

Large housing estates in Hungary

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RESTATE



How to improve the inherited bad reputation of a housing estate: the story of Havanna in Budapest

The poster explores, how an ambitious local government tries to change the reputation of a housing estate, which simply inherited its bad image. Due to its history – mostly because of its original population – and its former reputation as a problem spot, the Havanna housing estate in Budapest has been stigmatized in the eyes of the residents in and around the capital. Although its social and physical reality has changed quite substantially from the second half of the 1990s – due to spontaneous social changes caused by the privatization and the well-planned efforts of the local municipality – it is hard to change this reputation. The poster presents an overview of the origins of the problem, the social transformation that occurred after the change of the regime and the steps the local government has taken to improve the reputation of the housing estate.

I. How things began in the Havanna estate

On the site, where the Havanna housing estate was built, had once stood the so-called State Estate, which consisted of makeshift buildings with substandard apartments for refugees after WWI.

Havanna was constructed between 1977 and 1983 as a big state investment project, and provided homes for 22.000 people at the time in 6.200 dwellings. A lot of homes were distributed for socially disadvantaged people: some of its residents came from the former State Estate, some from the inner city clearance sites.

Its fragile social status was reflected by the high share of state-run apartment buildings (64,5%) with fewer condominiums (12.2%), cooperatives (19.3%) and apartments owned by the Ministry of Internal Affairs (4%).

It was named after the Cuban capital in an act of respect for its regime, and it actually housed guest workers from Cuba working in a nearby textile factory.

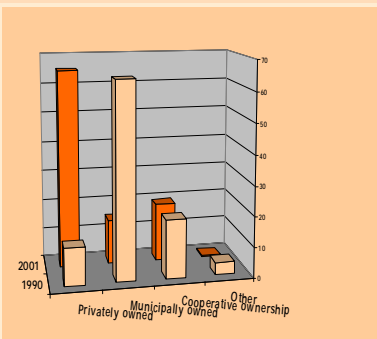
The former State Estate in the beginning of the XX. century



Havanna housing estate in construction



Change in the ownership structure of the apartments



II. Changing resident composition

The composition of residents changed rapidly in the early 90s, mainly as a result of privatisation. Then tenants could buy their units for about 10-15% of the market value from the municipality and sell it the next day for 100% in the market. In the hope of financial gain, a lot of the residents – mainly the poorest layer – sold their apartments and moved away.

Surging utility prices hit (especially hard) many families in the housing estates, as these homes were expensive to maintain. Thus many were prompted to sell the apartments and move to the suburbs.

In recent years the estate has become the target area for lower-middle class people, mainly youngsters with children, as low real estate prices – a result of the estate's bad reputation - made it possible for these families to purchase an apartment here.

Civil initiatives



A lot of children...

Upgraded shopping facilities



Renovation of the public spaces



III. Efforts of the local government

Havanna days in September (Winners of the cooking competition)



The introduction of the Havanna Days – a cultural week organised on the estate – serves two aims: to improve the lives of the estate residents and to spread the news that the estate has a flourishing cultural life.

The refurbishment of playgrounds and the creation of small gardens in front of the buildings serves to "humanise" the estate and to adjust it to the needs of the residents.

The introduction of the closed circuit camera system (CCTV) serves to reduce the crime rate – it has proven to be very successful – and consequently to diminish Havanna's reputation of being a dangerous spot.

DO YOU AGREE WITH THESE MEASURES?

WHAT WOULD YOU DO INSTEAD?

WE NEED YOUR OPINION!



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