

## REPUTATION

In our research, we focused on the trends of reputation of Skála Metro and its surrounding areas over the last 30 years. We studied marketing materials, articles in the media, films, video clips and technical publications etc. from the opening of Skála Metro to nowadays. We have conducted a survey among pedestrians near the building and talked to some workers of Skála Metro as well. As a result of our research, we identified 4 main periods in the history of the reputation of the building:

1. “The Golden Age” (ca. 1984-1997)
2. “The Fading Period” (ca. 1996-2007)
3. “The Alternative Scene” (ca. 2007-2011)
4. “The Neutral Image” (ca. 2011-)

**The Golden Age** - At the time of the opening (1984), Skála Metro was associated with the department store of the West. Offering a wide range of otherwise hardly accessible products, the store developed an image of a high profile shopping mall with “western goods”. The building - located in the heart of Budapest and the city’s central shopping area, the Grand Boulevard – contributed to the elegant scenery as well. Luxurious products were presented alongside goods of the department store’s own brand, and the easily likeable character “Skála Kópé” was introduced as the company’s merchandising figure. Furthermore, the building was frequently pictured with local and international celebrities.

**The Fading Period** – This blooming period faded slowly away with the change of the political and economic system and deteriorated finally with the appearance of the plazas in 1996. It is however important to emphasize that the image of the department store was strongly influenced by the decline of its surroundings as well and that the building was less and less separable from the negative associations that were attached to buildings of the communist era. The underpass of Nyugati tér became to be known as a scene of crime, prostitution and homelessness - severe social problems more visible after the change of the communist system in general.

**The Alternative Scene** - The beginning of the alternative era could be marked with the opening of “Kópé Terasz” and “West Balkan” in 2008. Skála Metro became the premise of cultural events, parties and a variety of concerts and performances. A shocking accident and scandal around a venue in early 2011 resulted however in the abrupt ending of this newly defined, alternative scenery. The clubs were shut down; the drastic fall in the reputation of the Skála Metro building was representative.

**The Neutral Image** - The efforts seemed to focus on the retaining of a more or less neutral image after the accident. New tenants, with the lowest risk factor possible were searched for. “MINI city” (a children’s entertainment center) opened in 2011. Although the current reputation of the building is still ambiguous, the conducted mini-survey allows us to assume that negative associations (be it the communist era, the scandal or old-fashioned aesthetics) do not inevitably define the reputation of the building anymore. The chances of a redefinition seem to be promising.

The generally unknown presence of office spaces in the upper floors and the popular meeting place before the Skála Metro building could be considered as persistent, to this day existent motives regarding the reputation of the building and its surroundings. Future plans on part of the company include functions such as fitness, a wall climbing facility and a flagship store for the “Libri” bookstore. The previously mentioned meeting place and office levels will be retained.