

Linking Emerging Cities—Exchange between Helsinki and Budapest at the Beginning of the Twentieth Century

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ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Aufstrebende Städte verbinden – Der Austausch zwischen Helsinki und Budapest zu Beginn des 20. Jahrhunderts

Zwischen 1873 und 1914 entwickelte sich das aus der Verschmelzung dreier Städte entstandene Budapest zu einer Industrie-, Medien-, Wissenschafts- und Kulturmetropole und wurde zugleich zu einem Zentrum nationaler Bestrebungen. Im Unterschied zu anderen Städten in der Region repräsentierte Budapest die Ambivalenz und Rasanz, die Ungarns Modernisierungsprozess auszeichnete.

In diesem Rahmen untersucht die vorliegende Studie die Rolle von Wissenstransfer und *best practice* bei der Entwicklung Budapests hin zu einer aufstrebenden Stadt. Zum einen sollen hierdurch die spezifischen Bedingungen vor Ort herausgearbeitet werden, die den Transfer, die Aufnahme sowie die Anwendung modernen Fachwissens in den aufstrebenden Städten Ostmitteleuropas im 19. Jahrhundert in Gang setzten. Zum anderen wird von der These ausgegangen, dass aufstrebende Städte wie Budapest oder Helsinki nicht nur die Strategie verfolgten, örtliche Traditionen und Bedürfnisse sowie internationale Trends sorgfältig in Balance zu halten, sondern auch ihre Erfahrungen und Herausforderungen bewusst miteinander teilten. Als Fallbeispiel wird die Stadtentwicklung behandelt. In Person des berühmtesten Architekten und Städteplaners seiner Zeit, Eliel Saarinen, waren Budapest und Helsinki miteinander verbunden und sammelten im Bereich des Städtebaus vergleichbare Erfahrungen.

KEYWORDS: emerging cities, best practice transfer, Eastern Europe, Central Europe, Budapest, Helsinki, Eliel Saarinen

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Between 1873 and 1914, the city of Budapest, which had been created by the merging of three separate cities, developed into a metropolis of industry, media, science and culture and consequently became a center of national power. Unlike any other city in the region, Budapest represented the particular ambivalence and velocity of Hungary's modernization process. Numerous contemporaries described the city with its rapid development as "American." The popular writer Viktor Cholnoky went further than this, labeling Budapest a "quasi—city" and complaining about its "emptiness." "When its inhabitants are strenuous," he wrote 1904, "[Budapest] begins to develop with an American velocity, like the plague [...] Here, things are made that appear beautiful from the outside, but remain empty inside."¹ Many of his contemporaries shared Cholnoky's dislike of the city's development and criticized aspects such as its structural transformation, industrialization, and the enormous efforts made by the municipality to transform the three towns into a single regional metropolis.

Using these circumstances as frames of reference, this paper investigates the role that the transfer of knowledge and best practices played in the rise of Budapest as an emerging city.² By doing so, the paper seeks, on the one hand, to elaborate on the specific local conditions that gave rise to the transfer, adaptation and use of modern knowledge in the emerging cities of East Central Europe in the nineteenth century. On the other hand, it assumes that these emerging cities, such as Budapest and Helsinki, not only followed a strategy of keeping a careful balance between local traditions and needs and international trends, but also maintained an exchange based on mutual experiences and challenges. The paper will also elaborate an aspect of Budapest's development that has, until now, remained unexamined.³ Demonstrating the aforementioned hypothesis, the rarely noticed⁴ Budapest-related activity of one of the most influential architects and urban planners of the twentieth century,

¹ CHOLNOKY VIKTOR: Vidéki vázlatok: Veszprém [Local Sketches: Veszprém], in: *A Hét* 30 (1904), pp. 555-557.

² For the concept of emerging cities, see ESZTER GANTNER, HEIDI HEIN-KIRCHER: "Emerging Cities": Knowledge and Urbanization in Europe's Borderlands 1880-1945—Introduction, in: *Journal of Urban History* 43 (2017), 4, pp. 575-586.

³ Although the international research on Budapest is a rich body of academic scholarship, the issue of the transfer of Budapest's planning history has remained unresearched. However, comparative studies focusing on cities of East Central Europe, such as JAN C. BEHREND, MARTIN KOHLRAUSCH (eds.): *Races to Modernity: Metropolitan Aspirations in Eastern Europe, 1890-1940*, Budapest 2014, and EMILY GUNZBURGER MAKAS, TANJA DAMLJANOVIC CONLEY (eds.): *Capital Cities in the Aftermath of Empires*, Oxfordshire 2010, also mention the issue of transfer of knowledge and best practices very briefly. The Budapest-based literature in Hungarian does not focus on a comparative approach and, as far as I am informed, does not discuss the aspect of knowledge transfer regarding the urbanization of Budapest.

⁴ For more details on Saarinen's influence on the Greater Budapest Master Plan, see CSÁKI TAMÁS: *A finn építészet és az architektúra magyar lelke [Finnish Architecture and the Hungarian Soul of the Architecture]*, in: *Múltunk* (2006), 1, pp. 200-230.

Elieel Saarinen, will be introduced here. As will be discussed, Saarinen's work established a special link between Helsinki and Budapest.

Creating Budapest—The Emerging City and Knowledge Transfer

The Revolution in 1848/49 and the struggle for liberation in the following years caused a break in the development of the twin cities of Buda and Pest. Following the Austrian-Hungarian Compromise in 1867, the construction of a metropolis as a symbol for a new and strong Hungary remained a national "joint project" as it had been during the period of romantic nationalism in the 1820s and 1830s. Before becoming the nation's capital (in 1873), the city was therefore already established as the center of national movements as well as of the national culture. However, the capitalist modernization in the country, which began during the 1850s, was mainly supported by laws and declarations of the imperial court in Vienna: The abolition of serfdom, the introduction of Austrian laws of trade and exchange, the freedom of trade, as well as the tax reform and customs union of the Habsburg Empire all supported the flourishing of capitalism in Hungary. Thus, the imperial structure framed the modernization process between 1850 and 1867. These developments also pursued the growth of industries, particularly in Pest, which faced rapid urbanization. Following the "Austro-Hungarian Compromise" in 1867, the Andrassy government prepared the unification of the three cities Buda, Óbuda and Pest to create the future national capital in 1873, thus fulfilling one of the major demands of the Hungarian national movement that had been campaigned for since the 1820s.⁵

The "old-new" capital became not only the political and symbolic, but also the economic center of the country. Its economic and cultural influence extended beyond the Empire into Italy and the Balkans.⁶ Altogether, the years between 1873 and 1914 marked the beginning and the end of the most successful era of modernization and urbanization in the history of the city. By 1900, Budapest had become a thriving metropolis. Its population exceeded 370,000 in 1880 and 880,000 in 1910. At this time, Budapest was the eighth largest city in Europe; within Hungary no other city came close to its size. Growth came about through continuous immigration and decreasing death rates. Budapest became a city of young people and of newcomers: in 1900, 63 per cent of the population had been born elsewhere. It was also an increasingly diverse city, particularly in terms of social class and of religion, with Protestants (14 per cent in 1900) and Jews (24 per cent) having become in-

⁵ Cf. ESZTER GANTNER: Logos, Industrial Palace and Urania: The Urban Forms of Knowledge in Budapest 1873-1914, in: *Journal of Urban History* 43 (2017), 4, pp. 602-614.

⁶ Cf. BÁCSKAI VERA, GYÁNI GÁBOR, KUBINYI ANDRÁS: *Budapest története a kezdetektől 1945-ig* [The History of Budapest from Its Beginning to 1945], Budapest 2000.

creasingly large groups within the population.⁷ The built environment also expanded outwards and upwards and the total number of buildings more than doubled from 1870 to 1910. In Budapest, municipal activism peaked during the mayoralty of István Bárczy⁸, who recognized the urgency of the housing situation and initiated an ambitious program of building schools and apartments for the working classes.

The American author and illustrator Frank Berkeley Smith visited Budapest in 1903 and recorded his impressions in a travel guide:

“A city with streets broader than Parisian boulevards, splendidly paved, with buildings erected with an extravagant expenditure, both in construction and decoration, that one might expect to find with us, but not upon the edge of the Orient. With electric surface tramways installed with the most modern system, with a model underground railroad, with gay little kiosks of stations leading down to it, built in native majolica, its tunnel lined with white tiling, its cars clean and well ventilated; with a superb opera-house, comfortable theaters, well-appointed shops full of pretty things, churches, monuments, luxuriant public parks; with museums full of rare collections in art and science; [...] its streets peopled with peasants in gay-colored costumes, with smart-looking officers, and with women whose beauty is celebrated the world over.”⁹

The described splendor, the modern infrastructure, the richly decorated buildings and other such aspects of cities in both national and imperial frames, such as Budapest in the Habsburg Empire or Helsinki in the Russian Empire, was not only the result of economic innovation and industrialization, but also due to the cities’ cultural appeal, their positions as national, political and social centers, and their relevance as centers of knowledge. These cultural appeals are characterized by complex, inter- and intra-cultural exchange and relationships and the dynamic integration of external impulses into their development. Even if the steps to modernization of urban life seemed delayed when seen through Western eyes, the “cities of the East European borderlands” followed multiple models in their modernization. They not only emulated the regional capitals and the Western European metropolises such as London and Paris, but also followed the examples of cities like themselves, which were struggling with similar problems and challenges. Furthermore, these cities developed their own conceptions of modernity—what it was and what form it should take in their particular case.

⁷ ROBERT NEMES: Budapest, in: GUNZBURGER MAKAS/DAMLJANOVIC CONLEY (as in footnote 3), pp. 141-157, here p. 148.

⁸ István Bárczy (1866-1943) was a Hungarian politician and lawyer, who served as Minister of Justice in 1919/20. He was the Mayor of Budapest between 1906 and 1918 and later served as Lord Mayor of Budapest. Under his mayorship the city bloomed. Bárczy was familiar with every level of the administrative work of the city council, but he also gained knowledge in architecture and planning. He had a special sense for selecting talented young experts—such as Imre Forbáth, Béla Lajta and Ferenc Harrer—to serve on his expert committee.

⁹ FRANK BERKELEY SMITH: *The City of the Magyars*, London 1903, p. 21.

The transformation in urban life provided an excellent stimulus for knowledge transfer—not only to provincial capitals, but also to other, smaller towns. At the same time, in trying to catch up with the standards and developments in the Western European centers, these cities had to find their own version of modernization. In this, however, they had a great advantage: while the cities in Western Europe had to develop through trial and error, the delayed start provided the Eastern European cities with the possibility to orientate themselves towards best practice models—as a recipe for success—that best fitted their needs and could be adapted to a region's specific conditions.¹⁰ Therefore, knowledge transfer, exchange and adaptation to local requirements were inherent to the urbanization and modernization processes that took place in Eastern Europe. All kinds of knowledge (from academic to the practical knowledge of city planning) and best practices—understood here as methods, practices, techniques and solutions for optimal implementation and enforcement of political visions, plans and strategies related to urban development¹¹—played an enormous role in the transformation of this region's cities, mostly the national capitals, into regional centers and ambitious, emerging metropolises. Moreover, a “specific local knowledge” was produced, related to ways in which a city could be transformed into a national capital and regional center. This knowledge—on the one hand developed through the transfer and application of best practices and on the other hand generated through local solutions—was communicated between the emerging cities in the form of exhibitions, expert meetings and study visits.

Yet already in 1842, at the peak of the Hungarian national cultural movement, the editor and politician Móric Lukács had formulated a strategy of modernization in the scientific journal *Tudománytár*:

“In the foreign institutions we have to distinguish between that which is a result of their particular conditions and that which is universal and therefore adaptable for our specific circumstances [...] We have to use their experience [...] and [...] rather learn from the mistakes of the foreigners than from our own [...]”¹²

His last sentence described precisely the strategy that was applied after 1867 in the urban development of Budapest: various methods and techniques from abroad were not simply adapted, but the decisions for or against them were the result of considerable reflection and their advantages and disadvantages were carefully calculated.¹³ The construction of the sewage system

¹⁰ JAN C. BEHREND, MARTIN KOHLRAUSCH: Races to Modernity: Metropolitan Aspirations in Eastern Europe, 1890-1940. An Introduction, in: IDEM (as in footnote 3), pp. 1-20.

¹¹ On the concept of best practices, see EUGENE A. BARDACH: Practical Guide for Policy Analysis: The Eightfold Path to More Effective Problem Solving, Thousand Oaks/CA 2011.

¹² LUKÁCS MÓRIC: Városok szerkezete külföldön [The Structure of Cities Abroad], in: *Tudománytár*, Pest 1842, pp. 268-270.

¹³ GANTNER/HEIN-KIRCHER (as in footnote 2).

in Budapest decades later provides a good example of the strategy formulated by Lukács, which involved inviting experts with international experience and implementing best practices according to careful appraisal and calculations. In 1866, the municipality of Budapest invited William Lindley, an expert engineer who was well known throughout Europe, to build the most modern sewage system in Budapest. Lindley had not only participated in designing the sewage system in London, but had also planned the sewage system in Hamburg in 1844-1848 and had worked in Frankfurt am Main in 1863 as well. Having studied in Croydon under the railway engineer Francis Giles¹⁴, he had been involved in numerous major projects, such as the expansion of the London-Birmingham and London-Southampton train line. This work experience together with his expertise recommended him for the complex job in Budapest.

Around this time, a counter movement was started, whereby, in addition to inviting foreign experts, young talents were sent abroad to study with the financial support of the municipality and the expert associations. These scholarships allowed for hundreds of ambitious students and young specialists to gather experience, expertise and knowledge in major cities such as Berlin and London. Most of them returned to Budapest or other Hungarian cities able to apply what they had seen abroad or even to develop these techniques and practices further. These experts also travelled to other emerging cities, as the case of the Finnish architect and urban planner Eliel Saarinen illustrates. Further examples clearly prove this development too, such as of that of the Budapest born Imre Forbát¹⁵, who trained as a civil engineer and planner in Budapest, Vienna and Zurich, was invited by the municipality in Frankfurt am Main, and later worked in Bucharest and Varna. Hungarian born sculptor and architect Géza Maróti¹⁶ followed a similar career path. Educated in Budapest, Maróti received an award for his pavilion and its interior at the Milan International world's fair in 1906, later receiving offers from New York and Mexico City to build there. After the First World War, he moved to Detroit, where he worked closely with Saarinen.

¹⁴ Francis Giles (1787-1847) was a canal engineer and later became a railway engineer. As such, he was appointed engineer of the London & Southampton Railway in 1831.

¹⁵ Imre Forbát (1875-1944) was a Hungarian civil engineer who studied and trained in Frankfurt am Main and Berlin. After finishing his studies, he worked in different cities in the Austro-Hungarian Empire and Germany. Forbát published articles in professional journals and elsewhere on a weekly basis. In 1906, he became a private professor at the Budapest Technical University. He was regarded as one of the most influential figures in Budapest's engineering and political circles.

¹⁶ Géza Maróti (1875-1941) began his career as a woodcarver but later went on to complete studies in Budapest and Vienna. Thanks to his friendship with Saarinen, who worked in the USA after 1923, Maróti came to Detroit in 1927 to work on the Cranbrook School. Among other projects, he designed the interior of the Fisher Building. On returning to Hungary, Maróti was marginalized, partly due to his Jewish origin.

These examples illustrate how expertise and practices in urban planning and construction tended to circulate back and forth between cities and they challenge the commonly applied, one-dimensional model of “center and periphery”¹⁷, which has been especially prevalent in German historiography and is still used in studies of urban history in order to describe the modernization and urbanization of cities in Eastern Europe. Yet it was these multi-directional networks and communications between the emerging cities in the region that allowed experts to develop strategies for their modernization. Furthermore, as the activity of Saarinen in Budapest clearly exemplifies, the “official” networks and channels between cities, which were maintained by associations, municipalities and expert groups, had their roots in the networks of a number of individuals who were devoted to architecture, urban development, and urban planning.

Linking Emerging Cities: István Bárczy and Eliel Saarinen

On 31 October 1911, the daily newspaper *Pester Lloyd* reported on the following event: “The Federation of Hungarian Architects held a banquet today at the ‘Hotel Hungaria’ in honor of the outstanding architects Saarinen and Jansen, who have been invited to Budapest by the mayor [...]”¹⁸

At this point the following questions emerge: How did István Bárczy, the powerful mayor of Budapest know about Saarinen? Why did he invite the young Saarinen in addition to the established architect and planner Jansen?¹⁹ Although Saarinen was already known for his work at this time, he was merely a “promising young architect” rather than an established expert. In seeking answers to these questions, it is also important to understand the aspirations and activity of one of the most ambitious mayors at that time in East Central Europe, whose devotion and visions shaped Budapest, the largest emerging city in the Habsburg Empire. Bárczy’s work ethic and attitude were later described by his daughter:

“He often told us that, in order to get ahead, it is not enough to just do your job; you should do a little more and a little better. So, while his colleagues tried to do as little as possible, [...] my father went to all the different departments of City

¹⁷ E. g. KARL SCHLÖGEL: Bürgergesellschaft, neue Urbanität, und die Zukunft der Stadt in Osteuropa, in: *Zeitschrift für Staats- und Europawissenschaften* 2 (2004), 3, pp. 394-410, here p. 394; GUIDO HAUSMANN: Osteuropäische Stadt oder Stadt in Osteuropa? Ein Beitrag zur Diskussion um „die europäische Stadt“ im 20. Jahrhundert, in: THOMAS M. BOHN, MARIE JANINE CALIC (eds.): *Urbanisierung und Stadtentwicklung in Südosteuropa vom 19. bis 21. Jahrhundert*, [München—Berlin] 2010, pp. 29-66.

¹⁸ *Pester Lloyd* from 1911-10-31.

¹⁹ Herman Jansen (1869-1945) was an architect, urban planner and lecturer. In 1910, he won the Great-Berlin competition with Joseph Brix. From 1929 onwards, his activities were relocated to Turkey, where he became involved in the planning work of Ankara.

Hall and studied their systems so that, by the time he became elected Mayor, he knew the ins and outs of the entire city administration.”²⁰

Without a doubt, this thoroughness and determination must have been one of the reasons for his career at the City Hall.

In 1889, Bárczy started work as a clerk while he finished his studies in Economics. His broad range of interests led him to publish articles that reflected contemporary ideas for reforming the fields of education, financial management and public administration. In 1897, he prepared a comprehensive plan for settling the capital’s finances²¹ and regularly addressed various issues in urban planning and civil engineering. His ambitions and capabilities helped him quickly rise through the ranks and, in 1901, he became the head of the department for public education. During these years—acknowledging the role of education and knowledge in urbanization—he helped to improve and enrich the city by establishing new public schools, kindergartens and even promoting new publications such as the *Népművelés* in 1904. This journal was one of the most progressive platforms for urban engineering and planning, presenting topics for discussion, for example the advantages of garden cities, and addressing problems such as the lack of social housing and the difficulties around adult education in Budapest. The editors regularly published reviews of international publications that discussed exhibitions and conferences. Bárczy’s election in 1906 was unexpected, as he was a relatively young employee of the City Hall and was running for office against two older and more established candidates, Gyula Kun and László Sipöcz. Being supported by the newly formed liberal party meant he was able to secure a majority of 193 votes. The media celebrated this change of leadership and praised Bárczy as both a well-known expert and a visionary politician:

“In the life of the Hungarian capital this mayoral election represents a major turn-around. A young, vigorous person has been elected by his fellow citizens who are confident in his ability to fulfil the role. István Bárczy is young, agile, and has fought for himself, achieving success in an almost unprecedentedly short period of time without relying on anybody else, only on the results of his own work. Though he is only forty, he can look back already on such influential and future-oriented initiatives, which is rare in the history of the intricate and paralyzing machinery of the City Council.”²²

With his election began a period of twelve years, which would come to be termed the “Bárczy era” by his contemporaries. It was a decade when modern, liberal urban politics ruled and triumphed. He owed his success partly to those young experts whom he invited to work with him, such as the politician

²⁰ Reminiscences of Piroška Barczy Zilahy, in: Columbia University Library, Manuscript-No. 1077 CHRO: Hungarian Project. Oral History Research Project 1978, p. 45.

²¹ VARSÁNYI ERIKA: Bárczy István, in: FEITL ISTVÁN (ed.): Budapest főpolgármesterei és polgármesterei 1873-1950, Budapest 2008, pp. 163-179, here p. 163.

²² SCHÖPFLIN ALADÁR: Bárczy István: Budapest új polgármestere [István Bárczy: Budapest’s New Mayor], in: Vasárnapi Újság from 1906-09-02, p. 410.

Ferenc Harrer, the sociologist Ödön Wildner, and the physicians Elek Bolgár and Imre Basch. Moreover, he established close connections with the art world of Budapest, especially with young architects, such as Béla Lajta and Géza Maróti²³. As his daughter later recalled: “Father, who was an artist at heart, gathered the best artists around him, primarily architects, sculptors and painters.”²⁴

Bárczy divided his activity as a mayor into three periods: the first, from 1906 to 1908, was largely devoted to preparations for the implementation of large projects; in the second period, from 1908 to 1912, the conditions were established to enable modern urban development to go ahead, while the third and final period, from 1912 to 1918, was characterized by a standstill in dynamic urban development and by the necessity to react to the new social, political and economic challenges created by the First World War.²⁵ Although his character, his ambitions and his understanding of communal politics divided the public after the initial enthusiasm with which he was received in 1906 and, despite widespread ambivalence and criticism of his charismatic appeal and his increasingly autocratic ways of working, there was an undeniable and enduring respect for Bárczy:

“At the head of Budapest there is a young, well-educated and creative man, surrounded by young, educated and creative people [...]. István Bárczy has certainly not created Budapest alone; but Budapest has indeed produced Bárczy—this new kind of city has been able to give birth to and raise a new type of people, who are at home in this new world.”²⁶

The most spectacular outcomes of his *œuvre* as mayor concentrated on three different areas of urban development: social policy, housing and building schools, and the municipalization of various bodies with public services. At the same time, Bárczy and his colleagues modernized the public education system and established new institutions in order to improve services in long neglected areas of urban development, such as tourism, public healthcare, the sewage system and social housing. Besides the many successes of his career, one of his main and favorite dreams failed, namely, the “Great-Budapest project,” which was based on the idea of enlarging Budapest by incorporating approximately 30 surrounding settlements into the city. In 1908, Bárczy and Ferenc Harrer described the project in detail in a publication²⁷ they collaborated on, arguing for it, on the one hand, by referencing the examples of Ber-

²³ HARRER FERENC: Egy magyar polgár élete [The Life of a Hungarian Citizen], Budapest 1968, p. 126.

²⁴ Reminiscences of Piroska Barczy Zilahy (as in footnote 20), p. 45.

²⁵ VARSÁNYI (as in footnote 21), p. 165.

²⁶ IGNOTUS: Bárczy, in: Nyugat (1911), 8, URL: <http://epa.oszk.hu/00000/00022/00078/02370.htm> (2018-10-30).

²⁷ BÁRCZY ISTVÁN, HARRER FERENC: Tanulmány a szomszédos községek Budapesthez való kapcsolásáról [Study about Connecting Neighborhood Communities to Budapest], Budapest 1908.

lin, Vienna and Leipzig and, on the other hand, by emphasizing the economic and social advantages of such an agglomeration²⁸ for “both parties:”

“Through this great development of the city, public life in the surrounding communities will be centralized; some of them will be linked to the city only economically; for others, the city will offer jobs and satisfy cultural needs and there also will be a number of communities who will fully integrate with the city population.”²⁹

Although the plan was rejected by the city council and disappeared for decades, it helped Bárczy realize the necessity of creating a Master Plan in order to plan and rebuild whole areas of the city, especially the Tabán quarter on the Buda side. Due the preparations for a Master Plan, Bárczy invited 1911 Saarinen to Budapest. Saarinen had been educated at the Helsinki University of Technology. From 1896 to 1905, he worked as a partner with the architects Herman Gesellius and Armas Lindgren at the firm Gesellius, Lindgren, and Saarinen. His first major work with the firm, the Finnish pavilion at the World Fair of 1900, exhibited an extraordinary convergence of stylistic influences: Finnish wooden architecture, British Gothic Revival, and Jugendstil. Saarinen’s early style was later named “Finnish National Romanticism” and culminated in the Helsinki Central Station (designed in 1904, constructed 1910-1914). Between 1910 and 1915, he worked on several city-planning projects in Europe. In January 1911, he became a consultant in city planning for Reval in Estonia and was invited to Budapest to advise in city development. In April 1913, he received first prize in an international competition for his plan of Reval. From 1917 to 1918, Saarinen worked on the city plan for Greater Helsinki. His expertise, drawn from the various city planning projects, especially from the Munksnäs-Haga project in Helsinki³⁰, which was similar to Bárczy’s Tabán Project, might have been the reason why Bárczy took note of him.

But besides this, the cities where Saarinen had been active, such as Helsinki, Reval and Budapest, had more in common as it seems at first glance: They belonged to a group of emerging cities that became centers of national movements and aspired, not only to becoming national centers, but also regional ones. These cities had been part of Empires and they worked out their urbanization and modernization strategies at the intersection of local and imperial politics. They were also home to a young, well-educated generation of experts³¹, who became “engineers” of urban modernization alongside politi-

²⁸ SIPOS ANDRÁS: *Várospolitika és városigazgatás Budapesten 1900-1914* [Urban Politics and Administration in Budapest 1900-1914], Budapest 1996, p. 203.

²⁹ BÁRCZY/HARRER (as in footnote 27), p. 17.

³⁰ EMILIA KARPINEN: Collective Expertise behind the Planning of Helsinki: The Case of Eliel Saarinen’s Munkkiniemi and Haaga Plan (1915), in: OLIVER HOCHADEL, AGUSTI NIETO-GALAN (eds.): *Urban Histories of Science*, London 2018, pp. 164-186.

³¹ LAURA KOLBE: Imperial and National Helsinki: Shaping an Eastern or Western Capital City?, in: BEHREND/SKOHLRAUSCH (as in footnote 3), pp. 267-289.

cians. These cities had ambitious mayors or councils who, though committed to the national agenda, at the same understood the necessity of applying internationally circulated best practices in the fields of urban planning and civil engineering. Considering all these factors, the following possible explanations arise in response to the question of why Saarinen was invited to Budapest.

The first explanation might be the influence of Finnish architecture and architectural thinking at the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The creation of a national style in Finland had an impact on those young Hungarian architects who were seeking to create a national architecture based on folk art motifs.

Saarinen had been known in Budapest since the exhibition of Scandinavian artists at the Múcsarnok (Art Hall) in 1906. The civil engineer and city planner Imre Forbáth referred to the exhibition in his diary: “Sunday November 25th, 1906; At the Múcsarnok. Besides Hungarian artists, there were Swedish, Finnish and Norwegian artists with their cold Nordic art.”³² Despite Forbáth’s obvious dislike of it, the exhibition turned out to be a huge success and strengthened public interest in Finnish Art and architecture. This interest manifested in various publications introducing Saarinen’s work: In 1908, the young Hungarian architect Béla Jászky praised Saarinen’s plans in the journal *A Ház* (The House).³³ These and other examples illustrate the diversity of the channels along which knowledge about the major actors and movements in Finnish urban planning and architecture was being transferred to Hungary.

The second explanation—connected with the first one—would point out the possible political motivation for inviting Saarinen. Besides the similar challenges the two cities had faced in the past, during the first decade of the twentieth century Hungarian politics turned with increasing interest toward “kindred peoples” such as the Finns and the Estonians. Political movements had emerged during the last third of the nineteenth century, like Turanism in Hungary and the Heimooate movement in Finland, that not only emphasized the linguistic connections between the two nations, but also assumed a common cultural and ethnic origin. In 1910, the Turan Society was founded in Budapest with the goal to support the “cultural and economic progress, confederation, and flourishing of all Turanians, i. e. the Hungarian nation and all kindred [...] nations.”³⁴ This political turn, together with the increased interest in Finnish culture, particularly architecture, may well have influenced Saarinen’s decision.

³² Forbáth Imre Diaries, entry 1906-11-24, p. 9, in: Columbia University Library, Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Bakhmeteff Archive, box 1.

³³ JÁNSZKY BÉLA: A finn parlament [The Finnish Parliament], in: *A Ház* (1908), 2-3, pp. 54-59.

³⁴ PAIKERT A.: Turáni Társaság: A Turáni Társaság alapszabályai [The Turanic Society: The Founding Document of the Turanic Society], Budapest 1910.

Nevertheless, although Bárczy's colleague Ferenc Harrer mentions in his memoirs that Bárczy had met Saarinen and Jansen abroad³⁵, the most realistic scenario is that, Bárczy had been informed earlier about Saarinen by his close architect friends, Béla Lajta and Géza Maróti. Both architects and artists shared with their Finnish colleagues a belief in the need for a national architecture, one which was rooted in both countries and in the "national romanticism" of the nineteenth century.³⁶ Lajta's and Maróti's style was characterized by folk art and they both belonged to a group of architects in Budapest who were trying to develop a Hungarian national art and architecture. This group, and the artists associated with them, maintained close private connections with the Finnish artist Akseli Gallén-Kallela and his friends, one of whom was Saarinen.³⁷ These friendships developed so far that, while Maróti visited Saarinen in Finland, Lajta, who was educated in Budapest and had studied architecture at the Technical University, spent a year in Eliel Saarinen's office in Helsinki after visiting various architectural firms in Europe as part of a scholarship. He communicated what he learned abroad in various ways in Budapest, not only in the form of articles and lectures but also through his plans and buildings.³⁸

In 1911, Saarinen accepted an invitation from Bárczy and visited Budapest³⁹ along with Jansen.

"Sunday October 8th, 1911: With the mayor (Bárczy), Hermann Jansen from Berlin, Saarinen from Helsingfors [...] we visited the Tabán quarter in order to discuss and finalize this part of the Budapest Master Plan."⁴⁰

Saarinen later summed up his impressions of the city and the Master Plan in an article entitled "Thoughts about the Budapest Master Plan"⁴¹, published in the aforementioned *Népművelés* in 1912. In this article, he analyzed the Master Plan and also explained his complex program and vision of the mod-

³⁵ HARRER (as in footnote 23), p. 126.

³⁶ CSÁKI TAMÁS: A finn építészet és az "architektúra magyar lelke"—Kultúrpolitika, építészet, publicisztika a századelő Magyarországon [Finnish Architecture and the Hungarian soul of Architecture—Cultural politics, Architecture and Journalism at the Beginning of the 20th Century in Hungary], in: *Múltunk* (2006), 1, pp. 200-230.

³⁷ Maróti visited Gallen Kallela and met Saarinen 1907. KESERÜ KATALIN, HUDRA KLÁRA (eds.): *Finnmagyar: Az 1900-as párizsi világiállításról a Cranbrook Schoolig* [Finnish-hungarian: From the World Exhibition 1900 to Cranbrook School], Budapest 2004-2005, pp. 65-66.

³⁸ Such as the architectural firm of Alfred Messel and Ernst von Ihne in Berlin, and Richard Norma's office in London; CSÁKI (as in footnote 36).

³⁹ This was not his first visit. The Hungarian journal *Magyar Iparművészet* [Hungarian Art and Craft] reported briefly in 1908 that Saarinen was visiting his "Hungarian friends": *Magyar Iparművészet* (1908), 4, p. 179.

⁴⁰ Forbáth Imre Diaries (as in footnote 32), entry from 1911-10-08, p. 24.

⁴¹ ELIEL SAARINEN: *Gondolatok Budapest szabályozásáról*, 1-2 [Thoughts about the Budapest Masterplan, 1-2], in: *Népművelés* (1912), 3-4, pp. 21-33, 161-179.

ern city. This urban vision he shared with Bárczy and his architects as well as the urban planners in the municipality.

Pointing out the importance of the aesthetic aspects of urban planning and their influence on social engineering, the guiding principle in the article was to provide pragmatic but at the same time “healthy” and aesthetically pleasing solutions to the challenges of becoming a metropolis.

In his influential essay, “The Metropolis and Mental life,”⁴² written during the Dresden City Exhibition in 1903, Georg Simmel described the rapid growth of the city and the associated problems of urban living. It is very likely that Saarinen and Bárczy were familiar with this essay and the issues it raised and they envisioned a kind of urban planning that could offer solutions, while, at the same time, securing the “unlimited development”⁴³ of the city. As Saarinen wrote:

“Hundreds of thousands, even millions, of lives are at stake. Their existence we want to make sunnier, healthier, and more beautiful. We will raise the aesthetic sensibility of the public and open their eyes to the blessings of cultural works. The urban population will breathe easier and the province will see the growing splendor and beauty of the capital. This is something we can all be proud of. We believe that the capital is the largest, most beautiful monument that represents the country’s and its people’s cultural progress through the centuries.”⁴⁴

In order to realize this task, Saarinen emphasized the importance of a proper system for regulating the traffic. For him, linking the agglomeration of outlying areas with the center was key for the further development of the city. Therefore, in his article, he suggested a new site for the future main railway station, taking into account that the city would now have two centers—the old, historical one and a new business center, as the master plan suggested connecting the two. Besides the train and traffic systems, Saarinen also proposed grouping the city’s various quarters and building types. He argued for diversity in the urban area, including five to six business centers, three or four storage buildings, and villa areas, but also parks and social housing. From this point of view, he carefully criticized the Tabán-Plan of Bárczy, who imagined only a villa quarter in the Tabán-area. Saarinen asked for a more accurate and diverse planning, arguing partly with a possible threat for the landscape of this hill-area in mind.

Although his article and analysis of the Budapest master plan presented an overall vision rather than practical suggestions, Saarinen still reflected on a possible development of the riverside area including its integration into the urban infrastructure. He also discussed the planned communal extension of Budapest and made proposals for better connections between the suburbs and

⁴² GEORG SIMMEL: Die Großstädte und das Geistesleben: Vorträge und Aufsätze zur Städteausstellung, in: THEODOR PETERMANN (ed.): Jahrbuch der Gehe-Stiftung Dresden, vol. 9, Dresden 1903, pp. 185-206.

⁴³ SAARINEN, Gondolatok (as in footnote 41), 1, p. 21.

⁴⁴ Ibidem, 2, p. 179.

city-centers. The article gave the impression of a sophisticated and well-established manifesto, which he would later include in his book about Greater Helsinki.⁴⁵ Neither the Master Plan nor Saarinen's suggestions were ever realized in their original form. Although Bárczy managed to secure the financial means, the outbreak of war in 1914 swept away all previous plans and the individuals involved in the project had to abandon it.

Conclusion

As this article outlines, the growth of emerging cities like Budapest and Helsinki in the borderlands of Europe was the result, not only of economic innovation and industrialization, but also of national and cultural strategies, which involved careful selection and transfer of best practices and knowledge from abroad. In this way, innovators were able to pursue and realize the modernization of these cities, while taking into account a matrix of local needs, and conditions as well as the latest European developments. Some of the emerging cities were transformed, not only into national and cultural hubs, but also into regional centers. In frames of the given empires and to achieve this goal, they have worked out their urbanization and modernization strategies at the intersection of local and imperial politics. Many were home to a young, well-educated generation of experts, who, alongside the local politicians, became "engineers" of urban modernization. These cities also had ambitious mayors or councils, who were committed to pursuing a national agenda, but at the same time understood the necessity of applying internationally circulated best practice in the fields of urban planning and civil engineering. Multiethnicity and the associated nationalization process were also factors that stimulated urban development in many of the cities, where there was a drive to secure cultural and ethnic homogeneity. A common goal in these emerging cities was that they should become centers of increased economic, political and cultural importance, at least regionally, and exert a greater influence over neighboring areas. The case of Budapest clearly demonstrates this thinking in practice.

Taking all these factors into consideration, this paper aims to give an example of knowledge transfer in the fields of urban planning and development between the two emerging cities of Budapest and Helsinki, arguing that knowledge and best practice transfer played a key role in their growth as national and regional centers. As is illustrated here by the case of Eliel Saarinen and István Bárczy, it was thanks to personal networks that knowledge and best practice was able to be communicated and transferred between these cities.

⁴⁵ IDEM: Pro Helsingfors: "Suur-Helsingin" asemakaavan ehdotus [Pro Helsingfors: Proposal for the "Greater Helsinki" Plan], Helsinki 1918.

Helsinki and Budapest were connected through the shared experiences and challenges of modernization at the height of nationalism and under the influence of imperial structures, but, because of their similar situation, they also shared established channels of information and knowledge transfer. Both cities had been part of an imperial structure—the Russian and Habsburg Empires, respectively—and both cities experienced a struggle for national independence. Furthermore, their exchange was strengthened by an imagined common ethnic ancestry.

Although the plans and ideas suggested by Saarinen could not be realized in their original forms, the exchange between the two emerging cities and their architects left a remarkable mark on Budapest's urban landscape, where a number of buildings and ornamental features clearly showed the influence of Finnish architecture and art.