

**CENTRE FOR REGIONAL STUDIES  
OF HUNGARIAN ACADEMY OF SCIENCES**

**DISCUSSION PAPERS**

**No. 27**

**The Hungarian Urban Network  
at the End of the Second Millennium**

**by  
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**Series editor**

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**Pécs  
1999**

Publishing of this paper is supported by the  
*Research Fund of the Centre for Regional Studies, Hungary*

ISSN 0238–2008

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Technical editor: Ilona Csapó, Zoltán Gál  
Typeset by Centre for Regional Studies of HAS Printed in Hungary by Sümegi  
Nyomdaipari, Kereskedelmi és Szolgáltató Ltd., Pécs

# CONTENTS

- 1 Introduction / 7
- 2 A brief introduction to urban development in Hungary / 9
  - 2.1 Roman preliminaries / 9
  - 2.2 Urban development in the medieval Hungary (10<sup>th</sup>–15<sup>th</sup> century) / 9
  - 2.3 “Turning back” to the East / 13
  - 2.4 The fragile frame of bourgeois development – the Hungarian urban network in 1850–1950 / 19
  - 2.5 The Hungarian urban network between the two World Wars / 24
  - 2.6 An ambiguous urban boom – the Hungarian towns in the “Socialist” era / 27
  - 2.7 Conditions for urban development after 1990 / 32
- 3 The contemporary urban network of Hungary / 36
  - 3.1 Towns, urbanisation level, proportion of the urban population / 36
  - 3.2 The hierarchy of the Hungarian towns / 43
  - 3.3 Hinterlands of the towns / 53
  - 3.4 Functional types of the Hungarian towns / 56
- 4 Urban types in Hungary / 60
  - 4.1 Budapest / 60
  - 4.2 Regional centres / 66
  - 4.3 County seats / 68
  - 4.4 Middle towns, with central functions and with industry / 69
  - 4.5 Small towns with central functions, (mostly) with industry dominant in size / 70
  - 4.6 Industrial towns / 72
  - 4.7 Holiday resort (bathing) towns / 74
  - 4.8 Agglomeration settlements, garden cities and suburbs, dwelling towns / 75
  - 4.9 Railway town / 77
  - 4.10 On the margin of the urban existence – urbanising settlements / 77
  - 4.11 Towns with urban rank but without urban functions / 78
- 5 Conclusion / 78
- Notes / 79
- References / 82



## FIGURES

- Figure 1: The main periods of urban development in Hungary from the beginning until now / 10
- Figure 2: The hierarchy system of the Hungarian towns in 1900 / 25
- Figure 3: Regional differences of urbanisation in Hungary / 37
- Figure 4: Dates of the awards of towns status to the Hungarian towns / 39
- Figure 5: Hierarchy of the Hungarian towns, 1995 / 45
- Figure 6: Breakdown of the Hungarian towns by hierarchy levels / 47
- Figure 7: Hinterlands of the Hungarian towns / 55
- Figure 8: Functional types of the Hungarian towns / 58
- Figure 9: Dynamism of the Hungarian towns / 61
- Figure 10: Change of population in the Hungarian towns, 1949–1990 / 62
- Figure 11: (Complex) types of the Hungarian towns / 63
- Figure 12: A simplified model of the urban structure of Budapest / 66
- Figure 13: Construction plan of the central part of a “socialist town”, Kazincbarcika / 73

## TABLES

- Table 1: Change of the number and proportion of urban population in Hungary, 1857–1910 / 21
- Table 2: The hierarchic division of the towns in the functional sense in 1910 / 22
- Table 3: The change of the number of population in Budapest and its agglomeration 1910–1949 / 27
- Table 4: The transition of the number of towns in Hungary, 1945–1996 / 37
- Table 5: The level of urbanisation in the counties, 1995 / 41
- Table 6: The distribution of the towns by the number of population, 1996 / 43
- Table 7: Number of towns in the individual hierarchy levels / 46
- Table 8: A few typical data of the towns in the different hierarchy levels / 54
- Table 9: Functional urban types / 57
- Table 10: Development of the number of population in the towns around Budapest, 1900–1990 / 76



# 1 Introduction

The formation and evolution of the Hungarian urban network show characteristics which are different from the Western European urbanisation<sup>1</sup>. These characteristics features do not only originate from the “belatedness”, but can also be attributed to the location of Hungary compared to the historical regions of Europe (Hungary is a Central European country, and this definition does not only have a geographical relevance), the repeated change of this comparative location and the fact that the “organic” urban development had been interrupted by forced pauses which lasted for several decades or centuries: the conquest of the Ottoman Empire in the 16th and 17th century, in the 20th century our forced position in the “eastern block” for more than four decades. In both periods, the features characteristic of the Eastern European (in fact, Asian) development path strengthened in Hungary.

The aim of this study is to describe the urban development in Hungary, as well as the “condition” of the Hungarian urban network these days, prior to the EU accession.

The above mentioned notions of “West” and “East” are naturally not only geographical directions. The special features of the history of the “East” cannot be explained only by the decades and centuries of “lagging behind”, “belatedness”. The “West” and the “East” followed different paths of development during history, thus “history” is necessarily different in the various regions. The characteristics features of the historical regions of Europe have been thoroughly depicted by the historians<sup>2</sup>; here we will only refer to some of these features.

The *Western type way of development* evolved as a combination of the antique (Roman) and the Germanic heritage; its economic base was provided by the *indisputable private ownership of the land*, the clear separation, guaranteed by law, of the lands used by the serves and in the private management of the landlord, the serves’ ownership of certain pieces of land (vineyards and clearings, and the right of the serves, laid down by law, to their unit of land. This was the basis of the *interest of the individuals* (the serf/peasant families) *in the increase of the production*, the modernisation and extension of the production tools (clearing of woods, planting of vineyards, increase of draught power etc.), as well as in the application of the results of the technical progress. At the same time, *in Eastern Europe the serves did not have any right to the land that they tilled*; their landlord could sell them or tear them apart from the lands – sending them to work in factories, mines, or to tow ships –, even exile them at any time (see the *Dead Souls* by Gogol). In Western Europe, the unified class of the serves with privately owned land properties were part of the divided feudal society, feudal system, a societal formula that was regulated by elaborate legal conditions. In order to describe this “formula”, we are quoting the excellent researcher of this field, Jenő Szűcs: “But the landlord also had from the beginning his obligations which had been settled

like regulations, in fact, the *fidelitas* itself was conditional, depending upon whether the more powerful party kept its obligations in the contract... Uneven conditions in the spirit of the conventional reciprocity, which obliged the parties bilaterally: this endogenous basic feature of the Western feudal system could be a fiction in certain cases, but a fertile fiction which had the power of a value norm – in course of time, downwards too”, which “... gave a sort of limited and conditional state of “liberty” at the level of the peasants, too”.<sup>3</sup> It derived from this “contractual” character of the Western European feudal society that a *variety of “small rights” were guaranteed*, taken out from the arbitrariness of the ruler (territorial freedoms – e.g. the freedom of the counties –, autonomy of the guilds, universities, towns, the Church, the social classes etc.). *In Central Europe, however, the feudal system was only partially built out*, the noblemen were also dependent on the state power, the “overpowered” ruler. One of the freedoms of the feudal system in Western Europe was urban development, the basic sign on which was the creation of the autonomy of the towns – a total of rights and competences which are part of the state sovereignty in other high cultures”. On the other hand, in Eastern Europe the towns were not an autonomous formation, not a municipality, but a heterogeneous creation under strong state control. In the Tsarist Russia, the secular ruler was also the head of the Church. Hungary was situated on the *border zone* of these two regions: the opinions are strongly divided whether Hungary in this border zone belonged (belongs) more to the West or the East, or it is an independent historical region – Central Europe! –, where *neither the Western European nor the Eastern European features are dominant*, or maybe the intensity of the Western and Eastern influence intensified or weakened in certain periods of time.<sup>4</sup> And if we do not consider the regional situation of Hungary (the Carpathian Basin) as predestined from the beginning, but see it in the current relationship to the “West” and “East” and in the economic, social, political-power and ideological similarities and differences, we have to accept that the regions are not territorial units existing since the beginning and never changing in area; thus the *situation of Hungary is not intact in Europe*, either. The effect of this fact on urban development and the urban network is versatile, too.



## **2 A brief introduction to urban development in Hungary**

### **2.1 Roman preliminaries**

There had been towns in the territory of Hungary before the foundation of the state. In the first years after Christ, the “civilised world” (or, if you like, the “West”) withdrew beyond the borders of the Roman Empire, beyond the so-called *limes* the Barbaric Areas lived their “prehistoric” lives. The Carpathian Basin was cut into two by the so-called *limes* following the River Danube, integrating Transdanubia into the “civilised world”. The engineering skills of the Romans and the economic power of the Empire soon built stone towns in Pannonia, and settled down a romanised population in them. These towns were probably “more developed” than the conditions of Pannonia would have required (the economy and population of the countryside was slower in romanisation and “catching up” with the provincial level), so as soon as in the Roman times (!) a “following of the pattern” took place in the Carpathian Basin. As opposed to former assumptions, there was no continuity between the Pannonian towns and the medieval Hungarian towns, unless the continuity of the ruins, despite the fact that several present Hungarian towns are situated exactly where the Roman towns had been (Szombathely–Savaria, Sopron–Scarbanca, Pécs–Sopianae, Óbuda–Acquincum etc.). Also, the difference of the Great Hungarian Plain, i.e. the difference of the towns of the Great Plain cannot be explained by the thousand-year delay of the “civilisation”.

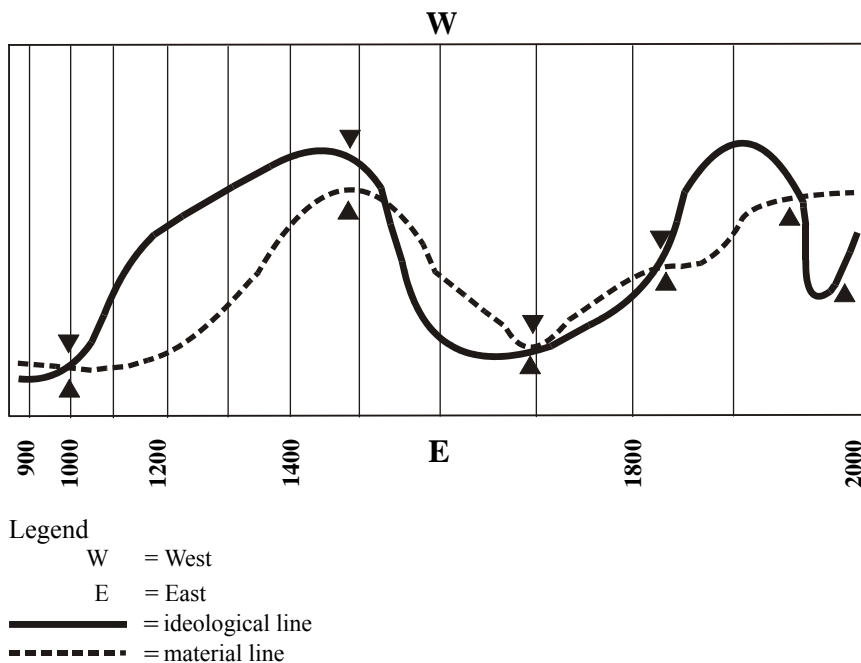
### **2.2 Urban development in the medieval Hungary (10th–15th century)**

After the collapse of the (West) Roman Empire, the “civilised world” shrank to a narrow space, although, after the lively centuries of the great invasions, from the 6th-7th century, the romanised peoples (and culture), and the Germanic tribes (and traditions) merged, and the Frank Empire attempted to reach the political and power heritage of the Romans, pushing the borders of the “West” more and more eastwards. At the same time, the second blooming and the expansion of Byzantium and the Hellenistic culture in “East” – in the Balkans and South Italy – also created an expanding Empire and a special culture. Between these two powers, there was a vacuum of power. In this situation, the Hungarian nation necessarily had to choose between the West or the East – i.e. Rome or Byzantium. Hungary, by taking up the Latin Christianity, by the way of the foundation of the state and the choice of the dynastic relationships, *joined the West, according to the contemporary views*. (The main phases of the urban development in Hungary are shown in *Figure 1*. The rise and fall of the lines in the chart do not simply mean a growth–expansion, also not “development” in general, but the approximation of the “ideological” and material

condition of the urban network to the Western European and the Eastern European features. The state of the “ideologies” means the ideological, political, legal and cultural conditions of the country, the material side means the development of the economy, the settlements, the state management and administration. The development, direction of the two “sides” may differ from one another. The periods of the evolution of the settlements, including the urban network, are shown by the changes of direction of the two curves and the changes in their relative positions. The urban development in the medieval Hungary is signed by mark I. in the figure.)

Figure 1

*The main periods of urban development in Hungary  
from the beginning until now*



This “joining” is signed by the fast approach of the “line of ideals” to the West in *Figure 1*. At the same time, the material side – the layers of the society, the feudal ownership patterns, the methods of the economy – followed this change of direction much more slowly. This period – from the foundation of the state until the mid-13th century – is characterised by the large-scale divergence of the two

“aspects”. “The civilisation and the structure ... belonged to different co-ordinates for a long time” – emphasised Jenő Szűcs<sup>5</sup>.

In the time of the so-called “early feudalism” – which is considered to have lasted in Hungary until the end of the 13th century – several “*Eastern-like*” features could be seen in the society and the economy. These naturally defined the conditions of urban development to a large extent:

- *The separation of the society into two basic classes had not stabilised yet.* In the 11th-12th century it was common to employ slaves or quasi-slaves in the economy, who had no production tools of their own. The Hungarians were permanent visitors, sellers and buyers at the slave markets of the surrounding countries. The first data showing the acceptance of guest peoples is from 1121.
- *The ownership patterns were not fixed, either:* the community ownership of lands was general, and the principle of “no land without a lord” only slowly became exclusive. The first time when units of land were held by the serves was in the early 13th century.
- *The leading role in social, political and economic affairs almost exclusively belonged to the ruler.* In the beginning of the 13th century, the ruler owned three-quarters of the cultivated lands. The first feudal movements started in the 13th century.

The conditions of urban development hardly changed until the mid-13th century. During these centuries, *natural economy* was prevalent in the Carpathian Basin, consequently the *internal exchange of goods was limited*, commercial activities were not separated from production (with the exception of the trade of luxury goods in some cities). The agricultural workers and handicraftsmen *were often the same persons*. Without a separate commercial and handicraft activity, and a population pursuing these activities – i.e. without urban citizens –, a detailed division of labour and a larger scale, permanent and continuous exchange of goods, no real towns could develop in Hungary in the 10th-13th century. We can say that despite the fact that some of the contemporary written sources some settlements were labelled with the definitions *civitas*, *urbs*, *castellanum*; these were mostly administrative centres. There were emerging “*central places*”: castles of the governors, county seats, church centres. (In other words: towns are central places, but not all central places are towns.) The governors castles were centres for the collection of the crop, sometimes law days were organised in them, markets were held in their protection, their churches collected the neighbouring population every now and then. The population of these “towns” were “...divided into groups according to whether they were dependent of the king, the governor or the Church, so their social composition was not very much different from that of the larger villages”. Only *Esztergom* and *(Székes)Fehérvár*, the church, royal and sacral centres of Hungary were different in this respect: they were home to wealthy

(Latin) merchants too, they had a certain degree of autonomy, their stone houses gave these settlements an urban look as early as on the turn of the 11th–12th century and later on in the 12th century. *The period between 10th and 13th century in Hungary was thus a period of the central places*, but not the towns.

The “material conditions” started to resemble more the Western European model from the mid-13th century (*see Figure 1*); *the era from the mid-13th century until the beginning of the 16th century is the period of the “real” medieval towns, the period of the catching up with the West*. From the mid-13th century, changes took place in Hungary which allowed the birth of “real” towns (the main characteristic features of which were urban rights guaranteeing autonomy, the concentration of non-agrarian activities and the emergence of the bourgeois class). Among these changes we have to mention the *spreading of goods production, the progress of the division of labour separating the agrarian workers and the handicraftsmen*, the increasing settling down of people (the villages with guest right also promoted the principle of local governance). After the Tartar Invasion, *defence* became the top priority<sup>6</sup>. After the giving away of the royal domains, in order to make up for the loss of incomes, it was necessary to take over lands that had been more or less uninhabited beforehand, and also to extend the sources of income – by duties, fees from the fairs, the so-called regales etc. –, which required the promotion of trading and urbanisation. The first town status was donated in 1231, and until the end of the 13th century, several settlements that became highly significant in the later urban network were awarded the title of free royal town (Pest, Nagyszombat [Trnava], Selmecebánya [Banská Štiavnica], Késmárk [Kežmarok], Zágráb [Zagreb], Zólyom [Zvolen], Buda, Szeged, Nyitra [Nitra], Győr, Sopron, Pozsony [Bratislava], Eperjes [Prešov] etc.). Their spatial location suggests that the main objective of the assistance of urban development was the booming of the economy of territories less intensively used in advance, and the protection against external forces. It is also true, however, that the emergence of the settlements that gained the town status can also be explained by the classical means of settlement geography (e.g. *Nagyszombat* [Trnava] was a market town at the Hungarian end of the road towards Moravia and Prague, *Sopron* was one of the most important gateway-towns of Hungary to the West, *Brassó* [Bra<sup>o</sup>ov] was a junction of the roads from three passes at the interface of the Saxon, Székely and Romanian settlers; *Pozsony* [Bratislava] was a defence point of the Dévény Gate along the Danube waterway, situated on a market line etc.). Still, irrespective of the royal will and the legal status, the surveys revealing the real urban characters (economic weight, number of population, hierarchy level), also showed that the centre of the “urbanisation” in the 15th century was in the Upper Northern Hungary (approximately in the territory of the present Slovakia). The level of urbanisation was more moderate in Transdanubia, while in the Great Hungarian Plain there were hardly any towns at higher hierarchy levels in the Middle Ages.

The towns in the Carpathian Basin, together with the whole of Hungary, *approached the West* in this period. From the second half of the 13th century, in the socio-economic structure of Hungary, Western elements were dominant (but not exclusive). In the case of the towns, the adjustment to the “Western-type norms” was marked by the appearance of the *urban rights, the birth and division of the bourgeois class, the role of the towns and the development of the cityscape* (although the density of the population in the core areas of the free royal towns in Hungary was 25–80 people per hectare, as opposed to 150–300 in the Western European towns). At the same time, the sparseness of the network, the low population of the towns (at the end of the 15th century, only Pest and Buda had more than 10 000 inhabitants, the number of population exceeded 5 000 people in approximately half a dozen towns), but *above all, the more modest material possessions of their citizens differentiated the Hungarian towns from the ones in Western Europe*. The rate of return of the limited urban capital was only one quarter or one third of the return that could be achieved in the trading towns in e.g. South Germany, because of the small internal market, the low level of goods production, the unfavourable location of Hungary from the aspect of traffic, the small volume of passing traffic and the slow circulation of the capital. This “structural weakness” resulted in very serious problems from the late 15<sup>th</sup> and early 16<sup>th</sup> century.

### **2.3 “Turning back” to the East**

From the late 15th century, the pace of the catching up with the “West” slowed down in the material sphere, although it was just that period in the first eight hundred years of the Hungarian history when we got the closest to Western Europe. The next chance for that came in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. This “turn” is shown by the “stop dead” with the coming of the 16<sup>th</sup> century in our chart.

In the following centuries – from the early 16<sup>th</sup> century until the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century – *the Central European way of development turned out to be a permanent structure*. Central Europe became stable, at the same time, it started to decline compared to the West. *This change originated from the large regional rearrangement of the European economy*. The “Atlantic Europe” became more dynamic, taking a leading role in the development of the early capitalism. In Western Europe, the disintegration of the feudal agrarian conditions accelerated, the serfs became tenants and free peasants. The disintegration of the feudal conditions allowed the spread of the early forms of capitalist industry; the Atlantic coasts became the centre of world trade; colonisation started – all these creating special opportunities for the “original accumulation”. The decline of the “Eastern zone” was due, among other things, to geographical reasons – the distance from the

transatlantic routes – , but the main reasons were socio-economic ones, i.e. the much lower proportion and less capital of the bourgeoisie. *Central and Eastern Europe more and more became the periphery of the West*, joining the international division of labour as agricultural producer and customer of industrial goods. The land-owner nobility of Central Europe could use the economic boom by increasing their allowances coming in kind, extending the lands in their own management and cultivating them by the forced labour of the villains – in one word, by strengthening the positions of feudalism. The feudal-type urban development stopped before it reached the Western European level. The population of the Hungarian towns hardly grew in the 15th century, especially in its second half. To cap it all, the Turks occupied Hungary. Even though the decline of the towns cannot be attributed to the Turks only, the everyday battles, the uncertainty of existence and the repeated decay of the population and of the mobile and immobile property struck the Hungarian towns to an extent that makes it reasonable to handle the period until 1711 as a separate era<sup>7</sup>.

Until the middle of the 16th century, the whole Délvidék (The Southern Hungary, the richest agricultural region in Hungary), the biggest part of the Great Plain, approximately half of Transdanubia, the southern edge of Upper Northern Hungary and the former capital city of Hungary, Buda were occupied by the Turks. The wealthier citizens of the towns under Turkish occupation fled, were captured or died. These towns became Turkish military towns, fortresses and administrative centres – in other word, *Eastern type towns, as parts of an empire that was not even Eastern Europe, but Asia*. This was the fate of Buda and Pest, Fehérvár, Esztergom, Pécs, Szeged, Bács, Eger and most of the Hungarian episcopal centres.

The Western and North-western part of Hungary, the Royal Hungary *became a periphery in several aspects*: not only a periphery of Europe but also of the Habsburg Empire. The constant uncertainty of existence, the perishing of the population and the decay of the economy set back urbanisation to an extreme extent; the role of the former Hungarian towns and country-towns was limited to the defence and they also served as local market centres. Their international connections were eliminated, they only joined in the long-distance (foreign) trade as mediators. Their population stagnated for centuries, and their functions were unchanged: the Hungarian towns fought for their “survival” and the reservation of their privileges (it is typical that the Hungarian royal towns made their measures against the Jews – i.e. against the competition – after the battle of Mohács).

Urban development in the Great Plain, occupied the Turks, had a very specific direction. The main reason for that is the fact that social development in the Great Plain was different than in the other large regions of Hungary. (We have to accept then, of course, that the individual countries and states can be divided into several simultaneously existing regions with different paths of development, they can involve several “socio-economic structures”.) Natural environment of the Great

Plain was also important in this aspect: in the vast flood plains, temporarily flooded areas and less fertile sandy lands, usually only nomadic stock-raising was possible<sup>8</sup>. Thus the density of population was low here (3-5 people per km<sup>2</sup>), settlements were scarce, and the system of feudal domains, the feudal “micro-structure” could only be built out partially; the large pastures did not belong to the lands of the serves, they were used commonly by the inhabitants of the settlements.

While Hungary turned towards the West in the Central European region, the Great Plain went on being a region “lagging behind in feudalism”, “a pre-feudal region”, with an extensive economy. However, the Great Plain cannot be considered without reservations as having an Eastern European character, either, since e.g. the majority of the population was not the Eastern European type serves, but a partially feudalised servants, keeping the traces of clannish society. The “development” and the “catching up” was also more orientated to the West than to the East. The Great Plain at this time was a pre-feudal periphery embedded in a Central European environment.

From the 15th century, we can presume a process that gave a dominant character to the Great Plain way of development. The essence of this process is that the Great Plain, in a very short time, moved from a “pre-feudal” to a “post-feudal” state without the mature, typical form of feudalism developing and becoming dominant here. The single class of the serves did not become general and prevalent here, either; thus the “free peasant” way of development could become dominant. It was mainly the *country-towns* that offered this possibility. The status of country-town was originally a legal category: those settlements with moderate urban functions could obtain this privilege that were unable to achieve the privileges of the free royal towns. They were owned by the landlord or the Church, but they were given certain urban privileges: they had the right to hold markets or fairs, they could elect a judge or/and a priest, they could pay their taxes in one sum etc.

Of course country-towns also emerged in the other parts of Hungary. No systematic difference seemed to appear in their legal status, but in their economy there was some: the country-towns of the Great Plain had a definite agrarian character as early as in the 14th and 15th centuries, their population mostly earned their living from animal husbandry and trading. If we consider the fact that the export of animals from the total of the Hungarian export grew from 60% to 80-85-90%, the role of the country-towns of the Great Plain seems to be especially important. Although the profit from the trade of animals was shared with other regions, the most important place of animal husbandry was still the Great Plain. The former looser settlement pattern, the progress of the desolation of the countryside (i.e. the total depopulation of some villages), the tenure of the “puszta” (waste lands), the vast areas belonging to the towns all provided the place for animal husbandry, already before the Turkish rule. It is also worth noting that the pastures did not belong to the private lands of the serf-holder feudal landlords,

irrespective of whether they were the property or the tenure of their owner or the (country-town) community. This way they were not subject to be tilled by force labour and villeinage.

The Turkish conquest – paradoxically – also promoted the evolution of the characteristics of the country-towns. The Hungarian lords of the country-towns fled, there was no feudal power (landlord, county etc.) any longer. Those towns that could become so-called “khász towns” (i.e. towns that paid their taxes directly to the Sultan and in return enjoyed the protection of the ruler), had to pay taxes to two places (the fled county and the lord often collected the taxes, too), but they had a relatively high degree of autonomy. This autonomy was strengthened by the fact that the population of these towns joined the Calvinist direction of the Reformation, and this Church – at least in the 16th and 17th centuries – had a strong community, people’s character. Acquiring the areas belonging to the villages that had depopulated or been destroyed by the Turks, these towns had vast territories of land around them (in the early 20th century, Debrecen had 957 km<sup>2</sup>, Kecskemét 873 km<sup>2</sup>, Szeged 815 km<sup>2</sup> and Hódmezővásárhely 761 km<sup>2</sup> of land), and the towns kept tens of thousands of cattle, in “nomadic circumstances”: the cattle spent the whole year on the meadows, their masters lived in the towns and the herds were only followed by their herdsmen. This is what shaped the settlement network of the *Great Plain* in a very special way, and these specialities survived until the 20th century, in fact, until now in some respects.

- The huge town territories gathered agglomerations of population as large as the population in the towns; agricultural production could be organised within the urban frameworks, and the agricultural activity also played a role in urban development. In order to supply the population living from agriculture, urban functions settled down in the country-towns, too (trade, handicraftsmen, schools, physicians, pharmacies etc.). Until the turn of the 19th and 20th century, hardly any “regular” villages could be found in the core of the Great Plain, a definitely agricultural area. On the other hand, most of the towns were inhabited by agricultural population (even in the 20th century, the proportion of agricultural earners reached 50-70% in most country-towns of the Great Plain), so they had hardly any statistical or economic urban character.
- The intensification of agricultural production – the spread of field growing of crops, the appearance of stabling animal husbandry – challenged the population of the country-towns in the 17th and even more the 18th century: the more distant parts of the lands (some lands of Debrecen were located 70 kilometres from the inner areas) naturally could not be cultivated from the inner areas of the towns. The “outmigration”, the revitalisation of the former village structure, however, would have meant the giving up of the privileges of the country-towns (in Hungary, the feudal legal system, ownerships and



the institution of the serves survived as long as until 1848). The response to this challenge was the creation of a specific form of “sporadic agricultural settlements”: the creation of the system of scattered farms. Although, scattered farms with agricultural functions are known outside the borders of Hungary too, the *principle* behind the system of scattered farms in Europe was to create temporary establishments, and *was not organised into a settlement and economic system*. The content of the “scattered farm principle”, and the settlement and economic function of the scattered farms changed several times, also, scattered farms of different functions existed simultaneously. The “real scattered farm” was *one, non-independent unit* of the divided settlement system, forming a single residential and economic unit, a single family farmstead together with the house in the inner areas of the towns. To put it into a simpler form: the house of the citizen of the country-town was situated in the inner area of the town, while the farmstead was in the area surrounding the town, in the estate of the citizen. The family and the farm were divided between the downtown house and the scattered farm: the family lived both in the scattered farm and the permanent residence, according to different rhythms in the different development phases of the scattered farms. This phenomenon resulted in a certain spatial division of the family and the whole country-town. The relationship between the two “partial units” of the settlements changed in course of time, from “temporary character” to “permanence”, the “independence” of the scattered farms, to such an extent that by the 20th century, a large number of “real” sporadic settlements were created.

- Thus the country-towns did not have or hardly had hinterlands, or that was limited to their own scattered farms, to the area that was part of the country-town in social and economic sense, “anyway”.
- In this specific settlement system, “towns” and “villages” were not sharply distinct, the dwellers of the scattered farms were not village, rural residents, but constituents of the urban society. What we do have to emphasise is the fact that the blurring of the borders was not only typical of the settlement system but also of the society of the Great Plain.

The consequence of this peasant-like society is that a class of “real bourgeoisie” only emerged in the largest country-towns, relatively late and in small numbers. This is the reason for the village-like forms, technical infrastructure, ground-plan, and not the “underdevelopment” or the natural endowments (e.g. the lack of building stones). The cityscape and infrastructure of the towns in the Great Plain was quite different from what was typical in Europe: these towns were – and mostly still are – “ground floor” settlements, although the houses, the axes of which were parallel to the line of the streets, amounted to a development in unbroken rows.

The “eligibility” of the country-towns was unquestionable only until the end of the feudal era (1848), their specific features weakened too, especially in the decades of the so-called socialist era with its unifying efforts, but these features still have not disappeared without a trace.

The 18th century is the century of the reconstruction, after the Turks had been expelled. The results of that were spectacular – re-population of Hungary, reconquest of the arable lands, reorganisation of the institutional system in the formerly occupied areas –, but without too much success from the aspect of the approach towards “the West”. Hungary became part, what is more, a periphery, of a typical Central European state, the Habsburg Empire. The “development” of the urban network was in effect nothing more than the reconstruction of the “Pre-Turkish” conditions. The Hungarian towns were revitalised as local market centres, handicraft centres of their narrow regions; the properties of their citizens were modest – in most of the cases only a small house, a workshop, maybe a vineyard. Their connection hardly reached beyond the Hungarian borders, the “perspective” of the wholesale merchants only reached Vienna, Bécsújhely (the now Wiener Neustadt), Brünn (the now Brno) or Fiume (the now Rijeka). Buda in the 15th century was a centre of power, culture and foreign trade with a European – or at least Central European – sphere of action, while in the 18th century only a modest centre of guilds and industry, with some distributing trade. All the phenomena that had taken place in the Western European urban development, remained completely unknown in Hungary (besides the handicrafts industry of the guilds, the formation of industrial mass production; the growing importance of finance institutes and the trade of mass products, the settling down of cultural “mass production” in towns etc.).

No sooner than in the late 18th and early 19th century started the situation to change; the capitalising Europe “broke into” Hungary by the means of trade. The purchase, collection, storage and processing of agricultural products became an urban development function in more and more towns of the Small Hungarian Plain, Transdanubia (which were close to the Western markets) and along the Danube waterway (Győr, Komárom, Moson, Pest etc.). The trade of wool, cereals and live animals became the fastest means of capital accumulation, and the corn merchants increased the number of bourgeoisie free from the bondages of the guilds. The rearrangement of the urban network started, too, and several towns without a free royal town past (Pápa, Nagykanizsa, Vác, Baja, Moson) rose to the elite of the trading towns. The “modern” civil institutions also appeared in the Hungarian towns (savings banks, newspapers, stock exchange, joint-stock companies, railways, scientific and cultural institutions, e.g. academy of sciences, theatres, publishing houses etc.). All this took place, however, in the frameworks of the feudal legal system and ownership patterns, with a limited national sovereignty.

## 2.4 The fragile frame of bourgeois development – the Hungarian urban network in 1850–1950

Hungary, “caught” in the Central European version of feudalism, only had a chance to approach the West in the mid-19th century. The elimination of the feudal legal system took place in 1848, and after the succeeding War of Independence (against the Habsburg rulers), the national sovereignty – although to a limited scale – was re-gained in 1867 (with the so-called “Compromise”). The civil “arrangement” was built out soon. The historical situation was similar to the one right after the foundation of the Hungarian state: the legal and political conditions of the “catching up” with the West were given. These conditions were “tailor made”, into which the economy and society of Hungary had to be fitted (see in *Figure 1*). This was true, first of all, of the towns: they did not lead the bourgeois development, but had to catch up with the bourgeois transformation, fill up the gained (given) frameworks with content, just like in the early Middle Ages.

Urban development in the dualist Hungary took place in an *agricultural country*. The proportion of the agricultural earners may have been around 80% in 1870, and even on the turn of the century it exceeded 70%. The formula of the territorial division of labour was rather simple around 1900: from the countryside with its pure agrarian character – where even the proportion of the merchants, handicraftsmen, public servants, clerical persons etc., involved in the direct supply of the agricultural population, was strikingly low –, the towns stood out. The focal point of the economic development was the *capitalist transformation, the technical and agro-technological modernisation of agricultural production*: purchasing, trade and transportation of the agricultural products (the primary motivation of the railway constructions was agriculture, the influence of the agrarian interest groups was dominant in the development of the Hungarian railway network), their processing (milling and sugar industry) and export, the building out of the credit and insurance institutions serving agricultural production, in fact, the high level institutional network of agricultural researches and training.

The other source of urbanisation in the dualist era was the “demand for centre” of the building civil public administration, and the settling down of the institutional network which became necessary because of the achieved administrative functions. The selection of the administrative centres and the settling down of the institutional network (among other things, the location of the military troops in the territory of Hungary is part of this!) integrated a large number of “external” factors into the development of the urban network. The urban development function of manufacturing industry only became significant in the last years of the 19th century. (While the increase in the number of industrial earners was 31.2% between 1870 and 1880, in 1890–1910 the growth was 64.5%.) On the turn of the century, only the manufacturing industry of *Budapest* was significant in an

international comparison (companies with more than 20 employees gave work to about 68 500 people in 1900); in the plants of *Pozsony*, [Bratislava] which was second in the order, 5 800 people worked, while the industrial plants of *Fiume* [Rijeka], *Temesvár* [Timișoara], *Pécs* and *Arad* employed 3 000–4 000 workers.

The railway constructions played an important role in the development of the urban network, too, especially because the birth of the “civil” urban network and the railway construction coincided, so their correlation could be strong.

The first *railway line* of Hungary was opened in 1846. Until the end of 1848, only 178 km of railway had been built in the then territory of Hungary, half a century later Hungary was endowed with a total of 22 000 km railway lines. The most dynamically developing sector of the period from 1848 until the breaking out of World War I was infrastructure, especially the railway constructions. There were times when the *annual* increase of the network exceeded 500 km; in 1867–1874, an average of 585 km was installed every year, in 1886–1899, 583 km. Even after 1900 – until World War I – 11 000 km of railway lines were constructed. Railway constructions “absorbed” most of the investments (between the Compromise and 1900, the railway investments were eleven times as much as the investments in large-scale industry (by joint-stock companies), and six times as much as the capital spent on the constructions in Budapest); just before World War I, 70% of the total capital assets of Hungary were in infrastructure, within that, 26% of the capital assets in the railway. The railway, besides the credit institutions, was the fastest growing sector of the economy, increasing its output by an annual 10.5% in the first half of the period – until 1890 –, then by 5.5% annually until 1914.

Until the Compromise, Hungary could not have independent railway policy concepts. The Austrian political and the Austrian-Hungarian economic interests urged the connection between *Vienna* and *Pest-Buda*, the Great Plain, which provided for the majority of the agricultural export, and the Austrian markets, and the creation of the possibility of the export of the agricultural products to the world markets. The railway connection between *Vienna* and *Pest* was established as early as in 1850, and in the 1850s, the major towns of the Great Plain were also linked to the railway network. In 1860, a direct connection between the Great Plain, Pestbuda and the sea was established, by the construction of the *Buda-Székesfehérvár–Nagykanizsa–Trieszt* [Trieste] line.

The independent Hungarian railway policy after the Compromise (1867) made Budapest the centre of the Hungarian railway network, contributing to its booming development. On the turn of the century, 131 settlements had town status in Hungary (without Croatia-Slavonia): their total population grew from 1.6 million in 1857 to 3 million in 1900 (a growth of 86%), however, their share from the total population of Hungary only increased by 18.1% (*Table 1*).

Table 1.

*Change of the number and proportion of urban population in Hungary,  
1857–1910\**

Place of residence	Number	Share	Number	Share	Number	Share	Number	Share	Number	Share
	of the population									
	1000 persons	%	1000 persons	%	1000 persons	%	1000 persons	%	1000 persons	%
	1857		1870		1890		1900		1910	
Budapest	187	1.5	271	2.0	492	3.2	716	4.3	880	4.8
Towns	1 439	11.9	1 736	12.8	2 083	13.7	2 307	13.8	2 846	15.6
Villages	1 0489	86.6	11 572	85.2	12 588	83.1	13 698	81.9	14 538	79.6
Total	12 124	100.0	13 579	100.0	15 163	100.0	16 721	100.0	18 264	100.0

\* Without Croatia–Slavonia

Naturally the settlements with town status and those with urban functions did not always coincide on the turn of the century, either. According to our surveys on the urban hierarchy of the 1910s, there were only approximately 325–330 towns in Hungary (in the functional sense) (*Table 2*); of these, 130 were at least middle towns, while the number of small towns almost reached 200<sup>9</sup>.

The number of the population living in settlements with urban functions but with village status exceeded 1 million in 1910; thus the proportion of the urban population was over 25%. The level of urbanisation was quite different in the various parts of the country: in Croatia–Slavonia, Transylvania and in the mountains surrounding Hungary it did not even reach the figures of the Medieval Europe – in several counties only 4–% of the population lived in settlements that could be considered as towns in the functional sense –, at the same time, as a consequence of the country-town character settlement network (see above), in some counties of the Great Hungarian Plain half or three quarters of the population (!) lived in towns.

Table 2.

*The hierarchic division of the towns in the functional sense in 1910  
(without Croatia–Slavonia)*

Hierarchy level	Number of settlements
I. Capital city	1
II. Regional centres	12

III. County seat towns	50
IV. Middle towns	65
V. Small towns	198
Total	326

In the beginning of the civil urban development, according to the general rules of regional development, modernisation started in some “bridgeheads”, above all in the capital city.

The three towns constituting the later Budapest – *Pest, Buda* and *Óbuda* – became more and more clearly the centre, the most important and largest urban agglomeration of Hungary after the late 18th century. The capitalist development connected to the agricultural boom, bourgeois development and the efforts for independence – demand for “own” national institutions, university, museum, theatre, library, academy, and their settling down in *Buda* and *Pest* – made these towns the most significant economic, trading and intellectual centre of Hungary by the middle of the 19th century. The number of their population grew from 50 000 in the late 18th century to over 100 000 by 1831 and 173 000 by 1851. From the late 18th and early 19th century on, the ground floor and one-storey baroque Pest was gradually reconstructed by two and three-storey classicist public buildings and tenement houses, mostly within the former city walls.

The defeated War of Independence (1848–1849) temporarily decreased its political-administrative role, but its economic positions went on strengthening. Due to its *splendid traffic location*, it became the main beneficiary of the increasing agricultural boom. Pest, in the middle of the Carpathian Basin, on the interface of the Great Plain which produced the most agricultural surplus and the main direction of the export, in the centre of the rapidly developing railway network, became the most important centre of the collection and processing of goods. Pest had a railway connection to *Vienna* already in 1851 (via Pozsony), to *Szeged* in 1854, *Debrecen, Nagyvárada* [Oradea] and *Arad* in 1857, *Temesvár* [Timișoara] in 1858 – i.e. with the most important trading centres of agricultural products in the Great Plain. By 1870, all the major regions of Hungary had a direct railway connection with Pest. The leading role in the trade of agricultural goods guaranteed a dominant role of the capital city in finance activities, on the credit market and in the foundation of industrial companies. After 1867, the Compromise, *Budapest became the capital city of a state with almost 20 million inhabitants*, the centre of the building civil administration; it was home to a large number of institution and offices. This created a large number of new jobs and initiated a large scale construction of public buildings. A conscious effort of the Hungarian state management was the increase of the economic, political etc. weight and role of

Hungary within the Monarchy; *a part of these efforts was the “catching up” of Budapest with Vienna, the rivalry between the two cities.* In the spirit of these efforts, Pest, Buda and Óbuda were united in 1873.

Later, with a significant state support, large scale town-planning works started in the city, and by the turn of the century, the present structure and cityscape of Budapest was completed; Budapest became not only one of the largest cities in Europe (in 1870 it was the 16th, in 1900 the 8th in the number of population), but also one of the best planned and most modern ones (underground working from 1896, telephone centre from 1881, electric public lighting from 1878, the first tram was launched in 1887 etc.).

This was how *Budapest* became the main target of foreign capital, technical civilisation, innovations, new social ideals and arts schools. Its population grew at an extremely rapid pace (by 22 500 people annually on the average between 1890 and 1900); it multiplied by five between 1848 and World War I. While only 1.5% of the Hungarian population lived in the capital city in the beginning of the 19th century, it was 5% by the early 20th century. The formation of the suburban-garden city ring around the capital city accelerated at around 1870.

The *regional centres*, taking shape around the turn of the century, were much more modest towns. Not one of the six towns offering all regional functions – Záhgráb [Zagreb], Pozsony [Bratislava], Kolozsvár [Cluj-Napoca], Kassa [Košice], Debrecen, Temesvár [Timișoara] – reached 100 000 population, and five of them are outside the present territory of Hungary. Even before the drawing of the “Trianon” borders, not more than 1–1.2 million people lived in their hinterlands, which is a too narrow background for the formation of a real large city, large regional centre. Only the situation of Záhgráb [Zagreb] was different: as the capital city of Croatia-Slavonia, enjoying a partial state sovereignty, it had a potential hinterland of 2–2.5 million people. Six more towns – Szeged, Nagyvárad [Oradea], Pécs, Győr, Arad and Brassó [Brașov] – functioned as incomplete regional centres. The origins and functions of the *county seat towns* were miscellaneous, most of them were raised to a high hierarchy level by their administrative functions. Some of them had only some 10 000 inhabitants in 1910. The Hungarian *small towns* on the turn of the century were usually settlements with a few thousand inhabitants, their urban functions were due to their role as administrative centres<sup>10</sup>. Otherwise they had rather “traditional” urban functions (retail trade, handicraftsmen, weekly markets and fairs), and they had quite a significant agricultural production (see also *Figure 2*). Their cityscape – with a few exceptions – could seem definitely rural in a Western European comparison.

## 2.5 The Hungarian urban network between the two World Wars

Before World War I, Hungary, as a part of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, was one of the European super powers. The Hungarian state was the sixth in Europe in territory and the seventh in the number of population.

After the central powers had lost the war, the multi-ethnic Monarchy disintegrated, and new states were founded in its place, or the countries on the side of the Entente (Italy, Rumania, Poland) increased their territories by the territories acquired from the falling apart Monarchy. The peace treaty made in Trianon next to Paris drastically changed the political situation and the geo-political relations of Hungary, also its economic potential. More than two-thirds (67.2%) of the territory of Hungary in the narrower sense (71.5% including Croatia), and 58.3% of the population (63.6% with Croatia) were *annexed to other states*. Hungary became one of the small states of Europe, and her natural and geographical unity ceased to exist. *The borders drawn at Trianon differed from the linguistic borders too*, to the detriment of Hungary. Three and a half million inhabitants with Hungarian mother language became minorities in the territories of the successor states (some one-third of all those who spoke Hungarian as mother tongue). The losses that the Hungarian economy faced were similar: Hungary lost almost nine-tenth of her forested areas, 83% of iron ore production and almost half of the production of manufacturing industry.

The consequences of the peace treaty were serious and influenced the whole period between the two world wars. In spite of the necessary reforms, the *territorial revision* (the so-called irredenta) became the focal point of politics. As a result of the trauma of Trianon and the revolutions of 1918 and 1919 (a civil democratic–republican revolution in 1918 and a communist one in 1919), the right wing gained power in Hungary, and the anti-liberal–conservative direction did not favour the bourgeois efforts.

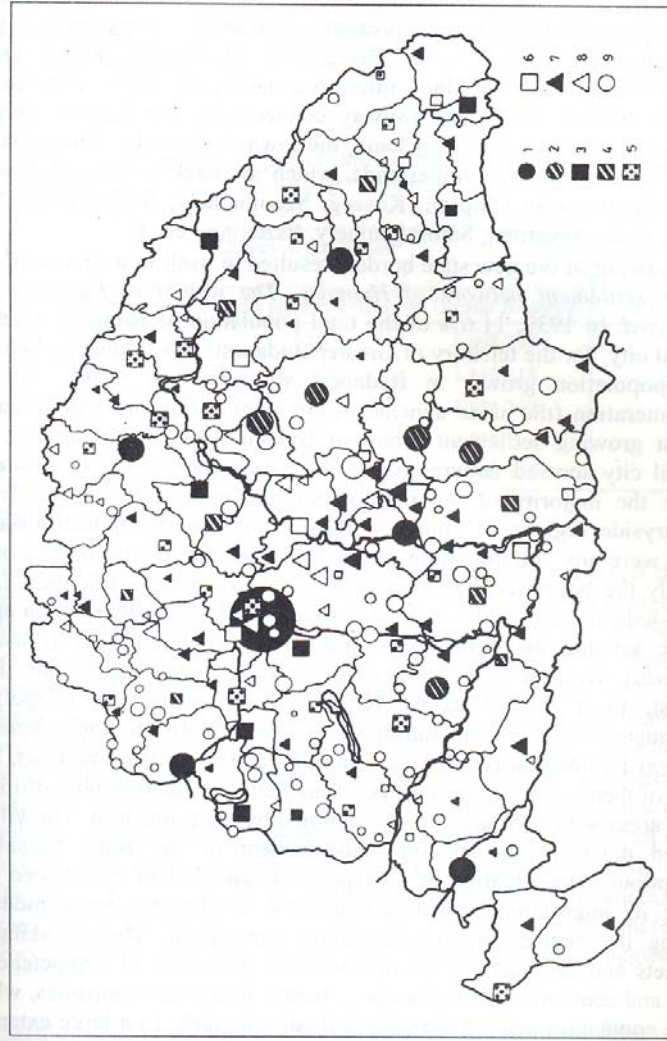
The changed situation and state borders of the country had a considerable impact on the development of the urban network:

- The new state borders entangled the economy, the transport network of Hungary and the system of hinterlands, the existing geographical division of labour. The state borders were artificial, only taking the strategic, economic and transportation interests of the successor states into consideration. The towns in the newly created border zone – despite the fact that the majority of



Figure 2

*The hierarchy system of the Hungarian towns in 1900*



(Based on own calculations by the author)

Key: 1 - complete regional centres; 2 - incomplete regional centres; 3 - complete, developed county seat towns; 4 - incomplete, developed county seats; 5 - incomplete county seat level towns; 6 - incomplete county seat level towns; 7 - complete middle towns; 8 - incomplete middle towns; 9 - major small towns (at district centre level)

their population were Hungarian –, were given to the successor states (Szabadka [Subotica], Nagyvárad [Oradea], Nagykároly [Carei], Szatmárnémeti [Satu Mare], Beregszász [Beregovo], Kassa [Košice], Komárom [Komarno]). Many micro-regions in the border zone lost their centres, market places and railway connections, and became peripheral, backward areas. On the other hand, the towns left on the “Hungarian side” were deprived of their hinterlands, which set back or slowed down their urban development (Sopron, Kőszeg, Szombathely, Nagykanizsa, Szeged, Makó, Balassagyarmat, Sátoraljaújhely, Esztergom etc.).

- The drawing of the new state borders resulted in itself in a *structural change in the settlement network of Hungary*. The weight of Budapest further increased. In 1930, 11.6% of the total population of Hungary lived in the capital city, for the territory of Greater Budapest, this figure reached 16.4%. The population growth in Budapest slowed down (Table 3), but its agglomeration (the areas annexed to the capital city in 1950) became the fastest growing settlement group in Hungary. The agglomeration of the capital city showed features typical of the *first phase of the urbanisation cycle*: the majority of the rapidly growing population arrived from the countryside regions of Hungary, mostly attracted by industrialisation. If there were any “outmigration” from Budapest, those who moved out were usually the poor who had been unable to take root in Budapest (tenants, night-lodgers etc.). Only in a few “colonies” of the agglomeration appeared public servants and employees working in the capital city (railwaymen, postmen). Besides a few *industrial suburbs* (most typical for this was Újpest, to a limited extent Kispest, Pesterzsébet and Csepel), most settlements of the agglomeration were dominated by *one-family houses with gardens* (residential type); they cannot be called garden city areas, because most of them were colonies on very small sites, without public utilities, they were areas with a village milieu inhabited by the proletariat. The villa-areas settled down in the pleasant environment of the Buda hillside were exceptions. The situation of Budapest was ambivalent in between the two wars: its international prestige decreased, it played a more modest role among the centres of socio-economic innovation. The shrinking of its markets and raw material producing areas, the areas of competence of its state and economic institutions (e.g. banks, insurance companies, wholesale trade companies etc.) slowed down its development to a large extent: some industries (especially the food processing plants) had unused capacities; the construction of public buildings was almost completely stopped, at the same time, as an after-effect of the former “innovation wave”, several modern branches of industry (pharmaceutical industry, telecommunication industry, manufacturing of light bulbs etc.) further developed, and as an effect of the

independent customs area, several sectors – e.g. the textile industry – increased their production. Budapest was still the sole representative of the “modern” Hungary.

Table 3.

*The change of the number of population in Budapest and its agglomeration 1910–1949\**

Year	Number of population			Growth in Greater Budapest;
	In Budapest	In the agglomeration	In Greater Budapest	1910 = 100%
1910	880 880	217 360	1 098 240	–
1920	929 690	287 928	1 217 618	110.9
1930	1 006 184	415 215	1 421 397	129.4
1941	1 164 963	547 828	1 712 791	156.0
1949	1 057 912	532 404	1 590 316	144.8

\* Within the contemporary administrative borders.

- The – relative – weight of Budapest was increased by the fact that 7 out of the 10 developing regional centres were taken away from Hungary, and the less developed Debrecen, Szeged and Pécs remained within the new borders, with a mutilated hinterland. The “catching up” of these towns was supported by the state, too: the University of Kolozsvár [Cluj] was “settled down” in Szeged, the young university of Pozsony [Bratislava] in Pécs, large-scale constructions were carried out for the placement of the University of Debrecen (the organisation of which had already started before World War I), they developed their tourism, but could not become real “counter-poles” of the capital city. Hungary still lacks real countryside middle towns or large towns in the European sense of the word.
- The level of urbanisation, the proportion of the urban population increased from 35.2% to 38.1% between the two world wars; the increase in this proportion was only due to the settlements in the Budapest agglomeration.

## 2.6 An ambiguous urban boom – the Hungarian towns in the “Socialist” era

A brand new situation occurred after World War II, when Hungary was forced into the Soviet block (“Yalta”). While the political and ideological, legal etc. conditions of Hungary (“the intellectual level”) turned towards “the East” in a sharp – and declared! – way, the “material level” could even produce some modernisation,

growth, “development”. The changed conditions *amounted to a rather ambiguous urban boom*. On one side of this asymmetric boom we find well known data and processes: rapid urbanisation which was most striking from the 1960s until the early 1980s, the rapid growth of the *number and proportion of the urban population* (1949: the number of the urban population is three and a half million, making 36.8% of the total population of Hungary; by 1970: 5.8 million urban inhabitants, which was 56.3% of the population; 1994: 6 and a half million urban citizens, 63.2% of the total Hungarian population), the quadruplicating of the number of settlements with town status (1945: 56 towns, 6 of which united with Budapest in 1950; 1995: 202 towns), the *construction of new towns* (Tiszaújváros, Százhalombatta, Dunaújváros, Kazincbarcika, Oroszlány, Komló etc.), the striking expansion of the urban functions of some settlements (Tatabánya, Salgótarján, Zalaegerszeg, Siófok, Gödöllő, Szentendre etc.). The Hungarian towns had passed the first urbanisation cycle, although only a few of them entered the second cycle; most of them, after the exhaustion of the “Socialist urban development energies”, are in a process where they have to find new ways (stagnation). The *volume of urban functions multiplied* (e.g. secondary and higher education, medical specialist service, retail trade etc.), also, they spread horizontally, too. The *correlation between the towns and their environs* is incomparably tighter than it was between the two world wars. There are clear evidences for the increase of the urban infrastructure, the results of the housing constructions, the increase of the school education of the urban population and the improvement in their living conditions. From an agricultural, single-town country, Hungary became a (medium) urbanised county.

This rapid urbanisation mostly relied on the *industrialisation* of Hungary. The main objective of the I. Five-Year Plan, starting on 1 January 1950, was “...the socialist industrialisation of the country and socialist reorganisation of a part of the agriculture”. The objective that had been originally set was to increase the industrial output by 90% within five years (within that, heavy industry by 105%), but these “obligations” were raised already in 1951 to 200 and 280%, respectively. Although the rudest means of pressure were occasionally used, the originally defined objectives could not be met, but the 130% increase of the industrial output (until 1955) and the start of several gigantic large-scale investments re-shaped the economic and employment structure in Hungary. The industrialisation in the beginning of the “socialist era” followed *patterns from the 19th century*, basically focusing on the production of raw materials, energy production and classical heavy industry. The scarcity of the investment goods forced the economic management to concentrate the investments into the *existing industrial areas*, industrial centres and Budapest, making use of the already given infrastructure. Most of the large-scale investments were made along the energy and heavy industrial “axis” between Veszprém and Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén county, the considerable state-financed

housing constructions took place here, this region was the destination of migration, and this was also the area where the “lasting” settlement development actions, the so-called “socialist towns” were built: these are *Ajka*, *Várpalota*, *Komló*, *Oroszlány*, *Sztálinváros* (the present Dunaújváros), *Tatabánya* and *Kazincbarcika*. In the beginning they were nothing more than hastily constructed housing estates for the huge new industrial establishments – iron smelters and steel manufacturing in Sztálinváros, power station and aluminium smelter in Várpalota, chemical plant in Kazincbarcika, a power station and coal mining feeding that in Oroszlány etc.<sup>11</sup>.

In the 1950s, the number of industrial employees increased by three-quarters of a million, a rapid employment shift took place in Hungary (between 1949 and 1960, the proportion of industrial earners grew from 21.6% to 34.0%). The shift of the proportions of employees in the different sectors of the economy was a “one-way street” then: workers leaving agriculture and becoming industrial employees. The shift of jobs took place *within the same generation* – those who had been working in agriculture for some time, were taken over by the industry; meanwhile they also changed their “social status”, becoming employees from independent small producers – and *not between generations*. This fact and the excessive speed of this process (the formation of the “industrial society” lasted for some 20 years, while it had been 80 to 100 years in Western Europe) had considerable impacts on society and the development of the settlements. Besides the industrial regions, the major administrative centres, the county seats were developed from significant state resources. Smaller towns, however, were neglected by the centralised economic development. The number of towns acknowledged in public administration rose slowly (in 1960, there were 63 towns in Hungary; the proportion of the urban population approached 40%).

After the first “long decade” of the Socialism (1948–1960), both the political and economic conditions of urban development – in general, settlement development – changed. After the revolt against the dictatorship (1956) and the following years of retaliation, by the mid-1960s the so-called “soft dictatorship” or “Kádarian consolidation” was created. The character of the management of the society did not change in the years of the “soft dictatorship”, either. Society and the local communities were not independent – they were controlled from above. The individuals had not real influence on the personnel, objectives and methods of the power. The relationship between the power and society did not change. The power, learning from the lessons of 1956, considered, for “self-defence” reasons, the “disarmament”, demobilisation of the society as one of its major tasks. These efforts included the exclusion of the society from decisionmaking, the serious restriction of the latitude of the civil sphere; on the other hand, the road to *individual achievements* was opened, the *state started to withdraw from the private sector* and ideology was pushed to the background when solving economic tasks. This policy lead, among other things, to securing the operation of the homesteads,

the spread of the second economy, finally to those societal and economic changes that made the “socialist model” of the practice of power impossible during the 1980s<sup>12</sup>.

The fundamental objectives of the *economic policy* did not change after 1956, either: the fastest possible (extensive) economic growth was forced, and all other “developments” – e.g. regional and settlement development – were subordinate to this purpose. Industry continued to be the centre of economic development. The expansion of the industrial production was the ultimate objective of economic policy, also, the most important tool for the solution of the major socio-economic tasks (e.g. total employment, development of the settlement network etc.). Industry was still a value “in itself” in the contemporary thinking. The development of infrastructure was still restricted to supplementing the most urgent shortages. At the same time, the objective of economic policy was changed in several partial issues: “industrialisation” now had to serve regional and settlement development purposes, too (decrease of the deepening regional disparities, urban development), also, industry was meant to guarantee total employment. The changing policy on living standards required the development of consumer goods and light industry. Finally, the exhaustion of the resources of the former industrial regions – labour force, infrastructure – promoted the deconcentration of industry. Industrialisation in the 1960s and 1970s was more balanced spatially and sectorally. However, industrialisation (together with the total of the economic development) was still extensive by nature: in the early 1960s, the number of industrial earners increased by 5–6% per year. In some counties, the number of industrial employees trebled or quadrupled in the period between 1960 and 1970. After the “success” of collectivisation – following 1960–1961, only 4% of the agricultural lands of Hungary remained privately owned –, a large number of labour force was released from agriculture (there were many who left agriculture because of their aversions to the co-operatives); this also forced the power to continue the extensive industrialisation and to concentrate housing constructions and infrastructural developments in the towns giving home to industry. As a consequence of this, *in the 1970s, 90% of all communal investments were implemented in towns* (which of course also meant a discriminative treatment against the villages).

Consequently, the two decades following the mid-1960s was the age of rapid industrialisation and extensive urban development. (The proportion of the agricultural earners of Hungary dropped to 24.4% by 1970, 15.4% by 1990). Despite the rapid population growth in the county seats, the so-called “socialist towns” and the few middle towns, the demand of the towns for industrial workers could only be met with a large-scale commuting. Every fifth industrial earner, approximately 1 million people commuted in Hungary in the 1970s and 1980s. (The population growth in Budapest was minimal, at the same time, because the immigration was restricted by administrative means. However, the agglomeration and

residential areas of the capital city grew rapidly.) From at least 60% of the villages, the active earners commuted in 1980.

The industrialisation standardised the towns; most of them became settlements with industrial functions (the other component of standardisation was the state-financed housing constructions, which almost exclusively meant the building of housing estates and panel flats).

The creation of the conditions of industrialisation and the rapid urban growth made it necessary to work out a national settlement network development concept; it was accepted in 1970<sup>13</sup>.

Finally, at the end of the so-called socialist era, 166 settlements had town status in Hungary; they gave home to just 60% of the population. Despite these unquestionable achievements, urban development was rather ambiguous – we stated earlier. The other side of the coin is not so much the *issue of "under-urbanisation"* (the fact that the growth of the urban population, especially in the 1960s, was not followed by an adequate growth in the number of jobs in the towns), the consequent *mass commuting*, the outdated, low quality level of the blocks of flats, the still missing public utilities, the *one-sided character of settlement development* – it is much more the fact that the *Hungarian towns* – in spite of all "developments" – *got closer to the Eastern European type of the towns than they had between the two world wars or in the dualist period.*

The elimination of the bourgeoisie as a social class changed at once the social content and character, the original essence of the towns. At the level of the ideology and in the everyday practice, the towns were the precious dwellings of the working class. The *ideological turn* did not only mean that – at least in the declarations – Marxism and Leninism were made the theoretical basis of the organisation of the society, but it also meant the ideology and even more so practice of power which were *deeply affected by the Eastern European features* surviving in the Soviet Union (totalitarian practice of power, lack of autonomy, lack of pluralism, lack of guarantees and stimuli provided by the private property etc.). It also meant that the ideology and its prophets were aliens, that continuity were denied, "locality" was neglected, traditional values did not receive any attention. All these features could be frequently seen in urban planning and development, as well. The "actions" served the ideology: during the constructions of the early blocks of flats, the establishment of the frameworks of the "socialist way of life" was attempted; urban constructions were meant to promote the expansion of the "leading force" of society, the working class etc. The prevalent ideology naturally resulted in a number of principles which affected the development of the settlement network. The *egalitarian ideas* are worth mentioning, as well as the promise for the elimination of the social, class and income differences, which had a direct effect on the basic objective of regional development: regional equalisation, the strive for the moderation of the regional

differences; the subordination of individual purposes to the communal purposes; the evaluation of the community life (several “norms” of the urban constructions served this purpose); the belief in the omnipotence of planning. Economic development also followed ideological objectives, struggling all the way with the harsh contradiction, which came from the fact that the political system stating its social-ideological-economic superiority *developed in the underdeveloped region of Europe*, thus the declared principles were daily confronted with the humiliating facts. This “incompatibility” deprived the socialist system from its primary, almost only reason for legitimacy, and drove it into a forced, excessive economic development programme, perpetuating the situation of the “war economy”, which only allowed a wasteful, necessarily selective development, within self-inducing and dictatorial conditions. It is true that the *selective nature* of the war economy favoured the towns, as the “robbed” resources were primarily from the villages, the agriculture – temporarily! –, infrastructure and the human resources. A necessary condition for the “war economy” was the concentration of the power, its monopolistic and dictatorial character, the tight correlation and the concentration of politics, power and economy, the control from the society “from above”, and the elimination of any kind of autonomy, including the autonomy of the municipalities.

Urban development and improvement became subject to *external* factors within such conditions; the position in the system of redistribution, the central regulation of the development of the individual sectors, the provisions of the also centrally made and accepted regional and settlement network development plans, the “dealings about the plans” defined the development possibilities of the individual regions and towns. This system neglected the effect of the local resources, the local income generating capacity, innovative capacities, the efforts of the local society, the “free competition” for the development resources etc. Autonomy, the most important characteristics of the western type urban development was also missing. This was the main purpose for the one-sided urban development in Hungary during the decades after 1945.

## **2.7 Conditions for urban development after 1990**

In the decades of the so-called soft dictatorship, Hungary was generally seen as being in the best position within the “socialist camp”. In the 1980s, however, the *signs of crisis* became more and more apparent (the increase of the debts, decline of real wages, decline in the relative development level etc.). These were only partially compensated by the measures taken in the frameworks of the new economic reform attempts after 1985 (price and import liberalisation, two-tier banking system, transformation of the system of taxation, spreading of the private property, guarantees of the economic laws for the investors and the private



economy etc.). These *internal processes*, the *shaping intentions of the different groups of society* – including the more and more influential so-called reform Communists in the top management of the “state party” –, and the favourable conditions of foreign politics led to the “constitutional take-over” in Hungary in 1989–1990. In 1989, the negotiations between the powers of the opposition and the state party created the possibilities for the constitutional, multi-party parliamentary democracy. The parliamentary elections held in the spring of 1990 resulted in the *victory of the opposition*. This did not only mean a political turn, but the fundamental transformation of the social and economic structure also started: the monolithic state socialist social and political arrangement was replaced by a pluralist “market economy” based on private property, and by the society of this market economy. We have to add that the post-socialist era started with a *deep recession* – partly as a result and necessary consequence of these transitions –, which turned out to be *lasting* by now. Naturally it thoroughly affects each segment of the transitions. (Between 1988 and 1993, the number of industrial earners dropped by approximately 540,000 people, i.e. by 38%, the total number of employees by 1.1 million people.) Still, amidst the signs of crisis, the building out of the market economy accelerated after 1989:

- most of the legal and economic institutional system of the market economy has been built out;
- because of the privatisation of the state property, the influx of the foreign working capital and the mass foundation of businesses, *ownership patterns* have changed, as have the *organisational forms of the economy*. The number of economic organisations has grown by leaps;
- a change in the foreign trade has occurred (which changes the location values of the different parts of the country).

*The direct effects of the “re-capitalisation” on the development of the urban network are as follows:*

- the location of the economy takes place in accordance with the rules of the market competition, with only indirect state (counties, regional development organs) intervention. The “movements” of the economy are defined by the endowments of the settlements (geographical location, labour supply, purchasing power, the quality of the labour force, the state of the environment, infrastructural provision etc.);
- economic investments used to be escorted by infrastructure developments, housing constructions by the state etc. This connection has ceased to exist by now. Naturally it also limits the tools of regional development. The tight correlation between industrial development and settlement development does not exist any longer;
- the “movements” and location of the economy considering market conditions have led to the birth of new disparities. Economic developments

do not have “social political” motives now. The regional rearrangement of the economy has already started (see below). The regions with favourable endowments – Budapest, the environment of the capital city, Northwest Transdanubia and the Balaton region – are home to the majority of the economic companies. The regional structure of the country is changing.

The new Act on Local Governments (1990) increased the independence and autonomy of the municipalities and decreased the disproportion in their “financing”. The municipalities are given a normative central provision. They are entitled to levy local taxes, but because of the high rates of the central taxes, the possibilities of local taxation are limited. Thus two-thirds of the total income of the municipalities come from the central budget. This fundamental change in the practice of local government financing, and the self-governance that was provided (again) for each municipality moderated the handicaps of settlements, the hierarchy among the villages blurred, and the advantages and disadvantages coming from the legal status decreased.

The Act on Local Governments *does not differentiate between towns and villages*, and neither has the practice of the financing of the municipalities. This fact “liberalised” the practice of the awards of town status (see below).

- *The spatial structure of Hungary is changing.* The Hungarian spatial structure before 1990 was characterised by the *regional (county level) equalisation*, which included both the economy (e.g. level of industrialisation, volume of production investments, provision of “producer” infrastructure etc.) and the living conditions, economic activity, incomes etc. of the population. At the same time, a strong differentiation emerged *along the hierarchy of the settlements*, both in the composition and demographic features of the society (at the lower levels of the hierarchy, the proportion of the ageing, less educated, unskilled, low income population was higher) and in the local labour markets, with respect to living conditions, basic supply etc. Thus the spatial structure had a mosaic-like character. Today the *inverse* of this situation is typical: the favourable or unfavourable phenomena appear at *territorial, regional level* (changing geographical location, formation of crisis regions etc.), the differences among the regions become dominant, whereas *the differences among the individual settlements have decreased*. The regional belonging more and more strictly determines the possibilities of the development of the settlements.
- The *priority of the factors making the differences* among the regions and settlements is changing, too. While formerly the position in the settlement hierarchy, the closely related infrastructural and institutional provision were the primary factors of differentiation, and the effects of the labour market conditions – need to commute, circumstances of commuting, slight differences among the potential incomes – were weaker within the

frameworks of full employment, today it is more and more the *income possibilities* that determine the situation of a given region (chances of the businesses, labour market conditions, assessment of the investors etc.).

- The Hungarian *macro-regions* that give the background of urban development are as follows:
  - *Northwest Hungary and the Budapest agglomeration* (Győr-Moson-Sopron, Vas, Veszprém, Zala, Komárom-Esztergom counties, the northern part of Fejér county). Its skeleton is made up by three *dynamic zones*: *Budapest and its agglomeration* (Budapest is the “headquarters” of several activities again, with a 40 to 100% share from the total national products of some activities), the *Balaton region* and the settlements along the *Vienna-Budapest axis*, above all Sopron, Győr and Mosonmagyaróvár.
  - *Northeast Hungary*: the region from Nógrád county through Szolnok to Békés is the largest crisis-stricken, disadvantageous macro-region in Hungary. Part of it is the eastern wing of the former “energy axis”, today known as the “rust belt”, and the northern part of the “traditionally” lagging behind region east of the Tisza river.
  - *South Hungary* is only homogeneous to some extent because of its development level, otherwise it contains regions rather different in natural endowments, economic structure and the characteristics of the settlement network.

### 3 The contemporary urban network of Hungary

#### 3.1 Towns, urbanisation level, proportion of the urban population

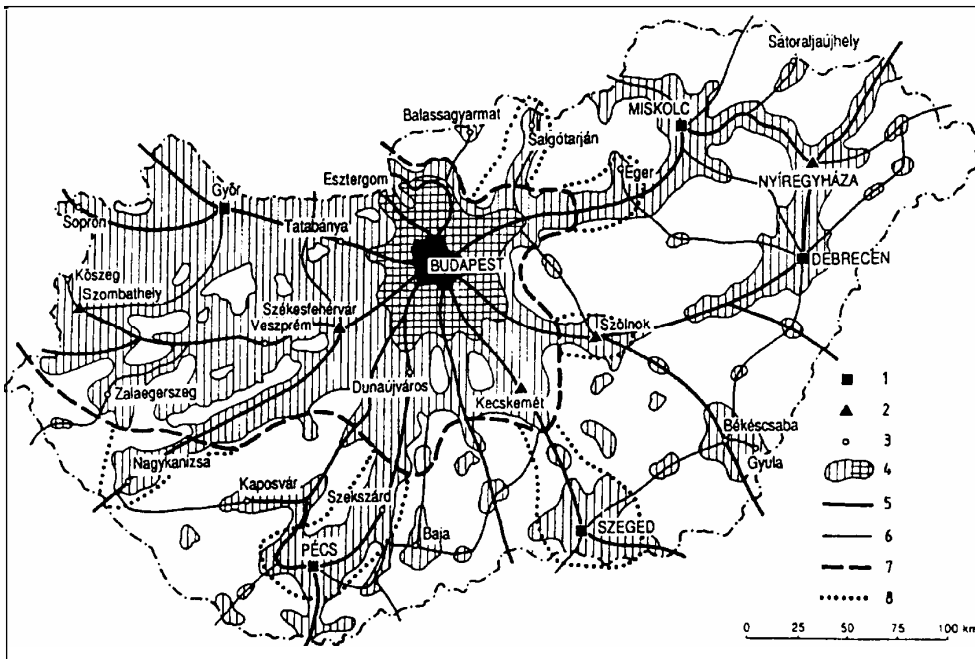
A concomitant of the birth of the “industrial towns” is the accelerating urbanisation, the influx of the population into the towns, in some cases the urban booms, agglomeration, the creation of extended residential areas. While in an agricultural country the towns stand out like islands from the continuous rural (agricultural, village-dominated) spaces – like in Hungary until the 1940 –, with the progress of urbanisation, the urbanised zones (both in quantitative and qualitative sense) reach into the rural areas, they extend and finally split the rural regions; finally it is the “rural” zones that are torn apart and become small islands. However, as “urbanisation” is a rather complex notion – which means the spread of the urban functions, urban technical civilisation and lifestyle, the tight connections to the urban core areas (agglomeration), the transformation of the cityscape, the penetration of the urban occupations etc. –, the assessment and mapping of its spatial extent depends on the attitude of the researchers, i.e. to which constituents of the urbanisation the researcher attributes a dominant significance. As an exposition of the issue, see the intuitive picture of *Tóth, József* and *Berényi, István* of the spatial extent of the urbanisation process in Hungary (*Figure 3*). Obviously the authors accepted the traditional view of urbanisation, demonstrating North Transdanubia and the broader environment of Budapest as an almost completely urbanised zone, while only considering a few deficient “urbanisation axes” in the Great Hungarian Plain. This concept definitely evaluates certain qualitative features (cityscape, development of the infrastructure, traditions of urban life etc.), at the same time treats the urbanisation of the Great Plain with reservations.<sup>14</sup> We do not comment on this view in this place, we note that the measurement of the quantitative aspect of urbanisation is more unequivocal – either we think in legal or functional (settlement geographical) categories –, although the quantification does not reflect all aspects of the urbanisation.

Hungary had 52 (legally accepted) towns in 1945, presently (1998) their number is 218; 6.8% of the municipalities have towns status (*Table 4*).

In the decades of the “planned economy”, town status had a large number of privileges, above all a favourable position in the system of state redistribution, advantage in the location of urban institutions, administration with bigger number of personnel, power and income (council, party organs etc.). The award of town status was restricted, connected to strict criteria. As for the relationship between settlements with town *rank* and settlements with urban *functions*, those *with town status* were less than the ones *with urban functions*. A large number of *villages* had

Figure 3

*Regional differences of urbanisation in Hungary*



(Eds.: Tóth, József and Berényi, István)

Key: 1 – higher order centres; 2 – rapidly growing towns; 3 – county seats and other middle towns;  
 4 – urbanised areas and the urban region of Budapest; 5 – main directions of the spatial connections; 6 – directions of the interregional connections; 7 – borders of the strongly urbanised zone; 8 – urbanised extensions

Table 4.

*The transition of the number of towns in Hungary, 1945–1996*

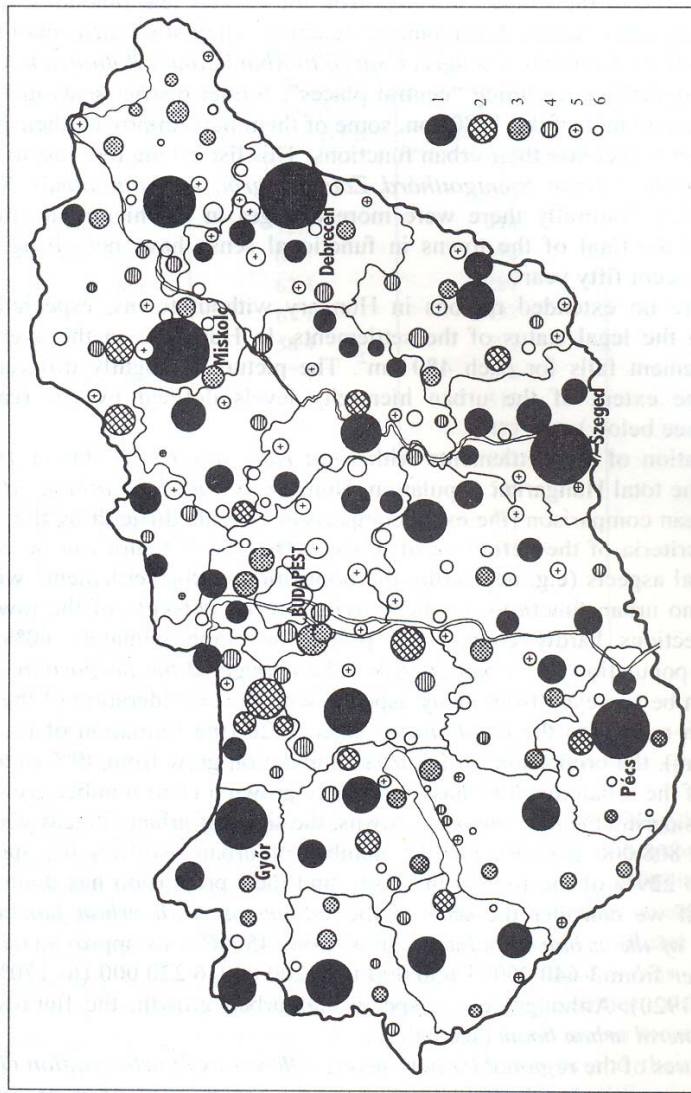
Year	Number of towns
1945	52
1960	63
1970	76
1982	96
1984	109
1988	125
1990. (1. January)	166
1993	184
1995. (1. January)	194
1996. (1. July)	206

definitely urban functions, they even had meso-level (central) functions in the system of public administration, as district centres. Right after World War II, approximately one-third of the settlements that were towns functionally had town rank, in the early 1970s half of them. In the mid-1980s, the value of the town status started to decline (because of the decrease in the volume of the infrastructure distributed by the state – e.g. housing –, more proportionate distribution of the financial tools of the councils etc.), simultaneously, the number of settlements that were awarded town status grew rapidly (in 1989, 41 new towns!). Around 1990, the *settlements with town status and urban functions* mostly *coincided* (with 166 towns in January 1990); the continuation of the awards of town status resulted in a situation where a large number of settlements with town status do not have or have hardly any urban functions (Pécel, Elek, Máriapócs, Ibrány, Nagyhalász, Téglás, Újfehértó, Hajdúhadház, Jászfényszaru, Balatonföldvár etc.). The Act on Local Governments in 1990 (in an attempt to avoid the abuses around the awards of town status, such as the artificial increase of the population number, the violent annexation of some villages to towns, campaign-like developments carried out to the detriment of the “rural areas” etc.), made it possible for a large number of villages to receive the town status (*Figure 4.*). In 1995, the competent ministry of the municipalities (the Ministry of Interior) detailed in a communiqué the criteria of winning the town status, but in the practice these principles are neglected.

Besides the quadruplicating of the settlements with town rank, the birth of real towns, the development of certain settlements into towns was rather exceptional in the recent half a century. During the 1950s and 1960s, the so-called socialist towns and the intensively developed infrastructural villages acquired new urban functions and became the centres of their environment (Kazinbarcika, Tiszaújváros, Dunaújváros, Ajka, Várpalota, Dorog, Ózd etc.). Urban institutions settled down later in a few holiday resorts, too, but among them only *Siófok* and *Balatonfüred* became versatile small towns with a significant attraction for the surrounding villages. In the recent years a few settlements in the *Budapest agglomeration*, with a large number of population, have received enough urban functions to reach the level of the small towns (Budaörs, Érd, Szigetszentmiklós, Dunakeszi), but they have a special position in the settlement network (lack of hinterland, limited volume of urban functions compared to the size of the population, agglomeration-like connections with their environment etc.). The position in the settlement network in itself and the demand for central functions hardly evoked the development of new towns; maybe *Encs*, in the Cserehát area, which was developed into the centre of the small village dominated area of the Hernád Valley, and *Lenti*, that grew (was developed) in the region of Zala, in an area lacking towns, can be mentioned here. On the other hand, the urban functions of several small towns was endangered in the 1960s and 1970s, when they were deprived of

Figure 4

*Dates of awards of the towns status to the Hungarian towns*



(Ed. by Beluszky, Fál, based on the following sources: Regional Statistical Annuals and the Register of the Hungarian Place-names, 1995)

Key: 1 – before 1 January 1945; 2 – 1945-1960; 3 – 1961-1980; 4 – 1981-1987; 5 – 1988-1990; 6 – after 1990 (The size of the circles is proportionate to the number of population in the given towns)

the main source of their urban development, the district seat functions, and were not given any other “urban development” function. The list of such small towns is rather long, from *Vasvár to Csenger, Csurgó to Abaújszántó, Battonya to Csepreg*, there were dozens of declining “central places”, former district seats in Hungary. From the second half of the 1980s on, some of them have improved their positions and managed to increase their urban functions. This list is long too, just to mention a few examples: *Vasvár, Szentgotthárd, Zalaszentgrót, Tab, Bácsalmás, Szécsény, Putnok, Tokaj*. Naturally there were more changes in the hierarchic order (see below), but the total of the towns in functional sense have not changed much during the recent fifty years.

There are no extended regions in Hungary without towns, especially when considering the legal status of the settlements. In Hungary, on the average one urban settlement falls for each 480 km<sup>2</sup>. The picture is slightly different if we examine the extent of the urban hierarchy levels defined by the real urban functions (see below).

The population of the settlements with *town rank* was 6 430 000 in 1995, i.e. 62.8% of the total Hungarian population. Hungary is a *medium urbanised country* in a European comparison (the exact comparison is made difficult by the different statistical criteria of the definition of towns). The above figure can be corrected from several aspects (e.g. neglecting the population of the settlements with town status but no urban functions, or those living on the outskirts of the towns), but these corrections hardly change the proportions: approximately 60% of the Hungarian population are urban citizens. The *change of the proportion* of urban citizens can be surveyed from many aspects: with the consideration of the *present towns* (with respect to the *legal status*) since 1920 (the formation of the present state borders), the proportion of the urban population grew from 49% to 63%, i.e. the share of the urban dwellers has moderately grown. (Their number grew by just 64%). Considering the *contemporary towns*, the share of urban citizens was 35.2% in 1920 (2 808 000 people), i.e. the number of urban dwellers has more than doubled (to 229% of the figures in 1920), and their proportion has doubled, too. However, if we consider the data of the *settlements with urban functions*, the *proportion of the urban population* grew from 45–46% to approximately 60%, their *number* from 3 640 000–3 650 000 to 6 200 000–6 220 000 (to 170% of the figures in 1920). Although it is a spectacular urban growth, the figures *do not reveal a general urban boom* (see below).

The figures of the *regional* (county level) *differences of urbanisation* (Table 5.) still show, as opposed to the public belief and the general view of urbanisation, the higher urbanisation level of the Great Plain. This is the consequence of the special settlement system of the Great Plain.



Table 5.

*The level of urbanisation in the counties, 1995*

Counties	Share of urban population in per cent	County are per town, in km <sup>2</sup>	County population per town, persons
1. Budapest	100.0	525	1 930 014
2. Csongrád	74.0	533	53 595
3. Hajdú-Bihar	72.9	414	36 657
4. Jász-Nagykun-Szolnok	64.7	374	28 189
5. Komárom-Esztergom	62.4	281	39 104
6. Békés	61.7	433	31 147
7. Bács-Kiskun	58.4	597	38 669
8. Baranya	57.7	748	68 668
9. Veszprém	56.1	515	42 098
10. Vas	54.9	477	38 939
11. Győr-Moson-Sopron	54.6	812	85 105
12. Zala	53.9	541	43 206
13. Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén	52.8	483	49 971
14. Fejér	52.0	625	60 794
15. Tolna	48.6	529	35 719
16. Somogy	47.7	503	28 208
17. Nógrád	44.9	424	37 328
18. Heves	44.5	520	47 146
19. Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg	44.2	371	35 797
20. Pest	36.3	400	60 830
Total:	62.8	480	52 813

The number of population per one town is varied (in Jász-Nagykun-Szolnok and Somogy counties it is only 28 000 people, in Győr-Moson-Sopron 85 000, in Baranya almost 70 000 people), offering rather limited possibilities for the concentration of urban functions and the birth of bigger towns in several counties.

The features of the settlement network do not allow a significant raise in the urbanisation level in the larger part of Hungary. In Veszprém, Vas, Zala, Győr-Moson-Sopron, Somogy and Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg counties, although their urbanisation level is not better than average, simply there are no more settlements suitable for urban functions. The population of the towns and their hinterlands together (the 3rd column of *Table 5.*) would only allow the proliferation of the real towns if either the purchasing power of the population grew significantly or the judgement of the urban functions changed. In areas with extremely fragmented, sporadic settlements (e.g. in Scandinavia, some regions of North America), lots of

the institutions, the post office, bank office, physician, chemist's shop etc. are considered as "urban" institutions. More exactly: "central functions", which are not necessarily urban.

After the large-scale declaration of new towns in the recent half a decade, the majority of the towns are small towns – considering the number of their population –, almost two-thirds of them do not have 10 000 inhabitants, and every tenth town is home to less than 5 000 people. Another 31% of the towns are home to 10 000 to 20 000 people, i.e. 70.4% of the Hungarian towns are small towns by the Hungarian standards. On the other hand, the number of bigger towns (medium and large towns) has grown in the recent decades: in 1960, there were only three towns in Hungary (apart from Budapest) with a population over 100,000 people, with *Miskolc* having the largest number of population, a bit less than 150 000 inhabitants. Today there are 8 towns with more than 100 000 people, in fact, Debrecen has more than 200 000 – but there are no towns in the "vacancy" between *Debrecen* with its 210 000 inhabitants and Budapest. In the international practice, towns with more than 250 000, or even 500 000 people are considered as large towns; if we accept these figures, there is only one large town in Hungary, Budapest.

In the Great Plain, the *threshold of urbanisation* is high, at approximately 10 000 inhabitants. There are a few settlements with a population of 7 000–10 000 people in the Great Plain too, where the urban functions appeared, but these functions are rather obscure. On the other hand, even those settlements that have more than 10 000 inhabitants and have town rank are at the very bottom of the urban hierarchy (*Balmazújváros*: 17 971 people, *Abony*: 14 858; *Tiszavasvári*: 14 234; *Hajdúhadház*: 13 287; *Újfehértó*: 13 007 people etc.). In *Balmazújváros*, e.g., where 18 000 people live, there is no court, hospital, travel agency, tourism office, land office, no hotel, real estate agent, there is only one savings bank office, there are 13.7 secondary school students per 1 000 inhabitants, as opposed to the average of 49.6 etc. The large number of settlements with large population allows the *modification of the urban functions*, on the other hand, the large number of settlements with more or less urban functions results in the fragmentation of the urban functions. This is especially typical in the middle part of the region east of the Tisza River, where not one middle town has been able to emerge from the dozens of small towns. The higher threshold values of urbanisation also mean that the same "amount" of urban functions gives a much more expressed urban profile to a Transdanubian small town than one in the Great Plain.

Table 6.

*The distribution of the towns by the number of population, 1996*

Population number categories	Number of towns	In per cent of the total of towns
> 4 999	20	9.7
5 000 – 9 999	60	29.1
10 000 – 14 999	41	19.9
15 000 – 19 999	24	11.6
20 000 – 29 999	23	11.2
30 000 – 49 999	17	8.3
50 000 – 99 999	12	5.8
100 000 – 199 999	7	3.4
200 000 – 299 999	1	0.5
Budapest	1	0.5
Total	206	100.0

### 3.2 The hierarchy of the Hungarian towns

The role of the individual towns in the *settlement network* is most directly shown by the *position in the (urban) hierarchy*. The hierarchic division among the settlements, the *hierarchy “level” (centralisation level) of the towns depends on the quantity and the qualitative combination of the basic urban functions*. The basic urban functions contain institutions and activities of the service branches in the broader sense which satisfy non-everyday needs. The hierarchy level (level of centralisation) can be comprehended by the absolute values of the basic urban functions, but also by the quantity of the urban services provided for the “rural areas”. This latter definition of the hierarchy levels, which is based upon the so-called “value added”, spread after the classic of the hierarchy researches, *Walter Christaller*, and similar surveys have been carried out in Hungary, too. Looking at areas with homogeneous settlement network, the findings of the two approaches are similar, but if we examine together the settlements networks organised by different principles – Transdanubia and the Great Plain –, the disparities are significant. The hierarchy surveys are also different with respect to whether they try to enumerate the wide range of urban functions (making an inventory of them) or they define the hierarchy level by the data of some element of the centralisation level and its consequences<sup>15</sup>. The author of these lines has tried several times and for several periods to reconstruct or define the hierarchic order of the towns. (See

above the survey concerning the turn of the century.) In all surveys, the inventory method was applied.

At the survey of the present urban hierarchy, the presence or absence of 174 indices was registered town by town. As the situation of Budapest is evident on the top of the Hungarian settlement hierarchy, the institutions and functions of national scale were not listed. These indices were divided into hierarchic categories according to their frequency. The number of categories was defined by our previous studies, in an empirical way. Aside from Budapest, the following levels were defined:

*I. Regional centres*; their characteristic institutions in Hungary are the universities, offices of airlines, post office directorates, dialysis centres, at least 25 finance institutions etc.

*II. County seats*; their defining institutions are county courts, colleges, oncological and orthopaedic departments of hospitals, episcopates, chambers of commerce etc.

*III. Middle towns*; their institutions are as follows: urological, ophthalmologic departments of hospitals, archives, at least 9 finance institutions, secondary schools of different profiles etc.

*IV. Small towns*; town courts, notaries, tourism offices, real estate agencies, travel agencies, car dealers etc.

*V. Urbanising settlements* (elementary centres); their institutions are: attorneys, ambulance station, bookshop, secondary school, finance institution, branch of insurance company etc.

Having done this, we found out to what extent the indices of the individual hierarchy levels were typical of the towns; the individual towns were put into the highest category where they had the majority of the indices (above 80% they were considered as complete, from 66 to 80% as deficient and from 50 to 65% as partial centres).

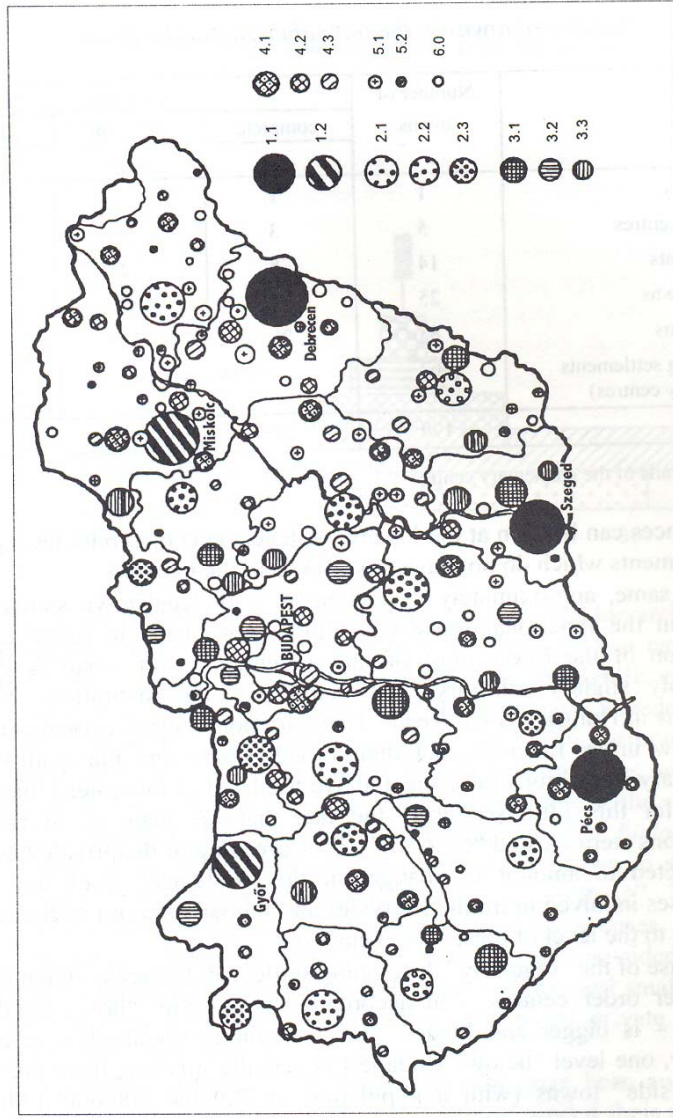
As a result of this enumeration, *we found that approximately 190 Hungarian settlements are towns in the functional (geographical) sense.* Their distribution at the different levels of the hierarchy can be seen in *Table 7.* and *Figure 5.*

*Our findings were as follows:*

- There is a good correlation between the *settlements with urban functions and with town status*, despite the fact that, as we have mentioned earlier, the donation of the town status has already reached beyond the settlements with urban functions. The number of settlements belonging to the two categories are similar: 218 of them have town status and – according to the author – 190 have urban functions. All of those 128 settlements that are indisputably towns (with the small towns at the end) are endowed with town status. The

Figure 5

*Hierarchy of the Hungarian towns, 1995*



(Source: Calculations by the author)

Key: 1.1 – regional centres; 1.2 – regional centres with deficient functions; 2.1 – regional centres with deficient functions; 2.2 – county seats with deficient functions; 2.3 – incomplete county seats; 3.1 – middle towns; 3.2 – middle towns with deficient functions; 3.3 – incomplete middle towns; 4.1 – small towns; 4.2 – small towns with deficient functions; 4.3 – incomplete small towns; 5.1 – major settlements with urban character; 5.2 – urbanised settlements; 6 – settlements with town status but no urban functions

• Table 7.  
*Number of towns in the individual hierarchy levels*

Hierarchy level	Number of towns	Of which		
		complete	deficient	partial
		centre		
I. Capital city	1	1	–	–
II. Regional centres	5	3	2	–
III. County seats	14	8	2	4
IV. Middle towns	25	9	7	9
V. Small towns	83	26	29	28
VI. Urbanising settlements (elementary centres)	62	without details		
Total	190	47*	40*	41*

\* Without the details of the elementary centres

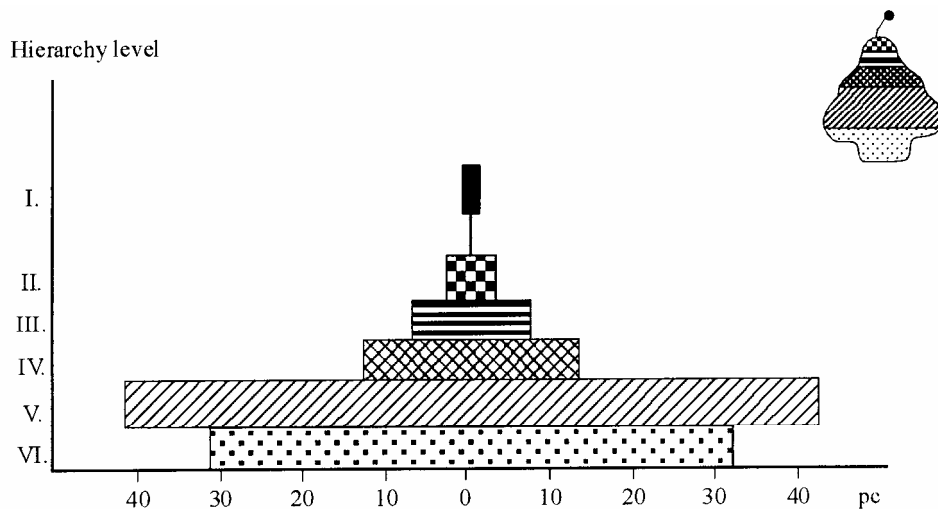
differences can be seen at the lowermost level. This hierarchy level contains 6 settlements which do not have town status at the moment.

At the same, approximately 25 settlement with legal town status are not towns in the functional sense yet, although we have to remark that the definition of the lower limit of the settlements with urban functions is inevitably slightly arbitrary. The *scatter* of the institutions of urban functions in Hungary *is moderate*. There are not so many settlements which have few urban functions but their broad supply and the quality of the elementary institutions raise them above the level of the other villages. The reason for this little scatter is the fact that the majority of the urban institutions were located “centrally”. The spreading of the private businesses is expected to amount to changes at this settlement level, and by the businesses involved in trading, services and tourism, several settlements can grow up to the level of these “town embryos”.

- In the case of the “regularly” developing settlement hierarchy, the number of the lower order centres – in accordance with some “law”, fixed index number – is bigger and bigger, thus a hierarchy pyramid is created. In Hungary, one level “below” Budapest is actually missing, there are no real “countryside” towns (with a population of 300 000–500 000–1 000 000). The number of regional centres and county seats is “regular”, but the number of middle towns and even more the “town embryos” is lower than could be expected. In spite of a hierarchy pyramid, a “*hierarchy pear*” appeared in Hungary; the reasons are analysed below (*Figure 6*).

Figure 6

*Breakdown of the Hungarian towns by hierarchy levels*



- Based on a similar approach, the author defined the hierarchic order of the Hungarian towns in the 1960s. During the 30 years that have passed since then, the position of *just one-third of the towns* has significantly changed:
  - the towns in the agglomeration of Budapest have considerably improved their positions: *Szentendre* was around the 100th position in the order in the 1960s, it was a small town with deficient functions, while it is among the middle towns today (with the 33rd position in the order), having a large number of county level institutions; also, *Érd*, *Budaörs*, *Százhalombatta*, *Szigetszentmiklós* and *Dunakeszi* have grown to settlements with small towns central functions from almost “nothing”. The quantity of their urban functions is also considerable in some cases. In spite of their favourable positions, their urban functions are one-sided – e.g. there is not a single hospital in any of the above-mentioned small towns –, their advancement is due to the rapid growth of the private sector (trading, tourism and financial services).
  - A number of *holiday and bathing resorts* have been awarded the town status in the recent years, some of them expanded their urban functions, too: *Balatonboglár*, *Fonyód* and *Balatonalmádi* have become small towns, but *Siófok*, *Balatonfüred* and *Balatonlelle* have improved their positions, too. The central functions of these towns are also special: on the one hand, they are one-sided (with the exception of *Siófok* and partly

Balatonfüred), with outstanding positions of the sectors connected to tourism, on the other hand, they are characterised by a *large-scale seasonality*; their urban functions cease their operation almost completely in the winter months.

- The so-called *socialist towns* have improved their positions, too, but this advancement was mostly due to the 1960s and 1970s. In the recent years, however, they have faced serious structural crises and have not proved to be successful in the acquisition of “new” functions. On the other hand, most of the industrial towns have integrated into the settlement network and reached high positions in the hierarchy (*Dunaújváros* and *Ózd* are middle towns, while *Kazinbarcika*, *Ajka*, *Komló* and *Várpalota* are developed small towns).
- As a result of the transition of the *regional situation*, the *positions of Győr and Sopron, in the western part of Hungary*, have improved too; Győr has almost caught up with Miskolc – although still being the 5th in the order – , it is equal with the other regional centres – e.g. Győr is the most significant finance institute centre in the countryside –, but its disadvantages in the field of the functions located by the state have continued to exist (e.g. in university and college training). *Sopron* has not moved much upwards in the hierarchy order, either, but *it is* the only non-county seat town that is considered as *a county centre*, because of the functions dominated by the private sector, too (tourism, trade, private practitioners, business services, financial services etc.).
- Several traditional middle towns that had not acquired new functions in the previous decades have got into a *less favourable position*, and their traditional market centres–small-scale industry–service functions have fallen back to the level of the small towns, as well.
- Also, the former *district seats*, that used to have small town functions but lost their administrative roles in the 1960s and 1970s, and have not been able to substitute them with other activities – e.g. industry, tourism –, have fallen back in the hierarchic order. The majority of them have been “compensated” by the award of the town status in the recent years, but their chances to get back their former importance is limited.

Despite the changes in the positions of these towns, the *Hungarian settlement hierarchy has proved to be stable in the recent decades*, both in structure, the number of the towns and the positions of most of the towns.

The *regional centres* have not changed. There are still three towns which are completely up to this function: *Szeged*, *Debrecen* and *Pécs*. The position of *Győr* has slightly changed. Győr did not have regional roles on the turn of the century, and there was no regional centres in the north-western part of Transdanubia: some functions were supplied by *Győr*, *Sopron* and *Szombathely*, but *Pozsony* (the now



Bratislava), *Budapest*, and even *Vienna* contributed to the regional supply of West Transdanubia. *Győr* started to create its regional role after the Treaty of Trianon, but without much state support, just like after 1945. It has a low position among the higher education centres of the countryside and it has not become a regional health care centre, either. In the recent years, however, *Győr* has become the most important financial, business and trading centre of the countryside, its tourism and business service sectors have increased etc. By these functions, *Győr* has caught up with the other regional centres, while *its positions in the market sphere hierarchy and in the hierarchy of the public–local governmental institutions are diverging*. This is a sign of the rearrangement of the urban hierarchy, where it is possible in some cases for the trade–service–business–tourism centres and the administrative centres to split. *Miskolc*, despite of its privileged position for several decades, has not strengthened its position in the highest hierarchy class, even the *quantity* of its urban functions lags behind the three leading regional centres.

We have already mentioned the gap between the weight of the urban functions of *Budapest* and the regional centres. The tenfold difference, which can be seen in the number of population, is just as big, in some cases bigger with respect to the higher level urban functions (e.g. the capital city manages 85-93% of all banking transactions on its own, the number of qualified researchers is almost twenty times higher than in the regional centres etc.). *Frank-Dieter Grimm*, in his essay on the urban system of Central and Eastern Europe, put the major towns into five hierarchy categories; *Budapest* was in the first grade, while the Hungarian regional centres only in the third or fourth category. The second category did not contain any Hungarian towns, and only two towns from the Carpathian Basin, Pozsony (the now Bratislava) and Kolozsvár (the now Cluj-Napoca)<sup>16</sup>. The number of population in the regional centres was rather low (178 000 people on the average), their “potential hinterlands” were quite small, too (with 1–1.2 million inhabitants), so they could not be developed “up” to become real counter-poles for the capital city.

The *county centres* make a homogeneous and very stable group in the urban hierarchy. Each county seat – which does not belong to higher hierarchy levels – is in this category, but only one town besides them: *Sopron*. The role of the counties decreased with the Act on Local Governments enacted in 1990, but that of the county seats not so much. Most branches of the public administration still operate their regional institutions within the frameworks of the counties (e.g. land offices, statistical offices, medical officer’s service, tax offices, central police stations, county general assemblies etc.), and so does jurisdiction. With only a few exceptions, the seats of these institutions are the county seats. The institutional system of the formerly “nationalised” socio-economic tasks was also organised within county frameworks, many times without sound reasons (museum directorates, county libraries, archives, finance institutions, chambers of commerce,

tourism boards, telegram offices, publishing of countryside newspapers, social security offices etc.). This *system has hardly changed to date*, providing a large number of offices and institutions, public servants and professionals. Especially before the systemic change, their sphere of action and competence was significant too, and they also enjoyed further advantages (relatively high level of budgetary supports, public housing constructions, prestige investments, institutions not strictly linked to county seats, e.g. higher education institutions etc.). Their role is increased by the fact that the meso-level of public administration was eliminated, and the competence of the state organs only “reach down” to the county seats. They can preserve their advantages for a long period of time. Until now only one non-county seta town, *Sopron* has reached the level of the county centres. Making use of its now very favourable traffic situation, Sopron, just like Győr, has accumulated functions and institutions to an extent above the average of the county seats in the trade–service–tourism–business sphere. The county seats are divided from the next category (the middle towns) by a rather deep “hierarchy gap”.

The 25 *middle towns* are thus well separated from the county seats, but the transition towards the small towns is gradual, and if we consider the settlement hierarchy as a system in which the number of settlements is multiplied at the lower levels of the hierarchy, the number of middle towns seems to be rather small. Presently this hierarchy level does not unequivocally mean an “organic” and necessary element of the hierarchy system, and is weakening both in number and importance. The reasons for that are as follows:

- The “official” intermediary hierarchy level *between* the county seats and the small towns (the former county seats) was and still is missing. The former settlement network development concept did not acknowledge this level, either; the grade following the higher level centres, which mostly coincided with the county seats, was the medium level centres, including both the middle and the small towns. Even if there were towns standing out from the level of the small towns, these were not administrative–religious–cultural centres, but either trade–small-scale industry–domanial centres – such as *Mohács, Nagykanizsa, Baja*, partly *Pápa* and *Vác* etc. – or country-towns in the Great Plain, with a large number of population. As these functions did not guarantee the necessary resources for urban development in the previous decades, several of these centres fell back in the hierarchy order.
- The competition of the county seats blocked the improvement in the positions of the small towns and the increase of their number. This “competition” was spontaneous in some cases (the county seat has a considerable weight within the county and no other town can emerge from among the small towns; Szombathely in Vas county, Pécs in Baranya, Kaposvár in Somogy, Nyíregyháza in Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg etc.), in other cases, the county seats, as long as they had the power, deliberately held back

the development of their rivals (Zalaegerszeg versus Nagykanizsa, Tatabánya versus Esztergom, Békéscsaba versus Gyula, Salgótarján versus Balassagyarmat etc.).

- Also, there are few *typically middle town functions in Hungary*. It is more typical that the small town institutions are concentrated in larger numbers in the middle towns with more population and larger hinterland; e.g. as there were two secondary schools in the small towns on the average, in the middle towns five secondary schools operated etc. Naturally the larger number of institutions also means a larger variety of supply, so the larger number of institutions can be seen as higher level of hierarchy.

Most of the 83 *small towns* are “*traditional*” *small towns*, which had already usually been market centres, minor handicrafts and trading towns in “regular” rural areas (agricultural region, small and middle sized villages, lack of scattered settlements) before the establishment of the civil public administration, with “regular” hinterlands (Körmend, Sárvár, Bonyhád, Mór, Siklós, Tapolca, Szigetvár, Csorna, Zirc, Kisvárdá etc.). After civil public administration had been built out, all of these settlements became district seats, and they acquired a significant industry between 1960 and 1980. The number of their population, however, did not follow the pace of their industrialisation, no major settlement development by the centre was carried out in them. Most of them are home to 10 000–15 000 people now. A similar role is played by the former district seats, market centres that were promoted by the civil public administration and the railway constructions, e.g. *Vásárosnamény, Fehérgyarmat, Tiszafüred, Celldömölk, Encs, Püspökladány* etc. The other characteristic group of this hierarchy level used to be typical *country-towns* (Békés, Mezőtúr, Csongrád, Hajdúböszörmény, Szarvas, Nagykőrös etc.), but their functions were complemented by administrative–cultural–service roles, and later industry.

Small towns are a “*necessary*” *element in the Hungarian settlement hierarchy*. As a matter of fact, the town embryos and miniature towns below this level offer small town services, too, but their supply is smaller, deficient, and more one-sided than that of the small towns. Most of the towns *below* the small town level have *fallen from the small town level* to their present positions. At the same time, the majority of the present *middle towns* have few real middle towns functions (they mostly have small town functions, in larger variety and volume), they are not between the small towns and the county seat towns (there are hardly any small towns in the hinterlands of the middle towns). For *urban goods*, “consumers” primarily travel to the small towns (naturally with the exception of those who live in the *direct* hinterland of the county centres and regional centres), it is the catchment areas of the small towns that cover the larger part of the territory of Hungary (while the existence of the middle town catchment areas is occasional; even if they exist, they are organically integrated into the hinterlands of the small

towns). Still, the role of the small towns in *supplying urban goods* is rather limited; while 20.4% of the Hungarian population live in small towns, only 15.4% of the secondary school students learn in them and they accommodate only 13.1% of the hospital beds. The reasons for that are the intensive development of the county and regional centres, the above-average growth of their urban institutions and the cheap public transport until the recent times.

The average number of population in the *present Hungarian small towns* is close to 16 000 people (*Érd*, in the agglomeration of Budapest, is home to 46 000 inhabitants, the “socialist industrial town” Kazincbarcika has 35 000 dwellers, while the former country-town, Kiskunfélegyháza 33 000).

After the elimination of the districts and urban environs, they do not have regional administrative functions, although there are still urban institutions serving the hinterland too, in jurisdiction (court, the Prosecution, public notary, central police station etc.) and in public administration and official affairs (land office, medical officer’s services, fire brigade, labour affairs etc.). Small towns still accommodate most of these institutions. Their most powerful influence on their areas have been their trade and service functions and institutions until recently. Because of the general recession, it was just clothing and manufactured goods the sales of which decreased the most, also, the turnover of the “traditional” shops fell back. Economic services (business services, investment and tax consultancy, financial services, marketing activities, real estate trade) in the small towns are still rather scarce. The majority of the small towns are facing the problems of the “shift” now. Their connections to the neighbouring settlements, and their hinterlands have loosened, the “official” integration ceased to exist, the towns diverged from their areas, they do not know their problems and are not “officially” responsible for them. The establishment of the institutional system which meets the demand of the market economy, the increase in the purchasing power of the population and the still ongoing elimination of the infrastructural bottlenecks may bring the small towns into a favourable situation, even create new functions in them (business centres, entertainment and leisure time centres, local centres of the agri-business etc.).

Only 62 settlements can be considered as urbanising settlements (elementary centres), so there is no “regular” hierarchy pyramid in Hungary. Approximately 30 settlements with town status do not belong even to this hierarchy level. The “liberalisation” of the criteria could expand the range of these settlements to a limited extent. Even among the settlements with town rank there are a few that do not have any urban functions. In Hungary, where the urban institutions were *settled* down for decades – not they found their own locations –, the above-mentioned 190-(200) settlements have more or less urban functions, and there is not a broad transitory level between the villages and the settlements with urban functions. (*Table 8* contains the data of the individual hierarchy levels.)

### 3.3 Hinterlands of the towns

The area from which an individual town is regularly visited by the “rural” population in order to acquire urban goods is called the catchment area (hinterland) of the towns.

After the transitions of 1989–1990, the network of hinterlands in Hungary has probably changed, too (we do not have results of detailed empirical surveys on this issue). The changes were triggered by the facts that

- the meso-level administrative units (districts and later the urban areas) were eliminated, so the *number and significance of the administratively drawn borders decreased*.

The number of businesses and institutions operating within administrative borders decreased (from the county level bakery businesses to the burial institutions of the counties), weakening the role of the borders of public administration in the creation of the hinterlands. While the “new” economic organisations, private businesses, firms involved in business and personal services (from the tax consultants through the car dealers to the lawyers who are experienced in the process of the Court of Registration) on the one hand are located irrespective of the “old” hierarchy, on the other hand, their hinterlands, catchment areas are shaped by the rules of the “competition”, without any traditional bond.

- In the recent years, the incomes of a significant part of the population have decreased, even more the solvent demand for the urban goods. The costs of public transport increased, and the number of commuters dropped by approximately 40%. All these factors have probably *weakened the intensity of the contacts between the towns and the villages*.
- The closeness of the former catchment areas has probably been loosened by the increasing proportion of the individual means of transport, as well as the decreasing uniformity of the institutional networks of the centres. Because of the growing differences of the incomes, the character, direction and intensity of the town-village contacts is probably more and more different in the case of the “well-to-do” and the poor.

The map (*Figure 7.*) shows the common hinterlands of the middle and small town functions.

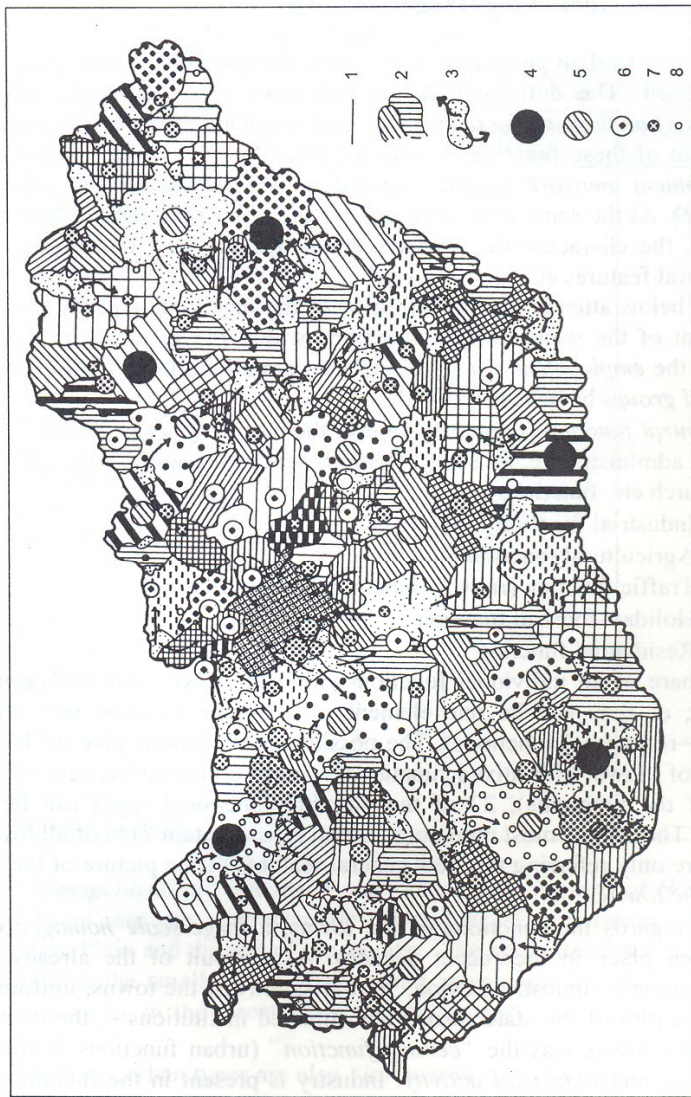
Table 8

*A few typical data of the towns in the different hierarchy levels*

Hierarchy level	Number of settlements	Number of population at the individual levels (1995)	Average number of population. (1995)	Total number of secondary school students. (1993/94)	Average number of secondary school students	Number of secondary school students per 1000 inhabitants	Total number of hospital beds	Average number of hospital beds	Number of hospital beds per 10000 inhabitants
I. Capital city	1	1 930 014	1 930 014	110 833	110 833	57.4	30 389	30 389	157.5
II. Regional centres	5	889 357	177 871	69 957	13 991	78.7	14 500	2 900	163.0
III. County seats	14	1 016 697	72 621	85 487	6 106	84.1	18 843	1 346	185.3
IV. Middle towns	25	802 214	32 089	54 424	2 177	67.8	15 618	625	194.7
V. Small towns	83	1 314 727	15 840	61 282	738	46.6	12 256	148	93.2
VI. Urbanising settlements	62	481 025	7 758	14 922	241	31.0	1 842	30	38.3
Total	190	6 434 034	33 863	396 905	2 089	61.7	93 448	492	145.2

Figure 7

*Hinterlands of the Hungarian towns*



Key: 1 – borders of the hinterlands; 2 – hinterlands of the towns; 3 – regions gravitating to several directions; 4 – regional centres; 5 – county centres; 6 – middle towns; 7 – small towns; 8 – settlements with urban functions

### 3.4 Functional types of the Hungarian towns

In the works of urban geography it is mostly the *functional types of the towns* that are described. The definition of the functional types may take place by the (economic) *functions of the towns*, the *inner proportions of their central functions* (the weight of these functions within the town) and by certain *characteristics of the settlement network* (spatial separation of the residential place and the workplace). At the same time, features like the size of the towns, their rank in the hierarchy, the characteristics of their urban history, their dynamism, cityscape–architectural features etc. are neglected.

In our below attempt for the definition of the functional types of the towns, the assessment of the weight of the functions within the given town was primarily based on the *employment structure* and the commuting in and out. The following *functional groups* have been defined:

- *Central function* (urban function in the narrower sense: “urbao” services of the administrative, financial, business services, trading, cultural, health care, church etc. functions)
  - Industrial function
  - Agricultural function
  - Traffic function (railway junction, border crossing)
  - Holiday–tourism function
  - Residential function

The share of an individual function within the towns can be *hegemonous* or *dominant*, or they can be one element of a double function (e.g. towns with industrial–residential functions). The possible combinations give us 34 types (the category of “town with mixed functions” was also created because of the strong scatter of the functions); 27 of the possible functional types can be found in Hungary. The seven “most numerous” urban types contain 71% of all towns (*Table 9.*). We are only referring to a few general features of the picture of the *functional types of the towns*.

- As regards the functions of the towns, a *large-scale homogenisation* has taken place in the recent decades. As a result of the already described processes – industrialisation, “tertiarisation” of the towns, uniform location principles of the state owned and directed institutions –, the dominant role of the towns was the “*central function*” (urban functions in the narrower sense) and *industrial activity*. Industry is present in the functional formula of 139 towns (70.6% of the classified towns), central function in 110 of them, keeping in mind that these two types of function are usually present among the “mixed” functions, too. Thus the most frequent type of the towns is the town with central–industrial functions (just one – third of the towns, 64 towns altogether).



Table 9.

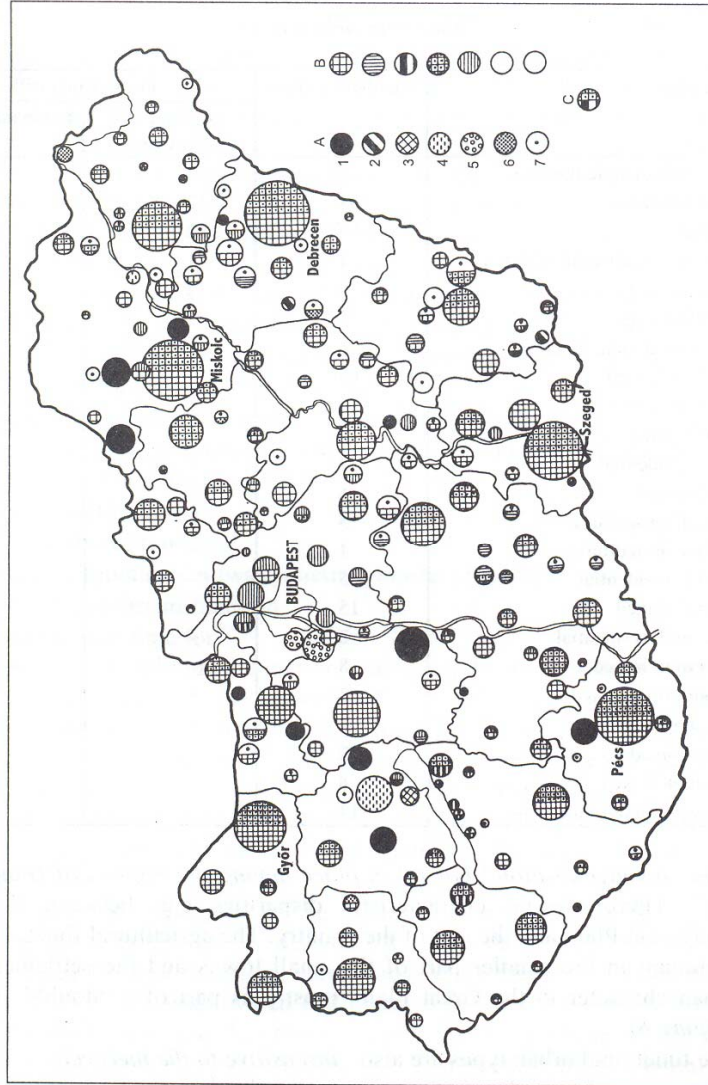
*Functional urban types*

Functional types	Number of towns	From which with	
		hegemonous function	dominant function
I. Towns with a single function	7	3	4
Central functions	31	12	19
Industrial	4	2	2
Agricultural and traffic functions	1	1	–
Holiday resort towns	3	2	1
Residential towns	8	2	6
II. Towns with double function			
Central–industrial	64	–	–
Central–agricultural	2	–	–
Central–holiday	2	–	–
Central–residential	2	–	–
Central–mixed	6	–	–
Industrial–agricultural	5	–	–
Industrial–agricultural	1	–	–
Industrial–residential	5	–	–
Industrial–mixed	15	–	–
Agricultural–residential	2	–	–
Agricultural–mixed	8	–	–
Transportation–mixed	2	–	–
Residential–holiday	3	–	–
Holiday–mixed	2	–	–
Residential–mixed	8	–	–
III. Towns with mixed functions	14	–	–

- This “homogenisation” has taken place among the regions of Hungary, as well. There are no characteristic disparities e.g. between the Great Hungarian Plain and the rest of the country. The agricultural function is only dominant in the smaller part of the small towns and the settlements with urban character in the Great Plain, mostly as part of a “double” function (*Figure 8*).
- The functional urban types are also “insensitive to the hierarchy”. The same category might involve regional centres and urbanising settlements with a few thousand population.
- Agricultural activity, which used to play a dominant role in the Hungarian urbanisation, at least in the Great Hungarian Plain, only appears of the functional “formula” of a few less populated settlements, at least this is what

Figure 8

Functional types of the Hungarian towns



Functions: 1 - industrial; 2 - agricultural; 3 - holiday-tourism; 4 - central functions; 5 - residential functions; 6 - transportation; 7 - mixed; A - hegemonous proportion; B - dominant proportion; C - towns with double function

the statistical numbers reveal. The industrialisation of the Great Plain towns was so intensive that “classical” country – towns (such as *Hódmezővásárhely*, *Jászberény*, *Orosháza*, *Törökszentmiklós*) are now among the towns with industrial character, others have central–industrial functions now (such as *Kecskemét*, *Békéscsaba*, *Karcag*, *Makó*, *Kiskunhalas*, *Mezőtúr* etc.). We have to remark, however, that the picture would be slightly different if we looked at the whole range of the agricultural activity (e.g. processing of agricultural products, agricultural training etc.), or considered the proportion of those participating in the agricultural production etc.

- It is a consequence of the standardisation that there are only a few towns which can be classified by a unique, special, characteristic function (e.g. school town, university town, mining towns etc.). Even the settlements that were born as mono – cultural industrial sites and grew to towns cannot be called unequivocally mining towns or chemical industrial towns now, although e.g. the “socialist industrial town” is a still well definable “urban formula”. Besides them only some *holiday resort – bathing towns* (e.g. Balatonfüred, Balatonalmádi, Balatonföldvár, Balatonlelle, Hévíz etc.) can be classified as “single – function” towns, and *Záhony*, the border crossing and rail loading centre. Naturally several Hungarian towns have specific past and functions; *Mezőhegyes* e.g. developed from a state – owned horse – breeding farm to a settlement with town status, but is still divided into a number of settlement parts, the former domains, which are located kilometres from each other; *Lenti* shows the features of a *garrison – town*; *Martfű* was built around a single large light industrial plant, a shoe factory; *Máriapócs*, a settlement with town status, is a place of pilgrimage; *Mórahalom* became a settlement with town rank from a scattered farm centre of Szeged etc.

## 4 Urban types in Hungary

When defining the *complex urban types*, besides the *functional* features it was primarily the place of the towns in the *urban hierarchy* that was considered, connected to this, in some cases also the *number of population* of the towns; in case of marked *urban historical characteristics*, these were taken into view (e.g. the so – called “socialist towns”, country – towns of the Great Hungarian Plain etc.), together with their “*dynamism*”. (See *Figures 9 and 10*). The measure of the consideration of these individual aspects was different for the individual urban types. There are types where the *order in the hierarchy* is a dominant feature (e.g. in the case of regional centres), irrespective of their urban history or their place within the functional types (e.g. in the case of the county seats). In other cases, the *similar circumstances of the creation*, the almost *same “functional formula”*, and other elements connected to these features (cityscape, dynamics, demographic features etc.) create characteristic urban types, irrespective of the position in the urban hierarchy (e.g. in the case of the “socialist towns” or the holiday resort – bathing towns). (*Figure 9–10*)

*The urban types of Hungary are as follows:*

1. Metropolis–capital city (Budapest)
2. Regional centres (5)
3. County centres (14)
4. Middle towns with central functions, with industry dominant in size (23)
5. Small towns with central functions, (mostly) with industry dominant in size (63)
6. Industrial towns (21)
7. Holiday resort (bathing) towns (9)
8. Agglomeration settlements – garden cities (14)
9. Railway town (1)
10. Urbanising settlements (37)
11. Settlements with town rank, with very limited urban functions (29) (see *Figure 11*).

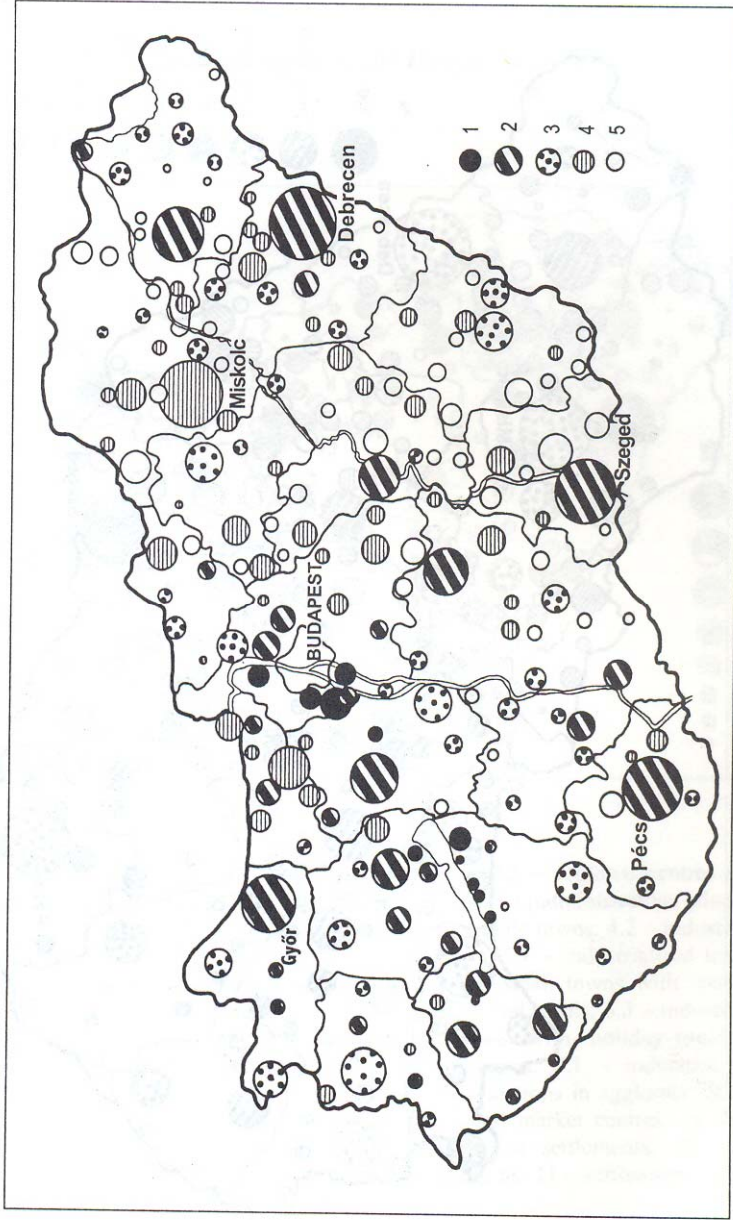
*A brief introduction to the urban types*

### 4.1 Budapest

Pest and Buda was almost equal with the large European cities by the end of the Middle Ages (15th century) by their development level, significance, and especially their power and political weight. The large economic and regional rearrangement, that took place in the beginning of the modern times, pushed

Figure 9

*Dynamism of the Hungarian towns*



Key: 1 – dynamically developing–growing towns; 2 – towns improving their positions; 3 – towns preserving their former positions; 4 – stagnating–declining towns, losing their positions; 5 – declining towns with a decreasing population

Figure 10

*Change of population in the Hungarian towns, 1949–1990*

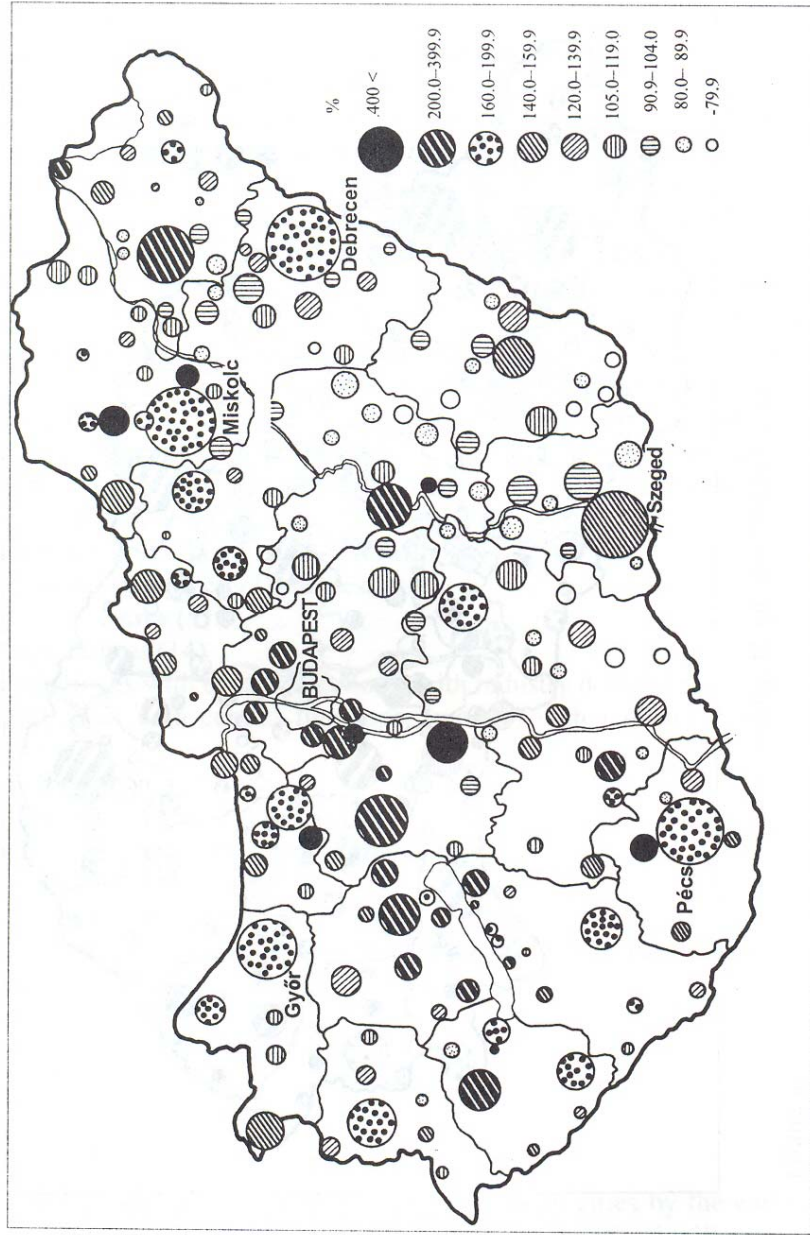
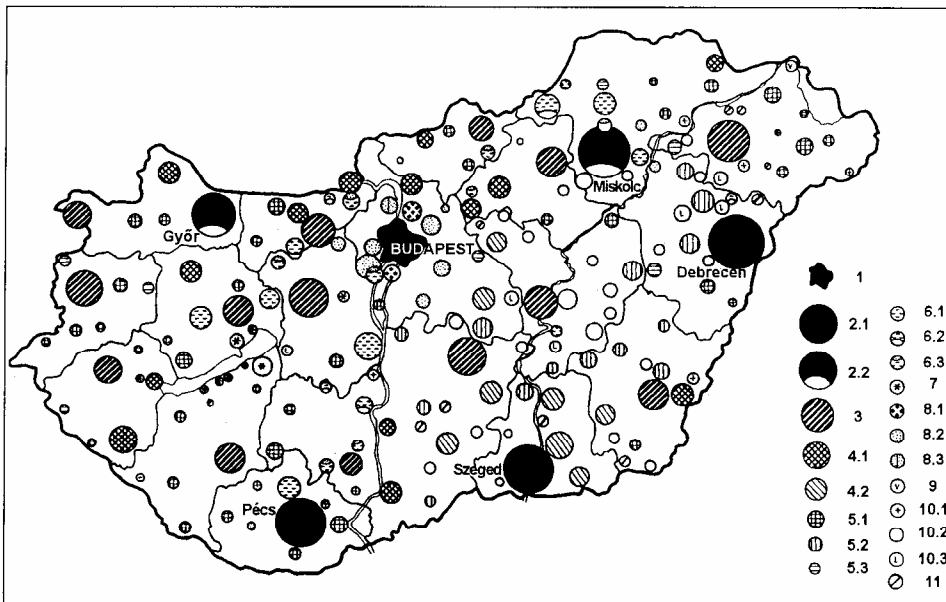




Figure 11

*(Complex) types of the Hungarian towns*



Key: Urban types: 1 – capital city; 2.1 – regional centres; 2.2 – regional centres with deficient functions; 3 – county centres; 4 – middle towns with central (administrative, educational, trade, service etc.) functions; 4.1 – industrialised traditional middle towns; 4.2 – industrialised former country towns; 5 – small towns with central functions; 5.1 – industrialised traditional small towns; 5.2 – industrialised former small towns; 5.3 – small towns with special functions; 6 – industrial towns; 6.1 – “socialist” towns; 6.2 – industrial towns; 6.3 – industrial towns with residential functions (in agglomeration); 7 – towns with holiday–tourism functions; 8 – settlements, suburbs, garden cities in agglomeration; 8.1 – industrial towns; 8.2 – residential settlements; 8.3 – settlements with special functions in agglomeration; 9 – railway town; 10 – urbanising settlements; 10.1 – former small market centres, ex district centres, middle towns; 10.2 – small country towns, agricultural settlements; 10.3 – agricultural settlements (small country towns) with residential functions; 11 – settlements with town status, without considerable urban functions



Hungary and Pest – Buda to the periphery of Europe, and then the occupation by the Turks (in 1541) took it out from the “European” towns. A new chance for catching up only came in the middle of the 19th century. Budapest, that was made from Buda, Óbuda and Pest in 1872, used the opportunity: on the eve of World War I, it was the 8th largest town in Europe, the co – centre of the Austro – Hungarian Monarchy, the rival of Vienna, a modern large city with a population of 1 million, the centre of the Carpathian Basin with a population of approximately 20 million people. After World War I, its geo – political situation fundamentally changed (the Monarchy disintegrated, Hungary only had 8 million inhabitants within the new borders drawn in Trianon), its development possibilities shrank, and the former population boom turned into stagnation. At the same time, its industry (which employed approximately 60% of the industrial earners of Hungary) was modernised. A number of modern large industrial plants worked in the capital city (pharmaceutical and telecommunication industry, light bulb manufacturing, precision engineering etc.). Outside the administrative borders, in the territory of the agglomeration, the concentration of the population continued.

After World War II, as part of the Soviet block, the situation of Budapest changed fundamentally again: it became the (capital) city of the periphery, a dependant state of an empire which followed an ideology and political – economic practice totally different from the European societal development model. The conditions for the development of the society and the social structure changed basically, too.

While the international role of Budapest was moderate, *its weight within Hungary* was continuously high. In 1950, partly because of political considerations, *Greater Budapest* was created by annexing 23 settlements to the capital city. This way the territory of Budapest increased to 525 km<sup>2</sup>, its population to 1.6 million people. The majority of the industry that had grown in the proximity of the capital city became within the administrative borders of Budapest (the industrial plants of Újpest, Kispest, Pesterzsébet, Csepel, Budafok etc.). The major part of the settlements annexed to the capital city, however, were dominantly residential areas with one – family houses and gardens, and with workers and the “small fry” living in them. These settlements were tightly bound to Budapest and each other (workplace–residence connections, regular use of the institutions of the capital city, market contacts etc.); the unification actually meant that the capital city devoured its agglomeration. Following World War II, its population went on increasing, by approximately 220 000 people between 1949 and 1960. However, even this population growth and the mass employment of women did not meet the rapidly growing labour demand of the capital city; the process of agglomeration accelerated outside the “new” borders of Budapest, too.

The agglomeration process in the 1950s and 1960s – in accordance with the start of the urbanisation cycle – meant the change of occupation for the local

agricultural earners and their becoming commuters, the immigration of those heading for Budapest, consequently the rapid population growth and finally the becoming of residential areas. The extremely fast population growth, which was mostly fed by the rural areas of Hungary and not by the (outmigration from the) capital city, resulted in an extensive development in the agglomeration zone.

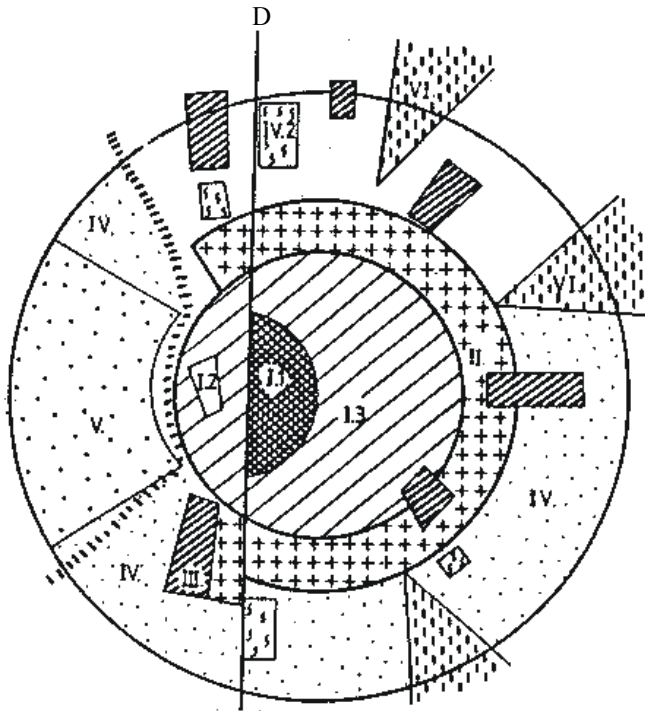
In the 1950s, by the further exploitation of the existing industrial capacities, Budapest went on increasing its industrial output, although its share gradually decreased within the country. Budapest in this time was basically *a state administrative – industrial centre*. Parallel to the decrease of the weight in the industrial production and the number of industrial employees, Budapest built out leading positions in the *management of the industry* (research and development, trading activity, organisation of export and import, advertising etc.), but it also received an outstanding role in almost all fields of the economic and social life: all the banks, the foreign trade companies and the publishing houses operated in Budapest, the only international airport of Hungary was (and still is) Ferihegy, in Budapest. In the 1960s and 1970s, Budapest was the centre of the *economic management – innovative industrial – state administrative – intellectual centre*. These tendencies still exist. Even if the weight of Budapest decreases in an area or two (e.g. in higher education and the number of those involved in R + D activity), the capital city has strengthened its role in other fields in the recent decades: Budapest produces more than half of the Hungarian GDP now, 58% of all foreign inward investments arrive at Budapest, Budapest produces 53.5% of the exported goods etc. In the 1980s Budapest was an *intellectual – economic management – state administrative centre*, with a knowledge – intensive industry.

Hungary was relatively “open” even as a country of the Soviet block, with relatively versatile Western connections.

These endowments allowed Budapest to become a leader in the transitions of Central Europe, especially in the early years, in 1989 and the early 1990s. This is true for both the political events and the economy. Between 1988 and 1991, Budapest was the primary destination of the western capital arriving at Central and Eastern Europe; 30% of that reached Budapest. The “opening” of the borders allowed the system of the European big cities to spread towards the East and the Southeast. Today Budapest is the Hungarian and (one of the) Central European *bridgeheads* of the western institutions and modernisation. Its endowments coming from the special Hungarian way of development, and its geographical location offer a good possibility for playing a dominant role in the Central European region. Budapest is still the only big city and traffic centre in the Carpathian Basin, and a “hallway” to the Balkans. (*Figure 12*)

Figure 12

*A simplified model of the urban structure of Budapest*



Key: I. Parts of the inner city: I.1. city core; I.2. castle area; I.3. inner residential zone (tenements);  
II. Industrial–transportation zone, zone of the institutions with large demand for space;  
III. Housing estates; IV. Zone of the outer districts; IV.1. garden city–one-family house zone;  
IV.2. inner areas of former suburbs and villages; V. Elite villa area, semi-detached house zone (the Hill); VI. Areas not built up (agricultural areas, forests); D = Danube River

#### 4.2 Regional centres

The group of the regional centres, with only 5 towns (Debrecen, Szeged, Pécs, Miskolc, Győr), makes a group definitely different from the other urban types in Hungary. Several size categories – half a million – one million inhabitants, 1–2 million inhabitants – separate these towns from *Budapest*. In the supply of some big city functions, Budapest has reached a monopolistic position (see above), or it has more of certain “urban” functions than the rest of the towns together. This dominant weight of Budapest does not only exist in the international–metropolitan and the national functions but also in the case of regional functions. (An important

factor in this is the central situation of the capital city.) This dominant and “over – weighted” role of Budapest in the urban hierarchy only leaves limited possibilities for the development of these five towns *as regional centres*.

Before World War I, *Debrecen*, *Szeged* and *Pécs* already had regional tasks, but it was mainly *Zágráb* (the now Zagreb), *Pozsony* (the now Bratislava), *Kolozsvár* (the now Cluj-Napoca) and *Kassa* (the now Košice) that started their way to develop into the centres of large regions.

Between the two world wars, after the loss of the shaping big cities, the development of their regional roles accelerated; in *Debrecen*, the university was organised right after World War I, while *Szeged* accommodated the 50 – year – old Kolozsvár and *Pécs* the newly organised Pozsony university from the territories of the successor states. They also acquired regional roles in health care (clinics); the expansion of their cultural, tourism and administrative roles was supported by the state. In the socialist era, although these regional centres often appeared in the settlement development concepts as the counter poles of Budapest, specially selected for development (as “selected” higher order centres in the Settlement Development Concept of Hungary), they did not have a privileged status. Their growth rates did not reach that of the majority of the county seats. (Miskolc is an exception in this matter, but this town was developed as an industrial centre, a workers’ town in the first place, and not as a regional centre.) Although the number of their population increased by 92% on the average between 1949 and 1980, it still does not reach 200 000 people, the pace of growth was faster in the other county seats. The expansion of their regional roles was also blocked by the fact that the counties were the territorial frameworks for the organisations of the public administration and the economy, the majority of the institutions formerly operating with regional authorities were re – organised within county frameworks, thus only a few administrative regional institutions worked in Hungary (e.g. post office directorates, regional railway managements). After the recent changes, there is no significant change – at this hierarchy level – in the regional distribution of the public institutions, budgetary and local governmental organisations. On the other hand, their *situation is favourable* in accommodating *institutions organised by the market*; presently the distribution of such institutions (banks, insurance companies, investment companies, business services, trade of luxury goods etc.) partly follows the hierarchic model (partly in a diffuse way, spreading from the western border region eastwards; where both expansion models operate, the result is striking [Győr]).

The average population of the regional centres is just 180 000 people now (*Debrecen*: 211 000; *Győr*: 127 000 inhabitants), their total population has been decreasing since 1990! Their *international functions* are insignificant (naturally they have international connections). By Hungarian standards, *Debrecen*, *Szeged* and *Pécs* plays the regional role completely; in all three cities, the institutions of

higher education offer a certain variety (universities, medical schools, technical colleges, higher level agricultural training etc.), they are regional health care centres, with several scientific institutions, they have literature journals, the range of business services is wide. The proportion of tertiary earners exceeds 50%. Their role in the “dynamisation” of their environment is still moderate.

### 4.3 County seats

The county seat towns are *identical with the towns of the hierarchy level with the same name*. The *origin and history* of these 14 towns are *varied*; some of them are “regular” Western European type towns with medieval origins and ancient history, like *Székesfehérvár, Sopron, Veszprém* and *Eger*; there are county seats “breaking up” as traffic centres in the period of bourgeois development, like *Szombathely, Kaposvár, Zalaegerszeg* and *Szolnok*; some of them were former country – towns, such as *Kecskemét, Békéscsaba* and *Nyíregyháza*, also *Szekszárd* in Transdanubia; others grew from *mining villages* into county seats, like *Salgótarján* and *Tatabánya*. Their *number of population* is varied (*Kecskemét, Nyíregyháza* and *Székesfehérvár* is home to more than 100 000 people, while *Szekszárd* only has 36 000 inhabitants; their average population is approximately 73 000 people), as are their *cityscape* and *dynamism*; however, the fact that they had *county seat* roles after 1950 resulted in a similar position for all of them in the settlement policy and settlement development, and the spatial system of the “power”. The extremely statist organisation of the economy and the power *standardised* their tertiary functions, institutional systems, employment structure and the social division of the population by locating and organising a vast amount of institutions with the same tasks and profiles in the towns. The uniform institutional system did not only involve the state administration in the narrower sense, but also the economic, service, cultural etc. sphere; in all county seats one could find the centre of the burial companies organised within county frameworks, just like the museum centre, the publishing house of the county newspaper, the county institution of public education, the county travel agency, library, “cultural centre” etc. The objectives of the “county leaders”, who had strong positions in the power hierarchy, were also similar: they urged industrialisation (industry did not only eliminate employment problems, but also improved the chance to have access to “supplementary investments” – housing, infrastructure), they fought for prestigious institutions (e.g. higher education institutions), also for prestige reasons, they were interested in a rapid urban growth. These similar efforts and the application of the standard models made the county seats so similar to each other that it is justified to put them into the same category. This is also supported by their very similar

employment structure. Thus this urban type is to some extent the product of the socialist period of urban development.

Because of the factors mentioned above, the county seats – especially between 1965 and 1985 – showed a very rapid growth. *Zalaegerszeg* in 1949 was a rather remote small town in the Zala Hill Ridge, with only 16 000 inhabitants – in 1980 it was home to 56 000 people (i.e. grew three and a half – fold within three decades); *Veszprém* tripled its population in three decades, growing from a town of 18 000 to a settlement with 57 000 people. The *average growth* from 1960 to 1980 was 67.1%. (On the other hand, the population growth in Sopron was only 32.9%, demonstrating the general disadvantages of not having county seat status.) The population growth was fed partly by the annexation of the neighbouring villages to the towns, to a larger extent by the immigration. The large – scale housing constructions took place in the housing estates built from pre – fabricated panels in the county seats too, so similar features were created in the structure and cityscape of the towns, as well. The “traditional elements” of the dynamism of the towns – e.g. change of the number of population, change of the number of jobs, housing constructions –, are typically stagnating in the county seats presently; the number of jobs in them has decreased, their industry has contracted (the number of industrial earners dropped to a half in Kaposvár, Kecskemét and Salgótarján, only one – third in Tatabánya), and practically there are no public and local governmental housing constructions any more.

If the schematic model of the state institutions – one county, one institution (in the county seat) – slackens, some competition may start among the county seats, and within the towns of the individual counties, which might modify the hierarchic system (this process has hardly started yet). The further spreading of the urban institutions organised by market demands will have a similar effect.

#### **4.4 Middle towns, with central functions and with industry**

The formation of this urban type was *not the consequence of the rank in the hierarchy*, although the majority of these towns have middle town *hierarchy rank*. However, this type can be linked to the hierarchy levels inasmuch as a *wide range and large volume of urban functions lower than the county level was concentrated* in them, and their urban functions have a long history (Esztergom, in this category, was the first town in Hungary, an archiepiscopal centre, just like Kalocsa; Vác was an episcopal seat; also, several former county seats are in this group, such as Sátoraljaújhely, Baja, Balassagyarmat, Mosonmagyaróvár, Szentés, Makó, Gyula etc.), they have had town rank for a long time (the last one to become town was Keszthely, in 1954). Their urban history is so versatile that they can be put into two

sub – categories, the (industrialised) “*traditional*” *middle towns* and the *former country – towns with middle town functions*.

The *traditional middle towns* have a “regular” urban past, their central functions made them towns, and during their lives they had higher level urban functions for shorter or longer periods; they were county seats, religious centres, centres of large estates (Pápa, Tata, Keszthely, Mosonmagyaróvár), famous trading towns (Baja, Nagykanizsa, Pápa, Moson). Because of this, their population was bigger than that of the small towns: their average population is just 30 000 people, *Nagykanizsa* is home to more than 50 000 inhabitants. They have not so many “typical” middle town functions (e.g. higher education is not one of these functions); the urban functions of the middle towns mostly appear in *roles and institutions belonging to higher hierarchy levels* (Keszthely, Mosonmagyaróvár, Baja and Esztergom are important centres of higher education, Vác, Kalocsa and Esztergom are the most important centres of the Roman Catholic Church, Gyula, Esztergom, Baja, Nagykanizsa and Tata are seats for several county level institutions, Keszthely is a tourism centre etc.), and even more in the larger number and consequently wider range of institutions also found in the small towns (e.g. secondary schools, but it is also true for trade, travel agencies, services etc.). The Hungarian middle towns are *large – grown small towns*. It is also typical of this type that the towns do not develop and rise from a lower hierarchy level, but have descended from more prestigious positions.

Several of them faced discrimination as potential rivals of the county seats in the “socialist era” (Gyula, Nagykanizsa, Esztergom, Baja, Mosonmagyaróvár, Pápa, Balassagyarmat etc.). After the events of the recent years, *Baja, Nagykanizsa, Keszthely* and *Tata* are in a relatively favourable situation, but the position of *Sátoraljaújhely* has quickly worsened; if we look at the development level of the urban functions in the narrower sense, *Sátoraljaújhely* does not belong to the middle towns any longer. *Central roles* are still the dominant functions of these towns, despite the fact that all of them have acquired significant industrial functions, as well. Their cityscape is also typically urban, in some places (by Hungarian standards) with big city elements; it is more typical, however, that the traditional small town morphology uses large areas in the cores of the towns.

#### **4.5 Small towns with central functions, (mostly) with industry dominant in size**

Taking their birth, functions, and their role in the settlement network into consideration, these towns are versions of the former urban type, at a lower hierarchy level, with smaller population and less urban traditions. This group is the

largest in number, just one – third of all Hungarian towns, 63 settlements belong to this group.

The majority of the (industrialised) small towns with central functions are thus *traditional small towns*, created by the demand for the urban goods and services, mostly already before the bourgeois urban development; they involve local market centres, handicraft settlements, but also intellectual centres (Sárospatak, Sárvár, Ráckeve). There are some towns in this group that used to be centres for larger areas but sank from that higher level; *Mohács* e.g. is an important trading centre and a Danube port of Baranya county, *Sárospatak* is a political and intellectual centre. After the building out of the bourgeois administration, they became administrative–management centres of the lower level of the regional administration, i.e. the districts. Many of them – especially in the regions with autarky – were elevated by this role to the major centres (Mátészalka, Fehérgyarmat, Vásárosnamény, Tab, Letenye, Encs etc.); *Dombóvár*, *Barcs* and *Szerencs* have a lot to thank for the railway construction.

After World War II, these small towns were affected by a double influence; their administrative role – after a temporary extension – gradually decreased (see above), finally the districts were eliminated (1984), and then the urban environs replacing them were also found unnecessary (in 1990). Since then in the Hungarian public administration there has been no (meso – level) administrative unit between the counties and the municipalities. At the same time, some of them were industrialised, their cultural and health care functions expanded, and after the 1960s and 1970s, due to the well established – and cheap – public transportation and the increasing purchasing power, their attraction in trade also strengthened. Tight and versatile connections were created between these small towns and their hinterlands.

In these days (after 1990), these small towns are in a – probably temporary – *low*. Their industry – which mostly consisted of the subsidiaries and branch plants of the large companies – decreased at a rate even faster than in the average of the towns (e.g. in Nyírbátor from 3 279 people (in 1984) to 1 022 people, in Fehérgyarmat from 2 227 to 1 101 people, in Dombóvár from 3 560 to 1 580 employees etc.), in the new financing system of the municipalities, they lost their advantages that they had formerly had against the villages, the solvent demand for the small town goods decreased. Most of them are centres of areas handicapped from some aspect. This is not compensated by the spreading of the private businesses and economic organisations yet.

The other group of the small towns are former (Great Plain) *country – towns*; a large number of characteristic towns of this settlement type were enumerated in this group. Their industrialisation, the expansion of their urban functions and the “cutting” of their scatted farms pushed agriculture to the third – fourth position in their functional structure, although several of them are still important agrarian



centres (Szarvas is the centre of agricultural training and research, Nagykőrös, Bácsalmás, Kiskőrös, Békés etc. are productive centres etc.). The agricultural past can be seen primarily in the cityscape, the (now rather scarce) scattered farms, the narrow or almost completely missing hinterlands – e.g. Kisújszállás, Hajdúnánás, Hajdúböszörmény etc.), and the large number of homesteads worked in part – time.

The *cityscape* of the small towns was mostly created in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and on the turn of the century. Their centres are usually dominated by one – storey, sometimes two – storey public buildings and bourgeois homes, the majority of the (petty) bourgeoisie live in closely – built not detached, ground floor houses with a single flat. After the turn of the century, garden city – like districts, with gardens and one – family houses were built in them. The former country – towns are more loosely built up, an extended village – like inner zone surrounded their urban centres. At the late 1960s and in the 1970s, the towns, reaching the urban development “boom”, were actively destroying and eliminating their small town – like centres and trying to build “modern”, big city – like – thus alien from the local character, scales and lifestyle – city centres. This effort has usually remained a “torso” (Celldömölk, Körmend, Szentgotthárd, Mátészalka, Csorna, Fehérgyarmat etc.).

#### 4.6 Industrial towns

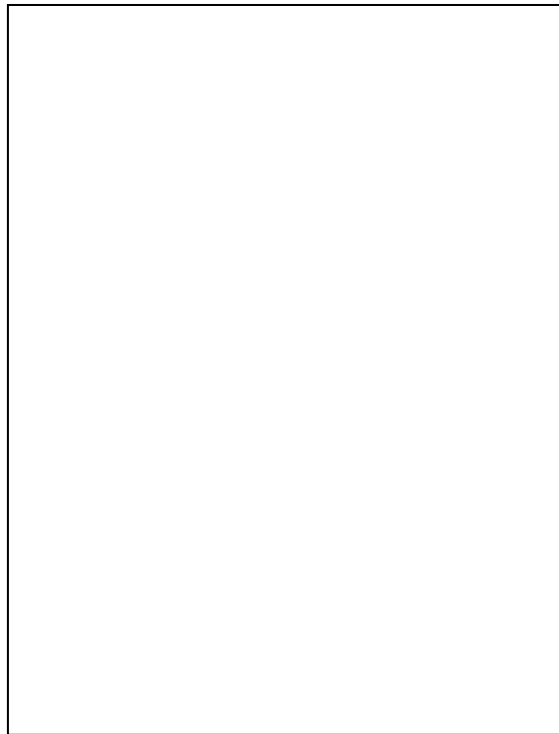
The common feature of these 21 towns is the *dominant weight* of industrial production and the *high proportion of industrial earners* in them (62% on the average, but it reaches 75.7% in Nyergesújfalu), the *lack* or insignificance of *urban traditions* and their societal character (they are the towns of the young and middle – aged technical intellectuals and the skilled workers), in the case of some settlements, the *identical circumstances of their birth* and the similarities of their career (the so – called “socialist towns”). Their present situation shows many a similarity, too: most of them are in the depressed industrial zone (the “rustbelt”), stuck by mine and factory closures, high unemployment and loss of prestige, and a large – scale outmigration has started from them. Besides these similarities (which justified the creation of this category), both their size (Dunaújváros has almost 60 000 inhabitants, Kazincbarcika is a town of 35 000, while Nyergesújfalu is only home to 8 000 people), the development level of their urban functions (Dunaújváros is among the middle towns in the hierarchy order, while Téglás and Lőrinci have town status but hardly any urban functions) and their origin – thus their city structure and cityscape – are very much different from each other.

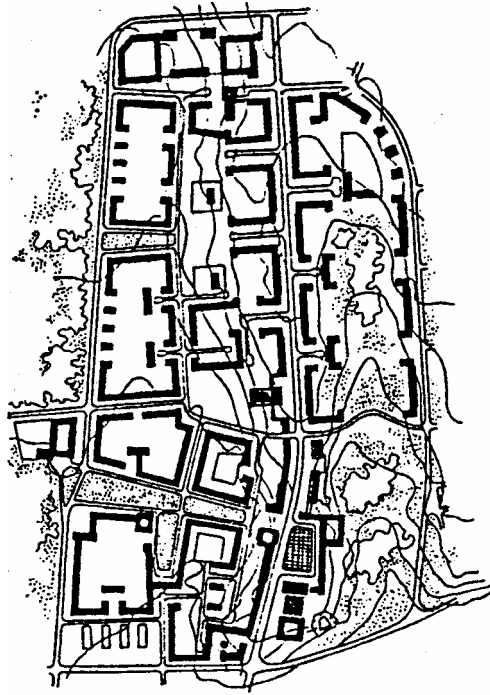
The construction of the so – called *socialist towns* was started as early as in the first years of the socialist era (1949–1950), closely connected to large industrial investments (e.g. *Dunaújváros* [Dunapentele, later Stalin Town] was the town of

the iron plant, built to increase the output of metallurgy, based on the Soviet iron ore shipped on the waterway of the Danube river; it was built without any industrial or urban preliminaries, as an experiment of the “socialist urban architecture” – provided that there was such a thing as socialist urban architecture at all). The constructed towns – large block of flats – were meant to satisfy the demand for labour of the industrial plants. The residential areas themselves were planned on the drawing desk and built farther from the core areas of the towns (on the “corn – fields”), not influenced by any preliminary history. Separate blocks were built in their city centres, too (*Figure 13*), with closed streets, no real urban cityscape was created, so that no “forum”, promenade, the space of the urban life could be created. The origin, size, present functions and cityscape of the other industrial towns are rather varied, what “brings” these settlements into the same category is the industry that dominates their lives. *Százhalombatta* and *Bátonyterenye* could be listed among the “socialist” industrial towns by their origin and a large number of their characteristics, but one – third or half of their earners are commuters.

Figure 13

*Construction plan of the central part of a “socialist town”, Kazincbarcika*





(Planners: Valentiny, Károly and colleagues)

*Ózd* developed into a town from a conglomerate of mining villages and industrial – dwelling villages in the 20th century, with the iron factory in its centre, “pressing itself” on the “town”. During the decades of “socialism”, the city centre was re – built, the town was expanding in the narrow valleys, growing to a town of almost 50 000 inhabitants by the annexation of further villages. The crisis of its metallurgy and coal mining started already in the 1980s. Between 1980 and 1990, the number of jobs dropped by more than 20%, that of the inhabitants by 10%. Because of the total failure of the metallurgy industry in *Ózd*, every fifth inhabitant in their active years is unemployed, the number of population dropped to 40 000, the amount of investments per capita is only one – fifth of the average of the towns. The surroundings of *Ózd* are also struck by serious depression. *Bonyhád*, *Mór*, *Tolna*, *Simontornya* and *Paks* are “over – industrialised” traditional small towns, while *Dorog*, *Sajószentpéter* and *Lőrinci* have grown from mining villages of industrial regions to towns, and acquired moderate urban functions.

#### 4.7 Holiday resort (bathing) towns

In 9 Hungarian towns (i.e. 4.5% of all towns), the leading and almost exclusive function is tourism. They are all situated along the shore of the *Lake Balaton* and the *Lake Velence*. The conditions and infrastructure of bathing life were created in the beginning of the 20th century, the stripes along the shores were divided into parcels, and the extended, long holiday resorts were built on the lake shore, farther from the inner areas of the existing villages and independent of them in settlement structure, society and functional sense. In these settlements, the summer holiday in the family villas became general; in the beginning, these settlements had hardly any permanent residents, in wintertime they were almost non – functioning technical establishments. After World War II, public (company and trade union) holiday homes were built (or the nationalised boarding houses, hotels and larger private holiday homes were re – built this way), and from the 1970s, hotels and camping sites were also established.

*The characteristic features of the Hungarian bathing towns are as follows:*

- An almost continuous settlement zone – with a total length of approximately 110–115 kilometres – is situated along the Lake Balaton, all along the south shore and up to *Tihany* on the north shore; within this stripe, the administrative division does not make much sense. In some points of this settlement zone, besides the omnipresent tourism services, some urban functions (serving mostly the permanent residents and the “rural hinterland”) are concentrated. The most important of these is *Siófok*, which has grown up to be a middle town in the hierarchy by now and the urban centre for a large area (the north – eastern part of Somogy county and the south shore of the lake), also, the biggest tourist centre of the Lake Balaton. (The number of hotel beds is 3 353, that of the so – called “public accommodations” is almost 15 000, where more than half a million guest nights are spent every year.)
- On the north shore of the lake, *Balatonfüred* is a health and bathing resort, also providing small town functions for its surroundings. The other holiday resort towns on the lake shore reach the town level in the functional sense, although their urban functions mostly serve tourism (trade, tourism services etc.).
- A special feature of the holiday settlements along the Lake Balaton is that their functions change by the changing of the seasons; the bathing season is short, from October to May the “operation” of the holiday settlements almost completely stops. Meanwhile, even the function of the individual households and buildings changes. The smaller holiday towns (*Lelle*, *Földvár*) are unlikely to provide inner city functions in the winter season.

- In the whole holiday zone along the Lake Balaton, the number of the private holiday homes for family recreation purposes is high. The major part of the holiday zone thus has a garden city character, they are made up by ground floor, one – flat holiday homes with gardens. The public tourism establishments are located within the narrow cores of the settlements. The centres of the bathing life and the urban life are separated from each other in some cases (Fonyód, Füred). The bathing centre of Füred was constructed in the Reform Era, and thus has the aura of a mellow old bathing resort.
- The guest nights are realised in 48 000 “beds in public accommodations” in these 9 towns – 5 400 beds per town on the average –, their average annual turnover (1994) is 2 and a half million guest nights (283 000 guest nights on the average). The real turnover is much larger than this; more people show up in the holiday homes of the companies and institutions and in the private holiday homes. In peak season, the number of holidaymakers exceeds that of the permanent residents.
- The holiday resort towns are dynamic elements in the urban network, with a relatively high number of entrepreneurs compared to the number of the population. They gain new functions and increase the number of their population.

#### **4.8 Agglomeration settlements, garden cities and suburbs, dwelling towns**

Most of these 14 towns are around Budapest, although the most typical suburbs (Újpest, Kispest, Pesterzsébet, Csepel etc.) were devoured by the capital city during the creation of Greater Budapest. In the 1950s and 1960s, the rapidly growing demand of Budapest for labour force created a rapidly growing agglomeration zone even outside the new administrative borders. (On the one hand, because the housing constructions in the capital city could not satisfy the demand for labour force, on the other hand, because the moving to Budapest was made difficult by administrative tools, as well.) In the 1970s, approximately 165 000 people commuted daily from the neighbouring areas to the capital city, and some settlements of the agglomeration also sent commuters by train to the capital city. The influence of the capital city was striking especially in commuting, in the fact that the employment structure became urban, and in the rapid growth of population in the agglomerating settlements. As a result of this population increase, a few settlements grow to the size of towns (*Table 10*). Some of them were awarded the town status after 1980, and in some cases they acquired a significant amount of functions, but these were unbalanced in composition and only reached the small town level; even so it happens frequently that they are unable to satisfy even the needs of their own inhabitants for certain functions. They have no or hardly any

hinterland. The *extensive growth of the agglomeration has stopped* by now, and the better – off inhabitants of the capital city have started to move to the settlements with more pleasant residential environment.

Table 10.

*Development of the number of population in the towns around Budapest, 1900–1990*

Town	Number of population					
	1900	1930	1949	1970	1980	1990
1. Budaörs	6 104	9 006	7 639	14 373	17 224	19 820
2. Szigetszentmiklós	3 196	4 660	5 865	13 778	17 698	19 372
3. Érd	3 480	5 632	16 444	31 205	41 330	43 327
4. Dunakeszi	2 837	8 415	11 029	19 895	25 137	26 111
5. Monor	8 808	13 469	13 606	16 939	18 629	18 483
6. Gödöllő	5 893	11 056	12 216	21 929	28 096	28 195
7. Százhalombatta	1 392	1 717	1 717	9 852	14 292	16 573
8. Szentendre	4 822	7 210	9 283	13 008	16 901	19 351

Source: Referendum of 1990. – Data of Pest county – Budapest, 1992.

The capital city *as a consumer market* is a great stimulus for the businesses in the agglomeration. Some of the agglomeration towns are spontaneously born large garden cities (like Érd, and partly Budaörs and Gödöllő), without major urban centres, with high rates of commuters. The former district centres, a little farther (20–25 km) from Budapest also belong to this category (Aszód, Monor and Dabas). A few towns of the agglomeration accommodated significant (state) industry (Dunakeszi, Szigetszentmárton, and Százhalombatta, which fits into this type too); even housing estates were built in them from pre – fabricated panels. *Szentendre* has a special role; this traditional small town, rich in monuments and having a picturesque cityscape (the centre of the Hungarian Serbs) has become by now an art and cultural centre, a museum city, a tourism destination with a considerable turnover, one of the *elite residences* of the agglomeration.

#### 4.9 Railway town

Only one single settlement belongs to this category: Záhony. It is a reloading station built at the junction of railway lines with different gauge (the Hungarian and the Ukrainian railways), with a port activity. Two – thirds of its employees are involved in transportation. The freight traffic of the border station has decreased in

the recent years, which can be counterbalanced by the effects of the large – scale shopping tourism and the recently established duty – free zone.

#### **4.10 On the margin of the urban existence – urbanising settlements**

At the definition of this type of the towns, it is the position in the urban hierarchy again that is prevalent. Those settlements, below the hierarchy level of the small towns, were put into this category which have certain urban functions, but these functions are deficient and small in volume, and which were not categorised into other types (industrial towns, holiday resort towns, agglomeration towns etc.). As we have mentioned earlier, there is limited number of institutions and functions typical of the “miniature towns”. It is more often the case that the towns on the edge of the urban existence were “created” by their former central functions and district centre rank becoming “redundant”, and so they were “deprived” of them (in 1923, there were 161 district centres in Hungary, in 1949 150, 128 in 1960, and their number decreased to 107 by 1970), but they kept some of their institutional system and functions, in some cases even their small hinterlands (although these hinterlands are overlapped and loosened by the attraction of the larger centres). Their positions deteriorated especially in the 1960s and 1970s when they lost, one after the other, their role played in regional administration, they were not listed among the meso – level centres in the Settlement Development Concept of Hungary, i.e. the settlements to be developed into towns, and so their “development” was insignificant. During the 1980s, they were compensated for their losses to some extent by gaining town status (but their institutions – court, land registration office, police department, medical officer’s service etc.– are not given back). However, they do not have any role in the regional administration, and it is unusual they are able to acquire new functions (Tokaj is successful in tourism, Mezőcsát has gained residential function). This category also contains a number of small country – towns, which have been unable so far to gain any new function, have always had moderate urban functions, and the ability of their agriculture to support the population has decreased. The number of population is decreasing in each of the towns in this category, they are among the declining settlements now.

#### **4.11 Towns with urban rank but without urban functions**

The awards of the town status, that has continued recently (in 1997, for example, 12 settlements were awarded town status), have elevated such settlements into towns that might have a few formal elements of the urban life (e.g. high number of population), but cannot be considered as towns from functional and geographical

aspects. It is also true, however, that some of the “new” towns, especially in the territory of the Budapest agglomeration, have acquired “urban” institutions operating within the frameworks of rapidly spreading and changing “new – style” private businesses (specialised shops, boarding houses, services, savings banks etc.). The number of these settlements is almost 30 now.

## **5 Conclusion**

Urban development in Hungary is in the same historical situation, “cycle” again as it was in the Middle Ages after the foundation of the state, or in the beginning of the bourgeois era after the so – called “Compromise” (1867). The possibilities and the legal frameworks, and more or less the political circumstances are given for a “western type” urban development; the “*line of the ideals*” shows towards “the West” again. The “*material aspect*” is naturally lagging behind; the restructuring, the decline of the importance of the industry, the consequent unemployment, the stagnation of the purchasing power of the population (with the exception of a rather narrow layer) etc. are blocking the rapid “catching up”. However, the initial signs of that catching up can already be seen both in the development of the urban functions (“tertiarisation”) and in the transition of the urban network, the widening of municipal autonomy and the change of the cityscape.



## Notes

- 1 For each historical era, we considered the Hungarian urban development within the contemporary state borders. Until 1920, the peace treaty concluding World War I, we looked at the “Hungarian Empire” that covered the whole of the Carpathian Basin with its territory of 325 000 km<sup>2</sup>. This state formation consisted of two legal units in the dualist era (1867–1918): Hungary in the narrower sense and Croatia – Slavonia (these were the so – called “countries of the Hungarian Holy Crown”). We only made an exception in the period of the Turkish occupation (approximately 1541–1686), when the former (and later) territory of Hungary was divided between three state formations: the territories occupied by the Turks and belonging to the Osman Empire, the Royal Hungary that gave the Habsburg rulers the royal throne, and the independent Transylvania (which was under Turkish influence and paid tax to the Turks). After World War I, following the so – called “Trianon” peace treaty, the territory of Hungary shrank to approximately 92 000 km<sup>2</sup> (see also in the text).
- 2 Hungarian historians also paid a lot of attention to the issue of the historical regions; the works of Szűcs, Jenő and Hanák, Péter are well known abroad, as well.
- 3 Szűcs, Jenő: Vázlat Európa három történelmi régiójáról (Drafts of three historical regions of Europe). – Történelmi Szemle, 1981/3.
- 4 Undoubtedly, the majority of those who expressed their opinion in this issue, assume an independent, “hybrid” region between Western and Eastern Europe. In Hanák Péter’s opinion: “It is proved by the examination of the characteristics of the economic and social history, state organisation, politics and culture, that the Eastern European region, that is a single region by definition, is divided into two regions that are different genetically, structurally and in their development tendencies: these are the Central European and the Eastern European region. This problem is not solved by the allowance which raises Central – Eastern Europe to the rank of a sub – region within the large Eastern region.” (Hanák, Péter: Közép – Európa mint történelmi régió az újkorban. (Central Europe as a historical region in the Modern Times). – Budapest, 1986). Szűcs Jenő thought too that “... there is a double – faced, hybrid – like, independent Central – Eastern European region, including Hungary, Bohemia and Poland.” (Szűcs, J. *ibid.*).
- 5 Szűcs, J. *ibid*
- 6 The Tartar (Mongol) troops broke into Hungary in 1241; they defeated the royal Hungarian troops, they invaded, robbed and destroyed the majority of the territory of Hungary (only a few fortresses stood their siege) and caused a serious loss of human lives (which is estimated to be 15–0%, by more pessimistic views, 40% of the Hungarian population). However, the Mongols left Hungary as early as the year after, in 1242.
- 7 Already in the 15th century, Hungary was in a constant fight with the advancing Turkish Empire. In the beginning, the Balkans were the battlefield, but by the end of the century, the raiding Turkish troops broke into the Hungarian territories several times. The Hungarian army suffered a final defeat in 1526, the Turks occupied the Hungarian capital city, Buda in 1541, and invaded the middle third of the country (almost the whole of the Great Hungarian Plain, South Transdanubia, the major part of the area between the Dráva and the Száva rivers and the southern edge of the Upper Northern Hungary). The Turks also made Transylvania, that had withdrawn from the royal Hungary, a dependent state. The liberation wars – after several unsuccessful attempts – started in the 1680s; in 1686, Buda was in Christian hands again. Following that, however, a national war of independence against the reign of the Habsburg House took place in 1703–711. It was not until after 1711 that a longer peaceful period was enjoyed in Hungary. To describe the devastations of the “war – stricken” 16th and 17th century: Hungary had approximately the same number of population in the early 18th century as in the beginning of the 16th century. In such a long time, the population of the country should have

doubled even with the natural increase of the Middle Ages. The loss of human lives in the 16th and 17th century was approximately 4 million.

- 8 The long – lasting feudal circumstances in Central Europe – the Habsburg Monarchy, Poland divided at the end of the 18th century, in the Eastern provinces of Germany, and in the Baltic region – is called the period of the “second villeinage” by the historians, referring to the fact that while in the Western part of Europe, from the 15th and 16th century the free peasant way of development became general, in Central Europe the bondages of the serves were tightened, and the serves were deprived of some of their former “allowances” (right of free moving, redemption of the force work with cash etc.).
- 9 For the definition of the urban hierarchy, the “inventory” method was used. In our view, the hierarchic rank of the towns is provided for by the quantity and versatility of their basic urban functions (“central place” functions). The basic urban functions are embodied in the roles and institutions at the higher levels of the hierarchy of the services in the broader sense (e.g. in the field of education, secondary schools, colleges and universities etc.). The hierarchic rank of a settlement primarily shows the differentiated nature of the (basic) urban functions, the level of the tasks fulfilled and the “frequency” of the accepted functions (universities, at a higher hierarchy level, are more scarce than secondary schools). The selected urban functions (and institutions) were ranked according to the frequency of their occurrence. The comparability of the different institutions was made possible by the so – called “dispersion value” (frequency of occurrence), i.e. the consideration of how many settlements within a given stock of settlements are home to some of the institutions. The less frequently an indicator occurs, the higher hierarchy level it marks. Based on the given hierarchy, we listed the considered institutions into 6 classes (hierarchy levels), then we examined which was the highest level in the settlements in which they had most of the indices.
- 10 The territory of Hungary was divided into counties in the “general public administration” (the approximately 325 000 km<sup>2</sup> territory into 71 counties) and towns with municipal rank, with similar legal status and competence to the counties. The territory and population of the individual counties varied; on the average, 261 000 people lived in one county (without the towns with municipal rank). The counties were further divided into the so – called districts; in 1910, there were 424 districts in Hungary, with an average population of 40 000 people. (Some of the towns, the so – called corporate towns were equal to the districts, so their population was not calculated into the population of those.) The small towns were usually the seats of the districts, giving home to general administrative offices, court, land registration office, tax office, notaries, which naturally could be escorted by other urban functions – secondary schools, retail trade, markets and fairs, local press, savings bank, lawyers etc.
- 11 Following World War II, “new towns” were built not only in Hungary, or in the “socialist camp”, but all over the world, mostly with the intention to handle the social conflicts caused by urbanisation with the tools of planning and urban architecture. While – in Hungary – the power only saw the conditions of the rapid development of industry in the “socialist towns” and these towns were promoted as the ideal location for the socialist way of life, their planners were hoping that the envisaged and planned towns could drive the development of the local societies in a favourable direction. However, apart from a few slogans, the theory and even more the practice of the socialist urbanistics was underdeveloped (if there was such a thing at all, considering that actually socialism never existed, either). There is only one single ideological element that a research of this era can find, which is the application of the “neighbourhood units” with architectural–social political content (these were where e.g. the child care institutions were located, as well as certain functions providing basic services, etc.).  
Finally, the construction of these towns started within frameworks set by limited financial resources, primitive construction technologies and the hegemony of the “socialist–realist architecture”.

- 12 The so – called “homesteads” were the supplementary farms of the co – operative members; they could cultivate their home gardens, very small lands of the co – operatives that they were allowed to use and small vineyards that had not taken into the co – operatives. Many times there was a co – operation between the homesteads and the co – operatives; e.g. the co – ops gave fodder to the homesteads, and the animals “produced” there were sold through the co – operatives. In the homesteads mostly primeurs, vegetables, fruits, wine and live animals were produced; thus the quantity of goods was fairly large compared to the size of lands tilled by the small farmers, significantly contributing to the incomes in the villages.
- 13 The ideas of regional and settlement development were approved of in two documents in 1971: these were the Settlement Development Concept of Hungary and the Directives of Regional Development. The strategic objectives of the Concept and the Directives were double: to safeguard the effective use of the resources of the people’s economy and to moderate the disparities in the living standards – “... financial and cultural level” – of the population. They wanted to decrease the disparities of the living standards within the hierarchic levels of the settlements. The two objectives could easily be confronted with each other, although the guidelines of the Hungarian Socialist Workers Party, giving the ideological background of the government decrees, “...placed economic efficiency in the foreground of the regional development policy, aiming this way at the equalisation of the discrepancies of the level of economic development in the different regions, the harmonisation of the interests of the counties and regions, and the economic, social and cultural development of the countryside”. The most important planning “tool” of the Concept was the categorisation of the settlements. This allowed the selected development of the settlements with central functions to receive an ideological–“theoretical” foundation, emphasising the advantages of the concentrated development of the economy and the economical operation of the institutional network. The development objectives were set for the development categories, using a single national system of indices and criteria (e.g. it was defined what composition the institutional networks of the settlements in the individual categories had to have).

*The number of settlements in the categories of the Settlement Development Concept of Hungary*

Central function	Number of settlements in the category	In per cent of all settlements
National centre	1	0.03
Selected higher level centre	5	0.15
Higher level centre	7	0.22
Partial higher level centre	11	0.34
Middle level centre	65	2.02
Partial middle level centre	41	1.28
Selected lower level centre	142	4.43
Lower level centre	530	16.52
Partial lower level centre	292	9.10
Settlements in the Budapest agglomeration	44	1.37
Other settlements	2 071	65.54
All settlements	3 209	100.0

The effects of the Concept were heavily debated and criticised, because:

- In infrastructure developments, the methods of the planned economy still had a leading role. The development possibilities of the municipalities were decided upon by the national organs, also, the local societies had little interest and competence in the effective location of the “acquired” goods.
  - The dictatorial “development” made the use of national “normatives” and schematic models necessary in planning. These models neglected the local endowments and characteristics of the settlement network. This made the Concept unsuitable for controlling the development of the settlements especially in the Great Plain or in the areas of the agglomerations.
  - The Concept gave a “system of objectives”, it detailed the goals to be achieved (e.g. the criteria for the certain centre – categories), but it had practically nothing to say about the road or roads leading to the desired goals.
  - The Concept – at least in the practice of implementation – was an urban development concept, made by the extreme concentration of the investment goods and the over – estimation of the “radiating effect” of the towns (according to which the developing towns automatically solve the problems of their surroundings).
  - The settlement network is a changing system, including declining elements; the Concept did not offer a solution for the stagnating and declining settlements. It planned growth (growth of the urban population, infrastructure investments, settling down of new generations), it had tools for this purpose. As soon as growth stopped, the Concept failed to manage the territorial processes. It was not up to the indirect control of settlement development.
  - The Concept had a one – sided technical – (economic) attitude; settlements appeared in space as conglomerates of technical establishments. (For further details on this, see Hajdú, Zoltán: Settlement Network Development Policy in Hungary in the Period of State Socialism (1949–1985). – Discussion Papers, No. 17., Pécs, 1993.)
- 14 Berényi, István – Dövényi, Zoltán: Historische und aktuelle Entwicklungen des ungarischen Siedlungsnetzes. – Beiträge zur regionalen Geographie, Bd. 39. Leipzig, 1996.
- 15 A classical example for that is W. Christaller’s examination based on the “importance surplus” of the telephone stations; in Hungary, Major, Jenő defined urban hierarchy by turnover data of the retail trade, while Kubinyi, András did the same for the Middle Ages, by the number of the students attending foreign universities.
- 16 Grimm, F.: Zentren Systeme als Träger der Raumentwicklung in Mittel – und Ost – europa. – Beiträge zur Regionalen Geographie, Bd. 37. Leipzig, 1994.

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