

PHD ÉRTEKEZÉS TÉZISEI

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*The Urbanisation of Székesfehérvár,*  
Town Development in the Era of the Compromise

Szeged, 2007

## I. Research topic

Székesfehérvár is rich in works of local historiography, which began to develop with new research and publications in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The first comprehensive work that attempted to relate the history of the town was published in 1861. A student of law Kálmán Tagyosi Csapó was the author of *The History of Székes-Fehérvár*. It was edited and published by a bookseller, Antal Ráder. The book discussed predominantly the early period of the town's history. For several decades following this first attempt only articles and studies, but not any comprehensive books were published on town history.

In the late 19<sup>th</sup> century János Károly (1843-1916) the grand provost of Székesfehérvár was the most significant scholar of town and the county history. In addition to his numerous ecclesiastic writings he also wrote historical works in the 1870s. The earliest introduction to the archives in Fejér county was carried out by him; it was published on the occasion of the national exhibition of 1879, which was held in Székesfehérvár. It was titled *Documents from Count Ferenc Nádasdy's Archives of Nádasdladány*. His *Almanac for the Centenary of the Bishopric of Székesfehérvár* is also a notable work, published in 1877.

Among his numerous works, due to its significance of local history we can mention *The History of Fejér County*. The five-volume monograph is the first comprehensive work which, besides the history of the county and the county seat, compiled the memories and data of the settlements of the county. Originally it was intended to be a three-volume book, but the monograph which processed also the data of the destroyed settlements finally came out in five volumes.

The second volume of the book deals with the history of Székesfehérvár. Not only did he write about the earliest mentioning of the town, its topography, founding, names and privileges but he also deals in details with the nominations, church institutes and the history of the chapter, the monastic orders, the parishes and the chapels. In his book, besides the chapter dedicated to the "inner life of the town" he investigated the history of the major educational, social and health institutions of Székesfehérvár. He processed the town history in chronological order in a separate chapter.

Following the work of Károly another distinguished historian of the town was dr. Gyula Lausmann (1861-1918). Early in his career he worked in the field of medicine. His essays, articles were published; he wrote a discourse about public healthcare in Székesfehérvár. Later his interest turned to town history. He wrote his main work *The History of Székesfehérvár* between 1908 and 1912 after 22 years of research.

For his positivist data collecting work, like János Károly, he used the sources that were published earlier. When he had studied them thoroughly, he set about studying the documents of the archives of the town, the county, the Bishopric-, the chapter-, and the Cistercian grammar school. He also used the precious sources of the Hungarian National Museum and the University Library. He was greatly assisted by Gyula Szekf?, who was working in the royal archives in Vienna at the time and he provided the author with sources about Székesfehérvár. Lausmann claims in the preface of his book that *Hungarian Centuries* by Benedek Virág served as the norm to him; he described the events chronologically. Although he admitted that a chronological treatment of events does not entirely suit the modern requirements of writing history, he pointed out the importance of data collecting.

The books contain poems, letters, leaflets, advertisements as well. In the appendix of the last volume we can find the biographies of illustrious artist and public figures of the town.

Lausmann's monograph, although it was not published for decades, aroused interest among

town historians; especially when Mayor dr. Emil Csitáry had it typed and it was placed in the public collections of the town. Sometimes it was overused as a source of research. Undoubtedly it furnished valuable data to researchers and visitors for decades but its publication was delayed for many decades.

Following the reorganisation of the Town Archives of Székesfehérvár in 1993 the publishing of the monograph was launched. The four volumes came out annually, and then due to the great interest they were published again in 1998 with new illustrations. Although Gyula Lausmann saw modern urbanisation as a contemporary, he does not mention it much in his work. However, he mentions the most important stages of the development. The most lasting value of the fourth volume is that it publishes several leaflets and handbills which can not be found in other sources.

From the 1960s several discourses elaborated the history of Székesfehérvár in the historical almanac that was published by the county archives under the editorship of Gábor Farkas. Besides the discourse by István Kállay we can also mention the studies of Vera Bácskai, Sarolta Czakó, Géza Érszegi, Károly Jenei, Ferenc Glatz and Előd Vass.

It was István Kállay who carried out research for several decades into the history of the town in the feudal age. In the early 1970s his fundamental studies were published about the beneficial interests of the town, about market jurisdiction, credit operations, the organisations and the personnel of the local government, the history of taxation in Székesfehérvár, and about how the local government was organised after the Turkish period. In 1988 the *Regiment of Fehérvár 1688-1849* was published, which describes the history of the town after the Turkish period. It is the most thorough work that provides insight into the everyday life of the town and the details of town history. In spite of these studies and books only a few works were written about the town history during the decades following the Compromise of 1867. One of them is *Capital Development in Fejér County* by Gábor Farkas. The study, which was published in the journal *Századok*, discusses the transformation of the economic structure in the county, but it also deals with the changes in the town. In the course of the study he discusses the general economic state, the development of agriculture and infrastructure in the county. This valuable study deals primarily with the period between the two world wars.

## II. Research methods and sources

The history of Székesfehérvár in the dualistic era has not been explored. Researchers dealt only with some aspects of the great changes that happened during the period. The aim of this thesis is to demonstrate the transition of civil life during this period through the comparative method of town history. This research tries to examine the position of Székesfehérvár among the municipal towns, how its development can be compared to the development of the other municipal towns with regard to the political situation, the change of society, employment of the inhabitants, housing conditions and urbanisation.

Apart from the works published in this topic statistics, the local press and primarily the documents of the archives have been my sources. The Archives of Székesfehérvár preserve several fonds which help to explore the town history of this period.

Further sources for analysis are the documents of the Municipal Town Council, the reports of the Municipal Committee meetings, documents of censuses, various committee documents, the collection of municipal law, the collection of maps and drawings. The research also examines the characteristics of other municipal towns (Győr, Pécs, Sopron) during the dualistic period. Each town had a different course of development. One of the objectives of the research is to highlight

these characteristics and differences.

### III. Summary of the research results

*The Urbanisation of Székesfehérvár, Town Development in the Era of the Compromise* aims at examining town development following the period of the Compromise of 1867. In separate chapters it deals with the changes in the number of the population, the changes regarding employment and the circumstances of denominations, the transformation of economy, how the political situation changed with regard to the general and municipal elections and the constitution of the municipal committee. It also deals with the expansion of the town, the role of corporate bodies, organisations and societies which took part in the process of urbanisation. Public construction and development of the infrastructure which improved the conditions in the town is also a topic of this thesis.

I. Urban society changed to a great extent during this period. Population was steadily increasing following the decline during neo-absolutism. As the population was growing– 22683 people (1869), 25612 (1880), 27548 (1890), 30451 (1900), 34828 (1910) the inner area of the town expanded greatly. The biggest growth in the civil population of Székesfehérvár was between 1900 and 1910, when it increased by 4377. The concentration of the inhabitants differed to some extent from the other municipal towns. In this period a lot of inhabitants moved to the outskirts of the town. Construction activity was even larger than the growth of the population. Due to the changes of the town's hydrography new districts appeared. The biggest growth of population can be seen in the outskirts of the town. As the population grew it transformed the position of the denominations. In the 1860s a lot of Israelites settled in the town; it meant that they became the second biggest denomination between 1869 and 1910. In the census of 1880 their percentage reached 10.5%, but they grew in number until 1910 (3024 people). Later, due to the change of the town's economic role their number decreased steadily. From 1910 the Calvinists became the second biggest denomination (3121 people in 1910). The Greek Orthodox Church, which had been a large denomination in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, decreased and became insignificant because of the assimilation of the Serbs.

Székesfehérvár became a significant town because it is situated at the entrance of a valley and it was on a market route and it lies at the intersection of roads. When the South Railway line was completed in 1860 a railway station was built; soon the town became a railway junction. The fact that Székesfehérvár was a transport junction can be seen in the employment structure of the population. Contemporary statistics mention the high percentage of transport workers as a peculiarity and characteristic feature of Székesfehérvár. The town outnumbered the other municipal towns in this respect. Apart from transport workers the other characteristic feature was the high number of the agrarian population, in spite of the fact that their ratio was decreasing in this period.

Up till the Compromise and after that Székesfehérvár was quite urbanised, even among the other free royal boroughs. Its advantageous location and the benefits of being a junction diminished or changed after the railway was built. As the South Railway was completed the vicinity of Budapest changed the situation and the town's development slowed down. Under the new circumstances its role as administrative centre remained, and even grew, but it adapted to the new economic situation too late. (Following the Compromise more state institutions and regional organisations were located in the town.) Commerce declined when the Pécs-Kelenföld railway line was opened.

People in the south and south-east part of the country did not travel to Székesfehérvár any more to buy manufactured goods. To revive trade and fairs Székesfehérvár supported building branch-lines. However, the intended effects of these developments proved to be temporary. The town's role as a centre of commerce declined further on. The turnover of the once famous fairs fell, and it could not be compensated by organising more fairs. The number of commercial employees also fell. While the commercial population of the town was equal to that of Pécs in 1894, at the turn of the century we can see a decline in the number of commercial workers. In the 1910s most of the business people and the financial management moved to Budapest.

II. Dualism brought a balanced town policy. There were only two political changes during the period. The civil servants of the neo-absolutist era became the leaders of the town after 1867. The first change, primarily a change of generations took place in 1878 and the following years. The new political and economic leaders managed to keep their political power for decades. Only in 1908, following the national political changes were they forced to give up power. The structure which was created by the municipal law remained unchanged throughout the period. The municipal system resulted in several specific features in municipal towns.

III. The chapter with the title *Establishing the Basis for the Expansion of the Town, Town-planning in the Reform Period* is about water management in Székesfehérvár. The streams and brooks flowing from Bakony had always had a defining role in the geographical surroundings of the town. It lasted over centuries to manage these streams. With water management it was possible to expand the inner territories of the town and to ensure healthier conditions of life. It also had an impact on the way the land was cultivated. Royal free towns performed town development and planning as an administrative task. In the early 19<sup>th</sup> century town embellishment was mainly regarded as a part of land surveying and engineering task. Large scale urban improvement was institutionalized in the 1830s in Székesfehérvár. The idea of setting up a standing committee for supervising town improvement and design of new buildings was conceived in 1833.

IV. In the chapter titled *Driving forces of urban development* I examine the organs of town improvement and planning and also the role of corporate bodies and civil servants who contributed to the development. The municipality was reorganised in 1867; in the new municipal structure different departments and committees were involved in treating the issue of urbanisation. Among them we can mention the departments of finance, public construction, transport, public works, and town improvement. Several municipal departments dealt with the question of urban improvement in the dualistic period. Besides the departments, a number of boards (committees, delegations) were engaged in town improvement issues. These bodies were usually set up for one occasion or for short periods. As tasks altered it had an impact on the structure of the bodies; new bodies were set up for new tasks. Besides the corporate bodies the post of a civil engineer can be found among the civil servants. The post was established in the reform period but soon it was abolished for a short time. In 1872 besides the post of the civil engineer an assistant engineer post was established. A reorganisation was carried out in this field when the offices of housing and public construction were established in 1891. Different societies also took part in this issue; they made parks and squares. However, the Embellishment Society was set up as late as 1912.

V. Following the Compromise town improvements started with the restoration of neglected roads

and streets. This improvement had an effect on the appearance of the town, especially in the city centre, where new streets were made and the transport system was developed as well. The immediate surroundings of the city centre were changed for the better when the canal of the castellany was covered; it also had an impact on traffic and marketplaces. During the Compromise era there were two ways of the maintenance of public places including parks and squares. Landscaping meant making more green areas and providing facilities for leisure time activities. The site of national and local fairs were rearranged and redistributed. The town expanded the way it was intended in the neo-absolutist period but the outskirts of the town became popular too. Expansion was primarily defined by the hydrographical environment. At the turn of the century expansion continued in the area of the military institutions. The expansion of the inner area made little progress because the leaders of the town did not support, even postponed attaching new territories, as they feared its financial consequences and the need to improve infrastructure. Partly this is the reason why the poor population of the town moved to the vineyards, which had lost their value due to the phylloxera infection. In spite of the fact that the authorities prohibited settling and living in this area the registered 142 people (at the census of 1869) went up to 5808 people by 1910.

VI. Public construction and building that shaped the townscape were financed partly by the treasury and partly by the town. The most significant of them, similarly to other municipal towns, were barrack building because letting out the barracks recovered the expenses thus the income of the town increased. Some institutions were located in the town in this period. Székesfehérvár always supported these plans by providing building material and site. It was part of the urbanisation of the modern era, Árpád public baths was built within the framework of this construction.

VII. Notable developments of infrastructure were made in order to improve urban living conditions. First gas lighting, after the turn of the century electric lighting was installed, and later a water supply network was built. However, there were only plans to establish public transport; it was not launched in this period. In spite of its time-lag every aspect of urbanisation was fulfilled. Due to the urban improvement that started in the 1870s Székesfehérvár was supplied with public utilities by 1910. Gas lighting was introduced on 3 January 1873. The telephone network between Budapest and Székesfehérvár was completed in 1894. Electricity supply started on 1 January 1903. The town started to build its water mains in the first decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Drinking-water supply started on 1 August 1913.

Székesfehérvár like other municipal towns usually financed its town improvement investments with loans. The value of investments completed between 1879 and 1908 was 5 653 328 crowns. 4 626 268 crowns of this sum came from loans; the remaining sum came from revenues of the town. However, the accomplished investments of this period lag behind the other municipal towns in the Transdanubian region. In Győr 13 027 379 crowns, in Pécs 13 967 61 crowns, even in Sopron a larger sum 6 791 000 crowns were spent on this purpose. These towns, like Székesfehérvár financed their improvements mainly with loans, but whereas Sopron financed its improvements entirely with loans, in Pécs the proportion of loan was much lower because the biggest part (5 150 000 crowns) was covered by the town's revenues. In Győr only 1 440 000 crowns came from its own revenues. It can be seen that the leaders of the towns took up different positions on providing the financial background of the improvements.

József Havranek was undoubtedly exceptionally gifted in economics. He was careful about

entering into long term obligations, especially when it was about loans. This careful approach characterises the way how the water mains and the sewage system were built. As it was the grandest investment in financial terms, he adopted a policy to delay the project. He had the same approach in connection with the townhall construction. This attitude can be explained by the fact that towards the end of the period town leaders more often emphasised the need for state funding. Before the turn of the century some towns wished to augment their sources of income partly from the increasing state subsidy. For this reason the town did not wish to lift local taxes. In 1908 a decision of the Parliament provided a 2 000 000-crown aid for the towns. Although they intended to provide further aid in order to counterbalance the expenditure of the administrative tasks of the towns, the sum did not rise until it was dealt with in statutes. The bill, although it guaranteed the promised 4 million crowns for the municipal towns, did not prove to be a considerable help, as it meant only 70 000 crowns for Székesfehérvár. The legal measure did not wish to solve the financial problems of towns by government aid. Undeniably, the debt of towns increased greatly; by 1910 it reached 370-380 million crowns. The legal measure emphasised the specific nature of town development: "it is important that the state strives to help towns in their own initiative activity, and work out the best way of development together. The objective for the towns is to be able to find the resources themselves in order to cover their prime necessities." Therefore the expectations, which were present from the introduction of government aid in 1908, to obtain higher income by means of rising state subsidies were not fulfilled. As a result there was no possibility to sponsor new investments with the help of state subsidies and this way to rearrange the budget.

As for the investment projects similarly to other towns new barrack and school building and railway investments must be mentioned. However, in Székesfehérvár there were not significant investments made in the field of healthcare and the development of the water-supply system. The later cost more than 2 million crowns. Sopron spent more than half (57%) of its investments on barrack building. Undoubtedly, each municipal town paid even more attention to barrack building because they could expect compensation and income from indirect consumption. Other, non municipal towns like Szombathely also made efforts to benefit from similar projects. It was also related to the effort to increase consumption, which they attempted to achieve by placing institutions and the army in the town. In Székesfehérvár the issue of the military centre is linked to the placement of public institutions. The town management paid extra attention to this matter from the 1870s. As a result the army corps headquarters, the state stud-farm, the provision store and the military hospital were built and several Hungarian, Imperial and Royal corps arrived in the town when the barracks had been completed.

Due to the extent of investment in urbanisation Székesfehérvár fell behind during this period increasingly. Among the municipal towns in the Transdanubian region Székesfehérvár belonged to the second line, like Sopron and Komárom. In spite of its relative shortfall urban development was carried out in all relevant aspects but sometimes with considerable delay. Postponed developments of the electric and the water supply system was the reason why the lack of infrastructure did not provide favourable conditions for the industry.

According to the statistics made by Károly Keleti in the early 1870s, among the royal free towns Székesfehérvár was one of the biggest with urban characteristics. According to Keleti, who made complicated measuring and calculation, Székesfehérvár was the sixth in the hierarchy following Győr, but it came before Buda and Sopron. In spite of the fact that by the 1910s the infrastructure of a modern town was completed the town suffered a loss of prestige. The reason of its lag can be contributed to the political relations of the town.

#### IV. Other publications of the author in the topic of the research

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