

# Urban Structures and Architectural Specificities in the Post-Socialist New Towns

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## Introduction

During the formulation of new towns' urban planning principles, ideological and professional expectations were both present. The political leadership expected these settlements to reflect the new social order in their form and spatial arrangement while planning them along new paradigms provided rarely seen grandiose opportunities for urban planners. As such, the actors of planning, the creators and the decision-makers were committed to creating something new.

These towns are important witnesses to the socialist period's regional and urban planning policy, as well as of its ideas about professional policy. We can therefore assume that they were "ideal" model cities of contemporary society, being experiments in social and urban planning. This is partly true; however, their construction was fundamentally influenced by production and operational aspects, and financial constraints, which often overwrote ideological expectations. Urban planning ideas were therefore not fully met. Buildings of production and housing enjoyed priority, at times delaying the construction of higher-level service facilities and representational architecture by several years. Plans were therefore often far removed from reality.

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Planners created plenty of plans that in the end never materialised, while aiming to express the spatial formations of the socialist city. They paid special attention to the city centre's location and the details of its urban composition. At the same time these parts were the ones that were delayed the most or in many cases, entirely omitted. Ideas of composition and spatial organisation could often only come to fruition fully in residential areas that were laid out next to each other, each with its unique spatial arrangement and architectural character.

Soviet city planning principles were intended as guidelines<sup>1</sup> for socialist countries. We can therefore ask: are there any common features of Central and Eastern European new towns? Did general expectations present at the time of planning produce typical situations and repeat schematic solutions? How were rigorously prescribed principles of architecture applied, and can their traces be found in today's cities? And finally, does the new town model show any radically different features when compared to traditional historic towns in terms of spatial organisation and urban planning?

This chapter aims to present the architectural and urban planning features of state socialist new towns, comparing past planning ideas with current reality. The study analyses six model cities, each different in its spatial spread, size and population while focusing on closely related urban characteristics that were declared as important elements of a new town at the time of planning. These are: the structure of the city, the city centre (its place, functional role, composition, the planning of architecture and public spaces), as well as issues of urban identity.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> See for example the Bolshaya Sovetskaya Entsiklopediya's instructions for town building; In: *Településtudományi Közlemények*, April 1953. pp. 165-179. Építőipari, Műszaki Egyetem Városépítési Tanszéke. Bolshaya Sovetskaya Entsiklopediya was a grandiose series of encyclopaedias created to summarise the soviet state's new worldview. It was published from 1926 to 1947 in 65 volumes, and republished several times afterwards.

<sup>2</sup> „...The socialist town's design and construction is not only a technical and economic problem (it is much more than that), the socialist town must express the strength and perspective of socialist society, and must provide a framework that is worthy in its appearance for the people of the socialist era. Only those cities can fully meet the concept of the beautiful city, which take the natural environment into account, which are built in accordance with a uniform spatial composition, which have a strong spatial structure, an active silhouette and a city centre.” (*Perényi, 1952, p. 3.*)

## General aspects of planning

### *Initial expectations, planning principles*

The state socialist period paid close attention to urban architecture-related issues. In contemporary professional press<sup>3</sup> one can clearly trace changes in political priorities and paradigm shifts.

It has been clear since new towns began to be built that their final goal is very practical (creating the conditions for production and ensuring habitation for the workers as soon as possible) but enforcing ideologically motivated aspects of form and aesthetics was also a fundamental requirement. A repeatedly expressed desire was that planners should treat the city as a work of art and the new town should express the democratic nature of socialist order in its content and function. To this end all of its parts had to be built to have the same quality<sup>4</sup>. (*Perényi, 1955; Prakfalvi–Szücs, 2010*) The issue of the city centre had a peculiar role in contemporary rhetoric, as it was difficult to reconcile with the previously mentioned idea of the urban corpus having a singular nature. (*Prakfalvi–Szücs, 2010*).

Formal issues of composition played a prominent role in the 1950s, which was when the initial stage of state socialist new towns' construction took place. During the building of Hungarian new towns, creating detailed zoning and development plan took place at the same time as the creation of the overall urban planning concept. Many so-called urban compositional plans were also made, which could clearly and spectacularly present to lay people the urban architectural features and elements that were thought to be important at the time. The task of compositional plans was to illustrate the settlement's creation, its harmony with the landscape, and the mutual relationship between landscape and cityscape (*Faragó, 1984*). It also had to illustrate the city's spatial shaping, and vertically or otherwise accentuated features that would affect the cityscape. Compositional plans had a good effect

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<sup>3</sup> In Hungary these are e.g. *Városépítés, Településtudományi Közlemények, Magyar Építőművészet*, and in Czechoslovakia *Architektura CSR*.

<sup>4</sup> „Soviet city building opens up limitless opportunities for architecture in the creation of districts and entire cities that are coherent and ideologically expressive”, said the previously quoted Bolshaya Sovetskaya, p. 167.

on zoning plans as they brought forth aesthetic considerations as well instead of only focusing on the usage of schematic buildings dictated by pragmatic sensibilities. (Peregi, 1975). Chief among structural and formal requirements were a representative, broad thoroughfare that would provide space for public events, and a need for symbolic high-rise buildings in city centres (Bonta, 2008). However, from 1957 onwards creating urban compositional plans was no longer compulsory. This is evidenced by the fact that the need for representative elements in the cityscape took a back seat even in planning (Körner–Nagy, 2006).

Urban scale building plans were not only characterised by formalism. The idea was to use them to realise city-building aspirations and organisational principles that were based on the Athens Charter's concepts, which were seen as justified based on seeing other European new town construction projects in practice. The 'Várorendezési Normák' (City Planning Standards) published in 1951 also codified this (Faragó, 1984; Perényi, 1988). Its ideas were practical, functionally divided land use, a well thought-out transportation network, advanced service structures, extensive development of public utilities, and breaking up constructed areas with green spaces. It became a fundamental requirement in modern structural planning to apply zoning principles, breaking up the city into functional areas (residential, industrial, and green areas), and into transport area units (Körner–Nagy, 2006). The basic unit of organisation and planning was chosen to be the micro-rayon (or micro-district) with basic service structures in its centre (these were typically schools). These units were organised into neighbourhoods, and neighbourhoods into residential zones. However, "planners' plans called for constructing residential buildings and neighbourhoods so large that they were not adequately provided with services on a city level" (Wedgwood, 1992). Some researchers therefore point out the planned uniformity of architecture and inadequate institutional coverage of large areas as one of the most important differences between the socialist and the capitalist city type.

### *Value systems and changes in attitude*

Functional planning "with its rational spatial arrangement of functions, however, could not satisfy the need for emotional order" (Paksy, 1988). From the second half of the 1960s there had been

increasingly stronger critical analyses that examined settlements not only from aspects of function, form or physicality but in a holistic manner, also taking social science aspects into account (*Faragó, 1984*). There had been critical remarks suggesting that zoning, functional separation, institutional hierarchy, and treating residential zones as closed systems are incorrect principles for urban planning (*Kőszegfalvy, 1967*). However, Hungarian policy continued to stand by these principles even in 1970 (*Perényi, 1970a*). “Our perception had to be slightly revised”, wrote Imre Perényi<sup>5</sup> much later, representing the official position, while also suggesting the need for a more flexible system for organising residential areas where units are not completely spatially separated, self-sufficient and mono-functional. This flexibility would enable linear or block arrangements or a mixture of the two (*Perényi, 1988*). With this, Perényi revised his previous views on zoning.

The disadvantages of rigid, non-malleable closed systems that are hard to link to other functional and spatial components were a recurring topic in the trade press of the 1980s (*Brenner, 1982; Perényi, 1983*). “The more closed and total an architectural system is, the more likely it is to lead to a uniformed cityscape lacking character and in the end, damaging the identity and uniqueness of the city” (*Brenner, 1982*).

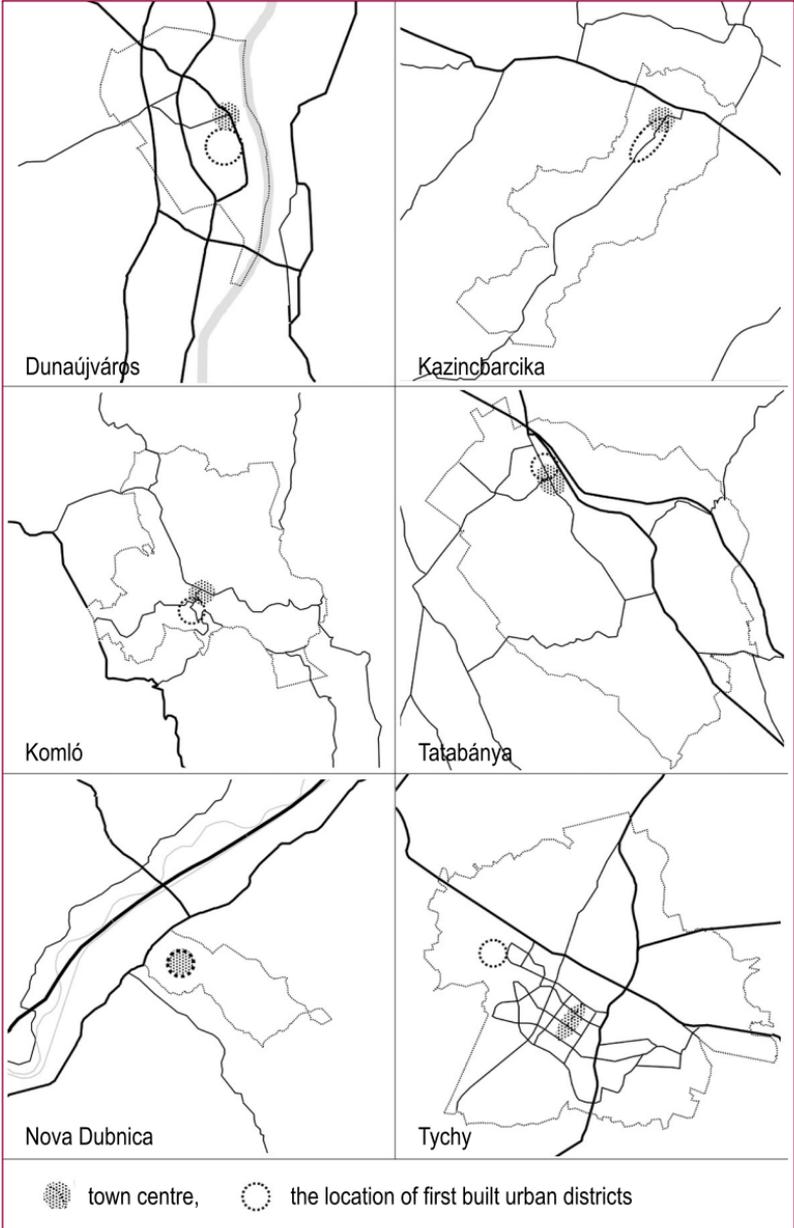
## Urban structure – urban-scale formal and structural characteristics

Contemporary standards contained instructions on the content of the zones but did not regulate their relationship with each other. In other words, they did not define specific compulsory guidelines for city structure. The major structures of new towns were therefore largely different (*Figure 52*) despite the efforts by the contemporary trade press to emphasise the existence of a coherent approach in planning (*Faragó, 1984*), whose most important element was the

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<sup>5</sup> Imre Perényi (1913-2002) was „one of the chief official leaders of architectural design and an activist of the party ... one of the highest officials in Hungarian architecture and planning” (*Bonta, 2008*). He was an unavoidable figure in Hungarian city building in practice, theory, and education as well. As such, this study will quote from his statements and writings many times.

Figure 52: Urban structural frameworks



Source: The author's own edition

direct structural connection between the city centre and the industrial area, expressing that the two belonged together on both ideological and functional levels. In most cases, however, this core concept was not expressed in a clear and 'formulaic' manner.

In Hungarian examples a common characteristic of the city structure was the thoroughfare that intersected the city for a long stretch and the city centre that was organised along it. In all city plans the centre, which was typically enclosed with facades, was built near the thoroughfare, regardless whether the road was a historic, regionally important structural path (Tatabánya, Komló), a planned new exploratory path (Kazincbarcika), or a new boulevard expressing the connection between city and industry (Dunaújváros). In the studied Polish and Slovak new towns centres were in a different situation: orthogonal order, symmetry, and a desire to create overarching axes, was much more apparent than the motivation for creating a central main square.

In all cases major structural principles and the ambitions for shaping space and form that were defined for urban architectural collectives could mostly be realised within subdivisions (typically in the residential units built earliest). Today these are often located in marginal places within the urban corpus. A frequent trait of new towns is that residential units are aligned with the city's primary structure; they are compact and well-planned by themselves. However, they often function along their own structural logic as a closed system. Many times they only share a common border with their neighbouring units but are not linked to them in their structure and logic. They are additively placed next to each other, often clearly showing the patchwork nature of the town's building.

## City centres

### *Changing roles – idea and reality*

The state-socialist urban planning principles attached a prominent role to urban centres. This fact and the city centres' general key role playing in the life of settlements justify a more detailed discussion on the subject. New towns were sought to distinguish from historic towns by considering their industrial zone as the symbolic spiritual centre and the fact that the town was spatially defined on the basis of its relationship with the industrial zone needs some clarification.

In socialist new towns industry – as a major economic power in the newly built society, and the principal motive of creating these

cities – really had a significant importance. It is also true that during state socialism, especially in its early stages, behind a number of decisions there was a strong desire for opposing and denying the civilian values of the pre-war period. In historic towns city centres clearly meant the sites of heritage and of spiritual and cultural continuity.

Thus, the logic why socialist new towns attached the role of symbolic city centre to industrial zones instead of them is fully understandable. However, their actual spatial and structural formation caused a problem. While in the ideological field the role and importance of industry were constantly declared in the early stages of new town planning, and its visualisation in urban structure was a definite demand in the rhetoric of professional policy is, the actual plans were rarely able to materialise it consequently. In most cases the spatial location of industrial zones, their fragmentation and landscape characteristics prevented the realisation of this principle. Over time it had been worn out of the city structure's main ideological requirements and remained only as a logistic, urban management aspect.

However, throughout the planning and construction of new towns the intention of building a city centre suitable for hosting institutions and social events, otherwise in real-contents not much different from the traditional ones – was constantly recognisable. (*Figure 53*) In Dunaújváros, which can be regarded as a model to follow from several aspects, this demand has been clearly formulated: the city centre should be “an outstanding representative place of the town; here must be placed the most important political, administrative and cultural institutions. The city centre should be formed as a square; it must be suitable for organising parades and festivities.”<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Submission in the subject of approving the urban plan of Stalin City [http://www.archivnet.hu/gazdasag/sztalinvarosi\\_felhocarcolok.html?oldal=2](http://www.archivnet.hu/gazdasag/sztalinvarosi_felhocarcolok.html?oldal=2) MOL. XXVI - D - 8 - f /1952/88. d. (Hungarian National Archives - VÁTI Hungarian Nonprofit Ltd. for Regional Development and Town planning - Plan Archive Collection - Box 88)

<sup>7</sup> It is worth mentioning that from 1960 with academic support a wide range of city centre researches started at the Budapest University of Technology, highlighting the fact that centre “is the concentration of the city's substance and essence” (*Granasztói, 1963*) Among the studied settlements, however there were no new towns, although the unresolved problems of new town centres were continuously on the agenda.

Despite these principles, it can be said that it is the role, the position and the architectural form of urban centres that have made them one of the most ambivalent elements<sup>7</sup> of new towns. It was already so throughout the planning and construction process of these towns, and this in many cases has not changed up to this day. Simultaneously with propagating the idea of a homogeneous city (*Prakfalvi–Szücs, 2010*), the emphasising of the privileged role of the city centre – structural, spatial and formal – was a basic demand from functional and policy aspects. However, for a long time, the issue of the city centre, as an addition to the unavoidable primary tasks of industrial development and housing, could only be the popular theoretical topic of urban composition plans and projects only.

“In places where new centres have been created, they were usually insufficient in terms of functionality and aesthetically immature” (*Perényi, 1970b*). So their tasks – though only on a local level – in many cases were performed by sub-centres of residential units, (e.g. Komló, Kökönyös district) or, some small institutional centres and their public areas (see Dunaújváros, the square in front of Dózsa Cinema). The absence or timely delay of city centre construction caused supply i.e. functional shortages (*Barta, 2013*), but it also meant a missing urban reference “point”, an urban creative “element” intended to generate ties, character, identity. All this had an impact, and still has an impact on today’s operation of the city and its overall image as well.

### *Changes in formal requirements*

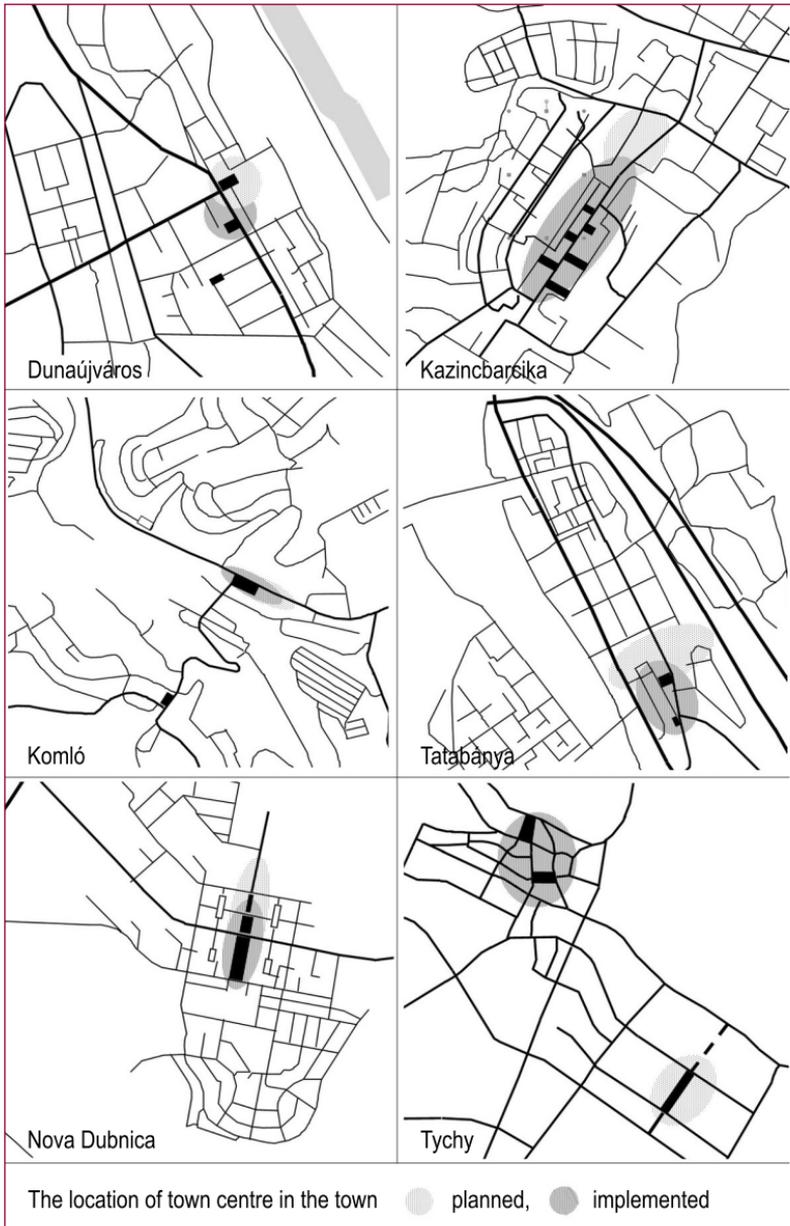
It’s quite contradictory that the socialist new town intending to convey its political / social mission in physical form “economised” on one of its most important, most effective means of expression, the city centre. Yet the political leadership proclaimed not only the necessity and the expected role of the city centre but in most cases even its position in the urban structure as well. From formal point of view in the Hungarian new towns the square-like formation was favoured, with shaping a large and representative square for various events, surrounded by the closed facade of institutional buildings. These squares – in accordance with the previously mentioned – opened to the city’s main axis, the main road (*Kissfázekas, 2013*). During the placement of centres, in many cases, landscape condi-

tions also were among the city's compositional devices. During the planning process and the planning council's evaluation of Kazincbarcika's main square, for example, the elevated location of the central area and its inherent skyline-shaping opportunities were continuously on the agenda of the ongoing professional discourses. In the early plans of Tatabánya's the main square's scenery sketches always showed the terrain in the background as an integral part of the composition. An often used architectural composition tool was the tower – typically asymmetrically positioned with the purpose of representation and the architectural emphasis of the city centre. In the case of Dunaújváros and Kazincbarcika in the consecutive plans the tower's position and functions essentially have not changed, only the applied stylistic means, well-illustrating the several paradigmatic changes of the architecture of the 1950s. The town's regular geometric shaped, large-scaled, vertically often emphasised main square became a recurring element of the early Hungarian state socialist city centre plans. According to the Soviet planning practice which was considered as a guideline to be followed, placing some vertical element into major urban structural positions (e.g. city centre) has been put as a kind of model into the 'common knowledge' of planning and in future plans it has survived in the form of a typical 'modernist' tower house. (See this on the realised examples of Dunaújváros and Tychy)

The formal features described show that while the era in all fields sought for abolishing and overriding civilian traditions, meanwhile in terms of urban architectural tools it was based on 'traditional' historical antecedents. The formal images of historic city centres in an undeniable way had influence on plans.

The contemporary new town centres are often characterised by the architectural chaos. This is a problem that has been 'scrolling' for decades. In 1970 – that is 15-20 years after the start of town constructions – a critical remark appeared in the book 'The City Centre' that "Hungarian new town centres can mostly be presented by plans only (...) the majority of town centres are typically unfinished" (*Perényi, 1970b*). This statement is still true today from several aspects. This is only partly because the centres were not built at the same time with the beginning of town building. Their place was marked in the plans, occasionally a significant square was built and in the majority of cases a building of some urban

Figure 53: The location of town centre in the town (planned, implemented)



Source: The author's own edition

significance was placed next to it. In Dunaújváros this was the typically socialist realist building of the Communist Party's Headquarters, in Komló the Council House with the Party Headquarters and the cinema were also built in 'socialist realism' style.

In Tatabánya, which was built not only as a new town but also became the new county seat, perhaps it was a demonstrative, political message that in the planned city centre, of the larger institutional buildings it was the County Hall the first to be built. However, the ambitious plans died, and many construction projects have been stalled after the implementation of the first large-scale institutions.

## Changes in urban architecture and image

Since the beginning, perhaps the most criticised feature of the new towns was their architectural image. This may obviously be associated with the several times changing formal architectural guidelines and public taste, but also with the two main issues discussed earlier, the theoretical and formal contradictions and shortcomings of urban structure and urban centres.

In relation to this, two important factors are worth focusing on:

- The image of city centres, which in each municipality basically affects our view of the city and
- The first phases of construction, which show most of the architectural aspirations associated with the ‘artificial town’ – model. These towns often cannot ‘boast’ of historical antecedents, but their construction’s history still covers several periods and architectural styles. In this aspect it is instructive to see how the original, early architectural style is dominant in today’s cities, and how it is overwritten by the later architectural periods. (Figure 54)

### *The characteristic features of urban image and character changes*

Dunaújváros, the first Hungarian model town, and personally Tibor Weiner, its planner, in many aspects was in the centre of attention. Due to the sometimes occurring contrasts between plans, desires, expectations and the realised state it has been the target of numerous attacks by the professionals and even by the laity. In 1967 a heated debate broke out in one of the most important cultural and literary journals (Kortárs), around a central theme that in addition to a number of shortcomings should Dunaújváros really be regarded as a town (Szűj–Farkasdy–Károlyi–

*Molnár, 1967*). This issue is very similar to the one raised by the sociologist Iván Szelényi (*Szelényi, 1996*) that new towns are not considered “urban places” in the true sense of the word.

One of the most common criticisms, which even the official defenders of new towns had admitted was monotony. However, they often noted that this is such a ‘depressing problem’ that in other (for example, in the Western) new towns is at least to the same extent unresolved (*Filkey, 1967*). Yet, just raising and solving the aesthetic issues were the task of many urban ‘compositional plans’. However, their construction faltered, and the architectural values, along which these former compositional plans had been formulated, were revaluated or devalued over time.

From the 1960s onwards, in Hungary thanks to the publications of the professionals of settlement and architectural history, Pál Granasztói, György Korompay, Frigyes Pogány<sup>8</sup>, the aesthetic aspects of the settlements have increasingly been put on the agenda, especially placed in parallel or opposed to the value system of functionalism (*Perényi, 1988*). The Hungarian new towns’ facelessness, the absence of city centres, as yet unresolved problems were even in the 1970s the main topics of professional discourses (*Perényi, 1970a*).

If today we want to define the image of socialist new towns, it cannot be said that they have well-recognised common criteria. The ‘patchy’ building practice taking place in phased pace in the early period of their construction itself gave these towns a hectic overall image. In addition, the new towns are also the scenes of various city construction processes and various constructional periods which decisively and very negatively shaped their urban image.

This paper is not going to give a detailed description of the events of the later phases of construction, since their image characteristics generally do not differ from other features of town building processes which took place during the state socialist era. Some of them are marked up by panel housing buildings, although they are

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<sup>8</sup> P. Granasztói (1908-85), architect, he has published a number of writings, books on urban aesthetics, urban construction and urban planning. Gy. Korompay (1905-91), architect, urban architect, academic researcher, professional writer and university professor. F. Pogány (1908-76), architect, art historian and urbanist, professor, critic.

not among the specificities of new towns. In addition, however, various public buildings were built in large numbers which were intended to fill in the lack of institutional functions of the city centre buildings. From 1970 onwards, a large number of secondary and tertiary institutions were built, which strengthened the central role of these settlements.

However, some of them “due to narrow-minded, urban context ignoring placement or architectural shaping alien from local characteristics brought about adverse changes and did not serve for the place’s becoming more orderly, for its harmonious, high-quality architectural and environmental development” (*Paksy, 1988*).

### *Socialist realism as a key factor in urban image*

In general, the architectural image of socialist new towns are associated with socialist realism. This is not entirely justified, since new towns were built not only in the ‘socialist realism’ dominated 1950s but much later, in the 1970s, too. (*Szirmai, 1988*) The 1950s itself was not homogeneous. The ‘socialist realism’ was dominant for only a short time, but undoubtedly in the era when these towns started and underwent an intensive and therefore decisive development the quantitative provision of housing was the primary goal. As its introduction and the public dethronement was bound to the Soviet Union’s political events, in some Central and Eastern European state socialist countries it had a very similar lifetime, its architectural reign may typically be placed into the period between 1949-1956/58. Its space organisational attributes and logic and its architectural styles are well recognised even within a wide range of historic towns as well. In addition to its pure-style forms, it has been tintured, sometimes mixed with the instrumentational marks of modernism. (*Prakfalvi–Szűcs, 2006; Kissfazekas, 2015*) From urban architectural point it used ‘historically traditional’ urban compositional instruments, of which the main components are blocks, streets, planned squares and in terms of compositional principles it was characterised by axis structure and symmetry.

As the main era of socialist new town constructions can be placed into the 1950s the elements of ‘socialist realism’ style can really be found in all of them. However, there are significant differences in how it is determining in a town’s urban architecture; whether it is a feature of partial territories or even has an impact on

the whole character and image of the town. This mostly depends on the spatial location and spatial extent of areas built-up by the criteria of socialist realism. The most important aspect of spatiality is the spatial attitude towards the main, most used urban structural places, typically the city centres. In case of spatial dimension, according to 'socialist realism', the size of built-up areas relative to the city's total size should be the determining factor.

### *The identity-shaping role of city centres*

In a city whether it is naturally grown or artificially planned – the city centre has a certain functional and intellectual role to play. In particular, this can be said for medium-sized and small cities (*Granasztói, 1963*). The locals are tied to the centre and the visitors from outside orientate by it. City centres have an important role also in the context of urban architectural image as well. In many cases, the image of the city centre determines our view of the cityscape. It is no different in the case of newly constructed towns either. However, in the majority of state socialist new towns the city centre, determining the city's overall character, is missing. Of the studied examples this characterises the towns of Dunaújváros, Komló, Tatabánya and in many aspects Tychy. Kazincbarcika and Nová Dubnica due to their system of urban structure of the tendency of their urban architectural processes, evolved from inside, from the centre, not as a centre of a mono-functional institution, but as a mixed zone. The building of the city centre has fallen into the period of socialist realism 'operating' by single architectural instruments. This explains that, overall, mostly these two cities can provide the cityscape, which is generally associated with or expected from a socialist new town.

In the past times the new town's square used to play primarily representational role. However, since the change of regime the utilisation patterns of Central and Eastern European public spaces have changed significantly. The main square may not only serve as a place of organised social intercourse, flanked by imposing institutions as a scenery symbolising the city's importance but is also ideal for spontaneous uses of space. The square walls and the public space they enclosed have become independent of each other in several aspects. In case of good design a public space itself, without the boundary buildings, is may become urban

image forming, identity strengthening element. This has been recognised in more and more settlements involved and by the instruments of public space renewal they try to offset the functional and architectural shortcomings of their centre.

In the following part the characteristic features of the investigated six sample towns will be shown from the aspects of urban structure, city centre and architectural image.

## Dunaújváros

### *Urban structure*

In the case of Dunaújváros, the first Hungarian socialist new town, a very strict political instruction was formulated concerning the elements the planned structure of the city should contain. Among the party policy requirements (which were recorded in written form as well<sup>9</sup>) for the structure of the city it was specified that the city's main roads, used at the same time as a marching route, should link the Iron Works with the city centre. It was a clear and direct reference to the functional and ideological role of industry in the life of the town. As a result, the grandiosely wide Vasmű út (Iron works Road) became the most important main axis of the city having a representative role, which at some places was complemented even with square expansions.

Thus, in the case of Dunaújváros the realisation of urban structure followed doctrinal regulations, so it is not by chance that often the very rational spatial utilisation and the above-described, T-road system connecting the city centre with the plant and the train station were identified as the main virtues of the plan (*Faragó, 1970*).

However, the principles seemingly very evident from the viewpoint of the system's logic – i.e. spatial organisation and form should refer to ideological content, the standing above all role of industry – did not manifest in other Hungarian new towns in such a way. Dunaújváros was a 'model city', the First among the Hungarian ones; it was a kind of testing ground for the new urban

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<sup>9</sup> Submission in the subject of approving the urban plan of Stalin City

architectural ideas of politics and urban professionals, where there were no ties to struggle with, such as historic legacy, or special landscape endowments in case of an existing city during the formulation of a city's new socialist model of development planners and builders inevitably faced. However, at this phase a number of theoretical ideas were formulated only as plans.

### *City centre*

Several plans<sup>10</sup> were prepared for the town – including the city centre – the construction history is well documented and traceable (*Szirmai, 1988, 1998, 2013; Prákfalvi–Szűcs, 2010; Kissfazekas, 2013, 2015*). The plans attached prominent role to a large and geometrically shaped square suitable for political and social events, which is lined by the most important urban institutional buildings – typically a town hall, city/county party committee buildings.

This central square was axially symmetric, geometrically shaped, and was marked by an asymmetrically positioned spectacular tower as a vertical signalling element. The tower's history is a remarkable phenomenon of the age, as it was strongly influenced, by the fact that the first house built – in socialist realist style – in the centre was the headquarters of the local communist party<sup>11</sup>, a building too little compared to the scale of city centre and its political importance. The party headquarters' location on the square and size caused not a small difficulty for planners and policy-makers during the planning of the future city centre and its tower house serving as a vertical signal. Although the main square of the former Sztálinváros (Stalin City) for decades did not get its final form, the above-described “model” well illustrates that period's primary compositional requirements against the main squares of newly formed towns. (*Baranyai, 2016*)

It is so much true that sometimes the plans for spaces in front of major industrial facilities, major factories were following these principles. Another more frequent feature of these spaces was that – due to their representative role -the era's essential monuments, sculptures of emblematic figures were put at their central space, which as a kind of visual code was engraved into the minds of con-

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<sup>10</sup> About 20 plans are known from the period between 1951-54 (*Perényi, 1983*)

<sup>11</sup> planned by Tibor Weiner /Erika Malecz; 1949

temporary urban users. One such a typical scheme was the statue of Lenin standing on a high pedestal. The statue of Lenin has for long become the defining element of public space at the main square of Dunaújváros too.

### *Urban architectural image*

The first urban quarter<sup>12</sup> in Dunaújváros was built close to the city centre, but independent of its spatial position and structure which otherwise was judged even by the later critics as the most successful architectural ensemble.

“Socialist realist” spatial construction principles are mixed with modernist built-in spaces and buildings the city’s real uniqueness of styles originates right from this. The closed row of the tall buildings of the several times mentioned main road (Vasmű út / Iron Works Road) borders this district like a wall, which clearly marks the metropolitan style socialist new town’s image.

The deficiencies of the constructional, architectural and characteristic features of city centre have already been mentioned; they obviously have a bearing on cityscape as well. The Town Hall’s solid tower house itself is not a sufficient centre-forming element and in the neighbourhood of the housing estates’ panel houses reaching up to the city centre it is far from being able to perform a signal-like role as it has been intended.

The main square was renewed in 2014. It was not easy to formulate a new centre emphasising public space image after a Lenin sculptured parade in the town’s former axis which was later on replaced by a purely functional parking space role; this is proved by the long hesitation and planning process prior to implementation.

## **Kazincbarcika**

### *Urban structure*

The structural planning of Kazincbarcika may have been influenced by the existence of several industrial sites (Borsod Chemical Works and mines) (*Berki, 2016*), topography and the planner’s

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<sup>12</sup> planned by Tibor Weiner

attitude<sup>13</sup>. It is a town built on River Sajó and in Tardona Creek Valley on an approx. 8-meter-high plateau, with a view of relatively high mountains on both sides of the valley. The town planners had a clear intention to create an attractive settlement silhouette for those arriving in the city and to create attractive, urban locations opening to the countryside for local citizens (*Bonta, 2008*). However, the plans did not intend to create an impressive structural connection between the Chemical Works and the city centre.

Although the plan included a T-shaped highway system with a large-scale square at the intersection, the main street leading to the railway station was more emphasised than linking the planned centre with the industrial area. It was clear that monumentality was not a goal, but rather creating spatial and visual relationship with green structural axes opening towards forests and the surrounding landscape (*Körner–Nagy, 2006*). The main structure was defined by a central axis on which the city is almost symmetrically organised. This main street in the middle became the city's main spine. Even today, it is the most important – and based on its spatial location within the city an ideal – city centre organising structural element.

Based on the symmetrical feature, the axis as the main compositional element and the sensitivity for environmental conditions Kazincbarcika peculiarly integrates the two characteristic guidelines of socialist realism distinguished by Tamás Meggyesi; the neoclassical and the romantic ones (*Meggyesi, 1985*).

### *City centre*

Several plans have been prepared for Kazincbarcika's city centre as well and it was also the site of a tender (*Ádám, 1979; Kissfazekas, 2015; Schmiedl, 1954*). The urban master plan resulted in a clear structure, terrain conditions adapted construction and favourable spatial connections. The central square has never been built, although the selection of the site was carried out very carefully; the landscape connectivity and landscape aspects were also examined in this aspect. Even in the first version planners sought for complex architectural composition. The main square was planned for closing down the main street (central axis), where commercial, admin-

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<sup>13</sup> planned by Károly Valentyin, 1951.

nistrative (city hall, party headquarters) and cultural buildings (theatre, library) would have been clustered with a tower house in the axis of the main street. Although the square was not built but subsequently some institutional buildings were erected in hectic architectural quality following the line of the main street (the town hall, shops and a department store). Instead of a signal-like tower house – although not exactly in the axis – the wall of the shorter side of a long 10-storey residential panel house can be seen.

Today, the role of city centre is filled by this central axis (now Egressy Road) which from EU funds has recently been turned into a pedestrian zone further emphasising the street's urban structural role in a positive way.

### *Urban architectural image*

The various housing-construction periods are not absent from Kazincbarcika's development phases either. The 5 and 10-storey housing estates, typically built by panel technology surround the socialist realist core of the city like a shell. As previously said, the building of the main square and its imposing building complexes failed but the location of the central axis, its structural position and the accompanying built in environment well orient visitors to the town in space and time. The situation within the town's body is clearly comprehensible; the town's architectural language is well readable.

The main street due to its above-mentioned transformation into pedestrian zone and the renewal of connected squares received a new content. It is a main street in the true sense of the word, which significantly replaces the not built up main square, and it gives such a surplus to the town, which the majority of other new towns do not have: a spatially well-defined, mixed-use, a liveable centre.

One can therefore say that in spite of the subsequent development and growth the town has a distinctive image, and this image fits well into the often stereotypical vision that is associated with the socialist new towns.

## Mining towns – Tatabánya and Komló

### *Urban structure*

It was obviously more difficult to define a clear spatial and symbolic centre of industry in mining towns than the entrance of Dunaújváros Iron Works that has become a cult. The construction of mining settlements did not allow for decisions purely made on ‘doctrinal’ basis. During the selection of their site and building-in methods economic, operational aspects had to receive priority, which were further refined by geological and topographical conditions specific to mining areas (*Halász, 2016*) and the building in and engineering constraints dictated by them.

There were no uniform guidelines, often short site visits, some committee discussions and individual estimates provided the basis for site selection; this situation was further complicated by the fact that in the early ‘50s, mineral resources, including coal fields were not fully explored and mapped (*Fürst-Sós, 1952*). So instead of ‘drawing’ the new defining guidelines of construction, mining towns retained the historic valley line as a main shaft. This served as a starting point for the centre and the structural skeleton of residential space units was also connected to it. This decision was justified by the fact that small settlements built prior to and merging into new towns were often following this structural line.

Among the investigated settlements the above-mentioned facts are true for Komló and Tatabánya. Both towns’ present urban morphology is strongly influenced by the fact that they were created by the artificial administrative merging of several small villages. (*Schuchmann, 2016*). In the later construction projects there were efforts to ‘interweave’ the different individual villages together but this only partially succeeded. In these two towns the landscape endowments, the valleys cutting the settlement, with the adaptation of existing roads, railway lines following the main structure stretching into the linear valley became the characteristic features of the new town. Komló was one of those cities where the settlement plan was not scheduled, but was uniformly prepared for the whole settlement.

Nevertheless, the town still remained very patchy; the town’s body is highly articulated. The plan organised the town and its new centre on the valley main road and the residential units on the

residential street following layer lines. Due to the latter circumstances the plan was criticised because the terrain capabilities were taken into account to a much greater extent (i.e. not adjusted mechanically to the central directives of urban structure) in comparison to the previous practice, “its nature due to strong western influence was less aligned with the traditional formation of our cityscapes” (*Rados, 1971*).

In Tatabánya linearity was even stronger; the newly built town with the planned large-scale city centre was placed into the zones between nearly parallel transport lines.

### *City centres*

Both in Tatabánya and Komló a prominent square formed the core of the proposed centre. Their scale, their need for representation, however, showed significant differences. In Tatabánya in the so-called New Town district, a symmetrical enclosed square was envisioned, which would have been suitable for holding celebrations for 20-30,000 people. The axial geometrically ordered square was composed with the view of Gerecse and Kő-hegy mountains in the background. In the centre<sup>14</sup> on a slightly sliding stair-lined-square opposite to the County Council the Municipal Council would have been placed with the building of the Municipal Party Committee; the square would have been encircled by the buildings of the County and Municipal Court, Cultural Centre, the headquarters of the Mining Trust and a department store. Back off the post office headquarters, the Market Hall and the County Police Department headquarters<sup>15</sup> with the buildings of an apprenticeship training school would have been situated (*Wehner, 2007*).

The County Hall<sup>16</sup> was the only building that has been built. The plans were continuously prepared at one of the largest state planning offices of Budapest, but meanwhile architectural guidelines changed. The new plans left the centre at the original location (the ribbon-like geometric centre of town), but instead of the previous perpendicular to hill symmetrical layout a linear layout better fit-

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<sup>14</sup> planned by Miklós Visontai

<sup>15</sup> built in 1953

<sup>16</sup> planned by János Scultéty, 1952/53

ting the geographic realities, was chosen<sup>17</sup>. In 1962 a new general plan also noted the principle that instead of a disintegrated and disorganised structure and scattered institutional and commercial network, a new, clear, and general-scale urban structure is needed, with a redefined city centre (*Csanádi, 1988*).

Almost all the town's major public institutions were placed in the area called 'Újvárosi városközpont' (New Town City Centre), a very narrow zone between the railway and the main road, but the planned construction of a 'classic' tower house to emphasise the importance of the city centre was cancelled. Over time, nearly all the major public buildings were built, but the prolonged construction process, the planning programmes were modified several times and the ever-changing urban planning concepts greatly left their mark on the operation and image of the centre.

There were several criticisms against it, mainly emphasising the absence of strength in urban composition. The centre is still extremely heterogeneous, fragmented and mosaic-like in terms of public space and building stock. As stuck in between the two highways, its internal system and orientation are hard to be determined. The architectural quality of the buildings is mixed, the characteristics of built in space is dominated by rows of stand-alone buildings without connections.

The city centre of Komló is hard to define. This is mainly the consequence of the development process already mentioned, the new town was built up by an additive sequence of subdivisions. The main square opening from the historic main road, exploring the area with the socialist realist style Council House and Hotel, was completed in the early stages of the town's construction period.

An additional road was built to the square leading towards south connecting it with Kőkönnyös district the town's first housing estate, located much farther away from the centre, functioning as a sub-centre. The square in comparison with the one planned for Tatabánya is less ambitious, its size and institutional program was moderate. The original plan as a continuation of the square next to the main road proposed an urban style, typically closed, homogenous built-in area, thus it did not consider the square alone as the centre of the city. However, the built in area lining the

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<sup>17</sup> planned by Tamás Mandel

main road was not created in such a form; instead solitary buildings appeared in many cases having no functional relationship with one another, bearing the architectural character of different ages along the main road. Their presence, in many cases, seems to be random and occasional.

### *Urban architectural image*

In Tatabánya the first socialist realist residential buildings were built adjacent to the planned centre. The homogeneous, typical 4-storey buildings accompany the west side of the main street (today Komári Street), the urban style enclosed, street view of framed apartment blocks and the architectural details undeniably convey the cityscape of a new socialist realist city. All these, however, are significantly counterweighed by the extremely heterogeneous buildings of the city centre 'launching' the main street.

The town's present image is strongly determined by the overall impression revealed by the panoramic view from the elevated motorway leading to the capital city. The key elements of the settlement are the low, poor conditioned, slum-like, grey residential buildings of the same type with tower house groups markedly standing out. However, arriving in the town one can see that the housing estates built in the early times with their well-planned built in space intensity, airspace ratios between buildings, with their micro-architectural elements still existing in many places and with their onset of greenery can offer very pleasant residential quality, in spite of their poor physical condition. This is a very thought-provoking feature of the early new towns' residential areas, especially compared to the high tower house residential areas built later in these towns.

The cityscape of today's Tatabánya is significantly determined by the fact that the city centre was built in stages and often not in tune with each other; this is all the more so, since this conglomerate, called as centre, at the same time serves as a gateway to the town from south and from the capital city.

In contrast to this, in Komló the different phases of institutional construction are linearly sequenced along the major axis passing through the city. The central uniform faced town square cannot give an essential character and it is unable to make the viewer forget the hectic nature of the main road already mentioned. Of the

pleasant residential units making up a major part of the town not much is seen from the main road. Only the buildings of the so-called Kenderföld district ‘slipping down’ to the main axis advancing through the valley, and connected to the main square, can provide a more dominant impression on the character of the remote, residential areas creeping up the hill.

Here the already mentioned Kőkönyös<sup>18</sup> (practically the “model area” in Komló) was the first built residential ensemble. Its building was a kind of tabula rasa; it could be linked neither to Komló’s comb patterned small old historic settlement nor to the miners’ district, called Újtelep, built in the 1920s. However, it was connected with the planned new city centre, which was emphasised by the socialist realist building of the local Mining Industry Trust, by a direct structural connection – a new road.

Its main square for a long time was regarded as the town’s architectural symbol; it was a favourite topic of publications and photos on contemporary urban architecture. In Komló this residential quarter represented the positive example of built-in area and architectural image which contemporary (professional) policy wanted to convey about the town.

In addition, in a similar way to Dunaújváros, the direction changes in architecture – the style encounters of the alternating periods of modernism and socialist realism – can be traced back here too. The residential quarter on the basis of its spatial position is peripheral within the mosaic patterned urban structure, so despite its geographical endowments it cannot be regarded as an essential, city-wide image element.

## The Polish example – Tychy

### *Urban structure*

The Polish and Slovak examples show a significant difference to the Hungarian patterns described above. The Polish Tychy even in the planning phase was intended to be much larger (planned for 100,000 people) than the other municipalities studied. The proxi-

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<sup>18</sup> Plans of buildings by László Zoltán

imity of Katowice, and that the town originally was defined as a sleeping town, can be seen on the structure as well (*Coudroy De Lille, 2007*).

The main directions of the city's network were determined by the spatial position of the industrial city in the north-east direction and of the neighbouring suburban settlements. The city centre was split into two major parts by the planners'<sup>19</sup> conception; into northern and southern territory along the railway line.

The area of the central part was filled in by a square patterned 1 km by 1 km checkerboard type grid system. The planned road network was shaped a nearly regular rectangular system; its central element became a green axis closing in a wide park stretching along the city centre. In the urban structure the same sized blocks accompanying the city's green axis are well delineated. Several plans were prepared, but the uniform orthogonal grid as a structural frame was a common conceptual element of the plans. In the structure outside the green axis designating the central axis there was not a definite hierarchy, there is no focusing on a central area, on one spectacular square. In this way, out of the settlements studied, perhaps Tychy stands the closest to the idea of social policy, which defined the socialist model of the city as a combination of equivalent areas.

Later on, several neighbouring villages were annexed to the city, which carried on their structure, local identity and community habits. This fact, as well as the size and structure of the settlement more inhibited here the creation of a seemingly integrated new town. (*Balockaite, 2012*)

### *City centre*

In the physical plans of Tychy the intersection of the settlement intersecting two perpendicular striking axes ('Axis of walking' and the 'green axis') suggests the presence of the city centre. Indeed the Town Hall's Y-forming tower house was placed here (1970) by which, in the already mentioned way, the importance of position in the urban structure was meant to be emphasised (*Bonta, 2008; Prakfalvi-Szűcs, 2006*).

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<sup>19</sup> Kazimierz Wejchert and Hanna Adamczewska

But this was only a favoured geometric point in the city, not a real city centre, in the true sense of the word. The building is surrounded by an ‘extensive empty space’ (Parade Square), which by that time turned into a public city park (*Chojecka, 2015*). Tychy had historical antecedents, a small medieval town, to which in the symmetric, composed new urban structure no special spatial role was attained (*Polish Ministry, 2010*).

Around it was built the city’s other, so-called “B” housing estate where planners tried to adapt to topographic conditions, they were striving to compose the views of the old church, and among the new buildings preserve the old ones. It was a kind of ‘romantic’ planning approach, even the urban architects themselves called their plan so. (*Lipok–Bierwiazonek, 2010*).<sup>20</sup> The heritage of urban structure can clearly be seen in the environment that is uniquely combined with the spatial organisation and building method of the 50s seeking for symmetry. In spite of the axis style, the closed building form and the uniform cornice heights the district is not monotonous.

The housing estate’s spatial relations, the lines of the streets, historicity provide a sense of historical continuity and real-centre experience at the same time, which can very rarely be felt in new towns. The urban architectural products of the period of socialist realism were often labelled as monotonous, lacking the virtues of historic towns and settlements (*Kőszegfalvi, 1983*). This quarter of Tychy well demonstrates that the style despite a number of its inflexibilities, in the ‘hands’ of the planner using the elements not mechanically, could be well adapted to the existing endowments.

### *Urban architectural image*

Based on Tychy’s size and scope it would be difficult to ask for a unified city image. The city centre, as described above, would be difficult to define both in spatial and characteristic aspects.

It is not by chance that in connection with the city the attributes frequently recurring are as follows: “loose collection of large house-

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<sup>20</sup> <http://www.unikatowetychy.pl/en/etap,2,the-b-c-and-e-housing-estate>

ing estates, a ‘socialist dormitory’, a bedroom in socialist style, an ‘unshaped city’, a ‘desert’, or a ‘workers’ lodging house for Silesia” (Szczepanski, 1993; Balockaite, 2012). All of them are suggesting the lack of real urban life, character and identity, and are similar to the already mentioned criticisms of the debate having arisen in 1967 about Dunaújváros. In comparison with it, it’s worth reading the planners’ code of belief: “Our task has been to build a town, not a group of housing estates separated from each other and not creating an urban formation. The town is not an agglomeration of housing estates with a shopping centre. The town is an organic creature”.<sup>21</sup>

The first built (‘A’) housing estate based on the use of structural, constructional, architectural and decorative instruments can be defined as a ‘classic’ socialist realist residential area<sup>22</sup>. It has been realised as a strictly axis symmetrical closed-building complex in the eastern corner of today’s city. In the centre of the two housing estates, organised on the east-west axis a library, a post office, retail and service units, and the former miners’ Community Centre was located with several micro-architectural decorative elements. The construction of the housing estate preceded the city-wide zoning plan, which explains its very inorganic relationship with other areas of the city. Based on the spatial position within the city it cannot substantially influence the general urban image.

## The Slovakian example – Nová Dubnica

### *Urban structure*

For the Slovakian Nová Dubnica an impressive urban structure was originally planned<sup>23</sup>. The town’s initial 15-20 thousand population number was increased parallelly by additional 5,000 by planning. Typically the town, which is lying between two fan-like

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<sup>21</sup> Contemporary Architects eds. Emanuel, M. p.879. <https://books.google.it>

<sup>22</sup> planned by Tadeusz Teodorowicz-Todorowskiy

<sup>23</sup> planned by Jiří Kroha 1951, March. In 1948 „the most vocal supporter of the ‘Soviet model’ among architects in Czechoslovakia”. The assignment with the Nová Dubnica project was the most important stage of his career. The project designer was Ivan Ciporanov.

parting main roads, was intended to be placed into an orthogonal urban network and a regular, uniformly designed four-block architectural ensemble was formed in its geometric centre.

The central axis of the composition was a wide town square with a green park, which focused on a huge amphitheatre at the northern edge of town. Here also the axis leading to the landscape instead of closing or marking the axis by a grandiose city square was an important element of the composition as it was in the case of the investigated Hungarian towns.

In this regard there is a significant structural similarity with the proposals in the plan of Tychy. However, the composition was only partially realised. The first phase, which is linked to the main road-network by an access road, a 'footstalk' only, was built according to the plan. Some of the main elements of the structure were also implemented according to the original plans. However, the building in process in many places did not follow the original plans. In the southern part of the town the orthogonal road network was combined with a completely different logic structure (*Gajdoš–Moravanská, 2016*).

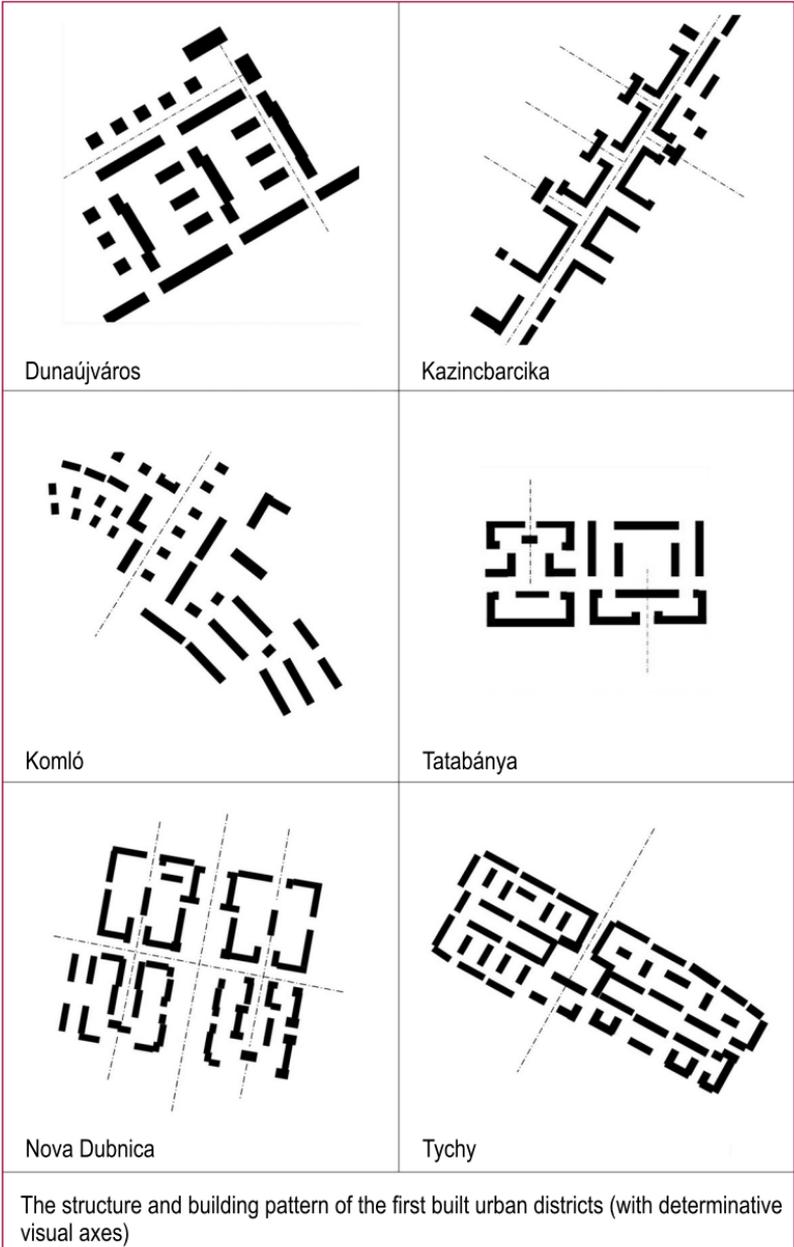
Although the first construction phase of the new town is a sealed, completed unit but from the viewpoint of the entire settlement's structure and building, however, seems a sort of torso, an alien element, a separate, enclosed entity within the body of the city.

### *City centre*

The building of Nová Dubnica, similarly to Kazincbarcika, started from the 'middle'. According to the plan, the area was built in by the architectural ensemble enclosing the town's central main square. The four-block unit draws a completely regular square geometry whose central axis is the already mentioned broad, large-scale landscaped urban square.

This square, however, is by far different from the kind of which you can see in the plans of Hungarian new towns. In the city centres of Hungarian new towns representativeness was expressed only partially by emphasising the size of squares of the new town centres. The enclosed urban style composition and surrounding the square with institutions of major importance were more important. In contrast to this, the main square of Nová Dubnica has such a depth of space that rather gives the sense of a wide

Figure 54: First built urban districts of the examined new towns



Source: The author's own edition

boulevard than a city square. The buildings around the square typically function as residential flats, with shops running along under the arcades on the ground floor. Urban services are con-

centrated in the centre (Mierové námestie), this was an important part of the original concept as well.

At the same time since its beginnings, Nová Dubnica has been characterised by above-average facilities which did not match its size but rather its status as a “model socialist town” (*Gajdoš–Moravanská, 2016*) Although the rates of empty and built in spaces are high, the square does not create a megalomaniac sense. Here the intellectual and formal relationship with historical images is also noticeable but this is not identical with the architecture of the Hungarian new towns’ representative spaces of mono-functional institutions.

### *Urban architectural image*

The centre of Nová Dubnica with a long, wide square formed between six-storey frame shaped building blocks has a very strong character. The four blocks appear from outside as a closed entity which allows access only from a dominant axis; it is not by chance that the most published facade of the buildings is dominated by a symmetrical, gate-like composition with a tower motif in the axis. Some architectural elements (e.g. the towers) are naming the neighbourhood’s historic buildings as formal historic images. (*Zarecor, 2011*)

The wide interior with a circled arcade on the ground floor intends to reproduce the atmosphere of the historic city centre. The quality of housing in the town is highly thought of and is one of the main reasons for the town’s attractiveness and the satisfaction of its inhabitants. (*Gajdoš–Moravanská, 2016*). Thus, it can be declared that although the integrity of the central core within today’s urban body and its relationship with the surrounding differently built in areas is controversial, but suits the overall city scape image of the socialist new towns.

## Conclusions

Based on the analysis of the examples shown, it can be stated that strong similarities can be detected between the Central and Eastern European state socialist new towns in planning principles independently of country. It is not surprising, since in all of the

countries concerned the Soviet general directives were taken into account in determining which of them should be applied; sometimes even the representatives of the Soviet urban policy tried to 'help' with personal visits and advice. Nevertheless, in terms of realisation among cities – even within countries – a number of differences found; a fact which shows that general requirements did not necessarily result in schematic-type solutions. Local conditions, or the plan approval process or the unique characteristics of construction or planner's qualities have refined, shaped central requirements to a great extent. On the grounds of these it can also be observed that although on the level of plans there are recurring elements in the structure of the surveyed cities (linearly stretched urban fabric, creation of an urban main axis, which was often "reinforced" by a concentrated main square in the Hungarian examples) but in reality, apart from some small details they do not have fundamentally identical features.

The axial appearance, the parade road, the vertical focus are elements easily associated with new towns, as they are commonly known urban architectural instruments of socialist realism. A parade road built on such 'pure principle' motives as in Dunaújváros is nowhere to be seen, the so often emphasised structural relationship with the industrial area is the most direct here in comparison to the studied cities.

It may arise therefore, that according to which criteria should socialist new towns be identified. The architectural character may be relevant, but there are few socialist industrial towns whose character is based on socialist realism in a uniformed manner. Out of the studied examples Kazincbarcika and Nová Dubnica (*Gajdoš–Moravanská, 2016*) are the best fit into this criterion because the features of "socialist realist" style define the image of the city centre itself.

In the other towns one can often see the hectic cityscape of the changing settlements, a mix of different construction periods with the distinctive features of the urban image of the 'average' Central and Eastern European cities forced to live through the urban development and construction processes in the state socialist era. The anywhere recognisable patterns of the homogenous architectural ensembles of socialist realism often appear between spatial units very different in character.

Compared to historical cities where the expanding development outward from the dense inner core is well recognisable, the new

urban morphology of new towns is different. Their settlement fabric, in fact reflects the idea of the ‘same quality’ areas which was one of the basic principles of the urban planning vision of the past.

Accordingly, the structural compactness and autonomy of individual territorial units are strongly dominant in comparison to the grown cities, which is a consequence of the phased building-in process by neighbourhood units. The patchwork-like system of residential units with a unique style organised by their own construction principles, often operating as a separate, difficult to integrate community as well, is common – typical both in Hungarian and foreign examples. (*Balockaite, 2012*).

The lack of city centre is also a general characteristic feature, which raises problems mainly not because of functional, institutional deficiencies, but because of the lack of orientation and of specific city-related unique image. Today’s reinterpretation of public areas, among others in the majority of cases just wants to fill in the absence of this central “Place.” Here the searching for identity issue which is closely linked to the subject-matter should also be mentioned (*Light, 2000*), which is one of the most common problems in Central and Eastern European post-socialist cities after the change of regime. (*Balockaite, 2012*). The post-socialist societies are trying to process, recollect and communicate outwards their state-socialist era in different ways. Beyond the general problems emerging after the regime change (economic restructuring, privatisation, inflation and their social implications, such as unemployment, etc.) the planned new towns and historic settlements with strong ties to the state socialist system had to face further challenges as well. (*Csizmady–Ferencz, 2016*) Among other things, as getting rid of the often negative bias associated with the socialist attribute, they had to fight for their new brand within the urban network.

All the cities, which have had historical antecedents, have means that can be activated in the field of identity. Young and Kaczmarek (2008) set forth three general methods that are used in the affected municipalities (decommunisation; return to the pre-socialist Golden Age; Westernisation / Europeanisation of the town). However, in the purpose-built new industrial cities, they do not always work, so these cities have to apply other strategies as well. Balockaite identifies additional familiar methods in the usual matter of the material and spiritual heritage of socialist new towns:

(“active forgetting of the socialist past; commercialisation of the socialist past via tourism; ironic imitation of the West, vis-à-vis de-ideologised images of “green and young” towns; bifurcation of consciousness into private remembrance and public forgetting of the past”) (*Balockaite, 2012*).

Out of the settlements presented here, the strategy of Dunaújváros is obvious. With the so-called Architectural Trail consciously undertakes the new town’s state socialist past and its architectural heritage. The town organises conferences and issues publications about its past, and building history. Though, other cities, are more cautious with the establishment of a new touristic brand such as the memories of state socialist urban planning, architectural monuments. The new image that Tychy is going to represent is that of a green city, able to provide pleasant lifestyle and good environmental conditions. It seems, as if not so consciously, like Tychy, but for other new towns mostly the liveable, airy, offering lots of green space urban vision is the most viable option. However, this image is not so easy to assert, due to prejudices, related to the former socialist new industrial cities. The reason for this is that for a long time industry here was not only an economic driving force, but it entailed almost an uncontrolled environmental load as well. In addition, however, the undeniable still existing common values of these cities are, – especially in the early-built areas – the scale of the living environment, liveability, the proportion of green areas and the quality level of the public areas’ micro-architecture. It’s worth appraising the elements which beyond the building in methods are making it possible to clearly identify the construction period as a kind of environmental pattern (reliefs above the entrance, building decorating figurines) as special values.

While with their schematic topics (“happy child, strong, optimistic workers, mother and child”) they clearly transmit the old ideological-political messages, at the same time in many cases they are demanding, unique, personal, and therefore often really lovable.

The professional and public perception of socialist realism has greatly improved recently. It is not by chance that a socialist realist building is already under national protection (e.g. in Dunaújváros), while at some places the municipalities themselves initiate the placing of their architectural ensembles at least under local protection. (*Kazinbcarcika*).

The analysis and investigation of new towns is a high priority research area. Despite the old principles, the politicisation, these settlements were formulated along the lines of the idea of a modern, liveable city; the plans in this regard truly intended to create a sort of “ideal city”. Following the specific historical and geopolitical situation in the various countries in the development history of nearly the same guidelines were tintured, the main structural criteria, the details of form differentiated, their integrity and ties are still recognisable.

The processing and analysis of the era’s urban planning, architectural, albeit slowly, but has already begun in some countries. However, there is a shortage of the above-mentioned comparative studies, which could serve as a basis for revealing the urban architectural aspects of the common fate of Central and Eastern European countries.

Those criteria, although strongly bound to the West-European intellectual trends in this region, were still specifically reinterpreted due to historical processes. The research of the specifics of the region and its cross-border similarities/differences has still many shortcomings. This study sought to somewhat reduce them.