PUBLIC SPACE DEVELOPMENTS IN SZEGED

Katalin LEDRÉDI
University of Szeged, Department of Economic and Social Geography, Hungary,
E-mail: vedredikata@gmail.com

Abstract: Within urban renewal, public space developments have got a high-priority, have generated high interest and have often resulted conflicts. I examined who are the main actors, what is the relationship like between them, and what are their interests. The study focuses on two public spaces and their (re)developments in Szeged. From the research, it emerged that one of the main reasons behind the conflicts is that the developments are mainly physical in nature, and the public opinions, protests are less considered. The possible users of the squares would take part in the implementation, and this could be the key element of the success.

Keywords: urban development, square, stakeholder, conflict, participation, planning

1. INTRODUCTION

It is prominently important to develop places in the city space that open the door to something, that have real functions as ideally working community places and that conduce social groups to hook up, relax. The city structure is basically made up of public and private spaces. “The city space was the place that belonged to nobody, therefore to everybody”2. The phrasing of Dezső Eklér Hungarian architect illustrates well, how difficult is to decide who’s is the given space, who is accountable for it, and how much can the public sector own the decisions related to it, and how much do the citizens have the right to have a voice in their development.

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2 The citation is from an article on website www.artportal.hu: Public space: The birth of a notion in the physical space and in the virtual world II.
In many Western European and North American countries a development concept is practised successfully, that particularly aimed to public spaces and based on the participation of the local social groups and the civic, political and private sector also have a voice. In the last few years such processes took place in Hungary too, but they aspired mainly to the physical renewal of public spaces to produce a more representative place. They took into account the aspect of use and social functions less, so primarily the business or other (e.g. aesthetic) interests predominated to enhance the place’s business attractiveness (Boros, L. et al., 2010, Nagy, E. – Boros L., 2010) The successful external experiences that emphasized the local communities and their ideas were adapted in relatively slight cases. Related to this, one aim of this paper is to introduce how much are the local social groups’ opinions are considered in the analysed developments, and if social protests emerged, how were these handled and how did these affect the developments.

In Hungary, development plans and the implementations might be influenced by factors like actual political situation, the accessible funding and application sources. Urban developments are allocated by European Union fundings and in a public space development it may happen, that the project focuses on the criterias and to spend the obtained money instead of the communities’ needs and expectations – thus a top-down strategy is implemented. Another problem is that communities don’t have a delegate and public spaces don’t have the party at fault. Accordingly Hungarian urban development is characterized by the building oriented and top-down strategy. In addition the weak or extinct communication channels also make the works more difficult (Madden, K., 2005). In this context the paper’s aim was to analyse the relationship and communication between the possible different actors, if there is any kind of.

Certain public space developments had a big response in Szeged lately that made the research particularly reasonable. Representatives of the city society groups and non-governmental organisations sounded off in connection with more parts of the reconstructions. Reconstructing the happenings it was necessary to analyse what public and non-governmental actors allocate the developments, who are the main actors who initiate and carry out the developments and how much are the European Union allocation affect the decisions of the city government.

2. METHODOLOGY

In the theoretical part of the study I lean on the external and domestic literature. With the content analysis of these I present the notion of public space and the good practices in public space developments. The case studies from Szeged partially based on the analysis of printed and electronic press and on the forum comments related to certain articles. In the research I did a keyword search in the data bank of daily paper Délmagyarország and other papers of Szeged. In the course of the search I primarily focused on the words “development”, “city development”, “public space” and the names of the analysed places. The analysed period was the term between 2004 and 2010.

Moreover, I adopted the method of questionnaires, interviews and participant observation in the fields of the case studies as well. In different times of the day I made field notes about the circulation of the public spaces, the typical ways of the use of space and the everyday life of the squares. Besides all these I made 100-100 questionnaires with the users
of the squares in the two analysed public spaces. Choosing the respondents happened with a simple random sampling and the available subjects were the basic population. In fine I made interviews with people who know the squares and their pasts well and I focused on the problems that the other methods highlighted.

3. DEFINITIONS AND DETERMINATIONS RELATED TO THE TOPIC

Public spaces are – similarly to all spaces – socially constructed (Lefebvre, H., 1991). As geographical micro-spaces have been presenting since people concentrated into settlements, however they have been tried to define in many ways. In casual expressing it is defined in general with the term of “anybody”, “anything”, “anytime” and “freely”. Public space constitutes the base of the democracy that strengthens the inherence of the society, so anybody should have a right to take part of the planning, not just the using of the square. According to David Harvey (2000), public space is an utopia and an ideal type of spatial form. Usually the Anglo-Saxon literature handles the notion and meaning of public space in a wider context than Hungarian literature. Public space is the token of the democracy, the space of the social justice, “theatre”, place of representation that is everybody’s and nobody’s at the same time. They analyse more questions in connection with public spaces, like problems of homeless and spatial exclusion (Boros, L., 2007), or who has the right to the spaces, how these problems appear in the urban planning and how do the policy handle them. As Don Mitchell takes it, public space is a product, as such, the token of the social control and property, extremely problematic and disputed entity. Here, the interests of the business and politics incorporate while public spaces remain democratic places (leastwise by right) (Mitchell, D., 2003).

In capitalism, public spaces are more and more commodified and homogenized – it is the part of the process which is often called “disneyfication” (Zukin, S., 1991). As a result of disneyfication the stimulation of consumption, the spectacle became ones of the dominant features these places. In this sense the market replaces the public in the state interventions and compromises social justice (Harvey, D., 2000).

Based on a Hungarian adaptation of the term “Public space means the compartments of precise, opened and located in the open air that anybody can use anytime without paying for it” (Studio Metropolitana Urban Researching Public Company: Using and adjudication of public spaces in Budapest, 2004).

4. THE ROLE OF THE COMMUNITIES IN THE URBAN DEVELOPMENTS

In the United States of America an initiative named Project for Public Spaces has been going on for more than 30 years. Its aim to develop such urban and community building places that enhance communities’ identity and help social integration. The organization takes part of the process of researching, training, planning and designing. The team analysed more than 1000 squares in the world and they saw the success principally in the easiness of approach, the attractive appearance, the convenience and community spirit (Madden, K., 2005).
In Hungary, effective urban steps first happened after the transition and the first opportunity for community participation was that time. In thought this term (community participation) is easily conjugated with protests of the community activists and non-governmental organizations, though this is lot more. Necessity of this method is heard more and more often from politicians and civil servants recently (Lukovich, T., 2002). The experiences of the Hungarian and American institutes were alloyed and the project named Public Space Program was started in Budapest. The aim of the organization is to enliven public spaces, give them functions and transvalue them in physical and in contents as well. In the course of the work, they figure out with the local square users what is the most needed and the process is characterized by interrelationship all along. Mátyás Square in 8th district of Budapest was renewed this way (Kovács, Z. – Alfoldi, Gy., 2008, Madden, K., 2005).

However some contradiction is noticeable in connection with all these attempts because while the point of view that community planning is necessary is more and more accepted, the implementation of developments may come off through the bureaucratic public sphere and in a capital-oriented way. In the course of such an implementation often diverse conflict of interests, each stakeholder has different motivation, ideology so the public sector, the politician and the entrepreneur has different aims (Boros, L., 2010).

It is also worth to take into account that community participation is not a panacea, besides the evident advantages there might be some disadvantages and tumblers too. Involving the local community may effect a more democratic sphere, in course of the process regular and high-standard communication may emerge between the parties concerned, which can mean an approbatory scratch in other urban development questions too. In course of the collective work other problems might surface to be resolved. Furthermore, it can be an effective tool to integrate minorities, beget or remould their own spaces (Lukovich, T., 2002, Kovács, Z. – Szirmai, V., 2006). Slowing down of the planning can be put down as a disadvantage of community participation, so at times the democratic community planning is out of accord with the efficiency. The expenses raise, but it is worth to take into account that such a square into which is invested more energy, money and time, can function much farther without additional costs like actuating or developing it. Social groups (in case they get too big say) might be a risk for the government, because a sort of power weakening can occur. This can affect against involving the communities (Lukovich, T., 2002).

At the same time I put a premium on highlighting that city is a big community itself, its development is also the community’s interest, and this is true to the smaller places too. That is to say it is not a good decision to separate the square that we want to develop and its users.

5. POSSIBLE ACTORS AND THEIR MOTIVATIONS IN PUBLIC SPACES

More participants hereby more kind of interest and aim may arise, completely reviewing them is impossible. Hence without limitation I attempt to present the most important ones. The state and administrative sphere play the biggest role, but beside the governmental contributory the private sphere and the entrepreneurs are also important
actors. The local community and the non-governmental initiatives are slightly a different group.

One of the most important actors of the urban development is local authority. This term doesn’t only cover the city governance but also the relationship between them and the local society, the common works, and the agreement based management. For quite a long time planning and managing the city was the charge of the politicians and boffins but today roping the local society in the works is crucial (Becsei, J., 1998, Kozma, G., 2002). The municipalities’ roles are really significant in public spaces. There are notable legal tools in their hands thus they can achieve their aims relatively easily through the support system by dint of laws, politics and institutional system. Thus they may overshadow the other stakeholders. Their aims are mainly to preserve and revise the competitiveness of the city or region and to achieve the political stability – and to keep their position of course. The municipalities’ accentuated interest to call down the allocations and to strengthen the local economy (László, M., - Pap, N., 2007).

The private sphere’s characteristic that it possesses expertise and means, so its aim is to achieve the higher profit and to get solvent principals. They are usually called “technocrats” because mainly boffins work on the development activities (Bartke, I., 1995, László, M. – Pap, N., 2007, Süli-Zakar, I., 1998, 2003).

In most cases the motivations of the public sphere (social groups and resident population) are their own ideologies and ideas. To achieve these, their tools are the voluntary work, promotion tools (Boros, L. – Garamhgyi, Á., 2009). Non-governmental institutions try to prevail in similar ways and with similar tools, but in their case the motivation is to work out their support and donations. They need to detect and handle conflict in time (László, M. – Pap, N., 2007).

6. THE CHANGING ROLE OF PUBLIC SPACES IN HUNGARY

Public spaces, public parks have always been important in urban structure, but at the same time the force and aspect of their roles have been different in various eras and places. Typically not just one function defined them because functions like sport, recreation, tourism or nature were determinative also in the past and today (Csapó, T., 2007).

The changing roles of public spaces are basically in connection with the changing of the settlement structure, the effects of globalization and the political changes (Boros, L. et al., 2006). In the middle ages public spaces gave place mainly to the barter and religious activities, so they were essential parts of the everyday life of urban society. In the period of enlightenment public space gave the most adequate place for the sciences and arts. At war, many public spaces were ruined and in the post-war period the reconstruction was the most important task instead of rebuilding the social life related to the squares, streets, parks, etc. In Hungary in the state-socialist period public spaces lost their former community functions because of the formal and informal rules made by the system (Erdei, F., 1971).

Public spaces are important because they can make the settlements unique, give place to the community life – that is to say to the society’s everyday life that related to the publicity. This explains that all over the world there is an increasing demand for usable, pretty, fitted with functions, nice and sparkling spaces. One reason is that well-functioning, successful places integrate in the resident population’s acquaint, identity and strengthen the
community feeling. The successfully renewed places can not only actuate directly the society but the city’s economy can also been strengthened. Saint Stephen Square’s renewal is a good example due to the appreciation of the surrounding properties. In Hungary, smaller city development questions came into view after the transition in 1989, but mainly after joining the European Union, because it is important to concern the budget of the municipalities, to get the allocations. Related to this, a problem can emerge: municipalities compete by thinking in a supply-driven way. This means that they know about a call for proposal, and if they are up to the mark, they find a problematic area apt for the tender that they can develop and they do the project.

In Szeged there isn’t any precedent like ones in abroad and Budapest, temporarily mainly physical developments come true. For the municipality it is often a problem that they don’t have a social and economic program related to the city developments and renewal projects. In case they still have, they rarely associate with the physical renewals so the lack of the complex approach may be a problem (Egedy, T., 2007, Kovács, Z. – Szirmai, V., 2006).

7. INTRODUCTION OF PUBLIC SPACE DEVELOPMENTS THROUGH EXAMPLES OF SZEGED

In the following section I present two cases from Szeged in which heated debates and conflicts emerged during the planning and implementation phase. The presented developments also illustrate the problems related to the supply-driven interventions.

7.1. „Lőfara”

The square called “Lőfara” (Lőfara is a word that refers to the bottom of a horse, in this case the bottom of the horse statue) by the colloquial speech, is a triangle, interstratified by the Tisza Lajos Boulevard, Kölcsey Street and Fekete Sas Street (Fig. 1.). The main characteristics of the square are the third military cavalry regiments equestrian statue, the building of the faculty of law and the palace Reök (Somorjai, F., 2002). The citizens of Szeged called the palace Lőfara house from the statue set up in 1943, because the bottom of the horse statue was towards the onetime pub, later bank, today a coffee house (Blazovich, L., 2005). As a matter of curiosity, the square does not have an official name yet, it is only referred to as its surname. This is strange because it is a centrally located place, well known by most of the citizens of Szeged and is an important part of the mental maps of the city.

The “Lőfara affair” has begun in 2008. European Union invited entries for a competition to develop the historical city centres. In this framework, the local authority decided about the rehabilitation of the square in front of the Reök palace in December of 2008. As one momentum of this, they initiated to relocate the statue. As many people considered the opening of a new coffee house as the main reason, this plan generated protests. The so renewed Kölcsey street links the square to the Kárász Street (Fig. 1.), which is the main promenade street of Szeged.
The main aim of the city was the improvement and strengthening of the tourism potential, to make a more aesthetic square and to extend the pedestrian zone of the city centre. The Reök palace has been changed to the house of arts, so the number of programs increased in there and the circulation and cultural role of the square increased too. This also explains the renewal (Boros, L., 2010).

However more problems emerged related to the renewal of the square. On the one part the originally triangle shaped square (Fig. 2.) that fitted in the city’s avenue-boulevard structure has transformed so the geometrically and architecturally structure of the city has disrupted (Fig. 3.).
Nevertheless the most vehement protests were against the removal of the statue. The statue bears many memorandums, like it is a piety place for the bereaved of the heroic victims of the First World War, in addition it is a memorial so traditions, feelings, and memories bind to it. The red roses around the statue symbolised the killed hussar’s blood. In the course of the renewal instead of the grassland around the statue a concrete area was developed and the grassland got place at a small corner of the square, what is a problem in
the urban climatology aspect because this square is one of the hottest places of the city and the grassland could slightly compensate this (Gulyás, Á. – Unger, J., 2010). First sculptors, architects and non-governmental organisations spoke out against the planned changes but later the citizens of Szeged joined, too. A part of the chamber of architects, the ones who protect the city and non-governmental organizations were protesting particularly against the removal of the statue. According to them, the development could have come true even if the statue stayed. The main explanation was the opening of the new coffee house in the ground floor of the Reök palace, because the place needed to the terrace in order to set up the more tables (which would enhance the Mediterranean milieu of the city as well). The protesters pushed a compromise: the statue could stay and the terrace could open too. Notwithstanding the protests, the municipality decided to move the statue in 2009 February. As an answer the Szögedi Védegylet (a non-governmental organization of the city) organised a protest and fifty people created a human-chain around the square, in which one faction’s advocacy took part too. From this point the political debates become sharper and sharper (often in harsh tone of voice). In the teeth of the debates and agreements finally the original plans were accepted. The decoupling works started in July 2009 and the new square was ready in April 2010. After the transmission the traditionalists initiated to give name to the square, but this is not decided yet. The Traditionalist and Cityscape Protector Association of Szeged advocated the „Hussar Hero’s Square” name.

As a matter of course, more articles came out in the local media related to the affair that piqued the citizens. As the conflict sharpened to the political sides, observably this aspect became decisive at the panel discussions in the internet. Many people complained about decreasing of the green area, eliminating of the parking places and keeping out of the car traffic, others favoured the car free downtown. The following citations from the forums related to the articles illustrate the debates: “The grass area hardly diminishes; 203 m² remains from the present 290 m² → According to Tünde Dombai the author of the article, if something reduced by third, that is slightly diminishing??”; “Of course the planning was first again, than the complains... Couldn’t it be prevented? Of course it could... Let it be a little green area, fence, event area to the REÖK, terrace, benches, but also place to the cyclists...”; “Stone field with an equestrian. What happened to the nice wrought iron fence and the flowers? Why is it good to make such bleak, empty, featureless places? Shouldn’t we ask the planners what was their intention, or they just had to spend the tender money to something, with a meaningless explanation?”.

These comments may illustrate well, that the readers of the articles are quit interested about the development of the spaces. This indicates that many good ideas could derive from them and they would be happy to participate in a common planning action.

When composing the questionnaire of Lófara, I aimed to formulate questions that may help me to illustrate the standpoint of the users about the square itself and its development. Due to the more kind of shade of meanings it was relevant to examine what the “Lófara” means to the users, what they associate with when they hear this word. Based on the answers it came clear that the majority link the square to the statue and this shows
well the statue’s importance and justifies the debates because the memorial is important to
the people. One of the main groups of the users is the students. They primarily think about
the square as a meeting place and this refers to their behavioural patterns and the more
active free time activities. The interpretation of the square as a meeting place should be
essential during the rehabilitation because meeting (the activity itself) is a media of creating
new relationships, living the public space, facing new things.

As the square is in the city centre it is also a junction of public transport and
education. Thus it is not surprising that most people just crossover it but besides this they
use it for other activities too. As we know the square is a meeting junction, based on the
survey relatively few people use it for relaxing, chatting or reading. Despite the university
building and the free time habits of the students these activities are less typical to the
redeveloped “Lófara”. The reason of this might be the noisy environment, uncomfortable
benches, small green area and the shadow free places which all make the square less
attractive. Most of the users use the place daytime and targeted. They rated the square as a 4
(on a chart 1 to 5 where 5 was the best mark and 1 was the worst), so overall they consider
it as an aesthetic place but this consideration may refer only to the appearance.

The new appearance of the square is better than before but the debates refer to the
fact that the agreements of the details would be important during the planning in order to fill
the attractive places with social content. In regard to the debates, the respondents’ point of
view is the same.

The biggest positive aspect of the development is the nicer appearance of the area.
The atmosphere of the place is great what is due to the buildings and coffees around the
area. The most negative aspect is the lack of the green area and the lack of trees. This is a
general problem in urban public spaces though the demand is increasing. The new concrete
surface makes the square bare, grey and boring. One more problem emerged, in connection
with the bicycle traffic. The signals are not clear, and there is no storage for the bicycles.

All together, the respondents characterised the square with the following words: bare,
noisy, boring, stern, depressed, and bleak. Though some differences emerged in the
opinions about the square, a picture evolved about the deficiencies. Based on the criticisms
it seems to clear that more trees are needed mostly. This would solve the problem of the
shade-free places, and also would be great from the environmental and aesthetical aspect.
Bigger green area, some fountains and different programs are much needed too. Organising
events would make the square more popular.

Based on the survey it can be stated that before the changes, a survey by the
developers would have been necessary to get answers what is important to the square users,
what they need. Considering the real needs, successful developments and places could be
made.

7.2. Saint Stephen Square

Saint Stephen Square is out of the Tisza Lajos Boulevard, which goes around the city
centre (Fig 1.), its determining element is the oldest ferro-concrete building of Hungary, the
water-tower (Fig. 4.).
The build-up, which is more than hundred years old, was renewed only once in 1959. Since then, the sand was running out it and the tower obtused statically, so the reconstruction was necessary. Beside the water-tower, the late market’s remains, the new stalls determine the area’s character (Becsei, J., 2004, Blazovich, L., 2005, Bajmócy, P., 2009). The main conflict in connection with the development was the diminishing of the former expansive market function. The square is notable also because of the small-scale gentrification that is going on since the renewal. At the same time the Saint Stephen square is slightly different from “Lófara”, because there were no harsh debates and protests on the part of the vendors or the citizens.

The recovery started in August 2005 initiated by the municipality and the Waterworks of Szeged, by the end of May in 2006 the elevation and the area around the water-tower has been renewed. The tower got more new functions, it operates as a gazebo, sometimes concerts are held due to its acoustics and it periodically gives a home to exhibitions. The execution of the square development was together with the tower’s renewal, in the framework of the same project. The square was enriched with fountains, benches, works of art, promenades. The earlier much bigger market got place in the South-West corner of the area (Fig. 5.). The crossover traffic has been partly closed off, only the trolley buses can run. This decreases the noise pollution and air pollution and increases the security.
In favour of the public safety some surveillance cameras has been equipped. This arrangement usually has a good impact on the adjudication of a square, people feel the given place safer and they visit it more often. In the case of Saint Stephen square, this had a different effect: in spite of the surveillance cameras, people don’t like to use the square, and they don’t feel it safe mainly because of the homeless.

Thereupon the renewal works not all the vendors could stay on the square: The owners got compensation but the renters went empty away. One of them declared in Tünde Dombai’s article this way⁵: „Since then I’m looking for a job, but I don’t find anything. I was an entrepreneur, I cannot be unemployed.”; „The trade is usually flat in wintertime every year, but here the demand decreased already in fall time. It was promised, that the new stalls will be ready in spring. The livelihood of the family ceases by closing the buffet.”; „We don’t let the market go! It is not possible to always do a job on the small people. We expand the 20-22 thousand Forints (~60 €) pension – charming the second hand book vendor.”; „Every metropolis protects the flea markets, why can’t Szeged do the same?”.

Greengrocers and flower-shops supposed to install in the new stalls. By this purview, decision-makers wanted to strengthen the touristic attractiveness of the square and the city and the earlier flea market and scone stalls did not fit in this picture, so they did not let them to open out again.

Saint Stephen square has become an adornment of Szeged, it carried of a prize in October 2010. On the surface, it is renewed nicely, but the earlier well-functioning market’s remains are near its end. The decision makers’ aim was to keep the original function of the square, that is why they didn’t eliminate completely the tourist attractive stalls, but they

increased the rental fees too high so not many vendors can afford it. The size of the market has substantially put down, the earlier bustle disappeared and the everyday life of the area changed. The essential community element of the square disappeared so the successful rehabilitation of the area could just partly come true.

According to the survey the respondents are more satisfied with this square then with Lőfara but still the majority just cross over the square and not many use it to relax or to sit down and read a book. Not many potential square users are willing to use it and one of the reasons is that there are many homeless and beggars and they discolour the square. Thus if people don’t have a business in the square or in the neighbourhood, so there isn’t any reason to go there, then they keep off of it. However if they still use it, then they do it in broad day, though in the evening the tower’s lights are very nice, in spite of the surveillance cameras people keep off the square because of the beggars. It refers to the fact, that without solving the local social problems the development is only a half-resolution because the poorest people aim to pick up a living in the most proper places.

Like at the first case study, most people prefer the new square, but many of them were not sure about the answer. Same as in the case of “Lőfara”, people didn’t take objection to the physical changes but the changing functions of the square. The most attractive element of the square is clearly the water-tower and the big green area. At the same time they don’t like the new stalls, they think that these stalls don’t fit in the aesthetical picture of the square. They mentioned many times that the neighbourhood is defunct, recess, “not really useful”, draftly, there is nothing to do there, and though it is nice, it’s sad that tourists don’t know about it and can’t visit it. These statements confirm the fact that a place can’t be attractive, can’t have a role or meaning without functions and programs, how nice so ever it may be, it just hides in the heart of the city. In other words, it can’t become a real public space, at least not in the sense that I presented before.

The results of the interviews I made with the vendors of the market were corresponding with the content analysis and the conclusions of the survey. The interviewees have been selling for three years in the square and they are content with the conditions needed for merchandising. They didn’t work on the market before the development, but from the chats with the earlier vendors they could adjudicate some facts. The turnover was much bigger before and the earlier square was much busier and sparkling. Some tourists loaf in the summer time, but in the other seasons they lose even this source of revenue. The costumers miss the old market, the old offer and atmosphere. As the flower shop’s owner said: “we are slowly running out of costumers”. The square doesn’t have any advertisement so only a few people know about it so its touristic function is nearly missing.

„The square would need a bigger advertisement; maybe more people would come to visit.”

The participant observation of the square attested that people really don’t like to sit down there; they can’t do any activity there. It is only busy in the morning, lunch time and in the afternoon. Between these times, just a few people visit the square, they crossover it without looking around, shopping or promenading. Children get bored soon, there isn’t any toy or playground for them. It is slightly capable for dog-walking though there isn’t any dog running place so the other visitor don’t like if a dog slabbers the square. The bicycle traffic

Based on one of the interviews I made with the vendors.
is quite big due to the bicycle road. There are really many homeless and beggars in the square in spite of the surveillance cameras.

The market function was given before and the city government planned to keep it but they transformed it in form and content too. More groups’ interest compromised mainly the vendors’ and the square users (the earlier costumers) evaluate it negatively. The new stalls don’t fit that much in the new square and less vendor rent them since the renewal (during the observations more of the stalls were empty). The water-tower is very nice and it could be a touristic value of the city but tourists don’t get any information about its presence. The top-down method in this case was not successful because the lost functions had not been replaced with new ones. Such a square came true that lost its spirit and content. Based on the foreign and domestic experiences, the mutual communication with the square users and vendors could result a more useful, richer, more attractive place.

8. CONCLUSIONS

After evaluating the survey it came evident that most people think about public spaces as the places of community life, relaxing, places where they can meet and participate events. They like to take pleasure and goggle in them, they need attractive, fascinating places that they can use. They think public spaces are for colouring cities, these are special spots of the city that bring people together and provide diversity. Of course the touristic attractiveness and tourist destination function is important too. In the case of Saint Stephen Square the city government’s primary aim was to create this kind of function but this didn’t come true (or just partly) so the city didn’t reach the required results. Obviously can’t be every activity settled in one place but settling the claims in would be necessary.

This aspect would be essential also because the respondents are squarely opened to it: the majority would be happy to participate an event where they can have a voice in shaping the place and can help in the development works. Many people would be attentive in connection with activities like planting trees or flowers but we can rarely hear tell of organising events like this. Men would be happy to paint benches and nearly everybody was eager when I mentioned the possibility, that they could compose the square with scale-models. In Budapest before the development of certain squares (Hunyadi Square, Mátyás Square) the resident population had a chance to enrich the plans with their own ideas and to attend forums where they could tell their thoughts. This is an exemplary practice what could be effective in Szeged too.

Rehabilitation of public spaces is of high priority in urban development. In the framework of such projects beyond renewal activities the change of functions and creating new ones is also happening. Within these it’s indispensable to appraise the earlier merits and keep them. The most important element of public space is the community itself so it’s most important function to create and strengthen their cohesion and create community life. To make the elements above the active residential participation is indispensable and the condition that the participants feel the place as theirs and feel responsibility for its destiny.

In the case of both squares the decisions of the municipality stirred up a storm. Within this, people were not only (and not primarily) against the concrete modifications but they also disallowed the arrangements that ignored the Non-Governmental Organizations and acted without any residential participation. Many criticisms think that the decision
makers of the city compensated the residential collation with eye-services. As it emerges from the second case study, in the case of Saint Stephen Square the debates were not that sharp but the oppugnance was clear in here too.

The processes are determined by the fact that the municipalities are the main decision makers and a very important aspect is the distribution of the sources and the deadlines. Mostly the projects are in late and the participation would make the processes slower.

These two case studies are exemplifying too that the so called successful public spaces are not necessary matterful and attractive enough to be part of the local society’s everyday life. These are not the most appropriate to consummate community life though give a nice visual experience. In the background of this there are complicated processes. There are too many interests, demands, aims and actors related to these places and these don’t harmonize with each other though they are connected much and the governance handles them abortively for the present. To harmonize them, the residential collation could give the best tools. The good practices from abroad and Hungary shows that this method works well. There are undeveloped sources in these groups and if the governance could use them, they could create really successful public spaces, and in a longer view more successful city and society.

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