

The impact of settlement character on urban development. Some example of small towns in South Transdanubia

Abstract

The purpose of the study. In my current research I want to describe the economic history and local economic development aspects of small towns in a coherent framework. The first of these elements is the impact of the urban form on the image of towns. All the characteristics that define a settlement will affect it throughout its development.

Applied methods. In addition to the analysis of the literature and regulatory background in Hungary, the development strategies, urban image manuals, and marketing strategies of small towns are presented.

Outcomes. One of the elements of culture-based small-town development is the built or natural cultural heritage found in towns; these factors have played an important and prominent role in the life of the settlements that have become towns and cities. Their role in urban development can also help to define the vision of the future of a settlement.

Keywords: settlement image, regulation, planning policy, urban development

The first stages of urban design planning policy

The identification and presentation of the potential of local economic development, the development of methodological and implementation support tools could help local economic development actors to become more effective, coordinated, and informed, which could support the country's successful participation in the international division of labour by finding good solutions at regional/local level¹. The success of local economic development cannot be separated from local resources and local circumstances in general (environment, public services, society, etc.). A detailed exploration of the causal links between these interrelationships can provide a basis for preparing more targeted, territorially sensitive solutions for local/central development policy interventions². Another important aspect of the economic development of urban planning is the study of urban image.

The first manifestations of the regulation of the modern urban image can be found in the capital. Between 1808 and 1857, the city had an Architectural Committee, which dealt with urbanistic-aesthetic issues of the architectural phenomena of the built environment³. The aim was to ensure that the character and architectural style of the town were well considered. In practice, several larger towns and cities systematized the regulations used in urban planning, some of which

¹ Horeczki, R. – Póla, P. (2023)

² Horeczki, R. – Egyed, I. (2021)

³ Domonkos, Cs. (2020)

operated with technical parameters such as floor heights, frontage walls, keeping cornices level, etc., while other elements of the regulations emphasized uniformity, the image of the city, its aesthetics. From 1870, the administration of the municipalities takes over the management of town planning, operation, and urban development⁴. Article VI of 1937⁵ on town planning and building is the next most important document in this field. In the current regulatory context, the Government Decree of 2012⁶ on the settlement development concept, integrated settlement development strategy and settlement planning instruments specifically highlights the characteristics that determine the visual appearance of the settlement environment, which may be cultural, scale, form, use of materials and quality. From 2016⁷, it is recommended that all municipalities prepare a town and city design manual. It can be seen that the above regulations are rather subjective - it has always been left to the municipality to regulate. In practice, however, this has been achieved through the joint involvement of the population, interest groups, civil and business organisations and religious communities.

From the 20th century onwards, the analysis of the urban landscape can be considered along four main lines⁸:

- What is the image of the town or city and how is this reflected in its economic attractiveness, and how is it influenced by local government or tourism?
- What does the importance of marketing mean for municipalities, what does it mean to sell municipalities, do they have to sell at any price and if they decide to sell, to whom and how?
- How is the condition of the local economy and the quality of local resources linked to the development of the municipality and competition between municipalities? Who and what kind of local marketing activities are carried out?
- What can be of particular importance in place marketing, who are the primary target groups for small town management - investors creating jobs, local residents or tourists?

The development of a town's image is a strategic planning process, usually a purposeful and planned activity that encompasses the development of the town.

How can the settlement's image contribute to urban development?

Settlement marketing can be understood as identifying, helping to develop, and communicating the competitiveness and comparative advantages of an area⁹; the creation of a strategy based on a thorough analysis, reconciliation of interests and synthesis work, and the ongoing operation of the tools to implement it; working to increase economic, community, cultural and ecological well-being. Otherwise, why is it important to examine these factors? For example, transport potential of the country, we can see that there are many small towns that are far from the arterial

⁴ Weninger, S. (2019)

⁵ 1937. VI. Act.

⁶ 314/2012. (XI. 8.) Government Decree.

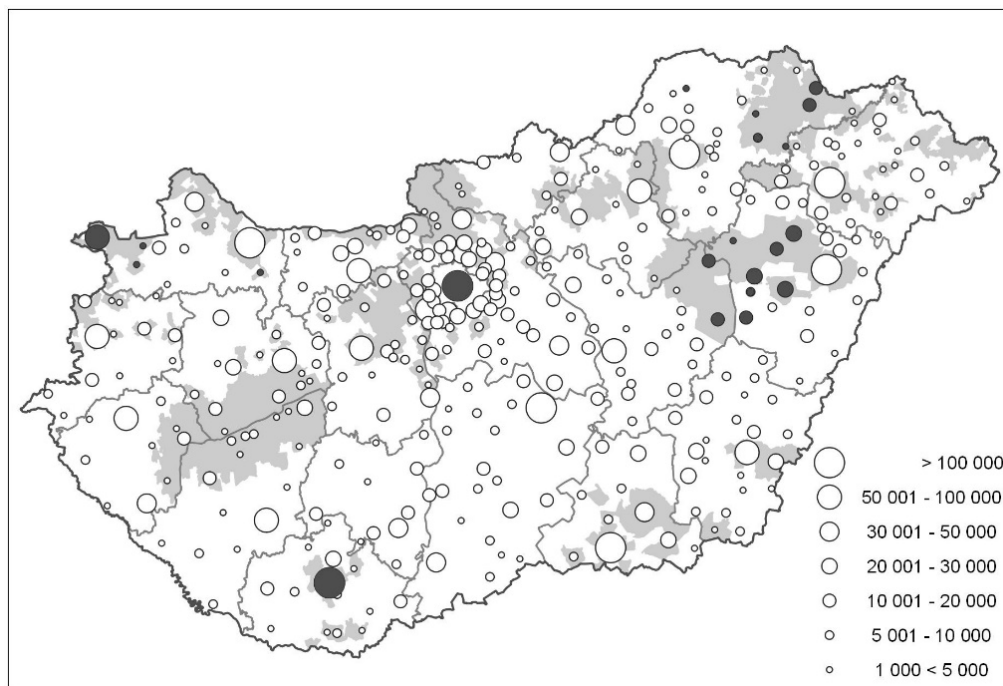
⁷ 2016. évi LXXIV. Act.

⁸ Weninger, S. (2019); Körner, Zs. (2010)

⁹ Orosdy, B. (1999)

roads, neither connected to the region by rail nor by primary or secondary roads. Nevertheless, we can see that these towns can be attractive from a tourist point of view, even on a national scale. One reason for this is the development and maintenance of a consciously planned identity and image of the town. A comparison of the national image studies and tourism destinations shows that there are still a lot of blank spots on the map and highlights the Lake Balaton and lakes region.

Figure 2 The relationship between tourist areas and the urban network



Source: own editing based on 429/2020 (IX. 14.) Government Decree (grey: tourist destination, black: world heritage site)

The concepts of the small towns in South Transdanubia include an image audit, in some cases a separate marketing strategy¹⁰, which I analysed in search of common intersections. By implementing the marketing concept, it is possible to develop a positive vision of the future, in which small towns can improve their standing among municipalities, become a recognised town at sub-regional level and at county and regional level. In some cases, e.g. on the shores of Lake Balaton or in spa towns, this is integrated into the municipal concepts and the benefits of the municipal image are realised. I found 3 main priorities that essentially penetrate the strategies of the small towns. The most important are elements focusing on the residents: youth retention, integrity of newcomers, community cohesion. To realise the economic benefits, it is necessary to: retain existing businesses, help new job-creating businesses to set up and employ highly skilled workers locally. In the context of the creation of a tourist axis, it is essential that the town and its surroundings become known and appreciated as a popular holiday and travel destination. A positive image can generate a significant number of visitors; it can have a positive social and economic impact; its municipality can operate profitably and continuously. The following areas are identified as priority axes in the concepts: public services and public safety;

¹⁰ Horeczki, R. (2014)

accessibility; social life (and institutions); healthy environment (green, clean, quiet); urban image (possibility to spend leisure time, sport opportunities etc.). Marketing of settlements can lead to a more favourable position in the city competition, but according to the opinion of the mayors¹¹, marketing is advertising at all; good advertising costs a lot of money, but municipalities do not have enough money.

The continuity of the historical development of a settlement is also determined by its urban character, its uniqueness, which may be the result of its natural or built heritage¹². In the South Transdanubian region, there are several natural or built characteristics that clearly identify the town and whose existence is intertwined with the development of the settlement.

Figure 1 Harkány bath in 1960s Source: GalariaSavaria



¹¹ Based on interviews conducted in Baranya County in 2019

¹² Meggyesi, T. (2006)

Figure 2 The south shore of Lake Balaton



Source: utazasokamultban.blog.hu

Can municipalities sell history as heritage??

To keep the historical heritage alive in small towns, it would be worth rethinking strategies based on cultural heritage. There are positive examples of livability well-being across Europe¹³. In general, small towns have many local cultural factors and a diverse cultural offer; and amenities: housing is considered average and there are many leisure facilities (sports, youth club, Entrepreneurs' Association, traditional balls, playhouses); health and education facilities: the settlements are home to a skilled workforce and an increasing number of graduates; they are the seat of secondary education; municipalities provide financial support for the economic sector: preferential business relocation costs, infrastructure relocation costs, district administration centres, regional cooperation. The existence and functioning of institutions and civil society organisations play an important role in advocacy. Their existence and their appropriate functions are an attraction for residents and potential newcomers (police station, vigilantes). The willingness to self-organise is still very strong today, and its origins can be traced back to the mid-19th century. The associations and organisations that were formed in the last century are still to be found after the millennium.

An important aspect in shaping the vision of small towns is the development of a concept aimed at improving the visibility and image of the small town among three key target groups: tourists, local and regional residents and business investors, in support of the development of the town, in line with urban, regional and sub-regional development plans¹⁴. By targeting the three target groups, three slogans can be defined: 'good life', 'good investment', 'good tourism'. The population would be targeted primarily by the "good life", since the offer of a favourable living environment can be an attractive aspect at any time, whether for settling down, starting a family, spending leisure time or working.

The small town (Kadarkút), which was assessed on several criteria, shows the following results:

¹³ Council of the European Union (2014)

¹⁴ Piskóti, I. et al., (2023)

Strengths and opportunities:

- the unique landscape of the Zselic (tourism potential)
- traditions and certain conditions for agricultural production
- the presence in the sub-region of a few medium-sized enterprises with significant employment potential
- proximity to Kaposvár, Szigetvár and Nagyatád (25 km, average bus journey time: 40 minutes)
- good accessibility to certain parts of the sub-region
- large labour reserves,
- experience of tendering in some municipalities and enterprises
- willingness to organise themselves (high number of associations)
- relatively developed parts of the region (Kaposvár area), higher incomes, education, employment, businesses
- opportunities arising from the development of the Kaposvár axis, the extent of the induced development-agglomeration zone
- exploitation of tourism potential, slow tourism in the Zselic and along the Boronka
- spectacular improvement in accessibility with the completion of the M9
- the creation of an incubator house could help to strengthen local small businesses

Weaknesses and threats:

- functional weakness of the small towns of the sub-regional centre (real centre Kaposvár)
- significant lack of urbanisation
- significant unemployment and inactivity
- fragmented settlement structure in the micro-region
- lack of local cohesion
- weaknesses in health care (general practitioner network, but on-call at weekends, lack of paediatrician)
- low educational indicators
- low business density, few manufacturing enterprises
- underdeveloped tourism infrastructure
- continuing demographic erosion: depopulation of inland areas, outward migration of human resources
- the emergence of ethnic and social segregation on a municipal and micro-regional scale
- shrinking internal market and lack of capital strangling the fragile entrepreneurial sector
- training gaps make it difficult for young people entering the labour market to find a job
- a subculture of unemployment will be perpetuated and reproduced across generations.

There are four ways to stimulate cultural tourism in Kadarkút. A first opportunity to learn more about the life of a poet: accompanying Mihály Csokonai Vitéz on his journey to Somogy. The

poet became acquainted with these landscapes of Somogy County from the summer of 1798. Among other places, he stayed in Nagybjom with István Sárközy, the chief slave magistrate, and then in Kiskorpád and Kisasszond with the magistrate's relatives. He then worked in Hedrehely, visited Csököly and Kadarkút, according to his poem "Somogyi Kázus"¹⁵. This short part of his life would be a good substitute for a part of a literature lesson, since when Csokonai is "on the agenda", visiting these places would make learning more enjoyable. The visit could be combined with a field trip, a bicycle ride or even a horse ride. In terms of accommodation, the dormitories of the schools of Nagybjom and Kadarkút would seem to be the right choice.

Figure 3. Béla Szántó oil painting of the Somssich Castle in Kadarkút



Source: Indafoto

The second option is to use the remaining manor houses, e.g. for children's camps. The former Somssich family manor house in Vótapuszta is now the home of the Evangelical Pentecostal Community. The National Youth Mission¹⁶ organises camps for young people aged 13-18 every summer. They have organised Star Camp, Castle Camp, Flying Camp, Exploration Camp. The camps are very popular, and there have been occasions when 500 young people have filled the castle building. The problem is that the camps on the outskirts of Kadarkút are not linked to the village itself. Many people know the name Kadarkút, but only about these camps. The association could be strengthened, as the municipality has a dormitory for 200 people, but the camp organisers do not mention Kadarkút as a possible place to stay. The Kadarkút area was notorious for bandit and robber attacks. So the third option will be a hiking trail, that could be developed to follow the main stops of an outlaw. These routes cross county boundaries, but regional cooperation could overcome these obstacles. This idea has already appeared on a small

¹⁵ Arcanum, Utazások a múltba Blogbejegyzés

¹⁶ OIM portal

scale in Gyöngyöspuszta, part of the former Márffy-Festetics family estate, where László Simon and his family are organising a Betyár camp¹⁷. The programme includes herding, shepherding; forest walks; woodcarving, textile and leather crafts, felting; forging; building ovens, huts, tents and pens; peasant farming: learning about farm animals; quizzes and hiking. The idea of the camp is a good one, offering a week's recreation, but without the opportunity to get to know the area. There are a number of monuments and listed buildings within the sub-region¹⁸. The former hunting lodge of the Counts of Somssich in Kadchirt, the park of the Goszthony Castle, the mansion and the glasshouse belonging to it in Bárdudvarnok, the monastery of the Order of St. Benedict in Kaposszentbenedek, consecrated in 1994, the Szarkavár near Kaposújlak, the primary school with bell tower entrance in Hedrehely and the Jankovich mansion can be seen. Arriving in Henche, you will immediately notice an old mansion, which has been restored to its former beauty by its present owner. The mansion was the home of the Márffy family, the former owners of the area, until the mid-20th century, and today the building and its park are home to a European-renowned resort and golf course. Anyone visiting the quiet Mike will be surprised at how rich it is in monuments. The former count's castle has recently been privately owned and is protected as a historical monument, as are the statues of St. Vendel, the old granary and the mausoleum. The latter was built on the shore of a small lake by Count Imre Sommsich in 1867 as a memorial to his son Pongrác, who died at the age of 20. The area around Pálmajor was the estate of Festetics and Somssich. A historical adventure tour through the whole county would also be attractive to foreign tourists.

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¹⁷ GyöngyösTanya Portal

¹⁸ Bányai Panoráma Egyesület webpage

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