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Creating and Domesticating Hungary's Socialist Industrial Landscape: from

Dunapentele to Sztálinváros, 1950-1958

ABSTRACT

Eastern Europe's socialist new cities have been seen as embodying "politicised landscapes"; in other words landscapes created by socialist dictatorships according to their own ideological purposes. The region's socialist new cities were indeed identified as distinctively socialist landscapes, but the processes by which they came to be understood as such by the citizens of socialist states were far more complex than top-down accounts allow. In this article the reactions of both builders and residents of the Hungarian new city of Sztálinváros (Stalin City) to the urban form are examined in order to show how the city came to be seen as a distinctively socialist industrial landscape. Employing an approach based on a dialogue between the methods of historical archaeology and social history this article demonstrates that an examination of popular responses to material culture can reveal much about state socialism in Eastern Europe and its nature.

Introduction

Above the main factory gate of the Danube Steel Works there is a mural entitled “The Worker and Peasant Alliance”. It depicts a ceremony held in green fields in which peasants give food to those who worked in the steel works. The picture’s message is not hard to de-cipher – it was intended to depict the social relationship on which the ideology of Hungary’s post-war socialist order was founded: that between the working class and the co-operative peasantry. The Danube Steel Works stands on the southern side of the city of Dunaújváros, which had around 60,000 inhabitants by the mid-1990s. The city was built in the early 1950s near to the village of Dunapentele, which lies some seventy kilometres south of Budapest on the west bank of the Danube (Figure 1). The core of the city was built in the early 1950s - a core now surrounded by pre-fabricated high-rise housing estates erected during the 1960s and 1970s, to solve the housing crises in the town generated by earlier socialist industrialisation (Miskolczi, 1980; Erdős, 2000).

The city of Dunaújváros is probably one of the most striking examples of an industrial landscape that embodies the legacy of the socialist state that ruled the country

between 1948 and 1989. As World War II drew to a close and Hungary became the site of battle between the insurgent forces of the Red Army and the retreating forces of Nazi Germany all that stood on the site of contemporary Dunaújváros was the village of Dunapentele and the fields that surrounded it. In inter-war Hungary Dunapentele, like much of the county of Fejér in which it is located, was dominated by agriculture with a population made up predominantly of poor rural smallholders, fishermen and manorial labourers (Farkas, 1975; Schlitterné Nyuli, 1994; Lukács, 2000;). The village was at the centre of fighting for two months at the beginning of 1945. Those months brought not only death and destruction but also the social revolution of land reform as the estates were expropriated and their land distributed to the landless and poorer smallholders. Throughout the three years that followed the end of the war, when Hungary was ruled by an anti-fascist popular front coalition government, the institutions of democracy and a smallholder based society were consolidated locally (Imréné Szönyegi, 2000).

With the onset of the cold war the Soviet Union and Hungary's own Communists tightened their grip on power from the summer of 1947 destroying the institutions of

the country's post-war democracy and laying the foundations of dictatorship.

Determined to pursue a programme of “building socialism” the state initiated drives to collectivise agriculture in 1948 and began to make preparations for a five-year plan designed to transform Hungary into “a country of iron, steel and machines”. Though it seemed at first that “the construction of socialism” would only impact on Dunapentele through the collectivisation of agriculture, in fact the village came to play a central role in the programme of socialist industrialisation. Socialist industrialisation in the country was designed to meet the needs of the Soviet military, who believed that a third world war was imminent. To feed their demand for armaments, machine manufacture was to be radically expanded. Hungary, however, lacked the capacity to produce the steel needed to supply a machine industry of the size envisaged and consequently planners sought to construct a new, large steel plant to meet the expected demand. Initially they planned on building the steel plant at Mohács in the south of the country next to the Yugoslav border, but deteriorating relations between the two countries in the wake of Tito's split with Stalin rendered this location impractical. The planned steel plant was moved north along to Danube to rural Dunapentele. Construction of both the steel plant and a new city – Hungary's “first

socialist new city” – were begun in May 1950. Named Sztálinváros, or Stalin City, from November 1951 until November 1961, it has been seen as a distinctive socialist landscape (Weiner, 1959; Miskolczi and Rózsa 1969; Birta 1970; Erdős 2000; Horváth et al. 2000).

During the 1950s Sztálinváros was a showpiece of socialist planning; it was one of the most obvious material manifestations of the socialist dictatorship’s desire to re-shape society. From 1948 the Hungarian state sought to integrate all social groups into a new society organised around the performance of collective labour in socialised enterprises in both industry and agriculture. Small-scale peasant agriculture was to be eliminated through punitive taxation and several collectivisation campaigns throughout the decade that would replace smallholdings with agricultural units organised along industrial lines. During the early 1950s particularly, the country’s industrial sector was expanded with the state giving priority to heavy industry. Private businesses, both in manufacturing and commerce, were all but eliminated (Lampland, 1995; Róna-Tas 1997; Pittaway 1998a; Valuch 2001; Varga 2001). This programme of social transformation was not, however, restricted to Hungary. With the onset of

the cold war socialist regimes were established across East-Central Europe. Inspired by the Stalinist model pioneered in the Soviet Union two decades before states sought to effect similar socialist transformations across the region during the 1950s (Kideckel, 1993; Kenney 1997; Kopstein 1997; Bokovoy 1998; Creed 1998). Because of the material manifestations of this transformation and its nature the socialist experience in Eastern Europe presents boundless opportunities for those examining the material cultures of labour. Agrarian landscapes were completely transformed by collectivisation, cities and towns were shaped out of agglomerations of villages as well from nothing. The nature of production was transformed as mixed residential-industrial neighbourhoods were swept away by the nationalisation of small businesses and production was concentrated in large factories.

The analysis of the material culture of socialism in the East-Central Europe is still in its infancy, however. It has been widely noticed by analysts of material culture that everyday material objects associated with the socialist period have played a central role in shaping popular memories of the socialist dictatorships right across the region (Betts 2000; Pittaway 2003). This has fed an interest in the everyday material objects

generated by socialist economies in the region and consumed by East European citizens. Concern has focused on socialist consumerism in particular in order to consider the question of whether a distinctive material culture generated by socialist consumerism existed and, if so, whether it shaped distinctive East European identities (Vörös, 1997; Pittaway 1998b; Merkel 1999; Reid and Crowley 2000; Pence 2001).

This concentration on issues of consumerism has restricted our understanding of state socialist material culture in two senses. Firstly much work on consumerism tends to divide the socialist period into two distinct sub-periods. The first one, of Stalinism lasting between 1948 and 1956, was characterised by considerable poverty. The second sub-period was, according to much of this work, the one in which a distinctive socialist material culture evolved. Such a distinction tends to ignore the everyday material culture of the period in which socialist transformation was pursued most single-mindedly by the state. Secondly very little attention has been given to the popular experience of place and space in the region. Some work has been done on the social history of the private sphere and the built environments associated with it (Buchli 1999; Pittaway 2000); there has, however, been little work on either the public sphere or the landscapes of socialist transformation.

Socialist urbanisation and in particular showpiece socialist new towns do form a partial exception to this rule (French and Hamilton 1979; Musil 1980; Sampson 1984). Very little of this work has sought to examine the socialist town or city as a distinctive cultural landscape; a distinctive socialist landscape or urban form. Where issues of socialist urban form as cultural landscape have been considered, socialist towns, suburbs or cities have been seen as the ultimate politicised landscapes. That is to say they have been seen as the material realisation of a revolutionary ideology that had broken with previous patterns of urban design. According to this view, settlements were built that embodied the will of a dominant state (Aman, 1992). Such views of urban spaces as distinctive politicised landscapes have stemmed from a notion that has stressed the “totalitarian” nature of socialist societies. This notion has been subjected to relentless criticism by social historians. Many of these historians have worked on the societies of socialist new towns. They have uncovered a complex dynamic of conflict and consent, accommodation and opposition in the societies of these settlements (Kotkin 1995; Dowling 1999; Lebow 1999; Lebow 2001). This research has concentrated on the social history of the residents and has tended to

underplay the material dimensions of new town life. Little consideration, if any, has been given to the residents' experiences of socialist new towns as cultural landscapes.

In 1951 the Communist journalist and Sztálinváros resident András Sándor wrote that “the city differs considerably in nature from the capitalist city” (Sándor 1951a:21).

Sztálinváros's urban form embodied elements of the social vision of its creators. State socialism in its stalinist variant envisaged a unity between politics and production; a unity based on a close link between performance in the socialised, industrialised workplace and loyalty to the single workers' party which ruled the state (Pittaway 1998a: 63-72). The socialist landscapes created during the Stalinist years were almost always landscapes of industrial labour development. Sztálinváros was no exception; the city was planned around the twin poles of political authority and socialist labour. At one end of the city planned and built in the 1950s lies the factory. It is separated from it by a one kilometre stretch of woodland. From the major factory gate on its north side through the swathe of woodland into and through the city is its main street. Originally named Stalin street (now Vasmű Út, or Steel Works' Street), it was to end in what was conceived as the main square – though in the 1960s and 1970s it would

be extended with the construction of new housing estates. Around the square were to be the major public buildings – the headquarters of the city party committee, the local council and public administration.

Certain elements of this landscape bear a striking similarity to certain kinds of industrial capitalist landscape; particularly the industrial company town. The central role played by the factory – the site of industrial production – within the urban form is one feature, as well as the organic link between industrial production and public authority. There are other parallels in more mundane features of the city as it was conceived in the early 1950s; workers were to be housed in flats with no gardens that could be used for food production. Workers were to be producers of steel only and just consumers of food. Green space was purely recreational, taking the form of parks. Sztálinváros's landscape embodied ideologies of work and social reform that would be familiar in industrial capitalist contexts (Mrozowski 1991; Crawford 1995).

Despite these apparent similarities the city's landscape has been identified in Hungarian popular consciousness as the most striking example of a socialist

landscape in the country. This is particularly visible in the way in which the landscape of Sztálinváros has played a central role in shaping and articulating memories of the years of Stalinist dictatorship in Hungary. In the later years of state socialism during the 1970s many living outside the city identified it with social upheaval, if not with outright criminality. This negative perception was met with a fierce local patriotism that emphasised the role the town played in giving work and a secure livelihood to the former rural poor and the industrial working class. These debates were as much about the painful memories of the violent process of state-directed social change in Hungary during the early 1950s as about the city itself, which had come to symbolise that transformation (Miskolczi, 1980). The city's landscape has continued to carry, shape and articulate Hungarian memories of socialism into the present. This has in part been a legacy of its representation in early socialist culture. Zoltán Tábori – who has written on the difficulties the city has faced during the harsh economic climate of the 1990s – described how he became fascinated with the city as boy, looking at its representation in the Hungarian postage stamps of the early 1950s (Tábori 1998: 7).

Given the role that landscapes play in the shaping and articulation of popular memory (Schama 1995), the issue of how landscape comes to be defined is one of central importance. Work on landscapes has come to see them as part of a process of dynamic social interaction through which societies define their sense of place and consequently where social and cultural identities are forged. While landscapes are often created by the powerful and can serve to naturalise dominant ideologies, they are also constantly appropriated, contested and re-interpreted by those who populate them. It is through these complex and conflictual processes that landscapes have come to be defined (Cosgrove 1984; Bender 1993; Mitchell 1994; Hirsch and O'Hanlon 1995).

Sztálinváros's urban form served to define it as a distinctively socialist landscape, as did the political context in which it was created. Due attention needs to be paid, however, to how the landscape was received, used and interpreted by those who interacted with it, if the roots of its definition as a distinctively socialist landscape are to be interrogated and the meaning of such a definition is to be uncovered.

To determine how Sztálinváros was defined as a distinctively socialist landscape this article builds and draws on perspectives from historical archaeology and social

history. In the latter historians have increasingly sought to use artefacts as evidence at the same time as material culture itself has become the subject of historical study (Donald and Hurcombe 2000; Reid and Crowley 2000). This interest parallels the work of historical archaeology where historical approaches have been fruitfully used to aid interpretation of the archaeological record (Beaudry Cook and Mrzozowski 1991; Andrén 1998). This article argues that the process by which Sztálinváros was defined stems from the twin processes of the city's creation as a socialist "new" town and its domestication. The first of these processes represented both the creation of the socialist new city as a distinctive urban space and the physical process of its construction. Its construction brought many people from different corners of the country into contact with the city; their reactions to its urban form played a central role in defining it as a socialist landscape. Yet its domestication, namely the process through which the city was populated by a body of permanent residents which followed its creation, produced a more positive view of the city, but one nevertheless which also identified it as a distinctively socialist place. Through these processes Sztálinváros's socialist industrial landscape came to symbolise the changes brought about by the socialist dictatorship's transformation of Hungarian society during the

1950s. The interaction between the social groups who, both temporarily and permanently, came to inhabit the city and its landscape embodied a range of deeper political and social conflicts that could only be indirectly articulated in the repressive climate that prevailed in Hungary after the suppression of the Revolution of 1956.

This argument is developed by firstly examining the development of Sztálinváros's urban form paying particular attention to how the policies and ideologies of the state influenced its development. The article then shifts focus to consider how the developing urban form was experienced by the original residents of the village of Dunapentele and then by those who came to build the city. Finally the city's domestication is examined through the experiences of those who came to live in one of the city's earliest neighbourhoods.

Sztálinváros as Urban Space

Writing in 1959, Tibor Weiner, who headed the team of architects and urban planners that shaped Sztálinváros during the 1950s, emphasised its novelty. In the 1940s during

the immediate post-war period “in terms of urban construction the first tasks of the reconstruction were simply the construction of small blocks of flats the whole concept of the socialist city in Hungary only emerged with the construction of the city alongside the Danube Steel Works. Dunapentele-Sztálinváros became the school for Hungarian urban construction” (Weiner 1959: 19). Weiner’s comment underlines the experimental nature of Sztálinváros’s urban landscape; something to which inadequate attention has been paid hitherto. Because of the profusion of socialist new towns in Eastern Europe that were built during the 1950s, it has been tempting to see the new towns as simply the realisations of a blueprint exported from the Soviet Union to states like Hungary. This assumption understates the complexity of the processes by which Hungary’s socialist industrial landscape was made. Soviet models were certainly important but they interacted both with the material factors of Hungary’s cold war industrialisation drive and more local circumstances to produce Sztálinváros’s urban form. Weiner’s comment belies another cliché frequently used by Hungarian architectural historians; that Sztálinváros was a “planned” city designed for the demands of politics and ideology, rather than for its people (Szendrői, 1972).

Like Hungarian Stalinism as a whole the city's urban form was a product of a combination of stalinist ideology, cold war circumstance and social tension.

The fundamental determinant of Sztálinváros as a landscape was the gigantic Stalin Steel Works; the largest single investment of Hungary's first five-year plan. The steel works would dominate the city both physically and economically. The city's origin was determined by a series of political decisions made about the works. The state's decision to invest in the works stemmed, according to the Minister of Heavy Industry serving at the time the decision was taken, from "the climate of the cold war". Fear of imminent war pushed the state to expand machine manufacture thus creating a shortage of steel production capacity in Hungary. A large steel works were the state's answer. Originally they were to be built at Mohács, close to the southern border, which would have provided the infrastructure to support the population employed by the new steel works. Fear of war with Yugoslavia, whose northern border lay only twelve kilometres from the proposed site, forced the state to reconsider and to move the city northward to a site next to the Danube two kilometres south of the village of Dunapentele. (Miskolczi and Rózsa 1969: 26-49). The area was, however, completely

rural with no major towns in the vicinity, while Dunapentele with a population of just over 4000 was a small rural community, utterly incapable of accommodating the workforce of a large steel plant (Imréné Szőnyegi 2000: 238). According to the original plans at the outset of construction in 1950 the steel plant was to employ 6535 people by 1954 of whom 5000 would be workers. It was decided in 1949 that a new city would have to be built alongside the factory to accommodate the workforce, their families and the services they would need. From November 1949 preparations were made to build the city on the two kilometres of land that lay between the factory and Dunapentele (Miskolczi and Rózsa 1969: 47-50).

The factory was to be constructed on a plateau that formed part of a range of hills ranging in height from 30 to 50 metres that flanked the western bank of the Danube. The plateau was agricultural land used by the smallholders of Dunapentele, whose village lay north of the plateau on the other side of the valley of a small tributary of the Danube. The northernmost two kilometres of the plateau between Dunapentele and the steel works were made available for the new city (Figure 2). The city was planned in such a way as to achieve unity between village, factory, city and the

natural landscape (Weiner 1959: 42). The urban landscape, however, also reflected and embodied the ideologies that underpinned the social transformation which was then underway in Hungary. This determined that the city was to be organised around the twin poles of politics and production; as the city's chief engineer put it when presenting his plan to his fellow architects in print in 1951, "the socialist city and the socialist industrial site are two poles of one unified unit. The city centre and the main gate of factory must lie in a direct line from one another" (Weiner 1951: 589).

The monumental factory gate flanked by the offices of the management of the steel works formed the main northern entrance of the factory. Linking the factory gate to the city centre was the main street, named the Stalin street (*Sztálin út*) throughout the 1950s. A straight, broad street, it ran from north to south initially through a half a kilometre band of woodland designed to provide a recreational space for residents, though more importantly to shield the city from the factory. It then was to drive northward through the city until it reached the centre. The city centre was marked by the main square (Figure 3). Just as the monumental factory gate was to act as a symbol of socialised production, the main square was to act as the site of political

power, with the main street linking the two elements. According to its planner “the main square is to be a large, stone-flagged, vegetation free square” which was “the consequence of its functional role as the end of point of demonstrations” (Weiner 1951: 591). The square was to be the site of political power in the city, to be flanked on three sides. On one side the seat of the city council and thus local public administration was placed. Opposite the council house was to be built the smaller, neo-classical party headquarters (which today serves as the Dunaújváros city museum), the seat of the representative of national political authority (Gyárfás 1951: 618-619; Weiner 1951: 596).

In this central element of Sztálinváros’s landscape lay the embodiment in bricks and mortar of an ideology of politicised production by which loyalty to the state was to be demonstrated through the performance of industrial labour and participation in public spectacle. In designing the main square as the end point of political demonstrations and other marches Tibor Weiner was consciously designing urban space to act as a stage set for the performance by Sztálinváros citizens of their loyalty to Hungary’s socialist state. South of the main square, along the side of Stalin street Weiner

planned a series of mini-centres; these were groups of buildings that served particular community needs. The first of these lay one hundred metres south of the main square on the western side of the Stalin street and was a cluster of building designed for purposes of relaxation. Facing onto the street stood the Red Star Hotel, with a patisserie (*cukrászda*) for city residents at ground level. South of the hotel set back from the street was a small square where the planners built the city's cinema (Figure 4). Though the cinema was planned as a space for de-politicised leisure, at times the authorities would use it for propaganda purposes. In 1952 five "undisciplined" workers described in the local press as "scroungers" were convicted of unauthorised absenteeism before a court convened in the style of a show trial in the cinema, which had then only just opened (*Sztálin Vasmű Építője*, 1952; Fejér Megyei Levéltár 1952a). As the decade continued it reverted to the role for which it had originally been built.

The planning of Stalin street suggested that priority was given to collectively provided services rather than private leisure or consumption. Directly opposite the cinema on the eastern side of Stalin street were built the city's hospital and central medical

surgery – both intended as symbols of the state’s intention to provide comprehensive health insurance coverage to Hungary’s industrial working class (Figure 5). The hospital would become the city’s second largest employer after the steel works. András Ivánka’s design for the city’s central medical surgery was to make it a showpiece of Hungarian socialist realist architecture (Gyárfás 1951: 611-612; Horváth et al. 2000: 92). Though private consumption was given space on Sztálin út, it was incorporated into the design of the five storied apartment blocks that flanked the street south of the city centre (Hámor 1951).

Approximately seven hundred metres west of the Stalin street the planners placed another large street running from north to south; the György Dózsa street (Dózsa György út). On this arterial street a bus station was located and also, significantly a market space where peasants from the surrounding area were permitted to sell goods they had produced that were left over after they had met compulsory deliveries.

Private markets were legalised in 1951, and the Sztálinváros market was created in 1952. In theory the smallholders in the neighbouring countryside were to come to sell goods to urban consumers – a sort of realisation of the “worker-peasant alliance” as

captured on the mural at the factory gate. It did not, however, quite work out like this, as the market was not as widely used as hoped by "working class" consumers. In reply to the question of who shopped on the "free market" an official replied that "in the morning it is the housewives who live locally, after work the workers come down to get necessary things. The real situation is that very few use it" (Fejér Megyei Levéltár 1952b:2).

The incursion of older "capitalist" elements into the landscape of the new socialist city was less worrying for the authorities during the 1950s than the incorporation of the village of Dunapentele into Sztálinváros. By the mid-1950s it was commonly referred to as "the old city" (*óváros*). The authorities regarded its smallholder population with profound suspicion because of their covert resistance to the state's collectivisation campaigns, their cultural alienation from the socialist city itself and their stubborn support for the principle of the private ownership of land. The village's craftsmen and small businessmen were regarded similarly; during 1951 the local authority forcibly organised the village's craftsmen into an industrial co-operative and nationalised its two private bakeries (Fejér Megyei Levéltár 1954a). The influence of

organised religion in the village also roused suspicion; some 75% of Dunapentele residents paid church tax to the Catholic church in 1955. The village had furthermore the only church in the area. Concern was expressed that many “politically unreliable” elements in the city attended church in Dunapentele (Fejér Megyei Levéltár 1955:1-6).

Constructing Sztálinváros as Socialist Landscape

The planning of the city’s urban form to achieve unity between village, factory, city and the natural landscape (Weiner 1959: 42) had resulted in the creation of a settlement that did not entirely reflect the intentions of the Stalinist state. It instead incorporated several disparate elements. Hungary’s socialist rulers were not especially happy with some of these elements. The city was not unproblematically a politicised, socialist landscape in the sense that it materialised state ideology; yet it came to be defined as a socialist landscape. The interaction between those who observed and populated the landscape and the urban form itself during its construction came to shape popular definitions of the city’s landscape.

The state intended that Sztálinváros would act as a showcase for the socialist society that it sought to create in post-war Hungary. The regime believed that it should materialise the promise of industrial transformation, thus serving as a space that would give industrial employment to the country's rural poor, thus transforming them into full members of the country's working class and granting them full citizenship in the new Hungary. Villages like the that of Nagykarcsony in the south of Fejér county some twenty kilometres from the new city were to be among those transformed by its creation. A former manorial estate village and then after land reform in 1945 a settlement of poor peasants, it was to act as a supplier of both labour and food to the city and the factory. Communist journalist András Sándor wrote in 1951 about the way in which Sztálinváros was to serve as a beacon of the future for communities like Nagykarcsony: "At night the fires of Pentele's chimneys light the sky; their sparks like sparkling red stars breaking apart the darkness. Above the former prairie and the banks, the woods and the gardens they rise, lighting the tractors stood in the fields" (Sándor 1951b:213).

If Sztálinváros's construction was intended to represent a beacon marking the route to a socialist industrial future for the villagers of Nagykarcsony, then for those of Dunapentele it represented an attack on their very way of life. With the creation of socialist dictatorship in 1948 compulsory deliveries of agricultural products by farmers and land taxation had been sharply increased while campaigns to collectivise agriculture in the village began. In a predominantly agrarian community these were interpreted as an attack on the way of life of village residents. The farmsteads on the plateau where the new city and factory were to be built were nationalised. The state paid what was regarded as only negligible compensation (Lukács 2000: 219-220). The state security services moved to expel those it regarded as "politically unreliable" from the village. Forty-four families were forcibly removed including the families of thirty-three smallholders (Erdős 2000: 251). It was into this hostile climate that construction workers first arrived in May 1950. In the first three months of construction there were less than 1000 workers and only around 150 who were qualified skilled workers. The vast majority of the first construction workers took work on the site to escape poverty and unemployment in rural Hungary (*Sztálin Vasmű Építője* 1953; Miskolczi and Rózsa 1969: 54). The new arrivals were deeply

unpopular among the Dunapentele residents; many remembered that prior to the construction of the barracks to house workers new to the site, the construction workers were housed in their appropriated farmsteads. The construction of the new city for them became a symbol of their dispossession (Lukács 2000: 220).

The construction site was transformed in 1951. That year was intended to be the decisive year for the construction of the new city. By Christmas 1950 5860 were working on the site; their numbers rose rapidly throughout 1951 reaching a total of 14,708 by January 1952 (Magyar Országos Levéltár 1950: 120; Fejér Megyei Levéltár 1952c: 1). The construction workers generally came from the former rural poor; according to those who collected their life-histories most had been members of the families of agricultural labourers prior to land reform. They had gained small amounts of land in 1945 that had been insufficient or only just sufficient to satisfy their need for food. Given the lack of opportunities to perform casual labour during the high unemployment of the late 1940s many had experienced the immediate post-war years as ones of considerable poverty (Dobos 1958). Furthermore their perception of the earliest years of socialist dictatorship was shaped by increases in taxation and

compulsory deliveries that came with the beginnings of agricultural collectivisation.

These policies caused considerable hardship in rural Hungary and generated much opposition. Typically construction workers on the site were the young male sons of poor smallholders who took work to weather the hardships their families faced at home. One typical case was A.S. who lived on a small farm. As a result of the farm's inability to guarantee an income for the family he had to go to work at Sztálinváros. He remembered that "twice a month he could go home for one and a half days and had to spend half a day of free time travelling. He gave his family 200 Forints of his monthly earnings and had to live from the rest" (Open Society Archives 1953a: 5).

These experiences meant that large numbers of construction workers on the site were hostile to the socialist regime. This hostility and the social attitudes they took from the villages where they lived shaped the way they experienced Sztálinváros as it was constructed and defined its landscape. Given the chaos, low wages, despotic management and poor working conditions on the construction site the alienating experience of performing socialist labour affected their view of the new city profoundly. By early 1953 the city had largely taken shape. Most construction

workers, however, did not feel part of it. For Gy.A., a labourer originally from the rural south-west of the country, the public spaces of the new city “were not used by anyone, because the “working masses” had no time for relaxation”. The city’s shops and restaraunts were, as far as he was concerned simply for the benefit of its “communist elite”, largely because the prices were far more than a construction worker could afford (Open Society Archives 1953c.: 1). According to T.A., another construction worker, one of the restaurants “offered anything that the mouth would wish for It was just the prices that were terrible” (Open Society Archives 1953d: 13).

For workers who came from villages where typically the church had formed the centre of the community (Jávor 2000), the new city’s obvious lack of a place of worship represented a further source of alienation. To Gy.A., for example, “only the most important bulding is lacking in Sztálinváros and that is a church. The opinion of the workers is that “this town has not accepted the good Lord and it has no blessing from him””. For many rural construction workers the lack of any presence of organised religion within the fabric of city represented an offence against the natural

order and their own notions of morality. According to Gy.A. “if someone wants to marry, they are forced to go out of the city to marry in one of the village churches, or they have to be content with the civil marriage that some party person conducts” (Open Society Archives 1953c: 3). For many construction workers the lack of any presence for organised religion in the new city fed a perception that the state encouraged co-habitation and forms of behaviour that were considered immoral; T.A. interpreted co-habitation in the city as a symptom of “free love” apparently encouraged by socialism and the lack of religious influence (Open Society Archives 1953d: 16).

These local perceptions of Sztálinváros’s landscape found an echo across Hungary during the first half of the 1950s. Sztálinváros played a central role in both early socialist culture and in the propaganda of the regime. At the same time the state sought to recruit labour to industry, including to Sztálinváros, to stem the labour shortage that was undermining the industrialisation drive by 1951. Labour recruiters entered villages where acute social tension generated by the effects of agricultural collectivisation, political repression and state-sponsored anti-clericalism bubbled

close to the surface (Pittaway 1998a: 198-207). For many Hungarian villagers during the early 1950s going to work in industry was seen as little better than surrender to a state that sought to destroy their way of life (Open Society Archives 1953e:3). These factors shaped an image of Sztálinváros in rural Hungary that was in many ways a direct inversion of that presented in party propaganda. In this image the city came to symbolise all that anti-Communist Hungarians saw as wrong with the socialist state.

According to one such account from 1953 “one only hears bad things about the making of Sztálinváros. A worker can only get out through weakness, illness or internment” (Open Society Archives 1953b:2).

For construction workers building the new city, as well as for those Hungarians who opposed the socialist regime, the political context of the city’s creation served to define it as a socialist landscape. Certain features of its urban form, notably the lack of space for organised religion in the city, played a role in shaping this definition.

This process had less to do with any specific material forms embedded in the city’s fabric as the symbolic significance Hungarians invested in it. Because of the alienation of construction workers Sztálinváros’s definition as a socialist landscape

was a negative definition. Construction workers, however, would not make up the bulk of permanent residents of the new city. This can be demonstrated through an analysis of a sample of the successful applications for settlement permits (*letelepedési engedélyek*) which prospective residents of the new town had to acquire to live there between 1951 and 1954. Of those economically active who became residents during this period only 13.1% had been initially employed in the town on the construction site, compared with a figure of 58.1% whose first place of work in Sztálinváros was the steelworks (Fejér Megyei Levéltár 1951). The permanent residents of the town came to shape a more positive definition of Sztálinváros as socialist landscape.

Domesticating Sztálinváros

The public face of the city, its main streets, squares and public buildings represented a socialist monumentalism that privileged both political power and collectively provided services. Only in the construction of a cinema was space given in the city centre for de-politicised leisure, while private consumption was given only a marginal role on the main street. South of the public buildings of the city centre Stalin street

was flanked by five storeyed buildings that contained flats for families with shops at street level (Figure 6). Most residential space was tucked back from the arterial roads in several neighborhoods in which flats would be organised around a central square, park and local facilities – including shops and schools.

The “first residential area” was planned together with the city as a whole during the first half of 1950. It was designed to be populated by 7000 people and contained also shops, a theatre and an elementary school. It was undoubtedly experimental and its planners aimed to learn from the experiences of the first area to subsequently plan the others after it was finished in 1951 (Weiner 1959:54). It was located between the south-east side of György Dózsa street and the south-west side of Stalin street (Figure 3).

The flats for the new residents were designed to be manifestly superior to much of the housing for industrial workers in Hungary. In a country in which internal bathrooms and toilets only became commonplace in the 1970s; all flats in the new city were to be equipped with a bathroom and flushing toilet – something that much propaganda

pointed to (Sándor 1951c). The housing was also designed to be spacious, at a time when in much of the rest of the country there was a severe shortage of adequate working class housing due to low investment (Pittaway 2000: 54-57). The city's planners, many of whom had been employed on the design of relatively small scale housing projects in Budapest prior to their move to Sztálinváros, took several of their designs for standardised mass housing in the capital and built them in the city (Szende 1951). Along the 1 May street (Május 1 utca), the first residential street in the city to be completed, housing of this kind was built (Figure 7).

On the west side of the street five three storeyed houses were built; each containing twelve family flats. Each flat contained a hall and two large rooms; one for use as a bedroom and the other a living room. In addition each flats also contained a kitchen, small bathroom and separate W.C. Though the flats that flanked the east side of the street were externally different, given that the blocks were larger, with four storeys each containing eighty family flats, their internal design was fundamentally the same. In each case and in contrast to much working class housing across the country, where a family would typically live in one room, they were designed to provide space for a

family to live. In each flat the designer designed the main room to accommodate two tables, including a main table which would have seats for four people. Furthermore, in contrast to much state rhetoric, which stressed the value of collective services, the existence of both the kitchen and the planning of the main room to accommodate a dining table, suggested the planners envisaged the home as being one for a privatised, nuclear family (Hámor 1951: 621).

The designers of the flats embraced an ideal of “stalinist domesticity” (Pittaway 2000: 52) that was founded on an ideal of the nuclear family as the basic unit of urban society. In some regards this model, which informed the design and regulation of the new flats, challenged certain aspects of working class culture. In much of industrial Hungary the home, together with the garden and allotment, played a central role in the self-provisioning of foodstuffs (Paládi-Kovács 2000; Pittaway 2000). Sztálinváros’s city council was determined that this would not become the case in the new city. No garden space was made available to the new residents within the city boundaries, while the keeping of animals within the flats or the buildings that housed them was explicitly forbidden. The regulations for the residents in the new housing were to be

policed by a specially employed *concierge* one of whose responsibilities was to safeguard “socialist morality” (Horváth 2000:30-31).

The state envisaged that the city’s residents should solely be consumers of food.

Despite the later opening of the “free market” a short distance away the authorities sought to encourage consumption through the state-run retail network. To this end it

built and opened a shopping centre (*üzletház*) for the residential district in 1951

(Figure 8). This centre was in effect a two-storey building. On the ground floor were

located a grocers and clothes’ shop together with their associated offices, while the

top floor was given over to a restaurant which proved to be too expensive for the

city’s residents (Gyárfás 1951:209-210). The expense of the restaurant was not the

only problem reported with the shopping centre; standards of service in its shops left

much to be desired during the early 1950s. Many complained that staff regarded

customers as an inconvenience to be tolerated (Politikatörténeti és Szakszervezeti

Levéltár 1952: 2). In 1952 frequent complaints were received about staff in the shops

deliberately under-weighing quantities of milk, cheese and meat and then

overcharging consumers. This was combined with arbitrary pricing. Shop staff were

often accused of unofficially changing prices from hour to hour (Fejér Megyei

Levéltár 1953: 1-2).

The vast majority of the new residents were from very different social origins to the construction workers and consequently their reactions to the new city would be profoundly different. They were largely young, skilled workers from other industrial areas in the country. They sought to escape low wages and especially poor housing conditions in industrial Hungary and go to Sztálinváros to take skilled work and set up families in newer and better housing. There was considerable tension between the residents of urban, working class origin and the construction workers during the early 1950s. Often this tension took the form of street fighting at weekends and in the evenings between the young, single male factory workers and some of the construction workers (L.A. 1995, personal interview).

The new urban residents were distrustful of the socialist state for the first half of the 1950s, though the reasons for that distrust were different to that of the construction workers. Few had direct experience of state policies towards rural areas and many

were deeply distrustful of smallholders and those who lived in the villages. They had experienced socialism in the factories along with other industrial workers; an experience characterised by high work intensity, despotic management and low wages. Furthermore they had been affected by the food shortages that plagued industrial areas during the early years of socialist industrialisation. Though conditions were generally better in Sztálinváros than in the country as a whole they were not fantastically so. Workers still experienced poverty and goods shortages (Pittaway 1998a).

Average monthly wages for the largely male workforce of the steel works stood at 1,283 Forints in January 1956, which was the average wage for workers in heavy industrial plants (Fejér Megyei Levéltár 1956b: 2). At this time the official trade unions calculated the “poverty line” for a family of four at 1900 Forints, meaning that a working class Sztálinváros family needed two incomes to guarantee a basic standard of living for themselves (Magyar Országos Levéltár 1956). Because of the lack of light industrial employment in the city there was a shortage of work for working class women that meant that effectively many families lived below or close to the trade

unions' "poverty line". This was calculated to allow only for the most basic standard of living (Fejér Megyei Levéltár 1956a: 4).

If in the early years Sztálinváros's residents had little money to become socialist consumers and lacked the hedge of self-provisioning, then their flats also fell short of expectations. The early flats suffered from poor standards of construction. One new resident of a flat on Stalin street complained that "when we moved in, the floor was so uneven we were afraid we were going to break our legs". Another worker "was delighted" with his new flat. "In the old days only wealthy capitalists and factory owners had such flats. Everything is wonderful – only the door frames are badly finished and the plaster falls off around them. It needs very little foresight to realise that the doors will be useless pretty soon" (*Szabad Nép*, 1952).

Frustration with the poor quality of state provided housing, food and goods shortages as well as poverty were also common in Hungarian industrial communities beyond Sztálinváros during the first half of the 1950s (Pittaway 2000: 57-59). They helped ensure, however, that during the Revolution of 1956 Sztálinváros was a centre of anti-

regime activity (Erdős 2000: 267-280). After 1956 the restored regime of János Kádár sought to reconstruct the authority of the socialist system through an appeal principally directed to Hungary's urban working class. The ruling party rhetorically emphasised its identity as a "workers' party" while wage levels were increased and social benefits were expanded (Pittaway 2001). Working class residents in Sztálinváros proved much more receptive to these shifts in policy than the population of Hungary as a whole. This was in part because of the working class origins of many residents and also because the state's national measures were dovetailed with measures locally to expand light industrial employment thus creating more jobs for women workers (Csatári 2000). New residents had already bought into the ideal of "stalinist domesticity" by moving to the city in the 1950s. With the improvements in living standards, the repair of their flats and the realisation of surrogate socialist consumerism in the late 1950s and early 1960s they could believe that a reality underpinned this ideal (Pittaway 1998b). The more positive view of socialism among working class Hungarians that these changes engendered, brought about a positive definition of Sztálinváros as a "new socialist city". Life history interviews suggest that in the late 1950s a positive view of Sztálinváros emerged as a place that gave jobs

and secure homes to its working class residents. While this view ignored some of the shortcomings of socialist transformation as it was experienced by Sztálinváros residents, it is nevertheless the dominant one among residents who came to the city during the 1950s and continues to inform a fierce local patriotism (L.A. 1995, personal interview; B.P-né 1995, personal interview; T.J-né 1996, personal interview).

Conclusion

Sztálinváros, now Dunaújváros, has been universally defined as a socialist industrial landscape. This stems from its creation, when it served as the flagship of a state led policy of industrial transformation during the early 1950s and as a laboratory for socialist urban design in Hungary. The way in which the landscape created by the planners was received and appropriated at a popular level reveals much about the responses of social groups to socialist transformation and thus the regime that governed the country for forty-two years. Both the rural construction workers who built the city and those who came to live there developed alternative definitions of

Sztálinváros as a socialist landscape. The construction workers and, by extension Hungary's rural majority, interpreted the landscape as deeply alien to its culture.

Another view, forged by the residents of the city who were largely of urban, industrial working class origin was more positive, stressing the role of the city in providing secure jobs and superior homes.

The way in which the socialist landscape of Sztálinváros was given meaning parallels the way in which Hungarian society itself responded to socialist transformation.

Throughout the post-war period Hungary has been marked by a deep political and cultural division between supporters of the right and left, even though in a single-party political system such divisions could not be openly expressed within the public sphere. These broadly corresponded to class divisions between the working class on the one hand and agrarian and middle class social groups on the other. During

Hungary's Stalinist years, when dictatorship in the country was at its harshest, both groups were discontented with the state even though their social and cultural values profoundly differed. After the 1956 revolution as the state sought to buy support by accommodating the working class Hungarian society came to be divided into those

with broadly positive and negative views of socialist transformation. Sztálinváros's very definition as a socialist landscape ensured that views of it would reflect these deep seated political divisions.

Sztálinváros was not the only Hungarian or even East European landscape that became "politicised" from above and below during the socialist years. These landscapes and popular reactions to them have the potential to reveal much about the formation of political identities across the region; identities that were largely hidden from view by state repression. In the post-socialist era the role that material culture has played, including landscapes, in articulating popular memories of socialism suggests that the discovery of the processes by which material culture was originally defined are of importance for interrogating contemporary social and political phenomena. This article suggests a need for work on a variety of "socialist" landscapes that interrogates not only their material reality, but also their reception at the moment of their creation.

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LIST OF FIGURE CAPTIONS

FIGURE 1. Map of Hungary c. 1949 showing the locations of Dunapentele and Mohács

FIGURE 2. Map of Sztálinváros c.1954 showing the city's component elements.

FIGURE 3. Map of the city centre and the first residential district of Sztálinváros c. 1953

FIGURE 4. The Dózsa cinema.

FIGURE 5. View from the front of the cinema of the medical surgery and hospital looking across Stalin street.

FIGURE 6 Five storeyed apartment blocks on the western side of Stalin street.

FIGURE 7. May 1st street looking south.

FIGURE 8. The first residential district's shopping centre.