

**GLOVE ACTUALLY:  
INTEGRATION AND GENTRIFICATION IN A  
COMMUNITY CENTER IN  
BUDAPEST**

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## **Abstract**

This paper examines how gentrification and integration relate to one another in a social town rehabilitation program situated in the 8<sup>th</sup> district of Budapest. The analysis is based on a case study of the Kesztyűgyár Community Center, which is the focal point of the social side of the rehabilitation. The research is grounded on anthropological methods – interviewing and participant observation – which revealed information about both the ideal and the actual mechanism of the process. The theoretical framework is mainly provided by Lefebvre's triple dialectic of spatiality and the analysis of the relevant gentrification literature. The results show that integration and gentrification coexist given that the development focuses on keeping and gentrifying of original dwellers instead of disposing them.

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## Introduction

Kesztyűgyár<sup>1</sup> means glove factory in Hungarian, but it also is the name of the community center in the 8<sup>th</sup> district in Budapest that provides a space for community building and integration in the territory traditionally labeled as the Gypsy ghetto in the vernacular. Kesztyűgyár is part of a larger social urban rehabilitation project called the Magdolna Quarter Program (hereafter MQP)<sup>2</sup> – initiated by the local municipality of the 8<sup>th</sup> district and the municipality of the capital – that deals with the development of the built environment and the changing of the social conditions of the dwellers in the designated area. This urban renewal program aims to produce change through attracting new comers to settle in the area (gentrification) and through developing the living-standards of the old-dwellers in order to lessen the social exclusion of the people living in the territory (integration). The Kesztyűgyár is the interface where the dual goal of the planners (gentrification, integration), the reality of the different standpoints of the dwellers and the problem of social and ethnic exclusion of the Roma minority meet.

The MQP is a unique and innovative approach among the usual rehabilitation programs happening in Budapest (e.g. in the 7<sup>th</sup> district, the 9<sup>th</sup> district or even at other parts of the 8<sup>th</sup> district called the Corvin-Szigony Project) because it consists of a strong social element.<sup>3</sup> Namely, the planners want the original dwellers to *stay* while changing the appearance and the structure of the territory around them. Also the planners – the municipality – have a say in the future of the composition of dwellers as the municipality owns 42% of the apartment-

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<sup>1</sup> The building formerly was used as a glove factory; this is where the community center got the name from. With the regime change of 1989 the factory was shut down and the government rented the territory for residential purposes. For the new purposes articulated by the Rehabilitation program the two families living in the house were removed and it started to be fully renovated in 2006 to be able to reopen for social facilities in 2008.

<sup>2</sup> For a map of the Magdolna Quarter see Appendix 1.

<sup>3</sup> These other rehabilitation projects are described in more details in section 2. 2. 3.

stock that it inherited from the state after the fall of socialism in the territory in question. This simple fact – that in the neighbourhood to be rehabilitated and gentrified 42 % of the apartments are social houses owned by the municipality of the 8<sup>th</sup> district – distinguishes this project from the predominant conceptualization of the gentrification trend. In this way the municipality has a great determining force about what will happen to the tenants. This again provides a new perspective on the current research in the history of the gentrification mechanisms.<sup>4</sup> The Kesztyűgyár Community Center has a crucial role within this development as it is intended to be the site for interacting with the dwellers. Analyzing the actual struggles of urban renewal when dealing with and concentrating on real people within the field of gentrification in a post-socialist country further develops the understanding of planned urban change mechanisms.

Integration has a twofold sense in the urban renewal process in the Magdolna Quarter: (1) as the integration or involvement of the original dwellers in shaping the renewal process itself and (2) as the integration of the segregated groups of the Magdolna Quarter into society. In the first sense, the control mechanisms of the planners refine the limits of public involvement. As far as the second sense of integration is concerned, the simultaneous gentrification process complicates the outcome of the project.

In the first *problématique*, the inclusive rhetoric of the Rehabilitation Program (and within that of Kesztyűgyár), as incorporating the needs and interests of the dwellers in shaping the process of change, will be contrasted to the underlying limits imposed by a pre-established urban planning. These two sides I label as “use” and “control” and to explain these terms Habermas (1989) and Lefebvre (1991) are applied as the basis of the analysis. Integration of

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<sup>4</sup> See Hackworth and Smith 2001, Hamnet 1991, Slater 2006, Smith 2002.

the original dwellers to the shaping of their neighbourhood and focusing on their participation is a user-friendly approach which concentrates on the importance of 'use'. At the same time the participatory role of the dwellers is limited by the capital interest that makes such a rehabilitation program realizable. The top-down project sets boundaries and thus involves 'control'. This dual mechanism is in line with these two theoretical frameworks. Habermas imagined an ideal public sphere where people appear as conversants and their acceptance depends only on the quality of their argument and not their individual identity or social-political backgrounds. This utopia is reflected in the idea of involving of the dwellers in the public debate about their neighbourhood where space is provided them to express their needs. This type of Habermasian concept of involvement is contrasted to Lefebvre and the three levels of the production of space, where the role of the control and authority are significant in any socio-spatial relation. The triple opposition that Lefebvre expresses with the concepts of perceived, conceived and lived spaces is used in this thesis to analyze the manifestation of the urban rehabilitation process. Here the perceived space is the actual field of action, and the conceived space is that of the planners to express the ideology and power of the conscious and planned rehabilitation strategy. The conceived space tries to control the lived space that the actual dwellers use as their surrounding space/neighbourhood.

The second understanding of integration is examined in light of gentrification literature in order to highlight the particularity of this case. There are two main concepts that are recalled and critically analyzed here: gentrification and integration. By gentrification I mean the critical concept used to describe a process of urban change when the middle class takes over a previously lower class area which usually co-occurs with 'the renewal' of the territory and the displacement of its original dwellers. The gentrification literature is applied primarily to study the urban renewal process in question and secondarily to compare and contrast this particular

case in Budapest with the general gentrification mechanisms. Integration of the inhabitants, on the other hand, also appears as a leading goal alongside development. Integration will be used here as a means of social change when equal possibilities are provided for the minority, poverty groups that are cut off of the rest of the society and by the access to these resources these groups are expected to fit/accommodate better in the texture of the society. In the Kesztyűgyár Community Center, within the frame of the urban rehabilitation program, these two concepts come up as aims simultaneously. On the one hand there is an urban renewal process to make the area more inhabitable which is accompanied by gentrification as a common tool for regeneration of the economically inactive areas. This gentrification happens through cooperation of private and public entities to make a ‘healthier’ area for later capital accumulation. On the other hand integration is a parallel attempt within the development to provide the possibility for the original dwellers to emerge from an unprivileged, underclass status otherwise reinforced by poverty, lack of economic activity, lack of mobility, stigmatization and often ethnic segregation – thereby to reconnect to the texture of the society. Gentrification and integration are usually contradictory processes, as gentrification is a process of exclusion of the disenfranchised. In the case of the MQP, I argue that, these two concepts appear on the same platform, which intrigued me to solve to paradox of their virtual coexistence in one single renewal project.

These and the following notions and sections are raised together with the supporting empirical material on the mechanism of Kesztyűgyár in order to help answer the main question of the thesis:

- What is the relationship and is there a contradiction between the simultaneous gentrifying and integrating efforts of the Kesztyűgyár Community Center’s project?

The structure of the thesis is built up as follows. The theoretical framework (section 2) of the paper is grounded in two comparisons: the public sphere and the social space on the one hand (subsection 2.1.) and the gentrification literature generally and specifically to Budapest on the other together with refining the different discursive languages used in the field (subsection 2.2.). The concepts described in these sections serve as a basis for the later analysis. Before diving into the case study its context (section 3) is presented as far as territory (subsection 3.1.), history (subsection 3.2.) and the rehabilitation program (subsection 3.3.) are concerned. Then the methodology of my research is accounted for (section 4.) followed by the case study of Kesztyűgyár (section 5). The findings and analysis of the research are introduced in four parts: a brief presentation of the Community Center (subsection 5.1.), a review of the difficulties the Center struggles with (subsection 5.2.), the construction of a dance-event in Kesztyűgyár (subsection 5.3.) and finally the concept of how the Center wants to have an effect, to socialize the dwellers (subsection 5.4.).



# 1. Literature review

## *1. 1. Use vs. Control / Public Sphere vs. Social Space*

The narrow path that the Kesztyűgyár project has to follow in order to reach its dual purpose is between opening up a sphere for public use and opinion and at the same time controlling this sphere in order to reach the preplanned objectives. This path is to be found by confronting different theories of the public sphere and social space. The following sections (2.1.1. and 2.1.2.) are as a contrasting balancing between two branches of theories to find the interface between them where all can be applied for contribution to the findings of the empirical research.

### **1. 1. 1. Public sphere**

In order to analyze the mechanism of the Kesztyűgyár project in connection with the opportunities it provides to create a space for expressing various opinions of the dwellers about their future, the debate around the public sphere raised by Jürgen Habermas, Seyla Benhabib and Nancy Fraser will be explained and implemented. This is to show how the ideal concept of the community center about the integration of the inhabitants to participation in the forming of the project meets Habermas' image of the functioning of the public sphere. Later Bourdieu's critical voice is introduced to show the possible limitations of this approach. Bourdieu's critical stance on the public sphere will open up the debate to introduce the Lefebvre's concept space.

Habermas (1989) believes that rational-critical civic debate has to be the dominant basis for political action in a democratic society. The idea of this type of arguing rooted in the bourgeois political life of the 17th-18th century French salons and its manner is primarily

circumscribed by Kant. According to Kant – as Calhoun puts it – the “practical reason was institutionalized through norms of reasoned discourse” (Calhoun 1992:2) and he develops a whole system of ethical regulation how one should listen to others and articulate their argument in an open and accepting way. Habermas does not encourage turning back to the elitist public sphere as it excludes a large segment of the society being solely kept for participation of the educated and propertied. This sphere excludes others since it creates a public where the entrance depends on one’s status in the private sphere. “The bourgeois public sphere may be conceived above all as the sphere of private people come together as a public” (Habermas 1989:27). Ideally the success of an argument does not depend on the identity of the conversant but only the quality of rational-critical discourse and the quantity of popular participation. Thus only the merits of the argument is regarded, not its presenter.

According to Benhabib’s (1992) summary of Habermas, after Habermas completed the *Structural Transformation* he sprang to the defense of modernity as it provides possibilities for the emergence of the public sphere in three areas. From the perspective of the society, in the realm of institutions, the formation of norms is through discourses. From the perspective of the personality, the individual identity depends on the reflexive attitude of its surrounding individuals. From the perspective of the culture, the cultural tradition loses its legitimacy gained by believing in the validity of the past, and it rests only upon the appropriation of the traditional in the problems of the present. In these three areas participation is prerequisite. In public space all those who are affected by general social norms and collective political decisions can contribute to their formulation.

Both Fraser (1980) and Benhabib (1992) focus on the exclusionary character of Habermas’ theory. Fraser points out that in Habermas’ public sphere the power of the authority shifts to

the ruling of the majority: the power turns from “a repressive mode of domination to a hegemonic one” (1980: 26). This also means that the minority groups get separated from the access to participation and become dominated by the majority opinion. As a solution, Fraser suggests to have multiple publics where the marginalized groups form public spheres for themselves as subordinate counter-discourses and dialogue should be organized between these different public spheres. Fraser, representing a feminist point of view, argues that these marginalized groups would be excluded by the dominating bourgeois masculine power. This is where she is in line with Benhabib. According to Benhabib (1992) Habermas creates his discursive model by setting up an opposition between interest and needs, justice and good life, norms and value, public and private. Benhabib thinks that these distinctions are internal to the process of will formation – the realm of public can not be separated if anything is to be a public matter. She also raises the feminist point of view by explaining that the female spheres are traditionally considered to be in the private sector, thus they are inaccessible to discourse analysis. Benhabib considers Habermas’ approach gender blind and claims that the establishment of the public presupposes the distinction of the private which are in this way in binary opposition. This distinction is the one that serves bases for women’s oppression.

Habermas later (1992) explains that he did not mean the public sphere he described as a real possibility but rather a regulative ideal that the society should aim for. This ideal concept of the public sphere can be related to the ideal image of the MQP and its community center. The importance of generating civic debate about the direction of the improvement process – about ‘good life’ for Habermas – is an explicit aim of the Kesztyűgyár project as it was laid out in the description of the Rehabilitation Program.

This program relates to the 100% Local Government owned rented houses. Our aim is that all should be real participants of the process during renovation. [...] This program works with rental houses, where the tenants participate in the

renewal process of the building from the design all the way to the implementation. [...] There will be a program designed together with the residential community whereby the proposed tasks or renewal works will be defined together with the property management organisation in each year. (MQP 2007:7)

They want to create space for interaction by theoretically involving the dwellers in this creation. Still the dominance of the planners – and through them, the municipality – having an aim and a trajectory to reach this aim is overwhelming the project. The ‘things will happen like this because it will be good for you’ idea severely stands beside the ‘let’s find it out together what to do’ intention. The organizers construct a definite frame around the possible directions. This way the opening towards the incorporation of the opinion of the public space is both offered and limited.

The control imposed by the organizers of the community center is explained by the importance of authority according to Bourdieu (1991). He negates the possibility of public opinion to be accepted as authoritative force on its own and emphasizes that the status of the spokesperson – the conversant for Habermas – is not negligible. While Habermas seems to assume that the background of the speaker can be ignored and only the quality of the argument should be regarded, Bourdieu explicitly expresses the contrary, as for him the success of the argument of the agent depends on his/her recognition by the group, i.e. on the symbolic capital that the group invests in the speaker. As such, the spokesperson has to possess power to be accepted and it can only be gained by speaking not only on behalf of him/herself but on behalf of a larger number of people as well. This then elevates him/her as their representative, their delegate. In Bourdieu’s words “[i]t is only in exceptional cases (in the abstract and artificial situations created by experimentation) that symbolic exchanges are reduced to relations of pure communication, and that the informative content of the message exhausts the content of the communication” (1991:107). In any other situation the

spokesperson has to have a delegated power (a social position) so that others mind his/her speech. Therefore Bourdieu disagrees with Habermas about the possibility of a powerless public sphere as the power of the agent matters primarily in the success of the argument.

As for Bourdieu individual voices do not reach recognition without mediation since first a system of legitimate delegates should be established. Following this idea, integrating the opinion of the dwellers into the debate about the rehabilitation without awarding symbolic power to them would be an unreal expectation on the part of the Community Center. It is especially true if they intend to create a limited space for only those arguments that can lead to the objective of the Rehabilitation Program. Along with Bourdieu raising the question of authority I turn from the ‘participation’ to the ‘control’ side of this duality explained above.

### **1. 1. 2. Social space**

The aim of Kesztyűgyár is not only to urge the inhabitants to cooperate in order to strengthen social cohesion, rather the organizers of Kesztyűgyár also articulate a planned direction of how strengthening social cohesion and developing the dwellers should happen in the designated area. Therefore the participation of the beneficiaries in the cooperation is not fully accepted but mediated by the controlling power of the organizers.

This area is a traditionally undervalued territory of Budapest where the experienced social space of the dwellers is far from the ‘developed’ middle class lifestyle that the rehabilitation program intends to create by the improvement of the built environment, the reorganization of the parks and the streets and conscious re-education of the inhabitants. Lefebvre’s (1991) classification of space into three categories of spatial experience illustrates the tensions of use and control that is drawn between the community center and the beneficiaries of its work. According to Lefebvre, space is a social product which affects special practices and

perception and “in addition to being a means of production it is also a means of control, and hence of domination, of power” (1991:26). Lefebvre set up a method to study space which he calls the ‘spatial triad’ and considers it important to think in the triple aspects as it resolves the static duality that would create opposition and reinforces a dynamic situation. These three moments of space are the spatial practice, the representation of space and the representational space. The spatial practice means the perceived space – that covers both the conceived and the lived space (detailed below), both production and consumption – in Gottdiener’s (1993:131) words it is “an externalized, material environment”. The representation of space is a conceived dimension, a conceptualized space constructed by professionals. As it is conceived, ideology, power and knowledge are implanted in it and this way it is tied to the dominant space of production. The representational space shows the lived and experienced space of the users. “[I]t may be directional, situational or relational, because it is essentially qualitative, fluid and dynamic” (Lefebvre 1991:42). This is the social space. The dynamic co-occurrence of these moments of space differentiates the Lefebvrian triad from what Lefebvre calls the abstract space that is conceptual, homogeneous, quantitative and oppressive, according to Gottdiener it is “pertinent to those who wish to control social organization” (1993:131) – that is the planners in the case of the MQP. This abstract space “gains objective expression in different buildings, places, activities and modes of social intercourse over and through space” as Merrifield puts it (2004:176). In contrast to the abstract space there is the differential space that is based on the practice and experience of all, just like the social space that Lefebvre describes. This differential or the above social space can be equated to the experiences of the beneficiaries about their surroundings and the changes happening in it.

Soja (1996) reflects on the ‘triple dialectic’ of Lefebvre (which Soja calls ‘trialectics’) and celebrates the avoidance of the restrictive binarisms and further develops the production of

space with his method of ‘thirding-as-Othering’. With this method Soja creates a third in-between category of all binary oppositions in order to broaden the possibilities to openness. This third category, or ‘Thirdspace’, is both the combination of the other two and still it is a separate entity. Following Soja’s theory ‘Firstspace’ is “the ‘real’ material of the world” (close to Lefebvre’s perceived space), ‘Secondspace’ “interprets this reality through ‘imagined’ representations of spatiality” (this would be the conceived space in Lefebvre) and the ‘Thirdspace’ is the mixture of the ‘real’ and ‘imagined’ in varying doses (Soja 1996:6). The difference in their perception is while Lefebvre equally concentrates on all spaces of the triad, Soja focuses on this third element which contains the other two.

Lefebvre’s main theoretical concept is the “the production of space”, meaning society materializes in and produces space and then space reproduces society. Both Lefebvre and de Certeau (1984) disagree with Castells who claims that there is a distinction between the sphere of active production and passive consumption (cf. Merrifield 2004). Lefebvre and de Certeau argue that use is also an active production on behalf of the consumers. De Certeau claims that even if there is an agent of production (representations of space in Lefebvre) consumption is what determines after all (representational space). This is in line with Lefebvre who states that the conceived space keeps trying to overcome and coordinate the lived social space, while the social space creatively renews its mechanisms with which withholds the conceived space to develop total control.

De Certeau differentiates representation and behaviour (which is the use of representation) on one hand, and production and consumption on the other and argues that consumption is also production or reproduction because users – who are not the makers – manipulate the representation of the product. Constructed space provides innumerable creative practices of

appropriation in the form of bricolage (making through combining, combining through using); however, these operations “conform to certain rules” (de Certeau 1984:XIV) i.e. act within subordinating and constructed borders. The non-producers make up the majority of society and by their exclusion from the production their silence would make them marginal, but in de Certeau’s view this is not the case. He brings up the metaphor of writing and reading as production and consumption: while reading is silent, it is not a passive consumption but a production as the reader makes the text – or the dweller the space – habitable. With this approach de Certeau opens up more possibilities and leaves wider space for the users (dwellers in my case) to influence the changes and act than Lefebvre with his idea that the social space is capable of reacting but not in reach of controlling its future.

## ***1. 2. Gentrification***

### **1. 2. 1. The General Framework of Gentrification**

Gentrification is a multi-level phenomenon but in a pure form it is a contemporary process with a pattern of middle class groups taking up the working class neighbourhoods. It is restricted in territory and the process has physical, economic, social and cultural aspects as well (Hamnett 1991). The conceptualizing and the focus points of gentrification have shifted in the last half century. The major difference between the recent studies and the past experiences lies in the quality and quantity of state intervention. The role of the state has changed and increased. Hackworth and Smith (2000) pointed out three major waves of gentrification in New York from the 1950s to now and connected these to the economic recessions and rises. The first under-researched wave is characterized by sporadic, state-led initiatives in localized small neighbourhoods. The second wave of the late 1970s and 1980s was led by the appearance of the art communities and their desire for unusual living in



underprivileged areas which provoked their revaluation. In this second wave federal programs followed the *laissez-faire* attitude, thus gentrification mainly concentrated on private market and integrated into wider cultural-economical processes. With the third wave starting in the mid-90s gentrification became greater and overflowed eclipsing cultural factors. This new direction is different from the earlier ones because of various reasons. First, there is a territorial dispersal: both inner- and outer city neighbourhoods are concerned. Second, the real-estate industry is, now, in the first line to provoke gentrification which prominent role could have only been seen after the changes have started to realize. Also the working class is systematically displaced to outer territories with which the real resistance to gentrification lessens. In general gentrification has always involved explicit economic interest.<sup>5</sup> With the proper timing fortunes have been made out of good land speculation. In this latest wave, however, the state capital is more involved than before and this interest – attached to privatization projects – encourages gentrification as regards the pace and quantity.

In a later article Smith (2002) details the general features of the new gentrification. He argues that not only the melting of the public and the private capital supports the process but the influx of global capital as well. By mobilizing the political sectors gentrification extends and causes alteration in new areas such as making the environment safer. In this manner, along with the housing, the neighbourhood is also transformed and new landscape complexes appear with many facets.

### **1. 2. 2. Rhetorical Changes**

The phenomenon of gentrification has recently expanded to be “a global urban strategy” (Smith 2002). It stopped being a marginal oddity and instead developed into a systemized central goal of urban policy. The displacement accompanying it is socially organized and has

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<sup>5</sup> Notes on Judit Bodnár’s lecture of Urban Change and the Right o the City, December 1, 2009

enlarged in scale and diversity, vertically and laterally (Smith 2002). As gentrification became an explicit strategy, people sought new terms to disguise the unpleasant nature of the process. Smith (2002) explains that gentrification turned into a politically incorrect “dirty word” that needs to be renamed, because “it becomes clear that the strategy involves a major colonization by the middle and upper-middle classes” (2002:98). A different discursive language was promoted to discuss the same phenomenon and to avoid talking about the unpleasant fact of the displacement of the original dwellers.

Although they do not serve as one-to-one translations, new notions appeared such as *urban renaissance*, *cultural renaissance* or *urban regeneration* (or also *urban rejuvenation* in Cook (2009:31)). Smith accuses these concepts of being cover terms of the white middle and upper-middle classes that would allow them to take up the territories and the economy of the neighbourhoods of the lower classes. The term ‘urban renaissance’ refers to the economic rebirth that the newcomers bring into the territory in economic recession by which they ameliorate the valuable but dead areas. The belief in the urban renaissance and also in the cultural renaissance has a connotation of the ethnocentric view in which *us* equals middle class bourgeois intellectuals who with their arrival show the proper way to the socially challenged groups about how to conduct their lives towards success. The idea of urban regeneration is also problematic because it presupposes that the territory to be filled up with new content is actually empty.

These misleading definitions can also lead to misguided research about the topic in the end. Tom Slater (2006) passionately argues that researches on gentrification are too much concentrated on the “nice” part of the process and tend to ignore the other side of the coin which is the displacement that goes along with the change. He agrees with Peck (2005) that

the recent theories promote the capturing of gentrification in the way that the bohemian, bourgeois, active “creative class” (Peck 2005 in Slater 2006:738) replaces the uncreative, inactive, marginal working class. The displacement that gentrification induces is under-researched and also neglected by policymakers by which the bad effects of the change can be swept under the carpet. According to Slater the rhetorical changes help to conceptualize gentrification as the process “to break up the ‘concentrated poverty’ (Crump 2002)” (2006:749) and promotes such catchy concepts as *mixing*, *diversity*, or *balance* which also serve to be a good excuse. Slater recommends that researchers should be more concerned with the non-gentrified groups of the gentrifying areas and instead of only dealing with the cause they should also concentrate on the effect (van Weesep 1994 in Slater 2006:743).

The choice of the term when conceptualizing urban change shows where the theorists or planners position themselves in the discourse about gentrification. The used notion indicates therefore the approach of whether change is understood as gentrification or as urban renewal. Moreover it reproduces and frames the later interpretation of the process in question. This is why it is important to deal with the different discursive languages in use.

### **1. 2. 3. Gentrification in Budapest**

Is gentrification a creative urban renewal process of good intentions, bringing – the otherwise necessary – development, beautification and user-friendliness to the undervalued areas? Or is it a process that deals with the texture of an urban territory regardless of the needs of the original dwellers who are this way abandoned and supplanted from the territory? The debate about gentrification is further developed in this section by focusing on the rhetoric about dealing with people in a conscious project aiming urban change in the Magdolna Quarter. For understanding the context of the Magdolna Quarter Social Urban Rehabilitation Program the formation of gentrification patterns and areas where gentrification takes place in Budapest

need to be detailed first. Gentrification in the post-socialist capital Budapest only reached its full expression after the transition of 1989, at a time when the more advanced capitalist countries were already turning away from it due to the economic recession (Tomay 2007). After 1989 the success of Budapest-style gentrification was determined by three factors: the flood of global capital (Smith 1996), the privatization of apartments that created a free market (Kovács 2006) and the amount of support for business interests provided by the local municipalities (Ladányi 2008, Tomay 2007).

During the socialist era the centralized state had control over the administration and the decision making; on a local level a hierarchy of councils was established that had little power. The first trace of the systematic state-led urban renewal programs was in the 1970s-80s. This radical urban restructuring meant the demolishing of entire neighbourhoods and building of ‘modern’ housing estates, this attitude was also called the “bulldozer type of urban reconstruction” (Ladányi 2008). After the transition of 1989 the new politics followed the “steering not rowing posture” (Nunberg 1999) and favored the decentralized administration with possibility to enforce local interests and place transformation in the governmental system accordingly. Following the Municipality Act of 1990 (No LXV.) a local municipality system was formed with relatively high autonomy on the local level. The municipalities of the districts in Budapest inherited the formerly state-owned dwelling-stock of their territory and – according to the Housing Act of 1993 (No LXXVIII.) – the right to care for the rehabilitation of the area together with the responsibility to renovate or privatize public houses in poor condition (Studio Metropolitana 2005). From these two options the local municipalities decided for rampant privatization and within three years the approximately one third of the previous public housing stock has been privatized (Smith 1996). Ladányi explains this posture as it is the necessary consequence of the interest of “quasi-proprietor” local municipalities as

this type of institution is typically not organized through market interest, yet it is forced to behave as such having enormous properties in its hand (Ladányi 2008:150). The privatization of the state-owned apartments has had two main consequences: it has created the conditions for free real-estate market and increase the importance of the profit oriented groups (Kovács 2006) and parallel to this it has evidently led to the flow of new-comer middle class groups causing a shift in the composition of the population of the concerned territories (Smith 1996).

The unsystematic privatization mechanisms took the form of urban rehabilitation programs within a short time. In 1993 the Government of Budapest worked out a comprehensive program and financing system for the rehabilitation of the city from which the municipalities of the different districts could well profit. Subsequently systematic rehabilitation projects started in the inner<sup>6</sup> and middle-belt<sup>7</sup> areas. Primarily the renovation or the replacing of the dwelling-stock has begun and the social interest or local cultural values were effaced (Kovács 2006). In addition gradually it became an apparent aim that besides the physical renewal a social-demographic change is also necessary as it is the “guarantee” for the revaluation (Tomay 2007:145). This demographic change was not difficult as the renovation leads to raise in the property values and rents which “spontaneously” supplants the poorer strata (Tomay 2007). In most of the programs the main focus has been on the renewal of the built environment while minority or vulnerable groups are excluded and banished to outer areas of the cities, in this way they relocate the social inequality, poverty and segregation instead of solving it. Thus in Budapest (as elsewhere) the gentrification process appeared in the guise of urban rehabilitation. Three examples of gentrification through rehabilitation took place in the 9<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> districts.

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<sup>6</sup> I call ‘inner areas’ the territory between Kiskörút [Small Boulevard] and Nagykörút [Grand Boulevard].

<sup>7</sup> I call ‘middle-belt’ the territory between Nagykörút [Grand Boulevard] and Róbert Károly-Hungária-Könyves Kálmán körút.

One of the pioneering rehabilitation projects started at the end of the 1980s in Middle Ferencváros, in the 9<sup>th</sup> district. A block-rehabilitation strategy was followed which was primarily financed by governmental support. After a short break the rehabilitation continued in the 1990s but already on different grounds: by involving private resources (Tomay 2007). The private capital gradually gathered ground until now when the 75% of the investments are in private hands (Egedy 2006)<sup>8</sup>. Moreover the local municipality rather concentrates on the renovation of the public places than the social houses which further intensify the appetite of the investors to reconstruct the area (Tomay 2007). In the last twenty years the significant proportion of apartment stock has been replaced (more than 3,000 new dwellings have been built in Middle Ferencváros), and as a consequence the local population has substantially changed (Egedy 2006). The lower status groups have been replaced by young higher income groups. This rehabilitation regarding property interest does not include social sensitivity.

In the 8<sup>th</sup> district the rehabilitation project called Corvin-Szigony (or Corvin sétány [Corvin Promenade]) is being advertised with the motto “we build a new downtown”<sup>9</sup> and with this the planners are pursuing a hermetic cut of 208 000 m<sup>2</sup> in the texture of the neighbourhood, dismissing the old-dwellers (1400 Roma families) who had to move to social houses of other areas of the city (Tódor 2001, 2002) and creating an “aquarium for capitalism” (Cook 2009:34). The investment has come from both private and public sources (PPP – Public-private partnership) and operates with significant rate of demolition of the old buildings and construction of new ones; the byproduct of this approach has been the total change of the residents which has also been eased by the fact that 80% of the population were tenants (Egedy 2006). The Corvin Promenade will be an area that conforms to middle-class values by

<sup>8</sup> This is the latest estimation up to now, to my knowledge.

<sup>9</sup> „új belvárost építünk” <http://www.corvinsetany.hu/index.php?fooldal=1>, Retrieved May 24, 2010

providing apartments, offices and entertainment for those who would have never come to the territory in its former state.

As Csanádi et al. (2006) describes renovation in the inner area of the 7<sup>th</sup> district started in 1978 in the form of a block-rehabilitation (called “block № 15”). This was an example of the so-called socialist gentrification; gentrification because higher status groups have moved in, and socialist because the distribution of the apartments is state led, therefore the authorities determined who can move in (those who can preserve the condition of the newly renovated and expensive apartments). The 1989 privatization did not effect this area as much as the others but a recurrent idea did, namely the creation a first boulevard, later promenade (Madách sétány) that would cut across the texture of the area. In 2002 the Andrassy road close to the district was announced a World Cultural Heritage site and together with this the neighbouring former Jewish quarter of the 7<sup>th</sup> district also became a protected area. Even so, in 2004 major reconstructions started in the middle of the culturally valued quarter filled with building from the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The dwellers of both social houses and private apartments have been offered the possibility of purchasing new apartments that were to be built instead of the previous ones or the payment of the value of the apartments where they lived in. As the new dwellings were much more expensive, buying them was not a real alternative for the poor inhabitants so they had to leave the neighbourhood. As a consequence the social texture has changed and the former local identity has been seriously damaged (Csanádi et al. 2006).

In response to these and other negative experiences of planned gentrification in the form of urban rehabilitation project, a new attempt has been formed for urban renewal. In 2005 the government of Budapest carried through a motion for the support of social rehabilitation

projects, three applicants competed (Szemerey 2006). One of these three was the Magdolna Quarter Program.



## 2. Context

### 2. 1. *The territory*

The 8<sup>th</sup> district is famous, or rather infamous, for criminality, poverty, prostitution, for being *the* dangerous area of Budapest; living in the 8<sup>th</sup> presumes stigmatization. Although the middle-belt of this territory is not the only one that hosts marginalized people living in poverty, this is still the prototype of underclass. This fact may be explained by its relative proximity to the city center (it is visible or at least sensed by the rest of the urban dwellers who move around the city): from the Körút which is one of the main arteries of the city it only takes few steps to get to the deep of the “dreaded” district. Still ‘outsiders’ can rarely be seen walking around; those who do not have something specific to do there prefer to avoid the district. Also it is not difficult to keep away as economic activity, public institutions or entertainment possibilities are not a prominent feature here. The rate of unemployment is 8.8% of the economically active population this digit is 6.3% when calculated for the whole capital<sup>10</sup>.

The middle area of the district is the Magdolna Quarter (this is its new name since the Rehabilitation), surrounded by Népszínház, Fiumei, Baross, Koszorú and Nagyfuvaros streets. It is one of the most commercially abandoned territories with the highest rate of unemployment in the district (12.6%), just as the educational deficit and the lack people working in permanent jobs (the rate of people having maximum elementary education and not having regular job-income is 23.2%<sup>11</sup>). The area is mostly residential with very few public institutions or commercial activity. Also the condition of the apartment-stock is very poor. The approximately 12,000 inhabitants that are registered in this territory live in about 5,500

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<sup>10</sup> KSH Népszámlálás. 2001

<sup>11</sup> KSH Népszámlálás. 2001

apartments of which 42% are in social houses owned by the municipality. According to a survey done in 2000 the type of economic activity is in correlation with the relation to the possession of the apartments. The rate of the economically inactive among those who own their apartment is 42% while among those who are tenants of a municipality owned property it goes up to 60%. In both cases the active members are generally employees (Gerőházi et al 2004)<sup>12</sup>. In the Magdolna Quarter neither the outward mobility of its dwellers, nor visits by the ‘outsider’ is experienced often. The former director of the only elementary school of the Quarter describes the extent of outer experience in the territory by saying that “some children have never seen the Danube”<sup>13</sup>. The lack of mobility further strengthens the segregated and stigmatized nature of the area in question.

The ethnic diversity is also significant in the 8<sup>th</sup> district. It is the usual first stop for newly arrived immigrants (as the rents are predictably low) – in the 8<sup>th</sup> district together with the 10<sup>th</sup> the density of migrants is the highest in Budapest, they are mostly ethnic Hungarians and Chinese (Szabó 2009). Also families of the largest minority in Hungary, the Roma, are notably present throughout the district. According to the low estimation of the Roma Government of Józsefváros (Józsefvárosi Cigány Roma Kisebbségi Önkormányzat) 30% of the population are Roma within the Magdolna Quarter (MQP 2005). Thus not only does the social class of the inhabitants make a difference but also the presence of the Roma minority gives the territory a special character. This ethnic minority living here provides further surface for stigmatization and segregation from the other parts of Budapest.

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<sup>12</sup> The data rely on the survey called Lakásviszonyok – 2000 taken in 2000 by Monitor Társadalomkutató és Módszertani Központ, Lakásviszonyok.

<sup>13</sup> The quotes from the interviews are translated by the author.

## ***2. 2. The history of the Roma arrival***

As the presence of the Roma is both a crucial feature when describing the neighbourhood and will be a recurrent topic in the following analysis it is important to depict the historical background of their arrival and reasons for staying. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century the 8<sup>th</sup> district was an artisan and industrial neighbourhood but by the turn of the century the factories already left the territory and the economic recession began. Then the two World Wars left their effect on some 90% of the buildings which has not been renovated and the district became one of the most neglected areas of the capital<sup>14</sup>. During the state socialism the tenement houses were taken over by the state and major renovation projects have not taken place in the district ever since.

There have always been Roma living in the 8<sup>th</sup> district but relatively few of them and they were mostly musician families who constituted the highest and most accepted class among the Roma. Change occurred when large numbers of Roma arrived and settled in the territory in the 1970s. As Ladányi explains (1992, 1993) before this time 30% of the Roma population lived in settlements which most of the time were not built of enduring material, they lacked electricity, heating and running water. In the 70s and 80s these settlements were eliminated and their dwellers either moved in with relatives living in Budapest, or gained state-owned apartments. Parallel to the moving in of the poorer strata to the 8<sup>th</sup> district, the petit-bourgeois moved out to Buda as they could afford better housing. The previous Roma/non-Roma residential segregation therefore was reproduced: earlier the separation was between the settlements and the inner city; with the changes in the 70s-80s it was between different parts of the city: in some areas the Roma are overrepresented while in others they do not appear at

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<sup>14</sup> “Józsefváros története” [http://www.jozsefvaros.hu/a\\_kerulet\\_jozsefvaros\\_tortenete](http://www.jozsefvaros.hu/a_kerulet_jozsefvaros_tortenete), Retrieved June 2, 2010

all. According to the fashion, housing estates were built for social purposes but many Gypsy<sup>15</sup> families did not get access to these apartments. They rather gained places in the old houses for two reasons, as Ladányi argues. The state-owned tenement-dwellings in the slum inner districts of Pest were a little-bit more spacious than the newly build housing estates that the state provided for the people in need, thus they were more suitable for the Gypsy families of many children. Also rather the old flats were given to Gypsies because the government was afraid that they would run down the condition of the new housing estates (Ladányi 1992, 1993).

Although the settlements were wiped out in the 1970s, these changes in the residential segregation did not mean changes in the social integration of the Gypsies. “In a way integration is hindered by the fact that the changes in the pattern on residential segregation made the Gypsies more visible and, at the same time, made the conflicts caused by prejudice more frequent” (Ladányi 1993:226). Reducing the residential segregation mean that the social inequalities become more apparent. In a later article Ladányi (2007) describes that the moving in of the Gypsies to the middle belt area surrounding the downtown of Pest accelerated in the 1980s-1990s. They found space in the old state-owned tenements of poor condition and the slum area has been conserved and enhanced. The segregation and homogenization of the social composition of these territories, as the 8<sup>th</sup> district, went on.

### ***2. 3. The Magdolna Social Urban Rehabilitation Program***

The above features characterize the territory of 15 streets in focus of the MQP. The planners designated this area as the most critical within the district and gave it the new name, Magdolna Quarter, both to liberate it from the names of previous stigmatization and to

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<sup>15</sup> As Ladányi uses the word “cigány” in Hungarian which means Gypsy, when I present his work I refer to Gypsies rather than Roma.

enforce social cohesion by creating a community that is spatially organized. In 2005 the rehabilitation was introduced and it is still in progress in order to produce change in the living conditions of the inhabitants. The project is financed by the local municipality of the district (Józsefvárosi Önkormányzat) and by the municipality of the capital (Budapesti Fővárosi Önkormányzat) and also enjoys financial support of the European Union. The executing organ of the project is a company owned by the (Józsefváros Rehabilitation and Urban Development Company, the Rév8 Ltd.) that includes architects, urban planning specialists, economists, lawyers, sociologists, social workers and geographers. As a response to former urban change processes described above the idea of the social urban rehabilitation came to surface within this project. “The key words of the urban regeneration program are cooperation and participation” (MQP 2007:2). The main characteristic that makes this program different from the usual town rehabilitation programs is the concept that the organizers wish to integrate the neighbourhood groups into the planning and the realization of the changes. By doing so they hope that not only the built environment but the dwellers themselves will be filled with positive content. The main goal of the Rehabilitation Program is concentrated on the social, economic and environmental development of the territory.

The social aim is to improve the standard of living by ensuring appropriate living conditions, by involvement of the current residents, by strengthening the local community cohesion and by retaining the social diversity. The economic aim is to improve the earnings production and self-reliance of the area, development of the local labour market and thereby reduction of the lasting unemployment. The environmental aim is to enlarge the public and green areas both by size and quality, creating sustainable living environment by continuous renewal of buildings in small steps, by retaining the architectural values and by building new houses. (MQP 2007:6)

The long undervalued territory has to be regenerated with the integrative help of these three areas to achieve higher efficiency. Although the Rehabilitation Program explicitly expresses that the involvement of the residents is of major importance and the aim is to work together with those concerned in order to create an atmosphere that is appropriate for their needs and

also has the potential to offer better living standards, it also mentions the key significance of the middle class dwellers. “There is still a **thin middle class** group in the quarter that did not want or was unable to move from this part of the city and could be more easily mobilised than the people of the poorest families. The key task of this program is to retain and to strengthen this thin **group** as possible.” (MQP 2007:6) Although the MQP emphasizes that strengthening the middle class living in the territory is not equal to displacing the lower strata, the renewal of the territory implies the revival of social and economic circulation which eventually results in the inflow of the higher classes. In an earlier interview György Molnár, one of the former urban planners from the Municipality of the 8<sup>th</sup> district, reported that approximately 30% of the population would change in the course of the Rehabilitation Program (Jakab 2005).

So far there have been two sections in the Rehabilitation Program. Although the social change was said to be equally important, the first part on the MQP (MQP1) – conducted between 2005 and 2008 – mostly achieved success in changing of the built environment. The principal innovations were (1) the expansion of the housing facilities in four municipality-owned social houses with the involvement of the tenants and (2) the restructuring and renewal of the only park in the territory in Mátyás Square. Also in the realm of the project (3) the only elementary school (previously: Elementary School of Erdélyi Street) was joined with a nearby high school and this way they form one entity, the Lakatos Menyhért Primary and High School. Lakatos Menyhért was a Roma writer and by giving his name to the school, where almost 100% of the students are of Roma origin, the Roma identity was supposed to be strengthened. The second part of the MQP (MQP2) – which runs from 2008 to may 2010 – focused more on the social programs by (1) organizing a three-day festival (Magdolna Days) in the territory and by (2) opening the new community center, Kesztyűgyár, in order to encourage community development. The changes in the built environment concern (3) the establishment

of a sport yard on an empty site neighboring the Lakatos Menyhért School, (4) further renovation of social houses and (5) the reorganization of the traffic is being done at the moment by making the Mátyás square and two surrounding streets car free. Also within the frame of the rehabilitation program (6) two “neighbourhood policemen” are employed who only watch for the territory of the Magdolna Quarter to prevent crime.

### 3. Method – the fieldwork

My analysis is based on empirical research into the functioning and the concepts of the institution of Kesztyűgyár. I used in-depth interviewing, participant observation and the documents about the main concept of the institution and that of the rehabilitation program to understand what is conceived as ideal by the organizers. I conducted semi-structured interviews with the head of the community center and the two social workers as these three people are the main actors who shape the character and choose the programs of the community center. Also I participated in several informal talks with the beneficiaries who use the facilities of Kesztyűgyár and also with some of those who avoid going to the Community Center. To support the second-hand information provided by the interviews, first-hand information was offered by participant observation of the everyday life in Kesztyűgyár and on the specific programs and courses it offers. I managed to participate on some of the permanent weekly programs (handcrafting, capoeira training, digital art club, free internet hours, table tennis, job-seeking club, drama group) and on the monthly programs (disco, Swap-market, Csángó Hungarian Táncház). To legitimate my presence and inquiry I actively took part in one of the programs offered by the community center from the beginning of October, 2009. This was a weekly drama course where the tools of performance were used to bring to the surface and help resolve the underlying conflicts that the attending children face, such as clashes between norms of the family background and the expectation of the majority of the society. The course was directed by experienced and professional drama teachers; my role was that of the observer who kept contact with the participating children – it may be added that in this respect my role sometimes shifted from participating observer to observing participant (see Bernard 1995). The drama course itself functioned as the gatekeeper in my research and my role in it allowed me to have an insight into the working and effect of the



mechanism of the drama pedagogy and it also gave me possibility to have a long-term observation of the life in Kesztyűgyár from multiple points of view during the whole school year of 2009/2010 and to establish deeper contact with both the workers and the users of the Community Center.

## 4. The Case Study of Kesztyűgyár

### 4. 1. *Description of the Community Center*

Kesztyűgyár is located at 15 Mátyás Square, 8<sup>th</sup> district, Budapest. It started operating as a community center on August 24, 2008 after the building had been renovated and painted with all the colours of the rainbow. The renovation of the building and its subsequent functioning has been financed by the local municipality of the 8<sup>th</sup> district, the municipality of Budapest and also by support from the European Union. Three people work there permanently: two social workers (Zsófia and Simon) and the head of Kesztyűgyár (Jolán<sup>16</sup>); also a group of mobilizable volunteers help them on particular occasions. According to one of the social workers about 50 people use the place regularly, mostly children. The beneficiaries can use five rooms for participating in programs, and the armchair area at the entrance plus the courtyard for meeting, chatting, to forming, storming, norming and performing. On the first floor of the two-storey building the offices of the workers can be found and this is also the work place of the planners of the Rév8 Ltd. who deal with the MQP.

What makes the MQP different and more complex than the previous rehabilitation programs is that it has a social element besides the mere reconstruction of the built environment. This social element is mostly conducted by the Kesztyűgyár Community Center. The recurrent concepts that the planners use to describe the social purpose of the institution in the formal documents are ‘community building’, ‘strengthening the local identity’, ‘bringing the Magdolna Quarter into the cultural circulation of Budapest’, ‘providing a space for alternative cultural and training programs’, ‘providing a public place for people in the neighbourhood’, ‘openness’ and ‘multi-functionality’ (MQP 2005, 2007, 2008). About these marketable

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<sup>16</sup> The names of the workers and interviewees are modified for the purpose of keeping their identity private.

notions Zsófia concludes that “the fact that there is a community center here is absolutely for the aim of giving a place, a possibility for the people living in the neighbourhood; this is why most of the programs, the lion’s share of the programs are for the locals.” Kesztyűgyár explicitly focuses on the dwellers of the territory of the rehabilitation but by doing so it addresses the other inhabitants of Budapest as well. As Zsófia comments, “the majority of the Budapestians can absolutely live without setting a foot in Mátyás Square. Why would they come here? They don’t have anything to do here. But precisely for the sake of the people living here it’s important; so that this wouldn’t be such a closed territory from which they don’t go out and others don’t come in either”. Therefore the main aim is dual: socializing the locals and attracting non-locals. Both serve the purpose to turn around the segregation process of the area. Hence the goal of integration gains its meaning in the rhetoric of Kesztyűgyár as being the inverse of segregation. As Zsófia puts it “on the one hand it should provide interesting programs, a model of living, a possibility for the children here. On the other hand another aim is to stop the belief that the Mátyás Square is a ghetto where white people don’t go because it’s sure that they will be knocked down or mugged... so to lessen the prejudice of this type.” Although the target group of Kesztyűgyár is the locals, the aim of attracting others appears as they have a particular purpose with that as well. Zsófia reports that

there are programs for which we expect expressly those people who don’t live in the neighbourhood to attend [...] so that there would be encounters. But this can turn into the reverse as well because an encounter situation is not always positive, and if it’s negative, it may further intensify prejudices. This is exactly why we have a dual aim. So by providing possibilities and programs we play the part of some kind of socialization in our hopes that we may increase the number of the positive encounters.

The programs by which Kesztyűgyár would like to socialize the locals and those that would assist the possible encounters with non-locals can be divided into two groups. The ones in the first category are mostly leisure activities with educative purposes for the young or trials for

community building. These programs are separated into age groups but all of them are open for entrance and free (see Table 1).

**Table 1 Open and Free Permanent Weekly Programs in Kesztyűgyár**

<b>For Children (under 12)</b>	<b>For Adolescents (between 12-18)</b>	<b>For Adults (over 18)</b>
Handcrafting Painting workshop Body Culture Capoeira training Hip-hop dance Story-telling	Handcrafting Free Internet Table tennis Karate Drama group Digital art club Stencil group Hip-hop dance Capoeira training Youngster discussion-club Football Monthly disco night	Job-seeking club Romani language club English language club – beginner English language club – intermediate Internet for adults Singing for babies Massage for babies course Monthly Swap-market

The programs are mostly conducted by foundations or non-profit organizations who applied for a public tender with a project that corresponds to the interest of Kesztyűgyár and these are sorted by the organizers. The rationale that directs picking the proper programs shows what the community center understands under socialization. The majority of the programs focus on pulling in children and teenagers who otherwise would hang around on the streets or on Mátyás Square where the community center is situated. The quality programs that are organized for them also seek to transmit middle-class values – this type of socialization is the direction that Kesztyűgyár would like to move in. The most popular programs with the largest participation of locals are the free internet hours, the monthly disco party and the Swap-market<sup>17</sup>. These are also the ones that are intended to build community.

The community center also organizes programs primarily dedicated to attracting middle-class people from the territory and outside in order to lessen the tensions and provide a potential

<sup>17</sup> The motto of the Swap-market is “leave your wallet at home”. In this event a market of exchanging goods (mostly clothes) opens in the Kesztyűgyár with established rules but without using money.

meeting point where positive encounters can take place. Such attempts are the baby-programs, the Csángó Hungarian Dance Event, and they also rent the rooms to conferences (business or scientific). The baby-programs are more popular among the non-Roma middle class families where the mothers feel isolated and need company (as Zsófia described, the mothers from the neighbourhood do not require these programs, living with many children and multiple generations their longing is rather for a little loneliness). By renting rooms for conferences Kesztyűgyár intends to take advantage of the building's recent renovation and quality facilities in the hope that outsider middle class attendees will spontaneously encounter the locals that would result in narrowing of the prejudices and exclusion from both sides. The case of the Csángó Hungarian Dance Event in particular is discussed in more detailed below. The interactions happen mostly through drawing outsiders in; the organizers concentrate less on urging insiders to go out.

Finally it is also interesting to see how the Community Center portrays and advertises itself. Although the Roma presence is ubiquitous in the Center, this aspect is not highlighted in advertisements or on the website of Kesztyűgyár. Meanwhile, as information mostly spreads through informal channels in the neighbourhood and the internet access is limited, the profile that appears on the website is not dedicated to address the locals but rather the rest of the city dwellers. Maybe precisely for the sake of attracting the outsiders, the middle class and all those groups that would make the Magdolna Quarter more heterogeneous, the organizers of the Community Center decide not to restrict the representation of the place to being a solely 'Roma House'.

#### ***4. 2. Conflicts and difficulties***

Other than exterior segregation and stigmatization, the actual problems that the workers of Kesztyűgyár have to fight with on a daily basis reflect deeply rooted conflicts within the

territory as well. Poverty and lack of mobility are just two of the difficulties; also hidden are problems of severe ethnic and social tension. The actors within the ethnic conflicts are the Roma and the non-Roma living in the neighbourhood. The young people who come to the Community Center regularly are disproportionately Roma. According to my interviews the overrepresentation of Roma is explained by non-Roma families avoiding the community center precisely because they would not want to mingle with the Roma inhabitants. The presence of the one excludes the presence of the other. The non-Romani father who lives next door to Kesztyűgyár but does not let his elementary school-aged son go to the Community Center says “I don’t even dare to let the kid out to the street”, and adds about the institution that “those Hungarians who assimilated, meaning have Gypsy friends, maybe they can enter there, then one or two can be seen maybe, but still not really [...] I think they don’t dare to go among them.” Simon confirms this: non-Romani dwellers “simply are afraid to enter the house, because all they can see is Gypsies coming in, Gypsies going out, non-Gypsies not coming in and non-Gypsies not going out. It can very rarely be seen when there is a conference, or a press conference, or a Swap market, or something. But as a regular visitor – like the Gypsies – they don’t come in.” This is one of the major problems that the social workers have to resolve in the first place so that at least within the territory the interpersonal relations would work. Therefore one side of the complex integration project also involves the management of ethnic conflicts.

Other than the ethnic problems of the neighbourhood, the Community Center struggles with social divisions as well. It seems those locals who identify themselves as bit more middle class than the others tend to avoid contact with the lower class groups. There are three hints of the social division: the first is connected to the schooling, the second reveals differentiation within the ethnic boundaries, at the third the social distinction appears spatially. Kesztyűgyár,

being two blocks away from the Lakatos Menyhért Primary and Secondary School, builds many programs around the students of this school – there are even separate ‘closed’ programs specifically organized for them. Although it is highly segregated and the level of education is thought to be poor, many of the local families enroll their children to this school – but not all of them. Zsófia said “we have even heard that the director of the elementary school two streets away from here [Németh László Elementary School] said that she reluctantly lets her students among these wild and not socialized children – who by the way live in the neighbourhood too, it’s just that their parents did that much to not enroll them in the nearby Lakatos Menyhért but in the school two streets away”. Other than the hesitation of the parents, the public institutions create a social barrier, too.

Interestingly not only the rivalry of the institutions bear witness to class differentiation but, according to Simon, even among the Roma there are class differences coming to the surface. Simon held mentor training courses at the Roma Versitas Foundation<sup>18</sup> for young Romani intellectuals and when he asked them to volunteer at Kesztyűgyár, none of the students came. Even Simon had a hard time digesting this attitude and he explained it to himself as “they would like to forget this problem. [...] They think that if they come to this building and face these problems, they will feel that the problems are theirs as well.” The students who managed to emerge from poverty and stigmatization are not keen on sinking back in. Social divisions that segregate the neighbourhood appear within the same ethnical frame as well.

Spatial divisions are also often experienced as social divisions. The Baross Street along the Magdolna Quarter acts as a threshold – a boundary that defines the ‘other’ (Barth 1969) – in

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<sup>18</sup> The Roma Versitas Foundation offers scholarships for Roma university students and many extracurricular events in order to help them in their educational progression and form a community of Roma intellectuals. Due to its successful support many Romani students have reached high status employments in various sectors of science, politics and arts.

many respects, the people on the two sides of it often identify themselves in opposition to the other. This may provide legitimation to undervalue the ‘other’. An example of this is Zsófia’s story about children from the other side of the Baross Street who have no intention to visit Kesztyűgyár because those groups go there that are unfavorable for them. Zsófia recounted an incident in which she inviting a child from ‘the other side’ to a program. He refused to go and reasoned that he would not step his feet among those “wild pigs” or “Roms”<sup>19</sup>. However, he himself was also a Rom.

In the next two sections I turn to the way in which these characteristics, purposes and difficulties manifest in practice. The dual aim of attracting the outsiders and socializing the insiders that build upon each other are to be described through a specific event, the Csángó Hungarian Táncház (chapter 5. 3.), and through the communication of the workers about the symbolic importance of the front door of the building (chapter 5. 4.).

#### ***4. 3. The Csángó Hungarian Táncház***

Every second Friday evening, Kesztyűgyár holds a Csángó Hungarian Táncház (a folk dance event). They invite band (Tatros) which is well-known amongst the usual táncház audience. The event starts at 7 o’clock and lasts until midnight; during this time a buffet is set up also. The entrance fee is 200 HUF (about 0.72 Euro) and unaccompanied children under the age of 18 are not welcome. Although the program only started on April 16, 2010, it reveals much about the intentions and the way of thinking of the organizers in Kesztyűgyár.

The Táncház is not a program organized for the Roma. It is not a program that would exclude the Roma either but the theme and the entrance fee (even if it is relatively low) does not encourage the Romani people from the neighbourhood to attend the event. As Zsófia said,

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<sup>19</sup> I translated ‘oláh cigány’ from Hungarian to ‘Rom’ in English.



with this program “we would like to attract the middle-class”; however as Simon adds that the aim is not to avoid Roma from attending.

Csángó is a Hungarian ethnic group living in Romania and preserving their old Hungarian dialect and traditions. The *táncház* movement in general is a recreated authenticating Hungarian tradition that gives space for entertainment but is also a symbol of *Hungarianness*. Although it is not communicated anywhere that it would be a program for non-Roma, as for my provocative question, Simon – who is also of Romani origin – admitted that the Romani people of the neighbourhood most probably would not be interested in such a program. Indeed from the 15-20 people who participated on the first occasion none appeared to be Roma. Outside the building there were a couple of youths from the neighbourhood standing around, one of them managed to go in but left after a few minutes saying “My God... this music!...” his friend reflected on his comment for me: “if I turn on the radio, I can listen to this music as well”. They had no intention to participate.

The other factor that contributes to keeping the locals away is the entrance fee. The aim of introducing a fee is interpreted in two ways by the two social workers. One version is “the *Táncház* has to be self-supporting since it is an expensive program”; another is “the aim with the paying programs usually is that only those who are truly interested should use the service. So those who would only come to make fun of a *táncház* wouldn’t pay even 50 HUF for the entrance fee”. Kesztyűgyár tries to avoid the participation of those people who would ruin the event and intends to attract those who would enjoy it. According to the second interpretation, the inauguration of the entrance fee helps preventing unwanted elements from entering. Zsófia explains “we don’t want the local kids to run around here; there is not enough of us [to supervise]” because running-around might scare off the already scarcely attending audience

that this program targets. (“If a middle-class outsider comes in, he will be deterred right away and he will never come back” (Zsófia).)

They would like to attract the usual Táncház audience who would come for the band anyway, even to the 8<sup>th</sup> district, “this is why it was important that the band should be a popular one”. The participants – on the two occasions that I have participated – were mostly the workers of the community center or of the Rév8 Ltd. and few non-Roma middle-class outsiders. The participation of the target group has not yet reached its expected level, however, as Simon pointed out, “we are already pleased if only five people come and participate on a program that is mixed in theory, as the Táncház is not expressly for non-Gypsy people”. Even if it is a non-Roma program in practice, it is still not communicated as such; and even if people presume that not many Roma people will be interested in the event, they can not exclude the possibility that they would be present. And if they come anyway, that is already a step towards the acceptance, as the organizers assume. The major problem that the Community Center workers permanently face in the neighbourhood is that “today, now, this day again non-Gypsies don’t come to this place [...] now it is like, when people pass along the building and they sidestep [...] I have even heard such rumors that people don’t dare to come in here”. This is the reason why Simon argues that “it makes no difference what people come in for, if they come for this, they will come for this, just come, please!” The main aim of Kesztyűgyár with this event is to get those people into the territory of the community center who otherwise would not come because they are apprehensive, unsupportive or merely indifferent. The endeavor with the Táncház is to form a new type of community. “A community – that is what I hope – that will start to let their children in here and who in this way will get to know our children; our children who already come here regularly”.

There are two community groups that appear to be the audience of Kesztyűgyár thanks to the work of the organizers. These groups however tend to separate to different time shifts. The Csángó Hungarian Táncház is organized on Friday nights when – in order to have time for preparation – the Community Center has already closed its front door and the usual day-time courses are over. Then the front door reopens at 7 o'clock for the night event and for the non-Roma audience of the Táncház. The same pattern takes place with the mother-and-baby programs that attract the local middle class and takes place in the morning hours, while the opening front door – when anyone can freely use the space – is only at 2 o'clock in the afternoon. The ones having the control have power to shape the use of the space which is in accordance with the mechanism of Lefebvre's conceived space. The ideology of the 'prosperous' way of integration developed by Kesztyűgyár forms and represents the experienced, lived space.

The Táncház is an attempt to attract on the one hand the outsiders to enter the territory, on the other hand the middle class; both are for the sake of provoking mingling between the locals and the rest of the city and also of the Roma and the non-Roma in order to ease the segregated character of the neighbourhood and the ethnic stigmatization. Gentrification – here in the form of invitation of the middle class to spend time 'inside' – serves integrating purposes, even if the invited middle class is presently consciously separated from the 'reality' of the Lefebvre's lived space of the neighbourhood.

#### ***4. 4. The front door of socialization***

While the aim of the Csángó Hungarian Táncház is to encourage social and ethnic mixing, for this mixing to be successful Kesztyűgyár wishes to develop the local dwellers so that they are prepared for positive encounters. In order to pursue the intended socialization the first thing is to get the people to come in. The opening of the front door is the most efficient way for this;

as Zsófia explained, “enormous amount of money could be spent on advertisement but it wouldn’t have as much an effect as opening the front door. And when the door is open I come and see what is in here”. When the front door opens, children stream in to see what is inside out of curiosity. The next step is to make them stay. The effective tool here is the fact that the courtyard and the armchair area can freely be used to spend time socially. But this facility would not differentiate Kesztyűgyár from the neighboring Mátyás Square. What makes a difference though is the infrastructure: the internet access, the lavatory and the ping-pong table. “Then we have programs that are specifically dedicated to make the boys spend time here and not on the street” (Simon). These programs basically mean that the house is open for mediated play, there are toys downstairs and the two social workers supervise and play with the children.

Throughout the first year of Kesztyűgyár these tools made many children from the neighbourhood choose the Community Center over the street. It is already an achievement that they are ‘inside’; in this way a space can be created for socialization in the long run. As Zsófia argues, “at the Mátyás Square there is no way that I can prevent a five or ten year old kid from smoking a cigarette. Here, though, I can say that in Kesztyűgyár you can’t smoke. And it’s possible that he’ll go out to the Square and smokes there but still there is a doorstep.” This doorstep is the threshold of socialization that the front door symbolizes. Once they are used to coming in the building they can be educated/developed/civilized. The actual socialization happens through enforcing the House rules<sup>20</sup> which children must obey, and through offering quality programs that transmit middle class values. Those who are in the

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<sup>20</sup> There are eight rules that the users of Kesztyűgyár have to obey. The House Rules are as follows “(1) It is forbidden to smoke under the age of 18 in the whole territory of the building. (2) The assigned place for smoking is the courtyard. (3) Aggressive attitude and fighting results in exclusion from the territory of the Community Center. (4) It is forbidden to consume alcohol in the territory of the Community Center. (5) Please, pay special attention on the condition of the building and do not litter. (6) Advertisement or announcement can only be put out with the permission of the organizers of the Community Center. (7) Those users who break the house rules multiple times will be excluded from the territory of the Community Center. (8) The workers of the Community Center do not take responsibility for any damage occurring to health or personal properties.”

house are also more likely be present at the programs; according to Zsófia, approximately half of those who use the Community Center for socializing purposes also attend some courses. “This is an attractive environment where they feel good and actually they already feel that the place is theirs. Why wouldn’t they come in? [...] But in exchange for providing this house, this is also a kind of location of socialization for them as well. There are basic rules that they have to keep, so this is not the Mátyás Square after all.” In return for the facilities and services they are made to obey the rules and become subjects of disciplining/socializing. Through the course of Kesztyűgyár’s functioning of a disciplined group of local children has evolved who know the limits and boundaries of the coexistence and transmit these to their peers. Simon said “they know that those who come in here have to conform to the others. The others who are already following the norms, there is a core like this.” Those who actively participate in the programs have already learned the rules and “sometimes they instruct one another on what is and is not allowed” (Simon). This is how the project of socializing builds up in the Community Center.

The work that is pursued is rationalized by the arguments that the beneficiaries will have to obey rules later, as well, and that thereby Kesztyűgyár is preparing the dwellers to meet social expectations. “Later if he/she goes to a public institution or an office he/she can’t take liberties, so it’s really not a problem that they acquire the knowledge that there are some places where it’s not good to behave as you like. [...] Obviously it won’t change in his/her family structure but still he/she knows about such a reasoning as well that one doesn’t have to fight” (Zsófia).

According to Jolán, the head of the Center, the main focus of the establishment is to develop the residents of the quarter: it is mainly intended to attract the people from the neighbourhood

in order to “provide or expand those possibilities in a reachable distance that middle class children elsewhere would naturally obtain.” The explicit goal, as Jolán put it, is the “middle classicization”<sup>21</sup> of the original residents that includes retaining the dwellers and the multicultural character of the territory. As the MQP is responsible for the territory, Kesztyűgyár – being the social institution of the Rehabilitation Program – is responsible for dwellers and both intend to fill their part up with positive content. Gentrification and integration in the purview of Kesztyűgyár connect precisely through the Community Center attempts to middle-classicize and gentrify the local lower status groups. For the newly arrived middle class that the urban rehabilitation would pull in the role of Kesztyűgyár is to provide space for them as they do with the original dwellers. “Those people who move in should come to us as well and they will get space, too” (Simon).

In the Magdolna Quarter the gentrification is urged to happen by the renewal of the neighbourhood in order to appeal to the potential new middle class dwellers; achieving this falls within the cognizance of the Rehabilitation Program. However, the task of the Kesztyűgyár Community Center is not to decide about the future accommodation of the dwellers (Ladányi 2008) (as what the government does) nor to rebuild the environment (Smith 2002) (as what the Rehabilitation Program does) but to care about the people who live there. Their role is to enforce community building and provide space and possibilities for social development at a territory where these two are rarely given. The difficulty that comes with the task of Kesztyűgyár is that the tension that appears in the neighbourhood between the Roma and non-Roma, the lower status groups and the less low status groups, is reflected in the exclusivity of the users’ attendance in the Community Center. Therefore the organizers simultaneously develop those who come and attract those who do not in order to enlarge the

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<sup>21</sup> “Middle-classicization” is a literal translation from the Hungarian “középosztályosítás” that the interviewee (Jolán) used to describe the intentions of the Kesztyűgyár.

number of the occasions when positive encounters happen between these two groups. As gentrification happens, the purpose of the Community Center is to create a population that is ready for the higher-class lifestyle that the neighbourhood is intended to lean to. This higher-class lifestyle calculates on creative, economically active, educated middle-class population. In order to fill the territory with this population, the Rehabilitation Program not only wants to move in the middle-class from other areas, but also creates a middle-class out of the original material. This is done through integration in the sense of providing possibilities to mingle with others (others meaning territorially, socially or ethnically – in all the respects that the dwellers seem to be homogeneous and closed, i.e. segregated at the moment). In another sense they do this by providing equal opportunities/access to opportunities to those dwellers who did or would not get access to such opportunities otherwise – by ‘equal’ they mean equal to middle-class. The creation of middle-class-like lifestyle is basically the gentrifying or “middle-classicizing” of the original dwellers.

## Conclusion

In this paper I argued that, although gentrification and integration are usually contradictory processes, they coexist in the case of the Kesztyűgyár Community Center. The purpose of the analysis was to identify how these two concepts appear on the same platform. Presenting the theoretical framework of the predominant understanding of gentrification contextualized the generalities and particularities of gentrification in Budapest. The Hungarian local municipalities, possessing a significant share in the apartments stock, shows that they have both interest and determining force in the process of urban rehabilitation (Ladányi 1989, 2008). This fact creates an unusual frame for understanding the urban renewal projects in Hungary. Although they show similarities with the usual gentrification patterns – being triggered by private, public and global investments (Smith 2001) – they are different precisely because of the embedded role of the authorities. This role implies that municipalities are capable of imposing their power and ideology on the lived space of the residents by introducing rehabilitation programs – such as the Magdolna Quarter Program – and this way to create a dominant conceived space (Lefebvre 1991).

At the same time the explicit aim of the Magdolna Quarter Social Urban Rehabilitation Program is to involve the original dwellers in the process of development. It is important at this point to compare the proportion of participation (use) and control. Participation of the users is necessary; there is a need for them to be accessible to produce a meeting point between the different spheres of the dwellers. In this way a Habermasian (1992) concept of participation is articulated by the planners of the Rehabilitation Program where the residents would get the opportunity to express their arguments and needs about the change of their surroundings and these opinions would be integrated in the project. But the direction of the

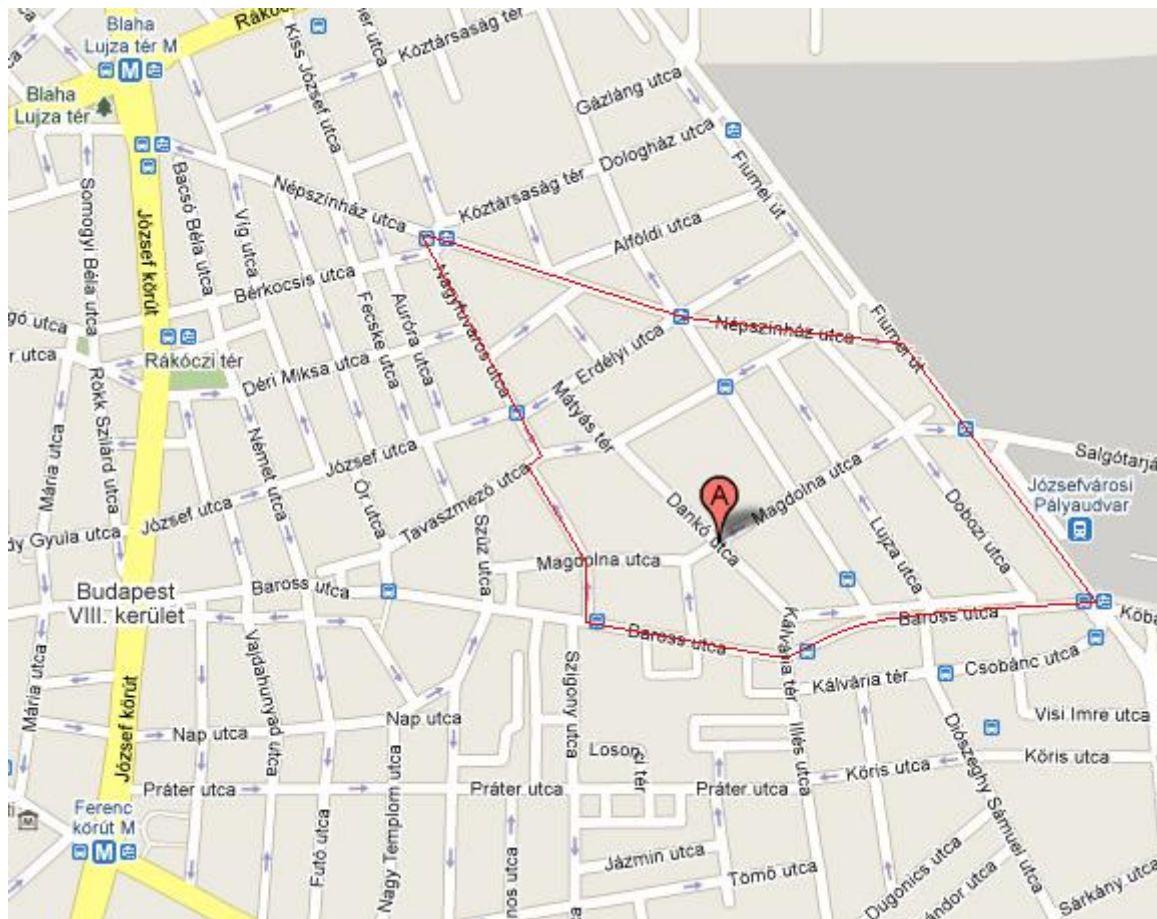


arguments is also mediated by the plan of how the rehabilitation should come off. My analysis showed that in the case of the Magdolna Quarter, integration does have a shaping force but only within the pre-fabricated limits of the conceived space; in this way the ideal concept of the public sphere in Habermas is overwritten by the control and ideology of the conceived space in Lefebvre (1991).

As the executors of the rehabilitation program have a financial interest in the revaluation of the territory, a plan of urban rehabilitation was born in the 8<sup>th</sup> district. But unlike the other Budapestian rehabilitation projects, the Magdolna Program contains a social element – pursued by Kesztyűgyár – where instead of the displacement of the original dwellers an integrative agenda has appeared. Integration is to be reached in two ways. On the one hand the underrepresented middle class strata are invited to the area to provide the possibility of encounter between the otherwise segregated and stigmatized local dwellers and the outside society. In this way the boundaries of segregation would begin to dissolve. On the other hand lower class residents are furnished with middle class opportunities and ‘socially accepted’ values are transmitted in order to facilitate positive encounters with the newly arriving middle class. Thus Kesztyűgyár intends to create a middle class out of the originally lower class residents, ultimately gentrifying them along with the territory. It is in this conscious gentrifying effort that the aims of integration and gentrification meet in the case of Kesztyűgyár. It is in this way that gentrification and integration happens simultaneously in the Magdolna Quarter and in some ways they even mutually strengthen one another. Presently, however, the long term effects of this process remain uncertain.

# Appendix 1

The rehabilitated area in the 8<sup>th</sup> district



## Appendix 2

Pictures from Kesztyűgyár



The children.



The monthly disco party.



The courtyard.



Participant observation.



The Csángó HungarianTáncház.



The façade of the Kesztyűgyár



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