

THE CENTRAL PARK OF CLUJ.

SIGNIFICATING SPACE

- a project of Drd. **PETRUTA MÎNDRUT**, with MA **IULIA HOSSU, NICU SCORUS,**
MARCEL MATES, GELU TEAMPAU –

The topic of our research is the Central Park of Cluj. Using the theoretical approach of the (social/public) space as being produced and reproduced, our project is intended at revealing the dynamic of this particular place both as a physical mapping and as symbolic representation. Also, we have considered the place as a contradictory placement, putting together multiple different identities and signs, a place open and somehow closed upon itself, a special place or, following Foucault, a heterotopy.

In short, this is an attempt at anthropologically “reading” the *life* story of this place (after all, this is not about the place *per se*, but about the people who permanently construct it, in all senses).

THE CITY AND THE SPACE OF THE CITY, PUBLIC SPACE AS SOCIAL AND/OR POLITICAL PRODUCT

Robert E. Park defined the city back in 1925 as “a state of mind, a body of customs and traditions and of the organized attitudes and sentiments that inhere in these customs and are transmitted with this tradition” (Park, 1925: 1). Park made the body-city metaphor quite fashionable in arguing that “we may think of the city, that is to say, the place and the people, with all the machinery and administrative devices that go with them, as *organically* related; a kind of *psycho-psychical mechanism* in and through which private and political interests find not merely a collective, but a *corporate expression*” (Park, 1925: 2, *emphasis mine*).

More recently, in a very provocative fashion, Elizabeth Grosz’s work, (from the field of the “new feminist philosophy of the body”), proposes an alternative post-modern inquiry on the life of the city. In her book, *Space, Time and Perversion. Essays on the Politics of Bodies*, she explores “the constitutive and mutually defining relation between bodies and cities”. In this sense, the city “provides the order and

organization that automatically links otherwise unrelated bodies. [...] It is the condition and milieu in which corporeality is socially, sexually and discursively produced” (Grosz, 1995: 43).

As a working definition, the city becomes “a complex and interactive network which links together, often in an un-integrated and de facto way, a number of disparate social activities, processes and relations, with a number of imaginary and real, projected or actual architectural, geographic, civic and public relations. The city brings together economic and informational flows, power networks, forms of displacements, management, and political organization, interpersonal, familial and extra-familial social relations, and an aesthetic/economic organization of space and place to create a semi-permanent but ever-changing built environment or milieu” (Grosz, 1995: 44).

Rejecting the traditional model of the city as reflecting the anatomical organization of the human body, a model constructed on a supposed isomorphism between the two, Grosz sees this relation as a “two-way linkage which could be defined as an *interface*, perhaps even a co-building”. Thus, she proposes an alternative model of the relation between bodies and cities “which sees them, not as megalithic total entities, distinct identities, but as assemblages or collections of parts, capable of crossing the thresholds between substances to form linkages, machines, provisional and often temporary sub- or micro-groupings” (Grosz, 1995: 47).

The organization of the city (structure, forms, rules and norms) affects “the constitution of corporeality and/as subjectivity” in what has been called “lived spatiality” (Grosz, 1995: 47). The inter-relation between body and city is an extremely complex one. Grosz underlines the view of the city as “the site for the body’s cultural saturation, its takeover and transformation by images, representational systems, the media, and the arts – the place where the body is representationally re-explored, transformed contested, re-inscribed”. As already mentioned, we are talking about a “two-way linkage”. Thus, “in turn, **the body**,

(as cultural product) **transforms, re-inscribes the urban landscape according to its changing** (demographic, economic, and psychological) needs” (Grosz, 1995: 47-48, emphasis mine).

This idea can be corroborated with another quite influential view, that of the **space as being produced and reproduced**. “The (social) space is a (social) product” (Mihali, 2001: 186, citing Henri Lefebvre’s *La production de l’espace*). This fact has two major implications. First, “the nature-space is irreversibly getting away, the nature itself becoming the brute material for producing the space”; and second, that each society produces a space of its own, a hypothesis which implies the idea of reading the specificity of space-production across cultures.

Moreover, as a social product, the **public space is a “stake of symbolic appropriation”**, as Grafmeyer puts it. Expressing *per excellentiam* the essence of the city, the public space is seen as problematic in as much as “it is not defined once and for all but, on the contrary, makes the object of a permanent construction by means of the interactions which bring together people with different identities in a place of free access”. Thus, it becomes a “decisive stake for different forces which perform in the sense of a segregation of the social groups, a confrontation of communities or a separation of the sexes”. The conclusion is that **“the question of the public space is also a political one”** (Grafmeyer, 2000: 95-96, emphasis mine).

The idea of the public space as a a political one is perfectly illustrated by an article on the construction (physical and symbolical!) of Central Park in New York. Dorceta Taylor writes about the Central Park from the perspective, highly argued by landscape architects throughout the XIX-th century, of the park as “an important instrument of enlightments and social control”. The previously mentioned architects praised and promoted parks for their “health-giving characteristics and character moulding capabilities” (Taylor, 1999: 420). As in the case of New York described by the author, in time parks became, contrary to their original design, “spaces of social and political contestation”, setting the stage for

conflicts between middle class and working class consumers of the parks, on the subject of appropriate use and behaviour.

The paper also analyses the differences between middle class and working class leisure behaviour, emphasizing two distinct and conflicting definitions and perceptions of the park. While the middle class preferred “passive leisure pursuits, cultural improvement and refined manners, the working class sought active, outdoor recreation, fun and games” (Taylor, 1999: 423).

Adopting a social constructionist approach, the paper addresses the urban park as the product of many events and as being defined through collective processes. “Groups in a society perceive, identify and define park problems by developing shared meanings and interpretation of the issues”. In other words, from the social constructionist point of view, D. Taylor is concerned with “how people assign meanings to their social world” (Taylor, 1999: 420). She is interested in how “the social, historical and institutional contexts shaped experiences and events, influenced definitions, ideologies and perceptions and stimulated activism” (Taylor, 1999: 421). As D. Taylor argues, “urban parks were not constructed as benign plots of land in the city; they were accorded special significance and imbued with special values and virtues” (Taylor, 1999: 426).

In the following, I shall reproduce most of these “values and virtues” here for the sake of comparison. Perhaps because of this being the prevalent discourse of the epoch or the preferred social, cultural and/or political themes in the discourses of the higher classes, most of these ideas can be easily traced down in our case. The most important function of the park is “social control”, meaning “moral upliftment, improved civility, socialization into middle class norms and values, cultivate tastes, ‘tranquillising’ recreation, public education, freedom, reduce anomie, induce better attitudes towards work, produce more efficient workers” (Taylor, 1999: 426).

Then - related to this - there are the following: “cultural enlightenment, exposure to beauty, pastoral settings; improve health; ease overcrowding - literally

provide a breathing space in congested cities; act as urban resorts for people with no access to the countryside; the Commons – the social nerve-centre of the city; structure the plan and growth of the city; protect the urban water supply; increase property values; mute class conflicts; repositories for works of art” (Taylor, 1999: 426). As we shall see, at least the “health” issue is perpetuated to present day discourses and narratives about the park.

As mentioned, the parks as spaces of contestation and political conflict have betrayed their original design. As for this particular design, Dorceta Taylor cites Stephan Dunkan Walker, a XIX-th century clergyman, who imagines the park as a “commonwealth, a kind of democracy, where the poor, the rich, the mechanic, the merchant and the man of letters, mingle on a footing of perfect equality” (Taylor, 1999: 427). The park is usually projected as “a rural resort, where the people of all classes, escaping from the glare, the glitter, and turmoil of the city, might find relief of the mind, and physical relaxation” (Taylor, 1999: 465).

Here is another sample from XIX-th century discourses that combine the pleasures of the senses with moral improvement for the final aim of educating the “character”: “Where the rough corners of the character become smoothed by the attractions of genteel intercourse, by the communications that such paces afford; multiple influences insensibly steal over the heart of the most pure and desirable character, and while the sight is gratified by an exhibition of what is beautiful in nature and art, the tastes improve, the mind becomes buoyant, the manners chastened by viewing what is pleasing, refined, cultivated, and appreciable in the more active graces of life” (Taylor, 1999: 427).

This quasi-religious exaltation of the beauty and benefits of the park is related to a romantic vision of parks/gardens as close to nature and to an originary innocent age. The discourses emphasise the educative function of beauty, putting it to work and transforming it into an instrument of social control. Although such discourse is deeply embedded in the social-political reality of the epoch, most of its themes are still, as we shall see, quite fashionable.

CULTURAL SPECIFICITY OF PUBLIC SPACES

The bibliographical resources on public gardens and parks are very few; even lesser on Romanian cultural specificity. Nevertheless, one that proved very helpful is the book of Dolores Toma, "*Despre gradini si modurile lor de folosire*", which outlines a kind of a cultural-specific model of using the public garden in Romania from the XVII-th to the XX-est century. The starting point is the author's conception that „one should interrogate not only the actual aspect of the garden, but also their function in the life of the community, the way of being used, the component elements and their imaginary, the representations of that space and of the time of their utilization” (Toma, 2000: 12).

We should, however, mention that the book does not necessarily refer to the geographical area we are interested in. As we know, the space of Transylvania is circumscribed by a different political and/or cultural history, that would possibly influence the history of parks and their praxis also.

However, the data are somehow the closest to what we are interested in and very relevant for the understanding of the role of public gardens. According to this micro-history of the parks as sketched by Dolores Toma, the garden has been originally perceived as „a locus of communion and sacred conviviality” (Toma, 2000: 28), a „vegetal environment meant for a collective and ludic use” (Toma, 2000: 41).

This is the very specificity of the Romanian model: that there never was a „solitary and melancholically praxis of the garden, but one of intense sociability” (Toma, 2000: 37). What really matters (as opposed to the French model of contemplating the aesthetics and architecture of the garden as a form of art), as Toma argues, is „the existence of the natural vegetation, of a drinkable source of water and the ludic use, in a sacred temporal period and later in the time of rest” (Toma, 2000: 12).

In the beginning, the public gardens were simply gardens in the property of high nobility and royalty, open to the public on the expense of the latter. What is

very interesting is that the garden used to be, spatially and functionally, very close to the church. „The garden belonged to a sacred space, visited on holy days, meant for rest and joy. It was not designed for a profane use but a celebration, not a solitary enjoyment but a collective joy. It would open itself on holy days as another dimension only accessible on those days and oposed to the ordinary days of the week. Rest instead of work, feast instead of fasting, joy instead of sorrow, ‚delight’ instead of ‚repulsion’” (Toma, 2000: 28).

The garden becomes, in a term coined by Foucault, a „*heteroropie*”, that is „a real space but different from all the others, encapsulated in their compact network but at the same time different from it” (Toma, 2000: 28). As such, this space has its own definite rules that define and identify (*i. e.* include/exclude) its practitioners.

THE PARK/GARDEN AS A HETEROTOPY

The idea is developped by Foucault in a text presented as a conference at the Circle of Architectural Studies, on March 14th 1967¹. Foucault starts with the idea that the present epoch is one of space, rather than of time, and as such he tries to explore the space and its metamorphosis across cultures. „There are, probably, in any culture, in any civilisation, real places, effective places, places designed in the very process of institutionalising a society, places that are a kind of counter-placements, a kind of utopias realised effectively in which the real placements, all the other real placements that can be found inside a culture, are at once *represented, contested, and inversed*, some kind of places outside any place, even if in fact localisable” (Foucault, 2001: 254, emphasis mine). These are the heterotopies, as oposed to utopias.

Among other characteristics, the heterotopy has the power of „juxtaposing in one single place several spaces, several placements which are in themselves incompatibles” (Foucault, 2001: 257).

¹ The text was originally published in *Architecture, Mouvement, Continuite*, no. 5, October 1984, and then reproduced in *Dits et Ecrits* (cf. Ciprian Mihali, 2001).

The oldest example of these heterotopias as contradictory placements is the garden. „The garden is a carpet on which the entire world comes to fulfil the symbolic perfection. [...] The Garden is the smallest parcel of the world and then the totality of the world. Since Antiquity, *the garden has been a type of blissful and universalising heterotopy*” (Foucault, 2001: 257, emphasis mine).

More that often, heterotopias are related to “a certain decoupage of time, which means that they open up towards what we might call heterochrony; heterotopias work fully when people find themselves in a kind of absolute disjuncture with their traditional time” (Foucault, 2001: 258). Another characteristic is that heterotopias always imply a system of closing/opening that at the same time isolates them and makes them penetrable. It is especially the case with illusory heterotopies; everybody can enter, but „you think you’re in and you’re excluded by the very fact of having entered” (Foucault, 2001: 259).

Thus, we might consider the park/garden as a heterotopy, a place with a regime of its own, with its own rules and norms, that lets you in but at the same time excludes you, a space continuously produced and reproduced where multiple identities and meanings fight over its denomination and signification. „The modern and post-modern production of spaces is thus a complex and extremely dynamic operation that impels a restless work of reading and interpreting the space and the discourses about it” (Mihali, 2001: 187).

MAIN QUESTIONS AND HYPOTHESES

We have started from the premise that there is a two-way relationship between space and human element, a permanent symbolic exchange of significations and a continuous construction of meanings that comes to define the identity and image of both. Our **hypothesis** is that *changes in human relations, in their history, in their interactions influence not only the representations of the space (i. e. the park) but also its physical appearance and its functions. In turn, this new “identity” of*

the space influences humans, in so far as it imposes new norms of behaviour, new sets of norms and eventually new identities to be performed in its milieu.

We consider that there is a division in the evolution of the park, marked out by the ante-communist period and the post-communist one. More specifically, before this period, the Central Park was essentially and *per excellentiam* a space of sociability. Nowadays, *the park is visibly fragmented* not only physically (we will describe the different places in the space of the park, each with a definite function and set of rules) but also symbolically.

In this respect, we have proposed ourselves to analyse the public space, as mentioned, as “a stake of symbolic appropriation” by different groups with different identities. These different groups construct different images of the park, not necessarily congruent. The particular discourses and narratives of these groups underline the differences and mark out the space as one of conflict.

In short, we are interested in, on one side, **the evolution of the park, physically and symbolically, as constructed by different narratives and subjectivities**, and, on the other hand, in analysing **the functions of the park and their dynamics**.

METHODOLOGY

We have combined several methods of gathering data. For the analysis of the present structure and imaginary of the park, we have used *participant observation* and *semi-structured interviews*. We have conducted all interviews in the setting of the park in order to stimulate discussions and circumscribe them to our topic of interest. The methodology of participant observation also proved very useful in acquiring a certain sense of the place and in observing and analysing the different groups, activities and identities performed in the space of the park.

For the history part of the project, we have consulted the Archive Institution in Cluj and the archives of the Central Universitary Library (BCU); also, for recent history, we have appealed to elderly narratives and memories.

An important part of the project is constituted by *visual material*. We have compared old representations of the park and new ones, trying to observe the chronological evolution of the park and the changes in its physical dimensions. The photos can also sustain our hypothesis about the present fragmentation of the park.

SHORT DESCRIPTION OF THE PLACE

The Central Park is located, we might say, at the periphery of the centre of the city. It starts in front of the Hungarian Opera and is oriented longitudinally towards the Stadium. At the north end, it is continued by the Sports Park (“Iuliu Hatieganu”). The place is cut through by a middle road, paralleled by several alleys, and sided by century-old chestnut trees. The tall trees build a kind of cupola across the middle road with their rich foliage and in a sense close the place upon itself. As one enters the park, the place seems cool and quite dark, but opened here and there by small clearings.

The park is also cut across by other smaller alleys, suggesting that the place is sometimes just a space of transit. The centre-nerve of the park is the Chios Restaurant near the lake and of course the lake with the boats. The old Casino is just a ramshackled building, hidden behind wild vegetation, as if it wanted to melt into the background. In front of the Casino there is a (once beautiful) artesian well in what used to be a small square. At the end of this square there is a small Pavilion (now lost between trees and bushes) where the fanfare used to sing.

At the south end, the first building one can lay eyes on is an old social group, not even functional. The building has a correspondent (obviously more recently built) at the other end of the park. *Vis-à-vis* this place there is a bar with a terrace (*Rainbow*), visibly contrasting with the general atmosphere of the park. Quite recently, some kind of fence appeared at the two ends of the park; half-open all time, it closes and opens up the place, marking – rather symbolically – the entrance.

THE CENTRAL PARK OF CLUJ. SHORT HISTORY OF THE PLACE

This park is older than I am.

(man, 73)

The story of the Central Park starts back in 1812; what is obvious from the very beginning is its intertwining with historical events and facts². The year of 1812 marks the moment when the city of Cluj becomes the administrative centre of the region. In terms of its urbanistic development, this fact has major implications. The officialities and the high-classes of Cluj develop new and higher expectations about their city. A “promenade” is quite a must-have in the cultural fashion of the time. Money and efforts will be focused from now on upon this aim.

Around 1812, the place is in fact a swampy field with a mill functioning here. For over 5 years, the place is rented and the building of the mill becomes a kind of popular saloon. By 1827, the place is divided, on one side we still have a swampy field, on the other side, over a small bridge, there is the estate of count Haller. Here there are several gardens belonging to aristocrats that would open them to the public (Remember the cultural pattern of “sponsoring” gardens for the lower classes).

Between 1827-1837, the place is somehow administered by a Women Association, who buys the place from the count and build a weaving mill for young women. Using different donations and charity money, they plant some trees and build roads.

Between 1837-1865 we have an Association of the Park. In 1834 the Dieta of Transylvania is temporarily moved to Sibiu (as a political sanction), and on the occasion of having it back in Cluj in the same year, the city organises a great

² Most of the information presented here comes from a document written in 1886 by Kövály László, as a report regarding the closing down of the Association of the Park after 20 years of activity (*A Koloszváy Sétatér. Keletkezése és fejlődése, 1812-1886. a Sétatér egyesület jelentése 20 év utáni feloszlása alkalmából*, Koloszvárt: Nyomatott a Magyar Polgár Nyomdájában, 1886). Special thanks to my colleague and friend Zsuzsa Plainer for translating the document for me.

charity ball. Money is collected precisely for the building of a promenade. This is the moment when the Association is born, gathering together aristocracy and bourgeois. The association has an Executive Committee (with members from the Local Administration, also).

By 1840, the place is already a crowded one. The park is organised, there is a gardener and administration, and they have a manège and sometimes fireworks. On the place of Hungarian Opera today, a stage is built. In general, these are the coordinates of the modern park of Cluj.

History interferes again. After the 1848 sad end of the revolution, people of Cluj are in no mood for promenades and feasts. The place is used by the army, which builds a covered basin for swimming. It is originally designed for soldiers, but it is also open to the public, with a fee.

Between 1860-1865, the park is administered and maintained by a Committee of the Park. Charity is still welcome; there are a lot of things to be done: a confectionary, a restaurant, roads. They begin digging the foundation for the lake.

In 1866, a new Association of the Park is instituted in order to lease and administrate the place for 20 years, as a stocks society. They promise to build the Kioszk, the lake and a pavilion for the fanfare. There is an interesting condition that the incomes from the functioning of the buildings in the park, after the 20 years period, should only be used for the administration of the park. Another type of income is realised by selling trees grown in a nursery in the park, not to mention the selling of hay.

By 1872, the place is already a popular place; we can recognise the “popular” entertainment: merry-go-round, hurdy-gurdy, target shooting. Between 1873-1886, the Association becomes a sleeping-partnership; the stocks are being reimbursed. During this period, the Summer Theatre is built on the place of present Hungarian Opera. In 1876, policemen are hired to patrol the place. Swimming in the lake is forbidden. We could speculate perhaps about the place

becoming too “popular”. Moreover, the area of the merry-go-round is disregarded as a meeting place for maids and soldiers.

By 1875, the popular feasts become more and more expensive, so that in 1877 the Committee of the park decides to apply an entrance fee for a period of two days.

Unfortunately, this story ends in 1886, when the Association of the Park ends its activities with a quite detailed report; after 1918 and during the interwar period, the place is obviously still one of the most appreciated in Cluj, although history and - along with it - cultural norms and behaviours might have changed. As proof, in 1939, Carol II, the highest royal official in Romania, pays a visit to the park as a representative place for the beautiful city of Cluj.

Today, the place has lost most of its “cultural” value. Without sounding too pathetically and passeistic, we might say that the place has lost its value *per se*. Coming to the park, walking, sitting on the benches are not aims in themselves, not anymore. More than often, they are subsumed to more practical and mundane reasons (relaxing, chatting, having some fresh air). The place is still quite frequented but most of the activities and gestures have lost their intimate cultural value and support. As we shall see, people hang on to a kind of anachronical discourse about the park. But the place is still fragmented and fragmenting itself.

Formerly known as Simeon Barnutiu, the old Rakoczi Garden is now named “The Park of the Cluj people” (“Parcul Clujenilor”), suggesting that the place is a common asset and a public wealth. The elders’ narratives construct the place as one of community, performing the precise function of being the framework in which the community of “Cluj people/clujeni” meet and socialize.

Now, the term of “clujeni” expresses the very fragmentation of the park; like any denomination, the term implies a process of defining (including/excluding) some individuals/groups as being or not from Cluj. This is just another symptom of the present fragmentation of the park

THE CENTRAL PARK OF CLUJ. IMAGE AND REPRESENTATION. SYMBOLIC APPROPRIATIONS.

As already mentioned, the park is fragmented into multiple sites where groups with different identities perform specific activities. Performing different functions, the park is today a space of (symbolic) confrontation between these groups. We have so far identified a few functions (but the list remains open): the setting of leisure, relaxation, rest; a ludic space; a romantic framework; a place for sports and sporting activities; a meeting place; a space of conflict; a place for sub-groups (gay people); a place to walk with friends and discuss problems “privately” in public.

On one hand we have the centre-nerve of the park - the lake with the restaurant. *Chios* is considered a nice place for weddings and prom balls. In the summer, the lake is full of parents with children or couples rowing their boats. They have classical boats with oars, but also hydro-bicycles. The whole place is in a sense a hybrid (a romantic setting, but also a family one; a classical scenery but also a modern one). Moreover, some people come to fish in the lake. In winter, when the lake is frozen, people come skating here.

Behind the old Casino, there is a small manege where a few years ago they used to have pony-horses for the great enjoyment of children. The place, called *Baza Poneiul*, is closed down. Near this place, across the alley, there is the “sports” area. There is a small playground where young boys play basketball. Very close, between the playground and the lake, there is an *ad hoc* old pensioners’ “club”. They play chess or backgammon; they even have a table and a few benches around it, and of course, a lot of kibitzers to go with.

Close to the *Chios* terrace, built upon the lake, there’s a jumping springboard, where children can have a lot of fun, even if it is placed in the middle of the main alley, obstructing it. On the other side of the park, there is the building

of the Institute of Belle-arts. On both sides of the main alley, there are smaller alleys leading to statues placed in the clearings.

In short, the Park means walking places, playgrounds, quiet places, rest places, fun places all in one and the same space. One might even say there is a park of children, one of lovers, one of teenagers, one of old people and of course the park of families. All these groups seek to appropriate places in the park or the whole space, as if the only legitimate “reading” of the park. They hardly interact and when they do, conflicts might appear, not necessarily open ones, but intrinsic. Old people would grumble against “these teenagers” and their outrageous behaviour (not like in “our times”); teenagers would at best ignore them. Young lovers would try to frame their love story in a romantic setting, while avoiding bicycles, dogs, prams and, of course, peevish old men. Men would try to act as *pater familias*, to entertain their families, wife and children, and at times comment on “these lovers who kiss all the time, with no shame”. After all, children, teenagers, adults and elder people (still other children, teenagers, adults and elders, as time goes by), they all try to share space and have a good time in the park, whatever this means.

Elders’ narratives usually construct the place as a **topos of social communion**. A former ballet dancer³, i. e. member of a cultural elite, declares the park to be *a place of recreation, of soul peace, of respect for the people that used to walk around here, cultivated, civilized people, that came here to relax, not to act rudely* (N. T., 74 years)⁴. The idea that people used to be more civilized and act mannerly is one of the leit motives of the interview with him,. *People came here everyday, but they were clean, civilized, mannerly people. It was like going to the Opera, when they came to the park. The outfit, the manners, everything* (N. T., 74 years).

³ You should remember that you’ve talked to a great artist of the Romanian Opera from Cluj, I was a ballet dancer, and I served art for 42 years on the stage. (N. T., 74 years)

⁴ He seems to try to recover that communion of friends and acquaintances fro the present time: *I am best friends with the greatest doctors and intellectuals in Cluj. Great friends. I won’t praise myself longer.* (N. T., 74 years)

The other leit motive is the repetition of the expression “heavenly” to describe his personal memory of the place. (The man seems to have a special relation to God: *I love God, because he gave me health to this age of 74 years. I respected life.*) *The Casino was a heavenly place; nobody wanted to go to the Continental or the restaurant, only here. It was so beautiful and such civilized people came here. Advocates, artists, intellectuals came here. People came to the Casino from different events, performances, sport events; they came here afterwards, not elsewhere. Not drinkers, but cultural elites, they met here. [...] I had my wedding here. So strange... I have just remembered, this is the place* (N. T., 74 years)

Memories awake piece by piece: *The lake, that extraordinary lake, was a great joy to row the boats on the lake. I used to come here as a little boy, and it was a great enjoyment. People came here to relax, to talk, and to meet each other, not to discuss politics. There was no political talk. It used to be lovely, full of flowers. Now it is modernized, they modernized it. There were two big swans on the lake and people came here to admire them. They wouldn't go to the Botanical garden, but here, to admire the lake and the beauty.[...] I used to come here with my little girl; it was a great pleasure for me. Life was great because we were all healthy. We used to come with our little girl, she was in the pram and we used to dance, me and my wife, on the terrace. It was a pleasure to listen to the music. We used to come here twice a week, we could afford it, but now... It was a dream.* (N. T., 74 years)

We could have read most of the narratives through a class-conflict perspective, sometimes explicitly uttered: *The casino was a more select place; cultural elites came here, people with neckties. The middle classes used to go to the Kios, it was cheaper. You could go there in a sweater* (N. T., 74 years). Another old lady told that working class used to come to the park during afternoon, while gentlemen came in the evening. But the fact does not necessarily point to a cultural norm, since the former lived at the periphery, while the latter lived very close, in the centre of the city. As tempting as it might have been, we tried not to jump into conclusions about class (or even ethnic!) conflicts. The question is there, however; common sense still recognises walking for the sake of it (to see and to be seen) as a high-class cultural habit, while the merry-go-round has always been a cheap

entertainment for the petty-bourgeoisie or working classes (not to mention sports-playing in the park). But the former communist period has managed to destroy and level out most of these cultural habits and norms in their specificity. Moreover, the recent transition period has exacerbated other conflicts (age conflict, newly-rich and poor people etc.).

Coming back to the elders' narratives about the park, there is one thing quite obvious we should mention. These narratives are so intertwined with their personal narratives, that the past becomes a happy age, where all (including the park) is painted in light, vivid colours. *There were no benches, it was a little bit more primitive, but it was much more attractive for us. Primitive but pleasant* (N. T., 74 years). This is a common theme in elders' narratives: *The park used to be a lovely place of recreation. All these are gone. It's not the authorities fault, it is our fault, most of us do not know what keeping a place clean means.* (Old lady and her daughter).

The reverse of the coin is that nowadays things have changed, as opposed to those happy times, when people were more civilised, life was cheaper, there were a lot of friends having a lot of fun (and, of course, the narrator was young). *Fifty years ago, we used to come here to skate on the lake in the winter. There was a clean place, with an entrance fee, but you could have a hot tea and have fun. It was very beautiful, and quite affordable for anyone* (old lady).

Now, everything is dark and sad: *People do not respect each other nowadays. They envy each other. There was not something like that in my time. We were all friends, all of us were friends. We were all friends and when we met here it was heaven* (N. T., 74 years).

People have changed; values, behaviour, norms, life itself. *People don't come to the park as they used to. There are a lot of vagabonds nowadays. They are the uncivilised sort of people, they curse a lot. As for me, I am myself a bit more educated. When I was young, I used to wash myself every Sunday before going to the church, then wash again and only afterwards eat lunch. I never cursed. I like to joke like this but not curse* (man, 73 years old).

We have two entirely different lifestyles here, fighting each other with the park as background: *People don't care nowadays. If there were flowers, they would walk them all over* (man, 73 years old). All the current problems of the park are framed as generally social-cultural (and, we might add, in a sense, political) problems. *We are too many nowadays in this city. You see things differently, I see things differently. We have lived a different life; you should respect us, as we respect you. We had a hard life; we have worked hard for this country. What I have appreciated in life was honesty, kindness and respect.* (N. T., 74 years)

There is also the 'problem' of the benches (like most paintable things in Cluj, they are painted in three colours). People are divided over these issues. An old man is angry at the birds: *I can sit on the bench but it is in three colours. I like it, it's my colours. What I don't like is when they're coloured by crows, they're all dirty, you cannot sit on them* (man, 73 years old). An old lady is more focused on the problem: *I think the benches should be painted in white; it's an innocent colour. Perhaps I am old-fashioned, but to put your flag on just about anything, even the garbage can or the bench you sit on, it's..* (Old lady and her daughter).

All in one, people are happy they have a place to come. *We feel like coming here as often as possible, to recharge our batteries. One cannot live without a bit of nature, a bit of green, of fresh air [...]* (Old lady and her daughter). People are so happy about having such a place that they even construct an imaginary of it. Sometimes is hilarious how this imaginary is divergent from the reality of the park. One respondent was enthusiastically telling us about the peace and quietness of the place, while we could hardly hear him because of the noise (the tramway was passing nearby). Another was arguing about the benefits of fresh air with a cigarette in his mouth. Although visibly divergent, the discourse and the reality of the park are somehow, paradoxically, linked. The park is a special place, abducted from the usual life in the city; here the rhythms slow down, the air is fresh and the silence complete. It comes with the definition of the park and it cannot be otherwise. *For me the park is a vital place, a place to come to open-heartedly. You can enjoy a few moments of silence and peace; you can get out of the usual, out of this agitated world of ours* (Old lady and her daughter).

In all these eclectic constructions of the park, Phillip the clown, whom we met on a sunny Sunday was an interesting character, but nevertheless integrated into the very idea of the park. He gave us quite a conventional discourse about the benefits of the park. *I think the park it's great. I feel relaxed when I come into the park. I like green, it calms you down. And I like yellow (he points to his socks). It's great because you can meet your friends here; people have time to talk here. If I am downtown, I cannot really stop people to talk to them, but here you're already relaxed (Phillip the clown).* For him, the park is a socializing place: *It's the nature of my job to contact people. You can make a lot of friends. In fact, I believe that we're all friends; we just haven't met yet (Phillip the clown).*

THE PARK OF THE CHILDREN

This park is a wealth of children. It is not the mayor's, it's the wealth of the children...
(F.N., administrator).

At the north end of the park, across the street, there is small park, which, for the sake of comparison we have considered an extension of the park. The place is full of toys; they even have a merry-go-round and a small booth where they sell sweets and juice. This small park is obviously a place for children. Most of the time it is populated by mothers/parents/grandparents with their children, but single people or couples also come to sit on the benches.

F. N., the administrator of the place and the owner of the booth and the carousel is also responsible for the place. He and his family actually live there during the summer in a wagon. He also keeps the place clean: *Every morning I have to pay two men to clean up the place. We are responsible with this park. We take care of the park and guard it day and night. We paint the tees, the toys, cut the grass, level the ground, everything there is to be done (F.N., administrator).*

The man is very proud of his job and has a quite coherent discourse about it (at first he was quite suspicious about our questioning him; perhaps that is why he is always trying to justify himself). *On Fridays I let poor people and orphans play for free on the merry-go-*

round. It's my respect for them. We work with people; no matter if poor or rich, after two rounds, everybody has one round for free. Humanship is more important than money (F.N., administrator).

Moreover, he takes things quite personally, moving all the time between 'official' discourse and personal narrative: *This park is a reflection of Cluj, it's a mirror of the city. As the park is cleaner, our respect for the people is greater, right? If I come to your house and the place is nice and clean, isn't it your own pride as a householder? (F.N., administrator).*

What is absolutely surprising is the after-dark life of this park; while during the day the place is such an innocent surrounding, with kids playing around and all the toys, at night it becomes the setting of unexpected activities. According to F. N., who is quite revolted, *at night people would come and ruin the place, break the chairs and benches. There's no police or guards. Young boys and girls, they come here, in those corners where's dark, and they do all things there. And they scream and make a lot of noise (F.N., administrator).*

Moreover, even if there is a panel saying that dogs are forbidden in the park, F. N. tells us surprising stories: *there were once some young men who wanted to come and have a fight with pit bulls in the park in the middle of the day. The guard wouldn't want to intervene, saying that it's not his job to run after the dogs in the park (F.N., administrator).* This is one of the major problems, not only in this area: no guards. This makes the place somehow open to all kinds of activities that obviously challenge the proper use of the park. *What I would like is some guards at night. After 22.00 it should be closed to public. Those big young fellows come and break our toys; they're not meant for them. (F.N., administrator).*

These stories deal in fact with one of the major cleavages manifested in the narratives of the park, that between old/mature people and young people. The conflict is mainly focused on the appearance and the behaviours of the latter, and is seemingly related to another discursive issue (*civilisation* as opposed to rude manners). *There's no civility today. There's no shame today. Where's the education of the young? There's no difference between a vamp and a high school girl. This youth of ours,*

they only dream of Wild West, as if there's two pretzels on every dog's tail. The discourse slowly moves to general social and political issues, as a natural framework for the problems of the park (poverty, emigration, work, education, social security, etc.). These issues are summarised by the administrator's wife: *Before, one could go out and have no fear of what might happen, but now...*

Another important actual problem is the absence of an absolutely necessary social group (there is a complicated long story about the mayor's promises and official petitioning). *People with small children come here and ask for a toilet, what should they do? They defecate behind that wagon. I have to clean every morning. As one needs fresh air, one needs a social group. What can you do, hold your pants to other end of the park? Everything is closed, where to go? They have ecological toilets in Timisoara, in Sibiu, in Zalau, everywhere but Cluj* (F.N., administrator).

TENTATIVE CONCLUSIONS

The original premise of the two-way relationship between space and human element, in shape of a permanent symbolic exchange of significations and identities, is somehow confirmed by the way in which discourses about the park is almost always framed by an all encompassing social/political discourse. The park is not an innocent setting. The public space is always socially produced and reproduced. Like most public places, it is the background of conflicting interests and identities.

The elders' narratives describe the park as a space of encounters, of interactions but in a limited environment circumscribed by precise norms and rules (cloths, behaviour, activities, subjects of conversation etc.). The contemporary reality of the park is its fragmentation, both physical and symbolical. The park as institution has lost its purpose and its original meanings. All these and the identity of the park are now being the object of continuous negotiations.

At the end of the XIX-th century, the park was rather a cultural institution, encapsulated in a network of cultural institutions (for instance, The Hungarian

Opera; they even had the same kind of fence). Its original design was linked to a cultural fashion of the time, - the promenade -, to a certain historical moment and to precise cultural patterns.

The park is also fragmented due to an internal dichotomy between its competitive definitions: garden vs. public space, nature vs. culture, passive vs. active relaxation, with direct consequences over its uses. This paradoxical nature of the park should be thoroughly explored.

What is also absolutely fascinating about the topic is the way it can be read through different looking glasses, be it class-conflict or ethnic conflict, generational conflicts or social conflicts. What we were mainly interested in was, though, how different narratives construct symbolically the park and how space and human element interact with each other in their respective dynamics.

FURTHER DEVELOPMENT OF THE PROJECT

First of all, we would like to further develop the **history part** of the project, especially the interwar period and the communist period (through personal narratives where possible or archive documents about the development of the park and administrative matters).

Then, we have to discuss with architects and other professionals about the **physical mapping (and evolution) of the park**. Other possible contacts: ecologist associations, that develop projects focused on the park (for instance, Transylvania Ecological Club).

We should also consider thoroughly **other possible readings** of this topic (ethnic conflict or class cleavage).

In as much as possible, we would like to have a look on the future of the park: plans of **urban development** or **financial investments proposals**.

REFERENCES

- Andrusz Gregory, Michael Harloe, Ivan Szeleny** (eds.) (1996) *Cities after Socialism. Urban and Regional Change and Conflict in Post-Socialist Societies*, Oxford and Cambridge: Blackwell Publishers
- Assunto Rosario** (1988) *Scieri despre arta. Filosofia gradinii si filosofia în gradina*, Bucuresti: Merdiane.
- Assunto Rosario** (1988) *Scieri despre arta. Gradini si ghetari*, Bucuresti: Merdiane.
- Banerjee Tridib** (2001) "The Future of Public Space: Beyond invented streets and reinvented places", in *Journal of American Planning Association*, vol. 67, no. 1, pp. 9-24
- Bonazzi Alessandra** (2002) "Heterotopology and geography: a reflection" in *Space and Culture*, vol. 5, no. 1, pp. 42-48
- Fader Jerry S.** (2002) "Radical Rethinking or Radical Reinvention? Intellectual Boundaries and Theory in Urban Anthropology" in *Reviews in Anthropology*, vol. 31, 63-71
- Foucault Michel** (2001) *Theatrum philosophicum. Studii, eseuri, interviuri (1963-1984)*, Cluj: Casa Cartii de Stiinta
- Grafmeyer Yves** (2000) *Sociologie urbaine*, Paris: Nathan
- Grosz Elizabeth** (1995) *Space, Time and Perversion. Essays on the Politics of Bodies*, New York & London: Routledge
- Grosz Elizabeth** (1999) "Bodies-Cities" in Nast J. Heidi, Steve Pile (eds.) *Places through the Body*, London and New York: Routledge
- Hannerz Ulf** (1980) *Exploring the City. Inquiries toward an Urban Anthropology*, New York: Columbia University Press
- Logan Kathleen** (1979) "Urban Anthropology: 'Moving towards a Synthesis'" in *Journal of Urban History*, vol. 5, no. 4, pp. 501-509
- Mihali Ciprian** (2001) *Altfel de spatii. Studii de heterotopologie*, Bucuresti: Paideia
- Mihali Ciprian** (2001) *Inventarea spatiului. Arhitecturi ale experientiei cotidiene*, Bucuresti: Paideia

- More A. Thomas** (2002) “‘The Parks are being Loved to Death’ and Other Frauds and Deceits in Recreation Management” in *Journal of Leisure Research*, vol. 34, no. 1, pp. 52-78
- Park E. Robert, E. W Burgess** (eds.) (1925) *The City*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press
- Raulin Anne** (2002) *Antropologie urbaine*, Paris: Armand Colin
- Richardson Tim, Ole B. Jensen** (2003) “Linking Discourse and Space: Towards a Cultural Sociology of Space in Analysing Spatial Policy Discourses” in *Urban Studies*, vol. 40, no. 1, pp. 7-22
- Ryan Jenny** (1994) “Women, Modernity and the City”, in *Theory, Culture and Society*, vol. 11, 35-63
- Shogan Debra** (2002) “Characterizing constraints of leisure: a Foucaultian analysis of leisure constraints” in *Leisure Studies*, vol. 21, pp. 27-38
- Stokowski A. Patricia** (2002) “Languages of Place and Discourses of Power: Constructing New Senses of Place” in *Journal of Leisure Research*, vol. 34, no. 1, pp. 368-382
- Szeleny Ivan** (1983) *Urban Inequalities under State Socialism*, Oxford: Oxford University Press
- Taylor E. Dorceta** (1999) “Central Park as a Model for Social Control: Urban Parks, Social Class and Leisure Behavior in Nineteenth-Century America” in *Journal of Leisure Research*, vol. 31, no. 4, pp. 420-477
- Toma Dolores** (2001) *Despre gradini si modurile lor de folosire*, Iasi: Polirom
- Urbach Henry** (1998) „Writing cultural heterotopia”, in *The Journal of Architecture*, vol. 3, pp. 347-354
- Wittel Andreas** (2001) „Toward a Network Sociality” in *Theory, Culture & Society*, vol. 18, no. 6, pp. 51-76

REFERENCES ABOUT OLD CLUJ

Cucu D. I. (1944) *Clujul. Realitatea românească a capitalei Ardealului*, București:

Tipografia Dacia Traiana

*** (1939) *Clujul 1919-1939. Însemnări și compilatii, bilanțiere, monografie de dr.*

Octavian Buzea, Cluj: Tipografia Ardealul

Fodor Andraș (1995) *Kincses Kolosvár*, Cluj: Gloria

Marcus Rica (1958) *Parcuri și grădini în România*, București: Editura Tehnica