

Preface

In the Hungarian urban network Budapest has an outstanding position: it is the only real metropolis that is evidently a flagship—in others' opinion: a 'water-head' (overgrown centre)—in the settlement network of Hungary. It is special not only because of its population of 1.7 million, but also because its reach is bigger than Hungary, due to its international recognition and diverse and advanced central functions. Budapest can certainly be considered as one of the centres of the East-Central European region.

It is not an accident that so many articles, essays, books, and other publications have been written on Budapest in the last century, and it is not by chance, either, that Budapest has always been a focal point of research. The range of this research covers almost all disciplines of science, including architecture, history, and geography that we most relied on in our work. Despite the vast number of publications, however, no book has been written thus far on the morphology of the capital city of Hungary which focused not on some functional parts of the capital city, not only some districts, but on the whole of Budapest, using a single approach and based on actual field work. This was one of the factors that inspired us to create this book. The other motivating factor was the changes that were induced by the change of political and economic system a quarter of a century ago, more exactly, the exploration and demonstration of the impacts of this change on the image and structure of the settlements. These changes had the most immediate and most striking impacts on the cities, especially Budapest, but these changes have only been partially demonstrated by the research conducted thus far, only focusing on certain aspects or issues.

The goal of our venture was then to demonstrate the reasons behind the changes in the image and structure of Budapest; we wanted to explore how Budapest is built up, what functional parts the capital city can be divided into, and what are the characteristic features of these parts 25 years after the regime change. In order to feature the present image and structure of Budapest it was necessary to analyse the historical development and progress of the ground plan of the city in the first chapter.

The book focuses on the area within the administrative boundaries of Budapest, without dealing with the agglomeration, although there are strong functional relationships between Budapest and the 80 settlements in its agglomeration. We know that the industrial and economic areas along the M0 ring road, the shopping centres located by the motorways, or the residential areas within this ring are parts of the city in the broader sense of the word. Such research, however, was beyond our possibilities; it is to be done in the coming years.

The primary method of the research was field work, during which, in 2011–2013 we literally walked each and every street and square in Budapest, the built-up and not built-up areas, where we surveyed the style and type of development as well as the functional use of buildings and areas. These findings were mapped and visualised, using ICT tools. In addition to empirical data collection we processed the literature sources on Budapest, used available statistical databases, and we also made use of the almost limitless possibilities that the Internet offered for data collection.

We hope that the book will raise the interest of not only geographers, historians, architects, and experts working in the management and development of cities but will also be interesting for the broader professional audience. We also hope that that our book will serve as a starting point for further research and surveys which will address the ideological, aesthetic, economic, and architecture theory reasons and correlations of the formation of the city.

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Settlement Morphology of Budapest

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