

Anatomy of a Street: an introduction

Welcoming Cities

The London Festival of Architecture's theme, 'Welcoming Cities', is open to a variety of interpretations: of cities welcoming the Olympic Games, as well as cities welcoming initiatives, diversity and eventually conflict. The *Anatomy of a Street* project poses the question somewhat differently: what if large-scale cultural or sporting events affect cities in far more diverse ways than we expect? How does the actual change taking place differ from the anticipated urban effects, and what are the side-effects of top-down, large-scale urban development? Do events or regeneration simply contribute to the process of gentrification and commercialisation of cities or, on the contrary, do they bring about complex bundles of effects and counter-effects?

Anatomy of a Street – an on-going research programme linking initiatives in Budapest, Pécs, London, Warsaw and Bratislava – is a proposal to take a closer look at these phenomena. The case studies of the AoaS project are locations in cities where top-down national or municipal planning, corporate development, small businesses and bottom-up initiatives of the civic sphere intersect, interact and create unique forms. The AoaS project questions some of the general assumptions that describe the relationship between public, private, civic and corporate elements in their effect on the city.

National contributions to architecture festivals and biennials have consisted traditionally of declarations of pride, and showcases of great architectural achievements in order to position nations in an internationalised competition for attention, investments and commissions. Contrary to this, the AoaS project draws its inspiration

from critical studies examining the way how architecture is embedded in social, political and economic contexts, and how architectural objects and symbols can be described and decoded in specific local settings, as well as in broader global networks. The case studies – streets from various locations – differ geographically, historically and culturally, as well as architecturally. Notwithstanding this colourful variety, there is still a shifting degree of resemblance and interconnections informed by the global exchange of concepts, real estate and capital.

Anatomy of a Street takes the position of what may be called research architecture.¹

1 'Research architecture', an undefined but overused term, here refers to studies of social, geographical

and political processes which architecture engenders, facilitates or impedes. See David

Gissen, *Architecture's Geographic Turns*. In *Log* 12, Spring/Summer 2008, New York, ANY.

In order to investigate the global dimension of changes, we propose to look at cities on the micro-level and explore them in a comparative manner. The starting point for the AoaS is therefore a search for local answers to globally relevant questions.

To diversify a methodological urban study, we opened up the project to flexible approaches. We invited artists and designers to investigate aspects of urban change, and developed our inquiry into a travelling exhibition that takes the form of a series of study trips – both driving and feeding back to our research. The project is asymmetrically divided between the research workshops, the publication and the exhibition. Balancing between documentation and open-ended mapping processes, we consider research in the form of an exhibition, and vice versa, exhibition in the form of research.

Anatomy

Anatomy is 'the scientific study of bodily structure (...), a detailed examination or analysis'.²

2 Oxford English Dictionary

In this case, the study of a single street, a restricted area cut deliberately from its urban context. In this setting, the analysis may result in a distorted, yet condensed view of Budapest, Pécs and London, revealing complex Connections inherent in the detail. Statistics of demography and local economy may provide a clear picture of general trends and tendencies at large; however, they may also obscure processes at the micro-scale. Without distrusting statistics and their revelatory force, we chose to provoke an encounter between statistical and phenomenological evidence, by defining uncommon cultural, social and economic indicators.³

3 We borrowed the term 'uncommon economic indicators' from WNYC journalist Brian Lehrer's

crowdsourcing initiatives. <http://beta.wnyc.org/shows/bl/>

Walking down the street and looking at the streetscape, the signs, shapes, colours and lights, street furniture and advertisements, the old shops and new ones, the local off-license, merchants, residents and passers-by, the local paper, real-estate signs, vacant lots and empty buildings, hidden gardens, rooftops, street corners and open doorways, local cafes, restaurants, pubs and galleries, monuments and landmarks, sites of memory or fame, does, of course, offer much more than pure phenomenological experience. It opens up and delineates boundaries and different territories, and allows for glancing into parallel microcosms that co-exist beside, across and on top of one other.

The street enters the global exchange circuit through hidden processes: the task is to identify some of the mechanisms that made these streets become what they are today. To anatomise the unconscious infrastructure of social and cultural phenomena, and to analyse the underlying forces that generate changes in the chosen neighbourhoods requires the skills both of an ethnographer and a cartographer. Ethnology and cartography in this sense are the undertaking

of locating the global and situating the universal, so that its mechanisms are unveiled. As the philosopher-ethnologist Bruno Latour reminds us, 'Politics is not revolution but *clarification*, that is, the unfolding of artificial elements that we have not been aware of, on which we depend to exist. Politics, in other words, is a question of *air conditioning*, the progressive recognition that we live together within compounds that are as little natural as greenhouses, and the mechanisms of which appear to us bit by bit'.⁴

4 Bruno Latour, *Paris, ville invisible: Le Plasma*. Paris, Éditions du Centre Pompidou, 2007, p.262.
In *Catalogue Aïrs de*

The Street as Indicator, the Street as Metaphor

The *Anatomy of a Street* project departs from the assumption that there is a methodological advantage in looking at a delineated area of the city and measuring change by analysing symptoms surfacing in the urban street. The idea of looking at a particular neighbourhood or a singular street to grasp changes of the whole city draws its inspiration from a variety of sources: the street has long been a philosophical, literary and political topos, the birthplace of ideas, movements and actions, and a generator of specific registers of perception, maintaining a dis-equilibrium between seeing and being seen.⁵

5 Richard Sennett, *The Conscience of the Eye*. New York, Knopf, 1991.

The street is more than a simple type of public space: situated outside of the frequently evoked dichotomy between space and place, the street is, unlike the square or the highway, simultaneously *lieu et espace*, space and place.

Certainly, the street cannot model the 'whole' city. So what is the use of looking at a street as if it were

more than 'just' a street – a model concentrating the mechanisms that shape and constantly re-configure the city? In its linearity, the urban main street or high street (often more so than large avenues) gives passers-by the sensation of having their finger on the pulse of the whole city. Undoubtedly, there are neighbourhoods, blocks or streets that concentrate signs and symptoms of change in a particular way, thus accumulating symptoms of transformation and giving observers the opportunity to measure changes in their phenomenological directness. Like a gauge or a litmus test, or functioning as a barometer, the street may be seen as the smallest unit where complex urban tendencies can be observed and deciphered.

Of course, to consider the part as containing (or at least indicating) the whole is a tradition whose implications go further than the parameters of the AoaS project. From centuries-old philosophical ideas compatible with theorisations of contemporary science and technology, like Leibniz's monadology, to literary forms, such as narratology's 'mise-en-abîme' or 'synecdoche', looking innovatively at the relationship between the part and the whole still opens a fertile ground for the investigation of various cultural phenomena and the city.

Sometimes the street is a mere metaphor, an idea of community, of authenticity, of sparkling urban life, of a sense of adaptation, of street-smartness. Among the numerous cultural undertakings that deal with the street metaphor, a most recent source of inspiration is the collaborative media project, *Mapping Main Street*, launched in the United States in 2008, aiming to deconstruct the generalising notion of 'Main Street', as opposed to Wall Street, in post-mortgage breakdown political discourses.⁶

6 <http://www.mappingmainstreet.org/>

Király and Church Streets

Our choice of Budapest's Király Street (King Street) in exploring aspects of Budapest's post-Socialist urban transformation is based on its history and location within the inner neighbourhoods of Budapest. Unlike any other neighbourhoods in the historic core – which follow the beaten path of gradual privatisation, renovation and consequently gentrification – it seems as if Király Street's population has worked hard on enumerating the widest variety of arguments for and against specific directions in development, and correspondingly, for and against specific ways of urban living. A 'swinging street', in the sense that it cannot engage either with the vision that owners of the proliferating design stores paint on its face, or with the values alternative youth culture associates with it, or with the survival economy of second-hand stores.

Király Street is an incubator, where all the current plans for the city are constantly brought into question: mechanisms of corruption or citizen self-organisation, of new developments and heritage protection are tested here. New design and art galleries, squats and ruin bars, second-hand stores and food markets quickly emerge and disappear in this neighbourhood, thus ceaselessly drawing, shifting and re-drawing frontlines between different visions for the city. This is where words such as 'development' and 'heritage' become floating signifiers, used and abused by any occasional argumentative context.

Pécs's Király Street is somewhat different, but is similar in its many aspects. The main street of a medium-sized Hungarian town, one would expect Király Street to be the showcase of what the city's commercial capacity can offer to residents, as well as to tourists: a dense retail district, where strolling is always about discovering new places and meeting new people.

There are many reasons why Király Street is not like that. The economic crisis, combined with the heightened

commercial expectations of the municipality in anticipation of the city's 2010 *European Capital of Culture* status, have left some parts of the street devastated. Due to the lack of flexibility in the rental policy and the lack of differentiation in rental fees (according to the leasers' status and profitability), empty storefronts and buildings wait hopelessly for those who can afford the high rental fees. However, as on its Budapest counterpart, Király Street's empty buildings do not remain disaffected for long periods: civic initiatives contributed to the mushrooming of alternative cultural venues and a flourishing garden culture in the neighbourhood.

What are the similarities between Paddington's Church Street and these two high streets in Hungary? Mainly its variety and divisions, the mixture of council housing and Georgian, Victorian façades. The contrast between the two ends of the street: the daily street market, off-license stores, cheap coffee shops, fast-food restaurants; and the high-profile antique stores, new design galleries and fancy cafés. As if an invisible hand drew a line between the two parts: alike in Budapest and Pécs, where the two faces of the streets reveal differing visions, whose long-term compatibility may be desirable – and improbable.

Despite its central location (only minutes away from Regent's Park, Marylebone, Paddington, Hyde Park and Marble Arch) Church Street is a hidden world trapped between the heavily trafficked Edgware Road, the canal and the railway network. Despite neighbouring the most expensive areas of London, Church Street counts as one of the poorest locations of Europe, with the highest numbers of unemployment, poverty and illiteracy. This often blamed isolation is, however, the very reason that made it possible to obtain and preserve one of the most precious qualities: a unique local feel to a street with a global mixture of communities and multi-cultural groups. Questions posed by the *AoS* project about contrasting visions – gentrification, preservation

and regeneration, privatisation and globalisation, commercialisation and secularisation – become highly relevant in relation to the current master-planning processes and other initiatives for regeneration that are there to shape Church Street's future in the long term.

How does the localisation of the global, and the globalisation of the local occur? – and how do they contribute to the dynamics involved in the emergence and maintenance of intra-neighbourhood contrasts that tend toward the constitution of borders? To find answers to this question, we both looked at the chosen streets as particular, local entities, and juxtaposed impressions and reflections, objects and artefacts found in the two Király Streets and Paddington's Church Street in London.

Belatedness and Transfer

Ideas often travel faster than contexts. While there is a single terminology to describe and analyse urban phenomena, it is worth taking a closer look at seemingly inconsequential details that might alter the way privatisation, gentrification, commercialisation or secularisation are brought about in different locations.

A common thread followed by researchers and theorists of the post-Socialist urban condition was the question of path-dependence.⁷

⁷ G. Andrusz, M. Harloe, *after Socialism*, Oxford, and I. Szelenyi (eds), *Cities* Blackwell, 1996

The arguments defending the idea of path-dependency claimed that cities that have lived through an important period of Socialist-type political and economic governance will not 'find their way back' to the kind of development that Capitalist cities have experienced: they will face evolutions which will always depend on their previous development path. Counter-arguments denied the importance of the Socialist path: they claimed that the

globalised nature of urban economies forces every city to respond to similar requirements, and thus to follow a converging path.

Without offering any evidence for the case of path-dependency, one must acknowledge the important differences in the rhythm of transformation between Western and Eastern European cities. Natural disasters, major political and economic tendencies set a global scale and time in Europe; however, the centres and peripheries, or the Western vs. Eastern (post-Socialist) bloc function and move according to different rhythms. This difference lies not only in the accelerated pace of transition following the radical political and economic changes of the early 1990s and the consequent rapid liberalisation of real-estate markets, but also to 'short-cuts' caused by the 'de-synchrony' between development

⁸ For example, while the use of vacant spaces and shops in Budapest or Pécs is promoted exclusively by grassroots initiatives (just like it used to be in London a few decades ago), the same thing in London is now a top-down facilitated, institutionalized process (with the tax cuts, Special Arts Council Grants, etc.)

plans and socio-economic conditions.⁸

For instance, gentrification in its classical sense, as a process led by non-established young artists, cultural activists and freelance intellectuals (while being followed closely by real-estate developers), does not exist in the same form in post-Socialist cities. In Budapest, inner city neighbourhoods, however dilapidated, have never been unappealing for developers. From the first moment of the opening of the real-estate market, developers who were conscious of real estate tendencies in the West started investing in neighbourhoods that – according to the theory of gentrification – were expected to rise. New housing arrived in areas still consisting of degraded buildings, thus creating sharp contrasts between long-time residents and newcomers, without the relative continuity of the process of gentrification.

**Anatomy of a Street:
the exhibition and the catalogue**

Contrasts, belatedness, parallels and synchrony are among the main questions that the *Anatomy of a Street* exhibition and publication raises, while addressing the evolution of various examples of the European *high street*. On the occasion of the London Festival of Architecture, Paddington is the first venue of the *AoaS* exhibition, a nomadic project – unfinished by definition, which will travel to and learn from such cities as London, Warsaw, Bratislava and Budapest.

The publication is designed to complement the exhibition, offering historical, sociological and political insight into the forces that produce Király and Church Streets. In the first edition, the essay by Edwin Heathcote sets the tone for a comparative approach between the chosen streets, focusing on their architecture as shaped by the constantly shifting political and economic circumstances. Deepa Naik and Trenton Oldfield, founders of TIANG (This is Not a Gateway) reflects upon its members personal involvements in research and activism. Allan Siegel evokes the images of the large constructions of Pécs, in the wake of its *European Capital of Culture* season, while Csaba Ders delves into a deeper analysis of the town's principal street, Király Street. In his short reflection, Péter Lowas explores Pécs's self-organised cultural networks in relation to municipal development plans. A text by Béla Káli introduces the complexities of post-Socialist real-estate management. László Muntean analyses claims of heritage protection in a context where the notion of heritage becomes a weapon in an ideological battle. Gabó Bartha tells the story of the activist group KAP-HT that succeeded in preserving the local open-air food market. Ádám Albert's network visualisation depicts the mechanisms of complex transactions that helped local municipalities outsource public property by making

it nearly impossible to follow the circulation of money and real estate.

Another section of the publication comprises an inventory of artworks that fed into our research. There is the photographic archive of Emőke Kerekes's and Anna Mózes's portraits of the shopkeepers in Király Street. Péter Rákosi's series collects theatrical displays of the everyday, and documents shop-windows in the Király Streets of Budapest and Pécs. Miklós Surányi's series of temporarily inhabited spaces is a poetic but precise documentation of the overlooked, the imprints of everyday activities. Maps designed by Tímea Csaba and Gergely Kovács visualise the internal borders of Budapest's Király Street neighbourhood, using data based on the research of university students of the Moholy-Nagy University of Arts and Design and the Budapest Technical University.

The inspiration for the *AoaS* project came from Király Street, with the proposal for local research and a travelling exhibition that gathers material and experiences from different locations before finally coming back and taking place on the very site from which the first impulse originated. Our first venue for the exhibition, Church Street in London, came to us in a natural, almost unintentional way. We first arrived as strangers and wanderers, in the course of two and a half months, gradually becoming familiar and natural to the street, *moving in* and setting up our temporary office on Church Street.*

* We owe special thanks to the team of Church Street Neighbourhood Management for all their help and enthusiastic

collaboration. Thanks must also go to all those who provided the space – (shop) windows, walls, rooftops, cabinets, shelves,

tables and TV screens – to host our exhibition on and about Church Street.

Two letters from Bahbak Hashemi-Nezhad and the House of Jonn are the documentation of a work-in-progress of research on-site, observations and early proposals of this period.

Based on the regular visits and conversations with the traders and visitors of the market, *Aubergine NW8* is a project by Bahbak Hashemi-Nezhad, a market stall for exchange of food and ideas (the cross-culturally popular staple ingredient *aubergine* for humble home-cooking recipes) seeking to explore and further understand the ethnically diverse community that surrounds and benefits from Church Street Market.

House of Jonn's proposal, a gallery-guide system (map, audio-guide and way-finders), is linked to the idea of bringing the gallery to the street, as well as it is a playful reference to the walks of the Situationists, a map and audio-guide linking London with Budapest. Interviews conducted and used in this audio-guide informed profoundly our understanding of the street and the making of this exhibition.

While writing this introduction, the exhibition is still being shaped. Its final evaluation is entrusted to the visitor and will be the task of the second chapter, the next edition of our travelling inquiry.

From: Bahbak Hashemi-Nezhad
Date: 03 May 2010 02:18
Subject: Re: furniture
To: Steierhoffer Eszter

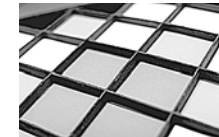
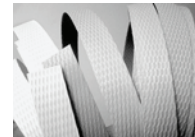
Hi Eszter,

As you know I have been thinking about designing elements for the street restaurant. Well, after some research, observation and good old model-making, I have an idea that could work very nicely.



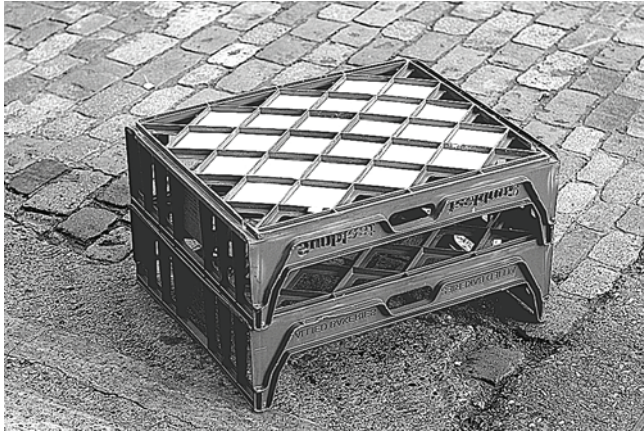
I am not really designing furniture but extending on the vernacular use of the crate within the market. There is a

certain crate that is used in almost all London street markets, I have seen it from Dalston, to Deptford to Church street: the Sunblest bread baskets, as they are called. All of which were used originally for bread, but most of which today are used for anything but bread. They are used vertically, horizontally, upside-down, stacked, nested etc. Currently heavy large boards are required to be placed on top of these bread baskets to provide a stable flat surface.



I want to make an additional element that can be dropped into the diamond shaped holes to provide this flat surface. Something in the line of a flexible rug made from wood and held together using strapping tape (pictured). The picture shows some pieces of paper I have placed (instead of the 15mm thick wooden diamonds) to illustrate the idea. These 'filled' crates can then be used as a bench and a table.

We can discuss in detail tomorrow.
Bahbak



From: Nicholas Lobo Brennan
 Date: 12 May 2010 09:50
 Subject: Gallery Ephemera
 To: Steierhoffer Eszter

Hi Eszter,



After looking at Church Street and the description of the Anatomy of a Street project we wondered what happens to the street when it becomes a gallery, and what happens to the gallery when it become a street.

Our key concerns were both the apparatus of 'gallery' and Church Street, and how they meet. So our idea is to produce the actual AoS gallery guidance system ephemera - the map, the audio guide, the way finder.

The project time limit means that the production of the gallery like paraphernalia will be the vehicle to learn about Church Street itself, which we like.



Let me know if you want more details of the actual elements we will produce. I have attached some photos of Church Street which show some of the observations.

We can discuss them too,
 Nick



Church and King

The point where Church Street spills into the roaring Roman Road of Edgware appears an exemplar of urban dysfunction and a crushing critique of London's particular brand of anti-urbanism. Yet, this is a cityscape of infinite complexity, one of the most perfect ciphers for the contemporary city in which globalisation informs the street in every conceivable way.

This is the view from that corner. The mouth of the street faces a huge hoarding and the behemoths of Paddington Basin's expanding fringes. This is the strange world of Paddington Green, the city's de facto high-security police station, once the monopoly of the IRA, now a drop-in shop for surveilled Muslims but also the Clash's Westway, a stream of imagined modernity flowing through the city. Church Street itself is delicately framed in perfect symmetry by a pair of traffic lights and the guard's tunic colours or a matching pair of 'no entry' signs.

The stucco Victorian terrace survives, set back from the single storey shopfront extension of what was once a mutualised building society but has now morphed into the Spanish Banco Santander, its flame logo looking deliciously like a mangal or grilled meat sign. 'Stucco?' said Groucho Marx of Florida's real estate boom, 'O can you get stucco'. The flush façades, stripped naked, caked with plaster like bad foundation, turn the corner into a mess of plastic shop-signs and ads for global phone cards, this new calling-home industry announced on its ad-hoc streetside boxes, the slightly more legal equivalent of the sharp's three-card-trick crate. The garish signs segue perfectly into the dumb pale façade of the Tesco Metro, one of Britain's few remaining home-grown global brands. The architecture which frames this entrance to the world of Church Street is defined at every conceivable scale. First, the resilient

Victorian fabric which has survived absurd traffic schemes and bombs, then the humane, Scandinavian-influenced social housing of the immediate post-war period, which modestly retains pitched roofs and window surrounds, a few ghostly remnants of northern European tradition. This gives way to more heroic applications, the ribbons of modernist housing, determined in their horizontality to create bands of social intercourse – street, canopy, terrace, elevated accessways. This is good, solid, self-effacing urbanity; these near invisible structures prove easily capable of handling bridal-wear shops, grocers and catts, permeable enough to accommodate the Middle Eastern lifestyle, lived more on the street than in the shop, yet robust enough to remain secure and to adapt. Then this mid-moderne gives way to a less humane version, brick cliffs and towers begin to disperse the street, breaking up the plan though their sheer mass.

But between the housing and the pavement emerges another language, an architecture of the in-between. It is this articulation of street furniture and mini-architecture which gives Church Street its particular expression. The modernist blocks to either side set a datum for the street. Fascias are capped with concrete canopies so that the garish plastic lettering doesn't infect the dignity of the housing above. But equally, these devices create shelter and produce a humanised scale which chimes with the stripy canvas coverings of the market stands and the barrows. This correspondence between building and the itinerant architecture of the market creates a mid-scale which is what makes this a part of a real city. But the scale of this world is not limited to the market stands. There is a complex ecosystem of *things* positioned at this scale. There are three different species of phone box, from the enclosed and glazed to the simple side-canopied. The internationalism and relative poverty of parts of the area and the proliferation of prostitutes' advertising

cards (clients presumably do not want to have numbers logged onto their mobile accounts) means that the phone boxes are in greater use than they are elsewhere, where they have become largely defunct.

A public toilet is dwarfed by the cliffs of social housing which frame it. Its half timbering is a touching reference to a bucolic, village green Englishness. The last resort of mock Tudor applied to that most English of building types. The streets are further flanked by bubblegum dispensers, by mobile street signs, by historicising bollards and signposts which bear no relation to the post-war welfare built landscape in which they stand.

Church Street gentrifies rapidly. The market stalls, some of which sell chandeliers, others seemingly attempting to sell spangly belly dancing outfits to the hijab-clad Muslim ladies, peter out and give way to antique modernist furniture shops and the indoor arcade of Alfies. The last stall is a frothy coffee merchant, a heavily gentrified intruder. Just as Benjamin perceived in the arcades of Paris the decline of a particular moment, but also a symbol of a certain kind of bourgeois production and consumption – industry and luxury – one which generated the unsettling, occasionally jarringly surreal juxtaposition of objects. Benjamin revelled in the defunct goods and trades of the arcades, geared towards a society that no longer existed, and outside of their time, temporal as well as spatial passages. In the self-conscious retro of Alfies, the effect is accelerated, moderne cocktail classics redolent of an age where wives were expected to greet their returning husbands with a Martini, the layers are suffused not only with the residue of time, but also endless layers of irony. Yet they do not let us forget that these are relics of an age which cherished modernity with an enthusiasm wholly lacking now. The security of a future of progress has disappeared; the ad-hoc aesthetic of the market outside has replaced a vision of gleaming technology.

Parallels are tantalising: Church Street is at once as globalised as anywhere in the world, yet resolutely local in its particular blend of businesses and an architectural aesthetic which results from an enlightened post-war consensus and the uncertainty of a property market which has difficulty sizing up the potential of a poor district on the threshold of some of the most valuable and desirable real estate in the world. The former Duke of York pub on the corner of Gateforth Street is now inhabited by the Lahore Restaurant (established 1970). Király Street (King Street) in Budapest was, curiously, named after the King of England. The Angol Király (English King) pub lent the street its name. If there are other links, they are through trade. Király Street was a centre of the city's rag trade: a few of its haberdashers and fabric shops remain, whilst Church Street's traders ply their brilliantly-coloured fabrics from their stalls and shops. It was also a centre of the city's Jewish community; bakeries and delis, now catering as much or more for Israeli or American tourists than for the locals, still dot the surroundings, whilst the extraordinarily theatrical endless perspective of the courtyards of the Gozsdú Udvar just off Király Street give an insight into the density of the urban fabric on the edge of the one-time ghetto.

Like Church Street, Király Street became an early adopter design ghetto, now with VAM's design centre bringing the corporate modernism of the big Italian manufacturers to the city. Previously, it was a place of small, smoky cafés and grudging service, Communist-era stores with wonderfully unselfconscious window displays of machine parts or sun-faded 1980s knitting patterns. Now, in its blend of 'ruin pubs', design shops, kosher caffs and pop-up stores, it has become more mainstream, pandering to a sentimental image of its own dereliction. The ruin pub, a particularly Budapest phenomenon, sees bars inhabit the complex spaces of derelict apartment blocks, using every room, from courtyard to garret, to create a rolling sequence of space in which

the customer asserts his or her independence of the formal city through a kind of drunken *dérive*. It owes more than a little to the pop-up bars of Berlin, which took advantage of the urban carnage left by the vacation of the swollen state apparatus of the East after its swallowing up by the West. Dozens of properties, from Stasi offices to police apartments, were left empty and appropriated by enterprising entrepreneurs to create party spaces selling cheap beer, which disappeared as quickly as they arrived, their activity tracing frenetic patterns through the pock-marked fabric of the city, their movement ensuring they stayed hip and cheap. The biggest of Budapest's ruin pubs have, of course, become institutionalised, and the area around Király Street has become the epicentre of this formalised informality. The pop up and ruin phenomena highlight a number of contemporary concerns – they are at once a subversion of the city fabric in the finest Situationist tradition, whilst at the same time becoming a formalised fetishisation of decay. They are a huge hit with tourists who rail against the corporatisation of Western Main Street, but who fail to acknowledge their role in precisely the kind of gentrification which, ultimately, leads to the arrival of the corporates. Nevertheless, in their transformation of the hulks of the nineteenth century city they do allow a penetration into and an alternative reading of the interior spaces of the city, which is unique and, in a voyeuristic way, thrilling. There is an undoubted frisson in such subversion of domesticity, but it is accompanied by a sadness that the centre of the city is becoming less dense as inhabitants move to the suburbs and spend their leisure time at the mall.

Whether in Church Street or Király Street, there is an ever-present danger in obsessing about the decline of a particular version of the city. The growing tendency to idolise authenticity is unavoidable in a globalised, insecure, rapidly-changing and international gentrifying urban realm. Until recently, Király Street

with its Communist-era shopfronts and dusty displays, its old time espresso bars and musty, decaying buildings, presented a picture of a city stuck in a seemingly more intimate urban milieu. Church Street too, with its buzz and astonishing diversity of the kitsch and the utilitarian, its seemingly exotic blend of shishas and hijabs against a background of the architecture of the welfare state, and tempered with the chic of its mid-century moderne specialists, seems to have found an urban ideal. But, as its rapid Islamicisation shows, the streetscape is far from static.

The urge to preserve authenticity is powerful but misleading: it is precisely the city's propensity for change which keeps it alive, even if the process may be painful, and even if our tendency towards the sentimentalisation of an earlier era makes us yearn for the old days. Whether the context is London or Budapest, that remembered utopian city always seems to be something slipping from our grip. We should instead relax, attempt to enjoy the city while we can, and revel in its endless capacity to absorb and adapt.

The Surreal Experience of Trying to Address Inequalities with the Logic that Increased them

In the time I worked at Cityside Regeneration¹

1 Cityside Regeneration Ltd (Cityside) operated in the West of Tower Hamlets. Cityside was a non-profit making company and partnership between the public, private and community

sectors including Tower Hamlets Council and the Corporation of London. It was established to manage regeneration programmes. Cityside managed the Single Regeneration Budget

Round 3 programme *Building Business* (1997-2002) and Round 5 programme, *Connecting Communities* (1999-2004). Corporation of London, accessed on 1 June 2010.

the organisation had two different chairman; one was the developer & co-landowner of Spitalfields Market²,

2 Mike Bear, chairman of Spitalfields Development Group (SDG)

the other the soon to retire CEO of the company that owned most of the land and buildings in Aldgate East.³

3 Director of Tishman Speyer.

The other positions on the board comprised the seats sat in by executives from nearby global banks, local businessmen and New Labour politicians. The board was almost always absent of influence from women and from non-business orientated organisations. The board was always absent of a dissenting voice that might have challenged the hegemonic business orthodoxy. The significant majority of the projects we worked in neighbourhoods required an 'entrepreneurial business' approach as a result of an obligation, set by central

government, to secure at least 50% 'match funding' from non-government and non-charity sources for a project. The result of this authority was the pervasive deployment of business practices, business logics and business lexicon. At this time people began to give themselves job titles like 'Urban Renewal Creative' or 'Creative Industries Incubator Manager'. Unsurprisingly both planning applications for Aldgate East and the re-development of Spitalfields Market as an office block went through the planning process with ease, despite in the later case, over 40,000 signatures being presented in an attempt to prevent the creation of another new peninsula of financial district style monoculture.

With capitalism left for the most part unchallenged by the collapse of the Soviet Union it was injected with a virulent new logic, often referred to, probably to simplistically, as neo-liberalism. Every aspect of work in urban regeneration started to fuse with the logic of a western businessman with a new MBA. When the regeneration programme, which had propelled over £300million of public and private money⁴

4 Unscientific calculation of all 'regeneration funding' allocated to be spent in the strip of land abutting the City of London from St Katharine's Dock to Bethnal Green between 1994–2004.

into the thin strip of geography abutting the eastern edge of the Corporation of London came to a close, the surreal experience of trying to address inequalities with the logic that increased them, was made more peculiar with the sacking and subsequent police investigation of the two senior local authority regeneration officers.⁵

5 Nisar Ahmed and David Richardson were suspended then dismissed from their senior posts in January 2004. See *Regeneration and Renewal Magazine*, 24 January 2004. Nisar Ahmed was jailed for 12 months for theft. See courtnews.co.uk

Despite this picture of corrosion, collapse and confusion, I was also aware due to personal network in the locality and wider work context, of a multiplicity of

organisations and people undertaking projects critically interrogating these processes, as well as a vast body of knowledge being expanded by vigorous, unexpected and heterogeneous agents.⁶

6 Our professional and voluntary experience has spanned academic work, regeneration project

management, activity on committees and boards, education projects on housing estates and in

local schools, regeneration initiatives and art in the public sphere.

New cells of new knowledge were and are continuously surfacing. This knowledge is generated and shared most often 'from the ground up' by those that inhabit the city, those that work alongside them and those thinkers within governments, think tanks or private companies that have not been seduced into only promoting and enabling the notion of 'erase, stretch, relinquish'.⁷

7 'Erase, stretch, relinquish' is introduced here as a term to summarise both the thinking and the actions leading built-environment decision-making processes. Rather than re-using existing building and making use of the ideas put forward by local residents, buildings are demolished. 'Erasing' is understood as both easier and more efficient. Demolition produces an

empty canvas suitable for an alien 'typology' to land. The new typology 'stretches' all aspects of the site including size, height and programming – the main aim being to 'stretch' the profit margin for the developer and the tax revenues for the local authority. 'Relinquish' is the stage when almost everyone that has benefited from 'stretching' moves on: the developer

either sells the site or passes on management responsibilities; the local authority no longer owns anything and struggles to answer who does own what or why none of the facilities promised have been built; and the neighbours 'relinquish' or resign themselves to the fact that their neighbourhood will never be what it could have been.

The sites propagating new knowledge are most often outside of 'the urban industry', and the agents of these new possibilities and practices seem to come together around shared notions of complexity, texture, rigour and potentiality. Is it not time for a re-understanding and re-formulation of the disciplines and, above all, of the participants involved in making space? Is it not time for urbanism to undergo a transformation similar to that of sociology opened up through cultural studies, or art history re-examined in the light of visual cultures?

This is not a moment to bemoan or to react against the current structures that are thought limiting and limited, but an opportunity to produce new conditions.

This Is Not A Gateway

Every movement and action in a city is a negotiation, each square foot belongs to a profit-making spreadsheet, every design is reviewed, every notion of 'citizenship' is contested. The work of Michel Foucault⁸ and Gayatri Spivak⁹

8 See for example, Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punishment* (Paris: Gallimard, 1977).

9 See for example, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *Death of a Discipline* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005).

provides a useful lens to question power-knowledge mechanisms, along with the exclusion and marginalisation of certain groups resulting from the maintenance of power within the urban industry. The question of how we might approach these realities, as significantly more people demand agency in their cities, has been guided by the practices of both Saul Alinsky¹⁰ and Paulo Freire.¹¹

10 See for example, Saul Alinsky, *Rules for Radicals: A pragmatic primer for realistic radicals* (New York: Vintage, 1989).

11 Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (New York: Continuum, 2007).

Following Alinsky, the need to act arises from recognising 'the world as it is'. Research data from UN-Habitat and Urban Age make explicit the significant implications of urbanisation on people's everyday lives. Statistics detailing the number of tall buildings constructed in Dubai and the accelerating concentration of financial and political power in a handful of cities are set against 'stomach dropping' and clearly unacceptable levels of poverty, injustice, monopolisation, collusion and exploitation. Our discussions with those working both within and outside spatial practices made it clear

that the out-of-step between official knowledge and on-the-ground realities was causing burning frustration for many. Personal and professional experience in a diversity of arenas brought us in contact with sites of relevant, critical knowledge and practice. These sites are often independent but also include clusters of research groups and leaders within innovative companies pushing out beyond their institutions. We were constantly working alongside people with remarkable ideas and projects that we thought colleagues in other fields should know about. These were not binaries, but missed opportunities resulting from a perceived isolation from each other. Like others, we recognised the urgency, desire and mutual need for barriers to be broken down, for ideas to be made accessible and for an expanded dialogue to begin. It was clear to us that a platform was needed – one that would circulate these multiple fields and sites of knowledge. Encouraged by colleagues and associates, we set out to create a platform that would demonstrate the potential of coming together.

Arguing for an engagement with a range of approaches and disciplines, thinkers like Stuart Hall, Nicholas Mirzoeff persistently allow us avenues in considering how to propose the city as a site of knowledge and potentiality. Writing about the *A.C.A.D.E.M.Y* exhibition, Irit Rogoff asked: 'Where are the unseen possibilities that already exist within these spaces – the people who are already working there and who bring together unexpected life experiences and connections... the paths outward which extend beyond the museum, the spaces and navigational vectors which are unexpectedly plotted within it'.¹²

12 Irit Rogoff, *Turning*, e-flux Journal #0

www.e-flux.com/journal/view/18

It is this curiosity and continual questioning how spaces and knowledge can be unbound from established limits

and expectations that have informed our thinking. We know that language frames thought and the usefulness of visual culture can also be demonstrated by a consideration of shifting terms such criticism, critique and criticality, potentiality and actualisation; terms that alter in convergence with the changing conditions they seek to address. The significance of this is not to deepen an understanding of a fixed object of study, in this case 'the city', but rather to create the possibility of prising open the field, making its complexities explicit, and allowing for unexpected actors to propel ideas forward.

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Notes on a Street in Transition

During the course of a city's evolution, its thoroughfares develop distinct characteristics and values signifying their different profiles and functions. In this context, the urban street is not too far removed from the trading routes blazed from the wilderness or charted by mariners. Decades ago, Jane Jacobs clarified why streets can be more than simply pipelines transmitting people or things from one place to the next. In contrast to their function as basic transport mechanisms, in the most dynamic situations they are organic entities.

Urbanists, planners, sociologists and city dwellers have argued relentlessly about the qualities that make one street resilient and alive while another is moribund and desolate. Searching for some magical ingredient to inject into the life blood of a city's atrophying elements, they often invent panaceas that inadequately consider the well-functioning dynamics of a public space. The results become reductionist solutions that compress the complexity of urban inter-relationships; often foregrounding features of design at the expense of historical and social factors – factors not always easily identifiable, but which are critical to processes of a street's re-invention and sustainability.

Frank Sinatra sang about 'State Street, that great street' in a paean to Chicago; yet, in the closing decades of the 20th century, State Street was a boulevard on life support. Located in the city's commercial centre, planners tenaciously sought to revive the once majestic thoroughfare. First, it was turned into a pedestrian zone, and then revamped and returned to the clamour of autos and buses traversing downtown. Despite its architectural landmarks, after six o'clock State Street

was drained of its vitality, as people returned to surrounding neighbourhoods and the suburbs.

Undertakings like State Street, regardless of the collection of experts, are ineffective if the motives at the base of the process are ill-conceived or fail to consider the socio-spatial dynamics that have propelled a street's evolution (or its demise). With the locations under consideration here, these issues come to the fore: in the more general sense as case studies in the formulation and implementation of urban design concepts, and more particularly if (and how) the specific qualities of an urban space can be amplified and sustained.

Pécs is a small city in southwestern Hungary, a fraction of the size of Chicago; its historical centre dates back to the Roman Empire and now contains an amalgam of nationalities, reflecting the region's geo-political vicissitudes. The main historical, civic and religious structures are situated in a core area. Acting as a buffer against auto traffic, this *centre* is encircled by a roadway, which distributes traffic headed into peripheral areas. Beyond the 'ring' and extending to the city's boundaries lies an assemblage of smaller communities and commercial districts. Like windowed monoliths, the residential areas are dotted with housing blocks. They give these neighbourhoods a distinct physical appearance. Expediently constructed, frequently pre-fabricated, this type of mostly featureless housing is seen often throughout Central/Eastern Europe and was built in conjunction with regional economic and industrial policies. Despite the expediency of their construction, these neighbourhoods frequently contain a range of amenities and variations in design, sufficient to provide a quite liveable environment.

Within the midst of this constellation of the old and new, the banal and the remarkable, lies Király Street (King Street), a street name ubiquitous in Hungary and often one of significance. In Pécs, it is an important link

in a mostly pedestrian route that runs from one end of the city ring to the other. A journey along Király, including its western and eastern extensions, is filled with details that mark the city's history.



At the street's mid-point is Széchenyi Square, where the Gázi Kászim Mosque (now a Catholic Church) commands this large public space. Built during the 16th century, when the city was part of the Ottoman Empire, it sits perched atop the gently sloping square. Nearby are the global, yet here discrete, yellow arches of a McDonalds and the landmark four-star Pannonia Hotel. At the eastern

is end of Király Street (Upper Customhouse Street) is what remains of the Zsolnay ceramics factory. Begun in 1853 as a family enterprise, it became one of the largest factories in the Austro-Hungarian Empire; its glazing techniques and craftsmanship were well-known throughout Europe. Walking west, and just to the south, are the remnants of the old market square. A bit further is Theatre Square: a small public space surrounded by a large concert hall, theatre and other cultural facilities. On the opposite side of Széchenyi Square is Jókai Square, a junction of four streets, the main one being Ferencsek Street, the pedestrian way linking the city centre to the large main campus of the University of Pécs, Hungary's largest university. In this sense, the life blood of Király Street is inseparable from the civic institutions and public spaces which describe the city's central core.

Thus, as the main element in a well-used urban pathway, Király Street possesses considerable importance (but with only a passing resemblance to a thriving English *high street*). Walking eastward, the contrast becomes clearer, as the number of vacant storefronts and office

spaces increases and Király's attractiveness as a business location becomes marginal. Instead of a well-proportioned resilience, its allure depends upon the centrally positioned commercial elements, which in turn rely on tourism and the drawing power of the theatres, cafés and restaurants to stay alive.

The thriving English High Street exists on a balance of commercial enterprises and an available supply of shoppers. In contrast, while Király has an abundance of potential shoppers, they are drawn mostly to malls and hypermarkets. What arises then is a sharp disparity between the historically grounded urban promenade

which Király Street represents and the enclosed walkways of the nearby



Árkád Shopping Mall. With easy auto access and a location on the main traffic route bisecting the city, Árkád signifies a prime symbol of the consumerist culture that arose as East/West barriers were expunged in the years after 1989. With the ascendancy of malls and hypermarkets, a public space like the Király promenade is pitted against the enclosed, heavily monitored, privatised space of the mall.

When I arrived in Pécs in October of last year as part of an artist residency project, the extremities of the Király east-west axis and Széchenyi Square were part of the massive city-wide transformation easily seen in the mass of new building construction and rejuvenation processes. The swirl of activity, traffic detours and pedestrian re-routings were the result of the city's designation as a 2010 Cultural Capital of Europe – along with Essen and Istanbul.

Some years ago, when Pécs was vying for the Cultural Capital title, I attended a planning meeting which took place in an exhibition space on Király Street.

The city was competing against Budapest and other large Hungarian cities. Besides the short term cash benefits, many of those present had considered what could be the long-range positive effects of the city's selection and made specific suggestions regarding improvements in the infrastructure and cultural institutions. It was therefore with great curiosity that I returned to the city and viewed how the results of those discussions were being translated. This was not confined just to the city centre: the stirrings generated by this infusion of public and private capital could be seen in most areas of the city, but were highly visible – and disruptive – along the Király axis.

During the three months of my residency, I developed an itinerary of locations which spanned many of the city's districts. I focused on areas emanating from Pécs' special status. I visited them regularly and documented aspects of the construction process and adjustments in many facets of the cityscape. The fact that many of the changes were cosmetic did not necessarily diminish their usefulness or value. But some of this upgrading and new construction was begun rapidly and often haphazardly. And, while the new buildings altered the city's fabric and improved its cultural facilities, the question which often crossed my mind concerned how all the pieces would fit together and at what cost.

Starting from scratch and creating new structures represents one type of challenge for architects and planners, but adjusting, bending or eradicating what already exists ventures into conceptual and practical territories where an assortment of conflicting interests frequently collide, often producing muted solutions devoid of any cohesion. With such brashness of purpose, the resulting structures, whether new or refurbished, are often robbed of historical subtext with the edges of time brushed into an homogenised surface. The bewildering sense of purpose which lies behind the Király revitalisation projects seems to relinquish the street's vitality to the modulated experience of the shopping mall.

Thus, the alteration of Király Street illustrates the shortcomings of cosmetic solutions directed at fundamental urban issues. Processes of analysis and evaluation, as well as design, are only conceptual indicators of how urban transformations can extend or reconfigure existing social spaces (or accelerate their disassembly). The outcome of these processes lies not only in what has been visibly altered, but also in those structures and spaces that are untouched or vacant.

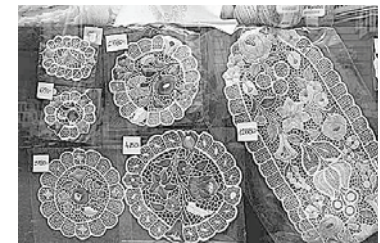
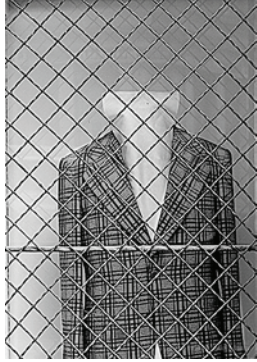


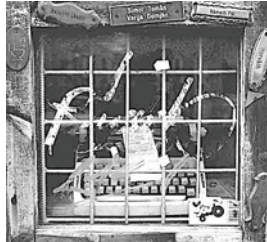
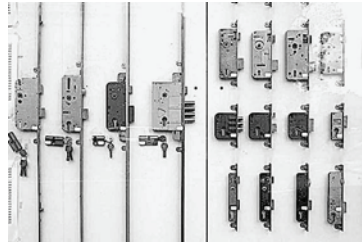
Thus, today, not far from Király Street, sits a vast empty space that was formally a small market hall. Perhaps that market was intrinsic to its vitality? Now its presence is only as a gaping wound, despite its continued inseparability from other elements within the urban habitat.

Within this framework, a street, with its own ecological and organic qualities, is simply one element in the urban matrix. And, while initiatives to alter these qualities might originate from good intentions, ultimately, the manner in which urban arteries like Király Street are woven into or disconnected from the fabric of urban spatiality correlates directly with the results. And the results cannot be measured simply by calibrating the number of new façades or walkways. Rather, the consequences, when they prove to be beneficial, resonate as a type of magnetic field that criss-crosses a public space, charging it with substance and meaning.

Shop Windows, an Inventory







Shop-windows constitute the most visible layer of the urban signscape. Together with posters, advertisements and graffiti messages, they constantly update the city's visual environment: they describe to the passer-by the current state of consumable objects. Created to animate the desire of shoppers, they are also talkative

inventories of what a store has to communicate. Created with craft, humour or exhibitionism, some shop-windows peel off from the store they represent and become self-referential signs, mere decorations of the street.

While Péter Rákosi started photographing shop-windows a few years ago, his interest in the subject dates back

to his earlier career as a window-dresser. Regularly returning to certain neighbourhoods or streets, he began recording and cataloguing vitrine decorations. The geometric precision of these photographs and their organisation into a series suggest the structure of an inventory.

Community – Community Space

Community and community space are closely related, this is what we have come to conclude after brainstorming over the case of Király Street (King Street) at the Pécs workshop of Urban Ideas Bakery.¹

1 http://creativecities.britishcouncil.org/urban_ideas_bakery/event/urban_ideas_bakery_in_Pecs

A properly functioning community space presupposes a properly functioning community, which is able to formulate its claims regarding the space and actively contribute to its creation and maintenance. Furthermore, this is an interactive process, during which the community and the space they occupy evolve hand in hand, while the space becomes a defining factor of the community's identity. In this relationship, the community gradually exceeds the role of passive consumer of the space, becoming its manager and developer because they consider it their own. In this reading, public space development means not the development of the physical environment and not even that of the community, but the improvement of their relationship.

Király Street, Pécs

The dramatic devaluation of Király Street on Pécs's 'public space market' can be traced back to the same system of relations. Apparently, there are two competing cultures of cooperation on the market of public space consumers: on the one hand, traditional public spaces created by the Cooperation of the civil community and the local government representing it; on the other hand, 'pseudo-public spaces' engendered by the cooperation of the civil society and the market.²

2 It is worth making a distinction between public spaces founded on community resources and

culture, serving traditional civil community functions, and those founded on market resources and

culture, serving economic goals.

It seems that the civil society's and the local government's culture of co-operation has limited or no capacity for keeping pace with the consumer/user/manager civil community's emerging demands regarding the once well-established old shopping street. First of all, the local government's formal culture of development is ignorant of the community's claims emerging in relation to Király Street, and is unwilling to involve the actors in the development process. Secondly, the civil society's demands or interests are difficult to grasp on account of their shortcomings in terms of co-operation and organisation, and they are unable to assert these as real partners of the local government. Not only do the organisational and institutional shortcomings of the two parties pose a problem, but the cultural conditions for co-operation are also inadequate.

It also appears that while market mechanisms are able to mobilise stable financial and organisational resources for the development and management of their 'quasi-public spaces', the informal organisations of the dissipated community of Pécs provide only a limited organisational and financial basis for a public space development process. Moreover, the financial and organisational base of the local government's formal organisational culture provides little support in this regard.

As a result, in the case of several actual development projects, the citizens of Pécs don't consider these traditional community spaces their own, using them less and in different ways than conceived by the development plans, and also devoting less care to their maintenance and improvement. The structural and organisational discrepancy that has arisen between the public space and the public on the levels of use, management and development reproduces the conflict, which is perceivably

manifest in the public space. This degrades the competitiveness of Király Street, as well as central public spaces fulfilling traditional community functions in general, as opposed to 'quasi-public spaces' that employ market strategies to position themselves much more sensitively to match the needs of groups of specific social functions.

Bottom-up/top-down views of a conflict
This spatial and communal discrepancy has a number of interesting and, in terms of finding a solution, important readings. Each approach endeavours to represent some kind of concordance of spatial and communal phenomena, an interpretation that crystallises a proposal for a solution. Each figure (including the ones above) therefore inevitably presupposes an innovative visualisation of the information at hand; not only because of the social, economic and political tension, as well as the disparity of their spatial views,³

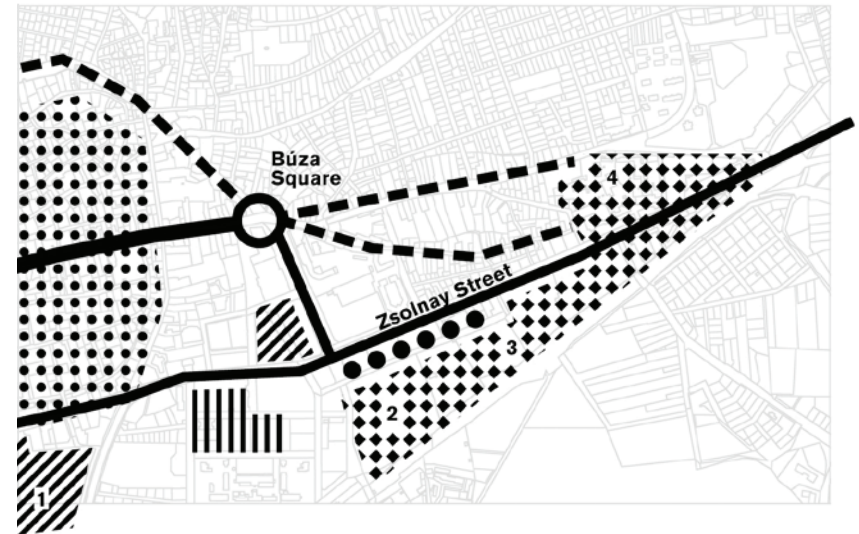
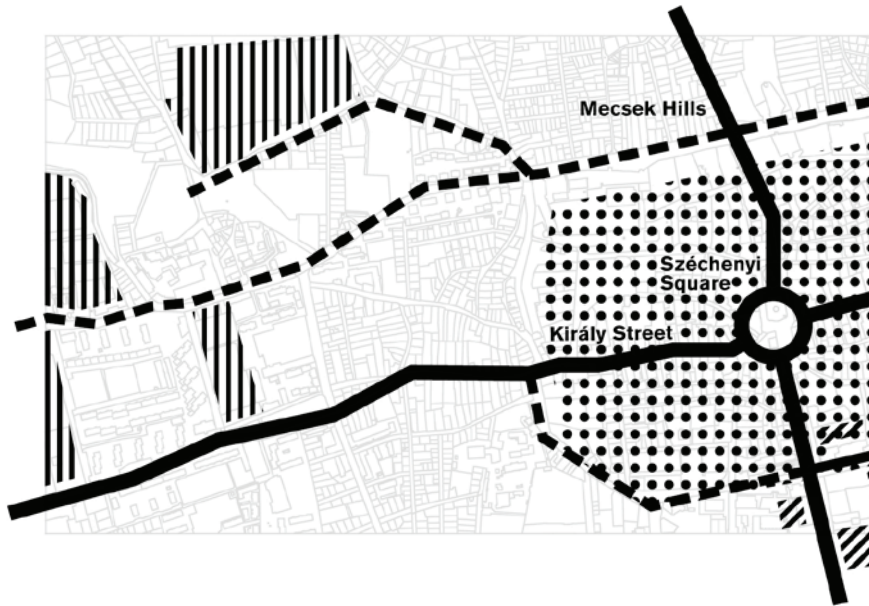
3 Cf. Bill Hillier (1996) Space is the machine. Hillier's model has certain

limitations as regards the actual mapping of reality; as Bill Hillier writes: '...it is







likely that the designer's predictions will refer only to an illusory reality'.

but also owing to the constantly changing point of view assumed by interpretation and development. In addition to developing the language of imparting information, this visualisation process is a means of producing information/knowledge.

The viewpoints have been examined from two aspects, comprising two different methodological approaches. The macro-view involved a fundamentally deductive way of thinking in exploring the situation of Király Street on the basis of the functional discrepancies of the prevailing system. The micro-views involved an inductive approach, regarding the functional discrepancies of Király Street through the point of view of the actors. Both aspects are indispensable for complete transparency. On the one hand, because macro-scale models are based on the cultural regularities of micro-scale phenomena;



Macro Perspective
The Spatio-functional Context
of the Király Street

- | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
|  | Historical downtown | 1 | Árkád shopping centre |
|  | University campus | 2 | South Transdanubian regional library |
|  | Shopping malls | 3 | Conference and concert centre |
|  | The main area of the cultural capital developments | 4 | Zsolnay cultural quarter (Faculty of Fine Arts) |
|  | Disturbing existing functions | | |
|  | North-south and east-west axis of the historical downtown | | |

on the other hand, because these cultural foundations are rather plastic in a society under such intense transformation as Hungary, including Pécs, causing a high probability of distortion in the case of a macro-approach.

Macro: Király Street in the spatial-functional system of the texture of the city

Since the political transition in 1989, the ‘public space market’ has undergone considerable transformation as regards Király Street. The first significant event in this transformation was the appearance of the ‘quasi-public space’ of the ÁRKÁD shopping centre in 2004, in the immediate vicinity of the historic city centre. Exploiting the advantage and superiority of the commercial ‘quasi-public space’, as well as the weak points of the shopping street (lack of parking, public transport and management, seasonality), it forced Pécs’s once lustrous but now languid shopping street into a competitive disadvantage. The *coup de grâce* to the street’s commercial function was the erratic introduction of parking fees and the lagging public space development projects, ignorant of the everyday functioning of the city.

A theoretical opportunity for breakout would have been to interlink the new development zones of the Capital of Culture (ECC) project, the city centre and the western campus of the university into a unified spatial system. The functions of the ECC projects involving the city centre and the university could be organised into a synergic system linking and complementing the three zones by relatively simple means. In this relation, besides the Martyrs of Arad Road circumventing the historic city centre to the north and the Zsolnay-Rákóczi Streets to the south, a significant role would be imparted on Király Street, the main east-west axis of the city centre. This would have come in handy in giving impetus to the eastern end of Király Street, which now gradually dies away after losing integrity towards Wheat Square. This, however, has only sporadically been achieved by the

current project: public space developments have been realised only in connection with key projects, to reinforce their synergy. The pedestrian shopping street still doesn’t curve towards the Knowledge Centre and the Concert Hall, and access to the Zsolnay Cultural Quarter still requires a map and a great deal of perseverance. With the densest traffic in Pécs, Zsolnay Road bisects rather than connects the city centre.

Micro: Király Street on the mental map of public space users

This analytical approach has focused on the groups of actors for whom Király Street was of concern, with special regard to how these individuals saw the situation and problems of the deteriorating street, as well as its causes.

It explored the services offered by the street to each of these actors, and what they were missing; also how and to what extent they exploited the physical and functional capacities of the street. We hoped that certain facts and aspects which we considered evident – and which provided the premises of macro-scale statements – would be enriched, confirmed, slightly adjusted, or even refuted by the viewpoints of the specific players.

In this case, a mental map can do more than visualise a community’s apprehension of a physical space and its usage patterns; through the latter, it also indicates the level of success of the co-operation between the civils and the local government regarding the Király Street area. Responding consumers mark places of interest on the map in terms of spatial use and functionality: the figure accurately indicates the discrepancies of the aforementioned co-operation.

The maps lead us to conclude that presently Király Street functions as a cul-de-sac rather than a street in the classical sense. It is difficult to predict today how this situation will be influenced by the scheduled public space developments and the new ‘cultural quarter’ intended as an eastern expansion of the city centre.

Alternatives of Active Life in the City of Pécs

The title European Capital of Culture raises a number of questions. Namely, how is it possible to avoid the 'capital of culture' becoming a mere 'projection surface', where cultural roles and products are represented in extraordinary magnitude; to what extent the lifestyle of the residents is affected; how much room is given for the community – the population – that forms the structure and cohesive force of the city, to participate in the process; what democratic potentials are invoked by its presence and possible participation.

Pécs is European Capital of Culture in 2010.

The city's original 'capital of culture programme' was a grassroots initiative, the local intelligentsia and activists able to keep track of its development, with most of its ideas based on their conceptions and claims.

The project would have developed an already existing civil infrastructure further by involving existing domestic and international relations while administering no considerable change to the cityscape. The original programme was modified considerably in the years following the conception of the project, shifting its focus: under the control of the ECC office established in 2006, the alteration of the cityscape has played a much greater role. By 2010, the city has become one enormous architectural performance, receiving a stream of tourists with the spectacle of grandiose constructions.

Beyond the official programmes offered by the city, the impact of the ECC is also considerable in the self-organised alternative cultural scene, if not devoid of contradictions. For these organisations and alternative modes of using public space, which have been present

years before the ECC, change lies in an active and creative life. While existing independently, the civils and activists of Pécs, as well as its 'underground' art and music scene, have fostered ever more diverse international relations. They organise workshops and festivals, make attempts at filling the gaps of the alternative market (cheap bicycle repair shop, youth hostel, ateliers, involving the underprivileged, independent radio channels, etc.) with their *craftivist* approach. The beneficiaries (as opposed to consumers) of these events and cultural products are primarily young people, and anyone who is receptive. The feasibility of the system is guaranteed by the unlimited human resources (university students, creative intellectuals, etc.), its complete freedom from politics, and its open structure. This 'grassroots' activity does not concentrate exclusively on the city centre: rewriting the cultural topography of the city, it temporarily resorts to unused spaces on the peripheries, giving rise to the emergent city through micro-festivals and communal workshops involving residents; a city where the intermingling of various subcultures has a mutually catalysing force.

According to the city's capital of culture concept, the propelling force of development is infrastructure, real estate and city image; the civils, in contrast, see this in communities, groups and individuals, based on the idea that the a city is essentially defined by its residents. Decentralised and utterly non-bureaucratic practices can rapidly adapt to new circumstances and can be revived in different locations and contexts. On the following pages, I will discuss these cultural practices and civil initiatives.

Approach Art Association is a group of art professionals whose focus is organising exhibitions of contemporary art mainly outside conventional exhibition spaces: in industrial compounds (*Zsolnay Porcelain Works*), temporarily closed cinemas (*Apollo Cinema*), the *TV Tower* on Mecsek Hill, as well as sensitive areas in the city. Their 2009 series of programmes, *Temporary*

City's basic idea was provided by the vacant shops on Király Street (King Street), which were transformed into exhibition spaces for two weeks, occupied by various international artists and projects. The placement of art in spaces out of the ordinary (museum, gallery), together with the street performances, brought the abstract and alienated notion of art closer to the people, encouraging them to interact. Programmes of institutional culture are rarely capable of this, since they either delegate the manifestations of art into the sphere of leisure, or fail to carry any meaning for those outside a narrow elite. The projects of Approach Art Association resort to the methods of public or urban art to effectively confront the citizens with the meaning of art and contemporary culture today. The *Temporary City* action, however, also raised urbanistic issues in addition to artistic ones: how is it possible that the main street of a city (capital of culture, in fact) hosts a number of vacant shops, while its cultural players are constantly looking for places to occupy, and exist in constant fear of losing their headquarters, sites, galleries? Drawing on the opportunities opened up by real estate that had 'freed up' owing to the economic crisis and had thus become accessible, the projects of Approach, exploiting their capacity for the innovative and spontaneous use of space, laid the foundations of an alternative urban policy.

The objective of *Market Platform*, yet another initiative, was to highlight the significance of the last marketplace in the city centre. The organisers asked sociologists and artists to reflect on the situation. The common end brought different social groups together: the merchants themselves, whose sole remaining option to defend their position was an artistic scenario (cf. direct democracy), took part in a number of projects until the market was shut down for good.

Cult Street (Franciscan Street) was brought to life through a collaboration of shopkeepers and citizens. With music and exhibitions, the shopkeepers created

a sort of street parade atmosphere, from which their sales also benefit. The event is quite popular, as consumers like to be entertained while spending their money, listening to live music while buying books. We also have to devote a word to the *Culture Lab Cooperative*, which was created by civil organisations around the city as an organisation for the protection of their interests. The group maintained an experimental cultural space on the border of city centre and periphery for two years, accommodating, among others, non-popular genres of music and art. Having lost the industrial building that housed these experiments (as it was taken over by the city's ECC project), Culture Lab now rents several spaces on Király Street, which they renovate from grants funding, as well as their own means. One of these spaces is their 'headquarters', with offices, sleeping quarters, a kitchen and ateliers; another one is an alternative bicycle repair shop (*Velosophie bike kitchen*), and they also plan to start a youth hostel. The Lab's significance in the city's culture is essential: they have organised several street festivals and programmes involving residents, focusing their events on the goal of calling attention to the opportunities that lie in the unused spaces around the city. This kind of 'soft urbanism', the 'rehabilitation' of public space and unused real estate via communal use, is a realistic alternative to mega investments that are themselves destined to fail without the support of the citizens and in want of a programme that is in harmony with the architectural designs.

The Lab's latest programme took place in a long abandoned mine-shaft. *Krétakör Mayfest* could be realised because the renowned theatre director Árpád Schilling, also participating in the programme, created a performance based on the programme proposals submitted by the civils of Pécs in the early stages of the project. In the course of a long and intense cooperation, Krétakör (theatre company Chalk Circle) and the Lab put together an event from these that would involve different local social groups, as well as

student age groups. Meanwhile, the spectators were also offered the opportunity to participate, and the entire event, in terms of infrastructure and logistics, relied on creative civil groups.

With *Collegium Utopium*, Krétakör appeared in the city more as a catalyst than a theatre group, fostering local initiatives. Despite its financial fragility and unpredictability, there are a number of lessons inherent in this logic: exploiting the potentials of the city, building on existing capacities and needs could be informative for larger institutions and programmes, which are often unable to represent subcultures, the visibility and active representation of which is essential to democratic urban culture.

Vendors' portraits, Király Street, Budapest





While surveys generally focus on the residents of a particular area, we often have no information about the people who work there. However, these are the people who affect the character of a neighbourhood the most. Emőke Kerekes and Anna Mózes, in their series of portraits taken of shopkeepers in Király Street, reveal the great variety of retail types

in the neighbourhood and the heterogeneity of their vendors. This heterogeneity suggests a variety of shoppers who frequent the street: they are all, from another viewpoint, agents of various uses of the city, and consequently, offer contrasting visions for the street. In these images, each vendor or employee appears in a frontal perspective, usually gazing

into the photographer's lens; the grocery, textile outlet, hardware store, boutique, vegetable stall, carpet shop, pharmacy, hairdresser, restaurant, bar, design store, art gallery, flower shop, and confectionary are revealed behind them as an accumulation of the paraphernalia of a profession.

Culs-de-sac of Transformation: The fate of historic neighbourhoods after privatisation

The inner Erzsébetváros (Elizabethtown) in Budapest fell victim to the merchant spirit already upon its formation in the late 19th century. A rather dense urban structure was formed already then – with all lots covered from one end to the other – leaving very little public space. With the exception of Klauzál Square, there are no green areas or parks in the inner, densely populated quarters of Districts VI and VII. Although such spaces were, in fact, included in the urban planning, the city sold them to investors, and they have been built over. These strongly profit-oriented developments of the late 19th century are usually referred to as the first large-scale real estate speculations. The unprecedented growth at the time provided a fertile ground for these in all respects.

It was after the joining of previously separate districts in 1873 that Budapest became a capital – lacking the necessary basic institutions and public facilities, as most of these had been operating in Vienna and Bratislava. Parliament, public administration, universities, schools, hospitals – all of these had to be built from scratch, as well as the residential buildings that would accommodate the masses working to build a metropolitan capital from the medium-size city of a population of 100,000. It was a self-generating process, as it coincided with the dawn of industrialisation in Hungary. Industrial development, and the concentration of labour force it required, had made the building of new neighbourhoods necessary, which itself

provided hundreds of thousands with work for decades to come.

Most of the buildings erected in this period are still standing, except for those that have fallen victim to World War II and recent real estate speculations. Of course, they have been run down by sixty years of negligence and an almost complete lack of maintenance, but they will still stand for longer than the architectural products of the past 20 or 30 years. This is mainly due to the favourable conditions at the time of their construction: the high quality of materials, the professional expertise, and the handicraft traditions. These buildings were state of the art in their age, and were designed with considerable reserves structurally and statically. Their load-bearing walls were made from high-quality fired bricks – true, initially mixed with carved limestone, which has less load-bearing capacity. If these structures have not been weakened by later in-expert reconstructions and renovations, they can serve as a good basis for a – perhaps even city-wide – real estate development project.

The residential houses comprising more than 100,000 flats in Budapest have essential social significance, as well: they were designed by an architectural programme that allowed the mingling of different social groups. The street front housed large flats with a street view, inhabited by wealthy or bourgeois families. The small flats in the side and back tracts lacked facilities and opened onto the courtyard. This is where the less wealthy, the poor, and the workers lived. Ground-floor shops along the main routes – such as Király Street – were occupied by merchants; the ones in the courtyards by artisans. Certain blocks housed bigger manufactories where industrial production took place. The tenement model comprised a diverse palette of interdependent social strata, groups and professions, encompassing entire quarters.

All this changed with one stroke when all private property was nationalised in 1952. This not only meant

the disappearance of the bourgeoisie: wealthy families were deported, their valuables seized, their flats divided into smaller ones to satisfy the renewed housing demand. The post-war political elite discontinued the previous regime's practice of investing capital into erecting new houses and entire quarters for the labour force swarming to Budapest from the provinces as a result of centralisation. They solved the problem with their own – simple and fast – means, breaking up most of the existing flats. At the same time, merchant streets, shops, boutiques and manufactories disappeared. It took decades for the city to recover and to rediscover its urban scene and spaces, but by that time, the construction of housing projects had started, as yet another contribution to de-urbanisation.

The regime's pool of devices was not exhausted by eliminating the fundament of downtown life – the bourgeoisie. Since the nationalised houses had started to wear down for want of maintenance, the political leadership resettled already poor Romany families into parts of the city centre thus left to erode – Districts VI, VII, VIII and IX. This decision is a perfect example of the ruling power's cynicism: neither the Romany, nor the deteriorating buildings benefited from the resettlement. The task of preserving the physical condition of the central districts remained unaccomplished.

As of the 1990s, everything was reassessed once more amidst the sudden emergence of the market. Previously national properties were passed on to the local governments, each of which could decide freely on their fate. The majority of real estate was sold by the districts to their residents. In view of the comparative statistical analysis, it appears as though the Hungarian families had all at once turned wealthy overnight: the private property per capita is now a lot higher than in most other European countries. In fact, the assets were simply reorganised: the country did not gain wealth.

The fact that the tenants had become owners did little to improve the physical condition of the flats,

and so the quality of life remained practically the same. Although the privatisation of flats comprised hundreds of thousands of transactions and produced income for the local governments, these authorities failed to use these returns to create new funds or reinvest them into the real estate to increase their value and raise the standards of the districts. Tenant-turned-owners acquired their freehold flats at a bargain price, often as little as 10% of the market value, although there was no stable real estate market at this time, so the prices were hypothetical. In this manner, almost anyone could turn into a flat owner without having to comply with the financial requirements of being one.

Real estate is an asset, and practically the most valuable one at that. As any asset, it needs to be managed, and requires knowledge of the obligations and expenses this entails. Asset management is a professional field that requires circumspection, know-how, and even risk assessment. Real estate is at once a capital and an investment, with a corresponding yield.

The majority of real-estate owners in Hungary lack the knowledge that the appropriate management of their property would require. The right of the current stock of flats – especially old residential houses – to exist is constantly questioned because no one is willing to do their maintenance. The majority of inhabitants have become owners by a one-time effort, but their lifestyle as owners is existentially unsustainable. The money once invested into the flat remains dead capital, whose capacity of producing income remains dormant for want of allocating resources to maintenance, renovation and development. This capital is simply worn down by the inhabitants, while renting a flat would perhaps provide a better quality of life for them.

Today it seems that the privatisation of the local government's stock of flats has not solved anything: 10 or 15 years after the transactions, there is still no considerable improvement in the liveability of these districts. The best example is the inner Erzsébetváros – the old Jewish Quarter of Pest – which is still characterised by run-down

buildings and the lack of public spaces. Among the sagging buildings, however, private capital has popped its head out, erecting 'characteristically characterless' buildings to replace the demolished old residential houses.

Nowadays, urban planning for the area allows practically everything necessary for making a quick profit, which is exhaustively exploited by the investors. The magic phrases – or numbers – are lot coverage limitation and floor-area ratio, which, in the case of these districts, allow a coverage that is even denser than the already extremely close-knit texture of the city. With the continued reduction of flat sizes, there are even more residents per lot, resulting in a deteriorating quality of life. This new investor's behaviour, assisted by the local governments, further degrades the conditions of life of the area, even if the street fronts are no longer run down. The quality and architectural appearance of the newly erected buildings – with a few exceptions – is completely sleazy and disgraceful.

The question emerges: what, then, is urban planning good for? Theoretically it serves to design medium and long-term interventions in service of a future objective, and to control the profit-oriented operations of investors, all in favour of the public and future liveability. Obviously, the investor – who, by the way, pockets a multiple of the profit that is realisable by fair means on the Western European market, and with much less risk and meagre performance – will not give a lot of thought to architectural quality. The economic crisis has only slowed this process down temporarily: investors, as well as banks, are ready to jump, waiting for the critical period to wear out so that they can resume real estate 'development', because this is the most profitable business in the region.

Despite their run-down condition, the buildings in Budapest are suitable for designing up-to-date living spaces: in addition to their static features mentioned above, their spaces also vouch for this. The existing

real-estate assets cannot be efficiently and sustainably made use of without the active participation of local governments. Of course, there have been attempts at rehabilitation before, as well as after the political transformation. However, the rehabilitation of entire blocks, which began in the 1980s in the inner Erzsébetváros, proved to be unsuccessful: not only was the construction industry incapable of producing high quality, but its fundamental concepts were also dubious – the zones of these buildings that were designated as public space have been vacant for decades.

State-of-the-art renovation of old buildings is never an easy task, but feasible, even if with more modest return rates than today's investment practice. It is also possible to modify and modernise these spaces: within a block it is possible to open several courtyards together, make passageways, and design diverse spaces and programme facilities, with high quality contemporary interventions. The development of public spaces and green areas – combined with a cutback in traffic – is also an integral part of renewing the central districts. Naturally, this can only be realised as part of a rehabilitation practice in which buildings are designed in accordance with public spaces, public functions and services.

Mapping Internal Borders



If statistics can provide evidence of tendencies taking place in larger areas, it also risks to obscure difference at the level of phenomenological

experience. In our ongoing mapping inquiry, we propose to combine these two epistemological levels: systematic interpretation of information based on

primary perception are developed into maps; maps are used as tools to make visible the internal borders of Király street.



2



4



12 - 14



16 - 20



28 - 30



34 - 38



44 - 50



52



1.a - 1.e



5



13 - 15



17 - 19



25



31 - 37



41 - 43



47 - 49



53 — 59



59.b

The Street as Palimpsest: The Dialectics of Preservation and Demolition in Budapest's Király Street

Over the course of the past decade, the area of District VII, known as Budapest's old Jewish quarter, has been a scene of fierce battles between developers supported by a largely corrupt district government and those civic organisations that have been assiduous in their attempt to protect the district's 19th century building stock, a large part of which has already fallen victim to the wrecking ball. The present architectural landscape of the district offers a unique palimpsest encompassing multiple layers of the district's history, from low-rise Neo-Classical houses erected in the first half of the 19th century to recently completed multi-storey apartment blocks sporting vivid colours and large balconies with a Mediterranean touch. The mouth of Király street (King Street) at Károly körút all the way up to Kazinczy street showcases ample examples of such new apartment complexes standing in stark contrast to their older neighbours. At the core of the upsurge of public resentment against these new developments stands the notion of preservation of the district's pre-World War II architectural heritage perceived as a token of identity. By contrast, most of the demolition and the new constructions have been vindicated by the district government as part of the area's overall rehabilitation. If rehabilitation is used as a euphemism for the destruction of the district's organically developed architectural heritage, the concept of heritage seems equally vague when it comes to the actual identity that it allegedly signifies.

What constitutes this heritage then? Unlike in other European cities, where Jews had built districts for themselves in the Middle Ages, here they moved into an existing texture of late-Baroque and Neo-Classical houses after having been granted the right to settle down in the second half of the 1780s. It was not until later in the 19th and early 20th century that rare architectural features such as 'through houses' providing passageways and interconnected courtyards between parallel streets were built (as in the case of the Gozdsu court between Király street and Dob street), as well as buildings combining residential and industrial functions, forming a maze of alleyways lending a peculiar ambiance to the quarter's streets. Ever since the early 1800s, Király street functioned as the single artery connecting the inner city with City Park. Although with the construction of Andrassy Boulevard in the 1870s, the street was slightly alleviated from its heavy traffic, it still continued to serve as an interface between Terézváros (Theresatown) and the younger Erzsébetváros (Elizabethtown), forming the northern border of the Jewish district. Heritage value is not so much manifested in architecturally outstanding buildings, with the exception of a few designed by prominent architects, as in the peculiar streetscapes and layouts that speak to a bygone era of a vibrant community of merchants and craftsmen. But in spite of the international protection granted to the Jewish quarter by UNESCO in 2002 as a buffer zone alongside the world-heritage Andrassy Boulevard, its protected status could not keep corruption at bay. The decimation of its 19th century housing stock accelerated in the subsequent years, until the National Office of Cultural Heritage, forced by public pressure, declared it an area of monumental historic significance in 2005 and extended official protection to 51 buildings.

Significantly, few (if any) of the activists dedicated to the protecting of the old buildings are residents in the area. Other local forms of public involvement within the district have emerged but seem to be in embryonic stages.

Conversely, however, the ambiance of the past afforded by the remaining old buildings has elicited multiple forms of nostalgia. The wide popularity of courtyard bars set up in abandoned interiors amid peeling plaster subscribes to such a nostalgic desire to connect with an imagined past through an environment pleasing in its evanescence. A complete opposite of the practice of façadism, in which the façade of a building is preserved and new interiors are designed behind it (as in 12 Holló Street), ruinous courtyard bars feed on the uncanny combination of the archaeological gaze and a carnivalistic pleasure of ruins – afforded by the precarious state of such buildings.

The peculiar ambiance that such places emanate derives from the surviving elements of the disorderly, maze-like arrangement of passageways that urban planners have sought to replace with a transparent pattern ever since the early 20th century. The planning of a new boulevard (Erzsébet Boulevard) that would have connected the inner ring with the outer ring dates back to 1908, but its realisation was thwarted by World War I. The idea would re-emerge in 1929, and eight years later, the so-called Madách Houses were built with a monumental arch connecting the two massive slabs of apartment blocks. Ironically, World War II withheld further construction of the boulevard into the Jewish quarter, leaving the grandiose structure as a monument to an ill-fated project. Although anachronistic in its inception, the idea emerged once again in the 1950s, even if with the plan for the boulevard reduced to a promenade. And even if a 12-storey office tower (built in the early 1990s) blocks the way behind the grand arch of the Madách Houses, the idea for the promenade still persists as a formative element defining prospective plans for the area. In its present form, the promenade cuts through the renovated courtyards of Gozdsu Court and continues all the way to Kazinczy street, defined by the overwhelmingly Mediterranean look of the recently completed apartment blocks. Here, the promenade is blocked by two old buildings in deplorable condition.

The one on the left (47 Kazinczy street) features a plaque, attached to the bare brick where the plaster had fallen off, declaring the house a protected monument – with its residents long ago evicted, just like in the neighbouring no. 49.

Although not in the form of a monumental boulevard rimmed by modernist streetscapes as envisioned in the 1930s, the legacy of this project remains to be a haunting presence that exerts its influence on the blocks between Király street and Dob street in the form of demolition, façadism and, most prominently, new apartment blocks that rise above their older neighbours as harbingers of the quarter's further gentrification. The uncanny sight of the decrepit, abandoned Neo-Classicist house with a plaque at its gate facing the grand balconies of the multi-storey residential block that could be anywhere in the world not only encompasses the radical confrontation of old and new, but places the possibility of communication between them at stake. For within the mechanism of the power relations that crystallised in the wake of demolitions, the 'production' of heritage, as well as the historic character that it purportedly represents, takes shape as a desperate reaction to the imminent danger of its destruction. Instead of forming an 'and-and' relation, old and new are pitted against each other in an 'either-or' binary.

Re-thinking the Marketplace: A story of resistance and proactivity

In 2007, a cluster of activists formed the group *Our Treasure, the Market – Hunyadi Square* (KAP-HT) in order to save the market at Hunyadi Square, which is the only remaining open-air food market in the central districts of Budapest. Linking the luxurious Andrassy Avenue to the Király Street (King Street) area that is undergoing radical transformations, this market has become an indicator of the changing demographics, value systems and consumption patterns of the city. For years, the KAP-HT (together with ecologist group *Védegylet*) has been working on raising public awareness of the disappearing open-air markets, by emphasising the social and logistic importance of meeting places and sources of affordable, healthy food.



In recent years, various debates have surrounded the market on Hunyadi Square. First, and most notoriously, with respect to plans for an underground garage beneath the original site of the open-air market and park, a plan ignoring environmental impact studies and lacking any downtown traffic planning. After long negotiations and interventions of the KAP-HT group, the local government took into account the importance of involving local residents in the decision-making process. Meanwhile, they also decided

to apply for EU funds together for the renovation of the site. Various participatory exercises were introduced to collect views and opinions of the planned development, while the impact of the community on the final plans still remained strongly compromised. The proposed plan for the market square envisioned a 500-car parking garage under the square, which went against the agreement of the participating residents.

Following an unsuccessful bid to raise EU funding for the planned car park, the local government shifted its focus to smaller interventions like renovating the park, creating a new playground, re-designing the market stalls and turning parts of the square into a moderated traffic zone, thus allowing for more space for the Friday and Saturday markets.

Nevertheless, the conflict was renewed by the local government's plans to clear from the square a significant number of trees, considered as unsafe and endangering public use of the square. KAP-HT's call for independent expertise contributed to deepening the disagreement between supporters of the competing plans. Trees became thus crucial in the district's heritage preservation strategy: once the trees are removed, plans for the parking garage may gain momentum, and the existence of the farmers' market may be put into question. Close cooperation with the district's chief architect did not prevent the market from remaining on precarious ground: municipal attempts to reduce its hours of activity and to increase the stall rental fee may result in a more exclusive market structure.

To improve the market's visibility and strengthen the sense of community that the market catalysed, KAP-HT has organised numerous events at the market square and at other locations. KAP-HT's activity is not limited to campaigning: activists of the group got involved in the life of the market, elaborating strategies for improving services and product variety (by introducing new herbs and vegetables, extending the selection of goods and foods) as well as opening up alternative channels of communication

between the market traders, the wider public, visitors and customers of the market and the local authorities. The most recent events included a thematic exhibition organised around the notion of the market, food infrastructure and related issues in the downtown life of Budapest, aiming to involve and reach the non-market-going crowd.

Based on my 15 years' experience as a visitor of this market – which includes three years of active involvement in the life of Hunyadi Square, as an initiator of the grassroots movement to save the farmers' market – I met, made friendships and collaborated with traders and other visitors, enabling me to describe the market through the different profiles of the various traders. These are the following:

- 1 Pensioner, never having been a farmer; living in Budapest, with an allotment garden, selling surplus harvest;
- 2 Pensioner, living in Budapest, regularly selling vegetables from the garden attached to the house;
- 3 Elderly farmers, giving up selling, who may be replaced by a family member;
- 4 Vendors selling products from mid-scale farmers and from wholesale markets;
- 5 Pensioner, living in a small town, and growing a small quantity of vegetables to complement his/her pension. (People aged over 65 ride the trains for free, and bringing a few kilograms of produce to the market is a good opportunity for them to earn some money);
- 6 Mid-scale farmer with family traditions (often their parents and grandparents were also

- farmers and went to the market with a cart in the past), coming to the market by car;
- 7 Farmer with family traditions, selling his/her own vegetables and fruits, complemented with products from the wholesale market;
 - 8 Farmer with family traditions, subsistence farmer, bringing only a smaller amount of fruits and vegetables to the market by train;
 - 9 Relatively young villager, having lost his factory job due to the economic transition following the end of Communism, coming to the market by train, bringing what s/he can carry;
 - 10 Has been working in agriculture/silviculture, but was not a small producer; still does seasonal work for others occasionally, brings produce in a small rucksack and comes by train;
 - 11 Village pensioner after civilian job; amateur gardener, bringing jams, flowers, fruits in season;
 - 12 Villager with very low pension-grabs what s/he can from her garden;
 - 13 Villager coming only with some seasonal products only at certain times of the year;
 - 14 Retired technical intellectual, living in a village, having always cultivated a small garden, and swearing to quit every year after finding a more profitable activity;

- 15 Relatively young vendor, selling his/her own product, complemented with a wide range of products from the wholesale market;
- 16 Traditionally a florist, selling merchandise from the wholesale flower market;
- 17 Vendor selling attractive goods from the wholesale market.

Selling at the open-air farmers' market requires a primary producer's certificate, but people who own a small piece of land can easily obtain this. Primary producers have the advantage of not having to pay taxes on transactions worth under HUF 640,000 (ca. 1870 GBP) annually, which is a good enough reason for retailers to pretend about their status both to authorities and their customers. Producers with long family traditions of selling their produce have witnessed the gradual dwindling of the market area on Hunyadi Square: today only one side of the square has stalls, and business has declined since the arrival of hyper- and supermarkets to Hungary in the 1990s. Others see the market as an opportunity to complement their income while still retaining another job. Another group of vendors turned to small-scale farming after losing their jobs as a result of the collapse of the Communist economic system and closure of factories.

Elderly people sell food at markets to complement their small pension, as over the age of 65, they can use public transportation free of charge, so that their only expense is the stall rental fee. Keeping the stall rental fee



relatively low is essential to maintain this group in the market. However, they can hardly compete with larger producers: the more stalls they have, and the wider range of products, the better they position themselves on the market. The issue of food diversity and inclusive economy is yet to be raised by customers. Ideally, if market vendors formed an organisation, they would be more efficient in defending their interests vis-à-vis the local government. However, if their unity is impossible to achieve, there are many reasons for that: conflicting interests between primary producers and re-sellers, a lack of self-confidence and of a culture of self-organising are the most important among these factors.

And who are the shoppers?

Local pensioners, housewives and various people working in the neighbourhood. For locals who have free time during the day on weekdays, it is probably a habit to go to the market. Chefs from nearby restaurants also come for a quick hunt for herbs or fresh fruit and vegetables that were harvested on the previous, or the very same day.



People on a tight budget appreciate the possibility to bargain at the outside market, or to have the option to choose something cheaper, while other health-conscious consumers come here to buy food that is locally produced. The fight of the local citizens'

group to save the open-air market has attracted attention to the spot, with the market listed as the second best market in Hungary, causing a small but steady increase in the number of visitors from younger generations.

The sellers of the Hunyadi Square Market, Budapest





Gabó is a visitor of the Hunyadi Square Market and has three years of active involvement as an initiator of the grassroots movement to save the farmers' market. She met,

made friendships and collaborated with traders and other visitors, enabling her to describe the market through the different profiles of the various traders.



On the Trace of the Ring: globalisation and real estate on the 'most emblematic (Buda)Pest street'

Budapest, the capital of Hungary, boasts a number of invaluable national monuments. Many of these are residential houses still owned by the local governments. Recent years have witnessed the demolition and elimination of these buildings with no regard for their national monument status. This is especially true of Budapest's District VII, Erzsébetváros (Elizabethtown, the old Jewish ghetto). This is where the three buildings of our concern, Király Street 25–27–29, are located. Using social network analysis, we have researched and charted the history of their privatisation since the political transition.

Buildings no. 25–27–29 on Király Street are in poor condition. Years ago, it seemed that the local government could ameliorate the situation by selling them. They did so, but the exchange was conducted in a highly irregular manner. The goal of our research has been to unveil the process and background of this exchange. Over the course of time, several new players entered the field, making the story increasingly difficult to untangle, especially for the outsider. This called for a methodology that would render this exchange process visible, so as to make 'order' in the mesh of names and firms that seemed unrelated at first glance.

Our small world is held together by the force of relationships. We ourselves are the individual points who strive to find our way day by day in this unfathomable and complex world sustained by the links of relationships.

Our orientation and awareness are often hindered by our failure to recognise how interdependent we are. Often, with more or less success, we try to form a mental picture of a space where we can position ourselves and those surrounding us. Reality, however, is much too complex and unfathomable for us to comprehend it outside our immediate environment.

In the past years – partly to satisfy this desire – the network approach has gained ever greater popularity. This school is specialised in studying the network of relationships: harmonising qualitative and quantitative methods, its subject of observation is the relationship itself: among individuals, groups, or even institutions. One of the most intriguing trends in social network analysis – adopting the work of, among others, Mark Lombardi – is the visualisation of the network of relationships. Its goal is to make reality known in its very complexity and impenetrability.

While Mark Lombardi ventured to graph all this manually, today there are a number of software applications at the disposal of researchers. ‘Reality’ is now displayable with these, after building an appropriate database and running specific algorithms.

The database necessary for exposing the case of real estate manipulation on Király Street was based on the systematic research of a – considerable – number of press publications regarding the issue. We mapped the data in a two-mode social network matrix, in which we linked individuals relevant to the story with the firms they were connected with on the basis of the press material. The data collection encompassed every article (26 in all) published on the topic between 2004 and 2009, and included the complaint submitted to the court against the local government. Upon completion, the two-mode database was analysed using the MDS (multidimensional scaling) option in NetDraw. In the social network thus graphed, individuals and firms with similar relationship

indexes are juxtaposed, while players filling very different functions are distant to one another.

The following 14 stages are required for such a complex and non-transparent social network to develop:

Stages 1–14: the route to obtain real estate on Király Street

- 1 The local government commissions its own firm to carry out the appraisal of the buildings. The assessed price is generally equivalent to the cost of relocating the residents.
- 2 Following the appraisal, a project firm, established by private individuals with the specific purpose of purchasing the residential house in question, ‘approaches’ the local government to make an offer for the building.
- 3 The president of the local government’s economic committee (EC) submits a proposal to the local government’s Board of Representatives (BR) regarding the sale of the building. The proposal includes the name of the buyer and the purchase price (a fictive price that will never be paid to the local government).
- 4 The BR meeting is chaired by the District Mayor. The sale of the residential houses is decided at a closed session. The EC proposal is distributed at the meeting, and the BR passes the proposal; in other words, accedes to selling the building. At the conclusion of the board meeting, the proposal is collected from the board members. After the vote, all documents regarding the real estate sale are held exclusively by the

- president of the Economic Committee and the District Mayor.
- 5 Residential houses in which BR members or MPs hold apartments are not subject to sale.
 - 6 The residential houses are sold without a public tender, violating public procurement law.
 - 7 Owners of the firms established for purchasing residential houses come from the same circle and are personally related to the local government. The newly established firm is well informed, and this is how, months before the official decision to sell the real estate is issued by the Board, they begin negotiations with foreign investors.
 - 8 Based on a contract of sale with the local government, the buyer firms acquire a 3-year right of purchase on the residential house, with the local government's retained ownership.
 - 9 The buyer firms' headquarters and the law firms involved are registered at identical addresses. Two law firms have had an instrumental role in the sales, accommodating the firms established solely for the purpose of purchasing and re-selling the buildings.
 - 10 Subsequently, the buyer firm – without having paid a penny to the local government – begins to pass on its right of purchase by selling shares in the firm. The firm itself is sold at an extremely low price (8–10,000 euros), including the rights of purchase in its property.

- 11 The tenants living in the residential houses are completely oblivious to the above proceedings. They receive no information whatsoever about the roof being sold from over their heads. The representative of the 'investor' calls on the tenants, showing them documents of authorisation from the firm and the local government, informing them that they need to vacate their flats.
- 12 In most cases, the tenants protest against the sale of their building, and claim their right of pre-emption regarding their apartment, which is denied by the local government.
- 13 Once the project firm finds a serious buyer, its ownership is passed on to offshore firms in Cyprus, the Seychelles or Ireland (without any transfer of money), who pass on the right of purchase to mainly Irish investors. The purchase price paid by the investors is a multiple many times over the value originally appraised by the local government; thus, the owners of the project firms acquire enormous profit.
- 14 Eventually, the local government ends up selling the property for as much as it cost to relocate the tenants, thus relinquishing ownership of the building, while being left with virtually zero return on the sale. Meanwhile, the project firms acquire an abundant profit despite selling the buildings below market value. The outcome: ownership of the buildings is passed into foreign hands, and a part of this world heritage is destroyed to give place to modern, featureless buildings.

Presently, the above case is before the court, and numerous politicians and businessmen have been arrested. Investigation is underway in the case of 14 buildings in all.

We hope that social network visualisation has helped us render the story of the sale of Király Street 25–29 visible and more comprehensible even for those personally not involved. We believe this ‘clarity of vision’ provides important and useful knowledge for all.

Hunt the Key: globalisation and real estate on the ‘most emblematic (Buda)Pest street’

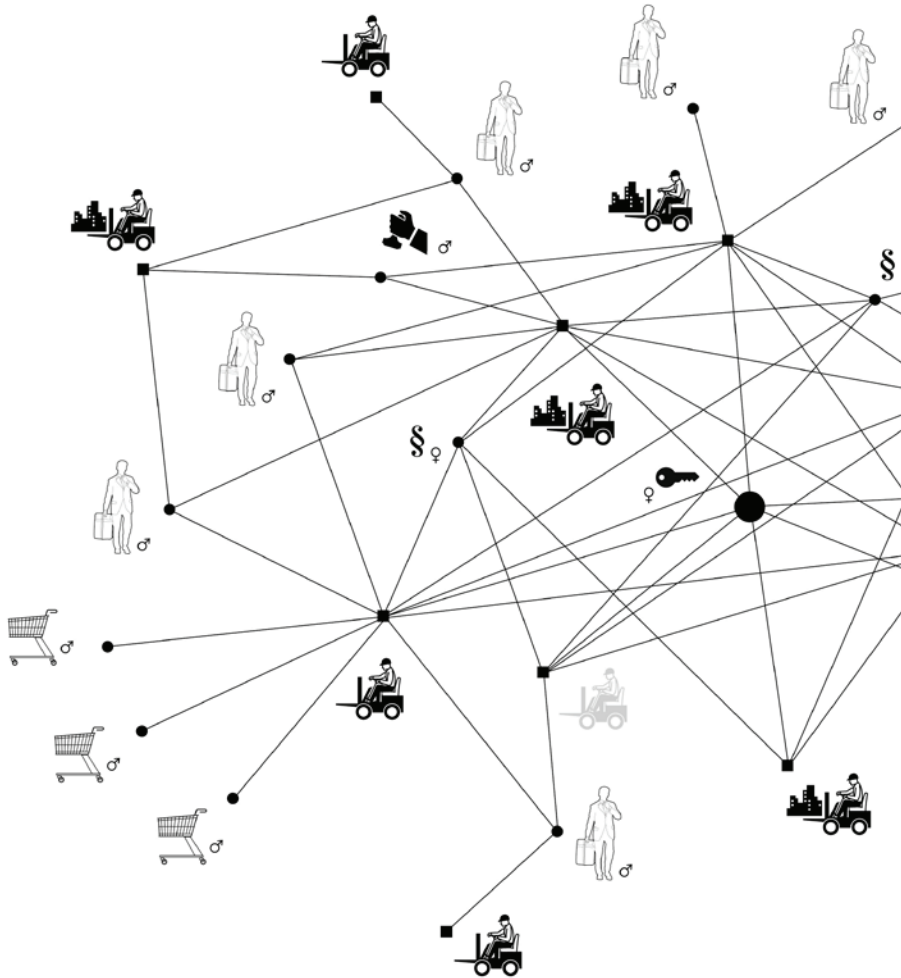


Running on the borders of the 6th and 7th district of Budapest, Király Street was famously called in the past century ‘the most emblematic (Buda)Pest street’ by the writer Gyula Krúdy. The neoclassical buildings on Király Street – some of them

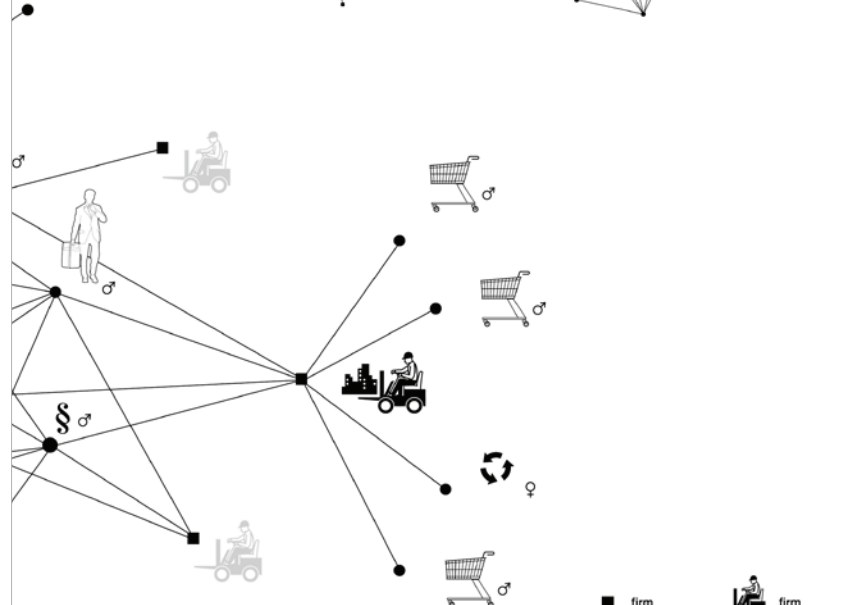
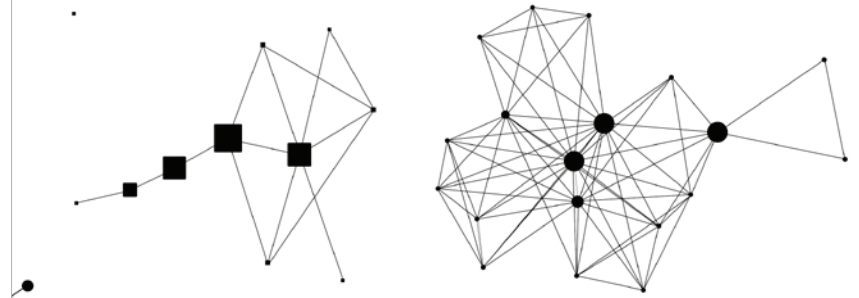
belonging to the national heritage list – now all await renovation or demolition. Amongst others, 25–29 Király Street, three nationally ‘protected’ buildings adjacent to each other are for sale.

This visualisation is based on 27 newspaper articles published since 2004 in 12 different papers, written by journalists committed to meticulous research on some of these processes and manipulations of the increasing globalisation of Király Street. Analysis of the relationship of different companies, firms and people who were involved in one way or another in the procedure of selling these real-estate reveal a vastly complex network. The visualisation displays people’s and companies’ affiliations differently, aiming to reveal a particular kind of power, decoding a convoluted, not at all transparent process which has been applied in other 13 cases in the past 6 years along Király Street in Budapest.

Hunt the key:
globalisation and real estate
on the 'most emblematic
(Buda)Pest street'



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- | | | | |
|---|--------|--|------------------|
| ■ | firm | | firm |
| ● | person | | project firm |
| ♀ | female | | offshore firm |
| ♂ | male | | businessman |
| | buyer | | lawyer |
| | agent | | local government |



Temporarily Inhabited Space





With the ups and downs of the real-estate market, the balance between supply and demand of residential, office and retail spaces often becomes unsettled. The apartments turned into offices in boom times, and shops developed into dwellings in times of shortage are all signs of this disequilibrium. Király Street and its surroundings, accommodating various

frontlines between contrasting visions of the city, has long functioned as the most important terrain to test the possibilities to use spaces differently from the purposes for which they were originally built.

Deserted residential buildings, abandoned garages and warehouses, disused schools and community edifices have become fertile ground for

cultural experimentation. In his series, Miklós Surányi traces the way cultural use overwrites and re-calibrates industrial, residential and commercial units. Lost clothes, found objects, arbitrary installations, and accidental compositions all reveal moments of stability and imbalance in temporarily inhabited spaces.

Ádám Albert

is an artist, living and working in Budapest. He graduated from the Hungarian University of Fine Arts (Budapest), and he is currently working on his DLA dissertation at the doctoral programme at HUFA. His works focus on the following concepts: gallery – public space; art – reality; and popular culture – high culture. His works address current social anomalies and highlight issues such as public space as private space (someone's private space), surveillance (privacy policy). He uses semantically condensed and purified images, peculiar pictograms, special flowcharts; his works are mainly characterised by minimalist aesthetics.

Gabó Bartha's

latest form of preoccupation with food and fashion is market activism. She is a founding member of a neighbourhood activist group working to save, raise awareness of and improve a farmers' market in downtown Budapest. She has exhibited work and written related to this and recently co-organised a group show about food markets. She has a background in art history.

Pedro Cid Proença, Sophie Demay & Afonso Duarte are a Luso-French graphic design ensemble. They met while studying at the Royal College of Art. They have since been involved in various projects, such as producing a book in a gallery space, an international non-school, a cinema building workshop and an itinerant bookshop.
www.cestdudigital.info

Ders Csaba gained spatial intelligence as an architect first. Realised the limits of his spatial approach on urban scale as a visiting researcher in Columbia University with the support of the Fulbright Grant. Got a valuable

insight about the production of urban systems in Bartlett, UCL. As a free-lancer advisor, currently he is working on the emerging development model of the Danube Strategy of Budapest.

Timea Csaba

is an architect, urbanist and curator based in Vienna. Working always in interdisciplinary fields, she is focusing on movement strategies, from the biggest scale as the migration of urban population, till the smallest detail as the play of fingertips in an empty room. She is founding member and member of the curator board at KÉK – Hungarian Contemporary Architecture Centre.

Beáta Dávid

Ph.D., sociologist, senior researcher at the Institute of Sociological Research of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences (MTA SZKI), professor at the Veszprém College of Theology. Areas of research: social network, sociology of health, social cohesion and family sociology.

Bahbak Hashemi-Nezhad has a background in industrial design and photography, developing from an early stage a strong interest in the role of images and representation within product design. In 2006 he moved to London to study at the Royal College of Art, where he received his MA in product design under the guidance of Jurgen Bey. He has since set up his own studio and has conducted and collaborated on numerous international design projects which have exhibited in Sydney, Milan, Barcelona, Tokyo, Amsterdam and London. Bahbak lives and works in East London.
www.bh-n.com

Edwin Heathcote is an architect, critic and designer living and working in London. He is the Architecture and Design

Critic of The Financial Times and the author of over a dozen books on architecture including *London Caffe*, *Theatre: London and Budapest: A Guide to Twentieth Century Architecture*. He is half Hungarian and has lived and worked in Budapest. In 2001 he founded hardware manufacturer 'izé', a word which means 'thingy' in Hungarian.

House of Jonn

House of Jonn is Jordan Hodgson, Niall Gallacher and Nixolas Lobo Brennan. They met while studying Architecture at the RCA and formed House of Jonn in London in 2009. They have worked at various international architecture practices in London, New York, São Paulo, and Zürich. Their work work is concerned with architecture as a cultural practice and the complex exigencies of the contemporary city. These concerns encompass both the everyday and possible alternatives. Their work includes both built structures and images, and is produced out of a non dogmatic design process.

www.houseofjonn.com

Béla Káli

is an architect, project manager of Dutch architect Kas Oosterhuis' latest work, the CET-Budapest project. He graduated from ULB University of Brussels, Victor Horta Department of Architecture. Currently he is undertaking his MSc in Real Estate, Property Investment and Management at Technical University of Budapest and Trent University of Nottingham, writing his thesis on the rehabilitation possibilities of the old Jewish Quarter of Budapest. He teaches contemporary architecture and interior design at Werk Academy, Budapest.

Gergely Kovács

is an architect working in London. He studied in Budapest and at the

Architectural Association in London where he is running workshops currently. His recent project exploring the spatial implications of the politics of neutrality has won several awards and been published widely.

Péter Lowas

is an artist and activist living and working in Berlin and Pécs, Hungary. Graduated at the Communication and Media Department at the University of Pécs. Co-founder of SmArt, a cultural project where he has organised experimental video/film festivals and art events in Pécs. He is a member of Lada project, is a Berlin based artist run brand from 2007. His works are based on found objects and footages as well as on situative installations addressing the idea of periphery, waste and hermeneutic thinking.

Emőke Kerekes & Anna Mózes

Emőke is a Transilvanian born photographer based in Budapest. Graduated from Moholy-Nagy University of Art and Design Budapest, with a Bachelor of Photography degree in 2010. Anna was born in Budapest, studies animation at the Moholy-Nagy University of Arts and Design.

László Munteán

is a Ph.D. candidate in American Studies at Eötvös Loránd University, Hungary, writing his dissertation on the commemoration of 9/11 in literature and the fine arts. Since 2004 he has been assistant professor at the Department of English at Pázmány Péter Catholic University, Hungary. He teaches 20th Century American Literature and American Architectural History. He also teaches Hungarian Architectural History to architecture students from the University of San Francisco studying in Budapest. His fields of interests include urban space and memorials, interrelations of text and image,

20th century English and American literature, and visual culture.

Deepa Naik

has worked with public works, Art for Change and the Serpentine Gallery, and has co-ordinated special projects with Irit Rogoff (Goldsmiths) including: *De-Regulation* (MuHKA 2006, Herzliya Museum of Contemporary Art 2006, Berlin 2010); *A.C.A.D.E.M.Y.: Learning from the Museum* (Van Abbemuseum 2006); *SUMMIT: non-aligned initiatives in education culture* (Multitude e.V. 2007); and *Eye Witness Conference* (Birkbeck School of Law 2008). Guest lectures include the Dutch Art Institute, Art & Architecture, Chelsea College of Art. She is currently editing *Casting Off: New Journeys in Visual Culture* (2010)

Trenton Oldfield's

work is pre-occupied with cities including formal work within government, cultural and environmental agencies and personal practice as well as film, public art commissions, research and guest lecturing. He was Coordinator of the Thames Strategy – Kew to Chelsea, Project Manager at Cityside Regeneration, a Community Development Worker in North Kensington, and active on the boards of the Westway Development Trust, London Citizens and Subtext. He is currently writing a book on the socio-political history of fences and their contemporary deployment in London's public spheres.

Levente Polyák

is lecturer at the Moholy-Nagy University of Art and Design and at the Budapest University of Technology where he teaches urban studies and architectural theory. Levente has worked on urban projects for the New York, Paris, Budapest and Pécs municipalities, and as co-founder of the KÉK-Hungarian Contemporary Architecture Centre, he has organized conferences and exhibitions on

contemporary urban phenomena. His theoretical work focuses on the intersections of art, architecture, urbanism, geography and cinema.

Péter Rákosi/Tehnica Schweiz studied Visual Communication at the Moholy-Nagy University of Arts and Design. Since 1997 his photography has been exhibited in Budapest as well as internationally. Since 2003 he worked together with László Gergely photographer as Tehnica Schweiz, posing questions about the active participation of small communities and interpersonal relationships in the wider society. They are members of POC (Piece of Cake, European network for Contemporary Images) since 2007.

Réka Schutzmann

is a social worker who obtained her diploma in 2008 on the College of Theology in Veszprém. She received the Scholarship of the Republic of Hungary in 2006. Currently she is a student at the Eötvös Loránd University, Budapest (social policy).

Allan Siegel

studied initially architecture but became involved in the experimental filmmaking movement and subsequently a founding member of the documentary film collective Newsreel and then was a co-director of Third World Newsreel. Besides working as a filmmaker he is also a visual media artist, writer and teacher. His films have been presented at major festivals in North America, Europe and Asia and his visual media at exhibitions in Budapest, Pécs, Chicago, New York, Cheltenham and Montreal. He taught for many years at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago and lectured at other universities in the United States. Currently he is a lecturer in the Intermedia Department at the Hungarian University of Fine Arts

and an Associate Editor of the journal *ARTMargins*.

Eszter Steierhoffer

is an art historian and curator based in London. She is a graduate of the Curating Contemporary Art MA at the Royal College of Art and previously studied art history in Budapest and in Italy, focusing on 20th and 21st century art and architecture. Her current research concentrates on a critical approach to curating architecture. At present she is directing the Art Network Agency Program at the Hungarian Cultural Centre in London.

Miklós Surányi

graduated from the University of Fine Arts in Budapest and worked on digital and video projects and several exhibitions oriented towards digital art. Since 2004 he is working exclusively with the media of photography. In 2006 he was awarded the Pécsi József Grant for Photography, ever since he exhibited widely in Budapest. In his series of photographs he is building up a strong connection, a quasi-narrative context between pictures, yet he aspires to have a story inherent also in individual images.

Csilla Zsuzsanna Vizl

was born in 1978, Hungary. Received the Hungarian Republican Scholarship in 2007. Obtained a diploma in 2008 on the College of Theology in Veszprém as social worker. Currently she is a student on the Semmelweis University, Budapest (social worker).

With thanks to the authors, artists, architects, designers, translators and all participants. Special thanks to John MacDonald, Cecilia Faduola, Leigh Gravenor, Edward Quigley, Shelleya Rahman and Marco Torquati from the Church Street Neighborhood Management Team; to Alastair Rudd without whom we would have never found our way to Church Street. Thanks to the whole team of the Hungarian Cultural Centre, especially to Ildikó Takács and Hanna Kiss for their support and assistance. For their generous help thanks to Gergely Kovács, Krisztián Mizun, Eszter Gerő, Theodore Thysiade and Ben Freeman. Thanks to Nicholas Lobo-Brennan and Bahbak Hashemi-Nezhad for their extraordinary dedication and involvement. For their advice and contribution we thank Anna Perczel, Mátyás Sárközi, Attila Fábri, Zsolt Szijártó, Márton Szuhay, Nóra Somlyódy, Rita Varga, Éva Kovács, Jack Tan, Janna Graham and Amal Khalaf.

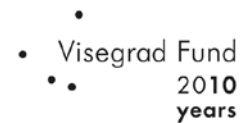
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Lastly, but by no means least, we would like to thank the people of Church Street who generously gave their time to be interviewed.



Anatomy of a Street is a traveling research project and exhibition curated by Levente Polyák & Eszter Steierhoffer

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Foreword

Anatomy of a Street is a travelling exhibition and on-going research project exploring sites of an accelerated urban transformation. The first event runs from the 25 June to the 4 July 2010 in Church Street, Paddington, London.

This publication does not attempt to represent that which has not yet taken place; instead, the documents here assembled, both text and images, act as a map of the theoretical and geographical territories in which the exhibition occurs.

Each stop on the exhibition's itinerary will result in a new iteration of this book, which shall be extended, chapter by chapter, with the documentation of the previous event and clues as to what may follow, tracing a chronological archive of the exhibition's path. It is, in this sense, an object in flux, that reacts to its context and is in a permanent state of liminality: documenting what just occurred while, simultaneously, unfolding new possible becomings – like the moving landscapes it tries to capture.