

## NEW TRENDS OF SUBURBANIZATION PROCESSES IN THE BUDAPEST METROPOLITAN REGION

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### 1. INTRODUCTION

If we leave by car the city centres of any Western European metropolis (Paris, London or Brussels etc.) or Budapest metropolis we can observe almost the same urban landscape. Just beside the huge motorway we can see big warehouses of many global supermarket chains, and big shopping malls, commercial buildings, and offices. We can observe the sprawling family houses areas as well. We can notice in the morning a huge amount of individuals sitting in cars going towards to the city centre, and at the afternoon, this huge amount of cars going towards to the outskirt areas, to the suburban residential areas as well.

After the post socialist regime (between the last twenty years) the most characteristic urban development trend was the metropolisation and the suburbanisation in Hungary, especially in the Budapest Metropolitan Region and the biggest Hungarian city regions as well. (Barta, 1998; Dövényi-Kovács, 2007; Enyedi, 1998; Görgl et al, 2012; Szirmai, 2011; Szirmai, V. Fassmann, H., 2012; Tosics, 2007). Due to the social and political changes and the effects of the global economy, and the new residential requirements, the social and economic relations between Budapest and its outskirt areas has changed significantly in the last twenty years. An economically and socially strong suburban zone was developed around Budapest. The previous one sided dependences was replaced by a diverse relationship between the capital and its suburbs settlements. In the last twenty year many research deals with the suburbanisation processes in the Budapest Metropolitan Region. Theses researchers revealed the social and economic spatial patterns of the suburbanisation. They highlighted the demographical, social and economic changes in the structure of the suburban settlements. Especially the significant decreasing the population of inner city of Budapest, and the dynamic population growth of the suburban areas. They have also shown the social-spatial inequalities and social conflict as consequences of suburbanization. Based on the newest statistical database the population of Budapest is started to grow again after a 25 years decline. Since 2007 a significant changes can be observed; since that time more people have moved into Budapest then moved out, thus the balance turned positive. However, we need to more information about current social-spatial consequences and main determining reasons of the suburbanisation e.g the

migration intention. This scientific need is more understandable because of the new economic situation and conditions because of the global economic crisis, which are affected very deeply the Budapest Metropolitan Region as well. The main goals of this paper are to investigate the current residential suburbanization processes by the analysis of the population changes and the migration patterns and residential intentions.

## **2. STATISTICAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE BUDAPEST METROPOLITAN REGION**

Budapest, as the country's capital city (see: Figure 1), due to its central economic, political, administrative and cultural functions, has national, regional and international roles as well. In 2011 it had 1 million 733 thousand inhabitants; this is 17.3% of the country's total population.

Budapest and its metropolitan region, although occupy only 3.3% of the country's whole territory, provide home for one quarter of the Hungarian population; this is the only metropolitan area of Hungary with over one million population. The population of the 80 municipalities being the members of Budapest Metropolitan Area was 790,995 in January 2011, which is 7.9% of the total Hungarian population.

Population concentration is extremely high in the region: an average of about one thousand inhabitants per square kilometres, more than nine times higher than the national average.

Budapest is the country's most densely populated settlement: its population density is 3,230/km<sup>2</sup>; nearly ten times than the general average for a sub-urban area (375/km<sup>2</sup>). The economic role of Budapest Metropolitan Area within the country is dominant; here the head offices of domestic and multinational companies are concentrated, with 60% of the total capacities of universities and research and development organisations. It is the country's most dynamic region in economic terms. This is indicated by the amount of per capita GDP, which is 1.8 times higher than the national average. Here nearly half the country's national income is produced. The economic activity of the population of the Budapest metropolitan area is characterized by high employment and low unemployment rate in comparison to cross-country rates. While the employment ratio of Hungary is 36.2% here, in the metropolitan this figure is 41.6%.

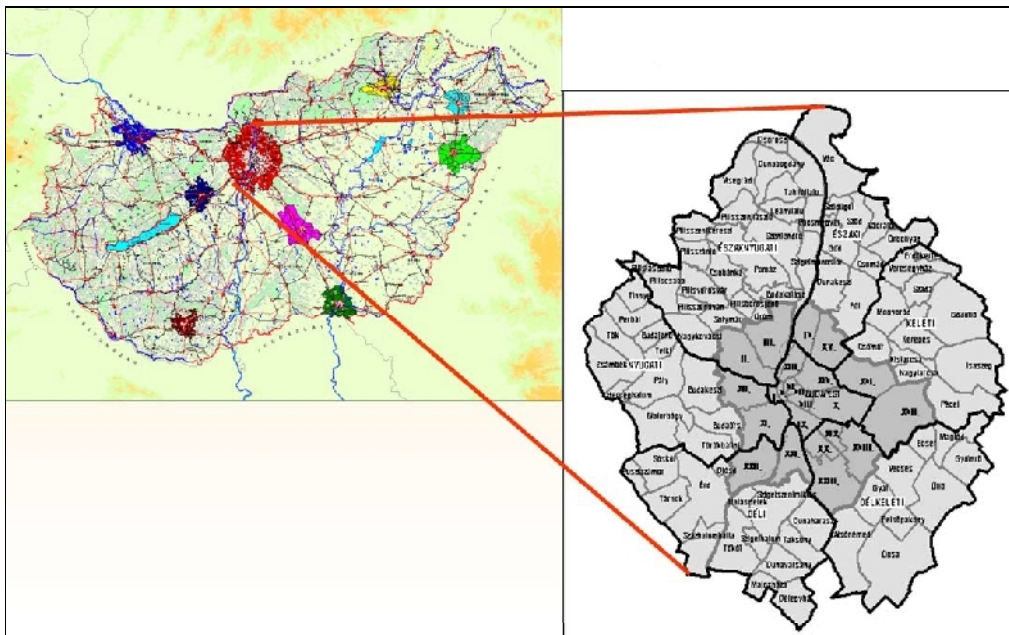


Figure 1: The localisation of the Budapest metropolitan region in Hungary  
Source: PESTTERTV Ltd.

### 3. POPULATION CHANGES

Hungary's population has been falling for decades, this is partly because of dramatic decline in birth rate and on the other hand it is the outcome of an ageing population. The Budapest Metropolitan Region is the country's only region where over the past 25 years, unlike national trends population growth was seen, which can be explained by immigration from more distant areas and regions of the country. However, the capital city's population between the last two censuses (1990-2001) decreased by almost 250 thousand, while of the sub-urban area increased by 120 thousand (see Figure 2).

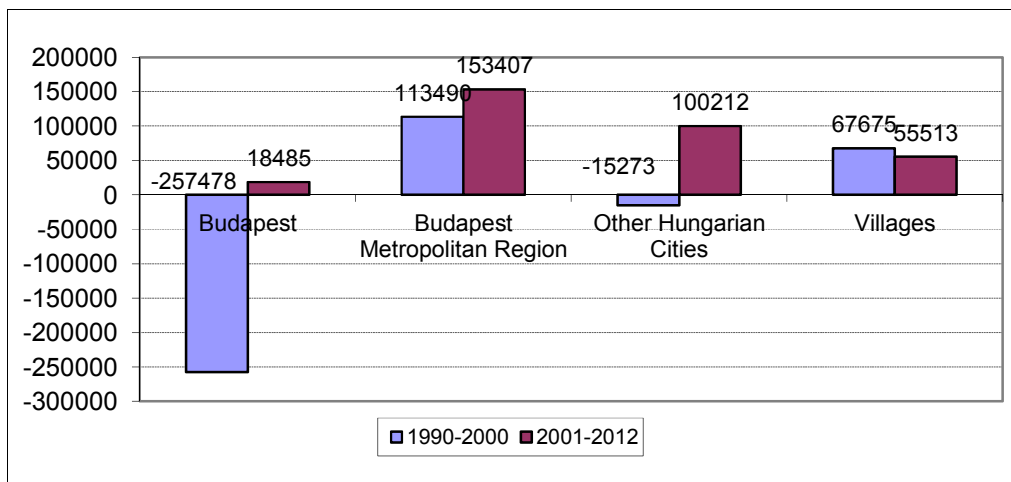


Figure 2: Population changes between 1990-2001 and 2001-2012 by different settlement types  
Source: edited on HCSO data by J. Schuchmann

The changing processes of the population in Budapest and in the studied outskirts are different from each other. The population of Budapest has been constantly decreasing since 1978. In 1978 the number of inhabitants was 2.059 thousand. In 1996 it was 1.886 thousand, in 2000 1.811 thousand. Between 2001 and 2007 the number of inhabitants continued to decrease by 82 thousand people (the average decrease of the population per year was 13.600 heads). The decrease touched the bottom in 2007 with 1.696 thousand people. On one hand the causes included the fact that the number of live births was slightly higher than the number of deaths and on the other hand the fact that a suburbanization process began in the 1990's. In the years between 2007 and 2009 the number of the inhabitants of Budapest started to grow again based on the latest statistical data. This important new phenomenon is determined by people or their children moving back to the capital from the outskirts, in addition to it was influenced by internal and international immigration as well. On the 1st of January in 2009 the total number of the inhabitants of Budapest was 1.712.210.

As opposed to the capital the number of population was continuously growing in the last 10 years due to the positive migration in the outskirts. In 1996 the number of inhabitants was 608 thousand; in 2000 it reached 640 thousand here. Between the last two censuses (1990, 2001) the number of inhabitants increased by 105 thousand people (growth of 18%). The process did not stop, consequently in 2007 the inhabitants of this area was 755.000, but between 2007 and 2009 the population increased further by 36.000 people.

It is important to pay attention for several new phenomena, firstly the change of the population of Budapest, which means the decrease of population turned stopped and a

slow increase began. Secondly, the increase of outskirts population continued but with territorial differences. The dynamism of the population development concentrated in specific sectors, particularly in the settlements with good accessibility (see Figure 3).

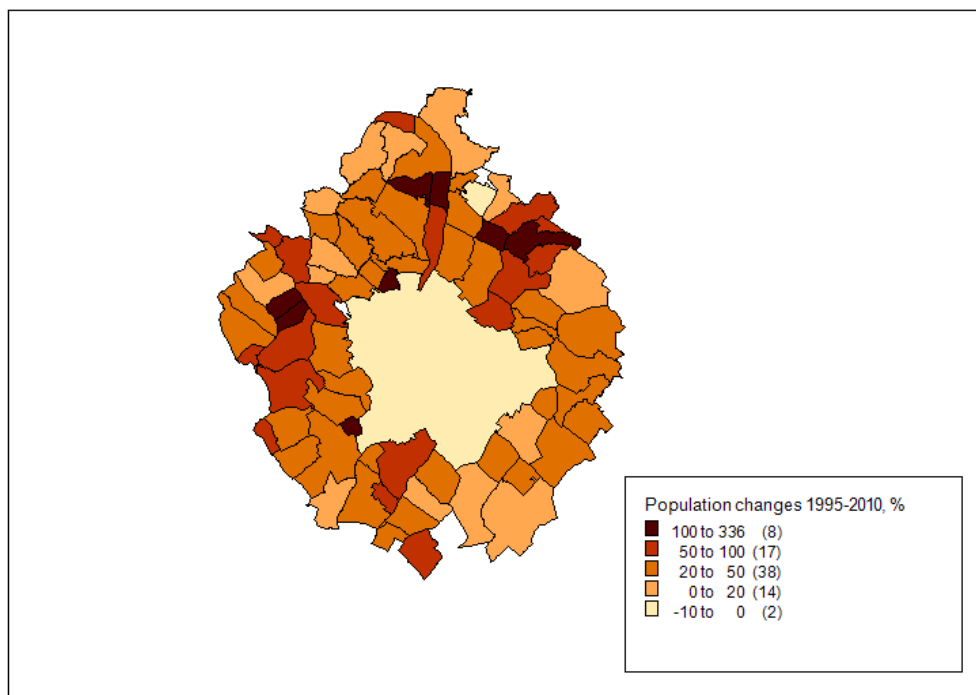


Figure 3: Population changes between 1995-2010, %  
Source: Edited by J. Schuchmann, on HCSO database, 1995, 2010

The more attractive settlements (Danube Bend, Buda Hills) with better accessibility (near highways, clearways, or railways) located in the Western part of the outskirts were preferred by the out migrants of higher classes. These social groups can afford the higher real estates prices. The motivations included the better living environments. The lower social groups concentrate in the less developed settlements located in the South-Eastern part, as a result of low property prices and worse accessibility. These present the impacts of infrastructural and ecological specificities on the spatial and social structure of the metropolitan zone which is significantly and hierarchically unequal. Concerning the statistical data on educational level in the Budapest metropolitan region the proportion of qualified people is higher than the country average, especially in the capital (see Figure 4).

	Elementary	Secondary	University or college degree
Budapest	95%	64,9%	28,8%
Budapest metropolitan region	90%	57,5%	26,9%
Country average	91%	42%	14,7%

Figure 4: Proportion of population by level of education, population above age 14, 2005, %  
Source: edited by Schuchmann, J., on the basis of Hungarian Micro Census, 2005

The statistical differences appeared on the level of outskirt settlements as well. The average of people with university degree is generally higher (between 16-27%) in the developed sectors than in the underdeveloped parts (4-5%) of the studied area.

In suburbanisation processes, the demographical structure of metropolitan regions generally changes radically, which we can state in the case of Budapest as well. In Budapest it is important to mention that the population has been ageing constantly since 1978. Due to the migration of younger groups to the outskirts, the demographical composition of outskirt settlements became younger than in the capital. But the whole Budapest metropolitan region started to ageing in 2007 when the proportion of elderly groups was higher (17%) than that of the population under 14 years (14%). (Compared with the average in the year of 1990, which were 14,5% for people over 65 years, and 18,6% in the case of population under 14 years.)

#### 4. MIGRATION PATTERNS

If we analyze the migration patterns and regional balance in Hungary we have to point out the historical attract of countries population to the central metropolitan region. It comes from the Budapest centrality of Hungary, and also the role of capital region as well. Beside the Budapest centrality, we can observe a migration trend from the underdeveloped eastern countries to the more developed western part of the country. Actually because of the economic crises the number of migrants decreasing significantly, but the outmigration is remaining the determining trend in many part of Hungary especially the southern and Eastern regions, where the local economy is quite weak. The most significant movements is observe in the Budapest Metroplitan Region. For years Budapest has a negative migration balance. Outmigration was especially strong in the western districts of the city. Since 2007, however, significant changes can be observed; since that time more people have moved into Budapest then moved out, thus the balance turned positive. The above change of the migration trend also shows

that the districts of Budapest formerly having been characterized by emigration, showed a positive migration difference in 2012 (see Figure 5).

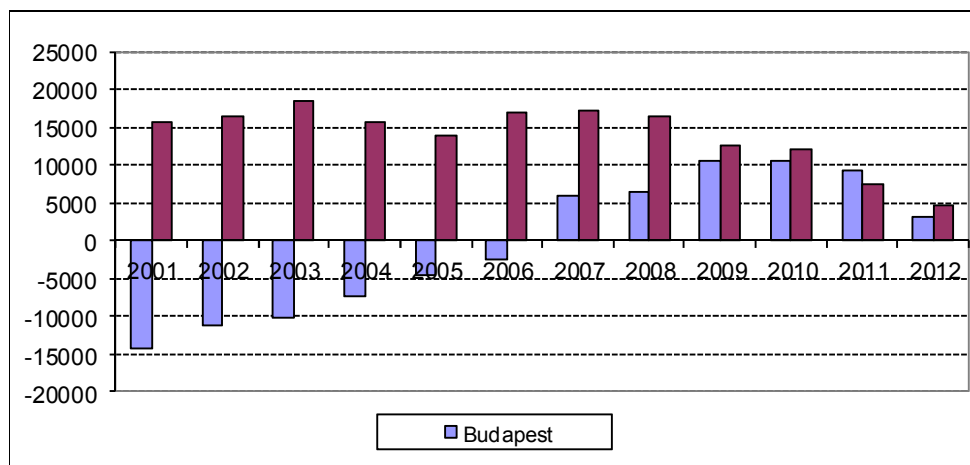


Figure 5: Migration Balance in Budapest and In Pest County (2001-2012, per capita) Source: Edited on HCSO data by J. Schuchmann

The population growth of peri-urban settlements is primarily due to the positive migration not only from the Capital but the other part (mainly the under developed part) of the country.

(see Figure 6). This population growth was accompanied by strong housing and by the large-scale building in of agricultural areas; this was also a side effect of suburbanisation.

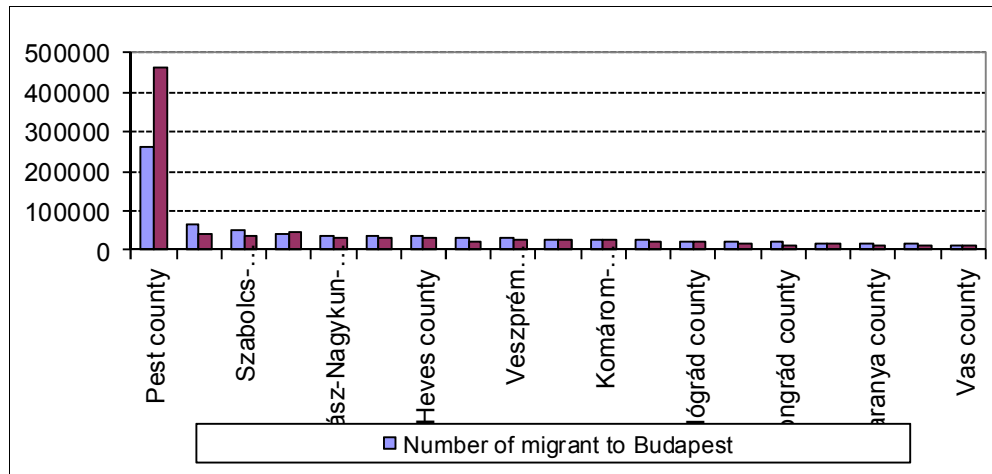


Figure 6: Number of migrants from Hungarian counties to Budapest between 1995- 2009,  
Source: Edited on HCSO data by J. Schuchmann

One of the most significant urban sprawl phenomena is related to the change in the land use patterns (see Figure 7). We can state that in the last decade the first transformation was an enormous increase of economic and commercial land use based on the new global economic impacts, especially on the impact of the new Hungarian regulation (Act LXXVIII of 1997 on the Formation and Protection of the Built Environment) and consequently on the revise of previous master plans of settlements. 2000 and 2001 were also the years of economic development and unfortunately of real estate speculations. The second significant change is the increase of residential investments due to suburbanisation processes.

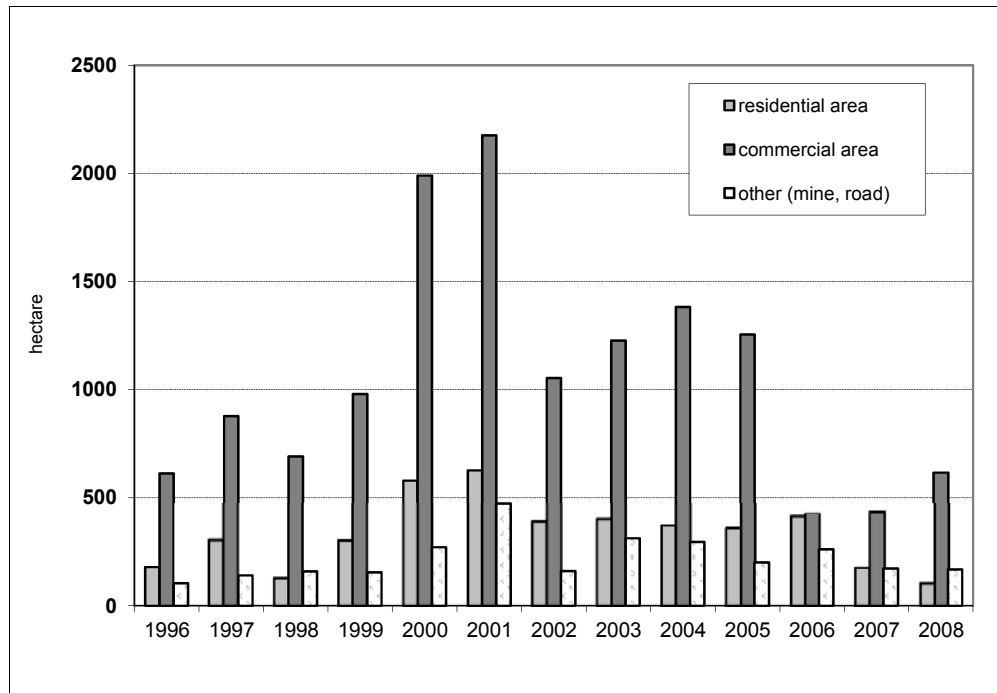


Figure 7: The change of land use patterns in the Budapest metropolitan region (Hectare, 1996 – 2008) Source: Pestterv ltd

## 5. CHANGES OF RESIDENTIAL REQUIREMENTS IN THE BUDAPEST METROPOLITAN REGION

The residential requirements of the urban population can determine the suburbanisation because the demands and aspirations of the population for possible future settlements can influence territorial consumption. That is why in this part of the study we would like to analyse the residential requirements of the population of the Budapest region based on the empirical survey carried out in the Budapest Metropolitan Region in two years, in 2005 and 2010. Based on the results of two big empirical research<sup>1</sup> it possible to compare the possible changes in the migration intentions between the two dates (see Figure 8).

<sup>1</sup> „Urban areas, spatial social inequality and conflicts” (2007-2009) Research Project supported by the Hungarian National Research Development Program, and carried out by Institute of Sociology of Hungarian Academy of Sciences Research leader: Prof. Dr. Viktória Szirmai Dsc, Sustainable Consumption, Production and Communication comprehensive research project supported by Norway Grant and carried out by Institute of Sociology of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences Research leader: Prof. Dr. Viktória Szirmai, Dsc.

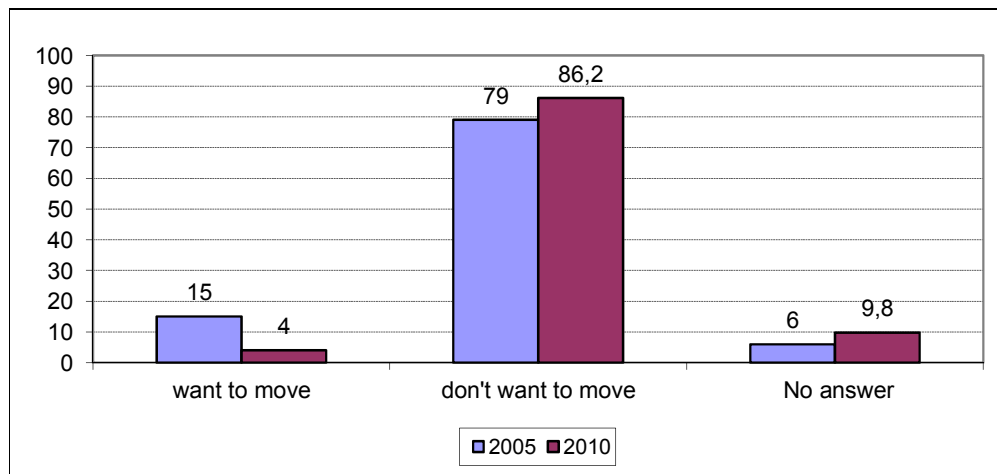


Figure 8: Changes in migration intention in the Budapest Metropolitan Region in 2005 and in 2010 (%) Source: Data from the questionnaire of the HNRDP (Hungarian National Research Development Program) and from the Project of Norwegian Financial Mechanism

We would like to strengthen that the majority of the interviewed people do not want to move from their current places of residence, but in 2005 the 79% of the peoples did not want to move, 15.2% wanted to move.

The surprising finding of the 2010 research in the Budapest metropolitan area was the further decrease (to 4%) of the already low proportion of those who want to move. One of the factual reasons for this is the current economic crisis, the debts which prevent many people from moving, especially among the strata living in underdeveloped outskirt areas, being in disadvantageous situation and having a lower level of education. Debt problems affected mainly the lower social status groups, while residential park developments decreased intentions to move out of the city centre among higher social status inhabitants. Obviously not only for this reason, but there has been a decrease in the dynamics of outmigration since 2007 and a slow increase can also be observed in the number of the population of the capital as well (See Figure 9).

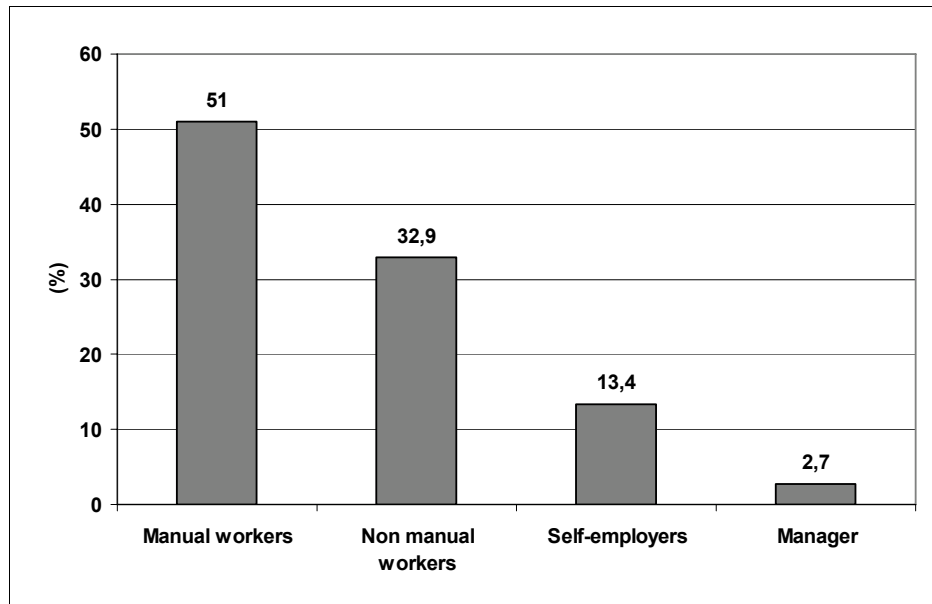


Figure 9: Population living in the Budapest Metropolitan Region with debts problems by educational groups (2010, %) Source: Data from the questionnaire of the Project of Norwegian Financial Mechanism

The population living in the different zones of Budapest region (city centre, transitional zone, suburb, developed and underdeveloped urban area) has in different intentions for move. The survey found that compared to the average (10.1%) a higher ratio of people want to move out of the city centre (17.8%) and of the transitional zone surrounding the city centre (16.7%). The proportion of people wishing to move is below-average in the suburbs (8.6%) and in developed settlements (3.5%). This value was slightly higher in underdeveloped settlements (7%).

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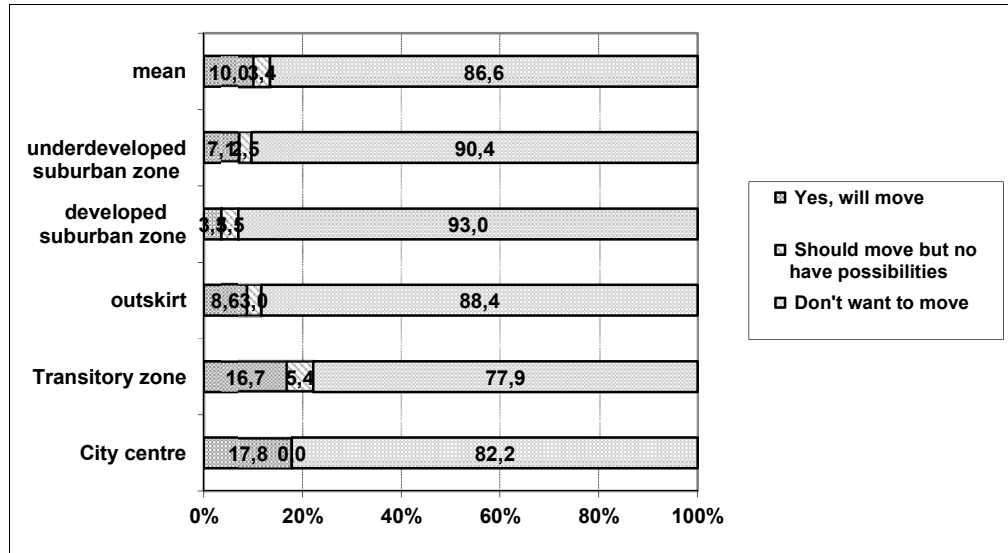


Figure 10: Differences in the migration intentions of people living in different zones (% , 2010)  
 Source: Data from the questionnaire of the Project of Norwegian Financial Mechanism

Educated social groups (15.6% of university and college graduates, 17.5% of secondary school graduates) have greater desire to move than low-educated people, 5.8% of people with primary school education and 6.5% of people with vocational school certificate would change their place of residence.

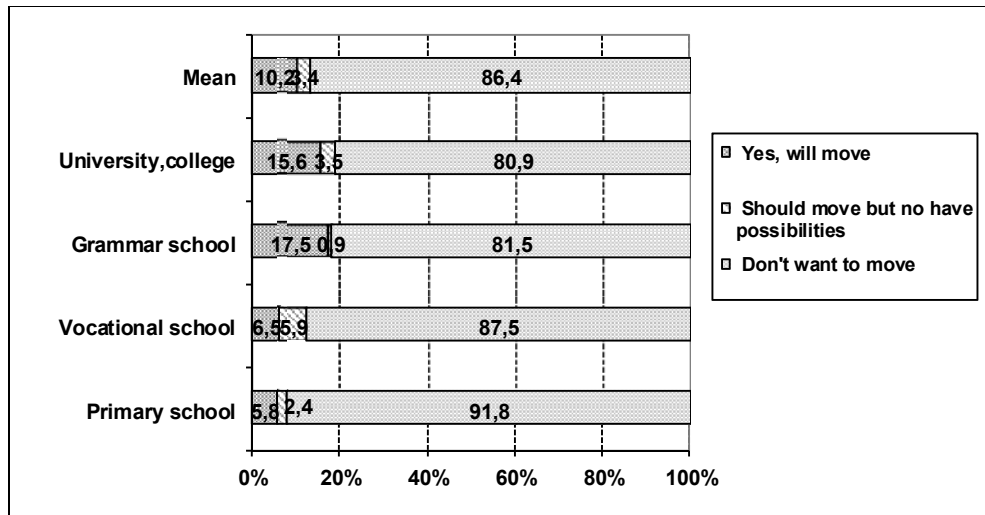


Figure 11: Migration intention in the Budapest Metropolitan Region by qualification groups (% , 2010) Source: Data from the questionnaire of the Project of Norwegian Financial Mechanism

## 5. CONCLUSION

To conclude, based on our first research results we have to summarize the main urban development trends in the Budapest Metropolitan Area with special focus on the suburbanisation processes.

In response to the question posed to the title namely: Suburbanisation or reurbanisation is the dominant urban development trend in the Budapest Metropolitan Area I can answer based on my first research results: both are relevant. On the one hand based on the statistical analysis there is still a strong outmigration from the city centre to the outskirt areas, but slowing. The residential suburbanisation effects the outskirt settlements very unequal. Those settlements were the most attractive for the middle and for the upper class which has a good accessibility and transport connections to the capital. The dynamic of the suburbanisation is slowdown because of the economic crisis effect on the real estate market and the following debt crisis as well. This debt crisis affected mostly the vulnerable social groups. Due to this economic and debt crisis the general intention to move have decreased. Only the wealthiest groups can afford them to move to the suburbs and to pay for it developing costs. On the other hand in the last period there was a strong regional concentration processes in the Budapest Metropolitan Area because of the immigration from the other part of the country. It means the Budapest Metropolitan Region is the only region of Hungary which has a positive migration balance due to the immigration. Recently the number of inhabitants of the capital is getting to growth again, which has an origin from the outskirt areas. The city

centre of Budapest is getting to attract peoples from the outskirt areas, thanks to the urban renewal and rehabilitation programmes.

For the future development scenarios could be depend on the general economic development of the country and also the social economic situation. For now the social and economic facts show us the slowdown of this space consuming urban development trend, and we have to find out how we can manage it to a more sustainable way.

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