Andreea Gabriela LUPU*

The Reconfiguration of the Theatre Space and the Relationship between Public and Private in the Case of Apartment Theatre

Abstract

This article tackles the means of theatre space reconfiguration in the apartment theater (*lorgean theater*), simultaneously analyzing the relation between public and private specific to this form of art. Structured around both a theoretical analysis and a qualitative empirical investigation, this paper emphasizes the traits of the theatre space as component of an artistic product received by the audience, and its value in the process of artistic production, within the theatre sector. The case study of *lorgean theater*, including a participant observation and an individual interview, enables the understanding of these two aspects of the spatial configuration, emphasizing its hybrid nature in terms of spatial configuration and the public-private relation as well as the act of reappropriation of the domestic space through an alternative practice of theatre consumption.

Keywords: domestic box; representational space; place; anti-institution; field; public; private.

1. Introduction

This paper explores a particular form of theatrical space reconfiguration in the case of apartment theater, one of the unique independent initiatives in the theatrical sector in Bucharest; it also analyzes the relationship between public and private implied by this original artistic concept. This art form reflects the current dynamic of the theater sector in Bucharest, stimulated by different initiatives that are independent of the public institutions and meant to challenge the conventions, the aesthetic status of artistic products and the perception of the consumers to them as well. It is particularly the tendency towards redefining the function and physical aspect of spaces that characterizes these artistic projects.

Lorgean theatre is Jean-Lorin Sterian's concept of apartment theatre, implemented in 2008, as one form of independent theatre. It was followed by a few similar initiatives, such as Apartment 17, in the same year, The Living Room Theatre (ro. Teatrul de sufragerie), The Cage (ro. Colivia), and 8PT in 2012 and, respectively, 2014. Although the practice of appropriation private spaces for cultural purposes is characteristic of Bucharest, it is also present in some of the main Romanian cities. It can also encompass a wide range of activities, namely exhibitions, performances and public debates. Some of these spaces fit the typology of squats¹, but lack the personal mark of a permanent inhabitant. Nonetheless, artistic initiatives in private spaces

* National University of Political and Administrative Studies, Romania, lupu.andreea3@gmail.com.

and the apartment theatre, in particular, have been a « widely spread form of expression within the totalitarian spaces », that challenged the common perception of the privacy and use of domestic space (Popovici, 2012). Inspired from the Do It Yourself spirit and Homemade culture², *lorgean theatre* distinguishes itself as an « alternative cultural institution, unofficial and dependent of the personality of its creator » (Sterian, 2015). This concept has extended from its initial space, Sterian's one-room apartment, to several other apartments in Bucharest, transformed by their owners into temporary playhouses. This evolution has led to HomeFest, a festival meant to boost the cultural activity of communities living in the flat blocks of Bucharest through a series of artistic activities (performances, theatrical plays, exhibitions, etc.), initially designed for public display, but placed within individuals' lived space, thus, challenging the borders of intimacy (Sterian, 2015). *Lorgean theatre* also aims to create an original experience of cultural consumption, shaped as an intense interaction between the participants within a friendly environment, as well as to urge its participants to reevaluate the meanings of both private and public spaces. It functions as a nonprofit theatre, on the basis of symbolic exchanges between its producers and its consumers (Sterian, 2015).

In order to examine of the issue of spatial reconfiguration within the apartment theatre as well as its entire context of existence, this article discusses two main theoretical approaches on the structure and functioning of the society. To begin with, the reconfiguration of space is discussed in reference to the perspective of spatial turn and Henri Lefebvre's thesis on *social space*, that has the quality of reflecting structural contradictions derived from the conflicts of socio-political interests and forces. Hence, this theoretical framework serves at underlining the tension existing between public funded theatre and private initiatives in the post-communist context. Fetishized by the capitalist system as both a product of the social relations of production and reproduction, and a generator of products and, implicitly, of added value it serves at setting the conceptual framework, emphasizing the reappropriation act of the domestic space and its condition as *representational space*, a leisure space which integrates art into everydayness.

Secondly, the rapid increase in the number of independent initiatives of theatre orientates attention towards the pole of production, thus, towards the field of cultural production theorized by Pierre Bourdieu and centered on the role of *habitus* and *symbolic capital* in agents' strategies. This highly stratified and dynamic environment clearly characterizes the current state of the subfield of theater in Bucharest, urging its agents to engage in a struggle for either economic or symbolic capital in order to ensure the legitimacy and dominance of their position. It also determines an amplified mobility of agents, who seek new opportunities to maintain and diversify their professional activity. Consequently, this approach accompanies and completes the former in order to clearly depict the issue and effects of apartment theatre, both being discussed through a complex empirical framework, comprising two qualitative methods, namely a participant observation and an individual interview.

2. Conceptual Framework

2.1. From Classical Stage Formats to Contemporary Theatre Spaces

Theatre space has undergone various changes according to the different aesthetic movements and historical contexts, starting with the classical stage format of the wide open-air am-

phitheater in Ancient Greece and, later, the Roman proscenium stage, which included the curtain and, thus, enabled a clearer fragmentation of the space (Drimba, 2000). The transition to modernity was marked by the 16th century circular Elizabethan playhouse and people's courtyards and their domestic area used for hosting dramatic representations (sp. *corrales*). The next phases of the evolution of theatre derive from the institutional processes, being influenced by the avant-garde movement, as both the importance of space over text and the process of staging and directing were highlighted by Antonin Artaud (1997) within the unconventional space of the Théâtre Libre. This vision was continued and developed through the elimination of the curtain by Adolphe Appia, dissolving the scenic illusion in order to considerably shape the manner in which the spectator refers to the play (Drimba, 2000). The epic theater represented the favorable context for the establishment of an unmediated communicational flux between the audience and the actors, also foreshadowing the *thrust* and *black box* spatial format, later used in the experimental theatre (Drimba, 2000).

In spite of their revolutionary condition, all of these techniques and aesthetic conventions all reinterpret the interior of the Theater building. A more radical detachment from this tradition of stage setting is specific to both "site-specific performances" (Wilkie, 2004) and the use of « found spaces »³ (Mackintosh, 1993). The first contemporary approach reveals an updated street theater (it. *commedia dell'arte*), implying the use of unconventional spaces, such as offices, railway stations, etc., as its own distinctive manner of display. The term "site" defines this form of theatrical performance referring to the idea of a network and outlining the transparency of the artistic process in the absence of the grounding effect of the proscenium arch (Wilkie, 2004). The second one appropriates buildings or other architectural settings whose particularity or "spirit" serves for the director's artistic vision, also creating a unique aesthetic experience for the audience (Mackintosh, 1993). In both cases, spaces are chosen on the basis of their symbolic potential according to the spectators' reference system, finally becoming story-tellers themselves. Hence, the expectation horizon of the audience is notably challenged as it imposes the necessity of a renegotiation of meanings and a reestablishment of comfort boundaries.

In Romania, these staging practices define some of the plays directed by Silviu Purcărete outdoors as well as within an industrial hall, refurbished for cultural purposes ("Faust," 2007). Set on a distinctive position, the concept of *lorgean theatre* defines its own space as a domestic box, a lived space, a common environment, slightly shaped by scenographic means, yet marked by the identity of the subject that occupies it and characterized by its potential of generating cultural events, meetings between artists and spectators. It is a "*ready-made* theatre space", distinguished from the stage formats *all'italienne* or *black box* especially through its uniqueness and atmosphere that are determined by both external factors, such as noise, and internal factors, namely the amount of objects in the room or the dimension of the space.

2.2. The Conceptualization of Space in the Context of Social Reality

The theoretical concern on the concept of space marks the shift to postmodernism, perceived as a coordinate of the everyday life and as an issue of the social construct. The context of this critical approach is represented by the political remapping of Europe, in the aftermath of the Wars, as well as the expansion of capitalism in the European Eastern sphere, consolidating the globalization process. Deriving from the linguistic turn, this approach is highly influenced by structuralism and poststructuralism, launching a relational concept of

space, shaped by the constellations of power and their specific resources and conflicts (Bachmann-Medick, 2016).

Among other theorists, Henri Lefebvre (1991) highlighted the relational nature of space and its structural link to power constellations within the society. Like time, space represents a coordinate of the social reality, shaped by its specific use, standing as a reference point of the everyday conduct. Having emphasized that “(Social) space is a (social) product” (1991, p. 26), Lefebvre synthesizes his theoretical view on the society as a whole and, thus, formulates his criticism against the capitalist mechanism that makes space a result of certain production processes, appropriation and control. These are reified through a complex division of labour related to the specialization of spaces, contributing to the standardization of lifestyle and to the shaping of everyday reality in which the individuals experience space in a passive manner (Löw, 2008). Taking this aspect into consideration, the French author strengthens his theory by using the illustrative scheme of a double-faced triad (Goonewardena et al., 2008).

This allows us to distinguish three distinctive, yet interconnected moments of the process of production of space. From a semiological perspective, these are « the social practice », « the representation of space » and « representational spaces ». Phenomenologically, the triad is represented by the “perceived”, “conceived” and “lived space” (Lefebvre, 1991). If the social practice consists of the use of space, implying a set of behavioral modes maintained and updated through routines of production and reproduction of space, the representations of space are also related to these processes. However, the latter distinguish themselves by referring to knowledge in a codified and conceptualized form and being the dominant space of any society, planned by urbanists and architects (Lefebvre, 1991; Goonewardena et al., 2008). Nevertheless, the third phase of the scheme refers to the symbolic dimension of space, most commonly produced by the hidden part of social life or by art (Lefebvre, 1991). Its qualitative, fluid and affective character gives it the potential of challenging the socially established order and its discourse, becoming a space of difference, an aesthetic space (Lefebvre, 1991). As a dominated space enhancing its subjects to change their conceptions on the meaning of home, regarding their particular knowledge of both the dwelling and the theater, the representational space makes them ground their actions on new interpretations and, thus, adopt a new practice. If the latter follows the evolution path of the production of space, it will become a social practice and, implicitly, this appropriated space will become a social space.

Aiming to convey everyday life with theatricality and, inversely, to render art more accessible and more intimate, the concept of *lorgean theater* proposes an alternative practice, at the level of both production and consumption. The initial discrepancy between the representation of space and the representational space, is significantly reduced through the practice specific to apartment theatre as it implies the adaptation of conventional theatre space to the dwelling, still preserving the character of the latter, which becomes a *mise-en-scène* itself. Initially designed in order to enhance its owner’s self-expression publicly, deploying a specific energy, the domestic space was conveyed with the purpose of enhancing the cultural activity of dwellers, once *lorgean theater* expanded in the form of the festival HomeFest. The domestic space is, therefore, reappropriated by both the artists and its owner, becoming a temporary space of leisure, a pseudo-theatre, that highlights and updates its inherent contradictions. This representational space becomes itself commodified and consumed, thus subsuming to the wider mechanism of production and reproduction.

Edward Soja (1989) identifies a similar point of view in the theories of Anthony Giddens (1984) and Henri Lefebvre (1991), stating that both of them emphasize the human factor, the

importance of human action and agency, elements that regulate the societal and, implicitly, spatial mechanisms as background for the fluxes of social relations. According to Anthony Giddens (1984) and Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann (1984), the processes of social reproduction is based on the spatial-temporal coordinates and sustained through recursive rules and resources as well as systems of signification, consolidating the structure of the society. This mechanism organizes the relations between actions produced by collectivities as social practices simultaneously being shaped by the power and knowledge constellations, through the processes of signification, domination and legitimation (Giddens, 1984). This symbolic order, associated to a specific discourse, is formulated and perpetuated by institutions within the processes of socialization, being internalized by individuals as truth (Berger & Luckmann, 1984; Foucault, 1999). Hence, these structures tend to conduct social activity in one direction only, imposing predefined social patterns. In the context of the cultural field, Gillian Rose (2011) revisits Lynda Nead's approach on the relation between art and the concept of discourse, by describing the former as a specialized corpus of knowledge, institutions, practices and subjects, having the capacity of distinguishing art objects from artifacts.

2.3. Theatre Space in the Perspective of Human Geography and Semiotics

A more thorough analysis of the concept of space in apartment theatre can be enabled by discussing the differences between space and place be considered. Although long debated, human geographers seem to agree that the differential criterion consists in the human perception, this being more abstract regarding space, and more concrete in relation to place (Cresswell, 2013). Space, like time, is perceived as a natural fact, having the role of generating the directions of social conduct as well as enabling the creation of places. This process is completed by human intervention, especially the symbolic one.

To some extent, this characterizes the tendency of both people and institutions towards engaging in « place-making activities », such as redecorating homes, making graffiti marks on public spaces and the projecting of nations' image through widely circulated objects (stamps, touristic brochures, etc.) (Cresswell, 2013, pp. 5-7). These “meaningful places” could be correlated to the notion of “locale”, used to define the background of social life and the dynamic of the environment, which imply the consolidation of values, attitudes and behaviors (Giddens, 1984; Agnew, 1987). Furthermore, a certain “sense of place” reveals the way of self identification of an individual or of a community with that specific place, through a set of values, finally, being reflected in daily routines and, somehow, contributing to the social cohesion (Agnew, 2011).

A more focused view on the difference between space and place requires the approach of conceptual differences between house and home, which is generally analyzed in relation to their particular privacy and subjectivity. Whether tackled from the perspective of architectural features of the lived space, whose physical delimitations between public and private sphere are expressed on the symbolic level, or from the cultural and historical changes of individuals' manners of interacting with these spaces, most of the theories outline the polarity between inside and outside, us (family or members of a closed group) and them (unknown people, the outside world) (Tuan, 1975; Mallet, 2004; Blunt, 2005). In addition, the concept of home is clearly distinguished by its affective or personal dimension, as every home is both physically and symbolically marked by its owner's self representation (Cooper, 1971). In one's « personal spatial bubble », the living room is one of the key elements of the individ-

ual's conscious and unconscious profile, being invested with a high degree of attention concerning the arrangements of objects and its overall design, as it signifies the place of welcoming people from outside the house (Cooper, 1971).

As a result, each home has its own particular identity, or what Gernot Böhme (2013) calls atmosphere, an interface between subject and object, which sets a specific mood and tone for the whole context, being dependent on the subject's perception of it. These domestic elements are exploited and integrated into *lorgean theatre*, as a marker of authenticity. This setting challenges their expectations by detaching itself from the standard format of a theatre or cinema room. This referential space is analyzed by Jean-Louis Baudry (1978) in relation to Plato's Myth of the Cave, emphasizing the polarization between the auditorium and stage created through lighting, decorative elements, like the curtain, and architecture, all meant to lead the spectators' attention throughout the artistic act. By contrast, the domestic space appropriated by *lorgean theatre* defines itself through the unity of space for both producers and receptors, by setting a homogenous environment, an informal space (Hall, 1966), that stimulates spectators' attention towards all the people and activities around them and their critical approach on the object of gaze.

The semiotic approach to this conceptual delimitation is highly complex, particularly regarding the theatre space where the symbolic role of each element is amplified. It appears as a place constructed through codes specific to stage conventions of a historic and geographic context (Ubersfeld, 1978). The iconic condition is a key-aspect of theatre space, this being whether *mimesis* of a spatial coordinate or an element of the objective reality. However, the iconic function is more noticeable from the perspective of the audience, which tends to perceive every spatial sign as representing a real place. This is generally due to the fact that theatre space reproduces spectators' image of the spatial configurations particular to their society, transforming the stage into a "symbolization of the socio-cultural space" (Ubersfeld, 1978, pp. 157-158). Patrice Pavis (2013) decomposes the concept of theatre space into multiple notions, making a clear distinction between theatre or scenographic space, which includes both the audience and the stage, and the textual space, created in the mind of the spectator after having read the dramatic text. In the case of unconventional theatre spaces, Patrice Pavis (2012) underlines the necessity of « regaining the spaces », a process specific to the experimental theatre.

2.4. The Relation between Public and Private in the Case of Apartment Theater

The ways in which the relation between public and private is reconfigured require a deeper analysis as one of the main factors of the originality of *lorgean theatre* as a form of dramatic representation consists in the choice of lived space, thus opposing to the existing conventional approaches on stage and setting inside a Theater building. Discussed through the concept of intimacy, they depend on the influence of inclusion and exclusion mechanisms in the configuration of domestic area, according to the social relations and to symbolical and physical differences of spaces (Sheller & Urry, 2003). From another perspective, the tendency towards private spaces could be motivated by the idealized or nostalgic representation of the dwelling, in reference to its inhabitants' meaningful experiences (Mallet, 2004).

One could better understand the dynamic of these poles that are specific to apartment theater, by considering the postmodern aesthetic paradigm, especially that of the art of performance, which puts an emphasis on the rendering of subjectivity in public space, in open areas

that are easily accessible to a large and heterogenous audience, as a manifesto to capitalist tendency of commodifying and commercializing almost everything and, simultaneously, as an initiative of breaking the conceptual limits established historically and culturally (Ward, 2012, p. 44).

Despite its discourse, outlining its detachment from the traditional nature of the Romanian public institutions of theater, *lorgean theater* is dependent on the segment of the public budget that is administrated by the Administration of National Cultural Fund and ARCUB (“HomeFest 2.0.,” 2015). Nevertheless, the “profit” of apartment theater cannot be quantified in money, but in cultural objects, such as books, as the “entry ticket” to the performances consists of spectators’ donations. *Lorgean theater* aims to melt the public and private into its *domestic box* altering both the process of production and the aesthetic experience of the audience, by imposing an unconventional practice of theatre consumption to a private space and by forcing the comfort limits of the participants.

2.5. The Configuration of the Subfield of Theatre

Pierre Bourdieu (1993) introduces the concept of “field” in order to designate the structured systems, formed by both subjective and objective relations. Here, the function of establishing its internal balance is essential as the polarized forces of the agents within the field of cultural production, whether individuals or institutions, are constantly conflicting, either trying to preserve the established norms and routine, or, on the contrary, aiming to make radical changes by defying conventions as a “return to the purity of origins” (Bourdieu, 2012, p. 271). This continuous movement is conducted through agents’ strategies according to their position within the field and, implicitly, the specific capital possessed by each of them.

In order to describe the functioning of both society as a whole and the field of cultural production, Bourdieu employs the relationship between the *habitus*, *capital* and *symbolic power* as a key factor that orientates individual and collective trajectories as well as institutional dynamics. While portraying power as the governing force of social reality, reflected through daily human activity, that determines a certain social stratification based on inclusion and exclusion, Bourdieu emphasizes the structural link between of legitimacy and the symbolic system imposed by dominant classes. Thus, both *habitus*, as the corpus of dispositions that shapes individuals’ and collectivities’ strategies on the basis of a « practical sense », and symbolic capital are integrated in their struggle for a dominant position within the hierarchic social space and, respectively, the field of cultural production.

The logic of the field is linked to the idea of profit, which can be obtained either through the principle of heteronomy is representative for the « bourgeois art » and dominant classes’ interests for political and economic power, or through autonomy, which implies a certain independence to the demand by compromising in order to create “art for art’s sake” (Bourdieu, 2012, p. 280). The degree of autonomy is historically and cumulatively determined, through successive generations. However, both strategies aim to gain a specific capital that can ensure a dominant position within the field. Although the intention of the newly entered agents is to deny the norms and conventions by launching original artistic products, it implies a paradox as it is essentially linked to the previous forms of art, making “any interrogation to be part of the tradition, a practical or theoretical knowledge of the heritage integrated in the structure of the field” (Bourdieu, 2012, p. 313). This cycle makes achieving autonomy and authenticity an idealistic endeavor for the agents of the field.

Being promoted as an “urban mystery”, though a word-of-mouth marketing, with the slogan “Maybe you will be invited!”, *lorgean theater* maintains its exclusive character, giving a sense of privilege to the “chosen” ones (Sterian, 2012, p. 2). Furthermore, the festival format is, according to Stanley Waterman (1998), a medium that enhances a new dialectical relationship between producer and consumer in the production of artistic objects, as the audience gets increasingly involved in the organization of the festival through the newly formed demands. As the festival essentially is both ephemeral and dependent on space, being a participant implies a privileged status, which generates a symbolic reward of identification and differentiation, labeled as “having been there”, creating an “*in situ* consumption” (Waterman, 1998, p. 66). Hence, the receptivity to originality and differentiation seems to be characteristic to producers as well as to consumers.

In the current theatre sector of Bucharest, the agents have the possibility and even the tendency to switch from one side to another, thus contributing to the variation of the level of autonomy specific to their position in the subfield and to the reconfiguration of the subfield itself. Particularly, the artistic initiatives inspired from the DIY spirit and homemade culture are part of a coagulated group within the subfield of theatre. According to Jean-Lorin Sterian (2015), *lorgean theater* claims its autonomy by emphasizing the originality of the concept and undermining the importance of the economical profit, as it has an alternative system of valuing theatre consumption.

2.6. The Apartment as (Anti)Institution

The practice of cultural institutions, initially conceived by the bourgeoisie in order to reinforce its dominant position and the conduct of social reality, urges us to analyze space through to the concept of “apparatus” (fr. *dispositif*), with reference to its disciplinary force (Foucault, 1979). Starting from Tony Bennett’s approach (2011) to the differences produced by the institutional apparatus of museums and art galleries, which themselves divide the audience at the level of its profile and attitude towards artistic objects, we can notice a similar effect between the two types of theatre space. In both cases the audience has the role of validating the consumed product, thus, deciding its unique or trivial character. However, the canonical theater predominantly attracts high and middle social categories, having the necessary competencies that enhance the act of decoding and comprehending the artistic object and reinforcing the sacrality of the entire context through a mannered behavior. The experimental theatre, specific to each hosting apartment, has a more heterogeneous audience, but more willing to defy the conduct of the traditional typology of the spectator (Bourdieu, 1993).

The concept of *lorgean theater* is based on the conception that theater consumption has been transformed by individuals into a pretentious practice, being ritualized as a parade of social status, conception from which it clearly detaches itself. By denouncing the essentialism of art and by undermining the official legitimation criteria, Jean-Lorin Sterian launches the « unofficial » alternative of a practice defined by the aesthetic value of the product and the opportunity of developing stronger relationships with the artists and the spectators (2015). Hence, the domestic box is created as an “anti-institution”, an informal space, a sign of the institutionalization of the anomaly (Bourdieu, 2012, p. 331). However, the intention of evading institutionalization is due to the influence of habits on our perception of reality, including the biographic characteristics of the background, trajectory and positioning of the individual in his reference environment (Fraser, 2005; Silva & Warde, 2010).

3. Theatre Space Reconfigurations in Homes and Views on the Dynamics of the Subfield of Theatre. A Case Study of the *lorgean* theatre

3.1. Methodology

This section continues the previous analysis through the study case of *lorgean theater*, designed as configurative-idiographic (Thomas, 2011). Its object consists of the dynamics of the state funded theatre in relation to the private initiatives in the cultural developments of post-communism as well as the specific of institutionalized products and practices of theatre compared to the experimental ones. Accordingly, both the configuration of theatre space within the apartment theater and the positioning of specialized agents in the subfield of theatre, in Bucharest, are investigated.

In order to illustrate the first aspect, I set to investigate the main traits of the concept of *lorgean theater*, namely its specific type of artistic act, its spatial determinations and its potential of engaging the audience throughout, through the following three research questions:

1. How is the theatrical space reconfigured within the context of *lorgean theater*? Is there any correlation between the type of the text and the aspect of the domestic space within the context of apartment theater?
2. What is the influence of the theatrical domestic space on the level of interactivity of the artistic act?
3. How do both the architecture and the content of the domestic space influence the progress of the dramatic representation?

The empirical methods have been tailored according to the division of the research questions into two main themes. On one hand, the reference to the domestic nature and the condition of the theatre space in the apartment theater imposes a participant observation allowing a thorough and comparative analysis of the particular spatial traits of both the classical stage format and the everyday background of the dwelling.

The second aspect was structured on the conception of *lorgean theater* and the wider current cultural context and positioning of the cultural agents of the subfield of theatre, reflected into three additional research questions:

1. What is the relationship between the inner trends of the theatrical field in Bucharest, regarding the artistic initiatives, and the socio-economic factors that contribute to the creation of a specific dynamic?
2. What is the relevance of the space in theater as far as the specialized agents in both independent and public theater are concerned?
3. How do the agents of the theatrical field perceive the concept of *lorgean theater*?

The obvious implication of the human factor in the examination of the reconfigured theatre space justified the choice for an individual interview, highlighting the motivations, opinions and positioning of subjects in relation to the apartment theatre, theatre space and the current general trends of the subfield in Bucharest.

The instruments used for these methods were the observation grid and, respectively, the semi-structured interview guide, both having particular sets of criteria specific to the analyzed aspects of the general problem. The observation grid is structured on seven categories composed of a total of 18 subcategories, such as placement, lighting, disturbing factors, facilities, contextual observations, etc. In addition, each subcategory was associated with particular units of observation which, unlike the categories and subcategories, record contextual

data, specific to each staging and each domestic space observed so that the grid fully capture their complexity. Thus, it contains both quantitative and qualitative data. Besides this, a set of photographs taken by one of the organizers during each artistic act enhance a better illustration of the entire context.

The semi-structured interview guide contains 13 questions, that were adapted to each respondent according to the progress of the discussion, following the issues implied by the three research questions. The sample of subjects was shaped based on the relevance of their profession, its forms of institutionalization and the demographical criterion, so that there were 17 interviewees working as directors, actors, theatre managers or theatre students in either the independent or the state theatre sector in Bucharest. This duality is meant to facilitate a comparative analysis between the subjects' view on certain aspects discussed. The interview data was gathered through a voice recorder, with one exception – through e-mail, during a period of three months (from March to May 2016), according to the availability of the respondents. The abbreviations used designate those subjects that work in the « independent theatre» (“i. t.”), in the state theatre (“s. t.”) and those who are theatre students (“s.”).

3.2. Data Collection

The observation was conducted by directly participating in four of the dramatic representations within Homefest, the festival of apartment theatre, held between 21.03.2016–25.03.2016, in four distinctive dwellings in Bucharest. The research started with “Casting”, in 8PT apartment, on 23 Colței street, continuing with the one-to-one performance with Lala Misosniky, called “I Live in Everybody’s Times” (ro. “Trăiesc în vremurile tuturor”), on 4 ?ipotul Fântânilor street, with “Platon or Who Do You Think You’re Fooling?” on 92 Basarabia Boulevard, and ending with A. P. Chekhov’s “Three sisters”, in Walter Mărăcineanu street. Except “Platon or Who do you think you’re fooling?”, all of the dramatic representations took place in district one, a central area in the cultural map of Bucharest.

The particularity of each observed case outlines the necessity of briefly describing the theme of the four dramatic representations in order to better understand the data gathered. In staging « Casting », the director, Alexandru Nagy, puts together various pieces from the dramatic texts of William Shakespeare, Neil N. LaBute, Eric Bogosian or Matei Vișniec, in a collective performance resembling an audition (“Casting”, 2016). Held in the one-room apartment of Jean-Lorin Sterian, the one-to-one performance managed to illustrate « a visual archive » through Lala’s monologue, by making reference to « the personification of a house through the human body and the different perspectives of perceiving a private space » (“Trăiesc în vremurile tuturor,” 2016). “Platon or Who Do You Think You’re Fooling?” is the performance based on a philosophical text, several of Plato’s dialogues on virtue and justice, that was adapted and interpreted in a dramatic manner. « Three sisters » is an adaptation of Chekhov’s play according to the spatial features of the hosting dwelling, maintaining the living room, depicted by the playwright in the first act, as the main background for the action of the characters.

4. Findings and Discussion

4.1. Participant Observation-based Findings

R.Q.1. How is the theatrical space reconfigured within the context of *lorgean theater*? Is there any correlation between the type of the text and the aspect of the domestic space within the context of apartment theater?

The possibility of correlating the four cases is considerably low regarding the correspondence between text and staging, ranging formats highest in the case of « Three Sisters » to its lowest in the case of “Platon or Who Do You Think You’re Fooling?”. The former fuses the space of the objective reality, the living room of the dwelling, with the dramatic space, the living room in the Prozorov residency, while the latter recreates the cinematic spatial format, in the absence of a textual depiction of the background. Moreover, the director managed to solve the unbalanced relation between the reduced spatial dimension of the room and the multiple backgrounds depicted by the playwright by juxtaposing two spatial-temporal dimension through a video recording projected upon one the walls, thus alternating the homogeneous space and the cinematic apparatus. “Casting” could be treated separately as the apartment lacks the aspect of permanent inhabitation and, implicitly, the personal mark of its owner, giving the director a high level of autonomy on both space and dramatic text. Thus, unlike the rest, Alexandru Nagy used the entire surface of the apartment in order to create a unitary background and to enhance an labyrinthine movement of the spectators throughout. However, it can be noticed that in all of the cases, the correspondence relation between space and text is determined by the necessity of mutual adaptation.

R.Q.2. How do both the architecture and the content of the domestic space influence the progress of the dramatic representation?

The reduced dimension of the apartment, its everyday “scenery” and its private nature have a restrictive effect on the dramatic representation, especially on actors’ movement and on the possibility of recreating a similar space to the one sketched by the playwright. Firstly, the removal of stage curtain becomes, in apartment theatre, a necessity conditioned by lack of resources rather than an element of the unconventional aesthetic discourse, implying a different organization of the dramatic sequences. Secondly, this type of theatre imposes an adaptation of the classical stage format to the atmosphere and everydayness of each home, although two of the cases show a recreation of the cinematic apparatus. Finally, *lorgean theater* problematizes the control on space, this being mainly held by the owner, whose willingness to enlarge his/her private perimeter and to collaborate with the artists in order to reshape the domestic space varies in all of the three cases, with the exception of 8PT apartment.

R.Q.3. What is the influence of the theatrical domestic space on the level of interactivity of the artistic act?

The findings demonstrate the apartment theatre’s capacity of stimulating the interaction between participants, starting from its atmosphere all the way to the narrow perimeter of the scenographic space, determined by the structure of the dwellings and quantity and size of object inside them, which amplifies the proximity between participants. Another key factor consists in the approach of the postmodern aesthetic paradigm, foreshadowed by the creators of the epic theatre and valued through the performance, parallel to the classical dramatic act, based on the convention of “the fourth wall”. Thus, although the spatial traits suppose the adapta-

tion of theatre space as an informal space, the active engagement of the participants in the artistic act varies according to the directing style.

Therefore, the data collected through the observational method enhances a comparative analysis between the concept of *domestic box* and its actual form. The elements of the *black box* which reflect the conventional traits of this theatre space are visible in the structure of the living room transformed in a a “box” in which spectators watch the artists, being placed on two or three of its sides, extremely closed to one another, as well as the setting of a cinematic apparatus. It can be supposed that the reference to *black box* is due to its revolutionary effect when it first appeared, reaching the highest level of interactivity compared to the previous stage formats. This once again outlines the historic determination of the aesthetic vision and, implicitly, the specialized agents’ positioning in the field, which are also specific to *lorgean theater*.

Compared to the forms and means of staging dramatic representations of the past, the analyzed domestic spaces can be grouped into two distinct categories, mainly determined by their particular functions. The daily aspect and the owners’ personal fingerprint on their private spaces outline the story-teller potential of the space, hosting artistic acts similar to “site-specific performances” (Wilkie, 2004). Unlike these three, 8PT, an apartment constantly hosting artistic events, can be referred to as a “found space” (Mackintosh, 1993), entirely shaped by the director and the actors. This last space is representative for the defiance of aesthetic conventions of theatre, as opposed to the daily lived aspect of the domestic space. It is its exception that enhances a comparative analysis of *lorgean theatre*, emphasizing the importance of the everydayness and uniqueness of each apartment for this concept’s discourse on authenticity and differentiation. These typologies impose the necessity of “reconquering the spaces” (Pavis, 2013) in order to adjust the relation between conventional and unconventional and to convey the artistic act the value of a dramatic representation. This contrast is reflected at the level of the iconic correspondence between space and the dramatic text and, sometimes, to the mental spatial representation of the audience, the highest similarity being noticed in the case of “Three sisters”, contrary to “Casting”. Consequently, it shows an augmentation of the importance of directing, initially underlined by Antonin Artaud (1997), simultaneously emphasizing the potential of space to reinforce the aesthetic discourse through its atmosphere and everydayness.

The results of the observation outline the collocation of everyday living and the artistic event, generated by the transformation of the domestic space into a theatre one, implying a double “place-making activity” through the intensified human intervention (Cresswell, 2013). Therefore, the three cases analyzed can become double places, inducing both their owners and the participants at the play a certain “sense of place” (Agnew, 2011), reflected in their attitude and behavior through their respect for the host and for the artistic endeavor.

4.2. Individual Interview-based Findings

R.Q.4. What is the relationship between the trends of the theatrical field in Bucharest, regarding the artistic initiatives, and the factors that contribute to the creation of a specific dynamic?

Trying to capture a wider image on the current dynamics of the theatre sector in Bucharest, from the interviewees, I focused the discussion on the structural aspects and trends of both the independent and the state spheres. The findings outline the impact of the rapid and un-

controlled development of the independent theatre in the capital city, with an incoherent evolution forecasted. The subjects identify the main causes in the sedentariness of the state theatre regarding the *repertoire* and the available positions, apparently unable to satisfy the demand of the labor market, even though the theatre spaces have recently multiplied.

There is a consensus regarding the magnitude of the economical aspect in the theatre sector. As the capitalist mechanism has replaced the patronal one, transforming some of the independent theatre companies into for-profit business, usually by becoming essentially commercial, conforming to the predominant market demand. This outlines the importance of defining the term “independent” as some of the interviewees prefer to say “private” when describing the financial autonomy of theatre from public authorities and the business model preventing bankruptcy (A. E., i. t.; A. U., i. t.). Therefore, the main distinction between independent and state theatre derives from this different economic status that is reflected into both the administrative aspect and the artistic offer of the two spheres. While the public theatre has enough resources, but lacks flexibility in terms of theme and artistic techniques, being generally complacent, the independent one enhances aesthetic innovations, being more anchored in the everyday reality by staging current social issues, and temporary collaborations between different artists. However, it usually implies a constant struggle for funding for human and material resources. As a result, directors and actors are conditioned to become a “tradesmen”, taking charge of multiple issues such as the promotion of the shows, copyrights, budget management, etc. in the absence of an official status, that contrasts with the unilateral activity of an artist hired in the public theatre. This division is obvious at the level of consumption and audience profile, “in the independent theatre you have to create « the coming », whereas the state theatre is used to « the coming »” (M. M., i. t.). Here, the opinions of the interviewees are mixed, some stating that both theatre spheres have heterogenous audiences and some acknowledging the clear delimitation between two types of audiences, one formed by elderly spectators, loyal to the state theatre and, respectively, one formed by youngsters, without a consolidated horizon of expectancies and willing to experience novelty and, thus, various forms of artistic expression, generally specific to the independent theatre. One of the respondents interprets the high accessibility of independent theatre, whether performed in the streets or for free, as a strategy for luring theater consumers in, based on a long process of social education (C. G., s. t.).

R.Q.5. What is the relevance of the space in theater as far as the specialized agents in both independent and public theater are concerned?

By using terms such as “very/extremely important” and “(absolutely) essential”, the interviewees unanimously outline the role of space in theatre, equally important as the one of actors’ performance, both representing the fundamental elements of any dramatic representation. One respondent conceives space as the “voiceless playwright” as all the attention focuses on it, from the actual playwright to the director and actor (A. U., i. t.). For the audience, the importance of space in theatre is mainly obvious at the level of perception, through its “energy” and atmosphere that it creates, this being the starting point for the concept of any show (C. G., s. t.). In spite these universal features of theatre space, its role gets distinctively shaped once referring to the audience. A theatre space can form a particular audience or it can be configured on the basis of an existent one, as it can, on one hand, “imprint the artistic trend on a certain thing or influence the artistic product through the audiences that access that space” (M. M., i. t.). Thus, it is the “package” of that space that counts, the discourse formulated in order to enlarge your target audience (S. A. B., i. t.). On the other hand, it is im-

portant to “bring the theatre space in the middle of the issues and needs particular to a certain neighborhood” (M. M., t. i.).

The division between the two types of theatre, previously discussed, correlated with this is care for “packaging” contribute to a clearer demarcation of the audiences, from the perspective of legitimacy. The interviewees confirm the existence of several preconceptions that both spectators and artists might have, which can dictate one’s preferences regarding the theatre consumption and, respectively, reinforce one’s skepticism about the viability of an artistic offer. In the first case, space can accustom spectators with a certain type of dramatic shows (M. B., s. t.; G. R., i. t.; A. U., i. t.). “People are still going to the great playhouses to see something serious and they come in unconventional spaces to see something trivial” (A. U., i. t.). This is where the design and architecture of the space can turn a theatre space into a sacred and luxurious place, “a place of magic”, which somehow certifies the quality of its artistic product (J. L. S., i. t.). Generally, public theaters are highlighted by certain spatial features, such as the foyer adorned with art objects, stimulating people’s mental analogy with the image and idea of a museum, of a sacred place, acting accordingly. Similarly, the unconventional character of the theatre space shapes consumers’ attitude and behavior towards it, in the manner of conceiving daily activities and space in general. People’s sensitivity for appearances characterizes, as some respondents claim, that audience that is “loyal to the so-called classical theatre” (S. A. B., t. i.). It could be, therefore, linked to the proclivity of this type of audience towards associating theatre consumption to an unordinary behavior, thus legitimating both that cultural institution and its artistic act. This is especially visible through elegant apparel, but also through the obeisance to unwritten norms, such as keeping quiet or even applauding after every representation (S. B., s. t.; M. P., s.; J. L. S., i. t.). However, an imposing theatre edifice does not guarantee this mannered behavior for all its spectators as there are some exceptions, according to their educational level (C. G., s. t.; G. R., i. t.). The highlighted comfort and elegance of the space in state playhouses significantly contribute to attracting and consolidating a certain type of audience.

Unlike them and in spite of the “centralized theatre culture”, the independent theater generally values “new theatre spaces” which “entail new perceptions on theatre” (M. M., i. t.). Thus, there are two distinct directions that derive from this, characterizing either initiatives based on unconventional spaces as support for their aesthetic manifesto, mostly contrary to the discourse of public institutions, or for compensating a space scarcity (C. G., s. t.). Although the respondents underline that, in the first case, the importance of these spaces lays in their capacity of grabbing theater consumers’ attention, they also emphasize the quality of the artistic act itself in consolidating the popularity of the independent playhouses.

R.Q.6. How do the agents of the theatrical field perceive the concept of *lorgean theatre*?

The interviewees’ attitude towards the apartment theater is generally positive with one exception only. The majority acknowledges the capacity of the independent sector to enhance the functioning of this initiative among all the others, considering it as « welcomed ». Moreover, they notice its potential of launching new challenges for artists as well as for the audiences on the significance of theatricality, by “revitalizing theatre formulae” while reducing the risk of routinizing theatre (M. M., i. t.). “The apartment is a privileged place, after all, because it gives you the image of everyday theatricality”, in which daily rituals, like cooking, can be approached through an aesthetic discourse, getting a new value and stimulating participants to critically reflect on the everydayness (M. M., i. t.). As its creator puts it, *lorgean theatre* is meant to create an outstanding aesthetic experience for the artists, hosts and spec-

tators and to intensify their engagement in the artistic act and in the entire communicational situation by appropriating the domestic space and revaluing its private nature. In addition, he outlines this theatre's potential of launching young artists into the industry by giving two relevant examples. Nevertheless, the agents interviewed discuss the implication of the apartment theatre on the acting technique with reference to the level of comfort experience by both the artist and the spectator. This implies a distinction between them, some being more open to the idea of acting more intimately and being more exposed to the critical judgement of the audience, while others prefer the classical spatial format, similar to the cinematic apparatus, as it ensures a bigger emotional and physical distance between the participants.

The respondents also argue that the visibility of this type of theater should be amplified in order for it to develop, as "the purpose of actors is to be seen and recognized by as many people as possible" (I. O., i. t.). Also, it can survive in this competitive environment only through the quality of its artistic acts, their capacity of being unforgettable and of stimulating spectators' desire of consuming them again. The exception mentioned earlier regards one respondent's opinion that considers the apartment theatre one of the multiple instruments of public authorities that serves to mask their lack of interest in investing in the theatre field, thus reinforcing their discourse of so-called freedom and flexibility of the current system and deceiving those wanting to take up this career path. Therefore, the apartment theatre is as absurd as "a surgeon operating in an apartment", as actors have been prepared to act in front of wide audiences in wide amphitheaters (A. B., s. t.).

5. Conclusion

The spatial concept of *lorgean theatre* suggests a new and distinctive manner of stage setting which implies a creative process, whose dynamic is determined by the personality of the place and its general atmosphere. The reinterpretation of the constitutive elements presented above are actually integrated into the wider context of aesthetics of theatre. *Lorgean theater* rather displays a negotiation between the standards of theatre space and the unicity of each home. It generates a balanced relation between the conventional structural elements of theatre space, integrated in the apartment theatre, mostly through suggestion, and both the configuration and the everydayness of the dwelling, which enhance the creation of a hybrid and differential space, as an alternative to aesthetic conventions. To some extent, this also enables audience to enlarge its horizon of expectations, by reinterpreting the theatre space as well as the domestic one, and thus corresponding to the contemporary practices of staging and of theatre consumption.

Having in mind the structuralist and poststructuralist views, the dominant discourse and the counter-discourse actually characterize the "conventional" and, respectively, the "unconventional", enabling our comprehension of the genesis of alternative practices and spaces. As Lefebvre (1991) states that spatial codes can only be specific and established within a certain context, resulting from the interaction of social agents and their *milieu*, the notion of *domestic box* enables the space of *lorgean theatre* to distinguish itself from other social spaces, enriching the ensemble of practices and, thus, contributing to the diversification of space as a whole. Through the act of re-appropriation, the domestic space becomes artists' instrument for defying the dominant discourse, enabling them to express their own artistic view or particular interests in products and practices, by valuing the symbolic potential of the « repre-

sentational space ». As a leisure space meant to generate pleasure, the *domestic box* preserves, the contradictions of the social relations of capitalism and property and, thus, its fetishized character.

The examined case captures the agency of an individual launching an alternative to official norms, initially at a personal level, by transforming the function of his own private space and, later, extending this project to other apartments in Bucharest. As those willing to reinterpret their domestic spaces by undertaking a model of counter-discourse, not by creating it themselves, the spread of this alternative artistic movement contributes to turning this manifesto into one of the sentences of the counter-discourse formulated by the independent theatre. However, *lorgean theater* positions itself against institutionalization and conformity to the apparatus, rather defining itself as an anti-institution, but still it remains captive within the wider system, subsuming to its logic. By that, it seems to confirm the tendency specific to avant-garde movement theorized by Bourdieu (2012) used to describe the

Agents' need for symbolic capital, in order to consolidate their position within the field of cultural production, actually reflects its particular dynamics, emphasizing the importance of being different. In the case of apartment theatre, this is determined by a constant « struggle » between the specialized agents in both theatre spheres, for both resources and audience. This opposition is also present in the official practice of theatre consumption, reinforced by the imposing aspect of the theatre space specific to the public sector, turning it into an institutional apparatus (Foucault, 1979). The double reference to the artistic product and the space of theatre derives from the individuals' conception and reaction to both uniqueness and triviality. As opposed to state theaters, the space of apartment theatre serves at integrating art into everydayness and, thus, denouncing its essentialism by inducing a sense of intimacy and familiarity to both actors and spectators. In this informal space, they become rather participants urged to get more involved in the artistic act as the reconfigured practice of theatre consumption makes it more accessible. Nonetheless, it remains an “apparatus” (Foucault, 1979) as it imposes an alternative convention that still norms their actions. As guests in a lived space, the participants express a certain respect for the host, having the impression of a privileged status due to being welcomed inside his/her “personal bubble” (Blunt, 2005). In the public theaters, however, the spectators are inclined to behave in order to show their respect towards the institution, thus legitimating the public authority and the dominant discourse. This also implies an update of the relation between the public and private function of the dwelling as well as of the theatre space, through the configuration of space itself (living room), its character (atmosphere), its background (the type and arrangement of objects), its proximal character (short physical distances between participants) and its high level of interactivity, by blurring the perceptual borders theorized by Claire Cooper (1974), Yi-Fu Tuan (1975), Mimi Sheller and John Urry (2003).

Notes

¹ *Squats* usually represent abandoned public or private buildings that are refurbished by a group of artists and turned into cultural spaces. *Squatting* is generally nonprofit and specific to underground art, but it could also designate a form of social activism, being practiced at an international level (Parry, 2011).

² This notion designates the forms of self-expression within the private space, including the DIY initiatives, which contribute to the consolidation of the identity of an individual or a community (Holden, 2008).

³ The author illustrates his concept through the example of the plays directed by Peter Brook, within the abandoned space of Bouffes du Nord in Paris, a former Theatre which became a historical monument.

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