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Settlement Network Development Policy
in Hungary in the Period of State Socialism (1949-1985)

**CENTRE FOR REGIONAL STUDIES
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No. 17

**Settlement Network Development Policy
in Hungary in the Period of
State Socialism (1949-1985)**

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INTRODUCTION

Settlement and settlement network development policy seems to be alien to direct high politics but upon examining their essential relations we can say that in fact these „politics” signify the basic outcomes and spatial consequences, i.e. the synthesis of the economic, social processes and political changes.

The evolution of the settlement development policy of state socialism was greatly influenced by the conception of society in the new system, the historically developed socio-economic spatial structure of the country, the sectoral-structural objectives of economic development and structure policy in a wider sense. Settlement development had to be integrated with the centralised structure of management, public administration and planning. In the practical activity a reply had to be given to the peculiar regional and settlement problems of the country (Budapest–the provinces, Budapest–the large cities, large cities–small towns, towns–villages, the system of small detached farms) and priorities had to be assigned under the circumstances of limited resources.

Regional policy and regional, settlement and settlement network development are not the „creatures” of the socialist turn in Hungary, the state used to interfere with the regional and settlement network processes formerly as well. The changes of the frontier after World War I, then the National Work Plan (1932) resulted in the unfolding of a peculiar regional development policy.

In the formulation of the goals, the direction and the instruments of regional policy science participated periodically and to an altering extent. In the 1950s science had a ceremonial role, then it took part in the establishment of the regional and settlement development policy depending on the political interests and objectives with a changing content and varying successfulness. From first to last the scope of movement of science was restricted, since the determining characteristic feature of the period was that the judgement of every professional issue obtained an ideological and political content.

The regional and settlement development policy of the period was determined to a great extent by the long-term, planned, ideal notion of society as well as by the direct conception of the society and the actual practice of the organisation of society. Perhaps the most often used phrase

in the writings of the period was *the socialist society*. Several levels and groups of interpretations of this category developed changing with time, but there remained some permanent elements, too. In the everyday practice and the political activity philosophical, ideological and propagandistic elements got mixed.

In addition to the system of values of the socialist transformation of the society, the directly formulated economic development strategy (the two were related in a lot of cases) determined the objectives and possibilities of the prevailing settlement and settlement network development. In the period of the extensive development of the economy, in the case of developments of sectoral (industrial) character regional and settlement development was a partial result, a kind of consequence related to the major investment projects.

In connection with settlement and settlement network development once again arises the issue of periodisation as well as that of the attitude to be taken in relation to the international processes and scientific tendencies. We regard the whole of state socialism as a homogeneous but not undifferentiated whole. The typical phases of settlement and settlement network development policy coincide with the structural changes of the economy, politics and public administration but the coincidence is not of a mechanical nature.

At the beginning of the period the endeavour to imitate the Soviet practice (or rather the pressure to do so) the indiscriminating adoption of the Soviet scientific accomplishments is obvious but „the representatives of the bourgeois science” are still present and elements of earlier views also emerge. From the early 1960s in the interest of promoting modernisation, the western scientific achievements were more powerfully integrated (often with a content and in a form strongly trans-ideologised). Such elements of the western practice gained ground which seemed to serve the efforts and plans of „catching up and overtaking”.

The regional and settlement development policy of the 1970s was characterised by a kind of peculiar eclecticism. The limited, hesitant market economy initiatives clashed with „the system of values of the socialist society”, the aspiration towards the materialisation of the ideal society and social equality, the requirement of successful development and efficient functioning intensified.

The parliamentary resolution of 1985 can be regarded as the final chapter of the regional and settlement development policy of state socialism. In the resolution the alleged values of the socialist society were still present, but there appeared the basic elements of a more open development policy and practice, differing from the earlier practice by reckoning with possible uncertainties, too, and acknowledging also the differences of the social interests on the regional and settlement level.

THE BASIC STRUCTURE OF THE STOCK OF SETTLEMENTS ON THE BASIS OF THE NATIONAL CENSUS OF 1949

According to the census of 1949 the population of Hungary was 9,204,799 out of which 1,589,065 (17.3%) lived in Budapest, the capital of the country; 1,107,905 (12%) lived in towns subordinated to the county councils (their number was 24) — these were the more important densely populated towns — , 643,806 inhabitants (7%) in towns subordinated to the district councils (29), while 5,864,023 (63.7%) lived in the 3,143 communities of the country.

The division of the towns and communities according to order of magnitude was extremely peculiar. The number of communities with inhabitants below 499 was 562 and in these communities lived 2.1% of the whole population; 867 communities belonged to the category with 500–999 inhabitants and in these lived 6.9% of the population. 850 communities belonged to the category with 1,000–1,999 inhabitants, amounting to 13% of the population. Consequently, in all, 22% of the population lived in (2279) communities with a number of inhabitants below 2,000 and this is very important because from the early 1950s onwards the communities with 2000 inhabitants were regarded as the ideal „socialist” or „rational” size to a greater and greater extent.

The number of settlements with 2,000–10,000 inhabitants was 812 and in these settlements lived 33.9% of the population. These settlements were extremely different with regard to function. In the *Great Hungarian Plain* they were mainly of an agrarian character while in *Transdanubia* towns already appeared at the upper limit of the category in the functional sense.

In the settlements with a number of inhabitants over 10,000 (106) lived 44.1% of the population of the country. From the viewpoint of public administration the settlements were of a different character, only half of them had the legal status of towns. Besides the two settlements with more than 100,000 inhabitants (*Debrecen* and *Miskolc*) Budapest had no rival at the other end of the hierarchy based on order of magnitude.

One of the peculiar problems of the Hungarian settlement network was the high proportion of the population living on the peripheries. 17.1% of the population, about 1.58 million people lived on the peripheries. The number of the inhabited peripheral places was 16,799 and most of them

(53%) had inhabitants below 30. The number of the inhabited peripheral places with more than 2,000 inhabitants was 35. Although some 76.5% of the settlements had population living on the peripheries, on the territory of the country the peripheral population had an extremely uneven distribution. The majority of the peripheral population lived in the Great Hungarian Plain, 41.5% and 32.6% of the population lived in *Bács-Kiskun* and *Csongrád* and *Békés* counties, respectively, mainly on scattered isolated farms or groups of small farms.

THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE SOCIALIST SETTLEMENT DEVELOPMENT POLICY

The political turn of 1948, then its acknowledgement in the Constitution of 1949, the switch of the economic, social and political system, the changes in the place, role and character of public administration logically brought about the shaping of a settlement policy expressing, representing and projecting the economic, social and political objectives and endeavours of the socialist society. Settlement policy is of the same age as the system, nevertheless we can say that political and socio-political considerations had appeared already in the coalitional period or even earlier — because of the communist direction of the *Supreme Economic Council* and the *Ministry of the Interior* — in the regional and settlement decisions the legal declaration of town status.

In the development of the new settlement development policy the basic points of departure were constituted by the political, economic system of values and the direct political objectives of the new society. The ideological basis of the social and regional division of labour was provided by the Marxist doctrines on the historically changing relationship of town and village and by the settlement development practice having occurred in the Soviet Union. But above all, it was the Stalinist approach which got across.

According to *Stalin's* approach the socialist revolution was to conquer first in the towns, the socialist ownership would be created there, the socialist transformation of the economy and the society was bound to occur first in the towns. The socialist towns were to reform the villages as well. The villages would not follow the socialist towns mechanically, therefore the socialist ownership and later the social relations of socialism were to be formed in the villages by means of external intervention. On the long term the whole settlement system was to be transformed in accordance with the construction of socialism.

From 1950 *Khrushchev* formulated his theory, which had a political impact, on the „socialist agrarian towns”. One of its significant components was that the antagonistic contradictions of town and village as well as the long-term economic, social, cultural, architectural and supply-related etc. differences would cease to exist under socialism but also mod-

ern settlements uniting all the advantages of both town and village would come into being without the disadvantages involved.

For the Hungarian political leaders settlement policy was one of the instruments of economic development and of the radical transformation of the society, partly an objective and a consequence.

Gradually the conception of the *First Five-year Plan* was gaining also a political content related to settlement development from April of 1949 until its adoption by the Parliament in December, 1949. In his speech, held in *Kecskemét* on August 20, 1949, *Mátyás Rákosi*, secretary-general of the party, connected the possibilities of rural development with the urgency of rapid collectivisation in agriculture. He determined „the disappearance of the difference between town and village” as a political objective. In the beginning the socialist transformation of the village involved mainly the transformation of ownership, then it was aimed at the decomposition of the proprietors’ society. The possibility of the establishment of „kulak villages” also emerged but in the end a decision in favour of the labour camps was made.

Ernő Gerő, the chief organiser and leader of the economy, touched upon the settlement and regional aspects of the five-year plan from several aspects. One of the objectives of the five-year plan was to change the „socio-economic map of our fatherland”. The main endeavour of the government was to industrialise those regions of the country which were in need of industry by means of the construction of 263 industrial plants, the transformation of a great number of agrarian towns into „towns being industrialised” and the establishment of „two new industrial centres in addition to the one in Budapest”. The living conditions of the peasantry were to be improved by means of setting up 250 regional centres for the small detached farms, the drilling of 2,000 new wells, the large-scale development of the allocation of supplies in the field of transport, telecommunications and electricity.

In the early 1950s the regional, settlement and economic differences increased as a consequence of the extensive, heavy industry-oriented development and in contrast with the original plans. Especially the development of *Komárom* and *Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén* counties was accelerated.

In accordance with the political objectives and needs the elaboration of the socialist settlement development policy and its approval on the state level took place. The most important scientific role in the settlement de-

velopment policy was taken by the *Institute of Regional Planning* and the *Council of Small Detached Farms*. The Institute of Regional Planning elaborated the national, regional, settlement network and settlement development conceptions while the Council of Small Detached Farms elaborated the socialist principles of the peripheries and of the policy of the small detached farms in particular, trying to co-ordinate their conceptions in accordance with the frequently modified political requirements.

In the course of both activities the former scientific achievements and aspirations were often trans-valuated, a viewpoint of relevance was the copying of the current Soviet practice, but basically the direction taken was determined by the directly asserted political positions and the system of values.

Finding a solution to the situation of the peripheries, mainly to that of the small detached farms, was an integral part of the settlement policy of the period. The Council of Small Detached Farms was set up under the chairmanship of *Ferenc Erdei* in January of 1949 with the purpose of finding a final, integral, socialist solution to the situation of the population which living on the periphery and it was functioning as a inter-departmental government committee. According to the preliminary directives of the political leadership the issue of the small detached farms was to be solved by the assignment and development of 200–250 centres for the small detached farms.

The executive decree on the restriction or ban of peripheral constructions was made with the substantial contribution of the Council of Small Detached Farms. The building of permanent houses was permitted only in central districts and assigned centres of small detached farms. Any utilities of public purpose could be built only in the assigned centres of the small detached farms, only in these settlements was it desirable for the decision-makers to give trade licence for the practising of any useful activities.

In accordance with the changes of the political conditions and the financial resources, the Council of Small Detached Farms always re-evaluated its activity, the aspects and possibilities of the development of centres. In this work rational and irrational elements were both mixed, the functions and also the number of the centres of small detached farms were often re-defined according to the changing requirements.

The attempt to solve the issue of the small detached farms gradually began to be associated with the need of the collectivisation of agriculture, in certain spaces it became the most effective instrument of collectivisation. In the interest of solving the issue of the small detached farms economic and extra-economic administrative instruments were used alike.

The most spectacular component in the activity of the Council of Small Detached Farms was the „communitisation” campaign, in the course of which 150 new communities were formed, largely in the Great Hungarian Plain, where there were a lot of small detached farms. In the process the normatives of settlement development coincided with those of public administration. From the viewpoint of the Establishment it was easier to „handle” the society of the Great Plain when it was concentrated into communities. Communitisation was promoted by the approach which tried to merge the issue of the small detached farms with that of the kulaks.

In November of 1950 the Supreme Economic Council determined the institutional system, the hierarchy and the mechanism of plan approval, the framework for the harmonisation of the investments, regional and settlement developments. The country and regional planning was to become the basis of the development and planning of cities and townships, but since such plans had not been completed, the two planning activities had to be carried out simultaneously.

In connection with country and regional planning the Supreme Economic Council announced that

- the regional plans should be made with regard to economically contiguous regions (geographical units) exceeding the boundaries of a single county as a rule,
- the regional plans shall consist of economic and technical plans,
- the drawing up of regional plans is a central task and shall be made by the *Central Planning Office* with the contribution of the *Institute of Regional Planning*, with the initiation of the competent ministries and the affected organs,
- the regional plans have to be made on the basis of the data provided by the five-year plan and those of the long-range aspects going beyond the plan period by making use of the data of development (electrification, road construction, afforestation) plans.

The Supreme Economic Council prescribed that „each town and community should make its own town and community planning programme”. It is also determined that

- administration and economic planning is a central (governmental) task,
- economic planning is the basis of technical planning: economic planning is directed by the Central Planning Office, technical planning by the Ministry of Housing and Public Construction,
- the planning of cities and communities shall consist of a programme recording the results of economic planning and also of the (general and detailed) technical plans; the planning programme should include all the economic and political aspects in accordance with which it is possible to use the territory of the cities or communities on a range longer than that of the economic plan period.

The Supreme Economic Council prescribed the classification of towns and communities into three categories from the aspect of city (community) planning. The classification was determined by the Supreme Economic Council upon the proposal of the Minister of the Interior in agreement with the Minister of Transport and Communication and the Minister of Housing and Public Construction.

The aspects of the classification of settlements in connection with the planning programmes are as follows.

- The *1st class* should be made up of settlements (towns and communities) which have to be developed to an extent above average already in the period of the First Five-Year Plan as well as the ones on the territory of which major industrial all other investments have to be located.
- The *2nd class* should include the settlements the urban development of which is required but which do not develop to an extent above the national average. On their territory the location of such institutions is desirable which meet the needs of both the locality and the environs (gravity zone).
- All the other settlements should be included in the *3rd class*. On the one hand, these are settlements the rural character of which still has to be developed further to meet the local needs and also ones on the territory of which permission for investments in the

period of the First Five-Year Plan can be granted only in exceptional cases on account of their poor economic and transport conditions.

The Institute of Regional Planning elaborated the conception of classification in several versions and in the process of co-ordination with the county party committees the classification of the individual settlements was modified even further until the political approval and announcement of the range of a „special class” or of 1st class settlements occurred. According to this conception only Budapest and Miskolc belonged to the class of special settlements, ensuring thereby „the possibilities of their especially centralised direction”. In the final version 47% of the settlements was classified into the *III/c* category (not to be developed) (Table 1, Figure 1).

Table 1

The classification of the villages and towns on 21 December, 1951

Classes	Number of classified settlements	% of all settlements
Special class	2	0.06
I class	73	2.27
II class		
II/A	52	1.61
II/B	29	0.90
III class		
III/A	1,254	38.91
III/B	283	8.78
III/C	1,530	47.47
All settlements	3,223	100.00

The categorisation of the settlements outgrew the original destination (orientation of the industrial and communal investments of the First Five-Year Plan) and in a short time it transformed into a settlement and settlement network development conception, with the basic elements of the new regional and settlement development policy outlined.

The regional development policy deliberately reckoned with the confinement of the development of the (Yugoslavian, Austrian) border regions, the planning and construction of new towns was launched and the *socialist town* partly obtained a historico-philosophical content. In the

central planning of the processes of the regions and settlements a development endeavour centralised in a decentralised way got across in which the long-range need for the homogenisation of the socialist society also obtained a role.

The persons involved in the drawing up and approving of the plans did not deny the class character of the conception, its commitment to the „workers party”. The following basic targets were aimed at: the development of the industrial and new socialist towns, the improvement of the allocation of supplies and the favouring of the special settlements (by fixing the rates of certain services). On account of the scarcity of the resources to be spent on settlement development and the exaggerated requirements of the outlined objectives this conception could be asserted in the real processes only to some extent, yet the special settlements and spaces obtained a more favourable position in several respects, developing at the cost of the neglect of other settlements.

In 1953–1956 the endeavours of regional planning and regional settlement development were incorporated into the regional reform attempts of the public administration. The fundamental issue of each reform plan was the possibility and extent of decentralisation but the solution was planned within different regional frames. In these plans and projects the development of the settlement network was presented in subordination to the interests of public administration.

CONCEPTIONS OF SETTLEMENT DEVELOPMENT AT THE TIME OF THE „CONSOLIDATION” AND IN THE PERIOD OF „LAYING DOWN OF THE FOUNDATIONS OF SOCIALISM”

From 1957 the „new” regime started to rethink the economic-political, development and planning practice of the former period. An attempt was made to re-determine the proportions of sectoral development within this framework and with precedence cautiously given to the role of infrastructure, the political and economic endeavours accepting the raising of the living standards and turning it into a propagandistic goal of primary importance became marked.

In 1958 a Governmental Resolution (on the System of Regional Planning) on re-starting the regional research activity and the making of regional planning programmes was passed. The future of long-range national economic plans was still uncertain, therefore the measures were formulated in a provisory way: if long-range national plans are made „regional development plans will have to be elaborated as well”. Thus in 1958 the planning of regional development was raised in connection with the making of long-range national economic plans.

The resolution of the *Politburo of the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party* (HSWP) (October 29, 1958) on the location of industry wanted to lay stress upon the forces of production, the regional aspects of the industrial development in particular, in contrast with the one-sided assertion of sectoral considerations. With this purpose in mind it was prescribed that the long-range, five-year and annual plans should also have a „chapter on the settlements”. The need for the more proportional industrial and regional development of the country was also formulated. The problem was to be solved by means of the planned reduction of the dominance of Budapest in the industry, the industrialisation of the industrially underdeveloped areas, the harmonisation of the internal economic structure of the individual regions, the increased assertion of economic efficiency.

By translating the resolution of the HSWP into a state measure the *Economic Committee* highlighted the significance of regional research and the development plans first of all from the viewpoint of the co-ordinated location of the industrial investments. It also laid down the principle of the „proportional development of the different regions of the country”.

The long-range planning activities blossoming out in the early 1960s (a 15-year housing construction plan, national water management general plan etc.) were to become elements of an organic and coherent conception asserting also the considerations of the regional and settlement development. The process, however, got stuck because the elaboration of the long-term regional conception was halted in the early stage out of political and economic considerations.

In the *Second Five-Year Plan* some kind of normativity was also asserted in the planning of the regional processes. This was shown by the formulation of the requirement of a more proportional industrial development. The development of *Miskolc*, *Győr*, *Pécs*, *Debrecen* and *Szeged* cities into centres of large-scale industry, the so-called *counter-pole conception* primarily served the reduction of the predominance of Budapest. The other towns could expect only moderate development and development means, since the majority of the resources were tied down by the collectivisation of agriculture and its unfavourable consequences. The development of the villages remained again only a propagandistic promise related to collectivisation.

Beyond its economic, social and political connections, the collectivisation of agriculture appeared also in the theory and practice of settlement and settlement network development. At the very beginning of the 1960s the creation of the „socialist system of villages” became the main issue of settlement and settlement network development.

In 1961 a governmental resolution prescribed the elaboration of a study project of the settlement network covering the whole country. The governmental functions, duties concerning the long-term development — with the exception of the ones within the competence of the Council of Ministers — were relegated to the competence of the Minister of Housing and Public Construction.

The regional research activities started again at the *Town and Urban Planning Department* of the Ministry of Housing and Public Construction were one of the bases of the study project. The other intellectual workshop was *VÁROSTERV*, the research, planning and development studies of which embraced all the problems of the Hungarian settlements and settlement network.

The *Settlement Network Development Study Project* (Study Project) was a kind of a compromise summarising the political, planning and sci-

entific endeavours of the early 1960s. The Central Planning Office wanted to form the settlement network by means of the proportional regional location of the productive forces, of the industry in particular, in compliance with the economic and social relations of socialism. A basic element of this endeavour was constituted by the building up of the 5 large cities as counter-poles. With regard to the other towns the needs and possibilities of an organic, proportional but not too rapid growth was aimed at. The network of villages based on the socialist agriculture was handled as a system with moderate development prospects concerning both the single villages and the regional structure. The Ministry of Housing and Public Construction and also the related technical experts and architects approached the long-term system of settlement network from the aspect of the hierarchical system and functional role of the towns.

The Study Project laid great emphasis on the elimination of the institutional disproportionateness of the settlement network, the prevention of the appearance of further disproportionateness, the need for the liquidation of the economic and social disadvantages arising from the system of settlements. The regional functions of the settlements and the regional structures built on them were elaborated systematically. In the assignment of the centres of the village districts and sub-regions co-ordination with the county, sometimes even with the district party and council organisation took place, thus some kind of local interest could be asserted, too.

The classification of the settlements according to the regional functions (*Table 2, Figure 2*) would often be justified by peculiar but approved principles and normatives. The 9 regional centres and 9 regional co-centres carried the possibility of a more decentralised development. 66.5% of the settlements became subordinate villages. Some of these would have continued to exist in the long run any way but most of the „villages unable to develop and the detached groups of houses in the outskirts would cease gradually”. In comparison with the earlier conception the proportion of the lowest category significantly enhanced.

The village district became the smallest regional unit of the settlement network as the potential area of large-scale agriculture, habitation for the agricultural population and primary unit for the allocation of provisions. The area of the village districts varied between 21.5 and 414.3 km², the population being around 1,600–15,000.

Table 2

The regional importance of the settlements according to the Settlement Network Development Study Project in 1963

Regional importance	Number of classified settlements	% of all settlements
Regional centre	9	0.27
Regional co-centre	9	0.27
Sub-regional centre	80	2.42
Major settlements without regional importance	27	0.82
Village district centre	979	29.71
Subordinate village	2,191	66.51
All settlements	3,295	100.00

The sub-region is an intermediary regional unit of the settlement network determined concerning production and the allocation of provisions. In the sub-region so-called internal and external zones were distinguished. The internal zone embraced mixed economic activities and population while the external zone was made up of an area which was purely agricultural. The sub-regions incorporated 8–17 village districts as a rule but there were also sub-regions with 1 or 40 village districts as well. The area of the sub-regions was between 382 and 2,976 km², the long-term population varied between 24,000 and 409,200.

A region is the largest territorial unit of the settlement network which forms a framework of organisation and allocation concerning both production and provisions. The area of the regions is between 8,342 and 12,620 km², their planned long-range population varied between 609,100 and 1,630,400. The problem of the outskirts also appeared in the Study Project. It intended to develop 211 of the peripheries into subsidiary villages, 3 into centres of village districts on the long term but the majority of the peripheries were doomed to elimination. There was no desire to permit either investments or building on the peripheries.

The Study Project was not approved by the government, for a while it was struck from the agenda together with the other long-range plans, yet strangely enough it was used obviously as a basis of reference in the planning of the regional processes on the county level at the time of the fusion the co-operatives and communities.

SETTLEMENT DEVELOPMENT POLICY IN THE „SHADOW” OF THE REFORM ENDEAVOURS OF ECONOMIC MANAGEMENT

In connection with the economic reform activities the problems of the settlement and settlement network development emerged again in the mid-1960s. The *Regional Planning Major Department* of the Ministry of Housing and Public Construction and City Planning and the Regional Office of the *City Planning Institute* was asked (again) to elaborate a settlement network development plan which „would promote the proportional and planned development of the country’s settlement network”. The development project had to be set before the Council of Ministers until the middle of 1969.

In 1967 the work of long-range regional planning was commenced again. Regional planning as an organic part of the long-range national economic planning got under the administration of the *Major Department of the Central Planning Office* and of the *Long-range Regional Planning Committee*. The elaboration of the long-range regional development strategy became the major goal with the consideration of the framework of the changing economic management system.

The *Nation-wide Settlement Network Development Framework Plan* (Framework Plan) gave a comprehensive and detailed analysis of Hungary’s spatial structure and the regional structure of the settlement network as well as that of the development having taken place in the period of the construction of socialism. The sectoral structures exercising a direct influence on the development of the settlement network were also explored. The Framework Plan formulated the long-range functional categories of the towns and the urban communities of the country as well as the consequences of the individual categories from the aspect of development. In the Framework Plan the development process was divided into 2 phases. It was regarded as a medium-range process until 1985 and as a long-range one until 2000.

In the Framework Plan the communal system of the institutions was formulated as one consisting of 9 grades which would play a decisive role in the shaping of the inter-settlement relationships. The long-range hierarchy was modelled, or rather planned, within a regional system of a three-grade (low-, intermediate- and high-grade) long-range hierarchy.

The planned regional functions of settlements (*Table 3, Figure 3*) and the structural classification of the stock of settlements do not significantly differ from those contained by the Study Project of 1963. The range and the internal division of the settlements classified as high-grade and partially high-grade settlements changed only slightly. 67% of the settlements were assigned to the *village category*. The settlements in the latter category could expect and assert a right to only being provided with the minimally required low-grade communal institutions in the future.

Table 3

The regional importance of the settlements according to the Nation-wide Settlement Network Development Framework Plan in 1969

Regional importance	Number of classified settlements	% of all the settlements
National centre	1	0.03
Special high-grade centre	7	0.22
Partially high-grade centre	11	0.35
Intermediate-grade centre	66	2.08
Partially intermediate-grade centre	39	1.28
Lower grade centre of high priority	123	3.87
Lower grade centre	524	16.49
Partial lower grade centre	270	8.49
Village	2,137	67.29
All settlements	3,178	100.00

After the sectoral, regional and social agreement the Framework Plan got into the cross-fire of the political sphere and within the range of the political movements.

SETTLEMENT DEVELOPMENT POLICY IN THE 1970S AND ITS CORRECTIVE ATTEMPTS UNTIL THE MID-1980S

The *Economic Management Reform* introduced in 1968 continued to be introduced in the other spheres only partially and controversially. There was not genuine change in the political structure, in the power relations and the decision-making mechanism. In fact, there was hardly any change in the ideologically determined social objectives and the system of values. In connection with the reform steps it is the new Council Act of 1971, the re-regulation of the national economic and regional planning, which deserves attention from the aspect of our topic.

The reformulation of the settlement and settlement network development policy was embedded (again) in this cautious reform process containing contradictions as well. At the *Economic Political Department of the HSWP's Central Committee* from 1969 the rethinking of the regional development policy and the elaboration of its guidelines were started in accordance with the new economic mechanism. Teams of internal and external experts were formed, the scientific institutes were allowed to participate and co-operate in preparing studies. The elaboration of the guidelines of regional development and long-range development policy was taking place on a wider professional base than ever before.

The regional development guidelines of the *Politburo of the HSWP* (March 10, 1970) laid stress upon the economic efficiency in the field of regional development policy and envisaged the balancing of the disproportionalities in the economic development of the different regions, harmonisation between the interests of the counties and the regions of the country, the economic, scientific and cultural development of the provinces.

The most important goals of the regional development policy to be enforced simultaneously became:

- a) the efficient utilisation of the national economic resources and of the individual regions, the modernisation and rationalisation of the settlement network,
- b) the moderation of the differences in the financial and cultural standards of the population by approaching the values of the individual regions in employment, production and the allocation of provisions.

With regard to the relationship between the economy and the settlement network it was explicitly stated that a more planned efficient spatial and temporal harmonisation of the territorial location of the productive forces and of settlement network development should be ensured. The concentration of the productive forces leads to concentration also in the system of the settlements. In the development of the settlement network greater emphasis should be laid on the long-range prognostication of urbanisation and trans-stratification. In the interest of the proportional development of the settlement network the criteria of the legal declaration of the town or township status of the individual settlements should be identified and the general guidelines of town-planning should be formed in addition to the determination of the normatives of the allocation of cultural, social and cultural provisions.

The long-range economic national plan was determined as the decisive instrument of the implementation of the regional development policy. In the national economic plan the main directions of regional development should be determined with regard to an economic district which covers the area of the country and incorporates some counties.

The governmental resolution recording the guidelines of regional development as a state document stated that regional development policy is an organic part of the social and economic policy while industry is a powerful but not the only element of regional development. The guidelines of the territorial location of the productive forces, the socio-political objectives of the regional development policy, the need for the harmonisation of the development of the productive forces and the settlements and the system of the instruments of regional development are enlisted in details.

The *National Settlement Network Development Conception* (Conception) was organically integrated with the economic, social, political and regional development endeavours of the period. The basic endeavour of the Conception was to encourage the shaping of such a network of settlements which would create the preconditions of the expedient, long-term location of the productive forces and ensure population supply, approach the standard of supply for the settlements of identical functions, reduce the exaggerated differences between the living conditions of town and village, orientate the location of the institutions of different levels, allow for the development of the national and technical net-

works in harmony with the settlement network and ensure the acceptable level and qualitative requirements of commutation.

On the basis of the socio-economic organising-directing activities as well on that of their servicing-providing functions within the regional division of labour, their gravity zones and number of inhabitants the settlements were classified into the following categories: national, high-grade, intermediate-grade, low-grade centres and other settlements. The guidelines of the development of the settlements belonging to the individual categories were laid down, too.

In formulating the guidelines of settlement network development it was emphasised that the division of the settlement network, the functions, character and order of magnitude of its units should be in accordance with the regional location of the productive forces. The regional system of the settlement network should ensure social efficiency as much as possible, the development of the individual settlements may occur only in the light of the need of the national network for proportionate, co-ordinated development.

The conception determined the range and directions of the development of national, special high-grade, high-grade, partially high-grade, intermediate-grade, partially intermediate-grade centres, the long-range number of the inhabitants, the direction of the desirable development of the relationships between centre and gravity zone and it pointed out the peculiarities of the agglomerations in particular.

The definition of the low-grade centres and districts was delegated into the scope of authority of the counties. Every county prepared its own plan of settlement network development and the complete Conception was made up of these (*Table 4, Figure 4*).

The Conception classified 64% of these settlements as *other settlements* but in this case there is no question of the perspective elimination of settlements (any more). The conception is restricted merely to the statement that these settlements do not perform organisational-administrative functions so for them low-grade service and supply have to be ensured mainly locally — in proportion to the order of magnitude of the population — and in a rational organisational form.

In several respects the regional and settlement development processes of the 1970s were formed according to the „requirements” of the Conception but also processes differing from it occurred. In the socio-

Table 4

The number of settlements classified by their importance on 1 January, 1972 according to the National Settlement Network Development Conception

Central importance	Number of classified settlements	% of all the settlements
National centre	1	0.03
Special high-grade centre	5	0.15
High-grade centre	7	0.22
Partially high-grade centre	11	0.34
Intermediate-grade centre	65	2.02
Partially intermediately grade centre	41	1.28
Lower centre of high priority	142	4.43
Lower centre	530	16.52
Partial lower centre	292	9.10
Settlements belonging to the agglomeration of Budapest	44	1.37
Other settlements	2,071	64.54
All settlements	3,209	100.00

political and settlement political debate arising and intensifying because of the socio-economic and settlement tensions, the Conception was „to blame” for all adverse processes. In our opinion, however, the Conception only strengthened the concentration processes inherent in the economic, social, political and management system and in the majority of cases these served as a source of legitimation (e.g. in the case of the development of special county seats) but it did not bring about the distortion processes of the settlement network by itself.

As a result of the economic crisis unfolding in the late 1970s, the restriction of the resources to be spent on settlement development and the more and more intensifying debates about settlement policy also affecting other fields, the modification of the Conception took place (*Table 5, Figure 5*) but basically it resulted only in changes implying mere „touching-up”. At the time of the modification of the Conception the classification of a new settlement development policy adjusted to the changed conditions started.

Table 5

The number of settlements classified by their importance according to the Modified National Settlement Network Development Conception in 1982

Central importance	Number of classified settlements	% of all the settlements
National centre	1	0.03
Special high-grade centre	5	0.16
High-grade centre	7	0.23
High-grade co-centre	11	0.35
Intermediate-grade centre	69	2.22
Intermediate-grade co-centre	44	1.42
Lower centre	936	30.20
Settlements belonging to the agglomeration of Budapest	43	1.39
Basic settlements	1,984	64.00
All settlements	3,100	100.00

As a critical response to the former practice of regional and settlement development and with the intention of renewal, the resolution of the HSWP Political Committee on the *Guidelines of Long-term Regional and Settlement Development* was born in July, 1983. In fact, the points of departure were defined on the basis of the old values („such regional and settlement development should be implemented which advances the further moderation of territorial disproportionateness, the continued assertion of the economic and socio-economic tasks”) but the details were presented in accordance with the changed conditions:

- the regionally differentiated development of the productive forces and production adjusted to the spatial endowments of the space and based on innovation and selection, the strengthening of the local co-operatives and the regionally rational organisational relationships,
- better utilisation of the revalued natural resources increased, the increased enforcement of the requirements of natural and environmental protection, the complex development of the production infrastructure,

- the improvement of the conditions of complete and efficient employment, raising the educational level of labour, strengthening the certainty of existence,
- reduction of the existing and unjustified regional differences in the living standards and conditions of the population, mainly in the development and the system of preferences of the population infrastructure, increasing the ability of the appropriate communities to keep their population,
- distinguished treatment of the special regions,
- increase of the economic independence and responsibility of the local councils, development of democratism.

The wording of the proposal of the Council Ministers and then the parliamentary resolution based on political guidelines belong to a very peculiar genre as opposed to that of the detailed documents of the former period, forming a bridge, as it were, between the position of principle and the long-range plan conception. It went into greater details than the political resolution but it deliberately avoided precise qualifications and numerical definitions.

From the viewpoint of „national economic development, the improvement of the living conditions of the population and the unfolding of the socialist life-style”, the regional and settlement relationships were handled as relationships of primary importance and the goals were formulated up to the turn of the millennium. The point of departure which says that „regional and settlement development should serve our main social and economic goals to a greater extent and create more favourable conditions in the interest of the more intensive development of the national economy and the further moderation of territorial disproportionateness, the improvement of the living conditions and general feeling of the population, the strengthening of democratism” are of the greatest importance.

As opposed to the formerly asserted policy it was directly formulated that „the regional structure of the economy and the system of settlements have to be developed in a more balanced way, moderating the concentration of the productive forces and the population”. The realisation of this objective of decentralisation was to be achieved by the different extent of the development of the productive forces and production in the different regions and by laying emphasis on the spatial approach and proportionateness. The role of the natural, historical environment, the system

of quality requirements gained ground. It was prescribed that in harmony with the modernisation of economic management and public administration, the administrative system of regional and settlement development should be modified.

The resolution of 1985 contained also value elements of the „population front” in addition to the approaches of the former party state. It opened up towards the social traditions and values and the protection of nature and environment got a new emphasis.

SUMMARY

At all times regional and settlement policy appeared and in the period of state socialism went through a change in a form organically interlinked with the given political, economic and social objectives. Looking at the whole period we can speak about some continuity in the sense that from first to last the direct decisive role of the party and politics was asserted in regional and settlement development (as well).

The socio-political considerations changed to some extent, yet in the views, practical activity of the Power, in the determination of class politics, the privileges of the strata and settlements and mainly in the propaganda the favourising of the working class was asserted all the time, even if this was one (of the) class(es) which was excluded from the real decision-making processes, functioning only as an instrument of ideology and legitimation.

In evaluating the settlement and settlement network development policy from the aspect of the realisation of the objectives we may come to the conclusion that luckily the declared objectives were not always realised (e.g. planned thinning of the communities in the early 1950s) and even the proclaimed „proportionately planned development” was not adequately enforced according to the objectives. On the one hand, the regional and settlement differences decreased, on the other hand, new disproportionateness came into being. In the allocation of the development resources lasting (nearly continuous) preferences can be observed for the good of the industrial regions (the point of the matter being that for these areas this did not result in a stable economic structure capable of growth).

The position of the large cities (*Győr, Debrecen, Miskolc, Pécs* and *Szeged*) strengthened in the settlement network, even if they were functioning insufficiently. In contrast with the plans, however, they did not become real counter-poles in comparison with Budapest. The development of the county seats accelerated, their development levels often approached each other. The real losers of the settlement development policy and practice are the majority of the communities. Their traditional economic, social, institutional system had been smashed in the last four decades and they were left without the new conditions of survival or new paths of development being planned.

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FIGURES

Figure 1
Settlements assigned for special development in 1951

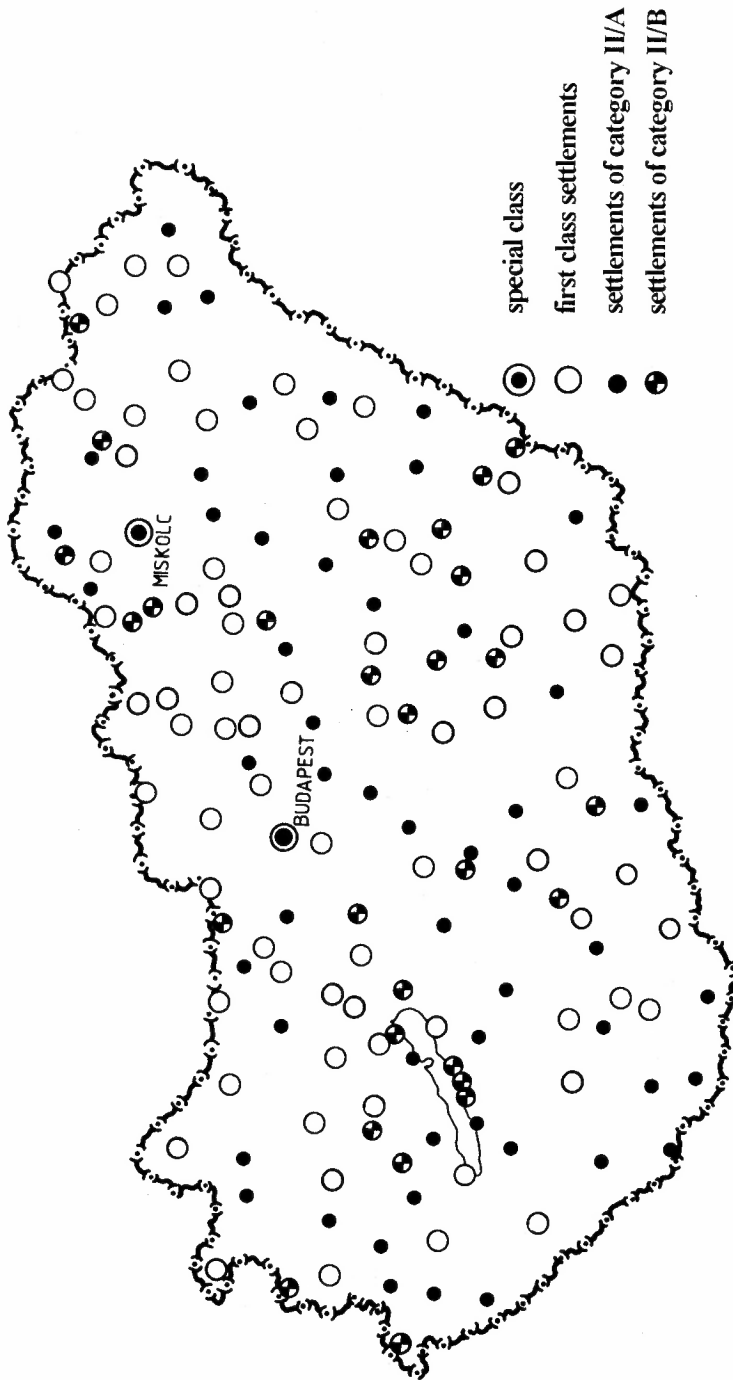


Figure 2
Settlements with special regional functions in 1963

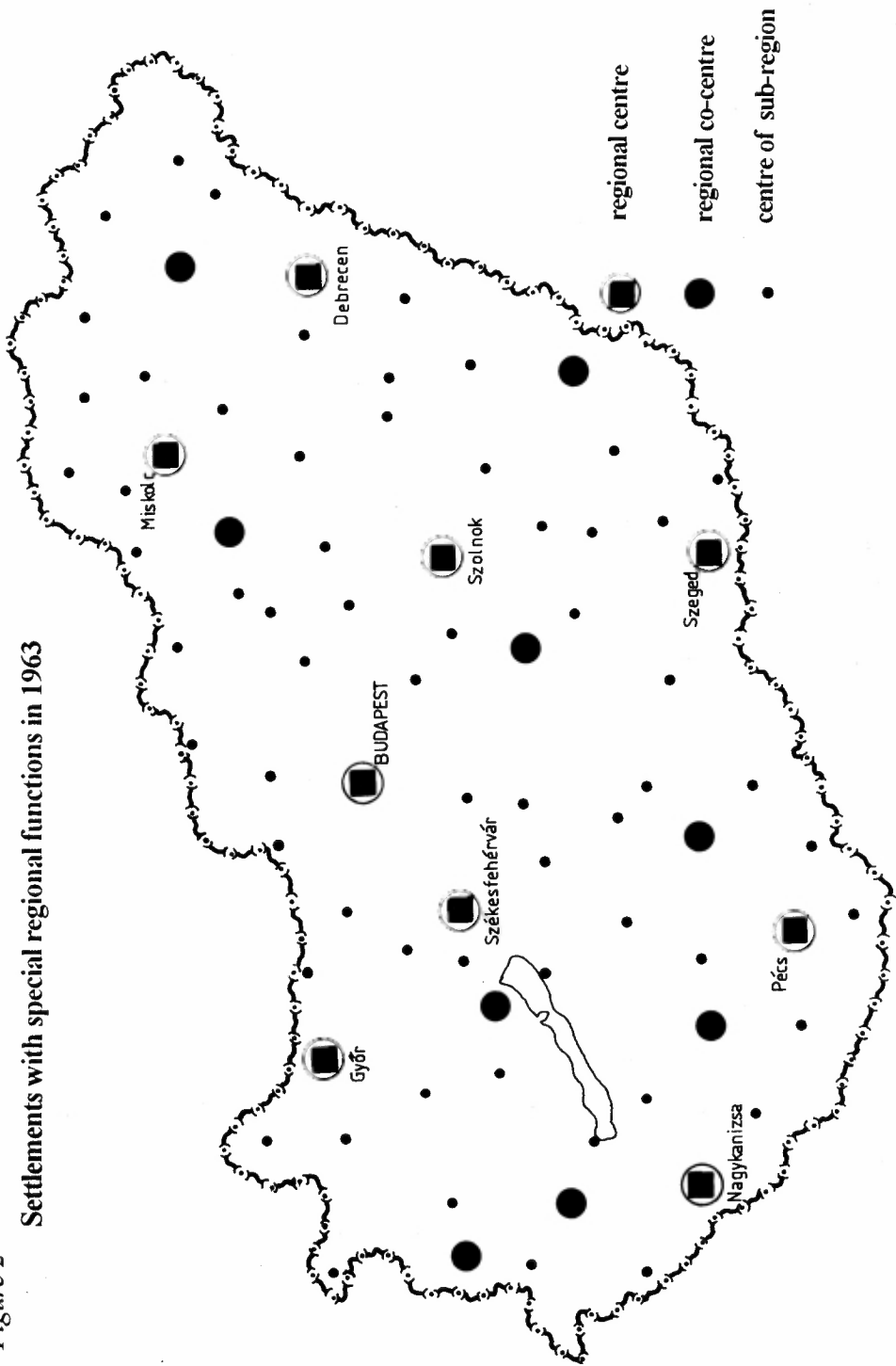


Figure 3
Settlements performing high- and intermediate-grade organisational functions in 1969

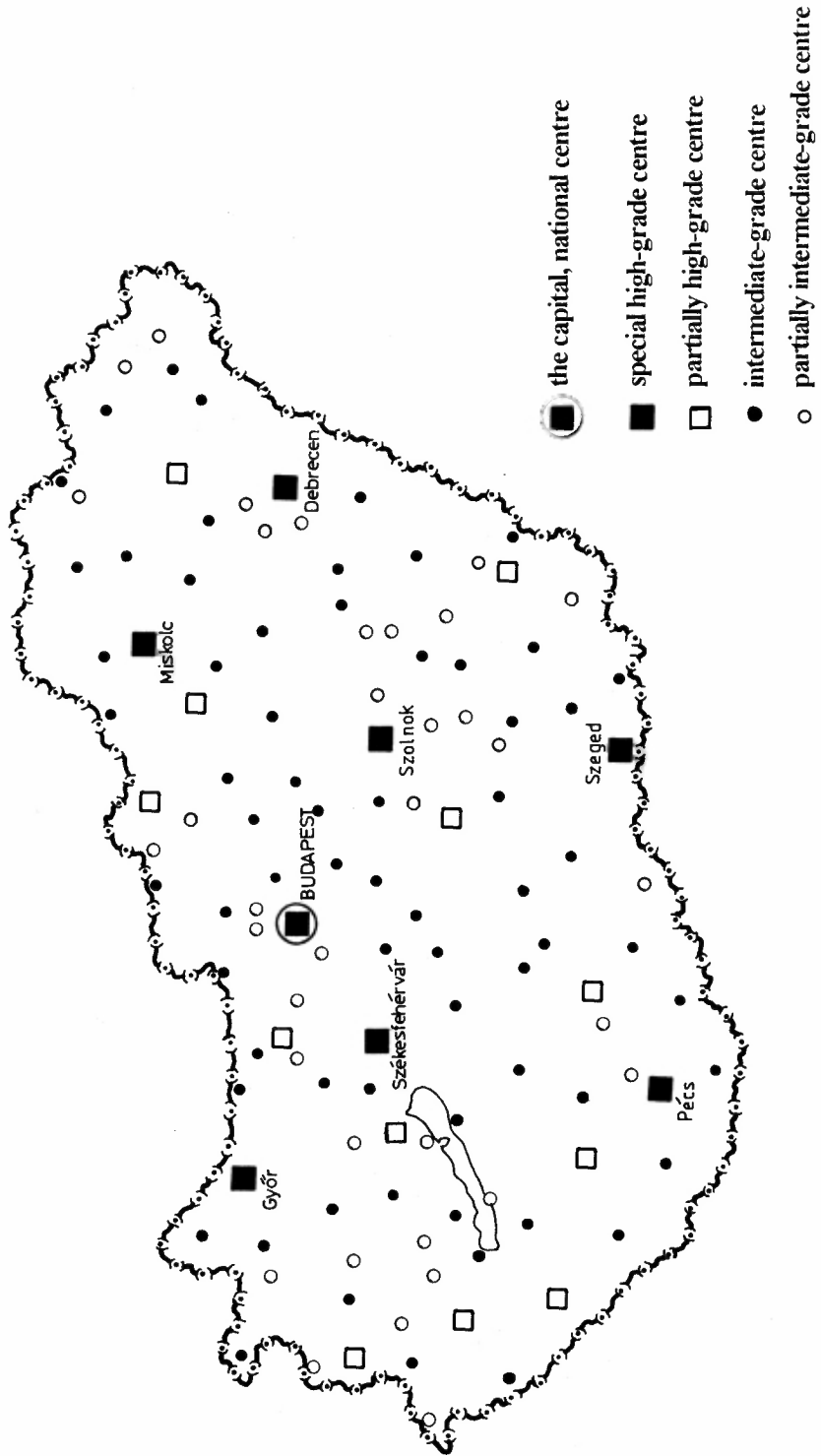


Figure 4

High and intermediate centres in 1971

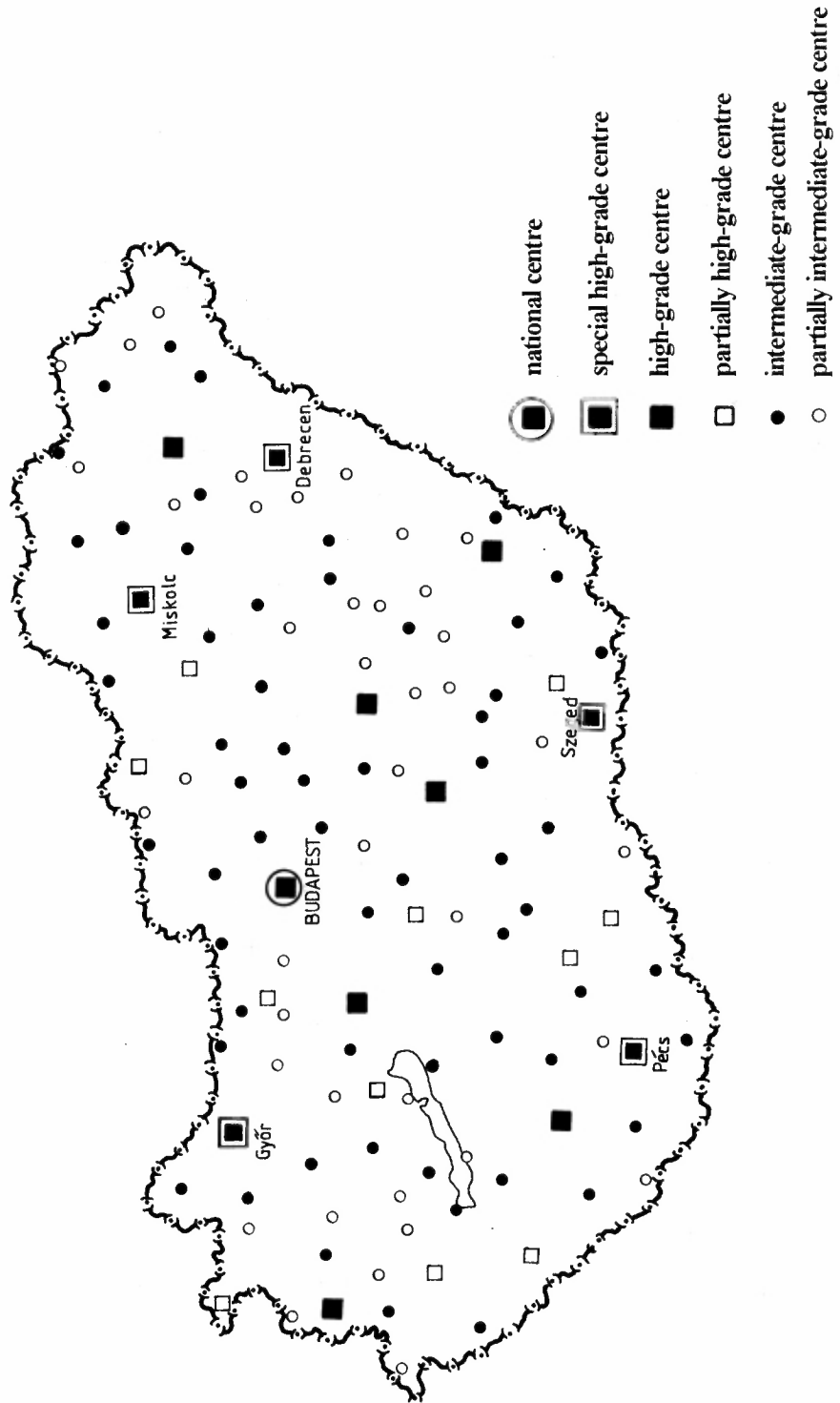
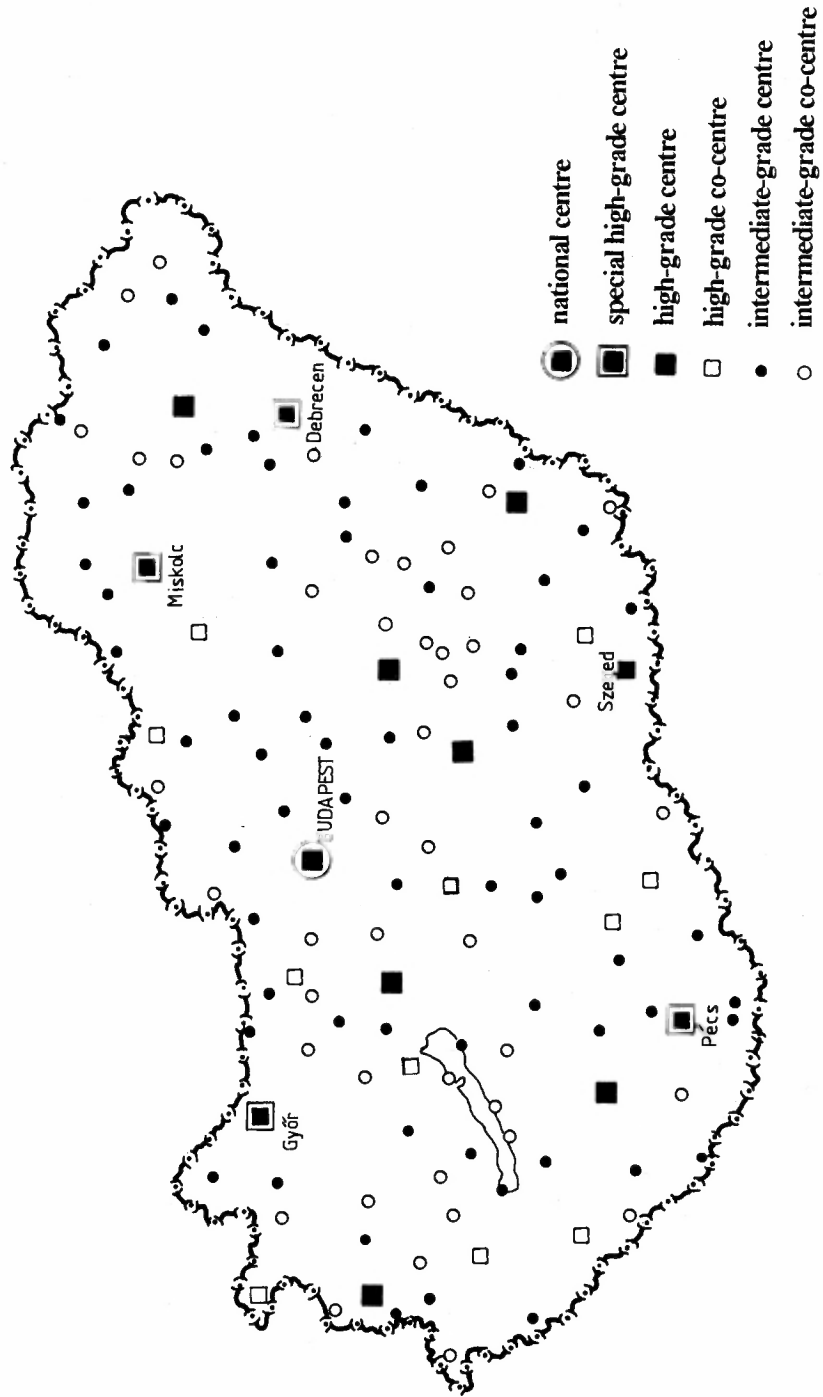


Figure 5
High- and intermediate-grade centres in 1982



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