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AR

TRANSFORMATIONS OF HUNGARIAN TRADITIONAL TOWN CENTERS IN THE ERA OF SOCIALISM - TWO CASE STUDIES

SPREMEMBE MADŽARSKIH TRADICIONALNIH MESTNIH JEDER V ČASU SOCIALIZMA - DVA PRIMERA

izvleček

Pričujoči esej povzema zgodovino dveh madžarskih mest v njunem razmerju do centralističnega in institucionaliziranega razvoja v obdobju socializma. Čeprav sta obe zgodovini značilni za to obdobje, sta v mnogih ozirih vseeno enkratni.

Ker so zgradbe posebnega pomena običajno gradili v osrednjih predelih, se njihov odnos do že obstoječih zgodovinskih središč zastavlja kot pomembno vprašanje.

Zame je eden glavnih sklepov, ki izhaja iz obeh predstavljenih primerov, da v osnovi pozitivna razvojna odločitev glede ustroja mesta v nadaljevanju, tj. pri določanju podrobnosti razvojnih načrtov in arhitekturnem "detajliranju", lahko tudi večkrat spremeni svojo usmeritev. Medtem ko je razvoj v Kecskemétu zaradi svoje nesorazmernosti in neupoštevanja razmerij v okolici pomenil popoln polom, je v Szekszárdu prisotnost grajene celote sprejemljiva zaradi natančnega ravnovesja arhitekturnih detajlov, ki utrjujejo zamisli mesta.

abstract

Present essay summarises the history of two Hungarian towns related to centralising institutional development in the State Socialist Era, both are characteristic, although still unique in many respect.

As these buildings of special importance were built typically in central areas, their relationship with the already existing historic centres is an important question.

For me one of the main conclusions of the presented two examples is that a basically positive development decision regarding urban structure later can take different directions in the course of "refining" development schemes, and architectural detailing. While development in Kecskemét became fiasco because of its disproportion, neglect of contextual scale, in Szekszárd the presence of the building ensemble is acceptable because of the refined balance of architectural details, and it is reinforcing the urban ideas.

"I have the suspicion, that unprejudiced perception of the present and the (somewhat steady) future can only be based on such past, which is perceived without pathos or cynicism..."
György Janáky: Those Sixties (1988)

Cliché: buildings carry messages. This stands particularly for institutional or public buildings, where transmitted message is also rooted in their civic, communal character not merely in their material, physical existence.

Aging of those urban ensembles is frequently not a merely physical deterioration process, but a struggle against loss of intellectual values. As people often do, buildings also have to tackle with the adaptation to varied circumstances, being adjusted to new "rules of the game", with their capability and intellectual power, attitude, authenticity brought about by sometimes magnetic personality, calling for public appreciation, correction and acceptance among fast changing circumstances.

Maybe the comparison is astonishing, but that's the way I see the destiny of Hungarian Administrative centres built in the 1960-70-ies. They are not old enough to earn acceptance and appreciation for their plain historic or aesthetic values, but are not fresh enough, not bold enough to make their weaknesses as compensation forgivable for their fresh values. Objective criticism of administrative centres of the 1960-70-ies is impeded by their proximity in time, real values are overshadowed by the prejudice connected to the era of their creation in some way. ('pathos and/or cynicism').

Those town centres have arrived to the troublesome age of midlife crisis, where mere usefulness is not a positive argument on their side. The institution types formulated for particular communal demands of that former social order, such as community cultural centre, state warehouse, centralised offices, party headquarter, etc. have lost their relevance among changed social values and lifestyles, among new economic circumstances with their devalued spiritual content, vanishing social message and in many cases even their loss of function. Those buildings would have been entitled for a fair selection, to survive for their eternal human values – even in their 'elderly' age – should have receive appreciation for their architectural qualities, for their values in the urban structure, even when their functional value is lost, despite their constant need for reconstituted appraisal, despite the fact that their usefulness frequently questioned in our age.

The nearly 45 years of State Socialism' was a complex, constantly changing period in Hungary. During this time the priorities of town planning changed significantly and the special attention initially paid to the role of public spaces eventually much slackened.

During the beginning of State Socialism in the early 1950s, the formulation of principles and the exact expression of expectations were central tasks in all areas of everyday life. Building towns became not only a post-war need but a political question as well. Hungary wanted to become a land of iron and steel, and this required a forced rate of development.

In the middle of the 1950s socialist realist style became dominant, be it in the field of urban architecture axiality, space hierarchy, symmetry, or model of regular, closed squares encircled by buildings. There are only a few 'clearly' socialist realist buildings, most of them are rather characterised by a mixture of modernism, new modernism and socialist realism, but in the field of urban architecture certain compositional ideas of the period stayed on permanently.

Those administrative centres which have been built in the main impetus of State Socialism, in the '60-ies and '70-ies, are in a very special situation, either from professional either from the layman's standpoint. The style, which preceded the modern socialist era, (called 'socialist-realism') have earned an almost accepting status, received historic 'public esteem' simply for its age. Its articulation almost became identified with the message of block-rehabilitation carried out in the '80-ies, with its similar pitched roof appearance acceptable for the greater public, at least not carrying irritable motives.

The barren 'model made modernism' [Janáky, 1988] is rejected by the majority of people, and it is jammed between those two styles, between modern and pitched roofed, with its articulation contrasting the physical context.

New guidelines were given based not on demagogic political ideas, but on technocratic directives initiated by principles of the planning profession.

Coming closee to the '70th, the designing of space structures was no longer determined by political ideologies, but rather by aspects of urban architectural trends. New, up-to-date, internationally used principles of designing were adopted, they differed from the traditional street-square patterns of use. Informal routes offering free crossing possibilities within the urban blocks were considered as block structure. [Kissfazekas, 2013/b]

 Considerable proportion of administrative centres of country towns were reconstructed in that time – they are products of that 'new' construction era which still determine the functioning of those urban centres even today, they are exactly the buildings that considerably determine actual urban- and architectural character, the aesthetics of country settlements. Their appreciation is controversial; laypeople do not differentiate between them in respect of quality, of architectural value. They do not know that the 'flat-roof-cubes and towers' typically classified as 'socialist' by them in many cases followed an accepted international architectural trend and are copied from western examples. For the general public flat roofed cube- and tower buildings are rejectable, single use facilities, planned in the age of poorness, ugly, characterless grey objects typically oozing with Eastern Bloc atmosphere.

Theoretically the union of urban design and architecture sounds evidence today; there is no debate, that the architectural product shall be assessed among contextual relations, which is the adaptation of the building to existing circumstances, and is an important factor being closely connected to the intellectual and physical content of the building. Nevertheless the sense of completeness, feeling of catharsis is quite rare. We have to admit: such buildings which are in contrast with the context still can give aesthetic pleasure. If they are not dissonant – at least not in a way that is caused by irritating stupidity, but maybe as part of inception, contrasting intentionally – a profoundly articulated building may also produce some decent and accepting emotion, sympathy with its mentality, or by its presence as a reasonable object, despite its alien appearance. And who can not mention counterexamples: disappointingly dreary buildings lacking basic sensitivity despite their 'perfect' operation, fair functioning, intensive contacts with their surroundings, urbanistically integrated, and commercially 'adjusted', seemingly optimum solutions.

'Context' is a recurring term usually used when evaluating a building in its set of relationships. The context primarily means the relationship of a building to the layout and its architectural environment, particularly in relation to the neighbouring buildings, and to the character and form of such relationships. But this context is a part of a wider, urban context, of a set of relationships which can clearly be seen only from a 'more distant' perspective, that is in the urban fabric. The complexity of the urban organism manifests itself also in the way these diverse layers of relationships interact each other.

The influence of a building or groups of buildings appearing in a city, their location and spatial situation within the urban corpus, their relationship to the urban fabric as well as their urban design, spatial and mass relations, are all different readings, varied in depth of the same text. [Kissfazekas, 2013a]

More approaches are possible, from more directions and scales, although the architectural and urban interpretation can not be separated, it still requires different ways of approach and handling, either we concentrate to buildings and examine how they fit to the surrounding urban tissue, or from a different aspect with different notions, approaching from the urban context examine the architectural 'object' in it.

Present essay follows the latter procedure, having selected two characteristic examples.

The decision on the location of certain important buildings in different time was strongly influenced by the availability of empty spaces for development. In Hungarian towns, the construction of important public buildings was generally in harmony with the urban structure, they were assigned to existing or new squares and roads, to serve as architectural emphasis. Instead of the unconditional application of compositional principles, though, many times practical considerations such as ownership or possible exchange of lands were the most decisive factors. Consequently, although public buildings of town centres became denser as time passed, following the existing spatial (characteristically central or linear) structure of the centre, they were not necessarily built in each other's immediate proximity, but in a patch-like manner, woven together with the existing old buildings.

In certain towns during the state socialist era, the development of the centre took place in a similar way, looking for the proximity

of the centre, and not necessarily each other's. The appearance of this scattered, diffuse structure of buildings within the urban corpus does not generate any conflicts in terms of the urban scale context.

However, in the majority of Hungarian towns not the 'scattered' placement of public buildings was typical, but designers thought in terms of urban complexes. [Kissfazekas, 2013a]

Although in other towns public buildings were constructed next to each other, thus they exhibited the intention to build a new town centre, developments were not coherent and they took place on the basis of a single-phase urban design concept. The buildings were lined up in each other's proximity according to independent planning. Plannings were sometimes carried out parallelly, neglecting any co-operation between designers and without any coordinating professional help. Thus, in many cases they failed to create coherent architectural complexes.

The spatial relationship in urban scale is determining when public buildings of central functions are built. These new buildings could fundamentally modify the spatial extension of city centres, as well as their external connections and internal functioning. It is especially true when not only single buildings, but a whole group of buildings appear in a city. These new developments, in many cases, bring not only their own architectural design, but as well their own structural logic and a new layout structure.
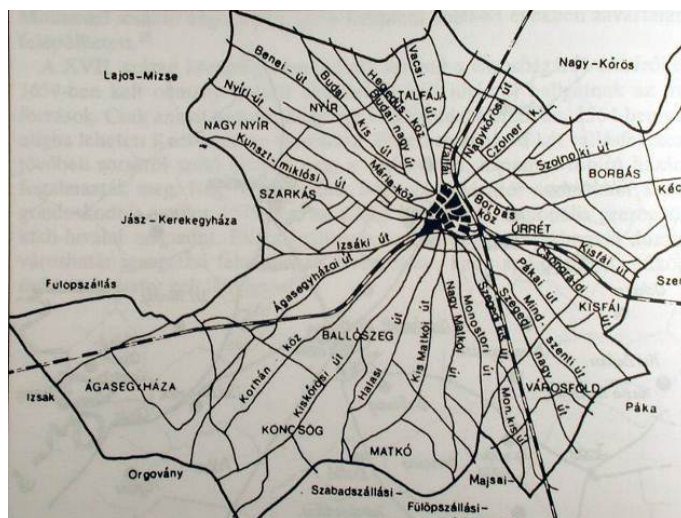
The two town centres have been selected for demonstrative precedent on the basis of the extent of work, which was exceptional in the examined period, and also for their capability to serve as a characteristic model. Their value as model in this sense does not mean that the process or the outcome should be positive, they are selected for their nature of being well documented, providing adequate data for analysis. Those town centre developments can be considered as exemplary models, where original functional mechanism was changed by the result of interventions, where lines of the spiritual forces have been rearranged or became sharper. A further common value in the examples is that they are created with efforts of strong architect personalities, going far beyond the social planning stereotypes, having sensitivity to urban issues, and high morality reflected in the elaborated workout of buildings.

Kecskemét
Historic Town Centre

Kecskemét historically was a single main centred town. The mosaic-like centre that earlier consisted of multiple interrelated squares has been opened up into a single square to the end of eighteenth century, after that change the single centred character became even more explicit, conscious.

Not only the historic/sacral places, certain built witnesses of the intellectual character of the town, namely the Cathedral, Saint Nicholas catholic church, the Calvinist church, synagogue are grouped around the main square, but also commercial and communal life has been focused to that town centre by open markets held there. This concentration of lines of forces to a single point has become clearly outlined, apparent, despite of the agglomerated urban structure, especially when 24 streets

accessing from various directions should be diverted in order to relieve traffic load of inner areas in 1970.

In the second half of the nineteenth century Péter Lestár (1880-1896) and Elek Kada (1897-1913) mayors proposed a new urban vision.('Kecskemét should become the largest fruit exporter of Hungary!') [Juhász, 1998]
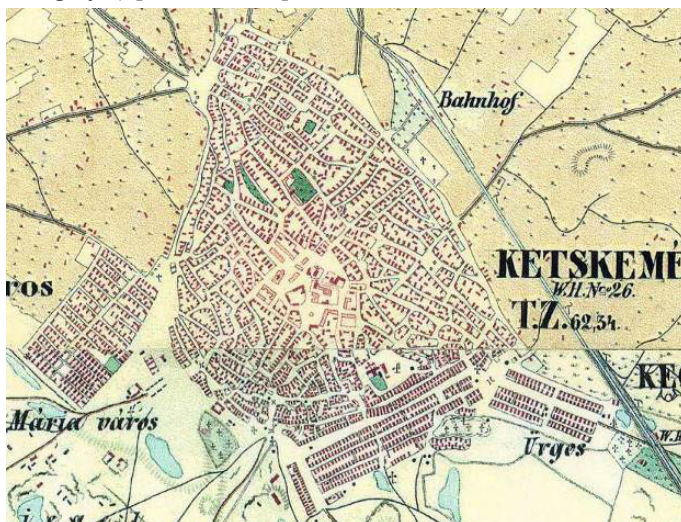
Figure 1: structure of Kecskemét around 1860 (II. military survey map (1806-1869)).
Slika 1: Ustroj Kecskeméta okoli 1860 (II. vojaški pregledni zemljevid (1806-1869)). [http://archivportal.arcanum.hu/maps/html/katfelm2b_google.html]

Figure 2: Roads radially starting out from town centre, in the beginning of 1900-ies (source: István Juhász: Townplanning history of Kecskemét).
Slika 2: Ceste, ki radialno izhajajo iz mestnega središča, začetek 20. stoletja (Juhász, 1998).

In the beginning of 1890-ies the newly opened spacious market square was intended to 'incarnate' the new role of the town, and by an impressive gesture they opened a new wide avenue by which that square was connected to the railway station, that symbolised the age and progress. Reinterpreted elements in the urban structure did not change the historically evolved centrality of the core. The fact, that the wide, new street has been ended directly at the main square, have even more emphasized the central position of the square in every respect.

Figure 3: Settlement centre before the square regulation by Péter Lestár.
Slika 3: Središče naselja pred ureditvijo trga, ki jo je izvedel Péter Lestár.
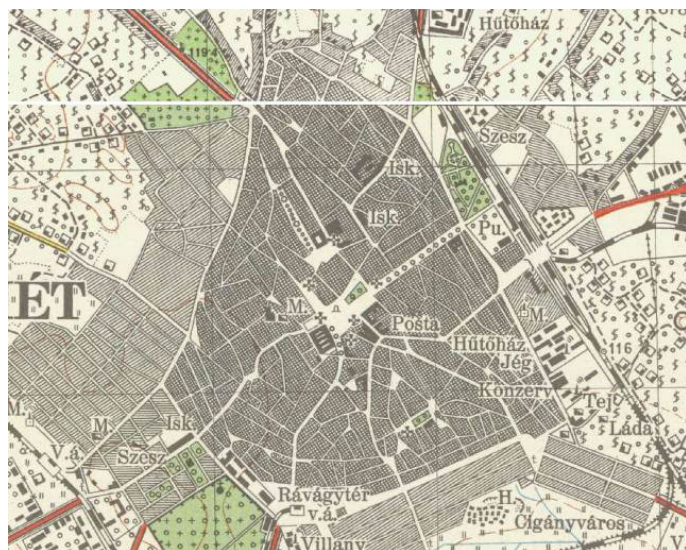

*Figure 4: Urban structure of Kecskemét after the regulation of new market/
main square and opening up of new avenue (Sugár-Street then /Rákóczi Street
today) leading to railway station (source: Juhász István: Townplanning history
of Kecskemét).*
Slika 4: Urbana struktura Kecskeméta po ureditvi nove tržnice/glavnega trga
in odprtju nove avenije (tedaj Sugárjeva ulica / danes Rákóczijeva), ki vodi k
železniški postaji (Juhász, 1998).

The 'new' Town Centre
After 1945 the first basic change of Kecskemét urban structure
was the alteration of municipal boundaries, by which 9 self-
reliant villages were detached and the administrative territory of
the town was decreased to its one forth. The same time the role
of the town has considerably altered, since it became the seat of
the newly formulated Bács-Kiskun County from 1950, and in
1971 high level supplying and service centre by the Settlement-
network-development concept.
Widening of its scope of roles have induced a large scale urban

development, with intensive growth of population, by which the
number of inhabitants has grown from 56.000 person to roughly
110.000 persons between 1949-1988, inducing the erection of
10 new residential projects. Those residential developments
– which were inspired also by the establishment of a local
prefabricating plant in 1975 – have reached the inner areas.
Services offered by the urban structure and the town itself
became inadequate to the increased size of population, and this
required a restructuring in the transport network of the town,
also a reinterpretation of the role of the town centre, creation of
a new forum saturated with 'new contents' [Juhász, 1998]. Of
course that forum was marked out not only for new functional
tasks, but to openly represent the altered political, communal
order and new tasks inflicted by it to the town.
For the centre a general regulation plan (master plan) has been
prepared in 1966 (urban design: dr. Dezsőné Korbonits - VÁTI).
In the time of preparation of that plan it was already a decided
fact, that the new centre with its field of administrative activities
in local and county sphere will be placed to the historic town,
but not directly to the existing main square, but reviving the idea
proposed by Elek Kada, namely an east-west direction avenue,
lead across the town. [Korbonits, 2010]

*Figure 5 and 6: The main square on postcards from the nineteenth century:
square viewed from Sugár Street and the estuary at Sugár Street (19-century
postcards).*
Sliki 5 in 6: Glavni trg na razglednicah iz 19. stoletja: pogled na trg iz
Sugárjeve ulice in rečno ustje na Sugárjevi ulici (razglednice iz 19. stoletja).

That axis got new emphasis in the urban structure by widening Rákóczi Street from railway station to main square, although it 'deceased' at the Cathedral and Town Hall. There were notions even earlier to continue the urban idea of the main axis, in order to connect the east and west side of the town from the railway station, across the main square. Originally nineteenth century plans considered the continuation of the avenue the same way, led from the railway station across the main square. It could be expected, that the structural importance and architectural articulation of that new segment can not be as significant as the existing segment that leads to the railway station, because of the presence of Cathedral (Nagytemplom) and the Town Hall bordering the square from west and closing the accessing road visually.

After that decision, when Kecskemét has been promoted to county seat, a new building ensemble was needed according to the didactic, normative thinking of that era for the new role with new architectural articulation. So in the beginning of the 1960-ies there came a decision that the above mentioned axis should be cleared from the Town Hall, demolishing the mainly low intensity built area being around, and at the starting point of that axis a new public centre should be built. In that public centre a party headquarter with a County Council building was decided to be built, which completely changed the townscape and the silhouette with its twin towers, emphasizing the main square, and which is definitive even today, also a cultural house, more than one warehouse.

The probably most well-known urban design tool of the state socialist era was the application of vertical accents to accentuate residential areas and public buildings. In several Hungarian towns, including Kecskemét, appeared high rise buildings sometimes scalelessly standing out of their environment. When analysing their place in the urban structure, various, well-definable principles can be noticed. In Kecskemét the appearance of high-rise buildings was the result of the decision relating the location of administrative buildings, that is the high-rise building was not accentuated in its surroundings for reasons of spatial plasticity, but just to transmit a message. It was evident that the new buildings had to be tall, since it performed a symbolic role. The two centres organised closely to each other – historic and new – although they have been in close physical contact, had no intimate interaction in any level, and had no tolerance or acceptance towards each other.

The architectural articulation of the new centre raised many questions regarding the spatial configuration. Although the new square connected directly to the historic main square, that connection did not became organic. Because the old main square constituted a closed unit with its impressive scale, with the two public building of considerable size and destination on west side turning to it with their main façade, having the new town centre connected with a new promenade to it, but since the two large historic building turned its back to it, its role became only secondary.

The newly constructed administrative centre attached directly to main square has reinforced the centric character. But the urban, townscape and structural relationship both to the historic core,

both to new town parts remained contradictory. Namely the west side of the new urban main square was not closed with a palpable space-bordering side, so it is almost leaking towards the traffic junction leading to surrounding residential districts. The most strikingly marked urban element among surrounding residential districts is the 176 apartment 'strip-house' along Petőfi Sándor Street built between 1967-69 (architect: Alfréd Peschka), with its longitudinal mass destined for accompaniment of the road leaving town. On the opposite side of the street there is the ten storey high residential district of so called Árpád-town extended to the new central square, as forced space-bordering unit, raising controversy for its scheme, scale, use of material, and for the lack of identity and basic contacts.
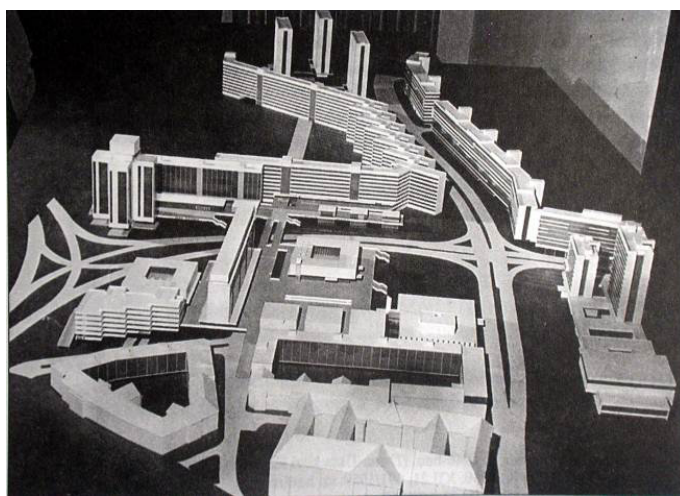

Figure 7: Mock up photo of the planned „new" town centre from the 1960-ies (source: István Juhász: Townplanning history of Kecskemét).
Slika 7: Fotografija makete načrtovanega 'novega' mestnega središča iz šestdesetih let (Juhász, 1998).

Figure 8: Structural connection of the historic and „new" town centres (foto: János Scheffer).
Slika 8: Strukturna povezava med zgodovinskim in 'novim' mestnim središčem (foto: János Scheffer).
[http://www.schefferj.ps.hu/images/Hungary/Hungary_AerialCities/ KecskemetBelvaros_1024.jpg)]

While reconstruction of new administrative centre in Kecskemét was adapted to historic heritage, maintained the original concentric character of the centre, neither the system of connections of the new building ensemble, the inner structure, the scheme, nor its relation to existing part is a successful solution, from the respect of coexistence with historic buildings. Urban interventions of the 1800-ies in Kecskemét were inventive, bold, radical, also creative rooted in the understanding of the situation, some elements 'organically' amalgamated with existing urban tissue as time passed. Institutional developments of town centres after 1945 – formulated according to centralising principles, doctrines – were not integrated to existing, living urban organism, mainly because of the lost sense for local scale.

Szekszárd
Historic Town Centre
The core of historic town centre in Szekszárd is Béla Square today with the Town Hall, with county municipality and Catholic Church designed by Mihály Pollack. The small square elevated to a high point of the setting has been distinctive in the web of smaller streets arriving from all directions. However it did organised the lines of urban forces 'un-proportionately', concentrically, leading them towards low lying, more dense areas, streets have become emphasized more emphatically in eastern direction. The longitudinal square widened to the valley like a funnel became a geometrical cross-axis among streets running downwards, (called Garay Square today) that lead down from the small main square, protuberant of the topography of the landscape towards Pest-Mohács (north-south direction) main road, where it suddenly stopped, working as a main street with its proportions and with its linear character.

Figure 9: Urban structure of Szekszárd in the middle of 1800-ies (II. military survey map (1806-1869)).
Slika 9: Urbana struktura Szekszárda sredi 19. stoletja (II. vojaški pregledni zemljevid (1806-1869)).
[http://archivportal.arcanum.hu/maps/html/katfelm2b_google.html]

The core have been relocated to Garay Square at the end of recent century, that meant the centre of gravity for the town slightly moved eastward, towards the valley end instead of the former single pointed arrangement it spread along the east-west axis. The centre by 'sliding down' from the topographic highpoint, stretching out in a linear way to north-south direction, towards Pest-Mohács (Széchenyi) road, also prepared the way for further expansion for the centre, since commercial/service destinations appeared accordingly beside the intense traffic main road.
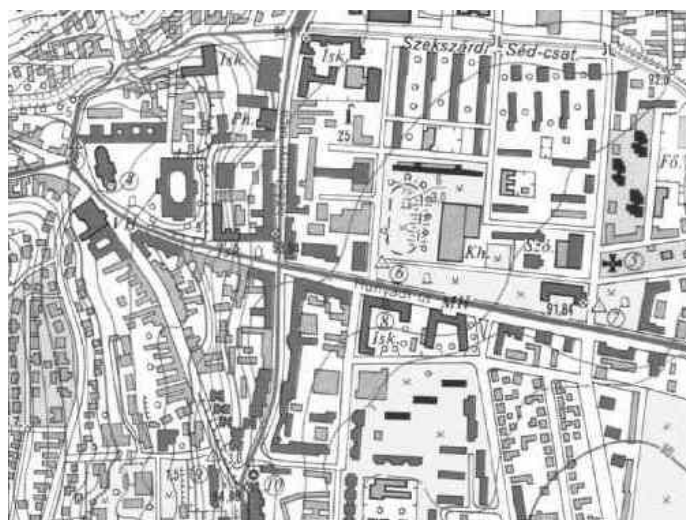

Figure 10: Direction of spread of institutional development towards Pest-Mohács (Széchenyi) road/Street from historic centre [FÖMI].
Slika 10: Smer širjenja institucionaliziranega razvoja iz zgodovinskega središča proti ulici Pest-Mohács (Széchenyi).

The new Town Centre
The town with 'modest, sleepy, lovable spirit' [Tillai, 1977] was shaken up by the change of attitude in the National Settlement-Structure-Development Framework-plan (1963). The earlier attitude was to concentrate mainly on the Capital City, in the countryside allowed only such ideas which were subordinated primarily to practical aims and industrial development. From the early '60-ies however the effort to put an end of the single-centred state control principle became a new, clearly declared ambition. In the second half of 1950-ies difficulties and advanced costs of Budapest centred development started to manifest, after which a conception was formulated to counterbalance the attraction of the Capital City by strengthening the five main country towns (Miskolc, Debrecen, Szeged, Pécs, Győr).

Economic reforms implemented from the second half of 1960-ies, and the openly declared New Economic Mechanism (1968) loosened the former rigid central planning-directive system, ensuring extended independence in decision making, and proving wider manoeuvring space for counties regarding budget used independently. In peculiar way counties started a powerful development activity first to renew their administrative centres from the budget transferred to county seats – now locally strengthening the idea of single centred principle – in order to prove that they can become 'up-to-date', and 'considerable' county administrative centres. During that time such county seat towns with earlier undeveloped centres, as Nyíregyháza,

Szolnok, Szekszárd, have reconstructed their downtown area, and also Salgótarján has become a real 'modern' centre.

One of the earliest beneficiaries of the new trend was Szekszárd town, for which a detailed master plan has been carried out in 1964. The designer, dr. Dezsőné Korbonits (VÁTI) received Ybl prize for her design merits the year after. (Schéry, eds. 1995)

The relationship of planning and erection was quite different in that respect, not like in the case of Kecskemét, although it has numerous similarities from the beginning of the process. Namely there were given the detailed plans of such institution buildings ready that would have emphasized the new role of the town centre in the time of preparation of regulation plan. Thus the urban designers got such ready-made decisions as input information, which should be decided in the course of planning by them. Despite all of this the actual designation of the place of the new centre was under discussion for a long time. The urban development plan proposed the new institutional area to be realized in a low land, earlier swamp, by reconstructing Budapest – Mohács crossing main road, exceeding the 'demarcations' line which separated the centre until then. Thus in the progress of planning the structural direction of development was relocated along the east-west axis spreading between the railway station and the historic centre, with eastward extension of the historic town centre, but its actual location was either put on north side either on south side of the street called today as Hunyadi Street.

Figure 11: Structural relation of town centre and railway station (source: local map for tourists).
Slika 11: Strukturna povezava mestnega središča in železniške postaje (vir: krajevni turistični zemljevid).

Eventually urban design sticking to the original concept organised the extension of the centre onto a definitive new pedestrian main axis [Korbonits, 2010], to the promenade led across a wide town park, that connected numerous important existing administrative buildings, by a loose pavilion-like arrangement. The smooth building mass of Cultural Centre, the eclectic Museum, the romantic building of the former synagogue (today: Houses of Arts) and Hotel Gemenc closing the main axis with all different architectural character was not disturbing because of the spacious arrangement, providing functionally abounding, visually exciting experience. The park with public buildings in it is a high urban value even today, a rare gift, which beauty is enriched by the solution that density of the centre was loosened

up gradually from relatively dense middle part towards suburban areas. Although buildings of various ages are located side by side, their statue-like character, independent architectural value and the green areas providing tissue-like background between them and the elements of the public space, statues, fountains planned, formulated consciously providing harmony and not chaotic overall picture.

Figures 12 and 13: Garay Square sloping slightly down to Pest-Mohács (Széchenyi) road/Street and the new urban axis connected to it.
Sliki 12 in 13: Trg Garay, ki se rahlo spušča proti ulici Pest-Mohács (Széchenyi), in nova mestna os, ki se navezuje nanj.

The town centre area of Szekszárd expanded significantly during the era of State Socialism. The newly forming central area which was built continuing the rather small central core of this town, gained an equal role with the original centre not only because of his spatial extension. It became centre with own identity and own functions, with his own 'iconic' layout and architectural design. In spite of his scale, it did not reduce the role of the historic centre. It is directly connected with the old centre, and the choice of the place proved to be right. [Kissfazekas, 2013a] By the regulation plan the old historic and new town centre are connected spreading over the new backbone of Széchenyi Street and Liszt Ferenc Square crossing. The connection joint was intentionally emphasized by an administrative building

ensemble, after demolishing a deteriorated commercial and residential block, constructing a two storey warehouse, a mix use building and a seven storey office tower.
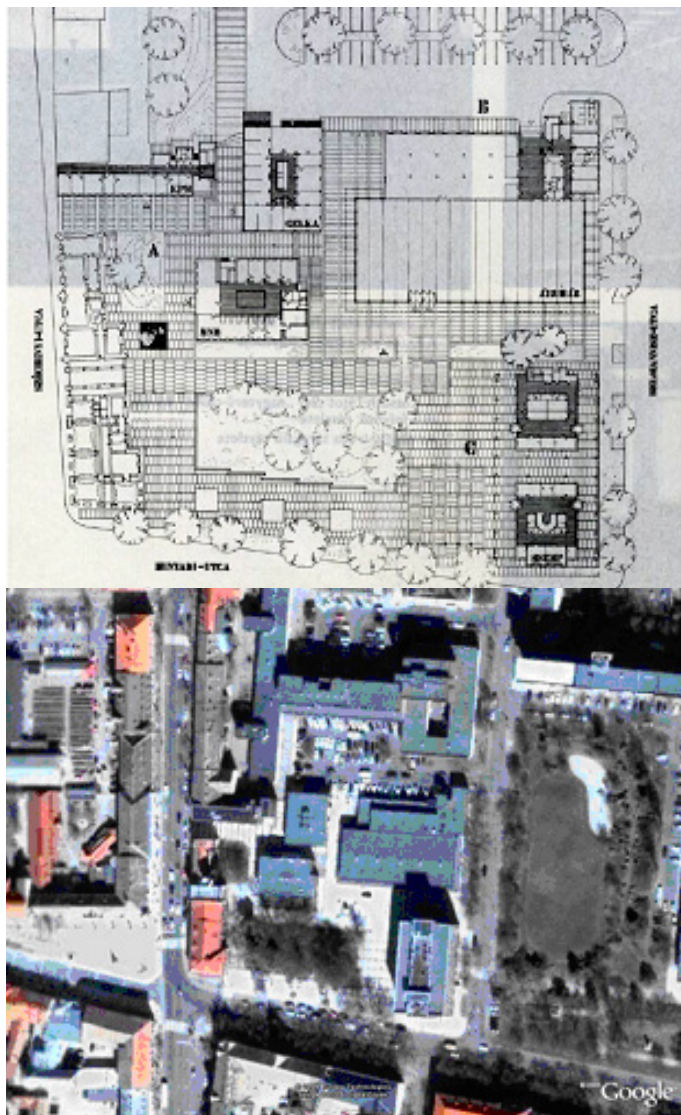

Figure 14 and 15: Master plan and satellite photo of the 'new' town centre institutional-ensemble [Korbonits, 2010, Google.earth].
Slika 14 in 15: Splošni načrt (master plan) in satelitska fotografija institucionalnega skupka 'novega' mestnega središča.

Putting aside the earlier plans already completed, new commission was given to Károly Jurcsik and partners, Lajos Bartha and Levente Varga (LAKÓTERV) regarding building designs. During the progress of building design unusual harmony and professional dialogue formed between architects and urban designers, breaking with the traditional hierarchic, rigid planning method of various levels making progress and feedback impossible. In the course of the designing process earlier design brief have changed again and after multiple preliminary stages the detailed master plan was changed too. In order to keep certain existing (neo-classical and romantic) architectural elements of the Main Street plans were further elaborated, and thanks to that carefulness the effort was successful, altering the large scale

scheme with maintaining buildings inheriting historic townscape and street atmosphere, e.g. the so called August-House. The building where Franz Liszt lived has an outstanding role today simple by its location: providing decent visual closure from the Garay Square side towards the sloping historic town centre.

Architectural design works of new administrative centre has been started in 1965, then realisation followed between 1967-70. [Simonn, 2005] On the basis of the new design brief a service-house and a warehouse some mixed use offices and as a vertical accent the HQ of MSZMP (Hungarian Socialist Workers Party) and a seven floor HQ on 'pilots' for Tolna County was erected. By the homogeneity of their work architects of the administrative centre intended to frame-in, 'soothe' the presence of other buildings existing as given elements of the surrounding, built in different style and age, having different structure and applying various building material. That intention was carried out by using uniform brick cladding – for which architects were condemned as Anglo maniacs – with a unifying floor-grid, 'by use of domestic detailing' [Tillai, 1977] with the application of sporadic patches of maintained trees, in the arrangement alien to buildings configuration, and they were successful.

Figure 16 and 17: The 'new' town centre fitted to the historic urban fabric – from Széchenyi Street and the inner part of the block.
Slika 16 in 17: 'Novo' mestno središče, pripojeno zgodovinskemu mestnemu tkivu, – od ulice Széchenyi in notranjega dela kareja (block).

Pedestrian communication of the promenade placed into the park mentioned before is then led across the 'built, urban' fabric of the new, homogeneous character administrative buildings in loose, sporadic arrangement and across public open spaces, distributing pedestrian movements by the pavilion-like arrangement. One or the other elements of the new town centre come into sight as reference behind the remaining street-line of Széchenyi Street sometimes, inserted between two historic buildings, sometimes as a background because of the humble architectural attitude – not hidden, but not pushed forward – elaborately woven between existing, preceding (urban) historic units.

Though the office building and commercial building ensemble 'suffered' certain remodeling, reconstruction, it has maintained its homogeneity, outstanding high level architectural character even today derived from its selection of building material and architectural motives. The building ensemble got considerable publicity then and since compared to its contemporary competitors. Although lack of Szekszárd roots, loss of identity was criticized many times by critiques, but architectural authenticity, and quality was not questioned. Behind appreciating architectural values – despite official state acknowledgement – praising of urban quality that gave frame for buildings often fell into the background.

For me one of the main conclusions of the presented two examples is that a basically positive development decision regarding urban structure later can take different directions in the course of 'refining' development schemes, and architectural detailing. While development in Kecskemét became fiasco because of its disproportion, neglect of contextual scale, in Szekszárd the presence of the building ensemble is acceptable because of the refined balance of architectural details, and it is reinforcing the urban ideas.

The buildings of the period which the paper examines are significant elements of the centres in all, either smaller or bigger Hungarian towns even nowadays and are looking for their current role. 'Language is also a cultural code, and language usage is a social phenomenon.' If urban design borrowed the term 'context' from textual analysis, the above linguistic statement can be adapted as well, since architecture is also a means of communication. The cultural code of the state socialist public building developments in city centres is sensibly extraneous and illegible for the citizes of today. It does not fit neither into the inherited, traditional code system, nor to the visual language of our age.

Something is often missing, and it is not the aesthetic criteria, neither a genuine inventive spirit or genuine, unique pieces of art, but the coherence which is beyond functional criteria. That is what is meant by context, the term which was often ignored during that historic period.

The above two examples also prove that interrelated connection and feedback of urban design- and architectural decisions are necessary for a real quality, acceptable for the town, and it can be adapted.

In Kecskemét the development beside the existing historic centre

in principle strengthened traditional urban structure directions, but the realised development scheme and architectural scale did not accomplish, did not verify the correctness of decision regarding structural development. Historic antecedents have been integrated with development directions of the '60-ies in case of Szekszárd too – as one of the possible variants. Contribution of architectural qualities to urban development intentions were necessary to bring them to perfection, refining it, elaborating it further in detail.

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Interview with dr. Dezsőné Korbonits (2008.11.07)

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