

Effects and Affects in Architecture: Public Space Scenography

Dana S. Opincariu^{*1}, Alina E. Voinea^{*2}

^{1,2} *Technical University of Cluj-Napoca, Faculty of Architecture and Urban Planning. 72-76
Observatorului Str., 400489, Cluj-Napoca, Romania*

(Published online 14 March 2017)

Abstract

Everyday life spaces are scenographies for ordinary activities. They are enabling actors in playing their roles, adapting the space to their needs and adjusting their behavior to space ambiance. The space is an expression of self and of our image of our selves in the world, our dreams and desires. The strive for built space ambiance, scenography and spectacle in our surroundings reveals the need to identify with the living space and also the need to express our real image of ourselves, what we aspire to be and how we think and want to be perceived. The ambient space acts as a second skin. It is our protective shell and an interaction mean with the outside world. The interaction consists in a two way exchange receiving stimulus and exposing information. The space is a stimulant of senses - sight, hearing, smell, and touch, but also is also shaped by sensations - views, sounds, scent and touch. The focus of the study is on the scenography of the space, on the way space expresses and impresses. Space design flexibility and its effects reflections in human affects are explored. Recently redesigned public squares are looked at in order to understand the relationship between the spaces and the public.

Keywords: *space, perception, ambiance, effect, affect*

1. Introduction

The interest in the topic was triggered in ambient design studio by architecture students. Being preoccupied by creating beautiful spaces, their main efforts are concentrated on obtaining straight forward effects using tools like texture, color, light, shadow. The side effects of the design that could appear are overlooked as well as the possible affects that are generated.

The purpose of the study is to unravel undisclosed aspects of urban public spaces after architects design completion. Public's opinion is manifested merely after the project is irreversible implemented. After the project materialization people's needs and wants are voiced. At this stage the design can only be adjusted, but not custom fit. Citizens are left out of the design process.

Quality cities are for/ about people [1], therefore a different side on the public spaces evaluation approach is explored in order to better understand public space design and people connection.

2. Context

Half of world's population is living in cities. Urban living needs meaningful changes in order to improve environmental, social and economic city problems. [2]

Having livable beautiful cities is possible and the change is in our power, as Ludwig Mies Van

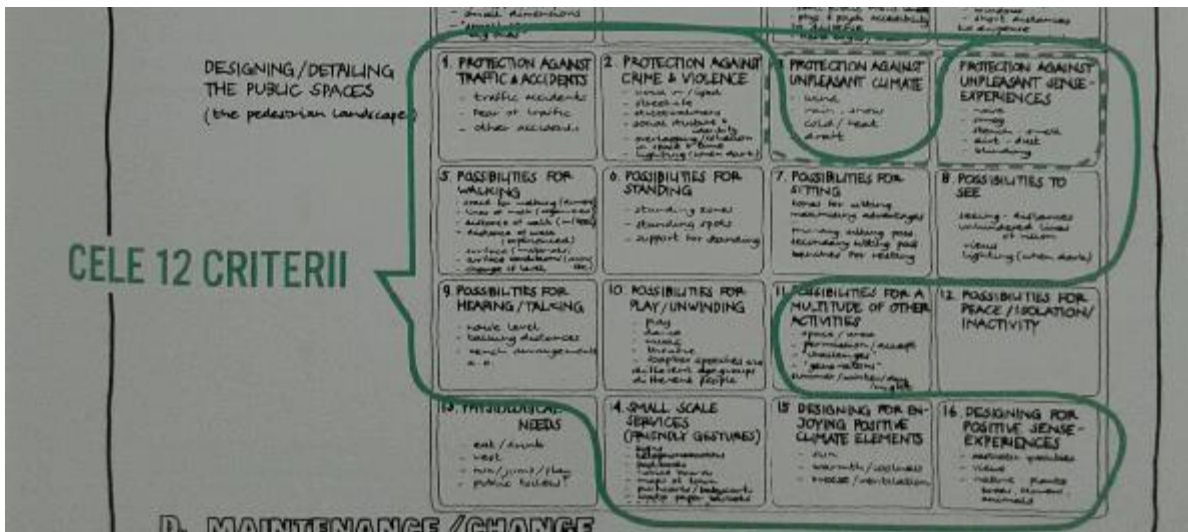


Figure 1. Urban space analysis criteria

der Rohe states: *“It is you, you have to build up the world you want to live in. And nobody else can do it for you.”*[3]. In his studies about urban life Jan Gehl underlines that urban studies are not only a research instrument, but also an important political instrument that can be used to document and generate change in time in order to improve city living quality. Gehl and Svarre propose studying urban life following Jane Jacobs advice to *“...look closely to the existing cities. While looking, also listen, linger and reflect what you see.”*[4]. Urban life is looked at in quantitative terms: how many?/ who?/ where?/ what? how long? The authors propose urban life understanding through counts, mapping, records and other instruments, and from historic perspective. Twelve city quality criteria categorized in three main sections: protection, comfort and pleasure are elaborated. (fig. 1)[5]

Evaluation of public space quality based on quantified observations is important in order to determine the measurable correctness of the design and even to design beautiful functional spaces. There are also immeasurable and unpredictable sides of public space design that can arise even to the best designs. The unpredictable consequences generated by aspects of design are revealed by effects and affects.

3. Effect

Effect is physical, affect is psychological. Effect is the *“Phenomenon which necessarily results in a particular case, being in an unbreakable bond with it; result”*. [6] Affect is an *“emotional reaction with a strong swing and relatively short-lived”* or *“the generic name for the states or emotional reactions”*. [7] *“Affects are the the inborn protocols that, when triggered, bring things to our attention and motivate us to act. [...]Affect is the innate, biological response to the increasing, decreasing or persistent intensity of neural firing. This results in a particular feeling, facial and body display, and skin changes. Affects feel rewarding, punishing, or neutral in their own ways. Affect makes things urgent.”* [8]

Affect is defined as a species of affection consisting in “*the affections of the body whereby the body’s power of acting is decreased or diminished*”. Spinoza argues the idea of the affection is doubled by the idea of the idea of the affection that it attains the level of conscious reflection. The body infolds the effect of the impingement – it conserves the impingement minus the impingement thing, the impingement abstracted from the actual action that caused it and actual context of the action. [9]. While Spinoza reduces *affects* to three primary ones: desire, joy and sadness, Thomkins defines nine types of affect which are positive: interest-excitement suggesting the pull toward mastery, enjoyment-joy or the social bond; neutral: surprise-startle or the reset button; negative: distress-anguish expressing the cry for help, anger-rage triggering the demand to fix it, fear-terror or the signal to flee or freeze, shame-humiliation or the self-protection signal, disgust or the need to expel and dissmell suggesting the avoidance signal. [10]. *Affect* is also analyzed through phenomenology, the role of the body in understanding the world, the body’s capacity to affect and be affected. [11] The body’s memory is linked with the built environment experience. Therefore affect is an expression of the living environment, of space and places.

4. Form/Space – Body/Perception

In architecture terms, design characteristics or features generate material *effects* which determine immaterial *affects*. In other words, *space* is a juxtaposition of perceived spaces: topological and psychological. The later generated by sensations and impressions is determined by the first one which is outlined by visual and functional communication. The body’s perception of space produces *affects* based on the type of perception. Categories of space *perception* are referring to the depth of analysis. Syncretic analysis is an insufficient analysis, analytic doesn’t set relationships between all details and synthetic analysis establishes complex whole-detail relation. Perception depth influences the manner space is *affecting* the body.

Deleuze underlines the open ended relationship between forms and body. He associates fixed functioned mechanism with closed autonomous forms and fixed identity, while machines depend on connections with other machines, including the human body, having proposed the substitution of machines with mechanism. For example, in case of Gyrotronic, you control the machine as well as the exercise. Your own interaction with the machine triggers the different functions according to your own needs, whether they are getting fit or leaner, healing, or relaxing.[12]

Tessellation is the complex repetition of a base unit – it varies as it repeats. Simple repetition entails repetitions of the base unit without any changes. Deleuze’s matrix is composed of a series of material systems, three different ways in which each can be tessellated (horizontal, vertical and curved) and a range of generated *affects*. The matrix maps emerged forms of different combinations and as results of spatial, sensorial and technical considerations. Perception of a built form involves two stages. First – a pre-personal affective relationship occurring between the human being and a form. Second – the *affects* are processed by the senses to produce individual percepts and thoughts, feelings, emotions, moods. [13]

Deleuze defines *affects* as pre – personal intensities transmitted by forms. “*Affects embed forms with the ability to be multiple ways perceived.*” [14]

Connecting human beings is a specific function of the architectural form performing as a singularity. Different people may choose different words to describe optical or acoustic sensations. The octagonal based dome with stellar surfaces will transmit different sensations from a round based dome with arched surfaces and symmetrically tessellated. The former, will transmit *affects* of diamonding, gradation and diffusion, while the latter would transmit *affects* of ribbing, rotundity and diffusion. [15] (fig.2).

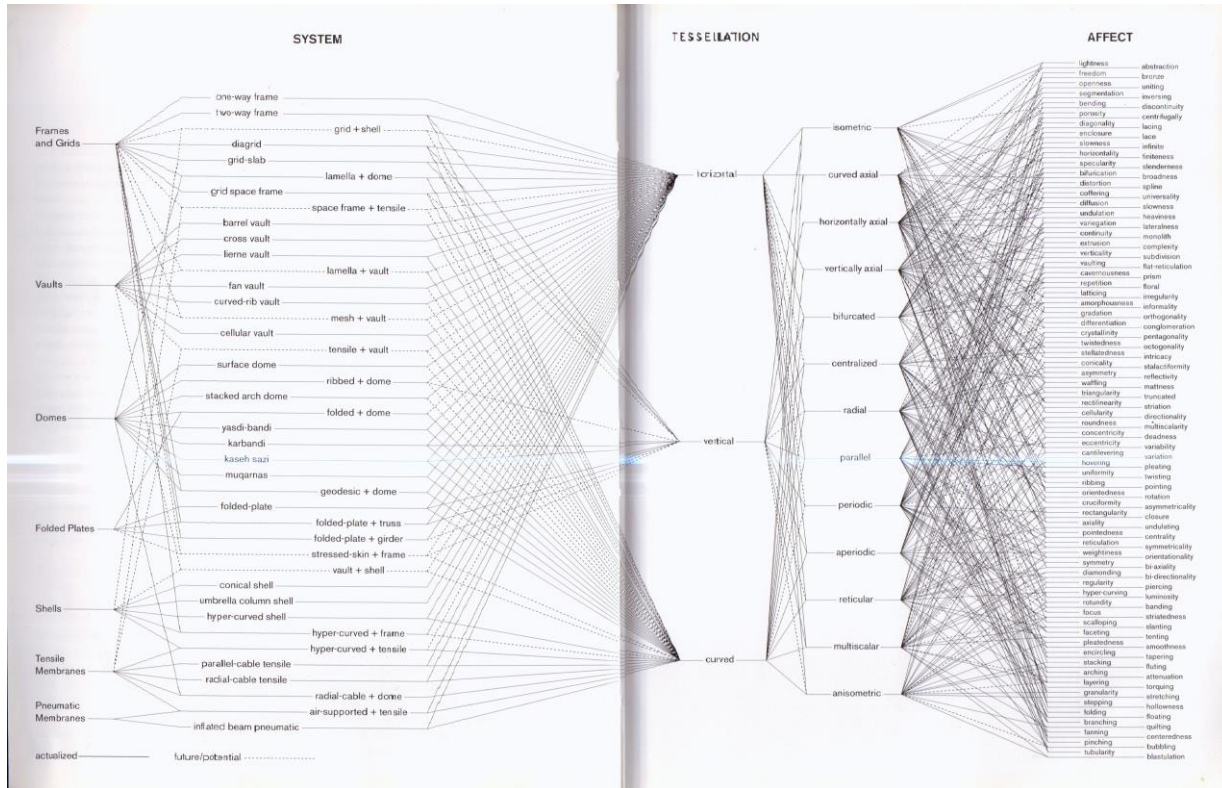


Figure 2. Deleuze's Matrix

5. Urban space – People

Human dimension is the universal starting point. Respect for people, dignity, the appetite for life and the city as meeting place are the main subjects. In the future the urban planning and design has to start from people. [16] *“In order to be a good architect, you have to love people, because architecture is an applied art that concerns people living environment.”* [17]. *Urban experience and the qualities of daily life and the cultivation of a sense of well-being are two of sustainable cities characteristics pointed out by David Harvey. Perception of the world triggered by urban experience can lead to “new design criteria and new visions of urban living”. The qualities of daily life and the cultivation of a sense of well-being (or of anxiety and distress) for life on the street, in the market place, in neighborhoods, in schools, in dwellings and work places makes the city a site of encounter, leisure, hard work and rest. The joys and anxieties of daily life in urban settings, the humdrum of urban routines, the stimuli and the blasé attitude are all part of a daily life that shapes urban activism. At the same time, it is perpetually being re-shaped by technological choices, natural events (hurricanes, earthquakes, epidemics), the technologies themselves and the like.”*[18]

6. Study Cases

Public space has always represented a significant meeting place together with the virtual space. Never stopping to have a democratic and cultural symbolic signification, public places continue to have a vital role to play as people meeting places despite media and virtual platforms capable of mobilizing masses. [19]. In the past decade several important public space design projects were developed and implemented. The projects took shape in spaces with strong historic and cultural background. The design solution in accordance with contemporaneity groomed the former space, either reshaped it completely. Public's attitude towards it was consistent with the change.

6.1 Alba Iulia – Custozza Park

Custozza Park (fig. 3 left) inside Alba-Iulia citadel is named after Custozza Monument inside the Park. The monument is a symbol of the Custozza Austrian-Italian battle where Alba-Iulia troupes took part. The obelisk is dedicated to Romanian and Hungarian martyrs. Inside the walls of Carolina Vauban fortress, former Custozza Park is converted into a public square (fig. 3 right). Urban design and landscaping project involved main square rehabilitation and a construction covering the ancient vestige. Starting with 2007, after Alba Citadel renovation works was completed, Custozza Park started to change. The transition was gradual. First the trees disappeared and the place was arranged as a pedestrian square, Citadel's Square. Next, the square was paved, furnished with symbolic objects as monuments, statues and imprinted bells. The last intervention in the public square was Princia Museum. The museum is a protective glass and steel construction which shelters discovered vestiges.

The proposed object is an interpretation of an open book standing on roman columns, closed with glass walls and metallic structure. A glaring intervention, Princia cultural site is composed of restored/reconstructed walls, the hypocaust surface, thesaurus area, pedestrian access bridge, stairs and lapidarium, enclosure, heating and ventilation system and reconstituted access portal. The museum building is mentioned as portraying an open book is strikingly resembling a food market or with a metro station. [20]

Citadel's square urban design is mentioned as a combination between logical details and other elements with severe effects. The square ambiance is a mélange of borrowed elements renewed fortress walls similar to Nürnberg, Viennese pavement and London like guard shift, flags, period costumes and carriages. The scenography is fascinating and catching for tourists, but, knowing the past, locals and professionals took a critique position. [21]. Irina Rotaru in Zeppelin states "In short, in order to create an artificial ambient, which does not have anything to do with the site in any of the phases of its evolution to date, it continues to be destroyed essential elements of urban history." Further on she states that strategic instruments of non-public space like mineralization and the concept of "*shared space*" are missed used in the Alba-Iulia. Mineralization is understood as park destruction and massive suiting of trees, while "*shared-space*" is assumed as a pedestrian area where cars and parking are allowed. [22]



Figure 3. Alba-Iulia Former Custozza Park / Today's Citadel's Square

a. Sibiu – Great Square

Great Square in Sibiu is engaged in a complex renovation starting with 2005. An important symbolic element of the square is the statue of Gheorghe Lazăr which was restored to its previous appearance []. Most present piece of the place is the fountain dated in 1538, backwhen it was a place of congregation, washing and watering. [] The new fountain, with a contemporary mechanism is a delight for visitors as well as for the locals as well for the locals. The presence of the two fountains in the square is underlining the interference between the old way of the space was used and the contemporary behaviour of the people. Nowadays the Great Square in Sibiu is a dynamic place for the community and touristic activities, participation in events, urban manifestation, loisir and play. (fig.4). The market already transitioned from the planted place similar to a park to a mineral public open space. Therefore the impact on the citizens was softer, the dynamic of the place was quick;y embraced and the activity sequence hosted here are well received and enjoyed by everybody,



Figure 4. Great Square Sibiu – Previous design/ Today's appearance

b. Timisoara – Liberty Square

Liberty Square in Timișoara is a former military square were parades military representation took place. The clear composition and the vicinity relationships are clearly justified by its initial character preserved over time through architectonic and urban features.

The square rehabilitation kept in mind pavement coherence while keeping a single dominant object of the surface - the central monument placed on the same axis with the city hall. The design solution initially proposed maintaining the green space, but still adding mineral surface. The green space was elevated; in fact the existing trees were supplemented in order to maintain a sufficient amount of shadow and thermal comfort at pedestrian level. The ground surface was transformed in a mineral coverage. The general intention was to bring back the mineral surface as it was initially conceived while maintaining a green – mineral balance. [23]

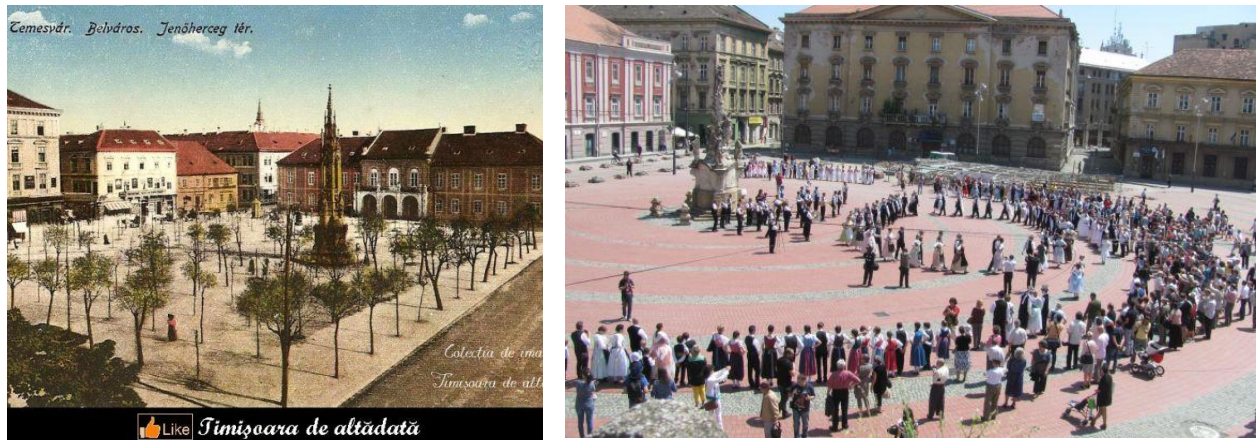


Figure 5. Liberty Square Timișoara – Old Image/ Today's appearance

Citizens in Timișoara are unsatisfied by the new square design. The change is salient mainly because of vegetation disappearance and new pavement color and geometry. Moreover, the architecture of the square is highlighted. While some appreciate the ingenuity of the design, others wonder what was wrong with the old market. The latter preferred the old square design thinking of the green intimate character of the space. The first appreciate the novelty of the design, but also enjoy the new capacity of the space to host collective activities, events and spectacles. While the feeling that the city is not what it used to be overwhelms some people, others disapprove the design and other opinions state that the square became a fair. [24]

c. Cluj-Napoca – Unirii Square

Unirii square is point zero of Cluj-Napoca city. With some of the most important symbols of the city – Saint Michel Cathedral, Matia Corvin statuery and the archeological site of ancient Napoca settlement, the square is the place where Cluj and Napoca overlap. It represents the meeting spot for locals and landmark for visitors, tourists or newcomers. It is also the heart of everyday life and the space for public events. The design team have proposed reestablishing the image and functionality of Cluj square and resolving the fragmented and discontinuous pedestrian. The auto circulation was reorganized and this way the public circulation was reconfigured. The archeological area is part of the design. The vestige are visible through a transparent glass ceiling and is surrounded by a seating place. On the south side, there is a fountain system accompanied by sycamore trees and seating places. The illumination system of the square was improved. The design project of the square is still to be finalized in order to bring back the buildings to the square by transforming the east and west sides in pedestrian areas. The space was thought of as a unitary surface connecting the fronts, [25] while the open central part is dedicated to public activities.

Still isolated and having an island character because of surrounding car circulation and parking, Unirii Square is generous at many levels. On one hand is spacious and the geometry allows all the elements to cohabit, on the other hand it maintains a favorable ratio of natural-artificial the symbolic and representational role.



Figure 6. Unirii Square Cluj-Napoca

7. Conclusions

There are a few ambiance directions in public space scenography design: tradition, istoriality and authenticity, functionalist modernism, expression evolution, but not always the desired effect is obtained or fully realized. As a medication, there are also positive or negative side-effects. The identified negative effects: mineral appearance squares, geometric graphic imprinting area space delimitation illusion, concentric graphic preference, pavement focus, overlooked space ambiance, architecture and nature aren't integrated in an ensemble are affecting everyday life activities disabling space. Positive side effects: uniqueness, free space, integrated urban furniture and public art, contemporary composition and character place are enabling space potential and improve people experience in the urban space.

Affects overlooked that make their way: agoraphobia –vast space sensation, confusion – false limits and directions of the pavement stereotomy, confusion - space fragmentation – split perception, lack of an unique image, alert – the city rhythm is uncomfortably dynamic due to frequent events, unease – space quality, are the result of altered quietness, sound and daily rhythms.

Even if the intentions o the design are good, people receive it in different manners. Which aspects are affecting the path between architects idea, the built space and the people? Is the design process broadly addressing standard? Should the design be emphasizing more on people?

8. References

[1] Jane Jacobs quoted in Gehl, J Svarre, B. translation by Silvia Gugu *Cum se studiază viața urbană*, ed. Igloo Media, București, 2015:VII

[2] <http://www.dac.dk/en/dac-cities/sustainable-cities/experts/david-harvey-the-right-to-the-city/>

- [3] <http://www.miessociety.org/speeches/commencement-speech/>
- [4] Jane Jacobs quoted in Gehl, J Svarre, B. translation by Silvia Gugu *Cum se studiază viața urbană*, ed. Igloo Media, București, 2015:4
- [5] Gehl, J Svarre, B. translation by Silvia Gugu *Cum se studiază viața urbană*, ed. Igloo Media, București, 2015
- [6] <https://dexonline.ro/definitie/efect>
- [7] <https://dexonline.ro/definitie/afect>
- [8] <http://www.tomkins.org/what-tomkins-said/introduction/nine-affects-present-at-birth-combine-to-form-emotion-mood-and-personality/>
- [9] <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/emotions-17th18th/LD5Spinoza.html#ClaAff>
- [10] <http://www.tomkins.org/what-tomkins-said/introduction/nine-affects-present-at-birth-combine-to-form-emotion-mood-and-personality/>
- [11] <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YnwgzsVJO2U>
- [12] MOUSSAVI, F. *The Function of Form*, ed. Actar and the Harvard University Graduate School of Design, 2009, Lopez, D. Ambrose, G. Fortunato, B. Ludwig, R. Schricker, A. Editors:22;
- [13] MOUSSAVI, F. *The Function of Form*, ed. Actar and the Harvard University Graduate School of Design, 2009, Lopez, D. Ambrose, G. Fortunato, B. Ludwig, R. Schricker, A. Editors:45;
- [14] MOUSSAVI, F. *The Function of Form*, ed. Actar and the Harvard University Graduate School of Design, 2009, Lopez, D. Ambrose, G. Fortunato, B. Ludwig, R. Schricker, A. Editors:44;
- [15] MOUSSAVI, F. *The Function of Form*, ed. Actar and the Harvard University Graduate School of Design, 2009, Lopez, D. Ambrose, G. Fortunato, B. Ludwig, R. Schricker, A. Editors:47;
- [16] Gehl, J *Orașe pentru oameni*, ed. Igloo Media, București, 2012:229;
- [17] Architect Ralph Erskine quoted in Gehl, J *Orașe pentru oameni*, ed. Igloo Media, București, 2012:229;
- [18] <http://www.dac.dk/en/dac-cities/sustainable-cities/experts/david-harvey-the-right-to-the-city/>
- [19] Gehl, J Svarre, B. translation by Silvia Gugu *Cum se studiază viața urbană*, ed. Igloo Media, București, 2015:72
- [20] <http://www.catavencii.ro/in-alba-iulia-chiar-si-o-hala-daca-primeste-numele-de-muzeu-poate-costa-14-milioane-de-lei>
- [21] <http://arhitectura-1906.ro/2012/05/urbanism-contra-naturii-ii/>
- [22] <http://e-zeppelin.ro/istorie-spatiu-public-si-ecologie-la-alba-iulia/>(<http://e-zeppelin.ro/en/history-public-space-and-ewcology-in-alba-iulia/>)
- [23] <http://arhitectura-1906.ro/2015/04/reabilitarea-spatiilor-publice-din-centrul-istoric-al-timisoarei-2/>

<http://arhitectura-1906.ro/2015/04/reabilitarea-spatiilor-publice-din-centrul-istoric-al-timisoarei-2/>

[24] <https://ro-ro.facebook.com/Piata-Libertatii-Timisoara-1569545203323918/>

[25] <http://www.planwerkcluj.org/project.php?id=35>

9. Image sources

1. Gehl, J Svarre, B. translation by Silvia Gugu *Cum se studiază viața urbană*, ed. Igloo Media, București, 2015:107;
2. MOUSSAVI, F. *The Function of Form*, ed. Actar and the Harvard University Graduate School of Design, 2009, Lopez, D. Ambrose, G. Fortunato, B. Ludwig, R. Schricker, A. Editors:46-47;
3. left: <http://alba24.ro/apel-anti-pavele-campanie-de-protest-impotriva-taierii-copacilor-din-parcului-custoza-17040.html>
right: http://adevarul.ro/locale/alba-iulia/fotografii-aeriene-piata-cetatii-alba-iulia-arata-zona-modernizare-1_50ae8f3c7c42d5a6639deaaa/index.html
4. left: <http://arhitectura-1906.ro/2012/05/urbanism-contra-naturii-ii/>
right: http://www.patrimoniu.sibiu.ro/cladiri/piata_mare/14
5. left: http://adevarul.ro/locale/timisoara/cea-mai-veche-casa-timisoara-fost-demilitarizata-data-istorie-armata-renuntat-garnizoana-piata-libertatii-1_563dde33f5eaafab2c61cf11/index.html
right: http://adevarul.ro/locale/timisoara/foto-germanii-readus-timisoara-traditie-seculara-cale-disparitie-romania-piata-libertatii-fost-ocupata-svabii-banateni-1_556afd88cfbe376e35c80ef6/index.html
6. left: <http://clujcapitala.ro/category/amintiri-din-cluj/page/2/>
right: <https://cluj.com/articole/transylvaniacam-sau-clujul-vazut-altfel/>