

The Castle District of Budapest: Housing before and after War and Revolution

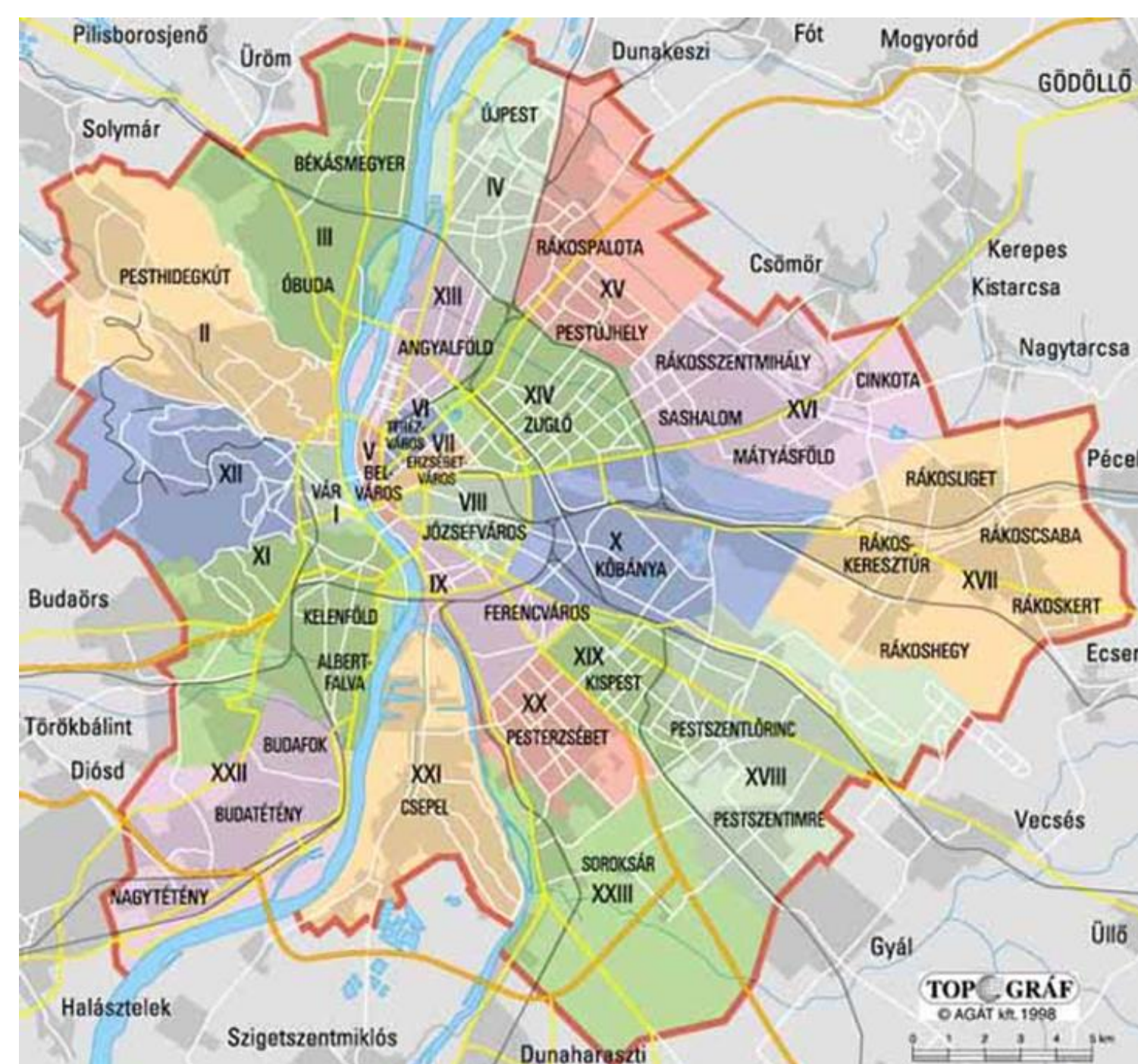
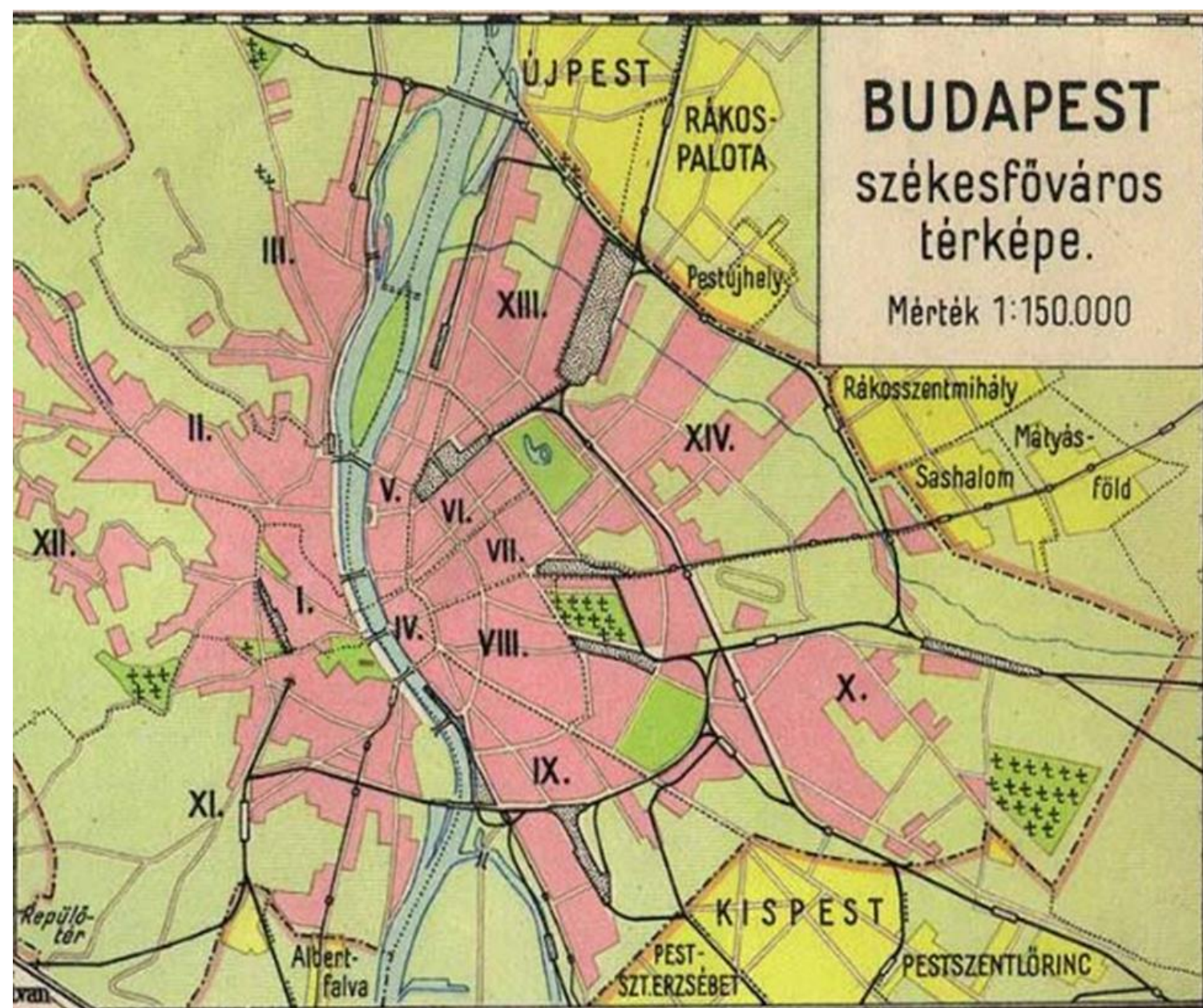


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INTRODUCTION

Budapest is a city with a remarkable history. From the Ottomans to the Hapsburgs to the Russians, it is a city that's history has been marked by conflict. In January 2016, this research team attempted to analyze the level of change that has occurred at the housing level in Budapest since 1941. For this project the research team used the 1941 census that was done in Hungary, specifically focusing on the Castle District in Budapest. This district is known as District I, or the “Vár” (Castle) District. Below, the top image shows the districts of Budapest in 1941, and the image below shows the districts today.



Our work on the 1941 census project is in collaboration with Project MOSAIC at the Max Planck Institute for Historical Demography in Rostock, Germany. MOSAIC is part of the European Historical Population Samples Network, Europe's leader in collecting census data in the continent's long history. For this project, the researchers were in Budapest, Hungary.



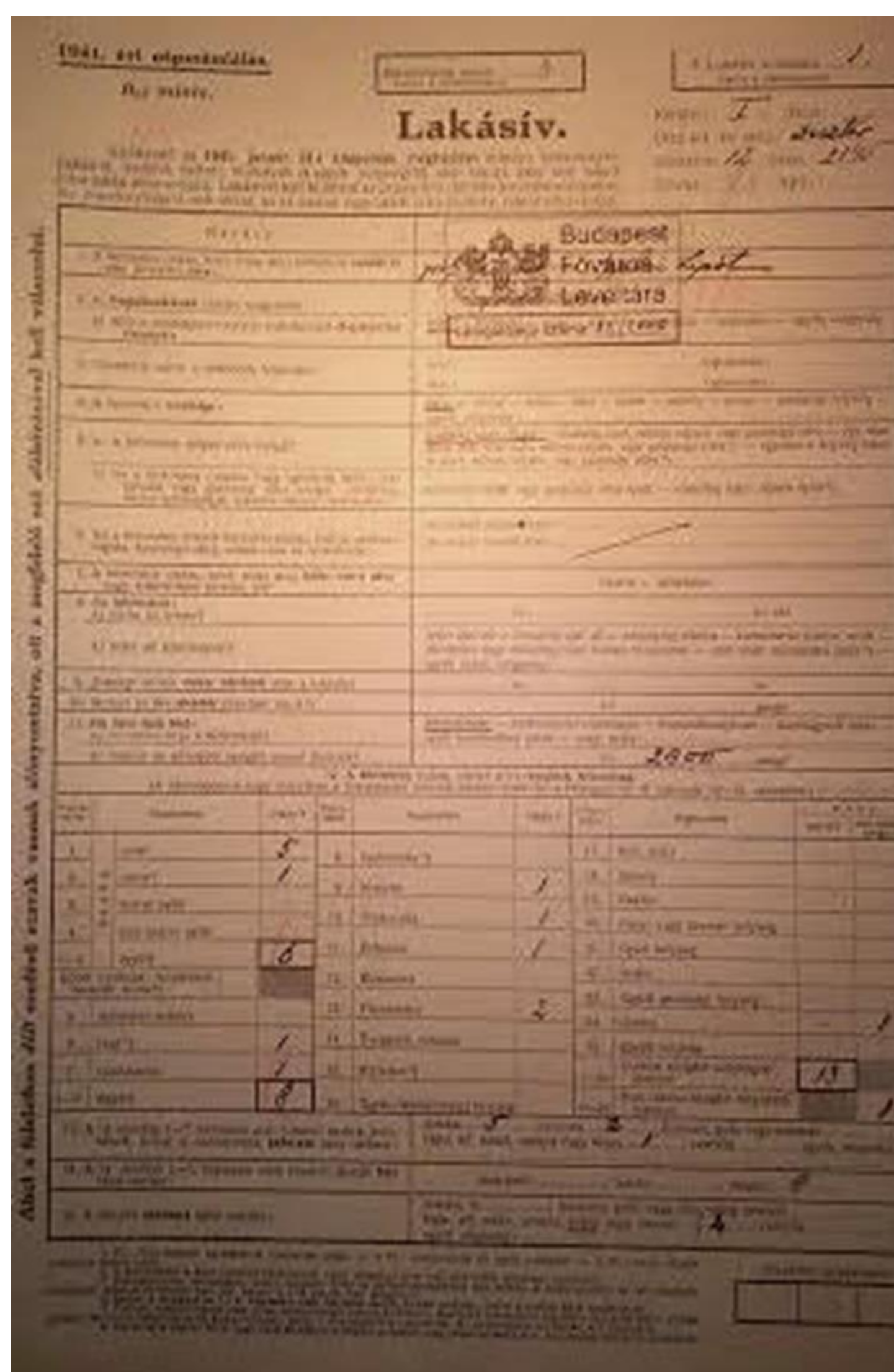
“What is microdata? Microdata are the individual records that contain information collected about each person and housing unit. They are computerized versions of the questionnaires collected from households, as coded and edited during census processing.” [Columbia University Libraries, 2015]

PROJECT OVERVIEW

The 1941 census counted more than 300,000 residential structures in the city. The manuscript census is preserved at the **Budapest Főváros Levéltára** (Budapest City Archives or BFL). The BFL stores the manuscripts in 7,000 boxes, organized the manuscripts by “Ker” (district), “Utca” (street), “Házszám” (house); and “Doboz” (archives box number) as exemplified in the image below. The image shows some of the houses that we studied both in the 1941 manuscript census and on the ground in Budapest in January 2016.

	A	B	C	D	E
1	Utca	Házszám	Ker.	Sz.járás	Doboz
2	Anna	1.2	1	3	1
3	Balta köz	1.4	1	3	1
4	Bécsi kapu tér	1	1	2	1
5	Casino	1.2	1	3	1
6	Dísz tér	1-2,3,4-5,6,7	1	2	1
7	Dísz tér	10,11,12,13,14,15,16	1	3	1
8	Dísz tér	17,18	1	1	1

During the fall semester in Eau Claire, the researchers devised a 1% sample of the manuscripts, totaling more than 3,000 structures, equally distributed across the 14 districts of the city in 1941. In January, the team spent two weeks in Budapest at the BFL beginning the work of studying the sample cases from the manuscript census. In addition to studying the city in 1941, the researchers wanted to see the changes wrought by war and revolution in Budapest's tumultuous history over the past 75 years. The team focused on the 1st district and the researchers divided up the houses to visit, and went out to photograph them today, giving us current images to match with the information from the 1941 census. This poster will focus on four of the buildings that were studied in the larger work. Those houses are: 1 Anna Utca, 6 Fortuna Utca 12 Dísz Tér, and 17 Dísz Tér.



The photograph on the left is the first page of 1941 census for the household living at 12 Dísz Tér. In 1941 it was a 13 room apartment that was being lived in by four people: a nobleman and his spouse, and two live-in servants. The apartment had electricity, flush toilets, telephone, radio, which shows that it was the home of a wealthy individual.

FINDINGS

1 Anna Utca: In 1941, 1 Anna Utca was an apartment building that had 11 apartments. What we saw in January was a remarkable consistency over 75 years. The building was older, but it was tucked along the back of an ally. Today, it is still an apartment complex that contains 12 apartments.

6 Fortuna Utca: At this address in 1941 there was a house lived in by a middle class family. Once again, we saw consistency in the age of the building still standing with the description of the building that was there in 1941. The difference is, today the building contains four separate apartments, no longer a single-family home.

12 Dísz Tér: The description of this building in 1941 can be found in the middle panel, next to the picture of the census form that provided us with the information about the occupants and living quarters. Today, that building serves a very different purpose than housing a nobleman's family. It is a middle to lower class apartment complex that has 12 apartments in it. The exterior of the building is run-down but still impressive; it can be seen in the image on the right.



17 Dísz Tér: The most interesting change we saw occur happened at this location. In 1941, this building was a military barracks, with 92 soldiers living within it. This is the closest building in the district to the Budapest Castle, which is less than a block away. Today, the building is an arts museum, though as you can see in the picture on the right, it still has scars from its days as a barracks.



SIGNIFICANCE

These findings brought a strongly felt manifestation of what years of classroom learning about World War II and Communism had taught us about the history of Central and Eastern Europe:

What war had damaged or destroyed, Communism sometimes failed to rebuild, and other times, altered the social makeup of a building's people. This is absolutely the case in Budapest, as we saw firsthand. The Budapest Castle is one of the least impressive in Europe because it was destroyed by the Russians in 1945 when they drove the Nazis from the city. All of the bridges that cross the Danube are new since 1945 because the Germans destroyed them all in their retreat. At 17 Dísz Tér there are still bullet holes in the brick façade. The legacy of the war surrounds you. Communism has a similar legacy. There are no longer wealthy upper-class Hungarians to own big, beautiful houses like 12 Dísz Tér. Communism's ideal of a classless society helped turn those buildings into lower class apartments, or put to other forms of housing structures by breaking up the upper classes. The biggest lesson learned from this research is that Budapest is a city still emerging from its dark, destructive history into a new and brighter future.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to thank ORSP, the International Fellows Research Program, the MOSAIC Project, and the UW-Eau Claire Center of Excellence for Faculty and Undergraduate Student Research Collaboration for their support.

REFERENCES

Credit for Maps of Budapest Districts: Various Staff, Karoli Gaspar Reform University, Budapest, Hungary
Chart near Top of Middle Panel: Research collected by Eric Hagstrom, Emily Herkert, Sarah Mcklveen, Trace Osborn, and Dr. James Oberly
Picture of 1941 Census Information: Budapest City Archives, taken by Dr. James Oberly
Pictures of 12 and 17 Dísz Tér: Taken by Trace Osborn