

Sam Hind

Planning for Protest

Stage vs. Sidewalk

THE SQUARE AS A STAGE

UNDER THE SPOTLIGHT

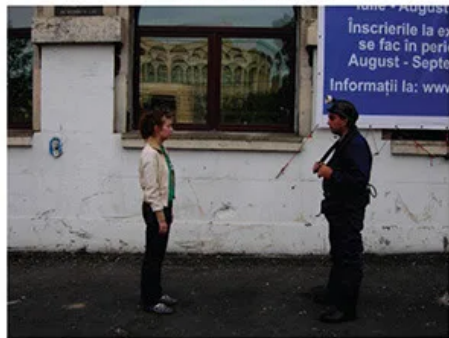
The square as a stage is a place of exposure, of celebration and joy, of remembering and performing. The square can support anything, attracting an array of objects, monuments, memorial plaques, structures, banners, that would be improbable elsewhere. These are surrounded by a wide variety of concerts, flash-mobs, art interventions, performances, political rallies, or commercial campaigns.



The 21 December Square, January 2011, photo Raluca Vonea



At The Fountain on 14th March 2012, from left to right: a car prize at the 'Kiosk Casino', monument for anti-communist fighters, passerby, inhabitant of the square, coffee machine, flower kiosk, ad-hoc extension of the kiosk, photo studioBASAR



Dan Perjovski - Monument (History/Hysteria), 2007

Monument (History/Hysteria) is the contribution of Dan Perjovski to the project Public Art Bucharest 2007, consisting in a living sculpture performed for a few hours every day for one week in the University Square, evoking the miners' insurrection in Bucharest in 1990.



The clock installed in the University Square roundabout, counting the day's until Romania was to join the European Union, the image is from 31st December 2006 when only one day was left, photo: Iulian Constantin



studioBASAR - The Sparrow's Tree, public intervention, 2008



George Marinescu - shelves, public intervention, 2013



Vlad Bakalic - Watching, Waiting, intervention, 2012, object design Atelier Brut, photo: Vlad Petri

THE SQUARE AS A SIDEWALK

EVERYDAY

The square as sidewalk is a complex world with diffuse rules and mysterious user patterns, governed by a tacit carelessness among its inhabitants. Engaged in a continuous dance of territorial negotiation, in the end everyone can have his or her own 'square'. Since the facelifts of 2012, the dynamics of the users had diminished dramatically. The booksellers, first evicted from the far NW side and then regrouped around the northern metro exits, have rare and less predictable appearances, although rumors circulate about their comeback in a more organized manifestation. The flower women and their kiosks were evicted, and even the usual beggars are gone. Life in the square had to follow more prescribed patterns, excluding its parallel informality, slowly losing its informal character.



Booksellers, 2012, photo: Vlad Petri



Oliver Unger sheltering in an informal workshop, with Alexia Gulea, George Marinescu, Simona Purcariu, Alex Axente, Cristi Borcan, December 2012, photo: studioBASAR

The

Occupied Times has a [fantastic missive \(http://theoccupiedtimes.org/?p=12335\)](http://theoccupiedtimes.org/?p=12335) from a project calling themselves [Planning for Protest \(http://www.planningforprotest.org/\)](http://www.planningforprotest.org/) on their website at the minute. Organized for the Lisbon Architecture Triennial, the project is designed to “explore both the social and architectural definitions of protest in light of the current global financial crisis”:

Planning for Protest came about as a conversation over what was happening in these flashpoints throughout the world, with a special focus on how the very spaces in which they took place helped to shape or form, if not circumvent, the success or failure of each cities' public mobilisation. Inasmuch as the mass convention of peoples creates the voice of these protests, we wanted to see how the streets and squares, its buildings, form the backdrop of these protests' stages.

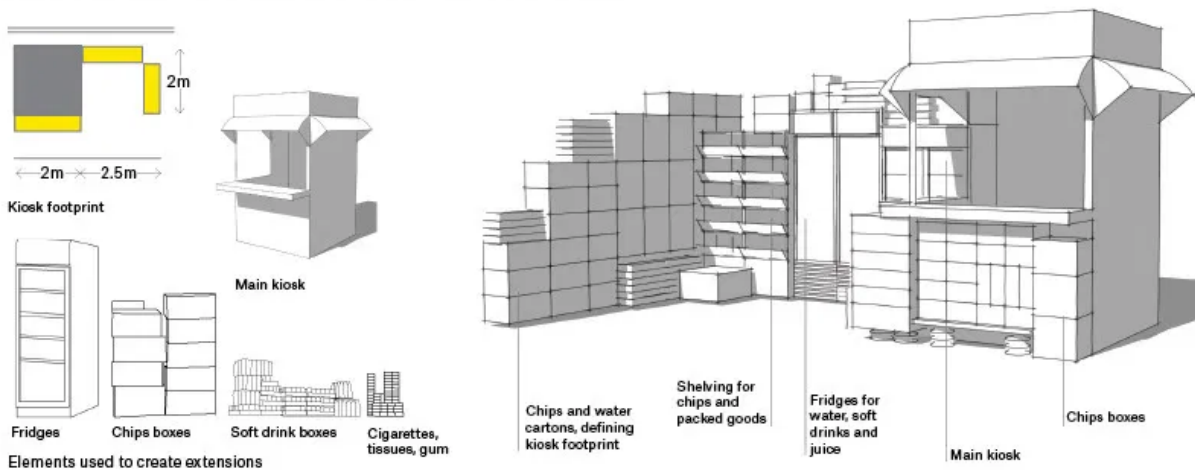
12 architects/architect offices were brought together to compile a unique set of 'typologies' of each urban protest movements taking part around the world. Athens, Berlin, Bucharest, Cairo, Dublin, Istanbul, Lisbon, London, Madrid, New York, Rome and Sao Paulo are all represented.

Although they say in the Occupied Times article that they wanted people to "see how the streets and squares, its buildings, form the backdrop of these protests' stages", I think it actually does far more than that. In fact, the project actually works to show how the streets, squares and buildings of each protest movement *aren't* in the background at all, and *aren't* mere 'stages' for the apparently more theatrical human actions laid on top. In all cases they are active, *foregrounded* actors in the nature of protest. The built environment is a primary facilitator of protest. If you delve into the case studies you'll actually find that most work with this notion anyway, describing, as an example, how the design of city squares can affect the shape, volume, mobility and intensity of protests (see the photo above from [Studio Basar](http://www.studiobasar.ro/?cat=3&lang=en) (<http://www.studiobasar.ro/?cat=3&lang=en>). – Bucharest).

Another example can be seen in the image below. It is taken from *Cluster's* (<http://www.clustercairo.org/>). Cairo effort and contains some compelling graphics elucidating the impact of vernacular structures on the urban fabric. As a form of 'slow' protest, Cluster argue that street vendors are helping to contest the nature of public space. In marking out their territory they are helping to define and delineate the margins of acceptable, agreeable behaviour. Although at the bottom-rung of the urban hierarchy (below NGOs, residents, real estate developers etc.) their efforts to stake a claim to the city environment do not go unrecognized – at least to Cluster. This 'encroachment of spatial informality' in the form of creeping vernacular architectures, whilst identified by the group as an alternative force to the 'urban protest as spectacle', nonetheless provides a compelling example of contemporary urban protest.

Kiosks: Towards a New Vernacular Streetscape

Using modulated blocks to create extended territories



Economic

How do revenues increase with illegal extensions, compared to legal footprints?

Legal

What are legal and spatial constraints for the kiosk footprint?
How is space outside of the kiosk footprint regulated?

Aesthetic

Are we seeing in the proliferation of alternative kiosk layouts a new vernacular aesthetic?
Or rather can kiosks be considered as negative encroachment on public space and surrounding historic context?

SILENT PROTESTS: SLOW ENCRoACHMENT OF SPATIAL INFORMALITY

CLUSTER

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