

THE IMPACT OF THE ECONOMIC CRISIS ON CULTURE

Maria MOLDOVEANU*
Valeriu IOAN-FRANC**

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In this context, the unanimous striving for international cooperation to find adequate answers to the present global crisis led to the confrontation of principles referring to concrete means of improving the financial institutions and reviving the economy of every country.

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In this respect, economists and practitioners initiated specific debates. Some meetings were attended by Nobel Prize winners for economics.

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* Ph.D. on economics, Senior 1st degree researcher, The National Institute for Economic Research „Costin C. Kirişescu”, The Romanian Academy, Bucharest, Romania, e-mail: cide@zappmobile.ro.

** Ph.D. on economics, Senior 1st degree researcher, deputy general director, The National Institute for Economic Research „Costin C. Kirişescu”, The Romanian Academy, Bucharest, Romania, e-mail: cide@zappmobile.ro.

1. On the economic crisis and some cultural connotations

Analysts of the present economic crisis have concluded – after studying the causes and processes that triggered it – that the “detonator” was the crisis of the US financial system. The high indebtedness at all levels (companies, consumers, public sector), the development of “toxic” financial instruments, considered real “mass destruction weapons” that weakened the financial system, along with risk underestimation, reached the critical point when the decline started.

Actually, the financial crisis moved to the real sector of the economy, so that in early 2009 “the recession was a reality in almost all developed countries” (Dolgu, Gh., 2009, p. 18) and continued to grow. The “trust crisis” caused the blocking of the banking system and a “liquidity crisis”, and even a “solvency crisis” with severe consequences on the economic situation.

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In this context, the unanimous striving for international cooperation to find adequate answers to the present global crisis led to the confrontation of principles referring to concrete means of improving the financial institutions and reviving the economy of every country.

The measures intended have several common targets such as diminishing the mistrust still prevailing in the USA and the EU countries: “Restoring the trust in financial markets is the main objective of the Central Banks’ and Governments’ intervention” (Dolgu, Gh., 2009, p. 35).

While mistrust and insecurity are becoming global, still there are differences between regions. Continental Europe, where we are situated, shows several vulnerabilities such as the lack of a common fiscal policy and a common labour market policy, which makes the harmonisation of national fiscal policies quite difficult, but as Gheorghe Dolgu writes, there also are many strengths, among which a lower indebtedness level (than in the USA), a higher saving rate and a single currency (euro), which protects it against speculative attacks.

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this respect, economists and practitioners initiated specific debates. Some meetings were attended by Nobel Prize winners for economics.

Synthesizing the opinions of several specialists, Dolgu thinks that there are irrefutable arguments in support of the state's intervention to limit the economic crisis, such as:

- the state enjoys a higher credibility than private enterprises and can mobilize important resources of the companies and of the population;
- the state helps to restore the trust in financial investments by guaranteeing the deposits and loans;
- the state, as investor, may involve in developing the infrastructure, in saving some branches/fields facing problems, in modernizing the society as a whole by reconsidering, among others, the balance between the state and markets.

This economic crisis is the most complex one in the modern history of the economy. In his latest work *Criza și după criză* ("Crisis and after crisis"), Andrei Marga thinks that it is too early to estimate its "size", even if, as Mircea Marin points out, the author is "obsessed" with overcoming the crisis, and with the time "after" crisis. In the chapter concerning the culture-crisis relation (or, more exactly, the culture-crisis isomorphism) as well as in the essay at the end of the book entitled *Economia drept cultură* ("Economy as culture") the author raises a (non-rhetorical) question: If a culturally emancipated society depends on the existence of a flourishing economy, what is the logical order? Does the society's spirituality imply economic prosperity or might its material development also result from activating the cultural background?

In the last years, journalists and arts creators have engaged in debates on culture and crisis. The programme launched by Sorin Alexandrescu under the aegis of the CESI (The Excellence Centre for the Image Study – The Bucharest University) called "Culture beats the crises", helped "the public thirsty for culture to take a deep breath.

The programme started with a conference of George Banu, a theatre scholar living in Paris, called "Shakespeare, the dream and the world", held at the Central University Library in Bucharest.

Considering the theatrical strategy of *début* and *finale*, esthetic trends and power scenarios, examples from Shakespeare's works and Cioran's youth crisis, G. Banu pleaded for the freedom of the man of culture, for his courage "to turn his back on crisis" and to save himself by culture.

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Scheduled in the spring of 2009, soon after the crisis had started, G. Banu's conference was a major event in the intellectual life of Bucharest.

As Cristina Stroe said, through his plays, Bann wrote and directed the drama of the thinking and the spiritual life of each participant or, as Shakespeare would say, culture is meant to keep the mirror in front of the world.

2. Culture in time of crisis

„Crisis is everywhere. In the Netherlands, theatres, orchestras and dance companies are being closed. Not only the independent sector is affected by austerity measures. Also state institutions face major budget cutting. In 2012, the intended measures are even severer. The Hague Government intend to cut expenditures by 200 million euros.

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They cut one-third of the expenditure on performance arts and ten percent of the museums' expenditure. Out of ten orchestras, only eight are preserved – five of them with a budget ensuring only their survival, and not developing their repertoire and financing their productions. Out of seven dance companies, only four are maintained. One theatre and one opera company receive no funding. Several thousands of employees public cultural institutions (artists and culture managers) are going to be fired” (Martin, M., 2011, nr. 391).

To the above-mentioned, one may add other examples (from the Netherlands and other countries – e.g. Romania) that show the impact of the economic crises of the cultural system. All its components and functions are affected: from infrastructure to the funding of cultural institutions and activities, from access to symbolic goods and services to the culture consumption and the evolution of the culture market, from the cultural environment to the mentalities and behaviour of the managers in the field, including those ones working in the field of the creative industries.

The analysis of cultural statistics as well as the sociological surveys reveal the changes in the condition and functioning of the system, of each branch and each type of institution since the beginning of the crisis. For example, the Barometer of Cultural Consumption (annual research by the Centre for Study and Research in the Culture Field – CSCDC, funded by the Ministry of Culture) shows that one year after the beginning of the crisis (i.e. 2009 compared with 2008) the population in our country had the perception that the number of museums, libraries, exhibition rooms, cultural clubs, festivals and bookshops diminished by about 2-6% (<http://culturadata.ro>).

The data provided by the National Institute of Statistics on “The activity of cultural artistic units” in 2010 show that, in comparison with the previous year, the number of museums diminished by 13 units, and that of public libraries and institutions decreased by only 3 units over the same period, their activity diminished more – from 19,739 of shows to 19,559, just as the activity of the public libraries decreased, from 50,447 books and periodicals borrowed in 2009, that is from 16.5 volumes per user to 14.9 (NIS, 2010, 2011).

Even since 2009, the estimation made by the subjects included in the Barometer of Cultural Consumption regarding the activity of cultural institutions was negative, especially cultural clubs, which are in a very poor condition, and that is why the number of people who identify their presence in various areas and localities is smaller, although “the cultural clubs still represent the most widespread type of cultural infrastructure, followed by libraries”.

Quite significant is the fact that the NIS statistical reports in the last years no longer reflected the existence and activity of rural cultural institutions although the estimates and strategies of the decentralized departments of the Ministry of Culture, Cults and National Cultural Patrimony attribute them significant importance.

For example, the Vâlcea District Department for Culture (DJCCPCNV) indicates in the 2008-2013 Cultural Strategy that there are 129 cultural clubs, some with significant activity (Vaideeni, Voineasa, Runcu, Prundeni, Crețeni, Costești, Amărăști); only 10 communes have no cultural clubs since the buildings collapsed or were reverted to the owners or since the initial investments were not finalized, as in Alunu or Copăceni.

In 2008, according to the point of view of the decision markers of the rural communities, such institutions offered opportunities for rural development and that is why they intended to rehabilitate the cultural clubs in 16 villages. The projects are to be finalized depending on the crisis evolution (www.bjai.ro/strategia_culturala_valcea).

Although “the economic crises is felt in all fields, culture is more affected than other sectors of the Romanian society”. The 2010 summer (in the opinion of the executive officer of the DJCCPCNV) was characterized by cultural effervescence.

Contributions to some events (exhibitions, festivals, traditional craftsmen’s fairs) were made by the cultural clubs from Lungești (Potter’s Day, the 32nd edition), Români de Sus (The Springs Cup, the 8th edition), Runcu (Runcu People’s Celebrations, the 6th edition), etc.

On organizing cultural events and reviving traditions, rural institutions cooperate with local authorities, cultural associations and private enterprisers in the field. Becoming aware of the contribution made by the latter, the role of cultural industries in providing symbolic goods and services, in stimulating the creative capacity and the intercultural dialogue, in rising the level of education and promoting cultural diversity as well as their contribution to the economic development of the area, the improvement of infrastructure and labour absorption.

In this respect, in this district there are enterprises for reproducing, distributing and trading audio, video and multimedia products, an international festival for documentary, anthropological and tourism films (Eco-Ethno-Folk Film), although there are no film producers and cine-clubs, and in crisis conditions, their emergence is quite improbable. Also there are two private TV stations and a local radio station, but for the Vâlcea people the written press (including cultural press) is more important, just like the book industry (seven publishing houses are constantly present in the District and at national books fairs), due to the strong tradition of the printed words, which became an “identity trademark of Vâlcea”, where the printing tradition, initiated 500 year ago at the Bistrița Monastery, witnessed an extraordinary development.

Still, the DJCCPCNV of the Vâlcea District pointed out in 2008, among the weaknesses of “the written culture” (i.e. book and journal printing industry), weak cooperation between the printing sector and the

education system, having repercussions on meeting school needs, as well as the poor effectiveness of the associations of creators and entrepreneurs in this field. But the culture condition in Vâlcea, presented as a case study in our analysis, may be found in other districts having similar size or features.

The NIS statistical studies do not include information concerning the activity of the publishing houses in our country by districts or development regions. The only data on book publishing are found in the chapter “The Activity of the Legal Store of the National Library”, indicating the number of titles of printed books and booklets (by field, in accordance with the UNESCO classification, and by language) included in the Legal Store. Figures show a lowering trend, as in 2010 the number was smaller by 5,152 titles as compared to 2009 (37.61%), while in 2009 there were 7,231 titles (59.72) less than in the previous year.

The 2009 Barometer of Culture Consumption does not include items on the perception of the publishing activity, and according to the estimation of the acquisition of cultural goods (e.g. books, music, films) and the preference for recreation activities, in the first year of crisis the interest in classic cultural goods (books, films, theatre, etc.) diminished, as respondents allocated a smaller budget, favouring discotheques, clubs, fun shows and concerts in the open air.

Also, museums and exhibitions no longer arouse the same interest as before. According to NIS statistics, in 2010 the number of visitors diminished by over 100,000 as compared to the first year of crisis and, as the authors of the Barometer of Cultural Consumption found out, “museums are actually full only during the Night of Museums, when access is free”, and the museums’ situation is strange.

The economic crisis influences the system infrastructure not only by number of units and cultural practice equipping, but it has also impact on services, on the volume and contests of the cultural activity.

Undoubtedly, we cannot explain the present situation of the cultural system only through the effects of the economic crisis/recession. The condition and quality of its structure depend on the entire period of transition, which Nicolae Belli (2001) called in an inspired way “more difficult than a war”.

Directing his research towards economic and social phenomena, wrong decision causing the worsening of the standard of living and “the aggressive escalation of poverty” in our country, Belli finds out that the cultural dimension of this multidimensional phenomenon – economic, social, cultural and political (i.e. poverty) – concentrates “the poor man’s privations, from access to education and professional training to cultural information and utilities with a civilizing character” (Belli, N., 2001, p. 238).

At the same time, we cannot separate the present cultural decline from the formalism and impact of ideology, from all the other constraints in the last fifty years. Also, we might be wrong if we do not recognize the bad influence of the global economic crisis on culture (that cannot be estimated at present), but excessively exploited by those in charge of managing this domain and finding solutions to prevent irreversible degradation.

3. Crisis influences the resources allocated to culture

Culture sociologists and economists rightly point out that the strongest effect of the economic crisis on the cultural system is *poor funding*. The shortage of investments is felt by all components: creation, production, distribution, promotion, cultural market.

Although in the last years the funding sources diversified – besides the local and state budgets, the cultural operators (public institutions and NGOs) use extrabudgetary sources (own sources or sponsorship) and external sources as loans or non-reimbursable funds – although the MCCNCP set rules for the effective use of funds and the correlation of funding sources and the decentralized services made, in turn, significant efforts in this direction, the amounts received are not enough to achieve some objectives included in the Strategic Plan for the Culture sector Development (2009-2013) such as: the *début* stimulation, the development of cultural services in rural area, the valuing of the intangible patrimony, wider access to culture for all social categories, and broader participation to the cultural life, including the creation and the production of symbolic goods, etc.

Still resources are available for other important objectives. For example, for “financing the consolidation, restoration and modernisation of 18 historical monuments and cultural buildings of public interest, selected by importance level according to the funding criteria of the Bank for

Development of the Council of Europe (80% of the required amount; 20% is covered by the Romanian Government). There are similar initiatives at the local level, but the number of cultural buildings (some being historical monuments) in poor/non-functioning condition is quite large.

In principle, there are several funding sources for the monumental patrimony:

1. Financing by own funds (if the monument is functional), i.e., by selling entry tickets and other services to visitors; but the visitors are never in a sufficient number to get the necessary amount, and if the ticket price is too high, the number of visitors will diminish even more.

2. Funding by guaranteed loans, which implied some costs for all parties involved.

3. Financing by European funds through *Community Programmes* focused on restoring historical monuments in relation to the regeneration and revival of the built zone in the urban and rural areas. The projects funded through such programmes should aim, among others, at: the integrated development of cultural activities, especially the traditional ones and rendering the cultural patrimony valuable.

4. Funding by local budgets, which, in underdeveloped areas and in crisis time, cannot reach the level required for funding culture.

In Romania, in all areas, there is a significant number of monuments, historical sites and architectural assemblies. For their conservation, protection and capitalisation, the local public administration plays the leading role. The decentralized services of the MCCNCP are directly involved in estimating the condition of the monumental patrimony and in stimulating the “pro-patrimony behaviour” of the community. At the same time, they face the lack of funding for urgent works of consolidation and restoration of the patrimony infrastructure.

For example, in the Cultural Strategy of the Vâlcea District, with over 100 historical monuments and archaeological sites included in the List of Monuments, explicitly requires that “The resources allocated from the state budget can cover only a small part of the cost of emergency works required by the present condition of the monuments (Cultural Strategy of the Vâlcea District, 2008-2013, p. 16), which requires the involvement of several potential fund providers: public authorities, parishes, owners, dwellers, economic agents, NGOs able to obtain European funds, etc.

The present economic crisis is also affecting the funding of the monumental patrimony by local budgets.

Although the MCCNCP Strategy for the culture development in 2007-2013 points out that "...for protecting immovable national cultural patrimony it is vital to increase the funding of the expenditure from the local budget in relation to the state budget" (MCCNCP, 2007), one finds that the difficulty to reach this objective is insurmountable.

5. Funding by economic agents located in the vicinity of the monuments, which by restoring/rehabilitating the monuments and developing the museum and tourism activity seek economic benefits.

6. Supporting specific programmes and projects by state subsidies and public-private partnership.

As a public authority, the state has a higher body function in relation to the patrimony. Its investments help to keep the collective memory, to protect the historical heritage, to ensure the social cohesion. As Xavier Greffe (1990) points out, the monumental patrimony clearly illustrates the tension caused by the competition between various social sub-systems (education, health, culture, public order, etc.) to get budget subsidies, which, in crisis conditions (i.e. decreasing economic activity, diminishing contributions to the GDP) can reach unpredictable proportions.

In this context, the author could ask: What is the authorities' risk when they decide to allocate public funds? Could we say, for example, that the amounts invested in restoring the stained-glass windows of a cathedral are more useful than those used to rehabilitate a mansion in rural area or that investments in culture are more important than those in health or in public order? The culture economists think that the decisions in this area should be based on rigorous scientific analyses able to show the cost and effects/benefits of the investment and to overcome the emotional and esthetic judgement (Greffe, X., 1990, p. 177).

But cultural authorities seek that the programmes and the projects receiving budget resources should be consistent with the specific feature of the region or the zone, "be sustainable, properly founded and realistic", but also able to produce benefits to communities and culture consumers (Ministerul Culturii, Cultelor și Patrimoniului Cultural Național, 2007). It is essential that the cultural operators should be informed of the opportunities to participate in auctions for both internal funding and Community funding.

At the same time, they should comply with the election criteria required by the auction regulations.

It is worth mentioning that the transparency of the decisions on funding projects and cultural organisations was obvious. Stakeholders can get information about the following: the final auction results, the name of the projects accepted and the score, the projects rejected or incomplete, the competitors – cultural public institutions or cultural NGOs – the amount allocated to each project, etc. A first “reading” of the final results of the funding session held by the Administration of the National Cultural Fund (www.afcn.ro) makes us conclude that the projects presented cover all cultural areas: museum activity, architecture and design, visual arts and new media, shows (music, dance, theatre), cultural education, professional training in the cultural field, national cultural patrimony, intangible patrimony and cultural intervention.

A study made several years ago by the ECUMEST Cultural Association in cooperation with for Institute for Public Policies on “The access of cultural NGOs to public funding in Romania” shows that the reasons for rejecting several projects were the following: low relevance for the cultural life of the communities, scarce resources of the local authorities, the quality of presentation (arguments) of the project and incomplete documents, poor experience of the organisation, etc.

The above reasons, especially the incomplete documents, are also valid in the case of the AFCN projects in 2011. By reducing the financial resources because of the amount allocated from the GDP to the culture sector and the present economic crisis, the number of accepted applications has diminished since 2010, as revealed by the Romanian Cultural Institute, which manages the funds distributed by the MCCNCP.

Therefore, the cultural organisations (public institutions and non-governmental institutions) are looking for resources to survive in economic conditions unsuitable for culture and are aware that for producing competitive cultural goods they cannot count only on the market forces, but they must find wise ways to save, attract sponsors, extend the public-private partnership.

In one of his books, Alvin Toffler (1997) points out that great investments must be made to produce culture in every socio-economic context. For example, when we check the expenses made by an important musical institution on a show, we find out that the amount invested in

infrastructure and equipment (e.g., installations, lighting, scenery, building maintenance), in paying artists and technician teams, to which we should add expenses on advertising, PR, insurance, etc., cannot be borne only by spectators irrespective of their number and the price of the entry tickets.

As Toffler writes, “The price cannot be discussed without discussing about the number” (Toffler, A., 1997, p. 138), i.e. market features, size, etc.

The potential cultural market can never be identified with the entire population in an area. Every community has individuals without “cultural capital” (i.e., knowledge, information, abilities to receive/decode cultural messages), which excludes them from among the potential consumers of symbolic goods, and to them one should add a population segment that, for financial or related reasons (lack of time in case of people having two or three jobs), gives up some cultural goods or some services/goods used before. They ex-consumers of culture and, according to statistics, their number increases in crisis time. Economic constraints “burden” the cultural domain as a whole from the creation of values to the consumption behaviour. If consumption diminishes, also the society’s material/financial resources diminish (the contributions to the GDP decreases) and the market targeted by the culture producers must be resized.

The cultural market, like the market for other products, consists of several segments. A. Toffler notices that in every society there is a significant segment of consumers directing their expenses towards products that satisfy their preferences and needs, without frequenting cultural institutions – “buying books or records, hearing the preferred music on the radio”, etc. (Toffler, A., 1997, p. 139). The segment attending musical events, visiting museums and other specific institutions is divided, in turn, by punctual cultural preferences: there is a public for chamber music, but not folk music, another for classical music, but not for contemporary music; it means that the number of buyers for each artistic discipline is limited.

The diversified supply is meant to satisfy the multitude of options.

The configuration of the cultural market differs from country to country, from a development period to another. The transition in our country and especially the recession/crisis caused the market restructuring and the culture consumers’ reorientation in relation to the constraints of the context and the personal options.

The estimation of consumption in the first year of crisis by the subjects included in the research show a tendency towards a more prudent behaviour

in managing the budget for cultural products, the option reorientation towards less costly activities and even giving up some cultural practices preferred before the crisis. Asked whether they are going to buy in the following months more or less DVDs containing artistic movies, 8% answered that they "will buy less", and 67% said they "will buy none" (<http://culturadata.ro>).

Usually, a rational being invests some money in buying some products after a brief analysis of costs and specific benefits, but also in accordance with the needs. The same cultural needs and preferences (e.g., musical ones) can be satisfied *at high cost* (e.g. booking tickets for an international festival, such as the George Enescu Festival) or free, hearing music on the radio or attending concerts organized in town squares (e.g. those organized during the Bucharest Days).

Depending on these elements – costs, benefits, needs, preferences, resources context, experience, etc. – people adopt individual cultural consumption strategies, but cannot ensure the resources for the functioning of the system as a whole.

That is why the public authorities must take part in funding the cultural production, especially the goods and activities that benefit equally the individuals and the society, that is stimulating creativity and social cohesion, participating in decision making and cultural life, shaping tastes and rising the education level, showing respect regarding the human values and solidarity. Moreover, the production and distribution of cultural services and products could generate jobs and important economic resources within the communities.

In essence, it is estimated that public subsidizing should equal the additional social benefit offered to the society through the production and consumption of cultural works.

4. Punctual solutions to the influence of the crisis on culture in Romania

The individual cultural consumption strategies are personal solutions to limit/counteract the impact of the economic crisis on the schooling/professional training of the individuals, on education and, in general, on the quality of their lives. Besides reducing the amounts allocated for cultural expenses and giving up some specific activities and practices, many individuals have to come to cultural products through practices like

online piracy of CDs and DVDs, which affects strongly the industry of audio recordings and going to the movie. Others opt for spending their free time in the open air, in parks and public gardens, as shown in the Barometer of the Cultural Consumption 2009.

By contrast with the place held in our days by these public spaces in the opinion of the cultural organisations, we present below their contribution over time to the population's recreation and education, to the cultural life of the Romanian towns.

Cornelia Viziteu (2002) demonstrates in *Biblioteca și societățile culturale botoșănene la începutul secolului al XX-lea*, (“The Botoșani library and cultural societies in early 20th century”) that the population considered public gardens as *active factors* for the cultural formation of the public and the harmonisation of the urban design in Botoșani. Arranged by Hungarian, German or Italian gardeners, provided with monuments, statues, show stages, the public gardens were places preferred for cultural events – concerts, theatrical and variety shows, speeches delivered by cultural celebrities, school feasts, etc. – but also spaces for socializing and strong attraction areas for all social categories in that zone and the incoming tourists.

Presenting the public parks and private gardens, C. Viziteu mentions that the model of the Botoșani community extended to other urban areas, so that until now the celebrity of the public gardens of the Moldavian cities and towns (Iași, Bacău, Roman, Dorohoi) lasted owing to their beauty and functionality; they are still unique and associated with the name of artists or other personalities that visited them, like the famous park called after Mihai Eminescu.

If after the first year of crisis the consumption of high quality cultural goods decreased – we do not agree the notion of “elitist” culture used in the CSCDC studies for its negative connotation – giving up theatre shows, concerts, museums, exhibitions, etc., and if the purchase of cultural goods (books, films, music, etc.) and home equipment diminished, opting for less costly leisure activities (e.g., fairs, anniversary exhibitions, free concerts in squares, events like the Museums' Night, visits to parks and public gardens) it means that the managers of the cultural organisations should reformulate the projects and find punctual solutions to the problems caused by the economic crisis.

In this context, the partnerships between the public cultural institutions and the economic units pertaining to cultural industries (e.g., publishing houses) or other fields (e.g., tourism industry) prove to be efficient.

In the CSCDC (2009, p. 27) researchers' opinion, the effects of the economic crisis can be limited/improved if we take three categories of measures: financial, innovative, socializing.

The local communities take varied initiatives of this kind and enjoy of creative energies that can be turned to good account. For example, the Bucharest Days events implied major imagination investment, inventiveness, abnegation, effectiveness, communication, cultural training, artistic experience.

“Bucharest Days” and other models of creativeness

– A case study –

The projects are developed in places relevant for the Capital's identity – The Historical Centre, The Constitution Square, The Herăstrău Park and The Youth Park (our note); these events organized during the Bucharest Days show that such places are ideal spaces for artistic expression and zones highly attractive to culture consumers.

The events covered a wide variety of genres - from symphonic concerts to folk music, from painting and graphic exhibitions to the townsmen's parade, from street theatre (see the shows of the French company “Les Studios de Cirque”) to horse riding, etc.

Organized by the Major of Bucharest, ArCuB and CreArt (The Bucharest Centre for Creation, Art and Traditions), many of these events were sponsored by economic agents (Apa Nova, Timișoreana), whom we mention for their decision to invest in culture in a crisis period. Some institutions joined their initiative as mentioned in the programme: “...the city theatrical institutions will perform free, and The Museum of Bucharest, the Museum of Romanian Literature and the Administration of Monuments and Tourism Patrimony will allow also free visiting of exhibitions organized by themselves” (our note).

Famous creators pertaining to all kinds of artistic expression participated in the Bucharest Days: orchestra and stage directors and performers of instrumental, choral and folk music, painters and writers, etc.

In our opinion, to the Bucharest Days may associate “the greatest cultural event in the open air, “Strada de C'Arte”, organized

approximately in the same period (17-24th September) in an area including the C.A. Rosetti, Boteanu and Golescu streets.

“The traffic of culture – as the event was also called by the organizer (i.e., the Charles I Central University Library), that launched the logo 'we legalize the traffic of culture' - took place in two main 'streets', 'Strada de C'Arte' and 'Strada de arhitectură', at the same time with 'Kids Art Land', where workshops were organized for children under the logo 'draw and enjoy’”.

In “Strada de C'Arte” one could find the latest publications, the GALATECA Painting Exhibition, “Zones for reading and resting’ (and also for socializing, we could say, since, in this areas people were discussing about books and writers, about reading, about their cultural expectations).

In the CUL Hall and in Strada de C'Arte there were artistic movies, conferences, theatre shows, and if we add the architecture films and the debates of specialists in parametric architecture, we understand that diverse arts and cultural domains covered in “traffic” – books, theatre, film, architecture, music, painting, graphical works made by children, Internet, etc.

The press presented the complexity of the events and pointed out their axiological density.

Owing to their importance, the above events attracted representative partners from among the economic agents and from press, and owing to their originality and theme profusion they received the gratitude of the culture consumers.

Assessing their methodological dimension, managers at all levels will understand that the positive evolution of the cultural system is dependent, on one hand, on the existence of economic resources and, on the other hand, on the quality of human resources: on training and creativeness, on information and managerial vision, on the capability to conceive realistic projects, to establish strong partnership, to identify latent cultural “forces” – individuals with imagination and cultural initiatives that can be examples for the entire community.

A Case – The Investor in Mosaic

He is neither artist nor a representative of a cultural institution, but he had ideas and saw the potential interest in a form of art that had tradition and continuity in time – the art of mosaic.

Of Oriental origin (Egypt, Persia), this decoration technique, consisting in assembling small coloured pieces of ceramics or glass (sometimes, small stone pieces) and sticking them on some support layer had been taken from Greek-Roman Antiquity and reached perfection in the Byzantine Empire.

The collector's endeavour began on the occasion of an art symposium organized within the partnership between Braşov (where the lawyer Nicolae Vrânceanu is a district councillor) and the Piemont Region in Italy.

While on the first edition, the symposium dealt with “the monumental wood carving”, on the fourth edition, in 2006, the theme was “mosaic” (today the event reached its ninth edition and is called The “Mosaic” National Art Symposium).

Seeing the public interest in this “decoration technique”, the investor decided to carry on the project by himself. He purchased mosaics (about 200 in a few years, preferably those of 1 sq.m.) and exhibited them as permanent exhibitions inside public institutions (e.g., the Braşov Court and Townhall). “They look like oil paintings, said Miron Manega, except for being displayed in the open air. No rain, snow, heat or frost can destroy them” (Manega, M., 2011, p. 30).

He collects but refuses to sell. He acquires mosaics and displays (promotes) them, but does not sell them, which, for some people, means a marketing strategy.

Mosaics, in the investor's opinion, “...humanize cold spaces, warm them up (...) I saw hundreds of people taking pictures by the mosaics, which means they are interesting and people like them”.

In the region, Nicolae Vrânceanu is reputed not only as investor and collector, but also as Maecenas, who gives support to young or recognized artists such as Radu Ciobanu, a sculptor, and Dan Ştefan Minea, a painter, etc.

The investors' ingenuity consisted in opting for a kind of art ignored before, in finding a market niche, to which, of course, others will direct their steps, but, as specialists in cultural marketing say, “he will probably be at the top”.

In line with the above purpose – valuing local creative energies – we find also the involvement of cultural foundations and associations in launching and implementing projects in Romanian zones/localities.

Studying the final results of the applications for funding to AFCN, the projects in fields such as museums, architecture, arts (i.e., painting, sculpture, music, theatre) education, media, management, patrimony, etc. revealed the existence of a large number of cultural NGOs having considerable human capacity and latent experience. They exist in all urban areas and are among the applicants for public funds (less for European funds because of non-competitive projects) but *are less visible in the cultural activity* of the communities. Some have exotic names, others, obscure names, and many are registered under names so general (i.e., “Values”, “Opinions”) that it is difficult to identify the activity object.

The project titles sound similarly. For example “AT4T” requests funding for the project “ManyFest”, and “ada mada” for the project “monstrous drawing”.

The extremely modest activity (inactivity) of many of the cultural associations explains their exclusion from the records and programmes of the District Departments, as territorial representatives of the MCCNCP, although the decision concerning the establishment of these Departments points out the task of supporting “the activity of NGOs and other private legal person with activity in the culture and cults domains” (Art. 17).

For example, in the presentation site of the Botoşani DJCCPCN, we find out that, among the local NGOs, the Ştefan Luchian Foundation, besides the “George Enescu”, “Nicolae Iorga”, “Mihai Eminescu” Memorial Houses, public museums and well-known religious establishments are really visible among the locals and the tourists. We opt for the Botoşani District since contrary to the present situation (similar to other districts) was long before a model for a remarkable cultural life, supported especially by cultural leagues, associations and societies of those areas. Such NGOs “emerged where conditions existed”, sometimes on the initiative of a single individual/group, which later determined a communion of ideas, trends, and motivations that stimulated people to involve in the cultural life.

The activity of every Botoşani organisation is quite telling.

Even today there are districts and localities where cultural NGOs are among the most active actors. The Timiş District is well-known not only for multiculturalism, but also for a remarkable tradition in this respect (e.g. as

far back as mid 19th century, several societies and associations of the nationalities in that area were created and activated in tens of rural areas). At present, a significant group of NGOs in Timișoara (e.g., the Timișoara Intercultural Institute, the Diaspora Foundation, the Third Europe Foundation, the Banat-Crișana Romanian Social Institute, etc.) participate in research and education, in organizing symposiums, seminars, conferences, training courses, in publishing scientific studies. In other words, these organisations support the strategic mission of the Timiș DJCCPCN, such as: the development of a competitive and diversifies cultural life through actions to preserve traditions and value the cultural patrimony, by stimulating the citizens' participation in cultural activities, by ensuring a suitable environment for cultural creativeness, by promoting social cohesion.

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The economic crisis affects inexorably *the quality of the cultural deed* – addressability, continuity, axiological density, educational function, etc. The impact on culture is mainly caused by the scarcity of economic resources and the worsening of the infrastructure because of the situation of the cultural personnel that feels the “threat” of the crises to jobs and incomes, to the social status and professional expectations, to the quality of life, in general.

In crisis time, *the cultural life* of every locality is affected. For the population of many localities, “the local power structures are interested rather in politics and group interests than in the cultural life of their communities” (Moldoveanu, M., Ioan-Franc, V., et al., 2000, p. 17).

The impact affects each component of the cultural life: cultural institutions, the required equipping, the typology of activities and their educative potential, the cultural creation, the human resources of the system, the size and the structure of the cultural personnel, etc.

In this context, the number of artistic events is diminishing, often being replaced with “subcultural products”, with the so-called “supermarket culture”.

The consumption of symbolic goods – implicitly the cultural creation and production – is diminishing. The concentration and “trustisation” trend in the industrial sector of culture causes the bankruptcy of many independent units (publishing houses, bookshops, artistic assemblies, local

TV stations, music studios, etc.) so that some localities, where even public institutions (theatres, libraries, cultural clubs) deteriorated/were dissolved, hardly survive and are viewed as “places where nothing happens”.

In our opinion, the responsibility for diminishing the crisis effects should be assumed by all social actors and the punctual solutions like those presented above should be found by local communities.

Annex

*Examples of cultural projects submitted
for funding at the 2011 (February)
Session of AFCN¹*

	Field	Project	Applicant
I.	Museum activities	<i>Virtual Archaedrome</i>	Constanța Museum of History and Archaeology
II.	Architecture and design	<i>Memorable Town – Investigation in the history of Brașov</i>	Order of Architects (Brașov Branch)
III.	Visual arts and new media	<i>Temps D’images Festival, fourth edition</i>	Colectiv A Association
IV.	Stage performance	<i>Liszt 200 Festival</i>	Cluj-Napoca Hungarian Opera, UNITER
V.	Cultural education	<i>Illustrious Bucharest</i>	Odaia Creativă Association
VI.	Professional Training	<i>Muzeoforum – Online training platform</i>	Casa Meșterilor Museum, Brașov
VII.	National Cultural Patrimony	<i>Dacian Industry</i>	Satu Mare District Museum
VIII.	Intangible Patrimony	<i>Exploration of the Bucovina trades</i>	Suceava Regional Association for Adult Education

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