

LITERATURE

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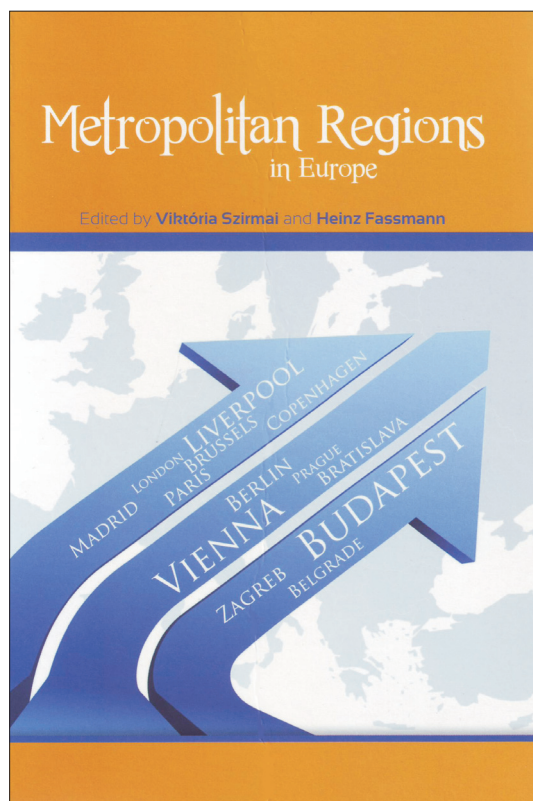
Szirmai, V. and Fassman, H. (eds): Metropolitan Regions in Europe. Austrian-Hungarian Action Fund, Budapest–Vienna, 2012. 357 p.

Due to urbanization processes, global population increases and nowadays it is a well-known fact that the number of metropolises and megacities (rapidly) grows. Over the past two decades, researchers realized that the role of cities is becoming more and more important in the global economy and they appear increasingly as the engines of national economies. It is also evident that large cities cannot be interpreted as independent entities at all, so thanks to the social and economic interrelations between large cities and their surroundings, metropolitan regions get in the focus of scientific investigations.

Today, it is well known that global economy functions the most efficiently in the metropolitan areas and the urban networks can successfully contribute to social and economic development of a country or a region. However, modern urban space also involves contradictions, for instance socio-economic conflicts, social inequality and environmental challenges.

From this point of view the comparison of metropolitan regions in different European countries is of particular interest, especially in cases where the history and the development of the countries have been interweaved for centuries.

In May 2012, sponsored by the Austrian-Hungarian Action Fund, the Institute of Sociology of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences organised a professional seminar for young researchers and students. The main aim of the seminar was to provide an opportunity for the next generation to present their current scientific results and the most important findings of comparative analyses on Western and Eastern European metropolitan regions. Another unconcealed aim of the event was to strengthen the Austro-Hungarian professional relations and scientific cooperation. The main outcomes of the seminar are summarised in a new book titled “Metropolitan Regions in Europe” edited by Viktória SZIRMAI and Heinz FASSMAN. The aesthetic book contains 13 studies on 13 metropolitan regions



written by 15 authors. The choice of topics is extremely varied, the topics are classified into three major chapters: i) Transformation and regeneration of inner cities and suburbs; ii) Urban, social and economic development tools; iii) Urban tourism and its effects.

Studies included in the *first chapter* of the book describe the social and economic developments trends taking place in metropolitan areas. Johannes RIEGLER compares the ongoing gentrification processes of the Vienna and Budapest metropolitan regions using case studies. As he states, although Brunnenviertel in Vienna and Józsefváros (Josefsadt) in Budapest can be characterised by similar determinant organizational structures (local government, local urban renewal agencies), the purposes of the two gentrification processes are actually different. While in Budapest the main objective of the process is to enhance the city's competitiveness, experts in Vienna try to attain a kind of social balance by soft urban renewal practices. Thus, different local strategies and urban regeneration policies can generate different developmental trends in metropolitan regions.

The study of Vanessa N. HÜNNEMEYER draws attention to the role of development paths of metropolitan regions: as a consequence of the different development paths, Budapest and Liverpool can be characterised by different socio-economic contexts which provide distinct opportunities for implementation of large-scale urban regeneration projects. Thus, the generating and facilitating roles of the projects in urban development are also different in the two cities. Marton BERKI examines the post-socialist transformation of a former industrial area in Budapest. In the theoretical part of the study he gives an overview on the urban structure models related to urban topologies, then spatial organization of the socialist and post-socialist cities are compared. Based on the investigations carried out in the former industrial area of Soroksari Road in Budapest, BERKI points out that the post-socialist city is more likely to be associated with postmodern urbanism resulting in a similar (fragmented and heterogeneous) urban structure. Júlia SCHUCHMANN analyses the suburbanization processes taking place in the Budapest Metropolitan Region. Her work is based on demographic statistics and questionnaire surveys on the intention to move. She underlines that the Budapest Metropolitan Region is the most important migration area of the country where the population of the core city has risen again in the recent years. It is an interesting fact that there is no significant correlation between the current economic crisis and the intention to move but this intention can be formed by the socio-spatial position and the extents of indebtedness of residents.

The *second chapter* starts with Marek DINKA's short essay analyzing the Bratislava metropolitan region in the context of BAUM (Bratislava Umland Management) project. Zsuzsanna FODRÓCZY writes about the changing role of railway stations and reveals that metropolitan railway stations besides their classic functions appear more and more as new urban centres of services and consumption. The case study areas were the Western Railway Station in Budapest and the Central Station in Vienna. Antoine STRUELENS pursues the train of thought on rail transport. In his study, the effects of the Petite Ceinture railway line in Paris and the Herrmann-Debroux viaduct in Brussels on urban development and transportation are compared.

Marchus MÄTCHER guides the reader into the world of virtual forums. Based on quantitative and qualitative surveys carried out in four Viennese large housing estates, he analyses the impacts of new media, communication platforms and social networks on the virtual and real communities. He concludes that those forums play a fundamental role in the local information flow and they can help shape local communities in metropolitan housing estates. In addition, through free opinion-forming, they can increase the residential satisfaction of local society. Anna Maria BATISTA, Sylvia SMITH and Carina LESKY draw attention to the role of artistic work in urban planning. Practical examples are presented in order to illustrate how

the application of artistic and creative solutions, contemporary arts and design in public spaces are able to change the interpretation of space and how they improve the quality of life and living environment. The authors provide positive examples for the cooperation of artists, designers, architects and residents working together on public spaces.

Similar topic is handled by Ivana ANDREJIĆ-DJUKIĆ who analysed the design, the urban perception and social utilisation of bank of the Danube in Vienna, Budapest and Belgrade. Urban open space design appeared in all three cities during the 1990s and since the millennium received more and more attention. Their results show a close correlation between the urban open space design and its public landmarks, and social actions of individuals as well. Artistic interventions combined with architectural environment are to be seen as visual consumption of signs and symbols represented through public landmarks. The greater is the potential of the urban open space design, the greater the variety of social uses is. Last study of the second chapter written by Amarilla LUKE highlights the clustering process taking place in the Western Transdanubia Region of Hungary using the methods of key sector analyses and cluster mapping.

The *third chapter* leads the reader into the world of urban tourism. Bálint KÁDÁR compares the spatial patterns of urban tourism in Vienna, Prague and Budapest. There is a very good model of urban land use of tourists provided in the study based on online image sharing. Touristic spaces in those cities before and after the change of regime are compared using that model. While Vienna can be characterised by a balanced network of tourist uses, the attractions in Prague are arranged in linear patterns due to the historical development of main urban axis. The case of Budapest shows that the development of the urban centre's tourist network is possible and it can also lead to more complex space usage. The composition and location of stores in the shopping streets are scarred by the distinct differences as well.

The final study of Paula METT provides insight into tourism marketing strategy of Copenhagen, Madrid and Budapest. Whereas Madrid aims at preserving its position as globally influential city, Berlin's image and marketing has been changing since the city's unification and now it is promoted as hip and trendy urban tourism destination. Copenhagen's strategy is to develop its potentials and also to realise its opportunities within the emerging Oresund Region. In this light, most important differences of the strategies are highlighted in the study.

The editors put together an aesthetic and variegated volume. As it was already mentioned earlier, an important objective of the book was to provide an introduction and publication opportunity for young up-coming researchers. In certain publications the typical routine for young researchers can be still recognised, nevertheless an exciting, well-illustrated and actually interesting book was published by the editors. The topic of "Metropolitan Regions in Europe" still carries a myriad of research opportunities, so the volume will hopefully continue with new topics and results.

TAMÁS EGEDY