

Small Town-question in the Scientific Literature

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Abstract

The South Transdanubian region belong to the 20 most disadvantaged regions of the European Union which shows a significant decline compared to previous years. In my opinion this justifies the need for professional research directed at changing this situation by performing some tangible efforts. The investigation of the small towns of the area, and the drafting of their possible development path in harmony with the existing development plans may not only provide a positive vision of the future for the towns, but their wider environment (micro-region) as well. Important is the clarification of the theoretical background of the research: reviewing literature on European urban planning and history, in order to find out what kind of theoretical and practical laws small towns need to obey to be successful. The research is basically of interdisciplinary nature, for this reason, the potential results may be connected to several disciplines and pragmatical components. On one hand, it may draw attention toward functioning models of local agricultural and political activities, and thus it may provide adaptable models for the local stakeholders, which may later on be adopted by the small towns and included in their operational structure. I will analyse to what extent the possibly existing visions reflect last decades development, whether their realization is a realistic opportunity based on the small towns' developmental history.

Key words: settlement network, small town, planning, Hungary

JEL Classification: N93, N94, R19

1 Introduction

Towns have always had an important role in the settlement network of Europe. The development of towns, the issue of inequalities among towns has always been an important and accurate topic. Urbanization processes becoming stronger after the 1990s and have formed specific trends in the development of settlement networks. Within Europe, urban development in Central-Eastern European countries shows specific developmental ways. An important feature in respect of settlement network is that the big cities, mostly capitals, have become dominant and counterpole cities do not really exist. Most of the city researchers favour to analysing big cities and agglomerations due to the accessibility and multitude of information. In correspondence with that, the studying of small towns can have a supplementary function among the other theories. Nowadays there are 346 settlements in town status. The quality of settlements which have town status is quite diverse in Hungary, regarding their population and how rich they are in infrastructure and other functions. Towns are the power centres of economic life due to their population density, heterogeneous employment build-up, and because their morphologic image and standards are different from those of villages.

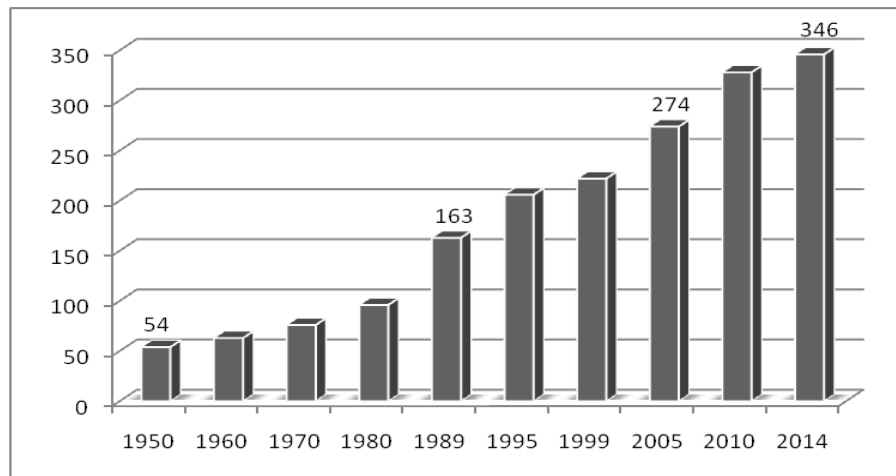


Fig. 1 The number of Hungarian town's between 1950-2014

Source: Own editing based on Hungarian Central Statistical Office Yearbook's.

2 Definition of Small Town

According to literature the notion of town can be originated from multiple components. Towns can be defined from the aspect of statistics, economics, geography, architecture, economic history, society, etc. According to economics, a town is every settlement that means a centre for its surrounding villages with not everyday specialized services, administration and institutions (Enyedi 2012, Illés 2008, Szigeti 2002). Demographic usually gives a minimal number of population to define city; for example the Statistical Office of the UN considers areas with a population of more than 5,000 people to be a town. The most widely accepted definition among Central-Eastern European countries is the one concerning status, because towns are those settlements “that have administrative town status, rights, authority and institutions” (Illés 2008, pp. 138.). The diversity of the notion of town appears in connection with small towns as well. On the one hand, there is a negative critical voice about settlements that became towns after the 1990s (Beluszky-Györi 2006), on the other hand, small towns can have a meaning, which suggests forgottenness (Bácskai 2002), and several statements can be found, which say that they do not deserve their statuses (T. Mérey 1989). Partly, for a village being declared as a town is an opportunity for heading upwards; on the other hand, it is the tribute of their development (Gyüre 2010). Classification based on population seems to be the simplest and the easiest to follow, as it can be supported by exact statistic data. In other words, the notion of small town does not only indicate population, though it can be categorized with the help of it, the notion itself is based on several other criteria. According to Tóth (2008), the population of a small town is under 5000, and that of “small-middletowns” is between 5000-10000 inhabitants. As Dövényi (2009) says, the last category should comprise towns with 5,000-15,000 inhabitants, but he suggests another name: “tinytown” or “minitown”. The National Territorial Development Plan (2006) draws the line at 30 000 people.

For me, towns are settlements that had town status in 2011, their population was generally under 10 000 people between 1870 and 2011, received city status after 1989/90, and within its population there exists a social group, which can be considered responsible for town development and they are the bourgeois class; and through its history the place was a settlement serving central functions.

3 From the Oppidum to the Reform of Public Administration

Taking the historic antecedents into account as well, the settlements of Hungary arrived to the 19th century conditions through several changes, but the specific features of development started to form in the following period. At the beginning of the 19th century 743 settlement has a town status, from this 692 settlement called oppidum. According to the Hungarian Demographic Lexicon an oppidum is a town with rights which were between those of a royal free city (*libera regia civitas*) and a village. This notion was widely spread in Hungary in the 14-15th centuries, when hundreds of villages received market town status. In Hungary the term oppidum referred to an economic centre with privileges, specific legal status, and with the right to host markets. The analyses of market towns between the two world wars had a double nature; Mályusz thought of the role of oppida in a negative way; according to him, these settlements can be considered towns on the basis of their privileges, yet they are just rural settlements with undeserved rights (Bácskai 2002). However, Bácskai (2002) denies this idea in his work and states that oppidum have to be comparable with not only towns, but also with villages. This comparativeness enables us to study market towns in their own specific form. As a result of that, oppida based on their earlier privileges or privileges received from the feudal lord, gained a comprehensive self-government. In settlement-hierarchy oppidum were on a level above villages, as they shared all the characteristics of villages, but they gained different privileges, among which the most common was the right to host markets. Towns are differentiated by specific legal status, higher population than villages, and economic and infrastructural central and organizing role. For this reason is important to examine the life of market towns and small towns by the study of town development; they did not have developed public institutions or public utilities, but in some regions they emerged as centres for commerce, industry, public administration, public education or culture.

In the South-Transdanubian (Baranya, Somogy and Tolna county) was 56 oppida with more than 2000 inhabitants; excluding Toponár with 983 inhabitants and Bükkösd with 275 inhabitants. In the table 1 shows the three county's oppidum, with bondface type can you see today's town. In Tolna county much of the oppidum preserve their status and described a visible evolutionary flow.

Tab. 1 Oppida in the South-Transdanubian (Census, 1828)

<i>Baranya county</i>	<i>Somogy county</i>		<i>Tolna county</i>	
Bóly	Ádánd	Kaposvár	Báta	Pinczehely
Dárda	Nagyatád	Karád	Bátaszék	Regöly
Gödre	Babócsa	Kéthely	Bonyhád	Simontornya
Kozár Rátz	Berény Iharos	Törökkoppány	Dombóvár	Szakcs
Magócs	Berki Nagy	Marcali	Döbrököz	Szekszárd
Mohács	Berzence	Mernye	Földvár	Tamási
Pécsvárad	Böhönye	Mozsgó	Hőgyész	Tolna
SzabadSzent Király	Bükkösd	Nágocs	Iregh	
Siklós	Csokonya	Sárd	Kölesd	
Szekcső	Csurgó	Segesd	Ozora	
Vaiszló	Györök Szőlős	Sellye	Paks	
	Hidvég Város	Szigetvár		
	Igal	Toponár		
	Istvándi			

Source: own editing by Census 1828 (Nagy Ludovico).

The April laws of 1848 had a significant role as they deleted the privileges of the ranks. With the change of property relations and the economic situation the factors of development of the settlement changed to some extent; the serf emancipation caused migration, the more and more capitalist economy boosted the different branches of transportation, and helped to create factories. From the aspect of settlement change the Austro-Hungarian Compromise of 1867 can be considered a significant turning-point, as it established the political requisites of the changes in the bourgeois class. After the Compromise the country aspired to shape an independent economic policy, within which infrastructural developments were carried out. This is the time of economic boost as well; the industrial revolution motivates the formation of the social and legal conditions, increases the competition of regions with good conditions. The importance of agro-conjunction must be emphasized, as the change took place in Hungary, an agro-country, where the agricultural products and their trade remained the most important inner power for creating capital. The modernisation of agro-production and its techniques, the growth in commerce, the modernisation of processing, and the establishment of credit institutions have all become the source of town development. There was a salient change in the 19th century concerning settlement network: the rate of village population decreased. Until World War I, town population increased three times faster than village population, such as in Tolna county. In this county was a dynamic advanced the population of the small town (Figure 2). Out of the town Dombóvár's increase was in the highest degree. However, its demographic reason is not the high rate of natural increase in town population, since the number of births in towns is significantly lower than in villages, but the death rate is the reverse (public sanitation conditions are better, due to the better living conditions, there is less infant mortality, children reach adulthood with higher chance). The high rate of migration into towns compensates the low rate of natural increase, and villages have provided cities with labour force and population (Beluszky–Györi 2005).

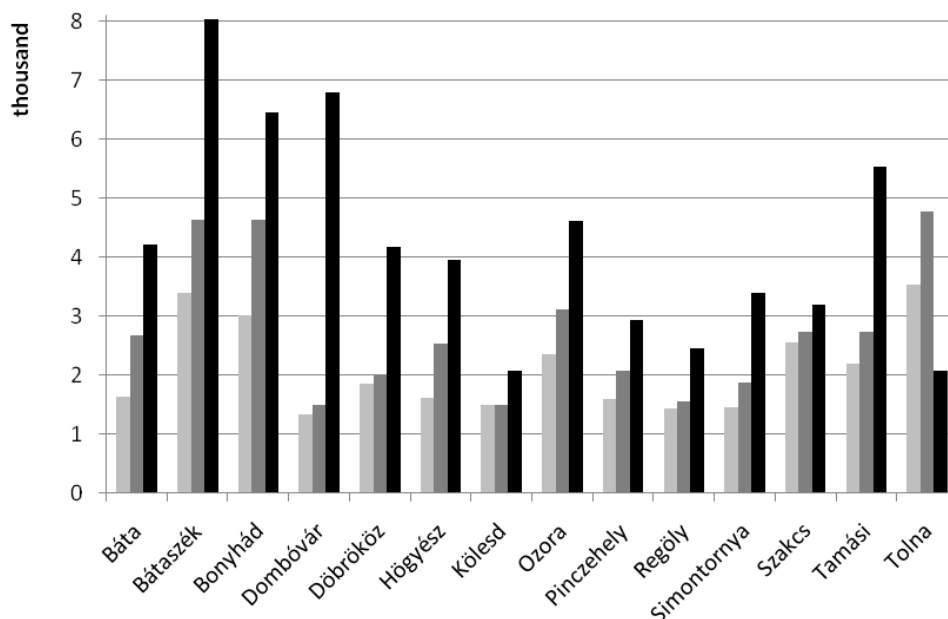


Fig. 2 The population-change in Tolna county's towns between 1828-1910

Source: own editing by Nagy 1828 and KSH 1910, 1960

Population helped not only the establishment of towns, but it also had an important role in the development of public administration. A county system, which is based on unified principles, was created in the country; the counties were divided into districts, thus deleting the areas and regions that previously had privileges. At the time of the Compromise more than 800 settlements had town status, 90 percent of which of them has a market town status. No consistency is found in the labelling of towns throughout the history, since after the Compromise the market town status was replaced by two new legal categories: town with integrated council and town with municipal status. Towns with integrated council can be considered the descendants of market towns from the aspect of legal status and judicial authority. Towns with integrated council belong directly under county governance (Máthé 1996). For me, this category seems to be the most interesting because of the examinations, as towns with municipal status formed separate public administration units; their population exceeded 20 000; they were regarded as middle or large towns. Today's small towns were in this period either towns with integrated council or large villages. The status of large village from 1870 to 1950 was given to settlements that although had no integrated council, employed notaries.

The category of administrative centre, where the development of towns was determined mainly by institutions and functions related to public administration, refers to differences outside the level of legal status (Máthé 1996, Bibó 1975). Becoming an administrative centre meant that town functions were established in the settlement: courts, land offices and police stations were created. The officers working at these institutions provided the base for the bourgeois class; their demands increasingly showed town-attitudes (Kovács 1980). After the settling of public offices several institutions with central function emerged, such as schools, press and medical institutions. From the aspect of development of small towns building railways became an important factor. The appearance of railways increased the importance of the settlements in many cases, helped it to become a town, just like in the case of Dombóvár, Szigetvár, Békéscsaba, Nyíregyháza or settlements along Lake Balaton. Small towns on the south coast of Balaton were located on the line of the Southern Railway, thus their location was auspicious because bath-culture became one of the basic elements of the bourgeois life from 1895 on and it helped in the development of small towns. While the main lines were built out more quickly in the southern counties, the building of the by-lines was only realized after the turn of the century. The commuter rail lines, like Kaposvár-Fonyód, Barcs-Kaposvár or Kaposvár-Siófok, strengthened the central role of a given settlement and supported the emergence of other (sometimes public administrative) functions. The sharp difference between settlements with town status and those with town functions is the main characteristics of the Hungarian town network that prevailed before World War I. At the turn of the century 250 settlements (which served town functions as lower status centres) were added to the already existing 131 settlements with town status, what concerns their number, population, economic structure, and the number of public administrative institutions. The image of the settlement network at this time shows the predominance of the capital and the lack of small and middle towns.

The settlement network of the country was also modified to a great extent by the Treaty of Trianon; the capital became absolutely superior, there were no regional centres that could have functioned as its counterpole. Not only the settlements, but the settlement network changed as well; in 1918 there were 139 settlements with town status; by 1920 this number decreased to 47. The number of villages also decreased drastically: earlier there were 12 500 and now there are 3500 within the new boundaries. The boundaries have also altered the country's economy,

transportation network and the urban areas. The town network declined and lacked urban areas, and has a single territory distribution. The rate of town population barely changed; the population of Budapest and that of its agglomeration changed (Beluszky 1999). The development of agrotowns in the Great Hungarian Plain was stagnating in this period, as opposed to the industrial towns on the northern part of the country. After the wars the agrotowns reached the limits of their performance, they were unable to restructure. Their population growth did not stop, thus they had to face several social inequality problems in addition to structural problems. Despite the territorial losses, the country's urban network still progressed similarly as in the period before World War I. The essential structural problems and the territorial unevenness caused a serious problem, and there were still too many deficiencies in the town areas. The lower base of the urban network was still missing, like the versatile developed small towns. Most of the small towns still undertook only one supply function (the role of being a transport junction, market place, educational centre etc.)

4 “The Urbanization Boom”

From the point of view of the settlement network we can reckon 1950 as the end of a stage, like the Compromise of 1867; when the reform of the public administration came into force. In addition to the transformation of the county system, town networks started to expand, the number of the towns started to grow (Germuska 2002). The first phase of urban development was the period from 1950 to 1965, when nine settlements were declared to be towns. Seven of them were so-called "socialist towns", they were either mining or industrial centres. The designated place for Sztálinváros, seemed to be a fortunate one, as it became the centre of a town deficient region (Beluszky 1999). Their primary function was to serve as an industrial site; the population of the town was only secondary. At that time 106 settlements represented the country's small and medium-sized urban network. Large villages served similar function as today's small towns, but only half of the settlements, which served the function of the towns, belonged to towns legally. The National Concept for Settlement Network Development of 1971 (hereinafter NCSND) has introduced strict categorization about the settlements, under which nine categories were distinguished. The towns which I examined belonged to these three categories: secondary centre, partial secondary centre, lower priority level centre. The NCSND's reflect about city network enabled further development that had been highlighted as the central sphere of action (Bibó 1975). Until 1980, out of this category, 18 new cities were “born” which met the expectations. The population of small towns grew at a moderate pace; industrial development improved the network of institutions and strengthened the region's central functions. Significantly more towns - nearly 50 - were inaugurated until the mid-1980s. Many of these settlements were well developed, and were rich in central institutions (Bibó 1975).

Tab. 2 Small towns in 2011 in the region

Baranya county		Somogy county		Tolna county	
Town-declaration in					
<i>Bóly</i>	1997	Balatonboglár	1991	Bátaszék	1995
<i>Harkány</i>	1999	<i>Balatonföldvár</i>	1992	Dunaföldvár	1989
Kozármisleny	2007	<i>Balatonlelle</i>	1991	<i>Gyönk</i>	2009
<i>Mágocs</i>	2009	Csurgó	1989	<i>Nagymányok</i>	2009

<i>Pécsvárad</i>	1993	<i>Fonyód</i>	1989	<i>Simontornya</i>	1995
<i>Sásd</i>	1995	<i>Igal</i>	2009	Tamási	1984
<i>Sellye</i>	1997	<i>Kadarkút</i>	2005		
<i>Szentlőrinc</i>	1996	<i>Lengyeltóti</i>	1992		
<i>Villány</i>	2000	<i>Nagybajom</i>	2001		
		<i>Tab</i>	1989		
		<i>Zamárdi</i>	2008		

Source: own editing by KSH 2013

By this time, the scope of urban settlements that functioned as town, caught up to the number of the settlements which had civic authority. Two small towns were inaugurated in this period in Southern Transdanubia: Siklós received town status in 1977 and Tamási in 1984 (see Table 2.). From 1989 there was a sharp rise in the number of the towns which were inaugurated in the country, namely: 41. From the Southern Transdanubian Csurgó, Fonyód, Tab and Dunaföldvár were also included (In Table 2. can you see the small towns in 2011 in the South-Transdanubian region; fewer than 5000 dweller with cursive). In 1996, 206 towns were there in the country, the functional and formal towns were separated again; there were more settlements with town status than needed. Several settlements received town status until 1995, such as Balatonboglár, Balatonföldvár, Balatonlelle, Bátaszék, Lengyeltóti, Pécsvárad, Sásd and Simontornya. Starting with the change of the regime, the development of settlements, their population, employment structure and history differ at several points. Despite the high number of towns the geographic distribution is still uneven; there are still many areas which lack the presence of towns nationwide and in regional breakdown, too. The settlement network's different structure is reflected in the spatial distribution of the towns. In the summer of 2005, 15 urban settlements received town status in the country. With them, the number of towns increased to 289 (Szigeti 2002). In 2010, the number of towns increased to 304 (the capital and the county seats are not included). In many cases becoming town is only a final result of a bureaucratic process, it does not expand the settlement's functions. Comparing the number of towns from 2005 to 2010 we can conclude that nearly three-quarters of the country's towns belonged to the small town category. The number of medium-sized towns remained relatively constant over the years.

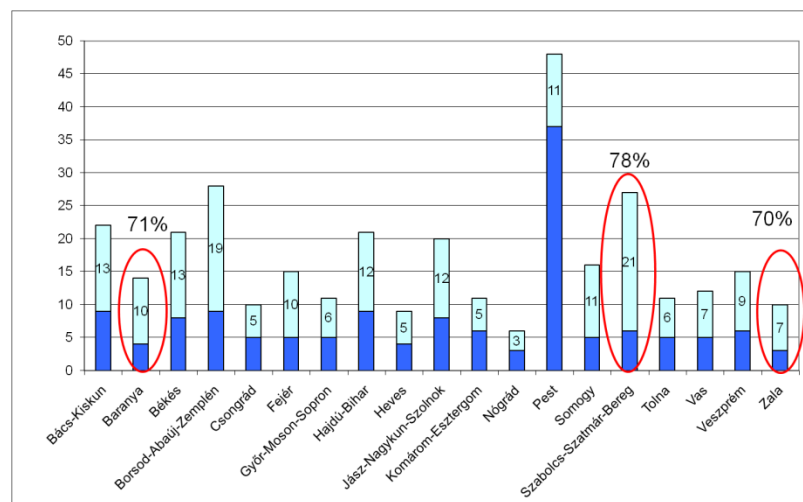


Fig. 3 The proportion of the small towns in 2012 by country

Source: own editing by KSH 2013.

After 2010, the process of town declaration seems to stop, over the past 3 years the number of the towns has not increased in the country. After declaring Pest as a county town in 2013 the concept of large village became empty. Over the years the proportion of urban population has increased steadily, in 2010 because of the adverse demographic wave and due to the process of suburbanization the number of the urban population reduced, but did not cause a shift in the proportions. Within the urban population the proportion of small urban population in some counties represents a significant concentration; on average one-fifth of the towns' inhabitants live in small towns (Figure 3.). Fejér County is outstanding in this respect, there is 10 out of 15, in Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg County 21 out of 27 towns are considered small towns and in Jász-Nagykun-Szolnok County where 8 towns are not among small towns. Baranya County is below the national average, which shows the superiority of Pécs, the county seat, compared to the rest of the towns in the county. Kaposvár and Szekszárd have less population so the small towns' population rate in Somogy and Tolna county is higher with 5 percentage points than in Baranya County.

5 Small Towns Today

Issues about town development and urbanization, the formal and functional concept of a town, the conceptual and legal issues about town declarations are definitions which we could read about and were related mostly to small towns recently. On the columns of “*Tér és Társadalom*”, “*Területi Statisztika*”, “*Földrajzi Értésítő*” and “*Falu város region*” we could read a number of articles related to small towns; as an incomplete functional element (Beluszky-Győri 2004, 2006), about the types of globalization (Molnár 2006), their demographic transformation (Pirisi-Trócsányi 2006) as well as general statistical summaries and analyses (Kőszegfalvi 2009, Szebényi-Nagyváradai 2009, Gyüre 2010). Tóth (2008) initiated a debate about town declarations in 2008-2009 on the columns of *Területi Statisztika*, about the inaugurated towns, which was a result of the town-boom after the change of the regime. Differences caused by formal and functional duality of the concept of town were concrete problem. Researchers approached the issue from several aspects, everyone from their own perspective. Through the example of a given settlement we can read beyond the theoretical approach, a detailed exploration of the social and legal differences and then a pragmatic approach, too. According to studies we can categorize small towns most logically on the basis of two criteria, the number of inhabitants and functionality. Classification on the basis of the population is not homogeneous, but unifying proposals were and are being made (Tóth 2008, Beluszky – Győri 2006). It is important to follow these debates in case of the examined small towns, especially in connection with the towns, which were declared to be towns after 2005, since providing functions, "the-anti- supplying" is the essential criterion for being a city. The majority of small towns cannot be considered as a city by their appearance, their range of services are neither appropriate and sometimes nor their infrastructure. If we examine the relations with institutions, two-thirds of small towns are not, or are less urbanized. Nearly 100 small towns do not have a nursery, one-fifth of small towns lacks secondary educational institutions, and only one-tenth of the 185 small towns have land offices, museums and local bus services (Kovacsicsné 2010). Beluszky-Győri (2006) calls these small towns, which became cities after change of the regime as urban villages and almost towns. He examines the occurrences of urban settlements without the role of a city. From the aspect of Economic History, functions and services, which ensured the achievement of a central role

(market centres and market towns, a district seat), were the ones that allowed these settlements to become towns after the regime change. The Parliamentary Resolution in 2005 about the NCSND has already taken the European Union's specifications on the terms of the settlement network development into account. NCSND had defined a territorial vision of the country, in which the relationship between the town and its region projected a new, intensive and integrated role. It is also designed to ensure the development of smaller towns to build a qualitatively renewed rural-urban relationship, where the division of functions can deepen and the availability of high-quality centre settlements would be solved. Creating a polycentric, cooperative urban network is one of the key objectives, which would be able to effectively now together the different regions of the country. One possible way of polycentrism is the establishment of functional urban areas (Farágó 2008). The big cities with international importance would be basically the basis of the structures of these urban areas, additionally the base would be the small towns with regional roles, and they could be integrated into the larger units. NCSND's pursued goals until 2013 included the connection system's development between city networks. In addition the concept is mostly focusing on regional development poles, it emphasized sustainability, so it was planned to design cities with developed cultural and traffic junctions. In the case of the relations between the centres and sub-centres, the emphasis was placed on ensuring availability.

According to VÁTI's research in 2008 the main problems of the urban system are: the suburbanization, the weakness of the nodes and deficiencies in network cohesion and management. The scope of formal cities and small towns are one of the main sources of settlement dilemmas. The country's deficient urban areas "were filled", a process that is spectacular in Southern Transdanubian, as the classification of each small South-Transdanubian region had at least a small town. The deficiency of urban areas ceased to exist, although towns and town-regions appeared to function with deficit. Apparent is a result of the increased process of urbanization, the range of functional cities is narrowing, but the scope of the settlement with urban status since the change of regime is growing. The weak, rural small towns are not or only partly able to fulfil their function, i.e. to fulfil the central role in the given region. Access to public institutions and public services is not guaranteed either in most small towns, which may affect negatively the people living in the locality and damage the already not so positive town image.

6 Conclusion

Throughout the history cooperation between the cities was a constant difficulty, because of the low level of co-operation, which could not be solved even in the 21st century. Physical links between the settlements (infrastructure, ecosystems) are the ones that have been built out in most cases and operate sustainably. Economic, social and other inter-municipal interactions do not function so well. The fragmented local government system generates a competitive situation, in which from the point of view of town network small towns lose. With the centralization of public services and public institutions several functions were removed from the small towns' scope, which would have been appealing for the population and would have had population retaining force (Salamin-Radvánszki-Nagy 2008). Among the possible development models there is always the expansion of small towns' networks, building a stable town hierarchy. Both of the regional development model realized under the decentralization and the renewed nationwide

network model based on the deconcentration are counting on the lower elements of the urban network, the urban-rural relations (Rechnitzer 2008). Small towns represent an important part of the city network - proportionally; the goal is to show this excess in their function, appearance and in the ability to enforce their interests. Today's development policy in Hungary lacks thinking in city networks (Faragó 2008); since the NCSND of 1971 it is not typical of the development policy to create a uniformly operating concept about towns. Centralization can be observed in development policy and in public administration, too which is also reflected in the reconstituted district centres in 2013. The accepted NCSND in 2012 did not break this tradition; at the same time it determines the territorial approach to regional development and industrial development as well.

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