

THE LAYERS OF THE MAIN STREET A FŐUTCA RÉTEGEI

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ABSTRACT

The subject of the paper is one of the most significant elements of urban morphology – the street. Researching its identity, essence and morphology of small towns in the Great Plain makes the framework of the study.

The research is based on the hypothesis that “the main street is the essence of the town”. It is not only the towns’ cultural imprint, but its soul, the concentration of central functions, shops and most of the hospitality can be found here.

Owing to the complexity of this linear urban element, a few layers are defined that are presenting the structure, development, changes in the history and everyday life of the settlement. Furthermore, these layers enable to depict the fine methodological differences how the people perceive their surroundings.

Defining the model that define certain characteristics of the Main Streets that make the readability possible is the

fulcrum of this paper, which will contain characteristic examples, taken from the Ph.D. in progress of the author.

Keywords: Main Street, urban layers, urban sociology, small town, development of the settlements

1. THE IMPORTANCE OF THE MAIN STREET

The most important public areas of the towns the streets and the sidewalks form the vital organs of settlements. What is our first thought when we think of a city? Its streets. If the streets of a city are interesting, then the city itself is interesting; if the streets are dull, the city is boring.¹

According to Jacobs, building a city without a sidewalks is as if the brain does not have nerve fibers and dendrites.²

The “Main Street” is not only the oldest street of the town. It is also the

¹ Jane Jacobs (2008): *Mire való a járda? A biztonság, Kommentár, Várospolitikai, 2008/2, p.:4*

² Steven Johnson: *Emergencia: A hangyák, az agy, a városok és a szoftverek életéről és viszonyairól, Világosság 2003/3-4, p.:31*

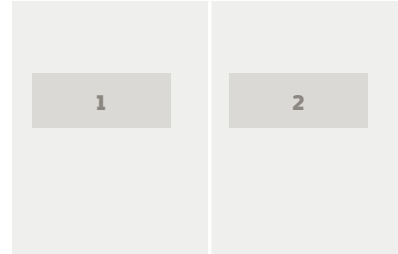


Figure 1: The evolution of Dunaújváros presented on historical maps and a Google Earth picture. (SOURCE: WWW.MAPIRE.EU, GOOGLEMAPS)



Figure 2: The evolution of Zenta presented on historical maps and a Google Earth picture. (SOURCE: WWW.MAPIRE.EU, GOOGLEMAPS)

essence, the gist of the settlement, but often the colloquial name of the most important street of the town and usually its official name, too. It reflects the determining factors that form the settlement, make its history, culture and habits readable. Moreover, it makes the life itself legible. As the Main Streets are the gist of the settlements most of the characteristics can be interpreted by them.

One of the main conceptual lines of the research is to prove that dividing the Main Streets into different layers the interpretation and identification of the towns, moreover the life of the inhabitants become possible.

Dividing the street into different layer receiving knowledge about the street and the settlement become possible. To achieve a whole, complete image about the Main Street not only the objective, tactile reality of the street should be analyzed but the subjective thoughts and feelings and the induced reactions of people must be taken into

consideration. Since the analysis of the physical reality of the street only the visible fragments can describe, other determinative parts would be missing. Therefore the research must be supplemented with the empirical analyzes.

The two category of the analyzes together, complementing each other form complete picture about the street, because as professor Meggyesi says *“When we are talking about the street, we never imagine a traffic channel but imagine two line of houses and the activity between them that gives the street a personal character, specific image, mood and role.”*³

The main question of the research is how much the characteristics of the settlement are presented on the main street, how effectively they can be read.

The problem of the research can be solved by qualitative and empirical research. The article is functioning as a sort of problem issue that will be explained in more detail in the Ph.D. in progress of the author.

3 Meggyesi Tamás (2006): *Városépítészet, Egyetemi jegyzet, Budapest, p.:30*

2. DEVELOPMENT OF MAIN STREETS OF SMALL TOWNS

Before to start analyzing the development process of the main streets of small-towns the conditions and criteria for selecting the small towns as a base of research must be clarified.

The small-town category is particularly interesting since the fundamental morphological and typological characteristics here comes to the strongest expression. Furthermore, the effects of different settlement forming factors⁴ can be easily recognized in the small-town category. Since this category contains one-centered settlements, that are simple enough to be easily analyzed but at the same time complex enough⁵ that the elementary statements can be determined and the appropriate conclusions can be deduced. Also makes easier to analyze the development process of the small-towns is the fact that the process does not include radical impacts that would extremely change the way of urbanization. As it happened in case of *Dunaújváros*. In 1951 a gigantic metallurgical engineering complex the “*Dunai Vasmű*” was built resulted in extreme increase in the number of inhabitants of the town.⁶

In contrast, the evolution of the traditional small-town does not include extreme population expansions or reductions. It has been keeping the small town's character throughout the development process. The typical example of traditional small-town development is Zenta. Its development process was a natural, continuous process and was not interrupted by external factors.

To sum up, for the research it was necessary to analyze small-towns which development was a traditional, continuous process affected by different settlement forming factors.

György Kőszegfalvi and Tamás Loydl classify the factors affecting the

development of the settlement into seven groups, the natural, economic, social, technical, ecological, structural and management factors.⁷ According to other sources, trade routes have largely determined the development of the settlements. Based on the research of Jenő Major,⁸ the ancestors of former settlements could be the market-places. The Iranian origin of the word “*market*” suggests that the Hungarians had already met markets earlier before they settle down in the Great Plain. In the defining the locations of the market-places the role of different regions and routes played an important role. And also the meeting points of the Slavic and Hungarian ethnic groups where the trade began to bloom.

The settlement forming factors should be divided into two groups. In the first one belongs factors that determine the exact place of the settlements and their morphology and the possible directions of the development. The other group of settlement forming factors includes factors that affected the structure and function of the settlement and determined the life of the inhabitants. It is certain that the development of the settlements is a complex process in which each stage is defined by one dominant factor. However, the phases of the development process cannot be sharply separated from each other because it is a permanent process.

If we look closely at Hungarian settlements, we can conclude that settlement development factors are closely related, so they can be said to be “linear” depending on each other.⁹

The research builds on four factors. These are natural influences, traffic and trade factors, social factors and social activities. The effect of the natural conditions creates the germ of the settlements. They, namely the hydrology and the topology determined not only the exact place and form of the settlement but also their development potential, possibilities

4 The different literary sources similarly define the concept of the settlement forming factors. All of them agree that they are the energies that affect the development of the settlements, which constantly transform the morphology and the lives of the inhabitants. For example, professor Meggyesi speaks about five settlement forming factors. These are the local and potential energies, the central role, the economic power of the settlement and the human energy source. These factors or developmental energies have determined the emergence and development of settlements. (Meggyesi, 2006)

5 The development process at these settlements is visible in the morphology of the towns. Also, these settlements went through all of the phases and statements of the development process that characterised the settlements of the Great Plain.

6 In 1949 Dunaújváros had 3950 inhabitants. That number in 1960 reached 30980 people. The process decelerated in the next two decade, but to 1980 the number of inhabitants doubled. (<http://nepesseg.population.city/magyarorszag/dunaujvaros/#1>)

7 Kőszegfalvi György and Loydl Tamás (2001): *Településfejlesztés, ELTE Eötvös kiadó, Budapest, p.: 20-29*

8 Tausz Katalin (1982): *A magyar településhálózat társadalmi rajza, Népművelési és Propaganda Iroda, Budapest In: Szabó Imre: Magyarország településszerkezetének rövid története (www.sze.hu)*

9 The settlement forming factors affected not only the development of the settlements but they also created the conditions for the next settlement forming factor.

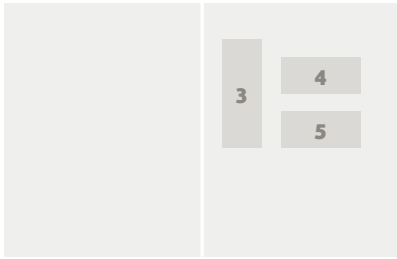
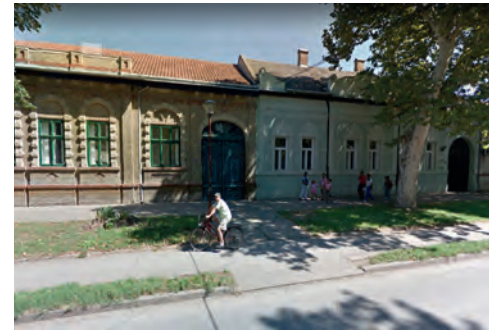
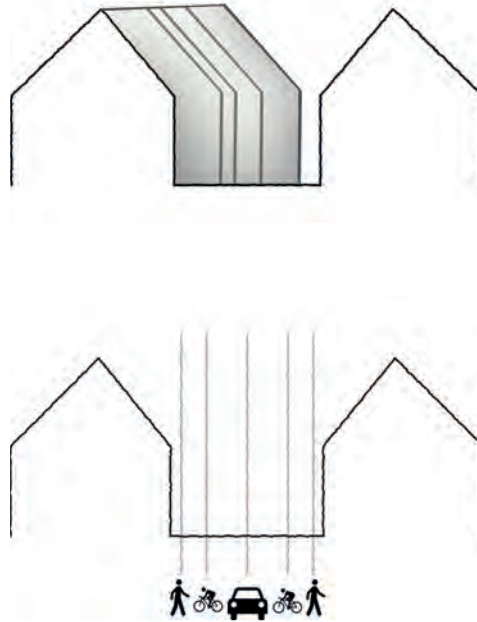
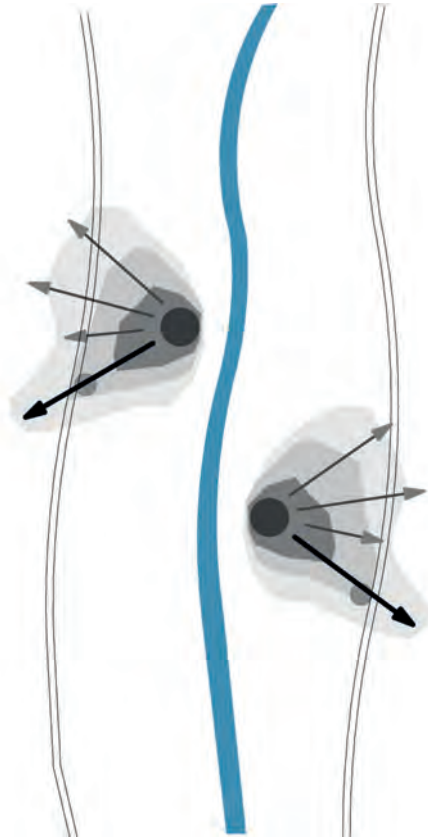


Figure 3: Schematic figure of twin-towns (MADE BY AUTHOR)

Figure 4: The Layer of Nature: schematic illustration in case of Magyarkanizsa (MADE BY AUTHOR, PHOTO TAKEN BY AUTHOR)

Figure 5: The Layer of Transport: schematic illustration in case of Óbecse (MADE BY AUTHOR, PHOTOS TAKEN BY AUTHOR)



and their growth directions. The factor of trade and transport further formed the settlements. The geographical location was essential for the development of transport since it also stimulates the evolution of trade and industry. When the conditions of transport were provided the trade began to bloom. Thereby marketplaces were formed, which became the so-called second center of the settlement. Once the traffic conditions were made, the trade started to bloom. The trade routes were developed which, besides the settlement center, grew to be a second focal point and focus point, thus the areas around the market square or fairgrounds were appreciated.

Exciting fact about the small-towns' main streets is that their line was changing in time. The process was depending on the evolution of the town as the factors that formed the settlement formed its soul, too. Interesting perception is that there were a few more important streets that defined the settlement, but the line of the exact

main street was changing depending on which factors dominated in each period. For instance, in the 17th - 18th century the line of the main street was not defined. This period was deeply affected by the natural factors. The structure of the surface and the possible closeness of water or flooded areas defined the directions of the development. In the 18th - 19th century the line of trade routes¹⁰ determined the development of the settlements. Therefore, the structure of the settlement is more articulated.

The main street connected the different trade routes within the settlements or it was a part of the trade routes, thereby including the settlements of the Great Plain into the Monarchy's bloodstream. In the 19th - 20th century the trade-economic and industrial factor determined the structure of the settlements. Owing to the industrial zones that were built along the national and international routes the settlements, the central areas became particularly more developed. The centralization became

¹⁰ Economists (L. Makkai, Berend T.I.) have been recognized that not only the economic, industrial and technical conditions were essential for the urbanization of the small towns. The historical geography specialists (Frisnyák S., B. Andrásfalvy, Csánki D. drew attention to the 19th century, but especially in the 20th century urban development cannot be identified solely in the industrial sector development, particularly in the Great Plain, where the intense agriculture has been largely effected the development of the settlements. Therefore, the trade lines were particularly important as they included the agricultural towns into (Kókai S., 1999)

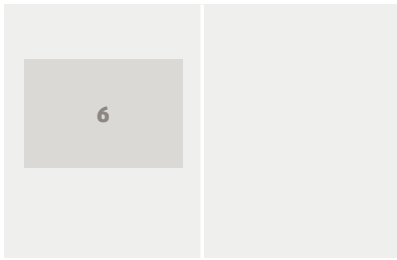
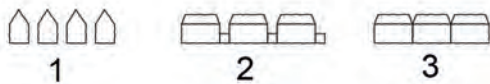


Figure 6: The Layer of History in case of Óbecse
(MADE BY AUTHOR, PHOTOS TAKEN BY AUTHOR)



more expressive, more significant. The next settlement forming factor that defined the morphology of the settlements is the factor of society. This factor is a combination of social life, culture and religion. It finalized the line of the main street and also defined the focus points and the different zones of the small-towns. In addition, one more settlement forming factor must be mentioned, that is the factor of social activities. This factor has had the most powerful impact on shaping the life between the built environments of nowadays main streets. This factor makes the main street mostly interesting, as it currently is "the soul of the settlement".

The case study of the research was made on a specific group of settlements that are the twin-towns.

These are a specific form of urban development of the small-town category which development was primarily defined by intense effects of the topography and the hydrology.

The term means two towns on both sides of a river, which are connected historically, functionally and visually. Twin-towns along the river Tisa developed in inter-relationship acquired the ability to complete each other. Most of them shared a common castle or port but there are many examples indicating that in earlier times some of these "twins" had been a single settlement. Whatever the primary feature of twin-towns was they depend on each other and succeed to maintain inter-connection, because they would be unable to live independently.

3. THE MEANING OF THE MAIN STREET

Louis I. Kahn said that *"The street is a community room."*¹¹ Since the expansion of the automobile, streets have entirely lost their room quality. Kahn said that city planning should start with the realization of this loss by directing the drive to reinstate the street where people live, learn, shop and work as the room out of commonality.

According to Jan Gehl, outdoor activities in public spaces (in this case on the main street), depending on the quality of the physical environment. When the quality of outdoor areas is good, optional activities¹² occur with increasing frequency. Furthermore, as levels of optional activity rise, the number of social activities usually increases substantially.¹³

Before we elaborate more the connection between the main street as public space and human activities let talk about the etymological origin of the word *"road"*. In most of the European languages the term *"road"* is mostly connected with the term of the motion-expressing verb, like the ride in case of English or comparable situation with the French *"rue"* or Italian *"via"* that are in relation with Latin verb *"ire"* (means: move).¹⁴

Consequently, it can be clearly deduced that the main task of the road, of the street is moving (transport). It is supported by the linguistic relationship between the word *"transport"* and *"trade"*. In case of small-towns in the Great Plain, the main task of the settlements was delivering and providing the Habsburg Empire.

The fact that the small-towns in the Great Plain had good connections and well-developed transportation network makes possible that the urbanization of these towns become more intense and the urban fabric become more complex. The evolution of the main streets of small-towns was a long process that resulted in a complex, multifunctional

public area. Therefore it is improper to say that the transport defines the main street. There is much more in the main streets spirit than transport. It is a public space that is functioning as an extended part of the town center. The situation is primarily caused by the natural factors that defined the development process of the towns and at the same time the development of the main streets.

For instance, in case of twin-towns the town core was established close to the river the eccentricity of the town center was caused by the fact that the expansion was possible only in the direction away from the river. Counterbalancing the eccentricity, the main street took over the certain rules of the town center and gives place for different public events, social activities. In other words, the river determined not only the development of the settlements but at the same time the line and the opportunities of the main street, too.

The character of social activities varies, depending on the context in which they occur. Life between buildings offers an opportunity to be with others. It can be a walk along the main street - in former times it was habitual to sit on a bench in front of the house and chat with neighbors and passers-by. The essence of the factor of social activities is that persons' biggest pleasure is another person. Therefore there is always a need to be surrounded by others.

The researchers dealt more deeply with this topic only in the 21st century. It quickly becomes clear that not only the people shape their environment but it also deeply impacts the human life. Not only it makes the urban area diversified it also defines focus points on the settlement.¹⁵

To sum up, people and human activities are the greatest objects of attention and interest. That makes the gist of the main street, it has an impact on the inhabitants' life, moreover, it presents that human activities are much more

11 Kahn, Louis (1971): *The Room, the Street and Human Agreement*, A+U, (<https://www.japlusu.com/news/room-street-and-human-agreement>), 2012

12 Activities which happen if there is a wish to do so and if time and place make it possible

13 Gehl, Jan (2006): *Life between buildings*, The Danish Architectural Press, p.: 13

14 S. Anderson (1986): *On Street*, The MIT Press, Cambridge, p.:15

15 Gehl, Jan (2010): *Élhető városok*, TERC, Budapest, p.: 9-18

Layers with measurable attributions	Layers with perceivable attributions
Layer of Nature	Layer of Identification, Identity
Layer of Transport	Scenarist Layer
Layer of History	Layer of Social Life
Layer of Functions	Layer of Perception
Structural (society-economy) Layer	
Layer of Culture	
Layer of Spiritual Life	
Layer of Green Area	



essential and more relevant than the public spaces themselves. Peter Hall described the cities as the construction of the computers. According to him, the physical structure of cities is the hardware, and the social structure is the software. The two complementing part is shaping and building the characteristics of the urban space together.¹⁶

4. THE READABILITY OF THE MAIN STREETS

Layers of the Main Streets

The main street is a complex urban element that determines the structure, development, changes in the history and everyday life of the settlement. Furthermore, considering their complexity and multifunctionality the characters, of the main streets can be divided into layers that permit to depict the fine methodological differences how the people perceive their surroundings and how they react on it. The principle is similar to Bernard Tschumi's idea of Parc de la Villette. Tschumi said he intended to create a space that exists in a vacuum, something without historical precedent. His goal was that visitors view and react to the park without the ability

to cross-reference them with previous works of historical architecture.¹⁷

The design of the park relies on principles that are illustrated within architectural deconstructivism. By allowing visitors to experience the architecture of the park the time, recognition and activities that take place in that space begin to acquire a more vivid and authentic nature.¹⁸ The park is not acting as a spectacle, it strives to act as just a frame for other cultural interaction. The same does the main street. On the one hand, dividing the street into layers make possible to explore the street as an urban element that is representing the effects of forming factors and to get relative objective information about it and in the same time layers are tools that allow to inhabitants to interpret the framework of their experiences about the urban surrounding.

In other words, this is how the town and its main street are functioning. The main street, just like the language, it is our common property, which every person understands and shapes.

That is, environmental changes are somehow created by the contribution of every human being.

These changes and signs are interpreted differently by every "reader".

¹⁶ Rossi, Aldo (2008): *Arhitektura grada (A város építészete - szerb kiadás)*, Gradjevinska Knjiga, Beograd, p.:95

¹⁷ Tschumi, Bernard (1987): *Cinégramme folie: le Parc de la Villette*, Princeton Arch. Press, p.:32

¹⁸ Tschumi, Bernard (1987): *Cinégramme folie: le Parc de la Villette*, Princeton Arch. Press, p.:32

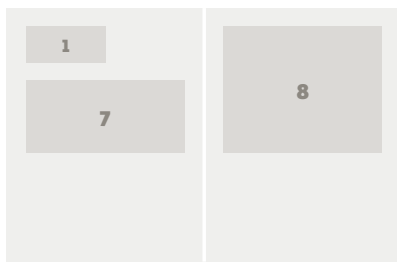


Table 1: Layers of the main streets
Figure 7: The Layer of Functions: schematic illustration in case of Óbecse
 (MADE BY AUTHOR, PHOTOS TAKEN BY AUTHOR)

Figure 8: Structural Layer in case of Óbecse
 (MADE BY AUTHOR, PHOTOS TAKEN BY AUTHOR)



As every reader rewrites his own story between the lines, which is identical to each reading and at the same time different from them. "It's not so about to force new writings into bookcases, but to finally read what's included in the books," Derrida says in his *Grammatology*.¹⁹

That is one of the main conceptual lines of the paper to prove that there are different layers in order to make possible better interpretation of the perception and recognition of the main street, moreover the life of the inhabitants.

It is not a traditional research of the environment based on cross sections, Plato ratio, percentages and meter, but based on the individual. How the person perceives the surrounding, what he can conclude from that he sees in the main street. How he can connect the details with the knowledge he already has, and how he could get information that can help him to get to know the whole settlement.

Subdividing the main streets into different layers is possible in a way that there is no defined boundary of each layer. The main street itself is not an exact, mathematically describable matter. Therefore, its components, in this case, its layers, cannot also be clearly demarcated.

A question justifiably emerges: how can we speak about distinct layers, if they cannot be precisely demarcated. To answer the question the nature of the layers should be explored. The layers that define the main street can be divided into two groups. The layers with objective, tactile and measurable attributions; and the layers that are perceivable and abstract.

The reason for dividing layers into two categories is the way of their analyzing. Layer with measurable attributions can be analyzed from the outside. That means there is no need to feel the atmosphere of the main street, analyzing maps and photos of the main street is enough. This group of layers is more objective represent the real, matter-of-fact entity of the street. In most of the cases, the analyzed topics are tangible or at least directly visible. That means for example that the *Layers of Nature* are visible in fine curves of the street. If it is "accidentally" curvy it means that it is not a planned but a grown settlement. Also, it presents the topographical endowments of the territory.

However, they are necessary to understand the other group of layers the analyses of which is in opposite direction, from the inside. That means it

¹⁹ Derrida, Jacques (1991): *Grammatológia, Magyar Műhely/ÉLETÜNK, Budapest, p.:62*

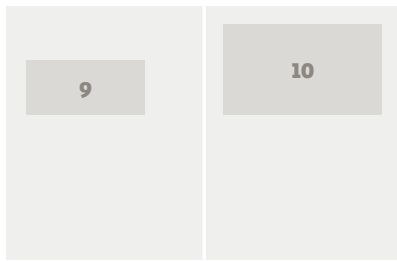
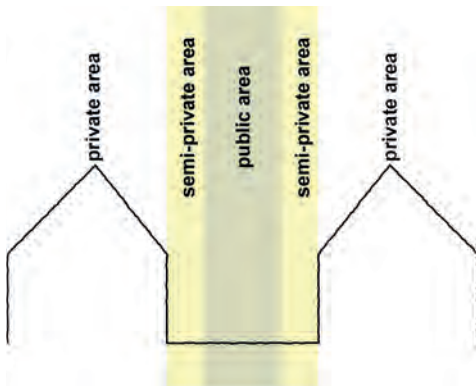


Figure 9: The layer of Culture: schematic illustration in case of Törökkanizsa (MADE BY AUTHOR, PHOTOS TAKEN BY AUTHOR)

Figure 10: The Layer of Spiritual Life in case of Óbecse and Törökbecse (MADE BY AUTHOR)



is indispensable to experience the main street. The characteristics of perceivable attributions are subjective, they cannot be identified from maps and literature. In fact, layers that belong to the group of subjective layers are the projection of the soul of the street in our mind. The mental map (*Layers of Identification, Identity*), the serial vision (*Layer of Perception*) or the different scenes played on the street (*Scenarist Layer*) are presenting how people perceive the street and how they are connected to it and how they interpret it.

Nevertheless, all the layers complete each other, there is no intent to analyze them separately. For example if there is a lot of qualitative green area on the street, in other words the *Layer of Green Area* is strongly presented the place is more comfortable and more enjoyable, the optional- and social activities (that can be analysed by the *Layer of Social Activities*) is going to be dominant over the necessary activities.

The aim of the paper is not to determine which characteristics are dominant but to get a complete picture of the settlements' streets. The equivalent examination of all the layers is required.

Layer of Nature

The relationship between human and the landscape begins in ancient time when the basic need for marking a place appeared. That was the "moment" when the ancient human started to distinguish places in his surroundings.

Professor Meggyesi highlights the differences between the space and the place. He says the space has a formula and the place has genius.²⁰ In other words, while the space is something visible, the place is something that can be only perceived. Professor Cságyó says that the place is the landscapes spiritual dimension which is a base for architecture that it should adapt to.²¹

Hamvas Béla says that there is 5 genius that determined the Pannonian Basin and which are visible not only in the surrounding but is the architecture and urbanism and in the way how the inhabitants use the town and the public spaces.²²

The natural factor most exerted their influence in the period of forming the settlement. Since the settlement network was many times destroyed in the Great Plain (the Mongol invasion in the 13th century, the Ottoman Empire in the 16th and 17th century) therefore, the settlements nowadays form was mostly created in the 18th century, resulting in strict orthogonal urban tissue. Despite, the fact that developing process of the settlement was a few times intermitted the effects of the natural factors are still readable. Even though the buildings were destroyed the layout of the settlements remained. That makes possible to see the fine curves that are resulted by the topography of the area. And also, since the line of the main street is presenting the essential directions of the settlement towards the river.

²⁰ The latin expression „genius loci” is based on the fact that the ancient Roman people belived that everything, every tree, creature or equipment have its own soul, as well the place. The ancient men marked his place. He created place where he felt the difference of inside and outside. He marked a place where he wanted to return thereby he created home. (Meggyesi, 2009, p.: 9)

²¹ Meggyesi Tamás (2009): *Városépítészeti alaktan*, TERC kiadó, Budapest, p.: 24

²² Hamvas Béla (1988): *Az öt génusz, Életünk könyvek*, Szombathely



Thereby presenting the basic necessity of life for the proximity of water.

Layer of Transport

As it was said before the etymological origin of the word “road” tells a lot about the main function of the street.²³

In case of small-towns in the Great Plain, the main task of the settlements was delivering and providing the Habsburg Empire. Therefore the primary function of the streets was providing opportunity for moving. To get from one point to another.²⁴ By the time the features of the streets are expanded to eventually turn into a truly urban and social area. However the imprint of transport dominated past remained, as the Main Streets are usually wider than other streets in the settlement since the buildings are detached from the road with a green area in order to separate the different function of the Main Street and to ensure adequate space for all users of the street.

Owing to the significant role they had, not only the Main Streets become a cultural, social artery of the settlements, they also become the economic and governmental center of the settlement.

Layers of History

Professor Nagy Béla says that the economy creates the conditions of development of the society, and it creates the base for the evolution of the culture. At the same time, the culture returns to the economy through production habits.²⁵

The small-towns in the Great Plain have characteristic historical past. Since these settlements were the pantry of the Habsburg Empire, the life of these settlements evolved developing from agriculture.²⁶ Therefore, in the rural layout is also presented in the urban area. The central area is denser, urbaner compared to the external areas that are characterized by agriculture. Furthermore, not only the urban layout informs us about the rich historical past. The other influential factor specific to the settlements on the borderlands of the Habsburg Empire is that the area is a combination of different cultures and nationalities. Thereby these areas have especially rich architectural and urban heritage.²⁷ The architectural diversity and variety are presented on the main street as most of the buildings are preserved. Owing to the facades of the historical buildings the culture of inhabitants become visible.

Layer of Functions (trade-transport)

During the development of the streets, a division of characters, functions and roles has been forming, which is presented in the differentiation and specific relationships of the streets.²⁸

The urban environment must be adapted to the lifestyle of the inhabitants.²⁹ Therefore the main streets have had several functions during the developing process of small-towns. The different functions basically present the different phases of the development process. In case of twin-towns along the

²³ S. Anderson (1986): *On Street*, The MIT Press, Cambridge, p.: 15

²⁴ Kókai Sándor (1999): *Az Alföld vonzáspontjai és -közetei a XIX. század közepén*, Nyíregyháza, p.:15

²⁵ Nagy Béla (2005): *A település, az épített világ*, B+V Lap- és Könyvkiadó, p.:72

²⁶ Somfai Attila (2002): *Kisalföldi és alföldi mezővárosok különbözősége, kisvárosi értékek védelme, Tér és társadalom* p.: 60-64

²⁷ Harkai Imre, Balassa Iván (1991): *A Magyar Népi Építészeti Archívum kiadványai, A Vajdaság népi építésze*, Szentendre, p.:11-15

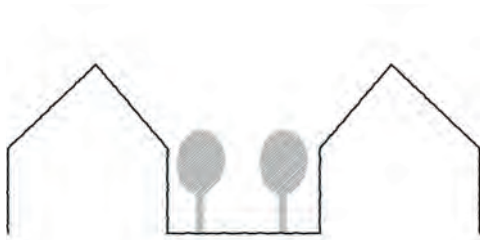
²⁸ Meggyesi Tamás (2009): *Városépítészeti alaktan*, TERC kiadó, p.:195-201

²⁹ Norberg-Schulz, Christian (2006): *Existence, Space and Architecture*, GP “Buducnost” - Zrenjanin, Nagybecskerek, (szerb kiadás),p.:18



Figure 11: The Layer of Green Area: schematic illustration in case of Zenta (MADE BY AUTHOR, PHOTOS TAKEN BY AUTHOR)

Figure 12: Mental map in case of Óbecse (MADE BY AUTHOR)



river Tisa it was connecting the town core with the ferry-port, thereby, the twin-pairs with each-other. Later, when the trade and transport became prominent marketplaces were formed on the crossing point of the trade routes and the main street.³⁰ Adopting to the new circumstances made possible that not only the main street preserved its prominent role, it became even more pronounced. The emphasis was revealed by the width of the main street and richly decorated facades of the houses.

All the phases can be seen on the line of the main street in form of a square or a crossroad.

Structural (society-economy) Layer

The concept of social stratification is more or less commonly used by international literature: In the most general methodological sense, social stratification is understood as "*the way hierarchical rankings of individuals and groups living in society*".³¹

The way in which the society is differentiated is defined with the mode how it is functioning, and vice versa.³²

To sum up, the reason for the fragmentation of the society is defined by the social position of the inhabitants. If we take into consideration that the small towns in the Great Plain are functioning as the pantry of the Habsburg Empire, therefore the agriculture and livestock was the generator of development. The duality of the rural and urban spirit generated the beauty

of these settlements. This duality is visible in the morphology of the settlements and also on the main streets.

The small towns in the Great Plain embodied the fine combination of structurally smaller urban components and agricultural characteristics. Therefore, these settlements could be easily divided into zones not only morphologically but socially, too. These fragments present the social and economic position of the inhabitants and allow to deduce what the social position of the inhabitants in different zones was. The small towns consist of smaller urban components defined by different characteristics and determinants.

The concept of center and periphery, in other words, the phenomenon of fragmentation is well known in urbanism and it refers to the dynamics of development of the settlements. In the history, centers and peripheral areas often change, the center of gravity transmitted.³³

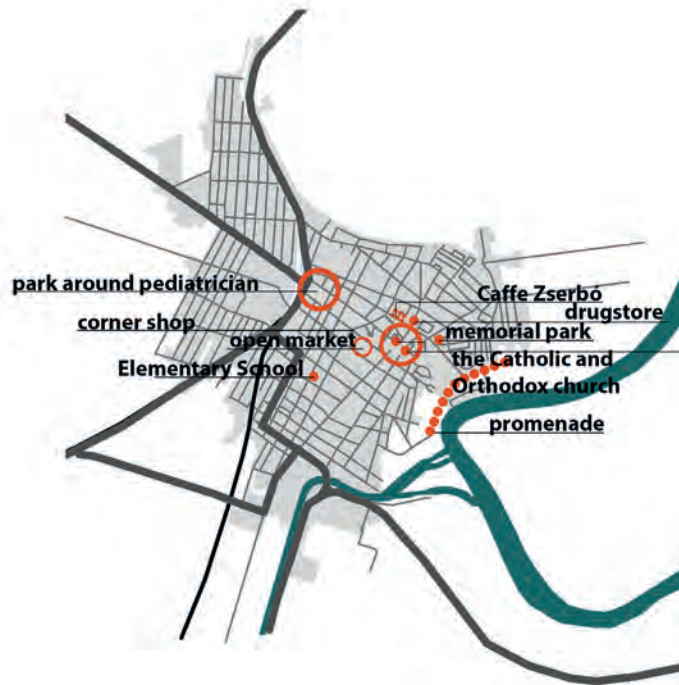
In case of twin-towns along the river Tisa, the settlements could be divided into 3 fragments. The central area, the transition zone, and the area of free-standing houses. The first fragment is characteristic of the central areas formed by multi-story or one-two story buildings with well-decorated facades. This rich decoration indicates the social status of the inhabitants. The second part is where the compact street view is dissolving but the less decorated buildings are connected with a built

30 Kókai Sándor (1999): *Az Alföld vonzáspontjai és -körzetei a XIX. század közepén, Nyíregyháza*, p.: 9-15

31 Ferge, Zsuzsa (1969): *Társadalmunk rétegződése, Budapest (www.tankonyvtar.hu)*

32 Kolosi Tamás (1987): *Tagolt társadalom, Gondolat, Budapest (www.tankonyvtar.hu)*

33 Nagy Béla (2005): *A település, az épített világ, B+V Lap- és Könyvkiadó*, p.:72



fence. The third part is the area of free-standing houses where the inhabitants here are mostly peasants.

Layer of Culture

According to Nagy Béla, the settlement is presenting the culture, the knowledge, experience and habits of human society. This layer not only covers the house but also the typical types of streets and squares.³⁴ Professor Meggyesi says that the main streets of settlements in the Great Plain are defined by alleys. The green area along the streets functioned as sand binding and protection of dust-blending wind. Another feature of the Great Plain is that the sidewalks are on the line of the buildings. Thus, the pavement is protected by the green area.³⁵

The culture of the population can be mostly identified by the way they shape their environment.

There is a tradition that was spread about in the Great Plain. Sitting in front of the house and chat with the neighbors was the part of an everyday program in smaller settlements (the before mentioned green area provides an excellent condition to do so), including the analyzed twin-towns. It is reflecting the inhabitants' basic need of having the social life.

Therefore, in front almost every house there a semi-private area was formed, where the neighbors could meet. It is a smaller scale social point, or focal point of the settlements, that work similar to the ground floors of the

buildings in the Middle Age. Although it was part of the private area, organically it belonged to the public areas.

That semi-private area comes from the traditional village house and it clearly presents the role of agriculture in the life of the twin-towns along the river Tisa. In front of the house there was a forecourt with a garden, then comes the house (the main building) with the main yard used by the family and behind this part comes the outbuildings and the backyard used for livestock or agriculture.

Layer of Spiritual Life

The religion defines people's worldview. It is a guiding principle that defines the relationship between people and the environment and culture.³⁶ The emphasis of the religious institution is typical of western society. Therefore, it is ordinary that the main street in the Great Plain connects the religious establishments as the church and the cemetery.

The same happens. In case of the twin-towns the line on the main street connects the river (ferry port), the church (town center) and the cemetery, presenting the importance of the religion in the inhabitants' lives. The close connection to religion is explained with a habit from the fact that in the Middle Age the people identified themselves by rank and religion.

A fine parallel can be drawn between the line of the main street and the life of the population. As life starts with birth then evolves, expands and

³⁴ Nagy Béla (2005): *A település, az épített világ*, B+V Lap- és Könyvkiadó, p.: 68-69

³⁵ Meggyesi Tamás (2006): *Városépítészet, Egyetemi jegyzet*, p.:45

³⁶ Nagy Béla (2005): *A település, az épített világ*, B+V Lap- és Könyvkiadó, p.: 64

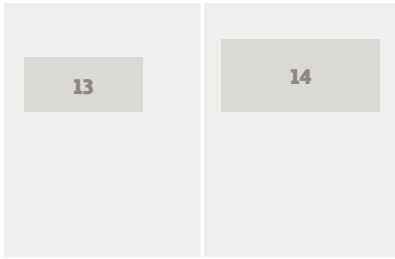
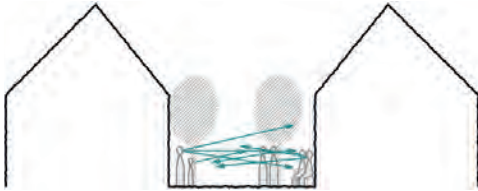


Figure 13: The Scenarist Layer: schematic illustration in case of Zenta (MADE BY AUTHOR, PHOTOS TAKEN BY AUTHOR)

Figure 14: The Layer of Social Life in case of Törökbecse (MADE BY AUTHOR, PHOTOS TAKEN BY AUTHOR)



at the end finds final peace in the cemetery, the main street does the same. It was born owing to the river, it expands in the town center and ends at the edge of the settlement.

Layer of Green Area

The Main Street of the settlement is the most attractive artery. Therefore particular attention should be paid to its design and atmosphere. A green street³⁷ provides multiple environmental, social, and economic benefits to communities. These benefits are realized by the entire community. Compared to traditional "grey" streets, green streets are more attractive, increase the safety and walkability of a community, and encourage and support the local economy. Furthermore, the green area stimulates the social activities on the street, making it more livable.

Layer of Identification, Identity

Identity according to Kevin Lynch is not to equalize with something else, but the meaning of individuality. A workable image requires first the identification of an object, which implies its distinction from other things, its recognition as a separable entity.³⁸

The image of the settlement is complex with a lot of emphasizes and relations. The perceptual input and the constant interactions must be filtered in order to get as objective an image as possible despite the fact that the image of a given reality may vary significantly

between different observers. "Environmental images are the result of a two-way process between the observer and his environment. The environment suggests distinctions and relations, and the observer selects, organizes, and endows with meaning what he sees."³⁹

The emphasis of the settlement should be selected and theoretically marked to get a mental map. Signing the significant lines, the squares, the most variable junctions and the personal emotions a complex picture of the settlement can be produced. With the same method, the mental map of the main street can be made. Thereby the subjective image of the main street can be received that is essential to get information how the inhabitants live the main street.

Scenarist Layer

Jan Gehl in his book *Life between Buildings* mentions "an ordinary day on an ordinary street" where children are playing, pedestrians are passing by, people are sitting on the benches and chat.⁴⁰

A public space is lively if it stimulates different outdoor activities. The main street can be treated as a stage where every person takes part as an active actor or passive audience in the performance.

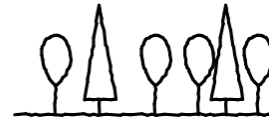
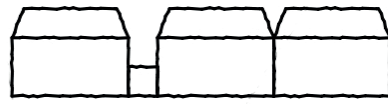
Perhaps this layer reflects the best the role of the main street as it is an urban design element that is constantly changing, adapting to new needs, like the theatre is constantly accommodating

37 It was a tradition to plant alleys along the streets in the Great Plain. (Meggyesi, 2009)

38 Lynch, Kevin (1960): *The Image of the City*, MIT Press, London, p.:6-8

39 Lynch, Kevin (1960): *The Image of the City*, MIT Press, London, p.:6

40 Gehl, Jan (2006): *Life between buildings*, The Danish Architectural Press, p.:11



to different performances. Therefore, the street is primarily responsible not only for transportation but also forming a space that adapts to the prevailing societal expectations.

Layer of Social Life

The social layer of the main street is the most visible from the layers analyzed in the paper. As Jan Gehl says the human is the greatest joy of another human. Therefore, public spaces must give place for spontaneous and planned meetings, too.⁴¹

Jan Gehl divided into 3 sections the interactions between people. The necessary-activities,⁴² the optional-activities⁴³ and the social activities.^{44, 45}

Impressionable factor that affects the density of outdoor activities is the quality of outdoor space. Therefore not only does this layer present the usage of the main street, but it also gives a clear image of how the inhabitants are related to the built environment, how much they are satisfied with it.

Analyzing the layer of Social Life the most subjective opinion can be received how much the inhabitants are connected to the main street, thereby to the town.

Layer of Perception

This layer is based on the fact that people experience the urban environment as a dynamic activity including movement and time. The theory of experiencing the environment moving is ascribed to Cordon Cullen.

His approach to urban design is therefore primarily visual, but it is also based on the physical relationship between movement and the environment: *“the scenery of towns is often revealed in a series of jerks or revelations.”*⁴⁶

It is for this reason that Cullen developed the concept of serial vision. A serial vision is a series of sketches that represent the changes and contrasts in the character of the built environment. The sketches should be shown along with a map identifying the line of the “journey” and the viewpoints from which the sketches are drawn.

In Cullen’s own words, *“the even progress of travel is illuminated by a series of sudden contrasts and so an impact is made on the eye, bringing the plan to life”*.⁴⁷

The concept of serial vision and, generally speaking, Cullen’s approach, can be applied to design as much as it can serve survey and analysis: can be projected on the main street analyses as the streets with historical past are not straight and the endpoints cannot be seen from one point. Owing to the gently curving path of the street a new street view is revealing constantly by a walk along the main street.

5. CONCLUSION

It is clear that the main street of the settlement is a complex urban element where the social interactions come to

⁴¹ Gehl, Jan (2010): *Élhető városok*, TERC, Budapest p.:19-29

⁴² As its name said these are necessary activities like going to school or work. The common in these activities is that different conditions do not affected the implementation.

⁴³ In this group of activities includes the activities that served mostly relaxation.

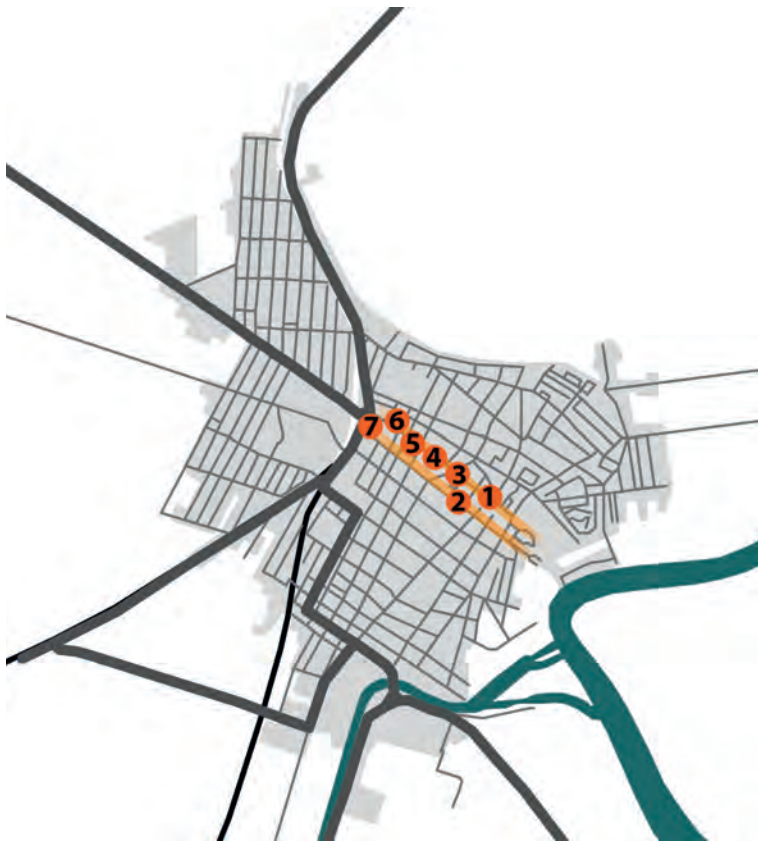
⁴⁴ Assuming the presence of other people social activities, others include all forms of communication between people moving in urban space.

⁴⁵ Gehl, Jan (2010): *Élhető városok*, TERC, Budapest, p.:21

⁴⁶ Cullen, Gordon (1971): *The Concise Townscape*, The Architectural Press, Oxford, p.:9

⁴⁷ Cullen, Gordon (1971): *The Concise Townscape*, The Architectural Press, Oxford, p.:17

Figure 15: Serial vision in case of Óbecse
(MADE BY AUTHOR,
PHOTOS TAKEN BY
AUTHOR)



the strongest expression. For a better understanding of the relations between built structure and open spaces as integral parts of the urban environment the main street is divided into layers that reflect the life and habits of the inhabitants. Analyzing the divided layers the readability of the main street is proved since without literature and lexical knowledge a complex image about the main street, and at the same time about twin-towns can be received.

To sum up, the paper is giving a base for establishing a new methodology of urban-architectural researches saying, that the subjective perception of the street gives even more relevant facts about the settlement as with traditional research can be achieved. It includes empirical factor.

Makes possible to involve subjective experience into the research enriching the research with the human factor.

On the other hand dividing the main street into the layers is not enough, the research cannot end up here. It is essential to define the exact part of the street that the certain layer covers. Also, it is essential to define the exact meaning of the layer and to determine the expected result that can be achieved analyzing them.

Defining a new method of urban-architectural analyzes of the main streets, but at the same time finding a framework which will allow that research become effective, is the fulcrum of this paper, which will be elaborated in the Ph.D. in progress of the author.

A FŐUTCA RÉTEGEI

A tanulmány tárgya a városi morfológia egyik legfontosabb eleme - az utca. Az utca komplex városépítészeti elem, mely megjeleníti a társadalmi kölcsönhatásokat. A tanulmány alapvetése, hipotézise: „*a település tükrözi a főutca*”. A főutca ugyanis nem csak a város kulturális lenyomata, hanem a lelke is. Mondhatni: a *genius loci* itt érhető leginkább tetten. Itt koncentrálnak a központi funkciók, valamint a kereskedelem és a vendéglátás meghatározó elemei.

Az utca tanulmányozása, annak sokrétűsége miatt, összetett folyamat. Elsősorban tisztázni kell a főutca kialakulását és fejlődését meghatározó hatótényezőket. A tanulmányban négy ilyen tényező jelenik meg: a természetföldrajzi tényezők, a közlekedési és kereskedelmi tényezők, a társadalmi tényezők és a társadalmi aktivitások. Ezek a hatótényezők meghatározzák a települések és egyben a főutcák helyét, funkcionális és téri kapcsolatait, gazdasági motorját, fejlődési lehetőségeit, sőt a lakosság kultúráját és szokásait is.

Az utcák fontosságát a 20. század során kezdték (ismét) hangsúlyozni. Jane Jacobs 1961-ben megjelent könyvében életteli és érdekes utcák kialakítását javasolta a városépítészetben. Az utcákat parkok, terek és középüle-

tek teszik változatossá, amelyek egyúttal biztosítják a különböző funkciók együttes jelenlétét és komplexitását a területen. Az 1970-es évek elejétől az 1990-es végéig fokozatosan jelentek meg a településkutatás újabb irányzatai, és előtérbe került az ember, nem csak a kutatók, hanem a tervezők számára is. Jan Gehl munkássága is a városi közterek, utcák életteli megtöltését hangsúlyozza.

Az épített struktúra, a nyitott terek és a társadalmi interakciók közötti összefüggések könnyebb értelmezése érdekében a vizsgálat a főutcat rétegekre bontja. Ezek a rétegek tükrözik a lakosság életét és szokásait, illetve az épített környezet minőségét. Továbbá a tanulmányban a rétegek elemzésével igazolható a főutca olvashatósága is, hiszen itt irodalmi és lexikai ismeretek nélkül kapunk összetett képet a főutcsról és magáról a településről.

A főutca rétegekre bontásának alapjául Bernard Tschumi terve, a Parc de la Villette szolgált, ugyanis a tervező a parkot eszközként, egyfajta keretként képzelte el, mely helyszínt ad a különböző eseményeknek. A dekonstrukció elvét követve a főutca rétegekre bontása lehetővé teszi a főutca és ezáltal a település objektív megismerését, ugyanakkor hangsúlyozza a főutca empirikus rétegének fontosságát, hiszen az utca mindenkinek mást jelent.

A főutca hasonlóképpen működik, mint a nyelv. Derrida Grammatológia című művében arról ír, hogy a nyelv közös tulajdonunk, minden ember használja és érti. A közös nyelv a közösség számára elvileg mindenki számára ugyanazt jelenti, ám mégis lehetnek egyéni, árnyalatnyi vagy markánsabb átértelmezések, megélések. Ugyanígy a főutcat is mindenki kicsit másként értelmezi a személyes tapasztalatai, kultúrája és szokásai függvényében.

Összefoglalva, a tanulmány alapot ad a városépítészeti kutatások új módszertanának kialakításához, mely szerint az utca szubjektív megismerése még inkább releváns tények tár fel a településről, mint a hagyományos kutatások. Lehetővé teszi a szubjektív tapasztalat, az empiria bevonását a kutatásba, ezáltal gazdagítva a kutatást az emberi tényezővel.

A főutca rétegekre bontása a település megértését szolgáló kutatás számára csak a kezdet. A cél a főutcák városépítészeti elemzésének új módszertani meghatározása, melyhez az írás csupán bevezetőt nyújt. ●