

**CODED CLARITY:**

**EMBODIMENTS OF HIDDEN JEWISH NARRATIVES**

**THROUGH SPATIAL COMMUNITY FORMATION IN**

**BUDAPEST**

By

Gréta Süveges

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Department of Sociology and Social Anthropology

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Supervisor: Prof. Daniel Monterescu  
Second Reader: Prof. Alexandra Kowalski

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# ABSTRACT

In this thesis I focus on how the last 20 years of urban change in the neighbourhood of Újlipótváros, in the 13<sup>th</sup> district of Budapest, enabled the creation of a community feeling organized around a secular, intellectual, middle class, and occasionally Jewish belonging. Drawing on archival sources, interviews and ethnographic fieldwork, I unpack the hidden Jewishness embodied in the district. Three ways of connecting to the communal feeling are based on the “village” (*falu*) metaphor: class composition, ethnic belonging, and tangible heritage. I explore the *coded clarity* of this ethnicized and eventually romanticized idea of belonging, which signifies the Jewish identities of Újlipótváros. Subsequently, I hone in on local class belonging with an analysis of recent gentrification processes in the neighbourhood. Local residents voice concrete perspectives on the impersonality of urban space. Recognizing the singularities of this specific case, I argue that different channels of belonging can lead to a better understanding of Central European Jewish identity patterns and the history of urban communities in cosmopolitan cities like Budapest.

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Many thanks to the anonymous informants, working mothers, fathers, and grandparents, doctors, artists, entrepreneurs, women and men, who shared their precious time, personal experiences, even life stories with me from the neighbourhood about the neighbourhood, their home. I also would like to thank the admins of ÚSzB, amongst them Melinda Bugledits, who helped my research with access to the rich conversations and discourses of everyday life and practical issues in the neighbourhood. Here I have to thank Dávid Váradi as well, who was always eager to challenge the topic, and without whom I could not find a better place for a temporary home during my field research.

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# Introduction

*„...stepping out from Újlipót is irresponsibility; everything else is dangerous in Budapest, a village is a village, a city is a city, and Újlipót is a village, it is pointless to argue about it.”*

Zsófi Kemény: *The Újlipótmező battle* (2018)

An ugly rainy weekend in May, 2019. On the occasion of the foundation of Bauhaus school, Budapest100 is celebrating the modernist and Bauhaus buildings of Budapest. As I heard from one of the event’s volunteers, they got in touch with the owners of 250 houses built in the interwar period but only 50 of them opened their gates to the curious audience. However, Újlipótváros with its modernist buildings is one of the most active and well-known neighbourhoods in the program.

Gyöngyház street in Újlipótváros is the tiniest and maybe one of the loveliest streets with its uniformly designed buildings from the second half of 1930s and its little gardens all around. The bad weather is keeping most people at home but, not in the case of Gyöngyház street. All gates are open, colourful balloons are on the doors, cookies and zsíros kenyér<sup>1</sup> are served at the entrances and even a spontaneous birthday celebration is being organized by the residents for another resident. I smell a strong aroma of fresh onion and hear the melody of an accordion played by one of the elder residents of Gyöngyház street as I am walking around in the corridors and stairs of the house. As I wander from one house to the other, I meet the residents of the houses, say hello to each of them and have the truly Újlipóthian experience of familiarity among the people of the district.

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<sup>1</sup> Zsíros kenyér [in Hungarian: bread with fat] is bread with preferably duck or goose fat with onions on the top. The most typical and cheapest Hungarian “party snack”.

This is exactly what I am writing about – the village is alive. However, it all exists in more diverse dimensions than I first imagined it. These are the dimensions what I would like to elaborate on the following pages.

To understand the main pillars of *coded clarity*, a term I employ to describe the hidden but obvious signs and symbols of belonging based on social and cultural/ethnic Jewish identity, we have to look closer at the work of metaphor in Újlipótváros identity formations. In this thesis I will analyse class identity partially through the gentrification discourse, tangible heritage through the findings of historical research and Jewish identities based on ethnography. This analysis is diversified by the local and newcomer identities and the generational composition of the residents.

The first chapter provides a short historical introduction to the history of the neighbourhood and how through the early industrial gentrification process the city of Budapest decided to create a carefully planned area along the banks of the Danube in the 1930s and rethink the idea of living space. In this chapter I look at the origins of Hungarian Bauhaus and Modernism of the interwar period to understand the perception of the new modern style in the field of architecture and the early appearance of urban planning.

Chapter one also clarifies the connection between the interwar Bauhaus and the contemporary modern idea of living. Even though the utopian idea of the newly organized modernist home and lifestyle remained the luxury of the upper-middle class, in the contemporary era it was turned into cultural capital (Zukin 1987). I will look at the connection to the built heritage and to a certain idea of an intellectual upper-middle-class lifestyle based on the historical rootedness of the middle class.

In the second chapter I focus on the significance of the act of naming in the case of Újlipótváros. *Lipócia/Újlipócia, Újzselánd, the village*. No other district in the city has such nicknames used by its own residents. I will look at the diverse meaning of these nicknames and their origins

from local writers, journals and literary pieces to show how romanticizing the district created the realization of a widely used metaphor (Lakoff, Johnson 1980).

In the third chapter I elaborate on the coded clarity of Jewishness in Újlipótváros. Based on the interviews I made with residents of Jewish origins, I map the different layers of Jewish belonging (Zeke 1990; Kovács, Barna eds. 2017) and discuss how Jewishness is embodied through the metaphorical process described by Lakoff and Johnson (1980). Additionally, I will also look at the idea of belonging through Herzfeld's (1997) notion of cultural intimacy and Wacquant's definition of urban stigma. (Wacquant 2008) In the main part of the thesis my intention is to shed light on the complexity of the contemporary Hungarian Jewish identities and ethnic belonging through the frame theory of Goffman (1986).

## **Methodology**

My research is based on ethnographic fieldwork in the neighbourhood. Thanks to a friend, I was lucky enough to find a typical one-room, garcon flat on Pozsonyi street and could move in for two months in early 2019. Additionally, I tried to maintain a lifestyle which took in as much of the social and cultural infrastructure of the neighbourhood as possible. I took yoga classes at NOHA Stúdió, mapped the cheaper dining options, went to performances at Víg theatre, and went out with my friends and family exclusively in the neighbourhood.

However, the main pillar of the fieldwork was semi-structured interviews with residents or former residents of Újlipótváros. I use pseudonyms, as we agreed in anonymous interviewing with the optional recording. Most of the people, regardless of their age had no problems with it. I started interviewing people in the winter time but the sudden arrival of spring sped up the slow, lazy tempo of networking by snowball sampling and the vibe and willingness to talk seemed to be more exuberant after March. Even though I did not live in the neighbourhood longer than two months, I still visited the cafés on a daily basis because of my interviews there.

My interviews were supplemented by joining the virtual centre of Újlipótváros: ÚSzB, a closed Facebook group for the Újlipótváros Parents and their Friends. It was a partial participant observation in the group which was founded 7 years ago by two mothers from the neighbourhood. I was not in incognito as the admins were aware of my intentions being there. For several months I was an active follower of the discussions about the lactose free dining options, where to go with small children on a rainy Saturday afternoon, what literature to give a 12-year old girl, where accidents happened and what to do with aggressive homeless people in the neighbourhood. The topics may seem random but they gave me great insight into the community life of Újlipótváros and how the most active members, meaning middle-class young parents, form their communal life and how they connect to each other.<sup>2</sup>

I also went on guided tours with a special focus on the story of the neighbourhood. They dealt with the significance of art history of the houses and their interior design of the Great Boulevard from the turn of the century, with the Communist past and the presence of secret service in the neighbourhood, and with the topic I am writing about: the legend of the “Bauhaus village”. Through these tours I deepened not only my lexical knowledge of the neighbourhood but more importantly learnt about the representation of it.

I gained additional lexical knowledge from archival research at the Metropolitan Ervin Szabó Library Budapest Collection. To supplement the ethnographic data and theory with historical background, I looked through newspapers like *Tér és Forma*, and essays from the 1920s and 1930s on urban planning, Bauhaus architecture and the neighbourhood history of Újlipótváros. Several of the photos and map illustrations are part of the Budapest Collection which supports the visual understanding of the evolution of the neighbourhood.

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<sup>2</sup> All phrases and sentences from the discussions of the group are my translation.

## Positionality

I am not from the neighbourhood, nor from the city of Budapest and I am not Jewish either. The invisible Jewish network and the winking references to Újlipótváros as *our* village, or being *there* made me think more deeply about the neighbourhood and its social web. Additionally, I read Péter György's essay<sup>3</sup> about Újlipótváros and how the loose network of people realised their own village.

Coming from a small town, for a long time I relished the idea of social cohesion, where everyone is familiar with each other, but after 18 years I had enough and I was happy to disappear in the anonymity of a city of almost 2 million. However, Újlipótváros became an axis mundi for some of my acquaintances. After a while I was wondering what people find living side by side attractive and being each other's friends, wives and husbands, lovers and haters in such a small space. How come the concentration of small shops and enterprises are still very high even if the biggest mall of the city is right on the corner at Nyugati station? What makes the neighbourhood the most vivid dining quarter after the busy and more and more unliveable party zone in district VII? And finally, how come that I was always bumping into something hidden but obviously Jewish in the district? These were the questions what made me go deeper into the question of visibility/invisibility. It turned out that there is a coded language that some people understand and many of them would like to learn. Being Újlipóthian became the subject of desire. My intention was to search for answers how the neighbourhood in the last decade became that desirable in many people's eyes.

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<sup>3</sup> Péter György. 2015. "FaluLátó/Falu Pesten." *Látó*. Retrieved: 2019. 05. 23. (<http://www.lato.ro/article.php/Falu-Pesten/3098/>)

## Limits

With all the goals of mapping the Jewish identities of the neighbourhood and researching the idea of belonging and communal feeling, not to mention the extension of super-gentrification literature, I am aware of the limits of the work as well. The ethnographic data serves as a partial insight with a massive focus on Jewish identities and network into the neighbourhood. However, it shows less about the non-Jewish communal segment of the network of the quarter. There is a strong focus on heritage and its legacy in the identity making. It reveals more from the representation of the district and its appearance in public perception. Because of the lack of greater quantitative data, I make more ethnographic observations than sociological conclusions.

# Chapter 1 – Historical Origins and Architectural Belonging

*“When I was young, the houses in this part of the town stood behind fences. Dogs would squeeze half way through the gap underneath and bark furiously, making you slip on the icy road, then stand up feeling thoroughly embarrassed. But this was all part of the charm, and you could continue on your way towards Újpest, which I knew only from legends and my own fears.”*

*Antal Szerb: A Martian’s Guide to Budapest (1935)*

## 1.1 From the mill industry to elite residential area: the birth of a new neighbourhood on the bank of the Danube from fin de siècle

The case of Újlipótváros is a special one. The district was created on an industrial zone surrounded by mill industries, breweries, coopers and slums. The capital city’s goal was to create a modern and uniform neighbourhood on the spreading edges of the city of Budapest. In a certain way the new neighbourhood represented a “‘vernacularization’ of avant-garde modernism” according to Rudolf Klein, one of the most productive architects and researchers of the Hungarian Jewish society’s impacts on the 19<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> century Budapest architecture (Klein 2009:52). But to discover the very origins of the neighbourhood we have to go back in time to the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century.

Budapest was always lacking in housing and the city has always suffered from the lack of comprehensive urban planning. After the Great Compromise in 1867, when the retrospectively called golden era of the dualistic period (Austro-Hungarian Dual Monarchy) started, the city gained its present look with the Grand Boulevard, Andrásy Avenue and grandiose constructions like the St. Stephen’s Basilica and the reconstructions of the Buda Castle. Later on, there was no coherent planning in Budapest. However, in the 1920s it became clear that the city needed a well-thought

reorganization of its infrastructure in order to lighten the heavy traffic of the city centre and make well-improved housing options for the growing number of residents.

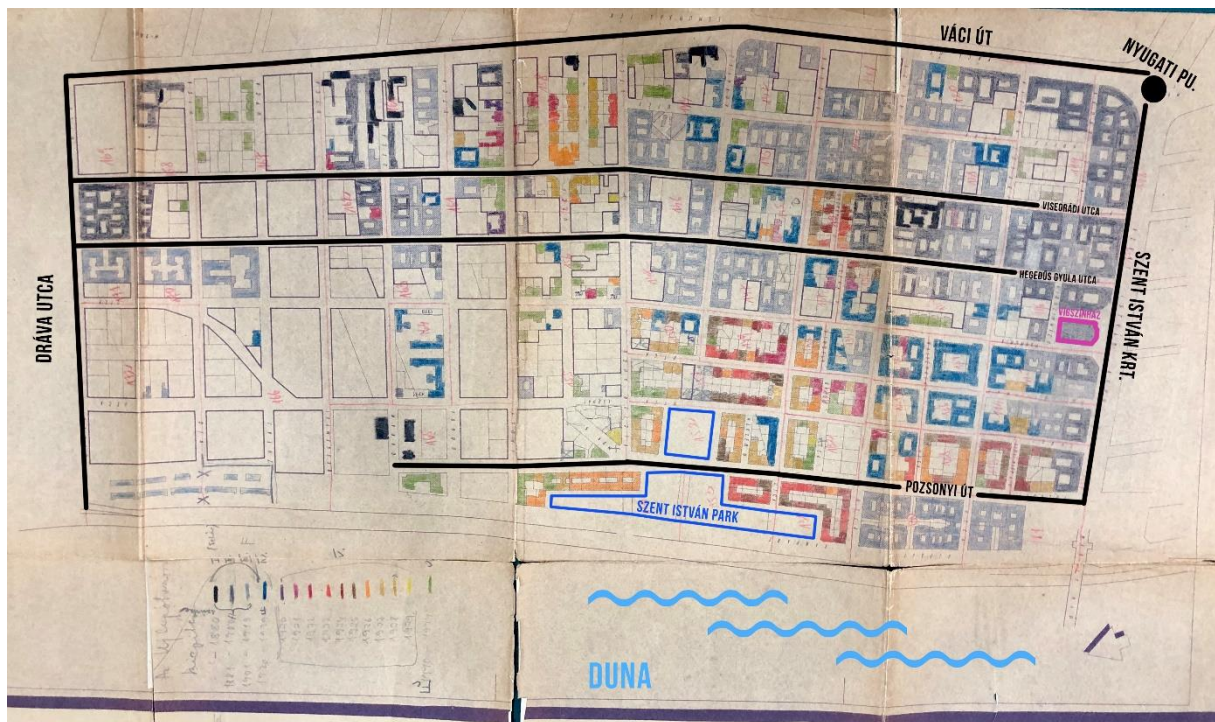


Figure 1. The development of Újlipótváros between 1880-1944. Source: Metropolitan Ervin Szabó Library Budapest Collection, Földeák-Somogyi 1954. Additional graphics by Barbara Németh, Gréta Süvegés

As a 1954 source from the urban planning office mentions, there was no crucial city planning and even if there was, mostly the private capitalist interests won out. The only exceptions at this time were the case of Újlipótváros, which is visible in Figure 1. (once district V., presently XIII) and Lágymányos in south Buda (district XI). This map is the appendix of the 1954 research which shows the borders of the neighbourhood and the colours of the buildings tell the date of the construction of the houses in Újlipótváros: Black, graphite, grey, dark blue: 1880-1919; different shades of purple, red, orange, yellow: 1931-1939; and green: 1940-1944. Both of the neighbourhoods are contrasting in the style of the architecture, which has its symbolic social meaning. While Lágymányos with its neo-baroque and historicist art nouveau style became the home of the Christian middle class, Újlipótváros became the home of middle-class intellectuals



mostly with Jewish background. At the same time both of the cases illustrate well how well-thought urban planning would help in creating more efficient and comfortable living areas in Budapest.

Újlipótváros had a pretty diverse face at the turn of the century: from the fashionable boulevard to the outskirts you could find outdated, ready-to-be-deconstructed poor neighbourhoods, slums with people living in tents, and industrial buildings. This stands in harsh contrast with the luxury apartment houses of Leopold (today Szent István) boulevard. “It almost could be said: the bright and the dark side of a global city unites in this neighbourhood!” (Földeák-Somogyi 1954:2)



Figure 2. Early workers' housing on the corner of Garam and Visegrádi street. The building is from 1884-1886. The photo was probably taken in the 1950s. Source: MESzL BC, Földeák-Somogyi 1954.

While the living areas were located along Váci street<sup>4</sup> closer to the present Western railway station (1877), the area around the river and in the middle of the district was an industrial zone.

<sup>4</sup> There are two Váci streets in Budapest. *Váci utca* is presently the main shopping street in between Ferenciek tere and Vörösmarty Square. *Váci út*, a busier road, starts at the Western railway station and goes North.

The Hungarian Kingdom at that time was one of the leading world powers in the mill industry. Budapest was home to the Unió steam mill, Tüköry's Royal brewery, Neuschloss' floor wood factory, Pannónia mill, The First Hungarian Wool Laundry and other factories and manufactures.<sup>5</sup> In the northern part of the district stood some workers' homes which could be counted as the early initiatives on conceptual social housing for the worker's society.

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<sup>5</sup> For the full list see Dr. Földeák János, Somogyi Gedeon: Az Új-Lipótváros kiépülése 1920-1944. Budapesti Városépítési Tervező Vállalat, Budapest, 1954.



Figure 3. Workers' homes from the Újpesti side of the Danube. The photo is probably from the 1950s Source: MESzL BC, Földeák-Somogyi 1954.



Figure 4. The same housing as in Figure 4, which stood on Újpesti side of the Danube and formed the continuation of Pozsonyi street. The photo was probably taken in 1970. Source: Fortepan





Figure 5. The Erzsébet and the Pannónia steam mills from around 1895. Source: Fortepan / Budapest Főváros Levéltára. Levéltári jelzet: HU.BFL.XV.19.d.1.07.059

Basically, in the 1870, before the great constructions of the Grand Boulevard Újlipótváros was an industrial district with a small, worker population. The luxury apartment houses on Leopold Boulevard were constructed between 1880s and 1906 and the foundation of Vígszínház on the territory of former Neue Welt cabaret, was the sign of a forming gentrifying process in 1896 turning the industrial and worker's area into a residential one. However, the turning point was the construction of the luxury apartments of Palatinus Houses (Figure 6.) on the banks of the Danube, which is today partially occupied by the slowly forming community centre of EMIH (United Hungarian Israelite Association/Chabad) called *Zsilip*. The only thing why it is especially interesting is because the lack of Jewish cultural/religious institutions in the district, the appearance of EMIH can impact the definition of the Jewishness in Újlipótváros. (See Chapter 3)



Figure 6. The Palatinus houses (1911) — built by the Palatinus Zrt and designed by Emil Vidor Source: Fortepan 1912

The next period of housing was encouraged by the state through tax relief for 10, 15, 30 years<sup>6</sup>. Because of the crisis after WW1 and the lack of private interests, further constructions only occurred in the second half of the 1920s. This was also the time when Váci street constructions were finished and the infamous Suhajda slum was torn down. Figure 7. illustrates the evolution of the new neighbourhood, in which WW1 is a clear break in this process of the development. The framework for the modern Újlipótváros was done in 1919 and was extended to a larger scale only in the 1930s.

<sup>6</sup> 1921./ LI. law provided 30-year tax relief for the houses finished by the end of 1923. Later on it was extended with 1925./ XVIII. law to the 1927 constructions as well. An additional new law 1925./XVIII. provided free ownership of the newly built flats.

## 1.2 “Collective dreams, bourgeois villas”<sup>7</sup>: How the Hungarian Bauhaus became the symbol of upper-middle-class luxury

*“Nowadays it’s full of modern mansions in the flat-roofed Bauhaus style. Inside them, youthful psychoanalysts spread out one another’s souls to dry on their couches, strapping amazons of the bridge table dream in the depth of their snow-white bathrooms, and amazingly clever clerks tune in to Radio Moscow. On Sundays in winter the entire neighbourhood sets out, walking stick in hand and goes on pilgrimage to Svábhegy, leaving only the poor abandoned barber behind. Everything here is modern and simple, objective and uniform. It is an area of two-room-plus-lobby apartments. With the defiant insistence of the young, their inhabitants conceal the only genuine secret of their wan little lives – that they have no money, none of them.”*

*Antal Szerb: A Martian’s Guide to Budapest. Magvető, Budapest, 1935*

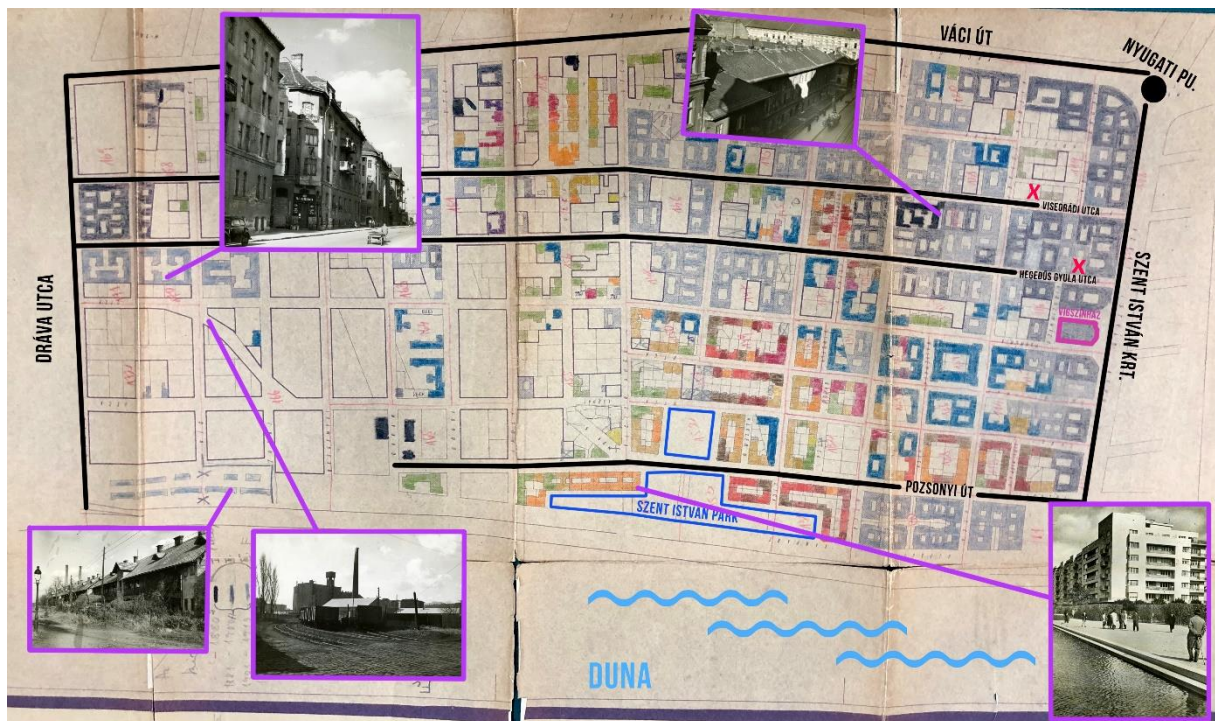


Figure 7. The radiation of Pozsonyi street and Szent István park to rest of the neighbourhood. (Map with photos.) Source: MESzL BC, Földeák-Somogyi 1954. Additional graphics by Barbara Németh, Gréta Süveges

Hungarian Modernism and Bauhaus had a special evolution, interrupted by WW1 and the hostile environment of the interwar revisionist politics. In Újlipótváros, there are several walking tours which go beyond the partially false representation of the neighbourhood as being

<sup>7</sup> „Collective Dreams and Bourgeois Villas – Site Plan of Hungarian CIRPAC group” – title of the exhibition at Blinken OSA Archives, Galeria Centralis about the modernization of housing in Hungary and the role of Bauhaus in the transformation process. 14 May – 15 September, 2019 <http://www.osaarchivum.org/events/Collective-Dreams-and-Bourgeois-Villas-%E2%80%93-Site-Plan-Hungarian-CIRPAC-Group-May-4%E2%80%93September-1-2>

exceptionally Bauhaus. The biggest controversy of this phrasing involves the Bauhaus apartment houses. Unfortunately, the spirit of Bauhaus School, founded in 1919 Weimar and banned in 1933 by the new Nazi regime (ed. Droste 2019), hardly can be fulfilled in a dense neighbourhood. Additionally, if we really stick to the definition, we will not find any Bauhaus students among the architects of the neighbourhood<sup>8</sup> and we rather should call the area a great example of Modernism built by talented architects who were heavily influenced by Art Deco, Modernism and the leading Hungarian architects from Bauhaus school like József Fischer, Farkas Molnár and Alfréd Forbát.

Then what made Újlipótváros the “Bauhaus village”? Iván Rakovszky, the new chairman of MBPW (The Metropolitan Board of Public Works = FKT, Fővárosi Közmunka Tanács), proposed on 15 May 1928 a decree which included long-term plans to construct a park and new housing in the overcrowded and unhealthy area of Újlipótváros. (Ferkai 2001:39) One significant part of the decree was the obligatory regulation plan of the newly built buildings. “the plots should be built with crosswise or adjoining courtyards, the height of the cornice should be 25 metres, which means that a ground floor plus six floors can be erected; the facades of the buildings within a plot should be built in a harmonious and unified way and supplied at least with a durable coat of plaster...” (Harrer 1941:136 as cited Ferkai 2001:40) By 1935 Szent István park (at that time named Rakovszky park) was ready and the neighbouring buildings around the park were completed by 1936 and other blocks by 1937. The most famous block of Pozsonyi street, number 38-42 designed by Béla Hofstätter and Ferenc Domány and built by the Alföldi Sugar-factory, became the symbol of the emergence of a new neighbourhood with a new lifestyle.

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<sup>8</sup> Zubreczki, Dávid. 2019. „Budapestben nincs is Bauhaus-ház, csak az ingatlanosok találták ki?” *Index*. Retrieved: 2019.05.28. ([https://index.hu/urbanista/2019/04/01/most\\_akkor\\_vegul\\_is\\_vannak\\_bauhaus-hazak\\_budapestben\\_vagy\\_nincsenek/](https://index.hu/urbanista/2019/04/01/most_akkor_vegul_is_vannak_bauhaus-hazak_budapestben_vagy_nincsenek/)).





Figure 8. Szent István park with Margaret Bridge and hill of the Buda Castle. Source: MESzL BC, Földeák-Somogyi 1954.





Figure 9. 38 Pozsonyi street: The legendary Dunapark-house. Architects: Béla Hofstätter, Ferenc Domány. Owner: Alföldi Sugar-factory. Built in 1935-1937. Source: Source: MESzL BC, Földeák-Somogyi 1954.

Modernism was not simply a style on the façade of a building but a different way of thinking. This is what Farkas Molnár and the Hungarian CIRPAC group<sup>9</sup> found offensive in the new modernist buildings of the neighbourhood that it is simplified into a style:

“... In the fight against the so-called fake moderns we can be a bit more tolerant, because we should admit that many times we are not better either, we are the subordinates of the same social impossibility. In this egg dance between capital and labour, proceeds and beauty, there needs to be a special talent to produce something real valuable. Until architecture depends on talent, there will always be good and bad ones...”<sup>10</sup>

This is also the reason why there is no need to stick to a very strict stylistic definition because the life of the Bauhaus school was too short, while its impact on Modern architecture and idea of social housing remains enormous. Amongst them, the biggest innovations of Modernism in housing were: 1.) the reformation of the kitchen (we are now in the era no servants); 2.) the emerging feminism and appearance of women in labour, setting them free from the household; 3.) the introduction of the hall/lobby – a new community space in flats; and 4.) additional comforts like balconies with showers, elevators, and pram holders on the ground floors of buildings. New ideas, new materials and new comfort – this is what describes the innovation of the Bauhaus and the interwar Modernism. However, the most original examples in their full ideological beauty of Bauhaus in Budapest can be found on the Rosehill and the upper hills of Buda and Margit Boulevard. Újlipótváros serves as a different example of how a uniformly designed neighbourhood can impact the quality of living.

The rise of Modernism was a sign of an already existing desire for a modern, middle-class lifestyle. This life-style flourished in the neighbourhood. Újlipótváros, facing the Danube and the Buda hills from the Pest side, represents a compromise, not just spatially but socially too: it does not have the high-luxury of the Buda villas. However, it cannot be clearly identified with the dense

<sup>9</sup> It was the Hungarian sub-group of CIAM, the international organization of modern architects to solve living issues. CIAM was found in 1928, Switzerland, while CIRPAC in 1929. In: Ferkai, András. 2001:238. *Molnár Farkas*. Budapest, TERC.

<sup>10</sup> Molnár, Farkas. „A CIRPAC 9 éve.” 1937 *Tér és Forma* 10:1:6.

and crowded old-fashioned apartment buildings of Pest. in contrast with the Buda fellows, the Újlipótváros residents are located in the heart of the busy cultural and social network of the city never leaving and always forming it. The phenomenon of a growing but still thin middle class in Budapest in the interwar period reflected the lack of modernization in the Hungarian society. (Gerő 2012:13-20) This and the lack of institutional support in state-founded social housing also made Bauhaus an upper-class luxury instead of a leading principle in mass social housing.

The biggest challenge to Bauhaus in Hungary was not only from the interwar period's hostile environment against everything Modern and international waves of new thinking, but parliamentary legislation as well. The Numerus Clausus (1920)<sup>11</sup> reduced the number of Hungarian Jews in the higher education, which led to a great emigration when many doctors, lawyers and architects studied in Italy, Germany and returned back to Hungary after their studies. Several of the Bauhaus architects were Hungarians of Jewish background. In other words, the identification of Bauhaus with Jews in Hungary was defined by the political context. This phenomenon plays a certain role in the present identification of the neighbourhood with Jewishness which appears in works like Klein about the “modernist shtetl” (Klein 2009). Even if the same number of Hungarian Jews were architects in Lágymányos with its historicist style (ed. Komoróczy 1999:338).

The identification of Jews with Modernism from a mistaken, ethnicized angle and the identification with the location presently forms one of the most significant elements in contemporary identity creation which is later on referred to as cultural capital (Zukin 1987). There is another significant example for this type of ethnicized identification from the turn of the century where debates about Jewishness of Budapest was forming (Gluck 2016:5-6): the phrase “Judapest”<sup>12</sup> first used by Karl Lueger, the mayor of Vienna at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. It was

<sup>11</sup> 1920: XXV. tc., „A tudományegyetemre, műegyetemre, a budapesti közgazdaságtudományi karra és a jogiakadémiára való beiratkozás szabályozásáról”, 1920. szeptember 26. In: Komoróczy, Géza. 2013. *„Nekem itt zsidónak kell lenni” Források és dokumentumok 1965-2012*. Pozsony: Kalligram.

<sup>12</sup> Intriguingly, the phrase was reused in the early 2000s in different forms like “Judafest”, which is now one of the biggest Jewish cultural festivals of Budapest.

used in an obviously antisemitic (and anti-Hungarian) connotation reflecting on the high number of Jews in Budapest. (23,6% in 1900, Komoróczy 2009) The Hungarian radical right referred to it with pleasure even until WW2 which implicates how a certain type of antisemitic discourse crystallized around everything modern, international and urban. This is how Újlipótváros was made Jewish as well as the more and more antisemitic politics enforced the visibility of Hungarian Jewry.

### 1.3 Theory & practice in the case of Újlipótváros gentrification

In the property market of Budapest, Bauhaus became the symbol of historical elite housing on the banks of the Danube. Here lies a gap between representation, urban legends and architectural reality. This is what several walking tours of the city in 2019 are trying to rediscover. What remains a fact is that Bauhaus as a style today is instrumentalized in the constantly growing real estate market.<sup>13</sup>

In Hungary, gentrification came after the democratic changes and the introduction of a market economy in the country. In the first scale the following districts went through major urban changes in Budapest: districts I, V, VI, VII and VIII. (N. Smith, 1996: 173-180). According to Smith (1996) the gentrification of the city hardly fits into the classical gentrification process, first described by Ruth Glass in 1964 as a replacement of a low class by higher, middle classes in a run-down neighbourhood as a consequence of its urban rescaling. According to Kovács the gentrification of Budapest had certain similarities with the greater American and Western-European processes; however, it was adapted to the local context. (Kovács, Wiessner and Zischner 2012)

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<sup>13</sup> Example: „The park is surrounded by expensive Bauhaus buildings with the first penthouse-style flats of Budapest.” Engel&Völkers Real Estate Agency Retrieved: 2019.04.23. [https://www.engelvoelkers.com/hu-hu/exposes/kuriozum-a-szent-istvan-park-felett-2671138.766970\\_exp/](https://www.engelvoelkers.com/hu-hu/exposes/kuriozum-a-szent-istvan-park-felett-2671138.766970_exp/)

According to Kovács, Wiessner and Zischner “a new nationalizing modernization process [occurred in Hungary], when new functions [i.e., new forms of capital accumulation] are emerging, and this process is proceeding in a very concentrated way”. (Kovács et al. 1994: 1089) Not only did steady privatization of the land and property took place after 1989 but Budapest attracted serious foreign capital investment as well (N. Smith 1996: 174). However, the case of Újlipótváros is a later story when in the early 2000’s European Union funded projects were open for application and when the dense centre of Budapest seemed to be less and less attractive to the newly emerging upper middle class society of the city with higher needs in housing, car parking and green zones.

In Újlipótváros the urban regeneration had a specific starting point. By the end of the 1990s it had an aging society and in the early 2000s new, young and mostly middle-class families moved into the neighbourhood. As I got to know from one of the oldest [here unnamed] real estate agencies in the district<sup>14</sup>, an inevitable part of the repopulation process was that, before the economic crisis, the government had a flexible property purchasing credit program. This is probably the factor which – in addition to the generally middle-class origins of the district – was re-strengthened by young middle-class couples and families moving in the neighbourhood.

What has made it an especially expensive and exclusive district in Budapest is the complex result of real estate speculation artificially created by the greater real estate companies in the city. Compared to the historically expensive neighbourhoods of Buda, Újlipótváros was always expensive but not as extremely as it is now. Prices after the economic crisis in 2008 were five times higher than before the recession. For example, a once 20 million HUF flat with a view of Szent István park and the Danube rose all of a sudden to 100 million HUF. After the first shock of the unimaginable increase of the property prices the market started to accept the new conditions and since then the prices of flats have been increasing in basically all parts of the district. This was

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<sup>14</sup> All information is provided by two active agencies from the district. For privacy reasons the real estate agencies chose rather not to be named in the research.

confirmed by the real estate actors I interviewed as well: just after the crisis, only the luxurious rooftop apartments went through such a drastic value change, but now the prices of less upscale flats of the neighbourhood and even the Communist period-built panel apartments in the greater district are too high for the new middle-class residents.

Sharon Zukin (1987), in her analysis about the relationship between culture and capital introduces the intriguing socioeconomic influences on the process of gentrification. The four key points are “the use of historic preservation in constituting new urban elite, gentrification’s contribution to homelessness and displacement, the economic rationality of the gentrifier’s role, and the relation between gentrification and economic transformation.” (Zukin 1987:134) The case of Újlipótváros is special and Zukin’s very US-based experiences are not totally applicable on it, although I still find her work important because separating the demographic, cultural and economic elements forms a great structure to analyse the case of Újlipótváros.

The historic preservation of the Bauhaus-style neighbourhood, and its famous artist and intellectual owners from the pre-war era, forms a certain type of cultural capital. The new middle-class, with indigenous and newcomer residents, is using this cultural capital to legitimize a historical middle-class lifestyle by re-occupying a historically special, uniform neighbourhood. This process of occupation creates a strong connection to form community identity through space and time. One of my informants, Mara revealed the sometimes irrational attachment toward historical housing some residence have. She is 41 and lived many times in the neighbourhood but recently moved back. However, her father refused to move to the neighbourhood. As she told me:

“it [Mara’s house] was built around the 30s... My father moved back to the city as an old man did not want move to Újlipótváros. Many people say that it is now irrational to live here. Because you have to search for 30 minutes for parking before you go home, the conditions of the buildings are not that good... I can see the rationality behind my father’s decision not buying property [here]. There is still district heating in many flats, a lot of technical problems because the flats are old etc... Some are attracted toward old buildings,

some not. For me it's really difficult to move into a new building, it's a punishment for me.”

This irrational viewpoint is common among the informants when they are defining their connection to the location.

The second point about displacement by Zukin is not totally true in the case of Újlipótváros and this is also the reason why I tend to state that it is in the first-round a positive rescaling instead of a negative gentrifying process. The replacement happens within a very demographic contextual framework: the aging society of the neighbourhood opened up an opportunity for others to resettle there. The historical roots of the space and the good location are part of the network of the city centre. However, it is far from the noisy and dense centre of town. In the early 2000s middle-class couples and families were drawn to the neighbourhood because of its affordable prices. This opportunity was supported by the state as well with the above-mentioned flexible property purchasing credits. In this case the urban policies of the city and the capital of the middle class formed a probable solution for resettling an aging neighbourhood.

The second-wave repopulation that started about 10 years ago was reinforced in a more upscale level after the real estate market realised the market opportunities hiding in Újlipótváros. What Zukin describes as the high-status gentrification by the “expansion of high-income personnel in corporations and government and producers’ services” is the second step in case of Újlipótváros and not the initial one. The higher-class resettlement of the neighbourhood added to and supported the constantly going redevelopment of urban space. This is most visible in the spaces of consumption in the district and here we can already see the reconfiguration of capital in space, namely the spatial fix defined by David Harvey (Harvey 2001). As Harvey elaborated in his essay about spatial fix, capital needs a constant geographic expansion to resolve its inner crisis of overaccumulation. This is achieved through “fixing investments spatially, embedding them in the land, to create an entirely new landscape” like cities as well. (Harvey 2001:28) In the case of Újlipótváros, we witness the production of space through the spread of real estate business and

the new cafés, restaurants, not to mention the epidemic of hairdressers, cosmetics & bio shops and clinics.

Újlipótváros is one of the few residential neighbourhoods in the city where the numbers of restaurants, pubs and bars are relatively high.<sup>15</sup> It is also worth taking a look at the quality and the great variety of small enterprises and businesses in the neighbourhood from the “kismama shops” to the culinary specialities and the constantly rising number of real estate offices. The number and the high-quality of restaurants, ice-cream bars and culinary shops presuppose a minimum middle-class daily consumption. This is why I would call Újlipótváros an illustrative case of super-gentrification (Lees 2003) or more poetically, the macha-latte gentrification referring to the high number of new wave cafés, where the production of space through urbanism and spread of upscale consumption in the neighbourhood develops. The main fields where the Újlipótváros spatial fix appear are the high-quality restaurants and the growing real estate market; both have a strong impact on the social cohesion of the neighbourhood. The investment-based property purchasing without the intention of belonging to the social net of Újlipótváros destroys the communal entity. While the commodification of Jewish identity instrumentalizes Jewishness.

In this chapter I introduced the historical origins of the neighbourhood to be able to locate Újlipótváros not only on the geographical but social map of Budapest. The neighbourhood represents a specific identity significantly based on middle-class belonging through socio-political consciousness and consumption. Capitalist rescaling is making the neighbourhood attractive for a middle-class audience. However, today there is a chance that the current speculations by the real estate agents and investors will destabilize the social cohesion of the neighbourhood. One tentative

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<sup>15</sup> E.F.; Szémann, Tamás. 2018. „Annyi a kocsmá a belvárosban, hogy az összes lakó egyszerre is be tudna ülni.” *Index*. Retrieved: June 3, 2019 ([https://index.hu/gazdasag/2018/10/20/budapest\\_vendeglatas\\_kocsmak\\_etterem\\_bufo\\_bevetel\\_2011-2017/](https://index.hu/gazdasag/2018/10/20/budapest_vendeglatas_kocsmak_etterem_bufo_bevetel_2011-2017/))



conclusion of this chapter is that the first-round newcomers which basically formed the massive middle-class layer of the society are the victims of the super-gentrification.

## Chapter 2 – The Act of Naming

*“Name: The man is guarded by all of his life by a name, and even if he suddenly wakes up from dreaming, he knows, who he is. After his life the name will continue to represent him, if he would have anything to do on this Earth.”*

*Podmaniczky Szilárd: Szép Magyar Szótár Történetek A-tól Z-ig (2009)*

The act of naming is one of the most ancient ways of capturing and identifying a person, an object or a location on map. In this chapter I am going to discuss the different nicknames of Újlipótváros and how the names are emphasizing different characteristics of the neighbourhood. Here I will analyse, through Lakoff's concept of metaphorical thinking, how the idea of the village is turned into reality in the neighbourhood and how much it defines the way the residents think about themselves. I will also reflect on the two-directions of name giving which is not only a one-way action within the community but it is a message toward a wider audience. I will apply Herzfeld's theory on cultural intimacy and Waquant's idea on urban stigmatization, albeit both from a very different angle.

### 2.1 Identification through nicknames

When did naming things begin? As Zachary J. Foster puts in his PhD dissertation on Palestine, we have to go back to the Pleistocen era “because that's when we first came to believe in words, ideas or concepts like Palestine. We mastered a concept of a symbol. We learned to name objects of the world, including abstract objects like places. Natural and sexual selection led us to communicate with infinite complexity by relating symbols to one another with grammar, morphology and syntax.” (Foster 2017:220) The main goal of naming through language is identification.

The name *Újlipótváros* in the last 15 years became synonymous with a socially sensitive and residentially conscious neighbourhood in the city of Budapest where “everyone knows each other”. *Újlipótváros* became known for its village-style identity where the number of intellectuals is higher than any village in Hungary. If we look at the great varieties of walking tours in Budapest for locals, after the official “Jewish district”, the most well-known districts are Józsefváros in district VIII and *Újlipótváros* in district XIII. If I say Istenhegy from district XII., the immediate references or pre-conceptions about the neighbourhood does not come as fast as if we hear about the socially challenging parts of *nyócker* or the vivid cafés of Pozsonyi street.

Why is this important? Because with naming we also assign characteristics and stories to the chosen subject. *Újlipótváros* as it is described in the book of Iván Bächer, the beloved writer of the neighbourhood, it is the land of intellectuals. And these people are more than eager to acknowledge it and reflect on it. Probably there is no other districts in the city of Budapest where the legends and stories of a location are in parallel with the desire by their prevailing residents’ cultural and economic capital to preserve them. *Újlipócia* as a title of a book, of a short-lived journal, even of a play is a referential point in the everyday discussions. All nicknames are foregrounding a real or imagined characteristic of the neighbourhood. In the following pages we will discuss those meanings.

*Újlipócia*, *Lipócia*, *Újzsidóland* [*New Jewish Land*], *the village*. These are the names which have made *Újlipótváros* one of the most special neighbourhoods in Budapest. All names have different connotations and reveal a different contextual way of understanding the identity of the neighbourhood.

*Újlipócia* or the shortened form of it, *Lipócia* is probably the most well-known ones. It was created by Iván Bächer, a non-indigenous writer of the neighbourhood who was probably one of the most well-known people of the community. He wrote a book called *Újlipócia* in 2009 which is basically a collection of random writings following the topographic routes of the neighbourhood.

Sometimes he elaborates on the past of a building, sometimes he deals more with the present function of it but what he mainly describes are the people of the neighbourhood: Éva from Láng-Téka, the “heart chakra”<sup>16</sup> of the neighbourhood; Víg úr from a wine shop next to Piccolo; or Gyuri, the newspaper seller from the corner; belly dancers; café owners; furriers and homeless people from the corner. They are all called by their nicknames. (Bächer-Teknőš 2014) If a reader does not belong to the circle of the neighbourhood, s/he probably will stay indifferent to this naming. Here we reach the main point why: it is a book about the residents of the neighbourhood, for the residents of the neighbourhood, by a resident of the neighbourhood, using names associated with the neighbourhood.

Michael Herzfeld’s insights about cultural intimacy are apt here. He writes in his work about cultural intimacy that it is “The recognition of those aspects of a cultural identity that are considered a source of external embarrassment but that nevertheless provide insiders with their assurance of common sociality” (Herzfeld 1997:3). Herzfeld focuses more on the cultural and in wider sense the social intimacy which is used and instrumentalized by the state through the symbolism of kin and family. Shared embarrassment is part of the idea of intimacy. However, the case of Újlipótváros is different. Here we partially can talk about “self-stereotypes that insiders express ostensibly at their own collective expense.” (Herzfeld 1997:3) Albeit I would reverse Herzfeld’s definition of cultural intimacy and would say: the Újlipótváros intimacy is based on a shared pride by being the resident of the neighbourhood with a well-preserved past.

The Újlipóthians proudly wear the positive urban stigma of a topographical area. “Yet territorial infamy displays properties analogous to those of bodily, moral and tribal stigmata, and it poses dilemmas of information management, identity formation and social relations, quite similar to these, even as it is also sports distinctive properties of its own.” (Waquant 2008:238) He elaborates that while Goffman has not dealt with the third types of stigmas, namely the territorial

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<sup>16</sup> Phrase is from Iván Bächer about the book shop. *Könyvesbolt, kőrösfával*. Láng-Téka Könyvesbolt, 2014.

one which “ ‘can be transmitted through lineages and contaminate all members of a family.’ “ (Goffman 1963:4-5 as cited Wacquant 2008:238) Wacquant adds that even if it is a separate and distinctive stigma, it can be easily dissimulated by geographical relocations. What is intriguing in the case of Újlipótváros is that we can see how Wacquant’s notion of a negative territorial stigma turns into a positively perceived and even desirable one.

The topography of Újlipótváros is filled with the residents’ own reversed cultural intimacy and because it was named by them, this is what formed their *coded clarity*. They gave name to the very familiarity of the neighbours among each other, saying hello to every second person on the street, going out with children to the parks and squares of the neighbourhood, finding emotional stability in having their own favourite groceries and cafés around their home. All these elements of living in the neighbourhood was transformed into a commonly shared experience and after a while the conscious residents wanted to contribute to this experience to widen this social reality or as Herzfeld says the wider experience of cultural intimacy, namely social intimacy.

However, access is not evident to the community of the neighbourhood. This brings up the notion of *coded clarity*. The newcomer has to know the opaque rules; the cultural minimum, from where this belonging originates and if s/he can read these signs, can be part of the community. This is a process of learning and socialization, and according to my findings and experiences, it is multi-layered knowledge. The first step to gain this knowledge is the internalized use of the different nicknames of Újlipótváros. This is where the two-sided part of this coded clarity comes from. The distinction of belonging creates a contextual audience made up of three groups: 1. members who are reading and sharing the signs; 2. members who are reading but not sharing the signs and in this way their belonging can be questioned; and 3. non-members who are not reading and not sharing signs meaning they do not belong. Only through this non-belonging can we understand the coded clarity of belonging. Coded clarity means nothing for non-members but important to strengthen the idea of belonging among the members. However, non-members

can be aware of the village-lifestyle and the community. As some of my interviewees mentioned, when their acquaintances heard that they live in Újlipótváros, the acquaintances said a meaningful “aha” and silence. In the other case they felt a certain type of alienation from my interviewees as the stigma of their neighbourhood meant “living the upper middle-class fancy family lifestyle.” Here we cannot only see the significance of coded clarity among the residents but how Wacquant’s stigma can be reversed from the socially and ethnically determined ones through topography. It means that social determination through space can work in the opposite sense as well. As Újlipótváros people probably hardly can be outcasted from the society, but can be stigmatized according to their place of living.

The contextual framework is extremely important in this type of communication, namely reading the signs because not only the readers and non-readers exist but there is also a thin group: people who according to their address, class and cultural/ethnic identity belongs to those who are aware of the coded clarity but refuse to read those signs and share that reversed cultural intimacy. Partially it is a generational phenomenon, where the older generation born during or right after the war is aware of these special types of ties of the neighbourhood when they hear its name but is not forming a new type of social network and kinship from it. The newer generation in their early 30s, 40s can share a more intensive grouping. The most significant examples of refusals are coming from the new generation where according to his/her social status and ethnic identity, s/he is supposed to belong to the community and even can read the signs and share the coded clarity of it, however s/he refuses to read and share them.

Returning to the significance of naming we have to look at the main embodiments of communal pride in the Újlipóthian identity formation. ÚSzB, a private group in facebook which knows no limit in solving problems; or *Pozsonyi Pihenik* which celebrated its tenth anniversary last year and grew from a grassroot movement of having picnic with your neighbours in Pozsonyi street. It was first organized amongst others by Iván Bächer, the writer and Éva Rédei, the owner

of *Láng Téka*, as Júlia Lángh, writer wrote about her “not only a friend, bookshop owner and brilliant organizer, but the Godmother of one of my books too.”<sup>17</sup> These efforts of widening the social frames and cultural references of the given community can partially explained by the evolution of social movements’ theory by Porta and Diani as these movements “are linked by dense informal networks; share a distinct collective identity (Porta, Diani 2006:20). However, it will be elaborated in the next part about the realization of a metaphorical concept of the village.

- „Then *Újzseland!*
- have no problem with it because it’s openly a joke
- It depends on who says.
- *Újlipócia* is way worse than the *falu*. I guess, both of them are the products of the last 10-15 years. I don’t understand at all why my parents’ generation (or anyone else) find calling [the neighbourhood] *Újlipócia* funny, but we are different. I only use *Újlipótváros* or the short version of it, *Újlipót*, but it’s sure that I’m conservative in this. However, even if I lived half of my adult life in abroad, I identify as an indigenous from *Újlipótváros* and can miss a lot the warmth of it.”

As mentioned, *Lipócia* is the shortened version of *Újlipócia*. However, when someone started a discussion about the names of the district at the closed facebook group of ÚSzB (textbox on the left is an extract from later in that same discussion where a funky name comes up: *Újzseland*), someone said it was a wrong one because *Lipócia* is supposed to refer to *Lipótváros* which is the other side of the Grand Boulevard. This is partially right but what can we do with shortening of nicknames? But let’s see a real funky name: *Újzseland*. This play on words is a reference to New Zealand, *Újzseland* in Hungarian while letter “zs” refers to its Jewishness. Usage of this nickname can have very different connotations

from someone from the neighbourhood with Jewish background which would be more like a wink on Jewishness – you know it, I know it. While it can have antisemitic meaning too. As one participant of the discussion above emphasizes it among the comments as well. Regarding the

<sup>17</sup> The quotation is part of the book which is the collection of writings from leading intellectuals and writers from the network of *Láng-Téka* for the 25th anniversary foundation of it. *Könyvesbolt, kőrifával*. Láng-Téka Könyvesbolt, 2014.

name *Újzséland*, one of the members of the discussion in an earlier part added the following comment (in the textbox):

- „Újzséland
- This is exclusive 😊 yuck
- I was told by a friend from Pasarét even something more hardcore: 'for you it's easy in the shtetl!' „

In this conversation the neighbourhood was called a shtetl<sup>18</sup>. Maybe the most illustrative comment is the previous one from the earlier part of the conversation.

The last comment on the page summarizes most of my findings which says that the different nicknames of the neighbourhood are the inventions of the last ten, maximum 15 years and through these nicknames a certain kind of insiderness is emphasized which is not always sympathetic even for the indigenous residents either.

And here we arrive to the village metaphor, *falú* in Hungarian. *Falú* is probably as well-known nickname of the neighbourhood as *Újlipócia*. It is less cheesy, as it was mentioned among the comments above but catches the very idea of the community. However, it still has an insider connotation.

„the expression Lipócia is so cheesy, I guess, if it was sweets, it would be the shittiest type of overcandied buttercream cookie what sticks your mouth. an insiderness, elitist, haughty and needlessly historicist and topographically false, furthermore needlessly Jewish (I can say it 😊) mood radiates from it.”

I will elaborate on its significance as a metaphor in sub-chapter 2.2. Here I just would like to point out the contextual significance regarding the usage of these nicknames. Through the above-mentioned examples, we can imagine what is the significance of different naming. While

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<sup>18</sup> Small, most of the time poor settlements in the territory of Galicia in Eastern Europe with high religious, Hasidic Jewish society. Shtetl is an eternal ethos in Yiddish literature for a romanticized location of old times where all true tradition originates from.



some forms can be more inclusive, the other has stronger references to the Jewishness of the neighbourhood. What I found especially interesting is the contextual framing of these names. This Újlipóthian identity needs the special context with a specific urban knowledge of the non-members of the community. If you have never heard about the unique atmosphere of Újlipótváros, if anyone winks at you saying ‘he is a Lipóthian’ or in any other forms, the lack of understanding will not provide the environment of mutual consensus based on the coded clarity of reading the identity and the wink behind the shared insiderness. And the magic is lost...

Coded clarity serves as the definition for the coded reality of the given social signs and symbols. The clarity is representing the mutual understanding and the community of “readers”. While at the same time this coded clarity needs not only readers but an audience as well, where the idea of belonging can distinguish one from another. This is exactly what specifies the Újlipóthian identity among the diverse neighbourhood identities of Budapest.

## 2.2 Realization of a metaphor: the village is alive

In the following part I will introduce how this identity was created based on a metaphor and who made it real. Analysing the metaphorical concept, I will shed light on the poetic exaggerations and its actual embodiments in reality.

“The essence of metaphor is understanding and experiencing one kind of thing in terms of another.” (Lakoff-Johnson 1980:5). And many of our activities have metaphorical nature which is inevitable if we are using a language for communication. “The most fundamental values in a culture will be coherent with the metaphorical structure of the most fundamental concepts in culture.” (Lakoff-Johnson 1980:22) *Falu* in Hungarian and in the Hungarian cultural context has a specific connotation with characteristics like “familiar”, “cosy”, “small”, “community-centred”. *Falu* is the locus where the essence of national identity is still preserved in contrast with the urban

environment. (The urban and country opposition has a long cultural history but due to the lack of time and space I cannot go into it.)

However, I have to add a comment here on the other aspect of the “village” term. The term urban village was first used by the British Urban Villages Group (UVG) in the late 1980s to reflect on the unsustainable nature of cities. (Franklin and Tait, 2002:251-252) According to the initial descriptions of planned urban villages, Újlipótváros is really close to meet those expectations. Intriguing that this part of the city, planned only in the 1920s when it was founded, became and internalized all those elements of a new identity which was conceptualized by urban planners only in the 1980s for sustainability reasons. It would be interesting that how the example of Újlipótváros can serve as a proper example for Budapest urban planning, later on, I will analyse the more poetic identification with the village metaphor.

In general, even if each person has a slightly or totally different associations with the Hungarian word *falu*, its metaphorical meaning, where an idea (community) is identified with a type of settlement, a location (village) will cover the above-mentioned characteristics. The experience is cultural and every experience is based on cultural presuppositions. (Lakoff-Johnson 1980: 57) It means that the *falu* metaphor applied on Újlipótváros defines it as a territorially small entity with a population of residents who tend to know each other and have more interactions among them than in the generally impersonal urban environment of Budapest.

One part of the identification can come from the sensation of the everyday experiences living in one pleasant neighbourhood in district XIII. As it is residential area, many people know each other and because of the young families and children, the interaction is much higher than in a sociographically more diverse neighbourhood. This is supported by the majority of topics on ÚSzB: searching for a Batman costumes for a boy age 4; or children boots in size 28; asking questions about whether parents can bring cakes to kindergarten; or what are the most child friendly hotels in Cape Verde, etc.

Everyday routines also form connections among the residents because Újlipótváros, in spite of the malls in the centre of Budapest, is filled with small enterprises and the residents do not have to leave the district at all to buy the groceries, do bigger shopping, copy keys, or go to hairdresser/barber/gym or even cultural events. The great variety of cafés is the ultimate sign of an urban environment where people are practicing the *flâneur* lifestyle. This is an inevitable element of analysing modernity and modern urban life which stands in contrast with the rural *falu*. Furthermore, all those writing by local writers, postcard-like short stories from and about the neighbourhood are supporting the existence of a reflective, urban observer attitude which is extremely highly presented in this part of town.

Intriguingly, the well-developed rich infrastructure what makes an urban area a “village”, functions as a separate infrastructural entity. While the Hungarian reality of villages are in the contemporary and even in the historical sense are definitely not the most well-developed locations regarding infrastructure, not to mention its aging society and the lack of basic needs like health care institutions and education. With the above-mentioned examples I wanted to reflect on what is the identificational gap between the real rural settlement of a village and Újlipótváros, and in what ways the neighbourhood is only projecting the village identity.

Then what makes Újlipótváros a *falu*? As we can see there is a gap between the subject and the object of the metaphor. A Hungarian village is not as good as Újlipótváros. And here comes the other segment of the identification. Metaphors are based on partial identifications and this is the reason why there is a construct in several of them which is mixed with some realistic elements. The desire for belonging and the idea of the community, even if it is probably more virtual than in a real village but more real than in an average urban environment, are in parallel with the community-based living experience of a small settlement and the “settlement” of Újlipótváros.

There is no clear evidence who used the village metaphor first. As it is mentioned in one of the facebook comments under the post discussed in the earlier sub-chapter, it is probably the

product of the last 10-15 years. Since then blogs, newspapers, the official site of *Pozsonyi Piknik*, the Bächer and other local writers' books all refer to the neighbourhood as a village and these are the channels through it became a common and visible referential point among the residents as well. This fact is highly supported by the existence of helpful environment among parents and neighbours. As I saw you can leave your keys at the café downstairs, or even your kids for half an hour while you are running for the post office. And unlike my experience in other parts of Budapest, you can freely ask with the obviousness about standing on the same political platform, your barista whether she was yesterday at the protests against the government or not.

Additional element of the village identity formation is the social competencies for action among the residents of the neighbourhood. Partially because of their class belonging, it is an eager society to take for social actions like collecting food and dresses for the Syrian refugees in 2015 summer-fall; annually collecting dresses, shoes, toys for families in need; informing each other about the homeless people and their needs like blankets or coats in the wintertime; or organizing themselves for protests. With politics we arrived to thin ice but not in the case of Újlipótváros. The lefty past of district XIII with the workers' neighbourhood of Angyalföld and the "Jewish" neighbourhood of Újlipótváros formed an informal knowledge and tradition of politically lefty and/or liberal, socially definitely sensitive idea of a good citizen. This phenomenon of political belonging significantly contributes to the coded clarity and its symbols in the neighbourhood.

The greatest evidence for this social activism within the community is the donation boxes of *Heti Betevő*, civil organization which grew out from the grassroot movement of preparing substantial Sunday lunch for people in need. It all started at *Kisüzem* at Klauzál square, district VII around four years ago. After a while, during my experiences in Újlipótváros, I started to wonder why I see *Heti Betevő* and only *Heti Betevő* donation boxes at many of the pizza places, cafés and food bars. I was enlightened that one of the heads of the organization lives in the neighbourhood. Here I also have to mention BAGÁZS, which opened their charity shop and event place on the

corner of Szent István park recently. BAGÁZS is a civil organization helping Roma settlements through educational and social work in Bag and Dány, not far from Budapest. The presence of social and charity organizations only shows the social embeddedness of high social activism.

In the historical sense there is nothing new under the sun: Újlipótváros was always inhabited by conscious middle-class residents who had a loose network. The frame is given, however the channels of communicating this belonging and, according to my assumption, the visibility of this network has changed in the last 70 years. This is how we slowly extend the greater view of the village phenomenon from a stricter metaphorical concept to the greater analysis of the village experience through Ervin Goffman's frame theory (Goffman 1974). But because the frame theory can only be understood in the light of Jewishness of the neighbourhood, I will elaborate on it in the next chapter.

To conclude, Újlipótváros seems to be a loose network of people embedded into a very urban environment supported with strong socio-cultural elements in its identity formation. It is not uniform and big enough territorially to be associated with nationalism (Herzfeld 1997) and not wide enough to be a social movement. (Snow 2003) However, some of the identity strengthening actions definitely can be called grass root movements and actions which are fuelled by the residents themselves. Like in the case of charity programs for the Syrian refugees or the recent fight against the massive Saint Stephen statute in the Szent István park to save more green zones. In this chapter I reversed Herzfeld's theory of cultural intimacy, so we can understand more from the social basis of belonging. While analysing the metaphorical concept of village, I provided insight into what characteristics the residents of Újlipótváros desire to be identified with and what is a construct in this identification. In the last chapter, I discuss one of the most significant pillars of belonging, namely the Jewishness, through which we can have the greater scope of understanding the constantly changing content of a stabile framework in the neighbourhood.

## Chapter 3 – Jewish Ethnic Belonging in Újlipótváros

*“Cholent: Újlipótváros is the home of original, Hungarian cholent. A lot of Hungarian with Jewish origins live here, and the cholent is a Hungarian dish with Jewish origins, which is not known in Israel, neither in the States, nor anywhere else in the world, only in Hungary.”*

Bächer Iván-Teknős Miklós: *Újlipócia*, javított kiadás (2014)

At the beginning of my fieldwork, one of my friends, Simon, made fun of me and my thesis on the district. He said I am working on basically the fact that „many Jews live in Újlipótváros”. Certainly, I got offended. But he has a point. My aim is to figure out why Hungarian Jews in 2019 feel the desire to move into a neighbourhood where the concentration of middle class, mostly intellectual Hungarians – many with openly Jewish identities—are higher. This question is truly intriguing in a city where the Holocaust occurred 75 years ago and where the Jewish life once was flourishing and now with the tragedies behind again seems to be thriving, albeit on a very different level accompanied by contemporary political antisemitism like the government’s anti-Soros campaign or the scandals around the House of Fates, a planned new Holocaust museum about the children of the Shoah.<sup>19</sup>

The epigraph to this chapter is from a book beloved by the residents, *Újlipócia*, written by Iván Bächer about the everyday life of the neighbourhood. The paragraph sums up the metaphoric link between place and identity: Hungarianness, Jewishness and culinary identity. In the first part of the chapter, Újlipótváros will be introduced as the location of Budapest Jewry in the historical

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<sup>19</sup> The Hungarian government planned the House of Fates, a new Holocaust museum introducing the Hungarian children victims of Shoa on the territory of the former Józsefváros railway station where deportations occurred. The opening was planned for the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Hungarian Holocaust in 2014. The biggest problem of the never opened museum was the lack of consent between the government and the Hungarian Jewish communities. Lately, EMIH became the responsible for the project, which creates tension as making compromises with the problematic governmental historical narratives already applied in different segments of history education, support of the Horthy Cult, or see the German Occupation Memorial at Liberty Square, Budapest.

sense. In the second part I will elaborate on how the historical knowledge on Jewishness is embedded into the popular cultural scene.

### 3.1 The spatial spread of the Budapest Jewry

There is a vast literature of Jewish urbanism; however here I focus on how the location of the Budapest Jewish society has changed with the different configurations of its identity. Furthermore, I will touch upon the question of Jewish districts.

Klein (2009) referred to Újlipótváros as the fifth Jewish district of Budapest. Ladányi partially supports this view through statistics about the almost constantly growing size of the Jewish population in district XIII since its foundation (Kovács ed. 2002:83). However, I am not totally convinced. The relatively high Jewish presence of Újlipótváros is undeniable, although the definition of the “modernist shtetl” (also used by Klein) is hardly applicable on the area but rightly catches more from the factor of desire for belonging based on a certain romanticized idea of a village lifestyle, elaborated in Chapter 2.

In the middle of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, there was a mass Jewish resettlement to Hungary from different parts of the Habsburg Empire. The main location of Jewish settlement was in Óbuda, on the land of the Zichy family, who were famous for their tolerance toward Jews. This is where the new age Budapest Jewish history starts. The spread of Jewry in the city was influenced significantly when in 1840 a new law permitted Jews to settle down in the city of Pest (Komoróczy ed. 1999:59). During this time the Buda site Jewish population was hardly growing in contrast with Pest. (Sebők; Komoróczy ed. 1999) While the area of contemporary Terézváros 80% was Jewish in 1880, by 1920 it was still between 50-60%. As Zeke points out the statistics are only applicable for the Hungarian Jewish population which is still registered as “Israelites” according to their religious belonging and we have a blank space regarding the converted and assimilated ones. Here starts a shift in the self-definition of Hungarian Jewish identity where the location and ethnic and religious

identity will not correspond anymore and clarity of identification disappears. This is also the reason why I have problems defining an area as “Jewish” where the ethnic belonging and religious-institutional context is not the organizing power in settling down.

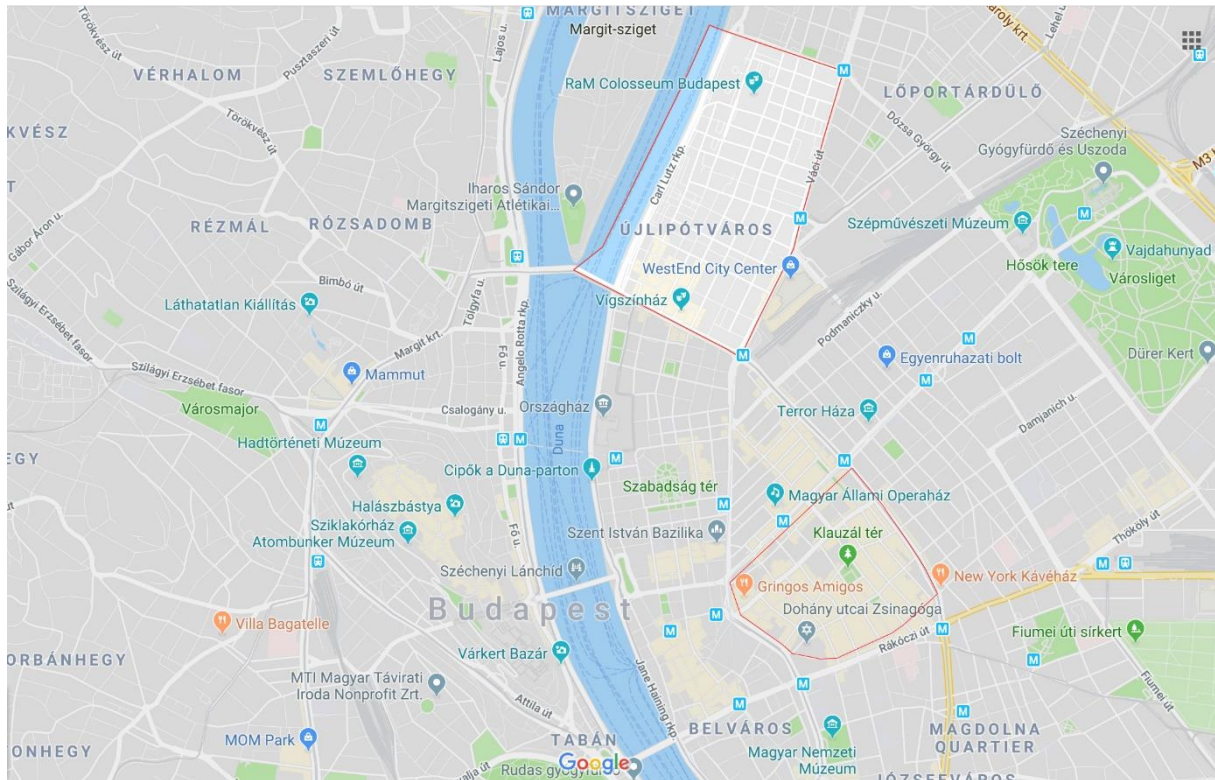


Figure 10. The Google map showing contemporary Újlipótváros on the banks of the Danube and the „historical Jewish district”, the smaller area, also signed with red. It is the approximate area of the former ghetto that stood between November, 1944-January 1945.

With new relocations and equal civic rights in 1867 (Komoróczy 2012:89-995), the Jewry of Budapest stepped out from the institutional religious framework of smaller Teréz- and Erzsébetváros, now known as the party and “official” Jewish district (Figure 10.). The new wave of settlement occurred in Lipótváros, where an emancipated and highly converted (Konrád 2016:261-262) economic elite settled down. For this high society of the new bourgeoisie, conversion was the access to certain positions like higher governmental positions. The later habitation of Újlipótváros in the interwar period brings a new chapter in the formation of Hungarian Jewish identity.



„I have never denied my Jewishness, I am *of the Jewish denomination* even today, though I do not feel *Jewish*. I have never been taught religion, it does not meet my needs, I do not practice it. Race, blood clot, roots, ancient sorrow trembling in the nerves and the like is but pure nonsense to me... My Jewishness my *life-problem* only because circumstances, laws and the whole world made it my problem. It is a problem that has been forced upon me. Otherwise I am a Hungarian poet (...) and I do not care what the current Prime Minister may think... Should they disown me, should they accept me, my nation will not cry out from the bookshelf saying 'get out of here, bloody Jew!' The land of my country will give me shelter. I still feel so today, in 1942, after three months of forced labor service and fourteen days of detention camp, (...) having been ousted from literature... And if they kill me? That would not change this fact either.”<sup>20</sup>

Miklós Radnóti, one of the greatest figures of 20<sup>th</sup> century Hungarian literature, lived in Pozsonyi street with his wife, Fanni Gyarmati. As he writes about his Jewishness, he exemplifies the emancipated Hungarian Jewish identity which does not deny its origins but is not bound to it. Because of these emancipated identities, what is also sensitively and precisely described in Péter Nádas' book called *Világló Részletek* or revealed in Fanni Gyarmati's diary, I find it difficult to call these districts as Jewish because of an ethnic/racial term. This term was put aside with the emancipation laws (1867) and with the all the hopes of the turn of the century that minorities, amongst them Jews as well, can be equal members of the Hungarian nation regardless of their ethnic and religious background. Basically, with the equal civic rights and stepping out from the cultural ghetto, Hungarian Jewry wanted to step out from the 19<sup>th</sup>-century form of urban stigma (Wacquant 2008). This is what was phrased by Jacob Katz, historian called *Out of the Ghetto* (1973) in his study on the social integration of Jews. While Lipótváros became the location of the emancipated and converted high society, Újlipótváros became the home of the new, early twentieth-century middle class.

In the next period, after the Trianon Peace Treaty with the increase of antisemitism and its appearance in legislation (Numerus Clausus, 1920) the promising social contract of Dualism has wrecked. Statistics by Zeke (1999) shows an increase in the Hungarian Jewish society resettling in bigger blocks and areas. As Zeke writes, in the interwar period, we society got disappointed in the

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<sup>20</sup> Letter of Miklós Radnóti to Aladár Komlós, 1942 In: Komoróczy Géza ed. *Jewish Budapest, Monuments, Rites, History*. CEU Press, Budapest, 1999.

assimilation and the hostile antisemitic environment proved this. These changes in the society are visible on the spatial spread of the Budapest Jewry as well, not to mention the decrease of population. (Zeke, 1990:168-1720.) There is only one exception, and this is Újlipótváros, where the Jewish population constantly grew until WW2. Zeke defines this phenomenon as a “spontaneous segregation” and culminates with the concentration of middle class, mostly freelancer intellectual Hungarian Jewry in Újlipótváros. (Zeke, 1990:177-178.) What does the spontaneous segregation tell us?

Zeke argues spontaneous contraction of Jews in Újlipótváros was partially because of the hostile political environment. This is where, for me, the coded clarity, I discussed in chapter 2, starts developing. Until the interwar period there was the chance, or more the hope, that a Jewish person in Hungary could feel and identify himself first as Hungarian. But the emergence of political antisemitism, its appearance on all segment of life via the anti-Jewish laws and restrictions on Hungarian Jewish society was based purely on ethnic identification. The negative political environment destroyed all the hopes about the idea of Hungarian national belonging. This culminated in the deportations from the countryside and the ghettoization in Budapest in the last period of WW2.

Through the historical introduction I elaborated on how tangible heritage, meaning architecture forms one of the main pillars of belonging, strongly intertwined with the modernization process in the Hungarian society which ultimate location was Újlipótváros. As it is the book *Jewish Budapest* puts it, “The Jewish character of Új-Lipótváros was not a cause but a consequence. The district was by no means organized on the basis of who is Jewish and who is not.” (Komoróczy ed., 1999:338) This statement was supported by author, Péter Nádas, as well, who wrote in a private letter:

“He is, like me, the descendant of an emancipated family. And if I am equal with everyone else, then I am not especially interested in who is coming from where. I am only interested in the man, his/her characteristics and talents, I am interested in the person.”<sup>21</sup>

I find Péter Nádas’ words illuminating because it shows the fragility of this emancipated Jewish self-definition and how it is in constant transformation because of the political context. This is why in the larger scale Újlipótváros form more complex embodiments of different narratives where not only the generational but the very different origins of Jewish descendants are defining too.

### **3.2 Újlipótváros – connection through social space and time**

Holocaust marked a harsh and irreversible break in the social contract between the Hungarian national identity and the Hungarian Jewry. Through the International Ghetto and the horror on the banks of the Danube, Újlipótváros became a place of remembrance and this until now defines the belonging to the neighbourhood through its history. The post-war conditions formed Jewish identities into a coded experience and Újlipótváros became the location of it. In this sub-chapter I will look at how Goffman’s frame theory is applicable to the continuity of the Jewish memory in space and time and how it contributes to the contemporary village identity formation in the neighbourhood.

In 1950 Újlipótváros was added to district XIII. The Communist era basically formed an in-between space for the cultural elite between Buda and Pest. This was epitomized by the legendary minister of culture, György Aczél who was a resident of the neighbourhood. On the northern side of Ipoly street, elite panel blocks were erected where the middle-leadership was

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<sup>21</sup> Original text in Hungarian: “Ő éppen úgy mint én, emancipált nemzedékek leszármazottja. S ha egyenlő vagyok mindenki mással, akkor különösebben az sem érdekel, hogy ki honnan származik. Maga az ember érdekel, a tulajdonságai és a képességei érdekelnek, a személy érdekel.”

provided with comfortable new housing. This is also the time when many countryside families got flats in the neighbourhood when the bigger properties were divided after WW2. Jewishness was part of the neighbourhood experiences as the past stories continued to hunt the present among the walls of the buildings of the international ghetto. But Jewish identity was hardly performed publicly until the democratic changes. This is the era of coded reality, secret languages of never trusting the other and performing the political game of the system. (György, 2016) This is when the Jewish identity definitely turned into a coded clarity among families. For me, coded clarity is the way a non-religious Jewish identity was preserved and its symbols are the ones which are constantly transforming with time and by the context around them.

The informal talks and interviews<sup>22</sup> I had with people with Jewish background from the neighbourhood support my idea about the diversity of Jewish self-definitions with different referential points between their Jewish background and the location. Many of the people emphasized that moving back to the neighbourhood was not only obvious because of the family properties in the district but because this secular cultural Jewish community sense was recreated based upon its historical rootedness. Several of the interviewees described the Jewish roots of the district as something self-evident. This is especially intriguing because according to research by András Kovács and János Ladányi (Kovács ed. 2003:83;85) Újlipótváros was always a highly Jewish populated area of Budapest; however, some Buda districts and the inner city of Erzsébet- and Terézváros are competing with this number as well. This means that here we are facing a narrative which was reconfigured and redrawn in the last 15 years.

For Berta (32, moved here in 2015) the main reason was accidental, but this was tied to her past:

“It was a lucky coincidence. I moved exactly in Pozsonyi. It was hardcore, I didn’t know it until now... I accidentally moved to the corner of Raoul Wallenberg street. It’s symbolic...

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<sup>22</sup> As a preliminary fieldwork, I conducted several informal talks and three 60-minute interviews with residents of the neighbourhood in December, 2018. Later on, I conducted 23 interviews in January-April 2019.

Last February it turned out for me that part of my family was saved by Raoul Wallenberg. They lived here, one of my cousins of my grandfather. Last year I saw an interview of the Shoah Foundation right before I left to New York. And damn, I live right here on the corner. They probably lived more deeper in the neighbourhood. They tried to survive here. But I live right here on the corner of Raoul Wallenberg. Right he saved my family on 31<sup>st</sup> December by night when the Nazis still shot Jews to the Danube. The men were killed but the women survived because R.W.: he appeared as Hungarian police in disguise at night. I believe that it's not only important for me because of this but because of the past as well, the traditions, a very strong connection, what I will preserve in the family.”

This example also supports the assumption that the spatial identity formation is pillared not only with historical class identity but historical ethnic component as well. While Kowalski (2019) argues the visibility of Jewish identity in the inner city of Erzsébet- and Terézváros, it is undeniable that Újlipótváros represents a type of visibility. The intriguing part is that how this visibility of Jewishness is coded.<sup>23</sup>

Through the frame concept of Goffman we can better understand the permanence and varieties of the system of coded reality of Hungarian Jewish existence. “frame is the word I use to refer to such of these basic elements as I am able to identify. ... My phrase ‘frame analysis’ is a slogan to refer to the examination in these terms of the organization of experience.” (Goffman 1970:11) All the introduced elements of belonging which constructs the village identity, namely the connection to tangible heritage (architecture), class identity and Jewish identity, is performed within the given historical and geographical frame of Újlipótváros. These are the three elements the residents of Újlipótváros can identify with on a different level of insensitivity. This is why the non-Jewish village identity is closely intertwined with the Jewish network of the neighbourhood but not necessarily the same. The organization of the individual’s experience, as Goffman phrased, is what interesting in the history of Újlipótváros. The triangle of architecture, class belonging and

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<sup>23</sup> Part of this coded remembrance is the fact that in the territory of Újlipótváros was the International Ghetto with diplomatically protected houses for Hungarian Jews. Because of the lack of Jewish institutions in the neighbourhood, we can only remember Holocaust in the area through personal space, which, represents a different access to remembrance. As we could see the sensitivity of the Yellow-Star Houses project by OSA Archivum in 2014. <http://www.yellowstarhouses.org/#>

lose Jewish network seems to be stabile and the way they are connected and performed by certain individuals are distinctive in different eras in the history of the neighbourhood.

In the following part I will look at how, within the frame of the contemporary coded clarity, Jewish identities of the neighbourhood are commodified in the field of culinary and dining and how gastro trends are reflecting on the new wave performativity of Jewishness, (which is more extended to Middle-Easterness).

### 3.3 Commodification of Jewish identity: Sólet & shakshouka

Jewish belonging is not a simple question and there is no universal answer for the phenomenon. There are certain patterns but because of the time and spatial context, has to be shown the uniqueness of the contemporary Budapest case. As Zorándy and Monterescu (2018) elaborated, the main pillars of new Budapest Jewish identities are moderately embedded into the Central/Eastern-European context of Jewish revivals. The Hungarian scene is significantly different from the other Central/Eastern European examples where the number of Jewish population is smaller and they are more external realizations of heritage and processing the past. (Kowalski 2019).

Then what is unique about Újlipótváros? The streets of the neighbourhood are full of newly opened shops, restaurants and cafés, several at which have an explicit reference to Jewishness. For example, the renamed *Jenitalia* was previously a simple Italian-looking trattoria. These are several Jewish and Israeli/Middle-Eastern dishes on the menu of *Babka*, a popular and casual place on Pozsonyi street. Shakshouka (Middle-Eastern meal from tomato and eggs) is called “Jewish lecsó/ratatouille” on another menu of *Pesti Sólet Restaurant*. [since then it is closed] This renaming and Jewish thematic connotation remind me of a café with a short life called *Mazel Tov* on Hegedűs Gyula street. The only thing Jewish about this café was the interior design: the walls of the tiny café were full of poorly printed but nicely framed photos of seemingly random

Hungarian and foreign Jewish intellectuals and stars like Péter Popper or Barbara Streisand. The random nature of Jewishness of *Mazel Tov* has become more frequent in the central part of the 13<sup>th</sup> district, not to mention the popular ironic name of *Újzsidóland* used by local residents that I mentioned in chapter 2. Here I would like to elaborate on what these signs of Jewishness represent to understand the visibility of Jewish identity in the district.



When I ask Karina (37), one of my interviewees at My Green Cup, one of the leaders of the new wave café boom on Pozsonyi, about her Jewishness and the connection to the district first she hesitates what to say. She has lived in the neighbourhood for 10 years with her husband and their dog. She is an artist and at the time of the interview she is days away from the delivery of their first child. She shyly mentions *Láng-Téka*, the legendary bookshop on Pozsonyi. And then

starts recalling the events of the neighbourhood with Jewish connotations like Yom Haatzmaut, Israel Independence Day annually celebrated at Szent István park or the memorial plaques of the protected houses from 1944/45 on the facades. She is a sensitive woman, conscious about her and the neighbourhood's Jewishness; however she admits she has a "strange, repressed, not talkative" family regarding the topic. When I ask her directly about the obviously Jewish characteristics of places of the neighbourhood like *Jenitalia*, she rolls her eyes and says "It's very antipathetic."

The appearance of Hungarian Jewish identity has a separate story since Holocaust. While the Communist era was defined by a secret coded language (György, 2016) which blurred the memory of the tragic events of WW2 and made the discourse of Holocaust opaque. The 1990s democratic changes opened a new chapter however, until now the discourse is harshly defined by the last hundred years political regimes and their perception of identity (Komoróczy 2016; Kowalski 2019). In the contemporary era antisemitism is less coded and more openly expressed, although there is an in parallel emerging phenomenon which is the commercialization of Judaism in the over-touristic zones of Pest like district VI or VII. In these districts the visibility because of the presence of the Jewish institutional life is not a question but more the actors and performers of this identity. This self-presentation is embedded in the historical-institutional framework spiced up with the tourism marketing. Although the visibility of Jewishness is different in Újlipótváros, where the main pillar of this actual visibility is culinary.

You don't have to walk too far to bump into the first restaurant with Middle-Eastern food on the menu, where shakshouka is a definite connection to the popular Israeli breakfast of tomato and egg. Ráchel Raj's flódni café has two venues in the city and one of them occupies the centre of Újlipótváros, and there is an old-style Sommer confectionery "with original Jewish recipes" as well. Interestingly both of the sweet shops opened their second shops after the inner-city centre in Újlipótváros when the market emerged around the kosher- or rather Jewish-style food. This is the same with the Friday *barbesz/challah* (scone made for Shabbath) and its appearance in different



cafés and sweet shops. When I asked an old-style coffee shop owner, Zsóka (73, 25 years here), why she is selling *barbesz* and since when, she mentioned that somehow it was obvious that after a while she collected the orders from the people coming to her café and made a deal with a kosher bakery to transport it to there on Friday mornings. Zsóka was the one who also mentioned when I asked her about that why this district is Jewish said “I don’t know. It’s in the air”.

Jewish-style dining, Hebrew-speaking day care or the obviousness of the ÚSzB facebook group’s posts about preparations for different Jewish holidays are all “in the air”. According to my interview findings the appearance of Judaism is the less coded part of the coded clarity. While it has a strong invisibility in the domestic level in contrast with the Jewish-revival-influenced neighbourhood of the party district in the centre of Pest. While the topographical and mental borders of the neighbourhood in parallel serve as a safe space for the free expression of this identity not all members of this half-virtual, half-real Jewish community agree with expressing a harsh, sometimes insider-style Jewish communal feeling. When I ask a young mother, Zsófi (38, 10 years here) about Jewishness of the family and the neighbourhood she says that she attended a Jewish high school in Pest but she is happy that no larger Jewish and friend circles are concentrated here. “I don’t mind because everything would be here. In this way there is a chance to go out and leave the district.” When I ask her about the neighbourhood, she says that probably the *village* and Jewishness is pretty much overlapping, but she is out of the Jewish circles.

“There was a *chanukia*<sup>24</sup> at little Szent István park, it was the second year, I guess. Maybe Chabad does it... Principally, they wanted to open a Jewish centre here or so [*Zsili*], they started three years ago... There is some [Jewish life] but the kosher shop is not here, synagogue is not here, or just Hegedűs and a little on Visegrádi. Actually, a lot of people attends Hegedűs... But I don’t think that this is the real Jewish district even if Újlipótváros is the *falu* of Jews. [Jewish district] is the district VII in the city-centre. And even if Újlipótváros is a Jewish district, it is not religious. There are some traces but you see more religious people in the centre. And actually, I don’t mind it...”

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<sup>24</sup> *Chanukia* is the 8+1-branched candellabrum which candles are lit by evenings during the holiday of *chanuka*, the „festival of lights”. It is a new age Jewish holiday celebrated mostly around the Chirstian holiday of Christmas. In the city of Budapest Chabad Lubavitch community has bigger chanukia lightings.

From the above-mentioned examples it is clear that the too obvious signs like a café called *Mazel Tov* or *Jewitalia* hardly strengthen the neighbourhood's Jewish identity, not to mention the religious life which is mostly attended by elderly and only small percent of these young, middle-class families. There is a more coded system of symbols practicing it which is highly intertwined with domestic practice of Judaism. The only explicit manifestation of Jewishness is the cultural references like in the case of *Láng-Téka* bookshop or the *Pozsonyi Piknik* festival.

A good example of coded Jewishness was expressed by Andrea (32, indigenous). As the owner of a small restaurant [here unnamed] mentioned that several of her guests, totally non-kosher consumers, did not accept meals with ham while she has no kosher dietary items on her menu. It took her a while to figure out why even the vegetarian meal from right next to the ham-decorated meal was not taken and the reason was the non-kosher style of the ham. Since she has changed the pork meat to chicken, there have been no dietary complaints. When I asked another ex-café owner, Noémi (indigenous but doesn't live here anymore) about the Jewishness of the district she said the following.

“We started selling bagels firstly at X [her previous café]. We also sold *rugelach*<sup>25</sup>, it's also a Jewish cookie. We never sold pork meat. It's not like that anymore in X. I also knew the Jewish holidays and so when there was feast, I knew that people won't come. That's it what we have done for it.” ... “And yes, my mother is Jewish, we are Jews... but only one from my three kids are attending *somer*<sup>26</sup> at IKI. He is interested in it. We were not really raised religious. P. [son] brought these traditions into the family. And with the café I slowly learnt these things. And absolutely, those who are coming here should definitely know this. The new owner for example doesn't know this... to not to serve pork meat for lunch... But that's it. We did all this because of the neighbourhood not because of family reason...”

From where does this coded clarity come from? I believe, because of the emancipated Jewish origins of the district, the basis of Jewish identity in Újlipótváros originates in a cultural Jewish identity. This identity forms the legitimacy for a new communal identity formation through

<sup>25</sup> Ashkenazi Jewish cookie with chocolate, popular in the diaspora and in Israel as well.

<sup>26</sup> During the foundation of the State of Israel, HaShomer HaTzair was a lefty youth organization founding kibbutz settlements in the territory of the new state. In the contemporary era in the diaspora HaShomer HaTzair serves as an identity strengthening Zionist youth organization preserving the Jewish traditions with different activities and community building.

different channels like consumption, food, architectural heritage. However, here I have to emphasize the very difference of the indigenous attitude toward the inherited and accidental Jewishness of the district and the newcomers active desire to perform this identity in certain ways. The indigenous residents in most cases have a domestic Jewish life inherited from their families but in these cases, Jewishness hardly serves as an organizing principle in a communal identity formation.

The domestic appearance of Judaism is embedded into the family stories and their continuation in the district and the idea of belonging to the built heritage and history of the neighbourhood. Intriguing part of the phenomenon is how the new wave consumerism in certain extent instrumentalized food and dining and become part of the inevitable Jewishness of the neighbourhood.

I have to the momentary turmoil about mixing Jewishness with Israeliness and/or Middle-Easternness. This is actually happening more visibly in the party/Jewish district where to make a new dining spot cooler, most of the owners regardless of its Jewish origins or not give some “Jewcyness” (Monterescu and Zorandy, 2018) to it as the credit for future success. This is why Mazel Tov, one of the most popular spots in Akácfa street, “places the fifth district’s high-quality gastro infrastructure into the authentic ruinbair neighbourhood of seventh district to strengthen diversity and novelty on the Budapest palette.”<sup>27</sup> This smart marketing targets a new wave consumers more open to the Mediterranean-style cuisine than a heavy cholent for lunch.

However, among the residents of Újlipótváros as well, the trends are quite similar. The younger generation is more open to shakshouka and knafeh than cholent and gefilte fish. While there are examples of fine Jewish dining, across the young, middle-class families the popularity of *Babka* is higher than *Fülemüle*, a slightly old-style Hungarian Jewish restaurant in district VIII. And

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<sup>27</sup> <https://www.mazeltov.hu/> Interestingly, the English version of the official website of the pub/restaurant is slightly different but due to the limited space I do not analyse the smart marketing campaign of *Mazel Tov*.

when I asked the locals about the seemingly obscure success of “Pozsonyi kisvendéglő” among the fancy restaurants on Pozsonyi which is an old-fashioned, typical Hungarian-style, lower quality dining option with huge portions, I was told the following: “ott elengedheted magad”/ “you can relax there”.

The coded clarity, I described through the examples in the sub-chapter above, represents the ambivalence of balancing performing Jewishness, while at the same time keeping it implicit. There is an intriguing tension in this performativity among the members and non-members of the group. The contemporary phenomenon of coded clarity of Jewishness is partially a strategy of survival because of the century of persecutions. At the same time, it shows a positive engagement and communication with potential community members and co-ethnic citizens. The shared class belonging through rescaling and locality forms a safe space – and makes the village metaphor working in Újlipótváros.

## Conclusion

After conducting interviews with people with Jewish background from Újlipótváros, and the archival research on the interwar period, I found that the Jewish and village identity is inseparable in the neighbourhood, however, it is reconfigured in different eras depending on the socio-political context. Practicing Jewish identity, which I called *coded clarity*, is a phenomenon among the actors with a special bond to the neighbourhood. I argue that this coded clarity within the architectural and social frame (Goffman 1970) of Újlipótváros, is an experience which is constantly changing and changed by the performers of the village identity in different eras. Today this coded clarity has been significantly influenced by super-gentrification and capital accumulation in upscale urbanism. I believe, through the notion of coded clarity, we can get closer understanding the reality of practicing Jewish identities in an urban context in a post-war society which is heavily influenced by the politics of heritage and impacted by internal debates in politics of memory to redefine itself.

The last point is a key one for further exploration: coded clarity serves as a tool to analyse the symbols along Hungarian Jewish residents of Újlipótváros intend to identify themselves with. Generational differences and the indigenous-non indigenous discourse highly impacts the coded symbols in use. One of the most significant findings is that the new middle-class society of the neighbourhood's performance of Jewish identity is tending to be accompanied by consumption patterns. This is the reason why class belonging is an inevitable part of the new generational experience of the neighbourhood. While in the older generation the social bonds through the educational system and family friends are the most defining. Furthermore, it is an overall pattern that Jewish identities of Újlipótváros are more domestic than institutional, as we could see from what my informants said.

Because of the late changes in the neoliberal capital accumulation through the spread of urban space, we can see how dining services commodified the hidden and coded Jewishness of the neighbourhood. Interestingly, the openly Jewish places like *Mazel Tov* café or *Pesti Sólet* seem to be less successful of this commodification by their use of language. While the new wave, Middle-Eastern culinary of *Babka* or *Hummus Bár*, previously not mentioned restaurant, which is lately the most popular healthy fast food in the city run by its Israeli owner, seems to be more successful in their approach to ride the Újlipóthian waves of practicing coded Jewishness. The culinary experiences seem a less scientific approach to identify the practices of Judaism, however they still can reflect on the findings of several researches like Monterescu and Zorándy's (2018) about the new formations of Jewish identities in the Hungarian scene.

Why is the social organization of a loose Jewish and non-Jewish network important in a specific neighbourhood of Budapest? There are two reasons. First, because according to my experiences in different religious and cultural Jewish communities and the Israeli Cultural Institute, there is a strong desire to practice Jewish identity. Second, because of the constantly changing political framing, Jewish identities are challenged in a way that the reconfiguration of the these identities is not an easy task. Recently, because of the stronger intertwining of EMIH and the Hungarian government, the actors of the institutional scene is changing their profile and new powerful figures are emerging as representatives of the Hungarian Jewry which was never a uniform entity. This is why Újlipótváros with its coded clarity within its own cultural and social framework without any significant institutional background seems to be a striking example of a new embodiment of hidden Jewish narratives in Budapest.

The embodiment of a coded reality is additionally intriguing because it is blooming within a non-Jewish framework built up on the village metaphor. It will be interesting to see how Jewish identities in Újlipótváros change as a result and how much it is fitting into the contemporary Jewish revival discourse all over in Eastern/Central Europe.

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