THE Identity Dimension of Monument and the Spaces Generator Discourse. The Case of the Arad City

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Abstract. The identity dimension of monument and the spaces generator discourse. the case of the Arad city. Regarding this subject, to geography is essential the process through each some things can led to territorial, historical and social realities. A process in which, the geographic fact and symbolic surroundings are joined. The symbolic surroundings can be defined as „rhetorical constructions designed to symbolize the territorial and social collectivity which compose it ... According to B. Debarbieux (1995) the territoriality operates through three rhetorical figures: the space attribute, the generic space and the condensing space. We won’t talk about the urban greatness of the Arad city without making a brief introduction in to his history and time moments that marked the social and mental space of the city. We won’t make a psychoanalytic Freudian perspective; we won’t sustain that everything that happens in „the childhood,, of the city has a decisive effect on further evolution of the city. However, some moments from the town evolution are indexed by the town community; they will be leading moments that sooner or later will be taken in to account in the process of articulating the identity of the respective space. For Arad city these moments are identified with some ambivalent symbols. Essentially remains the manner in which the city community will know to use its symbolic resources in a global perspective of the future in which the identity converting remains an alternative (proven in the western Europe) to the depreciation of the classical spiritual traits.

Key words: Arad, monument, identity spaces

Rezumat. Referitor la acest subiect, pentru geografie esențial este procesul prin care anumite locuri pot face referire la realități teritoriale, istorice sau sociale, un demers în care se îmbină atât spațiul geografic propriu-zisă, cât și cea simbolică. Locurile simbolice ar putea fi definite drept „construcții retorice destinate să desemneze prin conotație teritoriul și colectivitatea socială care îl constituie”. Conform lui B. Debarbieux (1995) teritorializarea operează prin trei asemenea figuri retorice, care ar fi: local atribut, local generic și local de condensare. Nu vom aborda monumentalitatea urbană a orașului Arad fără a face o scurtă incursiune în istoria să și în diferitele etape care au lasat urme în spațiul social sau mental al orașului. Nu ne vom înscrie într-o perspectivă psihanalitică freudiană; nu vom afirma că întotdeauna ceea ce se întâmplă în „copilăria” unui oraș are neapărat o influență decisivă asupra evoluției viitoare a orașului. Totuși, anumite momente din evoluția orașului sunt puse la index de comunitățile orașului; ele vor constitui repere care mai devreme sau mai târziu vor fi luate în calcul în procesul de articulare a identității spațiului respectiv. Pentru orașul Arad aceste repere se identifică cu unele simboluri ambivalente. Esențială rămâne maniera în care comunitatea orașului va și să se folosească de resursele sale simbolice într-un vizitor globalizării în care convertirea identitară rămâne o alternativă (deja verificată în vestul Europei) în fața devalorizării reperelor spirituale clasice.

Key words: Arad, monument, spații identitare
1. SPACE MEMORY, MEMORY SPACE. THE MONUMENT AS A PLACE OF (COLLECTIVE) MEMORY WILL

Etymological, the word “monument” appeals to memory and its recollective, commemorative of events, deeds and past personalities function. Considering another separation, although temporary, between mental, social and physical spaces, we shall find monumentality, its forming and deforming capacity permeating all these spaces in the most diverse situations, but presenting morphological and functional similarities. Referring to monument and monumentality is essential is the approach of configuring the social space and in the process of structuring the mental spaces, and within a town, the urban space can be considered a melting pot in which these overlap, fusion, exclude each other within a historical horizon found in a continuous semantic dynamic. Assigning it a vertical, hierarchical dimension, we can come to the urban monument feature as emergence factor, around which, based on the principle center-periphery were born the first urban spaces of humanity.

Obvious even in the material nature, where we may find monument of nature, pointing out forms of relief, flora and fauna and marking precisely their rarity and value, monumentality also structures the everyday occurrence by its temporal dimension. The monumentality correspondent in the everyday occurrence is the feast. But in this case too its articulations are not separated from the context, but a consequence of it. Feast and monument are not alternatives to routine and “common” places, although they present themselves – often in an authoritarian manner – as refuges, solutions, unique chances. They are part of the daily life, give and receive meaning from the routine and the common senses and we cannot conceive them other but in their interdependence and in the endless communication of their meanings with what we, synthetically and, always problematic, call everyday occurrence.

Unlike everyday places where we are what we do, in front of the monument (and feast), we are what we think we are, what we worship, what we commemorate not as an individual, but as a member of a community that shares the same values, belief, worship, etc. In that sense, the monument not only allows the individual’s identification, but especially and primarily, the community identification. Even if the monument is devoted to a certain hero, a personality from the past, it offers itself to posterity with an example and symbol value, and with the community representation capacity. As a symbolic place of collective memory, the monument can be born out of the subsequent designation of a legendary or historical, presented retrospectively, event, fundamental or decisive for the group or community destiny that built it. Just as the fundamental event gives meaning to all the subsequent events, the monument as a memory place gives meaning to the space where it lies. Thus, the historical event or the personality considered generator and bearer of meaning are “de-localized” (exhumed) and become able to withstand to the time and space vicissitudes.

But, the monuments do not possess inherently the mark of durability in time and space but, especially, the will for these to last. For that reason their credibility is never complete and definitive and the successive generations work on the monuments symbolic re-signifying and reinvestment. “The only identity that continues from one monument to another is the

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1 C. Mihali, 2001, p. 92.
2 Idem, p. 93.
3 Ibidem, p. 94.
dead people’s identity with themselves. All the political and social identifications trying to illustrate and perpetuate the fact of dying for… disappear in time. Thus alters the message with which a monument was invested.\(^4\)

In what concerns this subject, for geography is essential the process by which certain places can make referrals to territorial, historical and social realities, an approach in which both the proper geographical and the symbolic spatiality combine. The symbolic places could be defined as ‘rhetorical constructions meant to designate by connotation the territory and the social collectivity that represents them’\(^5\). According to Debarbieux (1995), territorialization operates by three such rhetorical images, namely: the attribute place, the generic place and the condensation place.

*The attribute place* is the mark by which is recognized a territory, the exemplary manifestation of a geographical, historical or cultural space. The Eiffel Tower for France, The Statue of Liberty for USA, the pyramids for Egypt, are territorial meanings, partially motivated (as they are part of a sum of meanings of that territory).

*The generic place* works according to the same mechanism as the attribute place (meaning by exemplarity), but this time it does not detach by oneness, but by its repetitiveness and ubiquity. The Swiss mountains, the Dutch dams, the Alsatian house are such allegories of a local and national cohesion and not rarely, expressions of the communion with material nature. At the limit here we talk less of a certain place, but of a figure, an image, even constructed, but in which easily finds himself or herself the member of that community.

*The condensation place* is a specific place, built by a community with a view to reflect itself in it, for its discursiveness and identification with it. Condensation is reported here to the capacity of such places to bring together the individuals of a community, to make them find themselves in its value and identity offer, to symbolize themselves thank to their territorial belonging. This operation also has the characteristic of centering the territory around such places (as the Pantheon from the center of Paris, the White House or the San Pietro basilica), places of blending the religious and the politic. Likewise, the practice and experience of these places take most often ritual and ceremonial forms.

It is obvious that the condensation places found in the natural order of what the French literature has called “haut lieu”, “lieu de memoire” or “lieu exemplaire” are the closest to the spatial semantic of the monument. From this perspective, the condensation places, which are the monuments with decisive role in structuring a territory identity (inclusively or especially urban) and in making up the identity hierarchies after which the individual and the community run their activities.

We shall not approach further on the monument only as a central place, situated in an inferior and anonymous daily space. We shall try, in the case of Arad, to follow the social and historic context from which it originates its meanings, but also their diffusion mode within the town community in different periods of history.

### 2. TOWN AMBITIJEANT SYMBOLS. “THE PRODIGAL SON PARABLE” AND CONTEMPORARY ARAD

We could not approach the urban monumentality of Arad without making a short excursion in its history and the different stages that left traces in the town social or mental space. We

shall not enroll to a Freudian psychoanalytic perspective; we shall not declare that always what happens in a town “childhood” has compellingly a decisive influence over the town’s future evolution. However, certain moments in the town evolution are made known by the town communities; they will be references sooner or later taking into account in the process of articulating that space identity.

The town Arad was born in the 11th century under the mark of instability and ambivalence as a “passing place” over the river Mures. To this passing over the river Mures the town Arad will oppose a longitudinal spatial evolution, a sort of symbolic barrier of the road on which the Mures valley stimulates activity in the whole space found on its both sides. A space found in a continuous dynamic. Beginning with the migration from the initial site of Glogovat (Vladimirescu) – the 12th century –, evolving through Maria Tereza’s plans dislodged in “Zimand pusza (Hungarian steppe)” (the 18th century) and till the end of the 20th century, when the “new socialist civic center” was about to happen – all these projects make up the history of Arad urban “complexes” and in the same time starting points in establishing urban symbols specific to the town: the ambivalent symbols.

But the element that marked deeply the town personality is still connected to Mures. The loop the river makes within the town could not remain unmarked because of its defensive and strategic virtues. The Habsburgic crown that rules the town beginning with 1699 will quickly notice that. The New City of Arad built in the system Vauban-Tenaille between 1762-1783 will thus become the first ambivalent symbol of the town. If from the constructive point of view, the City is certainly an architectonic accomplishment that impresses even today, from its urban development perspective it constituted an impediment and in the same time a continuous source of conflict between the civil administration of the town and the military (imperial) one of the City. Immediately after the City was built, the imperial authorities, seeking to secure the batteries range of fire from the City through a glacis, that superposed over the existent town, have imposed the town dislodgment toward North-East on another precincts, near the towns Zim and Utvinis. The empress Maria Tereza’s order in this regard, issued in 1766 would have been enforced, with all the claims, requests and desperate appeals of the inhabitants, if in 1780 had not come her death and the revocation of the dislodgment decision by her follower on the throne, Josef the second, in 1781.

In another register, this time a historical one, the City was to be the witness of another town ambivalent symbol birth – the revolutionary events of 1848-1849. The Revolution of 1848-1849 wrote here a final page at Arad, by capturing and execution of 13 generals of the Hungarian revolutionary army. Although the Hungarian generals’ ordeal is impressive at human scale, the revolutionary context in Transylvania has put the Hungarians and the Romanians on different positions in 1848. Thus, the Statue of Liberty dedicated to the generals’ memory, unveiled in 1890, will have different connotations for the two communities of the town.

In the years preceding the Union of 1918, Arad was to become the command center of the event that preceded this important historical act. A historical context in which the Romanians from Arad put great hopes; this way, Arad could become a symbol of the reunited Romania. Yet beyond the important industrial role Arad has maintained and amplified as well after 1918, the new Romanian administration preferred to capitalize on a

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symbolic plane the town at the South, Timisoara, with a Romanian community much smaller than that of Arad. Unlike Timisoara, Arad, in all the inter-war period, did not benefit of any great urban or architectural project. None of the representative buildings in Arad dates from that period. What was the reason for that attitude of the Romanian authorities? For now there is no rational answer to this question. If we were to put into a relation the two towns, Arad and Timisoara, we could in this case to justify this choice by the “prodigal son parable”. Arad benefited anyway of a strong Romanian community, so the material symbols of the Romanian spirit were almost exclusively dedicated to the “prodigal son” from the South.

From this period date the first urban complexes of the town Arad compared to the town at the South. They will be amplified during communism, when the lagging between the two towns will grow against the town on Mures. The major institutions will migrate toward Timisoara, inclusively the county residence function, for a time, so Arad will remain just with an important industrial function, on which it adds the one of the main exit gateway to the West of Europe (anyway inoperative until 1989 in the circumstances of the socialist camp). It is explainable why, in the years 1990, the railway over Mures, for a few years closed down for repairs, is identified as a marking element of the (in)dependence to Timisoara. Another ambivalent symbol of Arad to which another one will follow shortly afterwards.

3. THE SENSITIVE DIMENSION OF THE MONUMENT – FORM, PROPORTIONS, LOCATION AND MEANINGS

Considering the monuments feature as condensation places having the capacity to reunite the individuals of a community, a separation of the urban monuments of Arad belonging to the main ethnical group of the town would seem appropriate. In the context in which this initiative wishes to emphasize especially the spatial resultant of the identity condensation, we shall focus mainly on the monuments feature of centering the territory around such places.

Normally, some morphologic characteristics of the monuments (dimensions, proportions, harmonies), but as well their spatial posture, make up the so-called “monument sensitive dimension”\(^8\). Before reason, the monument is submitted to the direct sensitive observation; its qualities are firstly meant to impress and then to make you think. In the same time, the monument is also a social condenser, bringing together the feelings of a society, being an expression of the esthetic sensitivity (and not only) of a time.

The most part of Arad monuments date from the 18\(^{th}\)-19\(^{th}\) centuries. They are grouped either in the central part, or in the few historical centers of the town. However, the multinuclear feature of the urban structure had, among other consequences, their presence in other areas than the center of the urban mass. The most important monuments of architecture of Arad have appeared in the second half of the 19\(^{th}\) century – the beginning of the 20\(^{th}\) century and are marked by a variety of architectural styles. Dominant are the neoclassic, neo-baroque

\(^{7}\) In the inter-war period, the town Timisoara benefited of important urban and architectural accomplishments, which also brought in the town on Bega the fresh neo-Romanian style. The Metropolitan Cathedral, the front side of the Opera, the building of the Polytechnic University are notable accomplishments, which became today recognized symbols of the town.

\(^{8}\) C. Mihali, 2001, p. 106.
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and Secession styles. Their insertion in the urban space is of a classical type. Some of them represent view ends of some important traffic arteries, others furnish the central street lines – despite the stylistic diversity, the unity sensation being assured. The Prefecture Palace, the Palace of Cenad, the Cultural Palace, the state Theatre, the Orthodox Cathedral are the most known examples of architectonic units that became representative for the entire town community.

If we were to make a few referrals to the commemorative monuments, these should be archived in several chapters. In a first register, there are the religious monuments specific to the different ethnical and confessional communities of the town. Figurative are those belonging to the Germans from the district Aradu Nou: the St. Trinity monument or the statue St. Florian. Most of such monuments, situated in the outlying districts, are not shown to advantage either because of degradation (the St. Trinity monument) or as a result of the eccentric position (the statue St. Florian). Not the same thing can be said about “The 13 generals monument” belonging to the Hungarian community, which, although situated in an anonymous urban ambience, enjoys a remarkable attention. Characteristic to the outlying districts of Arad (and not only) is the monuments undersize in relation to the event or personality referred. The Monument of Heroes from the First World War, the statue of Mihai Eminescu and the Martyr Policemen Monument from 1989 are cases denoting a clear underrate of the important role the stylistic qualities and spatial position have over a monument. It is hard to believe that such modalities of monumental conception can come to the anticipated symbolic resonance.

Exemplary especially by their spatial posture than their stylistic value are the busts of some personalities from Arad near the Cultural Palace, that make up a sort of “walk of personalities” and two recent creations located in the generous space of the esplanade in front of the Prefecture: the Statue of Vasile Goldis and the Monument of the Heroes of Revolution from 1989.

As a symbolic and identity condensation potential, the square Avram Iancu is by far the most appreciated place and the most suitable to the monumentality exigencies. Vast, with a regulated geometry, the square Avram Iancu disposes of a relational space typical the town from the former habsburgic monarchy. Is not surprising that space was and is claimed as a symbolic reference by two important communities of the town, the Romanian and the Hungarian ones. Until 1925, that space was dominate by the Statue of Liberty – an impressive statuary metaphor of the events that marked the Hungarian community in 1848-1849. Since 1958 here thrones the Monument of Heroes from the Second World War, just as impressive in size, but poorer in meanings of identity nature. Has that last one succeeded to become an element generator of identification for the entire town community?

4. THE SPACE GENERATOR DISCOURSE. SETTING UP LIMITS AND CROSSING OVER THEM

Besides the specialized initiative, in daily life, the monument “is an element in a scheme”, meaning a sequence from the discourse it bases. Thus, we can place on the monument a narrative component that makes it a condenser of the discursive meanings of a community. The stories it focuses have but the effect of continuing transforming places in spaces and spaces in places. The stories set up spaces and monuments, and these in their turn give rise to other stories. This way the common spaces, as the monuments, are crossed over by discourses that consolidate, reproduce them, configure their range and limits. The story
depicts, and the description also has a strong creating power. There are two operations by which the story gives rise to spaces: the first is the one that authorizes an action in a certain monument or place and thus becomes founder of some social practices, of a field of action initially limited, that is setting up limits. The second consists in going beyond, crossing over these limits. Any border not only sets up a relation between an interior (legitimate) and an exterior (alien), but also the means of communication between the two: the bridges. 9

“Paradox of the border; created by contact, the differentiating points between two bodies are also the common points. Junction and disjunction are here inseparable. Which of the bodies in contact owns the border that separates them? None of them. Meaning no one?” (Michel de Certeau, p. 163).

The new monumental complex – the Park of Reconciliation --, unveiled in 2005, would have all the chances to become a symbol of Romanian-Hungarian reconciliation. As long as the symbolic potential al Avram Iancu square was exhausted as the lack of intuition for the communist authorities, the urban space of Arad, avid for a new identity, could claim it from a discourse (story) connected to the new monumental complex. Already it represents by dimensions and way of construction the main monumental space of the town. It could be an ambivalent symbol of the town, if the setting up of the complex would not have the deep meaning of a bridge. The bridge “does more than connecting the two banks already extant. (...) The other side separates by way of the bridge from this one. (...) It brings the river, the bank and the territory in their mutual vicinity. The bridge brings together the land as a river landscape.”10 Two representations of the Revolution of 1848: a Romanian and a Hungarian version, two aspects seeming irreconcilable, as some newspapers appreciated. Yet their presence in the same space gives the feeling of the bridge ambiguity, that can be the ambiguity proper negotiating the daily spaces or what the sociologists name “social interaction”. And the bridges, for Arad, can represent a source of identity unexpectedly consistent, experimented actually for ever, entered into daily occurrence.

The present imagine of a town is the result of some historical phases successive stratification. However, resorting to history does not mean automatically an objective position in interpreting some historical events. If postmodern history assumes a certain relativization of discourse, the same thing can happen in geography. It is true that real space cannot be relativized, but is not anything else than a disordered and inexhaustible repository. Space perceived currently is actually a sum of discourses about it. There is the strong tendency to see the spatial phenomenon in an integrator and simplifying setting, the temptation being present of reducing its diversity and complexity to a privileged focus of interpretation.

We did not intend this in case of Arad urban monuments and especially regarding the new monumental complex for the simple reason this is impossible. Many times the symbols (inclusively the spatial ones) are much more important than reality. Always the urban monument appealed to a symbol, myth and imaginary against reality. But that is not the problem: there is no contradiction between imaginary and real in case of a monument. Essential is the way it operates in structuring a space identity and not if this structure incorporates fictive or real elements or fictive and real in the same time.

For Arad important remains the manner in which the town community will know to use its identity resources in a future of globalization where converting the identity remains an
alternative (already verified in the West of Europe) in front of the classical spiritual references depreciation. Used with intelligence by the town community, the monumental complex can become in time a symbol of reconciliation, and Arad a sort of Strasbourg of the Eastern Europe.

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