

## URBANE RÄUME *URBAN SPACES*

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### OLD AND NEW RESIDENTIAL NEIGHBOURHOODS AS CREATIVE HUBS IN BUDAPEST

Tamás EGEDY and Melanie Kay SMITH, both Budapest\*

with 7 figures and 3 tables in the text

#### CONTENTS

<i>Zusammenfassung</i> .....	85
<i>Summary</i> .....	86
1 Introduction .....	87
2 The rise of the concept of creative cities and creative economy .....	88
3 A brief overview of the creative economy in Eastern Europe, Hungary and Budapest .....	91
4 Creative residential quarters in the inner districts of Budapest .....	95
5 Conclusions .....	104
6 References .....	106

#### *Zusammenfassung*

##### *Alte und neue Wohngebiete als Kreativzentren in Budapest*

*Die Theorie der kreativen Städte fand in der Wissenschaftslandschaft erstmals in der zweiten Hälfte der 1970er Jahre Beachtung, hatte aber ihre Blütezeit um die Jahrtausendwende und in der Dekade danach, als neoliberale politische Konzepte die Weltwirtschaft und die nationalen Wirtschaftssysteme dominierten. Es entstanden in allen Teilen Euro-*

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\* Tamás EGEDY, PhD., Geographical Institute, Centre for Astronomy and Earth Sciences, Hungarian Academy of Sciences, Budaörsi út 45, H-1112 Budapest, Hungary; email: egedy@gmx.net; Melanie Kay SMITH, PhD., Institute of Tourism, Leisure and Hospitality, Budapest Metropolitan University, Nagy Lajos király útja 1–9, H-1148 Budapest; email: msmith@metropolitan.hu

pas städtische Entwicklungspläne, in denen sich Städte als „kreative Städte“ definierten. Diese begannen dann auch ihr jeweiliges Wirtschaftssystem zu überdenken und neu zu ordnen. Um diese Zeit wurden auch in Budapest Stadterneuerungskonzepte sowohl von Seiten der Verwaltung als auch aus Kreisen der Bevölkerung vorgestellt, die im Blickpunkt unserer Untersuchung stehen und die wahrscheinlich die erfolgreichsten Beispiele nicht nur in Budapest, sondern in ganz Ungarn sind.

Im ersten Teil unserer Studie geben wir einen kurzen Überblick über das Konzept der kreativen Stadt und der Kreativwirtschaft. Der zweite Teil bietet eine statistische Analyse der Entwicklung und der aktuellen Trends der Kreativwirtschaft in Ungarn und in der Agglomeration von Budapest. Im Hauptteil stellen wir die Ergebnisse einer kritischen Analyse von zwei Wohngebieten unter besonderer Berücksichtigung der kreativen Dimension vor. Dabei werden auch regulative Maßnahmen in Bezug auf diese beiden Gebiete und ihre Auswirkungen auf die Kreativwirtschaft in Augenschein genommen. Als erstes Beispiel dient das historische jüdische Viertel von Pest, welches das vielleicht wichtigste Tourismus- und Geschäftszentrum ist und heute als Party-Zone fungiert. Das zweite Beispiel ist das Projekt der Corvinus-Promenade, das heute eines der erfolgreichsten Stadtentwicklungsprojekte in Ungarn ist. Wir versuchen in unserer Studie zu zeigen, wie alte und neue Stadtgebiete zu städtischen Erneuerungsprozessen beitragen können und weisen auf die Politikansätze und Herausforderungen hin, die damit verbunden sind.

Schlagwörter: Kreative Stadt, Kreativwirtschaft, städtische Wohngebiete, Stadtentwicklung Budapest

## Summary

The theory of creative cities already entered the scientific arena in the second half of the 1970s, but its heyday took place around the turn of the new millennium and the subsequent decade when neoliberal policies dominated global and national economies. Urban development concepts appeared across Europe, in which cities tried to define themselves as creative cities and they started to rethink and develop their local economies accordingly. Around this time, top-down and bottom-up urban renewal processes were launched in Budapest, which are the focus of our study, and which are probably the most successful examples not only in Budapest but in Hungary overall.

In the first part of our study we give a brief overview of the concept of creative cities and economy. The second part of the study provides a statistical analysis of development and current trends in the creative economy in Hungary and the Budapest agglomeration. The main part of the article provides the results of critical analyses of two residential neighbourhoods with special emphasis on creative dimensions. This includes the regulations affecting the two residential areas in question and how these affected the creative economy. The first example is the historical Jewish quarter of Pest, which is perhaps the most important tourist and commercial centre and nowadays functions as a party area, and the second is the Corvin Promenade project, which is currently one of the most successful urban development projects in Hungary. In our study, we try to show how old and

*new neighbourhoods can contribute to urban renewal processes and the politics, policies and challenges, which affect their development.*

*Keywords: Creative city, creative economy, urban residential neighbourhoods, urban development, Budapest*

## 1 Introduction

The trajectories of creative city or creative quarter development can be both planned and/or organic, which means a deliberate policy of national or local governments or arising from grass-roots initiatives of creative practitioners and entrepreneurs, communities and civil organisations. There may be different stages of development, and cities are always in flux so the creative process is a dynamic one and constantly evolving (for better or worse). However, there are many stable and common characteristics of creative districts including the existence of creative businesses and networks, the presence of artists and creative people, and the link to alternative lifestyles and sub-cultures (MARQUES & RICHARDS 2014). Many creative districts were originally some of the poorest and most deprived in a city where rents were cheap and students, artists, ethnic minorities and alternative lifestyles could afford to live. As creative districts become more attractive and popular, gentrification often ensues, but this is an inevitable part of the transition process, which needs to be managed carefully to avoid the erosion of what made the district appealing in the first place. The development of tourism may also be inevitable but there is the risk that these areas can turn into tourist enclaves and lose their appeal for creative people (PAPPALAPORE, MAITLAND & SMITH 2014).

Recent developments in many cities have shown that there is a growing interest amongst policy makers, planners and tourists alike in marginal and ethnic cultures, with the increasing promotion of ethnoscaping (APPADURAI 2000), ethnic festivals and gay quarters, for example. SHAW (2007) emphasises how, with careful planning and management, the development of the cultural and creative tourism and visitor economies can help to foster the role of ethnic and minority entrepreneurs as active agents of urban (re)development. PAPPALAPORE, MAITLAND & SMITH (2014) suggest that soft approaches to policy can be appropriate in the context of creative quarter development, for instance, the provision of opportunities (including space) for creative entrepreneurs to network, showcase their work and sell their products, as well as mingle with tourists.

LEFEBVRE's (1974) concept of lived space and SOJA's (1996) concept of Thirdspace imply that the focus of urban developments should be the everyday lives of local residents and their role in helping to shape space and create place. Additionally, FLORIDA (2005) insists on the one hand that cities need to have a 'people climate' as well as a 'business climate', on the other hand he emphasised the importance of diversity in the development of creative cities, stating that "more open and diverse places are likely to attract greater numbers of talented and creative people – the sort of people who power innovation and growth." (FLORIDA 2005, p. 39) This means that not only old neighbourhoods with cultural

and creative traditions can foster the further development of the urban fabric, but also newly planned and built residential neighbourhoods. The latter often appear nowadays as expressions of urban creativity and innovation and they operate as complex areas integrating residential, commercial and creative functions. In these neighbourhoods a new, young, urban, local community often arrives who work predominantly in different creative and knowledge intensive sectors.

In order to recognise and highlight the role and potential of old and new residential areas in the ongoing development of the urban fabric of Budapest, we introduce two residential neighbourhoods, which appear as creative hubs within the city: The old Jewish quarter, which functions nowadays partly as the party zone of young creatives, and the brand-new Corvin Quarter symbolising a new emerging area of creativity. The main aim of this paper is to provide detailed information on the development path and future perspectives of these neighbourhoods. Besides the historical developments of these neighbourhoods we present the process of urban regeneration taking place in these quarters. Through an analysis of creative renewal (or the lack of it) we provide information about how this process affects the everyday life of local communities and the further development of neighbourhoods. Critical voices on the current development trends will also be provided together with the introduction of the main fields of conflict that have emerged in these neighbourhoods in the past decade. Ultimately, we endeavour to highlight how these neighbourhoods contribute to the process of Budapest becoming a more creative city.

In the first theoretical section of the paper, we briefly consider the concept of creative cities and creative economy, then we present the characteristics of creative economy in Hungary and Budapest highlighting the leading role of the capital city within the country. In the third section two selected case studies will be introduced in detail in order to show the impacts of creative developments. The concluding part summarises our main findings on the role of old and new neighbourhoods as emerging creative hubs within the city.

## **2 The rise of the concept of creative cities and creative economy**

This section briefly describes how far theory and debate have come from focusing on fundamental concepts of creative city and creative economy to leading theses of urban development of neo-liberal economic policies in the last two decades. The interdependence of the social, political and economic environments already became the focus of economic investigations many decades ago. Already in the 1930s KEYNES (1936) called attention in his work "The General Theory of Employment, Interest and Money" to the fact that successful business needs a stimulating political and social climate. A few decades later, thanks to the work of Jane JACOBS, the significance of social and economic environment has again attracted increasing attention. In her book "The death and life of great American cities" (JACOBS 1961) she sharply criticised the contemporary mainstream urban planning in the United States and drew attention to the handicaps of prevailing 'orthodox' solutions of urban planning in the 1950s, which completely ignored the significance of urban design and did not strive for serving urban life, cultural and human values. JACOBS' aspirations for



urban development and revitalisation could be interpreted as a harbinger of the emerging new economic order. According to SCOTT (2006) numerous attempts have been made to characterise this new economic order of the coming decades: BELL (1973) labels it as post-industrial society, HARVEY (1987) describes it as flexible accumulation, and ALBERTSEN (1988) writes about post-Fordism.

In the 1990s the theory of the new economy emerged and became the dominant urban development concept of the decade and the first half of the 2000s (GORDON 2000). In economic research as well as in research on urban development the Los Angeles School of Urban Studies played a decisive role, which predominantly focused on the impacts of creativity and innovation on urban development (SOJA & SCOTT 1986). The concept of the creative city was developed by Charles LANDRY and Franco BIANCHINI. They published the concept in their book "The creative city" in 1995 (LANDRY & BIANCHINI 1995), then LANDRY worked further on the concept and a few years later published his seminal book "The Creative city: A toolkit for urban innovators" (LANDRY 2000). However, LANDRY's research on the creative city and its economy began much earlier. In 1978 he founded the organisation called *Comedia*, which went on to provide research and analyses on communication and media. This organisation brought together such influential contemporary urbanists and thinkers as Russell SOUTHWOOD, Ken WORPOLE, Franco BIANCHINI, Geoff MULGI (DEMOS), Peter HALL and Carol COLETTA (CEO's for Cities).

LANDRY and his research team focused in the first half of the 1980s on the situation of cultural industries, and deeper exploration of the creative economy began in the mid-1980s. It should be noted that this era was parallel with the booming period of scientific publications on creative milieu (CAMAGNI 1991). Organisational activities research on creative cities has been undertaken since 1994. In the early 2000s, new impetus was given to the expansion of the concept of the creative city and creative economy: Richard FLORIDA (2002) published his basic work "The Rise of the Creative Class", laying out his theory on the composition, function and mobility of the creative class. The theory is clearly coincided with the era of neoliberal economic policy, so creativity and innovation increasingly appeared as driving forces for the modern economy (PECK 2005). As a consequence of the new development trends symbolic economy quickly took the place of the traditional industrial economy in urban development (EVANS 2003), and cities started becoming "creative cities". A growing number of municipalities tried to define themselves as creative cities. According to PRATT (2010, p. 14) "Within the field of urban policy the notion of a creative city has spread like wildfire, but unlike a wildfire, it appears that everyone wants to have a creative city."

In Western European cities local municipalities one after the other established their branding departments, reversing the classic path of product development. The object of modern product development became the exploration and promotion of cognitive notions including the city's structure and environment in order to adjust cities to requirements of idealised new brands. The aim of the urban elite became to establish emotional ties through which consumers merge with the image and they re-buy products offered by the city (GREENBERG 2000). The creative city concept by the end of the 2000s became the ruling ideology of modern urban development and urban policy. After the global economic crisis, the prevailing neo-liberal economic ideology gradually lost ground, so the signifi-

cance of the creative city and economy declined and they appeared to lose their privileged positions in urban development. Already in the second half of the 2000s, the first serious critiques on the concept of creative cities and economies appeared, particularly related to RICHARD FLORIDA's theory.

STORPER & MANVILLE (2006) pointed out that FLORIDA underestimates the role of firms in the creative economy and in settling down the creative class, respectively. They note that not skills and creativity, but companies and agglomeration economies are engines of growth. HALL (2004) drew attention to the fact that creative cities cannot be created from one day to the next, as it is a time-consuming process. Many social scientists were concerned that the concept of the creative city embodies the desire to attract the financially strong transnational elite with global connections. In the consumer society, creative urban development projects target the upper (high end), capital-rich strata. They aim to promote the role of the middle strata in the urban economy's competitiveness, so that only certain elite groups are favoured instead of the majority (McCANN 2007). With regard to urban development strategies critical voices appeared that urban development projects focus on the improvement of the quality of "places" instead of the quality of "life" (DONALD & MORROW 2003), and these projects interpret the city as a mosaic of "public spaces" instead of as a "landscape" (MITCHELL 1993).

Critiques of culture and cultural life stressed that creative urban policies use liberal forms of multiculturalism in order to control the identity of place, and through the artificial appreciation of artistic and cultural districts they contribute to their securitisation (CATUNGAL, LESLIE & HII 2009). In this way, culture is becoming a marketing tool for the city, and it is increasingly becoming a decoration rather than a function (MOMMASS 2004).

The phrase *creative economy* appears several times, therefore in order to clarify the definition we briefly highlight the composition of the creative economy. The creative economy basically includes those branches where different forms of creativity (scientific, technological, economic, cultural creativity) are strongly present. At first, creative economy was identified with cultural economy, but it quickly expanded with copyright industries, information and communication technologies, and research and development (HARTLEY 2005). This concept was replaced by the view that cultural, creative and knowledge-intensive industries are parts of the creative economy (SÁGVÁRI & LENGYEL 2008).

Thus, the interpretation of creative economy is increasingly expanding because there is an extremely wide range of industries and activities that are rooted in individual creativity, their success lies in the creative readiness and knowledge-intensive working practices, have a high information content and their output are unique spiritual or material products. Currently, there is no standard definition for creative economy, so there is no clear consensus about which specific industries belong to the creative economy. This is particularly problematic, because if there is no commonly accepted conceptual framework, preparation of comprehensive surveys and comparison of results is extremely difficult.

Based on a comprehensive literature review, industries belonging to creative economy currently can be classified into two major groups: Creative industries and knowledge-intensive industries (MUSTERD et al. 2007). "Creative industries" is a very broad category that includes cultural economy, the copyright industries with traditional and digital content industry sectors. In the literature there is an approach that emerged in the last decade,

which suggested that knowledge-based activities should also be taken into account having a relatively high creative content. These so-called knowledge-intensive industries include info-communication technologies (ICT), special branches of finance, legal and business services, as well as research and development (R&D) and higher education.

Firms of the creative economy can be characterised by small company size, high degree of flexibility, customer-oriented and knowledge-intensive work and their activities provide high information content. Domestic and international networking is a typical feature of these firms, so they attract other economic activities. Metropolitan regions and large cities offer ideal venues for creative and knowledge-intensive industries where a high degree of concentration can be observed.

### **3 A brief overview of the creative economy in Eastern Europe, Hungary and Budapest**

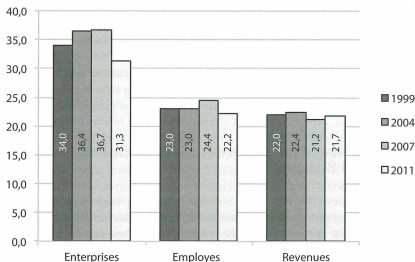
Some people believe that due to the Socialist period the weight of the creative economy in Eastern European countries is substantially lower than in Western Europe. The reality is that Eastern European cities do not lag behind their counterparts in Western Europe, but there are several differences. The strength of the creative economy is quite similar in the Western and Eastern part of Europe, however, the role of creative and knowledge-intensive industries is significantly different. The creative industry is much more market-driven and culture-specific, thus it is no accident that creative industries have a higher profile in Western European metropolitan regions. According to MUSTERD et al. (2007) we can conclude that no clear correlation can be detected between the weight of the creative economy and the development of cities and countries, or the local gross domestic product (GDP) per capita. Thus the development of the creative economy is not a matter of economic development, which could be good news for countries or even cities with less economic potential.

However, international experiences show that regarding creative economy the biggest challenge for Central and Eastern European cities is the lack of cooperation between the different actors. This applies not only to economic actors, but also universities and research and the academic sector, as well as politics and local decision makers. The lack of collaboration and co-operation is the greatest curse of the Hungarian economy, which affects the creative economy companies as well. All this is coupled with the high levels of bureaucracy, increasing corruption, and the lack of transparency. Nowadays, the biggest challenges for many Central and Eastern European countries including Hungary are the emerging ethnic and cultural intolerance and the outflow of talent.

According to the definition of creative economy by the ACRE<sup>1)</sup> consortium at the end of 2011, there were 221,000 active economic organisations in Hungary operating in the field of creative industries and knowledge-intensive industries (together the 'creative

<sup>1)</sup> ACRE: Accommodating Creative Knowledge – Competitiveness of European Metropolitan Regions within the Enlarged Union. The project was funded by the Sixth Framework Programme of the EU. Further information: <http://www.acre.socsci.uva.nl>

economy'). The number of employees working in the creative sector made up 787,600 persons and creative economy in Hungary produced 62.4 billion EUR revenues as a total. Compared with the data of 1999 several remarkable changes took place during this decade not only in Hungary, but also in the Budapest Metropolitan Region (Fig. 1).



Source: Own calculation based on the dataset of the HUNGARIAN CENTRAL STATISTICAL OFFICE 2011

Fig. 1: The weight of creative economy in Hungary between 1999 and 2011

The economic restructuring during transition has made it obvious that Hungary and Budapest – based on its skilled workforce – could be competitive in the knowledge-based industries within the European economic area. Accordingly, the national, regional and local strategies in Hungary have focused on the development of knowledge-intensive branches since 2000. Thus, the development of creativity has been neglected for the sake of development of innovation and knowledge. As a consequence of this progress a significant re-arrangement process took place within the creative economy in Hungary between 1999 and 2011 (Table 1).

The Budapest Metropolitan Region is the most economically advanced area of the country. Actually, the Budapest Metropolitan Region has a much better position among European cities than Hungary does in Europe. This can be related to the gateway position of Budapest within the country: Up to now the Central Hungary Region (and within that Budapest and its agglomeration) attracts most of the foreign and domestic investments and innovations, and Budapest serves as a gateway for innovation and modern technologies, and national centre of most creative activities. Since the change of the political regime, Budapest managed to keep its leading position in the economic development and modernisation of the country in most respects.

According to databases of the HUNGARIAN CENTRAL STATISTICAL OFFICE 44.5% of creative enterprises (ca. 100,600 companies and sole proprietors) were operating in Budapest

	<b>Enterprises</b>	<b>Employees</b>	<b>Revenues</b>
<b>Creative industries</b>	<b>-16.7</b>	<b>-18.0</b>	<b>-18.7</b>
ICT	3.4	5.2	4.6
Finances	5.1	3.2	13.3
Law and business	6.8	11.3	1.0
R&D, higher education	1.4	-1.8	-0.2
<b>Knowledge-intensive branches</b>	<b>16.7</b>	<b>18.0</b>	<b>18.7</b>

Source: Own calculation based on the dataset of HUNGARIAN CENTRAL STATISTICAL OFFICE, Department of National Accounts, 1999–2011

Tab. 1: Changes within the creative economy of Hungary (1999–2011, 1999=100 %)

	<b>Enterprises</b>	<b>Employees</b>	<b>Revenues</b>
<i>Creative industries</i>	45.0	46.2	64.6
ICT	57.1	49.7	32.3
Finance	31.2	68.3	94.8
Law and business	48.0	59.8	63.8
R+D, higher education	49.0	45.9	69.2
<i>Knowledge intensive industries</i>	45.9	57.0	56.9
Creative economy total	45.5	53.1	58.8
Total	36.9	40.9	54.5

Source: Own calculation based on the dataset of the HUNGARIAN CENTRAL STATISTICAL OFFICE, Department of National Accounts, 2011

Tab. 2: Weight of the Budapest Metropolitan Region in the creative knowledge sector in Hungary (2011, %)

and its agglomeration, and 52.0% of creative employees (418,000 persons) worked here (Table 2). The revenues produced in the territory of Budapest and its metropolitan region reached 36.7 billion EUR in 2011. Budapest's share in the Hungarian creative economy has steadily increased in the last decade (even during the global economic crisis), data thus suggest a growing spatial concentration of creative industries in Hungary. There is a considerable gap both between Budapest and the countryside, and larger provincial towns (county seats, centres of higher education) and villages. The former West-East slope of spatial and economic disparities in Hungary has been replaced by the distance from Budapest and the creative centres in the countryside. It is no coincidence that creative start-up companies are increasingly moving towards the metropolitan region of Budapest.

Creative firms are predominantly located on the Buda side within the city (Table 3). The highest concentrations of creative companies within the local economy could be detected in 2011 in districts I, II and XII. With regard to the number of creative employees

District	Enterprises	Employees	Revenues
on the Buda side			
I	48.2 (2)	49.6 (2)	72.9 (1)
II	48.1 (3)	37.5 (4)	43.2 (3)
XIII	43.2 (5)	30.6 (8)	26.1 (8)
XII	48.2 (1)	35.0 (6)	16.3 (16)
XI	44.2 (4)	35.2 (5)	12.5 (18)
on the Pest side			
V	43.0 (6)	38.8 (3)	52.9 (2)
VI	39.3 (11)	54.3 (1)	35.6 (4)
VII	40.4 (9)	29.7 (10)	30.4 (6)
IX	39.1 (12)	30.5 (9)	32.3 (5)
VIII	37.8 (15)	23.9 (17)	25.6 (11)

Source: Own calculation based on the dataset of the HUNGARIAN CENTRAL STATISTICAL OFFICE, Department of National Accounts, 2011; in brackets the rank of districts by given indices

Tab. 3: Comparative data on the creative economy of Budapest by districts (2011; %)

the positions of Districts are much more balanced between the two sides of Budapest. Districts located on the Pest side seem to be prevailing in revenues produced in the creative knowledge sectors. With regard to the role of creative economy Districts VII and VIII, where our case study areas are located, have intermediate positions within Budapest (Table 3). In 2011, in both districts around 3,000 creative companies were registered (3,000 in the 7<sup>th</sup> District and 2,800 in the 8<sup>th</sup> District), however the number of employees in the 7<sup>th</sup> District was twice as high as in the 8<sup>th</sup> District (27,700 and 13,800 employees, respectively). The revenues were more balanced: 2.1 billion EUR was produced by the creative and knowledge intensive sectors in the 7<sup>th</sup> District and 800 million EUR in the 8<sup>th</sup> District.

As a consequence of the significant re-arrangement of the creative economy in Hungary mentioned above, numerous cluster developments have been taking place in Budapest. The clustering process on the Buda side started already in 1996 with the establishment of Infopark in the 11<sup>th</sup> District being the first state-financed science park in Central Eastern Europe specialised in R&D. Starting with only two university buildings, the Infopark nowadays hosts the headquarters of Hungarian Telekom, IBM, Lufthansa Systems, Hewlett-Packard, and the centre of the European Institute of Innovation and Technology is located here as well. Another success story on the Buda side is the establishment of Graphisoft Park. In 2006, Graphisoft SE, one of the first private companies in Hungary founded in 1982 and nowadays a world-leading software company, established a technology park in the revitalised former Gasworks in north Budapest (Óbuda). The Graphisoft Park in the 3<sup>rd</sup> District offers high quality working conditions and office space for ICT and biotech companies in refurbished and brand-new high-tech buildings in an attractive physical environment (Fig. 2). In 2007, the new Aquincum Institute of Technology (AIT)



Source: Photo by T. EGEDY

Fig. 2: Graphisoft park linking urban and cluster development with ICT, R&D and mobility

was established in the Graphisoft Park providing an exceptional 'study abroad' experience for students working in IT from the world's leading universities. With regard to creative industries especially the film industry and its clusters emerged very rapidly in the last decade and showed outstanding dynamics in the Budapest Metropolitan Region. The Korda Studios and Filmpark in Etyek, the Hungarian Film studios in Fót and Budapest, and the new Raleigh Studio Budapest attract well-known producers, and many US-American blockbusters have already been shot in Budapest.

#### 4 Creative residential quarters in the inner districts of Budapest

Regarding the building stock, Budapest is a highly spectacular city from an architectural point of view. The ensemble of edifices built in art nouveau style at the turn of the 19–20<sup>th</sup> centuries is invaluable. In addition, the cultural heritage of Budapest should be mentioned. The core sites of the world heritage are the Buda Castle quarter and Andrassy Avenue representing the precious architectural traditions of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The diversity of neighbourhoods, the composition of the housing stock and new investments provide favourable conditions for creative workers and professionals to move and settle down in Budapest. A great variety of neighbourhoods of different standards and quality is ready to meet the demands of all social strata. In the following chapter we provide two positive cases to present how old and new neighbourhoods can successfully promote the further development of creative and innovative life within the city.

#### 4.1 The Jewish quarter providing old traditions and new perspectives

The Jewish quarter is one of the oldest and most valuable neighbourhoods in Budapest. One of the first theatres was established in the neighbourhood at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. In 1859, the biggest synagogue in Europe and currently the second-largest non-orthodox synagogue in the world was built on Dohány Street. The building stock was mainly erected in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Fig. 3). Besides residential buildings, a ritual bath, kosher shops and restaurants and workshops characterise the quarter. Many unique building types are located in the area, like passages, residential and factory buildings. However, due to the relatively small size of plots the quarter can be characterised by a lack of green spaces and high residential density. Many Jews settled here and this quarter became the residence of one of the biggest Jewish communities in Europe. This part of the city gradually became a vibrant quarter with unique spatial and social structures. According to KÁLMÁN MIKSZÁTH, a famous contemporary Hungarian writer from the 19<sup>th</sup> century “Since the beginning of time it has been the centre of night life. Bustling, lively, and noisy.” (SÁRKÓZI 2006, p. 10, quoted in ZATORI & SMITH 2014)



Source: Photo by T. EGEDY

Fig. 3: Old buildings in the Jewish quarter at Klauzál Square

During World War II, a Jewish ghetto was created in the vicinity of the synagogue. Large numbers of Jews died within the ghetto due to the appalling conditions but many more were deported. Although many Jewish residents live elsewhere in the city today, three of the city's working synagogues are still located here as well as the Jewish Museum and several kosher restaurants and cafés. It is considered to be the largest Jewish community in Central and Eastern Europe. International organisations estimate the number of Jews in Hungary to be 80,000–120,000. According to DELLA PERGOLA (2014) and local



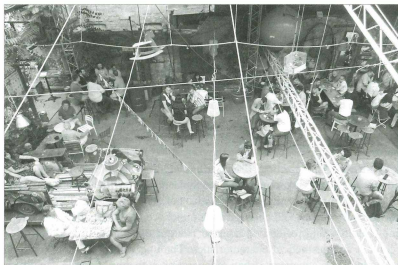
estimations by SEBŐK (2013) the real number of Jewish people is around 45,000–95,000 in Hungary and 80–90% of the Jewish community resides predominantly in Budapest.

As a consequence of the long-lasting neglect during Communism, the valuable building stock started to deteriorate. The physical decay was accompanied by unfavourable social processes (i.e. ageing, social downgrading, filtering down). After the change of regime in 1990 a brand-new promenade was planned here to integrate the quarter into the city's life, but only one building could be constructed before the recession in the mid-1990s.

After 2000, a massive rehabilitation process started in endangered neighbourhoods with inner-city old housing and in the housing estates. The inner city and especially the neighbourhoods near the city centre like the 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> Districts started to experience rising interest of investors and speculators. Due to the high rent gap the old building stock was often sold to developers who demolished and replaced them with new constructions (mostly real estate developments and shopping malls and, in a few cases, cultural investments). In the Jewish quarter many old heritage buildings have been demolished and replaced by new office buildings and residential houses. The quarter started to lose its former architectural context and aesthetical characteristics. The uncertainty and constantly changing plans and the lack of a consistent urban regeneration plan amplified the negative architectural and social developments. Several property scandals characterised these years. Only a few heritage buildings left behind by the Jewish community could be restored with the help of foreign (mainly Israeli and US-American) investors. The territory was revaluated when the Jewish quarter became the buffer zone of the World Heritage Site in 2002. Local residents and non-governmental organisations protested against the destructions. Due to local bottom-up initiatives the National Office of Cultural Heritage declared the Jewish quarter to be an area of monumental historical significance and in 2005 extended the official protection to 51 buildings as certified monuments. The construction works, foreign investments and rehabilitation process brought a kind of gentrification in certain parts of the quarter, and foreign flat owners and tenants appeared in the neighbourhood. However, their appearance weakened the former local identity and community.

#### ***4.1.1 Lack of regeneration as a seed bed for creative milieu?***

Since the early 2000s, many abandoned buildings have been re-invented as so-called 'ruin pubs' starting with Szimpla Garden in 2002 (Fig. 4). Ruin pubs located in neglected, run-down buildings predominantly in the 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> Districts of Budapest are unique features of the cultural milieu and entertainment of the city. The ruin-bars represent in some ways the idea of multifunctional independent cultural centres in Budapest: Partly as a result of their temporary existence, and partly by their message related to resistance against the destruction of urban values. Especially at the beginning, they attracted intellectuals, students, and artists. These pubs do not just serve drinks and snacks, and they are not only important meeting places for the younger generations, but host cultural and arts events (e.g. cinema, concerts, big screen events, even farmers' markets) and are designed and decorated by artists in unique and innovative ways. They became cultural focal points for many activities including community actions (see LUGOSI, BELL & LUGOSI 2010). This area has gradually become the 'creative hub' or 'creative heart' of the city with a plethora of



Source: Photo by T. EGEDY

Fig. 4: Szipmly Garden, the first ruin pub in Budapest opened in 2002

architectural monuments, restaurants, bars, design shops, galleries, and festivals. Within walking distance of one another there are around 220 architectural monuments, 180 restaurants, 31 ruin pubs, 25 hotels, 15 galleries, and 22 design shops (ZATORI & SMITH 2014).

The area is home of a recently renovated courtyard (the *Gozsdu Udvar*), which contains numerous restaurants and a Sunday arts and crafts market, and the district also hosts several art workshops and exhibition spaces and small theatres. Due to its openness, tolerance and sub-cultural offers these ruin pubs are especially popular amongst foreign creatives and expats (EGEDY et al. 2009). According to international surveys and tourist websites (e.g. GetYourGuide, GoEuro), thanks to the vibrant cultural and nightlife in this quarter Budapest belongs nowadays to the 15 most important party cities of the world. TÓTH, KESZEI & DÜLL (2014) examined the decisions of subcultural entrepreneurs such as fashion designers and retailers to locate themselves in these districts. The main factors included the concentration of talent, the aesthetics and cultural meanings of locality. They became personally attached to place and milieu, appreciating the inspiring, unique and creative atmosphere. It is also a central location in the city, easy to access, popular with local residents and tourists alike, and the rents are still relatively cheap.

In recent years, many experts draw the attention to the emerging commercialisation and commercial gentrification of the district. Private investors also recognised the potential of the 'ruin bar business', thus a concentration process within the ownership structure has been taking place in the past few years.

Another unique feature representing the local creativity is the painted firewalls. Many empty walls remained around the vacant plots of demolished buildings. Budapest is often

called a “city of firewalls” because of the high number of such walls. These walls stood for many years (sometimes for decades) unused, then around 2010 a new movement appeared for re-using these empty walls. Local painters initiated painting activities in the district and thanks to their engagement old run-down firewalls were reborn as works of art. These paintings have become fascinating and popular attractions within the neighbourhood (Fig. 5).



Source: Photo by T. EGEDY

Fig. 5: Painted firewall in the Jewish quarter

It should be emphasised that most of these initiatives have come from arts and cultural organisations or artists, community centres, civic groups, alternative tour operators, and small business entrepreneurs (e.g. restaurants, bars, shops) rather than from local or national government initiatives. However, one of the main streets (Király utca, which crosses both districts) was chosen as a prioritised project area by the Budapest Municipality for a five-year-long period, from 2011 to 2016. One of the main aims of this project is to bring together many stakeholders including local governments to make the area more liveable and aesthetically pleasing. Many buildings are still dilapidated, some streets are neglected and several areas are in need of a good clean-up.

#### **4.1.2 Fields of conflict within the quarter**

After the change of regime, in the early phase of the development of the quarter in the late 1990s and in the beginning of the 2000s, two main fields of conflict emerged in the neighbourhood. The area provided very good potential next to the World Heritage Site of

Andrássy Avenue for real estate speculations as depicted earlier. After 2000 and before the financial crisis that erupted in 2008, the private sector started to show more interest in the redevelopment of such centrally located inner-city neighbourhoods (KOVÁCS, WIESSNER & ZISCHNER 2013). As a consequence of the market pressures many monument buildings were taken over by private investors (often speculators), who took advantage of the absence of the demolition ban and built new buildings (e.g. apartments, hotels, office buildings) to replace the old ones. Especially local NGOs raised their voices against these demolition works and thanks to their protests and activity since 2005 it managed to slow down and bring under control the expanding speculative businesses.

However, simultaneously another field of conflict emerged in other parts of the district between private investors and the local government and local residents, respectively. In the run-down buildings ruin pubs have been opened and many problems appeared regarding hospitality and services (late opening times, loudness etc.). Long-lasting debates among the pub owners, the administration and local residents characterised this period during the 2000s. These conflicts exploded in the boom phase of the party quarter after 2010, when the site became more touristic and tourists increasingly invaded the area. In the past few years stakeholders managed together to reduce (but unfortunately not to solve) the problems. It is no surprise, therefore, that former residents often left the area and new, younger, creative strata (pioneers) moved into the neighbourhood predicting possible future gentrification. In the coming years it is expected that conflicts between private investors will increase. On the one hand the party business (pubs) seems to be concentrated in the hands of a few owners, on the other hand, many more owners who rented their properties during the recession are now returning to their original investment and development plans. This can sharply influence the future of ruin pubs and the future character of the whole district.

## **4.2 The Corvin Promenade project – a brand-new neighbourhood for the young creative generation**

In 1997, the municipality of the 8<sup>th</sup> District of Budapest decided to build a new quarter on the site of the former gipsy ghetto of Budapest containing run-down buildings and low quality public rental dwellings. The aims of the Corvin Promenade project were to create a new, mixed residential and commercial area for the young population attracted by an urban lifestyle and cultural life, and to build a new multifunctional community space and cultural centre with higher standard green areas located near to the historical city centre of Budapest. According to the real-estate development plan the 10-year project was supposed to induce the construction of further residential, commercial, institutional and public areas.

### ***4.2.1 A run-down neighbourhood with good potential***

The 8<sup>th</sup> District of Budapest, also called *Józsefváros*, is located on the Pest side between the city centre and the periphery. *Józsefváros* is one of the poorest and most densely populated districts of Budapest. This historical district dates back to the 18<sup>th</sup> century, even

though most of its housing stock was built during the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Bad quality housing stock was partly a result of the qualities of the historical urban fabric, with high density, a low ratio of dwellings with conveniences (such as toilets at the end of the inner corridors) and an unfortunate architectural layout (for example, courtyard houses containing apartments facing the open corridors). The delayed rehabilitation of the 8<sup>th</sup> District resulted in a considerable deterioration of the Corvin area as well, a site characterised by a population with a high concentration of low social status groups and extensive slum areas and a high share of disadvantaged Roma population (ENYEDI & KOVÁCS 2006). The image of the district was already very negative before the change of the regime in 1989. To avoid irreversible filtering down processes, the district government initiated a strategy-building process for the regeneration of the Józsefváros, which started in 1998. The main aim of the regeneration was on the one hand to renew the social rental dwelling stock containing run-down, obsolete, health-threatening flats, on the other hand to improve the negative image and reputation of the area.

#### ***4.2.2 The Corvin project***

The Corvin Promenade urban regeneration project aimed at creating a “new city centre” in the heart of the 8<sup>th</sup> District of Budapest. This large-scale development is currently the largest urban regeneration programme in Central Europe. Construction works started in 2006 and are still in progress. The development area is 22 hectares, with good connections to the centre and the transit network (two subway stops next to the neighbourhood). It is organised on a new pedestrian axis from the Grand Boulevard to the outer 8<sup>th</sup> District. The project is a mixed-use development of a planned 500,000 m<sup>2</sup>, it incorporates 182,000 m<sup>2</sup> of residential use, as well as 50,000 m<sup>2</sup> for commercial use, 57,000 m<sup>2</sup> for hotel and office, as well as 77,000 m<sup>2</sup> for administrative and research functions. The project has been developed using a public-private partnership agreement, in which the actors are: The Futureal Group (private developer, nowadays the most successful urban development company in East Central Europe), the Municipality of the 8<sup>th</sup> District, and the Rev8 Urban Development Company (a coordination agency founded by the Municipality of Józsefváros and the Municipality of Budapest). The Corvin project aimed for a multi-functional use concept (for residence, office and retail) and focused on capturing high-end residents both in Hungary and expatriates as well as local and international companies. This and many such projects in Budapest are intended to reposition the city of Budapest “on the map of the competitive landscape” by “re-imagining and recreating urban space” (SWYNGEDOUW, MOULAERT & RODRIGUEZ 2002).

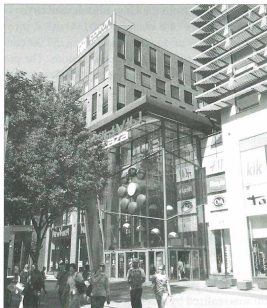
#### ***4.2.3 New residential and commercial developments on the Corvin Promenade***

One of the main aims of the project was to improve the local dwelling stock as mentioned above. This aim was realised by clearing 1,100 low-quality dwellings and the refurbishment of 1,400 apartments. In addition, 3,000 high-quality dwellings were planned. In the design of the new apartments, focus was put on the layout, rather than the actual size of the flats, reflecting the market needs (Fig. 6).



Source: Photo by T. EGEDY

Fig. 6: Residential buildings of the Corvin Promenade project



Source: Photo by T. EGEDY

Fig. 7: Commercial part of the Corvin project

Ownership structure is always influential in regeneration projects, for example, a high share of private ownership generally allows only step-by-step on-going micro-projects, whereas a high share of social rental (public) sector within the dwelling stock is favourable for carrying out mega-projects such as the Corvin Promenade. In the project area 74% of the dwellings to be demolished were owned by the local government. In order to enable the construction of the Corvin project the former inhabitants were moved to another part of Józsefváros. The whole development engendered considerable gentrification.

Retail and offices were placed on the western side of the area in the first two blocks (Fig. 7). Concerning the retail space, the development company estimated a total of 30,000 customers to sustain retail; of which 10,000 are expected to be local residents, 10,000 office workers, and an additional 10,000 customers from the adjacent neighbourhoods. The replacement of the old residential fabric in this Corvin area with the new 'iron and glass' shopping centre, residential duplexes as well as cafes and restaurants in the "Gastrostreet" represent the creation of new spaces of consumption that have become extremely common in the post-transitional period of former Central and Eastern European countries (Jakovčić 2008).

#### ***4.2.4 Cultural and knowledge-intensive industries***

Next to the Grand Boulevard at the western starting point of the Corvin axis is the Corvin Film Palace. The building of the Corvin Theatre was erected in 1924 and comprises altogether 1,200 places. The film palace is one of the few non-multiplex cinemas in Budapest, which survived the aggressive promotion of multiplex cinemas during the 1990s. The cinema managed to transform itself into a multi-functional institution hosting conferences, exhibitions and cultural events. Nowadays the building and its surroundings with cafes and restaurants function as a meeting point and entertainment site for the younger and middle-aged generations. The place also has a strong symbolic value: The Corvin köz, where the cinema is located, was one of the revolutionaries' headquarters during the 1956 revolution against the Soviet and Communist repression. The Corvin area is becoming a place of residence for more and more creative youngsters. A first sign of this development was when a leading company of Hungarian stand-up comedy moved into the area providing everyday events on their stage.

Knowledge-based and innovative industries are represented by the Corvin Science Park, the Living Lab and the Corvin Innovation Centre located in the western part of the project. The science park hosts many companies working in life sciences such as biotechnology and medicine, the Living Lab contains companies, which are active in the mobile and info-communication technologies. The innovative centre is actually an incubator house providing background infrastructure for young start-up enterprises.

#### ***4.2.5 Pros and cons of the project***

In terms of the quality of life of the local society as a result of the project, it should be mentioned that the tenants and private owners were relocated within the district and their living conditions subsequently improved. (The average size of a flat grew from 31 m<sup>2</sup> to

40 m<sup>2</sup> and all the dwellings had modern conveniences.) More public spaces and public institutions (e.g. local schools) were renewed during the project, new pedestrian zones were built and designated, the size of green spaces were increased, and parking problems were reduced by an underground garage for 5,000 cars. The position of the properties on the housing market improved and housing prices increased above the average. The most decisive result of the development was the rising appreciation of the area through new housing, and new public spaces.

Critical voices appeared regarding the project as well. The process of gentrification taking place in the area did not only result in the displacement of the people but represented a break in the cognitive relationship they had with their environment. The biggest dilemma facing many city authorities is how to improve the quality of housing stock and stop the associated process of gentrification that comes with it (in the face of the economic crisis). Even though the process of gentrification occurred, the state had to do this in order to rebuild the area otherwise the area would have been neglected and the structures might have become dangerous to human life and safety.

Before the Corvin Promenade project started in 2002 one could walk through the alleys of the neighbourhood at any time without feeling the need to buy or consume anything, one could simply appropriate the space. Currently the space of the mall is not meant for wandering but consuming. This economic barrier is often translated into a psycho-social barrier by those who use the space. Thus these economic and psycho-social barriers are currently the real barriers and they separate 'those who feel they belong there' (because they can afford to buy things) and those who feel that they do not belong there (e.g. poor people, homeless people, etc.).

One of the initial goals of the project was to integrate the new structures into the existing urban fabric, with a preservation of the local identity and the urban heritage. Currently the project is seen as a brand-new set of houses in a collection of old housing structures, and obviously the social status of people living there might also be different from those living in the surrounding neighbourhoods.

The Corvin Promenade project can also be considered as one of the many evidences of inter-city and intra-city competition to capture the global financial elite (businesses and talent). This shift from Spatial Keynesianism (Fordism) to post-Fordist neo-liberalism through urban competitiveness represents a duplication of firms' competitiveness into the realm of territorial competitiveness. Thus, it is perhaps correct to state that the Corvin mall and the entire Corvin Promenade project is an evidence of the changing social structure of neo-liberal times. The project appears to be a classic new 'rich people's hub' that is easy to criticise, and the actual socio-economic benefits or problems will no doubt re-emerge sometime in the future.

## 5 Conclusion

This paper has shown that Eastern European cities like Budapest might be different from their Western counterparts in terms of economic and political developments, but this



does not necessarily hinder the growth of creative initiatives. Indeed, it might even be true to say that grassroots, civil and community-based creative and sub-cultural ventures actually emerge more strongly as a counter-movement to top-down and conservative policies. This is especially true of capital cities like Budapest, which according to our statistical analysis is nowadays the major hub of creative and knowledge-intensive activities in Hungary in comparison to other cities and towns or countryside areas.

We agree with THIEL (2015) that it depends very much upon local conditions how creative economy can influence the further development of urban space. We have presented two cases in order to demonstrate how different conditions in residential areas can improve urban development based on creative background. Although the two districts of the cases have intermediate positions in Budapest with regard to the weight of creative economy, both examples testified the positive impacts of creativity and innovation on the local socio-economic environments. SANDERCOCK (1998) argues that some of the most radical planning paradigms emerge from people, agencies and organisations, which challenge existing power structures. The case of the Jewish quarter showed that a quarter where bottom-up grass-roots initiatives are engines of urban development can function very well even without external administrative assistance and governmental subsidies. Thus, such quarters can appear as driving forces for local urban development. The growing popularity of the ruin pubs with locals and tourists alike, the painting of firewalls and the increasing number of restaurants as well as cultural events like festivals all suggest that the districts are flourishing in terms of entrepreneurial, creative and touristic developments.

However, many experts criticise the current development of the quarter that Jewish traditions and current development processes are not actually related to each other and traditional culture does not play as important a role as it should. A more positive scenario for the future of such neighbourhoods could be drawn if modern creativity could be better linked to old traditions and culture. Another important lesson learnt from this case is that commercial gentrification can destroy creative endeavours, if due to the lack of strategy and vision development lacks some control.

The number of initiatives, institutions, civil organisations and commercial units accumulated in the quarter provided a critical mass, which influenced the behaviour of local government, which consequently recognised the economic benefits of commercialisation led by party business and creative activities. However, the brief analysis of fields of conflict highlighted that local governments could play a more significant role in balancing public and private development with local interests and should more actively take part in managing local issues in Budapest. The Budapest (and Hungarian) experience shows that the administration is not prepared to carry out properly this balancing role because the institutional and personal background is often deficient (lack of flexibility, unclear responsibilities, long-lasting debates, lack of finance or even aggressive assertion of political will).

Alternative lifestylers, artistic and creative people generally seek out those areas where they can engage in their activities surrounded by like-minded individuals, many of whom are forced to seek cheap rents in un-regenerated areas of cities. Budapest is no exception to this. Students, backpackers and other tourists are drawn to such environments because of the higher than average concentration of unusual entertainment facilities, ethnic food and a somewhat Bohemian atmosphere. Ideally, such spaces should not become too gentrified

otherwise local residents may be priced out and the area can become standardised, losing the appeal that made it popular with creative individuals and tourists in the first place. This is a real danger in the case of the Jewish quarter.

HARVEY (1991) suggests that the postmodern facade of cultural redevelopment can often be seen as a carnival mask, and BIANCHINI (2000, p. 5) refers to this phenomenon as "putting lipstick on the gorilla". Social and economic problems are (only) temporarily masked by new developments. Standardisation of development is one issue (e.g. shopping centres and multiplex cinemas, which could be anywhere) and the composition of the local population can change quite dramatically creating larger gaps between the 'haves' and the 'have nots'. In this sense the case of the Corvin project is a typical example of neo-liberal models of city quarter development. The Corvin project symbolises the power of large private investors in shaping the creative milieu. In this case local government appeared as a leading initiator and actor of the development and together with a large private investor they operate and manage the whole development process. The gentrification process taking place here draws attention to the risk how interweaving of interests of private investors and local administration can completely reshape existing local communities. Anyway, the Corvin Promenade in Budapest offers a (currently) successful example of a mixed-use development, which regenerated a relatively poor area and created retail, entertainment and gastronomic experiences for local residents. Although it has been criticised for creating commercial retail spaces, which are not affordable for all, there has been a steady influx of creative industries and creative people who contribute to creating the character of the area and not over-standardising its development. The true socio-economic implications of this development, however, remain to be seen.

A critical analysis of Corvin Promenade showed that it is not enough to develop one single 'flagship' project, which may or (more likely) may not leave a long-term legacy for the city. It is also not advisable to engage in 'copycat' strategies and try to replicate the same success that has been achieved elsewhere. Every city and context is different and developments should reflect their uniqueness, not merely creating a process of 'serial reproduction' and standardisation (RICHARDS & WILSON 2006).

To summarise our findings we can state that both cases resulted in some positive processes, for example the fact that local creative milieu, regardless of its bottom-up or top-down character, could contribute to the development of the local urban fabric. However, the future of the case study areas is still uncertain, so only time will tell whether the developments could be seen as wholly positive, especially for residents. Whatever the future of these two areas, it is certain that creativity and creative neighbourhoods are and will remain major components of the urban development of Budapest in the near future.

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