

## Genius Loci - How Place and Spirit Found Each Other in Kőszeg

In the middle of the 1990s, two scientists, Elemér Hankiss and Ferenc Mészáros were looking for a place ideal for thinking and creation, and found Kőszeg, a forgotten small town with a rich historical heritage. The spirit and the place, these two mystical forces might have attracted each other, perhaps each had a need for the other - thus they finally found each other. And thus a new, exciting era of creativity has begun in Kőszeg, which brought along the renewal of the town as well as the emergence of a symbolic workshop, which is lately becoming increasingly well-known in Hungarian and international Social Sciences circles as well.

In recent years, Kőszeg has evolved into the actual location of the Creative City – Sustainable Region (KRAFT) programme developed by the research institute. The complex exploration of the town's architectural and intellectual values began, which has led to a whole series of innovations by now.

Six of the town's ten central buildings have already been renovated. This was not only mere restoration, but also a transformation of the buildings' functions, turning them into places that facilitate creative work with a comfortable and inspiring environment. The Europe House (2015) has been hosting conferences, the Zwinger Tower (2015) became a home of exhibitions, and research activities are conducted under the roof of Szemző House (2017). The beautiful Festetics Palace (2018), currently waiting for its new occupants, also serves the spirit of the town, Sgraffitos House (2015) hosts a library as well as written sources, and the Benedictine Monastery (2020) is going to accommodate guests, scientists, masters and disciples. The elegant designs of the additional buildings reflect the momentum of systematic development.

Though the renovated and functioning building area of more than half a hectare is only a microscopical part of the town, its impact and charisma affect the whole of Kőszeg and its vicinity, the region and Hungary as well as other countries. The facilities, and of course the underlying professional and scientific programmes, indicate that the harmonious encounter of spirit and place generates creative energy, which is the key to the sustainable preservation and renewal of both of these.

The volume of fastidiously edited and beautiful photos accompanied by great texts spectacularly illustrates this modern process of innovative urban and regional development.

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