Emergence of Strategic Planning in the 1990s - The Case of Budapest

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Most cities around the World in the early 1990s started to elaborate strategic plans for urban development through integrating different sectoral and functional policies into a general strategy. Latter very much depends on broader political and legal circumstances. The newly established local governments in the Transition countries are also faced with the challenge of strategic planning, though in the context of very different planning traditions and unsettled economic circumstances. On the one hand, they had to shift their focus from the socialist supply-side planning system toward a demand-side strategic planning approach based on new perceptions about public sector's role and public policies. On the other hand, the establishment of local self-governments introduced a new and relatively independent layer for policy formulation in the context of the monolithic and top-down decision-making traditions. These necessitated the clarification and reallocation of competencies and functions and also introduction of new coordination methods.

This paper summarizes the evolution of the general urban policies, development concepts, and strategies in Budapest during the 1990s. Though development concepts have long been prepared, this paper shows that the local government had to go through a reform process before real and viable strategies could be elaborated and complex strategic plans could be developed. The general planning and management capacities in Budapest have become conducive for strategic planing by the end of 1990's, meanwhile the merits of new strategies became apparent. The distinction of the so called supply and demand-side approach widely used for studying infrastructure policies, proved to be a useful toolkit for analyzing the evolution of the urban development planning in Budapest.¹

The Developmental Context

Budapest at a first Glance

Budapest is now the biggest city in Central Europe with huge development potential. Its strength is due to its geo-political position in Europe as well as to its economic and political weight within the country. It lies at one of the major intersections in the network of existing and planned Trans-European transportation corridors. The city has 2 million, with the agglomeration about 2.5 million inhabitants and gives place for a consumer market of at least 5 million persons. More than 90 percent of the insurance, banking, and telecommunication sectors, and 60 percent of research and development capacities of Hungary are located in Budapest. The city produces more than one third of the national GDP (see Table 1).

Table 1 Major Indicators of Budapest

	Hungary	Budapest	Budapest as % of Hungary
Size square kilometer	93,000	525	0.5%
Population million	10	1.9	19 %
GDP in1997, billion HUF (USD bn.)	8,541 (46)	2,950 (16)	35%
GDP per capita in1997, HUF thousand (USD)	841 (4,504)	1,552 (8,315)	185%
Average wage 1998 (HUF)	70,450	89,402	127 %
Investments by businesses in 1996 (billion HUF)	1057	333	31.5 %
FDI (billion USD, cumulative yr. 2000 est.)	23	13.5	60%

¹ This Paper is based on [Pallai 2000a]

Source: National and Budapest Statistical Yearbooks, 1999

Budapest is an internationally recognized metropolis. The concentration of strategic functions and the high quality of human resources explain how, in the last few years, the city has acquired 60 percent of the foreign direct investment channeled to the country and became the most favored target of FDI in Central Europe.

Supply-side versus Demand-driven Development Strategies

The socialist planning was a profound supply side and top-down approach that focussed on supply driven investments, technically fixed solutions, and quantitative results. This "predict and provide" method spilled over from the production, inter alia, to the infrastructure and urban development. The dominance of central plans and distorted demand information caused by symbolic prices created uncoordinated sectoral policies, inefficient structures, severe shortage in service delivery, and high effective costs covered eventually by taxpayers. The lack of local autonomy degraded local planning to an administrative task with a profound hidden function of lobbying for central subsidies, and consequently, turned plans into a list of wished interventions. Contemporary urban planners who took the lead locally were mostly architects and engineers who focussed on projects rather than initiating development process.

 Table 2 Characteristics of Supply and Demand-side Policies in Urban Management

Supply side approach to urban development FIS	Demand side management of urban development DSM
Dominance of central planning Local planning for "lobbying" for central subsidies	Local planning, local level aggregation of policies based on local information, initiatives, and accountability
Focused on supply side investment and network extension	Focused on mediation in responding local needs and for increased system efficiency
General macro approach	Micro management based on understanding of micro dynamics and flexibility of procedures
Impact based on public investment and regulative logic	Pricing and incentives as influence on users
Top down approach and enforcement	Coordination of interest and mobilization

ez már saját, csak az infra volt az övék

Or Source: paraphrased for urban planning of the table comparing FIS-DSM of infra planning of of Guy and Marvin

During the 1990s the policy environment has progressively changed to a very positive direction. The transition to market economy, the strengthening private sector, the cost-based user charges, the liberalization, and the privatization necessitated new types of control mechanisms and a new political culture based less on the decision making power and more on interest reconciliation. Focus of policies has shifted from regulation and intervention towards the mediation of impacts and interests based on the understanding of the micro dynamics (see Table 2).

In parallel, the perception of the role of the public sector had changed from the sole provider of services to a facilitator in creating supportive environment. The establishment and empowerment of local governments in Hungary has created the opportunity to exploit the advantages of local information and initiatives and to aggregate latter into comprehensive local policies. This new framework is more supportive to local management and elaboration or adjustment of plans according to local needs.

Within the new policy environment one of the biggest public policy challenges has been the shift from statist intervention techniques to a more liberal while better coordinated and cooperative strategic planning in public entities. The unrealistic dreams of old urban planners had to be replaced by active strategic urban management approach. Instead of listing possible interventions, plans now have to concentrate the limited public resources to those actions that generate further

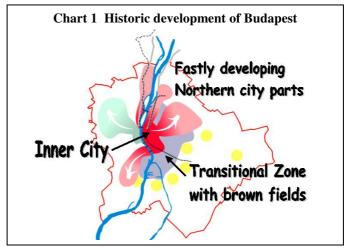
development and private investment, hence transform the development of the city into a public-private partnership program.

The Pre-transition Heritages of Budapest

Buda and Pest have been famous cities on the map of Europe since the middle ages. Though their fame faded during the Turkish occupation, a process of slow revival started right after. During the 19th century, especially after the Historical Compromise with the Habsburg Monarchy in 1867 and the unification of Buda and Pest with the neighboring settlements in 1873, an incredibly dynamic growth period started. During the course of a few decades Budapest developed into a huge industrial-age metropolis with prospering trades and pulsing international traffic. In this period a beautiful eclectic style city emerged and a sizable peripheral belt developed for industries and service functions. Furthermore outer agglomeration settlements clustered around Budapest and started to grow quickly at the backyard of the big city. By now, these all have been consolidated into one big city comprising 5 historic inner city districts and a belt of 18 residential and mixed residential-service-industrial districts.

At the very end of the nineteenth century and during the following decades, the construction of the bridges on the Danube enhanced the development of Buda the Western part of the city. Elegant villas were built on the hills of Buda, while industries and larger apartment houses settled in South-Buda. On the Pest side, first the garden city of Zugló penetrated the former belt Eastward. During

the last decades of the Socialist regime, the construction of large streets, a commuter train, and a metro line to the North could launch fast urban growth along these transportation corridors. In consequence, the former industrial belt rapidly shrunk in the North of the city as well. However, a gray transitional zone survived in the South-East of Budapest. By 1990, Budapest comprised by nature and by development potential three challenging sections: the inner city including the historic eclectic style core, the northern development zone, and the



transitional zone with crap industries and brown fields, meanwhile good potentials to merge functionally into the stretching inner city. (Chart 1)

Concepts and Strategies during the 1990s

Right after the first local elections the new leadership started the elaboration of an urban policy concept [UPC91]. The goal was to review and reconsider the needs and possible development interventions in the city under the new conditions. Half a year of intensive work resulted in a first summary of issues which could initiate public and professional dialogue on the major urban policy issues at the very start of the transition.

The Initial Challenges and Responses

The UPC91 identified three troublesome elements of the socialist heritage from the developmental perspective: (i) over centralized road system with low capacity and high ratio of through traffic; (ii) serious decay of the historic core city; and (iii) insufficient public services in big outer city areas.

Under the socialist regime, the severe shortage in privately owned vehicles coupled with a fairly good coverage of public transportation. So even in the 1980s, the vast majority of residents used public transportation. As a result of low motorization, an underdeveloped and strongly centralized road network could temporarily satisfy the needs of the traffic. The traffic has become very burdensome for the city because of noise, pollution, and the waste of time in transport in the 1990s.

The challenge of the historic core city was that this zone with the country's best tourist and business potential desperately needed building rehabilitation. On the one hand, the core city suffered because initially there were lack of public funds for maintenance and refurbishment of apartment houses, most of those were cheap public rentals. The legal impediments and the lack of a real-estate market on the other hand prevented to mobilize private funds into this territory.

The challenge of the outer area rooted in the uncoordinated and asymmetric development carried out in the previous Chart 2 Challenges and Development in the 1990s

Hungaria Ring

* ease the radial road structure

* Development of the zone along the Ring

* Rehabilitation of the inner city

decades. The housing development previously was focussed on the outer areas of the city without the parallel development of public services on site, hence these outer cities were not self-standing zones (they functioned rather satelite towns).

As a simple answer to the inherited conditions and urban conflicts, three priorities for urban development could easily be defined in 1991: (i) to ease the city's increasing traffic problem; (ii) start a building and street rehabilitation program in the inner city; and (iii) develop public services and improve connections for outer districts.

The UPC91 and the following dialogue provided a framework for defining the most urgent large-scale development tasks. These lead to *the first mega-project of Budapest*: the development of the Hungaria ring-road in conjunction with a new Danube bridge. The Hungaria ring-road supplements the two historic rings of the core city. It is currently the longest and outmost continuous ring street at the Pest side that serves several functions. It is a bypass for an immense volume of through traffic, hence prevents the inner city. It provides much better connections between the inner city and the outer districts. Finally, it provides for excellent connection, hence improves the development potential for a big part of the gray transition zone.

While the city government invested into construction of the Hungaria ring-road, the central government started to construct a beltway around the city called as M0 highway (Chart 2). The construction of a beltway was also well justified. First, when it will have fully constructed it serves as a fast and easy track for both the heavy and the passenger through-traffic between the 7 major highways those approaching Budapest from nearly all major cardinal points. Second, M0 could effectively and

Table 3 Capital Investments by Strategic Areas of
Budapest 1990-1998

Built km HUF Bn. %of Bgt
Traffic improvement
Roads and other transport
Other investments
Inner city development
Building rehabilitation
Public transport
Outer districts

a
b
Source: Local govt of Budapest

entirely prevent the stretching inner city from all through-traffic. Third, M0 not only supplements but also reinforces the Hungaria ring-road development since latter, having been no

longer burdened with through traffic, could primary serve readjusting the city traffic. The M0 highway is not only a primary tool for bypassing traffic, but it has inspired the dynamic development of a gigantic new logistic zone at the Southern edge of the city. For instance, a dozen of shopping malls, several truck terminal, tens of logistic basis have grown out as greenfield investments in a few years period. This logistic zone has gradually become the fourth strategic zone of Budapest. (Chart 2)

Parallel to the formation of the logistic zone, the construction of the Hungaria ring-road has also created developmental zones and partly counter-balanced the M0's unfavorable city deconcentration effect, by pulling some investment forces back closer to the inner city. Private investments have fairly reinforced the Hungaria ring-road development program of the local government. By the year of 2000, for instance, the real estate market have emerged and become a strategic market segment in Budapest, half a dozen of shopping centers opened, dozens of modern office buildings raised, and new hotels were built at the Hungaria ring-road and along the radial avenues that connect the inner city and the ring-road.

So the Hungaria ring-road development has proven to be a well-selected development intervention, as the construction of the ring-road alone could increase the potential of the surrounding area so that dynamic development started there. Since the Hungaria ring-road is constructed beyond the border of the inner city, it stretches significantly further out the limits of the densely utilized inner area. This ring alone, however, has not been able to create an impetus large enough to restructure the southeastern industrial brown-field towards the outer area so far.

The inner city rehabilitation was much less successful in the early 1990s. For the rehabilitation and up-grading of the inner city, traffic had to be filtered through parking regulations and the construction of routes evading the inner areas had to be started, so as the quality of the physical environment could be improved. The first building rehabilitation programs turned to be partially successful, due to serious legal and ownership impediments, and the unfavorable economic depression in the middle of the decade. The extensive and fast divestiture of the rental apartment buildings (cca 300.000 units of housing units were sold by 1995) and legislative changes have laid down the basis for rehabilitation of the inner city driven by the private sector. The private investors have reacted fast and very well, so the inner city of Budapest has absorbed the biggest stake of private hotel and office building development among the Central and East European capitals.

The outer-city development program turned to be the third element of the overall development strategy both in terms of timing and of emphasis too. In the outer areas of the city it was crucial to improve accessibility by creating better connections among the radial avenues through the gradual construction of new and new sections of the Hungaria ring-road. This third strategic element of the city development has proceeded at a much moderate pace, and the first results occurred only by the end of 1990s. The improvement in public services were driven by the local governments of the respective districts who started to develop their own development programs in coordination with the municipal council of Budapest.

Halfway to a Realistic Plan: the mid-1990s

While the municipal government of Budapest was still overburdened with the paramount operative financing and management issues, two strategic concepts were elaborated by 1994. The first laid down a strategy concept on the administrative restructuring and the management reform of service delivery [UPC94], the second was an urban development concept [UDC94]. The administrative and management reform concept [UPC94] was utterly realistic. It attempted to foresee the cutting edge of maneuvering in the fiscal, financial, and political arena, and it also delineated the next reform steps. As in 1993-94, based on the three-year experience and the proceeding transition process, the future of the local government system was far more

predictable than in 1991. It was already possible to adjust administrative structures to tasks and capabilities, hence the strategic concept document already attempted to define the scale of present and proposed activities in accordance with the forecasted revenues of the municipality. The 1994 local elections reconfirmed the previous leadership, hence this program became the basis of the coalition agreement between the two largest parties in the new local Assembly so it also served as the work plan of the local government for the new ruling cycle.

The Urban Development Concept [UDC94] document, however, became almost entirely neglected for two reasons. First, the program of the new local government was understandably focussed on the administrative and management reform, which was further reinforced by the fiscal squeeze. Second, the urban development concept gave only the vision of an idealized future state of the city, but did not give ideas as to the way to achieve this vision. The whishes for an end-state concept implied huge development interventions but failed to set clear priorities. This method, was still a supply side approach, hence was useless in a system where the local government policy had to optimize locally available resources.

Modern Strategic Planning on Track

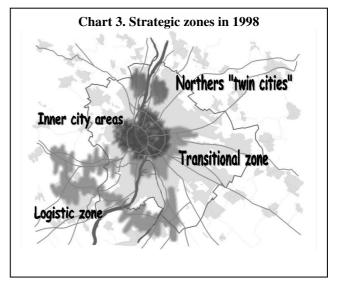
In 1996, after a short financial crisis caused by huge delays in receiving transfers form the central government a new financial strategy was approved. This started with a process of drastic reorganization of the municipality's financial management and a thorough reform of service delivery. As a consequence, the budget began to improve in tandem with the increasing predictability and creditworthiness of local finances, latter made possible to operate public services and finance public investments on a sustainable basis. These provided a good ground for a sound strategic planning practice.

Urban Development Concept 1998

The elaboration of a new urban development concept started in 1997. By that time there were already experiences about the proceeding city development under market conditions. The

effect of the reorganization of the traffic patterns, privatization of housing and infrastructure services, the strengthening real-estate market, and the effectiveness of interventions under the new conditions could already be analyzed. As a result, the identification of problems and possible solutions became more focused.

The first phase of the work on a new Urban Development Concept was carried out in 1997-98 [UDC98]. The expert team analyzed the city's different urban areas based on their prevailing urban problems and developmental stages, and distinguished four strategic zones: (i) the inner city; (ii) the transition zone; (iii) the



Northern twin cities; and (iv) the Southern logistic zone (see Chart 3). The UDC98 listed the most important local government actions for upgrading each of the strategic zones. At the same time, a financial prognosis was also prepared. The first comparison of the rough cost estimate of the necessary actions and the projected financial resources clearly shown that further focusing and prioritizing of the UDC98 was indispensable. As a consequence, the concept could only be called as a first iterative phase of strategic planning. Still, when the concept was published and

given for broad professional and public review and dialogue, the lack of focus was the least criticized element of the UDC98. On the contrary, its generality and all-embracing nature was highly appreciated and ultimately lead to wide public acceptance.

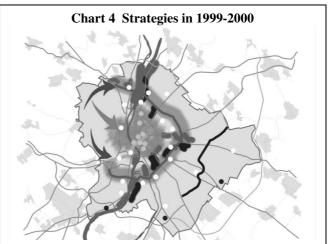
From Concept to Strategic Plan 1999-2000

The second phase of the elaboration of the new urban development concept that started in 1999 [UDC99], was focussed on the delineation of a viable strategy in real harmony with the needs and capabilities. Thus the new strategy aimed at developing a competitive and sustainable urban structure: (i) construction of the fourth ring-road and two Danube bridges to merge most of the transitional zone into the brother inner city and utilize huge land reserves; (ii) continuation of the rehabilitation of public spaces and buildings (iii) improve the outer areas.

The concept identified the low density transitional zone especially in its South-Eastern part as the biggest obstacle in the development of an efficient urban structure for Budapest. The key argument was that this economically depressed area, which is badly decaying and under-utilized, increases the length of routes, the travel needs, and cuts the inner and outer parts of the city from each other. Hence, the construction of one more outer ring road, the Körvasúti Körút with two new bridges on the Danube in the North and South became a key long-term public investment project in the new strategy.

In addition, this concept aimed at upgrading the transitional zone into a "Park City" ring area (Chart 4). The completion of the fourth ring road is assumed to result in a better access to a huge territorial reserve and hopefully would attract sizeable investments. The development strategy envisages the creation of new centers, public spaces and inter-modal nodes in the zone as well as a few major flagship projects. By the intention of the concept, this concentrated development in the transitional zone beyond the exploitation of local land reserves can take over some functions from the inner city, hence it facilitates the improvement of the quality of both the inner city and the outer districts too.

A development strategy that focuses on the transitional zone as a long-term objective considers development the process as a huge public-private partnership undertaking. The public sphere must take a leading role in upgrading the area by the construction of the ring road and some centers as focal points and with them giving access to a huge territorial reserve in a strategically good position. The dark areas on the map show the territories that can be redeveloped for housing, green and mixed functions (see Chart 4). Most of this land



reserve is in private hands, so the infrastructure is targeted to encourage private investors to participate in the restructuring process. If the infrastructure and regulation brings the zone into the position of a good investment target, the redevelopment of these areas can clearly be accomplished by the market or in public private strategic partnerships.

Beside the new "Park city" project, continuity in the earlier strategies for upgrading and rehabilitation of the inner city also remained a key part of the long-term urban development strategies. Rehabilitation and the consequent improvement of the quality of life in the inner city is the primary precondition for Budapest to obtain and strengthen its hoped role to be a regional business, financial, communication, and cultural center in Central Europe. Likewise a refurbished inner city could keep or attract the middle and upper class population to live in this

zone. Targeting the physical, functional and environmental improvement of the inner city is based on three elements: (i) The construction of a new metro line (this is the optimal vehicle to facilitate the increase of urban density without increase of noise and pollution). (ii) Comprehensive street and public transport rehabilitation and developing an integrated traffic system to filter the in-city traffic through the development of adequate parking places in tandem with proper parking fee policies within and outside of the inner city. (iii) Launching a further development and rehabilitation process by focusing local government interventions to the public spaces.

On the outskirts the goals are (i) establishment of new infrastructure connections; (ii) initiate large scale public-private partnership actions for developing several mixed residential-business sectors in this zone; and (iii) revitalize or establish new local urban centers. Local centers are the key developmental factors not only for the improvement of the local supply of public services and quality of life, but they can decrease travel needs to the inner city of Budapest and simultaneously ease the inner city traffic by creating "local inner cities".

Budapest Strategic Plan for the New Millennium

At the end of 2000, Budapest does not have a literally speaking urban development strategic plan, but the city has got very close to it. The Budapest's urban development strategy elaborated in 1999-2000 focuses on the transitional zone of the capital for long-term development, to ensure that reserve land can be exploited. This is a mega-project that is aimed at to be the engine of the whole urban development process. This urban development concept as a draft development plan that is expected to be adopted by 2001. After the official acceptance of the concept the challenge for the City local government will be to adjust policy tools, resources, and management instruments to facilitate the targeted processes. For this goal amendments of pricing policies, introduction of ad valorem property taxation, and reconsideration of regulations and incentives will be of crucial importance. The draft urban development strategy plan of Budapest comprises three groups of strategic development targets and actions (see Table 4).

Table 4 Budapest Urban Development Strategy for the New Millennium

Table 4 Budapest Orban Development Strategy for the New Wintermann		
Goals	Targets and actions	
Access to territorial reserves	Körvasúti Körút: Construction of the fourth ring-road	
	including two new bridges on the Danube	
	Access to isolated territories	
	Develop inter-modal hubs	
	Extension of development zones along the Danube	
	Relieve to inner areas	
Inner city development	Filtering traffic, parking development and regulation	
	Rehabilitation of buildings and public spaces	
	Construction of a new metro-line	
Improvement of outer areas	Construction of an external ring-road to complete the	
	M0 beltway	
	Develop transversal connections from the Buda hills	
	Public private partnership development programs in	
	the Southern-Pest outer districts	

The complete and full-fledge strategic planning process of urban policies is not achieved yet. This learning by doing strategic planning process, however is gradually proceeding, it comprises more and more complex and outreaching ideas, always absorbs new elements based on previous results, and it is always adjusted to the changing conditions. The urban development concept by the year of 2000 has become a draft strategic development plan that is expected to be adopted by early 2001. This gives the hope that in the coming years the necessary implementation tools will also be elaborated and the strategic plan will be materialized.

Lessons Learned

Looking through again Budapest's urban development concepts of the 1990s from the angle of strategic thinking, it is clear that the urban policies and urban development concepts always aimed at creating new strategies and always contained key strategic elements. The urban policy elaborated in 1991[UPC91] was a necessary and courageous first attempt to stabilize the city.

The 1994 management reform concept [UPC94] could already systematically organize and target to harmonize financial and management aspects of sectoral policies. The 1994 urban development concept [UDP94], however, could only give a vision of how the city would look like in the future. An ideal end-state was sketched, but no policy goals or programs were articulated, hence, these cannot be considered as a strategy by any standards of policy making.

The first real development strategy was the financial and management reform that could only be fully elaborated and implemented under the pressure of an approaching crisis in 1996. This historic momentum made politically possible to reach a consensus in taking the political costs of serious restrictive measures. This new financial strategy and its implementation resulted in a comprehensive reform of the internal functioning of the local government by the end of the 1990s.

The 1998 urban development concept [UDP98] was already conceptually different from its predecessors. It focused on the most problematic developmental sections of the city, listed possible programs, and specified needed development interventions in the four strategic zones. Nevertheless, this concept was still full of problem statements and supply side actions, while these naturally re-active policies did not cover key issues of financing and decision-making capabilities of the City local government.

It happened only in 1999 [UDP99] that the previous approach of "what should be done in the different areas?" shifted towards the more strategic question of "how can the development and investment process be best influenced or strategically guided from the limited resources available?" It became clear that under the conditions of market economy the primary goal should be to influence demand patterns and that latter could only be achieved by coordinated active strategic policies.

The crucial and symbolic point in this process was the shift of focus to the transitional belt. Discussions on relative importance of each strategic action pushed the objective of construction of a new ring road to the top of the priority list. The conceptual change was that the evaluation was not any more the mere supply side argument (e.g. need for new traffic connections). The importance of the project in the new reasoning was twofold, on the one hand there was the upgrading of the low density area in the transitional zone, by giving access to badly underutilized areas attracting investment. On the other hand to improve development possibilities of the whole city through the indirect effect of a more efficient urban density structure. This approach already qualifies as demand side management, as the role of the local government was to modify urban demand patterns, by bringing areas of the city into the position of an investment target.

The technique in 1998 weighted and prioritized possible interventions by the importance and urgency of the problem to be solved. The other technique utilized in 1999-2000 was to create a strategy in which interventions are prioritized by the strength and range of their effect. The first approach remains in the domain of passive, supply side thinking, lists "the reactions to problems", and "achieve as much as possible". The second approach is a more active, demand side one, where effectiveness is targeted by interventions at optimal points to reorganize demand patterns and initiate further development process. The fact that the importance was given to the Park city program symbolizes the shift from concept to strategy.

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