

RECENT ASPECTS OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE HUNGARIAN SETTLEMENT NETWORK WITHIN THE EUROPEAN STRUCTURE

After Settlement History and Theory Investigations
by Dr. Jenő Major

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Abstract

Due to investigations by Dr. Jenő Major on settlement history and theory, main trends of Hungarian urbanization and settlement network development offer an insight into the development of European settlement network. His — partly archival — research results underlying settlement science methodology are without precedence. It is attempted to fit development aspects of the Hungarian settlement network to the new regional structures of the to-be United States of Europe. A survey is given of the rapid urbanization process in Hungary after the Mongol invasion, of periods of mediaeval urbanization surges, as well as of the settlement network of industrializing-capitalizing Hungary.

Inter-war settlement development, and urbanization surge after World War II point to the intensity of relations between town and country.

Dr. Jenő Major has published his study on the beginnings of the development of Hungarian towns and settlement network* with the intention to soon report on his latest findings. His available manuscripts probabilize this intention. But his unforeseen decease interrupted the publication of his recognitions from the examination of 11th—12th-century markets and “marketplaces”.

His theoretical statements on these factors to be determinant permit to disclose regions of settlement groups functionally coherent with the marketplaces, as well as their structural features. A unique conception has been to transfer effects of production processes, beliefs, habits and market functions on the fabric of settlement groups. His ideas on the later destiny of these marketplaces disclose mediaeval Hungarian urbanization; relations between villages developed from marketplaces; marketplaces and oppidums; peculiarities of marketplaces developed into towns.

Also grounds of the rapid development of Hungarian urbanization after the Mongol invasion have been cleared. Thus, the historical continuity can be

* Periodica Polytechnica, Arch. No. 1—2 (Vol. 32) 1988.

tracked by means of his mental legacy, of an actualness evident from that at present, perspectives of the Hungarian settlement network can be realistically approximated as to fit European regional structures, settlement fabric. The underlying research approach by Jenő Major imposes restraint coupled with deep reverence and emotion on whom expected to transmit his mental wealth to the public.

He could not keep his promise to continue, made to readers of the *Periodica*. His mental legacy is known to comprise outstanding achievements of four decades of fundamental research on settlement history and settlement geography. Being an authority in his special field, he was rather humble and modest. His untimely decease prevented him from collecting his *œuvre*, of universal European significance by laying the foundations of the methodology of settlement history research.

Essentials of the Development of Hungarian Urbanization and Settlement Network [12]

Five surges of urbanization in Hungary may be distinguished.

The first urban settlements arose about the establishment of the Hungarian Kingdom.

The Hungarian name for a town, "város" — meaning a fortified place — might arise at that time, denoting royal seats and centres of royal estates — counties. And although according to European concepts of that age, part are hardly a kind of a town, and most of them never will be, others have become dynamic members of the Hungarian settlement network.

Social-economical conditions of marked medieval urbanization arose in the second half of the 13th century (after the Mongol invasion) when several settlements were granted urban privileges by kings. This second surge affected deeper layers of population, and beside royal towns, landlords' privileged towns, so-called oppidums developed. Towns evicted agriculture, villages were abandoned by crafts, reflecting the scheme of development of feudal society. This surge of urbanization decayed in the 15th century, namely under the influence of West-European, mainly South-German urbanization, power relations were rearranged. Positive tendencies became invigorated by Western export, trade roads, offer and demand in European markets. A peculiar borough development took place, resulting in a town network in the Great Hungarian Plain — Debrecen, Szeged, Kecskemét — mainly trade road-side settlements.

This mediaeval surge of urbanization smoothed by the end of the 15th century, after Turkish wars in the 16th and 17th centuries, ending political unity of this country, so urbanization underwent a period of depression. The third — peculiar — surge of urbanization consisted in a colonial-feudal re-

construction. Wordly nobility hardly participated in town building, except towns — Sopron, Pozsony — near the royal seat. Mainly palaces have been built in the countryside, of them some have become national centres of literature, arts, music. By means of constitutional authorities created to delimit royal power, nobility contributed to create county seats. Meanwhile the consolidating bourgeoisie fights for autonomy. Clerical nobility follows foreign examples of baroque town planning and of building cathedrals, episcopal palaces, prebendal homes, seminaries, well-equipped ecclesiastic secondary and high schools, all these constituting significant urban complexes, town districts.

Industrializing Austrian provinces encourage Hungarians to cereal cultivation, boosting centres of agriculture and of transport, and the cereal boom is responsible for the rapid growth of agrarian towns (boroughs) fast outgrowing by population the industrial-business towns.

The fourth surge is launched by mid-19th century capitalism. Urban administrative, cultural and business functions are multiplying, still enhanced by the abolition of feudalism, by the bringing up of intellectual capitalists as the leading stratum, by the development of railway network and of up-to-date transports. The manufacturing industry re-ranks cities. Boroughs in the Great Hungarian Plain are again overtaken by other towns, while concentration and upswing of development factors of what is to become Budapest are overwhelming.

The fifth urbanization surge started after World War II, essentially due to widening and intensification of connections between towns and the countryside, and to industrialization. It is featured by planned management of town development resources, and extension of the urban network by creating new towns for increasing industrial production.

Inter-War Settlement Development in Hungary [15]

This study relies on data of the 1930 census, concerning the 8.7 million inhabitants of this country distributed between 3419 communities averaging 2540. This favourable average conceals the extremities of the order of magnitude of our settlements. Settlements' populations were of the following distribution:

The settlement are clearly of a rather heterogeneous order of magnitude hinting to serious circumstances. Rather than to be uniformly distributed throughout the country, settlements of different population numbers are in different regions due to historical development and to natural features. The actual settlement network is essentially similar. In particular, as Lajos Tiring systematized it, 1.353.513 inhabitants or Upper Transdanubia were distributed among 865 settlements averaging 1565, much below the national average. An enhanced frittering away was found in South-Transdanubia with 1.331.183

Table 1

Variation of orders of magnitude of settlements from 1910 to 1941

Year	5-10 thousands		10-20 thousands		20-50 thousands		50-100 thousands		100-150 thousands		~1 million		Total	
	1	2	1	2	1	2	1	2	1	2	1	2	1	2
1910	4	27.4	17	252.1	28	860.0	5	331.0	1	113.3	1	880.9	56	2469.7
1920	3	19.3	18	272.9	26	842.3	6	349.6	2	126.8	1	929.7	56	2541.1
1930	3	23.3	16	248.2	25	794.9	9	569.7	2	252.3	1	1006.2	56	2894.6
1941	2	18.5	13	195.0	28	883.0	9	614.4	3	372.1	1	1165.0	56	3247.0

1 — number of towns in each category

2 — population (thousands) of the town in that category

Table 2

Size categories and populations of administrative units in 1930*

Number of	Below 500	501— 1000	1001— 2000	2001— 3000	3001— 5000	5001— 10000	10 000— 20 000	20 000— 50 000	50 000— 100 000	Over 100 000	Total
Settlements	750	953	857	330	253	161	66	33	9	3	3 415
Inhabitants	257 484	694 804	1 203 850	802 840	962 913	1 072 039	871 628	995 948	564 989	1 257 240	8 683 720
Average	343	729	1 405	2 433	3 806	6 659	13 206	30 180	62 777	419 080	2 543

* Data relying on administrative unit parameters. The system of administrative units relies on principles in laws issued in the 1870s, somewhat deviating from real settlement conditions. Here 683 settlements had a total of 1,134,758 inhabitants, averaging 1661 per settlement. Hence, in these regions, settlement units less than the national average prevailed.

inhabitants in 1137 settlements, averaging 1171. The mountainous region in North Hungary had a settlement structure similar to that in North Transdanubia.

1,015,752 inhabitants of the Upper Tisza region formed a mere 330 settlements, averaging 3078, thus concentration exceeded the national average. A higher average was between the Danube and the Tisza, with 1,260 inhabitants of 145 settlements averaging 8691.

The highest was the concentration in the Budapest region, clearly defining Budapest conglomeration.

Geographically, Budapest used to be ranged with the Great Hungarian Plain (GHP), unrealistically increasing the role of the GHP in urbanization. In fact, the Budapest region is situated at the rim of the GHP, where toes of the Transdanubian and the Northern Mountains join. This situation points to the role of urbanizing forces or all the country — rather than of the GHP alone — in the arise and development of this conglomeration.

Regionally seen the interwar urbanization in Hungary, number and population of towns had a distribution among the mentioned territories such as:

Table 3
Number and population of towns

	1910		1920		1930		1941		Development rate 1910—1941 (1910 = 100)
	1	2	1	2	1	2	1	2	
Transdanubia	17	371	17	395	17	436	17	493	132.8
Northern part	7	163	7	173	7	181	7	237	145.4
GHP	26	903	26	846	26	1008	26	1061	117.4
Budapest	1	881	1	930	1	1006	1	1165	123.2
Bp region	5	152	5	198	5	262	5	291	191.4
Total	56	2470	56	2542	56	2893	56	3247	131.5

1 = number of towns

2 = population (thousands)

Urbanization in regional units was not uniform. Differentiation affected the order of magnitude of towns. With the exception of the Budapest region, development was not by the multiplication of towns but by population increase.

In final account, the Great Hungarian Plain, preponderant since the late 18th century, was overtaken by Transdanubian and northern towns, and mainly, by the Budapest conglomeration.

This regression of the Great Hungarian Plain was due to two important phenomena of economic history. In the second half of the 19th century, within the economical system of Europe and the Austro—Hungarian Monarchy, the

Great Hungarian Plain concentrated on cereal cultivation, becoming preponderant in Hungarian agriculture. The Hungarian industrial development lagged, and also within the manufacturing industry, food industry prevailed.

Aspects of Settlement History Common between Hungary and Europe

It can be concluded — relying on the scientific activity of Dr. Jenő Major — that in this country, settlement science started in late 19th century, strictly related to the systematic German school of history, rather than to be an autonomous science with peculiar demands. It fitted into frames of developed sciences, acquiring principles, methods, nevertheless forced to discuss the coherent problematics of settlements disunited rather than synthesized. Geography, history, administration and construction pointed to new aspects of settlement relations — differentiated in themselves — giving birth to a relatively self-contained settlement science. A further link in this chain of reactions was the development of branches such as settlement geography, settlement history, settlement sociology, settlement management, settlement aesthetics, settlement development, settlement hygieny, etc.

Shortage of space prevents enumeration of relevant achievements, but one of the greatest merits of Dr. Jenő Major in the wide research domain of settlement history should be pointed out.

A central problem of urban history research is the development of Hungarian bourgeoisie. Within the Hungarian historiography, urban historiography got at times repressed. This deficiency was replaced by foreign — mainly German — historiography applying results of West-European historiography on Hungary. There is rich evidence that mediaeval Transdanubian and Transylvanian towns are successors of Roman towns, a fact recognized by Dr. Jenő Major, performing archival, pragmatic research for the sake of disclosures at fundamental research niveau. His peculiar means, methods induced archaeologists to scrutinize the problems of survival of Roman towns.

His excellent mediaeval urban historiographic research relied on those of Elemér Májusz and Péter Váczy. He maintained the historical continuity, and was a protagonist of the school of settlement history stating research not to be autotelic, but an important auxiliary knowledge of the science of the history of Hungarian people(s). It is expected to learn the settlement process of regions, territories, counties, presenting the effects of organization by central power and by feudal estates to analyze regional relations of local phenomena.

Research had to clear how much these early settlement processes resulted from spontaneous or purposeful economical, authoritarian or military actions. This is how the actual recognition of a typically Hungarian settlement history, fitting Europe's regional structures, has come about.

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* In Hungarian