

Social judgment of public spaces based on the case of Saint Stephen square of Szeged, Hungary

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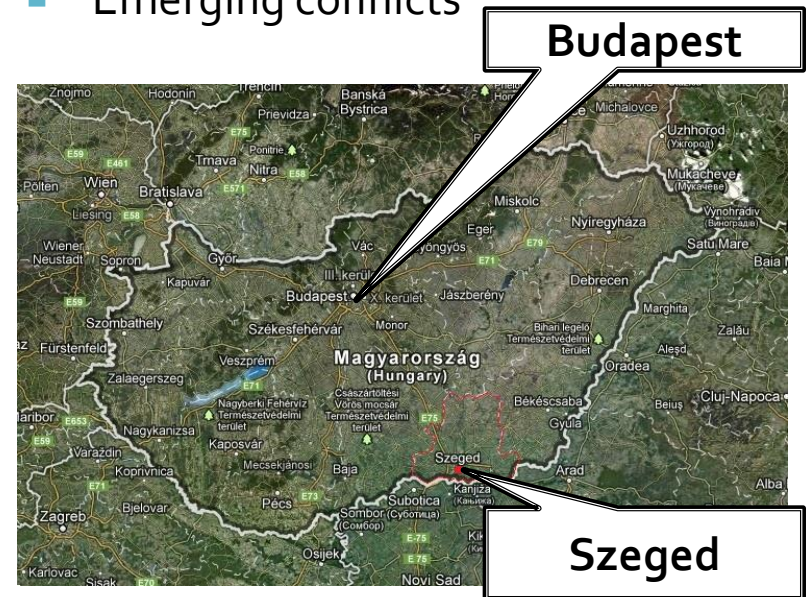


The relevance of public spaces

- In general:
 - Places of community life → Have high priority in cities and citizens life
 - Development → life of local people
 - More and more interest-groups are affected
 - They contribute to the face of the city
 - They reflect the operation of local development policy
- In Hungary:
 - public spaces were uncared for a long time
 - developments mainly since joining to the EU
 - their role getting reevaluated in the eye of decision makers
 - EU supports are really important motivations
 - more and more aims by developments (economic, touristic, social...)

- In the case study of Szeged:

- Related dilemmas
- Emerging conflicts



- Population: 170 052
- 3rd largest city in Hungary
- Regional center of Southern Great Plain
- County town of Csongrád country

Main questions

How the different actors perceive public space?
What is the successful public space like?
What are the main characteristics of the usage of
Saint Stephen square?
How the different experts perceive the square?
How does the square work after the development?



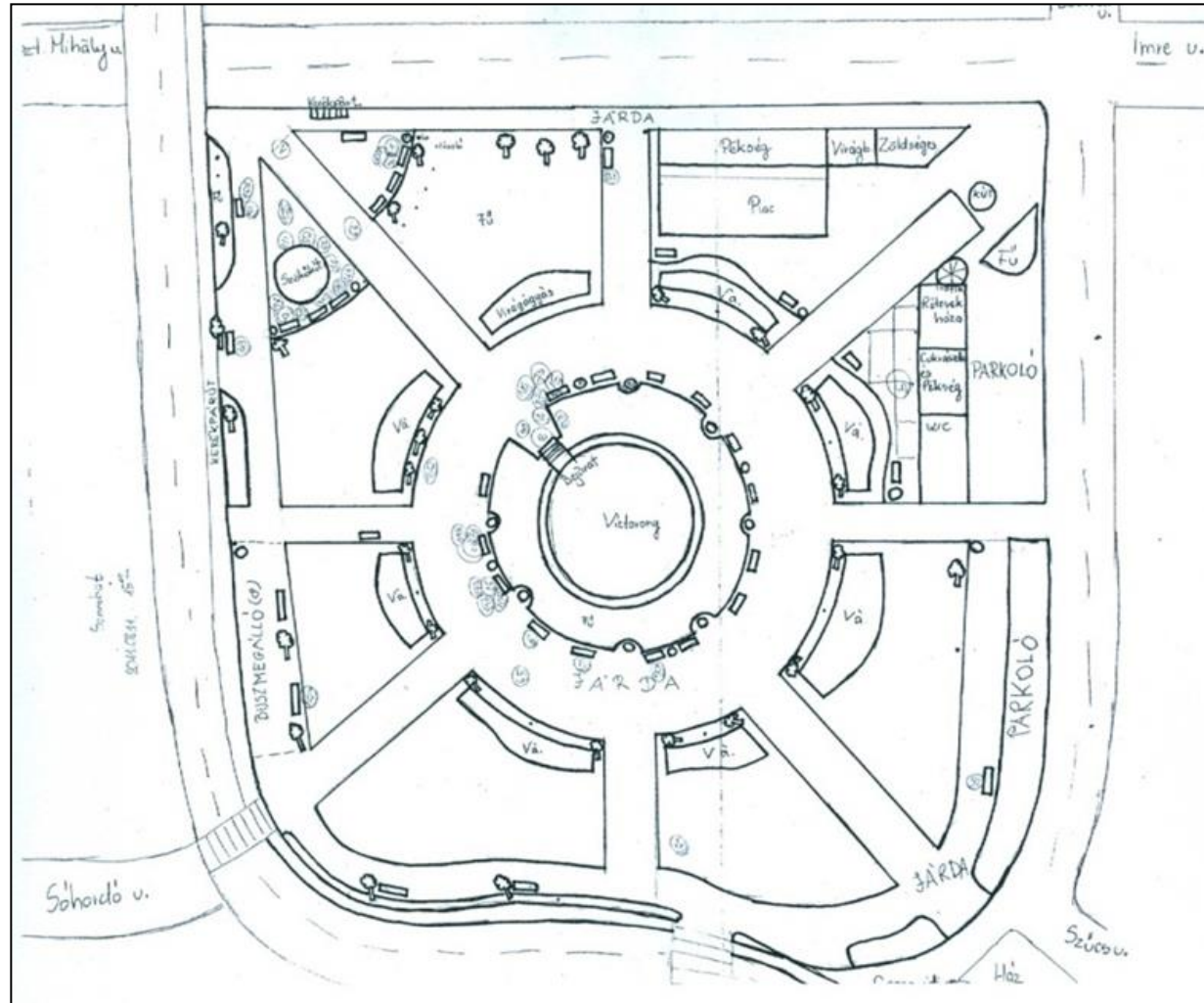
**Is the development of Saint Stephen square
successful?**

Methodology 1.

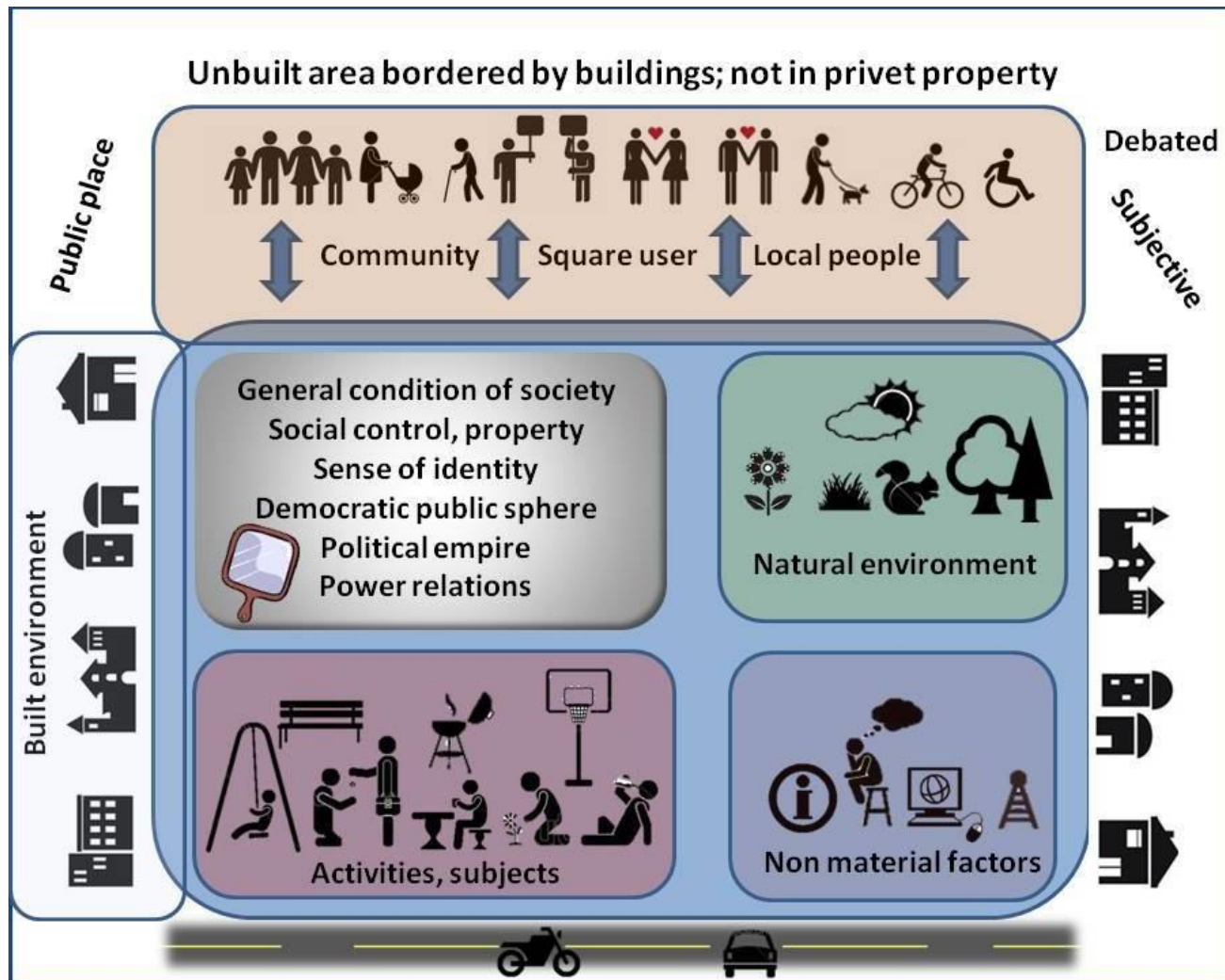
- Content analysis
 - Foreign and Hungarian literature
 - Development documents
 - Media analysis (printed and electronic press)
 - Forum analysis (forum comments)
- Field survey
- Photo documentation
- In-depth interviews with different experts

Methodology 2.

- Participant observation
 - appearance of square users
 - activity mapping
 - usage and number of terrain features
 - ways of usage by different parts of the day



Public space – definitions and approaches based on the literature



Edited by Katalin Vedrédi



Széll Kálmán square, Budapest



Kossuth square, Budapest

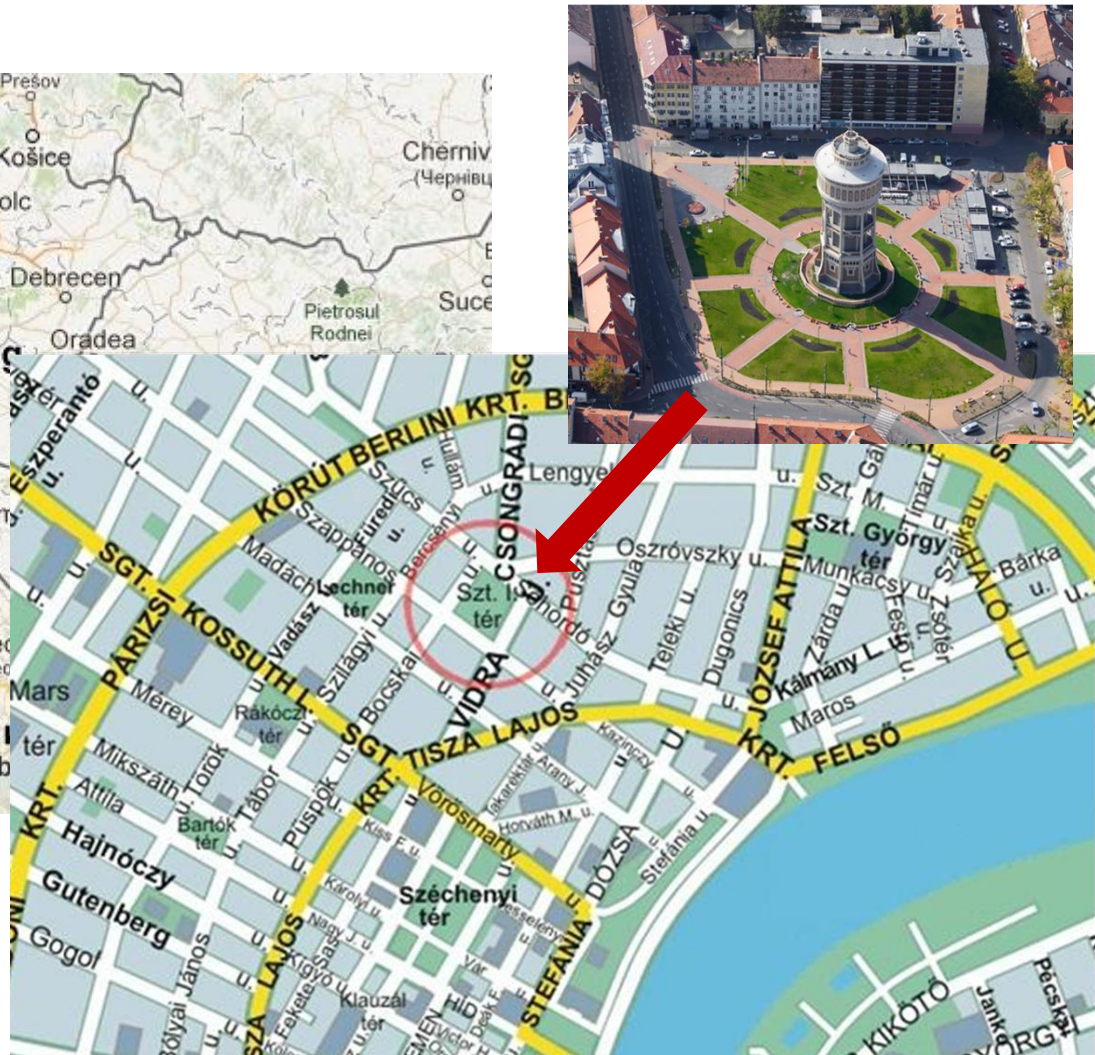


Ráday street, Budapest

Public space – definitions according to the interviewees

- „...**community** area...”
- „Free-for-all, **freely**...”
- „Maintained, cleaned and developed by the **community**”
- „Typically I think about **local communities**”
- „...that performs a **community** function...”
- „...**local people** and NGO-s use it...”
- „...basically **opened**...”
- „...**free** area...”
- „...it can be used **freely**...”
- „...**opened** area...”
- „...it can be used **free for all**...”
- ...”obviously **local people** use it more...”
- „...the more people use it **freely** the better it is...”
- „...it can be used to anything...”
- „...people feel at home, feel **free**...”
- „...they can be there **loosely**...”
- „...meeting point...”
- publicly owned land ≠ public space
- as Roman forums, Greek agoras

Introduction of the analyzed area – Saint Stephen square of Szeged, Hungary



Main facts in connection with the development

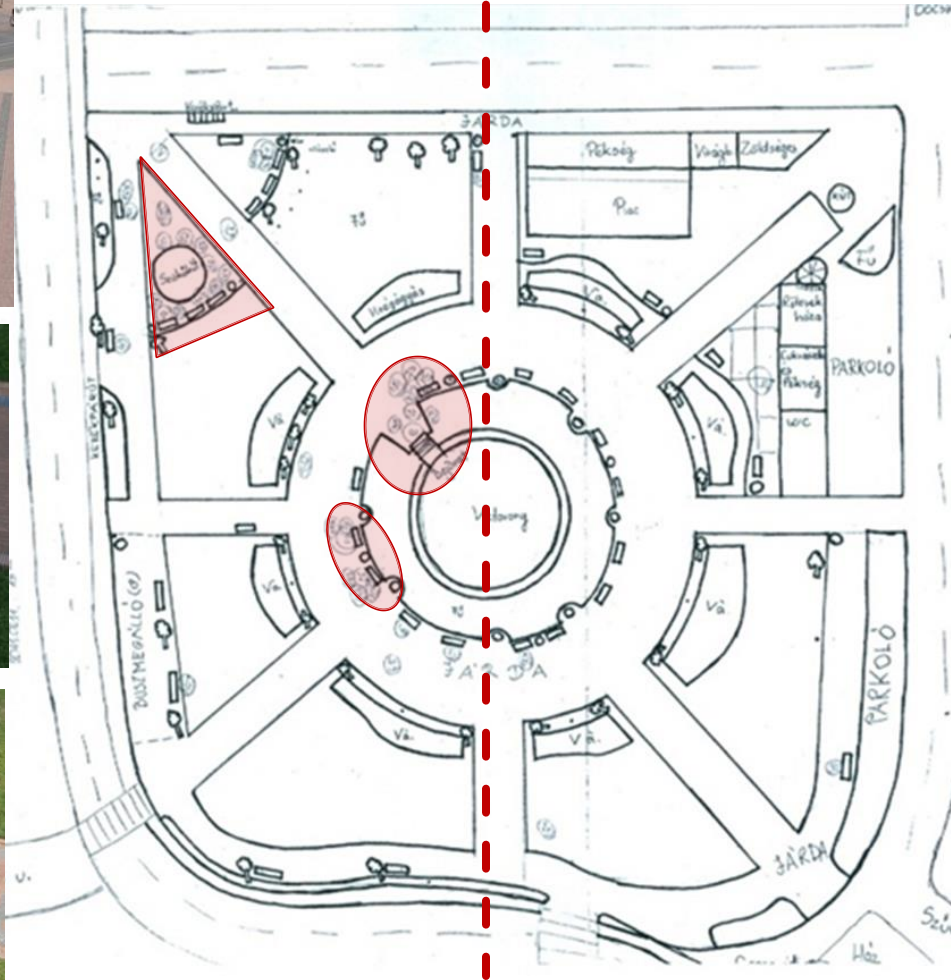
- 2006-2007: reconstruction of the square and the market
- Main aims:
 - to increase the satisfaction of the citizens
 - to preserve and present the values and traditions
 - **to increase touristic turnover**
 - to strengthen the issue of environmentalism
- Expected effects of the development:
 - Increase of the **touristic appeal** of the city
 - **New jobs**
 - Improvement of the **profitability** of local enterprises



Why is Saint Stephen square interesting?

- Preceding market place was kept in a different form → conflicts
- Decreasing (disappearing) of market function has negative affects in several aspects → markets have social, cultural and economic importance





Results of the analysis of the square

Media and discourse analysis

- Forum comments related to the market
 - „The 10 meters size market is a joke!”
 - “I walked there today, there was no merchant at all...”
 - „Much more people visited the earlier market.”
- Forum comments related to the whole square
 - „...It is not composed as the old masters would say.”
 - “One thing is sure, the square is dead, empty and has no functions.”
 - “It is bleak, lifeless and consists of ugly blue booths”



The square as the interviewees see it

- „The little market is actually **dying**, even I don't know what should be done with it.”
- „I could say that the decision was born along extremely long-term visions, but no it was not.”
- „It is not a success story.”
- „The market was its most important function.”
- It is impossible to stay there because it's so **hot**.”
- „It looks good as a mock-up but no one uses it...”
- „Totally **dysfunctional**.”
- „It became **empty**, earlier it was a lively square, now I don't see it in this way.”
- „It has absolutely **lost** its market **character**...”
- „It has only a few role, it is something **sterile**.”
- „This is an **unsuccessful** public space.”
- It is dysfunctional.”
- „It is **not user-friendly**, not citizen-friendly.”
- „Before there was a life there, now there isn't life there.”
- „It's not working.”
- „It doesn't really have a function”
- „The needs should be measured to make it filled up with life”

Summary

- Same results from the analysis that were made by different methods
 - The development didn't happen along long-term considerations
 - Using tender opportunities was strong motivation
 - Before the development it was degraded but full of people, now it is very nice but empty
 - The role of the market didn't get appropriate emphasis
 - There are several factors that make the use more difficult
 - Lack of measurement of needs and preparing the planning
 - The development and the new square is not successful according to the square users and interviewees

Thank you for your attention!



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