

SOCIAL URBAN REHABILITATION POLICIES AND UNIVERSITIES: THE CASE OF PÉCS, EUROPEAN CAPITAL OF CULTURE 2010 AND THE UNIVERSITY OF PÉCS

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Introduction

Social urban rehabilitation requires a complex and integrated approach, one which brings together various groups of professionals and lay people alike, and traverses the traditional departmental divisions within urban bureaucracy and management.¹ The aim of this kind of urban policy, in short, is to tackle social exclusion concentrated in rundown urban areas. For many European cities, such complexity and an integrated approach in urban policy-making are familiar from their experiences of being a European Capital of Culture. In the course of preparing for and implementing such a cultural capital project (and in its aftermath) urban policy-making in the city of Pécs too has been - and continues to be - faced with tasks very similar to the challenges posed by social urban rehabilitation. Pécs is in a special situation in this respect as these two kinds of urban policy have defined much of its post-millennial urban policy, their threads becoming intertwined in many ways, and the purpose of this paper is to evaluate the conditions under which the two ultimately click or clash.

The potential role of universities in boosting local and regional economies is well known, but their innovation potential is equally valid in various areas of policy-making, especially in local and regional contexts.² Hence, the paper looks at universities in European Capitals of Culture from the perspective of their role in urban policy formation. In the case of the University of Pécs, such a role is to be explored with respect to the two most challenging post-millennial urban projects: Pécs as European Capital of Culture in 2010 and social urban rehabilitation in Pécs East, a once-prosperous, but now run-down district which used to be home to the mining community.

Social exclusion and urban policy in the context of social capital

The theoretical background of the paper employs one of the most successful social science concepts of recent times, that of social capital. Social capital is both a sociological theory that concentrates on the interplay of networks in society, the trust that holds them together as well as the social norms they animate, but it has also become a more and more powerful policy concept in the context of economic and social development. These two faces of social capital, one scientific and the other policy-oriented, make it a useful paradigm to study particular social problems (social exclusion and urban segregation) as well as the policies related to these problems.

1 Egedy, Kovács and Morrison 2005:71-75, Egedy 2005:30, Bukowski and Füzér 2007:18.

2 Varga 1998, 2009.

The dazzling success of social capital both in the academia of the social sciences³ and in the policy world⁴ was followed by a wave of criticism. The concept of social capital was criticized⁵ for its under-theorised background and for attempting too much in explaining a great variety of social phenomena such as health condition, educational attainment, success on the labour market, quality of life, government performance and, of course, economic development.⁶ In the practical world of development policy, social capital received criticism⁷ for the way in which it was treated as panacea for all social problems. Much of this criticism is well-founded, for the standard theory of social capital lays the thrust of its emphasis on distinguishing its approach from that of social network analysis, and, in doing so, relies on three established concepts of sociological theory: trust, networks and social norms. The problem is that it handles these sociological concepts both theoretically and, especially, empirically - rather casually. In the policy world, on the other hand, we see that the development of social capital is considered to be a relatively inexpensive solution for complex problems such as poverty or economic backwardness. This means that the optimism attached to social capital promises a less expensive alternative to, and not merely a supplement for, other, very expensive means of development.

In response to criticisms, one of the most promising developments in the theory of social capital has been the introduction of distinctions among three types of social capital: bonding, bridging and linking.⁸ This move has allowed reconnection to the sociological theories that stand in the background of social capital and has made possible a more complex and robust re-theoretisation of how trust, networks and social norms intertwine in the three forms of social capital. This development gives new impetus to empirical research also and, as we shall argue in this paper, should certainly be integrated also into instruments of urban policy, where such a distinction has been all but missing.⁹

Bonding social capital is inherent in networks that build on a high degree of personal trust as well as honesty, reciprocity and trustworthiness in such relationships as family, relatives and close friends. Those who do not belong to these networks are closed off from them. Bonding social capital plays a vital role in the lives of all social groups since it is a guarantee of wellbeing, interpreted as realising various levels of satisfaction with life, as opposed to the material dimension of welfare.

The relations belonging to bridging social capital are predicated upon generalised trust among people, and require a considerable degree of honesty and reciprocity. These relations connect us to people belonging to social groups other than our own, such as classmates, acquaintances or colleagues. Bridging social capital is, on the one hand, vital to social integration and, on the other hand, constitutes a resource which is supportive of progress in terms of both the individual career and of household status. The concept of linking social capital is applied to the relations within the hierarchical structures of society which connect us to people in positions of influence ('good connections'). In such cases, expectations of honesty and reciprocity prevail but in very different configurations compared to the two previous types: linking social capital can, for example, thrive in a web of favours that can be interpreted as a

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- 3 Cf. the chart depicting the steady rise of academic articles on social capital from 1984 to 2003 compiled by Halpern (2005:9). The late 1980s were marked by the contributions of Pierre Bourdieu and James Coleman, whereas the major inspirations in the 1990s came from Robert Putnam and Francis Fukuyama. By the turn of the millennium, more than a 100 academic articles had been published on social capital, and this figure almost tripled in the following three years.
- 4 Besides international development agencies such as OECD (2001), or the World Bank (cf. its task force on social capital: <http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/TOPICS/EXTSOCIALDEVELOPMENT/EXTSOCIALCAPITAL>, visited on 01/07/2011), several countries' national development policies have relied on social capital such as the UK, Canada, Australia, New Zealand or Ireland. In the US, the social science doyen of social capital, Robert Putnam initiated a nation-wide social capital development strategy in the form of the Saguaro Seminar (<http://www.hks.harvard.edu/saguaro>, visited on 01/07/2011) as well as several concrete projects (cf. <http://www.bettertogether.org>, visited on 01/07/2011).
- 5 E.g. by Portes 1998:1, 8.
- 6 For the pro arguments cf. Fukuyama 1995, Putnam 2000.
- 7 E.g. by Woolcock 2000.
- 8 Woolcock 2001:13-14, Field 2003:42-43, Halpern 2005:26-31.
- 9 One important exception is Gittel and Vidal (1998:13-23): their analysis of community development corporations evokes the bonding-bridging social capital distinction (ignoring linking social capital) but ends up almost ignoring social capital in the programmes' evaluation.

system of corruption – witness to the warning that social capital does not always and necessarily have only positive social implications.¹⁰ It is evident that, in any society, linking social capital plays a central role in attaining and retaining advantageous social positions. This type of social capital is predicated upon a mix of trust in the formal, institutional structures of society as well as on trust in informal connections that often override formal hierarchies. Linking social capital was arguably the chief asset in the post-communist transformation process¹¹ and acted as a catalyst in the redistribution of other forms of capital – resulting in the creation of vast social inequalities, one manifestation of which is urban segregation.

Social urban rehabilitation: three models of urban policy development and implementation

Social urban rehabilitation as a social practice takes many forms, as demonstrated by international comparative studies.¹² We integrate the most relevant features of this practice along four dimensions to formulate three distinctive models of urban rehabilitation: the expert model, the partnership model and the community planning model. First of all, we differentiate according to the types of actors who participate in the formation and implementation of social urban rehabilitation policies. Secondly, the various activities involved in urban policy formation are conceptualised and translated, thirdly, into the dimension of policy measures. Finally, and most importantly for the arguments pursued in this paper, the implications of social urban rehabilitation for social capital are evaluated in each ideal typical case.

The dimension of actors in social urban rehabilitation

An obvious group of actors in social urban policy formation are municipal officials working in various departments of a city's bureaucracy (the chief role played by urban planning officials with a background in architecture, civil engineering or urban planning) as well as local politicians. There is a great difference, however, in terms of the dominance of this group of actors: in the expert model they play the role of initiators and contractors of consulting firms, vital actors under this model. In the partnership model, municipal officials and local politicians are only "first among equal" partners in formulating and implementing social urban rehabilitation programs, whereas in the community planning model they withdraw to the background and largely delegate the task of initiating, formulating and implementing social urban rehabilitation to a district multi-professional management agency. Such an agency brings city-employed officials and local experts so close to locals as to make them work on spot, in everyday contact with locals which makes it possible to carry out joint work and not only the coordination of various actors, as in the case of a multi-professional agency that is integrated into an urban development agency of city-wide relevance. Experts of local universities provide vital input for multi-professional management agencies of both types. From among local actors, lobby groups are by and large the only locals consulted in the expert model, whereas the partnership model lays great emphasis on finding local answers in local voices and involves as partners in the formation and implementation of social urban policy a great variety of local actors such as local civil organisations, local businesses, local public service providers (schools, district doctors, health visitors) and also other types of local actors such as local parish priests. In contrast to the partnership model, the community planning model explicitly attempts to tap beyond the lines of organised and institutionalised local society to address and involve all locals, irrespective of their prior position within the local community. Under this model an attempt is thus made to make each and every member of the local community a participant in social urban rehabilitation.

¹⁰ Field 2003:71-90, Whitehead 2004, Füzér et al. 2005.

¹¹ Böröcz 1993, 2000.

¹² Egedy, Kovács and Morrison 2005.

The dimensions of activities and policy instruments of social urban rehabilitation

The urban rehabilitation policy that is developed under the expert model is designed by consulting firms and can contain a programme of (or even be a fully fledged policy of) clearance, which means that a segregated neighbourhood's housing stock is demolished, families are moved to other neighbourhoods and the plot of their former neighbourhood is no longer used for residential purposes, at least not for poor households. Alternatively, rehabilitation policy under the expert model concentrates not on the demolition but on the physical revitalisation of the infrastructure of segregated neighbourhoods, such as public spaces (parks, squares, playgrounds etc.), public buildings (schools, health facilities, etc.), residential buildings and utilities. The focus, however, is still almost exclusively on the infrastructural dimension,¹³ with the only exception being programmes aimed at strengthening local trade, as the most easy-to-grasp element of the local economy.

As opposed to the expert model, the objectives of physical and social rehabilitation are equally important under the partnership model.¹⁴ The partnership model embraces a practice well-known in the development profession: work with stakeholders, do not apply universal solutions but search for local answers, preferably in local voices. The urban rehabilitation policy under the partnership model is not a matter of efforts behind writing tables: its elements are developed in the course of consultations, workshops and meetings among local partners, coordinated by the management agency. Projects are implemented by the multi-professional management agency with input from local partners where applicable. Importantly, physical revitalisation is carried out chiefly by local businesses.

The planning and implementation of rehabilitation policy under the collective planning model is essentially a process of several rounds of meetings managed jointly by local partners and the district management agency: the nature and stake of these gatherings range from presentation of ideas and discussion of alternatives, to making decisions on virtually all aspects of rehabilitation programmes. This means that locals are made 'owners' not only of programme outcomes (such as a renewed public park) but of the very resolutions that are behind programme elements. It is, therefore, not only their voice (or vote for that matter) that counts in this model but also their understanding of local issues, their mulling over alternatives, their contribution to making collective decisions as well as their participation in the realisation of rehabilitation programmes.¹⁵

The dimension of implications of social urban rehabilitation on the three types of social capital

The expert model's policy of clearance destroys not only houses but also the bonding and bridging social capital vested in many segregated neighbourhoods in the form of kinship and neighbourly connections.¹⁶ The alternative policy formulated under the expert model, that of infrastructural rehabilitation, usually makes the mistake of 'doing too much good.' The physical rehabilitation of residential buildings can, for example, result in the gentrification of a neighbourhood¹⁷ as renewed housing facilities are usually much more expensive to maintain. Better-off families move into the renovated area since poor households can no longer afford to live in these facilities and have to move to other parts of the city where conditions are usually similar to those that had characterised their neighbourhood before it had been renewed in the framework of a rehabilitation programme. The concentration of socially excluded families in rundown neighbourhoods becomes no less intensive as a result: the problem is simply being relocated in these cases. Gentrification has the same detrimental consequences for the bonding and bridging social capital thriving in segregated neighbourhoods: kinship and neighbourly connections, to

13 Egedy 2005.

14 Egedy 2005, Egedy, Kovács, Morrison 2005, Leipzig Charter on Sustainable European Cities, www.rfsustainablecities.eu/IMG/pdf/LeipzigCharte_EN_cle1d4c19.pdf. Visited on 01/07/2011.

15 Alföldi, Czeglédi, Horváth 2007.

16 Halpern 2005:289.

17 Egedy 2005.

which the neighbourhood provides the social context, become depleted as the composition of the neighbourhood changes drastically. Obviously, the renewed neighbourhood with its new population can be grounds for new social capital formation – but that social capital does not enrich the lives of socially excluded groups.

The partnership model's strategy has crucial implications for social capital. Participation in joint efforts to plan and implement the revitalisation of the neighbourhood increases bridging social capital among locals, and by strengthening local identity, adds to the stock of local, neighbourhood-related bonding social capital as well. The linking social capital of locals is greatly increased in the course of activities coordinated by the management agency: work with the agency's staff as well as with the experts they engage, results in new contacts to and (potentially) trusting relations with people in positions of influence. Very importantly, new jobs at local businesses (whose share of local renovation works is set to be the highest possible), create bridging social capital in the form of new colleague connections as well as linking social capital in the form of boss-staff relations. In contrast to the overall positive implications of the partnership model for social capital, it has to be noted that a central programme under this model can have (unintended) negative consequences for the overall stock of social capital. Certain conventional community development programmes in segregated neighbourhoods are designed to increase bonding social capital among locals belonging to same disadvantaged gender, ethnic or generation groups by supporting the creation of various in-group associations and activities for these groups disadvantaged even in the not very favourable social context of a segregated neighbourhood. At the same time, however, such programmes (unintentionally) prevent members from building connections outside their groups and thus contribute to the preservation of a low level of bridging social capital amongst the most disadvantaged.¹⁸ Another shortcoming of the partnership model is that the focus it has on locals is essentially a focus on locals who had already organised themselves into various associations. It all but forgets about those locals whose bridging social capital is less abundant and does not make them visible elements of the local social fabric – at least not for urban rehabilitation policy planners. Therefore, potentially serious tension arises from the discrepancy between the significant increase of bridging and linking social capital among members of organised local groups who participate in urban rehabilitation programmes and the relatively worsening social capital positions of those who do not. Should there be a cluster of middle class families in a segregated neighbourhood, it is they who are most likely to be active in such organisations.¹⁹ Furthermore, even among organised groups, there is the potential for existing inequalities in social capital not only to be reproduced as a result of participation in the planning and implementation of rehabilitation programmes, but groups with more initial linking social capital become more dominant within the local community, since they can access and control disproportionately more resources devoted to rehabilitation programmes.²⁰ The relative social capital positions of other local groups, and especially of unorganised locals, become much worse as a result of urban rehabilitation in case no conscious effort is made to manage partnership in a manner sensitive to such negative consequences.

In terms of implications for social capital, it is no exaggeration to maintain that the collective planning model of urban rehabilitation actually makes the development of all three types of social capital an explicit objective of its specific programmes while at the same time it attempts to guarantee that social capital is not destroyed or weakened as a result of any rehabilitation programme elements. (This can only be a realistic objective if there is a way to actually know what the outgoing conditions are and how programmes affect social capital.) Equally crucial, however, is the presence of what can be called 'social capital mainstreaming' in the thinking of rehabilitation policy planners, coordinators and implementers, i.e. all actors involved in collective planning. One major mistake, however, that urban policy can make under the collective planning model is that the focus on the social dimension and the con-

¹⁸ Pantoja 2000, Halpern 2005:290.

¹⁹ Field 2003:75-76.

²⁰ Pantoja 2000.

comitant social programmes turn from being decisive to being exclusive.²¹ The result is that resources devoted to the renewal of physical conditions of a segregated neighbourhood become meagre or even non-existent and the overall policy costs become appealingly small as social programmes are relatively inexpensive to run.²² The problem with this is obviously that social capital is only one of the dimensions of social exclusion: the poor will be better off only if households can better position themselves in the labour market, their housing conditions improve, and their neighbourhoods become better places to live in. Realising the latter objectives costs a great deal of money – in order not to throw it out of the window, programmes that develop social capital are needed as well. If social capital is treated as a panacea for the problems of the poor, however, urban rehabilitation may certainly end up tackling social exclusion at its heart, but without heed to its body.

Social urban rehabilitation and the European Capital of Culture 2010 programmes in Pécs: do the two complex urban development projects ‘click or clash’?

The first momentum in the 10-year-old history of making plans for the segregated neighbourhoods of the eastern district of Pécs was when, in 2001, local civil associations organised a conference on the past, present and future of their neighbourhoods with the title, ‘Pécs East in Focus.’²³ The members of these organisations came from among the minority middle class families of the district who were discontented with the decline which their residential area had experienced since the early 1990s. They possessed enough bridging and linking social capital to make this conference an event that gained serious urban publicity: the location was the prestigious Regional Seat of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences in Pécs, and the presenters included important decision-makers (such as the Mayor and a Secretary of State), as well as academics and other professionals. The objective was to raise awareness of the negative tendencies and already existing urgent social problems of the district, but, more importantly, to highlight the positive potential of their neighbourhoods (such as the green environment of the district, Pécs’s Green Heart, as the slogan had it). This local initiative largely corresponded to the collective planning model of social urban rehabilitation, with the obvious limitation that not all locals, but only middle-class organised groups participated. Ultimately, however, it was not experts (either in the Town Hall or in a management agency) who defined local problems but the local themselves who took it upon themselves to try to produce some practical solutions to the local predicament.

Decision-makers and experts from the local authority felt some obligation as a result of this local initiative and, after office-based preparations, drew up the first, small-scale, and largely experimental, rehabilitation programme called Borbála (named after Saint Barbara, patron saint of miners) which ran between 2005-2006 in one of the segregated neighbourhoods, István akna. The programme included projects for renovating apartment houses, public spaces, as well as conventional community development projects. Whilst the Borbála programme design is a clear example of an approach under the expert model of social urban rehabilitation, implementation was carried out along the lines of the partnership model since locals, after undergoing appropriate training in the course of the programme, took part in the renovation of their own apartments and the public spaces of their own neighbourhoods.

The next stage in a series of social urban rehabilitation efforts in Pécs East overlapped with the Borbála project, not only in terms of time, but also in respect of some of the personnel. This was meant to be a clear-cut example of the partnership model, adapting experiences gained in this former, experimental project in István akna. Cities Against Social Exclusion (CASE) was financed as an Interreg III C project

21 DeFilippis 2001, Füzér et al. 2005.

22 Woolcock 2000.

23 Information on this first momentum of making rehabilitation plans is based on personal communication to Füzér from Ms Edit Molnár, one of the association leaders of Pécs Kelet Érdekvédelmi Fórum (Pécs East Forum for Interest Protection).

of the European Union²⁴ and, in the context of Pécs East, brought together municipal officials, politicians, (local) university experts, local public service providers as well local residents to make preparations for drawing up the urban rehabilitation policy for the district. CASE made possible the research necessary for defining indicators of and collecting data for social exclusion and social capital. The most instructive insight from CASE for local project members was the insight that successful urban rehabilitation (i.e. programmes whose outcomes are to be lasting) has to be planned and carried out, not merely with the participation of, but actually by, the locals themselves. Such a process is best facilitated by a multi-professional district management agency. The documents prepared by local project partners laid great emphasis on these two elements and recommended the application of the community planning model. The very last phase of the CASE project, however, veered somewhat towards the expert model as in 2008 the city outsourced the task of actually drawing up a rehabilitation programme to (local) consulting firms.²⁵ In terms of programme design, since then (and in spite of a complete change both in the city's leadership in 2009 as well as in the composition of local government representatives in 2010), the expert model has dominated and no complex project proposal for funds has yet been submitted.²⁶

The irony of this shift from collective planning to expert model in developing a social urban rehabilitation programme for Pécs East was marked by the intervention of another, equally challenging complex urban development project. After years of preparations which had mobilised much support and input from local artists, academics and professionals, the city in 2005 filed its application to be a European Capital of Culture in 2010.²⁷ The main concept behind the bid was that, in the wake of the post-communist collapse of several branches of industry in the city and its region (with mining being only one, albeit the most painful component), Pécs and the South Transdanubian Region should take advantage of its cultural, touristic and recreational potential and transform itself into a regional cultural centre - which could be well served by the prestigious title. As soon as the announcement was made that Pécs had won the title of European Capital of Culture 2010, most, if not all, the time and energy of the management agency (a complete makeover of the one that had coordinated the bid) became concentrated on putting together the programme for the year 2010 and managing all construction and renovations works in between. An ambitious array of investments into large-scale cultural projects²⁸ began in 2006 - most of which are still under way (either in a physical sense or in terms of finalising projects financially as EU funds beneficiaries). To be able to cope with the complex tasks, the agency was turned into a multi-professional management agency, Pécs 2010 Management Centre,²⁹ and the municipality administration also had to switch into a higher gear. Generally speaking, since 2007, not much time, attention, energy or development funds, for that matter, have been left over for the rival task of social urban rehabilitation in Pécs East.

This was so in spite of the fact that the threads of the two programmes, Cultural Capital 2010 and Social Urban Rehabilitation in Pécs East, became explicitly intertwined when, in 2007, the Hungarian development authorities which manage the use of EU funds made it a requirement for large cities in Hungary to compose so called Integrated Urban Development Strategies, along the lines of the Leipzig

24 The project, which ran between 2005 and 2007, brought together municipalities with prior experience and good practices in social urban rehabilitation (Hamburg and Gelsenkirchen), and cities of Central and Eastern Europe with serious problems with segregated neighbourhoods (Arad, Komarno, Krakow, Olomouc, Pécs) as well as two universities, the University of Pécs and the Jagellonian University of Krakow.

25 The document was finalised in late-2008 under the title 'Preliminary Action Plan for Social Urban Rehabilitation in Pécs East' (http://eugyintezes.pecs.hu/download/tajekoztatok/strategia/szoc_rechab_EATT.pdf, visited on 01/07/2011).

26 A complex project proposal for social urban rehabilitation in Pécs East is foreseen for late 2011 or early 2012, when regional development funds become available.

27 This discussion is based on Takáts 2011.

28 Such as the second largest concert hall in Hungary, Kodály Conference and Concert Hall, the Zsolnay Cultural Quarter (www.zsn.hu, visited on 01/07/2011), and the Library and Knowledge Centre which integrates a good part of the university's and all of the city's libraries.

29 The management agency's structure and its position vis-à-vis city administration and other actors (such as the city's cultural institutions) proved to be heavily disputed matters (Takáts 2011:279-281).

Charter (2007). The handbook³⁰ which cities have to use as a guideline for preparing their development strategies makes a sharp distinction between so-called function-improving urban development plans and social urban rehabilitation. In the case of Pécs, the first came to be identical with the Cultural Capital project (and its cultural infrastructure investments), whereas the latter concerns the fate of Pécs East. The currently valid document that was drawn up (in haste) in 2008 admittedly concentrated on the Cultural Capital dimension as an Integrated Urban Development Strategy had to be submitted as a supplement to Pécs's European Capital of Culture project proposal for EU funds. Now that the year 2010 is over, a revision of the document is in progress and its new version is expected to show a shift of focus to social urban rehabilitation.³¹

In the course of this revision, several questions remain open as to which model would describe the recurring thread of social urban rehabilitation. First of all, the question is whether the city's new brand new Pécs Urban Development Agency (a reorganised version of the Pécs 2010 Management Centre) can embrace a multi-professional district management agency for social urban rehabilitation in Pécs East. In its current form the urban management agency is well-versed in cultural urban management and in implementing large-scale infrastructural projects but is not equipped for running a complex social urban rehabilitation programme. The option of abolishing a multi-professional management agency in toto is unlikely and, therefore, reverting back to a strictly expert model can be considered as improbable. Most likely it is the local participation factor which determines whether the partnership model or the community planning model will be the appropriate context in which to interpret the (finally) ensuing social urban rehabilitation of Pécs East. In case only locals organised into (predominantly middle-class) civil associations will be utilised, the benefits of sustainability associated with the community planning model cannot be expected to follow, as that guarantee is predicated upon the involvement of all locals, especially those who reside in the crisis neighbourhoods.

In conclusion, the prospective role of the University of Pécs in the social urban rehabilitation of Pécs East cannot be foreseen with certainty, based on a retrospective analysis of its involvement to date. The interests of local communities of segregated neighbourhoods and (local) universities coincide in the models of partnership and community planning. Since the social urban rehabilitation of Pécs East in a strict expert model is unlikely, local university experts can be expected to become partners to local and municipal efforts at social urban rehabilitation and/or facilitators of local efforts in developing, implementing and sustaining social urban rehabilitation projects.

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30 *Városfejlesztési kézikönyv* (2009) is a revised version of *Városrehabilitáció 2007-2013* (2007).

31 Information is based on the author's personal experience, being a member of the consortium that is currently working on the revision of Pécs's Integrated Urban Development Strategy.

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