

## THE SETTLEMENT STRUCTURE OF ZVOLEN HOLLOW AND THE DEVELOPMENT TRENDS

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**Abstract:** The creation and development of settlements was influenced and determined in many aspects by the social and economic changes, which have happened in nineties. Their extensive development process has been slow downed, when typical industrialised form of housing development has been rare. The transformation processes are the most visible in the city centres revitalisation. As a result of various civic initiatives, reinforcement of self-governmental processes, the disintegration processes appeared, resulting in many changes in number of communes. The development of settlements is closely related to the demographic processes, where the decreasing trends are observed in natural movement. These results may be seen in the number of inhabitants in individual communes. All of these tendencies are well reflected in the settlement structure of Zvolen Hollow.

**Key words:** distribution of population, environment, settlement structure, Zvolen hollow

### 1. CHARACTER OF SETTLEMENTS RELATED TO THE PRINCIPAL COMPONENTS OF THE HOLLOW

There are more phenomena, which have influenced settlement structure development. They may be reflected in size, spatial distribution, functions and relations among settlement units. When talking about the physical geographical aspects, they were raw materials and hollow relief that played a role of a great importance. The social and economic aspects are closely related to the historical periods of colonisation (mining and agriculture), together with the industrialisation. A geographical and transport position of the hollow is important from this point of view too.

The Zvolen Hollow represents the most complicated geomorphologic hollow of West Carpathian Mountains, as its relief is concerned. This relief begins with the plane, bottom up to its slightly rippled surface and it continues with the relief formations related to the hilly countries and highlands, having the above sea level from 280 up to 850 meters. The Zvolen Hollow is located on the area of 731 square kilometres and its plane or slightly rippled surface represents 41 percent only. In this surface parts, there are located the following areas and hollows: Sliačská, Slatinská a Detvianská kotlina and Bystrické podolie (The Hollow of Sliač, Slatina and Detva together with the Bystrica Valley). The hilly landscape cover 42 percent of the above mentioned area, where Zvolenská pahorkatina (The Hill-Country of Zvolen) and Povraznícka brázda (The Furrow of Povrazník) is located. However, 17 percent of this area cover mountains or highlands related to Bystrická vrchovina, Ponická vrchovina (Highland of Poniky, Highland of Bystrica) and Rohy. This relief structure influenced spatial distribution of settlements in this area. While the total number of settlements is 72, in the hollow formations and areas, there are located 51 settlements (it means 71 percent). In hilly landscape, there are located 18 settlements and only 3 settlements are located in the highlands.<sup>1</sup>

Detvianská kotlina (The Hollow of Detva) and east part of the Slatinská kotlina (Slatina Hollow) together with Rohy, have their special position in the settlement structure. The disperse settlements (farms on cleared lands), dominate in that area represented by the hilly landscape or slightly modelled relief and they create a continuous complex located over the borders of this hollow. However, this complex is touching the chain of mountains related to Javorie, Veporské vrchy (Mountains of Vepor) and Poľana. A number of isolated houses (or solitary settlements) within the cadastral territory of seven villages or communes (Detva, Kriváň, Korytárky, Stožok, Slatinské Lazy, Klokoč) is at about 2370 (in 1995). It is 48 percent of houses in these villages or communes (hereinafter only as village).

The hollow relief limited the location and size of these villages. Bystrická vrchovina (Highland of Bystrica) and Ponická vrchovina (Highland of Poniky), Rohy (Horns), as well as Povraznícka brázda (Furrow of Povrazník) closed in the highlands, have divided relief and considerable relative height differences. They have the lowest potential for settlements' location, as well as industrial, technical and communication objects location. These areas suffer with very weak economic activities at present. It is documented by population decline and general stagnation of settlements. The role of these settlements diminished in regard to decline of ore mining and processing. The above mentioned activities mobilised development, functions and relation of these settlements (Ľubietová, Povrazník, Strelníky, Poniky, Ponická Huta), to their neighbourhood, directly or indirectly, for historically quite a long period. Until present time, all of these areas have very bad communication ties and many of these settlements have no connections among each other.

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<sup>1</sup> When talking about settlements the concentrated formations are being considered, it means - towns, villages and communes, where more than 10 habitable objects exist.

The principal areas of settlement and economic activities related to Zvolen Hollow are concentrated to Bystrické podolie (Bystrica Valley), Sliačska, Slatinská a Detvianska kotlina (Hollows of Sliač, Slatina and Detva). These areas have a high relief potential for economic development. They have an advantageous communication position related to the main transit transport corridors of the Slovak Republic, too.

At present, the most important area is Bystrické podolie (Bystrica Valley) and Sliačska kotlina (Hollow of Sliač), when talking about distribution of population. In these two areas 147 339 inhabitants lived in 1996 (76,8 percent of total population living in Zvolen Hollow). The original 32 settlements located in this core area had been changed and transformed into line urban and sub-urban settlement structure. This structure has its own relations and inclines to two the leading urban centres located in the Hollow - Banská Bystrica and Zvolen, where 129 550 inhabitants live at present <sup>2</sup>and they represent the most important poles of the development. The lower parts related to the Hilly-Country of Zvolen may be assigned to the above mentioned sub-territories, partially. This assignment is concerned the valley, where the brooks Zolná and Lukavica flow and there are favourable relief conditions for settlement development. However, the peripheral position of this hilly country related to the main communication and transit lines results in economic stagnation of the above mentioned areas.

Raw materials, as potential factor of the settlement development we should evaluate from two different time aspects. A historical ore mining (copper especially) resulted in establishment and development of settlements in the northern part of the Zvolen Hollow. It was the first impulse for the development of Banská Bystrica - the first mining town in the hollow, and formed town on this base for six centuries. However, not only mining settlements were created, as a result of the mining colonisation in this part of the Hollow and in the adjacent mountains (Starohorské vrchy - Mountains of Staré Hory). Many other settlements were created too. They were closely related to metallurgy, wood cutting, coal treatment and carter's trade. They had a lot of different functional links to mining activities. As a result of the production organisation based on ore mining and processing, there had been integrated 40 settlements, dependent of each other from functional point of view, and 11 of them were located in that Hollow.<sup>3</sup>

The development possibilities of these settlements, closely related to the ore's exploitation and processing, were limited by the quality of raw material resources. A mining of raw materials is going on and their resources become smaller and smaller. Gradually decreasing efficiency of mining and lack of ore, they caused that settlements closely related to his activity are being degraded, leading to significant declining in population number. The environment, where the settlements were formed was not able to provide the appropriate alternative economic base, replacing former one. Therefore, under the influence of changed economic conditions, an important shift of the economic activities to the River Hron Valley had occurred. The principal social and economic activities and the crucial demographic potential of this Hollow, were concentrated to the mentioned valley.

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<sup>2</sup> This number is related to the year 1996.

<sup>3</sup> Names - the Zvolen Hollow and Hollow are the same from semantic point of view

At present, raw materials are more important from local point of view, than from the regional aspects. When talking about raw materials, not considered as ores, in this hollow, there are significant resources of marl limestone, dolomite, granodiorite and andesite. However, they do not represent a motivating factor related to the either settlement structure change or development. Mining of these raw materials has a negative dereliction effect for natural environment, devastating it especially in areas which could be suitable for tourism, or as holidays centres for people living in mentioned cities.

In the southern part of the Zvolen Hollow, there are observed many principle differences related to structure and development of settlements. The development of settlements in the Hollow of Sliač, Slatina and Detva (Sliačska, Slatinská a Detvianska kotlina) together with the Hilly country of Zvolen were based on the agricultural activities, first of all. They represented the principal resources for the people living there, for long term period. These activities also fixed a considerable quantity of employees. A visible economic autonomy was observed, when talking about the individual settlements, however the town of Zvolen represented a settlement of a great importance, and it was considered as a natural market centre. Small dispersed settlements located in a different distance among each other were created, based on the above mentioned aspects in the Hollow of Slatina and Detva, especially. This type of settlements had been extended to the mountains, as a result of the shepherd's colonisation, however a lot of forests were removed or destroyed. In spite of that, these factors based on which settlements were created, are not acting anymore - they became more active, partially in fifties of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. This activity is closely related to the industry located in Detva and Hriňová and it is concerned these settlements which have better communication ways to the above mentioned industrial centres. As a result of industrialisation related to the region of Podpoľana and this region where only farms existed before, more complicated functional relations in the settlements of the Zvolen Hollow were created, while the principal working opportunities were relocated from Zvolen region to the Hollow of Detva. In the industry located in Detva and Hriňová, there were 7,5 thousands employees, in the years from 1955 to 1989. This fact resulted in development of settlements in Hriňová and Detva, where new housing had been built, however new types of dwellings became a part of the disperse settlements too. This urbanisation process was not adequate to the investments paid to the industry and no standard public housing, having the appropriate physiognomy and functionality has been created, as a result of that.

More visible changes in the settlements related to the Hollow of Zvolen were observed since 1950 to 1980, when an industrialisation represented the decisive factor in the economy based on the central planning. It had a great influence to the migration of inhabitants living in the peripheral settlements to these parts of the hollow, which became most important from economic point of view. However, this migration aspects and influences were different in the individual parts of the hollow, when talking about the structure of settlements. The position of Banská Bystrica becomes stronger and stronger, because of industrialisation resulting a development of this city on one hand,

while its administrative function as a regional centre together with the appropriate tertiary sphere institutions, plays a role of a great importance, on the other hand. A concentration of these activities to the city of Banská Bystrica (hereinafter as City) and to its immediate neighbourhood resulted in a strong immigration of inhabitants and a demographic potential of villages located in the Northern part of the Hollow became weaker, actually.

The most expressive period related to the City development was in the years from 1960 to 1980. Number of its inhabitants doubled during this period, while it achieved 66 412 in 1980 and 85 052 inhabitants in 1996. City started to transform intensively the areas of neighbouring settlements. Into the various agglomeration relations were gradually engaged twenty three communes and 20 of them became incorporated into the administrative borders of the City, in a few short stages during above mentioned period.

The creation and formation of the settlement structure in the southern part of the Zvolen Hollow was substantially influenced by location of the core industrial factories outside the Zvolen area. It caused activation of rural settlements, especially in the Hollow of Detva and had negative impact for the development of Zvolen. This fact is also confirmed by spatial distribution of population outside the Zvolen area. A number of inhabitants increased from 34 023 to 43 263, in the period from 1960 to 1980. When considering 17 rural settlements, a number of inhabitants increased in the half of them. In one fourth of these settlements, a number of inhabitants were stabilised. An intensive influence of industrialisation on the rural areas led to origin of a new urban area in the cadastral territory of Detva and Hriňová, where disperse settlement was dominant. These two settlements had been gradually transformed and formally recognised as cities. Detva received its city status in 1965 and Hriňová in 1989.

Industrial phase of economic development, combined with long term influence of state central planning, regulated and controlled movements of work force, as well as industrial methods in housing construction, represented by the large capacity housing estates, also participated on selection of so-called central communes. The state investments into public facilities were directed to these communes. The termination of any construction activities in so-called non-preferred settlements caused significant differences in size and functions of settlements. This development phase in the area of the Zvolen Hollow is reflected in two different tendencies: rapidly growing population concentration in the area of Banská Bystrica, and by partial deconcentration in the area related to the South part of the Hollow. The growth of Zvolen is less expressive, although it does not correspond with its position from geographical and communication point of view. The population development and density of population according to the territorial sub-units of the Hollow confirms the already mentioned fact (see also Table 1).

The highest number of population and its density is in Bystrické podolie (Bystrica Valley) and in Sliačska kotlina (Hollow of Sliač). These areas passed through the most dynamic development, as a result of their good position from communication point of view. In these areas, there are concentrated 72 percent of inhabitants related to the Hollow of Zvolen and 89,2 percent of urban population. A number of inhabitants living in Detvianska kotlina (Hollow of Detva) has also increased, while all of the settlements

related to the Hollow became more active, as a result of the above mentioned industrialisation. The highest activity is observed in Detva, Hriňová (housing estate "Stred - Middle") and Kriváň, where the highest increase related to number of inhabitants, is observed. When talking about the number of inhabitants living in the mountain and highland areas, including Slatinská kotlina (the Hollow of Slatina), but excepting Zvolenská Slatina, more significant decrease or population stagnation is observed in these settlements.

**Table 1** The development related to the number of inhabitants and density of population in geomorphologic areas of the Zvolen Hollow in the years from 1961 up to 1996

Area	Surface In km <sup>2</sup>	Number of Inhabitants			Population Movement	Density of Population per km <sup>2</sup>	
		1961	1980	1996	1961 - 1996	1961	1996
Sliačska kotlina <sup>1</sup>	70,1	27467	44842	55031	+ 27564	392	785
Bystrické podolie	80,4	39115	71313	92308	53193	486	1 148
Bystrická vrchovina	69,2	2125	1605	1279	- 846	31	18
Zvolenská pahorkatina	273,2	5675	5413	5064	- 611	21	19
Ponická vrchovina	21,8	-	-	-	-	-	-
Povraznícka brázda	34,2	3527	2773	2343	- 1184	103	68
Slatinská kotlina	73,2	10387	9679	8580	- 1807	142	117
Detvianská kotlina	77,2	18153	25526	26540	+ 8387	235	344
Rohy	32	681	814	703	+ 22	21	22
Zvolenská kotlina	731,3	107130	161969	191848	84718	146	262

<sup>1</sup> English equivalent names of the areas contained in the Table 1 are in the text of the contribution. See also Page 1.

The highest increase is observed in the value related to the number of urban population. This value increased at about 123 670 in the period from 1950 to 1996, while in the rural settlement structures, the decrease of that value (at about 25 969 inhabitants) is observed, when comparing it to the year 1961, which represented culmination of this value. While in 1950, 68 percent of inhabitants lived in the rural settlements of the Hollow, in 1996 dominated urban population living in the towns of the Hollow with 78,4 percent share on total population (see also Table 2).

A development of the individual settlements, their functions, as well as internal structure also depends on their administrative status, in a great deal. This status may have an influence on formation of the settlement, taking into account an increasing role of institutions of self-government at present. Since 1950, an administrative structure of communes was influenced by the state administration intervention, with tendency toward integration of communes. This trend was required based on the development of cities, in many cases related to spatial expansion of built environment and investment activities invading into cadastral territories of the neighbouring communities. These changes were provided and closely related to the state administration decisions. They were of a directive character and resulted in merging of communities in a large scale, especially during the seventies. Seventy-two settlements located in the Hollow of Zvolen were

included to sixty communities and they became a part of them, in 1950. The subsequent administrative integration of communes resulted, that only 40 communes existed in 1996. The lowest number of communes was observed in 1980 and it reached a number 36, as a result of the state administration interventions.

**Table 2** Changes in the structure of inhabitants living in villages and towns related to the Hollow of Zvolen, in the period from 1950 to 1996

Year	Number of population living in the Hollow	Rural population	Urban population *	Urban population (%)
1950	83751	56941	26810	32,0
1961	107290	67337	39953	37,2
1970	128470	50165	78305	60,9
1980	162240	45159	117061	72,2
1996	191848	41368	150840	78,4

\* The inhabitants of 15 local parts related to Detva and Hriňová representing a part of the disperse settlements are not included to the number of urban population.

## 2. CURRENT TRENDS IN URBAN DEVELOPMENT OF THE HOLLOW

The crucial element related to qualitative changes in settlements is an intensive concentration of economic activities and inhabitants into the core areas of the Hollow. It have resulted in change of the original "point" character of towns into a new, more complicated urban structures. Results of these changes are observed in the areas of Sliáčska kotlina (Hollow of Sliáč) and Bystrické podolie (Valley of Bystrica), especially. These areas are most important when talking about the settlements in the Hollow of Zvolen. Two most important urban centres were created in these areas: Banská Bystrica and Zvolen, where the principal economic, social and demographic potential of the Hollow is cumulated. In 1996, in both of the mentioned cities, there were living 129 550 inhabitants, it means 67,5 percent of inhabitants related to the Hollow of Zvolen. The development of these cities leads to changes in their functions, physiognomy and ground-plane, as well as changes in relations to the settlements in hinterland of these cities, which have developed agglomeration links. Intensive agglomeration links also resulted in changing the administrative borders of Banská Bystrica, especially, where the impact of merging processes of settlements located close to this city as well as their transformations were the most extensive. The total rebuild was done in the original areas of Radvaň, Kráľová and Podlavice, new quarters with concentrated housing estates were built in Rudlová, Sásova and Radvaň. Many different industrial factories, warehouses, and other specific facilities serving the needs of the city, were built in Kráľová, Majer, Kremnička and Senica.

The administrative boundaries of cities are being changed and modified in different directions after 1990. The original communes integrated within the City are separating, based on the local referendum results. Local referendum was applied in the case of Kynceľová, Hronsek and Malachov, when talking about Banská Bystrica, and Lieskovec when talking about Zvolen. This attitude of inhabitants to the separation was influenced mainly by tax burdens. The second reason was to prevent the aims of cities to provide further investments, which could influence property and ownership rights of inhabitants of these communities. These trends also are observed in the case of Sliač, where the village called Veľká Lúka (Great Meadow) was separated. In the dispersed settlement's structure of Korytárky is separating village Kriváň, constituting a new independent village (in 1993).

In nineties, new elements were introduced into the development of both mentioned cities. Their extensive spatial development finished, while it was to the detriment of their compactness, in many cases. At present, trends of compactness are being reinforced. These trends are related to formation of their central parts actually. The gaps among the buildings are completed by construction of new housing, multi-functional or other specific objects. These objects form a new image by their physiognomy, old and shabby objects are rebuilt in the historical parts of both cities. Total rebuilding of narrow gothic yard parts is under process and they are utilised for various purposes in retailing and other services in the case of Banská Bystrica.

The ideas of spatial convergence of both cities located in Sliačska kotlina (Hollow of Sliač) are being again restored. However, we understand it as a long-term process, while a time convergence is provided based on the motorway connecting both of these cities. There are several important factors limiting a spatial development related to the city of Zvolen. In the northern direction, there are protected areas related to spas in Sliač and Kováčová, airport flight cones, together with economic conditions dealing with the agricultural land protection. However, in spite of these limiting factors urban and sub-urban elements of settlement prevail in Hollow of Sliač. These elements are reinforced by the spa areas of Sliač, and by the town statute for Kováčová, which is losing its rural character, that remained only in original part of the town. The potential settlements can be seen in Vlkanová and Hronsek (having their own large industrial areas), together with Sielnica and Badín with spatial conditions suitable for development of urban activities.

In the urban structure related the Hollow of Detva, there is not observed the such intensive development, when compared it with Sliačska kotlina (Hollow of Sliač) and Bystrické podolie (Valley of Bystrica). The existing character of disperse settlement in the areas of Detva and Hriňová (both of them gained the Statute of City), the strong dependence of the dominant industrial factories without the own clear production program, probably will not result in their development. Even the present function of a seat of district administration in a case of Detva will not initiate structural changes. The demographic potential related to the district of Detva (35 000 of inhabitants) is too small to influence migration of people, which is more important in the developing cities. The next factor limiting a development of these settlements is the fact, that they have not



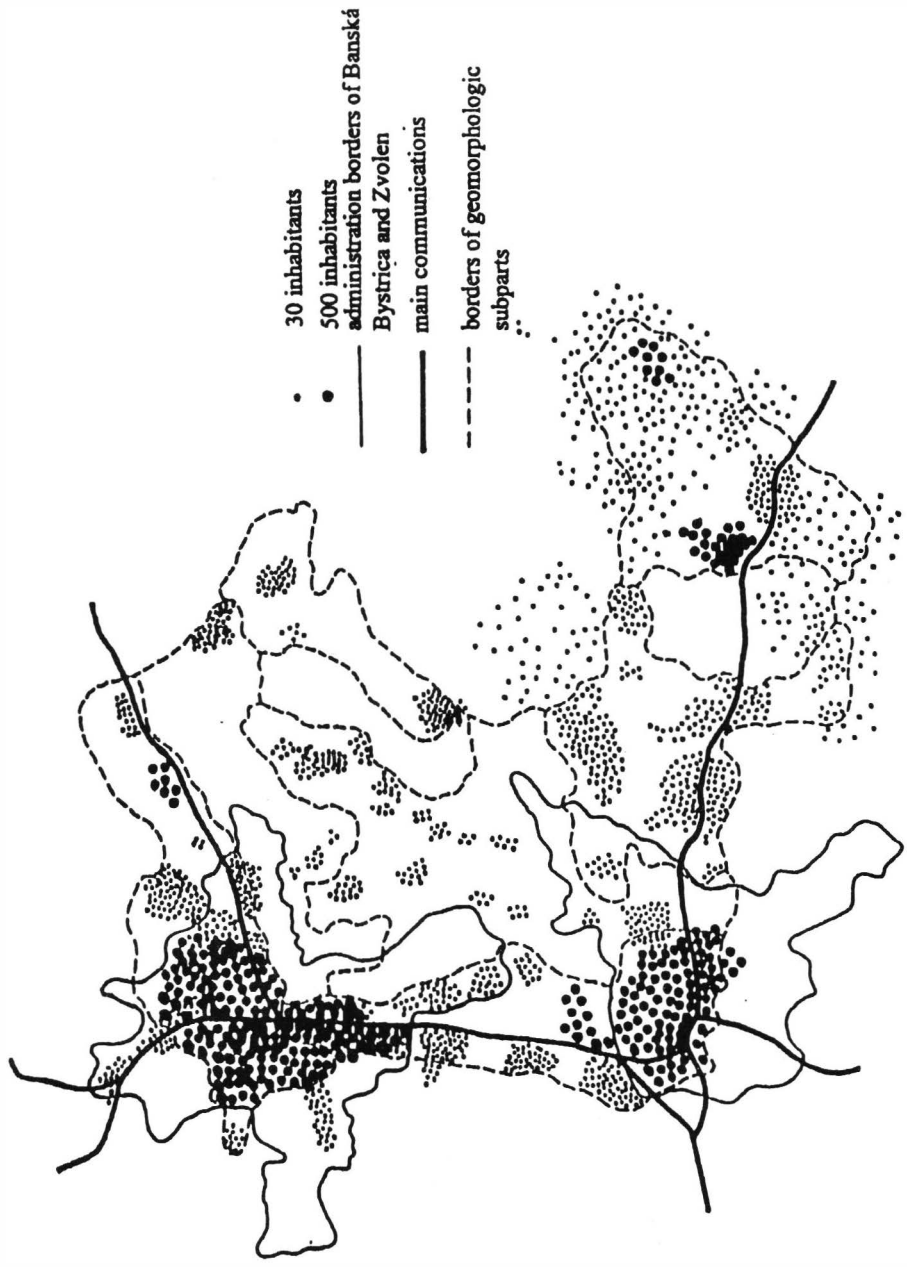


Fig. 1 Distribution of population in Zvolen basin in 1996

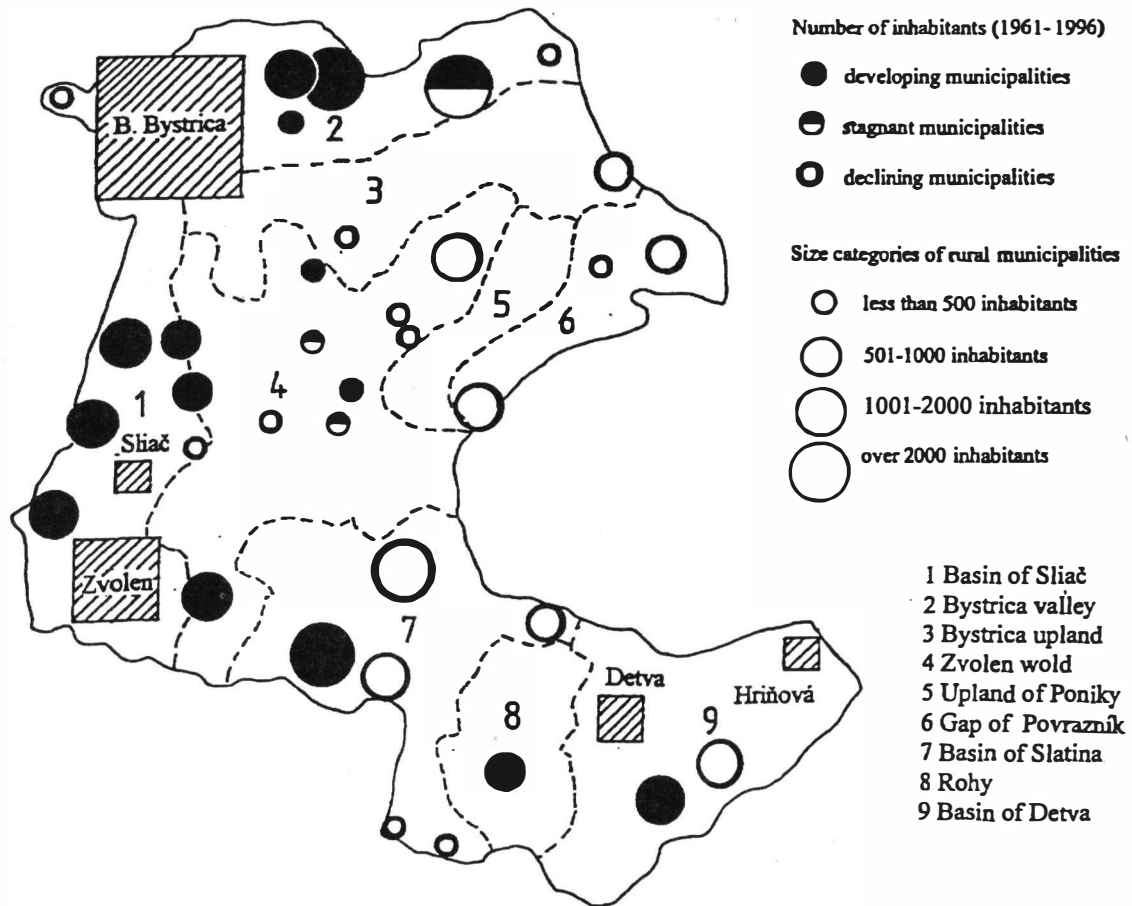


Fig. 2 The growth potential of municipalities in Zvolen basin

enough developed sphere of influence, and they have not formed own hinterland. The new borders of this district may result in weakening relation to the city of Zvolen in the administration sphere, however the final effect is, the town of Zvolen remains the central place for all of the settlements related to Detvianska kotlina (Hollow of Detva).

When we analyse data related to the total demographic balance in the districts of Banská Bystrica, Zvolen and Detva, all with ageing population, an urban growth will be stabilised on the present numbers of inhabitants, for longer terms, probably. A development of cities will depend on their economic capabilities, however it will be closely related to the housing development, which represents the next limiting factor in the recent years.

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## Resume

### Sídelná štruktúra Zvolenskej kotliny a tendencie jej vývoja

Na vývoj sídelnej štruktúry Zvolenskej kotliny z historického aspektu vplývalo niekoľko fenoménov, ktoré sa v končenom dôsledku odrazili na rozložení, veľkosti, funkcii sídiel a vzájomných väzbách medzi nimi. Z fyzickogeografických komponentov to bol predovšetkým členitý reliéf kotliny a nerastné suroviny, zo spoločenskoekonomických aktivít hlavne historické etapy kolonizácií (banickej a roľníckej), industrializácia a v neposlednej miere aj geografická, resp. dopravná poloha kotliny. Zo 72 sídiel sa 51 nachádza v nivných a terasových formáciách kotliny, 18 sídiel v pahorkatinách kotliny a 3 sídla sa lokovali vo vrchovinách kotliny. Základné priestory osídlenia a ekonomických aktivít sú koncentrované do Bystrického podolia, Sliačskej, Slatinskej a Detvianskej kotliny, ktoré majú vysoký potenciál krajiny pre hospodárske využívanie a výhodnú komunikačnú polohu k základným tranzitným dopravným koridorom Slovenska. Jadrovým sídelným priestorom zostáva Sliačska kotlina a Bystrické podolie, kde sa v roku 1996 koncentrovalo 76,8 % obyvateľstva Zvolenskej kotliny. Pôvodných 32 sídiel v tomto jadrovom území sa postupne transformovalo do urbánnej a suburbánnej sídelnej štruktúry. Sformovali sa tu dve najvýraznejšie mestá kotliny - Bynská Bystrica a Zvolen, ktoré predstavujú ťažiskové póly rozvoja. V nich sa koncentruje základný ekonomický, spoločenský a demografický potenciál kotliny. V roku 1996 žilo v týchto dvoch mestách 129 550 obyvateľov, t.j. 67,5 % obyvateľstva Zvolenskej kotliny. Rozvoj týchto miest postupne vyvoláva zmeny predovšetkým v ich funkciách, fyziognómii, pôdoryse, ako aj vo vzťahu k prímestským sídlam, ktoré sa dostali do aglomeračných zväzkov s týmito mestami. Opäť dochádza k oživovaniu predstáv priestorovej konvergencie oboch miest. Túto konvergenciu však chápame ako dlhotrvajúci proces s vysokým potenciálom sídiel medzi nimi (kúpeľné areály Sliača a Kováčovej, preimyselné areály Vlkanovej a Hronseka vodné plochy Sielnice a Badína pre rozvoj mestských aktivít.

V Slatinskej a Detvianskej kotline sa rozšíril do výrazných priestorových foriem disperzný typ osídlenia, ktorý je v tomto priestore aj v súčasnosti dominujúci. Aj keď na disperzné osídlenie už nepôsobia tie faktory, ktoré ho historicky vytvorili, v komunikačne výhodnejších polohách došlo k jeho čiastočnej aktivizácii s väzbami na priemysel lokovaný v Detve a Hriňovej v 50-tich rokoch 20 storočia. Preto v tomto priestore urbánna štruktúra nevykazuje taký intenzívny rozvoj ako je tomu v Sliačskej kotline a Bystrickom podolí. Ani súčasná funkcia okresného sídla v prípade Detvy nebude iniciovať jej štruktúralne zmeny.

Vývoj osídlenia kotliny môže ovplyvniť v perspektíve aj celková demografická bilancia okresov Banská Bystrica, Zvolen a Detva, ktorá zaznamenáva stárnutie populácie. Rast mestských sídiel v kotline sa pravdepodobne dlhšie stabilizuje na súčasných počtoch ich obyvateľstva. Vývoj miest bude závislý od ich ekonomickej solventnosti, ale predovšetkým od výstavby bytov, ktorá je v posledných rokoch limitujúcim faktorom ich ďalšieho rozvoja.