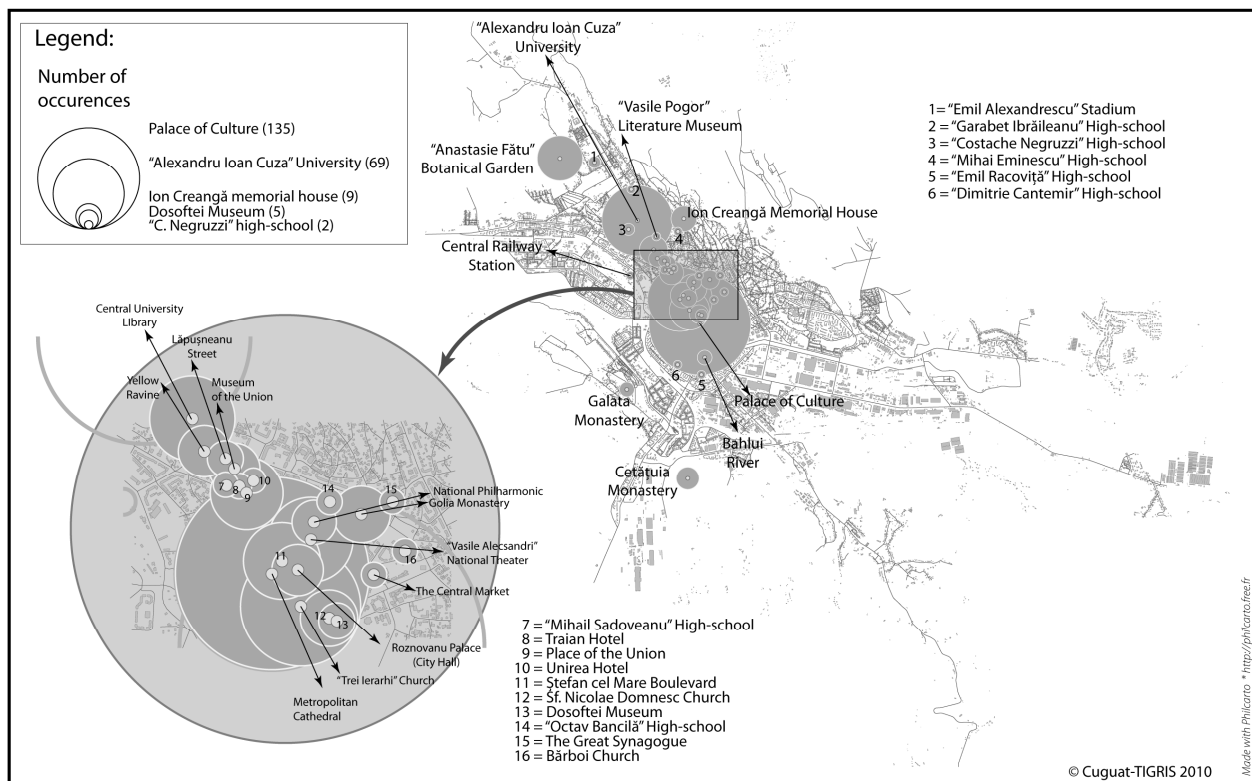


Figure 3 – The frequency of places associated with the municipality of Iași

Source: Groza et al. 2010

underlying the image of Iași municipality was achieved using the Wordle program (Figure 3). Wordle is qualitative data processing software, available online, who has the ability to map words. The word font size is

determined by the number of the occurrences, as the word appears more frequently in the text processing it is even more prominent.

The responses highlight the cultural (94%) and educational (30%) dimensions of

the municipality, followed by the others: : 28% believe that the historic past of the city is an asset for the city brand image (the capital of Moldova, and later of unoccupied Romania, the town of the three unions, promoter city of the 1989 Revolution), 14% indicate the natural element as being important in building the image of the city (geographical location, the existence of greenery islands inside the city, and of the borders of woods in the suburbs), 8% mentions the importance of religious item (relics of St. Cuv. Paraschiva, the approximately 100 churches and monasteries), 5% believe that the economic activity has an important contribution to the image of the city (the touristic, industry and commercial activity), 5% remember the traditions and customs still kept, 3% mentions the attribute of medical center, of prime importance, to Moldova and 2% the “how to be” of the people (open, hospitable, warm).

The image of Iași seems to be a complex one (Table 2), with some contradictory elements (young city - closed city to the ideas from abroad, etc.). We easily remark the assigned character of a cultural city. Also with reference to the cultural dimension we add the attributes of attractive university town, a city with special objectives, and a city that preserves the customs and the traditions.

Conclusions

The „cultural” capital of Moldavia was a large industrial city which tends to become a big bazaar, like a market town. The cultural tradition of Iași was interrupted by the communist regime, only the effect of city size (regional city) succeeding in to keep its superior urban functions. The urban transition involves a cultural transition to, by the reduction of the proletarian culture events and the emergence of the consumer culture (the consumer literature, the cinema city, the discos and bars, the city days who rise in the bad taste party). The cultural attribute does not imply only the existence of significant patrimonial values in the city, but also certain effervescence and a continuity of the cultural events (graphic exhibitions, painting, sculpture exhibitions, a high circulation of cultural magazines, the festivals of international fame, the good music concerts, etc.). Returning to the cultural heritage (the natural and the anthropic one), it is in a fairly advanced state of degradation, the restoration activities being initiated since the 1990s, but unfinished even today. Moreover, the reshape of the urban space during the communism and the post communist caused fundamental changes in the cultural landscape, through the emergence of new buildings, to adapt the territory to different kinds of activities,

Table 2. The composite image and sometimes contradictory of the city

Positive aspects	Negative aspects
Cultural city - 97%	High unemployment (87%)
Attractive university town - 92%	City where the living is not good - 78%
City with special sightseeing - 92%	The current municipal team does not give a positive image to the city - 77%
Friendly, warm city - 83%	The old transport infrastructure, which does not satisfies the needs of the residents - 71%
Town with old traditions and customs - 79%	City which doesn't have a dynamic economy - 70%
Safe city for tourists - 79%	A city that had suffered both during the communist and post-communist period - 62%
City located in a nice area - 78%	Closed city to the ideas from abroad - 61%
An attractive touristic destination (68%)	The current image of the city abroad discourages the business development - 53%
Young city - 67%	Poor city - 52%
A city which has a modern infrastructure of accommodation - 61%	A touristic destination too expensive compared with the quality of services - 40%
City with quality touristic services - 57%	
Aesthetic city - 54%	
Lively city - 51%	
City with satisfactory (37%) or good (26%) recreational opportunities	

Source: Groza et al., 2010

thereby creating obvious textural, formal and chromatic disharmonies.

The attribute of "cultural" in the phrase "cultural capital" is still an urban myth behind which to hide the mediocrity of urban society in search of its parts, its marks. Fortunately, this myth is quite powerful and has some real foundation on which to raise the foundations of a true urban image.

After the nightmare of destruction in the latter part of the Ceausescu era and their continuing after the transition period, applications to respect "specific" of the city become increasingly vehement. To those, the followers of "hard" modernization for whom the eclecticism and inconsistency due to a turbulent history can serve as an excuse to build anywhere and everywhere (Ghenciulescu, 2008).

Despite the development of settlements in the urban aspect is, at least in theory, coordinated by a general urban plan that describes how to permit intervention and inherent constraints, changing landscape in recent decades makes us define the urban space as an area of the Romanian all possible, a place where beauty and ugliness coexist, authenticity and kitsch, traditional and too modern. However, the landscape remains above all a cultural landscape, this picture being very well entrenched in the collective mentality, able to hide any imperfections dependent modernization.

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