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Urban Sprawl in Europe*

The alienated atmosphere, the shallow relationships of the residential suburbs inhabited by the American middle classes and the spatial manifestations of the failure of the American dream and family model are spectacularly presented in Edward Albee's dramas written in the 1960s *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*, *Everything in the Garden*, or *A Delicate Balance*. The problems of some types of European, including French, suburbs such as suburban crime, violence or fear are best illustrated in the context of art cinema by films such as Mathieu Kassovitz's *La Haine* (Hate) or Luc Besson's *Banlieue 13* (District B13).

Naturally, for us examples from the context of art are not as important as scientific studies indicating the main causes of today's social problems, which are basically the lifestyle of the middle class, its self-fulfilling confinement and individualism in the American suburbs, and the concentrations of socially disadvantaged classes and social exclusion in Europe. Behind the differences, behind the characteristics of the American and European societies, and the traits of their history, economy and development, the different social structural features of cities are evident. The American middle classes live mostly in suburbs, and more disadvantaged groups are spatially concentrated in inner cities. The European middle classes are located predominantly in the inner city or better-off suburban areas, while the disadvantaged classes are increasingly concentrated in suburban areas.

Although European suburbs are different from their American counterparts, there are visible signs of increasing convergence. Now European cities also have to face tensions which hitherto characterised mainly American urban societies. European cities are also typified by fragmentation, the rise of individualism, and the disintegration of community sense and social cohesion (Cattan p. 1). Slums, which in the past were mainly typical of American cities, are now spreading in European cities as well and segregation is also increasing (Haussermann–Haila 2010, p. 60). The hereto positive features specific to Europe, namely the European welfare state which has played an outstanding role in comparison with America, the relatively limited enforcement of market impacts and public efforts to manage social tensions, have been damaged and needs to be limited (Kazepov 2010, Cities of Europe). It is a fact that the European welfare states are not always able to restrain the various tensions, particularly due to different social structural and economic difficulties and crises, and to the strengthening of European urban sprawl and its sociological impacts. Besides American suburbanisation, which fundamentally has historical relevance to America, European suburbanisation is also gradually spreading (Kazepov 2010, p. 13). Because of global economic interests, metropolitan

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areas are functionally transforming; the significance of the role of central business districts, so prominent in the United States, is growing in European inner cities. As a result there is an increasing 'tendency to shift consumption from the CBD to suburban shopping malls' (Haussermann–Haila 2010, p. 61).

Urban sprawl is strongly criticised in international literature, including the case studies of this book. Criticisms highlight the problems of urbanised but uncontrollably expanding areas, the decline of rural areas, the decreasing territory of agricultural areas and forests, and the depletion of green spaces (Görgl et al. 2011, Cattán 2011). Nearly all the criticisms point out the environmental threats of powerful motorisation, the effects on health of time-consuming commuting between home and work, the radical lifestyle shift related to residence change, and the negative consequences of car-dependent suburban lifestyle (Frumkin 2002, Reeh–Zerlag 2011, p. 14).

The issues of adverse economic effects and the costs of meeting the development needs of infrastructural investments, including road network development which slows the dynamism of the economy, are also raised (Williamson–Imbroscio–Alperovitz 2005). Concerns include citizens escaping to suburban zones due to environmental hazards and the visible signs of poverty in inner cities, the radically decreasing urban population and the disappearance of traditional compact cities (Munoz 2003).

The new structural characteristics of urban-regional societies transforming in sprawl, the segregation of residential communities populated by the upper and middle classes together with their negative urban effects (Le Goix 2004), and peri-urban/social exclusion are strongly criticised. According to the French study in this book, urban sprawl is perceived in France and other parts of Europe as the end of the social model, supporting a trend which may impair the integration of sections of society. Urban sprawl here appears to replicate all the faults of the models, concerning North American cities, that is to say increasing individualism, strengthening social segregation and the increased use of motor vehicles among other things (Cattán 2011, p. 11).

In Europe, instead of or in addition to the urban-rural conflict, problems are caused by the formation of a new kind of spatial social dichotomy, the disparities between the core and the periphery, the city and its urban neighbourhood (Vieillard-Baron 2008). The most extreme examples of social exclusion are generated by the incredible scale of urban growth in Third World countries, which is totally uncontrolled. In Africa, South America, Brazil, India and even China the poorest of the poor live on the edge of cities in peripheral slums under inhuman circumstances (Davis 2007).

Not everyone opposes urban growth, mainly because they acknowledge the social demand for a suburban environment, namely that more and more people prefer suburban zones when choosing a place of residence. Many people also believe that urban sprawl is a development tool of urban neighbourhood which enables the urbanisation of rural areas (Fishman 1990, Le-Goaziou–Rojzman 2006, p. 10).

The supporters of both viewpoints offer solutions to the problems. The opponents recommend the strengthening of centralised urban planning models, developments in inner city areas, and higher and denser buildings. The supporters of urban sprawl urge the dynamic development of public transport and powerful planning interventions.

Neither the arguments nor the proposed solutions are new. Of the numerous historical examples, perhaps Howard's concept of the garden city, the planning intervention of the

19th century, is the most significant, which many people believe is still valid. Garden cities built around but separated from major cities – as compact settlements – offer work and living space with full leisure facilities, and fully integrate the inhabitants, absorbing people wishing to live in big cities, thus preventing the unlimited growth of town centres (Howard 1902). In contrast, the so-called ‘Good City’ idea offered a solution for a capitalist town of the 19th century, especially for problems faced by workers (Haussermann–Haila 2010, p. 54), although in effect it envisaged a more middle-class (Kesteloot 2010, p. 126) than working-class suburban model of development. As regards the latter, the Paris suburban pavillonnaires model built for workers proved to be more successful¹ (Haumont 2005).

Another example are the groups of avant-garde Russian architects in the 1920s and 1930s, the urbanists and deurbanists, who represented two different concepts, and their proposals for influencing urban sprawl. The supporters of the first group envisioned a model of concentrated urban development, while the other group planned to alleviate the perceivable urban problems by a decentralised, dispersed urban development model (Kopp 1979).

Although the suburbs born in the spirit of the garden city idea in several European cities tried to prevent the excessive expansion of the population by diverting the settlement of the population in specific directions, they were never really successful. The relevance of the garden city idea and the realisation of plans, i.e. the formation and long-term sustainability of communities propagating the unity of home and work in Europe, were supplanted in the meantime by processes transforming the economy: the development of the urban service sector attracting masses of people, which was not yet very noticeable in the early 1900s but later became dynamic, and the changing demands and forms of lifestyle as well as the weakening of local character, the trends of globalisation (Castells 1972, Merlin 1972, p. 62). The ideas of ‘Fingerplan’ in 1945 presented in the Danish case study, the positive effects elaborated and expected at that time on the unity of economic and social welfare, and the ambitions of the plan built on the aspects of reasonability and careful planning were questioned by these processes as well (Reeh–Zerlang 2011, p. 13).

Since then, the problems raised by Howard or even the avant-garde architects and their proposed solutions, and the processes of urbanisation and their impacts have changed radically because of the acceleration of the processes of globalisation and, as Enyedi suggests in his recent study, the enforcement of the new phase of urbanisation (Enyedi 2011). Originally the concepts attempted to respond to the problems of the first stages of urbanisation at that time, addressing the problems of urban growth, the accelerated flow to cities and the emergent problems of suburbanisation. Of course, the spatial problems of the early periods were also severe but differed from those of the present process and the effects of the advance of globalisation, behind which there are great mechanisms that today seem to be scientific banalities. One the one hand, in the developed Western European countries (and the United States and Japan) a strong economic and social centralisation of the service sector can be observed: the metropolitan

¹ In the 1970s 70,000 state-subsidised, private family houses were built in the outskirts of Paris for families with modest means by using a uniform house manufacturing technology and architectural style.

concentration of the service sector and skilled labour, the advance of multinational and transnational corporations, and as a result the strong development of large cities and their periphery (Veltz 1996, p. 33). On the other hand, the central role of the metropolitan regions in the world economy is evident, as is their aspiration for power for these reasons. The increasing concentration of the economy and population was seen in the growing territorial division of homes and workplaces and the fact that homes expanded outwards faster than workplaces. This determined the spatial movement of capital investment from the centre outwards, infrastructure development projects, and the establishment of trade and other services (Hall 1996). The result is the space-consuming expansion of urban agglomerations, the increased level of short- and long-term commuting, growing demand for transport and greater capacity, rising environmental damage, the transformation of spatial and social structure, i.e. urban sprawl, and its effects. Several factors lie behind the contemporary space consumption phenomena of metropolitan areas, including the expansion of the values of consumer society, the steadily increasing number of people living well and the changed residential demands. In addition the world system of power provides a regional development system which pushes social aspects into the background and enforces economic interests. The Danish case study shows that the global transformation, the evolving urban network systems between contemporary modern cities, and the goals of the project-oriented political intervention caused 'the shift from the welfare city to the growth city' (Reeh–Zerlang 2011, p. 13).

The evolution of urban sprawl correlates with the characteristic features of the roles of states in regional development and with the system of state subsidisation. In the United States of America, suburban development was initiated by the New Deal, the government's new economic, social and credit policy introduced in the 1930s, which was boosted by housing subsidies and long-term, 20-to-25-year loans in the 1950s. The marketing of suburban lifestyle promoting the ideal new American way of life also influenced the process as it met the demands of the middle classes tired of metropolitan life by offering a new way of living with the promise of less noise, less traffic and less crime. It even suggested that local community cohesion would afford protection from the poor (Williamson–Imbroscio–Alperovitz 2005). In the United States the importance of state initiatives has now decreased considerably; in addition to various government incentives and support systems, market actors have an increasing influence on regional trends.²

The case studies presented in this book show that, even though strong state intervention and modest market intervention was typical in Europe historically, this situation has now changed, and the convergence is becoming more visible; the role of the state has decreased and that of market actors has increased. This was partly because of the crisis of the welfare states and partly because of the increasing need of local governments to involve the market actors in planning thanks to the support of local

² The role of civil society actors is also increasing. A number of initiatives have been launched not to support urban sprawl but to stop it, for example the New Urbanism movement or the preparation of Smart Growth guidelines aimed at building viable, multi-functional, compact settlements.

residential civil society and especially to the pressure of local and global economic lobby groups.

The case study of the Danish capital presented in this book shows how the state consciously managed the development of the Greater Copenhagen Region and the decentralisation processes, including moving the middle classes out of the city, by the construction of rented family homes and by creating the necessary transport and other infrastructure. However, planning possibilities were limited, if not supplanted, by urbanisation, globalisation mechanisms and the global interests of the market. An urban neighbourhood has developed as a result of state-backed bank loans, and the co-operation of the national and local authorities, and private land developers and investors (Zerlag-Reeh 2011).

In the case of the Paris Region the management of development processes was also a conscious public policy goal, especially in the 1960s and 1970s. Among them, the new urban development programme defined the directions of peri-urban development by designating the location of new towns as well as the main target areas for the accommodation of the middle classes (dissatisfied with housing estates) in the suburbs, which had outstanding significance (Szirmai 1991, Haumont et al. 1999). The French case study highlights the continuing importance of state intervention. As a result of an act passed in 2000, the population of Paris, which had been decreasing for a long time, began to grow again. The evolution of peri-urban areas today is mainly regulated by market forces and bank loans based on social and residential needs. As regards the latter, the high property prices in Paris are of particular importance. An increasing number of low social status and younger, career starter intellectual groups seek to buy cheaper land around the city (Cattan 2011).

The Austrian case study also shows that, although market forces are important, the intervention efforts of the state or even regional-level authorities are still not negligible. By using various planning tools, monitoring the processes and employing new development strategies reflecting today's conditions, these endeavours seek to mitigate the adverse effects of suburbanisation patterns (Görgl et al. 2011).

The growth of the suburban zone of Budapest in the socialist system was naturally different from the above phenomena. However, the benefit of hindsight reveals similarities, albeit historically belated. Let us see why.

In Hungary, including Budapest, especially in the first phase of the state socialist system, spatial processes were fully regulated by the intervention of the state and followed its political and ideological interests. There were no market mechanisms (following the economic reform in 1968 they operated only in a limited and controlled manner³), and consequently there was neither private capital nor private property or land; the means of production and companies were all state-owned. There were no market actors and there were no local governments in a real sense. In the so-called council

³ The so-called new economic mechanism was introduced in Hungary on 1 January 1968. In order to renew the half-depleted economy, to accelerate growth and to strengthen social welfare, three key reforms were introduced by the government: the central planning role of the state decreased and corporate self-reliance increased; prices were liberalised, i.e. in addition to officially fixed prices the prices of some products were defined in accordance with market demand, and finally the centrally determined wage system was replaced by a more flexible one, within certain limits set by corporate control. These reforms were unique in the countries of the socialist bloc.

system 'local' powers had neither legal nor financial or socially legitimate (political) means to manage their regional processes. Due to the characteristic features of the system, right up until the change of the political system in 1990, the growth of the peri-urban population could not be described as suburbanisation. It was rather the peri-urban concentration of the unemployed rural agricultural population excluded from the mechanisms of the system, especially from the economic and other benefits of regional development. These people flocked to urban areas, particularly around the capital city, in search of job opportunities. This involved mass commuting (mainly public transport and workers' bus services), which consequently caused serious pollution. However, due to the interpretation of environmental policy at that time, this did not generate social problems⁴.

In order to prevent the expansion of large cities, partly because of the hostility towards Budapest in particular and big cities in general, state-initiated new town development concepts also prevailed. Unlike the Western European model, these developments (one of them in the Budapest region) were mainly ideological goals, representing working class interests. However, in fact they provided a chance to exploit the raw materials necessary for accelerating the development of heavy industry. At the same time, through their attractivity they also contributed to the disintegration of the old urban bourgeois society (Szirmai 1991, 1998). The regional development control of new towns until the regime change can be considered successful. The population of such towns steadily increased until 1990. This means that they were able to absorb the immigrating rural population due to the continuous substantial public and private house constructions. Behind the dynamics of flat constructions it is also apparent that, despite the looming crisis, local large companies (including workplaces), which were also in a dire predicament, received significant support from the local government in order to prevent the outbreak of social conflicts.

The failure of the state socialist regional development policy was not caused by the rise of market forces, but rather by the consequences of the crises of the regime which became harder and harder to conceal (the foreign debt of the state, the absence of large companies, the uncertain market conditions, the consequences of the shortage economy). In addition, in large cities with county rank, in particular Budapest, local land development needed autonomy. These were the consequences of the so-called softness of the Hungarian political system, the results of the economic opportunities offered by the Hungarian model. In 1968, the introduction of the so-called new economic mechanism, the state-controlled quasi-market conditions, and the appearance of the second economy reinforced local forces, especially cities with county rank and Budapest. These became

⁴ The state socialist centralised social governance and political power structure eliminated environmental factors and all the social forces that were interested in protecting the environment. The socialist planned economy did not consider environment as an internal element of the economy. Therefore economic development concepts did not take ecological consequences into account and did not attribute objective value to natural resources. Thus the centralised economic management model operating without market and price mechanisms utilised natural elements free of charge and did not consider the consequent social costs. In this way it could more easily enforce its non-economic power, military and other interests, and it could better conceal the performance limits of the economic system as well as the problems of efficiency. Society was ignorant of both damage to the environment and its adverse effects on health. Social conflicts arising from environmental damages emerged only in the 1970s and 1980s (Szirmai 1993, 1996).

redistributive centres as well as regional, settlement development and resource distribution centres able to assert their own interests.

In the political and social transformation of the 1990s, the state further withdrew from the development of regional processes due to the legacy of the socialist period, the crisis that emerged and a lack of capital. The new local governments were given greater powers. By virtue of the new Local Government Act of 1990, local authorities became responsible for town planning, development and decisions related to land use. The new local authorities, funded by locally generated revenue, shared taxes and the central government's normative contribution, were self-managing. However, the difficulties arising in the development of a market economy and the deficits of the State Treasury saw the emergence of re-centralisation tendencies already in the 1990s. Not only the re-centralisation of development resources, but also the lack of local capital resources restricted the planning and development opportunities of local governments. As a result, local development decisions were reached to serve land owners' and real estate developers' interests throughout the whole country, including Budapest. This was partly because of the underfunding of local authorities and partly because of the interest in realising additional revenues from land sales and the re-classification of territories. Urban policy-makers in Budapest fully ceded the development formation and investment opportunities to market forces and economic lobbies interested in the development of the city's outer urban neighbourhood. It should be noted that not only large urban centres but also peri-urban areas attracted foreign direct investments and various developments during the change of the Hungarian political system.

Among urban citizens who were discontented with urban rehabilitation projects in central Budapest implemented in isolation due to signs of crisis in the inner city area (traffic anomalies, pollution, the increasingly visible signs of urban poverty), the long-suppressed unsatisfied needs for suburban individual residential houses gradually intensified. This was in part because of the contemporary housing policy and the characteristic features of the housing market. Their needs boosted the demand for moving out of cities and gave rise to suburbanisation processes.

Almost all the professional groups concerned and relevant professional documents warned of the foreseeable adverse consequences of the unrestrained territorial expansion. Nevertheless, no regulations with a powerful set of tools were made with the intention of controlling or the ability to influence this 'spontaneous' process. The suburban development policy of Budapest was clearly contradictory. These contradictions are also explained by the fact that, although ideas of limiting expansion appeared in plans at the level of the capital city (as well as state or regional level), the provision of resources and the assignment of legal and incentive instruments essentially failed.

The regional development policies and programmes approved in this period not only showed the lack of adequate state regulation but also demonstrated that there were no incentive mechanisms to encourage efficient land use. The regional level development approach did not develop either. This process resulted in the unstructured and uncoordinated land use practice that developed in the Budapest agglomeration area (especially in its outskirts) which was characterised by the uncontrolled expansion of urban areas, along with the deterioration of territorial potentials and by the oversupply of potential development areas.

Public housing and credit policies did not assign development priorities either. They could not significantly influence suburban development in which private equity established in part as a result of land and housing privatisation, the site-selection strategy of global companies and new demands for moving into the suburban zone were dominant.

The legislation that restricted the unlimited expansion of new 'areas to be built in' was delayed by more than a decade. In 2005 Parliament passed the Act on Spatial Planning in the Agglomeration of Budapest (Act LXIV of 2005), which, intending to coordinate regional land use, set the possibility of further increasing the ratio of built-in areas in the administrative area of municipalities at 3%. However, these overdue restrictions were ineffective because the local authorities concerned reclassified large areas either before the legal limitation or on hearing the news of its possibility, and in these areas developments and investments started later at random.⁵

The amendment of LXIV Act of 2005 on Spatial Planning in the Agglomeration of Budapest⁶ further tightened the eligibility for including new areas and reduced the possibility of development to 2%. The amendment contains several new elements encouraging local authorities in the region to take greater care of the landscape, and natural and cultural values, and urging more thoughtful and efficient land management. However, because the Act does not revoke the previous ill-considered local decisions, its efficiency – and impact on real processes – would only be appropriate if the instruments of land use control were extended by development, support and incentive elements which served sustainable land management purposes and at the same time redefined interest relations.

The state, including the capital city's official actors, essentially ceded the suburban residential (including condominium) and other economic development-related areas to market players on the one hand, and on the other hand to the middle classes who were unsatisfied with the city centre and wanted to move out, and to the lower classes forced to leave the large city due to gradual impoverishment. In this way the capital city's social problems and certain tensions of urban poverty were relocated to the outskirts (forming the subject of our research) and less developed parts of the city.

Unlike the French case, social problems concentrated in the surrounding zone of Budapest are more the cumulative tensions of residential disadvantage and social backwardness, thus they are rather the problems of poverty⁷ and not of immigration. Spatial conflicts arising from the immigration of foreigners in Hungary are not or hardly visible, which is partly due to the lower ratio of foreign immigrants in comparison to Europe (6.5% of the EU population are foreigners, while the Hungarian average is 2.0%

⁵ The size of reserve areas can be characterised by the fact that on the basis of land use surveys carried out in 2010 the total size of 'unused' areas designated for residential and municipal purposes in local land use plans was 6,740 hectares, which is 9.2% of the total area designated for this purpose. Of the area designated for economic use (7,450 hectares), about one third (35%) of the area designated for this purpose was still 'unused'. According to the investigations of PESTTERV Kft., of the municipal area of land designated, 15%, a total of about 14,000 hectares, was regarded as territorial reserves during this period (Schuchmann, 2011).

⁶ See Act LXXXVIII of 2011 on the amendment of Act LXIV of 2005 on Spatial Planning in the Agglomeration of Budapest.

⁷ For the sake of completeness, it should be noted that regional poverty is more prevalent in eastern Hungary, especially in rural areas and to a lesser extent in urban areas, and it is less of a regional phenomenon in Budapest.

(Vasileva, 2011)). The study on gentrification indicates a ratio of 5% in Budapest, but this is partly because segregated zones of immigrants have not been established in the Hungarian capital region as they have in Vienna or even Copenhagen.

Suburbanisation and gentrification

The social aspects related to the process of urbanisation are the expression of Fordist economic development, and of the spatial needs and interests of the resultant consumer society; the well-off and expanding middle class wanting to live in family-owned houses with a garden in a clean natural environment.

In the 1950s in the United States 35 million people, nearly a quarter of the population, were suburban residents. This ratio was over 30% at the end of the decade (Hobbes–Stoops 2002⁸) and in the 1970s and 1980s this figure continued to increase. Statistics show that this trend has continued and today about half of American society lives in suburbs.

The ratio of urban population further decreased and the ratio of peri-urban population continued to grow in big American metropolises between 1990 and 2000 (from 46% to 50%). Suburban population ratios are much higher than the rates of urban population and the vast majority of the population of urbanised regions lives in suburbs (See Table 1).

Table 1

USA – Change in the rate of urban and suburban population in 1990 and 2000

Metropolitan region	1990		2000	
	urban rate	suburban rate	urban rate	suburban rate
New York-Northern New Jersey-Long Island	37	63	38	62
Los Angeles-Riverside-Orange County	24	76	23	77
Chicago-Gary-Kenosha	34	66	32	68
Houston-Galveston-Brazoria	44	56	42	58
Philadelphia-Wilmington-Atlantic City	27	73	25	75
San Diego	45	55	43	57
Detroit-Ann Arbor-Flint	20	80	17	83
Dallas-Fort Worth	36	64	33	67
Phoenix-Mesa	44	56	41	59
New York-Northern New Jersey-Long Island	71	29	72	28

Source: Based on <http://www.demographia.com/db-2000metrocoreshare.htm> and <http://eh.net/encyclopedia/article/Smith.Urban.Debate.doc>, edited by the authors.

However, trends in Europe are different. In major European metropolises the ratio of urban population in many cases is well above suburban population ratios. (This is particularly true of the capitals of former socialist countries like Prague, Warsaw and Budapest, but also of other capitals such as Berlin, Vienna, Brussels, London and Rome.) There are exceptions, such as Copenhagen and especially Paris, where the proportion of the suburban population is much higher.

⁸ <http://www.census.gov/prod/2002pubs/censr-4.pdf>

In the last few years there have been spectacular changes in the share of the population of the metropolitan regions of several European cities. For example, the proportion of the suburban population rose by a few per cent in Madrid, Berlin, Rome, Vienna, Warsaw, Prague and Ljubljana between 1996 and 2004. The biggest increase took place around Budapest (see Table 2).

Table 2

*European Union – Change in the rate of urban and suburban population
in 1996 and 2004*

(Per cent)

Metropolitan region	1996		2004	
	urban rate	suburban rate	urban rate	suburban rate
London	61	39	62	38
Paris ^{a)}	19	81	19	81
Brussels	55	45	56	44
Copenhagen	27	73	28	72
Madrid	56	44	53	47
Berlin	70	30	68	32
Rome ^{a)}	75	25	74	26
Vienna	75	25	73	27
Warsaw	65	35	64	36
Prague	62	38	60	40
Ljubljana	55	45	54	46
Budapest	76	24	71	29
Stockholm	45	55	41	59
Dublin	35	65	30	70
Bratislava	73	27	71	29
Tallinn	77	23	75	25
Riga	76	24	73	27
Vilnius	79	21	78	22
Helsinki	47	53	46	54
Sofia ^{b)}	96	4	86	14
Athens	20	80	20	80
Lisbon	27	73	22	78
Bucharest	91	9	90	10

a) Data of the 2001 Urban Audit.

b) Data of the 1991 and 2001 Urban Audit.

After peri-urban population growth following suburbanisation (i.e. the formation of the first suburbs, the settlements close to the urban centre) and later peri-urbanisation (i.e. the formation of settlement rings located further away), a new trend can be seen in almost all the big European cities of our study. For example, in Vienna, particularly in some inner city districts, the phenomenon of re-urbanisation has emerged in the last few years (Fasman 2004, Görgl et al. 2011, p. 10). The 2007 statistics for Budapest show that the outflow from the capital also seems to have slackened and the population in the city has started to grow (Schuchmann 2011; Szirmai, et al. 2011). The Paris case study also reveals that ‘the last ten years have shown a reversal in the trend. The return to the city

centre has been particularly noticeable, demonstrated by an increase of 3% in the population of Paris and of 6% in its inner core' (Cattan 2011, p. 5).

However, the sources of population growth are often uncertain. In Budapest, for example, the absence of recent statistical data makes it very difficult to judge whether the reason for the increase is moving back from the urban neighbourhood or the concentration of population in metropolitan areas, which is experienced nationwide.

As regards Vienna, the explanation is clear as 'the population growth is generally based exclusively on migration processes ... the growth is the result of immigration' (Görge et al. 2011, p. 10).

In any case, it can be stated that urban population growth is obviously generated by gentrification processes as well. In European cities, including those we analysed and presented, these are increasingly characterised by burgeoning suburbanisation processes, which occur either in parallel or subsequently. In Kesteloot's opinion this is because 'the socio-spatial history of European cities has been characterised by tension between centrifugal and centripetal forces that, for the sake of simplicity, can be termed suburbanisation and gentrification' (Kesteloot 2010, p. 126). Essentially the same mechanisms are at work behind the process which formulates urban sprawl as well and thus the declining role of the state and the rise of market forces. However, these are not the aspects of groups interested in urban sprawl but of groups interested in urban renewal. Franz points out this process in the presentation of the gentrification process in Vienna: 'The Austrian welfare state system has changed over recent years, and now tendencies that are much more market-driven are being observed both in Vienna and elsewhere' (Franz 2011, p. 2). The factors originating from the rejection of suburban lifestyle, and from the reorganisation of cultural and consumer demands also form part of the dynamics. The study on Hungarian gentrification remarks that the better educated middle class consumers have demands that cannot be satisfied by the ordinary hypermarkets of the suburbs but only in the inner city (Csanádi, Csizmady and Olt 2011, p. 4).

The renaissance of historic city centres is taking place in a highly differentiated manner from country to country. The literature on this topic shows that the differences between European and North American cities are particularly significant. The renovation of the inner districts is fostered by various social groups and not just yuppies. Instances of this are global city centres such as New York, London and Tokyo (Sassen 1991). Different groups renew the inner districts using various intervention tools, which creates a differentiated built environment with different consumer opportunities and different social content (van Criekingen 2003, p. 96).

The urban renewal examples of Vienna and Budapest, which are described in the book, demonstrate local characteristics which originate from the historical conditions of urban development and from the belated nature of urban development in Hungary. The Austrian study deals with the post-renovation conditions, the purified phenomena of the physical and social fabrics, while the Hungarian case study records the trends of transformation and the currently emerging processes, and also demonstrates the rules of convergence. The expansion of the competitiveness of the two cities after a complete renovation and the rather segregated phenomena of the social composition of the residential neighbourhood are the reasons why the authors investigating the renewal of city centres, view the phenomenon of gentrification as a more positive process than the

heavy outflow scenario, which strengthens social segregation as higher social classes move out from the city centre to suburban gated communities, leaving the poor behind.

The evaluation of the segregation effects of gentrification and suburbanisation is far from clear-cut: there is much research to show that urban renewal is not only followed by the continued residence or return flow of the higher social classes but also causes real estate prices to rise, displacing the poorer social groups from inner parts mostly to low-status suburbs or peri-urban settlements.

For example, real estate prices in the inner districts of Paris increased dramatically, tripling in the ten years after 2000. By the end of this period housing prices reached an average of 7,000 euro per square metre in 'Beaux Quartiers', that is the best neighbourhoods (Bronner, 2010, p. 9). This reinforces the existing socio-spatial hierarchy: binding the middle classes to metropolises, increasing the outward movement of poorer, lower social status groups (not just the uneducated, but rather people with a lower income), including school leavers and lower-middle class families, and accelerating the exclusion affecting the poor classes.

Suburban societies

The theatre and film examples mentioned briefly at the beginning of the study drew attention to two different suburban social formations. Both are types of mostly middle-class suburban societies, one with a lower and the other with a higher social status. Of course, these two types do not cover the spatial-social polarisation of the metropolitan societies of our time, which is much more differentiated today. For example, in Fassmann's and Hatz's opinion the city of Vienna 'is characterised by three separate social milieus, which are segregated from each other ... The first sector is the city of the rich and educated, who benefit from the globalised economy ... the second city refers to the city of the marginalised groups, consisting of the unemployed, an underclass dealing with multiple social problems like poverty, homelessness and drug abuse, and, finally, specific groups of immigrants ... Last but not least, the third city has to be mentioned, the "normal" city providing work, supplies and housing. Its population consists of "ordinary" people, neither particularly affluent and well-educated nor extremely poor or marginalised. It is the city of the middle class ... it comprises the "working-class" districts of the city itself' (Fassmann–Hatz 2007, pp. 75–76).

The problems of disadvantaged suburbs are topical due to the increasingly polarised urban areas and the concentrations of social tensions. In French society in recent years special political and scientific attention has been paid to this kind of urban problem. The reasons for this include the excessively high peri-urban population rate and the brutal 2005 Paris suburban riots and demonstrations, as well as the fact that the majority of French people regard the suburbs, including the suburban housing estates, as embodiments of social deviance⁹ (Vieillard-Baron 2008).

⁹ According to French researchers, the influence of the media is particularly important in the development of a negative image, but it is also true that some professional groups such as architects, researchers and politicians have given the public an unfavourable or rather one-sided picture firstly of residential areas and then of suburbs.

The starting point of the housing-related social stigma was the so-called 'Sarcessism', i.e. the criticisms related to Sarcesses–Lochére, a new quarter built 15 kilometres from Paris in the 1960s, which over-emphasised isolation, the gigantic dull built environment and urban crime, which concentrated there. Contemporary studies, however, suggest that a significant part of the population in housing estates proved to be pleased with their place of residence, except where crime was significant (Vieillard-Baron, 2008, p. 28). Meanwhile actual ongoing processes also explained the negative attitude towards housing estates (Le-Goaziou–Rojzman 2006, p. 36). Discontent mainly among the middle class had been caused by post-war housing shortages and then the housing estates built as a response to the needs of the demographic explosion, the baby boom, because the necessary residential infrastructure was poorly provided and the monotonous built environment was disliked. For this reason higher-status social classes started to leave the new quarters in the 1970s and 1980s and moved back to urban centres that had been renovated in the meanwhile, neighbouring villages in a better ecological and social position, better suburban areas or new cities. From the mid 1960s an increasing number of foreign immigrants moved into housing estates, in part at the behest of the authorities and in part from the 'bidonville', that is the slums, created spontaneously by North and West African immigrants.

In the 1960s large companies (especially car factories) built suburban districts in Paris in part for French employees, but mostly for foreign immigrant, unskilled, uneducated workers arriving from North Africa, especially Algeria (Le Goaziou–Rojzman 2006, p. 21). Now the second and third generations of former migrants live there who, similarly to the first generation, are unskilled, uneducated and mostly unemployed.

About 5 million people in France live in the so-called 'Sensitive Urban Areas' (Zones Urbaines Sensibles, ZUS), in socially problematic peri-urban areas. The proportion of migrants concentrated in these areas is above average, nearly twice the average for French cities. Almost 40% of the residents of the sensitive areas did not complete their schooling and they account for a significant part of the unemployed today. In 2009 the unemployment rate there was nearly 18.6%, double the national average of 9.5%. They are mostly young people, mainly men (Le Goaziou, Rojzman 2006, p. 24, Bronner 2010, p. 9).

The uncertainties of the future, the problems of everyday living and residential social tensions are the sources of a number of specific conflicts. There are conflicts between the older and younger generations, which stem from the older generation's fear of the rowdy gangs of young people 'living' in the streets. (To illustrate that this phenomenon is general and not exclusively French, it is worth mentioning the 2009 British film *Harry Brown* directed by Daniel Barber. In this rather shocking thriller youth gangs terrorise the mostly retired residents of run-down housing estates on the outskirts of London.) Confrontations, sometimes quiet but sometimes loud, develop between the active and the unemployed, which often escalate into ethnic problems. The residential conflicts are essentially of a social, structural nature, sometimes between the immigrants or their descendants and the 'indigenous' French, but more often between minority suburban lower middle classes, middle classes and the majority underclass, the excluded.

Almost all the case studies presented here describe the problems of higher status, mostly middle-class suburbs. This kind of suburban model in Europe and North America was created as a result of different housing policy support schemes mostly for the

middle-class and in many cases the upper-middle-class population (Jaumain–Lemarchand 2008). The developments intended to take into account the requirements of metropolitan expansion, the crisis of urban centres, the functional transformation of the suburbanisation of the middle class, including their aspirations for differentiation, car traffic and the needs of a family-based lifestyle (Harter 2008). This model is a result of social and structural inequalities, and the spatial separation of the upper and the lower social classes. In America, the model was shaped by ethnic contents as well due to the contradictions between the white upper and upper-middle class populated suburbs, the American ‘mainstream’, and the low social status (mostly inner) urban districts inhabited by problematic, often dark-skinned Americans, the so-called ‘others’ (Imbroscio, Williamson, Alperovitz 2005, p. 318).

The suburbs of the Budapest region can be divided into two types, which by using the case study, the statistical analyses and other empirical methods can also be defined as ‘developed’ and ‘underdeveloped’ peri-urban settlements. This division is based on social structural characteristics and other factors, such as infrastructure, housing and institutional coverage. The two types clearly differ in terms of the composition of local societies and the people moving in, the characteristic features of employment and commuting, and the economic processes of settlements. People moving to advanced villages are mainly members of higher status social groups (secondary and tertiary graduates, knowledge workers with high incomes), while underdeveloped rural areas typically attract newcomers who are blue-collar workers on low incomes with primary school education.

Ageing is one of the current problems of high status suburbs, which is not only a European but also a global phenomenon. This is proved, among other things, by a Canadian/French comparative analysis. In Canada in the 1950s and 1960s, and in France in the 1970s mainly young people, who were on average 25 years old and had a family, moved to suburban areas. They were the baby boomers, the generation of people who mostly entered the housing market around 1970 (Gill 2008, Luxembourg 2008). This group included people who no longer wanted to live with their parents, wished for their own home and desired to be independent.

However, the first half of the 2000s brought significant changes. By 2006 the baby boomers, typically graduates with high incomes, entered their sixties. In the meantime their children had left home and moved back to the city centres, partly due to the renewal of inner cities. This radically transformed the structure of the suburban households, significantly reducing the proportion of parents living together with children and increasing the ratio of single or single-parent households, which in part was caused by divorce. As a result of gentrification, the social structure also changed. For example, two thirds of active graduates, especially women aged between 25 and 54 years living alone in the Montréal metropolitan region, chose an urban form of life, living in the city as the urban environment was better suited to their contemporary lifestyle (Gill 2008, p. 61).

This is also the reason why the author of the Canadian case study asks how suburbs which were built mainly for the family life of the highly skilled middle classes with high incomes will be sustainable. The newly arrived young families have lower incomes and are less able to afford the suburban housing market, and it is unlikely that there will be a repeat of the higher income classes moving out from the city centres.

In the Vienna suburban area the problem of ageing mainly affects 'the first generation of suburbanised settlements'. In inner city areas the concentration of people over the age of 60 is greater, while the proportion of younger age groups in the suburbs is significantly higher. In the first generation of suburbanised settlements parents who were young when they moved out in the 1970s and 1980s will slowly reach retirement age. This is another reason why the authors ask: 'The question is how these communities will deal with the "collective ageing" of the original suburbanites. What will become of the many single-family homes when the children have moved away or when the "founding fathers and mothers" themselves are no longer alive? Likewise, how will the infrastructure adapt to the ageing society and who will assume the financial costs thereof? In particular the questions of caring for the elderly as well as retooling public institutions to cater for less mobile inhabitants will have to be answered satisfactorily' (Görgl et al. 2011, pp. 16–17).

The Hungarian case study reveals the different trend of ageing in the developed and the undeveloped urban neighbourhoods. It points out that, apart from Budapest where ageing is higher than the national average, the phenomenon of ageing mainly affects settlements with less favourable environmental and infrastructural conditions. However, the population of the developed urban areas is younger as there is an inflow of young, active, well-qualified families. This may also be due to the belated, 'catching up' character of Hungarian suburbanisation processes. Possibly this is because the processes which formed the younger demographic structure of the first generation suburbs in developed European and Canadian metropolises are occurring in Hungary right now.

Urban and suburban dichotomies

Among the early and modern criticisms of urban sprawl several authors have warned of the threats of the disappearing compact city and the evolution of the fragmented city. In my view this problem is less relevant in the context of the modern European metropolitan spatial structure. This is because we can no longer speak of exclusive compact cities. In modern regional systems compact and disperse settlements and settlement groups exist simultaneously. The former consist of communities developed in a more concentrated manner and characterised by a densely built environment in a social sense which have transparent if not integrated community systems. The latter, on the other hand, can be characterised by developing in a more decentralised, horizontal way, with a family house environment and low population density, consisting of sub-groups in a social sense with more fragmented communities.

The Hungarian case study investigated the lack of clear models, which it confirmed. Different models exist side by side, complementing each other and showing how many other social and business relationships exist within the regional system examined. Furthermore, these relationships are formed within the structures of space 'consumed by' the everyday activities of social status groups of different spatial position (Szirmai et al. 2011). The Danish case study provided other kinds of evidence by presenting how spatial relationships are formed between the city and the agglomeration as well as spatial relationships that go beyond these (often crossing national borders), the cooperation systems established with various cities, and the big spatial axes of today's modern lifestyle (Reeh, Zerlag 2011).

Compared to the compact or dispersed urban dichotomy, however, I believe that the modern hierarchical order of the societies of metropolitan areas is more important and socially more problematic. Aspects of this are the re-organised and even strengthening spatial social dichotomy, which is a negative side effect of urban sprawl, and the antagonisms between urban centres and outskirt areas.

Traditional and new segregation zones (enclaves) can also be seen in the Paris region. On the western edge the concentrations of suburban settlements are inhabited by high income, managerial classes, while the south-eastern area is populated by lower status settlement groups (Cattan 2011, p. 13).

The Vienna case study also emphasises the growth of the social separation process and its threats. Among the reasons for this is that for residents choosing the suburbs of Vienna, mainly to the south of the city, not only is easy accessibility essential, i.e. that the village should be close to the city centre, but so are land prices, that is to say the prices should be high enough to ensure a neighbourhood with people of similar social status and income (Görgl et al., p. 6).

A typical realisation of sociological rules is illustrated by the similar hierarchical arrangement of the different educational groups in the Hungarian and French capital cities. In the Paris Metropolitan Area (see Figure 6), the farther we go out from the regional centre (from the municipality of Paris) towards outer zones, the lower the ratio of people with tertiary education, and the higher the ratio of classes with average and poor education. The social structure of Budapest (and even of other Hungarian cities) also shows this hierarchical arrangement. In central areas the presence of higher social status is stronger (better educated, higher income groups with higher positions), while in outer districts and outskirt areas the ratio of lower social status (lower educated, lower income groups with lower positions) is more characteristic.

Conclusions: differences and/or similarities?

The case studies and their related literature state that the phenomena of European metropolitan areas are formed by urbanisation processes resulting from historical contexts and global trends. By this they prove that the historical roads or even the stages of urbanisation cannot really be bypassed, and less developed countries follow the paths designated or taken by those ahead of them due to the enforcement of the rules of global urbanisation. Moreover, these rules can sometimes override the objectives and the effects of conscious state-initiated regional and local development interventions. In the absence of this aspect, it would be hard to explain the European and Hungarian suburban social similarities, and the dichotomies between high and low social status settlements, which developed in different social and historical contexts in different economic conditions and by the activities of actors shaping different processes.

Global trends can also be explained by other processes causing convergence, namely the decreasing role of the state and authorities in regional development across Europe, the growing influence of market forces and the interest groups involved in market mechanisms. This convergence (on the basis of a relatively strong abstraction) was perceptible even in the state-socialist period as the state's decreasing role in regional development correlates with the crisis of the socialist type of welfare state, with the

strengthening of local economic and political forces, and with the emergence of limited, state-controlled yet rising market forces.

The phenomenon of urban sprawl has been detected in all the investigated metropolitan areas in the stage of relative deconcentration. This has been explained by Enyedi (according to the Dutch school) as a process of suburbanisation, yet it is also clear that there is more to this case, since the process of re-urbanisation can also be felt here. The fact is that the suburbanisation process is accompanied by the phenomena of gentrification and they are complementary, parallel great mechanisms. Due to the absence of comprehensive studies, I cannot comment on the big questions raised by Enyedi, namely whether the return to city centres is merely a rearrangement of the population in urban agglomerations or whether it is a new stage of urban growth? The case studies presented here, however, clearly show that the population in urban centres (particularly in some inner city neighbourhoods) has tended to grow in recent years. There were several reasons for this: moving back, other regional social processes of concentration, and the increasing sense of well-being of the metropolitan middle classes in the renewed inner district, hence their disinclination to leave. Another contributing factor is certainly the fact that quite a few suburban residents are disappointed with the suburban way of life.

This disappointment can be explained by several reasons, including the adverse environmental and social impacts of urban sprawl, and the dependencies and inconveniences of a commuting lifestyle. The development of segregation patterns is particularly relevant because the reasons mentioned indicate a problem, but not necessarily from a scientific viewpoint. Although segregation is usually regarded as harmful, separation from other positioned groups and isolation from social problems is a common expectation of the suburban middle classes. Naturally, they do not always achieve this despite the well-structured and spreading gated communities, as the urban poor are also located in the periphery of the metropolitan areas. These different residential groups, which have historically competed with each other for 'elbow room' in different ways and to varying degrees, supersede those in different situations or attract those in a similar situation.

Other reasons for the disappointment are related to market price mechanisms and to the fact that decisions on market development serve several people's interests but not the local interests. A certain part of the population, which in post-socialist countries is the majority, cannot always afford and do not always want to pay for the costs of the infrastructure accompanying suburban development, for instance those of the road network or public transport, which neither the state nor the local government can afford or intends to pay.

However, the social significance of the suburban way of life cannot be questioned and the demand for individual family housing will continue to be significant (perhaps this is most apparent in the Danish case). Today there are still quite a few people intending, or at least desiring, to move out of the cities, undoubtedly because of the existing social and environmental values of living there and because suburban life is still attractive for them despite the fact that it shows symptoms of crisis. The current economic crisis (for example, the home loan debt in Hungary) will seriously restrict demand for

suburbanisation, and the case of Budapest shows that relocation efforts have considerably decreased over the last few years.

Predicting the future processes of suburbanisation is not easy, not only because of the simultaneity of conflicting trends, that is to say that the effects of re-urbanisation are emerging during suburbanisation, but also because of the appearance of other major European processes. It must be remembered that the European (including the Hungarian) population is not only decreasing but at the same time European society is ageing, and the ageing phenomenon (especially of those in disadvantaged social positions) is a further factor limiting spatial migrations. Thus, today there is more uncertainty than clarity. But this might not matter, because if everything could be taken for sure, who would need science?

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Abstract

During the 20th century, profound socio-economic changes typified the metropolitan regions of the World. One of the most outstanding alterations was the relative decentralisation of urban space, that's visible sign is urban sprawl. The following paper intends to introduce the most significant characteristics of this specific phenomenon.

Current urban processes are presented throughout both Northern American and European metropolitan regions, with special emphasis on the similarities and differences, by the help of adequate European examples (Paris, Vienna, Copenhagen, Budapest).

The research is aiming to give multilateral information on suburbanisation and gentrification, moreover the recentralisation or/and decentralisation of metropolitan areas.

A vast introduction can be found in connection with the Hungarian urban planning system and procedures, especially during the Socialist Era and the Post-Socialist Period. The results of a deep research on the suburbia, suburban societies, the economic welfare of agglomeration settlements are presented concerning the Budapest Metropolitan Region, furthermore the recent effects of the world financial crisis that substantially determined.