Doing and Undoing Gender in Urban Spaces.
The University Square Bucharest[1]

Diana Elena Neaga
Nicolae Titulescu University, Bucharest, Romania

Abstract

Doing and undoing gender is a well-researched theme mainly in the area of feminist studies, but how this process is reflected in different urban spaces still remains understudied, a fortiori in Romania. That is why the Romanian Society for Feminist Analyses AnA is implementing the project „Urban Discriminations. Gender Sensitive Active Citizenship Program". Through its documentation and activism activities, the program will mark women's active presence in the urban space, and will contribute to the identification of potential urban oppressive elements for diverse women by removing physical, functional and symbolic barriers, offering alternative narratives to the dominant ones and arguing for the need to adapt the urban space to the society's contemporary requests of inclusion and respect of difference among people. In this context, in my paper I will present the data collected for a case study, namely University Square – Bucharest, a place with an important symbolic relevance for the recent history of our country. How women's presence (absence), but also the presence of other minorities, can be captured in advertising, graffiti, statues and monuments, streets names or other types of urban manifestations in University Square is the main research question of my study. In order to do so I will first present a theoretical framework for understanding the way which our daily life area of living (the city) can be experienced trough gendered lens, starting from the assumption that sexual & gender differences in the production of urban space analysis is very important in understanding public life, social interaction and the construction of identities. Second, I will present the data collected in order to, last but not least, open a discussion about the reappropriation & reinterpretation of urban spaces in the process of more equitable socio-cultural production.

Key words: gender regime • city • toponymy • social memory

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[1] An early version of this study is forthcoming in *The (non)sexist city,* Laura Grunberg, Diana Elena Neaga (eds.), 2015.

Introduction

The usual, the habitual, the normal are, at first sight, hard to associate with fields (objects) able to stir research interest. They are more likely perceived as an innate of things which is known, familiar and most importantly lived in everyday life practices. And, if you know, what's the point in researching? The paradox consists, just as in the field of study of the mundane (everyday life studies) which is relatively new to the field of social sciences, in giving meaning to something which isn't meaningful (is ordinary), in putting into discussion something which isn't worth discussing (Olson, 2011, 175). The city, as a space in which everyday life interactions are developed, seems to enter the category of the mundane, of the usual. Despite all of this, the city and the urban space are also institutions which generate sets of norms, rules and values which shape the behaviors and expectations of those that come into contact with them. And I can quickly come up with a few personal examples such as the difficulty I had in integrating in the 9th grade into the collective of colleagues which was comprised mostly of townspeople, and the way I struggled for a long time to hide the fact that I'm from the *countryside* or the way in which I'm now teased whenever I go to the countryside about my *Bucharest-isation* – a sort of expectations related to a certain way of behaving, speaking, dressing. More so, we often hear the expression *Bucharest, European capital.* What does this mean? Is it a normative reference towards a series of civilization which we should find in this urban setting, from the often talked about cleanliness, to the road infrastructure, to street safety, to the quality of services, to cultural events which the city hosts? Or perhaps it's a reference to the way in which this space is manifesting restrictively for some categories of people, to yet-to-be-paved roads, to houses that don't have sewerage, to the lack of bike lanes or maybe the fact that it's promoted as a tourist destination with easy access to cheap sex?

Stating the problem

Still, what is the city and what are the research challenges which it sets upon us? Gorsz (1992, 244) proposes the following definition: the city is a complex and interactive network which ties together, often in an unstructured way and ad-hoc a number of social activities, dispersed processes and relations to a number of relations that are real or imaginary, projected, geographic, civic or public. Thus the city connects economic and informational fluxes, power networks, forms of marginalization, of management and

political organization, social family relations, extra-familial and impersonal, models of economic and aesthetic management of the space and place in order to create a semi-permanent and constantly dynamic surrounding.

Therefore, on the one hand the city models our daily existence, it acquires meaning and becomes livable through legends, memories and projections which we have about it (De Certeau, 105), on the other hand our daily life is modeled by the way in which the city is, for some more, for others less, a comfortable setting and, why not, emancipatory, capacitory. As Elizabeth Grosz puts it in her article about the way in which the interaction between body (as biological nature, but also capable of reasoning) and city, "the city is built and rebuilt inside the body, and the body is in its turn transformed, *citified*, urbanized differently, as in the shape of a metropolizing body" (Grosz, 1992, 242). All of these aspects, as well as many others related to the mundane at the intersection with urban representations have constituted throughout time a field of study, and for me this type of research is all the more provoking as they integrate a perspective sensible to gender and other marginal (or marginalized) categories & groups with which the city interacts.

This sort of research has the purpose of outlining a form of metaphorical geography of the city by bringing to light other ways in which daily urban practices are organized and are given meaning (Collie, 2013, 1), and they become that much more valuable if they are used with the purpose of contributing to a more righteous and fair reconstruction of the environment in which people live and which should instead be one of manifestation and valorization of the differences and perhaps one less of segregation, polarization and invisibility as is most often the case. There are in this sense numerous studies which refers to the way in which the city discriminates, marginalizes, excludes certain categories of people and the flow of power which it channels, the management of symbols being in this sense an important resource. Cities have reflected over time the hegemonic (dominant) ideas and values, this process being more likely one that is generated, imposed and doubled as reactions by spontaneous cultural-urban productions. Statues, paintings, temples, palaces, etc. – all of them combined have been used as a justification and reinforcement of holding power and for intimidating adversaries (see Parker, 2014).

The city through gender lens

Thus, the fundamental premise which originates this research is that any ″city is a gender regime that ideologically and concretely manifests a distinctive relationship among its political, economic, and familial systems. This gender regime is patriarchal: it reflects the social relations of power in any given society in which the values and behaviors of men are presumed normative and thus embedded in urban institutions and structures to privilege male control and insure female subordination. This gender regime has also striven to keep women invisible - literally and figuratively, as much as possible—within the city″ (Flanagan, Valiulis, 2011). And if the gender regime is identifiable at a diagnosis level, at a production level ″the city is a gendered space and place where women must struggle to destroy the barriers that have been erected to keep them invisible, to claim their bodies and their bodies' needs as integral parts of the city, and to assert their rightful visibility as urban citizens″ (Flanagan, Valiulis, 2011).

How this urban gender regime can manifest itself I will present in short in the following, with references to various studies made on this subject. One of the clearest manifestations of the gender regime existing in cities is *poverty*. Even if cities are seen more like engines of economic development and as producers of wellbeing, they produce at the same time a large polarization between the rich and poor, and from the poor of the world women are from the category of the most vulnerable. Global preoccupations for the way in which women are affected by poverty in urban environments has come to fruition over time in engagements, resolutions and statements of position of international officials, among which I will remember the Habitat Agenda recognizes the human rights of women, it promotes greater participation of women in public and political life, and encourages capacity building for women and there are also calls to take into account the special needs of women and to value women's knowledge and contribution in planning and managing towns and cities; the Beijing Platform for Action (1995) refers to urbanization while it also recognizes the rise of rural-to-urban migration and its "unequal consequences for women and men and draws attention to the "feminization of poverty"; the Millennium Development Goals can be enhanced through attention to gender and urbanization - special attention is given to the plight of impoverished women in slums, the need to ensure environmental sustainability—also has linkages to gender equality and sustainable urbanization[1].

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[1] For more information about this issue see see http://www.un.org/womenwatch/feature/urban/

Another way in which the city interacts differently with its citizens according to their gender & sex refers to the way we feel as part of it, or to put it differently, to the *comfort or discomfort which is generated by the interaction with the city in our everyday life (the way in which we belong to the city).* Such a mundane gendered practice is for instance walking – to school, to work, home, to a club, etc. "Walking practices are usually gendered, as women's daily walking routine is usually dictated by their household gendered divisions of roles, e.g. taking care of the children, doing the shopping, working in the vicinity to the home. This is usually more explicit for young mothers who walk with baby strollers, and for dog owners, whose daily repetitive practices create their sense of belonging to the environment" (Fenster, 2005, 253) A vision of the city from the perspective of its accessibility and the way in which it is perceived through walking is developed in the *Walking in the city*, by Michel de Certeau, which is more like an essay in which the city is analyzed from the perspective of daily experiences and beyond the urban and architectural planning, for which walking represents a secondary means of locomotion (Certeau, 2011). Therefore the author tries to capture the way in which the city lives, has a life and mostly constructs and deconstructs identities in a carrousel of interactions in which we, as inhabitants of the city, live in a perpetual metamorphosis of contrasts – from spectators to players, from anomy to familiarity, from place & time effectively to toponymy, symbolism and metaphors, from models of collective city administration to subjective, individual meanings.

Urban gender based violence (GBV) is another theme which must be brought into discussion when we look at the city from a gender sensitive perspective. Even if the city is frequently associated with emancipatory and capacitory formulas, this doesn't mean that it is safe from phenomena such as violence. More so, specific formulas of abuse and aggression are developed in the shadow of urban particularities (anonymity, social polarization, apparition of subcultures, ethnic and racial heterogeneity, etc.) and women are especially affected by these phenomena. Moser and Mcllwaine make a summary of the urban particularities of GBV which I will take in the following.

"Evidence shows that violence against women by male partners is less prevalent in urban than rural areas, while GBV by non-partners is higher in cities. However, these patterns are not clear-cut; nor is it proven that urbanization processes lead to GBV, although social, economic and institutional changes that accompany urbanization can affect the incidence of GBV (…) Features of the urban environment that heighten the

exposure of women to stress-induced violence include poor-quality and remote sanitation facilities, widespread sale of alcohol and drugs, and secluded, un-policed spaces with limited street lighting. These risks are further compounded by the types of urban occupations in which women engage, such as sex work and employment in export-processing zones where sexual violence against women is so common that it has been referred to as "femicide" (...) At the same time, for women there are also positive aspects of living in cities; they have much greater freedom from social stigma and are more likely to seek help to address GBV both informally, through social support mechanisms, as well as through violence reduction projects and interventions that tend to concentrate in cities." (2014, 337 - 338)

Last but not least, another very important aspect in analyzing the way in which the city reflects gender inequalities is that which puts into discussion the *visibility and/or the invisibility of women in the urban public space.* When I'm referring to visibility I have in mind specially what Judith Lorber calls, by proposing a dynamic way of defining gender, gender display – meaning the way in which gender is displayed, represented, symbolized and which includes in itself the expectations held by those that decode this display (2000, 417). From the perspective of the way in which the city represents a space of gender display, we can refer on one hand to the way in which it is constructed (modeled) as a gendered space, and here I take into account everything that means street billboards – advertising, informative, educative – graffiti, inscriptions and messages, windows, monuments, statues, etc. On the other hand, gender display can be understood by referring to *urban toponymy* elements and in this way we are rather brought to a discussion about women's invisibility in the urban space – here I take into account elements such as the toponymy of streets, markets, institutions and public organizations (such as theaters, schools, museums, libraries). Because, as Tichleaar puts it, toponymy is the science that deals with the study of geographical names, and these names are rarely chosen randomly. Even if they have a physical signification (such as Mont Blanc) or are used to honor someone, to commemorate a historical event, or to mark someone's property, once used they become an integral part of language (2002, i) and thus they give meaning that can be analyzed also from the point of view of the way they fuel the patriarchal regime or not.

At the same time, elements that are part of urban planning, of place management, of architectural or technical formulas of city construction are embedded also in

modeling the identities of those that must and are looking to belong to these places, including by means of construction and reconstruction of gender. We're talking about what Certeau calls the transformation of the *place* as a form of expression of power, of authority in *space* as a formula for the appropriation of place, of practicing it and the way in which this interaction has an impact on the citizens seen in their diversity (I'm mainly interested in this study of gender differences).

For clarity, I will take an example presented by Certeau: "Thus the street geometrically defined by urban planning is transformed into a space by walkers. In the same way, an act of reading is the space produced by the practice of a particular place: a written text, i.e., a place constituted by a system of signs" (2011, 117). In this sense, I can quickly come up with examples, some personal, some not, of ways and situations which reflect the dynamics of name-place and I will present some of them. High heel shoes, even if worn initially by men in order to augment their masculinity, have become over time one of the strongest symbols of femininity. To be a woman still means too many wearing heels as an expression of elegance, but also a formula of passively manifesting sexuality. But what happens with these constructions of identity in a metropolis, in which every day life supposes the effective travel of tens of kilometers in public transportation, or by foot, in a very alert rhythm? The transformation of the place into space means the reconstruction of gender through giving up on heeled shoes, through adopting more casual outfits – masculine as some would put it. We wear more and more pants instead of dresses or skirts (see the fashion revolution made by Coco Chanel), we wear more and more clothes that are as comfortable as possible and we perhaps pay less attention to design, we wear more and more darker colors, all of these as an expression of the way in which we adapt to the place we're living in. Just like this, the city can also become a space of change, of all sorts of demands, of alternative movements which are fueled by the lack of communitarian constrains and of the so called anonymity which is typical of urban spaces. Referring to the way in which the city constrains us, the way in which it manifests as a structure that models our behaviors, we can analyze aspects which take into account the aforementioned gender based violence, and here, phenomena such Take Back the Night are clear expressions of demanding the city back by the women. It's often happening to us as women, that we carefully choose our clothes when we're going out, especially at night, and this is because of the way in which street harassment becomes a part of the normality of present day urban life – at least in

Bucharest. For instance, when I was doing street research at the University Square a young girl's skirt was pulled up right in front of me – it was broad daylight in the center of the capital and no one reacted, and these images are not at all rare (for more details on street harassment see for example hartuirestradala.wordpress.com). The city thus belongs less to women, especially at night and in some neighborhoods, and belongs less and less to sexual minorities, keeping in mind the fact that in this community they know the safe spots, but also the less accessible places, and also belongs less to ethnic minorities – see here the racist and xenophobic manifestations –, and to people with disabilities, etc.

Urban discriminations. Active citizenship gender sensitive project

In the logic presented above, and the field of study formed at the intersection between urbanism or city studies, symbolics, sociology, gender studies we also have the research done as part of the *Urban discrimination* project. *Active citizenship gender sensitive project* implemented by the non-governmental organization the Society of Feminist Analyses AnA in partnership with Front Association (between 2014-2015) and financed by the Civil Society Development Fund, part of the results which will be presented and analyzed in this paper. The general objective of the project consists in the developing of a model of active urban citizenship, sensible to gender, *the specific objective being on the research component*, namely documenting and outlining a table of segregation, inequality and gender discrimination in Bucharest. At the end, the goal is to propose certain narratives which are alternatives to the dominant ones and to adapt the urban space to the demands of inclusion and respect of differences between people.

Defining the universe of the research was based on one hand on a certain hierarchy of needs of research identifiable in such a pioneering project in Romania, more precisely on the need of some analyses of quantitative nature which can present the bigger picture specially regarding women invisibility in the urban space and that will later be completed with nuances, detailed analyses of qualitative nature. On the other hand, the delimitation of the field of research has been also done in relation to data accessibility, but also taking into account the financial and temporal limitations implied by the backing of the FDSC. Therefore, the collection of information from the field, with respect to the dimension of *gender and urban toponymy* has aimed at realizing a complete inventory for Bucharest, of streets, memorial plaques, monuments and statues,

metro stations, universities, high schools and state theaters. The data collection with respect to the dimension of "sexist/misogynistic/instigation to violence against women messages" has been realized through study case analyses (qualitative method) which were implemented in the following places in Bucharest: Piața Romană (author Ana Mizil), Piața Universității (author Diana Neaga), Piața Obor (author Monica Pavel), Nerva Traian - Șoseaua Colentina (author Ștefania Neagoe), touristic tour of Bucharest (author Ruxandra Yilmaz). The documentation for the "street violence/sexual harassment" dimension has materialized in the project on the one hand through the realization of a material about aggressions that women have to deal with when they're biking around the city – author Adina Mata, and on the other hand through two informative videos – materials on which the team coordinated by the director Matei Grünberg are working. Last but not least, the research component of the project also encompasses a material made by Tudorina Mihai which makes a reference to the gendered construction of citizenship in relation to the right to public expression. In this material the author arguments in favor of the hostile attitude of the representatives of the City Hall Commission for Public Manifestations Approval have in relation to the actions of the organizers that fight for women rights. In the following I will present a part of the data collected during this research, placing accent on the detailed presentation of the analysis made in the University Square. I will add the fact that the complete data, but also the critical analyses, suggestions and recommendations on the themes aforementioned are in the process of being published in the "Guide to gender discrimination in Bucharest" (for details please see http://www.discriminari-urbane.ro/).

Bucharest under the magnifying glass – a toponymic and urban memory analysis
Streets, boulevards, subway stations, statues, monuments, memorial plaques, high schools, universities, theaters – all stand as expressions of the construction of the patriarchal gender regime in Bucharest, through the act of naming places and public institutions which should refer to the recent or less recent history of this city. Perhaps many of us have noticed the absence of women from the collective and honorable[1] memory of the city, perhaps many of us have passed by the statue of Alexandru Lahovari or by that of Barbu Catargiu (both in the Piața Romana) at the feet of whom are placed in admirative positions women (see the study of Ana Mizil), or I have seen the bust of

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[1] Because women are invisible as role-models, as personalities they are more likely present as sexual objects, as marketing instruments

Traian Demetrescu carefully decorated with flowers, also by a woman. Maybe walking through Herăstrau we have seen the circle of writers and we have noticed the fact that no woman has had the honor of being represented there, even if an author such as Bianca Buruta-Cernat sign – with a name as if made to uphold our research hypothesis *„Group photo with forgotten writers – interwar feminist prose"* (Cartea Românească, 2011) – volumes that bring to light the remarkable work of women writers. Maybe some of us wondered why there is no metro station that has the name of a woman or how many boulevards do have the names of women and which are they, maybe we've been curious to know how many universities in Bucharest bear the name of some women, etc.

All of these aspects, this time studied systematically don't do anything but to uphold the hypothesis of the patriarchal gender regime upheld by urban management elements that make the city reflect the dichotomic social construction, gendered, unequal in which women are associated more with the private, familial space, with the sexuality and passivity, while men belong to the public sphere, active involved, professionally accomplished.

But let's let numbers talk. In the analysis made on the monuments and statues of Bucharest, Laura Grünberg and Corina Brăgaru (the coordinators of the research) have inventoried 161 such urban representations, the conclusions being the following: the androcentric character of the statues of Bucharest – out of 102 statues which were inventoried, 87 represent men and only 15 women; the gender roles are dichotomic: the women sleep and they are generic (anonymous), the men fight for country and are personalities. Gender inequalities are maintained when it comes to authors of statues/monuments that were inventoried – an overwhelming majority of these being made by men (135 *vs.* 14 women).

Regarding the toponymyc analysis, things are the simplest when it comes to metro stations – 41 (data collected by Ilona Voicu) and universities (40) of Bucharest (data collected by Ruxandra Yilmaz and Ana Maria Popa) – not even one of these bears the name of a woman. It would be hard to say that in the case of high schools we're better off, bearing in mind the fact that out of 105 high schools in Bucharest, only 5 bear the name of some feminine personalities (Iulia Hașdeu, Ita Wegman, Regina Elisabeta, Floria Capsali, Elena Cuza), 89 bearing the names of men.

What will we find through simple inquiries applied on the database that inventories the streets of Bucharest with respect to their names regarding gender? We

must remember here the fact that in the database we've inventoried a number of 5221 streets, the gendered toponymyc analysis generating the following results: 27,7% of streets bear the name of male personalities; 1,5% of streets bear the name of female personalities, 0.8% bear generic male names; 0,8% bear generic female names; names without gender signification 64%; names with masculine signification 3,6%; names with feminine signification 1,2%. Thus, Bucharest keeps in the memory of its streets 18 times more male personalities perpetuating in this way the dichotomies and categorizations through the association of women with the private sphere and of men with the public sphere, associating performance and career mostly with the masculine and limiting the references to women which have made history. The power relations are found clearly when we also make a toponymyc analysis of the streets of Bucharest in correlation with their type (boulevards, streets, ways, entrances etc.). Thus, out of 41 boulevards in Bucharest, only 2 bear the name of women and these are in fact the wives of great statesmen – we're talking about the boulevard Regina Elisabeta and the boulevard Regina Maria, and so the ratio is 1 to 20. The ratio is maintained approximately also when it comes to streets: 1 street with the name of a female personality to 19 streets with male name personality, it grows significantly when it comes to squares – 1 to 28 (so there is in Bucharest a single square that bears the name of a woman) and drops down when it comes to entrances 1 to 13

The tendency is preserved when we analyze the memorial plaques in Bucharest, Thus, 347 inventoried plaques (according to the material collected by Corneliu Lupes in the volume *Whispers of the Urban*, Oscar Print, 2011) 74,9% represents a homage brought to the memory of men, and only 6,6% honor the memory of women. Also, there are in Bucharest plaques of collective memory, some exclusively masculine – 2%, some mixed – 5,2%, but there are no memorial plaques that hold in the urban collective mind the memory of a collective exclusively comprise of women. Also, regarding state theaters 10 in all, only 1 bears the name of a feminine personality (Bulandra theater), 4 with the name of men and 5 with neutral names.

What do these numbers say in fact? That there are no remarkable women that have contributed to the writing of history in these places, or rather the differences of gender and especially their hierarchization (the deprecation of feminine domains, the association with the household sphere, and the public-private dichotomy) have generated over time the marginalization of women, their invisibility in urban spaces?

Certainly the first part of the answer can be easily contested, not the lack of feminine historical personalities is the problem[1], but the regime of power that leads to their deprecation. All of these elements may be interpreted as manifestations of the second rank citizenship of women which are thus deprived of the exercise of power on the dimension of symbolic appropriation of urban elements. Women are therefore excluded from the dynamics of naming places, of writing history and of assembling the collective memory of the city that remains, at least for Bucharest, a dominantly masculine one, or to put it better – as we will see in the case study presented below, one of perpetuation of traditional gender roles among which we could include the invisibility of women.

Case study – women and men, conformism and contestation in University Square

After presenting the big picture of the way in which Bucharest perpetuates gender inequalities, limiting in its toponymic and eulogizing memory the presence of women, I propose in the following a detailed analysis, critically-feminist of one of the most symbolic places in Bucharest, the University Square. The selection of this area of research is based on many considerations, but most importantly on the symbolic and profound meaning that this space bears. University Square has been for the last twenty five years the symbol of freedom and of the fight against communism, but also one of the main tourist and rendezvous places in the city. Being in the center of Bucharest, at ground zero, the square has not seldom been a place of contesting various authoritarian formulas considered illegitimate and so a space in which the voices and demands of the citizens have been hear, a sort of urban speakers. Tacitly accepted as an area open to protests, University Square manages to concentrate in a clearly defined urban perimeter, or clearly definable, symbols of the democratic construction of post-communist Romania, from the 1990 University Square phenomenon as a symbol of ultimate sacrifice, of citizen martyrdom, to the student revolts in the 90s, to the protests in the winter of 2012 against the austerity measures, to those in the autumn of 2013 as a formula of civic revitalization of a nation[2], and closing with the solidarity protests with the diaspora surrounding the presidential elections of 2014. The research question that concentrates the essence of this case study can be formulated as follows: is University

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[1] See for instance the two volumes of Ştefania Mihăilescu, which came out at Polirom, *From the history of Romanian* feminism, that refer to countless feminine personalities actively involved in the public life and the governance of the citadel. I was recalling earlier Bianca Burta-Cernat's volume and many more similar works can pe counted here.

[2] Here I take into account the strong nationalist feeling present at the Roşia Montana protests, but also a type of civic engagement associated with what the press called at the time the *hipster movement.*

Square, in virtue of the symbolic of strong contestation with which it is associated, also a place of contesting the patriarchal gender regime?

Therefore, I aim in the following to make a frame which can allow us to understand the productions of the urban space, with careful consideration of the way in which these present the gender regime with respect to inscriptions, messages, graffiti, street signs, statues, monuments, memorial plaques and toponymy elements. I will state from the beginning the fact that I've concentrated my attention more on the realization of an inventory of urban productions aforementioned and kept more or less in mind aspects which were aimed at the frequency with which certain elements appear, even though I don't exclude completely the use of such references over the course of the text. The hard nucleus of the methodology used was aimed at summing up the aforementioned elements found in the area of Piaţa Universităţii, with careful consideration of the gender dimension. I've also had in mind the realization of some transversal gender categories – man/woman, masculine/feminine, minority (marginal), signification with a sexual connotation. These were the categories defined initially, after some field research, others resulting as well. Given the specificity of the location, but also the urban dynamic, after the data collection on the field with the aim of facilitating the analysis I felt the need to make other categories as follows: political with all the subcategories – political ideology (messages, inscriptions as references to ideologies), political contester (messages which are critical to some doctrines or ideologies) and last but not least political figures (references to Romanian political people); *religious* and I have included here the messages, monuments with a religious feel existing in high numbers in the area; *small businesses* element which is made to present rather the urban dynamic of the small entrepreneurs who promote their businesses through sticking certain small-advertising and *adds* referring here to marketing political classes realized through street signs. Without discussion that the analysis of these categories will be made through a gender mainstreaming approach, their use having the goal, as I mentioned before, the facilitation of the data analysis, but also offering some frames which will present the specific difference of the researched area.

As an effective perimeter in which I've done the collection of data, I kept in mind the area in front of the National Theater, starting with the corner towards Piaţa Rosetti, continuing all the way to the Intercontinental hotel – across from the Fortuna Casino – the area of the fountain at the University (the effective place of the Piaţa 18 Decembrie

1989) – Edgard Quinet street (all the way to the Academy street) – Biserica Enei church (all the way to the Academy street) – the corner formed at the intersection between the Nicolae Bălcescu boulevard with the Regina Elisabeta boulevard. Even if the perimeter in front of the National Theater can be considered a distinct area, the delimitation proposed above had in mind a symbolic perimeter designated by the Piața University as a contester space. In this regard we all know that for instance the Nicolae Bălcescu Boulevard has often been occupied as a means of civil disobedience by the protesters thus merging the two areas – TNB and the University Square at the fountain. It is also true the fact that this boulevard has separated over time the protesters in competing camps, which remains common to the two areas being this association with a sort of agora in the classic sense, specific to the Athenian democracy.

The inclusion of the research perimeter and of the two streets – Biserica Enei and Edgard Quinet – was supported by data collected over time through the method of participative observation. Thus the two areas are recognized informally as spaces of gathering, as areas appropriated by certain alternative movements and contesters, but this also because it splits a university area, that of the University of Architecture and Urbanism Ioan Mincu, and that of the Faculty of Geography from the Bucharest University. I held in mind the role which the legends, the memories have in defining the metaphoric geography of a place, beyond the technical, rigid, architectural delimitations.

Formal urban elements – toponymy and memorial plaques

I will start of course by presenting the aspects which are related to place toponymy by summarizing the names of the streets that are part of the area of research. These are: Nicolae Bălcescu Boulevard, Regina Elisabeta Boulevard, Carol I Boulevard, I.C Bratianu Boulevard, Edgard Quinet Street and Biserica Enei Street. Thus three boulevards and a street that bear the names of masculine personalities, a street with a neutral name (Biserica Enei), and a boulevard (one of the existing two in all of Bucharest) which bears the name of feminine personalities. It is interesting to notice the fact that all the personalities aforementioned are related to the construction of the modern Romanian state, with references to the 48 generation and it's French inspiration (see here Edgard Quinet) and to the democratic ideals. Another commentary is about the tandem created by the two boulevards that can be seen as a eulogy to the family – Carol I and Queen Elisabeta – but that can also generate meanings less motivational by associating women

with traditional gender roles (Queen Elisabeta being known for her affinity towards care) and through promoting alongside the strong men of their lives (husbands, fathers, etc.) [1]. We can continue our toponymyc journey with references to the existing institutions in the area. Therefore it's worth reminding that the University of Architecture and Urbanism Ion Mincu, designed of course also by a man, the famed engineer and architect Grigore Cherchez. These are essentially the acts of naming that can be found in the researched space, the only feminine personality that can find her place amongst men being Queen Elisabeta.

University Square is by far a place of recent memory and of eulogy brought to those that have died for the liberty and revolution of December 1989, and this can be strongly felt in virtue of numerous places with religious connotation, but also which have the meaning of keeping alive the memory of those that have fought against the communist regime. Thus, out of 11 monuments and statues inventoried in the area[2], 5 are actually monuments dedicated to the heroes of the Romanian revolution and/or to University Square 1990 phenomenon, these being placed in front of the National Theater as well as in the area of the fountain – here we find the memorial plaque (the cross) dedicated to Cristian Pațurcă, next to which there is a guitar, symbol of the revolution which wanted to be peaceful, and monuments dedicated to the anti-communist fighting heroes, heroes of the 21-22 December 1989 revolution. All of these monuments are associated with Christian symbols – the cross – making us think inevitably about another form of domination, which breeds marginalization and exclusion. There is however an element which is different in this setting that is overflowing with Christian religious symbols, which seems to be more likely catholic or protestant, all the while being a feminine representation of the Virgin with the baby (traditional representation) – a small monument without inscriptions or references to the author, on the wall towards the Ion Mincu University fountain. The monument is hard to notice and when I've discovered it I had the feeling of a subversive action made to disturb the Christian-orthodox uniformity which reigns in the area.

It is interesting to notice that if we refer to official religious symbols placed in University Square, there are unanimously orthodox. However, when we make an inventory of the inscriptions, the messages, and the stencils we can also observe clearly

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[1] Perhaps it's worth mentioning here that the Regina Maria Boulevard doesn't really do a tandem with the Ferdinand Boulevard, since they are both situated in the central area of the capital.

[2] Incluzând aici Universitatea de Arhitectură și Urbanism considerată monument istoric

a form of manifestation of religious diversity which we can integrate in the contester logic, demanding of transformation of the place into space. There appear representations of the Star of David as a Judaic symbol; Pentecostal messages such as "The return of Christ", but also of feminist contestation of the authority imposed by religion such as the stencil "God is a woman".

Getting back, no other monument or statue from the researched area refers to a woman, that is if we don't put into discussion the statue group of course done by a man (Ioan Bolborea) Căruţa cu Paiaţe, part of the Caragealiana ensemble, which refers to characters from Caragiale[1]'s works, amongst which women (Zoe, Mam mare, Miţa, Veta, Ziţa). The question would be how does such an ensemble work socially, how does it fuel stereotypes and gender prejudices (hysterical women, ridiculous, lacking in personality) in the context in which in the area the references to feminine personalities, to good practices or to success models are almost inexistent? We meet however 3 monuments/statues that clearly refer to male personalities, specifically the statue of I.L. Caragiale part of the Caragealiana ensemble, the monument dedicated to Cristian Paţurcă and the reference to the architect Grigore Cerchez.

Regarding the inventory of the memorial plaques, 10 such elements in total, they can be integrated in the same logic of institutional reinforcing of the gender regime, the description which follows taking the place of the argument:

- Gender neutral plaques – 4 (A century of geographical education at the University of Bucharest, the first laboratory of paleontology in Romania – 08.1905. Here died for freedom 21-22 December 1989. Gratitude to the heroes of the revolution. Tears and flowers on their graves);

- Memorial plaques dedicated to men – 5 (George Filepeanu, Gheorghe Tomat, Constantin and Nicolae Dobrescu, Simion Vasilescu, in the year 1875, in the houses of Mazar Paşa and the street Biserica Enei no. 11 bis was founded the National Liberal Party under the coordination of the great patriots I.C. Brătianu and C.A. Rosetti);

- Memorial plaques dedicated to women – 1 (Elena Voinescu)

Informal urban elements – inscriptions, messages, graffiti or the right to belong, the right to difference

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[1] I. L. Cragiale - Romanian playwright, short story writer, poet, theater manager, political commentator and journalist

The inventory of urban grass-roots production, which reflects reactions, ideas identities of the citizens which live in the city and can be thought of as formulas of closeness and signification of the place confirms almost unequivocally the fact that University Square remains a space of contestation and of critical citizen manifestation. I present in the table below the centralization on categories of the data collected, which upholds the aforementioned affirmation. Therefore, the distribution on categories of the 106 inventoried elements is the following:

Category	Frequency	Category	Frequency
Political	52	Sexual meaning	7
Religious	5	Groups/minorities	6
Small business	16	Women	1
Advertisement	8	Other	11
Total: 106			

As I was mentioning earlier the summarization of these varied formulas of urban communication, this time coming from the bottom to the top, lead to the realization of the categories presented in the table and which will be detailed and analyzed in the following. Of course that these categories are ideally typical and they have the role of helping the structuring of analysis and of producing interpretative models, this aspect being prone to consideration as one of the limitations of this work.

The *political* category refers to messages which talk about i. *Political characters,* ii. *Political ideologies,* and iii. *Critical political manifestations*. In the category political characters I have included clear references to political people – counting 6 – the characters being Ion Iliescu (Iliescu, unprosecuted criminal), Ion Caramitru (Caramitru prime-minister is Romanian. Caramitru, come to the balcony!), Mircea Diaconu (Suca) and Traian Băsescu (2). There is also a reference to Nicuşor Dan, which I have categorized as political-ideological because the message is centered on ideology, the character being in fact an instrument (ecology – *I'm part of the class of mild-mannered cars. I vote Nicuşor Dan)*. Some observations can be taken from this assumption:

- The references to political characters are rather critical, contester;
- We can observe a sort of acculturation between the two spaces – TNB and Piaţa 18 December 1989, supported of course by the real political implication of the two actors (Diaconu and Caramitru)

- None of the political characters reminded is a woman – another proof of the perpetuation of the gender regime that leaves women outside the substantial citizenship

From the registered elements in the political category, most of which are part of the subcategories *ideologies* – 29 and *critical* – 17. The inventory of the ideologies signaled in the area researched is the following:

- Nationalism – most of the references among the messages such as *Bessarabia is Romania!, Romanian Echo* (media agency, portal for informing with the goal of bringing Romanians closer to romanianship and romanianship closer to Romanians), *Romania! Don't elect leaders that don't love their country! Petre Ţuţea, Vlad Ţepes,*

- Socialism – with anti-capitalist, anti-imperialist, anti-fascist messages, *Students slaves to corporations, Student – bar code,*

- Feminism – *God is a woman! Democracy in the country and in the home! We shit on the misogynists;*

- Ecology – *I'm part of the class of mild-mannered cars. I vote Nicuşor Dan; Roşia Montana, Culture not cyanide; 4th April University NO to fracking,*

- Anarchism – *Anarchism!, Punk is not dead, Cops in civilian!, ACAB*

- The inventory of the critical political attitudes can be summarized as follows:

- Critiques of the political class – *Free people don't have anyone to vote for, We change the political class, Don't let them steal your vote (Băsescu and Antonesu), Who am I voting for? Down with the Emanate, AntiLaw; Accusative state who/who;*

- Appeal to civic attitudes – *The only solution, our own evolution, We Make Evolution, Get Indignated!, Reforms, Spiritual Militia* (The organization's mission is to mobilize the active civic consciousness and the spirit of citizen solidarity).

What are all these elements saying in fact from the perspective of interaction between city and its inhabitants? On one hand we can understand these expressions as ways of renegotiating the distinction between public-private. This way, they can be placed somewhere between the two spheres – they are not public because they are not assumed directly, all the while they can be associated with formulas with civic disobedience and even with infractions (so it's not a manifestation of accessibility, of the power to have access), but they are neither private because they are realized with the purpose of becoming public, of being visible. Here we could rather talk about what Tovi Fenster calls *"the right to belong* identified as the right of people of different identities to

be recognized and the right to take part in civil society in spite of one's own identity differences (…) *the right to difference.* The right to belong in contested spaces can be perceived as a deeper expression *of citizenship in the global city.*"(2005, 253 - 154)

From the perspective of gender representation, in these formulas we have seen that there are in University Square feminist natured expressions which can suggest the need of this community to manifest its right to belong to the city, but also the need to contest the masculine privileges preserved, as we have seen, through formal policies, authorized (see the toponymic formulas presented above)

Women in University Square – sexism and traditional gender roles

And still women/the feminine are not so absent from the urban representations inventoried in University Square, only that we find them rather in the advertisements and small businesses adverts, which is for those minimally familiarized with feminist theories not at all surprising. Women sell, most of the time dressed in skimpy outfits or even naked, sodas (e.g.: Nestea), body care products (e.g.: Nivea), life and health insurance, or they sell themselves in video-chat type businesses, Top Escorts (poster found directly in front of the Intercontinental hotel), Speed Dating, and Erotic Massage. We're talking about traditional gender roles, with women sexualized, objectified, of constraints generated by beauty standards imposed by the society in which we live – impeccable bodies, without wrinkles or cellulite. Also from the perspective of gendered analysis it's worth stopping our attention for a little bit on the recruiting announcement "We're hiring girls, boys, couples for studio video-chat", in which the references to sex, correlated with the images on the poster (two girls) suggests the idea of openness to this domain even to boys, but also to couples – therefore displaying a certain dynamic of this phenomenon.

Also in this logic are interesting the announcements (small businesses) that are aimed toward renting certain spaces for students. These seem to be rarely neutral referencing to students (male) as a generic term (one announcement – I'm hosting one student [male]), but they aim rents for girls and/or boys. This drew my attention regarding the fact that at a common language level, there are few people who use the appropriate gender (student/studentă) and despite all of this, when it comes to offering some spaces to rent sex/gender becomes relevant. One possible explanation is also one that refers to traditional roles, stereotypes and prejudices, more exactly those that

associate girls with calmness, diligence, cleanliness, and qualities sought after by a person looking to rent a living space.

However, if we refer to the messages, inscriptions with *a sexual connotation*, a single aspect I consider is worth mentioning, and this is the fact that in the time that I've done the field research, the university fountain was full of penis drawings, next to which were scribbled two boys' faces (one having a name – Billa), one with a girl's face. These drawings seemed to be the result of some adolescents' rebelliousness, being scribbled in a hurry, but at the same time in the symbolic heart of the square – the fountain. These aspects can be interpreted through the grid of constraints generated by the taboo of sexuality which can make out of the simple drawing of a penis an act of courage.

Interesting to mention is also the fact that in a couple of days the drawings disappeared, just as the message "Caramitru, come to the balcony" was erased from the fountain, but which was later redone.

Conclusions

Therefore, the Square is alive, it is claimed and resignified at every moment by groups that seek their identity and belonging in this urban space. And this entire dynamic can't be perceived outside the power relations that, under a more careful analysis, can be clearly identified. In short, we could sum up this whole analysis as two categories of urban products.

Formal products officially authorized and that represent expressions of the dominant power regime, and here I classify the statues, the monuments, the memorial plaques, and the toponymy elements, but also the advertisements and the street sign elements. And in this perspective, things are as clear as can be, and we can talk from my point of view about institutionally implicit sexism which disadvantages obviously women, giving better opportunities to men. The data that was collected and presented in this study support this affirmation when I bring into discussion on one hand the invisibility and marginality of women in such urban productions, and on the other side their hypersexualization in adverts and posters.

Informal products, unauthorized, even illegal and expression of a form of civil disobedience manifested as a public, non-violently and conscientious breach of law undertaken with the aim of bringing about a change in laws or government policies (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy). The elements that I am integrating here are

those that pertain to messages, inscriptions, graffiti, stencils, but also small business adverts. Here the results can be divided into elements that fuel and support the gender regime [Looking to host student (feminine)], and on the other hand those that contest, meant to claim a more equitable order – messages explicitly feminist. We're talking about a grass-roots contestation of the system, but that remains between the public and private spheres, and whose marginality is underlined by the effective disclaimer of civil disobedience (people who engage in civil disobedience are willing to accept the legal consequences of their actions, as this shows their fidelity to the rule of law - Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy). What I mean to say is that the critical message exists, we therefore find in University Square claims of the space, inclusive alternative identity manifestations of feminist nature, but by the form through which they are materialized they rather remain perceptible at an individual level (those that see them are the passers-by, and maybe not even them, and eventually those that clean the walls and urban furniture) and with a minimal impact with respect to the dominant system. They tell us that the city lives and thus everyday life is unfolding beyond formal constrains as well, and that all this dynamic can constitute at a certain point, why not, the engine of new structural changes.

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