

THE “SMARTENED” CITY-REGION

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Sustainable urban creativity, heritage management, and the case of Kőszeg

The city, in all places and at all times throughout history, has been a world of desire for many, with a scale of freedom differing from those of the village, farm or jungle. Hence, places where not only masses of people accumulate (in times of war, for market or the right of the sword, a patronizing authority or trade centre) also generated the need for planning, the definition of rules for the market and administration, public services and education, traffic routes and communication. Thus the well-off villager, gaining a different status as a high-ranking, successful citizen of the town, could also get into decision-making, influencing public, administrative or defence affairs. But this kind of existence – leading a modern lifestyle in a historic town, shaping the environment in order to survive, planning for the future, and carrying forward built or cultural heritage – always demanded a program as well as awareness and responsibility. It requires not only an appropriate mentality, an ability to face challenges, or responsiveness, but also creativity, inventiveness and a constructive vision of the future. Today’s town planners, local governments, and stakeholders with a European perspective all tend to see this, with a sophisticated “smart” view, as the potential blueprint or management method for the “smart city”. This complex point of view – embracing the past, present and future of the settlement and its inhabitants, while defining for them the new functions of synergy and sustainability – is assumed by Ferenc Miszlivetz and his associates (the research community of the Institute for Social and European Studies, ISES in Kőszeg) in their research program subtitled “Recommendations for Danube Strategy implementation”. They outlined, in a Hungarian-language volume of collected papers¹, a programme for creating sustainability through the triple unity or harmony of ecological development, society and economy. However, sustainability as a generational responsibility, the variety of macro-policy plans for nations and individuals, the objectives and tendencies of venture capital (or the existing frameworks in the entrepreneurial market for such investments) have to be considered (as the authors do, in both

¹ Ferenc Miszlivetz (ed.), *Kreatív városok és fenntarthatóság. Javaslatok a Duna-stratégia megvalósítására Nyugat-Pannónia példáján* [Creative Cities and Sustainability: Recommendations for Danube Strategy implementation, with the West Pannonian Region as a showcase], Kőszeg and Szombathely: Savaria University Press (ISES Books), 2012, pp. 208.

local and macro-regional contexts) problematic issues in terms of localities, chances for the local adaptation of innovation strategies, the future markets and human resources of smaller enterprises as well as economic relations. The two main parts of this book focus on the common issues of sustainability and innovation in the Kőszeg–Szombathely development region, within the wider territory of West Hungary, and the new paradigms for creating a balanced system. The authors not only review the “winners” of previous games in business and their successful programs, but propose (and highlight as exemplars) development concepts that aim to foster the viability of the city and its region as an organic unit, underpinned by the creative tools for building regional knowledge bases.

The impressive research project carried out by Miszlivetz and his colleagues (for a large part, with the help of the late Elemér Hankiss) somehow emerges as the regional component for a wider West Pannonian strategy or creative hub. The underlying idea is that it should be linked to existing heritage and achieved results, draw support from a range of enterprises/investors, and rely on partnerships between central/local governments and universities in order to create or bring forth something that is also built on the visions of integrating the innovation-capable North Western region of Hungary into a network of international relations, attempting to launch projects based on examples, and creating the spirit of coping with changes and adaptation-ready flexibility. A special advantage of this five-year plan is that it is rooted in a British theoretical background (composed mainly on the basis of Charles Landry’s creative city theory), and thus its proven and experiential knowledge based patterns are almost “exchangeable” and rely also on networking and social capital rather than the traditional islands of tranquillity for the citizens of Szombathely and Kőszeg. Although the innovation-readiness, local administration and openness to create partnerships on the part of policy-makers of these two cities have a significant role, well-founded historical background, that is, the preservation of traditional meanings and conventions with the help of local museum director István Bariska is just as important.

Without giving a detailed description of the roughly 200-page volume – which incorporates plenty of well-documented (for the layperson, even overly detailed) plans and a range of illustrated lectures, educational material, all-inclusive visions and constructive drives for reconsideration – I would rather highlight here its wondrous and worthwhile feature, raising the potential for embracing the dimensions of a strong intention to innovate, sustainability and interconnectivity. In the initial one-third of the book the concept introduced by Ferenc Miszlivetz (with Eszter Márkus as a co-creator) for the “Creative City – Sustainable Region” (KRAFT) development program with an integrative approach emphasizes the priority of “soft”

factors like trust, cooperation, collective competences, knowledge transfer, establishing new pools of knowledge and ensuring their creative market entry, institutional patterns of relations with users in terms of their habits and expectations, responsibilities, networking, technical and administrative partnerships, etc. As a new regional development strategy, it is by all means a novel idea in Hungary, with the related pilot projects already showing the initial results in the cities of Szombathely and Kőszeg, making their data measurable and comparable.

In contemporary thinking (and generally, in project-level development) it is a basic point to present “best practices”, outline exemplars on the one hand, and, on the other hand, to build the enquiry, clinging to the support of sustainability, and project management on the elements that proved to be and remained successful elsewhere. From this perspective, the book itself is part and parcel of the development plans, and vice versa, the inclusion of the draft for the development concept in this book, so that it could reach a wider public, be tested and published are also investments with an almost immediate return. The authors see the creative city as “the brain of its sustainable region”, not only re-constructing institutions for traditions, built heritage and the apparent well-being of citizens in its revalued role, but also unleashing positive energies from the negative impacts of an altered city role, revitalizing “tangible features”. These can be found everywhere, in small amount or low density, but they are still self-sustaining entities. When examined in an incubator, the universe of their potentials prevails in their lives amidst incomprehensible concrete jungles. Therefore such a project deploys the highly valued qualities in the face of global competition and challenges, allowing us to rethink, appreciate and secure within an infrastructural networked system the treasures of water, spas, clean air, gastronomy, natural living spaces and environmental health. Culture as a value begins to gain currency in the global drift, history can become a support and knowledge base, interdependencies and social networks may replace the rigid structures of hierarchies, while the think tank developing modernization plans can select, invite and encourage to enter into partnerships the market players on the basis of the pure value preferences of investors.

Following the first bloc of modelling and theoretical foundations, the largest second part of the book focuses on tourism, infrastructural potential, spaces for energies and improvement opportunities, the production perspectives of creative industries and knowledge repositories. It is abundant in site photographs, plans, cooperation examples, administration and feasibility indicators, all summarized in the programmatic framework of cooperation and integrated development proposed for the twin townships of Kőszeg and Szombathely.

Annexes describe the conceptual details for conferences and partnership programs organized by the ISES Foundation in Kőszeg, with a separate glossary that helps to understand

the KRAFT concept (pp. 53–56). While the latter is undeniably creative and innovative in its terminological approach, it seems to give a sketchy image of the diversity of everyday lives, value systems and attempts of self-actualization when it elevates them to higher (scientific) conceptual levels. It resembles the vehemence of Hankiss’ “Let’s invent Hungary!” with a benign boastfulness and the redefinition of dimensions that can only be lifted up from among the many layers of culture. Nevertheless, this conceptional “sketchiness” fully matches the current perspectives of creativity articulated at the city level, favouring the micro-region that can be freed or saved from the global drift in order to preserve its values, presenting the specific treasures that seem to be common in the hope of “heritagification” in contemporary terms, and the expectant depiction of conditions for public-private partnerships and cooperations. A reasonable measure for this programmatic ardour in research, education and popularization may be the fact that the innovative exploration and future-building at its heart have just received promising governmental support, which not only increases its chances of realization at a Pannonian scale, but also adds an impressive experiment to the strategic showcase of creative knowledge management.

The above lines of appraisal necessarily lead us to the next publication, which provide justifiable background for the continuation of city-region development commenced in the earlier 2011–2012 period as well as planning for sustainability. Due to additional development grants received after 2008 and the practical tie-ins from a multitude of new ideas, the implementation concept initiated by Ferenc Miszlivetz and co-researchers did not end with the first theoretical achievements or imports of theoretical bases from elsewhere, the first findings from pilot projects, but it was carried on through expanding its appeal, inviting partners from the region, tenders launched by the “New Central Europe” research enterprise and its team of experts. The English-language volume published in 2015² also discusses how architecture, local initiatives and attachments are embedded in the relations between cities and European culture. Covering the conservation, maintenance and management of cultural heritage as an additional topic, it lures the reader to enter deeper scientific spheres. Although I cannot leaf through the book here because it hides too many treasures and lessons to be outlined in just a few letters, it is worth citing some of its words as notes to be remembered...

For example, Graham Bell (pp. 11–30) looks in the researcher’s mirror when he deploys optical illusions, the reflections and versions of reality, in variants of spatial orientation and temporal cognition. Urban history can be interpreted as “here and now”, if not from a

² Ferenc Miszlivetz and the Research Community of ISES (eds.), *Creative Cities and Sustainability*, Szombathely: Savaria University Press, 2015, pp. 236.

theological point of view, where *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance* meets Cartesian methodological ideas, projected as a film onto the individual's urban milieu, where creativity emerges as an outstanding opportunity for the actors. One does not have to be a Renaissance Man, and the American ideal of hidden persuaders from the 1950s and 1960s should not be interpreted as perpetual market manipulation for the city as the space of high-level comfort to become a desired reality. Swiss or Austrian/German local examples of creativity are not only the reflections of long gone local societies but they are also the self-images of inventiveness that can be realized anywhere by the participatory citizen or the self-representing localist. Indeed, rather than following the examples of Shanghai, Berlin or Paris, or even garden cities and revitalized metropolitan areas, here and now we can partake in creating our own environment, housing conditions, and enjoy the real benefits of spatiality. All we need is the ability to use our imaginative intellect in seeking better solutions for existence. In this case, we not only keep our eyes open or look in the mirror to face our opportunities, but we can also perceive there a new quality of urban society. In fact, it resembles *The Matrix* in the sense "Do not just look at what things are but begin to see what things mean" – it is not just a virtual experience but the ethical norm of understanding social spaces within the city.

This creative space of ethical and aesthetical values is extended with the aspect of human geography by Mario Neve (pp. 31–57), who proposes the historical patterns of cultural heritage as a basis for learning how we can "read" space or understand what spatiality is, and the perceptual routine as a part of the geographical whole. Traditions of good government have never been exempt from ethnic heritage, an understanding community construction, strong symbolization or creative reception: the egocentric aspect co-exists the allocentric spatial reference frame, they clarify the nature of spaces and also serve as a basis for *habitus*. But is it humans who have to adapt to their environment, or vice versa, they shape the dialogue with nature through interactions and perceptions? This heritage is not just a legacy but a live driving force: the creative community emerges from the harmony between cultural heritage and innovation, its nature evolving in a social network. Creative examples are not just illustrations but also realizations, in-between reflections that can use the togetherness represented by the city (*urbs*) and even more by its citizens (*civitas*) as their firm foundation. This also requires the adventure of openness, insight and understanding (rather than *Nostalgia for the present*, referring to Borges' poem), with dynamic spaces and motives emerging in debates over development serving only as a frame of interpretation. But they do provide such a frame, so they cannot be ignored, for that would mean a denial of the heritage of humans populating this planet...

In accordance with historic and spatial dimensions, the chapter written by Dezsó Ekler (pp. 59–66) guides us to the theme of heritage preserved in architectural shapes, highlighting an attempt to understand the architectural “speech” of the city that consists of a variety of potential discourses and narratives. Exemplary designs from Beijing, Santiago de Compostela, Budapest and Verona propose understanding based in a linguistic context and on rhetorical principles, sharing insights from Chomsky, Ricoeur, Rossi, Derrida and Vitruvius, place the virtual heritage of man who strives for understanding and the products of this space-speech that are hard to hear yet have a universal meaning between the spatial or virtual columns of narrative city existence, material shapes and modes of expression.

Anngret Simms’ writing (pp. 67–76) invites us to the world of social engineering and the existence of cities as cultural heritage through the European Historic Town Atlas project. Based on comparative studies, the author discusses the historical showcase of the complementary categories of the diverse city, city-region and toolkits of modern urban cartography, illustrating various facets of churches, markets, public spaces, distances and interpretative frames through excerpts from German and Polish case studies, with respect to the explanatory signs and scales of maps, the central or decentralized character of the medieval town core and the interactions between present dynamic patterns.

Tamás Fejérdy (pp. 77–84) seems to continue this train of thought, elaborating previous and current regional and sustainability-related parameters of the historic parts/core of towns and urban planning from the perspectives of models applied in cultural heritage protection, UNESCO World Heritage listings and creative city development. He also describes the relationship between locations embodying tradition and development projects that are based on the identity-strengthening function of mind-sets for the preservation and enhancement of economic, environmental, organizational, physical and mental heritage – as it is confirmed by the (above detailed) initiative and on-going development course of the KRAFT project.

In the next chapter the indicators, soft and hard factors, difficulties and achievements of this project are described by Ferenc Míszlivetz and Eszter Márkus (pp. 85–123). They give a detailed depiction of potential environmental components, prospective development regions, peripheries and inner cities, partnerships and magnetism models. The authors do not present theoretical formulas only, but also discuss the basic considerations for adaptation schemes built on the town–country–population model (Ebenezer Howard, 1902), green design, the utilization of knowledge capital, responsibilities of small town level development and management, creativity (covering a wide spectrum from services, education, public transport, communications, energy and water management), and last but not least, stakes for the citizen

(city-dweller) through figures of development models, and ending their list of palpable examples with the long-term prospects for the Danube Strategy. In a separate article Eszter Márkus goes on to give further details in the outlines for studying the primary indices in the relationship between Kőszeg and Szombathely (pp. 125–144).

All of the above may reveal an overarching design that streamlines careful project preparation, laying the foundations for an appropriate approach and historical basis as well as the thematic background for related research projects. However, we can also discern behind these efforts (or rather, in their forefront, in plain sight) the motivating/encouraging/inspiring power of Elemér Hankiss, who had an exemplary, key role in recording the developments within Hungarian society from a sociological perspective for decades. Miszlivetz and his co-researchers have been building on this solid basis since the very beginning, used it not just as a firm foundation but also to adaptively construct a vision for the future.

A really characteristic writing by Hankiss included in this volume (pp. 145–157) gives the essence of the creative aspects for societal changes in Central Europe and particularly in Hungary as well as a viable vision of the future constructed in spite of bleak images of the past. His study should be read as a creative essay, true to the American genre, a poetical reality show disguised as a sketchy overview. It is a *show* not in terms of a conspicuous style but in the dimensions of presentation, since the wide range of topics touched upon in this article, including the liberty of citizens, the preservation of traditions, the community's courage to experiment and retain its achievements in order to plan for the future, the constructive interactions deriving from the exchange of ideas, and perspectives of harmonization rather than hostility-generation between debating parties, "us" and "them". This essay points to an effective interplay of city size, interactions and a "critical mass", the potential intersections of "islands of excellence" and units radiating new ideas, and a "Kőszeg model" that is built on the proven practices of exemplary cities inhabited by people with a "bourgeois" lifestyle, from the Mediterranean region to Tokyo, from Seoul to New York, from Florence to Berlin, or from Heidelberg to Bruges, while it also details the image of Kőszeg as it is seen by its citizens, its role within the region, future plans for relations between allied cities, and the interactions between the city and its region.

The opportunities of a European-type city modelling, human treasures and creative development envisioned by Hankiss are also present in the study written by Gaudenz Assenza and Markus Molz (pp. 159–201), which, being remarkably rich in details, articulates even the minute issues of organization and planning in the context of a consistently innovative approach and the expectations of citizens (hopes for the specific region). The aspects of integrative

development, campus ideals, the World Heritage value system and the management of “liveable cities” introduce us to an impressive sphere of city development experiments in the Czech Republic (the authors’ example is drawn from the planning model for the tri-border Moravian region), which can also offer a development pattern for other city-regions at the levels of “learning cities” (or even villages that are capable to learn), if objectives are seen in the infrastructural-cultural-ecological triad of origins, development paths, local and regional intentions. Based on the applicable model of similar scales, complexity, traditions and safeguarding of values, the Krumlovia Project can also serve as an example for the Kőszeg region in the future (if it has not already been adopted).

It is also confirmed by the last study of the book, written by László Z. Karvalits (pp. 203–231), who links his all-embracing strand of thought to the technological components of cultural heritage management and the interests of knowledge society, local administration and city leaders responsible for the reasonable management of knowledge capital, and environmental development projects. His examples are significant not just for the often idealized mega-cities, new industrial regions delineated by migration flows or areas targeted and transformed by venture capital, but they also point to the deep structure of glocal worlds surpassing the perspectives of simply “downsizing” global cities. Alternatives present tendencies for city scales that consist manageable smaller units organized in networks and thus capable to accumulate knowledge capital and utilize it for improvement. In this model ideals will be the synergies of “smart cities” and collective intelligence rather than the traditional patterns of battles within the community and between cities. Karvalits assumes a stance based on/in favour of rationality ensured by information technology and the multiplicable creativity of the local community. His insights mark a promising pathway for development, local government and community-building decisions based on the patterns of eagerness or willingness to participate as well as horizontal and vertical arrangements. He outlines the paths followed by Nyíregyháza and Dubrovnik as outstanding examples in their development, local administration and self-government, roles and functions as regional centres. He also mentions that the innovation heritage of several small towns are based on aggregate economic, industrial and functional, or intellectually encouraging effects, concluding the study with the cornerstone of his argument that opportunities for development focusing on the potential mobilization of “locality” (although it is also politically determined) and the perspective of autonomy and independent survival are equally important.

Creative city existence, explored by the Kőszeg research and defined by opportunities for regional development and creative city status based on preserving customs and local

administrative support for the “smartness” of the city, is now a relatively new issue in urbanology, regional development and the effective construction of perspectives with ecological awareness. The project focusing on Kőszeg (and its region) might be an exemplar for many city-regions. But, of course, it will hardly be such an example, due not only to discrepancies or local specifics. The main reason for this is usually the fact that the “creative” city never becomes creative by itself, in the lack of local intellectuals (or even “newcomers”, migrant experts) who are committed to fostering and appreciating skills and opportunities. We should also call attention to this experiment because – despite its uniqueness – it can prevail, in the case of lacking knowledge capital (if not city “bluntness”), in the common goal system of a knowledge set adopted from the outside and holding power generated locally. It may be the case not only in well-positioned Kőszeg but in any place where creativity can emerge and the city is still capable to exploit the opportunities that (may) arise from its traditions, heritage and holding power. Urban knowledge cannot be transferred, and urban models cannot be implanted without adaptation. We have to compose, dream, embody, construct and test through thinking together, compare and “invent”. Hankiss’ frequently quoted key sentence, “Let us invent Hungary!” was not only an invitation but an invocation of creativity. It could serve as a basis for the KRAFT project (as a result of the current planning at the level of urban reality), the role of Kőszeg in European education and research, its prominent position among European city models today and perhaps its sustainability in the future. It may become something more than “a school at the frontier”, if plans to create “a university for the region” come true...