

COMMON MISTAKES IN DESIGNING ALLEYS AND URBAN RECREATION PLACES

GREȘELI COMUNE ÎN PROIECTAREA PEISAGISTICĂ A ALEILOR ȘI LOCURILOR DE ODIHNĂ URBANE

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Abstract. *It has become a "normal" fact that many urban green spaces provide landscaping polluting both physically and visually. The paper aims to select and analyze the most "practiced" mistakes in design and execution of paths and places of urban rest. Identifying these mistakes could help to establish the causes and subsequently their eradication by proposing correction. The aim would be that the mayors of cities should become aware that there is a need for landscape specialists able to create harmonious compositions, providing alleys both for people hurry to reach their jobs, but also pleasant path, with resting places, judiciously placed.*

Key words: *landscape design, urban effects, common mistakes.*

Rezumat. *A devenit un fapt "obisnuit" ca multe din spațiile verzi urbane să ofere amenajări peisagistice poluante atât fizic, cât și vizual. Lucrarea își propune să selecteze și să analizeze cele mai "practicate" greșeli din proiectarea și execuția aleilor și locurilor de odihnă urbane. Identificarea acestor greșeli ar putea contribui la stabilirea cauzelor și, ulterior, la eradicarea lor prin propuneri de corectare. Scopul ar fi ca edilii orașelor să accepte faptul că este nevoie de specialiști peisagiști capabili de a crea compoziții armonioase, care să ofere atât trasee pentru oamenii grăbiți să ajungă la locurile de muncă, dar și trasee plăcute, revigorante, cu locuri de odihnă confortabile, judicios amplasate.*

Cuvinte cheie: *proiectare peisagistică, efecte urbane, greșeli comune.*

INTRODUCTION

Currently landscaping encounters a "helplessness" to overcome stage words regarding actual implementation of proposals to improve the urban comfort, the aestheticization of degraded urban areas and, effectively, combat pollution in general, especially visual pollution (Dascălu, 2006). Landscaping of paths and places of rest constitutes one of the areas generally endangered, due to municipality neglect. Alarm signals have emerged as in the very frequent cases specialized training has been neglected: arrangements are often created by untrained people, having "subjective" ideas and opinions, or leaving out executions to the workers of green spaces.

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MATERIAL AND METHOD

This study aims to identify and analyse the most common mistakes in designing and executing alleys and urban resting places.

The investigation tries to establish the causes of these mistakes, in order to help finding ways for judicious planning, design and execution for various situations.

The cases chosen and analyzed in this paper tried to highlight some negative aspects that contribute to visual pollution and urban discomfort, both by design and execution.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The design and implementation of alleys and resting places seems to be very simple and easy to be done by anyone unspecialized in landscaping. In this illusion lies a great danger. As example, the most common “folk concept” for the creation of paths into a site, in order to create a future square, consists in the idea of “letting people move freely and then draw the paths according to their daily routes”. This “folk” solution could, possibly, solve only the problem of daily intensive circulations towards important points in surroundings.

In terms of landscape, despite these “landscape populisms”, walkways imply more complex features, simultaneously providing: direct circulation or promenade, opportunities for rest and socializing, a relaxing adjacent ambient, developing aesthetic sense and civic responsibility.

Studying sites in Romania and abroad, analyzing and reviewing numerous cases, we identified the following issues as being important and endangered: dimensions of traffic flow, alleys and places of recreation; location of rest places; ergonomics, style, color and materials of urban furniture items; structure and design of adjacent vegetation composition.

The aim of this presentation would be that the mayors of cities should become aware that there is a need for landscape specialists, able to create harmonious compositions, providing alleys both for people hurry to reach their jobs, but also pleasant path, with resting places, judiciously placed.

In the urban areas that can be created alleys and resting places in various landscape zones: from little squares to big parks, from sidewalks or footways to pedestrian esplanades, from outdoor institutions areas to residential gardens (Dascălu, 2006). The circulation appears to be the most important of the alleys functions. Therefore, studies of population segments, that cross daily the urban green areas, are helping to establish the correct traffic flows.

Depending on the type of movement and functionality of landscape areas, it can be designed various type of alleys: only for traffic or promenade, but also with resting places located along or in some dilatation created as adjacent spaces of traffic directions (Dascălu, 2011). Also, the route can be sprinkled with spaces expansions, treated as areas of dynamic landscape interest and/or passive recreation areas.

In the design of paths with resting places, the most frequent mistakes are those regarding the location of furniture (fig. 1).



Fig. 1 - If banks are located completely outside of paving people are forced to keep their feet in the dust, or in the mud (photo D. Dascalu)

In these cases are necessary following recommendations:

- in front seating space must be created a space of min. 0.50 m for the person sitting on the bench, which should not be disturbed or touched by the persons circulating on the alley; we can call this as „vital individual space”;
- the space occupied by banks and the “vital individual space” should not enter into the calculation of alley traffic flow;
- it stands to reason that the locations of rest places along the paths will increase the width of the walkways; consequently the resting places can be located also in some dilatation created as adjacent spaces of traffic directions;
- incorrectly placed in the alleys, banks may become obstacles, creating a traffic strangulation.

If we design an alley with resting places, banks must be placed on paving. Mistakes occur when banks are placed half on paving-half on green space, or completely outside of paving. In these cases, people are forced to keep their feet in the dust, or in the mud (fig. 1). Of course, some resting places can be placed in the lawn or green spaces, but these cases require a special study (fig. 2).



Fig. 2 - Some resting places can be placed in the lawn or green spaces, but these cases require a special study (photo D. Dascalu)

Pavings should be anti-sliding, pleasant and comforting as a texture while walking, combined with harmonious materials and colors. Sliding pavings create problems especially in the rainy and snow season.

Edges can bring in the urban spaces a touch of elegance, if proportions, harmonies, materials and colors are used correctly (Dascălu D. M., 2006). Edges and borders can often generate problems due to lack of attention for their versatility. Sometimes redundancies occur, placing the bank in front of wide borders that can be used as sitting places. Sometimes edges are incoherent as route, generating confusion and visual pollution (fig.3).



Fig. 3 - The edge is interrupted by wrong position of public lighting columns (photo D. Dascalu)

In order to remove visual pollution, aestheticization proposals for degraded urban areas are involving the use of an important and well known principle of landscape design: unity in diversity.

Styles, colors and materials, used in many cases of alleys and recreation areas, offer many opportunities for violation of this concept. Nowadays there are many design catalogs for aesthetic urban furniture. Despite this fact, mistakes consist mostly in the wrong combination of colors, shapes and volumes, for the furniture of resting places, also for the paving (fig.4 and 5).



Fig. 4 - The unaesthetic effect due to joining of two banks with completely different and opposite styles (photo D. Dascalu)



Fig. 5 - Unaesthetic effect due to joining of many furniture objects with completely opposite styles (photo D. Dascalu)

The design of vegetation, as complex and harmonious compositions, can create an intimate and relaxing space, both for promenade along the alleys, also around the resting places (Trowbridge and Bassuk, 2004).

Unfortunately, the most frequent urban examples of plantations all along the alleys are either those eclectically composed, or that monotone composed. This is the result of a routine design, as a consequence of the lack of understanding of landscape design techniques regarding vegetation.

Trying to create diversity without unity, or without a harmonious composition of species, bring the danger of eclectic plantations, suffocated by a big density. The effects consist in visual stress or visual pollution (Dascălu, 2012). In the adjacent spaces, around alleys and resting places, another common mistake is the fragmentation or the dilution of images, either by using anaesthetic hedgerows, or by spreading singular shrubs or trees on large surfaces (fig. 6 and 7). This kind of design vegetation can generate visual monotony. The lack of personality and the insipidity of these vegetal images can create a less desire of meetings in such spaces.



Fig. 6 - Unaesthetic effect due to the unsightly aspect of the hedgerows, combined with the old bench wrong located (photo D. Dascalu)



Fig. 6 - Dilution of images by spreading singular shrubs or trees on large surfaces, around alleys and resting places (photo D. Dascalu)

CONCLUSIONS

Common mistakes in designing alleys and urban recreation places are most often related to the lack of information, routine, “folk concepts” and a false desire to “save public money” that hides the real problems.

The issues presented in this paper are intended to be an original contribution, necessary to improve the existing urban landscape studies which are dealing usually with general known informations, paying less attention to the details above mentioned and analysed.

Correction of these errors, through curative and preventive action, is absolutely needed.

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