

BUDAPEST: REGAINING MULTICULTURALISM?

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1. PORTRAYING THE CITY

1.1 General overview

1.1.1. A brief history of urban development and planning in Budapest

Budapest was created on 17 November, 1873 by the unification of Buda, Pest and Óbuda (Old Buda - *Aquincum*). Following this the city develops rapidly as the national capital of Hungary and, as the second capital of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, soon became an international metropolis. After Treaty of Versailles concluded after World War I, the metropolis lost two thirds of its country. The city had been developed into a capital of a leading European country where a significant proportion of the population was composed of ethnic minorities but now the country (and population) was divided into 6 parts and Hungary became a medium-sized country with a monocultural society. This caused major conflicts between Budapest and the rest of the country, the repercussions of which continue to fuel debate even today. During the next several decades Budapest was often treated as the “enemy” of the nation, in the sense that it was an unnecessarily overdeveloped and over-modernized city compared to the other parts of the country. On the other hand, Budapest remained the main centre and the national symbol of Hungary and represented the wonderland and central point for three million Hungarians stranded outside the new borders of the country. The city thus came to be viewed in this twofold manner and still is today.

Finding the balance between interests is the key to urban development in the case of Budapest today. After 1989, it became the main destination for international capital investment. During the first six to eight years of the transition period, Budapest kept its dominant economic position in East-Central Europe, concentrating 30% of the total investment entering the region. Its attractiveness was bolstered by a liberal and laissez-faire urban policy on the part of the municipality. During the 1990's Budapest went through a deep urban restructuring that was mainly the result of international private investment in property (offices, shopping malls, hotels and residential parks). The state withdrew entirely from urban development and planning, and new major state investment projects only appeared in the capital around 2000. Since the political transition, then Budapest's urban development has thus been characterised by the preponderance of private investment and the disintegration of local policies as a result of the decentralisation of public administration. Urban planning practically disappeared for almost the whole of the last decade, and urban development strategies that were implemented during the last few years are now being used to try to fill the gaps that had been left by the complete lack of regulation earlier. Moreover since 1990, Budapest has been steadily losing its population as a result of a rapid suburbanisation process, which naturally hinders its infrastructural development.

It has finally become obvious to urban and national policy-makers that Budapest is gradually losing its primary position in the region in comparison to other capitals such as Prague, Warsaw or even Bratislava... and also that the permanent degradation of urban life may be the result of the lack of socially and culturally sensitive policy-making. Finally, people and politicians in Budapest have begun to realise that sustainable cultural and social development are indispensable to keeping Budapest an attractive city for economic investment and international tourism. National and urban policy making have to find the balance, on the one hand, within Budapest, the different parts and social groups of the capital, and on the other hand, between the capital and other parts of the country, especially secondary cities such as Debrecen (population 206,000), Pécs (158,000), and Szeged (163,000).

1.1.2 Some data on Budapest

Recent infrastructure development includes:

- The new metro line 4 and a restructuring of metro line 2
- A major restructuring of the city's roads
- New squares such as Erzsébet Square, a cultural district (Palace of Arts, National Theatre), Millenáris Park.

In conjunction with this, private investment has increased dramatically in the construction of office buildings and "apartment parks".

Budapest is divided into 23 districts. Each district has an elected local government with a mayor at its head, and in addition there is an elected municipal local government with a principal mayor for the entire city. Every public territory and institution is owned by the capital authority or the district authority, which makes the city structure very complex. Co-operation between the capital and its districts is a very sensitive process.

The socio-demographic characteristics of the city are an aging population, depopulation, a scaling down of industry in the downtown area, and a fast-developing suburban area. Districts situated on the Buda side are rich, while districts situated in Pest side are rather impoverished except for the Parliament area (5th district). Budapest has no real problem with unemployment, which stands at only 2-3%, but it has problems in regard to homelessness and poverty. Budapest and its suburban area with four million inhabitants represent 48% of EU GDP average per capita, which is significantly higher than the Hungarian average (35-40%). Many international companies have established their East-Central European headquarters in Budapest, which explains the economic weight of the city.

In regard to Budapest's multicultural tradition, it can be observed that the structure of the city is rather a mosaic; there are parts where different ethnic groups and minorities are grouped. However, the total number of minorities is less than 5% and it is mostly the Jewish and Roma cultures that represent the multicultural tradition.

1.2 Culturescape

1.2.1 Major cultural trends - elite and grassroots culture

Generally speaking, cultural trends are widely segmented and in continuous flux in Budapest. As far as elite and popular culture are concerned a fair description would be that major cultural trends are a rising and falling cyclical processes. It must be clarified that distinctions made between elite and grassroots culture are sometimes superficial, but in some cases can be discordant and deep as well. We shall focus on the most influential cultural development processes and try to place them in their appropriate place between elite and popular culture.

The radical changes of Hungarian society and culture after 1989 are self-evident and need little elaboration; however there is a need to describe what has been happening recently, and what processes are on the rise. Indeed, we can mention several fields of cultural life with special regard to their contribution to these processes.

In Budapest there are 4-5 important contemporary fine arts galleries that are utilised as points of sale by agencies for artists, and their turnover is rising by about 10% a year. Oil paintings and mixed materials are usually the most popular, but video and new media art is gaining ground too. A well-run gallery can manage 10-12 contemporary artists.

Other forms of traditional elite cultural life such as opera and philharmonics are struggling to retain their position among the array of cultural services. Opera is one of the most expensive high art forms and thus questions are being raised as to the efficiency of funding it. But, on the other hand, one of the most up-to-date European concert halls and the home of the National Philharmonic Orchestra with nearly 2,000 seats, was opened at the Palace of Arts, in Budapest, in 2005. Until now, it has been a constant challenge to fill the 1,000 seats at the Academy of Music, so another 2000 seats will be an extra challenge for the Orchestra. It is hoped that the reconstruction of the building of the Academy of Music will begin soon, giving the box office managers a breathing space before having to fill 3,000 seats a night. To sell the seats is also a key question of opera life. While old and “heavy” operas are staged at the beautiful historical building of the Opera House, popular opera pieces and musicals are staged in a 70-year old plain building (made of concrete) that also belongs to the opera management. Paying for a traditional opera performance or paying for a popular musical or operetta is somewhat segments the audience. Traditional opera and philharmonics are seen as high culture while musicals and operettas are lower on the scale.

The present overall trend as regards elite culture is applied art, mixed/media art, architecture, industrial art, design and fashion, which are all apparently growing in popularity. Unfortunately, however, the market is being inundated with trashy art at the same time.

New developments can be observed in the film industry. Huge multiplex centres with 10-20 theatres were built during 1990’s, such as the West End, which is the biggest shopping, and entertainment centre in East-Central Europe. As a parallel process the municipality has created an art movie network in order to save smaller cinemas in the city centre. The cinema system was completely restructured in the process. As the next step, new film studios were established through private investments after 2000. Some evaluate this trend as late in coming, but an absolutely necessary process that will build up a new film industrial area around Budapest, on the ruins of the antiquated Hungarian Film Company (MAFILM), which flourished in the 1960s and 1970s.

Various forms of theatre, music and dance occupy a place between elite and popular culture, depending on the show. Contemporary theatre and dance are mostly for very keen patrons, who are never really satisfied. However, avant-garde and postmodern theatre usually play to almost full houses. The National Dance Theatre, opened at Buda Castle in 2005, runs as an open house for contemporary companies. Recognised new theatre and dance companies usually run shows without their own building, while traditional theatre companies (providing 92% of yearly shows) tend to have their own building. Overall, theatre and dance are flourishing in Budapest, since the numbers of performances, audiences and venues has been growing continuously since 2000.

Music is in the forefront as regards popular culture and it is everywhere: local pubs, music clubs, discotheques with DJ-s that do well year in year out. Yet pubs with live music are not doing so well at all. Fortunately, new venues and festivals provide some excellent opportunities for music groups.

1.2.2 Institutional and non-institutional based cultural activities

Strange attitudes still exist among artists and groups of artists about being state-funded or state-employed. Other artists take different approaches, such as selling their music commercially, or by utilising the media or sponsorship. ‘Mini matrix’ organisational structure (team members with various roles in various projects) has become the standard among cultural managers and artists, as well as among institutions. Recently, the role of institutions has changed, because new forms of institutional co-operation and partnership are rising and

providing opportunities for artistic expression. This question is of major importance for our research, because institutions support most of the cultural activities. It should be noted, however, that the institutional background is often provided by a group of institutions rather than only one in isolation. Many cultural activities require such an institutionalised background; moreover, it is essential for bodies such as galleries, theatres, and museums. Wherever guaranteed continuous services are necessary for an activity, institutions cannot be disregarded. On the other hand, institutions are looking into new methods, such as flexibility, in order to survive.

1.2.3 Spatial configuration of culture i.e. centre / neighbourhoods

Each one of the 23 districts has a centre of administration and shops, cinema and other cultural services. Budapest as a whole also has its downtown, which is the 5th district and the Buda Castle (1st district). There have been many plans to develop areas such as Nagymező Street (a street with six theatres in the 7th district) as a cultural district, however certain hard financial facts stood in the way of these ambitions.

These days cultural consumption takes place mostly between Buda Castle and Heroes' Square. Visitors can follow a path called "Cultural Avenue", which is almost a straight line to the most interesting museums, cafés, restaurants, theatres, churches and parks. To identify clusters of cultural consumers, this "Cultural Avenue" is dedicated to tourists; however, in the winter most of the institutions are visited by citizens of Budapest as well. In the summer the whole city changes, new open-air concert venues are formed such as St. Stephen Basilica Square (mostly symphonic and opera concerts). Sziget Festival attracts 200,000 people to the old shipyard island. Budapesti Búcsú (patron saint's day of Budapest) opens bridges for street walks. Films are screened in the open air all night in front of the Parliament during the Space-Film-Music Festival.

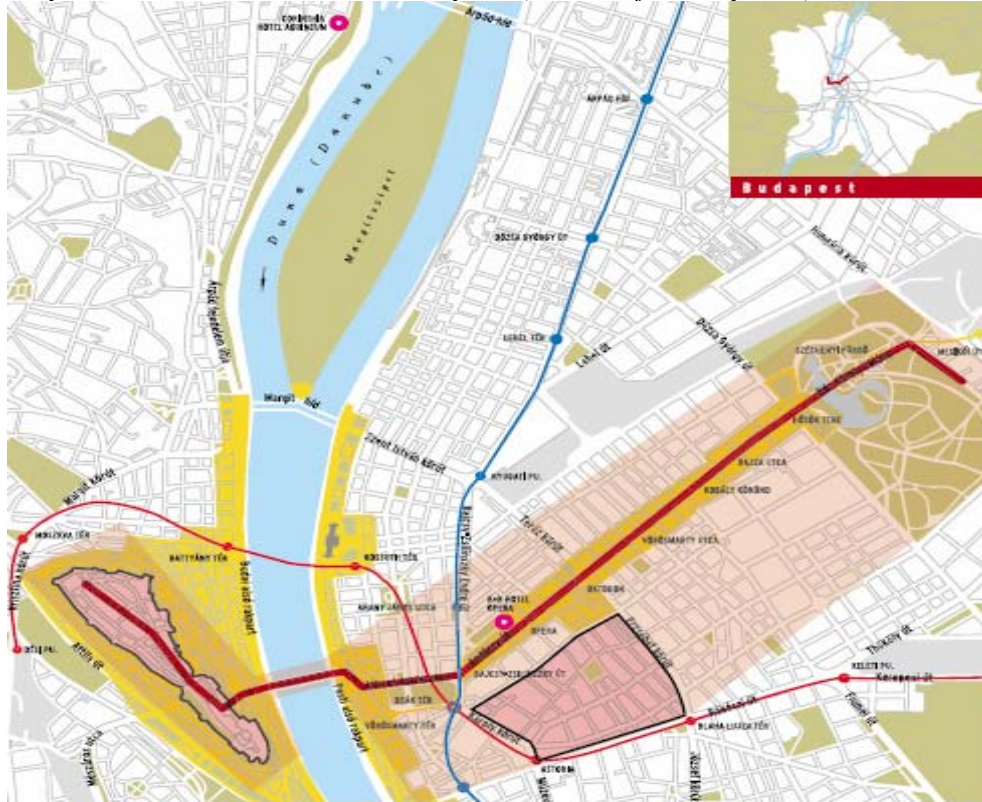
Youth groups are constantly acquiring new venues for entertainment such as Ráday Street with its many bars and restaurants, the A38 Ship and the Green Pardon. As cultural consumption, they usually gather for concerts at Petőfi Csarnok, Budapest Arena, Puskás Ferenc Stadium, or smaller places like Gödör and Millenáris Park. Multifunctional places open for contemporary art are the Trafó House of Contemporary Culture, and the Fonó House.

It is worth noting that a tourism boom took place in 2005, with 5-10% more visits, 50-70% more flights, and 10-15% more nights booked although nobody has provided an adequate explanation for this. It was a positive change but quite unexpected. Can cheap flights really have such an impact on tourism?

1.3 Maps

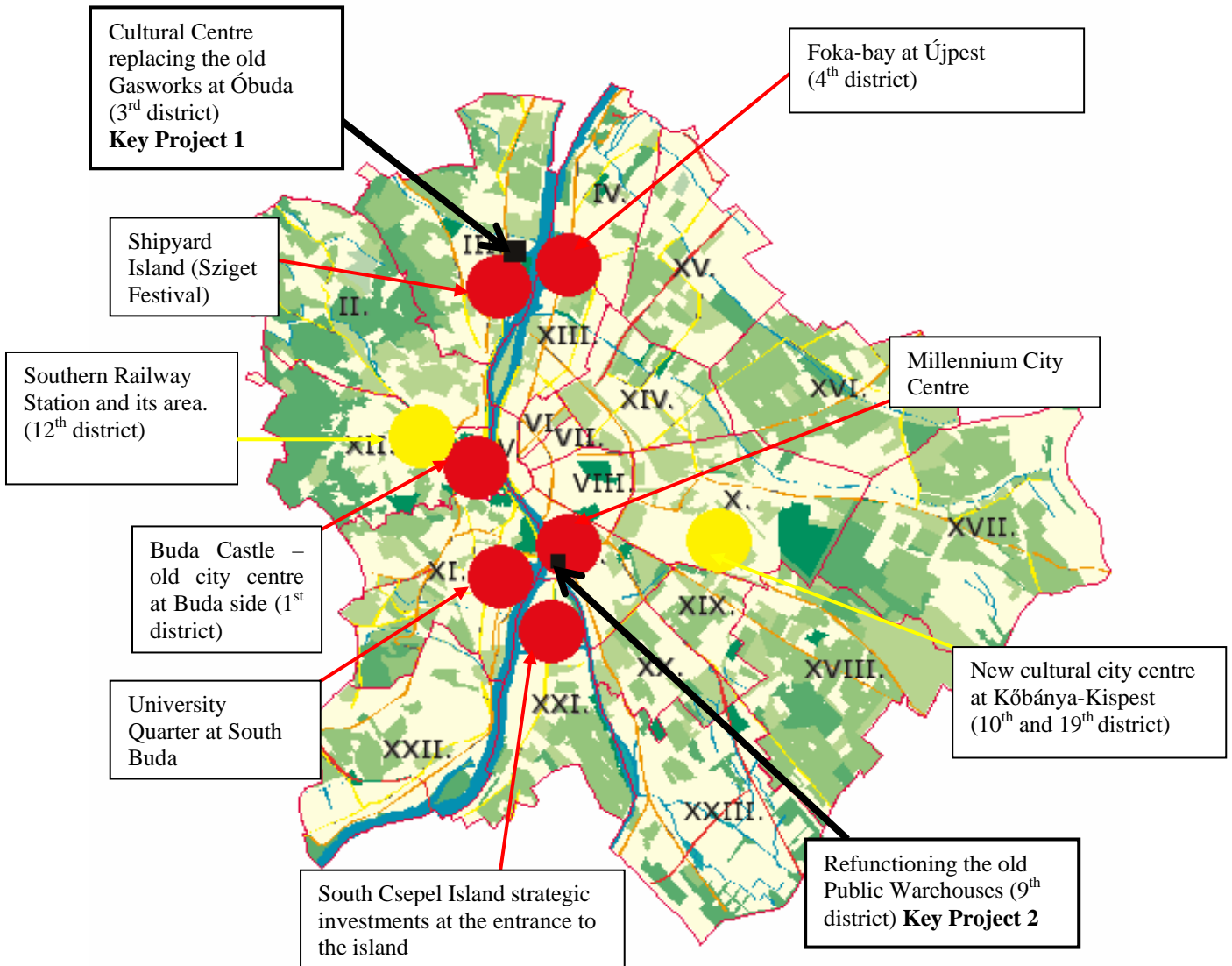
Cultural Avenue was a project led by *Turisztikai Kutató* (Tourist Research KKt.), which identified 55 spots worth visiting, following along the red line on the map from Buda Castle (left) to Heroes' square (right).

Map No. 1. Cultural Avenue, Budapest. (Licence from 2q Kkt (Puczkó László))



This red line running in the East-West represents most of the historical cultural buildings and museums of Budapest. As can be seen, this is not an extensive area and can be walked in one day. This is why city leaders recognised the need to plan new cultural centres in the opposite direction (South-North). Map 2 illustrates what Budapest is planning to implement within the framework of its application to become European Capital of Culture 2010.

Map No. 2. Investment in the Budapest application for European Capital of Culture 2010



As the Millennium City Centre with the Palace of Arts and the National Theatre started this process, the two key projects will strengthen the whole by creating new cultural spaces in the North and South.

2. EXPRESSIONS OF CULTURAL DIVERSITY

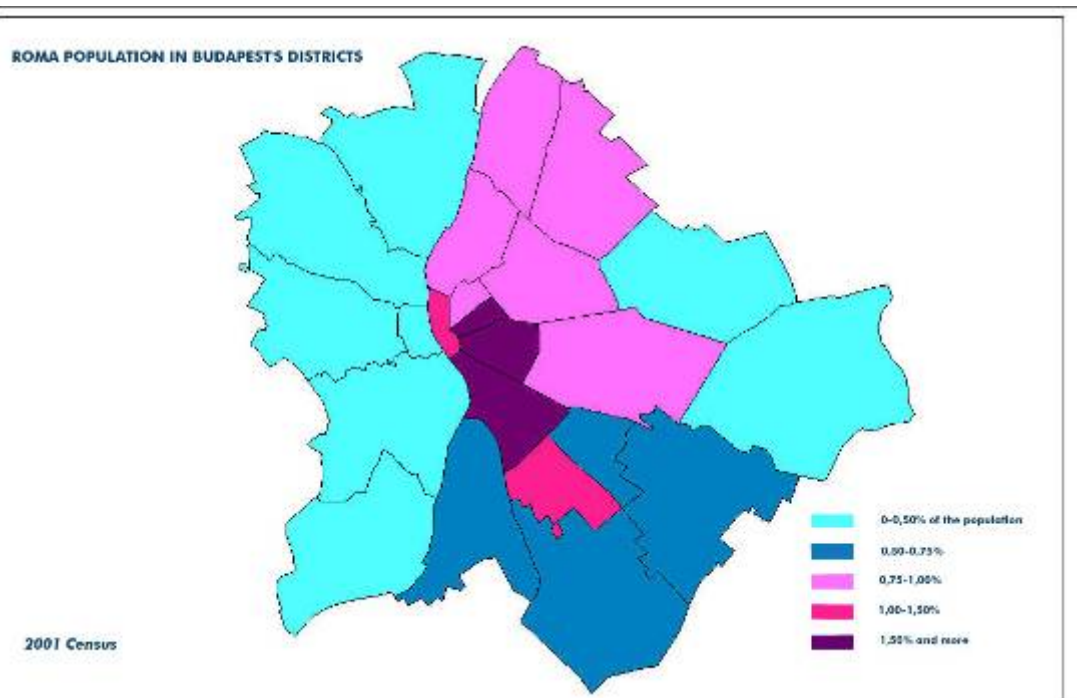
2.1 *How is cultural diversity reflected in city life?*

When focusing on the question of *cultural diversity*, one has to analyse the level of plurality within a population. By definition, two main groups have to be distinguished in Budapest. Ethnic or what in Central and Eastern Europe are termed ‘national’ **minorities** are formed by ethnic or religious groups that have had *a stable life and tradition in the country for at least a hundred years*. This is the necessary condition to obtain the legal status of minority. The other group that contributes to Budapest’s cultural diversity is composed of **immigrants**. Measuring the numbers of minorities and immigrants respectively is one of the main challenges for demographic and social studies. Statistical data are never exact, since their points of view are entirely different, such as in the case of national census data, or data related to working or residence permits. The legal situation of these two groups is constantly changing.

2.1.1 *Minorities*

The two most important minorities are that of the *Roma* (Gypsy) and the *Jews*. According to the 2001 census, Gypsies form 0,79 % of the population of Budapest, or 14,000 people. It is quite possible that their number is higher (up to 150,000), as many Gypsies do not live a stable, place-oriented life and also because many of them are most probably unwilling to admit to their ethnic origin. The largest Jewish population of East-Central Europe lives in Budapest, approximately 100,000, strong and are usually referred to as “Hungarian Jewish” or “Jewish Hungarian”. These expressions describe their identity, which is Hungarian and Jewish at the same time, a point that Imre Kertész, 2004 Literary Nobel prize-winner has made many times. The Jewish population can be considered as a religious group, but they have had a stable life and tradition in Budapest for more than a hundred years, so they also count as a minority.

Map No. 3. Roma population in Budapest’s districts



Case study 1. Cultural integration of Roma community

The Roma first appeared in Hungary in the fourteenth century, and various Gypsy groups continued to arrive afterwards, until the nineteenth. According to historical sources both local and central political authorities sought the social integration and assimilation of the Gypsies, Thus both Marie Therese and Josef II issued various decrees, the objective of which was to hinder the travelling lifestyle of Gypsy groups. For the 1893 census, because of these decrees, 90% of the Gypsy people declared that they had long been sedentary. During the Horthy regency (1920-40) other arrangements were made to force Gypsies to settle, and the majority were employed in agriculture, mostly as day-labourers. By that time, industrial development began to drive out handicrafts, including traditional Gypsy professions. The tragedy of World War II resulted in thousands of Gypsies falling victim to the Roma Holocaust.

During the socialist regime (1948-1989), the Roma remained one of the poorest groups of society. Owing to the extensive industrial development of 1950's many new job was created and required new labour. At this point the politicians turned to the Roma, realising that poverty stood in the way of their integration. A party decree issued in 1961 initiated the construction of basic apartments for them (the so called "CS" flats), which usually meant apartments with a shared bathroom on the corridor. The realisation of this plan was made by interest-free long-term loans. At that time, the Gypsy population of the 6th, 7th and mainly 8th district of Budapest reached its present percentage by occupying old and semi-derelict apartments (built around 1900). At the same time politicians realised that a high percentage of Roma children were dropping out from obligatory primary school. In order to compel these children to attend school "temporary Gypsy classes, and schools" were established. The schooling of the Roma is still a huge problem; however, integrated schools and classrooms created since 2003 have become symbols of Roma integration, though it is still a controversial issue as to how to realise integrated schooling.

A softening of the political climate made it possible for István Kemény and his team to carry out a research survey on the Roma in 1970-71. As well as looking into other issues, this

survey studied the labour market situation of the Roma such as the employment rate of adult Gypsy men (85,2%) and found that it was almost on the level of non-Gypsy men (87,7). Industry needed the unskilled labour of the Roma and this situation did not change until 1989, when many unskilled Gypsies became unemployed. According to a Roma survey (1993) approximately half a million Gypsy people live in Hungary, with about 150,000 in Budapest. The unemployment rate of the Roma is double that of non-Gypsies.

From 1992, many new Roma programmes were started by the Hungarian Labour Fund, the Autonomy Fund, the Soros Foundation, the Public Foundation for Hungarian National and Ethnic Minorities etc. After Hungary joined the EU, Roma people were targeted by EU structural funds for specific programmes. Since 1993, there has been a Roma Parliament (and Cultural Centre) operating in a building situated in the 8th district of Budapest. The Ministry of Cultural Heritage started a new programme to help the creation of Roma cultural centres. Today Roma cultural centres (sometimes called “Roma community centres”)—in spite of their financial difficulties—are available in almost every large town. Indeed some may ask why we need new Roma infrastructure (financed by central government. Would it not duplicate the old cultural centres (cultural houses) financed by local governments. This does not really fit the notion of integration, but Gypsy people undoubtedly consider Roma cultural centres to be symbols of their autonomy.

Another historically significant minority group in Budapest is still that of the *Germans*, known to Hungarians as the *Svabish*. German was the official language until 1867, when, two decades after the 1848 revolt, in a historic reconciliatory compromise, the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy was established. Though the population of Budapest has been rapidly assimilated (“magyarized”), the number of people of German origin remains highly significant. A relatively significant number of Germans live in the elegant neighbourhoods of Budapest.

Other important minorities are the Greeks, the Slovaks and Serbs. The Greek minority can trace its origin to the 1950s revolution in Greece, when a huge number of Greek communist activists immigrated to countries of the Soviet block.

2.1.2 Legal and cultural situation of minorities

Since 1993, legislation on National and Ethnic Minority Rights (act LXXVII) stipulates that autonomous local-governments can be organised by minorities as parallel systems of territorial local governments of settlements and cities. Representatives of minorities are elected at local elections, parallel to other local representatives. Since June 2005, these minority governments can be elected only by persons who have previously declared themselves as belonging to the given minority group (prior to this anybody could vote for minorities’ local governments, which led to various voting manipulations and abuse).

Government Decree 2187/1995 established the Public Foundation for Hungarian National and Ethnic Minorities with an approximately two million €annual budget. Furthermore, the National and Ethnic Minority Office was founded by government decree 125/2001, responsible for national and ethnic issues. This political-administrative structure in Hungary is considered to be a unique democratic approach for minorities in Europe and more specifically in Eastern Europe.

2.1.3 Immigrants or minorities?

The 2001 census used a broad definition of minorities. According to this survey, several groups of immigrants are considered to be minority groups, such as Chinese, Africans or Arabs. Yet these groups are far from forming minority groups in Hungary, as they were

certainly not present in Budapest a hundred years ago, which is the legal requirement. Meanwhile, the presence of these groups of immigrants is becoming ever more visible in Budapest. The most numerous are the Chinese whose estimated number was 4–5,000 in Budapest in 1999 (Keresztély, K. 1998). Yet as in all cities in general the Chinese have an important impact on the urban landscape and on consumption practices in Budapest. Apart from the spread of restaurants, Chinese business people have established the biggest mixed market in Eastern Europe, in the 8th district of the city.

Arabs, Turks and Africans, though less important in their numbers, have a visible effect on the urban landscape as a result of the proliferation of small groceries and kebab bars in the central areas of Budapest. Still, in the case of the latter group, there remains the problem that people coming from the diverse countries of Africa are considered by most Hungarians to have originated from a single i.e. *African* culture. (Olomoofe, L. 2000)

The identity and position of certain groups of immigrants in Hungary is difficult to define: more than half of the immigrants in Hungary are *Hungarians* coming from a neighbouring country (see Table 1). Research has shown that for instance Hungarians coming from Erdély (Transylvania, Romania) build their networks by keeping their initial relationships with their compatriots (SÍK, 2000). That means there are strong differences between Hungarians coming from different countries and diverse social groups. Yet there has been little research in sociology or cultural anthropology concerning these particularities.

Table 1. Persons living in Hungary with an immigrant permit in 2001

Citizenship	Number of persons	%
Romanian*	37,996	47.7
Yugoslav*	9,81	12.3
Former USSR*	4,888	6.1
Ukrainian*	5,859	7.4
German	3,658	4.5
Chinese	3,684	4.6
Czech and Slovak*	1,728	2.2
Russian*	1,468	1.8
Others	11,404	14.3
TOTAL	79,652	100

Citizenship marked with a *: the majority of these are ethnic Hungarians. The phenomenon derives from the Treaty of Versailles after World War I, when two-thirds of Hungary was cut off and annexed to the neighbouring countries. At present, around four million Hungarians are living outside of the country. This influences the political rhetoric on the position of immigrants and minorities in Hungary (see above).

Source: Tóth, Pál Péter

2.1.4 Immigrants and expatriates

Since the 1989 transition and subsequent opening of the country, the position of Hungary in terms of international migration has changed. Instead of being an exporting country it has become an importing one, and more people are coming into the country than the number of those leaving it. Unfortunately, the increased attraction of Hungary does not mean that it is also successful in keeping the immigrants... According to the demographer P. Tóth, more than 200,000 foreigners entered the country officially between 1990 and 2000, while almost 100,000 left it. (TÓTH, P.P. 19??)

Refugees form an important component of the non-Hungarian immigrants. Though the majority live in refugee camps, some of them reside with friends while waiting to leave the

country. Refugees in general do not intend to remain in Hungary for a longer period of time, or at least they do not imagine spending their whole lives in this country. Yet sometimes they have to stay here for several years, or even permanently. Generally, their living conditions are far from decent, and few of them can be integrated into Hungarian society.

Case study: Refugee camp failure in Kalocsa

In 2001, the Hungarian government decided to rebuild the unused army barracks left behind in Kalocsa by the occupying Russian Army (Russian troops were pulled out in 2002) and open it as refugee camp for Afghan refugees. On October 30, 2001, a major demonstration was organised to protest against this decision. “Why in Kalocsa?” asked many. On the one hand they disapproved of the decision having been made without asking local people and authorities, and on the other they developed irrational ideas that justified rejecting strangers in their neighbourhood. In fact, those Afghans were obviously not terrorists, but victims of the totalitarian system in Afghanistan.

The media brought the issue to the public’s attention following the political, sociological and physical background of the affair. On October 11, Magyar Narancs (a weekly journal) noted that the socialist heritage was one to be feared and did not accept the stigmatisation of any people or group. In the previous day’s issue of Népszabadság (daily news) Ákos Tóth noted that people were afraid of the repercussions of the US-led invasion on Afghanistan. They thought that a flood of refugees was inevitable and no one would be happy to live in a neighbourhood full of disgruntled Afghans. The article details the arguments of local people:

- *The barracks are in the city centre and it is not the best use of a centrally located building;*
- *500 refugees is too high a number for a town with only 10,000 inhabitants;*
- *The local authority is suffering from a financial deficit;*
- *Afghan customs are simply too different*

It would be fair to say that Ákos Tóth emphasised the emotional side of the affair, disregarding the facts, and did not concentrate on experience or on possible guidelines as to how people should live and deal with the presence of refugees. In Magyar Hírlap (a popular daily newspaper), R. Székely Julianna also reflected on the story and asked the question: “what if we could be proud of being Kalocsai not just when those who suffer are faraway from us, but when they walk on our streets?” In Magyar Nemzet (a popular daily newspaper) Szabolcs Berényi criticized the Hungarian Liberal Democrats’ Party, because a liberal party member and mayor was against the refugee camp. Berényi wrote that this was not the first case of the liberal party demonstrating its lack of tolerance, and called for the need to be tolerant in deeds and not just in words.

According to the Home Office, 2,749 Afghans sought asylum in Hungary in 2001. Many of them received it, but then 1,358 refugees disappeared! While we were having a debate about foreigners, one-and-a-half thousand Afghans disappeared in our country. Where are they now? Finally the Afghans were put into another refugee camp in Debrecen. There are now some 2-3.000 refugees in a city of 230,000.

The other category of immigrants is a “happier” one: **expatriates**, (or *new immigrants*). Expatriates are different from traditional migrants because their migration is not related to any political or human constraint and not even to economic need, but probably because they simply wanted to come here for their own special reasons or personal interest. Expatriates can be *independent people* following intellectual professions or doing studies. Most of them arrived in Budapest for ‘adventure’. They are quite flexible and integrated within society; most of them speak Hungarian. They go out to the same places as Hungarians; they follow

similar habits in the city. Expatriates can also be *employees* of multinational companies. Because of their long working hours, however, they do not have time to meet local people, and therefore they live in a strongly international ambience. The time they remain in Budapest depends largely on their company so even psychologically; they do not invest much in local culture. (Ramond, 1998)

2.2 Institutions and cultural offer representing multiculturalism

We may distinguish three components of multicultural offer in Budapest:

- cultural institutions and activities of minorities;
- cultural institutions and events promoting international cultural offer (invitations to artists, organised events in foreign languages etc.);
- institutions and events improving international and inter-city relations and eventually the presentation of Hungarian artists and groups abroad.

2.2.1 Cultural institutions and activities of minorities

All minorities have well-established institutional networks consisting of a politico-administrative centre, one or several centres for cultural activities, occasionally their own newspapers, and art groups (in general, groups of music or dance). Several of them organise their own festivals or other cultural events. In Budapest, the following minorities run their own cultural centres: Bulgarian, Greek, Croatian, Polish, German, Armenian, Romanian, Serbian, Slovak, Slovenian, Ukrainian and the Roma community. Apart from “traditional” cultural centres, certain minorities organise their own special art venues, such as the Malko Teatro, the Bulgarian ethnic theatre that has been open since 1996, or the ethnic music group of the Greek minority (*Sirtos*), that has been well known in Budapest since the 1980s. Yet in certain cases, these establishments may function as *off*-cultural centres and events; this is so in the case of the Bulgarian theatre. As a result of this phenomenon, in some cases, minorities’ cultural events or establishments may become part of the alternative cultural life of Budapest.

2.2.2. Institutions promoting international cultural offer and inter-city cultural relations

In Budapest, most of the cultural institutions and events focusing on international/multicultural offers are largely limited to ‘cultural imports’. For financial and organisational reasons, cultural institutions have but few opportunities to promote for themselves the presentation of Hungarian artists and organised events abroad. (Keresztély, 2005) For this latter purpose, “transfer” institutions and programmes aimed at the development of international relations gain importance in Budapest. Several types of cultural institutions may be distinguished according to the form they use when presenting a multicultural offer.

a) Institutions created directly for the international communities living in Budapest

The Merlin Theatre was founded in 1992 and has been a core place for international cultural offer in Budapest since then. The founders believed in a rapid increase of tourism. Though the creation of a theatre for tourists failed, the organisers maintained the idea of running an English Theatre for the benefit of the international communities living in Budapest. In 2003, the Theatre was renamed: the Merlin International Theatre. The main idea of the reorganization was to create a more multicultural theatre that plays in several languages, English, French, and German, etc.

b) Institutions and events promoting special international cultural offer in Budapest

Most of the cultural institutions make efforts towards international networking. That is why it is difficult to limit the circle of cultural institutions that *de facto* determine the international-multicultural art life. Thus our analysis will not cover all the cultural venues of Budapest, but will give a picture about characteristics and problems of multicultural representation.

The **Trafó House of Contemporary Art** was created by the Budapest Municipality (in a former electric transformer house in the 9th district) as the successor of the *Club of Young Artists [Fiatal Művészek Klubja]* that was arguably the most cultic place of alternative art and cultural life during the 1980s. Trafó provides different forms of art: fine art, theatre, music, but mainly dance and other services such as a café, bar-restaurant, and nightclub.

Fonó is a cultural centre that was founded by civil initiative in 1998, and became the main centre of ethnic, world and jazz music; it runs its own disc-editor company and plays an important role in the presentation of multicultural music-life, by regularly inviting ethnic and world-music groups, such as Chalaban (Morocco) or Besho-Drom (Serbian, Balkan world music), Ando Drom (Roma music).

Műcsarnok [Kunsthalle] is a museum without a permanent collection that also provides a venue for events of modern and contemporary art, often exhibiting the work of international artists. In 2004 one of the museum's main exhibitions was the "Bisterdo Holocaust" that concentrated on the presentation of the Holocaust of all minorities, and not just that of the Jews, i.e. on that of the Roma, homosexuals or people persecuted for their religion.

The two latest cultural developments in Budapest were created by state investment (or at least, by PPP between the central state and a private investor). The **Millenaris Park** was inaugurated in 2001. The cultural theme park was created on the premises of a former machine factory (GANZ) in the prestigious area of Buda. Millenaris has become an important cultural centre in Buda to host international concerts of jazz or world music, several small festivals, exhibitions etc.

The **Palace of Arts** hosts three institutions owned and managed by the central government: the **Festival Theatre**, the **Ludwig Museum** and the **National Concert Hall**. All three play a major role in the international cultural attraction of Budapest, by regularly inviting world-renowned artists and orchestras. The **Ludwig Museum** especially represents international art-life as part of the Ludwig museums' network (Vienna, Köln, Habanna, headquarters in Aachen) and specialises in modern and contemporary art. The Budapest collection is partly based on international art objects (pop art, German new expressionism, photo realism etc.) and partly on Hungarian and Eastern European pieces acquired systematically during the last decade.

c) Temporary events for international culture: festivals.

There are four main festivals with an international reputation. The **Spring Festival** (since 1980) was a state-financed festival until 1989, when the local government of Budapest took on this role. Later many other cities copied the initiation and now it is not only Budapest that holds a spring festival. Cities ("cultural franchise?") work with a co-ordination centre in Budapest. From 1992/1993 they have organised an **Autumn Festival** as a sister festival to the Spring Festival, but the goals of the festivals are different. The Spring Festival's aim is to put classics on stage (philharmonics, choir, theatre, ballet opera etc.), while the Autumn Festival is for contemporary art (jazz, pop/rock, architecture etc.).

The "**Sziget**" Festival is often heralded as the biggest pop/rock festival in Europe. Based on private initiative they had many teething difficulties, however, as a profit-oriented Limited

Company (so-called “Kft”) now. After the first several years of concentrating on pop/rock the Sziget has become a multicultural festival with theatre and cinema performances introducing different cultures.

The venue for the **Jewish Summer Festival** is in Erzsébet Square and around the traditional Jewish area of the 7th district. The event promotes Budapest’s Jewish culture, but it has a strong international flavour too.

Other smaller festivals in Budapest such as the **Festivities of Arts and Crafts** at Buda Castle, the **Festival on Space, Film and Music** (*Tér Film Zene Fesztivál*) in front of the Parliament are designed for tourists. **Budapest Plázs** and **Budapest Parade** attract many different subcultures and minority cultures.

d) Transfer institutions.

In the 1990’s, the cultural sections institutions of many foreign embassies realised the need for international cultural co-operation and played a very important role in this field as transfer institutions. In 2005, most of them decided to cut their spending on international co-operation. Culture 2000 took over this role partly from embassies.

e) Cultural seasons abroad

After being a guest at Frankfurt Book Fair (1997) and special guest at *Europalia* (1998) in Brussels, the Hungarian Government evaluated cultural seasons that were very useful and efficient. We have already had French, Italian, English, Dutch, Russian Cultural Seasons and a Chinese Season is expected in 2006. At the present time these are the only events that provide an official framework for allocation of public subsidies for cultural events and organisations whose aim is to present Hungarian artists and works in a foreign country.

f) Media

Almost every community has its own publications: the Budapest Business Journal, the Budapest Sun, In 24 (ingrained issue of *Libération*), and even the Chinese have their own newspaper. There are two radio stations that focus on minorities and immigrants. The first one is **Radio C**, ('C' is from Gypsy=Cigány in Hungarian) the Roma radio, which is well known at international level. **Tilos Radio (Radio 'forbidden')** is an innovative and alternative cultural radio station that often broadcasts programmes in different languages such as English, German, Serbian, and maybe in the near future, in Arabic. State subsidy is granted every year for various minority programmes at Hungarian National Radio and Television.

Table 2. Minority newspapers and journals supported by the Office of National and Ethnic Minorities

Name of media (weekly/monthly)	State grant in 1997. in 1000 forints (HUF)	State grant in 1998. in 1000 forints (HUF)	State grant in 1999. in 1000 forints (HUF)	State grant in 2000. in 1000 forints (HUF)
Ararát (Armenian) every second week	7 130	7 443	8 346	8 992
Hromada (Ukrainian)	3 760	3 925	5 000	5 387
Haemus (Bulgarian) Quarterly	4 500	4 698	5 272	5 680
Hrvatski Glasnik (Croatian) weekly	21 770	22 727	25 557	27 538
Kafeneio (Greek) Quarterly	4 000	4 176	5 000	5 387
Ludové noviny (Slovakian) weekly	21 770	22 727	24 090	27 538
Magazyn Polonijny and Polonia Wegierska (Polish) Every second week.	9 160	9 563	10 277	11 073
Neue Zeitung (German) Weekly	24 740	25 828	27 377	29 499
Foaia românească (Romanian) weekly	15 500	16 208	22 471	24 212
Porabje (Slovenian) Every second week.	6 450	6 733	7 561	8 147
Ruszinskij Zsivot and Fővárosi Ruszin Hírlap (Russian) Every second week.	4 300	4 489	5 033	4 334
Srpske Narodne Novine (Serbian) weekly	22 000	22 968	25 743	27 738
Friendly (on line) Every second week.	0	0	1 500	2 494
Roma news & journals				
Amaro Drom, monthly	9 240	9 646	6 550	7 038
Lungo Drom, monthly	10 380	10 836	12 457	11 972
Phralipe, monthly	5 300	5 533	4 000	1 000
Világunk, monthly	0	0	10 378	13 967
Kethano Drom (quarterly)	0	0	0	1 995
Total	170 000	177 500	206 612	224 000

Source: Office of National and Ethnic Minorities

Table 3. Minority programmes at Hungarian National Radio stations

Minority	Programme time, frequency, Broadcasting	Weekly total time
Bulgarian	Weekly 30 minutes broadcast nationwide.	30 minutes
Gypsy	30 minutes on 6 days of the week, nationwide,	180 minutes
Greek	Weekly 30 minutes broadcast nationwide.	30 minutes
Croatian	Daily 90 minutes broadcast regional, daily 30 minutes broadcast nationwide.	840 minutes
Polish	Weekly 30 minutes broadcast nationwide.	30 minutes
German	Daily 90 minutes broadcast regionally, daily 30 minutes country wide	840 minutes
Armenian	Weekly 30 minutes broadcast nationwide.	30 minutes
Romanian	Daily 90 minutes broadcast regional, daily 30 minutes broadcast nationwide.	840 minutes
Russian	Weekly 30 minutes broadcast nationwide.	30 minutes
Serbian	Daily 30 minutes and broadcast regionally, 4 days a week 50 minutes broadcast regionally, daily 30 minutes broadcast country wide	630 minutes
Slovak	Daily 90 minutes plus weekly 30 minutes regionally broadcast, Daily 30 broadcast country wide	870 minutes
Slovenian	Weekly 30 minutes broadcast regionally and 30 minutes nationwide.	60 minutes
Ukrainian	Weekly 30 minutes broadcast country wide	30 minutes
“In the same home” "Egy hazában"	Multicultural programme, weekly 30 minutes, plus quarterly 180 minutes broadcast nationwide.	

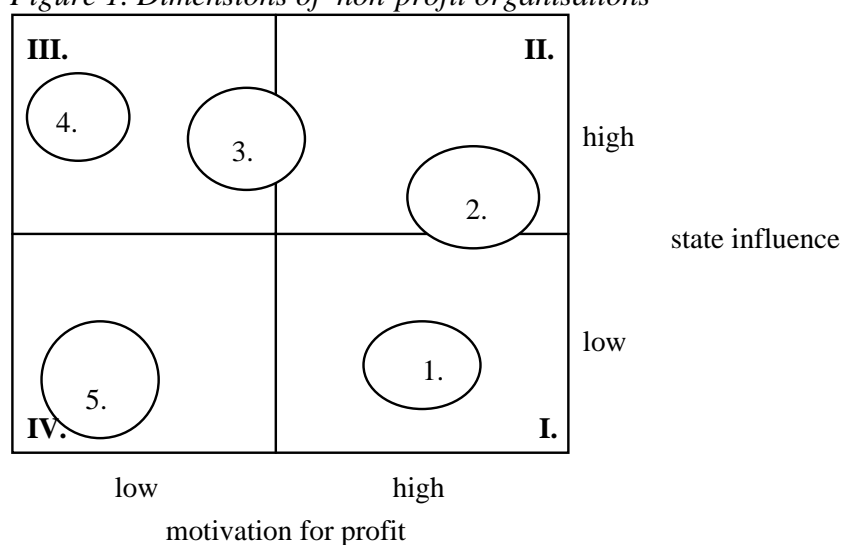
Source: Office of National and Ethnic Minorities

2.3 How institutionalised is the multi-cultural offer in the three sectors?

2.3.1 Public, Private and Civil

Private and civil organizations are becoming increasingly involved in creating cultural institutions these days. Figure 1 illustrates their place in the structure of cultural institutions and organizations. One dimension of this matrix shows the relations of culture (its organizations, participants and creations) to the economy, or rather it reflects the role of economic factors in the objectives and **motivation for profit**. The second dimension illustrates the relations of politics and state to the same cultural organizations. This **state influence** could well be that of the owners, employers, legal supervision and protection and supporter.

Figure 1. Dimensions of non-profit organisations



Source: Szabó Cs., Szabó J.Z. (1996)

Organizations set up by private individuals and characterized by strong motivation for personal gain, expect little state regulation. (I) A good example for this in the field of entertainment is Sziget Festival, small institutions such as APA Gallery, and some other galleries in Budapest. They are private enterprises, whose founders risk their own money (circle 1) on business, and their expenses are covered mostly from their own revenue.

The next segment (II) stands for organizations working for high profit under strong state influence. It was not possible to find a multicultural organisation where the local authority is the owner, the employer, or the legal supervisor and it could press this advantage (circle 2). Special examples could be where the founding document does not claim profit but it gives its board members the opportunity for personal benefits (circle 3). The Spring Festival could be included here.

The third type (III segment) organizations are state-affiliated whose objective is not-for-profit. It means that they carry out certain legal and expected state functions. Public institutions such as the national public television and radio, museums, Millenaris Park, Trafó, Gödör, Merlin, Art cinema-network belong here, but minority news and journals too, since the majority of their income is derived from the state. In Hungary maintaining the National Theatre and museums is not a duty but is expected from the state by the citizens (circle 4)

In the fourth segment can be found those organizations whose aim is not profit and the state only influences them as a legal supervisor. This is the segment to which most civil society organizations belong (circle 5) such as Kultiplx, Café-bars with cultural-art functions (Szimpla, Spinoza, Godot, Sark (Roma evenings) etc.), C3, Studio of Young Artists, minorities' institutions such as theatres, art groups.

2.3.2 Data on cultural consumption

Chart 3. Capacity of cultural institutions

	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
Theatres in Budapest					
Number of theatres	22	22	23	23	23
Maximum seats	13,400	14,000	15,000	14,800	15,100
Permanent employees	2,461	2,476	2,609	2749	3,045
Number of performances	6,189	6,072	6,224	6,424	6,472
Attendances	2 087000	2 138000	2 266000	2 345000	2 416000
Cinemas in Budapest*					
Seats	22,651	22,702	24,551	24,487	n.a.
Number of Rooms	125	124	133	134	132
Number of performances	192,829	209,713	226,580	222,248	222,390
Attendances (thousand)	9 123000	8 459000	8 382000	7 821000	7 793000
Museums in Budapest					
Number of museums	96	98	99	100	100
Number of exhibitions	604	569	586	658	557
Number of attendance	2 604000	2 342000	2 737000	4 042000	4 033000
Libraries in Budapest					
Total number of books (thousand)	3,979	4,324	3,857	3,760	3,713
Books borrowed (thousand)	6,165	6,584	6,597	6,357	5,706
Number of registered readers	163,368	195,000	192,688	213,737	215,903

* Data on the art-movie network is quite deficient. There are 27 art-film cinemas in operation in Budapest and these had 720,000 paying attendances in 2004.

3. DEBATE – POLICIES – ACTIONS

3.1 Debate

Politicians, community leaders and non-governmental organisations, individual artists and the media often discuss cultural diversity. Politicians sometimes question the validity of the whole issue, while community leaders and non-governmental organisations seek to put it higher on the agenda. Although cultural policy documents have not highlighted the question, several important perspectives can be analysed. We can cite, for example, the views of two key commentators, who represent diametrically opposed points of view on this topic:

- Tamás Derce, the Mayor of 4th district claims that multiculturalism does not make any sense. It is a blind alley for European development as whole and its realisation is problematic at the EU level; only co-operation between distinct cultures would be able to improve the EU's performance.

- György Enyedi, researcher and intellectual often claims that Budapest has to become an international city, a gateway between East and West, in which minorities and subcultures can to live together and focus on Europe. Such a gateway city would represent a mixed but well-balanced culture for the European Union and would thus strengthen Union.

Debates concerning multiculturalism are largely dependent on political and social concerns. With regard to international migration, Hungary and its capital have only recently become recipients of immigrants. Cultural diversity as a matter of political and social debate has become a subject in continuous flux. In addition, very few connections can be found between the diverse issues that appear in differing circumstances.

3.1.1 Debate in media about national policies

Debate on multiculturalism in the Hungarian media is on the narrow side, which is true even if newspapers represent the most liberal and open vision with regard to multiculturalism. Two main topics are the social and political situation of the Roma population and the social and political situation of the Hungarian minorities living in the neighbouring countries as a result of the 1920 Trianon Treaty. The majority of debates thus adopt the historical and traditional meaning of multiculturalism in Hungary. Debate on foreigners and new immigrants figures very rarely in articles concerning multiculturalism in Hungary and Budapest.

One of the main questions posed by politicians and social groups concerns the policy of the Hungarian Government in terms of the legal, cultural and economic situation of the Hungarian minority living in the neighbouring countries. Should the Hungarian state grant them the status of Hungarian Citizenship? This was the main question in the autumn of 2004, preceding a national referendum held at the end of the same year. The question is emblematic of the traditional cultural debate in Hungary between defenders of the traditional values of Hungarian culture and those who would press forward the European – and global – integration of the country. The people rejected the proposal of the referendum, but they did not say yes to globalisation – and so it is clear that the problem is not yet solved.

The reason that debate concerning minorities living in Hungary is not more heated is almost certainly because Hungary is one of the European countries that developed the most liberal policies towards minorities. Yet, the question is more complex in the case of the most populated and traditionally the most problematic group of minorities: the Roma. As has been

shown above, the cultural and economic integration of the Roma communities is in the forefront of Hungarian social policy in general. The vision and approach of Hungarian society towards the Roma population has been absolutely transformed since the political transition as a result of various programmes for cultural and social development. In March 2005, the Hungarian Parliament officially declared the responsibility of Hungarian society for the Roma Holocaust. This move is a sign that the Roma population has come to be considered as an integral part of Hungarian society, something completely taboo under state socialism.

However, there is continued debate on the ways and means of Roma integration. Partly these stem from the fact that certain Roma political groups are themselves in opposition towards one another. In 2001, nine different political parties of Roma were registered by the Hungarian Supreme Court (www.romacentrum.hu); each of them are adopting different political principles and approaching various parties of the majority society.

3.1.2 The civil sector entering the debate on multiculturalism

National and local policies dispute multiculturalism and international migration as political-theoretical facts but they have initiated very few practical steps to resolve the everyday problems of immigrants in Hungary and especially in Budapest. Some recent events in Budapest have shown that the civil sector is actually the most sensitive to the problems of multiculturalism, though its vision of the issue is often limited as well. Since 2004, for example, a scandalous debate has developed concerning the future of the famous 'Jewish Quarter' in the former ghetto. The debate mainly concentrated on urban development, i.e. on the conservation of the former ghetto's rundown facades instead of destroying the old buildings and constructing new ones. The local municipality of the district (7th district) intended to sell the mostly derelict buildings to private developers and renew the urban landscape of the whole area in this way. In opposition to this policy, a civil movement was formed called 'Protestation' (*Óvás*). Led by an architect, the actions of this association concentrated on the preservation of the buildings that the local municipality wanted to put up for sale. Meanwhile, the movement is often criticised as being composed of 'elite architects' living in the residential areas of Budapest who only concentrate on the buildings, but do not care about the social problems of the area. Yet, an indisputable achievement is that the civil association has succeeded in thwarting the project of a legally elected body: the Budapest Municipality suspended the sale and reconstruction of the buildings.

In 2005, a group of young artists created the first real cultural squat called 'Tuzraktar'. They organised a complex cultural centre in a former industrial building that they obtained for use from the owner of the building during the summer of 2005. The building and the whole initiative fit well into the neighbourhood located on the edge of the most important rehabilitation area in Budapest that previously had been a severely rundown neighbourhood close to the city centre. The group's cultural activities are entirely non-profit events and concerts, and are offered free just like at every other cultural centre of this kind all over Europe. Since they host international guests and workshops and they are in close contact with the international network of independent cultural centres (*Trans Europe Halles*), their multicultural role in Budapest is incontestable. They provide special occasions for the inhabitants of the neighbourhood to participate in their activities and thus have a possibly important effect on local society as well. In order to finance their activities, they applied for subsidies to both the district and the central municipality, but without success. The local municipality declined because it felt the activities did not fit its objective of creating a serene,

middle class area. Again, multiculturalism found itself blocked by a conservative vision of local policy.

3.1.3 Artists as a special group of independent expatriates

A certain number of expatriate professional artists have chosen to live in Budapest for various reasons. Their opinion about the atmosphere and the opportunities for art in Budapest may be an important element when considering different opinions about multiculturalism in the capital city. Interviews were made with some of them, almost entirely integrated into the local art community, who speak Hungarian but who on the other hand also take part in international art networks. According to them, the Hungarian ambition of keeping up with Western European trends hinders the development of harmonious and original local forms of art. Western norms are over-estimated. Budapest is a relatively small city that combines the advantages of a multicultural metropolis with those of a smaller city. On the other hand, after a longer stay here one may come to realise that it hosts a very narrow circle of people, with strong personal interests and networks that makes it difficult for a 'foreigner' to be a successful competitor. In general, as most of artists saw it, average people in Budapest are rarely open enough towards multiculturalism – most of them do not speak a foreign language, and are closed to ethnic difference, etc.

These examples show therefore that multiculturalism is still far from being an evident cultural need for the wider public in Budapest. Further policies and moves are required to improve the situation.

3.2 Policies and actions

3.2.1 National policies towards multiculturalism

In 2002, the Minister of Culture established a strategic council chaired by the head of the National Cultural Fund. The council and all its members are responsible for elaborating a Hungarian Cultural Strategy. A first final version of this cultural policy document submitted to Minister István Hiller (2002-2005) in February 2005 analysed the new world situation and noted the following points:

- Globalisation is an irreversible process, and while on the one hand values can be depreciated by it, isolated national values can become universal on the other.
- People are living longer, the aging of the population is continuing, and migration is increasing. The formation of fragmented societies can be expected.
- The confrontation of global cultures resulted in the renaissance of national identity issues. The correlation between identity and nation symbols is a more and more sensitive issue.

The document did not reflect, however, on 'national' or ethnic minorities or strategic goals or priorities.

In June 15 proclamation, 2005, minister András Bozóki decided to change the priorities to the following:

- Community experience
- Freedom in culture

- Inclusive and colonizer culture
- Create a European Hungary
- Open culture (put culture on internet, to make it free for everyone)

Although there is relatively little information available on policies, on the basis of recent trends several observations can be made on both cultural policies in general and policies towards minority groups in particular.

First of all, absolutely positive processes were launched in regard to Roma people during the 1990s and especially after Hungary joined the EU. Many Roma programmes, and initiatives were launched in the fields of culture and education. The need is real for well-designed programmes on international cultural relationships; and policies towards immigrants.

The cultural policies of the Budapest municipalities (including the central municipality and the districts), although responsible for the same urban spaces, approach quite differently the question of minorities. Municipalities have been co-operating with the local governments of the 'national' minorities. Minority governments operate as mini-parliaments responsible for minority issues, and they are financed by the central government according to legislation on National and Ethnic Minority Rights.

In order to finance special minority projects the Hungarian Government established the Public Foundation for Hungarian National and Ethnic Minorities, which coordinates its work with the National and Ethnic Minority Office (2001) and the Helsinki Committee¹. The National Cultural Fund created a temporary board responsible for minority cultures in 2004. These two funds have an annual budget of some 2,5 million €. Since joining the EU, structural funds have started numerous different programmes for the Roma, but until now it is not clear how far the supported projects can be considered as multicultural projects.

The civil sector is relatively wide in the field of minorities. The main players are the Soros Foundation and the Autonomia Foundation while minority groups, mainly gypsies, run many civil organisations. The annual budget spent on multicultural activities can be estimated at 2-3 million Euros.

3.2.2 Policy of the Budapest Municipality – treating multiculturalism in urban development strategies

The financing and operation of cultural institutions and programmes are managed by the Department for Culture. Yet policy and strategy making concerning the role of culture in the global functioning of the Municipality appears in the long- and medium-term strategies for urban development as carried in recent years by the Mayor of Budapest. The long-term

¹ The Helsinki movement began in the Soviet Union following the signing of the Helsinki Final Act in 1975. The Moscow Helsinki Group was founded with the aim of monitoring compliance by the Soviet government with the human rights provisions of the Final Act. Based on their initiative, in 1978 Helsinki Watch was founded in the United States, which monitored the protection of human rights in all signatory countries. Soon after, Helsinki Committees were brought to life in Western Europe, then in Central and Eastern Europe and in countries of the ex-Soviet Union. In Hungary, the democratic opposition had been in regular contact with the Helsinki movement, particularly with Helsinki Watch, since the early 80's. The Hungarian Helsinki Committee was established in May 1989. It monitors the enforcement of human rights enshrined in international human rights instruments, provides legal defence to victims of human rights and informs the public about rights violations. It promotes legal education and training in fields relevant to its activities, both in Hungary and abroad. Its main areas of activities are centred on protecting the rights of asylum seekers and foreigners in need of international protection, as well as monitoring the human rights performance of law enforcement agencies and the judicial system. In recent years, the Hungarian Helsinki Committee's activities have been supported among others. By the Soros Foundation Hungary, the Open Society Institute, the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees etc. (www.helsinki.hu)

strategy draws up a vision for the capital's urban development for the next 30 years. The concept and the programmes included in the document focus on the international role and functions of Budapest. One of the main objectives for the coming decades is to define and strengthen the position of Budapest as a regional-international economic hub in Central-Eastern Europe. The medium-term strategy (from 2005 to 2013) places greater emphasis on the 'internal' situation of Budapest, i.e. the develop cooperation between private and civil players, as well as better living conditions within the city. This strategy is more apt when treating the international position of Budapest: *'Budapest is a city with excellent geographical conditions, a wonderful natural setting, architectural treasures and distinguished potentials but it would be difficult to say that Budapest is the cultural hub, the economic transfer-point, the financial and tourism centre or the ecological model-city of Central Europe'* (p. 3.)

Cultural development and multiculturalism appear in divergent forms as well in the two documents. The long-term strategy stresses the international cultural attractiveness of the capital. Its main components are to develop Budapest as an international music hub; to develop a knowledge-based city with points of IT communication and to ameliorate the position and participation of minorities in Budapest cultural life. In this latter point, the document formulates an important idea. The Budapest municipality should initiate the renewal of certain run-down industrial and other types of buildings in order to install cultural centres for ethnic, religious and other minorities living in Budapest. Unfortunately, this long-term document does not provide any practical solutions for the proposed programmes, and as a result no concrete method has been defined for the amelioration of institutional conditions of multicultural life in Budapest.

It seems that the 2005 medium-term strategy has but these goals to one side. Its cultural programme stresses the need to broaden the social conditions of cultural consumption. Multiculturalism and international cultural attraction do not even appear as priorities. On the other hand, the strategy formulates several concrete development projects that support cultural and also multicultural development. Two projects are emphasised as core elements of the cultural-urban development; both focus on the renewal of former industrial buildings on the two sides of the Danube in order to create two new cultural centres in the city.

Besides urban development strategies, the Budapest Municipality offers very weak cultural policies, and its activities are limited to funding. Much of the policy framework is devoting to the maintenance of institutional networks such as theatres, museums, cultural centres etc. Support to multicultural initiatives is always linked with the support of a certain programme: for instance, that of the Sziget Festival, of the Autumn Festival or the Jewish Festival; support for certain institutions such as the Trafó Theatre, and the Merlin Theatre, etc. The Budapest Municipality does not follow a cultural policy based on strong initiatives, but rather one based mostly on 'laissez-faire' policies.

3.2.3 Policy of district municipalities

The role of district municipalities is a very special problem in Budapest. According to the 1990 Act on Local Governments, the 23 Budapest district municipalities obtained similar autonomy as other local governments in Hungary. Each has its own budget and the right to define its own regulations, especially in matters of urbanism. Their local autonomy is based on their own revenues and properties. At the same time, they have obligations similar to smaller cities (like Debrecen) – provision of elementary education and health services, public lighting, maintenance of local roads and public spaces, and preserving ethnic and religious

equality in the area. In regard to culture, there is a cultural department in every district municipality that has to follow the decisions of the Cultural Committee of the district. The central Municipality of Budapest functions mostly as a regional authority, with restricted competences on the local level, but with several obligatory duties at the level of the capital city or in issues that concerns the territory of more than one district.

In spite of the difficulties, there is a cultural success story from about the 9th district, the first area where an urban rehabilitation programme was launched at the end of the 1980s. This programme, in cooperation with the French *Caisse de Depots et de Consignations*, has continued ever since the transition. As a result, the former blue-collar district became an increasingly middle-class area. This change has been accelerated by the biggest urban development project in Budapest, which was conceived in the same district: the Millennium City Centre. This project involves important cultural elements, such as the National Theatre (completed in 2002) and the Palace of Arts (2005).

Districts represent individual strategies and practices of cultural development, but there are some common features, namely in regard to obligatory duties related to multiculturalism. In Budapest, an institutional structure of multiculturalism is still far from being achieved. Districts are responsible for elementary public services – and this duty clearly concerns every social, ethnic, and national group living in the territory of one district. Some case studies have shown that few districts respond to the needs of immigrants living in Budapest – although they do fulfil their obligatory duties, but the tendency to initiate special services, such as teaching Hungarian, or translating services, is an extremely slow procedure. (Keresztély, 1998)

4. Conclusions

Can sensitive policy actions lead to better integration?'

Budapest is a city with an important multicultural tradition which, however, was twice reduced: first, after WW I, and then again under the socialist system. After the 1989 transition, the opening of policies, culture and the economy to international relations began to bring this tradition back. The number of immigrants increased rapidly. However, after fifteen years of transition it is now clear that the return of multiculturalism is limited.

The tradition has been almost entirely destroyed during the last hundred years or so. After World War I, Budapest lost its multicultural background as most of the country's mixed ethnic regions were detached from Hungary. In the 1940's, the remaining minorities, ethnic and religious groups were decimated by the Holocaust; then and under communism by deportation and voluntary emigration. As a result, by the time the country opened up in 1989, Hungary was a quasi-monocultural country. After the transition, Hungary turned from being an exporting country of people to being a net importing country and as such a new target for international migration. A major proportion of the new immigrants is composed of ethnic Hungarians who have left neighbouring countries for political and/or economic reasons. This main source of international migration to Hungary provides immigrants who are people of Hungarian origin. Presently, urban diversity is largely based on a population with common cultural origins as the majority society once again weakening multiculturalism in Budapest.

However as other post-socialist countries after 1990, Hungary also became an important destination for refugees and other migrants, who rarely consider Hungary and Budapest as the

terminus of their migration; on the contrary, they use the country as interchange station that most of them want to leave after a few years. This actually characterises a relatively high percentage of migrants of Hungarian origin as well.

Minorities do have their own cultural institutions and productions, but their effect on urban culture is limited. There are a few cases, e.g. Greek dance, or Roma music groups, when a minority's production becomes part of the majority cultural offer, and even then usually that of alternative culture. Other cultural institutions that typically represent the international and multicultural offer in Budapest have restricted opportunities to develop inter-city and international cultural relations, largely as a result of financial limitations. Though politicians and intellectuals like to imagine Budapest as a gateway city connecting East and West, the international cultural relations of the capital have always been asymmetric: they are strong towards the West and much weaker towards the South-Eastern part of Europe.

Multiculturalism remains vague in public debate. It could even be claimed that a true debate on multiculturalism does not exist. Articles and opinions remain within the framework of the traditional meanings of 'multiculturalism' and 'migration', in other words the situation of Hungarians living outside the country, and the minority groups – especially the Roma - living in Hungary. Migration as a recent phenomenon is only discussed in regard to specific issues, such as the choice of location for a refugee camp or the usefulness of migration for the demographic development of the country. But considering immigrants as potential or real contributors to the cultural offer of the city is rather unusual.

Multiculturalism appears in a very ambivalent way in local and national policies as well. In other words, there is a strong contradiction between strategy-making and real implementation. The importance of developing a multicultural city is expressed in almost every strategy document. Yet relatively few special subsidies or programmes exist to for sustain multicultural offers and inter-city cultural relations on the state as well as on the municipal level. The municipality follows a conservative urban cultural policy that is mainly based on maintaining existing infrastructures and public institutes. As far as the everyday problems of immigrants are concerned, such as language, or a lack of other basic knowledge, no strategic political solution is proposed at the city level. The fragmented administrative structure of Budapest hinders the functioning of a balanced even policy concerning relations between local services and immigrants.

The inefficiency of local policies also reflects the relatively weak position of the civil sphere in Hungary. One of the most important between them is clearly the Soros Foundation, which is actually planning to entirely withdraw from Hungary and Central Europe in general. Individuals and associations who represent any form of multiculturalism have very few opportunities to lobby local and municipal policy-makers. Recent debates and tensions in Budapest have shown that multiculturalism is still treated as 'suspicious' by the man in the street, and local policy-making does not act in order to change these misconceptions. On the contrary, local politicians do everything to retain votes, therefore most of the local municipalities impede initiatives that would otherwise reinforce the multicultural offer in Budapest.

The case of the Roma population shows that a sensitive policy making can ameliorate this situation. During the last decade, the Roma have been foregrounded at all levels: state, municipal and civil. Socio-political programmes dealing with the Roma population extend to a large array of activities, such as education, cultural heritage, arts, etc. As a result of strong and voluntaristic policies to strengthen the rights and opportunities of the Roma population, the extremely strong preconceptions that before had determined the behaviour of the majority

of society seems now to have declined somewhat. This is a very good example concerning the role of sensitive and strategic policy-making in the integration of minority groups.

After the 1990 political transition, Hungary developed a democratic politico-administrative structure for the political, social and cultural representation of traditional minorities – but these groups are no longer the only ones to determine multiculturalism. International migration in its actual form is certainly a new phenomenon in Hungary that is difficult to deal with. In the end Hungarian society and policy-making will have to accept this phenomenon and work out its own strategies. At a time when the cultural sector has an increasing role in all fields of economic and social development, cultural development will also obtain a role in policies fostering the integration and the democratic rights of new immigrants. Cultural institutions, inter-city cultural relations, special subsidies of cultural productions etc. should thus become some important tools for dealing with the new problems related to international migration and new forms of multiculturalism.

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<http://kisebbseg.bmknet.hu/index.html> (a site containing the websites of minority organisations)

<http://www.romacentrum.hu> (website containing informations and links concerning the Roma minority in Hungary)

<http://www.soros.org> (Soros Foundation)

<http://www.errc.org> (European Roma Rights Centre)

<http://www.radioc.hu> (Hungarian Roman Radio)

<http://www.c3.hu> (Cultural Centre and Website of SOROS Foundation)

<http://www.nka.hu> (National Cultural Fund)

Media:

<http://www.nol.hu>

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Mamikon Yengibarian – sculptor, Armenian

Eike – video artist, German

Laurent Prebos – artist, French

Mathieu Bardiaux – attaché for culture, French Cultural Institute

Brigitte Kaiser-Derenthal, director of Goethe Institute

László Magács, director of Merlin Thatre

Szabó György, director of Trafó