

# SHIFTING SPACES

## Public Spaces facing new needs and expectations

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**REZUMAT.** Spațiul public reprezintă în continuare unul din cele mai complexe programe arhitectural-urbanistice ținând cont de faptul că este nevoit să se adapteze și să răspundă nevoilor din ce în ce mai specifice a unei diversități ridicate de utilizatori. Scopul articolului este de a prezenta modul în care principiile de amenajare și intervenție în spațiul public evoluează, împreună cu schimbarea nevoilor și așteptărilor utilizatorilor. Așadar sunt prezentate pe scurt principiile de bază elaborate de specialiștii în domeniul spațiului public pornind de la studiile lui William Holly Whyte până la cea mai recentă publicație a lui Jan Gehl. Pentru o adaptare la contextul actual, cel de tranziție a spațiului public sunt prezentate trei din tendințele majore în amenajarea și proiectarea a acestuia, și anume: TIC (Tehnologiile de Informare și Comunicare), Urbanismul Pop-Up și Urbanismul Tactic. Ultima parte a articolului descrie succint și evaluează Piața Universității ca și spațiu public. Pentru a exemplifica potențialul noulor tendințe acest segment final prezintă modul în care intervențiile de tip Pop-Up sau TIC pot ameliora semnificativ calitatea acestui spațiu public reprezentativ.

**Cuvinte cheie:** spațiu public, principii de proiectare, tendințe noi, așteptări, nevoi, TIC, urbanism Pop-up, urbanism Tactic.

**ABSTRACT.** Public space is still one of the most complex architectural and urban planning programs due to the fact that it is compelled to adapt and meet the increasingly specific needs of a high diversity of users. The purpose of this paper is to show how the principles of design and intervention in public space evolve with the shifting needs and expectations of its users. Therefore the first part summarizes the basic principles developed by specialists in public space starting from William Holly Whyte's studies to the latest publication of Jan Gehl. In order to adapt to the current context of public spaces in a shifting period, three major trends in development and design of these places, namely: ICT (Information and Communication Technologies) Pop-Up Urbanism and Tactical Urbanism, are presented. The last part of the article briefly describes and evaluates the University Square as public space. To illustrate the potential of new trends, this final segment shows how Pop-Up interventions or ICT can significantly improve the quality of a representative public space.

**Keywords:** public spaces, design principles, new trends, needs, expectations, ICT, Pop-Up urbanism, Tactical urbanism.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Public spaces form one of our cities' most important layers. As Craig Calhoun argues, "one of the most important social characteristics of cities is the provision of public spaces in which relative strangers can interact and observe each other, debate and learn politically, and grow psychologically from diverse contacts" (Calhoun 1986; 341). These places where people meet, where social interactions happen most often, are open for all and common ground for free meaning (democracy), but they are also places where you can relax and have some intimacy. Given the increasing complexity of human needs and the diverse cultural backgrounds present in nowadays cities, creating an inclusive place that responds to all

its users' needs and expectations became a huge challenge for architects, planners, designers and other professionals in the field.

### 2. BASIC PRINCIPLES FOR PUBLIC SPACE DESIGN

Using basic principles of designing, studying and understanding public spaces developed by theorists and practitioners such as W.H. Whyte, J. Gehl, S. Carr and others, planners can succeed in designing better public spaces. However, they often tend to forget these basic principles in favor of esthetics, building infamous places like: Diagonal del Mar (Barcelona), Tate Modern (London) or Schouwburgplein (Rotterdam),

which are unable to satisfy people's needs and expectations. Hence, they end up empty or underused.

The article will present a brief evolution of the basic principles and criteria for designing public spaces, while also highlighting nowadays trends (ICT, Pop-Up Urbanism and Tactical Urbanism) aiming to cope with the users' new needs and expectations. In the end, it will present the case of "Piața Universității" in Bucharest, analyzing the way this square relates to basic principles of designing public spaces.

The first complex study upon contemporary public spaces was undertaken in 1980 by Whilliam H. Whyte. Using video recordings of various public spaces in New York, he studied human behavior in these places trying to understand why some of them are not used, despite their high esthetical quality. Based on his studies, Whyte then published "The social life of small urban spaces". His recordings are also available as a documentary under the same name. As a brief conclusion of Whyte's study, seven main characteristics of a successful public space where highlighted: "sittable space, street, sun, food, water, trees, and triangulation".

A high importance is given to sitting places, and how this simple utility manages to attract people. The lack of sitting places is considered to be a common error of nowadays public spaces. Nevertheless, handled the right way it can also be an asset, as shown by the case of Paley Park. Moveable chairs are one of the main features that transform Paley Park into one of New York's most successful public spaces. People can adjust parts of this place according to their own needs: they can group more chairs for a quick discussion with friends, but they can also take a chair and hide in a more isolated corner to relax. This simple approach added the feature of adaptability to Paley Park, increasing its attractiveness by making it easier to fit various needs.

Relying on Whilliam H. Whyte's study, in 1993 Stephen Carr published "Public Space", where he analyzes various public spaces throughout U.S. He ends up in explaining human behavior within public spaces structured on tree pillars: needs (comfort, relaxation, passive /active engagement and discovery), rights (access, freedom of act, claim and change<sup>1</sup>) and meanings. The focus on meanings, identity and therefore the way people understand public spaces is related to Kevin Lynch's "A Theory of Good City Form"; "A good place is one which, in some way appropriate to the person and her culture, makes her aware of her community", but can also be related to Norberg Schultz's "genius loci"<sup>2</sup>. The spirit of the place also has a high relevance in the methodology of

analyzing and designing public space of PPS3, a famous New York based organizations that developed the so called "placemaking", also relying on Whyte's studies. PPS uses the concept of "the power of 10" as starting point for public space intervention. This simple, rather bottom up (community based) idea states that before making any change within the given public space, the 10 most important reasons for it to be should be discovered. In these manner specialists, helped by the local community, can identify the real value of public spaces and build on it, a fact which helps in designing places closer to their users. A great public space in the view of PPS, consists of four major attributes: Access & Linkages, Uses & Activities, Comfort & Image and Sociability. These basic characteristics, representing the social, functional and esthetic dimensions of public spaces combined with the symbolic part resulting from the "power of ten"<sup>4</sup>, form one of the most complete approaches on describing and understanding a successful public space.

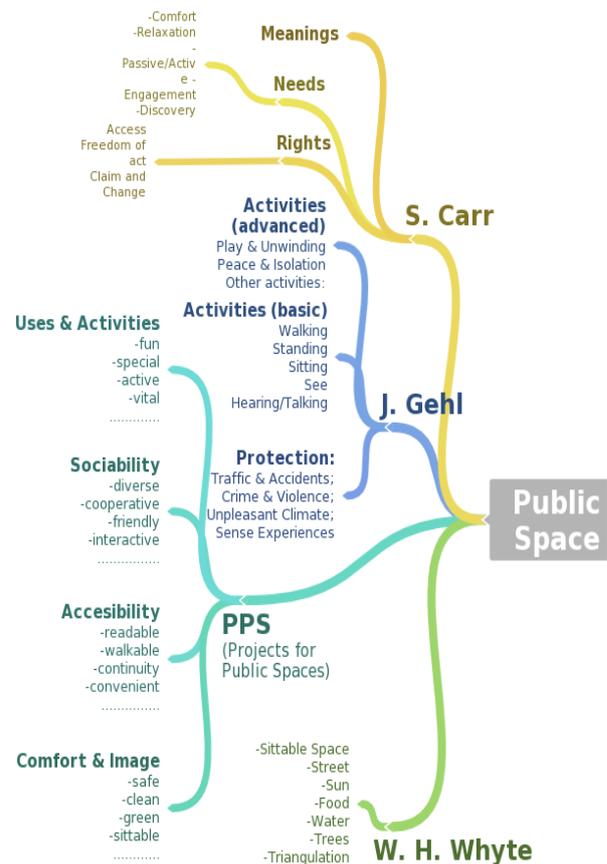


Fig.1. the basic criteria for a successful public space presented by J.Gehl, S.Carr, PPS and W.H. Whyte.

Compared to W. H. Whyte and S. Carr, PPS added another feature in the portrait of successful public spaces: accessibility and connectivity. This

<sup>1</sup> Claim and change can be translated into adaptability of public spaces, feature exemplified by the Paley Park.

<sup>2</sup> Genius Loci: Towards a Phenomenology of Architecture.

<sup>3</sup> Projects for Public Spaces

<sup>4</sup> A detailed presentation of the concept can be found at: <http://www.pps.org/reference/poweroften/>

feature is mostly related to urban mobility and the paradigm shift started in the late 80's. The high degree of automobility inherited by the fordist model is considered to be a major threat for the quality and development of nowadays public spaces. Jan Gehl, a Copenhagen based architect, also advocates for the idea of giving cities back to the people and for the reduction of car use. He builds on the model of Copenhagen, a city that started to change its attitude towards automobility in the 60s and has gradually (within 40 years) extended its pedestrian area<sup>1</sup> while also building one of the most complex cycling infrastructures in Europe. J.Gehl describes a successful public space through the following key aspects: Protection (traffic, accidents, crime, violence, unpleasant climate etc.), Basic activities (walking, standing, sitting, seeing, hearing/talking) and advanced activities (play & unwinding, peace & isolation, etc.) (J. Gehl and B. Svarre 2013). Compared to the PPS methodology, J. Gehl's approach seems to focus more on the urban mobility and functional part of public spaces while, maybe, not focusing enough on the symbolic part, the real identity of a place.

Looking at a quick evolution of contemporary public space analysis we can state that the basic principles developed by W.H. Whyte are still valid and that the major additions of subsequent theorists and practitioners consist of the addition of urban mobility issues and highlighting the places' identity. Considering prior research mentioned above regarding the quality of public spaces we can consider that a successful public space is built upon three major pillars: Function – Esthetics – Spirit<sup>2</sup>. These three pillars (shown in Fig. 2) represent the base on which several other characteristics are built. The ratio between the three elements (Function, Esthetics and Spirit) is in a certain manner site dependent. We can therefore have places with a high spiritual significance like Ghetto Heroes Square in Krakow, or spaces which improved functional qualities like Paley Park in New York. The spiritual value of public spaces is mostly highlighted and appreciated by the specialists representing the Public Space branch of Centre de Cultura Contemporània de Barcelona (CCCB)<sup>3</sup> which hosts the biannual European Public Space Award. Unfortunately the CCCB experts have not presented a detailed methodology by now, though which they define a “successful public space”. Therefore this definition can just be given using an in depth analysis of the awarded public spaces.

<sup>1</sup> Pedestrian areas were extended mostly by closing or narrowing down existent roads.

<sup>2</sup> Or meaning.

<sup>3</sup> Like for example David Bravo Bordas in the article: The *flâneur*'s surprise.

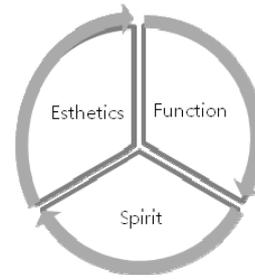


Fig. 2. The three pillars – base of a successful public space.

### 3. THE SHIFT – NEW NEEDS AND EXPECTATIONS GENERATE NEW TRENDS

Even though the basic principles presented above still apply, there are several new trends that not only improve nowadays public spaces, but also change the way we perceive, build and use them. These trends are meant to better cope with the rapid change of people's needs and expectations by producing a slight shift in what we could call “the portrait of a successful public space”.

The most cited such trends are represented by the influence of ICT4 on public space, the so called Pop-up urbanism or temporary urbanism (Bishop 2012) and the related “Do It Yourself” urbanism.<sup>5</sup> These new trends manage to give public spaces new uses and images, to make it more efficient and to bring it closer to people.

#### 3.1. Information and communication technologies

Information and communication technologies (ICT) play an essential role in nowadays public spaces, satisfying the need to stay connected to the information stream, part of living in the era of digitalization (Riether, 2010). More precisely, we are living in a time of uncertainty, following the modern era when people lost interest towards public spaces in favor of virtual environments that managed to completely negate physical interaction between individuals (Hurtago, 2004). However, although at the first sight ICT had a negative impact on public spaces by the raise of “virtual communities” (Rheingold, 2000) and the diminishing of face to face interactions, these technologies can also be used to increase the quality of the public realm.

ICT adds a range of new utilities/functionalities to public spaces and change the way we perceive

<sup>4</sup> Information and Communication Technologies.

<sup>5</sup> DIY urbanism, also called tactical urbanism.

and interact with these places. The impact of ICT on public spaces can be resumed to five major areas: (1) culture and art, (2) information transmitters, (3) games and entertainment (4) education and (5) planning and design. (Stadler, 2013). New ways of interactive art can be experienced with the help of new technologies, mostly relying on hardware, such as large digital screens, projections, sound installations or sensors. Through ICT, especially wireless internet, public spaces can regain their role of access point for information, which is a major attractor for today's users. Playfulness<sup>1</sup> is also an important characteristic of successful public spaces (Gehl, 2013; Dekel et al., 2005) which can be added using ICT. Installations like the "Piano Stairs", sTail, or the Water Wall at Zaragoza's Digital Mile are just a few out of many successful ICT interventions for playful public spaces. Education can be added into public spaces using ICT tools by offering additional information of the site using, for example, Qr codes linked to various relevant websites. In the field of planning and design, new technologies support a more diverse and in depth analysis of public spaces by using specific software such as the Space Syntax model developed by Bill Hillier, or even the google maps add-on that shows real time traffic data.

In conclusion, ICT is one of the major changes and agents of change in nowadays public spaces, supporting the direct connection with the so called digital public space, a place filled with information, extremely attractive to the user of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The ICT tools can strengthen or add basic characteristics of public spaces such as: play and unwinding (Gehl 2013) or fun, special, active (PPS, 2010). Sociability (PPS, 2010) can also be increased through various applications or installations aiming to bring people together like the sTail project. Last but not least, by generating a digital image of public spaces these places gain a different type of accessibility, "virtual accessibility".

### 3.2. Pop-Up Urbanism

Pop-Up Urbanism or Temporary Urbanism (Bishop, 2012) appeared in the context of decreasing resources for major urban interventions, while also trying to address the inefficient use of land in cities. Moreover, this trend relates to the ongoing necessity to research, analyze and understand the fast shifting needs of public space users. Pop-up interventions in public spaces are generally implemented with a low amount of resources (including time) and most of them are temporary. Such interventions are great

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<sup>1</sup> Also related to "Urbanism made to like" one of the top 10 city trends for 2013 considered by the Pop-up City blog.

solutions for the quick revival of public spaces, for testing various approaches on public space design and for awareness raising on urban issues and opportunities. London is maybe the most familiar with this trend; it even has its own website for matching vacant places with potential users or events. Through <http://www.londonpopups.com>, one can find a large diversity of pop-up shops, galleries and bars. Users can even support or visualize future interventions. Projects like the pop-up lake at Union Street, in London are developed in order to enliven abandoned public spaces (Moore, 2013). Other interventions such as "Pop-up Rockwell" aim to test users' reactions to minor changes within the city. The project temporarily transformed a traffic lane covering five blocks into a two way cycling lane, equipped bus stations with Wi-Fi and added several groups of urban furniture to increase the attractiveness of the reclaimed space<sup>2</sup>. There is also a pop-up project for Berlin Tempelhof airport, aiming to bring the abandoned land back into the urban circuit. Under the concept of "planning in between planning"<sup>3</sup> the airport was open (free) for community uses until the local administration gathers resources (5-10 years) for a new mixed use development. Today, Tempelhof "park" hosts various pop-up projects such as: community gardens, playgrounds, etc. Through this simple, low cost project, a part of Berlin is reopened for public use, working as a laboratory for urban interventions and community-based design; a place "designed and developed by people, for people".

Temporary interventions that randomly pop-up like "mushrooms after the rain" raise awareness or highlight specific opportunities, often preparing long term urban projects. Best suited to test various ideas within public spaces and/or to emphasize the need for intervention, pop-up projects can generate precious information about the use of public spaces. Hence, this trend can bring a significant contribution to understanding how to better satisfy the rapidly changing needs and expectations related to public spaces. Pop-up interventions can also add, even if only for a short time, most of basic ingredients for a successful public space: sitting places, food, water, trees (Whyte 2001).

### 3.3. Tactical Urbanism

Tactical urbanism refers to specific tactics aiming to improve the urban environment through low cost

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<sup>2</sup> The former traffic lane.

<sup>3</sup> Idea presented by Raumlabor Berlin which highlights the need for a more efficient use of land resources within the planning process. More precisely it addresses the questions: "what can we do with land for whose development we don't have money yet?"

projects with a high degree of replicability. This new trend, similar to Pop-up urbanism, started as a reaction to three major changes in today's cities: recession, demographic shift and the internet as a tool for civil society (Lydon 2012). The simplicity of these urban interventions, their replicability and the internet as tool for spreading information are the three main ingredients for these viral projects' success. A major focus of tactical urbanism is on bottom up interventions, as the tactics are mostly implemented by local communities or civil society organisations/groups in order to sort problems not tackled by local administrations. This trend also marks a shift in the public space interventions' approach, empowering local communities to act instead of demanding and waiting for local administrations to intervene. Projects such as "10 things before I die" and "I wish this was..."<sup>1</sup> are simple, yet powerful ideas aiming to increase community engagement. Parking day, a global initiative started in Los Angeles (USA), equips parking places with urban furniture and activities for one day, in order to show the potential for public space development within the city. Guerilla gardening is another tactic applied in many cities, transforming abandoned land into public, community gardens.

Tactical urbanism, consisting of simple, cheap but highly visible interventions, can significantly improve the quality of public spaces, while also helping us better understand the users' needs and to compare results. The same intervention in different environments will mostly give different results. Pop-up urbanism and tactical urbanism fit best into PPS's concept "lighter, quicker, cheaper", supporting experimental, simple and cheap interventions.

In conclusion, ICT, Pop-up and Tactical Urbanism interventions can complete public spaces with essential feature but they can't work alone on the long term. ICT interventions can be considered additions (or even catalysts) aimed to increase the quality of public spaces. Pop-up projects are useful for testing interventions, they can offer a temporary solution for public space improvements, or even build places from the scratch. The ephemeral character also applies for tactical urbanism interventions, that can quickly solve urban issues, but for a short/medium amount of time while losing the attribute of uniqueness<sup>2</sup>.

In order to get a better view on how these new trends work together to enhance the basic features of

public spaces, the case of Piața Universității (Bucharest) is presented below.

### 4. CASE STUDY – PIAȚA UNIVERSITĂȚII, BUCHAREST

Piața Universității<sup>3</sup>, located in Bucharest city centre, is one of the most well-known and transited squares of the city. Nevertheless, its name is assigned by people to the entire area surrounding the square, a larger surface consisting of four public spaces: University square, Colțea square, National Theatre square and 21st December square<sup>4</sup>. The University square belongs to the series of public spaces reclaimed from the dominance of car traffic and it is now considered an important piece of the revitalized historical center of Bucharest. The square was redesigned in 2011 after an architecture competition.

Today's shape of University square is the outcome of an international design contest organized by the Romanian Chamber of Architects<sup>5</sup>. Unfortunately, many strong points of the winning proposal were lost in the implementation phase. The proposal had more sitting places, more vegetation, a more advanced pavement and a specific lightning installation compared to the design we experience today.

#### 4.1. Spiritual Value / Meaning

The spiritual value of University square is kept alive by the four statues representing: Ion Heliade Rădulescu, Mihai Viteazul, Gheorghe Lazăr and Spiru Haret, placed on an East-West axis. The new design changed their position so that they aren't centered on the entrances of the university anymore<sup>6</sup>. Nevertheless they still manage to give the place a monumental image and count as a well-known meeting place. The University area also has an important role as a place for democracy, supporting various protests. The most recent protests accommodated by the University square in the redesigned version started in September 2013 and were related to the controversial gold mining project in Roșia Montană, Romania. Due to its minimalistic design, the square is ideal for large gatherings.

<sup>1</sup> Projects implemented by Candy Chang and followers in various places around the globe.

<sup>2</sup> The feature of being an unique projects is lost due to the replicability of the interventions, a basic characteristic of tactics.

<sup>3</sup> This article refers to "Piața Universității" as the place in front of the Bucharest University (Universitatea București)

<sup>4</sup> The name was prior assigned to the intersection between the major boulevards crossing the area on N-S and E-V directions where the statue of I.C. Brătianu was placed before being destroyed in 1948.

<sup>5</sup> Ordinul Arhitecților Români (OAR)

<sup>6</sup> More details about the position of the statues can be found at: <http://www.syaa.ro/portfolio/studiu-piata-universitatii/>

## 4.2. Functional considerations

From a functional perspective, the square is bordered by activities that don't (or only slightly) interact with the public space. Bank offices, a casino and other such activities and services don't foster interaction between the users of the public space and the ground level of the surrounding buildings. The only places of interaction are, at the moment, a few terraces located near the south entrance of the square and a pub adjacent to the BRD headquarters. The Șuțu palace, headquarter of the Bucharest City Museum hosting various outdoor exhibitions and fairs faces away from the square.

Places offering shelter (from sun, wind, rain, etc.) are missing from the square but one can use the porch on Academiei Street<sup>1</sup>. Protection from traffic is ensured by large bollards surrounding the place and the relative distance from the noisy street makes social interaction possible (J.Gehl, 2013).

The square misses sitting places; the urban furniture covering the ventilation of the underground parking is used for sitting, together with the base of the four statues. The lack of sitting and resting places removes one of the most important features of the public space, the support for social interactions or the possibility "to see and be seen"<sup>2</sup>.

The only playful aspect of the square is provided by the urban furniture above the ventilation of the underground parking, which is often used by skaters (even though it was not designed for that purpose). Although there are a few young trees planted on the southern side of the square, they are barely perceived by the public. This will change for sure when they will have grown enough, but if these few trees were enough for this kind of public space, it is still arguable.

University Square is therefore rather used for transit, accentuating its high accessibility and proximity to various points of interest. Rushing pedestrians and public spaces with an accentuated mobility role are characteristic for cities with a fast growing, more advanced economy (E. Jaffe, 2012), a category that also involves Bucharest<sup>3</sup>.

## 4.3. Esthetical considerations

From the esthetical perspective, the buildings surroundings of the square are of high architectural

value, increasing the esthetic and spiritual value of the place. The two buildings outlining the southern, hemicycle-shaped, entrance of the square offer a unified picture, even though they were built in completely different periods<sup>4</sup>. The southern exit of the square has a great perspective towards the St. Nicholas Russian Church.

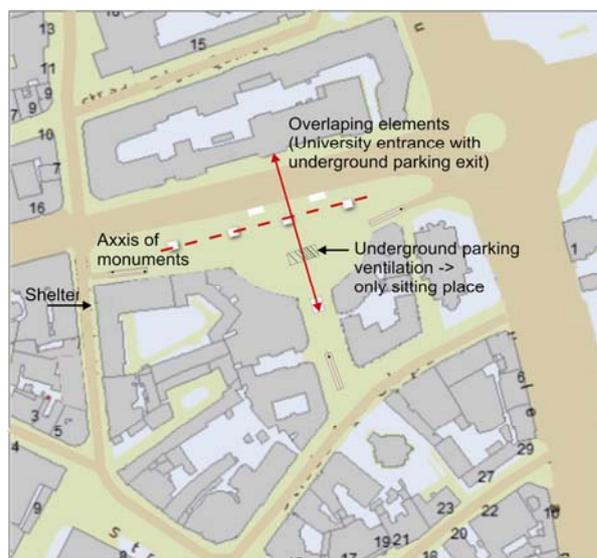


Fig. 3. Sketch of University square.

Although the relationship of the four statues with the adjacent façade of the University was lost after the redesign, there is still a rather unknown axial composition between the exit structure of the underground parking and the central entrance of the University<sup>5</sup>. There is also a lack of correlation in between the two buss stations the underground parking and metro entrances which could have been designed in a better manner to better integrate into the prestigious surroundings. Instead, they are built as standard metal, stone and plastic structures.

Other esthetical qualities were also lost in the process of redesigning University square. Even though the winning proposal argued for a specific pavement and high quality urban furniture, these were not implemented. The pavement has already started to deteriorate and the only urban furniture within the square consists of the coverage of the ventilation system of the underground parking. In conclusion, University Square does not fulfil the expectations generated by the high value of its built surroundings.

The following table presents an evaluation of the case study based on the basic principles of public

<sup>1</sup> The porch is directly related to the square, it represents the entrance from the S-V part.

<sup>2</sup> Concept promoted by theorist Augustin Ioan.

<sup>3</sup> At least compared with other Romanian cities Ia Brașov, Timișoara or Sibiu.

<sup>4</sup> Unfortunately the newer one of the two buildings is very deteriorated.

<sup>5</sup> Relation presented on "idei urbane" blog; article available at: <http://www.ideiurbane.ro/semne-prin-piata-universitatii/>

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spaces presented by J.Gehl, PPS, W.H. Whyte and S. Carr.

J. Gehl	Basic Activities	Walking friendly	Yes
		Standing	Yes
		Sitting	Poor
		See	Poor
		Hearing/Talking	Yes
	Protection	Traffic & Accidents	Yes
		Crime and Violence	Yes
		Unpleasant climate	Poor
		Sense experiences	Yes
	Advanced Activities	Play and Unwinding	No
		Peace and Isolation	No
		Other activities	Poor
PPS (Projects for Public Spaces)	Uses and Activities	Fun	No
		Special	Poor
		Active	Yes
		Vital	No
	Sociability	Diverse	No
		Cooperative	No
		Friendly	Poor
		Interactive	No
	Accessibility	Readable	Yes
		Walkable	Yes
		Continuity	Yes
		Convenient	Yes
	Comfort & Image	Safe	Yes
		Clean	Yes
		Green	Poor
		Sittable	No
W.H. Whyte	Sittable	Poor	
	Sun	Yes	
	Street	Yes	
	Water	No	
	Food	Poor	
	Trees	Poor	
	Triangulation	Yes	
	Comfort	Poor	
Needs	Relaxation	No	
	Passive/Active Engagement	Poor	
	Discovery	No	
	Meanings	Yes	
Rights	Access	Yes	
	Freedom of act	Yes	
	Claim and Change	No	

After checking the list of necessary criteria for a successful public space, University square ranks quite low. The main qualities of the place mostly refer to accessibility and the possibility to quickly cross the area. Therefore, it can be classified as mainly a place of transit. The memory of the place, its spiritual value is preserved through the surrounding built environment and the four statues.

On the other hand, the University square has a strong asset, a large amount of free space. This gives the square a great degree of adaptability. Therefore it can host various events and urban experiments, while also quickly adapting to the changing needs and expectations of its users. While some of the events held here had a great success (ex. Poiana Urbană, summer 2013), some of them were rather controversial (ex. F64 pavilion, spring 2014). Suitable for events, the space can also support various pop-up interventions aimed to experiment and test users' reactions.

For example, „Poiana Urbană” can be related to the Pop-up urbanism trend. A green carpet with grass texture and a few chairs were enough to give the place a cozy familiar atmosphere, while the small wooden decorations were a playful addition mostly appreciated by the young visitors. While it can be argued that such simple interventions don't fit the general esthetics of the place and its monumental allure, they managed to make University Square more attractive for its users by convincing them to stay and enjoy the atmosphere.



Fig. 4. „Poiana Urbană” sitting area [image online] Available at: <http://designist.ro/wp-content/uploads/2013/07/Poiana-Urbana-2013-Designist-4.jpg>

The University square is also suitable for ICT interventions, aimed to either connect people to the online information flows and/ or to add playfulness to the place. For example, the facades of the surrounding buildings were often used for projections, especially during the Christmas fair. Projected urban games or even augmented reality applications such as the Colorbitor project<sup>1</sup> from the Revolution square could make this place more playful while also providing information about its interesting past.

However due to its precious historical and architectural surroundings any interventions which plan to pass the stage of “temporality” should consider an increased attention towards esthetical and symbolic integration.

<sup>1</sup> The Colorbitor application developed by Cronobitor agency brings back the historical facade of the Revolution square using Augmented reality. Basically a layer with historical images is placed directly over the actual reality.

## 5. CONCLUSIONS

Basic principles of public space design such as the need for sitting and shelter or the importance of vegetation are still of great actuality. However, considering the users' fast-changing needs and expectations, public spaces have to adapt by shifting towards new trends like ICT, Pop-up urbanism or Tactical urbanism. These new trends support a better connection to new technologies, to the virtual public space, the possibility to experiment and test the reaction of users towards new interventions while supporting them in shaping their own places. The University square offers great opportunities for these new trends to flourish. Even though it misses a considerable amount of basic elements that define successful public spaces, it shows that these parts can be substituted or improved through Pop-up interventions and/or creative ICT projects and applications. Hence, the University square can be considered a highly adaptable place, open for creative, experimental opportunities. Nevertheless, such interventions have shown the potential to improve the quality of a major, underused public space, making it more attractive to its users.

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## About the author

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