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THE SUBURBAN TOWNSCAPE
ITS ORIGIN AND PERSPECTIVES BASED ON THE EXAMPLE OF A BORDER TOWN IN HUNGARY
(KOMÁROM-KOPPÁNYMONOSTOR)

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ABSTRACT

The paper aims to illustrate through a local study how the North American suburban townscape appears in a historical small town in Hungary. The core idea is that North American suburbanization resulted in a special suburban townscape. Instead of the traditional structure of towns and cities where the centre and periphery made up certain circles or zones, mobility axes like motorways, airports structure the suburban zone. The first chapters of the paper discuss this process and they can also be read as an independent theoretical essay.

The second part of the paper shows the case study of Komárom-Koppánymonostor. Our first question is whether in this case we can speak about a suburban townscape (as a North American type). After empirical investigations the answer to the question is no. Komárom-Koppánymonostor shows a mixture of the petty-bourgeois milieu typical of late socialism (and post-socialism), while the North American type of suburbanization is a new pattern of lifestyle after 2000. The second question is: what are the specific historical-social conditions that influenced the suburbanization in Komárom-Koppánymonostor? We claim that it was the Danube bank which preserved its natural environment in the phase of the rapid urbanisation of the 20th century.

Finally, we claim that the suburban transformation is by no means a closed chapter seeing today's trends. Thanks to the planned new bridge (Komárom, HU – Komárno, SK), the area of Komárom-Koppánymonostor can dissolve in future in a twin town trans-border suburban townscape. In that case, the suburban zones will get a wider dimension, in their morphology as well as in their economical potential, and they will move closer to the North American patterns.

Key words: suburbanisation, border studies, divided twin towns, architecture sociology

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INTRODUCTION

This paper discusses a special case of suburbanization. The classical discourse of suburbanization focuses on migration from cities (Jackson 1985, Hayden 2004, Garreau 1992, Fishman 1987). The processes presented here take place in a small town, Komárom, and its former vineyards, Koppánymonostor (Komárom, Hungary, fewer than 20,000 inhabitants). A further specification of the objective is the focus on space: it will interpret the suburban townscape in its morphological aspects. The main (but by no means only) feature of the suburban townscape is the high number of storey dwellings. From that point of view we can say that a large part of the townscape of Komárom is suburban. Only 7.7 per cent of the buildings have more than one storey according to statistics (KSH 2011). This is not unique in the region as only 6.6% of Esztergom's houses have more than one storey (KSH 2011). Nevertheless, Komárom without a historical urban centre seems very rural. Indeed, the history of Komárom's urbanization goes back only to the first half of 20th century, when the former suburb (named Újszőny) across the railway with a few thousand people was detached from its mother town, called Komárno (SK) today, by the establishment of the international border (Tamáska 2016).

The policy of forced urbanization accompanied the development of Komárom throughout the 20th century. Most of the development plans present torsos: the neo-Baroque administrative and school buildings of the twenties, the endeavours of modern architecture in the forties, and the rows of houses of socialist realism from the fifties. The prefabricated block of flats eventually eliminated the one storey centre of the former district (1960–1980), but the transformation to town centre lacked social support (see Tamáska 2015). In spite of the subventions from regional planning, the town lacked all the social and economic backgrounds for a striking expansion in the late seventies. The number of inhabitants stagnated. The regional planning authority tried to force development: in 1977, the town incorporated its neighbouring town, Szőny. It was the last stage in the history of enlarging the inner town, a process that resulted in a linear town structure along the Danube. It is an 8–10 km long, and only 600–2000 meter wide texture of the town that offers a morphological background for inner suburbanization.

The two edges for suburbanization within the town structure are Szőny and Koppánymonostor. This paper will present only the second, because Szőny is still an independent structure within the town today. The website of Komárom describes Koppánymonostor: *'the weekend houses offer the most beautiful panorama*

of the town.² The recreation zone was established in the late sixties. In the past two decades the weekend houses have constantly been giving way to family houses.³ Contemporary Koppánymonostor is a mixture of the relics of a recreation zone and the new wave of suburbanization. The townscape of family houses links to other elements of developing suburban townscapes, to so-called 'thematic parks': an industrial park, a cultural heritage park (fortification), and a recreation park (the promenade along the Danube) (on thematic parks see: Low–Smith 2006, Sorokin 1993).

Currently a new bridge is under construction between Komárom–Koppánymonostor and the suburbs of the twin town of Komárno (SK) on the other side of the Danube. It is possible that, the integration of the twin towns of Komárom/Komárno, supported by EU funds, will take place not (or not only) around the historical centre but rather in the new suburbs following patterns of global towns in a regional-local dimension.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The paper below aims to illustrate using a local study, how the North American suburban townscape appears in a historical small town in Hungary. The core idea is that near one hundred years of North American suburbanization resulted in a special suburban townscape. The first chapters of the paper discuss this process and they can also be read as an independent theoretical essay. However, the central ideas of those chapters were to find the most important elements of a well-developed suburban townscape, which is a mixture of thematic parks around the mobility axes, like motorways.

Suburbanization in Hungary is another story. It started only in the late seventies of the 20th century around Budapest, and even later (after 1990) in the small towns (Brown–Schafft 2002). Our first question is, whether we can speak in the case of Komárom-Koppánymonostor about a suburban townscape (as a North American type), or whether it is adequate to speak only about classical suburbanization (residential mobility)? The differences between the two categories (suburban townscape and classical suburbanization) will be presented in the theoretical part of this paper.

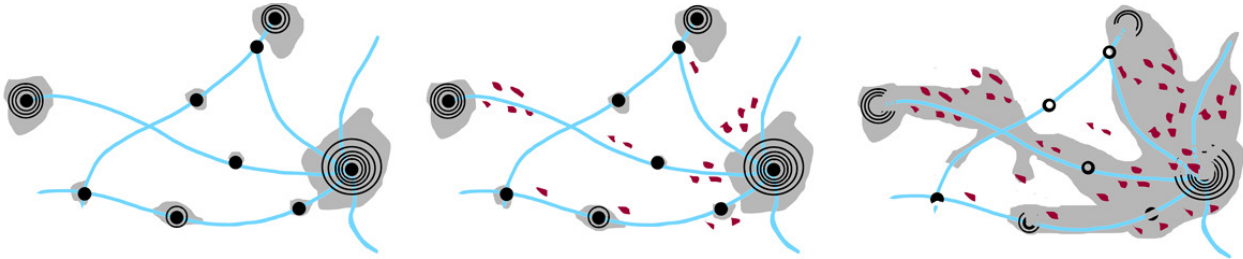
The interaction between the American type of suburban townscape and the spaces that can be observed in Komárom-Koppánymonostor is not self-evident. The history of Hungarian urbanization has different roots, especial in the second half of the 20th century. Thus, the paper has to answer a further question: what are the special conditions (townscape, historical heritage, social trends), which shaped the suburban area in Komárom?

The most important aspiration of this paper can be summarized by noting that the global trends and narratives (often laying far away from local issues, like 'global cities') mix with local patterns. The paper will confront both point of views. It aims to understand the coexistence of global and local trends, which finely creates the suburban townscape of Komárom-Koppánymonostor.

² <http://komarom.hu/komaromrol.php> 03.08.2016

³ It is hard to give exact numbers about this change. The statistical number can only give an outline of the trend. There were only 20 weekend houses in Komárom in 2001, but 50 were officially in use as a dwelling in 2011. (Data from KSH – Hungarian Statistical Office).

Fig. 1. Comparing the geographical structure of the classical suburbanization, the Zwischenstadt and the suburban townscape. Circles: Towns and Cities (black point: Central Business District, circles: zones in the city); Blue: motorways. Grey: suburban area (most with family houses). Red: thematic parks (storages, industrial parks, entertainment parts).



ABOUT SUBURBAN TOWNSCAPE

The topic of suburbanization is broader than the framework of this paper. Nevertheless, it is important to review the history of suburbanization and its effects on cities, towns, and their surroundings briefly. There are three ideas to take into consideration. (1) Firstly, the theoretical thesis of the paper discusses the differences in the suburbanizations that follow patterns evolved in North America and the idea of the garden city that derives from the European urban planning tradition. (2) Secondly, suburban townscape means much more than relations between the urban core and its surroundings. It represents a structure between towns (Zwischenstadt), a texture, which is more or less independent from the historical town cores. (3) Thirdly, the suburban townscape follows other structures than traditional towns and cities. While traditional towns and cities have a massive structure (centre, zones) the suburban townscape follows the mobility pathways. The idea of the ‘space of flows’ of Manuel Castells could help to understand those new spaces (Fig. 1).

Garden City and suburbanization

Suburbanization and the idea of garden cities are two different phenomena. Despite the similarities (both oppose the industrial town of the 19th century, both aim at decentralizing large towns, both idealize rural life as opposed to the urban), their forms are fundamentally different. The garden city movement goes back to late 19th century England. It aimed to establish suburban towns around the large cities (first of all, around London) with comprehensive functions: residence, gardening (agriculture), middle-size industry and craft-work, recreation, church, schooling etc. (Hall 1996, Stern et al. 2013). The movement contradicted not only the form of contemporary (late 19th century) major towns but their very existence. It sought for the diffusion of the population and for the evocation and passing on of traditional social forms. The movement was typically organized top-down, from intellectuals (architects like W. H. Lever, E. Howard, R. Unwin) to the average man.

In the 20th century, the idea of the garden city became a coherent part of urban design, however, the original principles had changed a lot. The target areas were no longer only the suburbs, but built-up areas as well. Here, in the inner parts of towns, developers created vertical garden towns (high-rise buildings) to eliminate residential density. The building of prefabricated blocks of flats placed in a green environment is one of the outcomes of the garden city movement (Meggyesi 2005). Another palpable outcome of regional

planning is that in order to relieve the large cities, the developers started to establish satellite suburban towns. The two outcomes (vertical garden cities and suburban satellite towns) could naturally interlock: most new suburban towns after the WWII followed the architectural idea of vertical garden cities. The original anti-large-city attitude of the movement lost its legitimate drive with time and its urban planning ideas rather served the development of large cities, partly even into the surrounding areas (Hayden 2004, Hall 1996).

In effect, the latter got combined with another spatial process: with suburbanization. Suburbanization – although it also had European traditions – came into being in North America and it was imported after WWII into Europe as a life style pattern (Baum–Snow 2007, Bentmann–Müller 1970). The urban development in North America occurred in essentially different circumstances. North America in the 18th century contained vast territories for free use, while in Europe, nearly all estates had been in possession since the Middle Ages (Lichtenberger 1998). Thus, the North American city development occurred as a permanent expansion into its surroundings. The classical (18th century) North American town had a very weak centre, a ‘main street’ and the settlement itself dissolved into the townscape. So, the appearance of modern suburban townscape had its historical patterns in the heroic age of North American history (Rifkind 1977, Kazepov 2004).

The historical-cultural heritage of suburbs is very important, because this is what determines the narratives about ideal American citizens. These narratives show us a ‘farmer in his own estate’ (individual rights – own house), and this farmer is also politically active, he takes part in local issues (Schlesinger 1961). Thanks to the architect and statesman, Thomas Jefferson (1743–1826) this ideal became a guiding principle in regional and urban planning (Wills 2008). ‘New-England’ was divided into a grid system, and the towns and cities followed this very simple system as well. The plots were built up with detached villas and economic buildings. This loose townscape had projected the suburban townscape forming after 1920. Of course, the suburbanization after 1920 no longer aimed at agricultural activity.

One of the most significant theoreticians of modern suburbanization was F. L. Wright (1867–1959, Nicholson 1963). He reckoned Thomas Jefferson as the intellectual father of ideal cities. Wright connected the technical development (automobile) and the romantic idea of living in nature. He believed that the everyday mobility from the cottage near to nature (residence) to large cities (work) would solve the problems of large cities. The architect definitely described the ideas of middle-class America here.

Another classical author, Lewis Mumford termed this trend the *fourth migration* (1925). In the fourth migration, the inhabitants move out from the densely built-up large cities into the surrounding rural areas.⁴ Of course, the ideal America of Jefferson and the trends of the twenties had very different social backgrounds, but some similar values and circumstances exist: the idea of independence (including the family), openness for mobility, the ideal of rural life, and not least the low price of plots. A substantial difference however, is that modern suburbanization provides only residential functions and not those of production. While the historical North American townscape resembled a green carpet with scattered buildings, the suburban districts after 1920 and after the WWII produced a high density of family houses.

⁴ ‘The first migration (1790–1890) cleared the land and settled the continent. The second migration (1830–1910) fatted out natural and human resources and created the mean and chaotic industrial district. The third migration (1870–?) gathered population in New York and the twelve sub-metropolises.’ (Mumford 1935: 131)

Summarizing, we can assume that several factors lie behind the success of North American suburbanization. The cities did not have long histories, and the morphological and social traditions were not as rigid as those in Europe. On the other hand, the first generation of North American farmers received an identification motivation to own their land and their houses as well. Furthermore, the construction of railway networks differed between the two continents – the interference between urbanization and mobility is well known in urban history (Schivelbusch 1977). The lack of land in Europe demanded a fundamental change in the townscape to make place for embankments. It meant of course higher costs. It resulted in a more stable structure in both industrial cooperation (corporation of railway and state administration) and in morphological elements (tunnels, viaducts, and railway stations). The railways in North America could be built faster and more easily because of the available land. The embankments followed the morphology of the townscape, and there were fewer legal and social obstacles in the way of investment. One hundred years later, as the car and motorization sought its place in the townscape, it all happened inversely: the railways vanished more rapidly in North America than in Europe, and Americans changed their mobility habit more thoroughly than people in Europe, where the trains play a very important role in personal mobility until today.

Suburban networks between the Cities

The effect of mobility on suburbanization can hardly be overvalued (Baum–Snow 2007). Using a car offered an individual timetable and ‘free choice’ of residence for the people. Indeed, the trains also contributed to suburbanization. But the railways opened up the townscape in linear axes and made nodes around the stations. Thus, large areas between the railway lines remained green.⁵ This is not the case when cars serve mobility: The family houses were no longer bound to railway stations, the built-up areas filled in the townscape around the cities (Downs 1999).

In the first phase of suburbanization (in North America about 1920–1960) only the residential function moved out from the inner cities. Since 1960–1970, more and more researchers have pointed out that not only the residential functions, but the complexity of urban life have started moving towards the outskirts: commercial buildings (malls and shops), medical centres, back offices, and even organs of state administration have settled in the suburbs, where plots are cheaper and administration and architectural planning easier (Archer 1973, Keil 1994). This process means that the nucleus of new urbanity is no longer the historical city itself but the suburbs (or at least there exists a duality between them). The urban regional geographer, György Enyedi (2011) emphasizes that the new city is not urban anymore in the classical way, but a ‘rurban’ society. Thus, after the phases of urbanization (moving into cities), suburbanization (moving into suburbs), desuburbanization (ascent of rural areas), a new phase has started in the last decades. It is not a classical re-urbanization (as it may seem at first sight, since the large cities in Europe are attracting people again), but the birth of a new age, where urban and rural areas melt together in agglomeration zones. Such agglomerations have been forming between the large cities along the highways. The suburban townscape integrates different functional units specialized in one function. There are the so-called ‘thematic parks’ for commerce, residence, and entertainment (including nature reservation areas for leisure, Lukovich 1990). The transport to and from

⁵ The famous Copenhagen, the ‘Finger Plan’ development plan could preserve this structure until today (Knowles 2012).

thematic parks requires the individual use of cars. The model of suburban agglomeration (also termed ‘rurban areas’) is a typical North American phenomenon, yet there are similar suburban townscapes in Europe – though less well-developed –, too (Szirmai 2011). German literature uses the word ‘Zwischenstadt’ (‘inter-town’) to describe this (Sieverts 1997).⁶

Thus, the formation of the suburban townscape has followed North American models (Fishman 1987). Its distribution in Europe shows a west to east orientation. Pierre Bourdieu (2002) wrote his thesis about family houses and their social effects, like the social disintegration of the housewife who spends her ‘life’ sitting in her car. The great escape from large cities to suburbs happened in Austria only in the seventies and eighties, while in Hungary only in the late nineties (Burdack–Herfert 1998).⁷

Obviously, suburbanization depends not only on the geographical position in the region (Csurgó et al. 2012). The most important factor is the size and density of the classical cities and towns: the most developed suburban townscapes occur around the metropolises, while small towns often do not have suburban structures.⁸ Historical heritage plays an important role as well. The cities with large green territories within their administration can cover up the desuburbanization, because people do not appear in the main statistics. However, the inner suburbanization does not fundamentally differ in lifestyle and effects on urbanity from the classical situation, when people leave the administrative borders of the cities.

To sum it all up, it can be pointed out that there are qualitative differences between the classical suburbanization and the suburban townscape that has developed in the last decades. The first one refers to the moving out of the middle class (and later some industrial and commercial utilities), while the suburban townscape refers to the fundamental change between urban and rural areas, to the shaping of a rural area (Zwischenstadt), with special elements (like thematic parks) and networks (highways) and not least, a new lifestyle (based on using a car and living in a family house).

(3) Space of flows: the structural phenomena of suburb townscape

The suburban townscape does not contradict another contemporary process: the renaissance of some global cities (in Europe for example: Brussels, London, Copenhagen, Frankfurt M or Vienna, (Less 2008, Matznetter–Musil 2011). The concepts about the ‘global city’ allow for the interpretation of all issues from the view of a ‘global network’ of cities and capitals (Kunzmann 1996, Sassen 2001). Manuel Castells (1989) is one of the most cited authors regarding his theory on the ‘Space of flows’. Castells’ starting point is the revolution in

⁶ As reaction to the suburbanization, it started a trend of overvaluing old historical townscapes. The rehabilitation of old urban structures has become a significant part of urban policies since the sixties, especially in Europe. Therefore, the formation of a suburban townscape does not necessarily mean the disappearance of old structures, but rather a symbiosis (Csanádi–Csizmady 2012).

⁷ Hungarian suburbanization has some special characteristics too. (1) in some cases it appears as motivation for agricultural activities (especially around Szeged or Debrecen, around the classical agrarian towns). (2) the suburbanization of lower classes, who do not choose the suburbs but are compelled to live there because they cannot afford an urban flat (Timár 1992).

⁸ In fact, suburbanization has a specific Eastern European version that likely occurs elsewhere, like North America, but researchers have observed it in our region. Part of the population moving in the city is unable to settle in the city because of high plot prices, and they find a home in the peri-urban villages (suburbanization around Pest). The other phenomenon – intensifying after 1990 – affects people who cannot maintain their city apartments. The poor’s “suburbanization” is not the subject of this study however (Timár–Váradi 1999).

communication technology and the revolution of mobility (cheap flying), which brings about a global network of cities and societies. In the nodes of the networks there are the most powerful cities like New York, Tokyo, or London, and not only the cities themselves but their networks.

The space of flows is not only an abstract theory about the information age but it helps understand post-modern urban design and society behind the curtains: *'Seeing, that capitalism in the information age sets up the space of flows, moreover that the flowing space connects the most valuable (local) sites in the world and abstracts them from their social and cultural backgrounds; therefore the post-modern architecture concentrates not on a venture but on objects like airports, conference centres, hotels and office buildings'* (Lukovich 1990: 79 – translated by author from Hungarian). The new urban networks – developing partly in the suburbs along the roads and airports – can absorb the historical settlements as well. The economy often employs these as tourist attractions. The tourist's place in historical urban townscapes is part of global city networking (Rypkema 2005).

Noteworthy is that the global city networks (space of flows) do not aim to fill the grounds. This is the difference between the global urbanization patterns and the former (also existing) national urban networks. The latter (19th century) ventured to establish hierarchical structures on the whole territory of the national state: it also supported urbanization in regions lacking economic background, unlike global networks (Matznetter–Musil 2012). The capital has its own way. The result is that many such regions cannot connect to the energies of the global networks (but at the same time they suffer the concurrences of global trades on the local market). These regions are not only actually far away from the nodes, but – even though communication creates abstract places – physically very near to global networks (inner peripheries – like a little village at the highway, in which village an own car is too expensive for local people).

The present agglomerations are a mixture of groups of settlements that are part of global networks (space of flows) and groups that are outside. There exists no communication between the two societies. It seems that the space of flows has replicated classical capitalism on a global perspective. The suburban townscape is therefore a materialization of segregation. The middle class creates a suburban townscape here definitely closed against outsiders (see: closed communities, closed highway roads, controlled parking garages etc.), and constructs a utopia of social welfare and security.

METHODOLOGY: SOCIOLOGICAL INTERPRETATION OF TOWNSCAPE

It is not easy to make empirical questions from the theoretical concepts above. At first, behind the theories one can guess the empirical experiences of scholars gained in a specific social-urban environment (mostly in North America). It is a general problem of the 'sociology of knowledge', but special dilemmas arise when sociological methods like the observation or visual analyses of observed townscapes are employed. Moreover, how can the instances of great theories about global trends be adopted in a case study about local issues? The macro-micro issues of urban process do not automatically overlap with each other. Let us only refer to the local elites, who do not necessarily contribute to global networks or historical heritage, local conflicts, state and mentality borders: all can have their own independent interpretations.

Furthermore, the question arises: what should the observation element be in the case of Komárom? The suburban townscape is a phenomenon between towns. Therefore, Komárom should become part of a greater agglomeration area. On the other hand however, the paper wants to present the micro milieu of a small town. Consequently, the classical suburbanization discourses should be recalled for the duality of urban and rural lifestyles.

And last but not least it is important to stress that the paper deals with a special methodological approach, based on the observing of 'stories' telling through 'space'. This architecture sociological methodology is different from the classical approach of cognitional sociology, in which not the space itself lays in the focus but the narratives about the space (Delitz 2009).

In fact, all the dilemmas helped in forming the first research question:

(1) Can we speak in the case of Komárom about a suburban townscape, or is it adequate to speak only about classical suburbanization? To answer the question it is necessary to investigate the relationship between the historical town and its suburbs at first, and next to understand the structure of suburban zones: is it only a residential area or is it more complex with other functions? The employed method was to analyse historical maps and development plans. In that context it is also important to show, that Komárom is a divided twin town.

(2) The second question belongs more in historical circumstances: what were the special conditions (townscape, historical heritage, and social trends) to form the suburban area? To answer these questions the documents of the planning history had to be collected (local archive) and interviews with people conducted.

The empirical results are part of a larger research activity which focuses on the space and society of divided twin towns in Hungarian- Slovakian border region.⁹ One of the investigated sites without this project is Komárom-Komárno. The phenomenon of suburbanization is in this project one but not the most important aspect. The investigation of Koppánymonostor within the town structure was a choice after making the first interviews and field research in 2015 (methodology see below). It is a fact that a large part of the whole townscape of Komárom shows up a suburban character. But in the interviews, two parts of the town were named where people 'move out to'. Both are situated on the outskirts of the town: Koppánymonostor and Szőny. Both have their own structures and milieus. Koppánymonostor was not part of the administration area of the town until the twenties, while Szőny was not until 1977. Szőny moreover was itself a market town, and has local patterns and a historical identity more or less independent from that of Komárom. People differentiate between Komárom and Szőny even today. Whereas, Koppánymonostor can be interpreted as vineyards and summer cottages on the outskirts of Komárom for hundreds of years or even more (however, until 1920 it belonged rather to the present Komárno SK). The original number of 500–600 inhabitants in Koppánymonostor (in 1920–1930) has increased rapidly since the seventies, today it is 2600. Koppánymonostor has the highest proportion of children (under 18 = 21%, in Komárom while Szőny has only 15%), which reflects the typical suburban society (numbers: www.komarom.hu 11.06.2011).

⁹ The research is supported by OTKA (Hungarian Scientific Research Fund), Nr. PD 108532, 2015–2017.

The case of Koppánymonostor got an actuality through the fact that a new bridge is under construction between Koppánymonostor and the North twin town Komárno. Because this bridge will be the most important change in the divided townscape since 1990, it was logical to undertake some special investigation in the suburbs.

The most important sources were found in the local archives (Komárom-Esztergom Megyei Levéltár, Komáromi Fióklevéltár), where the documents of urban planning from 1900 to 1990 are stored. The urban planning process of Koppánymonostor started from the sixties, as the regional plans defined this territory as a touristic-recreation area. The urban design plans allowed a systematic reconstruction of the development of space from the touristic-recreation area until today.

The other method used was the survey about visual milieus in the field. The views of streets were photographed and the also the typical use of plots, gardens, and houses. The visual analyses of the local milieu allowed understanding the most important values of the people: the traditional gardens (orchards) go back to the late seventies, the house type around the years of 1980 and 1990 show an internationalizing without international market products. After 2000 one finds the house products of international brands (often incorporated into an 'American House', see: Kapitány 2000). The field research about local milieus is also one of participative observation. This method of the research principally exposes the apparent processes of town usage. Its significance lies in incorporating the in situ character of the action: which social groups use the suburban space and to what extent, and how does commutation happen between the people. The suburban townscape has a very characteristic use of space, in which mobility by car plays the central role.

The third part of sources comprises the interviews with local people. Most of the interviewed people do not have a residence in Koppánymonostor (total number: 16 interviews). Some of the interviewed people are or were stakeholders in the local community, mostly in cultural life (6 interviews). The rest of the interviews give the word to local people in the neighbourhood (4 in Komárno, 3 in Hungarian Komárom and only 3 in Komárom-Koppánymonostor). The polled local people show a very mixed social character but most of them (7) belong to the older generations (older than 50 years). The interviews chiefly served to expose town usage and ideas about the town. As mentioned above, the interviews are part of a larger project about twin towns, thus the suburbanization was not a central subject. This also means that the interviews are not the core sources of the empirical study below. They are much more the analyses of urban planning and the field research about visual milieus.

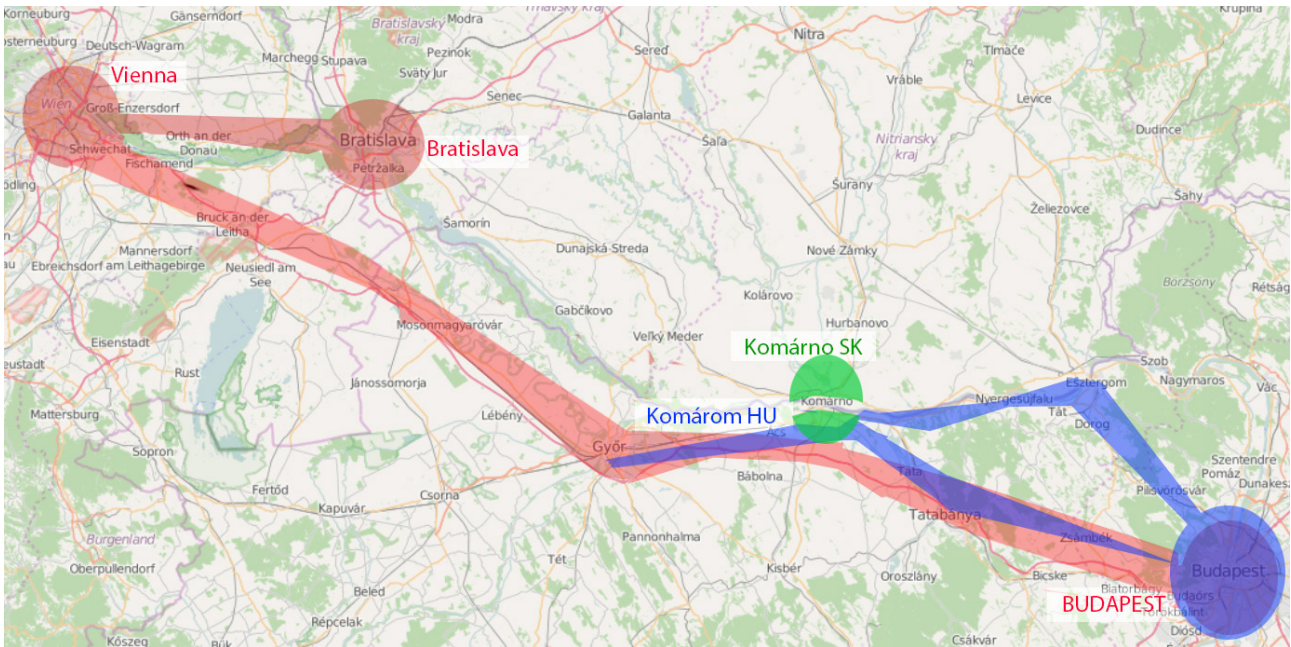
REGIONAL POSITION OF KOMÁROM

The regional position of Komárom in the evolving suburban townscape can be examined from three aspects. The first is how the city is connected to the national urban network, whose centre point is Budapest. The second aspect is its position in the developing axis of Vienna, Bratislava, Győr and Budapest. A third aspect is the relation between the twin towns of Komárom (HU) and Komárno (SK). All three aspects will appear in a historical perspective (Fig 2).

The formation of a national network of towns dates back to the 19th century. The rapid industrialization of Budapest made the capital's leading position unquestionable (Beluszky-Győri 2005). The concentration of

Fig. 2. Geographical networks of Komárom. Blue: the national hierarchy. Red: The Vienna-Bratislava-Budapest developing axes (city agglomeration, space of flows). Green: the divided twin town: Komárom (HU) – Komárno (SK).

Map: Open Street Map



energies onto Budapest stalled small towns like Komárom. For example, while the trade on the Danube served the development of several regional small towns (including Komárom) at the beginning of the 20th century, only Budapest attracted effective national and international capital. The central administration of the national state tried to compensate for the economic disadvantages with public investments: administrative buildings, bridges, even factories were constructed in Komárom. Yet, all of them depended on the core of the urban network, Budapest.

After 1920, the core parts of Komárom went to Czechoslovakia (Komárno SK). The rest (Hungarian Komárom) was only a former suburb, which needed even more investments to ensure its position within the new state borders (Fig. 3). But the regional administration preferred places where the conditions for development were more favorable, so that was Esztergom until 1945, and it has been Tatabánya since 1945. The new administration taking shape until the sixties inherited the name of Komárom but did not accept the site as a central place. Komárom became only a local principal town at the edge of two industrial zones: one around Tatabánya, the other around Esztergom and along the Danube. The regional plans of the seventies designate Komárom for service functions (residency and recreation) supporting the industrial zones. Thus, in the national urban network Komárom has a strictly defined position even today (see Tamáska 2015).

However, the change of regime after 1990 modified the inherited network positions. The large multinational companies' choice for plant sites moved from west to east. As a result, Győr has become the main host for the capital moving from Vienna to Budapest (Hardi 2013). Komárom was already rather oriented towards Győr than towards Tatabánya in the millennium years, while the attraction of Budapest has not diminished.

Fig. 3. Map of divided twin town: Komárom–Komárno. Source: Open Street Map



Taking in a wider dimension, geographical research in Central Europe has identified a banana-shaped development region forming all the way from Poland to Slovenia, whose most important power centre is currently Vienna (Andrusz et al. 1996). Although Budapest tried to define itself as the Balkan gateway after 1990, Vienna has eventually taken up this role. The Austrian capital has become a regional distribution centre for multinational capital and the centre of the emerging agglomerations (Rechnitzer–Tóth 2014, Szirmai–Fassmann 2012).

Komárom is more in a peripheral position in the emerging international space. The strategic points of international flow of space, such as airports, major industrial and financial centres are relatively far away and difficult to reach (Székely 2007, Sikos–Tiner 2008). Komárom in the late nineties seemed to enter into the multinational production structure successfully. The company giant, Nokia opened a factory in 1999 and attracted more businesses into the industrial park. However, its closure in 2013 has highlighted the ambiguity and vulnerability of the occupational structure in Komárom.¹⁰ While it occupies a strategic position as a district seat (school city) in the national urban hierarchy, it is in the internal periphery of the agglomeration areas between Budapest–Vienna (and Bratislava).

As a final point, the question arises whether the Győr–Vienna–Budapest development axis brings about a suburban townscape according to the identified economic indicators (POLYCE 2012). If the North American and Western European agglomerations are the standards, the answer is clearly not, because the issuer cities in our region are inherently less dense, hence the physical limitations also determine suburbanizational merging. The structure of the smaller county towns, especially district seats do not require suburbanization. These towns

¹⁰ The fall in the numbers of flats shows the position of Komárom in the new regional hierarchy: 2001: 8,749 and 357 flats unhabited. 2011 only 8,533 but 671 unhabited (Data from KSH – Hungarian Statistical Office).

have enough building plots within their territories. However, for a small town like Komárom, the loosening of the town's internal structure is much more significant, which apparently follows the 'American way of life' patterns, but the extent is less and the effect is less intense.

The border situation of Komárom is a special phenomenon. The present spatial structure of Komárom was conceived in constraint, hence the centre is weakly deployed, similarly to the townspeople's ambiguous identity. *'About Komárom (HU) there is nothing to mention, only that there are two of them (Komárom in HU and SK)'* – as one of the interviewees put it succinctly. Another strong statement reflects on the relationship of new Komárom (HU) and the historic Komárno (SK): *'There is history there (SK), work here (HU).'* The relationship between the two towns is one of juxtaposition. Although the north and the south towns could constitute a medium-sized town of nearly 60,000 inhabitants, the towns do not work as one organism (Sikos–Tiner 2008). Almost all the interviewees felt this way, and some draw mental maps that typically featured only their riverbank. The two twin towns' separate development already began between the two world wars. The railway in the south, the shipyard (and its extension) in the north did not only cut the towns off from the Danube, but also from each other. The ideological differences between the first Czechoslovak Republic and the truncated Kingdom of Hungary created different mentalities for their intellectual elites by the end of 1930s, despite the same ethnicity. The process really culminated after 1945. The population exchange increasingly affected Komárno's (SK) intellectual elite, whose prominent members often wrote the history of all of Komárom, while already having work and residence in Komárom (HU). Meanwhile in Komárno (SK) shipyard developments generated a specific workers society with a significant immigrant population (Vajda 2014).

Although there had been some cross-river employment through personal contacts in the local factories, people (women in the southern flax mill and men in the northern shipyard) and shopping tourism had picked up, until 1990 the two towns lived in isolation from one another. Several conditions hinder the merger of the twin towns Komárom–Komárno, like the morphological distance between the two towns, difference in legal environment and in social identities. Andrea Székely writes this in her essay on integration evaluation. *'Overall, we can say that in the case of Komárom (HU) and Komárno (SK), the process to become a morphologically uniform town – if it does take place – is at a very early stage'* (Székely 2007b: 23). However, in some areas, the two towns' inclusion is quite palpable: culture (Jókai Theatre, Komárno Days – SK), whereas the most obvious cultural heritage and tourism development should be the fortress, which has buildings element on both banks of the Danube. However the culture heritage management of the fortress has only started on the Hungarian side so far.¹¹

The other area is commercial services. Almost all interviewees said that the 'big shopping' (that is, shopping by car) is a major motivation for cross-border traffic. One interviewee said: *'The town centre at the moment is the Tesco store, where people get together and there is always a friend'*. Contemplating the previous example, we may ask what examples the cross-border urban structure follows. Researchers investigating the town's socio-spatial relations typically look for public spaces in the historic old town and along its bridge. Undoubtedly, it would be historically justified. However, it takes place in parallel with another process

¹¹ See a list about the Cross-Border projects: http://www.husk-cbc.eu/en/financed_projects/, 20.06.2016.

Fig. 4. Zonas in Komárom-Koppánymonostor. Photo: Google Earths



that interweaves the town in a non-traditional sense, in theme parks typical of the suburban townscape. Koppánymonostor is one of the strongest urban areas of this emerging suburban townscape that could merge with the north bank via the planned bridge where similar processes take place.

VINE GROVE BECOMES SUBURBAN TOWNSCAPE

The Koppánymonostor settlement was destroyed in Turkish times and revived in the 18–19th centuries as vineyards (Basahegy, Sandberg).¹² Wealthy families of Komárno (SK) who owned them held famous festivals here like on the Elizabeth Island (Kriegsinsel) opposite. Besides the civil summer villas, the image of the vineyards was rather poor. A good indicator of the economic value of the local vineyards is that the vineyard society disbanded in 1929 for lack of revenue. By then the majority of the area belonged to Komárom township municipally, but it lay in isolation, as the bastion of Fort ‘Monostor’ blocked it from the inner city (Fig. 4).

The development of the area started in the 1960s.¹³ The socialist industrialization policy, the construction of blocks of flats and the designation of recreation areas were simultaneous, complementary processes in Komárom as well as all over the country: ‘... industrial workers (...) have an apparent demand for waterfront holidays, which necessitates us to prepare a detailed development plan for the area designated in the general development plan’ – explained the regional planners (translated by the author).¹⁴

As prospective users of the resort area, the urban planner marked the rural recreation zone east of the city and boat tours from Czechoslovakia as well (while due to the nearby border, fishing from a boat was subject to a special permit). The plan referred to the example of the Lake Balaton holiday area that involved hotels and camping sites to serve the masses, as well as weekend cottages for individual (family) recreation. The

12 There are no works in English or in any international languages. See the sources of historical data about the site in Tamáska 2016, or in the local journal ‘Koppánymonostori Kalendárium’ 1998, 2000, 2001 (the articles in that journal are based mostly on oral histories and personal memories).

13 See Archive Document: Komárom-Esztergom Megyei Levéltár, Komáromi Fiók: RT/21 (1970), RT/22 (1961), RT 23 (1965-1966), RT/24 (1981-1986).

14 Regional Development Plan: nr. RT/23 (1965–1966).

Fig. 5. Old vernacular structure (a relic before the development plans of 1960)



development plan outlines three zones accordingly. The coastal strip stretches along the high bank of the Danube to serve mass demand with a wharf and a camping site. The hills with vineyards near the town were intended for individual holidaymakers. In between the two, larger corporate resorts would have been located. The resort area of Komárom-Koppánymonostor has obviously never reached the level of Lake Balaton, it rather offers facilities for people moving out of the town. Only one of the interviewees lived in this area in the eighties. He claimed that the neighbourhood had ‘changed a lot’, in his time there had hardly been any houses in the area. The suburban migrants’ typical narrative is true, as the size and density of built-up areas have spectacularly increased. However, already in the 1960s, Koppánymonostor’s traditional structure had surfaced. The streets already built-up show two linear axes: Koppányvezér Road leading to the town and bypassing Fort Monostor (a closed military area for a long time), and the Danube Row running parallel to the Danube (Fig. 4).

The Koppányvezér Road is an ‘ancient street’ of Koppánymonostor. The property portfolio of the main road leading to the town still mostly consists of traditional buildings due to the relatively heavy car traffic, and the exchange and renovation of the housing stock are happening slowly (Fig. 5). However, the smaller side streets of traditional layout show a mixed picture everywhere. The property prices vary from plot to plot according to the age and size of the house (www.otthoncentrum.hu, 24.05.2016, 24 houses on offer). Old farmhouses in need of repair go for 8-10 million forints (app. 30,000 Euro), family houses of 200 square meters with a driveway, built at the beginning of the 2000s, could reach 50 million (app. 150,000 Euro). The properties between these extremes were typically built between 1970–2000, to a relatively modest design (with the appropriate facilities of that era) with a target price of around 20 million HUF (app. 60,000 Euro).

Another typical constructions of the town emerged in the resort area parceled out after the 1960s, the so-called Felső-gyepű row which had initially been designated for corporate resorts, but eventually has become a closed garden area. This zone had transformed into a garden suburb of family houses before the political changes, and this process is still going on today (Fig. 6, Fig. 7). The old and new migrants’ houses have very different styles, but still there exists no uniform construction: the plots are built up individually according

Fig. 6. Weekend house from the seventies-eighties



Fig. 7. New structure with garage on a former plot designed for summer resort houses



to the builder's taste. This informality reflects the individuality of suburban life. Nonetheless, neighbourly relations are much stronger here than in town: the people here are bound to know each other, and recognize a stranger from afar.

The collective control of the street suggests a strong sense of security, although the sense of security seems not to be the most significant for the suburban idyll: *'The most beautiful is the Danube bank, we go down there with the kids. But few appreciate it.'*—said a man who had just moved out from the centre with his family. In reality, the river is the natural element that has been the most important driving force for the development of the garden town and it remains so today (Fig. 8). It is a typical phenomenon that the suburbanization has a natural background and so a cultural and property value (Kováč et al. 2009). Even the 19–20th century villas

Fig. 8. The branch of the Danube. The attractive natural environment



Fig. 9. Classical second-home villa (named Tuba-villa) from the late 19th century, with a view of the river



tried to take advantage of the Danube panorama, and today the most elegant family houses are situated on Danube Row (Fig. 9). They represent a very actual international style with a 21st century design language: ‘neo-modern’ (Fig. 10.). However, this area is not the richest part of Komárom. Therefore, only a few examples of contemporary architecture can be found. The strongest dynamic growth in the suburb occurs not in the streets that existed before 1990, but at the edges of the suburban zone. There are almost only new houses in the area next to the railway embankment. This territory was parcelled out at the end of the eighties but was only built up in the past decades (Fig. 11).

Fig.10. Modern building in international neo-modern style, with a view of the river



Fig. 11. New street lines, forming a typical suburban townscape



The question arises whether and to what extent the street milieus came near to the ideal ‘North American’ suburban townscape? To that purpose, a few street images and house-floor plans will be reviewed. Here it will be attempted to grasp the suburban townscape characteristics by the presence of cars for the sake of simplicity. The street image can be revealed at two points: (1) at the road system for car traffic (2) at the pronounced pattern of garages about houses. Regarding the first aspect, only one road (Koppányvezér Road) serves to access the area reaching to almost all the side streets (see again: Fig. 4). Furthermore, this road has developed from a historical street. Not typical in the North Americas, but in European suburbanization this occurs along former village main streets. Consequently, the oldest part with a strong identity suffers the utmost traffic load. The difference in property prices reflects this fragmentation of the area, which exists between the main road burdened by car traffic and the side streets. Indeed, the side streets typically are not suitable for through-traffic – because they were (originally) intended for the summer resorts. Today, however, those little narrow streets serve daily traffic. However, even the busier parts will access no more than 40–50 plots, which means that the traffic is not heavy.

Fig. 12. Family house in 'American style' with grassy garden



Turning to how the plots are built up, the study area will generally not appear to be the ideal type of the North American suburbia. The heritage of the recreation area and the closed garden still dominates most of the streetscapes: the streets are narrow and clad with green. The first development plan prescribed that trees be planted in the streets, as the gardens were then professionally cultivated. Even today, there are many fruit orchards, however, this active way of weekend life seems to be in retreat. The house renovations, housing constructions prefer a more puritan, grassy courtyard (Fig. 12). The fruit trees (because they need intensive care) are gradually replaced with evergreens. The most significant change, however, is the shift in scales as compared with the conventional constructions. Buildings of the 1960s and 1970s ranged from 60–100 square meters, today's buildings measure 130–170 square meters (see again: Fig. 6 and 7). Another crucial change is that the garage is becoming the central element. In some places the garage faces the street directly, elsewhere the garage is located in the middle of the garden, and the paved driveway becomes the dominant element of the garden.

Overall, the residential areas of the suburban townscape of Koppánymonostor are still in the first phase of suburbanization, where the traditional garden town, closed garden, and recreation elements mingle with house models, settlement organization, and lifestyle patterns that feed on US examples.

However, the suburban townscape consists not only of the garden town with family homes as indicated above. Koppánymonostor as the target area was also chosen, because the new urban townscape components are concentrated in close proximity: residential area, workplace, recreation area, cultural heritage. Komárom's industrial park was established in 1994 with direct connections to the main road. Despite the fact that the railway is just a few hundred meters away, sidings were not built (Fig. 13). The flourishing of the park is linked to NOKIA's local activities (1998–2014). Hence, the first decade of the 2000s produced the most intense development. Naturally, Komárom became an immigration target then; the housing construction was particularly high compared with the other towns of the county. The figures also show therefore, that the new type of industry and new residential areas – the two basic elements of the suburban townscape – are simultaneous tendencies. The third pronounced functional elements of the suburban townscape are the commercial centres accessible by car. Although this area is lacking today, when the bridge is completed,

Fig. 13. Back site of suburban townscape: the former rubbish dump and the block of an industrial park



Fig.14. The thematic park of culture-heritage: the Bastille (Fortification) ‘Monostor’ (Monsotori Erőd), from the north side



the Komárno (SK) – Komárom (HU) suburban ring will likely be completed too. Because, in the north, at the stretch of the outbound road to Bratislava, there is a very strongly developed suburban area with warehouse stores, and even back offices as well, including a university campus of relatively high prestige (relative to the town's size). The new bridge is planned for 2017; therefore it will be one of the most important infrastructural investments in the development of suburban townscape adapted to vehicle traffic, although impact studies rather emphasize the relieved load on the town center.

Finally, let us discuss the natural environment and cultural heritage that are the attractions in a suburban townscape. All of these are situated as functionally delimited parks. That is, Fort Monostor is not part of the garden town but lies next to it as its leisure park (Fig. 14). The same can be said for the Danube bank, which is more accessible by nature, as the garden town's main axis runs parallel (see again Fig. 8). However, the Danube bridge will considerably reduce its value. Nevertheless, this is precisely one of the main characteristics of the suburbanization moves: the biggest attraction is the proximity of the natural environment, which developments urbanize, even in a much more extensive way as compared with the historical centres.

SUMMARY – CONCLUSION

The study above wanted to confront the idea of suburban townscape with the reality of a small Hungarian town. First of all, it has focused on the transitions between suburbanization and the suburban townscape. The suburban townscape is a phenomenon of the last four-five decades of North American Urbanism. It shows how the town is dissolving into the surrounding townscape, how the centre of urbanization is shifting from the historical town core towards the suburban zone. Instead of traditional structure of towns and cities, where the centre and periphery made up certain circles or zones, mobility axes, like motorways, airports, structure the suburban zone. It seems that the traditional city is dissolving into a network of places.

However, European urbanization has other traditions than the North American. Thus, the suburban townscape has another character in Europe. The German terminology 'Zwischenstadt' (inter-town) shows the differences: it means an area, which depends upon the historical town centre and upon the historical use of the land. The 'Zwischenstadt' is home to back offices, logistics depots, residences or contemporary means of production, but it does not attract the completely urban life to itself.

The first question, whether the case of Komárom-Koppánymonostor is identical with North American type of suburban townscape is to answer negatively. The townscape forming today in Komárom-Koppánymonostor is much closer to the idea of 'Zwischenstadt', however, this is not the best definition of the process either. First, the suburban agglomeration in the region between Budapest and Vienna is not as extensive as to form a megalopolis. Consequently, small suburban micro regions emerge around each town centre. The development axis along the Budapest–Vienna traffic corridor can bring new elements into this regional structure but it cannot override it.

In Komárom as in many similar places in Hungary, a resort area development preceded suburbanization. Consequently, the structure, street access, plot system, and partly the social composition of the area show a mixture between the petty-bourgeois milieu typical of late socialism (e.g. 'do it yourself' around the house, joints, orchards – a production-oriented way of life) and the North American type of suburbanization (cars, courtyards for cars, large living spaces, storage rooms, garages – a consumption-oriented lifestyle).

At this point, we have arrived at our next question: what are the specific historical-social conditions, which influenced the suburbanization in Komárom-Koppánymonostor. The suburbanization process always links to the geographical conditions. The middle class prefers the antitheses of 'urban desert' where nature can be reached from the windows. Komárom started to shape an urban townscape with blocks of flats only in the late sixties of the 20th Century. The formation of the suburban townscape – or what we can compare with that in Koppánymonostor – goes back to this time. The industrial and logistical corridors in the town centre made access to the river impossible. However, this was not so in Koppánymonostor, where the Danube bank preserved its natural environment. The development plans designated a recreation zone here. From this zone after the 1990 changes and even more so due to the economic flourishing around 2000 a semi-suburban townscape emerged: detached family houses, thematic parks, like industrial parks, a cultural heritage park (fortification), natural reserve zones and mobility axes.

Fig.15. The planned bridge: the new axes of an evolving trans-border suburb townscape.
Source: http://komarno.sk/docs/2006_04_26_interreg_29.jpg



These are all today only in an embryonic phase. It shows elements of an evolving suburban townscape but in no way is it to be considered identical with a North American type of suburban townscape. The suburban transformation is by no means a closed chapter seeing today's trends. The most current part of this paper was about the construction process of a new bridge between Komárom-Koppánymonostor and Komárno (SK). Together with the middle-class lifestyle patterns outlined in the interviews (house, car, nature-friendly house, consumption) it predicts that Koppánymonostor will be only one part of a twin town trans-border suburban townscape in time stretching to the northern side across the bridge (Fig. 15). The often-mentioned integration of the two twin towns (Komárom HU – Komárno SK) therefore will occur not (only) or primarily in the historical cores, but in the suburban areas around the new bridge. In that case, the suburban zones will get a wider dimension, in their morphology as well as in their economic potential and they will move closer to the North American patterns.

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