

Eötvös Loránd University, Faculty of Arts
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Program of Cultural History

Synopsis of Doctoral Dissertation by
The Formation of the Pest Magnate Quarter

Thesis

DUBNICZKY ZSOLT

Tutor: Kósa László MHAS

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Members of the Committee:

Dr. Kardos József DSc, professor emeritus
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I. Statement of proposal

Connoisseurs of the history of Budapest, especially the ones dealing with it are aware of the fact that prior to the unification of the city, just like in subsequent times, a large number of representative palaces have been erected in the vicinity of the Nemzeti Múzeum (National Museum) as well as in the heart of Belső Józsefváros (Inner Joseph Town). The majority of the builders were aristocrats moving into town or spending a certain portion of time in town together with their families. Their settlement in was mainly concerned with the area behind the National Museum as well as today's Ötpacsirta utca (Five Larks Street) and the properties alongside Reviczky Street. In a broader sense, the buildings which can be found a little bit further away alongside today's Trefort, Horánszky, Szentkirályi and Krúdy Gyula Streets can also be classified here. Members of the most significant and best known aristocratic families settled here such as the Festetics, the Károlyi, the Esterházy and the Wenckheim.

Following four decades of construction work that began in the 1860's and lasted until the turn of the century the palaces built have significantly changed the surrounding cityscape. In contemporary memoirs this area is mentioned as neglected suburbs whose reputation was further damaged by the infamous inn called Két Pisztoly Vendégfogadó (Two Pistols Inn) situated in the nearby Széna tér (Hay Square) – today's Kálvin tér (Calvin Square). It's looks and the scandalous events taking place in it just worsened the situation.

In contrast to this, an attractive, elegant and exclusive, dignified and classy district was created throughout the forty years of the second part of the 19th century where even the monarch himself was repeatedly to be seen. The palaces became a defining element of the dominant architectural image of the capital city so they are mentioned in all the descriptions of Budapest. Besides, the palaces have contributed to the formation of social life herewith accomplishing all that Széchenyi had planned in the course of the Reform Era. Although the vicinity of the National Museum was not the only construction site during the building projects of the capital's aristocracy, it is the most significant one.

In a statement compiled by Sándor Országh several places were enumerated where stately buildings were erected in Budapest in the first half of the 1880's.

It's counterpart is the Castle District of Buda with the Castle itself including Margit rakpart (Margaret Wharf), that is today's József Bem Wharf and the well known Karácsonyi Palace in Krisztinaváros (Christina Town). More buildings are there to be found in Inner City Pest, namely in the vicinity of the Nemzeti Casino (National Casino) where a number of palaces are beside each other alongside Reáltanoda utca (Real School Street) and Szép utca, such as the palace of Ernő Blaskovich and those of the Szapáry, Zichy and György families. In addition to this, in Lipótváros (Leopold Town), alongside the Nagykörút (Grand Avenue) which was then being built; there were almost ten buildings, furthermore, an absolute modest number, in Ferencváros (Francis Town) there were two buildings built by the aristocracy.

In Józsefváros (Joseph Town) most of the buildings stood in the vicinity of the National Museum and were mainly lined up behind it. Hence here, in a relatively small area, a significant concentration of aristocrat dwellings had happened, having created buildings mainly of residential nature and of exclusive value. The name, Magnate Quarter distinguishes this area from all the other baronial construction sites by good reason. As a result, the project differs from all the rest and that this name had already been given at the time of the reconstruction process can well be justified. Hence the emergence of similar aristocratic quarters was not an uncommon phenomenon either in the domestic or in the European city history. Similar quarters can also be boasted of in almost all the former and present capitals and administrative centres. The best-known patterns and archetypes can be found domestically, then still belonging to Hungary, in Pozsony (Bratislava), Kolozsvár (Cluj) as well as abroad, in Paris, Vienna and presumably parallel examples are also encountered in the city history of London, Berlin and St. Petersburg, not to mention contemporary Italy.

Presenting the development and exploring the Pest Magnate Quarter is considered important in multiple aspects. It enables the writer of this thesis partly to introduce, partly to examine the urbanisation of the Hungarian ruling class occurring in the latter half of the 19th century, i.e. the representative constructions deriving from their long-term but also seasonal presence, their use of space, the social events connected to these buildings and besides, the use of space within the palaces.

At the same time, the formation of the Magnate Quarter is concerned not only with the aspects of city history but also with important culture-historical issues as by the building projects of the members of the Hungarian aristocracy, their seasonal sojourn in the city, furthermore, the form of their presence and the manner they use are also rendered for analysis.

II. Structure of Dissertation

The author of this dissertation follows the formation of the Magnate Quarter in the vicinity of the National Museum beginning in the 1850's up to the turn of the century.

As for an introduction, since the Quarter is part of common knowledge, not an existing administrative unit, we describe the location. It is also examined how the term Mágánás negyed (Magnate Quarter), which is widely known to the Budapest researchers and the people interested in the topic, has become of common knowledge; then, how it has become of general usage and furthermore, what terms have been used for the area. The methodology of the research, sources and literary background are also presented in this part of the essay.

The thesis itself is divided into three main structural parts. First of all, we have considered it important to present the quarter-forming social stratum, the Hungarian aristocracy, as well as the presenting of such significant domestic and European parallels like Paris-Faubourg-Saint-Germain, which are also noted by contemporaries. This is followed by a thorough analysis of the reasons facilitating the Hungarian aristocracy to settle in the vicinity of the National Museum. In the European (capital) cities, the formation of such aristocratic neighbourhoods can be conceived almost exclusively to royal/palatial centres and residencies. Pest did not perform such a function, so the reasons leading to this had to be found outside and at least partially analysed. Then, a thorough introduction to the development of the area is carried out using archival sources. The author has reviewed the process analysing it per each decade. Finally, the third big structural part is conceived by the illustration of the social life of the aristocracy having settled in the area.

III. Research and analysis

1. Aim and methodology of thesis, sources

The study of the formation of the Pest Magnate Quarter conforms to the research area of historical writings of the recent decades which aim at the exploration and analysis of the urban space trying to explore and analyse it on the basis of various methods. Mapping the formation of the Quarter provides a possibility to demonstrate how the aristocracy moving into town makes use of the available space in the vicinity of the National Museum. Going forward, how the aristocracy became the possessor of the available space, how they lived with the possibilities of the area, how they adopted and related to the restrictions, how they were able to change and transform it conforming to their own pretensions and tastes.

Mapping the process was a basic research task hence the process itself, the transformation of the surrounding cityscape has not been examined yet by the exploration of archival sources and primarily relying to them. In the course of this process we did not only explore but also tried to analyse the city formation and the urbanisation changes of the vicinity of the National Museum including the period prior to the formation of the area up to the era of the turn of the century. Hence there has been no clear, written evidence why certain members of the aristocracy have started to develop this area we have summarized those circumstances and factors which helped the aristocratic colonization within an analysis of the development of the city including time, space and personal components. The accurate real estate register of Pest is included in the urban land register. Based on these registry entries it is possible to follow the

changes in ownership, the exact date of the sales and purchases of individual lands i.e. the gradual acquisition of land by the aristocracy as well as an urban use of land around the National Museum.

The commencement and completion of the construction works, the assessment of the projects, their scheduling, the incidental irregularities could be tracked down by the documents of the Construction Committee of the City of Pest and those of the Council of Pest; furthermore, on the basis of the existing resolutions of the Metropolitan Council of Communal Works established in 1870. The latter one served as a forum of appeals making resolutions in construction and while it also served as a forum for appeals, on second rate it ruled in building and construction regulations.

The other authority acting in the field of construction was the Pest Municipal Engineering Office. This organisation was responsible for attending the roads, streets, canals and gave proposals in regulating the status and maintenance of the aforementioned. These matters were settled by the Council itself but the opinion was given by the Engineering Office and they took care of the due implementation as well. Within its field and official tasks the Engineering Office appointed the individual building sites and also supervised construction work.

It is a matter of common knowledge that the life of aristocracy was primarily built on public appearance and entertainment. The town palaces served this function in their full capacity, inside and out. We have analysed the functional division and style of the buildings, while the functional character is shown partly in the light of the contemporary press; on the other hand, we have tried to introduce the topic relying on contemporary letters and diaries, which yielded insight behind the coulisses of this, on the surface an externally closed and rigid way of life.

2. A search for causes fostering the formation of the quarter

There were several reasons for the aristocracy to settle and colonize in the vicinity of the National Museum. The commencement of the process was enhanced by the accomplishment of the role of Pest as capital, together with Count Széchenyi's call, i.e. those measures which sheperded the attention of his fellow class members towards a new capital, Pest, whose idea was conceived by the Count himself. Beyond that, however, we have found several motifs which can serve as direct explanation to the formation of the magnate quarter right here. These include topographical features; primarily, the National Museum, the attraction of the National Tattersall (Nemzeti Lovarda /Equestrian/) built prior to the development of the Magnate Quarter, and the proximity of such buildings like the Casino and the National Theatre which provided entertainment for the aristocracy, made urban living more pleasant and sometimes also served cultural needs.

We cannot disregard the works which followed the 1838 floods and brought about the town planning programme and resulted in the formation of Square Mihály Pollack which can be considered the starting point and also the centre of the Magnate Quarter. In the countryside, the aristocracy surrounded itself by parks and wide open spaces. Moving into town, they would presumably have liked to experience the same feeling of space around them where their power and distancing in rank could further be enhanced. The exclusive, partially undivided and unregulated space provided representative sites for housing large scale buildings later on. An explanation to the attraction to such large scale urban spaces is that they have always provided all the circumstances for the exertion of elegance and architectural aesthetism.

Moreover, the urban development characteristics of Inner Joseph Town have been highlighted as well as the foundation of political life in the quarter. At the same time the temporal conditions have been focussed on as well: it was the era of national awakening, furthermore, it was in connection with the reformation of social life; those demands and expectations which concerned the aristocrats were characteristic of the public opinion in the 1850's.

An extra emphasis was placed on personal factors, personal motives and ambitions which made people purchase a site in Pest and plan to build a place: referring here to such people as the figure of Count György Festetics who erected the first building in the future Magnate Quarter and furthermore, the figure of Count Lajos Károlyi who built a palace parallel to that of Count Festetics. Beyond the previous point, they were necessary to mention because the further construction of the quarter was owing to the large scale residential construction work of the two counts. Their construction work has prompted the aristocracy moving into the city to start up a similar activity in their surroundings.

3. Presentation of the period preceding the formation of Magnate Quarter

Examining the emergence of the Magnate Quarter it is worth having a glimpse on the period prior to its formation: on the one hand, what was the vicinity of the National Museum like before the building of palaces, who were the local land owners, on the other hand, to what extent was the aristocracy present in Pest, moreover, where they had real estate property during the period preceding the shaping of the quarter. The answer to these questions lies partly in contemporary urban design and specifications, furthermore, the memoirs of Teréz Karacs and Árpád Bókay having lived in the National Museum area, moreover, cadastral data, and information supplied by the press. On the basis of all this, it has turned out, that by the 1860's the vicinity of the national Museum did not particularly catch the attention of the aristocracy. Prior to this site they had building constructions in Inner City Pest and in Leopold Town (Lipótvaros), but this area had been inhabited by burgers, the so called honoratiors who were professional people of non-noble birth. The formation of the Magnate Quarter does not mean the closing down of the former construction sites and that the aristocrats would only have continued here; rather, this area, as a possible building site caught the attention of the aristocrats who were thus catching up with the projects of Inner City locations at an accelerating rate.

4. Presentation of the formation of Magnate Quarter

Mapping the Magnate Quarter means the creation of the building complex seen in the vicinity of the National Museum. The formation of the area indicated the social realignment of the area of the National Museum where, outplacing the bourgeois layer present, a dominance of the aristocracy prevailed. This was apparently manifested in an architectural treasury of forms which could be tracked down in the urban mansions. The most impressive of all was the area behind the National Museum where the traditional aristocracy was accomplishing building constructions. The Magnate Quarter, however, did not solely consist of mansions. The vicinity of the National Museum was not reserved for the aristocracy only: owing to the freedom of real estate trade anyone who had the means was allowed to settle here. The Museum flanked by apartment buildings and mansions on both sides also belongs to the formation of the quarter, where a decisive percentage of the buildings has been erected by the the wealthy bourgeoisie for their own use but in time the buildings were handed over to noblemen who did not start new projects. Existing buildings were not demolished to have new buildings erected but as they became the owners they just used them.

The apartment house of János Bókay in Múzeum utca (Museum Street) which was erected by this physician and pediatrician for his own use at the beginning of the 1870's is considered such a building. Likewise Count Festetics, Bókay sensed an equally attractive and beneficial investment in the area and was able to obtain a property in the vicinity. However, shortly after the death of Bókay, his house was passed on to Count László Károlyi's proprietorship. The count did not get the existing three-storey building demolished since he must have known for himself that it would only be a useless waste of money. His need for representation was perfectly satisfied by the first-floor suite as that of Bókay's in his time while the rest of the building he was able to sell or sustain for Károlyi clan members. However, with the change of ownership, this apartment building brought about the settlement of aristocracy and belongs to the emergence of the Magnate Quarter just like the build-up of the row of spectacular mansions behind the museum.

It was important to discuss these questions since the vicinity of the National Museum should not be pictured as if besides the mansion building construction work of the aristocracy there should be no other building activities and the properties should only have expected aristocratic investors to have any kind of construction work initiated. An excellent example to this is the Bókay apartment building. At the same time, besides the construction of the mansions, not all the building activities proved as spectacular and enduring as compared to that of Bókay's. Parallel to the building of aristocratic mansions several constructions, alterations and additions were going on, somehow owing to the increase of the beauty and elegance of the area but a trail of the above can only be found in filed building permits, plans or other council documents.

Moreover, it is also important to emphasize what land registry records provide sufficient evidence of, that is: a property which was obtained by aristocrats only later, let us say, in the 80-90's, before this had

already been a sales subject, namely, from the 60's onwards, and was not necessarily bound to the aristocracy. A property could change hands several times until it landed in aristocratic hands: via inheritance, kinship threads, connections or just by purchase. That is, from the beginning of the 1860's the fate of a real estate should not be conceived as showing a stagnant picture and that the change should have emanated from the first purchase of a nobleman only, but on the contrary, -while not in every case- there (might) have been buying and selling transactions in connection with it as well.

In consequence to the above mentioned, the formation of the Magnate Quarter as the colonisation of the social elite was not closely integrated with the time of the springing up of buildings around the National Museum since there is such a building among them which got into aristocratic hands only ten to fifteen years after its construction. Remaining at the example of the Bókay apartment house, this building became part of the elements of cityscape – and it is still there – but can only be set to the line two decades later, thus having shown social realignment.

In the present thesis, the formation of the quarter is tracked down on the basis of the transformation of the architectural cityscape, i.e. following the order of the construction of the presently seen buildings, thus touching upon the order of ownership change until a property got in aristocratic hands, i. e. the social exchange had happened.

The development of the palatial quarter around the National Museum and the ownership transformation in favour of the aristocracy took some thirty- forty years from the 1860's onwards, lasting until the turn of the century. This is a relatively long period indicating that the onset did not happen in a rush, one day to the next. The formation of the quarter did not mean a quick, consecutive or perhaps a competitive series of construction work. It indicates that it was rather a process than a series of conscious decisions. It was conscious, or rather intentional in the sense that the people arriving later preferred settling down where their own social stratum began to settle down and where their social life was concentrated rather than in the more remote areas elsewhere. Their intention does not mean consciousness and that they have already prepared for this. The almost four decades passed offers an opportunity to pace the construction work to create certain kinds of periods and separate sections. As all kinds of process, it had a beginning, and as for the people, there were proactive people, models and followers and there were periods with multiple constructions at a time. The streets also did not gain their present image at the same pace, in a consecutive way, one after the other. It happened several times that a vacant site was built on only years later. The 60's was the decade setting up the formation of the quarter. Then its building was carried out the fastest in the 70's, thanks to the city's nascent capital city status and the formation of its metropolitan nature worthy to the future capital. In comparison to this, the rate of speed somehow abated indicating that the area had already increased to a certain degree of being built-in.

5. Pace of building constructions

The shaping of the Magnate Quarter is connected to such aristocratic personalities who were attracted to the vicinity of the National Museum by the reviving public life, the revival of the political life and the metropolitan development of Pest and its municipal role. They were motivated not by an interest group but by individual ambition and intention; they were the people who were building around the mansions of György Festetics and Lajos Károlyi. The initiators of the formation of the quarter were the aforementioned politicians who were also driven by individual motifs but their parallel purchase of building sites and that of their construction work surmises mutual interests.

Statistics show that the most intense construction activity took place in Joseph Town in Pest at the beginning of the 1870's. All this, as József Körösi, the writer has also pointed out, could also be traced down to two causes: one of them is the development of the city and the other one is the mansions built up until that time. The 70's resulted in a further arrival of the aristocracy but as it has been mentioned before, the constructions in the area of the National Museum could not only be bound to them. People coming from the bourgeoisie and also medium estate owners were also engaged in construction work. However, geographically they were separated from each other. The aristocracy took root solely behind the territory of the National Museum except for Sándor/Ede Károlyi's palace which could also be accounted for here while flanked by the National Museum, on the sides, other members of the social strata commenced building constructions. Since by the 1880's, owing to the construction fever of the 1870's most of the building sites of the area had already been built in, these decades meant a more modest

construction speed. Practically, there had been hardly any sites by then. The new construction work resulted in the demolition of the existing non-noble buildings which may have been built or reconstructed in the 70's while there are examples for adding a storey. The appearance of the new property owners was motivated by the prestige of the sites. Here, not only one or two mansions were concerned, but also like at the commencement of the construction work, it became common knowledge that this area, which was on the way of becoming a notion itself, was spreading further and further, where living and residing meant prestige.

Nevertheless, it is considered important to convey that the construction work behind the National Museum brought about a positive step in the transformation of the cityscape, i.e. the vicinity was enriched by impressive buildings and homes in a sense that they themselves enhanced the urbanization of the area. The appearance of mansions, the House of Representatives built in 1865, and also the establishment of a political and governmental centre made it urgent to create proper urban surroundings. The plank flanking the Múzeumkert (Museum Garden) looked more and more distasteful, the streets without sewerage, the mud, the dust had become gradually more and more intolerable also that such as inn like The Two Pistols, where the urban mob was dwelling could be in the vicinity. Thus, the presentation of the formation of the quarter include those in the city plan like street control, drainage and paving, which were being formed during the establishment of the quarter.

6. Social conflicts

The process of the mansions being built in the vicinity of the National Museum was closely followed by the public and also purchases of building sites by the aristocrat were denoted with great satisfaction. Information was announced inasmuch as who owns a site or mansion in the area and who are about to begin construction. During the construction works the gradual rise of the number of aristocracy in Pest was welcome. Likewise, in an urban point of view, the transformation of the surroundings of the National Museum was also worthy of it. At the same time, like at every change, this one also gave rise to injuries and grievances. All this phenomena was only minute, marginal and atypical compared to the positive results and gains brought about by the evolution and formation of an elegant cityscape. Why they deserve mentioning is that they provide a sense to notice that the positive events happening at macro-level did not seem to happen so at micro-level and that for some they can also appear as negative elements while in a certain extent some might have lived through them as absolutely negative. On the other hand, they were able to sense the emerging social conflicts lying behind and the beginning of the social restructuring of the area. However, from the 1860's onwards, it meant a private clash of interests while in the 1870's those conflicts were about to begin where community – the capital city's – interests clashed with private interests.

7.

A defining element of the way of life, existence of aristocracy is representation, the expression of rank and nobility. The high social position has always entailed the obligation that this rank should be expressed for the people under the social stratum of the aristocrats and that this rank should be manifested by certain forms. The higher the position occupied by a person in society, the higher rank he had the more he was obliged to act and behave according to his stance in society and position of power.

In our view, on the basis of a study by Ernő Marosi social representation can be separated into two parts: there is an active side to it, a temporal, temporary, time-related form, during which the demonstration of the position is expressed, the explicit show off of pomp is executed together with the use of space where all this happens.¹ On the contrary, there is a passive side to it, in the idle, non-active meaning of the word. Its elements comprise of the built surroundings and the whole material and object culture of the aristocracy which were status symbols surrounding them. Besides this, part of it is the representative space which provides a framework to ensure that the representation happens and takes place. Here we present these two forms in connection with the Magnate Quarter.

¹ Marosi Ernő: A reprezentáció kérdése a 14-15. századi magyar művészettel. *Történelmi Szemle*, 1984/4. 517-538.

7.1. Representation

The author of this essay has analysed representation mainly through the building construction of Count Festetics since the building situated at the corner of Mihály Pollack Square and Bródy Sándor utca (Sándor Bródy Street) was a construction bearing residential qualities, and conformed to the demands placed on such buildings. The façade of the palace, its interior structure, art style and the adjoining garden were also analysed. Where sources allowed, we also tried to cover other mansions in the area.

7.2. Social events

An active side of representation was comprised of social and private events which took place within the walls of the mansions of the Magnate Quarter. As there are different levels of it like in an exceptional case, from an exhibition taking place in the palace until the closed circles of private life. We have tried to choose such events which can comply with the open, half-open and closed spaces drawn by Ferenc Velkey.² Here the various events seeking publicity were highlighted: convivial evenings, evening parties, balls, exhibitions and family events, luncheons and dinner invitations and furthermore, saloon life.

IV. Conclusion

As for the ending of the dissertation the author of this essay has examined what the existing Magnate Quarter meant within the realms of the architecture of Budapest. What is highlighted here is the fact that all this was not only of local interest, but brought about a significant contribution concerning the whole of the city, fostering the close up of Budapest in the range of European capitals.

At the same time it was considered important to point out that the quarter did not only play a significant role in the life of the city but it was also instrumental played in national integration of the Hungarian aristocracy alike. Previously, this social stratum was charged with treason and an imperilment of the nation. In accordance with their Pest building constructions they were not charged with such accusations but they were discovered to be demonstrating national characteristics as well.

V. Appendix: Illustration

An exploration and the analysis of illustrative sources is not part of the aims of this work, still, at the end of it, a picture material is compiled primarily of the buildings and personalities excessively discussed here. A chart has been placed summarizing the most important data referring to the buildings: the constructor and the architect, the time of the completion of mansions as well as past and present street numbers.

² Velkey Ferenc: A pesti főúri társasági élet néhány jellegzetessége az 1840-es években Széchenyi naplóinak tükrében. In: *Arisztokrata életpályák és életviszonyok*. Szerk. Papp Klára, Püski Levente. Debrecen, Debreceni Egyetem Történelmi Intézete. 2009. /A Debreceni Egyetem Történelmi Intézete kiadványai/ 113-128.