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**TOURISM RELATED PROBLEMS, POSSIBILITIES AND
HISTORICAL RESEARCH OF TOURISM DEVELOPMENT IN
BUDAPEST**

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The follow article is about the tourism in Budapest and the problems and possibilities that can be connect with the tourism development. This is a superficial approach about the topic as this theme can be very extensive.

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ABSTRACT

This article has as its priority to analyze the current situation of tourism in Budapest taking into account the positive and negative aspects for the city and for the residents. Find out the consequences that this tourist movement can have on the quality of life of its inhabitants, such as the price of housing, products, transportation, etc.

This analysis will be based on reading articles, news and experience as a resident of the capital. Also make a brief analysis of new mechanisms that attract tourists, such as Airbnb, Lime (scooters), etc.

Budapest has attracted many tourists for years due to its architectural and historical beauty, being considered one of the most beautiful capitals in the world. Even during the communist regime the city was regarded as a "refuge" for the communist bloc, where people from neighboring countries could come and enjoy a certain "freedom". And for the capitalist bloc it was a way of experiencing life in a place of different political regime. But with the fall of the communist bloc in the late 1980s and early 1990s, there was also a fall in the tourist movement in the Hungarian capital. This fall is due to several factors, such as the opening of new cities that were once part of the communist bloc to the world and the freedom of the population to come and go.

From the 2000s, Budapest has been rediscovered for tourism, attracting more tourists each year to the Hungarian capital. This growing tourist movement is due to its architectural and historical beauty as well as its well-known nightlife, with its famous ruins bars. With this increase in tourism there have also been changes in real estate, security, cleaning, transportation, etc. These changes were both positive and negative in many ways.

According to an article of BBC about the Airbnb, in Barcelona this kind of temporary housing is dealing with some issues as tenant expulsions, harassment and daily disruptions. Besides that the Barcelona council says that Airbnb "creates speculation and illicit economies and its activities leave nothing positive for local neighbors, causing nuisance and complaints" (GUTTENTAG, 2018). Not only in Barcelona this is being a problem, in Boston, Los Angeles and in other parts of the world, this new way of hosting is causing a rising in the local rents. So in many cases gentrification is being a dilemma that now the locals have to deal. One US study suggested a 10% increase in Airbnb listings led to a 0,42% increase in rents and a 0,76% increase in house prices. (GUTTENTAG, 2018) But it is not only bad experience with the Airbnb or similar platforms. This can be also positive when you think about the local economy and a cultural exchange that can bring sometimes to the neighborhood. As well bring more life to those distant areas or with a "bad" reputation, when they try to attract more tourists.

Another point is the scooters that are being use in the cities, most by tourists that do not have the properly knowledge about the rules and the traffic of the city. The pedestrians and the scooters are fighting for a space in the sidewalk when was suppose to be using different areas. But this many times occurs because they do not know the rules or just do not care about it.

Key words: *Budapest; tourism; problems; gentrification; Airbnb; scooters.*

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

UNESCO – United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

COURB – Instituto de Urbanismo Colaborativo

UBA – Federal Environmental Agency (Umweltbundesamtes)

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1 INTRODUCTION

The main topic of this research is about the tourism and the problems and possibilities in the city of Budapest, especially in the inner part and historical areas. But to understand a little more is it necessary introduces in a short way the history of Budapest in the field of tourism.

Budapest has attracted many tourists for years, being considered one of the most beautiful capitals in the world. During the communist regime the city was regarded as a "refuge" for the communist bloc, where people from neighboring countries used to come because was considered an "easy" access. And for the western countries it was a new experience with a different political regime. Was seen as the most Western city from the eastern part of the Europe. But the fall of the communism, in the late 1980s and early 1990s, contributed as well for the fall of the tourism movement in the Hungarian capital. This drop is due to several factors, such as the "opening" of cities and countries that were once part of the communist bloc and the freedom of the population to come and go.

Most of the architecture in the inner part of the city is from the 19th century. And the most famous tourist attractions came from this time such as the Heroes's Square, the Parliament, and the residential buildings at Andrásy Avenue. Besides that the preservation of the old buildings and also from previous times (Aquincum and medieval houses in the Castle District – figure 1) is one of the things that attract many tourists for the capital.

Figura 1: Medieval houses at the Castle District.



Source: by author, 2014.

Even going through the two World Wars and sieges Budapest was capable to preserve many places that today are the touristic attractions and that have a big contribution for the World Heritage in the central area, according to UNESCO, (Puczko, Ratz and Smith (2008, p.23)) being *“one of the world’s outstanding urban landscapes which displays the continuity of history as an urban panorama, and illustrates the great periods in the history of the Hungarian capital”* (apud Puczko and Rátz, 2006a).

In the post-communism period the city lost a plenty of tourist, as already mentioned, due many factors that contributed but from the 2000s, this started to change and Budapest has been rediscovered for tourism, attracting more and more tourists each year to the Hungarian capital. And in 2018 Hungary drew a record number of foreign visitors, 650,000 more than in 2017, according to the director-general of the Hungarian Tourism Agency (Magyar Turisztikai Ügynökség – MTÜ) (DAILY NEWS HUNGARY, 2019). And at the same time Budapest won as the best European destination for 2019.

Budapest is the most important city in Hungary and more than 50% of GDP is produced in the city and/or around. This is why many international companies have the headquarters in the city and the international institutions as well.

As many other cities around the world, Budapest wants to attract more tourism as a form to increase the economy of the city and even of the country. But at the same time this can bring some issues for who is living on it.

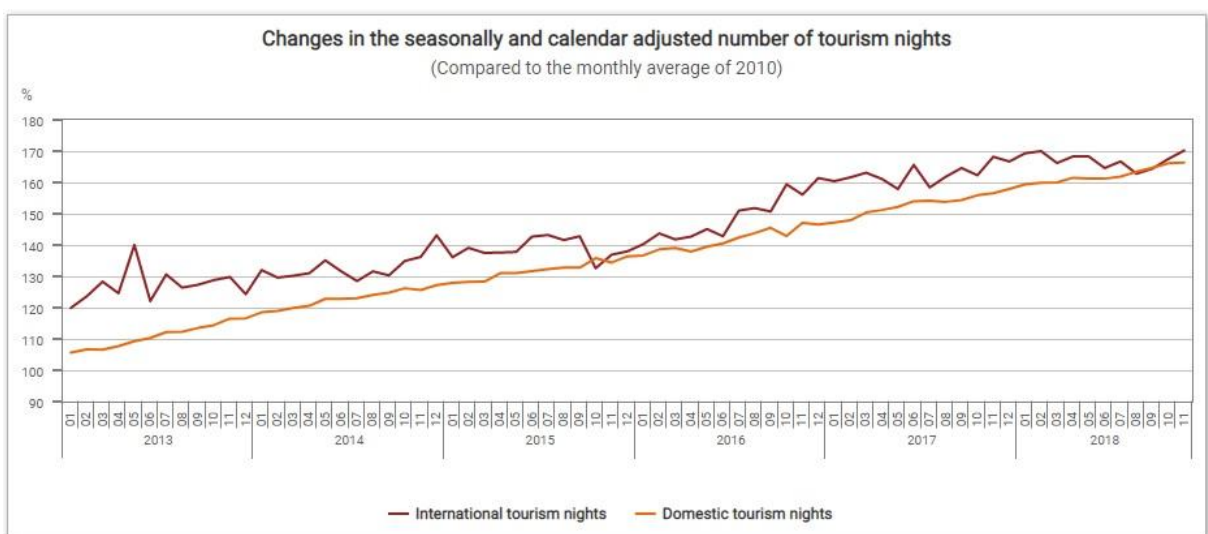
1.1 Tourism in Hungary and Budapest

As already mentioned, the tourism in Budapest has grown since few years ago but in the end of 2018 this growth was recognize. Recent research shows that the tourism sector had a strong year and the commercial accommodation increased comparing to the previous year. According to the Central Statistical Office (KSH), the night spent by international tourists had a growth of 0.9% from the previous year, 2017 (GAÁL, 2019).

The official numbers show that was around 31 million guest nights in Hungary and more than 50% were foreign. German tourists were the ones who most spent nights in Hungary in the year of 2018 followed by tourists from United Kingdom and Czech Republic. They spent 2.083.00, 1.050.500 and 933.900 respectively (GAÁL, 2019).

The number of international tourists grew by 4.8% and the tourism night they spent increased 1.6%. Usually they stayed in boarding houses, community hostels and camping sites. But also in hotels and Airbnb, being this last one more difficult to know the exactly numbers. The foreigners spent more time/nights in Budapest-Central Danube region, 2.5% more than the previous year at the same month. However the domestic tourist spent more time/nights in each tourist region, with exception of the Lake Tisza Region. In this case the rate of expansion was 4.5% in hotels and grew by 8.2% - table 1 (KSH, 2019).

Tabela 1: Changes in the seasonally and calendar adjusted of tourism nights.



Author: Hungarian Central Statistical Office, 2019.

More than 10% of the GDP of Hungary last year came from the tourism and the catering industry (BERENDE, 2019). Showing how important was the tourism movement for the country in the financial field. In addition is possible to see the growing job offers in the sector.

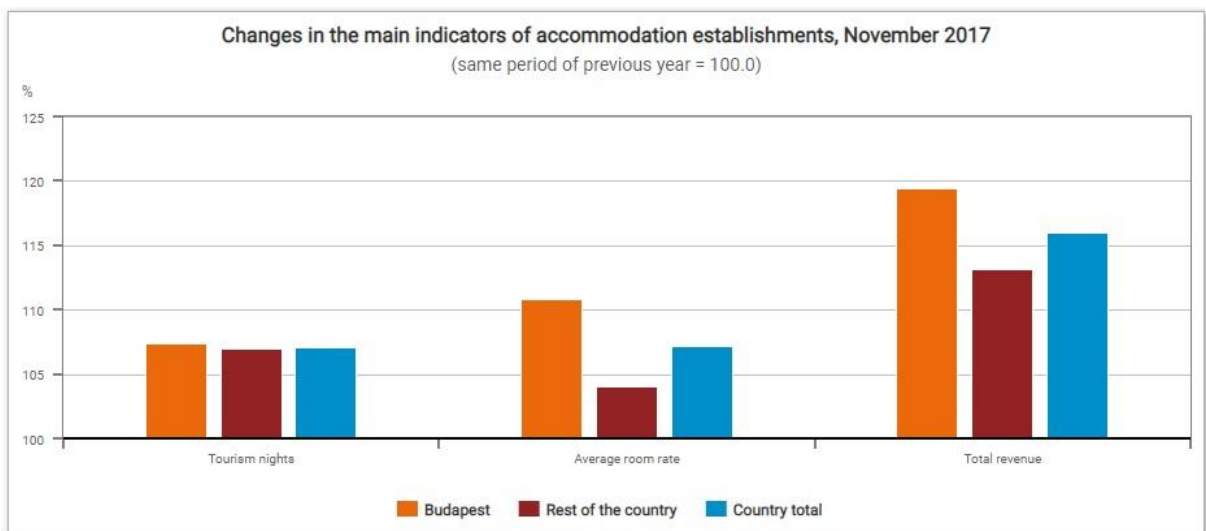
Figura 2: Official Budapest Tourist Information Point.

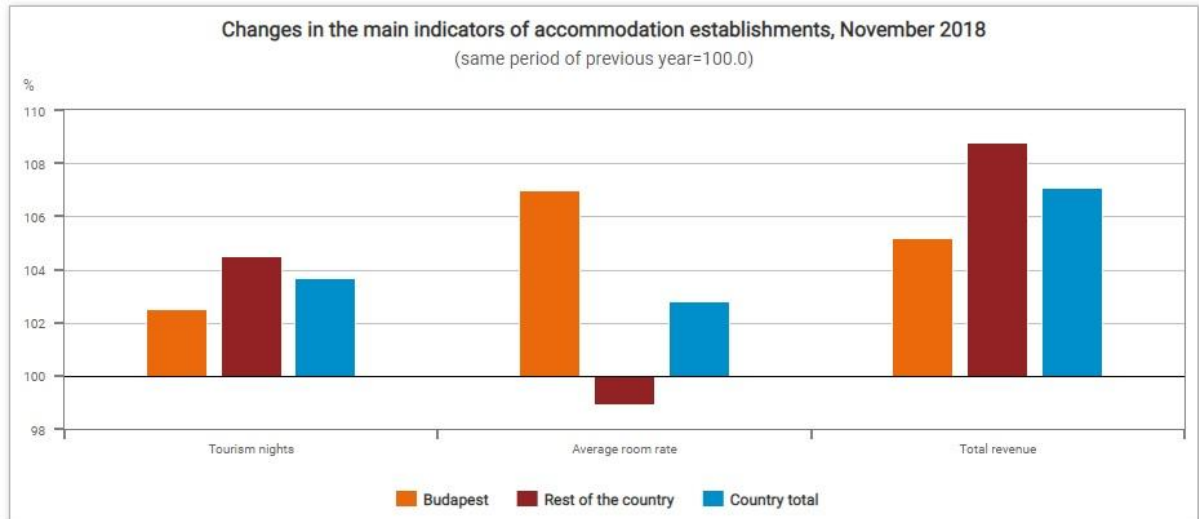


Source: MUNICIPALITY OF BUDAPEST, 2019.

According to Hungarian Central Statistical Office, “The total gross revenue of accommodation establishments increased by 7.1% to HUF 37 billion at current prices; within this, accommodation fee revenues increased by 6.8% (to HUF 20 billion)” (KSH, 2019).

Tabela 2: Main indicators of accommodation establishments, November 2017 / 2018.





Author: Hungarian Central Statistical Office, 2019.

1.2 Methodology

- Brief research on the history of Budapest related to tourism.
- Bibliographical review on tourism, gentrification, etc. Understanding the concepts.
- Researches about the problems/possibilities connect to Airbnb and scooters (news, websites, etc.).
- Study analysis.

2 THEORETICAL REFERENCE AND BASIC DEFINITIONS

The concepts addressed in this theoretical reference were taken from academic documents and from the intentional reading about them.

The texts researched aim to broaden the understanding about the theme chosen for this work. With this, it seeks to deepen the theoretical bases on tourism and other concepts related to the theme.

2.1 Tourism

Was the matter of effect it is a very knowing word in the whole world but what is tourism? According the GO2 Tourism HR Society the meaning is: “*Tourism – is the activities of people traveling to and staying in places outside their usual environment for leisure, business or other purposes for not more than one consecutive year.*” (go2HR, 2019). It can be divided in many different categories (outbound, inbound, domestic, etc.).

2.2 Tourist

According to Collins dictionary, “*a tourist is a person who is visiting a place for pleasure and interest, especially when they are on holiday.*” (COBUILD, 2019). That is, a person who is not from the region, but who is in a certain place taking a trip that can be for leisure, work or both. And will stay for a short time in the city.

2.3 Gentrification

Gentrification is a word that originally came from the English gentry and then turned the expression gentrification. The word gentry refer to the little nobility. The first time this expression came about was in the 1960s in London. This was because at this time very small nobles were migrating from the suburbs to neighborhoods that previously only the working class lived. With this new movement of the city, there was a considerable increase in the prices of real estate located in these neighborhoods and the real estate market soared. This led to the "expulsion" of the former residents, who could no longer afford to rent and live in these areas.

Bringing more into the urban city context, gentrification is a process of ennoblement, gentrification or elitism of an area (COSTA - COURB¹, 2016).

British sociologist Ruth Glass in 1964 was responsible for the first time the term "gentrification." The first definitions of gentrification have a greater focus on the real estate market and the replacement of the poorest population by the new middle class (RANGEL, 2015: p.40). Currently this term does not only apply in this real estate context, although it is the most observed. But it is also widely used in the social context.

Neil Smith (1996) characterizes that the gentrification is configured as a modern pioneering, the urban renaissance. This new image created from the urban centers would serve for the legitimating and rationalization of this new process of conquest, a process that is necessarily international, occurring in several parts of the world.

¹ COURB – Instituto de Urbanismo Colaborativo

3 PROBLEMS AND POSSIBILITIES IN THE TOURISM

The tourism has two sides for the city, at the same time that can be a good thing can also be and change for a negative perspective. But everything depends how do you see and feel the tourism movement where do you live. In Budapest this is not different. In one point of view the tourism brought positive things. A plenty of new developments were made in few years to attract more tourists and increase the cash flow in the tourism sector, such as rebuilt national Ferenc Puskás Stadium for the Euro Football Championship in 2020, new swimming pools for the swimming championship in 2017, sports fields for others competitions, new museums at Város Liget, and investments plans for new terminal in the international airport, etc.

Other important point in the development of the tourism was the rising in the Airbnb. Many inhabitants are choosing to rent the own apartment for temporary rental for tourists and have an extra money. In some cases they leave their flats in the city center only for the Airbnb proposal and live faraway. The problem is when they start to buy flats around or from the poor people with the idea to change into this temporary housing. This can disturb the neighbors from the building with this new use and increase the living in the area. This expanding of the living costs can start a gentrification even not being the objective.

All those changes in the city to attract more visitors and enlarge the cash flow also bring a new life style and raise the costs of the living. In some cases the old residents can not afford anymore for the costs and then they are forced to move out to a far place from the city center. And for the new residents, who are searching for a new apartment, they can find on the central area expensive rentals.

This new way of tourism housing is causing many changes not only in Budapest but in many others parts of the world as Barcelona, San Francisco, Rio de Janeiro, etc. Recent news and researches show that in many cities was possible to notice that Airbnb and similar platforms are changing the value of the residential rents/purchase, the costs of living in the neighborhood, security, the relation with the space and the urban planning.

In the article about Airbnb, the rent gap and gentrification written by David Wachsmuth and Alexander Weisler they mention:

As this brief timeline of Airbnb in New York suggests, cities and communities around the world are increasingly grappling with the impact of short-term rentals on their housing markets, and the question of whether and how to regulate the matter. Cities across North America and Europe have seen legislative showdowns fueled by housing activism. Barcelona's leftist mayor Ada Colau swept to office in 2015 with a platform that explicitly

linked Airbnb with housing stress. Berlin has cracked down on short-term rentals in hopes of keeping housing affordable. Pricier capitals London and Amsterdam have limited rentals to 90 nights and 60 nights per year, respectively. And even while New York City and San Francisco dominate the US discourse, a range of mid-size cities across the country have challenged the company's business practices, while others have reached amicable arrangements. (WACHSMUTH; WEISLER, 2018)

This fresh way of hosting is bringing a different issue for the cities where the governments must elaborate laws to regulate this new trade. For the urban planners is not being an easy task to deal with this change on the hosting/housing in the cities. Because in this case how effective existing planning controls on tourism and residential accommodations and what are the implications in the urban policy? Questions that now local governments, urban planners and society must try to answer for a better living for all.

Besides the Airbnb and similar platforms tribulations, another one very fresh and a bit more difficult to figure out is the mobility, focus in tourists through the cities, such as scooters, segways, electric bikes and other electronic transport devices. It is starting to be a big issue for many touristic cities in the world and wouldn't be different in the Hungarian capital. The main issues are who could use those electronic devices, where people could use and how to regulate. Because what we can see is that many times the users are not able to drive such devices and they do not know the regulations for the use, causing accidents, stress and disrespect.

3.1 The new mobility for tourists and the problems that this can cause

Electronic devices are being use as innovative system of mobility with the idea of being sustainable and eco friendly. They first came as an alternative to change the traffic and to help the cities as a substitute for the cars, etc. But in latest researches those changes that should occur is not for sure real because in some cases this e-scooters and related devices are being used inconveniently. When they should be used in the suburbs allowing commuters to reach easier the train and tram stops they are being used in downtown. One of the biggest problem with electric scooters is that it has become a popular replacement for downtown pedestrian and cycling instead of improving the quality of life in the city and in replacing car traffic (HERCZEG,2019).

Is it visible in the city of Budapest that the largest users of this type of transport are tourists and not residents. Most of the time they are touring using this alternative transportation and in places they should not. This is due to lack of knowledge or even lack of laws and inspection.

Figura 3: Tourists using e-scooters in Kazinczy utca, Budapest.



Source: made by author, 2019.

This missing regulation for this alternative mobility is causing a mess many districts in the city, especially in the inner ones such 6th, 7th, 8th and 9th districts, where is noticed a big movement of visitors during the whole year. The 5th district known for the touristic areas as well they banned last year the use of electronic devices but sometimes it is still possible see the use of it. This ban was prompted by numerous complaints about the danger that scooters and comparable caused in areas of heavy pedestrian traffic. If someone is caught using such a device on the spot he should pay a fine of 50.000 HUF, which is equivalent to about 155 Euros.

Those devices are often parked anywhere and not in a predetermined area, may be in the middle of the sidewalk, near or in front of a business establishment and even on the street, figure 4. In addition, many users use the sidewalk as a route for scooter traffic. This misuse causes stress for pedestrians and can even lead to accidents. In June of this year Germany they have banned scooters from using sidewalks as a traffic place and can only be used on the edge of the highway or on bike paths. This type of regulation is already something important for a better organization of urban spaces.

Figura 4: E-scooter parked in the middle of the sidewalk in Rákóczi út, Budapest.



Source: made by author, 2019.

Another point about using this type of transportation is the lack of security, figure 5. This is because often when you rent such a vehicle, it is not equipped with safety equipment such as a helmet, knee pad, etc. For example companies similar to Lime. But in touristic places they usually offer such equipments.

Figura 5: Author using e-scooter for the first time in Vienna without safety equipment.



Source: ROVID, 2019.

Drive such transport without safety equipments and without have the knowledge of the local regulation can be very dangerous and bad experience. This why is trick to say that this kind of transportation is helping in fact the city reducing the traffic and improving the quality of life for the residents, in fact can be the opposite. Parking this devices in the wrong places can disturb daily neighborhood movement using inappropriate places can cause accidents and contribute to traffic jams and contribute to a dispute between residents and tourists, figure 6.

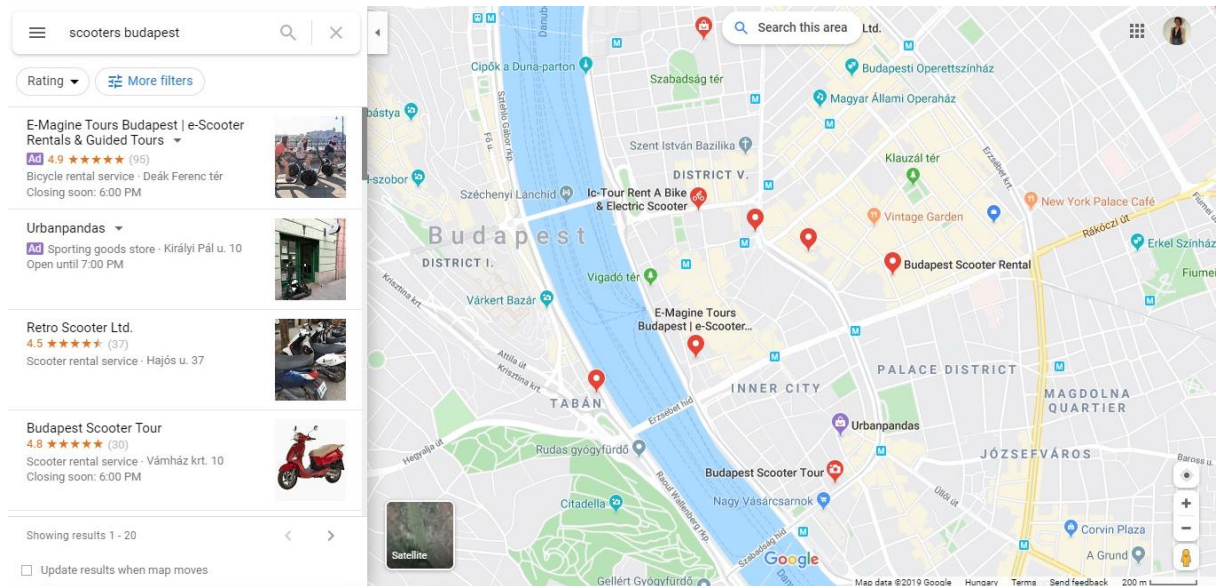
Figura 6: E-scooters parked in different areas of the 7th district in Budapest.



Source: made by author, 2019.

From this map (figure 7) we can observe, in red points, that most of the rental companies for this alternative transportation are located on the tourist districts of Budapest. A sign that this kind of transport is used basically by tourists and not residents.

Figura 7: Map with some rental scooters companies in Budapest.



Source: Google Maps, 2019.

3.2 Scooters in the world: problems and solutions

The scooters came as a new solution for the problems related to traffic and sustainability for the cities but would be in fact a good answer? Recent research shows that in order for scooters actually play this role of promoting the improvement in city traffic and to be considered a sustainable alternative, responsible companies need to implement such mobility in the farthest regions of the city in order to connect these areas with means of transportation such as the subway and trams and not in the central areas. Because, generally, in urban centers people can travel the routes walking without need transport or use public transport.

According to UBA (UBA, 2019) *“E-scooters are environmentally friendly only if they replace car or motorcycle rides and no other additional trips with fuel-powered vehicles take place. Using the e-scooter instead of your own feet or a bicycle is bad for the environment and health.”*

The French government is implementing new rules for the use of the electric scooters after incidents in some cities in the country. This is an attempt to reduce many of the problems caused by misuse of the scooters. “Junior Transport Minister Jean-Baptiste Djebbari said in a statement the new rules would encourage “more responsible use... and restore a sense of tranquility for pedestrians, in particular the most vulnerable: the elderly, children and handicapped people”” (BCC, 2019). Some of the rules are: riders must have at least 12 years and cannot ride in pavement; only one rider per device will be allowed; the users cannot go against the traffic and they must use the bike paths when possible; will be forbidden the use of

headphones by riders; the speed limit will be reduce; and will be mandatory the use of helmet and high-visibility clothing.

Figura 8: Electric scooter in Paris.



Source: BBC, 2019.

It is being a struggle in many cities with the users and companies of electric scooters because they the governments and do not know how to create a regulation for it. Regulators do not know if the electric scooters should use the sidewalks, bike paths or the roads because it is a device that didn't exist a few years ago.

In August of 2018 a 92 year-old woman died in Barcelona after being hit by an e-scooter. Was the first case of a pedestrian being killed by the electric vehicle. At the time the rider does not saw her because he was looking at his phone, unfortunately it is a very common practice by users.

In Sweden they banned any of electric scooters that go more than 20km/h in the bike paths. In UK and Ireland was banned from the sidewalks and from the public roads. They can be used only in private land and with the landowner permission. The speed limit of 25km/h was introduced in Belgium and only people with 18 years old or over can ride. And in Copenhagen they are considering a limit of scooters that can park in specific areas of the city.

4 RESULTS

4.1 How Budapest can solve the problems that scooters may cause through the example of other cities

As you can see many cities are trying to find solutions to this new urban mobility, mainly used by tourists. But how can Budapest use these examples to work out and improve the use of those electric mobility? Would be banning the use of it? Restricting? Or making new rules for transportation?

From a point of view would be much “easier and more practical” to ban the use of electric vehicles, but I don't see as the best solution for a city like Budapest. Moreover, such a proposal would cause a lot of stress for the government with rental companies and even residents who own this type of vehicle.

It may not be the ideal solution, but restricting the use in certain areas would already be an improvement to the city's daily movement and would bring a bit more safety to pedestrians, drivers and even users. It would be a reorganization to improve the use of public spaces by all. New rules for the means of transport, especially for electric vehicles such as scooters, segways, etc., may already be considered essential in major tourist cities such as Budapest. The approval of new laws for the use of this equipment could bring more safety for everyone. It would be extremely important since the use is growing every day in the city. But these new laws must indeed be implemented and enforced by local authorities. Because without inspection at the beginning, the changes will not really be noticed and will remain in the same situation or even worse than it is today.

Restricting the use in certain areas and creating new laws would not be 100% effective to stop all the problems caused by these vehicles, but could already be a way of improving the quality of life of its inhabitants and even visitors who spend a few days in the city.

As an example we can mention countries like France, Germany, Sweden, Belgium and Italy that have already implemented or are in the process of implementing new laws for the use of electric vehicles as the pretext of improving the city. However, it is too early to be sure that such changes have been or will actually be effective. But it is already a beginning and an opening for a new discussion.

5 SUMMARIZING

This article aims to bring some important points in the tourist movement that afflicts many cities around the world, which would be not different in the case of Budapest. The aspects mentioned were the new form of hosting using electronic platforms such as Airbnb and the new means of mobility for example electric scooters and segways, mostly used by tourists.

Firstly, the tourist movement in Hungary and the Hungarian capital was approached. A historical introduction of tourism was made and the sector's growth after years was presented later. It shows that in 2018 tourism increased considerably compared to the previous year in both, the capital and the country. Linked to this growth in tourism, was made the observation of new means of accommodation for example Airbnb and the impacts that this new tool has been causing in the city. Changes such the rising cost of living in some districts, the gentrification caused by this, and changes in the city.

Another aspect mentioned was the use of new urban mobility devices, mostly used by people visiting the city. These vehicles were recently implemented but have become a concern for local government. In just a few time, such devices have already created a lot of divergence of opinions. This is due to the lack of norms and adequate knowledge of how to use it. In some European cities, local governments are already creating new laws and restrictions aimed at improving the quality of life of residents and tourists. It will be a long and arduous process to get there at a concrete solution.

Those two issues were chosen because they are considered the most significant in the current reality of the city. It aimed to expose the problems caused, the possibilities and some solutions to them.

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