THE REVIEW OF THE GATEWAY CITY FUNCTIONS OF SZEGED

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Abstract. Gateway-cities play a very important role in the development of the European border area. Firstly, definitions of gateway-city mentioned in the Hungarian and international Geographic literature are analyzed. Then the question is examined, whether Szeged according to Enyedi’s gateway city criteria could be as a gateway city considered. Finally, the possibilities of the entire gateway city role in Duna-Criş-Mureş-Tisza Euroregion for Szeged are explained.


Keywords: gateway-city, space structure, Hungary, Szeged, DCMT Euroregion, co-operation.

Cuvinte cheie: oraş-poartă, structură spaţială, Ungaria, Szeged, euroregiunea DCMT, cooperare.

1. THE DEFINITIONS OF GATEWAY CITY

In this work we examine whether Szeged city could be considered a gateway city or not among the Hungarian regional centres, and which of its gateway functions could provide the transnational co-operation in the DCMT Euroregion.

The definition of gateway city may be interpreted variously by Hungarian and international scientific literature.

Gateway cities mean cities maintaining connections with various regions, which cities exchange the products of the diverse natural resources, but they can play political roles (e. g. in case of border location) as well (Gy. Enyedi 1997). The gate role in this situation mentioned is a manifestation of the local energies. So, the function of gateway cities is the intermediation between several regions, not only in the trade, but in the several fields of social life (Fig.1, p. 2.).

The large urban centres located in the borders of the well-developed region can fill these roles (reception, processing and transmission of the flows of innovation, information, capital, product and producing-connections arriving from the well-developed regions) most.

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In this way gateway cities play not only a transit objective but also fulfil prosperity to their own region surrounding them. It is important to declare that not every gateway city plays a dominant role in the international hierarchy of cities – generally they do not generate information, they only receive and transmit them. In addition, local and not global decisions are made in gateway cities (Gy. Enyedi 1997).

According to the other, latest definition of Enyedi’s gateway city, they are cities playing an important role in the development of European integration in the last few decades. The regional integration in the European Union and the joining of the European regions to the global processes are increasingly carried out by the cities of the EU. In this sense gateway cities are settlements playing specific, important international roles.

Fig. 1 Market lines in the Middle Ages in the East-Carpathian Basin
Cluj-Napoca (in Hungarian: Kolozsvár), Tirgu Mureş (Marosvásárhely), Sibiu (Nagyszeben), Braşov (Brassó). Source: Z. Kovacs, 2001, modified by the author

Gy. Enyedi relates to gateway cities in connection with the space structure consisting of three level of Hungary, too. The most important element of the upper, global level of space structure is the Hungarian capital, Budapest which is a member of the network of European metropolises, and – at this level – a gateway city receiving and transmitting global and European effects to the whole area of Hungary (Gy. Enyedi 2004, Fig.2, p. 3.)

P. Beluszky and T. Dőry determine the definition of gateway-city similar to Enyedi; gateway cities transmit information, dynamise the economy of its own region, serve as a model and intermediate culture and life styles to it (P. Beluszky, T. Dőry 1999).

Some foreign author’s interpretations of gateway city are analogous to GY. ENYEDI’s one. Accordingly to Taylor et al. (2002), gateway cities are nodes of global city
network which nodes are completely to the international informatics network connected, but which perform the less direction tasks. They assert that the gateway cities of the world can be divided in two categories: gateway cities with high-informatics connections belong to the one, and the gateway cities of emerging markets belong to the other. The latter differ from the former in the fact that the transnational companies settle down purposely having the intension to ensuring the international accessibility and expansion in the gateway cities of emerging markets. At the present, Beijing is the most significant member of this type, followed by Moscow.

Other foreign researchers (e.g. T. R. Lakshmanan – L. Chatterjee 2000) emphasize the part of gateway cities playing in the global social, economic processes and in the production. The essential features of (new) global economy are the more and more increasing concentration on the one hand, and the regional and functional differentiation on the other. This dichotomy is caused by the separation of partly the business direction, strategical planning, and informatics management, and partly the effective production and services. In this dual system gateway cities (the global gateway cities among them) represent the new geographical phenomena of concentration, illustrating one regional aspect of the often mentioned global producing system.
2. SZEGED, THE GATEWAY CITY

Gy. Enyedi determined eight gateway city criteria in the case of Budapest (Gy. Enyedi, 1997). We can suppose that it is worth adapting these criteria to Szeged which city is a member of the next level of Hungarian city hierarchy under Budapest.

The geographical location of Szeged is very good, the city is situated in the South Great Hungarian Plain, from 15 kms from the Serbian, and 51 kms from Romanian border on the E5 and E68 international main roads. These roads handle significant transit traffic. The M5 motorway connects Szeged with Budapest and the whole Hungarian and European motorway network. The Mureş river join with Tisza at Szeged, thus there are good opportunities to the shipping here in the future.

The population of Szeged is approximately 163 000, and the city is the centre of the South Great Plain NUTS II. statistical region. Some functions of Szeged have wider hinterland – it embraces North-Vojdovina, Arad and Timiş county. Approving to the population number and the area of Szeged, the city is able to provide regional services, and it is the centre of many regional institutions. Its schools (including higher education) and health institutes are famous in Hungary and abroad.

The attracting ability of international capital and controlling function of Szeged is weak at the moment. The foreign direct investment is only present in the high-living labour intensive and low value added producing industries (e. g. food industry), and in the energetic industry. A significant part of the industry went bankrupt before the privatisation in the 1990’s because its obsoleteness and non-competitiveness.

Greenfield investments are not characteristic of Szeged, so far.

The international controlling function of Szeged is still not significant, either.

The significance of the border-guarding will increasing after introduction of Schengen Treaty.

The development level of infrastructure. The human (social) infrastructure is well developed (medical service, higher education) in opposition to some component parts of the technical infrastructure (e. g. environmental protection, transport).

The well-educated workforce is partly available (e.g. in Biotechnology, Informatics), and partly not (in the classical technical qualifications). Only one kind of research and development (mainly in Biological Sciences and to a lesser degree in Informatics) operate in Szeged. However, Informatics and Communication Technologies (ICT) play a major role in Szeged – in comparison to other Hungarian regional centres (Table 1).

\(^2\) in the next parts in italics
Table 1 The importance of the Informatics and Communication Technology (ICT) economic branch in the Hungarian regional centres

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>regional centre</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Debrecen</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Győr</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miskolc</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pécs</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Szeged</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A: rank order of the number of firms belonging to ICT sector, 2001
B: rank order of the number of firms belonging to ICT sector per 10,000 inhabitants, 2001.


The presence of high level financial-business deliveries. There are many branch banks in relation to other Hungarian regional centres in Szeged, but the neighbouring countries do not have any in the city. Szeged has an average position in the rank order of regional centres (Table 2.).

Attracting built and cultural urban environment, the quality of urban life. Szeged has undoubtedly an attracting built and cultural urban environment (e.g. the unified, characteristic, historically rebuilt cityscape). The quality of urban life in Szeged seems to satisfy the demands. The touristy infrastructure is developed, and the relative indexes of tourism are advantageous in comparison with the other regional centres.

The willingness of local society to the multiethnic, multicultural life (living with Serbs, Romanians, Romas, Germans, Chinese etc. minorities, tourists, European and American students) is usually very good. Szeged accepts and receives other cultures. Serbs live here for a long time.

Urban policies supporting to socially sustainable development are not complete and well-developed in Szeged, yet. The city has not very much information based upon scientifically made survey about e.g. the situations of its poor or homeless inhabitants so far. The social problem solving ability of the city is generally insufficient.

Table 2. The development level of the bank system of Hungarian regional centres

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>regional centre</th>
<th>number of banks (2002)</th>
<th>Number of branch banks (2001)</th>
<th>The number of the headquarters of banks in the regional centre</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Debrecen</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Győr</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miskolc</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pécs</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Szeged</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>4</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Source: Wágner in Z. Gál, 2000, modified by the author
SUMMARY

According to Enyedi’s gateway criteria, Szeged can be only partly considered a gateway city in the hierarchy-level of Hungarian regional centres. Though its geographical location, its willingness to the multiethnic, multicultural life, and its attracting built and cultural urban environment, good quality of urban life seem to meet the requirements of a gateway city; its population number, the presence of well-educated workforce, and its urban policies supporting to socially sustainable development can only partly fulfil the previously mentioned criteria. Unfortunately the city is not able to perform many economic gateway city “standards” (developed national and international connection systems, attracting ability of international capital and controlling function, the development level of infrastructure, the presence of high level financial-business deliveries).

After the opinion of R. Mészáros, the destiny of a city having similar dimensions like Szeged is determined by its degree of ability of connecting to the international producing and consuming networks (R. Mészáros, 1998). If Szeged could become a complete gateway city, then - as a south-eastern social-economic “bastion” of Budapest - Szeged could intermediate between West-Europe, and many cities of Romania and Serbia, including DCMT, such as Szeged played this role for long centuries in consequence of its favourable geographical position.

There are many other real or potential gateway cities in the DCMT Euroregion besides Szeged (e. g. Timişoara, Novi Sad). It seems unreasonable in the case of Szeged to compete in the economy e. g. with Timişoara, rather all gateway cities in the DCMT Euroregion should further and more intensively co-operate with each other (socially, culturally, economically etc.). In this way, the whole DCMT Euroregion could better utilize its natural and human resources in the intensified regional contest in Europe. Therefore the area of DCMT Euroregion could again be a prospering, affluent multicultural area as it was a century ago.

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