RESCALING “HISTORIC BUDAPEST”: PARADIGM SHIFTS IN URBAN HERITAGE WITHIN HUNGARIAN ARCHITECTURAL DISCOURSE OF THE 1960s

Gábor Oláh

Abstract
Budapest encompasses several historic urban neighbourhoods that have each been designated “historic” at various times and via different mechanisms. The most recently designated historic centre is located on the left bank of the Danube, in Pest, which was largely (re)built in the late 19th century. Since the 1960s, urban heritage preservation has assumed a new dimension, necessitating a shift in scale in Europe and North America: Preservation efforts have expanded from solely protecting historic monuments to encompassing larger areas. The concept of the historic city centre in Pest evolved in tandem with European intellectual movements, while incorporating specific local elements. Hungary’s and Budapest’s “tumultuous history”, characterised by fractures from the Middle Ages onwards, has repeatedly led to the destruction of buildings representative of previous eras and an ensuing near-total absence of architectural heritage. This theme has been a recurring topic in architectural and urban planning journals since the 1930s. Consequently, urban heritage in Budapest has been described in the architectural journals as fragmented, conveyed through concepts such as “townscape”, “landscape”, and “urban structure”, which have vaguer boundaries or can even be considered as “transcendental”. This can be contrasted with Western European concepts centred around attributes such as antiquity, homogeneity, and architectural unity. In this context, the challenge of creating urban heritage was pursued through the construction of a spatial and temporal continuum. Concisely, the historicity of Pest’s city centre was developed and rendered intelligible by the architectural discourse through changes in scale. This chapter aims to identify the elements through which architectural discourse in the 1960s appropriated and applied new urban heritage paradigms to reinterpret Pest’s inner city, based on an analysis of architectural journals *(Magyar Építőművészet, Műemlékvédelem, Városépítés, Településtudományi Közlemények, Építés- és Közlekedéstudományi Közlemények/ Építés- Építészettudomány)* between 1956 and 1973.

Keywords
Urban heritage, historic city centre, urban landscape, socialist urbanism, Budapest

https://doi.org/10.34727/2025/isbn.978-3-85448-077-8_4

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Scaling-up urban heritage: A global and local history

While, prior to the conclusion of World War II, the institutional protection of heritage predominantly focused on individual buildings, a debate had already emerged in the pre-war period regarding the appropriate boundaries for such protection. Initial efforts to extend protection spatially appeared sporadically across various European countries. Examples include the concept of *entourage* (1913) and *abords* (1943) in France, and listed town centres in Poland (1928) (Stubbs et al., 2011). Consequently, there are divergent and specific chronologies in the conceptual evolution and legal adoption of this change in scale from one country to another, and even from one city to another (Vadelorge, 2003). However, as Hartog (2015), Tomas (2004), and Sonkoly (2017) have illustrated, the history of spatial concepts of urban heritage is linked to specific regimes of heritagisation, reflecting the shift from a future-oriented experience of time to presentism. This highlights correlations and even causal relationships with the evolution of urbanisation. Bandarin (2015) further underscores that paradigm shifts in the history of urban heritage, whether driven by spatial, chronological, or thematic extensions, have been characterised by a densification of interactions outside established protocols.

From the 1960s onwards, new instruments for the protection of urban heritage began to emerge in many countries, driven by the development of concepts and frameworks for area-wide protection. During this period, the protection of urban heritage acquired an increasingly international scope. Although the Venice Charter of 1964 did not explicitly address the territorial dimension of urban heritage, from the 1960s onwards, international discourse on heritage, facilitated by organisations such as ICOMOS, UNESCO, and the Council of Europe, began to establish global standards for managing historic districts and frameworks for ongoing discourse (e.g. European Architectural Heritage Year in 1975). In 1987, the Washington Charter (International Charter for the Protection of Historic Towns and Cities) was adopted to complement the Venice Charter, aiming to formalise management methods for historic towns and districts (Bandarin & van Oers, 2012, pp. 39–50; Sonkoly, 2017, pp. 37–47).

With the growth of cities and peri-urbanisation in the post-war period, the frameworks governing city centres underwent significant re-evaluation. This was due both to the concentrated focus on and direction of resources towards planned towns and neighbourhoods and to the stark contrast between the old centres and new peripheries, resulting in radically different housing conditions. Such processes often led to the deterioration and insalubrity of city centres. Simultaneously, the "bulldozer urbanism" (*"rénovation-bulldozer")* became socially controversial, a sentiment that gradually infiltrated professional and political visions as well (Tomas, 2004, p. 199). The shift in attitude towards city centres was fuelled by the devastating experience of war, the perception that the past was being lost, and the revision of the dogmatism of functionalism within the context of the city's relentless expansion. Beyond the physiological

need for space, the significance of the social and emotional needs for the built environment was thus made explicit. Consequently, these urban spaces gradually accrued an irreplaceable identity value and gained heritage status (Roncayolo, 1997, pp. 250–253; Tomas, 2004, pp. 198–200).

As a result, national legislation has been adapted to modify the spatial scale of heritage protection, establishing different conditions and vocabulary for the delimitation of protected urban areas. These spatial concepts, often encapsulated in neologisms, condense distinct realities: the protected townscape in the Netherlands (*beschermd stadsgezicht*, 1961), the safeguarded sector in France (*secteur sauvegardé*, 1962), the area of historic interest in Hungary (*műemléki jelentőségű terület*, 1964), the *conservation area* in the UK (1967), and the historic centre in Italy (*centro storico*, 1973) (Stubbs et al., 2011). These differing perceptions and conceptualisations of urban space have their origins in specific cultural and historical contexts and may constitute relevant research issues. This necessarily implies studies from the perspective of cultural geography.

Such newly established conservation areas, primarily situated in city centres, were delineated with precise boundaries, necessitating the creation of separate plans distinct from the general urban-planning process. The main objective of the separate management of these areas was the conservation and enhancement of the urban fabric within well-defined boundaries, aligning thus with the functionalist zoning logic of urban planning (Román, 1985, p. 16; Roncayolo, 1997, pp. 250–253; Tomas, 2004, p. 199). Since the late 1980s, conservation areas have faced considerable criticism for their insular or enclave-like nature and the static framework of their protection, which have exacerbated discontinuities in the urban fabric across their boundaries (Román 1985; Bandarin & van Oers, 2012). Consequently, international discourse on heritage began to explore concepts and approaches that could promote continuity, urban integrity, and the preservation as a dynamic process. Many experts saw the solution in a further shift in spatial scale, leading to the development of concepts such as “visual integrity” (Sonkoly, 2017, pp. 145–161). However, the discourse has since evolved towards the more complex notion of the “historic urban landscape” (UNESCO, 2011), which extends beyond the spatial scale to include ecological, social, and cultural dimensions (Taylor, 2018; Turner & Singer, 2015).

1.2 A research problem rooted in the concepts of urban space

Examining the process of scaling-up urban heritage and establishing new categories in contexts outside the core of international heritage discourse, e.g., in Central Europe, reveals that the stakes are different there. These issues are often discussed in the literature in terms of how this region received and adapted external cultural concepts. It could be argued that the paradigms and notions of heritage, primarily developed in English and French, were adopted later and predominantly in a legal and administrative context by the countries of Central Europe. This adoption often occurred with limited public dialogue or further professional discourse (Sonkoly, 2017; Trencsényi, 2004).

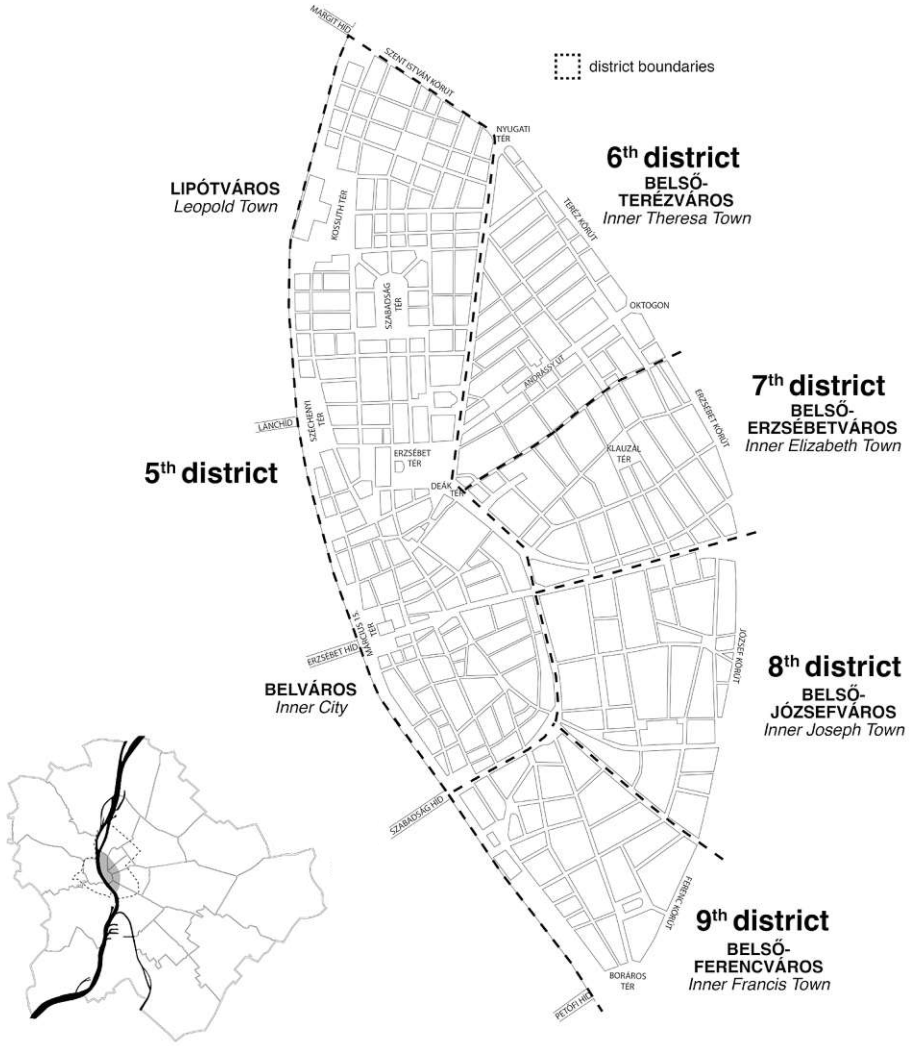

FIGURE 1 The area studied (shaded grey) and the perimeter of the late 19th century urban fabric (dashed line) within Budapest (left) and the boundaries of districts the with the names of the neighbourhoods (right). (Infographic: Gábor Oláh 2024, CC BY-SA)

However, recent research has begun to critique the robustness of this model of one-way cultural transmission. For instance, Szívós (2021) examines international networks and knowledge transfer through the “permeable” Iron Curtain. Other studies have highlighted the active role of experts from socialist countries in shaping the international urban heritage discourse (Harlov, 2016; Gantner et al., 2022). The question, then, in the context of socialist Hungary, is how the discourse on the scaling of urban heritage has been influenced by international knowledge transfer. Furthermore, can local stakes be identified that accompanied the reception and adaptation of these paradigms and concepts?

Budapest encompasses several historic urban neighbourhoods; each of which has been designated "historic" at various times and via different mechanisms. The most recently designated historic centre is located on the left bank of the Danube, in Pest.[1] This area (Figure 1) underwent significant demolition and reconstruction in the late 19th century due to a high degree of urbanisation. However, no significant physical or structural transformation has taken place since then. Throughout the 20th century, the perception of Pest's inner-city neighbourhoods evolved considerably. In the 1920s and 1930s, sources described it as a young city, lacking historical patina (see for example, Bierbauer, 1932, p. 2), with discussions focusing on intervention, reconstruction, and restructuring. Less than half a century later, from the 1960s onwards, the term "historic" began to be increasingly applied to this urban area, shifting the discourse towards conservation, safeguarding, and renovation. Over the decades, statements and debates reveal a transformation in the perception of Pest's inner-city neighbourhoods, leading to its designation as a protected area with multiple scales and definitions. A significant milestone in this process occurred during the 1960s, when urban heritage became a central topic of professional discourse among architects and urban planners. This period saw the consolidation of legal and administrative terminology related to urban heritage, as well as increased recognition and appreciation of late 19th century architecture and urbanism. An important case of this recognition is the historicisation of the city centre of Budapest, where the eclectic late 19th century ensemble of three-to-six storey buildings spans nearly twelve square kilometres (Benkő, 2012, pp. 32–33.)

2 A CONCEPTUALIST-CONTEXTUALIST METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH TO STUDY THE SPATIAL EXPANSION OF URBAN HERITAGE

In this chapter, we will analyse a fraction of this late 19th century historic ensemble, encompassing approximately 4.5 km^2 (Figure 1). This research focuses on the central neighbourhoods of Pest, defined as the area between the Grand Boulevard[2] and the Danube. Administratively, this includes the 5th district and the central parts of the current 6th, 7th, 8th, and 9th districts. This area is conceived as an observation perimeter, guided primarily by practical considerations to effectively circumscribe the research field. The specified area has also played a central role in the discourse on the preservation of urban heritage, making this delimitation particularly relevant. Around the Grand Boulevard, we observe the emergence of a spatial unit that is "projected" not only on official maps but also in mental maps.

There are several perspectives from which we can write the history of the concept of the historic centre of Pest. Fundamentally, it can be seen as an

1 Until 1873, Buda (on the right bank) and Pest (on the left bank) were two distinct municipalities. Today, Buda and Pest remain the familiar names of the two banks of the Danube, though they are not associated with any current administrative units.

2 "Grand Boulevard" is the informal name given to a group of boulevards in Budapest. The following roads constitute part of the Grand Boulevard in Pest, with some named after the districts they traverse (from north to south): Szent István Boulevard, Teréz Boulevard, Erzsébet Boulevard, József Boulevard, and Ferenc Boulevard.

objectified social construct, something that has been shaped, in other words, by the shared understanding and cultural values of urban societies over time. It encapsulates categories and images formed by complex processes involving changing perceptions and interpretations of urban space – whether in physical, geographical, or metaphorical terms. In this way, we will examine the collective efforts involved in constructing the concept of protected urban space, with particular reference to the city centre of Pest. More broadly, this chapter considers the evolution of perceptions and temporalities associated with urban space. It can thus be understood as a history of concepts, conceptions, and representations of urban space in which theoretical constructions and discursive positions appear to be more important than the history of events, political and institutional processes, decision-making mechanisms concerning the preservation of urban heritage, the history of a building or neighbourhood, or the concrete implementation of urban development plans. This conceptual-historical perspective will be used to analyse the evolution of the spatial expansion of urban heritage, complemented by an experimental quantitative approach.

Conceptual history is a widely applicable methodological approach to the historical analysis of urban heritage. Because urban heritage evolved and acquired meaning over time, it may be considered a result of a process of conceptual evolution (Sonkoly, 2017, p. 10). The conceptual-historical method studies concepts and their relationship to reality, and their role in understanding historical change. A concept concentrates a more elaborate construct of thought, condensing various types of information that convey extra-linguistic content, such as sociohistorical contexts. Koselleck (2004) links the theory and method of conceptual history to research in social history, which has a double consequence for this study. Semantic-historical analysis requires socio-historical data to understand and interpret concepts and, in turn, provides socio-historical information (Szabó & Szűcs, 2011). This leads to the hypotheses that: firstly, the conceptual-historical analysis of urban heritage enables us to grasp certain elements of historical reality beyond the object of research; and, second, conceptual history analysis can also contribute to understanding other historical problems of urban social change. By focusing on the evolution of the concepts, meanings, and representations of urban space over time, we can better understand the perceptions, underlying ideas, and values that shape urban heritage. This approach allows us to capture the changing elements and notions of urban heritage as well as the transformations in spatial concepts over time, providing insights into the broader dynamics of urban social change.

From this perspective, urban heritage is not merely static, physical artefacts, but dynamic spaces imbued with cultural meanings, social relations, and historical narratives (Soja, 1996). The absence of precise definitions for such concepts renders them especially pertinent to the study of conceptual history. The ambiguity inherent in the concept represents a shifting perspective on urban space, which acquires clarity and meaning within a given context (Roncayolo, 2002, p. 84). This indeterminacy allows scholars to investigate the ways in which the meanings and applications of these ideas have shifted across different historical periods and contexts. Such fluidity offers valuable

insights into the dynamic evolution of thought and language (Koselleck 2004; Sonkoly, 2017, p. 10). Urban heritage manifests in various contexts and linguistic expressions. Consequently, a primary challenge in analysing textual sources from a historical-semantic perspective lies in identifying concepts in relation to their specific contexts. Concepts are undoubtedly identifiable within their semantic field, but their meaning necessarily goes beyond their original definition. Concepts are strongly anchored in both diachronic and synchronic contexts. In a diachronic approach, concepts are defined, modified, and supplemented in relation to their uses by previous generations. In a synchronic approach, concepts change or reinforce their meanings through a horizontal system of relations and interactions in the present. Since conceptualisation is inherently a collective activity, conceptual history can be seen as a historical method of collective social organisation. As a result, conceptual-historical analyses emphasise the discursive context of concepts, highlighting how they are shaped and reshaped through collective use and interaction within their specific historical and social settings (Koselleck, 2004; Szabó & Szűcs, 2011; Trencsényi, 2004).

In this chapter, conceptual-historical methods will be complemented by contextualist approaches involving discourse analysis, which has further implications for this research. Defining the social group – in this case, the profession of architects and urban planners in 1960s Hungary – makes linguistic representations and concepts of urban heritage more identifiable in both synchronic and diachronic terms by capturing typical co-occurrences and juxtapositions of concepts. The consequences of this conceptualist-contextualist approach are significant (Lepetit, 1993; Szabó & Szűcs, 2011; Trencsényi, 2004):

- Re-evaluation of continuity and discontinuity: By examining the historical and social contexts in which concepts are used, it will be possible to analyse how ideas about urban heritage have evolved or remained consistent over time.
- Visibility of options and bifurcations: This approach highlights the choices and paths available to actors at different points in time, revealing the decision-making processes and potential alternatives that shaped urban heritage discourse.
- Focus on subtle phenomena: As this approach transcends well-established narratives of urban development, certain historical information can be revealed that might be imperceptible or deemed uninteresting from other perspectives. This can uncover nuanced shifts in language and meaning that indicate broader social and cultural changes.

Overall, combining conceptual-historical methods with contextualist discourse analysis offers an appropriate framework for exploring how urban heritage concepts have developed and been employed within the Hungarian context.

This chapter uses Hungarian professional architectural journals published between 1956 and 1970 – namely, *Magyar Építőművészet* (Hungarian Architecture), *Műemlékvédelem* (Protection of Monuments), *Városépítés*

(Urban Planning), *Településtudományi Közlemények* (Publications on Settlement Studies)*, Építés- és Közlekedéstudományi Közlemények* (Publications on Building and Transport Science*)/Építés- Építészettudomány* (Building science – Architectural science*)* – as historical sources to carry out the conceptual-contextualist analysis.[3] Architectural journals are becoming increasingly attractive to researchers, and recent studies (Jannière & Vanlaethem, 2008; Parnell & Sawyer, 2021; Schmiedeknecht & Peckham, 2018) demonstrate the multifaceted benefits of this type of source. For the present research problem, these benefits are primarily due to three features, which will be discussed in this chapter:

1. Professional representation: These journals provide a discursive framework for professional information exchange and debate in the fields of architecture *(Magyar Építőművészet)*, urban planning *(Várospítés)*, and monument protection *(Műemlékvédelem)*. This makes them rich sources for understanding the professional perspectives and evolving discourse within these fields.
2. Periodicity: Produced regularly, these journals allow for repeated observations over a relatively long period. This feature enables researchers to track changes and continuities in professional discourse over time, providing a longitudinal perspective on the evolution of concepts and debates.
3. Topicality: Professional journals play a key role in communicating relevant information and discussing pertinent issues of their time. They reflect the then-current priorities, challenges, and innovations within the professional community.

In terms of these three features, this chapter will provide a nuanced understanding of how concepts of urban heritage have been articulated, debated, and transformed within the Hungarian architectural and urban planning community.

Ferkai (2018, p. 112) observes that, during the Cold War era, while most architectural journals (e.g. *Architectural Review*, *L'Architecture d'aujourd'hui)* in Western European countries maintained their own distinct editorial lines, thereby establishing unique identities, journals within the socialist bloc were assigned a "lone role": to cover the entirety of architectural production, monument protection, and urban planning for their respective countries. Their primary "editorial principle" was thus to transcend "partisan interests". In Hungary, the communist takeover in 1948–1949 resulted in a complete reset of architectural journalism, leading to closure of the journals that had been established during the interwar period and the founding of entirely new publications. Following the revolution of 1956, the institutional consolidation of urbanism and heritage conservation was paralleled by the consolidation of architectural journalism, resulting in a framework that persisted for the next three decades, until the democratic transition (Figure 2).

3 Unless otherwise stated, this and all subsequent translations from non-English-language sources are by the author.

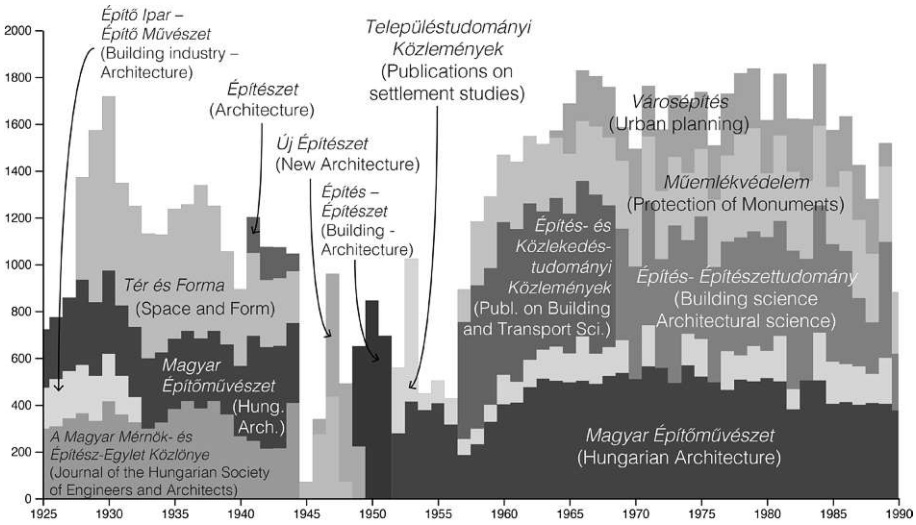

FIGURE 2 Architectural journal production in Hungary between 1925 and 1990. The x-axis represents the years, while the y-axis denotes the total number of pages published in the journals for each corresponding year. (Infographic: Gábor Oláh using RawGraphs, based on data from MATARKA (Searchable database of Hungarian journal tables of contents), 2022, CC BY-SA)

In our analysis of architectural journals, several terms have "surfaced" that institutions or authors have defined to describe urban heritage. To enable a form of experimental, quantitative inquiry, these terms are transformed into keywords (Wevers & Koolen, 2020, p. 226). The quantitative analysis is based on the assumption that keywords can be used to infer the temporal density and dynamics of urban heritage. By this means, the keywords "compete with each other", with the increasing use of one term over another indicating current trends in the approach to urban heritage (Veschambre, 2007, p. 374). The proximity and interchangeability of the keywords allow for the establishment of a typology. The criterion for grouping is defined in terms of scale, which seems to be an appropriate categorisation tool for describing the spatial expansion of urban heritage. Based on the keyword repertoire, five groups of concepts are proposed: surrounding area, building ensemble, townscape, neighbourhood, and landscape (See Table 1). This analytical framework is used to revisit the architects' texts with analysis facilitated by the complex search interface of the Arcanum Newspapers Database.[4] It should be noted that, as a "naive tool user", I possessed limited ability to reflect critically on tool parameters and methods; while the influence of tool choice and (hyper)parameters on the outcome is recognised, in-depth critique remains outside the current scope of expertise (Szabó et al., 2021, pp. 1–2).

4 https://adt.arcanum.com/en/

TABLE 1 Groups and terms found in the journals.

Groups	Terms
Surrounding area	*műemléki környezet* (surroundings of the monument), *történeti/történelmi környezet* (historic/historical surroundings)
Building ensemble	*műemléki együttes/műemlékegyüttes* (ensemble of historic monuments), *történeti/történelmi együttes* (historical/historical ensemble), *városépítészeti együttes* (urban ensemble)
Townscape	*történeti/történelmi városkép* (historic/historical townscape), *védett városkép* (protected townscape), *egységes városkép* (unified townscape), *városképi együttes* (townscape ensemble), *városképi egység* (townscape unit), *védett utcakép* (protected streetscape), *városkép szempontjából fontos/kiemelt terület* (priority area of townscape preservation), *városképi jelentőségű terület* (area of townscape interest)
Neighborhood	*történelmi/történeti városmag* (historical/historic city core), *történelmi/történeti városközpont/belváros* (historical/historic city centre), *műemléki városrész* (quarter of historic character), történelmi/történeti városrész/városnegyed (historic/historical quarter), védett városrész (protected quarter) *műemléki jelentőségű terület* (area of historic interest), *történelmi/történeti értékű terület* (area of historic/historical value), *védett terület* (protected area) *műemléki város/műemlékváros/történeti/történelmi város* (historic/historical town), *védett város* (protected town)
Landscape	*építészeti táj* (architectural landscape), *városi/települési táj* (urban landscape), *kultúrtáj* (cultural landscape), *történeti táj* (historic landscape)

Running the keyword search through the corpus, grouping them, registering their occurrences, and then visualising them (Mauri et al., 2017), opens up several analytical possibilities (Figure 3). First, it is possible to identify “competition” among concepts and (typed) scales, and to determine which formal-informal subject-marker concepts become dominant. Second, conclusions can be drawn about the establishment of technical terms, such as the discursive anchoring of regulatory spatial categories or their invisibility, or the discursive origins of concepts that subsequently become legal categories. Third, the analysis may reveal which spatial references have been privileged by the discourse for the designation of urban heritage, potentially making certain paradigm shifts visible.

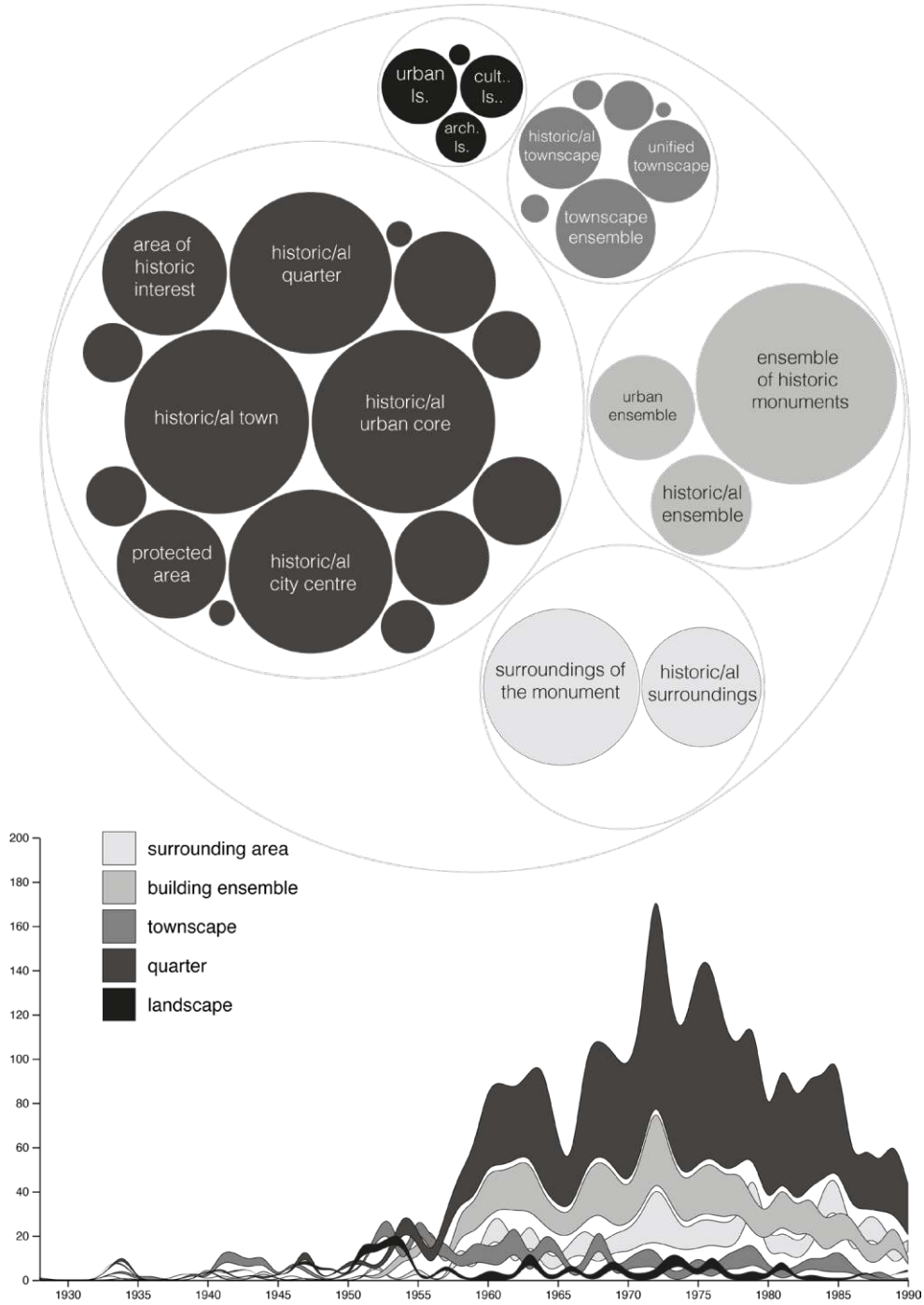

FIGURE 3 Grouping of terms (above) and dynamic classification of five predefined scale-types between 1925 and 1990 based on a keyword search (below). In the figure below, the x-axis represents the years, while the y-axis denotes the number of occurrences. (Infographic: Gábor Oláh using RawGraphs, based on data from Arcanum Database (digitised architectural journals), 2022, CC BY-SA).

The typology and the method are not without problems. Latent definitions, overlaps, concepts at the intersection of two sets, and the typological choices that resolve them can affect the analysis and results (Huistra & Mellink, 2016, pp. 221–226; Wevers & Koolen, 2020, pp. 226–228). Despite the significant biases of the method, the experimental combination of qualitative and quantitative approaches can broaden the scope of the analysis.

3 HISTORICISING PEST'S INNER-CITY NEIGHBOURHOODS

3.1 A brief history of institutional heritage management in the city centre of Pest

Budapest is situated at the intersection of geographically diverse regions: the wide Danube River runs between the hilly districts of Buda and its surrounding valleys, on the right bank, and the Plain of Pest, on the river's more extensive left bank. Throughout history, Buda and Pest developed in an interdependent manner. The modern city of Budapest was established in 1873 through the administrative merger of the royal free cities of Buda and Pest and the market town of Óbuda, creating a city of approximately 207 km^2. In 1950, the creation of Greater Budapest, which incorporated the first ring of agglomerations, expanded the city's surface area by 2.5 times to its current 525 km^2. The economic boom that began in the late 19th century led to intensive urbanisation, resulting in a very dense city by the start of World War I. At the same time, the peripheral parts of the city were only loosely urbanised, reinforcing the development of a monocentric city. The creation of Greater Budapest, characterised by an extremely dense city centre, under-urbanised and sparsely populated outskirts, and proportionally smaller sub-centres, did not result in the formation of a "compact and organic city" within its extensive administrative boundaries. Within this spatial inequality, the central districts of Pest embody a reality distinct from other urban areas, necessitating specific urban management policies (Benkő, 2012; Erő, 2005).

Until the Second World War, the central neighbourhoods of Pest had very few listed monuments, primarily because the protection criteria were based on chronological considerations. This chronological principle continued to influence the subsequent classification of historical monuments. Post-war reconstruction, however, brought heightened attention to issues concerning historical monuments, emphasising not only individual structures but also the importance of protecting groups of buildings and townscapes (Dercsényi, 1969; Erő, 2005, p. 275). An important milestone in this process was the 1949 decree-law regulating the protection of monuments and museums.[5] Under these regulations, architectural and landscape features surrounding listed buildings could be protected, as could land of archaeological interest, by means of the *védett terület* (protected area) conservation category.

5 Decree-Law No. 13 of 1949 of the Presidential Council of the People's Republic on Museums and Monuments (16 November 1949)

The restoration of the heavily damaged Buda Castle and its surrounding quarter emerged as a model project for post-war restoration efforts, marking a significant shift in the scale of urban heritage conservation both theoretically and practically. As foreseen in the Decree-Law of 1949, the necessity to design and plan conservation on a broader scale led to comprehensive surveys of townscapes and monuments conducted between 1951 and 1957. These surveys encompassed urban morphological, archaeological, historical, and art-historical studies, as well as detailed examinations of buildings and building complexes across 74 towns, including Budapest. The data gathered was intended to inform the creation of local urban plans by local councils. The results of the surveys contributed to the development of the legal framework for monument protection. The Building Act of 1964[6] and the subsequent Ministerial Decrees on the Protection of Monuments enacted between 1967 and 1972 established two new categories of area-based urban conservation: *műemléki környezet* (surroundings of the monument)[7] and *műemléki jelentőségű terület* (area of historic interest)[8]. In 1966, fourteen such areas were designated, including the Buda Castle district. These newly designated conservation areas, each situated in the city centre, were meticulously delineated. Their establishment required the development of specific plans, separate from the general urban planning process. The first plans for these areas were developed in the 1960s and 1970s by the Institute for Town Planning and Research, with the guidance of the National Monument Protection Inspectorate. (Gerő, 1967; Erő, 2005, pp. 275–276). The designation of conservation areas in Budapest was strategically programmed to coincide with the 100th anniversary of the unification of Pest, Buda, and Óbuda in 1973, serving as a symbolic gesture. Initially, fifteen surroundings of the monument were designated in the city. During the centenary celebrations,[9] the city council instituted a local protection category specifically for buildings within the capital's jurisdiction. Under this designation, nearly 200 buildings dating from the post-unification period were granted protected status.

During the Stalinist period of the 1950s, proposals were developed to remodel the downtown area of Pest in order to display the regime's power, and plans were drawn up for Moscow-style skyscrapers in the inner *Erzsébetváros* (7th district) and along the Grand Boulevard. However, these bold, aesthetics-oriented urban plans generally did not make it beyond the level of political communication and preliminary outlines. Actual resources and priorities were not focused on downtown Pest, largely due to the accelerated pace of industrialisation, the 1956 revolution, and the subsequent period of reconstruction and consolidation. From the 1960s onwards, urban policy was focused on constructing large-scale housing estates on the outskirts of the city. In this context, the central districts of Pest were regarded by the

6 Act III of 1964 on Building.

7 The category of surroundings of the monument aims to ensure the unobstructed view of a listed building by protecting its architectural and landscape environment. It has been defined as the protection of buildings within precise boundaries.

8 The category of area of historic significance is a delimited part of a town that bears witness to a characteristic morphology or townscape. Within the boundaries of the area, all buildings have been subject to listed building regulations.

9 This was a series of programs organised in 1972 and 1973.

authorities as a problem to be deferred. The focus was primarily on resolving the "quantitative" housing crisis, leading to the postponement of efforts to address issues in the central districts. Consequently, the fin-de-siècle building stock experienced severe deterioration due to a lack of rehabilitation efforts (Benkő, 2012; Kovács, 1994).

At the end of the 1950s, the average age of the building stock in these neighbourhoods ranged between 60 and 80 years, and most had not undergone any major renovations since their initial construction. The only substantial renovation efforts were directed at the priority roads (e.g. Grand Boulevard, Rákóczi Avenue), which were part of the post-revolution reconstruction and urban beautification programme[10] conducted between 1957 and 1961 (Tamáska, 2018, pp. 38–39). According to the literature, this work was often poorly and unsatisfactorily executed. A form of "Potemkin village" policy, involving façade renovations on major roads, became a hallmark of the Kádár regime's (1956–1988) city centre conservation strategy, followed by a similar wave of renovations on the Grand Boulevard in 1982–1983. As Korompay (2002, p. 62) succinctly states, "a century-old Pest has been spared three major renovations". Nevertheless, from the latter half of the 1970s, the urban regeneration of Pest's inner-city neighbourhoods became a priority at multiple levels, encompassing both party directives and public administration initiatives (Szívós, 2014).

3.2 Constructing the temporality and spatiality of the urban heritage of Pest

In the 1950s and 1960s, architects frequently discussed Hungary's "tumultuous history" and the resulting lack of architectural heritage (Gerő, 1967; Granasztói, 1956; Korompay G., 1960). Pál Granasztói (1956) highlighted the differences between the development of urbanisation in Hungary as compared to Western Europe. While Western European cities grew through "enrichment and tradition" (p. 29) since the Middle Ages, Hungarian towns lacked these stable architectural and planning traditions due to their disrupted history. The rapid urbanisation driven by capitalism and modernisation in the late 19th century further transformed Hungarian towns, erasing traditional architectural elements. Pál Granasztói argued that this absence of historical continuity made the "townscape" a central topic in Hungarian discussions about national identity and tradition. Discourse analysis reveals that, from the 1960s onwards, the term townscape no longer adequately captured the changing scale of urban heritage, as larger territorial units became more relevant.

The completion of townscape and monument surveys in 1957 established the foundation for defining conservation areas within towns. Mirroring international discourse, the discussions around establishing these areas focused narrowly on delimiting the conservation areas. According to László Gerő (1967), historical aspects were accentuated at the scale of the conservation area, whereas at the scale of individual buildings, artistic and

10 The removal of the traces of the Revolution of 1956 was embedded in a comprehensive urban renovation programme that emphasised the projection of prestige and ideological power via the aestheticisation of the townscape on main roads.

aesthetic considerations predominated. This approach contributed to the adjective "historic" becoming a key term in discourse designating priority areas. From the 1960s onwards, the term *történeti városmag* (historic urban core) became the most common reference in specialised articles, supplementing legal and administrative concepts (Figure 3). The term "urban core" emerged almost exclusively in work concerning the historicity of the city (Perényi, 1964). This approach resulted in a conceptual distinction between the "historic urban core" and the "functional urban centre". This theoretical separation asserts disciplinary boundaries: the protection of historic monuments, which focuses on buildings within the urban core, and urban planning, which aims to reorganise the city centre. Debates over territorial and disciplinary boundaries emerged, seeking to clarify the relationship between central functions and historicity. The primary challenge in delineating the boundary between these two territorial concepts lies in the fact that central functions – political, administrative, economic, cultural, etc. – are predominantly concentrated within the historic urban core.

In the 1960s, Venice became a symbol of the changing approach to heritage preservation and a central gathering point for international experts in the field. A key event was the Second International Congress of Architects and Technicians of Historical Monuments in 1964, which led to the drafting of the Venice Charter. At the same time, the International Federation for Housing and Planning (IFHP) held a three-day meeting of its Standing Committee on Historic Urban Areas in Venice. Pál Granasztói, a member of this organisation, delivered a lecture on Budapest and Szeged, highlighting the history of urbanism of these Hungarian cities (Granasztói, 1970). Granasztói's decades-long public career established him as a leading authority on urban issues, owing to his contributions in both theoretical and practical domains. His lecture is central to this study because it synthesised the conceptual production of the previous three decades, including his own work.

This period was marked by terminological ambiguity, with the different names for the IFHP committee in different languages – *sites historiques urbains* in French, *historic urban areas* in English, *Historische Stadtviertel* in German – reflecting contrasting cultural and linguistic perspectives on urban heritage. The new paradigm of urban heritage preservation included diverse territorial units with unique scales and thus perceptions, such as *site*, *area*, and *Viertel*. This diversity in terminology was typical of the early stage of the new urban preservation approach, which was not yet conceptually unified (Sonkoly, 2017). This context is crucial for understanding Granasztói's conference paper.

At the IFHP meeting in Venice, nearly all speakers, except for the Hungarian participant, focused on architecturally homogeneous units from the medieval or early modern periods, thereby defining historic urban areas by their antiquity, architectural unity, and homogeneity (Biegański, 1964, p. 47).[11] However, Granasztói (1970) argued that these criteria do not apply to Hungarian towns. He based his argument on three interdependent principles:

11 The speakers presented mostly medieval and early modern examples: Ole Thomassen (Denmark) on Copenhagen's historic model housing estates; R.C. Hekker (Netherlands) on the *hofj* of the Middle Ages; W. Schmidt (FRG) on the world's oldest public housing estate, the Fuggerei in Augsburg, which dates back

1. Hungarian towns lack unified neighbourhoods or groups of buildings of outstanding historic value, having only isolated buildings or ruins from the Middle Ages.
2. These isolated monuments are mainly concentrated in city centres, where remnants of the old road network and land divisions still exist, such as the Buda Castle Quarter and the 5th district in Pest.
3. The urban foundations of Szeged and Budapest were shaped by the eclectic style of the late 19th century.

Granasztói's perspective highlighted the unique challenges and characteristics of Hungarian urban heritage, as contrasted with the more homogeneous and older architectural contexts discussed by other participants.

Granasztói (1970) emphasised that while urban planning at the end of the 19th century often built on or organically developed old urban structures, it also nearly obliterated the remaining historical monuments and architectural units. He argued that the prevailing paradigm, which focuses on medieval and early modern towns, does not suit the Hungarian context. Instead, Hungary requires a different understanding of historicity and spatiality. Granasztói suggested that terms such as "ancient" and "old" are insufficient to describe Hungarian townscapes, and that "historic" offers more flexibility. He believed that reforming the conceptual apparatus of urban heritage necessitated the redefinition of the term "historic". He concluded that the late 19th century produced cohesive architectural ensembles on a city-wide scale in Budapest and Szeged, indicating that their historical value lies in the overall urban scale rather than individual buildings. This view cautiously rehabilitates eclecticism, considering fin-de-siècle urbanism as a "historic subject" distinguished from present-day forms of urbanism by significant socio-economic and technical changes. Furthermore, according to Granasztói, defining the territorial units of urban heritage in Hungary was problematic, as concepts such as *városkép* (townscape), *városszerkezet* (urban structure), and *táj* (landscape) have boundaries that are less rigidly defined than their equivalents in Western Europe.

In this context, it become a dominant element in the discourse that Budapest could be considered as a large-scale and cohesive urban architectural masterpiece, and therefore treated as a historical subject. This theoretical framework posits that the city's historic significance and outstanding value are manifested on a grand scale, rendering it unique globally. However, it is not only *historic* (important in history) but also *historical* (belonging to the past), i.e., the period during which Pest's inner city was built, which can be delineated from the present by profound socio-economic and technical transformations. Both the historical perspective and the scale were critical in attributing heritage value to Pest's inner city. Furthermore, the quality of Pest's inner city was also situated in a transcendental context: Its historicity is manifest in the organic relationship it forged with previous eras, adapting both to the landscape and the urban structure. The "complementary dimension" is provided by its architectural style, characterised by eclecticism that embodies the modernity of the 19th century.

to the 16th century; Egle Renata Tricanato (Italy) on the social and collective housing of historical Venice; and Piotr Biegański (Poland) on Copernicus' city, Frombork, a restored city.

4 CONCLUSIONS

In many European cities, particularly during the 1960s and even more so in the 1970s, there was a notable transformation in how inner-city neighbourhoods were perceived. Pest was no exception to this trend. This era was characterised by both a chronological broadening of interest to include eclectic architecture and a spatial expansion through the designation of conservation areas, acknowledging the historical significance of the late 19th century urban fabric. This perceptual and conceptual shift, documented in both political and professional discourse, developed specialised instruments to preserve and emphasise the historicity of previously neglected neighbourhoods, thereby reinforcing local identities. Consequently, approaches to the inner city of Pest evolved under the influence of competing visions of conservation and development, which is a hallmark of historic neighbourhoods (increasingly regarded as heritage).

The dismantling of the *topos* of the "young city without historical patina", widely used from the 1920s onwards, was constructed on concepts such as townscape, urban structure, and landscape, and reinterpreted through historical-cultural factors. Historical considerations played an important role, i.e. periodisation and the reinterpretation and expansion of the notion of "the historic", which had consequences for both which styles of architecture could be protected and the scale and extent of protection generally. In the late 1970s, the theoretical construction of the "historic Pest" can also be understood as a programme of regeneration through the preservation of its building stock. This, of course, entailed the mobilisation of immeasurable economic resources, so that the discourse of vulnerability was shaped around the idea of opulence (Sonkoly, 2017, pp. 137–143; Szívós 2014, pp. 47–53).

Thus, the historicity of the inner city of Pest was created through a dynamic change of scale, with standards in relation to the international urban heritage discourse as reference points and benchmarks. Overcoming Pest's spatial and temporal discontinuity became a challenge for the city itself, which was granted a Western European-style organic continuity by means of the discursive upscaling of urban heritage. Fractures and fragmentation were dissolved in the great historical arc that transformed Pest's inner city into a periodic "city-scale production" (Granasztói, 1970, p. 126), Március 15 Square into a site of "architectural-historical continuity",[12] and, later, the Danube panorama into a site of universal value reflecting "the great periods in the history of the Hungarian capital".[13] The value that legitimised the protection was manifested on an almost invisible, metaphorical level. The narratives and conceptual constructions of the protected urban spaces negotiated the real with the symbolic, which implied the use of notions of time and space that referred to continuity. The inclusion of almost transcendental, borderless categories and shifts in scale are important aspects for interpreting the history of urban heritage in Hungary, and perhaps it can be argued, in Central Europe.

12 Meeting minutes of the Executive Committee of the Metropolitan Council of 23 June 1971, p. 81 (Budapest Metropolitan Archive).

13 UNESCO WHC. (2002, 1987). *Budapest, including the Banks of the Danube, the Buda Castle Quarter and Andrássy Avenue*. https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/400/.

REFERENCES

Bandarin, F., & van Oers, R. (2012). *The historic urban landscape: Managing heritage in an urban century*. Wiley-Blackwell. https://doi.org/10.1002/9781119968115

Bandarin, F. (2015). Introduction. Urban conservation and the end of planning. In F. Bandarin & R. van Oers (Eds.), *Reconnecting the city: The historic urban landscape approach and the future of urban heritage* (pp. 1–16). Wiley Blackwell.

Benkő M. (2012). A pesti belváros kialakulása és fejlődése. In G. Alföldi (Ed.), *Budapest 2050 – A belvárosi tömbök fennmaradásának esélyei* (pp. 32–45). Terc.

Bierbauer V. (1932). *Budapest: Múlt és jelen.* n.p.

Dercsényi, D. (1969). *Historical monuments in Hungary: Restoration and preservation*. Corvina.

Erő, Z. (2005). Mûemlékvédelem és városfejlõdés. In T. Egedy & A. Csizmady (Eds.), *Városrehabilitáció és társadalom: Tanulmánykötet* (pp. 269–287). Magyar Tudományos Akadémia Földrajztudományi Kutatóintézet.

Ferkai, A. (2018). Axe or mirror? Architectural journals in postwar Hungary. In T. Schmiedeknecht & A. Peckham (Eds.), *Modernism and the Professional Architecture Journal* (pp. 112–130). Routledge.

Gantner, E. B., Geering, C., & Vickers, P. (Eds.). (2022). *Heritage under socialism: Preservation in Eastern and Central Europe, 1945–1991*. Berghahn.

Gerő L. (1967). Magyar városaink történelmi magjairól: A “műemléki jelentőségű terület”-ek. *Műemlékvédelem*, *11*(3), 134–145.

Granasztói P. (1956). A magyar városépítészet sajátosságai. *Településtudományi Közlemények*, *8*, 28–40.

Granasztói, P. (1970). Budapest et Szeged, deux villes hongroises caractéristiques de l’urbanisme de la fin du siècle dernier. *Acta Historiae Artium*, *16*(1–2), 105–127.

Harlov M. (2016). Műemlékvédelem, kapocs a világgal. *Múltunk*, *61*(4), 113–135.

Huistra, H., & Mellink, B. (2016). Phrasing history: Selecting sources in digital repositories. *Historical Methods: A Journal of Quantitative and Interdisciplinary History*, *49*(4), 220–229. https://doi.org/10.1080/01615440.2016.1205964

Jannière, H., & Vanlaethem, F. (2008). Essai méthodologique: Les revues, source ou objet de l’histoire de l’architecture ? In A. Sornin, H. Jannière, & F. Vanlaethem (Eds.), *Revues d’architecture dans les années 1960 et 1970: Fragments d’une histoire événementielle, intellectuelle et matérielle: Actes du colloque international tenu les 6 et 7 mai 2004 au Centre Canadien d’Architecture, CCA, à Montréal* (pp. 13–33). Institut de recherche en histoire de l’architecture.

Korompay G. (1960). Műemléki együttesek védelmének irányelvei. *Építés- és Közlekedéstudományi Közlemények*, *4*(3), 403–427.

Korompay, K. (2002). Örökségvédelem és rehabilitáció – Most vagy soha. *Utóirat: A Magyar Építőművészet Elméleti Melléklete*, *2*(1), 61–68.

Koselleck, R. (2004). *Futures past: On the semantics of historical time*. Columbia University Press.

Kovács, Z. (1994). A city at the crossroads: Social and economic transformation in Budapest. *Urban Studies*, *31*(7), 1081–1096.

Lepetit, B. (1993). Passé, présent et avenir des modèles urbains d’auto-organisation. In B. Lepetit & D. Pumain (Eds.), *Temporalités urbaines* (pp. 113–134). Antrophos.

Mauri, M., Elli, T., Caviglia, G., Uboldi, G., & Azzi, M. (2017). RAWGraphs: A visualisation platform to create open outputs. *Proceedings of the 12th Biannual Conference on Italian SIGCHI Chapter*, 1–5. https://doi.org/10.1145/3125571.3125585

Parnell, S., & Sawyer, M. (2021). In search of architectural magazines. *Architectural Research Quarterly*, *25*(1), 43–54. https://doi.org/10.1017/S1359135520000457

Perényi I. (1964). A „Városépítéstörténet és építés történeti városokban" c. Akadémiai munkaközösség IV. nemzetközi konferenciája. Megnyitó. *Építés- és Közlekedéstudományi Közlemények*, *8*(1–2), 19–26.

Román A. (1985). Műemlékvédelem és városépítés. *Városépítés*, *21*(1–2), 13–16.

Roncayolo, M. (1997). *La ville et ses territoires*. Gallimard.

Roncayolo, M. (2002). *Lectures de villes: Formes et temps*. Éditions Parenthèses.

Schmiedeknecht, T., & Peckham, A. (2018). Introduction. In T. Schmiedeknecht & A. Peckham (Eds.), *Modernism and the Professional Architecture Journal* (pp. 1–10). Routledge.

Soja, E. W. (1996). *Thirdspace: Journeys to Los Angeles and other real-and-imagined places*. Blackwell.

Sonkoly, G. (2017). *Historical urban landscape*. Springer International Publishing. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-49166-0

Stubbs, J. H., Gunzburger Makaš, E., & Bouchenaki, M. (2011). *Architectural conservation in Europe and the Americas: National experiences and practice; with a contribution of images from the photo archive of the World Monuments Fund*. Wiley.

Szabó M., & Szűcs Z. G. (2011). Fogalomtörténeti perspektívák. *Múltunk*, *56*(2), 4–19.

Szabó, M. K., Ring, O., Nagy, B., Kiss, L., Koltai, J., Berend, G., Vidács, L., Gulyás, A., & Kmetty, Z. (2021). Exploring the dynamic changes of key concepts of the Hungarian socialist era with natural language processing methods. *Historical Methods: A Journal of Quantitative and Interdisciplinary History*, *54*(1), 1–13. https://doi.org/10.1080/01615440.2020.1823289

Szívós, E. (2014). Terhes örökség. A történelmi lakónegyedek problémája a Kádár-korszakban a Klauzál tér és környéke példáján. In E. Szívós (Ed.), *Az öröklött város: Városi tér, kultúra és emlékezet a 19–21. Században – Történeti tanulmányok* (pp. 35–54). Budapest Főváros Levéltára.

Szívós, E. (2021). The historic city and the east-west exchange: Architecture, urban renewal and international knowledge transfers under state socialism in Hungary. *Urban History*, *49*(3), 523548. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0963926821000468

Tamáska M. (2018). 1956 városképi emlékezete Budapesten. A Corvin köz és az Üllői út újjáépítése. *Építés-Építészettudomány*, *46*(1–2), 33–55. https://doi.org/10.1556/096.2017.002

Taylor, K. (2018). Connecting concepts of cultural landscape and historic urban landscape: The politics of similarity. *Built Heritage*, *2*(3), 53–67. https://doi.org/10.1186/BF03545710

Tomas, F. (2004). Les temporalités du patrimoine et de l'aménagement urbain. *Géocarrefour*, *79*(3), 197–212. https://doi.org/10.4000/geocarrefour.722

Trencsényi, B. (2004). Conceptual history and political languages: On the Central-European adaptation of the contextualist-conceptualist methodologies of intellectual history. In *The history of East Central Europe and Russia: On the occasion of the 25th anniversary of the death of Jan Slavík* (pp. 142–163). National Library of the Czech Republic, Slavonic Library.

Turner, M., & Singer, R. (2015). Researching and mapping the historic urban landscape. In F. Bandarin & R. van Oers (Eds.), *Reconnecting the city: The historic urban landscape approach and the future of urban heritage* (pp. 301–312). Wiley Blackwell.

Vadelorge, L. (2003). Introduction: Le patrimoine comme objet politique. In P. Poirrier & L. Vadelorge (Eds.), *Pour une histoire des politiques du patrimoine*. Comité d'histoire du Ministère de la culture Fondation Maison des sciences de l'Homme.

Veschambre, V. (2007). Patrimoine: Un objet révélateur des évolutions de la géographie et de sa place dans les sciences sociales. *Annales de géographie*, *656*(4), 361–381. https://doi.org/10.3917/ag.656.0361

Wevers, M., & Koolen, M. (2020). Digital begriffsgeschichte: Tracing semantic change using word embeddings. *Historical Methods: A Journal of Quantitative and Interdisciplinary History*, *53*(4), 226–243. https://doi.org/10.1080/01615440.2020.1760157

BIOGRAPHY

Gábor Oláh is a postdoctoral researcher at the Atelier Department for Interdisciplinary History at Eötvös Loránd University (ELTE), Budapest and the Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne University. He holds a PhD in urban studies and history, which he completed in 2023 through the ELTE-École des hautes études en sciences sociales (EHESS) cotutelle programme. His research focuses on urban heritage, with a particular focus on the concepts of urban landscape and neighbourhood. He has contributed to multiple EU-funded research projects, including REACH (2017–2020), UNCHARTED (2020–2024), SECreTour (2024–2027) and HerEntrep (2024–2027).