

LIFE IN VESZPRÉM, IN THE "TOWN OF QUEENS"

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Abstract

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Every settlement is a unique place. This uniqueness is manifested, among others, in cultural and historical values. Truly reflecting the settlement's history and development, the ground plan of a town safeguards these unique characteristics over the centuries. Therefore, it is practical to analyse the spatial extension within its historical relations when researching a settlement's morphology, development and functional structure. This method has traditions dating back to Tibor Mendöl in the Hungarian settlement geography. By means of historical settlement geography, one can interpret the creation of a settlement space, the principles of spatial arrangement, and explore the expansion or regression of a settlement. In the present study, we attempted to find a correlation between the historical, functional and formal aspects of the transformation processes on the example of Veszprém, a county capital in Transdanubia. The authors' aim of doing so was to establish a basis for a later settlement-morphological examination of the town.

Keywords

Historical settlement geography, settlement structure, historical ground plan development, fortress-based settlement

1. Introduction

By means of the historical settlement geography, one can make sense of the spatial development of settlements and the principles of spatial arrangements, moreover, one can also explore the expansion or regression of a settlement. In this study, the author made attempts to find the interrelation between the historical, functional and formal aspects of the transformation processes in the case of Veszprém, a county capital of Hungary's Transdanubia region.

2. Historical settlement geography of Veszprém

"It is primarily the initial period of the formation of a settlement that the physionomical features of the same demonstrate a strong interrelation with the natural environment into which man settles and creates the settlement, adjusting to the properties of the natural environment" (Mendöl 1963). This classical statement of settlement geography becomes particularly true for Veszprém when examining the local and positional energies impacting the spatial growth of the town. The following important statements can be made:

1. The location of the town core was determined by the valley of the River Séd, at places up to 60 to 80 metres deep, cut into the dolomite highland along fault-lines. The most audacious section of the river looking for its way towards the East with fickle bends around the picturesque Fortress Hill and its continuation called Benedict Hill.
2. Since the cliff nose standing out to the North of Castle Hill with its steep slopes proved to be an ideally defendable elevation, it gave a place to the fortress, along the mint dimension of which, as along an axis, the chain of the later fortress-based settlements were built.
3. The special feature of Veszprém's settlement structure dating back to the early medieval times, i.e. its downtown streets are adjusted to the changing terrain levels and that it has a lot of narrow, steep and zigzagged streets a result of the aforementioned facts.
4. Thus, Veszprém is one of the naturally grown towns; its early ground plan having an irregular arrangement. As a result of gradual and long-term growth, this street network continued to expand by spreading to the outside (Csapó 2005).
5. The fortress-based settlements to unite later on – the so-called "angles" – were formed at the meeting point of the Devecser fault-line crossing Bakony Hills and the Nagyvázsony fault-line dividing Bakony Hills and Balaton Highlands, as well as at their common exit in the East (Bulla – Mendöl 1999).
6. These fault-lines were tracks of highly important routes, which, thanks to the central location of Veszprém Highland, connected Bakony, Southern Bakony, Balaton Highland and Mezőföld.
7. It was along these routes that the products from areas with different branches of agriculture reached Veszprém's marketplace. Expanding to South-East from the southern end of the fortress, this marketplace became the centre-line of Veszprém's road network.
8. As the only significant watercourse on Veszprém Highland, River Séd also enhanced handicraft and trade. It is not only by its relative richness in water but also by the power of its drift that River Séd, with its fast flow and stony bed, represents a significant settlement-forming energy locally. In the

earlier centuries, 39 mills operated between Veszprém and Ósi, which was important because there was no other place on Mezőföld, north-west of River Sió, where a water-mill could have been built. Among these mills using water energy, there were flour-milling, plank-cutting and braying mills as well. It was the river that provided a living to the local craftsmen, too, such as the tanners, the divers and the nationwide famous beaters of Veszprém.

From whichever direction one approaches the town, it seems to have been built on a plain area. It is only from a close distance that one notices the town's unexpected and surprising image. On this dolomite plateau, which can be defended well from both the North and the South, the first findings are from the Neolithic Age. However, the Illyrians and the Celts had settlements here, too. No important Roman roads led across the town; the Romans did not settle down here – their village farm was found at Balácapuszta nearby. However, this Roman estate centre is an essential antecedent of the formation of Veszprém town. The settlement, namely, lay in the line across which the road connecting Aquincum to Italy passed (this corresponds to the track of today's highway between Veszprém to Tapolca), and this was the branching point of the road which connected to Amber Road, leading from the North to the South, at Savaria. In the age of the great migration, Lombards and Avars lived in the area. The conquering Hungarians already found a church reinforced with entrenchments and, probably, a fortress as well.

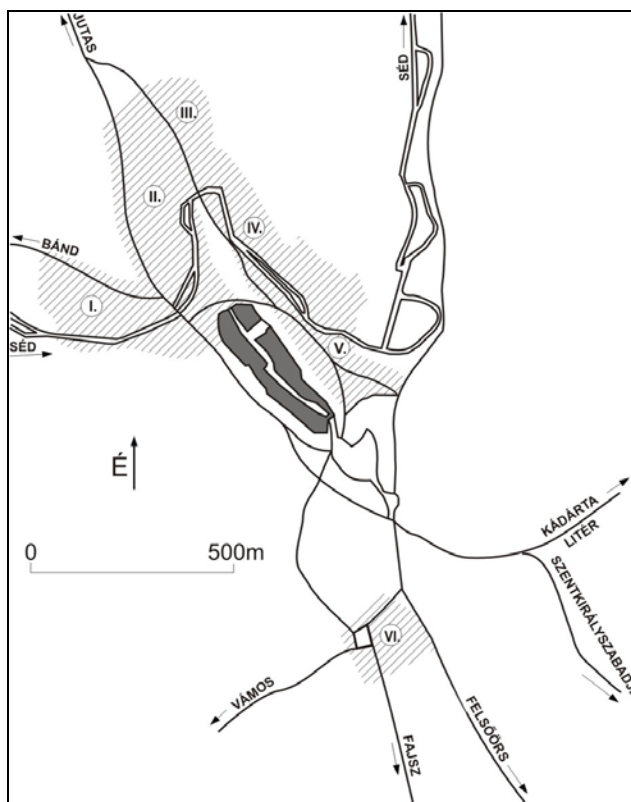


Fig. 1: The medieval fortress-based settlements and the major roads.
Source: the authors' own construction based on Korompay 1957.

There is evidence, however, that, in the 10th and 11th centuries, the centre of Veszprém town was the fortress. With its relative elevation, the fortress emphasized sub- and superordination since, parallel with its formation, a number of fortress-based settlements began to develop around the fortress as a clerical and royal centre of administration. The small-scale development with small houses, the valleys and the hillsides with opposite location to that of the Fortress Hill virtually put the fortress in a frame. In a natural manner, geographically separated by the River Séd, six small settlements developed. It was the bishop's and the chapter's servants who lived in these parts of the town.

See explanation in the text:

- Inhabited in the earliest time, St. Nicholas Angle can be identified as the area of today's University Town, the museum and Calvary Hill. Iron-melting furnaces from the 11th century were found in this part of the town. (VI.)
- St. Margaret Angle developed north-west of the Fortress Hill. It was named after the church sanctified to the honour of the guardian of suffering women. This settlement was also referred to as "West Chapter" due to the canon's houses built around the church-hill. The international commercial route was leading towards the West across a bridge on the River Séd. Today, St. Ladislaus' Chapel of opposite orientation is standing next to St. Stephen Viaduct, on the place of the former church. (I.)
- The least known medieval town district is the St. Thomas Angle. Away from the fortress to the North, it was an Episcopal settlement. Apostle St. Thomas is the guardian of carpenters, architects and the sick. His worship was probably related to the profession of the inhabitants in this part of the town. (III.)
- St. Catherine Angle was situated by the River Séd, between the two aforementioned settlements. The settlement detached from St. Margaret Angle was in the joint possession of the queen and the bishop. This settlement hosted the St. Catherine Dominican Monastery established in 1240 by Bishop Bartholomew, where King Béla IV's daughter, Margaret was raised between 1246 and 1252. Built in Romanesque style then extended in the Gothic times, St. Catherine's Church and Monastery, the so-called Margaret Ruins can still be seen at Margaret Square under Benedict Hill. (II.)
- Mud Angle developed on the other side of Benedict Hill, east of Catherine Angle. Its location can be identified as the area of today's Buhim Valley, by the hill embraced by the River Séd starting from the cape of Benedict Hill. Water mills operated here on the River Séd (referred to as Muddy Water earlier). (IV.)
- St. Ivan Angle was situated south of Mud Angle. Its name refers to the medieval denomination of St. John the Baptist. St. Ivan is the patron saint of inn-keepers and leather workers, so, most probably, the local inhabitants chose him to be their guardian because of their professions. The area of this settlement can be identified as today's Oak Hill district. (V.)

Besides the above settlement parts under the bishop's authority, there was an exception: the area of today's Have-A-Look-In Valley, which belonged under the authority of the Archbishop of Esztergom. The famous monastery of the nuns practising Orthodox ceremonies, where the Hungarian coronation palest was made, stood in a place referred to as Veszprém Valley by its medieval name.

The reason why Veszprém was called "the Queens' Town" was that the Bishops of Veszprém were the queens' counsellors and one of their privileges was the coronation of queens. The throne for the inauguration of queens used to stand in St. Michael's Cathedral in Romanesque style, founded by King St. Stephen and this was the place where the queens' crown and seal were guarded. Archaeologists estimate the number of Veszprém's inhabitants in the 11th century between 1000 and 1200. The medieval town parts were not yet built closely together. The undeveloped gardens and plough-lands between them gave a village-like appearance to the rural town. To provide for the transportation between the angles and the other settlement parts, the basic road network of Veszprém had developed by the end of the 13th century. Starting in the 15th century, the areas between the individual settlement centres became inhabited.

Meanwhile, the small fortress on Castle Hill was continuously being expanded. The gradual, subsequent development of the fortification system of the fortress brought about significant changes from the settlement structure's point of view. First, the inner and the outer fortress were separated then, in the 14th century, the southern side of the fortress was reinforced by a strong wall in order to protect the Fortress Gate, the marketplace and its southern surroundings. To continue the work in the next century, walls were built to the other sides of the fortress thus far protected by steep cliffs as natural reinforcement. So were the Episcopal seat, its town practising handicrafts and trade, as well as the roads connecting it with its environment protected by the walls of the fortress. After the fall of Székesfehérvár in 1543, Veszprém became the most important border fortress of Transdanubia. Veszprém became a constant theatre of war: it changed ownership seventeen times during 200 years. In these battles against the border fortress during the Ottoman occupation, the medieval culture of the town suffered fatal damage. The final act of destruction was done by the Habsburgs during the years of Rákóczi's Freedom Fight. The reconstruction process in the 18th century had a complex effect on the development of Veszprém's settlement structure. The reconstruction resulted in a change of scale in the fortress: wider, multi-storey houses were built to replace the narrow, old, single-storey ones. The small, zigzagged dead-end streets (so-called „turn-around streets”) disappeared and the baroque appearance of the fortress complex began to develop (Korompay 1969). At the same time, the weight-point of Veszprém's spatial growth shifted to the South, and the belt of the town parts around the fortress closed (Fig. 2).

The new town part around the market, namely, grew together with the gradually populating, medieval St. Ivan Angle. By this, the development of the settlement began to include today's Oak Hill district, the place of which had been covered with a Turkey oak forest at the time of the Ottoman occupation. That was the time when the approach road called Coach Park Street to the road to Palota was built. At times of fairs, this was the place where people could park their carts. This is Kossuth Lajos Street today. At the end of the century, the settlement at Komakút Square was built together, towards the South, with the surroundings of the marketplace on the north of today's Old Town Square. (Koma-kút was a resting and area for long-distance cart passengers.) The Calvinist citizen having been exorcised from the fortress as well as Jewish families gradually moving to Veszprém after 1523 settled down west of the fortress, over Devil's Ditch. They named their new place of residence "Jerusalem Hill", a denomination taken from the Bible. Very soon, the inhabitants opened separate cemeteries. In their ground plan structures, certain parts of today's downtown have preserved the features of the road network from the early Middle

Ages. We can still find narrow, steep streets with a slightly zigzagged line. The development was adjusted to the varying terrain height, which made the streets look diversified. Only few blocks of regular nature can be found in the historical parts of the town.



Fig. 2: Spatial Growth of the Town Body (from the 15th to the mid-20th century).

Source: the author's own construction, based on Korompay 1957.

Legend: 1. The fortress 2. the medieval settlement 3. Town parts in the New Age until 1780 4. 1780 to 1850 5. 1850 to 1900 6. 1900 to 1955 7. Thirteen-Town 8. Oak Hill 9. Jerusalem Hill

Founded in the 18th century, Thirteen-town (known as Dózsa-town today) can here be mentioned as an exception. German tradesmen were settled onto small plots in the area called Cemetery Hill named after the first cemetery established around the town after the Ottoman occupation. Despite the small size of these plots, one can hardly find development in unbroken rows in the town centre. The lack of unbroken row of houses on both sides and the frequent changes in the direction of streets is a feature of medieval origin, which proves the natural spatial development of the gradually growing town (Korompay 1957). This development was also justified by the towns growing population. In 1785, at the time of the first official census, Veszprém had 7082 inhabitants. This headcount was approximately three times as many as the population of the 1720s. The settlement reborn thanks to construction works became a prosperous, artisan's and trading town with multiple nationalities and denomination. The changes in Veszprém's ground plan in the subsequent decades can be restored with the help of maps as well. The oldest known map of the town comes from 1780. The map drawn by Ferenc Kováts, Engineer-in-Chief of Veszprém County, carefully depicts the orographic and hydrographic environment of the settlement as well as the roads and the balks but pays less attention in the

depiction of development level. The change in the spatial extension can, however, clearly be seen on the map: Oak Hill is the part of town which is developed in the densest way but the Jerusalem Hill and Cemetery Hill settlement parts, with the latter spreading over towards the Beaters' District can also be seen. The first cadastral survey of the town was made due to the increased taxes and rates and taxes imposed in the Bach Era. On the basis of records kept about the owners, the area and mode of cultivation of lands, József Sárnépék, Veszprém's "Chartered Engineer" drew the coloured map depicting the expansion of the town in 1855. The names of 75 streets, 6 roads and 9 squares appeared on this map. (Hungler 1988.) When comparing this map to the one from 1780, it can be seen that the main direction of the proportionally low spatial growth continues to be South-East, towards Cart Park. The bigger, northern part of Cserhát appears as a new settlement part with the integrating Giricses Hill. Those settling down here were poor: this is clearly indicated by the dissipate plots and the small, cabin-like houses. The centre of the town was the marketplace, which was the venue of active grain trade. The streets sloping towards the valley of the River Séd and inhabited by craftsmen 30 the North and the North-East. Those, however, who wanted to cross the Séd by cart had to choose Horgos Street or its continuation, Jókai Street. This was the street to lead to the only bridge called the Big Bridge on which carts could pass (Cholnoky 1938). The other marketplace, smaller in significance, the livestock-market developed here. Pápai Road and Csornai Street both started from here, towards the North-East and the North, respectively. This was the route for the livestock to be driven from the meadows of the highland to the town for the nights. In 1881, the Southern Railway connecting Buda with Nagykanizsa was built. Although there had been concepts to lead the railway track along the northern side of Lake Balaton across Veszprém, a different plan was implemented. The town made enormous financial and political efforts to compensate the disadvantages originating from its geographical characteristics but by the time the Jutas railway station on the line from Székesfehérvár to Celldömölk was built on the highland, Veszprém had already lost its former leading role in the grain market. The railway, however, had a strong impact on the development of the settlement structure that the outer railway station, originally belonging to Jutas, was situated about 4.5 kilometres north of the town centre and its remote location generally had an adverse impact on the development of the town structure. From this point, the general endeavour of the town became its expansion towards the North in order to make Veszprém reach the railway station at Jutas. The situation was greatly improved by the Balaton railway line built in 1909, which created a direct railway connection, on the one hand, with Jutas, on the other hand, with Lake Balaton towards Balatonalmádi-Alsóörs-Balatonfüred. Its track led along today's Haszkovó Street – Hold Street – Levendula Street – Mester Street – Európa Street. Visitors to the town could reach the centre from the small, inner railway station along Kossuth Lajos Street, from the direction of the Industrial Estate Station along Bajcsy-Zsilinszky Road (the former road from Szabadja). This provided for the enhancement of commerce and the mass transportation of bathers.

In the first decades of the 20th century, changes took place also in other locations regarding the development of the town's internal and external transport connections. The road to Devecser and Pápa put the transport on the road to Tapolca to a minor position. The track of the former along Jókai Street at Hosszúvölgy was becoming less and less suitable to manage the growing traffic. Thus, in 1907, Óváry Ferenc was opened by penetration between the Town Hall and Hotel Korona. This improved the connection between Jerusalem Hill and the town

centre a lot, which facilitated the development of Jerusalem Hill district. In 1909, Tobak Street, thus far known as a dead-end street, was opened up by means of the explosion of a cliff and the construction of a bridge, to run into a small street leading along the east side of Benedict Hill, thus creating a connection Buhim and Beater's District (Somfai 2000). Built in 1937, the Viaduct as well as Dózsa György brought about another significant change in the structure of the town: they made a connection between two town parts, Jerusalem Hill and Cemetery Hill, and they eased the busy cross-town traffic of Road No. 8. In this way, Veszprém's crossing section was constructed along the route Budapesti Road – Kossuth Lajos Street (a pedestrian zone today) – Óváry Ferenc Street – Dózsa György Road – St. Stephen Viaduct – Pápai Road (Gy. Lovassy 1990). The ONCSA Houses were built between the two world wars between Síp Street and today's Tumbler Henrik Street. They were the homes of poor families with many children. This was a social project implemented with financing from the National Fund for the Protection of People and Families. The new owners could repay the purchasing price of these bedsitter houses in discounted monthly instalments. There were similar houses with similarly set-out plots on an area nearby, between Aranyoskút and Nagytó Streets. The row of villas at the beginning of József Attila Street and a number of richly ornamented houses with a carved verandah. Proceeding outwards along József Attila Street, plots were handed out on a social basis between Szegfű and Kiskörösi Streets from the donation of Bishop Nándor Rott after World War I. These identical houses comprise the core of Nándor Housing Estate. After the economic recession, the estate grew towards the South by the residential houses erected. Also residential houses were built on the triangular area bordered by Budapesti Road – Cholnoky Jenő Street – Bajcsy-Zsilinszky Road between the two World Wars. At the same time, a large district, called New Estate, developed north of Budapesti Road. Its borders are Jutasi Road – Órház Street – Haszkovó Street – Hold Street and Nap Street.

As a point in the "Industrial Axis", Veszprém was strongly developed after World War II. The University of Chemical Industry was moved to the town. Many workers employed in the industrial zones nearby were settled to Veszprém. Between 1970 and 1980, the number of the town's inhabitants grew by 16 and a half thousand, i.e. by 43.4 per cent, which made it the fastest growing county capital of the time. In 1990, already 63,870 people lived in Veszprém. This was the town where the most flats were built compared to the number of inhabitants and also the place where the aggregate value of council investment projects by inhabitant was the highest in Hungary (Beluszky 2003, Lenner 2011). In the 1960s, Veszprém's settlement structure started to change dramatically. Kádárta and Gyulafirátót were attached to Veszprém in 1973 and 1984, respectively (Kocsis 1997). The town was gradually closed up within a ring of housing estates (Fig. 3).

Three housing estates of large surface areas and of different character were built up in three different points of the town. By the early 1960s, University Town had been completed on the area bordered by Hóvirág Estate – Stadion Street – Egyetem Street. The houses were mostly four-storey ones built of brick, with green parks among them. A decade later, in the early 1970s, the construction of the housing estate at Jutasi Road was commenced. The construction works proceeded from the North to the South. The first houses, yet four-storey and built of brick, were erected at the corner of Jutasi Road and Haszkovó Street, then, near Munkácsy Road, tall residential blocks were built of concrete panels manufactured by the residential construction panel manufacturer in Győr. The last panel buildings in this area were

finished at the end of the 1980s. The panel buildings of Cholnoky Estate were built from concrete panels, manufactured locally, from the second half of the 1970s to the turn of 1989 and 1990. Visible from the by-pass road around Veszprém, the street with terraced Houses in Cholnoky Housing Estate have been built in during the past 20 years.

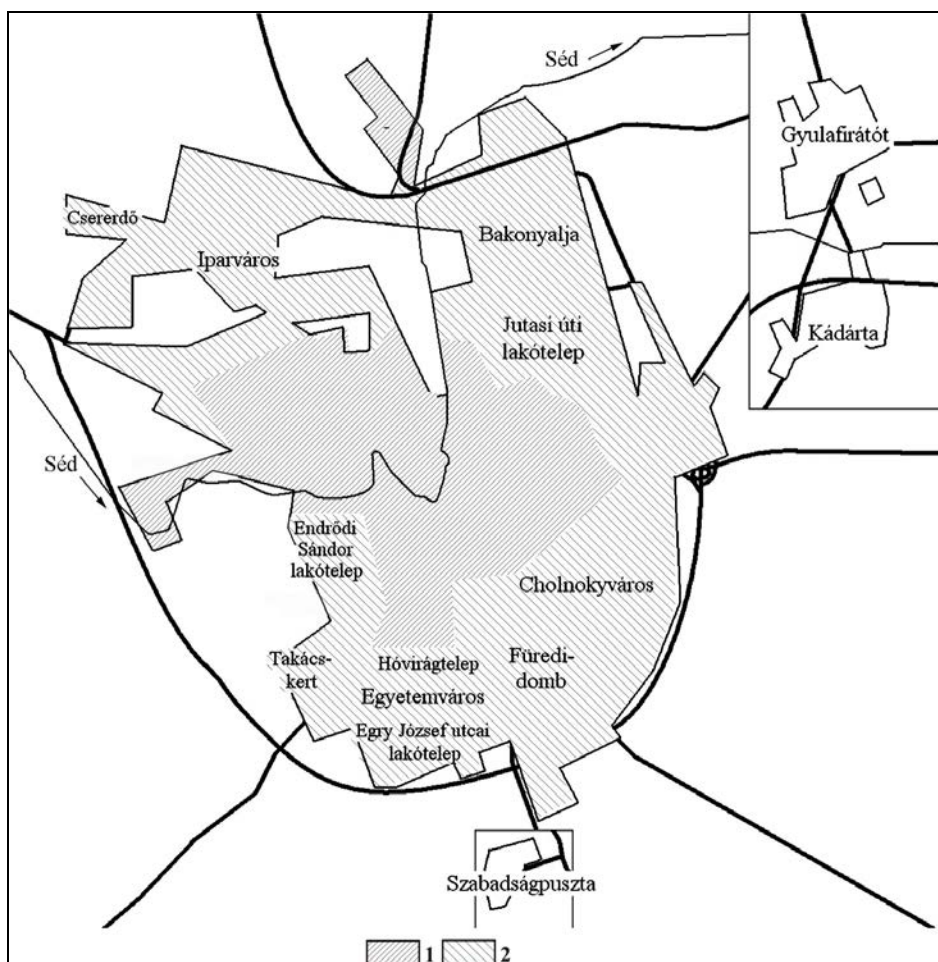


Fig. 3: Spatial Growth of Veszprém from the Mid-20th Century to the Present Days.

Source: the author's own construction.

Legend: 1. The extension of the town body until the mid-20th century 2. The ring of housing estates.

Besides the housing estates mentioned, residential blocks built from construction panels or terraced houses can be found virtually everywhere in the town. The terraced houses in Avar Street in Dózsa-Town were built in the 1970s. Oak Forest began to develop between the two World Wars; at the same time, a residential area with detached and semi-detached houses developed. Later, after Bakony Works had been established in 1968, housing estates consisting of ready-cut houses were built for its workers. In this area, anyway, new streets have been opened even in the past ten years. El Built mostly of four-storey brick buildings, the housing estate in Endrődi Sándor Street was completed in the northern foreground of Jerusalem Hill in

the late 1960s. The houses in the housing estate in the mouth of József Attila Street– Egyetem Street. However, the terraced houses and blocks of Takács-Garden at the place of the former brick-factory were built after the political changes in 1989. The terraced houses in Egrý József Housing Estate were the results of the co-operation in the movement of the communist work-teams. At the same time, the so-called Baláca Row has been developed in the past three decades. On Füred Hill, east of this housing estate, along the southern edge of Veszprém, terraced houses built in the 1970s can be found. The modern terraced houses of the loop of Cserepes Street – Varga Street are one decade younger. On the northern edge of Veszprém, at the foot of Bakony Hills) on the premises of the former Soviet garrison), the officers' apartments built of the construction panels manufactured by the Kiev Construction Panel Factory were renovated, but there are also blocks of modern-style estates to be found in this area. The authors wish to mention the changes brought about by the reconstruction of the old marketplace and its surroundings, Gypsy Hill, Cserhát and Kossuth Street in the town centre. Old and valuable buildings of significance in the town's image were demolished out of political intentions. The construction project of the new town centre commenced in 1967. The twenty-storey residential building, the commercial centre belonging thereto office buildings, Hotel Veszprém and the Oak Hill Housing Estate finally did not suit either to the old urban structure or the town's image (Bószéné- Szatmáry-Nagy 2008). Fortunately, the bigger part of the patinas town centre – the clerical and educational institutions of the Fortress Hill, the Old Town Square in front of the Fortress Gate the commercial centre of Veszprém in the 18th century, then the County Hall and its residential quarter to the South – have escaped "modernisation".

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Summary

In his study, the author presented the historical settlement geography of Veszprém in two aspects: through the development of its functions, the authors examined the process of the settlement's urbanization, then analysed the changes in the settlement structure in the different ages. Veszprém grew into a town at the crossing-point of roads running along fault-lines, where the River Séd and its side brooks had carved a cliff cape suitable to erect a fortress on, the Fortress Hill into Veszprém Highlands. During the most of its history, Veszprém has been an Episcopal centre, a state administration centre and a border fortress protecting its traders and craftsmen. Its monuments from the Middle Ages were destroyed during the Ottoman occupation; its historical image as seen today developed in the Baroque times. Veszprém's dynamic development at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries was stopped by the main railway lines' avoiding the town. During the communist regime, Veszprém was being developed at a racing speed. After the fall of the surrounding industrial area, especially since the changing of the political system, the town's role as the leader of economic processes has decreased. Today, the ground plan of the town truly reflects its development through history: the gradually developing ring of fortress-based settlements enhanced the dominant role of the fortress in the settlement structure of the old Veszprém. During the ground plan extension of the later times, the fortress retained its central role but the involvement of the plateaus of the surrounding hills of nearly the same height in the urban development resulted in a new trend in the improvement of the town.

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