

Budapest, including the banks of the Danube, the Buda Castle Quarter and Andrassy Avenue

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Abstract

Budapest was inscribed on the World Heritage List in 1987. The original territory, which consists of the banks of the Danube and the district of the Buda Castle, was extended with Andrassy Avenue including Heroes' Square and the Millennium Underground in 2002. Furthermore, the site was enriched with a buffer zone as well, which enlarged the world heritage site. Although it is not a cultural landscape, the panorama of Budapest plays a significant part in its uniqueness and popularity. As a result, thousands of tourists visit Budapest every year, which has positive effects in many respects. Interesting, but according to a research, there is no connection between this growing number of tourists and the world heritage label in the case of Budapest. In order to keep the world heritage label proper conservation and maintenance is inevitable. It could be a major challenge for developing cities like Budapest.

Keywords: *Budapest, world heritage label, landscape, tourism, conservation*

Characteristic landscape features

First of all, I would like to make it clear that Budapest is not a cultural landscape. It was inscribed on the world heritage list as a cultural world heritage site, although if we examine the UNESCO documents, we can see there is a lot of emphasis on the panorama and the landscape features of the city. Let me provide some examples:

- The evaluation of ICOMOS from 1987
 - „Within the unified perspective of an immense urban panorama the Danube is the dividing line between two cities...” (Advisory Body Evaluation, 1987)
 - „...strongly recommended to the Hungarian government so that one of the most beautiful urban landscapes in the world may be preserved.”(*Advisory Body Evaluation, 1987*)

- The decision of UNESCO World Heritage Committee from 1987
 - „The Committee took note of the statement made by the observer from Hungary that his Government undertook to make no modifications to the panorama of Budapest by adding constructions out of scale.” (*Report of the 11th Session of the Committee, 1987*)
- Adaptation of retrospective Statements of Outstanding Universal Value from 2013
 - “The scenic view of the banks of the Danube as part of the historic urban landscape is a unique example of the harmonious interaction between human society and a natural environment characterised by varied morphological conditions...” (*WHC-13/37.COM/8E, 2013*)

Apart from this, we can ascertain that Budapest is indeed not a cultural landscape, but landscape features appear strongly in this world heritage site.

Budapest, as a world heritage site

The Hungarian Government ratified the World Heritage Convention in 1985. Two years later Budapest was inscribed on the World Heritage List. Beside Hollókő, it was the first world heritage site in Hungary, which properly illustrates the importance of this place. The first time the State Party nominated a smaller territory than the extent of the present site.

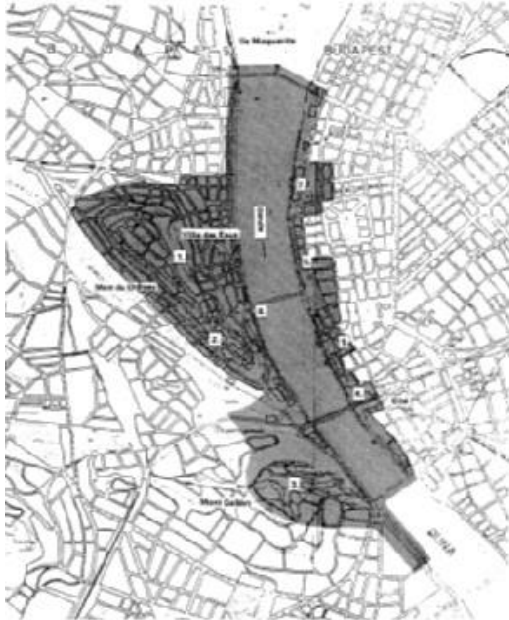


Figure 1: The nomination of Budapest, the banks of the Danube and the district of Buda Castle from 1987

This territory stretched from Margaret Bridge in the north to the Technical University, in the south on the Buda side. It contained four bridges over the Danube (Margaret Bridge, Chain Bridge, Elizabeth Bridge, and Liberty Bridge), on the Buda side Gellért Hill with its Freedom Monument and the Citadel, the Buda Castle Quarter with the Castle, the Matthias Church and several other monuments from the Middle Ages and the early modern period. On the other side of the city the territory expanded just to the first street parallel with the River Danube, but it already included many magnificent architectural and historical buildings, like the Parliament or the building of the Hungarian Academy of Science. The territory was 415, 1 ha and there was no buffer zone yet.

If any place wants to be on the world heritage list, it has to comply with one particular criterion from the ten. Budapest was included on the World Heritage List on the basis of criteria II and IV. If I should summarize the two criterions, I would say that they mostly concentrate on the historical, cultural and architectural significance of the site.

Returning to the historical overview, in 2002 the world heritage site was expanded with Andrásy Avenue including Heroes' Square and the Millennium Underground. This expansion first of all increased the size of the core territory, and expanded with a buffer

zone too. The new territory is 967, 1 ha, from which 473, 3 ha belongs to the core area and 493, 8 ha to the buffer zone.

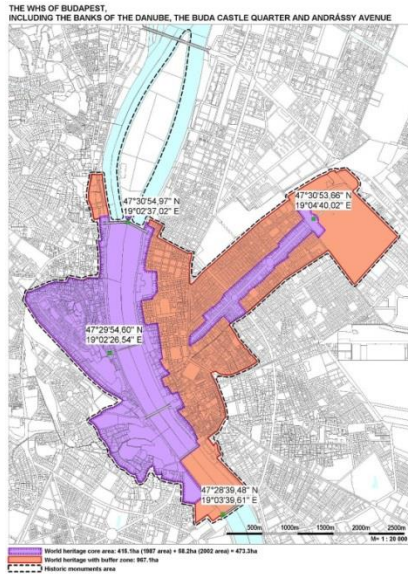


Figure 2: The territory of the site after 2002

Andrássy Avenue is the pinnacle of eclectic architecture from a time when Budapest was becoming a metropolis. It is a virtual gallery of architectural styles from the second half of the 19th century and it creates a corridor from the city centre to the parkland. The new core territory is also very popular among tourists with its Neo-Renaissance, Neo-Baroque, Classicist, Art Nouveau and Romantic style buildings. We could visit in the close environment of this Avenue the worthily famous Heroes' Square, the Opera House, the Liszt Ferenc Academy of Music, which was added to the European Heritage Label List this year or the Millennium Underground, which was by the way the first subway in the continent in its own way. Furthermore, the buffer zone contains several areas with important historical links to the avenue, for example the City Garden, the Saint Stephen's Basilica, the Synagogue in Dohány Street, the Broadway of Pest or the Central Market Hall.

The question of expanding the buffer zone in the Buda side or with the Margaret Island emerged sometimes in the last decades. But until now, there weren't any step for the implementation of this idea. In the context of expanding the world heritage site of Budapest I have to mention the Caves of the Buda Thermal Karst System as well, which builds up from six parts under the ground. It has been on the Tentative List of Hungary since 1993. It

could be a reasonable initiation to complete the existing world heritage site with this extremely complex and unique natural treasure in the future.

Tourism

If we take a look at the tourism, we can see that according to the data of the Hungarian Central Statistical Office, the number of the arrivals and guest nights have been growing constantly in the last few years in Budapest.

Table 1: Commercial Accommodation

	2012	2013	2014	2015
Arrivals (000s)	3,091	3,292	3,508	3,776
Guest nights (000s)	7,413	7,819	8,153	8,713

Table 2: Hotels

	2012	2013	2014	2015
Arrivals (000s)	2,932	3,103	3,269	3,468
Guest nights (000s)	6,969	7,328	7,538	7,950

The connection between tourism and the world heritage label in Budapest

It means that the number of tourists in Budapest is increasing, which has been supported by international newspapers or magazines which have ranked Budapest very favourably among the most popular cities in Europe and all over the world several times. It is really interesting, that according to a research made by students of the Budapest Metropolitan University in co-operation with the Association of Cultural Heritage Managers (ACHM), being on the World Heritage List plays a minimal role in it.

The students in the multi-layered research mapped the connection between tourism and the world heritage fame of Budapest. First of all, they explored the appearance of the World Heritage “brand” in the territory. The result showed us that tourists can meet the World Heritage Emblem only 14 times in the whole city.

Conservation

In order to ensure public attendance it is essential that State Parties protect and sustain the Outstanding Universal Value of the heritage on their territory. Unfortunately, in developing towns saving cultural and natural values against modern projects could be a major challenge in the prominent parts of the city. It is definitely true for Budapest as well, where the Committee at the inscription in 1987 took note that “the Hungarian Government undertook to make no modifications to the panorama of Budapest by adding constructions out of scale.” (*Report of the 11th Session of the Committee, 1987*)

Nevertheless, there were some projects in the last almost 30 years, the realization of which would have affected negatively the panorama of the territory. In 2005 a UNESCO/ICOMOS monitoring mission came to Budapest to evaluate the Wastewater Collector and Road Project at the embankment of Buda. The embankments on both sides are a constitutive part of this site, with well-designed stone structures (walls, steps) constructed in the second half of the 19th century. However, the integrity of these embankments has been affected by their transformation from harbour quays into freeways in the 1970s. The project aim was to widen the road with two or four lines on the ground, but luckily it hasn't implemented.

Next to the banks of the River Danube, there are some parts of the world heritage site where the proper maintenance of the monuments are burning issues. An unfortunate accident also drew the attention to this question. A great fire broke out in the middle of the Andrásy Avenue, in a prominent part of the core territory in June 2014. The whole roof of a building perished, and the building was completely soaked by water in the process of putting out the fire. Nearly a hundred flats became unusable, and the heritage values like the detailed roof structure, the towers on the roof and the main cornice were also severely damaged.



Figure 4: The burning roof on the Andrassy Avenue

As a reaction to this damage, the Forster Centre has initiated the preparation of a risk map, through which the condition of similarly endangered buildings can be mapped. After the analyzation of some international examples such as English Heritage initiation “Heritage at Risk”, the Forster Centre developed its own assessment methodology. The experts set the scale of the data collection, which was adjusted to the aim of the project. One of the purposes was to draw a conclusion from the survey of the façades in relation to the technical condition of the buildings. A significant advantage of this method is that it can be done from the street, and the surveyors don’t need special permits to enter the buildings. Our interest affects among other things the address, the function, the role in the cityscape, the ownership status, the categories of protection and the technical condition of the building. By filtering each category, we could get a full picture about the examined territory.

We considered that even if the evaluation is subjective in some cases, the final assessment would be objective. Thus, the Forster Centre created an evaluation chart, based on which the level of endangerment of a building can be determined. 30 participants took part in the survey, which concerned 300 buildings along Andrassy Avenue, and it took only one week.

We could draw several conclusions regarding the final Risk Map. From 300 buildings, 26 are severely endangered (9 %), 67 are moderately endangered (22 %) and 70 % of the buildings in the world heritage site are in good or adequate state.

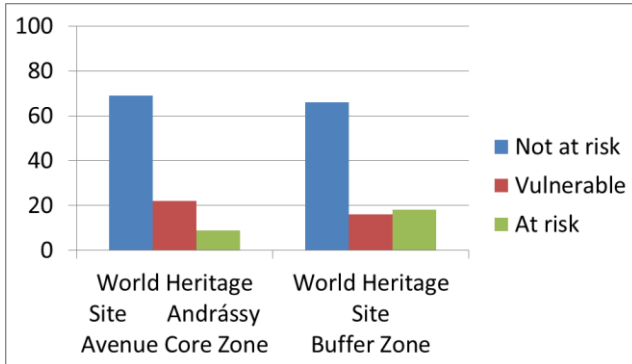


Figure 5: The result of the monitoring

We got a telling picture about the ownership status of the severely endangered buildings as well: most of them, 16 (approx. 60%) have multiple owners, 7 (approx. 30%) are owned by the state or local government, and only 3 (approx. 10%) are in private ownership. If we look at the location of the examined buildings, we can establish that there is no connection between the level of endangerment and the situation. The only one exception could be Kodály Körönd, where three buildings from four are endangered. (One of them was damaged by the fire.)



Figure 6: The representation of the endangered buildings on the Andrassy Avenue

Summary

Budapest becomes a world heritage site in 1987 thanks, among others, to the significant landscape features. Additionally, the long and continuously transforming history, the abundance of cultural events and the milieu play also a key part in the attractiveness of the capital city. The key role of the panorama has remained important in the last 30 years, which is monitored by the UNESCO periodically. As a result, the implementation of several modern projects failed in the last two decades which would have had negative effects on the Outstanding Universal Value and the World Heritage Label as well. The above mentioned research concerning the tourism and the world heritage label pointed out that this title may not have such an important role as we imagined before in terms of the number of tourists who visit the capital city of Hungary every year. The examination of the reasons and the deeper research is not the aim of this article. Nevertheless, we can ascertain that the State Party should promote the label at different forums in order to capitalize on the benefit of being on the World Heritage List.

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