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IN SEARCH OF RESILIENT URBAN SPACE.

PEST'S CITY CENTRE AT THE CROSSROADS OF TRADITION AND INNOVATION, 1928–1944

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ABSTRACT

In this paper my aim is to examine the Hungarian architectural discourse between 1928 and 1944, with special regard to the 'historical' centre of Pest. The observation is carried out through the review of architectural journals and theoretical essays. I undertake a historical analysis of the various uses and changes in the meaning of the concept of townscape. Analysis of the architectural discourse for this time interval might provide a better understanding of the transformation in the perception of urban space.

The examined period can be boldly called the 'dawn of urban heritage protection', but also the age of a new urbanity that envisioned the rethinking of urban space through the reconstruction of complete urban areas. This paradox not only had a remarkable impact on rethinking of urban space, especially on determining values, but also led to experimental and hybrid spatial categories. My aim is to study this specific problem of social history, which not only made urban preservation part of the discourse but expanded it more and more as a continually growing 'set'. This set captures and addresses the diverse aspects of urban life, making the concept of urban heritage even more complex.

The fundamental questions of the study are how the discourse conceptualises urban spatial categories, more precisely, how the materiality of the built environment and representations of space are taken into account. The discourse on compatibility encompasses all strategic behaviours that seek to integrate the historic city and the new architectural solutions incorporating the needs of the present. In order to analyse the ways in which the city centre was constructed in the discourse, I incorporate the resilience model into the argument. Thus, the discussion may help understanding how changes in the interpretation of urban space result in a new attitude towards preservation, development or modernization of 'historic' neighbourhoods.

Keywords: urban preservation, townscape, resilience, historical urban neighbourhood

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*'The beautiful Biedermeier Pest, the Old Downtown, so kindly sung about by Kazinczy, have been destroyed and what we have got instead is better not to talk about, because now it is neither old nor modern, only confusing, messy and tasteless'*² (Csathó 1931:7). The writer Kálmán Csathó's jeremiad on the ruined Budapest city centre was not only shared by the conservative, nationalist readership of the daily *Budapesti Hírlap* or the political elite (see Klebelsberg 1928) but also by the modern architectural movement, which was spreading its wings and just gaining visibility. Undoubtedly, assessments of the situation of these different groups could sometimes meet, but they had a radically different vision on the city. The modernist architects rather talked about complete neighbourhoods with *'outdated'*, *'backward'* and *'unhealthy'* (Ligeti 1928) housing and less about nostalgia for the old Pest, at least during the emergent phase of the movement.

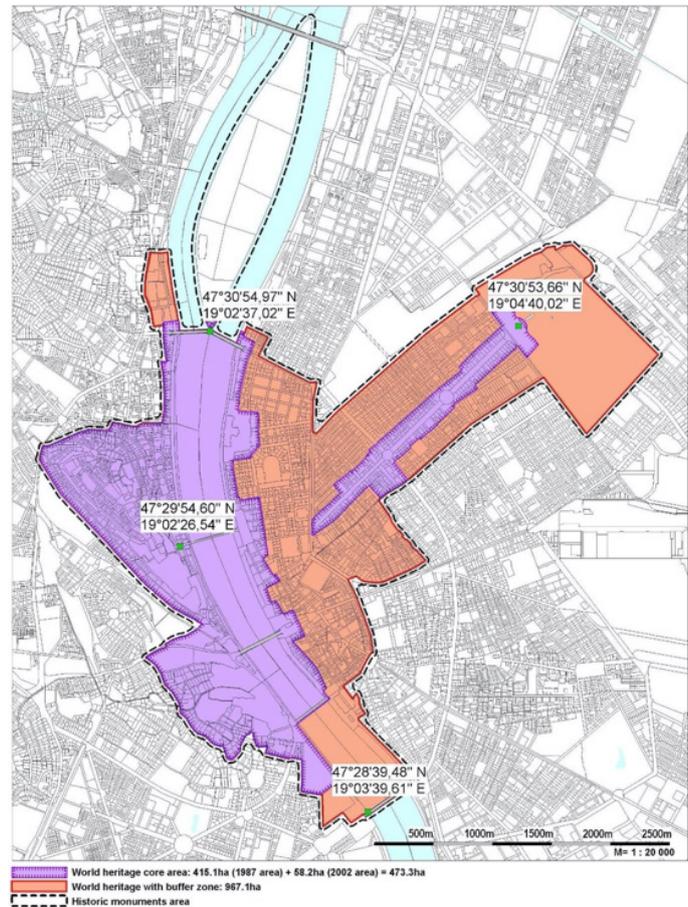
What is certain is that a plurality of imaginations on past, present and future of Pest inner-city neighbourhoods characterized the political and professional discourses at the turn of the twenties and thirties. This is the period when, with the foundation of the International Congresses of Modern Architecture (CIAM), the modern architectural movement gained strength on the international stage and gradually moved from the conceptualisation of healthy homes to urban issues, and when the International Conference for the Protection and Conservation of Artistic and Historical Monuments took place and adopted the first normative document on urban preservation. Thus, the intention to redefine the city became strong in this period and condensed along the conflict between the old and the new city. At first glance, the seemingly contradictory modernist and anti-modernist tendencies captured the 'time' from different perspectives. However, if we look at the two Athens Charters³, the one common denominator was still the formulation of the attitude towards urban preservation (Iamandi 1997). Without going deeper into the analysis of the charters I would like to refer to their main characteristics, which after all greatly distinguish their visions on integration of the old and the new. The Athens Charter of 1931, while promoting the aesthetic enhancement of monuments, recommended the preservation of the surroundings of listed buildings and *'certain particularly picturesque perspectives'* (Athens Charter 1931). The Athens Charter of 1933, which summarized the principles of CIAM's urban development ideas, spoke of some of the lay-outs and building structures that define the *'personality of the city'*, and from which *'its soul gradually emanates'*, which are the *'witnesses of the past'* and *'a plastic virtue in which the utmost intensity of human genius has been incorporated'* (Athens Charter 1933). Although it roughly formulated some ideas for preserving, highlighting and isolating certain buildings in the context of the new city, it did not provide clear guidelines on how this could be put into practice (Iamandi 1997).

Figure 1
The World Heritage site of Budapest,
including the banks of Danube,
the Buda Castle Quarter and Andrásy Avenue
(UNESCO 2020)

² Translations of all citations from Hungarian-language sources are by Gábor Oláh.

³ One the basic document of monument protection and restoration from 1931, and the other the modernist manifesto of the functional city from 1933 (Iamandi 1997).

Today, the majority of these ‘confusing’, ‘messy’, ‘tasteless’ or ‘outdated’, ‘backward’, ‘unhealthy’ inner-Pest neighbourhoods are protected areas in the UNESCO World Heritage list (Figure 1). The seemingly turbulent and constant debates on the redefinition of the old



Pest transformed its perception over time and resulted in protected area status by the end of the 20th and beginning of the 21st century. Thus, the main issue is to consider to what extent the preservation of the urban space was made part of the discourse and practice. Isabelle Backouche (2013) defines this as a modified form of modernity that seeks to integrate the preservation of the old city and the adaptation to new needs. The emerging issue is ‘compatibility’ (p14) between the different times of the city, between the new architectural possibilities and the existing urban fabric. My aim is to study this specific problem of social history, which not only made urban preservation part of the discourse but has expanded it more and more as a continually growing ‘set’. This set captures and addresses the diverse aspects of urban life, making the concept of urban heritage even more complex (Sonkoly 2017). How did architects perceive and manage the times of the city? Through which terms and concepts did the preservation of urban space appear in the discourse? How were the perceptions of the preserved urban space filled with historical and social content?

In the present study I intend to examine the Hungarian architectural discourse between 1928 and 1944, with special regard to the ‘historic’ centre of Pest.⁴ I carry out the observation through architectural journals and theoretical essays. However, it is worthwhile supplementing the perspective of the ‘urban planner’ with the outline of the legal–administrative framework which also can be considered as a discourse, the result of the conflicting efforts on urban preservation, modernization and adaptation. There are several reasons for setting 1928 as the starting date. This was the year when the emblematic journal of the Hungarian modern

4 The ‘historic neighbourhoods’ of Pest serve as a kind of laboratory for the analysis, including the area between Grand Boulevard and the Danube, according to the administrative division of the examined period, the whole 4th and the inner parts of the 5th, 6th, 7th, 8th and 9th districts.

architecture movement, *Tér és Forma*⁵ was launched, and when due to a modification of the Building Code of Budapest, the preservation of Buda Castle Quarter went beyond the conservation of individual buildings by treating it as an ensemble (Kaiser 1996). As for the end point of this study, the year of 1944 seemed to be appropriate as the siege of Budapest critically changed the physical nature of the urban space and did not leave its perception unaffected either. This paper fits into a larger project covering the period from 1928 to 1987⁶. Hence, a part of it will be presented, which is expected to be suitable for testing the research model. Analysis of the architectural discourse for this time interval might provide a better understanding of the transformation in perception of urban space.

FROM DISCOURSE ON COMPATIBILITY TO RESILIENT URBAN SPACE

As a possible methodological approach, a conceptual history analysis (see Koselleck 2004) can be considered, which focuses on the process when the demand occurs for the redefinition of the existing conceptual apparatus. Another possible way is to study the configurations of perceptions and conceptions of the urban space. Thus, architects tried to develop alternative strategies to address – among others – expectations of politics, their own professional vocation, and at the same time the challenges of modernity, while at the same time trying to define new forms and meanings of urban space (Hopfengärtner 2016). I would like to examine how changes in the interpretation of urban space will result in a new attitude towards preservation, development or modernization of ‘historical neighbourhoods’.

The discourse on compatibility encompasses all strategic behaviours that seek to integrate the historic city and the new architectural solutions incorporating the needs of the present (Backouche 2013). Hence, it could be suitable for defining the perceptions and interpretations of time and space of urban planning actors and the changes that have taken place in them. Several aspects of the issue of compatibility are worth distinguishing:

- How was it considered possible to integrate the new into the old urban strata?
- What concepts were used to think about juxtaposition, harmonization and conflict?
- How was urban space with historical value and with non-outstanding historical value identified in the discourse?
- What complex, holistic and integrative concepts of urban preservation were defined and concretized?

Analyzing certain social phenomena through texts is mostly based on the assumption that understanding the content of these texts will lead to the identification and understanding of the historical, social and cultural contexts that are important for the research question. I undertake a historical analysis of the various uses and changes in the meaning of the socio-political concepts related to the historical centre of Pest. To what extent is the concept of the city centre created as a result of an active socially constructed discursive process? This is a conceptual historical method that seeks out the changes in linguistic content condensed in concepts (Koselleck 2015). While drawing clear boundaries of the forums to be examined, a key consideration is their ability to provide a comprehensive picture of the evolution of discourses that is sufficiently representative and relevant to the operational categories of the research. Therefore, I have selected journals that specifically wanted to be carriers of opinions about architecture and urbanism (Figure 2).

To develop the framework of conceptual historical interpretation on how the historicity of the city centre was constructed in the discourse, I incorporate the resilience model into the argument. Resilience has become an integral part of urban history and heritage research in recent years with its holistic, multifaceted and

5 *Tér és Forma* (Space and Form) was a monthly professional architectural journal between 1928–1948, was the primary forum of the Hungarian modern architectural movement.

6 1987 marks the date on which the view of the Danube bank and the Buda Castle District became a world heritage site.

Figure 2
Architecture and urbanism related journals of the studied period serving as the main sources for the discourse analysis.



heterogenic interpretations as it is present in other academic scholarly discourses (Meyen–Schier 2019). The increasing attractiveness of resilience in the scientific and policy discourses can be considered a consequence of its presentist nature (Hartog 2015; Sonkoly 2017), its basic premise being that the future is unpredictable and uncontrollable (Meyen–Schier 2019). Instead of delving deeper into the conceptual definitions/model explanations of resilience and their scientific positions – which has already been done previously in great depth (See Rapp–Endress–Naumann 2019) – I would like to highlight the aspects that are important for the present analysis of the discourse.

By resilient urban space I mean those spatial categories that emerge from the discourse on compatibility, which take into account and attribute significance to both monument protection and urban development (Sonkoly 2017). Resilient spatial categories develop from the modernist dichotomy set up by the discourse that can be defined between tradition and innovation (Merrill–Giamarelos 2019). In this approach, continuous integration between innovation (urban development) and tradition (urban conservation) is framed and applied in the present to establish hybrid urban spatial categories (Sonkoly 2017). These cannot be characterized simply as a multitude of mixed categories because I postulate that there is a strategic thinking behind them. In this approach the discourse of compatibility is defined as management of change that wants to resolve issues by

selecting values, discovering and using their own resources and potentials, and integrating them into strategies. It may reveal how temporality becomes a category of strategic thinking and action of urban planning. According to my hypothesis, the hybrid spatial categories that emerge from compatibility follow this approach.

The examined period can be boldly called the ‘dawn of urban heritage protection’, but also the age of a new urbanity that envisioned the rethinking of urban space through the reconstruction of complete urban areas. This paradox did not only have a remarkable impact on the rethinking of urban space, especially on guiding values, but also led to experimental and hybrid spatial categories. Hence resilience is an analytical and operational tool that helps to formulate questions addressed to the sources, which may provide new perspectives on the historical evolution of urban development and preservation of the inner city. This paper does not seek to categorize the city as resilient or non-resilient but rather to shed light on the changes in the concept of townscape. Using the ideas of the resilience model, I will study how the conceptualisations shifted regarding the townscape of Pest’s centre.

CHAOTIC VERSUS RATIONALIZED TOWNSCAPE

‘In Paris, the streets have been built with palaces with uniform facades and the same building height in the past, and new buildings need to fit into this as well. This is an essential condition for true greatness, for a monumental townscape. We should have achieved at least in Budapest that it would be impossible to build side by side at different building heights!’ – lamented Gáspár Fábrián (1928:157) a devoted representative of the historicist architectural approach and also the editor-in-chief of *Építő Ipar – Építő Művészet*⁷, while regretting the loss of the old Petőfi Square and condemning its current disorganized townscape. The journal dealt frequently with the issue of Budapest’s townscape from the 1920s onwards, above all with regard to the concern over the lost townscape and the contemporary disorder. The recently incumbent president of MBPW, Iván Rakovszky (1929), also expressed his displeasure with the current state of the city. He identified the mistakes with the integration of new buildings in the urban fabric during the whole design and permission process of a new building: *‘the houses in Pest stand side by side as if they ignored each other, [...] no one cared about the surrounding townscape’* (p19).

In Virgil Bierbauer’s (1929) inaugural editorial in *Tér és Forma*, he rejoiced over the growing and unprecedented interest of the public in urban issues, which also encouraged architects to think on a larger scale. According to him, this is due to the fact that the ugliness of Budapest had never been *‘whipped’* (p1) by the cultural and political elite as much as it had been in recent years. Bierbauer was curious why they did not notice all the ugliness earlier, responsibility for which lay largely with the second half of the 19th century. Bierbauer agreed with this position by describing a dismal image of the state of Budapest, which *‘despite its exceptionally beautiful and lucky location, is supremely rich in the most unfortunate, worst townscapes’* (p1). In the initial period of *Tér és Forma*, the importance of urban aesthetic issues was clearly and consciously listed backwards among other urban issues. This could be seen as an intentional overcoming and confrontation with historicist and formalist ideas. In a 1928 article, the other co-editor of the journal, János Komor, criticized the practice of *‘composing impressive townscapes’* (p87) as they were only about formalism and were *‘born from an urban development derived from the satisfaction of non-organic [social] needs’* (p87). According to him, the prerequisite for beauty is the overcoming of *‘irregular, chaotic, and tasteless chaos’* (p87), consequently, a townscape authority was required. In his argument, the streamlined visuality could carry the aesthetic experience and make the streetscape enjoyable, and even improve the well-being of the walker. Systematization is also the basis of urban aesthetics for Virgil Bierbauer (1933). He drew a sharp line between the visuals of the man of the

⁷ *Építő Ipar – Építő Művészet* (Construction industry – Architecture) was a weekly professional journal dealing mainly with technical topics between 1877–1932. This was the official journal of the associations of construction professions of Budapest and the Committee for the Examination of Construction Workers.

past and the present: *'the beauties of the cities of the past came from chance, the beauties of today's city will be born by foresight, long-term planning, the conscious incorporation of details into the city'* (p62). Harmony stemmed from rationality, from the reassuring nature of the evenness of houses. Thus, the modernists wanted to go beyond aestheticizing urban planning practices, while at the same time they were strongly critical of the architecture of previous times.

The problematisation of integration can be clearly seen as early as the turn of the twenties and thirties, which was mostly connected with visual integrity and aesthetic experience. If we look at this problematization effort through the 'glasses of resilience', we straightaway find the issue of compatibility in the visually perceived, quite holistic and by no means well-defined townscape concept, which seems to be one of the urban spaces where intervention or rather modernization should take place. However, there is no reflection on urban preservation or any other content than the aesthetic, and the tension is not even obvious related to the integration between the old and the new city. Hence, it is worth examining the situation of monuments, which is the seemingly most discernible form of more specific evaluations.

CITY WITH NO HISTORICAL PATINA

According to a short reflection on monuments in *Városi Szemle*⁸, a total of 56 protected buildings were listed in Budapest (Városi Szemle 1927). A consensus seemed to be formed over the fact that Budapest did not have a significant number of monumental buildings, so everything could be done to transform it into a modern city. *'The traces of the older settlement are nowhere to be seen, despite the fact that many older strata are hidden beneath the city'* (Bierbauer 1932:2). Thus, while being one of the oldest cities in Europe, Bierbauer called Budapest a young city, up to 150-200 years old, with *'no historical patina'* (p2) beside the Buda Castle. The modernist discourse on monuments was defined by the youthfulness of the city, the insignificant number of monuments, and the monument-destroying critique of 19th-century *'style-mimicking epigonic'* (Ferenczy 1938:250), historicizing architecture.

According to Pál Ligeti (1928) a significant part of the difficulties in placing the City Hall building was in connection with monumental aspects which apparently became one of the most important challenges: the baroque parts of the monumental town hall and the classicist Lutheran church in Deák Square. In his argument these buildings must be *'unconditionally maintained'* (p28). Moreover, the Lutheran Church is *'Pollack's work! [...] This will be certainly dominated by the grandiose [new city hall] building next to it'* (p29). In his suggestion, he tried to fit the future city hall building with the Lutheran church. Pál Forgó (1928) suggested that the whole building complex should be demolished, to have some parks, gardens and *'air in the crowded inner districts of Budapest'* (p78). Forgó admitted that Ligeti's town hall suggestion provided an innovative solution to the monuments, but it did not dare to touch the street structure of the city centre because of its *'false historical conception'* (p78). Virgil Bierbauer (1928) completely rejected Forgó's proposal, as the Palace of Invalids (City Hall building) in Budapest is *'the only Baroque architectural monument [that has] scaped from the demolition pickaxe'* (p115). According to him the building must be *'restored to the true character of the age'* by replacing the missing parts in order to *'regain its original form'* (p115).

While – in cases like the issue of the City Hall – some architects were concerned with the correct integration of monuments into the new city, the issue did not gain much ground in the discourse. In any case, what makes this really interesting from the point of view of resilience is the possibility of tracing how the protection of monuments became a part of urban planning thinking.

PERCEPTIONS OF CITY CENTRE NEIGHBOURHOODS

We can see very few direct references related to the perception of Pest's centre neighbourhoods, only in urban design competitions (Figure 3) and theoretical writings dealing with neighbourhood scale ideas. The year 1930 brought two open urban design competitions related to a detailed solution for the southern side of Szabadság Square and for the intersection of Erzsébet Avenue with Károly Boulevard. In the case of Szabadság Square, as a novelty of the design ideas competition, plans were invited that had a specific regard to urban structure and townscape issues (Györgyi 1930).

With regard to the modernist markers concerning the old Pest mentioned earlier (outdated, backward, unhealthy), we may have the impression that, when they were used, they actually imagined inner-Erzsébetváros. There was a quite broad consensus that the neighbourhood *'cried out for air and life'* (Kaffka 1929:225), but it was expressed in different ways. The far-right press stigmatized the Inner-Erzsébetváros as a ghetto due to its unsanitary, airless, sunless and messy urban fabric (Magyarország 1929) but certainly it was largely determined by the widespread image association as a Jewish quarter. The modernist architect Pál Ligeti described the neighbourhood as follows: *'modern tall houses stand next to ground-floor sheds, next to a dilapidated one-story build-*

⁸ *Városi Szemle* (Urban Review) was an urban science journal published between 1908–1948. It was not specifically an architectural journal, but it often dealt with the administrative, construction, transport, health and social issues of Budapest.

ing, even in the heart of the city' (p19). In his description, this is the most backward neighbourhood in the city centre, the biggest embarrassment inside the city. Ferenc Vámos (1928) agreed with Ligeti that the neighbourhood was one of the 'terrible wounds' (p118) of Budapest, but total reconstruction could not be considered until 'there is an opportunity for generous repair' (p118).

In 1936 a design ideas competition was announced to solve the problems of the city centre. The competition was inspired by Ferenc Harrer's idea of the Budapest Forum from 1932. With this conception he tried to give an answer to the fact that Budapest did not actually have a real main square. The forum idea made it possible to create a large-scale city centre: this basically involved the parts of the Small Boulevard where the 'coincidence' brought together the main churches of all four major religions (St. Stephen's Basilica, the Lutheran church at Deák Square, the Dohány Street Synagogue, and the Reformed Church at Kálvin Square), furthermore the City Hall, University buildings and the National Museum (Harrer 1933). In his critically edited summary, Virgil Bierbauer (1937) did not see the concept of the forum as a good idea because 'it is by no means worth the sacrifices that this large-scale urban development would inevitably involve' (p67). Bierbauer drew attention to the fact that certain areas were intentionally left untouched, and their plans were largely shaped by their relationship to these buildings being perceived historically valuable, which can be considered as the creation of preserved areas that could mostly be associated with certain historic buildings. Bierbauer, on the other hand, strongly supported the idea of Pál Ligeti's 'urban axis' ('várostengely'). The axis had been drawn along the path of Szabadság

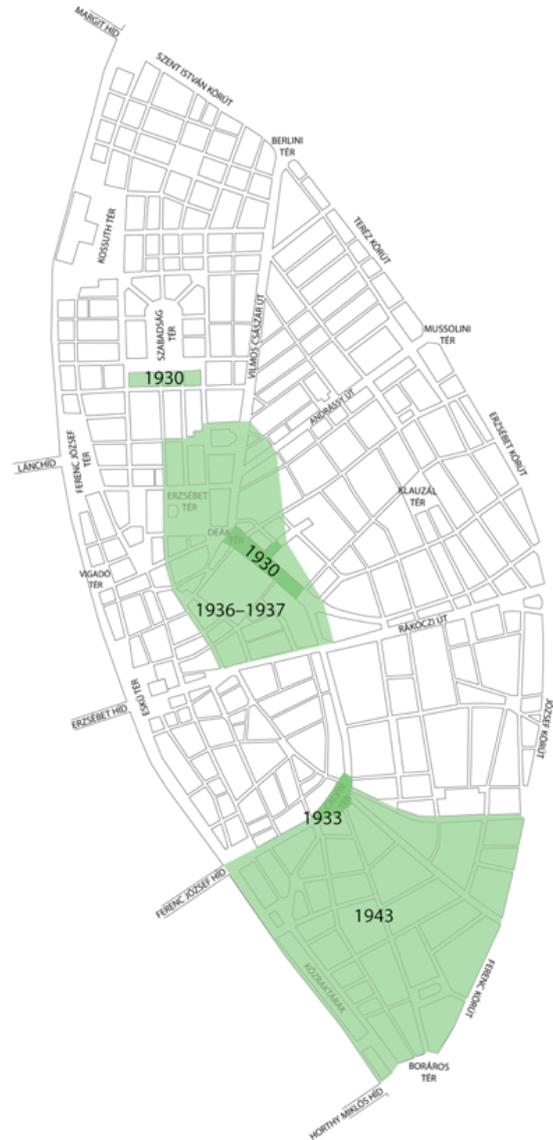
tér – Erzsébet tér – Szervita tér – Apponyi tér (today Ferenciek tere) – Kálvin tér. Ligeti wanted to create an organic connection between Budapest's governmental and judiciary, financial, municipal and scientific centres. Although tacitly, the axis sought to arrange the city centre without major demolitions and to frame the monuments located on it into a single concatenation.

By examining the question of the possibilities to integrate the new into the old urban strata through design ideas competitions, tacitly and passively articulated urban spatial categories can be discerned. On the one hand, they actually defined urban spaces that require special attention. On the other hand, it is difficult to grasp and demonstrate the strategic attitude of the actors to the issue.

MARKING FAULT LINES BY TOWNSCAPE

The concept of the townscape emerged with some shift in emphasis from the late 1930s. In the case of *Tér és Forma*, this meant that in addition to the dichotomy-driven discourse of chaotic versus rationalized town-

Figure 3
Urban design ideas competitions in Pest's central neighbourhoods between 1930–1944 (Drawing by Gábor Oláh)



scape, the problem of integration of the new architecture into the old urban fabric also gained ground. János Tóth (1938) examined the townscapes from the aesthetic design perspective. In his argument, the historical aspect of the protection of monuments emerged. He suggested that monument protection should be enhanced in certain streets which had preserved their precious old houses undisturbed, and that when approving each new building, it should be assessed whether the building fitted into the townscape. György Masirevich (1939) – in whose article the editor indicated that the paper did not share the author’s thoughts – explained that by the end of the heroic age of new architecture, the issue of the harmonisation of modern buildings with the urban fabric had been becoming increasingly important. According to him, architecture should strive to create houses that are ‘*modern and yet have a formal and emotional connection to the city*’ (p66). The only way to create beautiful and harmonic townscapes was by respecting traditions. The modern architecture, which had been becoming mainstream, must also come to the realization that a building ‘*can never be independent of the townscape or landscape*’ (p66). However, recent times had shown that new buildings in many cases ‘*disintegrated the townscape*’ (p66), which greatly degraded the social acceptance of modern architecture.

Pál [Granasztói] Rihmer (1939) gave a more complex definition of the townscape in the reform conservative *Magyar Szemle*. The townscape is ‘*the face of the city*’ (p241) and expresses all the cultural, social, economic forces that shaped the city, depicting the organization, character, history and spirit of the city. In Rihmer’s conceptualisation the townscape is thus a multi-complex phenomenon, which is ‘*similar to the human face, whose features reflect the depths of the soul and which is summed up from countless small details and impressions into a unified experience*’ (p241). To be able to analyse the townscape all these elements should be examined one by one, which is an endless mission. In his article, he undertook to capture the townscape from two perspectives: construction projects and regulations. He did not give a favourable picture of Budapest’s new townscapes in his evaluation: only some vacant lot had been completed without giving an enriching new appearance to the city. The modern townscape is therefore based on conscious planning and recognition of the interests of the community.

László Irsy, the vice-president of MPWC and the editor in chief of *Magyar Építőművészet*⁹, criticized the buildings representing ‘new architecture’ which disturbed the harmony of already formed townscapes in a dissonant way. He said that the architects could – with little efforts related to the facade – design buildings that fitted into the townscape without giving up their professional vocation (Irsy 1941). We can observe an increasing number of articles dealing with the townscape as a scientifically feasible urban planning activity. It became such an important topic in *Magyar Építőművészet* that Irsy started a series of articles to discuss the elements that shape the townscape. When it came to placing sculptures (Kisléghi Nagy–Pogány 1943), street furniture or signboards, inserting a building, designing facades and the interplay of roofs (Irsy 1944), the right measures and ratio could be determined for the townscapes. Despite all this, they stated that the application of rigid rules and regulations would not meet the objectives stated in the series of articles. The change of principles of *Magyar Építőművészet* related to Irsy was largely driven by anti-modernism, and it certainly found an opportunity for confrontation in relation with the townscape. This change of direction is well illustrated by the case of the Town Hall, which, in their view, had to be in line with the style and ‘*historical atmosphere*’ of the city centre (Vertse 1944:37). It is worth emphasizing that this ‘historical atmosphere’ is no longer determined only by visuality, but also by spirituality that gave the city its own personality.

At the same time, István Kisléghi Nagy and Frigyes Pogány (1944) started writing theoretical articles on monuments and the townscape in a specifically dedicated section of the journal. They emphasized the need to undertake profound townscape research in Hungarian towns. In terms of their approach to townscapes, they

⁹ Magyar Építőművészet (Hungarian Architecture) was an architectural journal representing the conservative approach between 1903 and 1944. In 1940, László Irsy, the vice-president of the MBPW, took over the editing of the journal, and from then on it became a semi-official journal of the Board. The new editorial principles had an effect on the journal’s appearance, content and structure.

distinguished four characteristic acts of the viewer: emotion formation, imagination, conceptualization and aesthetic evaluation. Together, these acts form the overall impression and real effect of the townscape. With the established perception process of the townscape, they criticized those who tried to find the rules of urban beauty in the forms and proportions that most satisfy the needs of the imagination. They acknowledged that the viewers' ultimate experience, in its true nature, is very complex and involves many components, between which the aesthetic can easily be obscured. Awareness of a historic event could profoundly change their experience. However, these '*romantic factors*' (p112) were explicitly excluded from the scope of the study. In their argument, examination of the process of forming perceptions of the townscape led to the establishment of important principles which allow it to be researched on a regular basis.

In contrast to the unanimous negative opinion of old Pest at the beginning of the decade, the discovery of certain local values can be observed. In parallel, claims that the townscape of Budapest had been continuously deteriorating since the late 19th century persisted in the 1940s as well. However, articles reproaching townscape errors had a slightly different tone compared to earlier: they were largely illustrated and associated with modernist buildings (Tóth 1941). If we take a closer look at the townscape concept of the 1940s, we can have the impression that there was a strong need for a more complex definition. For sure, as a result of these reconceptualization efforts, many new aspects of compatibility gained ground in the discourse. Among the reasons we can count the spread of new architecture, the professionalization of urbanism and the fact that the regulatory environment had also increasingly embraced the concept.

DESIRABLE PLACES FOR ARTISTIC TOWNSCAPES

In the first Hungarian town planning act of 1937¹⁰ the protection of monuments and historic areas was mentioned. Special rules could be laid down in order to protect buildings and neighbourhoods with historical or artistic value, and preserve the beauty of the townscapes (Kaiser 1996). In the light of this regulatory environment, the City Hall's Special Committee on Urban Development¹¹ took monument protection issues seriously. The Chairman, Ferenc Harrer, asked the art historian István Genthon, the rapporteur of the National Committee of Monuments¹², to revise the monument inventory of Budapest. Genthon provided a list of 51 monuments which definitely needed to be preserved. The listed buildings were mostly situated in the inner part of Buda, in Óbuda and Downtown Pest (Sipos 2011). András Sipos quotes the Harrer Committee's position on the urban planning role of monument conservation (1936):

'[...] we must remove everything from the path of development that has no special value from a historical, art historical, or artistic point of view, or because of its age, its rarity or its local significance; but wherever it is a matter of saving and maintaining serious values in these aspects, development must look for another way to enforce its interests' (p57).

The committee therefore defined certain urban spatial unities to be preserved on the basis of artistic and historical value assessment, which above all belonged to individual buildings. Before the finalisation of the urban development program, in 1939, the City Hall Department for Public Culture submitted a proposal on the protection of monuments and townscape, which took into consideration the differences in terms of historical periods and urban historical significance while evaluating the monuments and preserved areas. The proposal also argued that Andrassy Avenue, with its *'entirely monumental character'* (p58), and the street network of Pest Downtown must be preserved. This is therefore an extension of the concept of preserved urban space, which took into account not only the protection of individual buildings, but also the protection of building complexes, historic neighbourhoods and morphological features as well.

The General Assembly of the Capital adopted the report of the Harrer Committee in 1940, which became the basis for the development of the Budapest General Master Plan (Sipos 2011). Concerning the built environment, it distinguished residential areas, industrial zones, the Bath city, the commercial city, the university city, and the historic city (*történeti város*). According to the definition of the latter, urban development could face three *'historical problems'* (Harrer 1941a:29): 1) preservation of certain historic, primarily valuable architectural monuments; 2) maintaining the historic character of a whole neighbourhood; 3) excavation of an archaeological site. All three problems could be encountered in Budapest: Pest is good example of the first, Buda Castle of the second, and Óbuda of the third. In the case of Pest, recent construction projects (namely the construction of the Elizabeth Bridge) had eliminated the last contiguous historic neighbourhood, so here only some *'sporadically located memories'* (p30) could be preserved. Harrer (1941b) identified beautification as one of the major subjects in the urban development program. Urban beautification envisioned the elimination of everything that spoiled the townscape, but mostly had special issues on a larger scale: the preservation and enforcement of objects of natural beauty, the protection and effective integration of historical monuments into the townscape, and the artistic creation of unified townscapes (*egységes városképek*). In his program presentation, Harrer detailed the most significant monuments, which in some cases included a reference to

10 Act No. VI of 1937 on town planning and construction.

11 In 1932 a special committee was established under Ferenc Harrer's leadership to create the urban development program of Budapest (Sipos 2011).

12 The National Committee of Monuments (Műemlékek Országos Bizottsága) was a consultative body with office apparatus for monument protection between 1881–1949. The main activities of the Committee were supporting and supervising the protection of monuments, conducting scientific research and registering monuments (Barcza 1969).

Figure 4

Annex 9 to the Budapest Urban Development Program: historical monuments of Budapest (red) and desirable places for artistic townscapes (blue) enlarging on Pest's city centre neighbourhoods. (Messik–Beckske 1940)



their surroundings. Nevertheless, this did not mean a particular level of protection of the surroundings, but rather the adaptation of the neighbouring buildings to the monument. A separate section dealt with the unified townscapes. The creation of artistic townscapes was considered the most important task of urban beautification. Suitable places were primarily determined by natural or historical features. The program identified a number of suitable places where a unified artistic townscape should be developed (Figure 4).

Concerning the examined area, 27 monuments were listed, and three main zones were identified that required a unified approach: the Danube bank, the city-axis (this idea was taken over from Pál Ligeti) and the Budapest Forum. Mussolini Square (today: Oktogon) and Kossuth Square were listed as *square issues* where townscape improvement was required (Harrer 1941b). In 1940 a new Building Code was issued in line with the adopted urban development program, which defined special provisions for the Castle Quarter and Andrassy Avenue. MBPW might impose building restrictions in order to protect buildings and districts of historical or artistic value. The Code discussed the preservation of the townscapes in a separate chapter, which was defined in the spirit of the program with regard to the guidelines for urban beautification and the artistic creation of unified townscapes. In the case of preserved townscapes, the National Committee of Monuments was granted the right to comment before a building permit was issued (Kaiser 1996).

TOWNSCAPE IMAGINED TO BE RESILIENT

Architects faced a number of challenges when they were trying to redefine the city centre of Pest. The discourse made attempts to conceptualize urban preservation, express new approaches, and reclassify certain areas. These urban changes were closely related to certain concepts, foremost the townscape. I intend to look at how the concept of the townscape and Pest's central neighbourhoods changed during this period.

To what extent can we say that the discourse formed certain hybrid urban spatial categories that can be described via the concept of resilient urban space? Was there any conceptual invention and novelty that we can consider as resulting from the discourse on compatibility? Is resilience truly interpretable in a historical urban context? To answer these questions, I tried to systematize at which levels the concepts may have emerged.

We can certainly encounter the first attempts to develop continuous spatial forms of urban preservation. The prominent role of the townscape in the discourse can hardly be disputed. The weight of the concept shows precisely the efforts to (re)shape its definitions, especially the changed requirement for a more complex concept of urban preservation, which moves from the problem of the integration of the old and the modern to a broader, more 'resilient' concept. On the one hand, it seems that the issue of the visual integrity and image of the city became the sphere where compatibility should take place. By creating the concept of a unified townscape and projecting it onto the map, the Harrer Committee consciously made an effort to establish a model for harmonizing urban preservation and planning. This integrative attitude was formulated at the level of the urban development program and the building code. On the other hand, the other selected documents shed light on the townscape from very different perspectives, resulting in considerable uncertainty around this integrative feature. Although several interpretations and potential categories have emerged, bringing a degree of diversity to the perceptions of the city centre, most of them did not seem to be permanently incorporated into the discourse. Nothing proves this more than the different ways in which the sources speak about associating townscape with tradition or historical value. Although historical arguments have emerged in some writings, they have been marginalized relative to aesthetic requirements. Nevertheless, through its aesthetic functions, the concept of townscape was able to become a 'laboratory of compatibility'.

It is important to highlight the mixed attributes and classification of the city centre in the planning documents of the 1940s. In addition to the functional properties (governmental, academic, financial etc.) a historical character was given to this area. Without overestimating its importance, we need to draw attention to the way in which the blurry concept of 'historic city' in the urban development program of 1940 morphed into a more specific but still not precisely defined spatial category in the 1948 draft of the General Master Plan of Budapest as '*neighbourhoods of historical value*' ('*történelmi értékű városrészek*') or '*finite townscapes of historic origin*' ('*történelmi eredetű zárt városképek*') (Sipos 2011:112).

Resilience seems to be an appropriate model to reveal changes in perceptions and conceptions of urban space. The model mobilized hidden assumptions and strategies, and opened up further aspects to be considered, such as the geographical concept of landscape (*táj*), which seems to have a fundamental influence on the thinking of architects. However, it has also become apparent that the analysis can provide more insights by broadening the diversity of sources reviewed.

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