

PUBLIC SPACES AS THE FACTOR OF URBAN IDENTITY, CASE STUDY OF BRATISLAVA

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Keywords: Public spaces, urban space, identity

Abstract

Appertain to the place has several dimensions – identification with the state, region, area, city (town), village, district, neighbourhood. Character of the place defines the urban fabric, the urban space, its importance, location, history, economical prosperity and, naturally, people, their memory, manners, experiences, actions and nature.

The basic elements of identification with a place can be stable, either with long period fixed character, or they can be changing with the dynamic evolution. Also our sensibility is changing according to the character of the place, its elements during the evolution. There are periods, when we are less sensitive to the value of the environment; even arrogant. Sometimes we are calculative when the commercial effect from otherness is more important for us than human or spiritual aspect.

Urban resident and occupant identifies himself with the city and urban environment via arrangement of spaces. Identification with urban space and its characteristic elements is linked to good orientation, accessibility, functions, activities, people... Also details of public spaces create memorable places.

The paper is focused on evaluation of public spaces in Bratislava with the emphasis on squares in the central city area. The study is aimed at problems and potential of the squares. Based on the complex research, a strategy and concept of squares development and transformation in the scale of the whole area is presented. The concept consists of prioritization and differentiation of spaces, which should support their identity and good legibility.

Study presents applied research supported by city council of Bratislava.

1. Introduction

Spatial structure of places on has gone through significant changes in last 70 years, caused by modernistic approach towards urban design. This approach has brought retraction from traditional spatial form and has started introducing free form design of urban spaces since the 1960's. Tighter urban structure has started to be applied since the 1980's, but in a less significant way than in other developed european countries, as a result of starting mass-housing period. However modernistic approach legacy is quite heavily maintained and present in our cities. Single-use commercial areas and family-house "landscapes" located mostly on the outside of city border represent the mentioned system. In those structures, a man usually identifies himself with his own house or apartment rather than with space that commonly surrounds him. Therefor the role of spaces, their image perceived by men and their character is more and more important. Supporting the distinctive individual character of a city and its places and the identification with districts is fundamental.

Bratislava is becoming recognized as a city without properties. This nickname was given by Tijs van den Boon in his publication Bratislava - city of peace. Moravčíkova sees this name as "*provoking, but according to the fact of permanent change as appropriate*" [Moravčíková, H., 2010, p.34]. The reason is that Bratislava has gone through a set of modifications in last hundred years and "*is open to transition yet too much, mostly the urban fabric*" [Vitková, L., 2013, p. 20]. Architectonic tracks are erased after each fundamental political change. Bratislava is carelessly getting rid of its typical buildings, even whole complexes. Mostly those industrial ones; Podhradie (area under the medieval castle), typical rural settlements... Nowadays modern 20th century architecture is endangered. This approach is reflected into the image of public spaces of Bratislava. By losing areas, public spaces with unique identity are getting lost as well.

Cultural and social meaning of public spaces has been underestimated in Slovakia for a long time. Their role has changed from a stage for public life into a role of traffic corridors or crossroads. Traffic swallows the public space and so degrades the perception and identification with place. This is another problem of public spaces in Bratislava.

The report is focused on characteristic parts, elements and places in Bratislava. In the first phase the emphases is given on squares of central district of Bratislava.

Research objective is to analyze individualities and utility of nodal public spaces in Bratislava.

Spatial structure of acity was focused on evaluation of acharacter:

- System of nodal public spaces in the city strcture (location, hierarchy, significance, distance, use...) and their mutual relations and connections.
- System of nodal public spaces in the city district structure (location, hierarchy, significance, distance, use...)
- City spatial structure analysis within the frame of historical development, development of site use, location of main nodal spaces and development axis.
- Arrangement of nodal public spaces within city structure in linkage with important public buildings, city entrances - railway stations, bus stations, high-rise buildings.
- Arrangement of nodal public spaces within city structure in linkage with development axis (boulevards, city streets, pedestrian areas...)
- Character and way of defining the selected public spaces, intensity of connections and building entrances.
- Use of public spaces and their surrounding structure (character of parterre, buildings entry strength)
- Type of nodal and linear public spaces use.
- Size parameters of nodal public spaces.

Research was focused on the quality of public life in public spaces from these aspects:

- Quality and intensity of public life (degree in use of public space) compared to the evalutaion level of quality of public space (by residents, professionals) by exact methods.
- Quality and intensity of public life compared to the use of surrounding structure of public spaces

The objective of the research was to review the qualitative level of public spaces in Bratislava as a whole and its single districts with accent put on their individuality and utility.

Public spaces of Bratislava are the research subject studied as a whole since there is no such complex material about the issue of public spaces and still the capital of Slovakia misses this kind of document. Considering the difficulty of a problem and a need for a somplex solution, the research is studying mainly the nodal public spaces of central city area. Individual types of spaces were characterized and classified on the base of formerly defined criteria. Character and structure of spatial raster, quality of spaces, their type and intensity of use were evaluated.

Special attention was given to the analysis of readability of main public spaces from the aspect of outer image of a city and to the analysis of readability of public spaces within the urban city structure - readability of their individuality and singularity.

Essential part of the research has taken a look at a review of relation between spatial quality of a public space, use of enclosing structure and parterre, use of the area of place and quality, character and intensity of use.

There was an assume that a place claelry spatially defined, used in different ways, operationally well organized would be more attractive and more intensely used and more lively.

2. Definitions of urban space

Traditional basic spatial elements of a city - streets and squares have been forming the growing city framework and gave the city an image. Hierarchy of elements forming cities is fundamental for the city development, for contemporary growth and transformation. In his theory of an image of a city, Kevin Lynch considers nodes and lines, borders, areas and orientation spots being the most essential.

2.1. Definitions of public space

Spatial urban structure can be characterized from several aspects, e.g. spatial definition. Carmona defines two basic types of urban space: *"first where space is defined by buildings, second where the buildings are objects in space"* [Carmona, M., 2010, p. 77]. Others simplify the definition even more, for example Jan Gehl uses the term *"space between buildings"* [Gehl, J., 2010, p.15].

According to the accessibility, the public space can be divided to public, semi-public and private. The relation between owner right principles and the degree of its communal use is getting less and less unambiguous. Several authors pay higher attention to this question. [Madanipour, A., 2003]. Manuel Delgado characterizes a public space as: *"A space, that public has rights to use."* [Gausa, M., 2003, p. 563] Frederico Soriano points out that: *"private spaces are used by public (shopping malls, airports) and vice versa, a public space is taken by private use."* [Gausa, M., 2003, p. 563]

However, the urban fabric is associated with other features; economy, owner-rights, intensity of public use. Thus public space is a space intensely used by public, citizens. This part as a social and cultural layer is inevitable for living city. *"Public spaces are kind of a mirror to the city culture, to the city life... undoubtedly it is a medium influencing and completing the cultural profile of a man and society."* [Melková, P., 2014, p.4]

2.1. Definitions of squares

A square definition from Edward White highlights the social and cultural meaning of these places: *"Squares are a place for sharing, living and befit." ... "While the streets encourage us to go, portals to pass through, squares invite us to stay, sit down and take part in public life."* [White, E., 2007]

Jan Gehl underlines the difference between a street and a square in the same sense: *"Streets reflect the linear move formula, a square matches the field of view." ... "While streets symbolize the movement: ""go on please"", squares encourage to stay. If a place says: ""go, go, go"", the square means: ""stop and look at what is happening"".* [White, E., 2012, p.38] Pavla Melková and her collective highlight the social dimension: *"A square is a place of an identification and a permanent community confirmation, a place for national, urban, local and communal representation, a place for meeting, a city saloon." ... "it is an orientation spot in the mental city map."* [Melková, P., 2014]

3. Identification through public spaces

3.1. Identification with space via form, system of unique places

The study of public spaces in an analytical phase is focused on data collection and evaluation. The type of data collected is led by already realized studies from Copenhagen [Gehl, J., 2004] and Prague [Melková, P., 2014] and partly affected by the environment already known. In the chapter *Identification with place via form* basic volumetric elements sensed in space will be discussed. We chose schemes of several characteristics in site plans to describe the city - dominating, present, absent. Partial conclusions bearing the information about a place, locality, area are to be made; conclusions about the identity, even about the unfinished /unspoken identity, a violated identity.

3.1.1 Characteristics

For the needs of this study, **constriction** is taken for a degree of secretiveness of space. All the publicly accessible spaces will be processed: streets, squares, other corridors. These will be stylized and simplified, capturing the estimated height of surrounding buildings and the "floor" bordered. Bearing in minds the basic compositional principles [Sitte, 1995] [Krier,1975] only corridors where the "walls" exceed half the width of the horizontal surface will be rendered (Figure 1). In the already analyzed part of a city we can see places where the streets are getting lost somehow. For example places hit by vast reconstructions in past decades (solitary construction, traffic linear structures). Although a different region can be identified by wide open spaces, it should be well considered whether this is a case of a city getting lost and whether it should be further completed and subdivided. We cannot assume any close identity support from current development plans, speaking of zones, localities.

meaning: understanding the city structure and its inner subdivision to smaller segments.



Figure 1. Street constriction in city centre plan

Connectivity describes a frequency of nodes in the city structure where the pedestrian can decide what route to take next, it bears the information of how intense is the freedom to choose. The frequency can be higher or lower when the nodes are closer or more distant. Interestingly, this characteristic bears information about how is the built structure used by residents and visitors actually.

Node and line is the basic pair of analytic elements. The node or point is place where three or more routes meet. A line is a real connection between any two points that can be taken by a man. (Figure 2) Bold black lines are highlighting those short connections, creating the blue zones where it is quite a frequent situation for a user to stop on his way and choose how to go on. The pink bold lines mark those long paths that can often be boring.

We found out that passages meliorate the connectivity of a city. On the picture we can see a mesh of bold black lines within squares. It is caused by a solitair put in the middle (as a result of socialist and mass-housing construction period). This phenomenon should be called connectivity of lower level because the moment of option is multiplied by solitairs and by fact that nodes put in a map does not join streets or defined corridors, but pavings, roads, areas and stripes defined superficially by material only.

In the Figure 2. we can see four named blue zones. A zone is historical area with narrow houses forming short streets with passages leading to another short streets. In the B zone, there is an emerging east-west longitudinal system of longer and shorter streets. Those shorter lead from north to south. However, there are many spots where it is violated by irregularities. The C and D zone (family houses and city villas; apartment houses and section panel houses) could be described as a bit twisted gridiron structure of a modified square shape where the irregularities are found, too. Even though, we consider the presence of the above mentioned irregularities as elements orienting the person inside the place.

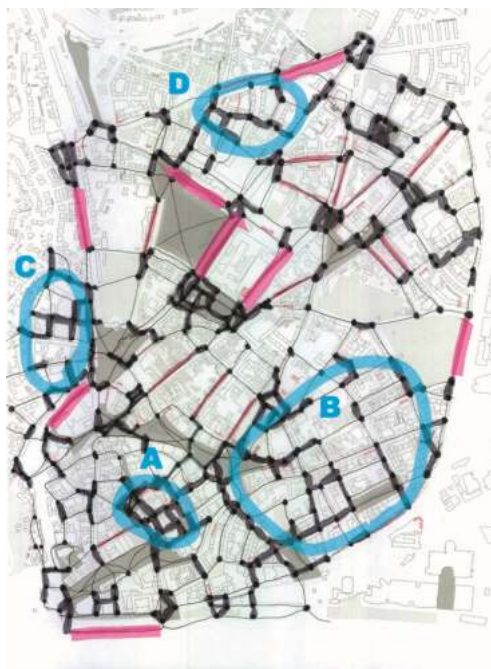


Figure 2. Connectivity of pedestrian routes in urban structure as a factor of identity

Volume interaction describes the act of space entering the mass vice versa (walkway, cantilever, arcade). This accent is most often found on individual objects. However, few localities with passages or overcast arcades, colonnades are emerging. These places are favourite to pass through and sit in, they are analyzed from the sociological aspect, also.

meaning: shortcut, curiosity /interest, hideaway from sun, rain, from views.

Perceived roof shape, excluding extremely narrow spaces, can be basically divided into flat and sloping; or other shapes, arcs, combinations. Once again, it must be reminded that this is not a pure qualitative feature where one category is always taken for the positive or negative. Anyway, the phenomenon of one kind prevailing over the other enhances the identity of a place will be important for the study. The historical expression of the building facade could be studied further, this is what we consider for quite detailed features, more planar than volumetric; it is even bearing the information on the origin.

meaning: prevailing type supports the identity; from the visual aspect, the saddleback mellows the view and its flow through the space

Greenery in the corridor and in front of facades will be mapped because of the uniqueness and related consequences inflicted by its presence. Whereas the greenery in the corridor stands for accessible and touchable trees and lawns from around and the greenery in front of facades, understood as the front gardens usually without direct access serving as a visual sensation.

meaning: (corridor greenery) orienting and guiding, subdividing, covering and hiding, completing and adjusting the character of a place (in the sense of a typology)

meaning: (front garden) isolate, protect

The aim of this analysis is to point out a way how the greenery is placed in city, how does it complete the identity of a locality and how does the identity exceed the place boundary (for example crossing the square's border to streets). Moreover, there are some other features associated with greenery, but less concerned with the issue of identity, the image of a city and with the urban psychology.

Facade and corridor greenery were studied in their position when some basic qualities were met. Facade greenery is meant to be a stripe of a lawn wider than 1,5 meter with trees in a row (explained below). This strip makes up a kind of buffer zone for the building offering a visual contact. Greenery in a corridor is accessible and touchable row of trees that can be combined with lawn of different widths. The trees in row have to be in fourths at least and the distance between them has to be less than 6 meters. These trees create "a ceiling", "a hideaway" for the users, for pedestrians; they divide the space also. Lawns with short bushes but without trees in a row were not mapped.

Results

Applying this approach, several facts were found. The greenery is usually placed without concept and order; the system of organizing into alleys, green streets, boulevards has typically got weak parts that threaten the readability and simplicity of a corridor. Smaller groups of trees and bushes remind rather a spot element. Pairs, triplets and solitaires were found most often; they float in a non-structured space, without clear composition and therefore understanding of a man. These solitaires are placed individually, by chance, additionally. Furthermore, they are not of typical solitaire features - of an accent: colour, specie, meaning).

To sum up, few localities with prevailing identity associated with the greenery were identified. Areas where the lawn, bushes and trees flank the building, a kind of garden neighbourhoods are circled in the figure below. (Figure 3) There are also areas with absolutely no green element in the corridor, they are circled in the dark blue shapes. The yellow lines represent emerging green streets, linear urban greenery functioning as a ceiling from the top and a partition on the sides. Grey areas are squares in the central district of Bratislava.

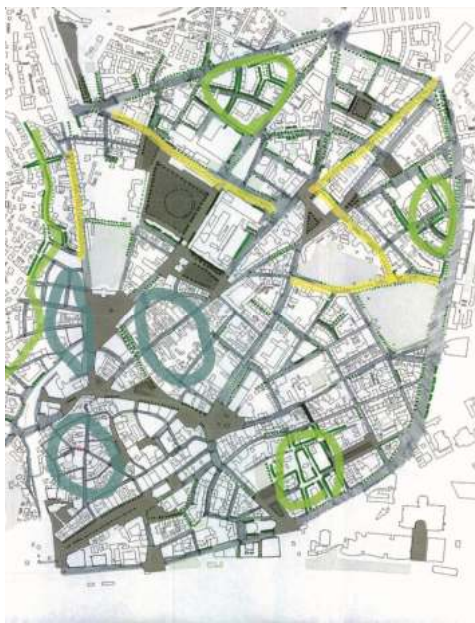


Figure 3. Urban greenery forms creating typical areas.

3.1.2 Characteristics exceeding the issue of volume

Typical materials are other basic features of a place perceived by a user /passer-by easing the orientation (Lynch: The Image of the City). Repeated facade material, smaller or bigger cobblestones

with tall or low cross-section, comfortable walk through street segments, facade cladding pleasant to look at and to touch, varied historical stucco, stem large-scale plates, vegetation walls.

Communicating parterre is more and more taken for a great asset to city life. Although sometimes a little less in a reality, including the idea of a city effectiveness on different scale. If we still want to talk about volumetric features, the material, shape and service provided make us understand the types of activity in public /private spaces in the floor at the ground level. This characteristic stands on the borderline of the volume, flat and function.

Accessibility of the building favours pedestrians to move slower move and stay, consecrating the place to walk without threats. Buildings and residents should not be cut apart. Pedestrian localities are spots with calm transport or traffic excluded, within the 5-meter offset from the building. The aim is to identify areas with potential to bring the life back, which can be easy or difficult to do. Interesting but at the same time dangerous spaces are expected to be found as well as places with good accessibility but no activities taken.

Results

The study aims at the relation figure-background (square-area). The question is: Is it a A-B relation while talking of some characteristics or is it a A-AB-B relation? Within the A-B we talk about a contextual greenery (Figure 4) (Jakubovo námestie with front garden continuing as a part of the square into the street), about a contextual constriction (Main square, Komenského námestie with enclosed corridor with proportions over 1:1) or about the contrast constriction (Kamenné námestie, Námestie SNP, Kollárovo námestie with constricted street corridors leading to wide and open space of a square). The A-AB-B relation gives an opportunity to describe the double contrast. For example the great openness of a place is accentuated by narrow street walkways entering the open volumes (Námestie slobody and surrounding area). It is not our goal to decide which paradigm is appropriate, but to highlight the importance of relativity of scale when analyzing the city; to work with the scale of a zone, area, city part; identities and their structure.

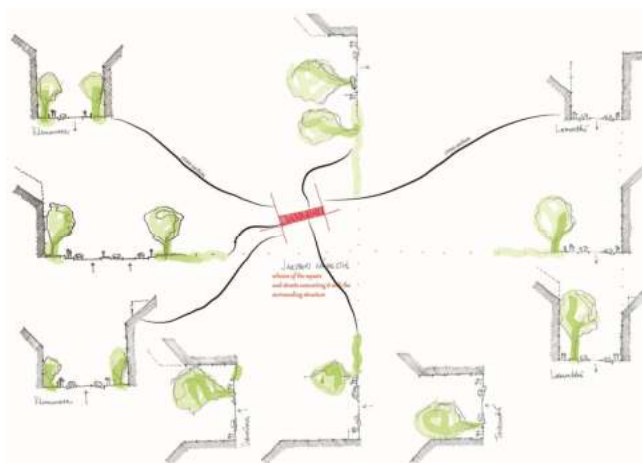


Figure 4. Contextual greenery

3.2 Identifications with space via dominants, important objects (monuments)

Significant buildings are important for the readability of public spaces. Not only with the role of orientation points, landmarks. They are a message of a period, remind significant historical events, prosperous times, importance and role of a place.

Thanks to the natural features, terrain configuration support natural dominants that highlight the position and importance of public spaces, the central areas most of all. Bratislava castle reef, Slavín (war memorial and cemetery), Bôrik... hanging over the city, places in contact with the river Danube, spots raising their importance. Natural features enhance the uniqueness.

Dominants, historical or contemporary, are the city symbols easy to identify in the urban fabric creating the solid orientation spots in public spaces. Some of them are symbols of the city overcoming its borders. Once again, this affects the identity of a town. It was partly realized by foreign architects. For example the Riverpark project (Erick van Egeraat's concept), a set of dominants Panorama City under the construction from Ricardo Bofill and the complex of dominants from architectural studio Zaha Hadid Architects in starting point of the realization process. Like many other big cities, Bratislava is trying to get known thanks to the big names and iconic architecture.



Figure 5 Dominants and hierarchy of public spaces according to their importance
Authors: Ľubica Vitková, Katarína Boháčová

3.3 Identification with space via use

Activity - life is the basic feature of a place - a square we realize in a public space. What is happening in the square? What attracts people to come to a square? Use of surrounding structure, active and pleasing parterre and activities taking place in the square area. Finally, it is also people occupying the place who attract the others to come.

Atmosphere of a square consists of a character and a form of architectonic space as well as activities and energy, symbolism... a church, a museum, town hall, a theatre, pleasant cafes...

A way of organizing the services is essential for utility of a square. What is the relation between the traffic and the pedestrians? What is the ratio of them? To what amount is the dynamic and static traffic and the pedestrian move divided? A square surface adjustment plays a great role: is it a lawn or paving with solid subsurface? Is the square surface walkable enough? These are the aspects influencing the atmosphere and ease in the square as well as relations to the place.

For the system of evaluation, the use of space was considered as one of main criteria; including the use of surrounding buildings, use of parterre and the square surface itself (Table 1). During history, some squares have kept and developed gradually some particular functions: commercial, traffic,

representative, cultural... Although the use of buildings and square area changes in time, there still is a maintenance of a character based on the locality, importance and character of structures. Regular and irregular events and activities taking place in here are negligible.

Table 1. Use and potential evaluation of selected squares of Bratislava

Square	Use	Parterre	Current use. (Potential)
Namestie A. Dubceka	Parliament, government buildings	Passive	Greenery, public space, traffic, Representative, public
Namestie F. Liszta	Railway station	Passive	Greenery, public space, traffic Traffic, shopping, public
Namestie E. Suchona	Cultural buildings, hotel	Active	Greenery, public space, traffic Cultural, public, relax
Namestie L. Štúra	Cultural buildings, government buildings	Active, passive	Public space, traffic Cultural
Námestie M. Benku	Mixed use fabric	Active, passive	Greenery Public, relax
Námestie slobody	Government buildings, university buildings	Passive, partly active	Greenery, public space, traffic, Representative, public, relax use
Námestie SNP	Mixed use fabric, churches, hospital, bank, department house	Active	Greenery, public space, traffic Public, shopping, relax
Primaciálne námestie	Municipality buildings	Passive	Pedestrian zone Representative, public, cultural
Rudnayovo námestie	Mixed use fabric, cathedral	Active, passive	Pedestrian Public, cultural, relax
Rybné námestie	Mixed use fabric, disrupted	Active, passive	Public, relax
Šafárikovo námestie	Mixed use fabric, university	Passive, partly active	Traffic, greenery Public, relax
Odborarske námestie	Mixed use fabric, university building	Active, passive	Traffic, greenery Traffic

Evaluation of selected squares from the aspect of social and cultural use is following:

- 8 squares are part of a pedestrian area, social character with varied intensity of use
- 2 squares social - commercial
- 2 squares social - rest
- 2 squares traffic - walk
- 5 squares traffic
- 3 squares traffic - "vegetation" with low degree of stay /rest character
- 4 squares "vegetation" with lower degree of stay /rest character

Surprisingly, while considering the use and the character of surrounding structure, historical context and location, the potential of analyzed square is far greater. Whether from the qualitative or quantitative aspect, squares of Bratislava are nowhere as used and lively as they could be. Different prevailing use of these spaces could be considered in the future - not in the way of single use but in the sense of supporting particular identity and readability as well.

3.4 Identifications with space via importance and history

Historical meaning of a public space is not sensible superficially, but acts like an important factor affecting the atmosphere. Historical forming of a square, development process along the events, important personalities, groups. We have tracked the following:

- what was the role of a place in the history of a city?
- how has the use of a place changed during the development?
- what important personalities lived in the square?
- what important events took place in the square?
- what historically important events happened in the square?

History strongly enhances the value of a place. White points out this in his works. [White, E. W., 2007] It can be associated with a building, a balcony, a tree, with the square area itself... A symbol, an importance of a place is present, it acts as its part.

In our research we took a look into the history of analyzed squares. Some of them are presented in the study.

Hviezdoslavovo námestie (bearing its name since 1879)

"Spacious square with beautiful alley and representative buildings" [Ortvay, T., 2005, p.22] this is a characteristic by Tivadar Ortvay proceeding with: "It is one of the most beautiful public open space in the city. Surrounded by macadamia roadway with granite cube paving." In past, there was a water ditch and river Danube branch. This was a popular place to walk and it was a main city promenade. It bore name of important personalities of Austria-Hungary, it was called Radeckého námestie, Kossuthovo námestie, today it bears name of a distinguished Slovak poet. Placing significant urban activities was always typical in here. After filling up the river ditch and the river Danube branch, famous noble and bourgeois families started to build their residences in the western and southern side of the square. The old theatre is standing there from year 1776 and the city theatre since 1886. Both have played important role in the cultural life of Bratislava. Medical and naturalistic guilds were based in Ján Palffy's residence. There were two hotels in the square - the National and Palugyay's Green tree. The latter have become recognized far beyond the city borders. Ludovít Kossuth has declared the Hungarian renaissance from the balcony of a Green tree hotel in 1848. In the square, there were cafes, renowned bakery with famous "Bratislava rolls", there were statues: a bust of Hummel, Petöfi... [Ortvay, T., 2005, p.22-43]

Námestie Ľudovíta Štúra

Also called The Coronation square after a coronation hill placed in the square for 96 years. Later a statue of Maria Theresawas placed here to remind of a coronation. The Coronation square was defined by palaces, "granary" - later Reduta (building for cultural performances and meetings), eastern wing of Water barracks. There were also horse railways tracks leading through the square. After constructing the stable bridge over the river Danube, a propeler to Petržalka (city district on the opposite side of the Danube) dock was constructed. [Ortvay, T., 2005, p.58]

Šafárikovo námestie

It had significant position - acting as a city entrance from the side of Petržalka after constructing the Old bridge over the river Danube in the end of year 1890. There were important buildings - barracks of František Jozef, exposition palaces, office building for military command in the southern part. In the beginning of the 20th century it was transformed into a park. [Ortvay, T., 2005, p.100]

Jakubovo námestie

The square was named in the honor of two former reeves of Bratislava - Jakub (Jacob), a city reeve in years 1279-1286 and Jakub, a reeve in years 1326-1327 and 1338-1373. "Prešporok has named a public open space as an eternal memory of their name." [Ortvay, T., 2005, p.110]

Kamenné námestie

Townspeople were building their houses here. The title comes from mason company and stone warehouse standing in the square. [Ortvay, T., 2005]

In our research, we saw it necessary to evaluate the current importance of squares in centre of Bratislava. The squares were hierarchized according to the importance and location in the city, placement of important objects, historical events and the intensity of social activities. (Table 2) Based on the mentioned evaluation system, squares' potential seems to be quite bigger.

The squares in central area can be divided according to the importance as follows:

- 13 squares of international and national importance
- 9 squares of regional /citywide importance
- 2 squares of city /local importance
- 2 squares of local importance

Table 2. Evaluation according to the importance and potential of selected squares of Bratislava

Square	Importance of a square / Potential	Location	Important buildings Dominants Selected monuments	Activities Historical events
Namestie A. Dubčeka	International, national /local	Inner city Edge location	SNR, Bratislava castle Monument for the politicians	Political representation Public activities
Namestie F. Liszta	International, national	Inner city	Main station (railway)	
Namestie E. Suchona	International, national	Historical core	Reduta	Political representation
Namestie L. Štúra	International, national	Historical core Entry to historical core	SNG, ministry Monuments for activists	Coronations
Námestie M. Benku	City/local	Inner city On the main axes	Palace of justice	
Namestie slobody	International/national	Inner city, Development axis On traffic axis	Government office, ministry Faculties of STU Former monument of a historical event	Political representation Public activities Cultural activities
Namestie SNP	International/national	Inner city Edge of historical core	Postal office, churches, ministry, hospital, bank, department house, monuments	Velvet revolution Commemorative memorial Year 19 68 Public activities Cultural activities Markets Coronations
Primaciálne námestie	International/national	Historical core central	City hall Primate's palace	Political representation Cultural activities
Rudnayovo námestie	International/national	Historical core Edge location	St. Martin's Cathedral	Political, church representation Coronations
Rybne námestie	International/national	Historical core Entry to historical core		
Šafárikovo námestie	Regional/national	Inner city Entry to city center On axis	Comenius University	Memorial place, r. 68
Odborarske námestie	Regional/national	Inner city On the main axis		

Conclusion

This paper presents results of a research focused on evaluation of current state of squares in Bratislava central area. The research includes character and the quality of spatial and structural definition, use, affection and quality of services, location and intensity of usage and public life. Degree of identification of residents with public spaces in Bratislava. Analyzed features have important role in this process and for keeping the genius loci.

A more detailed analysis has been focused on reviewing all nodal spaces in central city district. The research was conducted in the following sites: Americké námestie, Floriánske námestie, Františkánske námestie, Hlavné námestie, Hodžovo námestie, Hurbanovo námestie, Hviezdoslavovo námestie, Jakubovo námestie, Kamenné námestie, Kmeťovo námestie, Kollárovo námestie, Komenského námestie, Námestie 1. mája, Námestie Alexandra Dubčeka, Námestie Eugena Suchoňa, Námestie Ľudovíta Štúra, Námestie Martina Benku, Námestie slobody, Námestie SNP, Primaciálne námestie, Rudnayovo námestie, Rybné námestie, Šafárikove námestie, Franza Liszta, Odborárske námestie, Župné námestie.

Based on the research, the following can be stated:

A hypothesis saying that spatially clearly defined public spaces, their functional complexity and appropriate services and aesthetical expression is fundamental presumption to more intense use and identification of residents with mentioned place was proven.

Places missing (or nearly missing) any of these features have turned out to be problematic. Even places with strong historical message or associated with significant historical events or with residences of important governmental or cultural institutions and monuments were found in this category of public spaces.

Particularly Náměstie SNP which used to be a market square, place of coronation celebrations, "Velvet revolution" venue. It is clearly defined and creates main historical centre round. Factors decreasing its importance and degree of use are the following:

- bad service organization (area subdivision into dynamic and static transport, allocating unused green area) - generating operational barriers.
- decline of surrounding building use
- great amount of "deaf" facades
- missing areas for spreading the activities
- very low quality of architecture

Analyzed nodal public spaces of Bratislava can be divided according to the study to following:

- Squares in the need of complex solution - spatial definition (only bearing the title square), appropriate use and architectonic-urban design
- Squares with inappropriate use (that moved to the outer city)
- Squares where the operational and spatial barriers have to be removed
- Squares missing only an impulse in a form of activities (events, week markets, quality mobiliary and street furniture)

Users and residents themselves can play a big role in the process of identification with mentioned place. Usually local residents and activists bring new life and new meanings here.

There are good examples of the mentioned phenomenon. Several squares in the historical centre have been reconstructed to achieve aesthetical and qualitative goals, although the use of surrounding structures and the social dimension of the parterre is left behind. This level does not support the quality of public spaces, even though they are of national and international character and of great potential.

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