Calea Griviței. Perspectives considering its value as cultural resource

Katia Moldoveanu, Muzeul Național, XIX, 2007, București

Calea Griviței began its existence as a small street on the way to Târgoviște. At the time it was called Târgoviște Lane. Even though it is an important street of Bucharest it never captured the attention that the other streets starting from the historical centre have. Calea Griviței is a very interesting mixture of old and new, with old buildings on its extremity from Calea Victoriei, *Old Calea Griviței* from now on, and new flats on the other half starting with the North Railway Station, *New Calea Griviței* from now on.

Calea Griviței was analyzed as cultural resource from the scale of the urban assemblage to that of the urban tissue and finally at the small scale of the buildings. The purpose was to find elements that define its specific, what is valuable and it is still preserved, what, why and how should be preserved; finally, in a further perspective, what can constitute future heritage. The present study consists of a short historical study followed by an urban analysis and the cultural values analysis, in order to identify and evaluate the cultural resources related to Calea Griviței.

I. A bit of history

First of all, an inventory of the main reference points which existed or still exist on Calea Griviței was necessary. The main reference points on the old street routes are the churches, with the suburbs developed around them, then the markets, the inns and the public institutions. Later, at the reference points category will be added those with a special destination around the North Railway Station, like hotels and cinemas. The small scale reference points are represented by houses that once belonged to personalities from the Romanian history, together with several remaining "boutiques" that define the commercial aspect of Calea Griviței.

The churches on Calea Griviței are the following, starting from Calea Victoriei: Sfinții Voievozi, Manea Brutarul, Sfânta Paraschiva, Sfânta Vineri și Sfântul Ilie Podeanu. Sfinții Voievozi Church was raised in the years 1813-1817 by merchant Stoian Băcanu from Gabrovo. The church had stone walls, 8 shops and 17 cells for poor people. In 1903 it was restored as it was ruined, at the initiative of priests Veniamin Ploieșteanu and Ioan Burca, after the plans of architect D. Patriciu, with a silhouette reminding of Curtea de Argeș Church. Manea Brutarul Church is placed at the crossroad with Gen. Budișteanu Street, the former Manea Brutarul Street and it was raised in 1787. The man who gave the name of the church and its surrounding area had a bakery at the end of Calea Victoriei (the former *Podul Mogoșoaiei).* The church was surrounded at that time by shops and dwellings forming the church's inn. Sfânta Vineri Church was raised by merchant Niculăiță Eftimiu in 1854, near the Basarab Bridge. It was demolished in 1931 because of the works for the railway and a new church was built on N. Titulescu Street.

The 10 barriers of the town were established in 1830, one of them being at the crossroad of Basarab Street and Calea Griviței - attested in 1842. A bridge was built in this location in 1885, crossing the railway. Many inns could be found in the barrier surroundings, like the "Yellow Inn", located in the Filantropia suburb, on the right side of Târgoviște Lane, at the crossroad of Banu Manta and Dr. Felix Streets. Neculcea and Polizu Inns were two other in the area. The "Yellow Inn" was built by Lord Preda in the nearby of the way to Târgoviște, where merchants were floating day and night. It was known by the Police Office because many thieves were also passing by. „Adevărul de Dimineața" newspaper (1904) mentioned that "...on Filantropia Street, after passing by Victoria Square, the Bucharest life disappears completely". The suburb around the inn was called "The Devil's Suburb". The area was inhabited by the painter Ștefan Luchian, which gives the area a memorial value. In the years 1907-1909 he had lived on 24 Filantropia Street, just across the "Yellow Inn" and immortalized in a few works the suburb. Neculcea Inn, a barrier inn as well, was built probably after 1808 on the Târgoviște Lane, more precise on the place of the nowadays Victoriei Square, up to the first

round crossroad of Kiseleff Street. The inn had a bad fame and it seems that it lasted up to 1887/1895. As for Polizu Inn, it is mentioned in the first decades of the 19th century as the heritage of Polizu to his son, Dumitru Polizu that had sold two rooms to Preda Stan in 1835. Another Polizu Inn is mentioned in Bucharest in 1846 but it couldn't be traced.

Târgoviște Lane was bordered towards Calea Victoriei by two boyar houses, as follows: on the right side Grigore Romanit house which housed the Administrative Council and the old Internal Affairs and Finance Ministry, nowadays the Art Collections Museum and on the left side there was Barbu Știrbei house. Another important institution was housed by the building of Accounts Court, nowadays „Carol Davila" Hospital. The Art University building belonged to Lord Nicolae Rosetti. Going further on, in Sfinții Voievozi suburb was mentioned Ioan Ceacovschi's property, having a shop at the entrance, houses, orchard, hayfield, pavilion, just to make an idea how Calea Griviței looked at that time. On the crossroad with Sfinții Voievozi Street there is Grivița Public Bathroom, opened in 1897, December 18th. From this point all the way to Matache Măcelarul Market, Târgoviște Lane was bordered all most exclusively by private houses.

On the crossroad with Polizu Street there was Polizu house, on which's place was later raised Bratu Hotel. It is interesting to observe, from the urban evolution point of view, how important buildings housing institutions were placed at crossroads. On Polizu Street there were three schools: The Bridges and Road School (1881), The Superior Arts and Crafts School (future "Politehica", 1895) and a primary school. Delimited by the streets Calea Griviței (Polizu) - N. Titulescu - Al. I. Cuza, including nowadays I. Gh. Duca Street, there was the estate of priestess Maria, mother of N. Filimon, estate which was fragmented after 1865 in relation with the changes due to the construction of the North Railway Station. .

On the left side of Târgoviște Lane there were fields with orchards, vineyards, corn, owned by Ghiță Ioniță and Iancu Roset. On their properties was erected The Târgoviște Railway Station (from 1888 called The North Railway Station), the second in Bucharest after Filaret Railway Station (1869). On Fundătura Atelierului Street were installed the *CFR* (Romanian Railways) Workshops, which's place was later taken by the Administrative Palace of Romanian Railways and the surrounding park. In 1868, September 10th began the construction of Bucharest - Galați railway by the German Strousseberg Company. For an easier access to the railway station, the horse tram was introduced. As a commercial axis, Calea Griviței is the achievement of the railroads. The prosperity of small scale commerce was directly linked with the raising number of railroads workers. The construction of Târgoviște Raliway Station will generate the development of the "New Calea Griviței" with its suburbs inhabited by the workers for the Railway Station and Grivița Workshops. Târgoviște Raliway Station was inaugurated in 1970, November 15th/27th and inaugurated in 1872, September 1st/13th with the occasion of the opening of the railway route Roman - Galați - București - Pitești.

A guide from the beginning of the 20th century mentioned six hotels and seven cinemas on Calea Griviței: "Bratu" (no. 130, today "Grivița"), "Frunzette" (no. 112), "New York" (no. 143), "Europa" (no. 100), "Londra" (no. 11) and "Roma" (no. 110) -hotels, "Ferdinand" (no. 357), "Grivița" (no. 261), "Lux" (no. 196), "Marna" (no. 80), "Marconi" (no. 137), "Roma" (no. 110), "Triumf" (no. 335) - cinemas. In 1943 there were sixteen hotels, plus nearby "Gociman" on Dinicu Golescu Street, "Regele Ferdinand" on Polizu Street, "Brașov" and "Cameliei" around Matache Market hotels, so there were around 20 hotels in the area of the North Railway Station at that time.

Some hotels and restaurants on Calea Griviței were destroyed during the bombardments from April-August 1944. Some of the mentioned buildings were lost, some changed their profile, and some became dwellings for the distressed population or for students. In 1965, August 1st began its existence the luxury category North Hotel complex, no. 143 Calea Griviței. Most of them era now out of use: restaurants like "Feroviarul" at no. 214 and "Vulcan" at no. 160, hotels like „Dunărea" at no. 140, „Grivița" at no. 130 (former "Ferdinand"), „Marna" at no. 3, Buzești Street.

Going further on Calea Griviței there is Grant Bridge, erected in 1912. The area surrounding Grant Bridge has an interesting history related with Effingham Grant, whose name was kept in the memory of this

neighborhood. Grant was a Scottish young man that came to Bucharest representing an insurance company and then became the secretary of the English consul in Bucharest. He married Zoe Racoviță, descended of Golescu family after her mother, from whom she inherited several properties in the area of Basarab Railway Station - the Belvedere Estate. It was composed of several houses and a water tower, still standing today in front of Carrefour Orhideea Bricostore. The name of Orhideea Street is related with Grant as well, as he was the first in Bucharest to harvest this kind of flower. The area, at that time located at the periphery of the town, developed several industrial activities, like the foundry "Fonderia E. Grant et comp. - Belvedere" (1863), the first of its kind in Bucharest, the Erhard Luther Brewery (1863), at that time the third in Bucharest and the cigars Manufactory Belvedere (1864), founded by the Romanian state to which Grant sold a great amount of his lands. The manufactory functioned in the former houses of Golescu family, extended in 1888-1890 with new buildings and reconstructed after the war, in the years 1948-1955-1960. the last two ensembles were preserved and present an important potential in what concerns the industrial heritage and their placement on old parcels already established at the end of the 19th century and oriented towards a street that preserves the orientation from that time. Their faith is now depending on the future supra terrain passage from Basarab. The question of whether the urbanism project takes in consideration the potential industrial heritage is raised.

This industrial nucleus together with the North Railway Station and the Griviţa Workshops gave birth to undesired places and generated new neighborhood around them, the field being cheep and the workers not having pretensions for comfort. The terrain remaining after construction of the cigarettes factory was parceled and sold in small and cheep lots to the workers from the factories at the end of "Podul de Pământ" and to these working for the Romanian Railroads. In this way appeared Grant, Regie and Giulești neighborhoods. The streets from Grant neighborhood kept the name of Grant's family until the war. The mentioned neighborhood, placed at the border of town and village, became larger after Al. I Cuza took away the riches from the monasteries and gave them to the many that need, together with the volunteers from the Independence War that received from the state 10 acres of field for each of them.

Grant neighborhood had a bad fame, being populated with gangs of youth named "grandiști". They had as distinctive mark: white-red shirts, in order to distinguish from their neighbors from Sfânta Vineri or Ouatu's Pits. The gangs ruled the neighborhood so that strangers couldn't escape from their hands. They were outlaws, making a sort of "republic" of their own at the edges of Bucharest and controlling the contraband from Basarab Barrier.

It is interesting how the town's periphery followed the railroad, as far as the assembly from the North Railway Station developed. Even more interesting is to see how the suburb from the studied area evolved, as the subject of the society's periphery recently became a trend in literature. The first modern gang appeared in Grant neighborhood, related with "Rapid" football team, because the first players were recruited from the workers for the railroads that lived in Grant suburb. At the beginning of the 19th century, the gang controlled a third of the city, including Giulești, Cotroceni, Grozăvești and Filantropia neighborhoods. There couldn't be found any gendarme in these suburbs and the local authority was replaced until 1914-1916 by a local authority formed by the suburbs delegates that were supposed to resolve all problems in order to avoid the disputes.

The commerce in Bucharest was on top in the period between the World Wars. The shops formed continuous ranges in areas like *Lipscănia* or Calea Griviței from the crossroad with Buzești all the way to the North Railway Station, as can be seen in photographic documents from the time. Due to these documents we can still see the signboard of different shops and taverns, as well as their large range of products and offers: breweries, restaurants, druggist's, glass, clothes, shoes, stoves, porcelains, pharmacy, ironmongery, tailors, delicacies, window glass, popular bank, salami and sausages, cheese, mirrors, hairdresser's, bakery, butchery, deposits of lime, cement and plaster. These examples show a point of view upon the life of the little commerce developed in the period between the World Wars on Calea Griviței and its neighborhoods developed around the North Railway Station and Griviţa Workshops.

The urban development also occurred together with the prosperous economical development from this period. New neighborhoods appeared, for example 1 Mai raised on the former Ouatu Pit, which was filled in and leveled in order to make place for modest dwellings. The same happened with Cuțarida Pit and its brick factory. Periphery neighborhoods appeared in this way, by giving land to veterans from 1st World War or by selling it to poor people. The workers for the Railways settled more often in the area between the lines leading to Chitila, forming Grivița commune with 6.000 inhabitants in 1930. The houses were wagon type, characteristic for the second half of the 19th century. Here's a description from 1972, made by Constantin Argetoianu, the ministry of internal affairs, regarding the sad story of configuring the Bucharest's periphery, in hurry and disorganization: "...one has to have a special skill in order to pass through the wave of dust or the swamps of these neighborhoods, like Crângași, Principele Carol, Dămăroaia, Militari. It is a shame". The situation must have been the same in Grivița as it had a similar genesis.

In Grant and Crângași neighborhoods, inhabited by people working at Railways, there was no current water or the most elementary living conditions, not having electric power and only one water source for both of them. Despite this situation, the rents were high, meaning up to a third from a middle and low social class, on the discontent of their inhabitants. Other neighborhoods from the area, like Filantropia, Sf. Vineri and Puțul lui Crăciun, with a total of 10.000 inhabitants, had only two water sources, one on Filantropia Street and another one after St. Vineri Cemetery. In Cuțarida neighborhood, in 1925, most of the houses were made of timber and clay.

In 1944, German and allied forces bombed especially the area of the North Railway Station and the neighborhoods of Cotroceni, Grivița and Steaua. After the war, in 1950, the old administrative departments of Bucharest, called "colors" (Calea Griviței was in the Green color) were replaced with new ones after the Soviet model, having names of important historical personalities or data. With the new organization, Căii Griviței had the following sub-divisions: Grivița Roșie, 30 Decembrie (30 Decembrie Market = Chibrit Market) and 1 Mai, plus the former rural communes that were included in the new boundaries of the city (Chitila and Mogoșoaia communes were added to Grivița Roșie, Otopeni to 30 Decembrie and Cetatea Voluntărească to 1 Mai).

In the era of the socialist reconstruction, entire segments of the city streets changed their appearance completely, especially Calea Griviței between the North Railway Station and Chibrit Market, 1 Mai and Dinicu Golescu. They were all bordered with an almost continuous range of blocks. The North Railway Station and Chibrit Markets were systemized. The Romanian Railways Palace (G+11) was also finished, after its concrete frame had been teemed before 1944 and during the war served as anti-aerial shelter. The socialist period also realized other things in the urban field like the central heating system in the new buildings complexes from Calea Griviței and Grozăvești and the surrounding industrial area, together with the arrangement of parks like Nicolae Bălcescu (12 ha), with open air theatre and Parcul Copilului (Child's Park, 6 ha), on the former Cuțarida pit.

Other daily life characteristics around The North Railway Station are represented by the „loisir" locals. In the period between the World Wars, the area around Buzești Market was famous for its summer taverns with gardens, like "Coșna". In 1932, the manager Georgescu built another pub named "Restaurant Coșna-Cireșoaia", later known as "Dory Parc" and "Neptun". Here, in 1938 the famous singer Maria Tănase made its first appearance in public. The restaurant became assaulted by the people who had just discovered a new attraction. At 23.30 hours, when Maria Tănase was appearing on stage, applauses went for minutes. In the times when social and cultural institutions had less popularity than taverns, these became land marks in the topography of București, like the tavern of Chibrit, placed at the crossroad of Calea Griviței with Bulevardul Filantropia -1 Mai.

II. The urban evolution

The urban evolution was analyzed from the point of view the three components of the urban tissue: the street texture, the parcels and the buildings, at the scale of the assembly represented by Calea Griviței. Taking into consideration the scale, the last two components couldn't be traced too detailed.

Calea Griviței is one of the oldest streets from București, linking the upper - Târgoviște and Câmpulung - and lower - București - capitals of Țara Românească. Actually, it seems there were three ways going to Târgoviște: one going from Curtea Veche (the Old Court) through Calea Mehedinților to Cotroceni, a second one dating back to the 16th-17th century starting as well from Curtea Veche and named *Drumul Târgoviștei cel Vechi* (the Old Way to Târgoviște) and the last one, named *Drumul Târgoviștei cel Nou* (the New Way to Târgoviște). The Old Way went on *Podul Târgului din Afară* then, through Poșta Veche (Pictor Verona Street), Biserica Albă, crossed Podul Mogoșoaiei at the Cișmeaua Roșie and then through General Budișteanu Street entered Târgoviștei Lane. Ernst's plan (1789-1791) showed o this lane cultivated parcels and a document from 1829 mentioned 100 houses.

Based on the historical plans, the traces of Calea Griviței date back before the middle of the 19th century, when is showed on Borroczyn's plan. At that time, Târgoviștei Lane had four crossroads related with a religious or commercial activity. Coming from *Podul Mogoșoaiei,* the first crossroad is placed in the area of Manea Brutarul Church, another one in the area of Sfinții Voievozi Church and close to this one a crossroad in the area of Matache Măcelarul Market. Going further, at the Târgoviștei Barrier, today's Basarab Bridge, there was the last major crossroad of Târgoviștei Lane. This area was part of the city belt together with *Podul de Pământ* and Mogoșoaiei Barriers. The 1899 and 1911 plans show major differences from the preceding period, because of regularization, straightening and thinking process of the street network, leading to new streets emergence, like Polizu. The construction of the North Railway Station determined the fragmentation of the big estates from the area, as the city continued to develop to its North-West side. The North Railway Station was first named Târgoviștei Railway Station (1872). New neighborhoods appeared together with the construction of the Griviția Workshops (1897) leading to the transformation of the rural periphery into an urban one. On its way, Calea Griviței followed the urban development process in this part of București.

The second component of the urban tissue is represented by the parcels. On the Borroczyn's plan, until the crossroad with Polizu Street, the lots were already established and remained the same. In the area of Târgoviștei Barrier there were large estates that will disappear after the North Railway Station was built. On the 1899 and 1911 plans it can be observed that the habitation density increased for the already existing parcels. Other observations related with the urban process consist in the diminishing of the existing lots on *Old* Calea Griviței. For the New Calea Griviței, small lots were constituted following the geometric network of the new born streets on the adjacent area of Calea Griviței. A process of lots unification is traced in Polizu area, related with the institutions raised there - the Polytechnic Institute and the Hospital.

The buildings on Calea Griviței are varied. The built environment earned a lot in half century, after the North Railway Station was constructed. The *Old* Calea Griviței still preserves apart of the 19th-20th century buildings, some of them historical monuments that follow the street alignments preceding the middle of the 19th century. Another characteristic is the tendency to create a continuous front as a commercial street.

The urban study of Calea Griviței revealed the evolution into a major street of the capital. In the mid of the 19th century, București ended at Târgoviștei Barrier - Basarab and the built environment could be seen until the crossroad with Matache Market. At the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century, Calea Griviței evolved rapidly and on a large scale, on the capital's map appearing a whole new neighborhood generated by the construction of the North Railway Station.

Calea Griviței marks on its way important moments of București urban development, which gives it great value of cultural identity and proves it is an important cultural resource. This potential is also detained by the other old city streets that held a barrier in those times, marking in this way the city width at the mid 19th century. Particular for Calea Griviței, the construction of the North Railway Station determined the urban development on the North-West direction, phenomenon reflected also at the urban area level as Calea Griviței and the surrounding became important at the scale of the whole settlement at the end of the 19th century.

III. Cultural resource values

As study case had been chosen an area considered to be worth the attention of such boarding. It is the case of the area of Calea Griviței from the crossroad with Buzești until that with Polizu. It is characterized by the presence of historical buildings with special function - hotels and cinemas, deserted at the present time, but with a high potential in revitalizing the area around the North Railway Station. Their conservation estate is poor and the perspectives concerning their future....somber.

Calea Griviței is a heterogeneous entity formed by two distinct parts, the *Old* and *New* Calea Griviței, but this is a normal consequence of the urban process and the historical evolution of the area. A decisive role is attributed to the appearance of the North Railway Station. The buildings kept the same characteristic, varying from the palaces towards Calea Victoriei to houses from 19th-10th century and finally to modest dwellings destinated to workers for the railways. This amalgam confers a specific cultural identity to Calea Griviței.

The analysis method was to identify both the elements that harm the aspect of Căii Griviței and the elements that give its cultural value. The negative aspects of the mentioned area have been classified in more categories: degradations at the level of the facade, insertions of new constructions or inadequate interventions on old buildings using new materials and elements, the discontinuity of the front (the segment from the crossroad with Buzești all the way to the crossroad with Polizu), ruined constructions near unused spaces (Rădulescu House/ Hotel Marna (Calea Griviței no. 80), Oltenia Hotel (Calea Griviței no. 88-90), Bratu/ Grivița Hotel (Calea Griviței no. 130), Marconi/ Dacia cinema (Calea Griviței no. 137) and Dunărea Hotel).

The area has a valuable potential and there are several intervention that could reanimate the entire zone: the rebuilding of the continuous front, the rehabilitation of the unused buildings according to their status of historical monuments. The special function of the buildings (hotels and cinemas) is appropriate for the location nearby the North Railway Station and it should be exploited if not for the cultural value at least for the economic one. The investments possibilities in a transit area are good enough to worth mading them. Another interest zone is that of the industrial buildings ("Gambrinus" beer brewery - 1869, cigars manufactory - 1864, functioning in the former houses of Golescu family, Grivița Workshops). All these are possible future landmarks for the industrial heritage.

Calea Griviței has a valuable potential concerning the architectural and urban heritage but this must be preserved and improved. Unfortunately, the physical integrity of the architecture assembly represented by Calea Griviței is affected but with no consequences upon the value of its potential unit.

Between the associated values, the cultural identity expressed by oldness of the streets generated by Calea Griviței, the parcels for the old part until the North Railway Station and some of the buildings, all these preceding the mid 19th century when they are mentioned on Borroczyn's plan. The buildings are also part of the relative artistically-technical values, considering their variety of architectural styles, being identified no more than 8 (neoclassic, neo-baroque, eclecticism, secession, neo-romanian, art-deco, modernism, and mauro-florentinian), decoration type, materials and quality of execution. At the same time, the group of contemporary social-economic values should be more exploited, in the sense of revalorizing the cultural heritage.

In this way, the group of unused and ruined hotels and cinemas mentioned above could make the object of rehabilitation, preserving the initial functions. This could lead to a revitalization of the area around the North Railway Station, important railway junction and commercial node of the capital. The historical buildings could be reused, from the educational value point of view, it is necessary to preserve and rehabilitate a historical building, and from the political value point of view it is moral and financial sustain to reborn a part of the architectural heritage of the capital.

The most important aspect remains the authenticity, the inner value that defines the cultural resource in itself. Authentic on Calea Griviței is the grouping around the North Railway Station of the special functions (hotels, cinemas) buildings, and the combination between commercial and residential functions in its

extremities. Calea Griviței is also authentic because it is characterized by an amalgam of architectural functions and styles, by a succession of values-non values, empty spaces and isolated monuments. With all the negative aspects that can be erased at some point, Calea Griviței preserves a 200 years heritage showing the local urban and historic evolution.

The area from Calea Victoriei to the north Railway belongs to the urban tissue where architectural, historical and urban values must be preserved, while in the area from the Railway Station to Constanța Bridge only isolated values must be preserved (buildings, assemblies, urban tissue fragments) together with the environment.

Conclusions

Calea Griviței is one of the oldest streets in Bucharest; it was first known as the "way to Târgoviște". Its historical importance is due to the fact that in the Middle Ages it was the beginning of the way that the lower (București) and the upper (Târgoviște) capitals of Walachia. The road is formed of two distinctive parts: „the old" Calea Griviței, from Calea Victoriei until the North Railway Station, bordered with historical buildings and „the new" Calea Griviței, dominated by the railway, Grivița Workshops and the surrounding neighborhood. Calea Griviței represents a mark of the urban development on the North-West side of Bucharest, its cultural value being reflected by this matter. Even though it has an important potential from the point of view of the cultural resources, the perspectives concerning the preservation of historical monuments, not only from Calea Griviței, are somber, at least for present time.