

RESPONSIBILITY IN PUBLIC SPACE REMAKING OF TWO CROATIAN CITIES

NEVENA ŠKRBIĆ ALEMPIJEVIĆ AND TOMISLAV OROZ

The article addresses the transformations of urban public space in contemporary Croatia. It tackles the issue of responsibility related to city-making processes. It raises the question of what and who makes a public space public. The analysis is based on ethnographic case studies conducted in the European Square in Zagreb and Sea Organs in Zadar. Despite their previous marginality, both places function as places of gathering but also as spaces whose publicness is renegotiated between diverse agents.

Keywords: urban public space, responsibility, Zagreb, Zadar, European Square, Sea Organs

V članku so obravnavane spremembe urbanega javnega prostora v sodobni Hrvaški. Opozorjeno je na vprašanje odgovornosti v procesih ustvarjanja mest: kaj in kdo naredi javni prostor, da je dejansko javen. Analiza temelji na etnografskih raziskavah primerov – Evropskega trga v Zagrebu in Morskih orgel v Zadru. Obe lokaciji kljub poprejšnji obrobni delujeta kot prostora zbiranja, vendar tudi kot prostora, katerih javnost se nenehno poustvarja s pogajanji med različnimi akterji.

Ključne besede: mestni javni prostor, odgovornost, Zagreb, Zadar, Evropski trg, Morske orgle

In this article, we address the transformations and (mis)uses of urban public space in Croatia, viewed through the prism of cultural anthropology. Public areas nowadays are subject to changes that can be considered global tendencies. These include the processes of fragmentation, narrowing, and changing the character of public spaces through privatization, commercialization, and touristification, the dissolution of the idea of the “common good” through spatial instability and segregation, etc., which are in line with the current economic, political and social orders (cf. Hirt, 2012: 14–30). However, some of the trends observed in Croatian cities reflect the specific post-socialist context of urban life. The establishment of a sovereign state in 1991, the transition from socialism to a market economy, from centralized spatial planning strategies directed by the Yugoslav state to local urban planning and entrepreneurial initiatives, and the country’s accession to the EU in 2013 have all left their mark on contemporary Croatian cityscapes. In these contexts, the former center of one of the Yugoslav republics – Zagreb – became the capital of the independent state, while a new network of regional centers was created, following today’s political and symbolic geography. The transformations mentioned above affecting public space in Croatia raise the question of responsibility at various levels, including the state and political level and civil responsibility, i.e., the engagement of citizens with and for public space. Such an all-encompassing view of responsibility *in* and *for* public space assumes a specific understanding of city-making as a process triggered by diverse social agents, by all the individuals and groups that conceive, use, and activate urban

spaces, and not only those at the top of the political and economic hierarchy (Gulin Zrnić, Škrbić Alempijević, 2019: 12–13). Such an understanding of what and who makes the city reflects the two complementary perspectives to space-making – *social production* and *social construction* – developed by urban anthropologist Setha Low (1996). The first focuses on the architectonic, technological, ideological, and economic mechanisms – factors imposed “from above” – that lead to the production of the built environment. The second is directed to the lived and symbolic dimensions of public space, highlighting how spaces are constructed “from below” at the intersection of various human imaginaries, memories, narratives, practices, and social interactions (ibid.). According to this twofold approach to public space, all the different actors in urban life co-create public space and thus bear some responsibility for it; however, their voices are not equally influential in the decision-making processes.

We address responsibility as the transformative phenomenon that emerges at the interstices of private and public, institutional and experiential, local and global, abstract and concrete; it is entangled in the (a)symmetrical power relations that shape the (in)visibility of urban places and their relationship to identity-forming processes. In articulating the link between responsibility and identity, we have been inspired by Doreen Massey’s concept of *geographies of responsibility*, which highlights the political positions not directed solely from one center, and relationships inscribed in urban spaces that extend far beyond concrete locations (Massey, 2007). Geographies of responsibility are also expanded to include the temporal dimension, extending these relations geographically and historically. Responsibility opens the questions of political processes, social engagement, questions of exclusion, and belonging to urban spaces, but also of participating in the creation of urban centers in transformation. The concept emphasizes the plurality of positionalities, i.e., tackles “a politics of place which does not deprive of meaning those lines of connections, relations, and practices, that construct place” (Massey, 2007: 9).

Responsibility also stems from the claims of “the right to the city” made in both the academic and activist spheres. They demand that citizens reclaim the city, seen primarily as a commodity, and participate in rebuilding a collective urban life (Lefebvre, 1968; Mitchell, 2003). Such tendencies trigger public debates, social actions, and movements in contemporary Croatia. In the last decade, there have been several protests in major Croatian cities against the privatization, restructuring, and renaming of public spaces. The dimensions of responsibility concerning urban public space also raise intriguing and analytically relevant points: What makes a public space public? How do different agents shape and activate urban space? What kind of interventions and behaviors are allowed in public areas, who gets to decide it, and in what ways? Are there limits to the public, open and inclusive character of public space, and for whom?

We raised these core questions to discuss the dynamic interrelationships between public space, cultural practices, and responsibility. Our research is based on two ethnographic

case studies conducted in two Croatian cities: Zagreb and Zadar.¹ The common feature of these cases is that both public spaces we analyze are being reconfigured and transformed to such an extent that they are considered *new* within the urban grid. By observing the two cases, we gain insight into what it takes to change an outdoor location within the existing urban configuration to appear and function as a new public place. We examine urbanistic and architectural interventions in such redesigned areas and how they reflect the broader economic, political, and social issues that led to their creation. However, we also emphasize the specific performances and practices of those who use urban space. We are interested in how these emerging *new* spaces acquire memory and significance for their users and how a new urban topography is formulated and brought to life.

The two cities and two public spaces within the cities selected for our comparative analysis differ in many aspects. The dominant representation of Zagreb, as the country's largest city and capital, focuses on its centrality in the governmental and institutional sense, its status as a business and culture hub that, due to its history and continental position, reaches out for Central-European identity strategies. Our research in Zagreb focuses on the European Square, a newly constructed and centrally positioned square-in-becoming (cf. Gulin Zrnić, Škrbić Alempijević, 2019: 230, 358). This public space functioned as an intersection of three streets until recently. In 2013 it was restructured as a *square*: the street juncture was remodeled into a semi-pedestrian area, a business center location, and the headquarters of various cultural and political organizations, such as the European Commission Representation in Croatia. The space was also turned into a scene of multiple public events that brand the square, the city, and the country as a whole as "European," "cosmopolitan," and "open." The transformation of this space and redefinition of practices raises the issue of responsibility on different levels. It is related to the social production of the European Square, i.e., the physical restructuring of space, filling it with adequate materiality, objects, institutions, branding strategies, etc. However, it is equally oriented to its social construction by focusing on different ways a *new* square is filled with meanings, experiences, and performances by reinventing it as a public space.

On the other hand, the representation of Zadar is based on more than two thousand years of history, which, together with the positive connotations of the Mediterranean, is often used in tourism strategies and identity-building processes at the regional and national levels. The second case study focused on the Sea Organs, an architectural object on the Zadar promenade, considered Zadar's new, re-branded symbol. Until 2005, the space occupied by the Sea Organs was treated only marginally in tourism promotion as an area located mainly on the outskirts of town, serving as a swimming site for locals living nearby. However, thanks to the installations of architect Nikola Bašić – the Sea Organ and the

¹ The research in Zagreb was carried out by Nevena Škrbić Alempijević, while Tomislav Oroz led the research in Zadar. The research in Zagreb was conducted as part of the project *City-making: Space, Culture and Identity*, funded by the Croatian Science Foundation. The comparative analysis and interpretation are the result of a joint effort of the two authors.

Greeting to the Sun – the seafront has turned into the busiest tourist destination in the old town of Zadar. The music produced by the sea waves and the light show of the Greeting to the Sun are a point of attraction for numerous visitors. Such changes raise questions about socially responsible architecture, the relationship between the city's historical heritage and its current needs, the issues of touristification and commodification, and “proper” and “responsible” ways of using the public space.

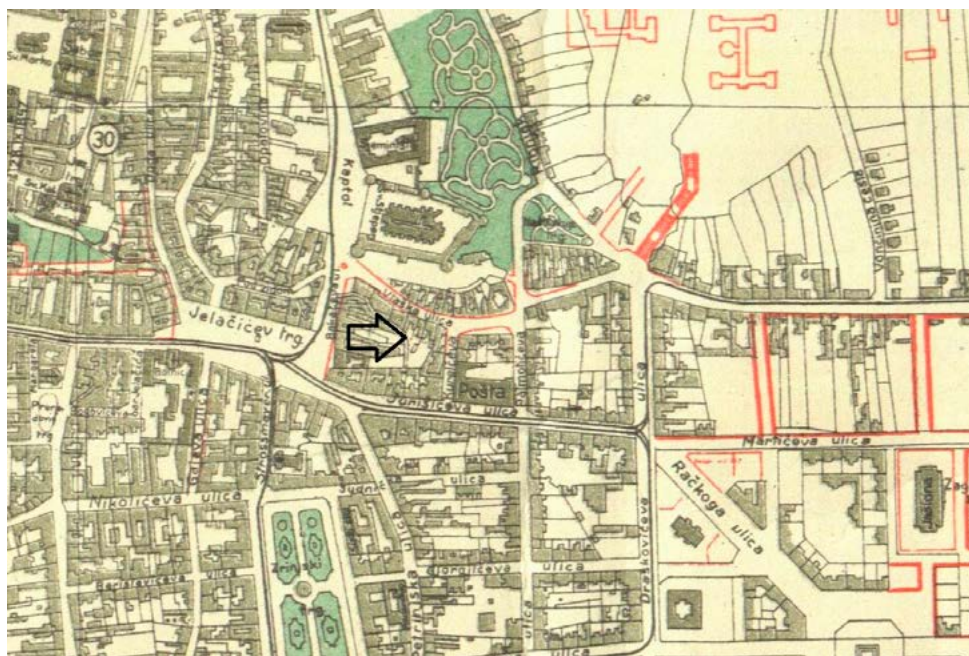
Methodologically, our ethnographic research conducted over the past four years is based on qualitative approaches and is designed as a combination of top-down and bottom-up approaches. It involves the analysis of institutional spatial redefinitions “from above” on the one hand and the multiple uses, experiences, affects, and meanings attached to space “from below” on the other. The research was based on interviews with diverse city-makers: municipal officials, representatives of tourist boards, representatives of national and European institutions, organizations and non-governmental organizations, conservation experts, architects, urban planners, art historians and artists, event managers, numerous city residents, and city visitors. It also included participant observation of performances organized on the European Square in Zagreb and on the promenade in Zadar.

We focused on public events and performances, perceived as mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion from the public sphere and as arenas where different understandings of responsibility are promoted and negotiated. To explore the (re)making of public spaces – viewed as the “crucibles of the expression, resistance, and constant formation and re-formation of the social order of the city and the state” (Kapferer, 2007: 69) – means examining the relationship between public and private spheres and sets of values, what is profitable and symbolically alive, materially present and affectively expressed, as well as all the other factors and actors that form a complex web of concrete human practices in urban places.

BECOMING EUROPEAN: SQUARE-MAKING IN ZAGREB²

What levels and modes of responsibility are triggered in strengthening and constructing a European identity for Croatian citizens and cities on the occasion of the country's accession to the European Union? How are those changes reflected in urban public spaces that are redefined and put into practice along the lines of Europeanness? What is the role of public events in remaking space, and what responsibilities do their organizers face when reimagining the European topography there? Those are the core questions we address while analyzing the production of a new square in Zagreb – nowadays named the European Square – whose development is inextricably intertwined with how the notion of Europe is perceived and filled with meanings in 21st-century Croatia.

² The topic of space-making that reconfigures the European Square has been thoroughly discussed in the book *Grad kao susret: Etnografije zagrebačkih trgova* (A City as an Encounter: the Ethnography of Zagreb Squares), published in the Croatian language (Gulin Zrnić, Škrbić Alempijević, 2019: 230–358).



The crossroad was restructured into the European Square on the master plan of the Zagreb center from 1923 (Regulatory basis of Zagreb; documentation of the University of Zagreb, Faculty of Architecture).



The construction of *Ban centar*, Zagreb, July 2011 (Portal of the Croatian Cultural Council).

Our first case study is thus related to a newly constructed square in Croatia's capital, which is only 230 m distant from Zagreb's main Count Josip Jelačić Square towards the northeast and directly connected to it. Legislatively, the space functioned as the intersection of three streets – Vlaška, Cesarčeva, and Kurelčeva Streets – and not as a square until 2017. The three streets have formed part of the original urban grid of Zagreb Lower Town, whose historical core was defined in the 19th century (cf. Knežević, 2006).

The square's northern side is still defined by two-story architecture from the early 19th century, protected and safeguarded by the national conservation trust as a part of the city's historic zone (Kahle, 2004: 207). The location functioned as a mixed residential and commercial area, with small shops of craftsmen and merchants on the ground level. The site of this crossroads at the southern entrance to the seat of the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Zagreb provided the place with centrality and frequency throughout its history. Nevertheless, the junction was rarely used as a place of gathering. The streets were used primarily as passageways toward the main square, Zagreb Cathedral, and the city's biggest open-air market, the Dolac. What characterized the space dynamics is passing by, walking up and down these streets. The space functioned as a getaway to specific locations and rarely as a destination for people's movements. Such spatial tactics proved vital in restructuring that urban zone and affected the organization of open-air public events. Another common practice that intensified in the second half of the 20th century was driving through and parking in that location; the streets functioned as important traffic lines to reach the strict city center, supply the market with goods, etc. Judging by the narratives of our interviewees, during socialism, the space was treated as a crowded parking lot, experienced as a temporary and unavoidable stopover before entering the city proper.

The space experienced a significant redefinition and a new traffic regulation in 2013, in the frame of the so-called small-scale communal action coordinated by the municipality. Today, the location where the three streets meet forms a small semi-pedestrian zone with newly planted trees, specially designed benches, and street lights. The critical marker in its transformation is the construction of the business building *Ban centar*.

This edifice, built according to a 2007 project, is a combination of private and public investment, erected at the previous location of an open parking lot. The building comprises luxury apartments and business spaces. The area in front of the building was redesigned only after the building opened. For this reason, many of our interviewees see the transformation of the open public space in front of the building as the renovation of the Ban centar courtyard. In their narratives, the public space is being restructured only to make those who can afford to live or have an office there feel comfortable and at home. When marketing the building and the surrounding space, the investors foreground the city's European identity. A quote from the investors' website states it is "accommodation of the highest international standards in the heart of a dynamic European city."³

³ <http://www.ban-centar.hr/projekt#> (July 2017).



Passersby on the European Square, January 2016 (photo by Nevena Škrbić Alempijević).

One of the reasons for emphasizing the European dimension of the space is that the building houses, among others, the European Commission Representation in Croatia and the European Parliament Information Office. That factor leads to a specific visual identity of the space. European Union and Croatian flags are constantly hoisted in the square, and posters and billboards fill the space with EU slogans like “united in diversity,” “peace, democracy, solidarity,” etc. At certain public events organized in front of the offices of the Commission Representation, the flags of other European countries are also hoisted in the square. Such I The high-level EU institutions’ location also influences the square’s social dynamics. For instance, people planning a more extended stay in another EU country, especially those interested in education and training abroad, go there to find information about the programs. In their narratives and practices, the building and the space in front of it function as the *House of Europe*, a point where one enters and becomes aware of a broader European context. In other cases, the building is perceived as the *Fort of Europe*, to which some groups and individuals attach the attribute of coldness and ignorance of the European administration. That becomes evident during protests and gatherings organized on this square, which question specific EU policies and send messages to EU leaders. This was especially the case in 2015, during the period referred to in media discourse as the European migrant crisis, when numerous groups of activists organized public events in front of the EU institutions in Zagreb to demand migrants’ rights and plead for the safe passage of refugees to Europe.

The square got its recognizable look with the installation of the “EU Star,” defined by its author as “a mark” of Croatia’s 2013 accession to the European Union. The square and the monument were designed by the renowned Croatian architect Branko Siladin, a member

of the team that renovated Zagreb's main square in 1987. On the day Croatia became a member of the EU, it was opened to the public in its new shape. It reflects the efforts of the city and the whole country to renegotiate its post-socialist identity and build its imagery on the European legacy. This is also true for the protected 19th-century architectural heritage, which is nowadays described as proof of the city's belonging to Central Europe rather than the Balkans. The same goes for the futuristic form of Ban centar, which is advertised as a striving European present and future togetherness. The square-making does not go without controversies as it was renovated without standard contract award procedures. Many urban planning and design professionals, NGOs, and activist groups raise the question about responsibility and transparency in remaking the site and appeal that the voices of citizens and experts should have been heard in the process. Many critiques are directed toward the monument, and people often describe it as a pedestal for a proper memorial rather than a monument itself. Therefore, it becomes a platform for specific interventions that turn the cube into a pedestal of another artwork, dice, or a surface on which the citizens are invited to stick their comments on the square and urban policies.

Diverse social agents, especially event organizers, treated this space as a *square* and called it informally European Square, even though it was still officially defined as a street intersection.⁴ In March 2017, the municipality decided to follow the trend and declared it a square, more concretely, European Square. The City Council decided to "name the square in the memory of the lawful admission of the Republic of Croatia as the 28th member of the European Union" (Odbor za imenovanje naselja, ulica i trgova, 2027). On the 60th anniversary of the signing of the Treaty of Rome, which is celebrated as the birthday of the European Union, the Mayor of Zagreb, Milan Bandić, in the presence of ambassadors and other representatives of EU countries, placed the new plaque on the square. It should mark the geographical and political affiliation but also intertwine the image of the Croatian capital with the idea and ideal of Europe.

Although the space has undergone significant restructuring and renaming, many of our interview partners, mainly the citizens of Zagreb, have stressed that it still does not quite meet the criteria that define the square. For them, the location is a "square in the making." It is a part of the route of numerous passers-by, city residents, and tourists, many of whom head for the city center via the newly established stop for tourist busses near European Square. Although the square now offers places to sit and take a break, meet and circle on the plateau, it is still used primarily as a transitory point towards another location. Besides emphasizing the European identity of the city and the Croatian state, the city authorities and policymakers, the national and EU institutions, and the Tourist board want to turn the square into an attractive place to stop and meet and not just pass by. They call for diverse public events in this space, from car shows to poetry evenings.

⁴ Even Google Maps had marked this place as European Square before it was declared a square by the city administration.



“EU Star” on the European Square, Zagreb, July 2018 (photo by Vesna Uglješić).

Their organizers use the European dimension of the square as a branding strategy. We will point to three different types of performances to outline the relationship between space-making and responsibility issues: public events organized by the European Commission Representation; manifestations organized by the Zagreb Tourist Board; and finally, the performances centered around artistic interventions that question and contest the dominant narrative produced in this public space.

“European,” “cosmopolitan,” “open,” and “urban” are the keywords used to describe the European Square, and the events are intended as a means to highlight these components. In this sense, they act as tools contributing to the formation of “European heritage and European belonging” (cf. Horolets, 2003; Bouchard, 2016: 25–31). This tendency is particularly evident in the events organized by the European Commission Representation in Croatia. One of the reasons they chose the European Square as the venue for their events was mainly logistical because it was easiest for them to place their activities in front of their offices. As the representative of this institution explained, they consider the square an external extension of their workplace, a carefully redesigned and representative platform where they exhibit their work. Their goal is to recreate the space through public events that reflect the agenda of the European Commission. They organize public events on the square, from cultural manifestations, celebrations of significant anniversaries, fairs, workshops, and concerts, to parades and sporting events. The cultural manifestation that is the focus of their attention is the celebration of Europe Day on May 9, the anniversary of the Schuman Declaration from 1950. In the frame of this event, the square becomes an

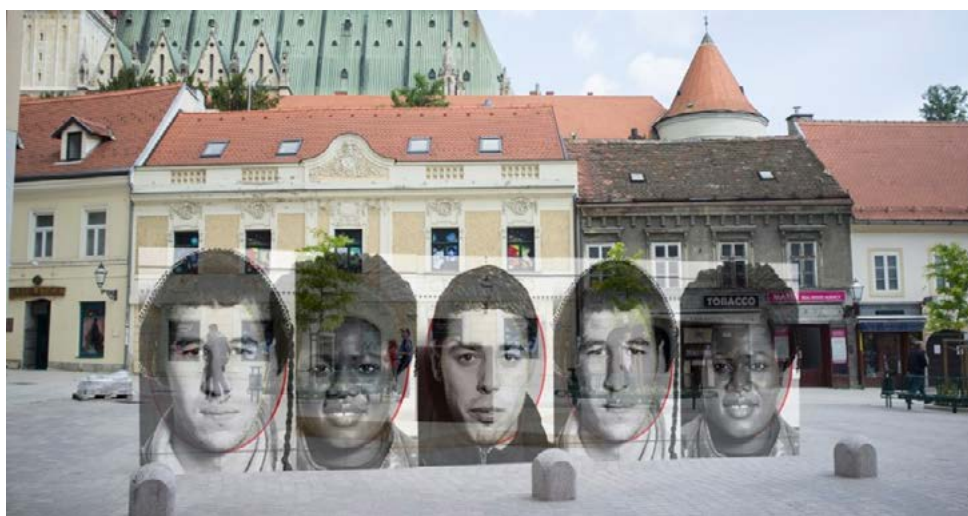
arena where the European heritage is constructed and displayed. It is filled with booths representing each EU member country, where visitors can get information about mobility programs, the country's cultural offer, and tourist destinations. Although each country presenter has their time slot on the central stage, the constant presence of all country representatives in the background of their program brings European togetherness to life. The event thus functions as a context in which the organizers materialize the slogan "Unity in Diversity" through a selection of traditional and contemporary cultural elements ("Tasting Europe" being one of the common strategies). Other motifs and types of performances they highlight include music (both classical and contemporary), popular games, arts, crafts, folklore (especially folk costumes and dances), etc. Through such public events, the imagery of Europe and the symbols of Croatia's belonging to the EU are embedded and embodied in the newly constructed European Square.

The second institution that uses the square as a venue for public events is the Zagreb Tourist Board. When designing events, the Tourist Board also uses the European dimension of the square as a source of inspiration and a brand strategy. As their representative has explained, they use the fact that the European element has already been emphasized in the space to give the public events a unique touch compared to other manifestations organized in Zagreb. The *Advent in Zagreb* is the event that has the most significant reach in this regard; it is a manifestation that begins four weeks before Christmas and lasts until the first half of January. Thanks to this event, Zagreb has been awarded the best Christmas destination in Europe for several years. This has attracted thousands of tourists to the Croatian capital, but locals are just as interested in participating in the event. Advent includes a variety of programs: street performances, artistic interventions, concerts, workshops and presentations, Christmas fair, walking tours, etc. It is held a whole day until late evening in several locations in the city center, one of them being the European Square. Each of these scenes offers a different story of Advent and addresses a diverse audience. The organizers of the event in the square, employees of Svibanj projekt company, focus on the younger generation, on "young urban people," on those who, as they stated, "think globally, who feel at home in the world." The European dimension is again very pronounced. Music programs are performed by bands and DJs from different European countries with free admission. Embassies and culture centers from EU countries are invited to present their Christmas traditions on stage.

European Square again shows itself as European and cosmopolitan during the Advent performances. Thanks to promotional strategies and activities of the Tourist Board, the square is full of visitors and has turned into an event venue (cf. Smith, 2016). The event makes people stay in the square for a while, thus changing their spatial tactics and the dynamics of the square. On the other hand, Advent raises debates about the quality of life in the city center turned into a tourism destination, the abuse of protected natural and cultural areas, and the like. This time, the issue of responsibility is directed to those who should control touristification trends and public property privatization.



Europe Day on the European Square, May 2017 (photo by Iva Grubiša).



The sketch of the non-realized intervention *Holy People* on the European Square, Zagreb, 2014 (Davor Konjikušić's photo collection).

The question of which symbols of identity, memories, and practices should be associated with European Square is not without controversy. Some public events organized on the square point to the debates and media discussions that have accompanied the remodeling of the square and criticize its new design. They also look at the idea of Europe created in this place from a different angle. This is the case with the UrbanFestival, an event organized by a platform of local and international artists and cultural workers. It includes performances, a series of interventions in public spaces, and a workshop program. The entire 2013 edition

of the UrbanFestival was dedicated to European Square in response to the construction work that took place that year (Hanaček, Kutleša, 2015). During the event, organizers and performers introduced elements that do not usually belong in the square to change the everyday routines and make people think about what and who is allowed to be in the square. Some performers brought pebbles to recreate more natural surroundings; others placed chairs on the square and opened discussion groups where everyone could participate. As the initiator of the whole platform explained, their goal was to make people “stop, think and act” to make the issue of public space a point of general discussion. The intervention that attracted the most attention in the media was the one that did not take place at all, although it was planned as one of the temporary spatial interventions of the UrbanFestival.

One of the artists, Davor Konjikušić, wanted to exhibit the photographed faces of asylum seekers on the European Square in front of the European Commission Representation building because he felt that migrants’ issues belonged there. He used the biometric photo pattern but allowed facial expressions to reveal their personalities. However, the city administration refused to issue permission for this installation, stating that “the space is reserved for other types of city events” (Konjikušić, 2015: 49). In this way, the festival organizers’ attempt to make the immigrants and asylum seekers symbolically present in the centrally located public space failed. The case of the UrbanFestival raises the question of the limits of the square as a public good, of inclusion and exclusion from the public sphere.

SEA ORGANS AND GREETING TO THE SUN ALONG THE MEDITERRANEAN PROMENADE

The second part of our comparative research discusses the challenges of public space in its post-socialist context by examining new architectural inventions that have reshaped the historical core of the Dalmatian town of Zadar. The millennial old urban setting of Zadar makes questions of responsibility particularly intriguing and relevant to cultural analysis. When addressing the concept of responsibility in the case of Zadar, one goes beyond mere urbanistic reinventions or challenges in (re)defining the generic idea of responsibility. From the ethnographic perspective, when one deals with the concept of responsibility as a relational phenomenon, political, social, and cultural issues arise that are relevant to understanding the multi-layered fabric of urban life. Moreover, the understanding of responsibility, to whom it is addressed, and how it correlates with the practice of everyday life seems even more puzzling when confronted with the effects of mass tourism. Therefore, to re-think urbanity and responsibility, one needs to be aware of how the debate about responsibility is culturally organized (Appadurai, 1981: 212).

The questions of communal and economic sustainability of the spatially limited urban nucleus of Zadar, the anxiety stirred by the loss of the specific urban way of life, the one that is associated with immediacy and familiarity among a rapidly decreasing number of

residents, longing for the time before the mass tourism, pose essential questions in the bottom-up understanding of what makes ‘publicness’ of the public urban space of Zadar. On the other hand, local political strategies for tourism development promote the idea of belonging to the Mediterranean when it comes to the public urban space of Zadar. The Mediterranean, popularly associated with the conviviality and easy-going lifestyle usually attributed to the people of the Mediterranean, represents the benchmark in tourism marketing strategies. In such complex circumstances, urban public spaces become “crucially important in understanding the social, political, and cultural forces engaged in the creation and change of the orders governing contemporary social life” (Kapferer, 2007: 69). Therefore, the imagination of places like Zadar is being constituted at the “criss-crossings in the wider power-geometries which constitutes themselves and ‘the global’” (Massey, 2007: 11). The situation in which the local urban culture is overwhelmed by the tourists eager to partake in local urban life makes the question of responsibility and accessibility of public space in Zadar highly challenging and troublesome.

Statistics show that in recent years the process of gentrification combined with the *laissez-faire* philosophy of the booming market of online rental services has led to the depopulation of the historic center of Zadar. Today, Zadar figures as desirable scenography for tourists looking to *hashtag* their experiences quickly. In the age of global mobility and cheap flights, social media, and tourist ‘discoveries’ of all kinds, the usual portrayal of Zadar, which until recently was based on historical landmarks such as the 9th century Church of St. Donat, has been overshadowed by ‘viral’ explosion of photos, videos, and references of the Sea Organs in general. Zadar Sea Organs, an architectural acoustic installation accompanied by the nearby light installation The Greeting to the Sun, is one of the most prominent examples of how new urban spaces-in-becoming alter the ordinary daily rhythm of town and change towns’ representation.

We sought to understand the relationship between historical heritage and contemporary urban installations and how and by whom they are used. Our ethnographic approach to understanding the dynamic changes that the post-socialist Adriatic town has undergone was inspired by several questions that are becoming increasingly evident in public discourse. These questions concern the concept of public space and the problems of responsibility and sustainability; they are raised by the increasing number of tourists and the need to preserve the historical heritage and the way of life that was emblematic of Zadar. The answers to these questions can hardly be agreed upon or solved, but the way the questions are raised shows they are also relevant for cultural analysis. At the core of this growing number of questions is the issue of urban and public spaces, i.e., of their publicness (for whom, to which extent, and who gets excluded); at the same time, the rapid popularity of the Sea Organ and Greeting to the Sun triggers their articulation.

To understand the entanglements that the installation of Sea Organs and Greeting to the Sun trigger in public discourse, it is essential to reflect on the history of Zadar Promenade and how the residents perceive the town. Although Zadar was established in

ancient times, it underwent a radical urban transformation in the second half of the 19th century. The current shape of the promenade along the western part of Zadar's historic nucleus resulted from the thorough urban transformation that began in the second half of the 19th century and continued in the 20th century. The first step in this urbanistic facelift began in 1874, when medieval city walls facing the islands of Ugljan and Pašman were demolished, following similar urbanistic tendencies observed in other European cities of the time (Petricioli, 1958: 70). By the end of the 19th century, the Austro-Hungarian central government coordinated major urban renovations along the coastline and initiated the construction of residential and public buildings, mainly in the neoclassical architectural style. This 'opening' of the medieval town to the water and neighboring islands (Zanki, 2013: [s.p.]) was reflected not only in the visual identity and urban structure of Zadar but also in the way the residents of the historical center used it. Familiar scenes of squares within city walls, crowded by pedestrians depicted on postcards and photographs, were replaced by the scenes with which most modern tourists can identify. The newly formed promenade, or *Riva*⁵ as residents call it, became a marker of the new urban identity, a place to stroll and socialize with the seasonal rhythm. Kalelarga⁶ Street, located near the ruins of the ancient Roman forum, was active in winter, thus keeping pedestrians away from the waves and cold winds from the sea. Riva became a hotspot in summer when strollers enjoyed a cool breeze. This seasonal dynamic of Zadar became a marker of the town's identity, pointing to the ambivalence and fragmented rhythm of the urban experience. The crowded squares in the historic center and narrow streets contrasted with the vast, open horizon that extended from the newly created waterfront. In the following century, Zadar continued to dwell on this seasonal ambivalence, that over time became a hallmark of urban identity.

The reshaping of Zadar's urban space continued during the turbulent 20th century. One of the most dramatic events that changed the cityscape occurred in 1944 when the town was destroyed in a bombing raid, and more than 70% of the buildings were in ruins or completely demolished. In the 1950s, Zadar became a construction site; architects such as Božidar Rašica and Neven Šegvić were given the opportunity to redefine the sensitive urban structure of Zadar, including the promenade. After the disintegration of Yugoslavia in the 1990s, Zadar was again exposed to destruction. This "constant change as a typical leitmotif of the urban context of Zadar" (cf. Jukić, Vukić, 2015: 316) was accompanied by political, demographic, class, economic, social, and cultural transformations. Therefore, rather than preserving historic sites, destruction often enabled reconstruction and transformation of old urban structures for new functions and needs. However, this challenging task of adapting new urban projects to historically significant sites (such as the remains

⁵ *Riva*, Italian word meaning coast. The word *riva* is used in microtoponymy of coastal areas, usually to describe a coastal urban promenade.

⁶ From the Italian *kala*, street, and *larga* wide, meaning "a wide street." Kalelarga in Zadar is the main street in the historical center, in the same direction as the *decumanus maximus* from ancient times.



Guided tourist group on the Sea Organs, Zadar, September 2022 (photo by Tomislav Oroz).



Strollers and tourists on the Sea Organs, Zadar, September 2022 (photo by Tomislav Oroz).

of the Roman Forum or the medieval church of St. Donatus) was not problematic in the case of Zadar. The interweaving of “old” and “new” was a characteristic symbol of the (re)building of Zadar. This dynamic relationship simultaneously led to a need for transformations, as well as conservation and safeguarding. Archeological stone remains from the Roman period were often used in the building of medieval churches, including the church of the towns’ patron St. Donatus. Something similar happened when the medieval walls were demolished after WWI, making possible what architect Nikola Bašić refers to as a “marvelous and spontaneous mosaic structure” (Bašić, 2011: 21) characteristic of Zadar’s architectural heritage.

In 2005, one of the most intensive interventions in the urban space of Zadar was the interpolation of Sea Organs and Greeting to the Sun light installation in the north-western part of the promenade. The author of these contemporary urban art installations was architect Nikola Bašić, who identified this specific part of the Riva as static and marginal, a kind of “grey area” making the “paradox of the periphery in the city center” (Mattioni, 2011: 6). Bašić wanted to create a kind of “spatial dramatization”⁷ that opposes this “claustrophobically blocked” (Vukić, 2011: 12) and “inanimate and neglected space” (Mattioni, 2011: 6). To avoid the “tiring character of Riva and its monotonous linearity,”⁸ Sea Organs were installed. They consist of white marble stairs that gradually slope down to the sea and tubes placed beneath the stairs. In combination with waves, water, and air, the tubes produce sounds as a “fourth dimension of space,” making Sea Organs a “music scale, materialized in space” (Zanki, 2013: [s.p.]).

According to Nikola Bašić, the idea was to provoke an interaction with urban space that would allow meditative and spontaneous social rituals to come into play with the surrounding urban and natural environment. The “Urban spirituality”⁹ that Bašić stimulated by the sound of the Sea Organs, where one could get in touch with nature, created a place of encounter and conviviality for locals and tourists. This phenomenon was amplified in 2008 when the nearby light installation Greeting to the Sun accompanied the Sun Sea Organs. The decades-old Alfred Hitchcock’s reference to the sunset in Zadar as the most beautiful in the world inspired Bašić, who envisioned a light installation that mimicked the solar system. The central object, 22 meters in diameter, consists of glass panels that absorb sun rays and convert them into electricity. At night, the energy is used to put a light show along with smaller circular panels in the shape of solar system planets. Unlike the Sea Organs, which, according to Bašić, inspire meditation and promote social interaction on the Riva as a typically Mediterranean gathering place, the Greeting to the Sun light installation was intended to trigger spontaneous and ludic behavior, “bringing you into

⁷ Based on the interview with Nikola Bašić in 2009. The copy of the transcript of the interview is available in the archive of the Department of Ethnology and Anthropology, University of Zadar.

⁸ Interview with Nikola Bašić in 2009. See previous footnote.

⁹ Interview with Nikola Bašić in 2009. See footnote 7.



Night air photo of the Greeting to the Sun light installation with the Sea Organs, Zadar (photo by Stipe Surać; Bašić Stelutti, Mattioni, 2011: 94).

an immaterial environment, with a sensation of swimming on the soil moving under your feet” (Bašić, 2011: 32). According to Bašić, the notion of play, central to the Mediterranean, comes to the forefront for people in the setting of Greeting to the Sun. “I wanted to affirm the phenomenon of play as an incitement for social communication, an initiative for urban culture, and a stimulus for a kind of urban hedonism” (ibid.).

The Sea Organs and the Greeting to the Sun soon became symbols of Zadar, even though at the time of their construction no one could have imagined that these new symbols, which were being built in the historical center, could eclipse the then landmark of Zadar – the Church of St. Donatus. As soon as tourists began to visit Zadar for the Sea Organs and the Greeting to the Sun, the economic aspect became obvious and justified the architectural intervention as part of the re-making of the town. Critics from a wide range of disciplines grappled with Bašić’s urban installation – from accusations of being kitschy and unoriginal (cf. Mlikota, 2008/2009: 307–308) to those who enthusiastically recognized it as part of Zadar’s urban identity, on par with monuments of historical significance (Mattioni, 2011: 7). Nevertheless, the official acknowledgment came in 2006, when Nikola Bašić was awarded the European prize for the design of public urban spaces (*Premio Europeo del Espacio Público Urbano* awarded by Barcelona Center for Contemporary Culture). In 2008 he participated in the Venice Biennale (ibid.).

But beyond the more or less official production of space imagined and institutionally distributed from the top of the social hierarchy, the question remains whether these ideas are rooted in practice. To what extent do specific cultural practices of locals and tourists correlate or circumvent the intentions of architects, urban planners, city administration, or notable trends in tourism? Does the Sea Organs with The Greeting to the Sun function as a public space open to locals and tourists or as a zone of separation? Is the overcrowded Riva with Sea Organs and The Greeting to the Sun a place where local and global come into interplay or a generator of new centers of sociality relieved of overcrowded tourist buzz? Is the process of city re-making only a one-way process, or is it an open-ended activity that allows different social agents to participate in the creation of meanings?

In the case of both urban installations, one cannot answer these questions without considering the importance of the historical context and the transformative character of Riva. However, suppose one grasps the space as a blank canvas, a mere scenography with people as passive consumers – in that case, there is a risk that the framework for cultural analysis becomes oversimplified and theoretically superficial. Arjun Appadurai's warning that history produces geographies where imagination is a fundamental human activity shows us that locality, even at the city scale, is the result of social agency (Appadurai, 2010: 9). Despite the differing perception of the Sea Organs or the Greeting to the Sun, their integration into the ambivalent and dynamic social urban space of Zadar shows that they affect those who engage with them. The seductive acoustic spectacle stirred by Sea Organs opens this part of Riva to diverse social actors and triggers spatial experiences beyond the usual architectural intentions of the urban space. Relations established between social actors and the spatial and acoustic environment contribute to the making of the urban space of Zadar. According to Abigail Wood, these visual and auditory elements “participate in a broader sensory, aesthetic, and political realm that extends beyond their immediate spatial boundaries, reiterating the importance and presence of the full sensorium in the urban experience” (Wood, 2013: 293). Whether this part of Riva functions as a playground or resting place for travelers who want to take a photo or enter a meditative state or as a good swimming spot for locals living nearby, this urban space in-making stirs emotions and initiates practices in an unstructured way.¹⁰ Despite the safe distancing of locals still cautious about their ‘rightful’ place in the urban fabric of Zadar, the transformation from “periphery in the city center” (Mattioni, 2011: 6) to a vibrant and potent urban hotspot is not only the result of institutionally orchestrated re-making of urban space. Daily rituals and practices defy its monumentality and various attempts to define it in a structured

¹⁰ The scenes of tourists meditatively enjoying their spare of Mediterranean sun on the steps of the Sea Organ or enjoying light performance after sunset sparked the buzz of secularization of this urban space. Even the archbishop anticipated this trend when he noted the absence of a Christian heritage in the complex. As Josip Zanki points out, the religious and ritual aspect of enjoying Sea Organs show that this place was emancipated from the strict social norms and ideological guidelines (Zanki, 2013: [s.p.]).

way. An attempt to resist the notion of ‘public’ appeared in 2008 when the city council passed the law prohibiting swimming in Sea Organs. Both installations were defined as an “architectural unit,” and even renowned architects like Branko Silađin described them as “important urban monuments to life on the Adriatic” (Silađin, 2011: 44). For people living near Sea Organs, the perception and usage of the space were very much conditioned by their daily routines and swimming breaks, despite the occasional discussions for the formal ban. Although the decision is still valid and those who swim near Sea Organs could be punished with high fines, the decision is being ignored, allowing residents to use the public space as before. In recent years, the high cost of maintaining the glass panels, which must be replaced from time to time, has often been an argument for charging visitors for admission. However, the implications of this kind of musealization and justification of public space, which was snatched away from everyday life, were often at odds with daily use, with the intentions of architect Bašić,¹¹ and with the general understanding of what the “public” stands for. Therefore, the collision between the bottom-up practices and top-down strategies shows that these processes, even though formally in opposition, function as mutually interrelated as they charge the public discussion of what makes urban public space while positioning it “at the centre of dialectic tension” (Mela, 2014: 6).

Weddings that take place on Sea Organs, urban rituals such as high school students jumping into the sea after graduation, or the recently invented traditions of throwing panties into the sea beneath Sea Organs (instead of coins) (cf. Bašić Stelluti, Mattioni 2011: 103), not only point out to diverse practices that often defy official intentions of local authorities, but also show that Sea Organ and Greeting to the Sun function as *topoi* of urban identity. According to sociological research presented in the book *The Zadar Riva as an Urban Space*, Riva figures not only as “the most important spot of urbanity” but also as a “fundamental generator of urban identity” (Tomić-Koludrović et al., 2014: 9). The results of the study show that Riva is one of the most important places in the city center, and its ambivalence is demonstrated by the fact that it serves as an escape from the urban bustle and as “an important generator of sense of community” (ibid.: 89). Riva’s attractiveness lies in its particular ambient features with the open seafront combined with peace and tranquility. Sea Organs and Greeting to the Sun are considered the most exciting and attractive places on Riva, inviting gathering and socializing (ibid.: 107).

This constant friction between the private and the public, combined with the ambivalent nature of Riva, shows that Sea Organs and Greeting to the Sun represent an interactive public space where different actors (people, nature, urban space) come to participate in the ambient dramatization of the urban fabric of Zadar. Whether one wants to drink beer and watch the sunset, enjoy the sound of the waves, swim, dance, or close one’s eyes, the endless activities that take place in this small space of Zadar redefine the notion of the public

¹¹ According to the interview with Nikola Bašić, the “publicness” of Sea Organs and Greeting to the Sun is particularly relevant in the post-socialist Croatian society marked by transition when, according to Bašić, space like this “belongs to all citizens and as such is a place of capital importance.”

sphere by resisting any attempt to structure the use of urban space. It is also important to remember that the Sea Organs and the Greeting to the Sun, although located on the edge of the historical center, function as central points in contemporary urban topography.¹² Cultural practices instigated by sound and light effects of this urban installation show that the centrality of this seemingly marginal space is being re-negotiated in the process of re-making of urban identity.

CONCLUSION

The two case studies we have dealt with in this text reflect two distinctive types of public spaces: one is a square, and the other is a waterfront. By definition, they differ in their relationship with the landscape, the mechanisms by which urban imagery is inscribed in them, and the behaviors considered proper and expected in their vicinity. However, what they have in common are their representative character, branding potential, and publicness: both are regarded as metonyms of city buzz and urban lifestyles, spots where the cities show their polished and appealing faces both to locals and visitors. The post-socialist context in which these two public spaces function makes questions of responsibility relevant in understanding the notions of their publicness. However, considering the diverse actors included in the production of their publicness, continuous transformation as the dominant motif of our two case studies indicates that city-making processes do not function as a one-way strategy. Both cases show that bottom-up approaches and policies dispersed from the top of the social hierarchy intertwine, overlap, and sometimes oppose each other. The European or Mediterranean character of the two cities, so often evoked in the official representations, shows that their significance does not derive only from declarative naming. Instead, practices and experiences in this, up until recently, marginal pedestrian spaces make their identity and urban profile. Therefore, their urbanity stems not only from the top-down strategies or bottom-up initiatives, nor from their aesthetics or urban settings, but rather from the interplay which reflects the dialectics between the individual and collective social actors that make places inclusive or exclusive (Mela, 2014: 7).

In the case of the European Square, a busy downtown crossroads has been transformed into a square. However, it gains its character of the square only when people use it as a space for gathering, socializing, and participating in a public event, not just for passing by. The

¹² Administratively, Zadar also consists of various islands one can see from the Sea Organs. Although physically separated from the historical center, administratively they function as part of the urban space. Apart from the island of Ugljan and to some extent the island of Pašman, whose residents participate in urban life daily (jobs on the mainland), islands such as Molat, Olib, Silba, Sestrunj, and others function administratively as part of the town. Therefore, the marginal position of the Sea Organs and Greeting to the Sun is only partially truth, while daily practices, on the other hand confirm, their centrality.

square obtained its European etiquette through the location of European institutions, its visual identity, and its naming strategy. But it is only through everyday use and practices aimed at marking and celebrating the European identity of the city and the state that the European dimension of the space is activated, challenged, and given life. The publicness of this square-in-becoming derives from the dense network of social relations triggered by cultural practices instigated by the square's centrality.

Whether it is festivals, protests, tourists visiting the square, everyday activities, or virtual platforms, the square's publicness is constituted through various tactics that oppose, overlap, and correlate with the institutionally desired use of the square. In *Sea Organs and Greeting to the Sun*, the centuries-old urban space of Zadar, with Riva as its cultural and identity feature, was transformed into a conceptually playful and sometimes even ambivalent space. Strolling along the promenade with *Sea Organs* at its end provoked social interaction and collective experience, transforming passive walkers into active creators of meanings. The sense of urban identity awakened by *Sea Organs* and the nearby *Greeting to the Sun* light installation redefined the notion of publicness through constantly renegotiating collective and individual, marginal and central, institutional and practical. Both places we have been talking about, with their distinctive urban characteristics and transformative nature, are presented as ambivalent: as places of inclusion and coming together despite their spatial marginality, but also as public spaces whose publicness is renegotiated between different actors and contexts.

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ODGOVORNOST V JAVNEM PROSTORU: PRENOVA DVEH HRVAŠKIH MEST

V članku so obravnavane transformacije in (zlo)rabe urbanega javnega prostora v sodobni Hrvaški. Avtorja opozarjata na vprašanje odgovornosti, povezano s procesi ustvarjanja mesta, vključno z oblastjo in civilno odgovornostjo, s sodelovanjem meščanov v javnem prostoru in za javni prostor. Vprašanje je, kaj in kdo naredi javni prostor, da je dejansko javen, in kako.

Analiza temeljni na etnografskih raziskavah primerov v Zagrebu in Zadru. Raziskava v Zagrebu je osredinjena na Evropski trg, novo oblikovani in središčni trg v nastajanju. Zadarski primer so Morske orgle, arhitekturni objekt na promenadi, ki je del novega znamenja mesta. Spremembe v teh mestnih krajinah postavljajo vprašanja o družbeno odgovorni arhitekturi, razmerju med zgodovinsko dediščino mesta in njegovimi sodobnimi potrebami, o zadregah s turistično preplavljenostjo in poblagovljenjem, kakor tudi o odgovornih načinih rabe javnega mestnega prostora.

V obeh primerih se je raziskava osredinila na javne dogodke in prakse kot mehanizme vključevanja in izključevanja javnosti in na prostor kot prizorišče, kjer se ponujajo in spoprijemajo različni koncepti odgovornosti. Pokazala je, da se procesi in politike od zgoraj, tj. z vrha družbene hierarhije, prepletajo, prekrivajo in si včasih tudi nasprotujejo. Evropski ali sredozemski značaj mest, na katera tako pogosto opozarjajo uradne predstavitve, kaže, da njun pomen ne izvira le iz deklarativnega poimenovanja – njuno identiteto in urbanost bolj ustvarjajo prakse in izkušnje v teh donedavna obrobni prostorih za pešce.

V primeru Evropskega trga je bilo prometno križišče v središču mesta spremenjeno v trg; ta pa pridobi javni značaj le, ko ga ljudje uporabljajo za zbiranje, druženje, udeležbo na javnih dogodkih ipd. Z Morskimi orglami je bil stoletja star zadarski mestni prostor spremenjen v konceptualno igriv in včasih ambivalenten prostor. Sprehajališče s Pozdravom soncem na robu je spodbudilo živahno družbeno interakcijo in in skupnostno izluščno, turiste je spremenilo v aktivne ustvarjalce pomenov. Občutje mestne identitete, ki so ga zaznamovale Morske orgle, je redefiniralo smisel javnega v procesih nenehnega pogajanja med skupnostnim in individualnim, obrobni in središčni, institucionalnim in praktičnim.

Oba kraja z značilnimi urbanimi potezami in transformativno močjo je mogoče označiti z ambivalenco: kot kraja vključevanja in zbiranja kljub poprejšnji obrobni, a tudi kot javna prostora, katerih javnost se tke med različnimi akterji in konteksti.

Prof. Dr. Nevena Škrbić Alempijević, University of Zagreb, Department of Ethnology and Cultural Anthropology, Zagreb, Croatia, nskrbic@ffzg.hr

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Tomislav Oroz, University of Zadar, Department of Ethnology and Anthropology, Zadar, Croatia, toroz@unizd.hr