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**Spatial aspects of the urban deprivation – a conflict perspective  
approach and case studies on Szeged**

Theses of the PhD dissertation

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## **I. Research topic, antecedents in the literature of the field**

The aim of the dissertation is to introduce the (conflict) theory frameworks to the interpretation of socio-spatial differences within the cities, and to confirm these theories through case studies as well. We also would like to introduce some methods which could be appropriate to examine the spatial aspects of urban deprivation.

In the past decades the Hungarian human geography was a constantly changing field with new approaches and themes. The settlement geography was no exception to this process: there was a major change of the approaches in this field of geography too. (BECSEI J. 1989, MÉSZÁROS R. 2000, TIMÁR J. 2001b) One of the reasons behind this phenomenon was the disappearance of the ideological limits, which were determining the approaches and goals of the previous researches. The other important cause was that because of the transition to a market-based economy, many new processes occurred in the Hungarian settlements - the urban development and the professional public expected explanations to these processes. Most of the questions were addressed to the urban geography, because after the change of regime a very quick transformation began in the Hungarian cities. The changing ownership relations and the privatization transformed the housing market, and the society and economy of the cities. These causes started some new phenomenon, for example the ghettoization or gentrification. The effects of globalization strongly affected the appearance of the settlements, too. (ENYEDI GY. 1998, CSATÁRI B. 2002, KOVÁCS, Z. – ENYEDI, GY. 2006, SZIRMAI V. 2004, 2006) These changes inspired a lot of new researches, contributing to the thematic and methodological metamorphosis of the Hungarian human geography. Our dissertation intends to join this process, demonstrating the theories and possibilities of the conflict theory-based urban research, and introducing the urban deprivation as a new theme in the Hungarian geography.

In our judgment there are a few causes, which validate the justification of the urban research based on conflict theory. These causes can be divided into three sections: based on the theoretical background of the geography, based on the processes of the regional development, and the challenges for the social policy. We also would like to justify the location of the case studies.

Based on the theoretical background of geography, the metamorphosis of the Hungarian human geography, starting from the 1970s explains the subject of the dissertation. This process changed the methodology, the approach and the themes of the research. The field, previously called as economic geography was more often mentioned as human geography – as the sign of the change of the approach. As a result, geography changed its point of view: emphasizing the whole society instead of one segment (the economy) of it. (BERÉNYI I. 1993, 2002, TÓTH J. 1990, TIMÁR J. 2007, PÁL V.-TÓTH J. 2007)

The tendencies of the “Western” urban research motivate to apply our approach to the Hungarian processes as well. In the urban research geography and

sociology made interlocking notions. However the theories of these studies are not commonly used in the Hungarian urban research. (TIMÁR J. 2002)

From the empirical and regional development point of view the intentions of the EU about the urban and regional development justify the aims of the dissertation. In the EU the social and social policy issues have been intensified since the 1990s. (FARKAS B.-VÁRNAY E. 2002, KRÉMER B. 2003) According to this process, it is increasingly important in the common policy and the documents related to it to emphasize the matter of the equal chances or the spatial exclusion. (ESDP 1999, FERGE Zs. 2001, KRÉMER B. 2003, SOÓKI-TÓTH G. 2005, BARÁTH G.-SZÉPVÖLGYI Á. 2007)

In the European cities the ghettoization and the segregation is not as serious as in the North American cities. But the tension in the society, which is related to the immigration and the political change of regimes as well, intensifies the problems of the social cohesion. (ESDP 1999, FERGE Zs. 2001, SZIRMAI V. 2006, KOVÁCS Z.-SZIRMAI V. 2006) The problem between the market (interested in the profit) and the local communities (interested in the sustainable growth) can be particularly acute. (BOROS L.-HEGEDŰS G.-PÁL V. 2007)

From the social policy's point of view the changes in the quality of life after the change of the regime, and the polarization of the society justify the choice of the theme. These processes were less researched by the Hungarian geographers in the previous years. However before the change of the regime several studies engaged the urban living conditions – but in the 1990s these notions were overshadowed. At the same time the British and American geographers often dealt with the marginalized or deviant groups (for example the homeless, prostitutes, immigrants, religious or sexual minorities etc.). The (spatial) exclusion of these groups, their special spatial routes were (and are) important research phenomena, and the intensifying urban segregation, or the conflict of the interests in the urban development as well. (WOLCH, J.R.-RAHIMIAN, A.-KOEGL, P. 1993, GLEESON, B. 2001 HUBBARD, P. 1998, 2004, PEACH, C. 2006, HOLLOWAY, S.L. 2005)

We chose Szeged to introduce the validity of the theories. The city has not got a polarized society, but we thought if we can prove the existence of the conflict and the urban deprivation, our conclusions will be more valid, than by examining a city with extreme polarization and a lot of social conflict. The so called “beggars decree” made the city an obvious choice, because we think it is apparent that the decree is a manifestation of the spatial exclusion. It is an element of a city policy which wants to displace the undesirable people – it is a world wide known phenomenon nowadays. (HAVASRÉTI J.-NIEDERMÜLLER P. 2005)

## **II. Aims**

The main aim of our dissertation is to introduce a theoretical background and use it in an empirical work which is usable in the Hungarian urban research, and helps

the regional development and urban policy, and expands the theoretical background of the Hungarian human geography.

According to the structure of the paper, the aims and the questions related to the above mentioned main aim divide into two groups. The theoretical questions are the following. What kind of theories can be applied to interpret the poverty and the exclusion, and the conflict related to them? Which were the most important approaches in the urban studies in the past decades? What is the difference between these approaches and the previous ones? To answer these questions we examine the adaptability of these approaches in the notion of the Hungarian urban processes. There are further questions related to this.

- Which are the dominant approaches in the contemporary urban research?
- Is the question of the conflict present in these approaches?
- How can we unite the conflict perspective and the human geography?
- Which are the processes that can appear in Hungary, based on the Western urban development?

Besides these questions we aim to contribute to the Hungarian human geography with a mostly theoretical work – inducing debates or further research.

Related to the case studies our goal was to show the adaptability of the conflict theories introduced earlier. The main question of the second part of the dissertation is: how do the deprivation and the conflict in a Hungarian city appear? This question can be split into further questions, too:

- What are the spatial aspects of the deprivation?
- What methods can be used in the notion of the urban deprivation?
- How is the spatial exclusion apparent in a case, when the underclass is forbidden from the downtown?
- How can we study the spatial aspects of the potential deprivation processes?

The case studies are going to answer these questions.

### **III. Methodology**

The complexity of the notions demanded to use diverse research methods. We used qualitative and quantitative methods as well – depending on the theme, and the question.

#### *1. The methods used in the theoretical part of the dissertation*

In the course of the making of the theoretical part, we used the social theory, the urban geography and the urban sociology literature. We considered them as source, and conducted content analysis on the collected material. The literature used in the dissertation divide into three parts:

- In the first part are the various works from social theory. We used original sources, adaptations and evaluations as well.
- In the second part there are the works from the field of the theoretical background of the urban geography and urban sociology.
- The third part of the literature is the empirical studies about the urban studies.

The databases and the methodology in the three case studies were different.

## *2. Methods used in the quantitative notion of the deprivation*

In this case study we used two types of data sources. Firstly we used the data from the 2001 Census to create cumulative indicators (deprivation indexes). Because we can't get all the information about the deprivation from the Census, we used the data from the "Szeged 2007 survey", which is conducted by the Department of Sociology. This survey is represents the quarters of the city, therefore we can conclude an area comparison. Unfortunately the two database use different classification, that's why the possibility of the comparison is limited.

Based on the data from the Census, we studied the "objective deprivation", therefore we used indicators which represents various objective aspects of the quality of life, and are independent from the people's opinion. The observed units were the quarters defined in the Census, but we cumulated those parts of the city, where there were not enough residents. Therefore they can not distort the results.

In which quarter the value of an indicator was below par, we considered the part of the city disadvantaged in that dimension. Because of the comparability we used standardized values. We made two types of the deprivation index from these data. Firstly, we defined the "combined deprivation index", which shows the number of the dimension in which the quarter is disadvantaged. Secondly, we defined the "cumulated deprivation index", by adding together the values of various dimensions.

Processing the data from the 2007 survey we used the subjective deprivation approach, therefore we used the appropriate data concerning the perception of the quality of life. We used the principal component analysis as a data reduction method. Based on the principal components we defined the deprived parts of the city: if the value of a principal component was below par, we considered it as a deprived neighborhood according to that dimension.

We interpreted the data from the questionnaires on the electoral districts of Szeged, because the survey was representative on these units. We defined the combined and the cumulated index in this case as well.

### *3. Methods used in the notion of the spatial exclusion*

In the second case study we used the data from the Szeged survey, but in this case not only from the 2007 survey, but the 2004 too. Although the questionnaires were different every year, some similar questions made the longitudinal comparison possible. The survey before 2007 were not representative to the territorial units, therefore we could not make a year by year comparison between different parts of the city.

We also conducted a phone-based survey with random sampling (N=300) between 18-30 October 2005.

We conducted a qualitative survey as well: we made interviews with the guests of a poor people's kitchen.

Finally we conducted a qualitative content analysis on the reports of the Szeged City Council, the proposal to the beggars' decree, and the articles in the local newspaper.

### *4. Methods used in the course of the third case study*

In the third case study we aimed to analyze the appearance of the deprivation in the mental maps. In this enquiry we also used the data from the Szeged 2007 survey. In the course of the analysis we made cross tabs and frequency tables, presenting the results in tables and diagrams. We also made a mental map survey among university students. The survey was conducted in September 2006, we asked the students who moved to the city that month.

In the course of the making of the case studies we used the SPSS, and MS Excel software to the quantitative analysis. We conducted principal component analysis, made frequency tables, and various significance tests (Chi square test, correlation, etc.) The figures were made by CorelDraw and MapInfo.

## **IV. Summary of the research results**

According the structure of the dissertation, our results are theoretical and empirical as well.

### *Theoretical results:*

1. Based on our analysis we found that after an adaptation the social theories could be used in the human geography and the urban research. We also found that the conflict perspective came off in the urban geography and urban sociology after the 1970s, taking the place of the earlier approaches, which were using the consensus based approach. The conflict theory perspective mainly influenced the radical and critical human geography.

Based on the Western experience the conflict perspective can be used in the Hungarian urban research too. However in Hungary the consensus based

approaches have more impact: the social geography and the human ecology both use the functionalist approach.

In the urban geography a lot of new points of view came into existence. Based on the literature we made our own segmentation of these approaches:

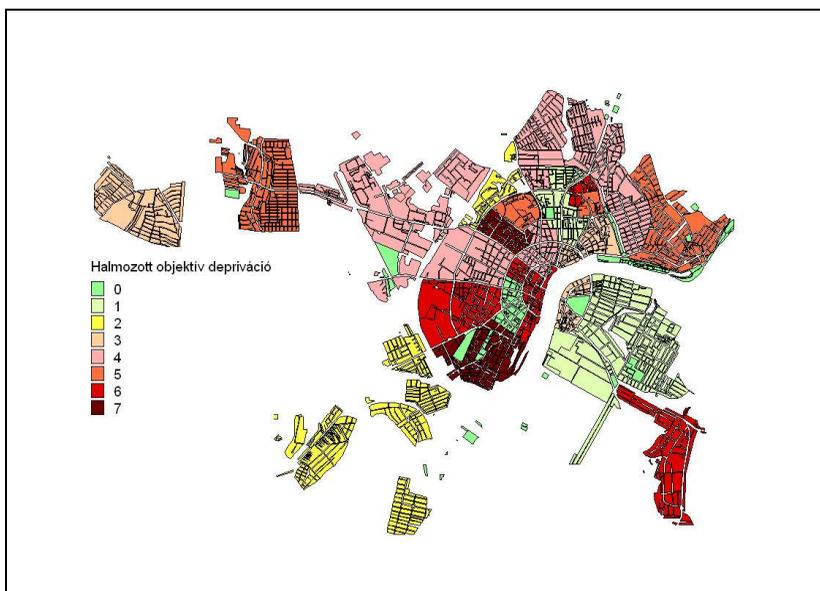
- Neo-marxist approaches,
- The city as a growth machine
- Cultural approaches (symbolic economies),
- Historical/institutional views,
- Global views,
- Postmodern urbanism

2. According to our results the new approaches are based on the conflict theory – contrary to the Chicago School of Sociology, which used a consensus based approach.

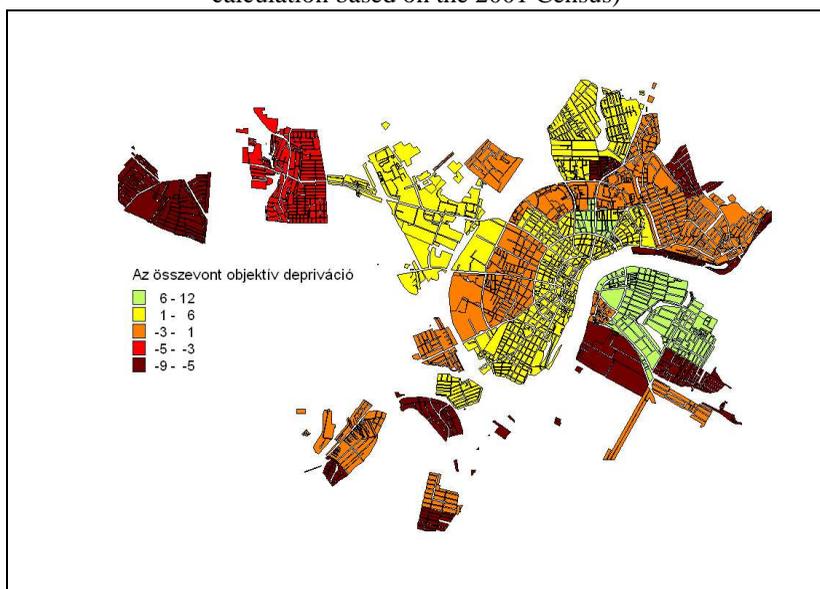
As the results of the changes the urban research became a more interdisciplinary field as before, and the geography and the sociology made joint researches. The new theories formed a new interpretation of space, exceeding the previous positivist one, which interpreted the space as a “container”, in which the things happen. Based on LEFEBVRE’s (1991) work the significance of the subjective interpretation of space, and the social production of space have grown. (BOROS L. 2007c)

The new urban research abandoned the deterministic conception of the Chicago School, and centered the questions of power, capital and the interests. The role of the actors of urban life, and the “right to the city” (Lefebvre, H. 1996) became more important in the notions. But the certain theorists disagree about the role of the different actors, and the role of the social structure. HARVEY D. (1973, 1985, 1989) for example emphasizes the role of the capital, LOGAN, J.R. and MOLOTOCH, H.L. (1999) emphasize the role of the local actors in the growth regimes. (BOROS L.-HEGEDŰS G.-PÁL V. 2007b)

Whereas the structuralist approaches – such as neo-marxism – became more “individualized” after the cultural turn of geography in the 1980s. As a result, representatives of these theories do not think that the structure dominates the social processes, and the researchers take into account the individuals and the relations as well. CASTELLS, M., (1989, 2005, 2007) or the postmodern urbanism (SOJA, E.W. 1989, 2001) are the examples to this phenomenon.



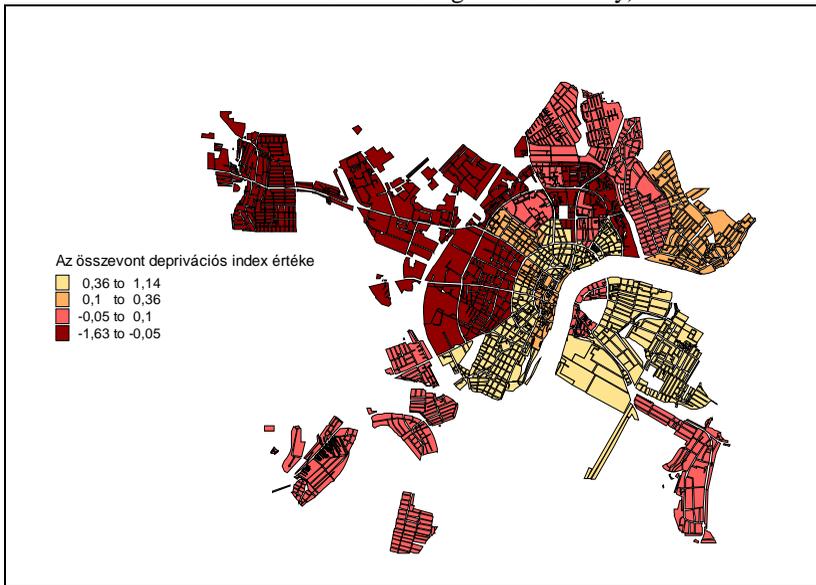
**Figure 1.** The combined objective deprivation index in Szeged. (source: calculation based on the 2001 Census)



**Figure 2.** The cumulative objective deprivation index in Szeged. (source: calculation based on the 2001 Census)



**Figure 3.** The combined subjective deprivation index in Szeged (source: calculation based on Szeged 2007 survey)



**Figure 4.** The cumulative subjective deprivation index in Szeged. (source: calculation based on Szeged 2007 survey)

The new researches emphasize the importance of social problems, such as the conflicts related to the underclass, deviants, the excluded groups or the minorities. These conflicts became important social policy issues in the polarizing societies.

3. According to our research, the globalization process bears a dominant role in the Hungarian urban development too. Therefore the economic flows, the global accumulation are substantial in the future of the cities. Furthermore the characteristics of the post-socialist society are important as well.

Because of the influence these factors, the balance between the actors of the urban development is split up, and the interest of the capital is dominant. The local and national policy cannot counterbalance the intentions of the market actors – moreover they sometimes promote them.

According to our theory this is a tool for social domination, and it causes that in the local communities the basics of the democratic participation are not present. The determining neo-liberal urban policy centers the competitiveness, and it means that the profit and the effectiveness are the criteria to the success of the city. Many of the local residents accept this concept, legitimizing the urban policy. This concept makes effectiveness more important than solidarity. Through this some parts of the society cannot adapt to the new conditions. (BOROS L. – HEGEDŰS G. – PÁL V. 2006a, 2007b)

#### *Empirical results*

4. In the course of the quantitative notion of the deprivation we managed to define combined indicators, which seem to be appropriate to the examination of the urban deprivation and its spatial pattern. Combining the standardized values we defined the cumulative objective deprivation index (Figure 1.) and the combined objective deprivation index (Figure 2.). With the use of the principal components based on the data from the questionnaires we also defined the cumulative and combined subjective deprivation index.

In the first case study we proved that there are diverse deprived and privileged parts of the city. The spatial pattern of the objective and subjective indexes are quite similar, but not the same. The differentiation of the city is probably determined by the market processes, which revaluated the quarters of Szeged after the change of regime. These processes made the more accessible neighborhoods and the ones with better quality of life more valuable. Because of this the most privileged areas are the Újszeged quarters and the Downtown, the most deprived ones are the peripheral parts of the city, for example Kiskundorozsma, and the planned unit developments (mostly Tarján).

In spite of the problems related to the different data sources, and the dissimilar territorial units we found that the spatial pattern of Szeged is very similar based on the objective and the subjective indicators too. Although there are some significant differences: for example the Downtown is more differentiated by

the subjective indicators, and the residents of the Downtown are more content than we expected based on the Census data and the objective deprivation.

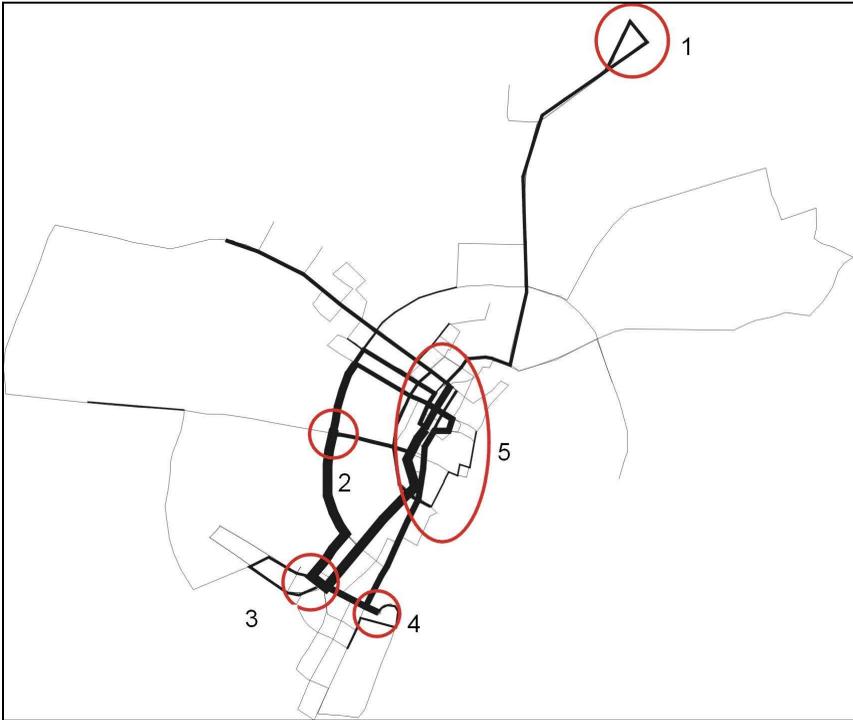
5. Our second case study proved that there is a conflict in Szeged related to the spatial exclusion. We assume that this conflict is based on the neo-liberal urban policy, which centers the effectiveness. According to our research the exclusion affects the beggars' most important routes in the city (Figure 5.). (BOROS L. 2006b, 2007a)

Although the solidarity is strong towards the poor, it does not mean that people start an individual action to help them. Therefore the role of the external actors (EU, government) is significant to the working of solidarity. A lot of respondents support the decree and the spatial exclusion.

We assume that because of the representative function of the Downtown, many of the residents accept the displacement of the unwanted and not fitting people. The decree of the City Council and the previous proposal reflect the same conception. The homeless and the beggars diverge from the society, making their own communities with their own rules and norms. These new groups often break the law and the norms of the majority. Therefore the society punishes them by suspending their support or displacing them. These actions alienate the members of this urban underclass, therefore weakens the integrity of the society. (BOROS L.-TÓTH P. 2005, BOROS L. 2006b)

6. Our third case study based on the stereotypes related to certain quarters, demonstrated that the market logic (accessibility, quality of life) and the socio-spatial pattern of the city are determinative in the judgment of the parts of Szeged. We assume that it is not only the sign of the "reality", but it affects the development of the quarters. Only the state, the government or the investors can modify these stereotypes – and they often do this. (BOROS L.-BUDAI B. 2007, BOROS L. 2007b)

Particularly the groups from the bottom and the top of the social structure are determining in the judgment of a quarter. Amongst the university students the stereotypes related to certain parts of the city and their residents quickly evolve – however their mental maps show that they do not have much information about the city. (BOROS L. 2007b)



**Figure 5. The daily routes of the visitors of the poor people's kitchen**  
 Legend: 1: daytime shelter, 2: homeless shelter, 3: poor people's kitchen: 4:  
 homeless shelter, 5: downtown.  
 (Source: focal group survey)

7. On the whole the case studies allow us to assume that the growth regimes, determining the urban development evolved in Szeged again. The residents are part of this coalition, legitimizing the regime by supporting the growth goals. In the debate related to the neo-liberal urban policy they take the side of effectiveness contrary to solidarity. (BOROS L.-HEGEDŰS G.-PÁL V. 2007a)

Using a conflict perspective based on the Frankfurt School's approach (HABERMAS, J. 1980, MARCUSE, H. 1990), we can interpret this phenomenon as the formation of the mechanisms which reproduce the capitalism and the accumulation of capital. Because of the uneven distribution of the power the social (re)production of space is determined by the elites.

## V. Possible ways to the utilization of the results

The results of the dissertation can be used multiple ways.

- Our theoretical results can be used in the Hungarian human geography and the urban research as well. So far few Hungarian researches have dealt with the appearance of the social theories in the geography and in the urban research. The approaches and interpretations presented in the dissertation can generate arguments, and can contribute to the theoretical background of the Hungarian human geography.
- The role of the growth regimes can also generate arguments and the question of the power in the urban development as well. Our theoretical framework can be used in further research.
- The deprivation indexes can be used to compare small areas, and define the underdeveloped quarters. Therefore it can be a tool for a regional policy which aims to develop the quality of life. The indexes also indicate some new criteria in the data collecting, because to calculate the index we need detailed small area data.
- Our second case study can be used in the urban policy and to demonstrate the (post)modern conflict related to the space and its use. The results of the case study can bring the residents' and the city leaders' attention to the spatial exclusion and the weakening solidarity.
- The results of the third case study can be also helpful to the policy makers: they can use the mental map method for defining the city structure according to its residents, or some results can be connected to important development matters.
- All of the case studies can be useful to the civil society: the civil movements can use them in choosing their activities.

## **VI. Possible directions of the further research**

The further directions of the research can be theoretical, practical and methodological as well.

- The further adaptation of the theory of contemporary urban research can be important, so is the adaptation of general social theories. These directions can be productive to the Hungarian human geography as a whole.
- Particularly the additional use of the conflict theory can be significant, related to the spreading and growth of the critical approaches.
- The deprivation indexes presented in the case studies can be used to reveal other cities' inner structure, and define their deprived areas. This can lead to the opportunity of comparison between Hungarian cities. This comparison would give an overview about the rate of socio-spatial segregation in our cities, and the difference in the quality of life between various cities.

- The indexes can be used to make longitudinal comparison as well, in case we have appropriate data – with these we could measure the effect of the urban policy.
- The longitudinal comparison can be important in the case of the mental maps too: it could reveal the changes in the stereotypes about certain quarters.
- The deprivation indexes can be developed with other variables; therefore we can get a better overview of the spatial pattern of the city.
- The case study about the spatial exclusion can be expanded with interviews, which could show us the motivations of different actors of the urban policy.

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