Ideology meets urban planning: The Erzsébet Avenue Project as the reflection of nationalist and antisemitic discourses in the early 20th century Budapest

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Abstract

The late 19th century witnessed a remarkable development of the architectural and urban layout of Budapest. Large-scale refurbishment programs were framed as the symbolic representative of the national interests, and simultaneously, existing neighborhoods were evaluated according to whether they fit the future visions for the Hungarian capital city. This thesis deals with the 40-year history of the unrealized Erzsébet Avenue that meant to restructure Elizabethtown, a neighborhood with significant Jewish population. It looks at the disputes around the project to track the manifestation of ideological discourses governing the period between 1900 and 1942. The discourse analysis of previously underresearched sources aims to tell the story of the assimilation of Hungarian Jewry as well as the nationalist and antisemitic discourse through the lens of urban planning.

1. Introduction

"They do not know that houses make a town, but citizens a city" – wrote Jean-Jacques Rousseau in his famous 1762 treaty *The Social Contract*.[1] This catchy sentence calls for recontextualization, and has an interesting resonance with the different ways of telling urban history. A story that is more than a mere set of dry facts retrieved from registries and blueprints. It is also a palimpsest of the complex network of meanings that had been attributed by those who made sense of these spaces over the course of history. Adopting the latter approach, my master thesis deals with the history of Madách Imre Square and the surrounding neighborhood Inner Elizabethtown, two iconic spaces in the downtown of today's Budapest, the Hungarian capital.

Inner Elizabethtown constitutes the part of the 7th district of the city. Simultaneously known as the party quarter and Jewish neighborhood, it registers one of the highest tourist traffic owing to its vibrant cultural and night life. One of its most spectacular landmarks is the modernist housing ensemble on the Madách Imre Square. Its grandiose structure covered by clinker bricks and neo-Gothic boarded ceiling is a messenger of progressivity and future-oriented mindset, forms a striking contrast with the 19th-century historicist layout of the surrounding streets. One might not be mistaken to suggest that the modernist houses meant to be an intervention in the urban fabric: they are the physical testimony of a long-debated urban planning endeavor called Erzsébet Avenue that put Inner Elizabethtown and its development into spotlight in the first half of the 20th century.

Since the 1890s, Inner Elizabethtown counted among the most contested spaces in Budapest. With the rising demand of turning the capital city into a worthy representative of the

[1] I came upon this citation in Cathleen Giustino's book *Tearing Down Prague's Jewish Town: Ghetto Clearance and the Legacy of Middle-class Ethnic Politics Around 1900*, but I used G. D. H. Cole's translation. See: Rousseau, Jean-Jacques. *The Social Contract,* 1762. trans. by Cole, George Douglas Howard, p. 6.

Hungarian nation, the neighborhood became staged as the sabotage of the nationalist project. In terms of urban planning, the dense street network and the aging building stock constituted a growing health concern which urged urban planners and architects to come up with structural solutions improving the devastating living conditions. In a symbolic sense, however, the neighborhood also represented a place of moral transgression where shady businesses, prostitution, and other criminal activities were thriving. Although Budapest had other neighborhoods of bad reputation, it was Elizabethtown[2] where criminality was associated with the local Jewry. The epitome of this prejudice was the Orczy House, an important place of identity for the Budapest Jewish community, which was later stigmatized as an anti-Magyar bulwark within the heart of the Hungarian capital.

The purpose of thesis is to unearth the complexity of meanings attributed to the so-called Erzsébet Avenue Project in the period before World War II. First proposed in the early 1900s, this large-scale urban refurbishment project would have reconstructed the whole layout of Inner Elizabethtown through an extensive demolition of the built environment. Torpedoed by the world wars, however, it is only today's Madách Imre Square and a few tenement houses that had been finalized by the early 1940s. The original idea of a large-scale avenue, which had even been preserved in personal recollections of locals, were not revisited again.[3]

What could a never-completed project tell us more than only about the general perception of Inner Elizabethtown? I argue that looking at the disputes around the Erzsébet Avenue Plan could help track and analyze the manifestation of nationalist and antisemitic

[2] The localities referred to by Elizabethtown [Erzsébetváros] and Inner Elizabethtown [Belső Erzsébetváros] overlap with each other: Elizabethtown encompasses the whole 7th district, while Inner Elizabethtown includes the area bordered by Károly Boulevard, Király Street, Erzsébet Bouleevard, and Rákóczi Road.

[3] "At Dob Street 46 on the corner, in the angular house, which anyway was angular because it should have been on the path of the Madách Avenue, there was the shop *Patyolat*. I used to bring my clothes there for decades […]. I have recently seen that it became a second-hand [ruti butik] shop. It is no longer the world I am used to." – so an old local in an interview published in Mária Kemény's anthology *Kismező, Nagymező, Broadway.* See: Matern, Éva. *Hétköznapi legendák* 403.

agendas, which had their seeds in the Dual Monarchy era, and became a full-fledged ideological program by the interwar period. Specifically, expressing opinion about the future of this neighborhood and its reconstruction might have suggested a certain stance on the so-called Jewish question, namely the social status and progress of Jews, a widely debated issue during the examined period.[4]

My master thesis is an endeavor to offer the novel way of researching nationalism and antisemitism in the early 20th century Hungary through the prism of urban planning. I argue that the decades-long history of Erzsébet Avenue project bridges the gap between the Dual Monarchy period and the Horthy era, pointing out the origins of the antisemitic and nationalist narratives that were normalized during the interwar years. Besides, my analysis will demonstrate the functions of antisemitism and nationalism had in the discourse about the urban development of Budapest in the investigated timeframe. This is done through the analysis of previously less investigated previous sources including press materials and private recollections.

This thesis is divided into six major chapters. Following Chapter 1 Introduction, Chapter 2 Theory and Methodology elaborates on the existing literature as well as on the key methodological and theoretical concepts that served as the benchmark of my research. Chapter 3 aims to contextualize my analysis by looking at the correlation between the contemporary ideological discourses, urban experience as well as the assimilation of Jews in Hungary. Chapter 4 concentrates on Inner Elizabethtown and elaborates on the shifts of its meaning in

[4] The term Jewish question refers to the discourse emerged in the wake of the legal and social emancipation of Jews in Europe. (Bein, 18–19) First used in 1840, it was generated by antisemites and those advocating for the full religious and cultural assimilation of Jews, usually with an undertone of doubt or even hostility. However, it also hints at the suspicion that Jews in fact represent their own group interests under the disguise of assimilation. For the European history of the Jewish question, see Bein, Alex. *The Jewish Question. Biography of a World Problem.* London, Toronto: Associated University Presses, 1990. For an overview of the Jewish question in Hungarian context, see Ungvári, Tamás. *The Jewish Question in Europe. The Case of Hungary.* New York: Columbia Press University, 2000; Gyurgyák, János. *A zsidókérdés Magyarországon.* Budapest: Osiris Kiadó, 2001; Bibó, István. *A zsidókérdés Magyarországon 1944 után.* Budapest: Múlt és Jövő, 2001.

the nearly 150-year period between the early 20th century and the eve of World War II. Distinct attention is given to the changing meaning of the Orczy House, as this place was considered by contemporaries an epitome of the problems characterizing the whole neighborhood. The history of this neighborhood's representation is essential to understand the disputes around the Erzsébet Avenue, the main topic of Chapter 5. It will introduce the main actors participating in the discourse, and aims to bring a complex understanding of the ideological dimension of this urban planning project. The last chapter is a summary of the key arguments and main takeaways of the thesis as well as lists some suggestions for further investigation.

2. Theory and methodology

2.1. Literature review

Animating the imagination of urban enthusiasts for decades, the Erzsébet Avenue Project is an evergreen topic of informative articles, and has also been featured in city walks, architectural-cultural festivals, and more recently a museum exhibition.[5] Therefore, it is surprising to see the scant attention it has so far received in the academic literature. Most contributions were made in the field of urban history where the Erzsébet Avenue was featured as part of broader narratives. Gábor Preisich's monography as well as Katalin Rákosi's essay recounted the history of the avenue from the perspective of urban planning visions for Budapest.[6] One of the few studies exclusively on the Erzsébet Avenue was written by András Román in 1999 which dealt extensively with the 1929 call for plans.[7] More recently, Virág Hajdú published an article on the history of the buildings that were meant to be the part of the envisioned avenue.[8] However, the full and detailed account of the Erzsébet Avenue is still missing, and its social and political context was neither a subject of inquiry, nor it has been featured as part of an interpretative analysis.

The lack of research is even more surprising in light of the past 35 years witnessing a growing interest in the urban and sociological history of Budapest in the form of excellent journals, yearbooks and monographs. A growing body of these works are attempts for a better understanding of those socio-political conditions that influenced the development of the

[5] Borsik. "A város mint ábránd és a végtelen fontolgatás." *Artportal*; *"Nyissunk a térre. Share the Square!" Budapest100 Programfüzet*, p. 87, 2018. The search on September 29, 2023 in the digital collection of Arcanum resulted in 99 hits for the keyword "Erzsébet sugárút" and 148 hits for "Madách sugárút" in the timeframe between 1960 and present years. Even though some articles might be featured more than once among the results, the numbers still show the popularity of the topic.

[6] Rákosi, Katalin. "Budapest városrendezési problémái (1871-1948): különös tekintettel Kismarty-Lechner Jenő szerepére." Régi-új Magyar Építőművészet 1, no 4. (2004): 28–39., Preisich, Gábor. *Budapest városépítésének története Buda visszavételétől a II. világháború végéig - Buda visszavételétől a II. világháború végéig.* Budapest: Műszaki Könyvkiadó, 1960, pp. 29–31, 75–76.

[7] Román, András. "Madách Imre, avagy egy sugárút tragédiája". *Budapesti Negyed* 18–19, 4 (1997) – 1 (1998).

[8] Hajdú, Virág. "A Madách Imre út modern épületei. A védetté vált épületállomány III." *Műemlékvédelem* 49, no. 3. (2005): 153–155.

Hungarian capital. Informative for the present thesis was András Sipos's 2011 book *A jövő Budapestje 1930-1960* [The Budapest of the Future 1930-1960] which gives a reading of the urban development from the angle of the concept 'modernity'.[9] Even more importantly, this interpretative approach became present in the accounts of local historiographies, which is the most tangible in the case of Inner Elizabethtown and Theresetown, the neighborhoods with significant Jewish past. This tendency, which was ignited partly by locals' resistance to the gentrification of the neighborhoods in the early 1990s, was pioneered by Anna Perczel whose 2007 seminal book *Unprotected Heritage* identified local culture and architecture in the context of Jewish heritage.[10] In a similar vein, Mária Kemény's anthology *Kismező, Nagymező, Broadway* (2009) and Erika Szívós' *Az öröklött város* [The Inherited City] (2014) and *Hétker, gettó, bulinegyed?* [7th district, Ghetto, Party Quarter?] also deal with the history of these neighborhoods, but place the emphasis on their multiethnic character.[11] Inspired by these works, my master thesis aims to highlight the social and political context of the Erzsébet Avenue Project from the angle of nationalism and antisemitism. For this purpose, I will draw on the theoretical framework of spatial turn.

2.2. Spatial turn: novel perspectives in urban history

Following the establishment of the Austria-Hungary Dual Monarchy in 1867, the urban development of Budapest came to the foreground both in the political and public discourse in Hungary.[12] Although started out as a municipal affair, turning the provincial Pest-Buda into the metropolis Budapest became a central issue on the country-wide nationalist agenda. The spatial

[9] Sipos, András. *A jövő Budapestje 1930-1960. Városfejlesztési Programok és rendezési tervek*. Budapest: Napvilág Kiadó, 2011.
[10] Perczel, Anna. *Védtelen Örökség / Unprotected Heritage - Residential Buildings in the Jewish Quarter.* Budapest: Városháza City Hall, 2007.
[11] Kemény, Mária (ed.). *Kismező, Nagymező, Broadway.* Budapest: Műcsarnok Nonprofit Kft., 2009. Szívós, Erika. *Az öröklött város. Városi tér, kultúra és emlékezet a 19-21. században.* Budapest: Budapest Főváros Levéltára, 2014. Szívós, Erika. Hétker, zsidónegyed, gettó, bulinegyed? A Belső-Erzsébetváros története a kezdetektől a 2000-s évekig. Budapest: Korall, 2022.
[12] About this topic, see Chapter 3.

structure and architectural layout of the city had to represent a geopolitically strengthening country emerging from centuries of subjection to foreign powers. The neighborhoods were evaluated according to whether they fit the future vision of Budapest. In the post-World War I period, the urban development of Budapest took on another dimension, whereby it became a battlefield of political ideologies. The phenomenon of expressing political affiliation in the urban environment in the form of statues, street names and other symbols was a common practice of the all-time administration during the interwar period. Although conveying ideologies through space had already been present under Dualism, it was only in the 1920s when it was turned into the service of the political ideology of nationalism. One can see that shaping the physical structure of the city bore a symbolic importance, which warrants a closer look at the notion of spatiality in theoretical literature.

Influenced by Michel Foucault, the 1980s saw a growing interest in the relation between spatiality and society in the Anglo-Saxon human geography. Notable human geographers like Kevin Cosgrove pointed out in their analysis of urban context that space is more than just a 'container' of the social world, but it is actually a factor actively shaping the social world itself.[13] In his 1998 book *In Place Out of Place*, urban geographer Tim Cresswell elaborated further on this idea; through case studies of U.S. cities, he argued that the perception of events highly depend on the meanings attached to the settings where they play out, as spatial structures and the meanings attributed to it "are held in a taken-for-granted way".[14] The rising emphasis on spatiality in different fields of social sciences and humanities was first called *spatial turn* by human geographer Edward Soja to compare its significance to that of the linguistic turn:

[13] Gunn, *Identities in Space*, 1–4.
[14] Cresswell, 9.

„Contemporary critical studies have experienced a significant spatial turn. In what may be seen as one of the most important intellectual and political developments in the late twentieth century, scholars have begun to interpret space and the spatiality of human life with the same critical insight and emphasis that has traditionally been given to time and history on the one hand, and to social relations and society on the other.“[15]

Whether spatial turn can be conceptualized as a paradigm shift like the linguistic turn is a contested theoretical question.[16] However, I argue that spatial turn as an approach can be highly effective in understanding the socio-cultural context of urban history. A milestone work in this respect id the 2001 anthology *Identities in Space* arguing to combine urban history with research into the history of ideas.[17] In the introductory chapter, Simon Gunn points out that even though spatiality might not take the central role of temporality in the discipline of history, the idea that identities are historically constructed and their construction is bound to spatiality is getting more recognition. This is grasped by the term *representation* that draws the "attention to the ways in which phenomena are discursively constructed [re-presented]."[18] The conclusion is that a specific framing of a space, for example public space as a battlefield, are not inherent to the place itself, but this image was produced by the participants in the discourse. As Cresswell puts it, value and meaning are not inherent in any space or place—indeed they must be created, reproduced, and defended from heresy."[19] This way, "the investigation of the production of differentiated types of urban space, and the analysis of place of symbolic meaning and ownership" can lead to a deeper understanding of the way ideas and ideologies governed a certain period of history.

Although not explicitly mentioned, the past two decades has seen the publication of some remarkable works in the context of Budapest history that adopted this conceptualization of spatial turn in urban history. Alexander Vári's study elaborates on the ideological exploitation

[15] Cited from Ibid., 9.
[16] Ibid., 10–13.
[17] Gunn, Simon. „The spatial turn: changing histories of space and place". In *Identities in Space. Contested Terrains in the Western City since 1850*, pp. 9–14. Vermont: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2001.
[18] Ibid., 9–11.
[19] Creswell, 9.

of urban spaces in the interwar period.[20] In a similar but more focused manner Olivér Perczel discusses the pratices of symbolic politics during the red terror in 1919.[21] In line with Cresswell's work, they both point to the subconscious power of space in shaping the perception of people in everyday life. On the other side, works also deal with the situatedness of Jewish identity in the Budapest context. Mary Gluck's study on the orpheums and cafés in the fin-de-siècle demonstrates that these scenes of nightlife in light of their audience, repertory and ownership were also quintessentially Jewish.[22] In his 2003 book *Holocaust City*, Tim Cole looks specifically into the discourse of 1940s to track how Inner Elizabethtown turned into a ghetto first in the public imagination and then in the reality.[23] Although these works follow different ways of approaching spatiality, they are all common in acknowledging the power of space in the formation of identity, perception and representation.

The wide body of literature available at physical and digital archives suggests that the idea of an avenue generated various types for responses reflecting on the identity and representations of Elizabethtown. More specifically, it was its Jewish background that provoked a rather negative perception. Attending to the results of the research literature introduced above, my master thesis is an attempt to provide a comprehensive overview of the representations of Elizabethtown and thee Erzsébet Avenue Project, through which the discourse of nationalism, its aims, producers and participants in Hungary especially in the interwar era can be better understood. My analysis is supported through a comparison with two case studies of Prague and Berlin. Cathleen Giustino's *Tearing Down Prague's Jewish town* tells the decades-long story of the urban clearance of the Prague ghetto and gives an insight into the space politics

[20] Vari, Alexander. "Re-Territorializing the 'Guilty City': Nationalist and Right-Wing Attempts to Nationalize Budapest during the Interwar Period." *Journal of Contemporary History* 47, no. 4 (2012): 709–33.
[21] Perczel, Olivér. "Vörös zászlók, vörös utcák, vörös ligetek, vörös rongyok. Térfoglalások Budapesten a Tanácsköztársaság időszakában." *Múltunk* 64, no. 1. (2019): 4–33.
[22] Gluck, Mary. "The Scandal of the Budapest orpheum", pp. 139–178. In *The Invisible Jewish Budapest.* University of Wisconsin, 2016.
[23] Cole, Tim. Holocaust City. *The Making of a Jewish Ghetto.* New York, London: Routledge, 2003.

espoused by different interest groups.[24] Theresa Walch's study offers an insight into the urban planning policies against the Jewish Scheunenviertel in Berlin during the Nazi administration.[25]

2.3. Methodology

This thesis is based on the discourse analysis of written historical sources identified as parts of the disputes on the Erzsébet Avenue Project. In the context of my analysis, discourse is conceptualized as the manifestation of ideology, which provides an interpretational framework for social experiences dictated by the agents of power, and thus form the basis of group identity construction.[26] Identity formation, at the same time, plays out in the interaction with a real or imaginary outgroup, therefore, it is always structured by open and underlying power relations in the society.

Although having different modalities in different periods, my thesis considers nationalism and antisemitism the leading discourses of the age of Dualism and the interwar years. Without attempting to be comprehensive, I emphasize the "Otherizing" character of nationalism through which the distinction between the ingroup and outgroup are drawn. Its most dominant manifestation in the period researched is antisemitism. Originally a cultural code for nationalist groups in the late 19th century as explained by Shulamit Volkov, antisemitism became the leading discourse to distinguish between Magyar and non-Magyar in all aspects of public life based on ideological ground by the interwar period.[27] My research aims to shed light on how these two discourses functioned in the context of the Erzsébet Avenue project.

[24] Giustino, Cathleen. *Tearing Down Prague's Jewish Town: Ghetto Clearance and the Legacy of Middle-Class Ethnic Politics around 1900.* Columbia University Press, 2003.
[25] Walch, Teresa. „With an Iron Broom: Cleansing Berlin's Bülowplatz of 'Judeo-Bolshevism', 1933–1936". *German History* 40, sz. 1 (2022): 61-87.
[26] My approach to discourse analysis is based on Michel Foucault's inaugural lecture at the Collège de France. For the full text, see Foucault, Michael. "The Order of Things", pp. 48–78. Young, Robert (ed.). *Untying the Text: A Post-Structuralist Reader.* London: Routledge, 1981.
[27] Volkov, Shulamit. "Antisemitism as a Cultural Code: Reflections on the History and Historiography of Antisemitism in Imperial Germany" In Part 2 The Origins of the Holocaust edited by Michael R. Marrus, 307-328. Berlin, New York: K. G. Saur, 1989. https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110970494.307.

My thesis focuses on the period between 1900 and 1937, from the proposal of the Erzsébet Avenue project to the demolition of the Orczy House. Some chapters are dedicated to the early decades of the Dual Monarchy as they are crucial to understand the origins of the public discourse that later unfolded in the interwar years. Apart from official documents like registries, minutes, and legal files, the most important cluster of sources is comprised of contemporary press materials. Apart from the newspapers of explicit political affiliation, tabloids and satirical papers are important to grasp the rhetoric and views communicated to the public. In contrast, professional journals represent the position by certain social groups and circles. The parliamentary correspondences published in *Magyar Közlöny* [Hungarian Gazette] are crucial sources of political debates, while *Tér és forma* [Space and Form], represents the novel perspectives in architecture espoused by the progressive part of the Hungarian architect society. Last but not least, Jewish weeklies like the Neolog *Egyenlőség* [Equality] and the Orthodox *Zsidó Ujság* [Jewish Newspaper] are essential to explain how different religious groups reacted to the changing character of Elizabethtown, or why they remained silent over it.

The second cluster consists of popular works by influential authors who reached a wider audience and represented a particular angle, specifically on Elizabethtown. As for the pre-1914 period, the famous Jewish author Adolf Ágai is cited to demonstrate a grown-up assimilated Jew's complex feelings over a Jewish space in the pre-emancipation period. The interwar period is represented a wider array of sources which includes works of non-Jewish authors. Written government official Sándor Jeszenszky and an unknown author under the pseudonym Leó Szendi, *Szép Budapest* (1928) [Nice Budapest] and *Budapesti riport* (1935) [Report from Budapest] were meant to make urban planning more accessible to non-professionals, while they were also in line with the nationalist vision of Budapest in the Horthy administration. On the other hand, the memoir *Egy magyar polgár élete* [The Life of a Hungarian Citizen] penned by urban theorist Ferenc Harrer are also included in my analysis, whose central position in the

professional discourse offers an insider's perspective on the contemporary political and intellectual elite shaping urban planning as decision-makers or influential stakeholders. Lastly, author and dramatist Béla Zsolt's play *Erzsébetváros* offers the perspective of the slowly pauperizing Jewish middle class living in the 7th district to get a better understanding of the self-identity of the Jewish population in in this neighborhood.

3. Historical framework

3.1. City planning in Budapest: an overview

The late 1860s marks a major shift in the history of Budapest: it was the period when the Hungarian capital embarked on the way of modernization following the example of Western European metropolises. Modernization, as we shall see in this chapter, is multidimensional term to grasp the paradigm shifts taking place in the social, economic and physical structure of a city. In the first subchapter, I am going to introduce the meaning of modernization in the field of architecture and urban planning between 1867 and 1945. Emphasis is given to the pre-1914 period as this had in many respects defined the conditions in the interwar years. In the subsequent subchapter, I will reflect on the ideological interpretation of these developments by highlighting the social and political background in the examined period.

The prerequisites of modernization were already present in the early 18th century, when the town Pest on the left bank of the river Danube experienced a fast-paced demographical growth, resulting in the rudimentary stage of urbanization in the form of densely built housing as well as growing economic activity. The new settlements were established near the city wall gates and were inhabited by artisans and merchants who were not allowed to move within either due to their financial situation or religious affiliation.[28] With the gradual tearing-down of city walls in the early 19th century, Pest started to grow out its rather provincial character. Yet, the conscious and overarching urban planning, which my thesis holds as the key pillar of a modernizing European city, was not developed until 1867. In contrast to the majestic imperial Vienna, its role as an important, but purely economic hub of Transleithania did not warrant any systematic considerations of infrastructural and architectural development.[29]

[28] Kocsis, *Budapest és régiója etnikai térszerkezetének átalakulása*, 305, Tóth, "Mit olvaszt az olvasztótégely?", 83.
[29] Hall, *Planning Europe's Capital Cities,* 245.

Although the first urban development plan of Pest was prepared by János Hild as early as in 1805, it was the 1838 great flood that pointed out the grave need for a conscious approach to city planning.[30] The mid-19th century had already witnessed some progress in terms of road constructions and urban aestheticization. Emblematic buildings such as the Chain Bridge, the Hungarian National Theatre or the Hungarian National Museum came to be the first representatives of urbanization that also meant to follow the example of Western European capitals.[31] Last but not least, they were the first symbols of an evolving Hungarian culture that gradually counterpointed the German hegemony of Pest.[32] These constructions, however, were patronized by the aristocracy and were isolated enterprises without being embedded in an overarching masterplan. It was the liberalized political and economic climate brought about by the 1867 Austro-Hungarian Compromise that opened the floor to the metropolization of Pest-Buda, and as of 1873 Budapest.[33]

The modernization of the architectural layout was started with the adoption of Georges-Eugène Baron Hausmann's renovation plans for Paris. The new avenues and boulevards planned to restructure Pest were deemed as the most effective ways of bringing fresh air and light into unsanitized and slum-like downtown neighborhoods like Inner Elizabethtown and Theresetown.[34] Completed by 1885, the Andrássy Avenue with its alley and scenic historicist villas was one of the few undertakings that was eventually realized. Concerning the institutionalization of urban planning, the Metropolitan Board of Works in London served as the model to be followed. Established in 1870 through Article X of 1870, this governmental body exercised the main authority over the implementation and supervision of all matters related to the infrastructural and architectural development of the capital city such as the railway

[30] Preisich, *Budapest városépítésének története II.,* 40–47.
[31] Hall, 246–247.
[32] According to Károly Kocsis' analysis, the Magyarization of Pest-Buda started in the 1850s and the German ethnic group comprised the majority of the city population. See: Kocsis, 305–307.
[33] Buda, Pest and Óbuda were unified into one single unit of Budapest in 1873.
[34] Gyáni, 85–89.

and public transport system, parcel improvement and public utilities.[35] Last but not least, this period also witnessed the emergence of forums in the form of associations and journals such as the *Építészeti Szemle* and the outlets of the Hungarian Association of Architects and Draughtsmen, where the discourse on city planning by professionals took place.

The first comprehensive urban development plans by the Metropolitan Board of Works were prepared by as early as the 1870s.[36] However, just as the case of the Andrássy Avenue demonstrate, the administration of Budapest heavily relied on the power of private capital due to the scant budget envisioned for ambitious urban planning projects. Furthermore, as András Sipos points out, the implementation of these plans was hindered by the opposing interests of private investors who had a leverage in Budapest politics through their economic power or even their privileged status as virilists, namely leading tax payers of the capital.[37] They were members of the Municipal Committee of Budapest and were generally discontent with the strict regulations of the Metropolitan Board of Works. It was particularly the restrictions on the parcel improvement that triggered a strong dislike from their side, because it put a limit to the profit one could have earned in case of the maximization of space. As the contemporary mastermind of urban planning Ferenc Harrer notes in his memoir, the capitalist circles had an enormous influence on the decisions made by the Board of Works. In order to attract capital, the governmental body often turned a blind eye on the violation of regulations.[38] Therefore, urban development was an arena of differing economic and political interests, which remained a characteristic of the interwar period as well.

Following the economic stagnation of the 1890s, the radical civil and social democrat political circles developed a strong opposition against the rampant practices of capitalist interest

[35] Harrer, Ferenc. A Fővárosi Közmunkák Tanácsa 1930-1940, 15–17., Preisich, 25–35.
[36] 1872, Pest, 1876, Buda (Sipos, 13)
[37] Ibid., 10–11. See also the entry on "Törvényhatósági Bizottság" in *A Pallas Nagy Lexikona* (1893-1897).
[38] Harrer, *Egy magyar polgár élete I.,* 76–78, 140.

groups.[39] They advocated for a socially conscious approach to urban reconstructions, where profit-making of the economic elite was intended to be cut back significantly. This was represented by László Warga's urban development plan for Inner Elizabethtown in 1912 in which the building density was replaced by wide street network and healthy housing.[40] Even though the social aspect was often overridden by economic interest, this approach gained a foothold in the public discourse and remained a frequently discussed topic in the interwar period, although the contemporary discourse on architecture style leant heavily towards neobaroque and applied modernist tendencies in terms of technique.[41]

3.2. Ideological representations of modernizing urban space: the dimension of nationalism and antisemitism

In 1872, the political daily *A Hon* praising Jewish MP Mór Wahrmann's agenda for its balance between the local and countrywide interests staged Budapest as the *heart,* while Hungary as the *body* of the nation.[42] What is the role and meaning of these metaphorical descriptions? As linguist Georg Lakoff notes, metaphors "structure what we perceive, how we get around in the world, and how we relate to other people".[43] The way a phenomenon is portrayed linguistically is an indicator of a certain experience within the matrix of social relations and power dynamics. Based on this premise, I argue that the contemporary discourse on the modern layout of Budapest also incorporated a symbolic meaning related to the nationalist discourse, and it developed a more ideological layer during the interwar period.

[39] Ibid.
[40] See Ferenc Harrer's private collection on documents related to Erzsébet Avenue in the Budapest Archives. Reference Code: HU BFL XIV.31 14.3
[41] This movement was particularly pursued by progressive architecture circles such as the CIRPAC group that were founded by Bauhaus students. Since these architects did not get many commissions, there are only a few examples that represented their program, such as the housing estate in Napraforgó Street.
[42] "A fővárosi választások. A Budapesti I. választókerületben." *A Hon,* July 2, 1872, 1.
[43] Lakoff, 3.

The significance of Budapest for Hungarian national identity goes back to the Reform Age between 1825 and 1848. The emerging nationalist movement was particularly tangible in Pest-Buda where the number of bourgeoise with awareness of their Magyar identity rose significantly in the respective period. The priority of the city over Pozsony[44] was symbolically confirmed by its significance during the revolution in March 1848, when as the capital city of the Transleithaneian territories, Pest-Buda became the epicenter of forces fighting for autonomy. Considering this awareness in the collective memory, it seems inevitable that the metropolization of Budapest becomes an issue of symbolical importance in the nationalist discourse during the Dual Monarchy.

The following decades in Budapest witnessed the changing character of what Gábor Gyáni calls the "urban experience".[45] Like in the case of other Western European capitals, capitalism and the demographical boom took shape also in the form of a particular urban culture that had anything in common with the provincial and rural parts in Hungary. The rapidly changing urban experience led to two different portrayals of Budapest in the public imagination and political debate. On one hand, as the article about Wahrmann cited in the previous subchapter demonstrates, Budapest as thee *heart* was the subtotal and representative of entire Hungary. The urbanization was regarded as a success story not only for the residents but for the whole nation, which led to the strengthening of the country's reputation. It is important to note that this view was particularly espoused by intellectuals and political figures, like Prime Minister Gyula Andrássy and his circle, who embraced a more cosmopolitan vision of Budapest. On the other hand, the economic crisis and stagnation in the last third of the 19th century saw a growing discontent with the outcomes of the urbanization process. Some groups of conservative and gentry background in the Hungarian public discourse argued that the

[44] Today's capital city of Slovakia, Bratislava.
[45] Gyáni, Gábor. *Identity and the Urban Experience. Fin-de-siécle Budapest*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2004.

adoption of consumerism and capitalism inherent to Western metropolises had a negative impact on public morality and justice. In their eyes, the tendencies of modernity seemed to uproot national belonging and countereffect national movements.[46]

It is also particularly notable that many times the Budapest Jewry was staged as the reason of these negative tendencies. The new constitution of 1867 granted full social and legal equality to all citizens of Hungary, including the Jewish community which were among the most underprivileged groups not only in the Kingdom of Hungary, but also in the Habsburg Monarchy.[47] The Jewry of Hungary had gone through Magyarization since the 1830s; as a German-speaking group, they gradually adopted Hungarian language and culture as well as became the members of nationalist associations. The year 1867 opened up new opportunities for them, whereby Jews could join the economy without any restrictions.

Simultaneously, a new urban culture based on the emancipating Jewish experience took place. Mary Gluck's monography *The Inivisible Jewish Budapest* shows that the mass culture represented by coffee houses, orpheums and music halls as well as the emerging press scene, whose owners, audience, and producers were often of Israelite background, were essentially a reflection of the changing social conditions of the Jews.[48] This was, however, not welcomed warmly in every sphere of public discourse. For the non-Jewish right-wing middle class and the pauperizing aristocracy, the Jewish population came to represent these negative tendencies who take advantage of their emancipated status and benefit at the expense of the non-Jewish citizens; for them, Jews were considered a main agent of capitalism under the disguise of national pride.[49] They aligned with the notorious statement of the Vienna mayor Karl Lueger who called the Hungarian capital as Judapest. This ill-intended pun has also relevant to spatial thinking; it

[46] Szabó, 129 –130.
[47] Komoróczy, 189.
[48] Gluck, 3–8.
[49] See more in Szabó, "A politikai gondolkodás néhány jellemző vonása", pp. 119–413. in *Az újkonzervativizmus és a jobboldali radikalizmus története*, Budapest (2015).

referred to the assumption that the city of the Hungarian became Judaized, or in other words, taken over by a "foreign group".

Manifesting all the underlying tensions, the post-World War I period brought about a shift in the public representation of Budapest and also in the role of spatiality. Alexander Vari points to the short-lived Communist period of the Hungarian Soviet Republic as a gamechanger in this regard. Under Béla Kun's administration, the main public spaces of Budapest were covered by red flags and decorated by Communist symbols, and thus pave the way to symbolic politics manifesting in the changing of the physical layout, or in the renaming of street names.[50] What is notable here is not the centrality of urban space in the ideological movement. Even under dualism, spatial planning was a key form of expressing national grandeur and pride. It was the modality of the ideology that significantly differed from the one in the pre-1914 times. Whereas the nationalist understanding of urban spaces was not in principle an oppressing agenda, it became an exclusionary and eventually a discriminating one during the turbulent period following 1918.

At the same time, the negative stereotype of Budapest as a morally corrupt and anti-national space came to be normalized. According to Alexander Vari and Miklós Szabó, the governor Miklós Horthy's speech at the recapture of Budapest from Romanian troops played a key role in this.[51] Horthy notoriously called the capital as the guilty city which needs to be purified to regain its old pride. As the next chapters shall demonstrate, this view continued to animate public discourse around the city in the following years. Very important is, however, that this negative stereotype was tightly associated with the Jewish population itself. The late 1920s experienced a gradual alleviation of denouncements and re-explored the great potentiality Budapest had. The idea to redress Budapest as a worthy capital city was also

[50] See also Perczel's study *Vörös zászlók, vörös utcák, vörös ligetek, vörös rongyok: Térfoglalások Budapesten a Tanácsköztársaság időszakában.*
[51] Szabó, 411, Vári, 712–718.

favorable by groups who sought ways to reconnect with Europe and symbolically overcome the collective trauma of Trianon. Despite the optimistic outlook, however, the stigma on Budapest continued to influence under the table and the discourse on the city has become a battlefield for different political interests.

4. A Controversial space in Budapest: Inner Elizabethtown

4.1. The emergence of Inner Elizabethtown

The history of Inner Elizabethtown can be traced back to the second half of the 18th century, when it still consisted of farmlands, manors and gardens as the part of Theresetown. These territories were originally called "Upper Suburbium" referring to their outside position to the city walls of Pest, and were renamed to Theresetown in 1772 upon the inauguration of the local Catholic church, which in a revamped form still stands today at the junction of Nagymező and Király Streets.[52] In the last third of the 18th century, the population of Theresetown gradually rose due to the influx of merchants and artisans who could not settle within Pest due to religious restrictions or financial status.[53] They were compelled to reside outside the city walls and establish business on the properties rented from the citizens of Pest.[54] This can be interpreted as the rudimentary stage of the urbanization of Pest-Buda.[55]

Over the first half of the 19th century, Theresetown retained its distinctly commercial character and multiethnic character. Today's Király Street and Dob Street, the Englischer Königgasse and Drei Trommel Gasse were frequented by travelling merchants who came from all parts of the Habsburg Empire. It was the Austro-Hungarian Compromise of 1867 that gave a new impetus to its development. With the construction of the Andrássy Avenue beginning in 1870, it became one of the most dynamically developing neighborhoods. In 1873, the year of the unification of Budapest, Theresetown was split into two districts, leading to the formation of the sizeable 6th district and the smaller 7th district later named to Elizabethtown.

[52] Michalkó, "Erzsébetváros szociálgeográfiai vizsgálata I.", 125–127. In honor of the Habsburg royalties, the neighborhood was named after Empress Maria Theresa. In a similar vein, Elizabethtown was named after Empress Elizabeth, the wife of Emperor Franz Joseph.
[53] Tóth, "Mit olvaszt az olvasztótégely?", 83.
[54] Michalkó, 120-122; Kemény, "Kismező, Nagymező, Broadway", 11–12; Perczel, "Védtelen örökség", 13–16. Perczel also notes that the agricultural past of Theresetown and Elizabethtown is preserved in the street names of Akácfa utca, Kis Diófa utca, Nagy Diófa utca and Kertész utca.
[55] Perczel, 15.

Elizabethtown comprises two separate neighborhoods split by Nagymező Street. The smaller part is Inner Elizabethtown which is located in the area between Károly Boulevard, Rákóczi Road, Nagymező Street, and Király street. The part beyond the Erzsébet Boulevard is called Outer Elizabethtown and was originally bordered by today's Rákóczi Street, Ajtósi Dürer Alley, Dózsa György Road, Hermina Street, and Városligeti Alley. Today, the area beyond Dózsa György Road is a part of the 14th district.[56] The two neighborhoods share many similarities in terms of demography and architecture[57]; in my thesis, however, "Elizabethtown" will only refer to Inner Elizabethtown, as the Erzsébet Avenue Project primarily aimed at the reconstruction of this part.

Although Elizabethtown shares many similarities with Theresetown in terms of built environment, the two neighborhoods took on different trajectories following their partition in 1873. Theresetown underwent the process of gentrification in the first 20 years after the Austro-Hungarian Compromise. The slum-like neighborhood was swiftly reinvigorated by the construction of the prestigious Andrássy Avenue, whose shine was complemented by the vibrant artist scene of Nagymező Street and the opulent Grande Boulevard. The reconstruction of the neighborhood was financed by the upper middle class and aristocrats who built their private properties in this area. These newly built spectacular spaces were compared to the grandeur of Paris and Vienna.[58] In public imagination, it endowed all the qualities required for the status of a pioneering metropolis and national capital city.

In contrast, Elizabethtown went through a significantly more modest development than its counterpart. Although the number of buildings and the population jumped significantly in

[56] Michalkó, 121.
[57] See Szívós, Erika. Hétker, zsidónegyed, gettó, bulinegyed? A Belső-Erzsébetváros története a kezdetektől a 2000-s évekig. Budapest: Korall, 2022.
[58] It is nicely demonstrated by the urban legend about the Opera House, a major landmark of Theresetown. Allegedly, Emperor Franz Joseph visited the Hungarian Opera House only once as he was furious about its beauty transcending the one in Vienna, the capital city of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy.

the fin-de-siècle period, the infrastructure and the building stock were far more underdeveloped. During the Austria-Hungary period, there were significantly less political will to develop this neighborhood which can be explained with its social landscape. Whereas Theresetown became inhabited by primarily social groups of high and middle-class social status, Elizabethtown retained its pragmatic character. Its population of low middle and working classes had modest possibilities of investing into prestigious housing. The neighborhood, especially the area of Király Street, Dob Street and Klauzál Square remained the hubs of trades in the forms of markets, merchantries and shops.[59]

Besides its occupational and economic structure, it was the ethnic heterogeneity which can be identified as difference to Theresetown. On one hand, Elizabethtown continued to attract merchants and craftsmen from foreign lands, thus creating a space of intercultural exchange. The functional-trading character of Elizabethtown is also demonstrated by the low birth rate; according to Michalkó, the birth rate rose significantly only in the early 20th century[60] which suggests that this neighborhood was rather viewed as a transition and not a final space of settlement. On the other hand, various ethnicities, but primarily the German-speaking dominated the ethnic composition until the end of the 19th century, when the Hungarian community became the majority.[61] The multiethnic character remained a characteristic of Elizabethtown which was frequently reflected upon in the public discourse.

4.2. The Jewish Elizabethtown: The Orczy House and its surroundings

The multiethnic character of Elizabethtown was strongly associated with the Jewish community that constituted a significant part of the local population. Much later than in the case of other Jewish neighborhoods of European cities, the influx of Jews to Elizabethtown and Theresetown played out in the late 18th century. Although the 1786 tolerance edict of Joseph II

[59] Szívós, *Az István tér lakói*, 13–15.
[60] Michalkó, 136–137.
[61] Gyáni, *Identity and the Urban Experience,* 173–176.

already enabled the settlement of Jews into free royal towns, it was Count Orczy who first offered his tenement house for rent to Jews on the Pest side in 1796. Following the purchase from Anna Mayerhoffer, Count József Orczy incorporated his newly gained house into the old one, creating the second largest building of Pest in 1795.[62] This was the so-called Orczy House which was situated at the corner of Landstrasse and König von Engellandgasse, today's Király Street and Károly Boulevard next to the city walls of Pest.[63]

By the early 19th century, the Orczy House had already obtained its reputation as a lucrative venue of commerce, which, according to the often-cited legend, profited the owners one gold coin per hour with its coffee-serving privilege and revenue from tenants.[64] It is important to note that most of the profit, if not exclusively, was produced by the Jewish tenants who worked and resided there. One part of the commercial activity was specifically Jewish: for example, the coffee house of the Orczy House served as a job market for *melamed* who were looking for employment at affluent families.[65] Besides, it also housed religious institutions and services such as a mikvah, kosher butchery and restaurant, and two synagogues which were recalled by famous Jewish personalities such as journalist Adolf Ágai or orientalist Ármin Vámbéry.[66] Hence, the everyday life The Orczy House served as an important religious and commercial space that were shaped by Jewish business activity and lifestyle at the same time.

Since the 1820s, religious tensions were present in the Jewish community of the Orczy House. As Gábor Dombi points out, the conflicts first manifested around the construction of the Chortempel, which provided space for the reformist community to practice their own rites separately from the traditionalists who dominated the more spacious Alte Synagoge.[67] The

[62] Dombi, *Az Orczy-házon száz galamb*, 25, 100.
[63] For an overview of its history, see Dombi, 100–104.
[64] Ibid., 25.
[65] Ibid., 59–60. Melamed are teachers of Jewish faith.
[66] Ibid., 10.
[67] Ibid., 33, 101.

breach deepened in 1859 when the Reformists relocated to the prestigious Dohány Synagogue. Afterwards, the religious life in the Orczy House was especially hit hard by the 1873 opening of the Rumbach Street Synagogue; many members quit the Orczy House community which led to the discontinuation of services in the Alte Synagoge until 1875.[68] The 1860s and 1870s also mark an important demographical shift in the neighborhood. The Orczy House became the hub of the Budapest Orthodoxy, whereas the Jewish population, mostly Neolog and later non-religious, in the neighboring streets significantly rose.[69] As Szívós points out, 1900 was the peak point of this tendency; in this year, 35,63% of the population was Jew in Theresetown, whereas the proportion reached 42,38% in Inner Elizabethtown and 39,12% in whole Elizabethtown.[70] The 7th district had acclaimed its distinct Jewish character.

4.3. Inner Elizabethtown – a Jewish ghetto?

Can we consider the 18th and early 19th century Elizabethtown and Theresetown a Jewish quarter in the sense of the "classical" ones of Prague and Venice? On one hand, a significant proportion of the population comprised of Jewish residents just like in the case of these cities. In the early 1800s, the Orczy House was widely known as *Judenhof*, a name referring to the Jewish ghetto of Speyer in Germany.[71] Furthermore, especially some areas like Király Street, Dob Street as well as Klauzál Square had an overwhelming majority of Jewish residents which were not only salient in official statistics, but were also confirmed by contemporary accounts and official sources.[72] The large number of religious and social institutions such as synagogues, schools, orphanages, and canteens is also striking, let alone the property and building ownership. Although the proportion of Jewish ownership and inhabitance had sunk by the eve of World War II, the Jewish presence remained a key characteristic of the

[68] Ibid., 54.
[69] Perczel, 19–20.
[70] Szívós (2022), 71.
[71] See "Plan vom sogenannten Judenhof zu Pest." *Budapest Archives,* Reference code: BFL XV.16.b.225/123-2. "Judenhof in Speyer gehört zum UNESCO-Welterbe." *Webseite der Dom zu Speyer*
[72] See, Szívós (2014), *Az István tér lakói a 19 –20. század fordulóján,* 13–34.

neighborhood. In this respect, Inner Elizabethtown had indeed a dominant Jewish character which was visible both to the local population and outsiders.

On the other hand, the identification of the Jewish community with their neighborhood exhibits great differences that can be tracked back to the different context of its establishment. The Jewish neighborhood of Prague was established in the Middle Ages within the city walls to provide space for Jewish merchants. Similar to the one in Venice, they were not allowed to settle outside of this neighborhood. At the same time, this spatial confinement also came with the autonomy of local religious authorities; the Jewish Town Hall was the representative of political rights of Jewish community towards the leadership of Prague. Although they strove from the early modern period on to get out of the spatial confinements, the Jewish community continued to maintain strong religious ties with Josefov. This became clear in the debates around the Finis Ghetto plan in the last decades of the 19th century when the territorial integrity of the Old Jewish Cemetery got endangered by the urban refurbishment plans for this neighborhood. Although urban development itself was not countered by the local community, the possibility of tearing down one part of the Old Jewish Ghetto had sparked great criticism from Jews and non-Jews alike. The open resistance of the religious leadership can be explained with their strong affiliation with the neighborhood's religious past and autonomy.[73]

In contrast, the Jewish community of Pest never maintained such strong religious ties to Theresetown and Elizabethtown. First, they did not experience settling in Orczy House as a confinement, but as an opportunity to expand their business even if outside the city walls in the very beginning. Second, their political organization was far too different to the Jews of Prague, whereby they were not granted municipal autonomy. The Jews of Pest were free to rent tenements and run business, but they did not possess the right of collective self-representation.

[73] See Giustino, "Tearing Down Prague's Jewish town", 124–127., 142–147.

Third, and most importantly, the Jews of Pest lacked the century-long heritage and history in the neighborhood what Josefov meant to Jews in Prague. Instead of a space with traditions and customs, Theresetown was primarily governed by commercial activity. Therefore, the Jewish neighborhood in Budapest cannot be categorized as ghetto in the sense of the Prague one. The late 18th century and early 19th century Jewish settlement in Theresetown is best characterized by what Géza Komoróczy calls "urban shtetl"[74]; Theresetown had a dominant Jewish character, which, however, provided latitude for religious intermingling. As we shall see, it also impacted the identification of the local Jewish community with the neighborhood as well as their relation to the construction of the Erzsébet Avenue.

4.4. Born of the metropolis: Inner Elizabethtown as of the mid-19th century

It was in Elizabethtown where the urbanization of Pest began, and it was also the core of the new Central European metropolis called Budapest as of 1873. Metropolis in this sense does not only refer to the urban problems generated by growing population, and infrastructural development, but also the culture that emerges in this specific urban context. In the first decades of the Dual Monarchy, the commercial importance of Elizabethtown gradually lost its significance and took on the reputation of a fervent nightlife quarter. Apart from the orpheums, music halls and cafés that were frequented by a variety of audiences, the neighborhood partly gained the reputation of red-light district. A notable example is the notorious Wassermann-szálla in the Orczy House which was featured in newspapers as the den of prostitution.[75]

In her seminal book *Invisible Budapest,* Mary Gluck interprets the cafés, music halls and orpheums as the most impactful carriers of contemporary urban culture.[76] Frequented mostly by the middle class, they were quintessentially Jewish spaces in terms of their audience,

[74] Komoróczy, *Jewish Budapest,* 72.
[75] Dombi, 44–55.
[76] Gluck, Mary. "The Scandal of the Budapest Orpheum", pp. 139–178. In Gluck, Mary. *The Invisible Jewish Budapest. Metropolitan Culture at the Fin de Siécle.* London: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2016.

ownership and, in case of orpheums and music halls, also their repertoire. This is demonstrated by Miklós Konrád's research into the contemporary advertisements that informs about the German-Jewish and Yiddish cabarets taking place in these venues.[77] At the same time, they functioned as symbolic spaces of cultural transgression, because contemporary accounts prove that non-Jews also attended these places.[78] However, Gluck argues that their position in these spaces was reversed compared to their social status in everyday life, since it was them who constituted the minority group in the audience. Thus, as Gluck concludes, these spaces were eventually subversive and served as a model to an equal and democratic society.[79]

Even though these spaces might have represented the transgression of social norms and restrictions, it was the experience of uprootedness that served as the basis to their emergence. This was also reflected in the contemporaries' recollections on the Orczy House, which at this time already was considered as the representative of the "old Pest". An illuminative example is the well-known Jewish journalist Adolf Ágai's untitled short story which evokes his memory of this building from the 1850s.[80] Its plot centers around the young narrator, a young Jewish medical student, who crashes a Jewish wedding there with his co-religionist friend Jancsi Pünkösdi. Pünkösdi, who is described to have good connections with the Hungarian aristocracy, invites the narrator to a ball at the house of Baron Orczy and convinces him to sell his silver pocket watch to buy elegant clothes. Following his friend's instructions unsuspiciously, he learns only at the venue that he was tricked into a Jewish wedding at the Orczy House where he was perceived as a *goj*[81] musician due to his dressing. The narrator gives an expression to this surprise with an ironic joke: "The Orczy House? Not a single baron lives there. The only

[77] Konrád, „Orfeum és zsidó identitás Budapesten a századfordulón", 7–13.
[78] Gluck, 150–152, 158.
[79] Gluck, 158.
[80] Ágai, Adolf. "Fiatalkori riugaszkodások", *Fővárosi Lapok*, May 21, 1870, 463.
[81] Hebrew term for non-Jewish individuals.

one who bears this name, but not the title, is David Baron who sells silver-fringed caps for kids in the gateway."

Figure 1. "On the Landstrasse"
An 1874 illustration of the downtown of Pest with the Orczy House on the left[82]

The story plays out in the period before the legal emancipation of Jews, and it shows one possible way assimilating Jews during Dualism might have related to this space. Ágai depicts the Jewish wedding in a romanticized way, yet the narrators' position clearly shows a breach with traditions: the wedding appears to be vivid and warm, but the narrator seems secluded from the events, which is amplified by his disguise as a non-Jewish musician. Besides, Pünkösdi's tell-tale name – Pünkösd is the Christian festivity of Pentecost – also hints at the reading of this story as a narrative of assimilation. In the light of this short story, the Orczy House must have unquestionably been a reference point to the Jewish community of Pest in the 1870s. Unlike the Orthodox community, however, the assimilated group interpreted it as a memory of a distant past that evoke nostalgia, but without the wish of returning to it.

[82] In *Magyarország és a Nagyvilág*, February 1, 1874, 67.

The 1890s brought about a new shift in the public discourse on Elizabethtown. The approaching Millenium Year of 1896 and the stagnating economic crisis brought the urban development problems to the fore. Apart from Tabán, it was Elizabethtown where the discourse about the lack of urban development was picked up. Perhaps the most tell-tale sign of the shifting discourse is the changing representation of the Orczy House. The negative impact of Orthodox Jewry and Hasidic tradesmen called *galíciáner* was always in the forefront of reports and triggered non-Jewish journalist to publish denouncing articles often anonymously. Surprisingly enough, it was Jewish journalist Lajos Hevesi who used this stereotype among the first in an 1874 feuilleton. In this context, Orczy House was the endowment of the backward religious Jew who comes from the East solely to do business.

"This is the place where the vagabonds from Galicia feel at home the most, surrounded by the atmosphere they enjoy and familiar noises they like to hear; although, to tell the truth, the audience here does not really like to engage into discussions, but rather into business-related talks."[83]

Hevesi's attitude, which might have stemmed from his strong commitment to Magyarization, was surprisingly widespread in the public discourse as of the 1890s. The watershed moment for the discourse on Elizabethtown might be symbolically linked to the collapse of the roof of the Orczy House in 1903, which directed the attention to the dilapidated state of and the need for extensive refurbishment of the neighborhood.[84] The Orczy House seemed not to fit the future visions on the district, and a strong will for its demolition soon emerged. As a 1912 article written by the non-Jewish art historian Károly Lyka in the journal *Művészet* notes:

"The city is a living organism that, just like diatoms, tailors its limestone shell onto its body. It sheds it when it becomes narrow, transforms it when the law of adaptation to new circumstances demands it. […] [The demolition of the Orczy house] will not be criticized by anyone because buildings of this kind were dedicated to transience

[83] Hevesi, 403.
[84] "Az Orczy-ház." *Pesti Napló,* November 10, 1903, 8.

from the start, precisely because they serve the aims of practical life, and practical purposes are subject to the understanding, interests, and economic changes of eras."[85]

Lyka calls the buildings of practical purposes as "barbarity" as they are considered unfit for the heritage protection in a modern city. Other articles go even further by espousing an attitude that might be interpreted as antisemitic. Reporting about the Jewish ghetto in Rome, journalist Ignácz Balla calls the Orczy House as "the ghetto of Hungary" and calls out its backward state compared to the developing Jewish neighborhood of the Italian capital city.[86] It is notable that Balla, just like Lajos Hevesi, was also of Jewish background. It indicates the formation of an assimilated Jewish intellectual group, which was highly against the Jewish character of this neighborhood.

By the early 20th century, the need for the refurbishment of Elizabethtown became apparent and was put to the political agenda, as the next chapter on the Erzsébet Avenue will demonstrate. The Orczy House, which once represented progress and the urban character of Pest, were condemned as unfit for being the part of the Hungarian capital. Jews and non-Jews had different opinion on whether this building had a heritage value. But the majority of press were advocating for its demolition and even spoke to some antisemitic tropes. This negative perception of the Orczy House remained an integral part of its public representation until its demolition in the late 1930s.

4.5. The Making of the Scapegoat: Inner Elizabethtown following Trianon

The post-World War I period opened a dark chapter in the history of Inner Elizabethtown: due to its large proportion of Jewish population, it became the target of hate mongering in the early 1920s when anti-Bolshevik forces took over the power following the short-lived Hungarian Soviet Republic. The backbone of the new administration represented by

[85] Lyka, "Barbárságok", 292.
[86] Balla, "A római ghetto"

Admiral Miklós Horthy consisted of right-wing nationalist groups who were against the Jewish liberal-capitalist political forces. Therefore, the excessive negative representation of Elizabethtown in the public discourse was unavoidable.

The most often cited example of this tendency is the oeuvre of the celebrated author Cécile Tormay, whose 1921 semi-autobiography *An Outlaw's Diary* commemorates Budapest under the period of the red terror. In her description of the Dob Street, she mixes the well-known antisemitic tropes of "Bolshevik Jew" and "Galician religious Jew" – also known as *galíciáner* – to attest the untrustworthiness of this community considered an inherent ethnic trait.[87]

"It was as though the city had for years devoured countless Galician immigrants and now vomited them forth in sickness. How sick it was! Syrian faces and bodies, red posters and red hammers whirled round in it. And freemasons, feminists, editorial offices, Galileans, night cafes came to the surface and the ghetto sported cockades of national colours and chrysanthemums."[88]

Tormay's text also suggests that the trope of guilty city used by Miklós Horthy does not necessarily relate to whole Budapest. It is rather the foreign and anti-national "ghetto" of Elizabethtown which turned Budapest into a morally corrupted metropolis bowing down to the declining Western European culture. Thus, the link between anti-national tendencies and the local Jewish population got even more strengthened.

With different intensity over time, unrest and hate crimes came to characterize the everyday life in Inner Elizabethtown. The most notable incident is the terrorist attack against the Erzsébetvárosi Kör on the eve of April 3, 1922 that targeted the Jewish and non-Jewish philosemitic social democrats belonging to this political association. With a death toll of 8, which counted as high-profile political figures such as István Bárczy, Vilmos Vázsonyi, and

[87] Ungváry, 51.
[88] Tormay, *The Outlaw's Diary*, 8.

Gusztáv G. Ehrlich among its members, received a clear message about the perspectives of their political views.[89] Furthermore, the reports published in the Jewish weekly *Egyenlőség* suggest that Jews were often the victims of pogrom-like atrocities. Not long after the bomb attack at the Erzsébetvárosi Kör, another terrorist attack took place against the Rombach Street Synagogue. The author of *Egyenlőség* took on an ironic tone referring to popular antisemitic tropes:

"On the right side of the vestibule in the Rombach Street Temple, there was an ornate and decorative wood-carving gently fitting the wall that held the candle burning for the deceased Jews, the members of the Chevra, on the anniversary of their death. This wood-carving no longer embellishes the wall of the church. It has been burnt […] [because] mysteriously, gasoline was poured into the candle. The Jews of Erzsébetváros are doing well. Firstly, they are exploded by bombs. Afterwards, they are burnt by gasoline – so as to stay on the safe side. Because deceased Jews could once also resurrect. One might never know…"[90]

But not only religious spaces were under attack. The 13 November, 1920 issue of *Egyenlőség* reported physical insults against respected personalities in the 6th and 7th districts.[91] When introducing the victims, it was not their Jewish identity, but their service and dedication to the Hungarian cause prior 1914 or during World War I that were emphasized. These attacks, therefore, were not only framed as pogroms, but were understood as a symptom of civil war conditions where Magyars turn against their compatriots. It is important to note that it was only the socialist *Népszava* that tried to deconstruct the negative trope of "Jewish quarter" and defend the district against hate speech.[92] Otherwise, the stereotype "Jewish" on Elizabethtown got normalized in the public discourse and embraced everything considered "morally rotting" in the conservative administration: capitalism and liberalism.

[89] Ungváry, 123–125. These politicians also participated in the discourse on Erzsébet Avenue in th pre-1914 period (see Subchapter 5.1.).
[90] "A Rombach utcai templomban…" *Egyenlőség,* May 19, 1922, 3.
[91] "A vasárnapi frontról", *Egyenlőség,* November 13, 1920, 2–3.
[92] "Keresik a Lipót körúti merénylőket", *Népszava*

4.6. Revamping Elizabethown: New visions in the 1920s and 1930s

During the consolidation of the Bethlen period, the hate mongering and negative representation against Elizabethtown and its population gradually decreased. Owing to the political and economic stabilization in the late 1920s, a new discourse emerged on its potential in the cityscape. The discussion was initiated by a series of seminars held in the Erzsébetváros Kaszinó, a conservative elite club in March 1928. The events intended to raise awareness of the architectural and urban planning challenges ahead of Elizabethtown as well as generating discussion on the possible directions of development.[93] The first session was delivered by architect Pál Ligeti on March 29, whose lecture was later published as an article titled *The Reconstruction of Erzsébetváros* in the first issue of the architecture magazine *Tér és forma* [Space and form] in May 1928.[94] Ligeti stated that the reconstruction of Erzsébetváros is a key pillar in the reinvigoration of Budapest; the village-like layout of this neighborhood in close proximation to the *city* should be eliminated instead of expanding the suburbs. The wartime and period of stabilization so far explained its delay, but 1928 opens up new possibilities for construction.[95]

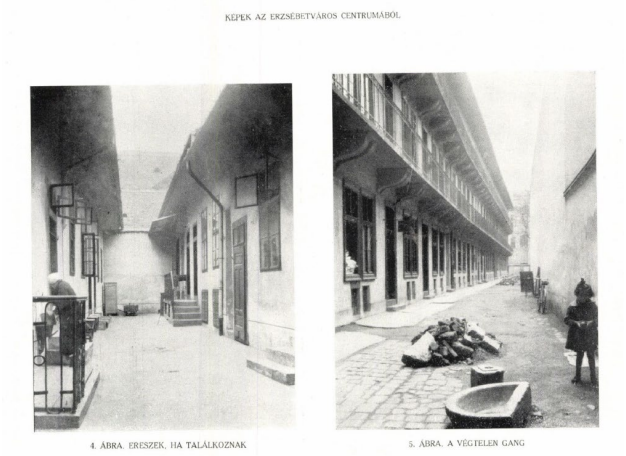

Figure 2: Footages from the center of Erzsébetváros published in Pál Ligeti's 1928 article (Picture 4: “Eaves if they meet” and picture 5 “The inifinite gang”)

[93] “Az Erzsébetváros építési problémái“, *Magyarság,* March 27, 1928, 17.
[94] Ligeti, Pál. “Az Erzsébetváros újjáépítése.” *Tér és Forma* 1, no. 1 (1928): 19–31.
[95] Ibid., 21–22.

In contrast to Ligeti's focus on architectural revamping, other speakers used sharper wording that resonated with the anti-Jewish discourse of the period. Architect Jenő Padányi-Gulyás compared Elizabethtown to the Suhajda telep, a slum neighborhood on the outskirts, and called it the "stain of shame" of Budapest. In a similar vein, government official Sándor Jeszenszky[96] added that unless the situation does not change, the "unhealthy corners" of Elizabethtown will continue to "produce urban people who are hundred times more uncivilized than peasants."[97] Jeszenszky was even more specific in his description of Elizabethtown population in his 1927 book *Szép Budapest* [Beautiful Budapest], when he called the merchants of "immigrants of 67" as the "dirt next to the grandiose Andrássy Avenue".[98] Calling out the underdeveloped landscape as well as associating it with its Jewish population deemed to be a conventional argument which eventually set the discussions on the Erzsébet Avenue in motion.

4.7. The Jewish Elizabethtown: realities and local identity

To what extent did social realities in Elizabethtown correspond with the Jewish label pushed by contemporary right-wing press? What did the label 'Jewish' specifically refer to? Indeed, census data shows that the majority of population identified as 'Jewish' during the interwar period. Particularly Király Street, Dob Street and some other streets in Inner Elizabethtown had Jewish majority.[99] Furthermore, religious life continued to be a significant element in the neighborhood partly owing to the large Orthodox communion who did not move to outer districts. Therefore, it is plausible to suggest that it was Elizabethtown where Jewish religious life was most visible.

[96] According to the entry in the 21st volume of Révai's Grande Lexicon, Jeszenszky was „an essayist in the field of art active in art administration, especially in the domain of motion picture, music and radio under the aegis of the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Public Education". (See: Révai Nagy Lexikona, ed. 21, 476)
The 144 entries in the digital database of Arcanum for the cluewords „Jeszenszky" and „Szép Budapest" shows that this book received wide coverage in professional and daily press as well as purchased by state-run educational institutions. Search in the database was carried out on August 8, 2023.
[97] "A Belső-Erzsébetváros szégyenletes suhajdatelep", *Pesti Napló,* May 5, 1928, 8.
[98] Jeszenszky, *Szép Budapest,* 78.
[99] Szívós (2022), 98.

At the same time, inquiries into the urban history of Elizabethtown show that the presence of non-Jewish elements were also a characteristic of this neighborhood. The recent studies of Erika Szívós and Beáta Fabó pointed to the multireligious co-habitation patterns around the Klauzál Square that hint at the various types of contact among locals of different religious affiliations than was represented in the public discourse.[100] Fabó regards István Square [the old name of Klauzál Square] and its environment as a contact point among Jewish and non-Jewish merchants until it was moved to a closed market hall in 1896. Furthermore, based on the analysis of the 1941 census, Szívós argues that it was multiethnic co-habitation patterns that characterized this part of Elizabethtown. From Jewish families employing Christian maids to shared apartments or beds, it is very likely that Jews and non-Jews were in close contact even in their private environment.

Apart from demographical numbers, contemporary literary works also demonstrate that Jews might not have necessarily defined their local identity in ethnic or religious terms. For example, Erika Szívós' analysis of authors Béla Zsolt's and Tamás Kóbor's works consider Jewish background a stigma to be left behind; instead, it is the middle-class belonging that constitute a central element of identification with Elizabethtown.[101] Indeed, the 7th district always had a distinct middle-class character due to craftsmen, artisans and shop owners living in the area,[102] and the middle-class experience also prioritized over religious identity due to the large extent of assimilation.[103]

[100] In her analysis of 1941 census data from Klauzál Square, Szívós argues that the 23%-63% of households had a mixed Christian-Jewish ethnic character. The most typical cohabitation patterns were among others: Christian maiden in Jewish middle-class family, Christian tenant in Jewish owner's house, Christian and Jewish working class tenants sharing the same apartment or room. See: Szívós (2022), 146–158. See also Fabó, "A Klauzál tér története", 52 –97.
[101] Szívós, *Dobócia történetei*, 104–106.
[102] Szívós (2022), 69–70.
[103] Fenyves, 213–261.

The contemporary public discourse, however, often associated the middle-class experience of Elizabethtown with the Jewish one. This is also demonstrated in the reception of Zsolt's 1929 play *Erzsébetváros* which often pointed out its Jewish dimension. Chief editor of *Nyugat* Pál Ignotus, who was Jew himself, drew parallels with prominent figures of Russian literature such as Chekov and Gogol, whose way of artistic depiction corresponds to Zsolt's way of depicting the realities of Jewish residents in Elizabethtown.[104] In a more antisemitic vein, János Makkai in *Magyarság* applaudes Zsolt for the "wittiness" and "business acumen of his kind" that enabled him to produce such a master piece. He later moves on to seemingly praise the author for not trying to "hide the differences between the life of our and their kind", but being brave to tell-tale the silent plight of the middle-class Jew.[105] Can the local identity be described as essentially Jewish? Not necessarily, but coming to terms with the Jewish past was probably a challenge all residents faced.

[104] Ignotus, "Erzsébetváros"
[105] Makkai, "Erzsébetváros". As Krisztián Ungváry notes, János Makkai presented the Second Jewish Law of 1938 in the Hungarian Parliament. (Ungváry, 216.)

5. Ideological representation of Budapest urban planning: the case study of the Erzsébet Avenue Project

5.1. The pre-1914 period: the Erzsébet Avenue as a local initiative

The idea of a long and wide traffic road leading from the suburbs to the downtown was already articulated when the Wesselényi Street was extended into Károly Boulevard in 1895.[106] However, it was in 1900 when the plans for an avenue cutting through Elizabethtown from Károly Boulevard until City Park was put forward by the liberal political leadership of the 7th district. In an open letter published in *Budapesti Napló* [Budapest Diary], the signees, most importantly Károly Morzsányi and Gusztáv G. Ehrlich, argued that the transformation of Dob Street into an Andrássy Avenue-like thoroughfare would have substantially contributed to the metropolitan character of Budapest, which was considered a common interest of the Hungarian nation. As they put it,

"We are delighted to observe that over the past decade, significant progress has been made in this direction. Without going into further details, it is undeniable that the meticulously crafted downtown regulations will undoubtedly contribute immensely to bestowing upon the Hungarian capital a truly cosmopolitan character. This represents a substantial leap forward in the artistic direction and the creation of the avenue of Elizabethtown. We can categorize this plan among matters of national significance because every Hungarian holds their beautiful capital with pride, and welcomes every step, every idea, and every creation that enhances Budapest's beauty, grandeur, and brilliance."[107]

In 1902, the liberal MP representative for Elizabethtown Károly Morzsányi put forward the proposal of Erzsébet Avenue in the Assembly of the Parliament.[108] As András Román's research suggests, it encountered reluctance from the Board of Works, and was officially approved only in 1908.[109] The original idea of transforming Dob Street was also replaced by a new plan which designated the site of the legendary Orczy House (15 Károly Boulevard) as the

[106] Román, 73.
[107] *Budapesti Napló,* September 20, 1900, 8.
[108] *Alkotmány,* March 23, 1902, 3.; comp. Dombi, 83; Román, 73.
[109] Román, 73.

beginning of the avenue. Furthermore, the Károly Boulevard end of the road would have run into the new City Hall.

The political and economic elite belonging to the Erzsébetvárosi Kör exhibited a great interest in the development of Elizabethtown.[110] Particularly, it was two Jewish public figure the banker Gusztáv G. Ehrlich and the political representative Vilmos Vázsonyi who advocated for the implementation. Owner of Budapest-Erzsébetvárosi Bank RT, Ehrlich represented the capitalist interests in the debates and was portrayed as ardent supporter of the plans.[111] As a commentary in the weekly magazine *A Hét* [The Week] noted in a rather sharp manner, the name of the avenue will be "with time Magyarized into Ehrlich G. Gusztáv Avenue", and the only purpose of this road is "to reap benefit to influential figures".[112] This rather critical description of Ehrlich stands in line with Harrer's memoir in which he also called out the negative impacts of capitalism in the city politics and the imbuement of the Board with underlying political influences.[113]

In contrast, the social democrat politician Vilmos Vázsonyi was opposed to the capitalist interests represented by the circle of Ehrlich.[114] Roughly 20 years his junior, Vázsonyi was already an assimilated Jew who called into question the values of capitalist elite and was more attuned to wider social questions regardless of religious affiliation. Although he shared the leading role with Ehrlich in the Polgári Demokrata Kör [Civil Democratic Circle], the tension between them was from early on tangible. As the local newspaper *Az Erzsébetváros* about the 1906 elections reported:

"Not long ago, two opposing factions stood facing each other like two forces seeking to annihilate one another: Ehrlich G. Gusztáv and, with all due respect to mention his name, Vilmos Vázsonyi. The latter was born to kill the former. They faced each other like fire and water, ready to engage in a struggle where, in accordance with the

[110] See the report in *Pesti Napló,* December 15, 1906, 15.
[111] See *Az Ujság,* August 12, 1905, 12.
[112] *A Hét,* March 24, 1912, 181.
[113] Harrer, *Egy magyar polgár élete I.,* 63–67, 76–78, 140.
[114] Ibid., 63–67.

eternal laws of nature, one element would destroy the other. Sympathy and truth were on Vázsonyi's side, opposite to him stood corruption, which he fought against with superhuman strength."[115]

In line with this description, Vázsonyi advocated for a conscious city panning that does not prioritize the interest of property owners; moreover, he called for the imposing of tax on the owners, who would have been this way financially bound to contribute to the constructions.[116] The interest groups, however, were more powerful in getting through their ideas, and this was reflected in the 1912 urban development plan of László Warga. The avenue, which was imagined to be joined with an underground train station by more ambitious fantasies[117], eventually was designed to have a curve at István Square and run until Damjanich Street.[118] According to Harrer, who pointed out that the Erzsébet Avenue essentially lost its avenue-like character, this solution meant to avoid the demolition of Royal Szálló in Elizabeth Boulevard, a public limited company owned by Jewish business men also active in the local politics of Elizabethtown.[119] The final plans were officially adopted in 1914, but its realization was put on hold due to World War I.[120]

The digital collection of Arcanum attests that the political lobbying for the Erzsébet Avenue was widely covered and the idea was welcomed by the public. The economic sector was also widely interested in the topic; as Gábor Dombi's research demonstrate, the owners of the Orczy RT. [Orczy Limited Company] were also in favor of the Erzsébet Avenue, and expected their property to be expropriated by the municipality.[121] This can be explained with the deteriorated conditions of the building and the grave public health conditions in this

[115] *Az Erzsébetváros,* December 9, 1906, 1.
[116] *Fővárosi Közlöny*, July 16, 1911, 1742 –1743; July 4, 1913, 1923.
[117] *Budapesti Hírlap*, March 10, 1913, 12.
[118] See the adopted proposal among Harrer's documents in the Budapest Archives. Reference code: HU BFL XIV.31 14.3
[119] Harrer, *Egy magyar polgár élete II,* 199. Regarding the history and ownership of the Royal Szálló, see Balog, Ádám. "Idén lenne 125 éves a Royal Nagy Szálloda." *Magyar Kereskedelmi és Vendéglátóipari Múzeum,* August 6, 2021. Last accessed: October 12, 2023. https://mkvm.hu/iden-lenne-125-eves-a-royal-nagy-szalloda/
[120] Román, 73–74.
[121] Dombi, 70–92.

neighborhood that had long been well-known. The constant delay, however, led to a general disappointment; this was best articulated by the liberal mayor István Bárczy, who talked about the project in a rather resilient manner:

'There stands the new city hall of the capital of one and a half million inhabitants opposite Elizabeth Avenue,' he said in his speech, 'which leads from the city hall to the city park, with more beautiful houses and valuable shops, and to the right and left of it, in place of the airless streets and houses, a whole new, healthy piece of the city. […] And at the end of the list Bárczy himself exclaims: 'All this is a dizzying utopia!' and adds, "No, only ten years [to build it] is not enough!"[122]

The above-mentioned sources attest that the Erzsébet Avenue not only represented an urban renewal project for Budapest, but nationalist ideas were attributed to it in order to garner support for it, just like in the case of the Andrássy Avenue in the 1870s.[123] At the same time, the antisemitic undertone was far less present in this period. As elaborated on in Chapter 4, the stereotypical representation of the Orczy House was indeed present in the contemporary public discourse.[124] Besides, some sources were imbued with anti-Jewish sentiments; a notable example is Viktor Cholnoky's article in *Művészet*, in which he expressed his wish of destroying the "Chicago" with the construction of the Avenue.[125] Yet, due to the rather philosemitic discourse of the era as well as the Jewish liberal circles endorsing the idea, the Erzsébet Avenue was not utilized for hate-mongering against Jews.

[122] *Egy magyar polgár élete I.,* 134–135.
[123] See subhapter 4.1.
[124] See subchapter 4.4.
[125] Paganel [Cholnoky, Viktor], *Erzsébet-sugárut,* 262.

5.2. The re-birth of the project in the interwar period: the Erzsébet Avenue amidst the national and antisemitic climate between 1929 and 1938

5.2.1. The revision of plans and the open call in the years 1928-1930

The Municipal Council of Budapest for a long time considered the realization of the Erzsébet Avenue unfeasible due to the economic crisis of the late 1910s. As mayor Jenő Sipőcz pointed out in his 1922 speech, the grave changes in the political and economic conditions made it impossible to revisit the plans of the Avenue.[126] The economic uplift between 1926 and 1929, however, brought about a renewed interest in the refurbishment of Budapest.[127] As discussed in chapters 3 and 4, the boost of tourism and the consolidating economy created conditions which allowed for the revision of large-scale urban development plans.

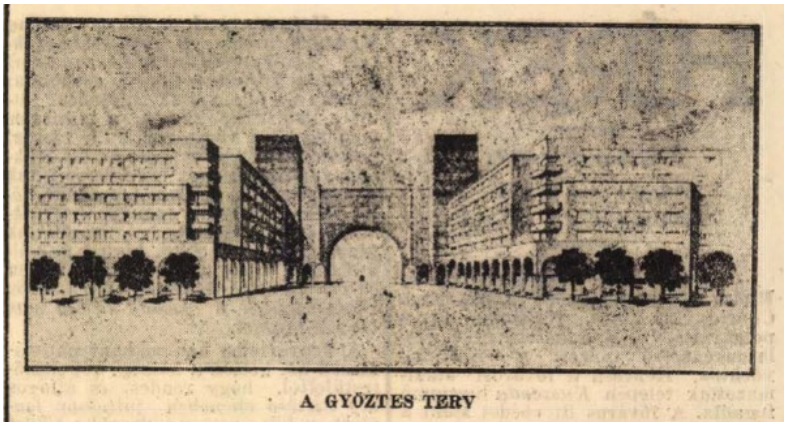

Figure 3. Aladár Árkay's award-winning plans published in Az Est[128]

The refurbishment of Elizabethtown, especially the area embraced by the Great Boulevard, was discussed by professionals and governmental officials in the framework of the discussion series in the Erzsébetvárosi Kaszinó in 1928. The project was officially brought up by the Metropolitan Board of Works that also started talks with the Municipal Committee of Budapest about its realization; due to different views on the implementation, however, the Municipal Committee refused to financially support the project and rendered it under the

[126] "Budapest székesfőváros törvényhatósági bizottságának 1922. március 29-én (szerdán) és 30-án (csütörtökön) tartott folytatólagos rendes közgyűlése", *Fővárosi Közlöny,* 1005.
[127] Ungváry, 146.
[128] Ibid.

authority of the Board in 1930.[129] In the same year, a call for the design of the new buildings on the site of the Orczy House was announced by the Metropolitan Board of Works. The call received 47 submissions among which the young architect Aladár Árkay's work was awarded. Besides, some submissions were purchased by the Board, among others architecture professor Gyula Wälder's plans.[130] As Árkay explained in an interview to *Az Est,* the award committee was delighted by the triumph arch that dominated his plans. At this point, the project seemed to be on the track of realization.

5.2.2. The growing antisemitic undertones around the Erzsébet Avenue Project

The new wave of economic crisis caused by the Great Depression of 1929 soon put a stop to the implementation of any ambitious urban development endeavor, including the Erzsébet Avenue. The government still refused to provide tax relief to new constructions in Elizabethtown as this might have possibly led to a deficit in the governmental budget. The Metropolitan Board of Works, which was now fully responsible for the financial and technical implementation of the project, was unable to lobby for the approval of the governmental help either. The minutes of the Works show that the emphasis was put on the renovation of the Buda Castle and preservation of city landmarks.[131] As Harrer notes, both chairmen Zénó Bessenyey and Iván Rakovszky in the examined period represented the demands by governmental circles whom they maintained strong ties with. Furthermore, the members of the Board were also delegated by the government which cemented the influence of the administration.[132] Therefore, the idea of boosting tourism and invest into prestige projects preferred by the government overrode the improvement of life conditions for the city population. The Erzsébet Avenue, although meant to tackle the housing and general health problems of a largely populated area,

[129] Harrer, 200–202, Committee Meeting decree 358/1930.
[130] Román, 75.
[131] See the online collection in the Archive of the HAS RCH Institute of Art History under the reference code: A-II-07a Fővárosi Közmunkák Tanácsának tanácsülési és bizottsági jegyzőkönyvei (1870-1948).
[132] Harrer, *Egy magyar polgár élete II,* 194–197.

was sidelined due to the immense costs. The project was conditioned upon the investors who had low interest in investments due to the absence of tax relief.

The stalled construction of Erzsébet Avenue was widely covered by the Budapest press, and it became a topic through which the general dissatisfaction over the economic crisis materialized. The tension grew partly towards the government that kept rejecting to subsidize the implementation without any further explanations; as a 1932 article suggests, the Minister of Finances rejected "with a stroke of pen" to give the government's approval to the plans for the Erzsébet Avenue.[133] The Municipal Committee of Budapest stood perplexed at these developments. As committee member Zsigmond Zala explained in a 1933 speech, the construction was considered the only way out from the spiraling unemployment.[134] Nevertheless, it was not the Metropolitan Board of Works, but the Municipal Committee and particularly its member Ferenc Harrer who was blamed as a scapegoat for the stagnation.

Originally graduated as architect, Ferenc Harrer had been involved in the administrative discussions and decision-makings on urban planning-related matters of Budapest since the late 1890s. Under the mayorship of István Bárczy, he gained a reputation of leading professional in the urban development.[135] He was also an active member in social democrat associations and were aware of the responsibility of architecture in social improvement.[136] Unlike Bárczy, however, he continued to retain his position in the administrative field even in the Horthy administration due to his reserved participation in political debates and high focus on strictly profession-related issues. Harrer also contributed to the implementation of the Erzsébet Avenue project. As he notes it in his memoir, he initialized the property exchange between the Board

[133] *Ujság*, July 31, 1932, 10.; Metropolitan Board of Works minutes, II.1.a.50/1934.
[134] *Fővárosi Közlöny*, June 23, 1933, 763.
[135] For a detailed overview of Harrer's pre-1914 career, see Harrer, Ferenc. *Egy magyar polgár élete I*. Budapest: Gondolat, 1968.
[136] See Ibid.

and the Budapest Committee; by handing over the property of 15 Károly Boulevard to the Board for the building in Tabán, the Board *de facto* gained full authority over the implementation.[137]

In early 1934, when the dissatisfaction over the stalled reconstructions peaked, the Committee has rejected its endorsement, citing Harrer's argument that the legal circumstances had not been prepared yet for the commence of the work. Additionally, he suggested to rethink the whole idea of the avenue by instead building a neighborhood of tenement houses with gardens that would "provide healthy and nice living conditions to those who have businesses there."[138] Harrer's commentary triggered a backlash from the political sphere and public opinion. Called by a "dryasdust scholar", he was staged as the main saboteur of the project.[139]

Figure 4. The caricature titled *The ghetto garden suburb* in *Magyarság.* The small poem on the bottom, a parody of Hungarian poet Sándor Petőfi's *You Cannot Forbid the Flower…*[140]

The harshest criticism was probably expressed in the caricature titled *The ghetto garden suburb* published in the far-right newspaper *Magyarság*. It depicts the imaginary Inner Elizabethtown as a grotesque suburban neighborhood with Jewish residents portrayed in a

[137] Harrer, *Egy magyar polgár élete II*, 206.
[138] Ibid., 205.
[139] Fővárosi Közlöny, March 30, 1934, 333.
[140] "A gettó kertváros. (Álomkép)", *Magyarság,* February 2, 1934, 12.

highly stereotypical fashion under the warm rays of Ferenc Harrer as the Sun. The image combines widely known cultural and antisemitic tropes that are associated with natural elements and village life. The central motive is the flower that governs the textual dimension of the caricature. The doggerel on the bottom is a comic reinterpretation of the iconic Hungarian poet Sándor Petőfi's poem *You Cannot Forbid the Flower.* The flower in this case refers to the central Jewish figure bearing the characteristics of a *galiciáner.* His name is Virág [Flower], but as the reference suggests, it is the Magyarized form of the German *Blum,* hinting that the character was not born, but became Hungarian. The German phrase *Achtung!* also appear on the prohibition sign that suggests German is a common language spoken among the characters. These linguistic elements speak to the most common antisemitic prejudice at this time that considered Jew, even though under the disguise of assimilation, remained the enemies of the Hungarian nation. The untrue nature associated with Jews is also emphasized by the Rombach Street that is renamed to "Do-not-hurt-me-flower" Street; it suggests a criticism towards the assumed self-victimization of Jews, who at the same time take away space from the non-Jewish Hungarian community. The message of this caricature might likely be that Harrer's alleged philosemitic attitude undermines the interest of the Hungarian nation.

Parallel to the criticism towards Harrer and the delay of the implementation, the smear campaign against the Orczy House was intensified. Although its representation as shady and malicious place was not absent from the discourse of the preceding years, 1934 saw the emergence of an even more explicit anti-Jewish discourse.[141] Besides the caricature in *Magyarság, Pesti Napló* published a report about the Orczy House and surroundings.[142] The author András Mihály Rónai invites the reader for an "exotic" walk around the typical scenes of the respective section of Károly Boulevard, describing the space imbued with the penetrant

[141] See the announcement in *8 Órai Ujság,* March 25, 1932
[142] *Pesti Napló,* April 8, 1934, 12.

smell of naphthalene coming from the shops. Similar to the caricature, the guests of the Orczy House and the people of Rombach Street are described to be speaking only German. The author even notes that he himself as a Pest citizen feels mesmerized, but also alien in this environment. The author finally visits a pastry shop called "Orthodox Zserbó" where the owner Mrs Dancziger proudly introduces herself as the "first commissioner of the Erzsébet Street", as she has properties in Rombach Street, suggesting the same conclusion as the caricature in *Magyarság*: the Jews are staged as the major beneficiaries of the constructions that excludes non-Jewish Hungarians from possibilities. The interpretation of this article in the light of the contemporary discourse, however, becomes even more complicated if one considers Rónai's assimilated Jewish background.[143] This suggests the existence of a group of assimilated Jewish intellectuals who, just like Ignácz Balla and Lajos Hevesi before 1914, internalized the prejudices against Inner Elizabethtown, and openly called out its alleged anti-Magyar character.[144]

A more sidelined part of the discussion revolved around the name of the avenue. A reader's letter published on 21 February, 1934 in *Budapest Hírlap* demonstrates that the renaming of the Erzsébet Avenue to Madách Imre Avenue was being considered by authorities. The author argued that many public spaces and institutions bore the name of the legendary Empress of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, whereas the great dramatist Imre Madách is only remembered in the name of a "shabby street inhabited by gypsies" [*cigánysor*] in the 8th district.[145] In November 1934, the Metropolitan Board of Works decided to name the avenue after Madách.[146] The change, although Empress Elizabeth was still an acceptable figure of the

[143] "Rónai András Mihály." Centropa, Last accessed: November 15, 2023. I owe thanks to my supervisor Professor András Kovács, who pointed out his Jewish background.
[144] About the Jewish response to the construction of Erzsébet Avenue as well as the demolition of the Orczy House, see subchapter 5.2.4.
[145] *Budapest Hírlap,* February 21, 1934, 5.
[146] "Új utcaelnevezések", *Fővárosi Közlöny*, January 8, 1935, 36.

Habsburg past of Hungary, might have signified a preference of a nationalist canon of historical figures, and also a sort of breach with the legacy of Dualism.

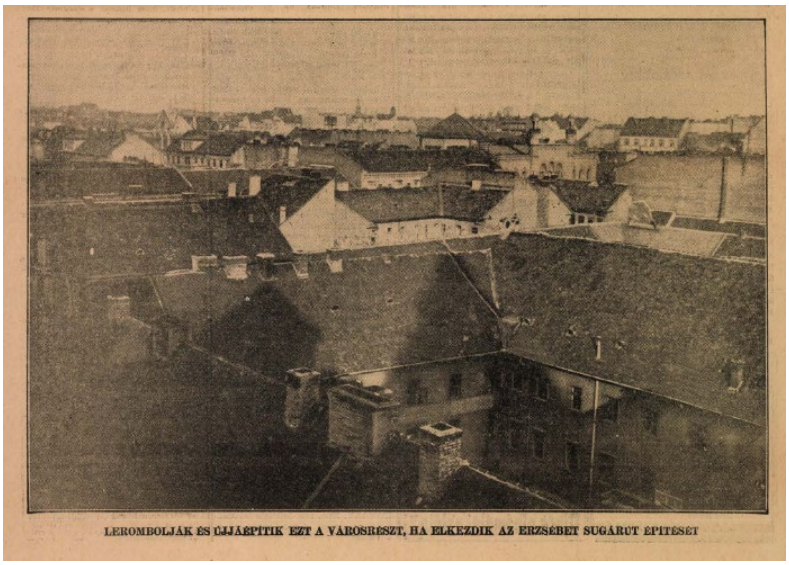

Figure 5. "This neighborhood will be demolished and rebuilt, once the construction of the Erzsébet Avenue begins." The title of a photo about Inner Elizabethtown published in *Az Est* in 1934.[147]

The defamation towards Harrer and the negative representation of the Orczy House and Inner Elizabethtown made its influence. Harrer, who was aware of the smear campaign against him[148], stood up against the accusations that staged him as the boycotter of the Erzsébet Avenue.[149] Nevertheless, he refrained from further participation in the discussion, and as he notes, the 1934 upheaval was strangely endorsed the implementation of the Avenue. As an article of *Az Est* in April 1934 reports, the Metropolitan Board of Works quickly prepared a law proposal for the implementation, requesting a tax-relief for 25 and 35 years.[150] An agreement was reached by the government and administrative bodies of Budapest only by 1936.[151] The demolition of the Orczy House requested by the owners was finally agreed on and a tax relief of 25 years was granted form the Minister of Finances to the future emblematic houses of the

[147] *Az Est,* April 14, 1934, 5.
[148] See Ferenc Harrer's private collection on documents related to Erzsébet Avenue. Reference code: HU BFL XIV.31 14.3.
[149] *Budapest Főváros közgyűlési jegyzőkönyvei,* 1934, no. 49, 23. He also reflected briefly on the criticism in his memoir *Egy magyar polgár élete,* 204–205.
[150] *Az Est,* April 11, 1934, 7.
[151] Minutes of the Metropolitan Board of Works, decree II.I.a.60/1936

Madách Imre Road. The eight-storey housing ensemble, that was in the end constructed based on the plans of Gyula Wälder, was inaugurated in 1938 and housed the headquarters of the Metropolitan Board of Works.[152]

5.2.3. Some takes on the interest groups and the traces of antisemitism in the architects' scene

The previous subchapters dealt with antisemitism and nationalism around the Erzsébet Avenue in the public discourse. This section looks at the ideological embeddedness of professionals who voiced their views on architecture and urban planning. Historical sources suggest that antisemitism was present in the private sphere of these circles. For example, the family of Jenő Padányi-Gulyás, the architect who called Inner Elizabethtown a shameful ghetto in a 1928 article in *Tér és forma*, also had ideological disputes due to his brother Béla's marriage with a Jewish woman.[153] More importantly, however, András Ferkai's research demonstrate that antisemitism was strongly present in the architect scene and legitimized the discrimination of Jewish masters from the job market.[154]

An architect who was directly involved in the Madách Avenue Project and might have been associated with antisemitism was vitéz Imre Martsekényi, who designed the new City Hall and some houses (46/a Dob Street, 3 Imre Madách Street) that meant to be part of the Madách Avenue.[155] Martsekényi, who was a representative of the Hungarian Parliament under the Horthy administration, maintained a leading role in Tűzharcosok [Bombardiers], an association

[152] Minutes of the Metropolitan Board of Works, decree no. II.I.a.61/1937
[153] The documents referenced can be found in under the reference HU BFL XIV.206 in the Budapest Archives. I would like to express my gratitude to historian Anikó Lukács at the Budapest Archives who pointed out this source. On the private correspondence, see Lukács, Anikó. "»Neki csak a bőre van itt.« A Padányi Gulyás-család levelei a németországi emigrációból, 1946–1949." In *A Hajnal István Kör – Társadalomtörténeti Egyesület 2016. évi, gödöllői konferenciájának tanulmánykötete,* 2018.
[154] See Ferkai, András. "Nemzeti építészet a polgári sajtó tükrében. I. rész, 1920–1930", pp. 331–363. In Szabó, János (ed). *Építés-Építészettudomány – A MTA Műszaki Tudományok Osztályának Közleményei* 20, no. 3-4, 2018.
[155] "Madách Imre út 3." *A mi Erzsébetvárosunk*; *A Bauhaus nyomában. In the footsteps of Bauhaus. Budapest100 Programfüzet*, 2019.

advocating for the employment of World War 1 veterans.[156] A 1946 decision suspended Martsekényi's architect license due to his involvement in the Horthy government. Furthermore, he was reported by photographer Ferenc Dobsai for allegedly engaging into antisemitic activities in his professional work.[157]

According to Dobsai's testimony, Martsekényi gave antisemitic speeches on the assemblies of Tűzharcosok that were also published in newspapers. His victory in the call for the new City Hall was due to the discrimination against Jewish competitors governing the architect society at that time. An even more serious charge was, however, that Martsekényi engaged a "Jewish architect called Wachtel" for preparing the plan awarded, and offered only a small commission to his widow in exchange. In the end, the charges were dropped; numerous witnesses, among them a member of the Jewish congregation, testified for his innocence and his good deeds for persecuted Jews. Others also stated that Martsekényi abandoned the public duties when the antisemitic Imrédy government was enacted. The charges were eventually dropped in April 1948. At the same time, the decision to suspend his architect license made by the People's Jurisdiction was upheld according to a document dated December 1948.

Was it only the contemporary press scene that espoused an antisemitic understanding of the Erzsébet Avenue Project? Or can we consider the architecture and urban planning circles contributors as well? Based on the sources analyzed, one cannot rule out the existence of such discourse in the professional and political bodies. Ferenc Harrer's affirmation that the Erzsébet Avenue had never meant to replace the residents of the neighborhood might suggest that there were some groups who entertained the idea of changing the ethnic character of the neighborhood. However, one must also consider that there was no explicit antisemitic utterance

[156] "Újabb háborús bűnös lista készül." *Magyar Nemzet,* July 13, 1945, 3; HU_BFL_XXV_2_b_1948_3426_I_0223171, the Budapest Archives. About the Bombardiers, see Ungváry, 163–165.

[157] For the process against Martsekényi, see: HU_BFL_XXV_2_b_1948_3426_I_0223171, the Budapest Archives.

around the Madách Avenue, let alone any mention of a top-down decision on population shift. The social composition was always carefully left out from these debates, at least in those in written form; perhaps the criticism of weathered buildings could be interpreted as a disguised form of antisemitism.

5.2.4. The Jewish response to the Erzsébet Avenue

The stance of Budapest Jewry on the Erzsébet Avenue was not unified, as it had been heavily fragmented since the late 19th century. Even though the Budapest Jewry might have been at least aware of their Jewish background, not all of them acted upon it or was affiliated with the religious community. It is reflected in the official statistics that registered a shrink in the already less sizeable Jewish community from 23,2% in 1920 to 15,8% by 1941.[158] Furthermore, Fenyves' studies based on literary sources and memoirs suggest that the generations born after 1900 were more likely to distance themselves from Judaism or even convert to Christianity.[159] This demographical change was brought about by the emancipation of Jewry and the liberalizing political climate during the period of the Dual Monarchy, and was further amplified by antisemitism particularly tangible as of the early 1920s.

Considering these circumstances, it is not surprising that a significant part of Budapest Jewry did not only acknowledge the necessity of extensive demolition in Inner Elizabethtown, but was even in favor of it. Under the leadership of banker Gusztáv G. Ehrlich, the democratic political circles of the early 1900s had members of influential Jewish entrepreneurs who were interested in building new properties in this neighborhood. Profit was also a strong motivator for this group after 1929, when the establishment of Madách Avenue was highly dependent on the investment of private capital. Built in 1942, it is demonstrated by today's 15a Rumbach Sebestyén Street that was commissioned by Manufaktur Kereskedelmi Kft. and was designed

[158] Szívós (2022), 111.
[159] See Fenyves, 213 –262.

by Jewish architects Béla Tauszig and Zsigmond Róth.[160] It is notable, that both the commissioners and the architects maintained a strong tie to the religious community. Jewish newspapers suggest that the ownership of the company had a strong affiliation with Judaism: the founder Gyula Eisnmann was a respected member of the Israelite Congregation of Pest where his jubilee was also celebrated.[161] Tauszig and Róth created plans for the Goldmark Hall of the Neolog Jewish community and both received an obituary in the newspaper *Új Kelet* upon their death, paying homage to their architectural oeuvre.[162] Yet, their Jewish identity did not hinder them in working on a building that meant to be a part of a more extensive urban clearance project in a neighborhood widely known for its Jewish past. This might suggest that religious identity was considered a private matter that should not interfere with professional decisions or to be politicized, especially in the highly antisemitic climate of the 1930s and 1940s.

There was also a group of Jewish intellectuals who openly advocated for the refurbishment of Inner Elizabethtown, and thus the realization of the avenue. They were journalists of assimilated Jewish background who aimed to reach wider audiences, and therefore adopted an agenda of modernity and social awareness with a touch of empathy. In propaganda outlet of Budapest municipal government *Az Új Városháza,* Artúr Elek recounts the long history of the Orczy House, but ends the nostalgic tone by emphasizing the grave need for change.[163] Another report written by a Jewish journalist in *Esti Kurir* also gets to the same conclusion: no matter how difficult is for the tenants to leave behind their home full of stories, it is still high time moving on to the future of novel perspectives.[164] The Jewish Géza Rácz,

[160] Hajdú, "A Madách Imre út modern épületei", 154.
[161] "Akiket e héten ünneplünk", *Egyenlőség*
[162] Bokor, "A Pesti Izraelita Hitközség építkezései", 122; Heller, "Meghalt Tauszig Béla műépítész"; Vajda, "Róth Zsigmond emlékezete"
[163] Elek, Artúr in *Az új pesti városháza – várospolitikai és kritikai szemle,* 1936.
[164] Rácz, Géza. "Bölcsőüzlet az egyik oldalon – sírkőüzlet a másikon. Beszélgetés a halálraítélt Orczy-ház legöregebb lakójával." *Esti Kurir*, November 13, 1936, 6.

who authored the article, was later deported to Germany and murdered in a concentration camp.[165]

Although not fighting against it, it was only the religious congregations that expressed sorrow over the demolition of the Orczy House because of the old synagogue in one of the courtyards. This temple as the first synagogue of Pest bore a great significance in the collective memory of the Budapest Jewry regardless of affiliation to the Orthodox or Neolog community. The acknowledgement of this heritage by the Neolog community is best represented by rabbi Zsigmond Groszmann, who published a number of articles on the history of the Orczy House in Jewish magazines.[166] It was, however, the Orthodox community that mourned the demolition of the synagogue and organized a farewell service for it. The service, which was described to be held with "touching solemnity" by the Neolog *Egyenlőség,* was described in detail in the June 4, 1937 issue of the Orthodox *Zsidó Ujság*.[167] The report included the speeches given by the leadership of the religious congregation. Evoking the destruction of the first temple in Jerusalem, congregation leader Ábrahám Freudiger placed the demolition of the synagogue in the biblical context to attest that it was another ordeal of Jews imposed by God. Head of the Chevra Kadisha Márkusz Klein added that it was especially the older generation having spent their childhood and youth there who had a hard time saying goodbye to the Orczy temple. The endnote of the service was, however, that grief and sorrow should not lead to hopelessness; as Freudiger highlights, "it is only the doors that are shut down, but the spirit that resided here for over hundred years, will be taken with us". To keep its memory, clerk of the congregation

[165] "Rácz Géza." Holocaust Emlékközpont. Last accessed: May 12, 2023.
[166] See: "A pest kultusztemplom." *Magyar-Zsidó szemle* 40, no. 2 –3. (1923): 86–94; "A százéves pesti kultusztistentisztelet." *Múlt és Jövő* 18, no. 9 (1928): 294. "A Pesti zsidóság második nemzedéke." *Magyar-Zsidó Szemle* 53 (1936): 231–243. "A pesti zsidóság vezetői." *Magyar-Zsidó Zsemle* 56 (1939): 51–57.
[167] Ballagi, Ernő, "Az év története", 60. 18 –61. "Történelmi pillanatok légkörében. A száznegyvenéves Orczy-templom bucsuztatóján." *Zsidó Ujság,* June 4, 1937, 1–3.

Henrik Löffler also started to publish a series of articles about the history of the synagogue in *Zsidó Ujság,* with the last one featured in the September 9, 1937 issue.[168]

[168] Löffler, "Búcsúzom az Orczy-háztól"

6. Conclusion and discussion

The late 1920s saw a major shift in the public discourse around the Erzsébet Avenue Project. Originally an imprint of local political interests in the pre-1914 period, it attained a central role in the symbolic nationalist takeover of Budapest propagated by the government. Although the conservative nationalist administration of Hungary backed the urban renewal of Elizabethtown on paper, no governmental subsidies or tax relief were offered due to the destabilized economy, and later the Great Depression. Nevertheless, public opinion demanded concrete steps towards the implementation of the project. The contemporary press scene both channeled and generated these disappointed voices. They reported on the public debates on the Erzsébet Avenue that was, at the same time, framed as the stall of progress and a symptom of dysfunctional Budapest leadership. Apart from Ferenc Harrer, Inner Elizabethtown was particularly targeted by the contemporary press. To garner support for the construction of Inner Elizabethtown, a negative representation of this neighborhood was repeatedly reinforced to demonstrate the unsustainability of the prevailing conditions. The public uproar reaped its benefits in 1936 when a 30-year housing tax relief was granted by the government to boost investment in the urban renewal of Elizabethtown. Another significant move was the demolition of the Orczy House in 1937 paving the way to new constructions such as the housing ensemble of the Madách Square, some surrounding buildings as well as a new tenement house in Klauzál Square.

Historical sources demonstrate that antisemitism and nationalism was indeed present in the discourse around this urban reconstruction project. Although they played a functional role in generating public pressure to start urban renovation, they also genuinely reflected the rising tensions animating the contemporary Hungarian society. Even though a minority of intellectuals, such as Ferenc Harrer or Pál Ligeti, that abstained from ideological incitements on professional grounds, official records and private sources suggest that stakeholders did not

refrain from gaining benefits from the anti-Jewish sentiments. The response of local Jewry was rather resilient to the changes in the neighborhood; apart from the mourning Orthodoxy, intellectuals aimed at keeping pace with the upcoming changes, partly as a strategy to avoid the prejudice of untrustworthy elements.

My thesis also points to the importance of comparative examination of Jewish neighborhoods across Europe. By bringing examples of ghetto clearance in other European cities, I aimed to demonstrate that the Jewish identity of Inner Elizabethtown is profoundly different due to the historical and social context the neighborhood was established. In contrast to Josefov in Prague, the urban experience of Jewry in Elizabethtown is far more rooted in the experience of assimilation and emancipation. The notion of religious heritage played a less significant role as the major synagogues were untouched by the plan of Madách Avenue and the sacral nature of cemetery was not endangered. Therefore, unlike in Prague, they were emotionally less affiliated with the built environment and were principally not against the extensive refurbishment of their neighborhood. This secular character is very similar to the one in the Scheunenviertel of Berlin. In this case, however, the ethnicization of urban space is greatly different between the two contexts. Following the Nazi takeover, the *Entjudung* of the neighborhood were added a prominent importance which fuelled aggressive reconstruction programs endorsed by the city leadership and the government. In the case of Elizabethtown, the stigmatization of the neighborhood never actually led to action in such a volume as in Berlin. Not only was it impossible due to financial deficit, but also the government did not attribute importance to the spatial rearrangement. These differences demonstrate that local Jewish identity and the role of space in it is far more multifaceted in the European context.

This thesis aimed at the reconstruction of symbolic meaning that were attached to the Erzsébet Avenue project and Inner Elizabethtown in the first half of the 20th century. It attempted to highlight previously less or not known sources which helps to contextualize

descriptive urban history. Overall, however, my thesis could not reach the full understanding of discourse and the dynamism of antisemitism in it. A reason for it is the unavailability of personal sources; although antisemitism functioned as cultural code during the interwar years, one cannot in every case test whether the main decision-makers actually bolstered it in their private or semi-private discussions.

My master thesis intended to demonstrate the usefulness of spatial planning in establishing a coherent narrative of nationalism and antisemitism in Hungary. Yet, its volume was not sufficient to showcase its full potentiality and more questions was opened than answered. A future research could include a more fundamental overview of available historical sources. My master thesis is primarily based on the analysis of Hungarian press that is contextualized by important, but few memoirs or other private sources. In contrast, the archives in Budapest offer far more opportunity to make targeted research into the background and motivation of stakeholders. Whereas the material in the possession of the Hungarian Architecture Museum could provide an insight into the private sources of powerful architects, the collection of Budapest Archives is able to add to the context of Budapest politics. Particularly, it is the sources about the Metropolitan Board of Works and semi-official papers of the Budapest mayor that could bring important inputs.

Another possible direction of research is the international contextualization of the Erzsébet Avenue. In my thesis, I aimed to draw parallels with cases of Prague and Berlin in order to measure whether the public discourse fits in a transnational pattern. Although my analysis suggests that the case of Budapest is Hungarian-specific, there is still a vast potential in carrying out a comparative research to investigate city politics and antisemitic in the interwar period in the wider context of Europe. Last but not least, the history of Erzsébet Avenue offers a great opportunity for the Hungarian academia as well. Apart from the better understanding of political battles in the realm of Budapest public discourse, it points to a direction of the

understanding of interwar period from the angle of the Dual Monarchy. All these directions point to interesting research topics that have the great potentiality of better understanding the contested pre-1945 period in Hungary.

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