

**ESZTER RAKITA**

**Migrations of Hungarian Peasants into and out of a Village at  
the Borders of Budapest. Social and Economic Changes in Vecsés in the  
Early 20th Century**

Pro&Contra

1 (2018) 59-79.



## Abstract

The Hungarian capital, Budapest, witnessed unprecedented development during the rapid modernization period of the Dual Monarchy. It was also the time period when Austria-Hungary underwent the greatest loss of people in its history to international migration. This paper attempts to analyze this phenomenon in relation to a small town in the vicinity of Budapest. Vecsés had been a peasant village but after the abolition of serfdom and the beginnings of modernization, it lost its previous function and transformed into a residential village. The paper analyzes the growth of the population and the changes in the occupational structure, and briefly examines issues of land distribution in Vecsés based on a variety of archival records. The research demonstrates how at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries a typical agricultural village was utterly transformed by the influence of modernization, the urbanization of the capital city, and domestic and international migration.

**Keywords:** modernization, urbanization, migration, occupational structure

Migration has been a constant in human history.<sup>1</sup> Individuals and groups seeking better conditions or fleeing war and other threats have been making long journeys since the beginning of human history. Migration is motivated by several economic and social factors. These are widely known as “push” and “pull” factors.

Factors explaining movements of people across geopolitical boundaries, with push factors being aspects of homelands that motivate nationals to emigrate, and pull factors being aspects of other countries that attract immigrants.<sup>2</sup>

These factors are not confined to the phenomenon of international migration but are also influences driving domestic migration. This essay examines issues related to

---

<sup>1</sup> The author’s research was supported by the grant EFOP-3.6.1-16-2016-00001 („Complex improvement of research capacities and services at Eszterházy Károly University”).

<sup>2</sup> Carl L. Bankston III, *Encyclopedia of American Immigration* (Pasadena: Salem Press, 2010), 872.

domestic and international migration from the viewpoint of Vecsés, a peasant village situated on the border of the Hungarian capital city, Budapest.<sup>3</sup>

Vecsés is a rather small town which lies between the Hungarian capital, Budapest, and Liszt Ferenc International Airport. It has a population a little above 20 thousand. Vecsés is considered a Schwab town, although not more than 5 per cent of the population identifies as of German origin.<sup>4</sup> Despite being small in numbers, the Schwab minority has a strong identity – as they have had since their settlement in the area.

The town used to be a part of the dominium of Gödöllő, which belonged to the Grassalkovichs, one of Hungary's greatest aristocratic families. The inhabitants abandoned the area during the Ottoman era, and it soon became a so called "puszta," a barren land with no inhabitants. Resettlement in Hungary began under the rule of Queen Marie Theresa and was continued under her son, King Joseph II. Vecsés was resettled in the last wave of these relocations, in 1786, by Duke Antal Grassalkovich. According to the resettlement document, 50 serf families received a part of land in the territory that is today's Vecsés. The resettlement contract is the founding document of the village, and provides a glimpse at the composition of the population at the time.<sup>5</sup> Some of the family names among the signatories can be found in several archival records throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

Budapest became the capital of Hungary in 1873, when three towns: Buda, Pest, and Óbuda ("ancient Buda") were officially united, creating a 19<sup>th</sup>-century metropolis. This marked the beginning of an extraordinary period of economic growth. In fact, Budapest was one of the fastest growing capital cities in Europe at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, with

---

<sup>3</sup> This essay is based on some of my previous works, published in Hungarian over the past few years, such as Eszter Rakita, "A foglalkozásszerkezet elemzésének lehetőségei és néhány aspektusa egy funkciót váltó településen a modernizáció korában," in *Tavaszi Szél / Spring Wind 2014*, eds. Imre Csiszár and Péter Miklós Kőmíves (Budapest, 2014), 307–317, and Eszter Rakita, "Társadalmi változások a főváros vonzásában. A funkcióváltás és forrásai," in *Vidéki élet és vidéki társadalom Magyarországon*, eds. József Pap, Árpád Tóth and Tibor Valuch (Budapest, 2016). 443–453. Here I synthesize the most important points of said papers and set directions for the following stages of the research.

<sup>4</sup> According to the 2010 state census.

<sup>5</sup> The document was published by several authors, most importantly by Veronika Müller, "Vecsés újjátelepítése és reformkori fejlődése 1686–1847" [The Resettlement and Reform Era Development of Vecsés] in *Vecsés története* [History of Vecsés], ed. Ernő Lakatos (Vecsés, 1984), 67–69.

an immigration rate remarkable even in European terms.<sup>6</sup> The growing economy, and the proliferation of industry required more and more labor. As a result, swathes of the rural population started migrating towards Budapest from the Hungarian countryside, and they populated not only the capital, but also many of the surrounding settlements. The urbanization of Budapest created a situation in which the smaller settlements close to the capital lost their economic independence and became so called residential villages, a process which will be explained later in this essay.

As mentioned before, and many times in Hungarian academic literature,<sup>7</sup> in the last decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century Hungary witnessed two forms of migration: domestic migration, which primarily consisted of people moving from rural areas to the capital or its vicinity; and international migration, in which a large proportion of the peasantry sailed to the United States in the hope of better wages and living conditions. As seen in both cases, it was those in the rural areas that were most affected by migration. Leaving poverty behind and seeking better conditions for their families was another common feature of these migrations. The abolition of serfdom in 1848 (de facto in 1853) did provide most of the peasantry with lands of their own but did not solve the problem of unequal distribution.<sup>8</sup> As a consequence of this, the uneven system of Hungarian land ownership created a huge surplus of unskilled labor. People began migrating towards big cities such as Szeged, Debrecen, Miskolc, and, of course, most towards Budapest. But unfortunately, the growing but fractionally developed Hungarian industry was not ready to utilize most of this workforce. So, many of these people needed to find an industry that could provide them with jobs. They found it in America, but most of them did not want to move to the USA for good, rather their aim was to remain there long enough to save enough, and then to return to Hungary.<sup>9</sup> Usually, their plan was to buy land or start their own business

---

<sup>6</sup> Gábor Gyáni, “Budapest története [History of Budapest] 1873–1945,” in *Budapest története a kezdetektől 1945-ig* [History of Budapest from the Beginning to 1945], eds. Vera Bácskai, Gábor Gyáni and András Kubinyi (Budapest, 2000), 142. Gyáni also deals with the modernization of Budapest, and the changes of the city’s identity in Gábor Gyáni, *Budapest – túl jön és rosszon. A nagyvárosi múlt mint tapasztalat* [Budapest through Good and Bad. The Metropolitan Past as an Experience] (Budapest: Napvilág, 2008), 59–85.

<sup>7</sup> For example, in László Katus, *Hungary in the Dual Monarchy 1867–1914* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), 161–164.

<sup>8</sup> John Kosa, “A Century of Hungarian Emigration 1850–1950,” *The American Slavic and East European Review* 16, no. 4 (December 1957): 503.

<sup>9</sup> See Roger Daniels, *Coming to America: A History of Immigration and Ethnicity in American Life* (New York: HarperCollins, 2002), 232.; and also Julianna Puskás, *Ties That Bind, Ties That Divide. 100 Years of Hungarian Experience in the United States*, (New York: 2000), 5–11.

in Hungary something they could never do with Hungarian wages. As Béla Várdy, one of the foremost chroniclers of Hungarian-American history, puts it:

They were driven from their homeland by economic privation and drawn to the United States by the economic opportunities of a burgeoning industrial society. Most of them were young males who came as temporary guest workers with the intention of returning to their homeland and becoming well-to-do farmers.<sup>10</sup>

This research explores both domestic and international migration with regard to Vecsés utilizing a wide variety of primary and secondary sources. Due to the space constraints of the article genre, a complete account of the research undertaken is not possible here; therefore, this paper will discuss the domestic issues of migration and the way it impacted on the settlement under study. Particular focus will be placed on the relationship between domestic migration caused by modernization and the social-economic transformation of Vecsés. The questions of international migration will be explored in a later essay.

According to the terminology established by Ferenc Erdei, a noted sociologist in 20<sup>th</sup>-century Hungary, Vecsés belonged among the settlements in the surroundings of Budapest that were referred to as agglomerative villages.<sup>11</sup> This meant that the village was located within the sphere of the capital, and served as a place for those working in the industry in Budapest, such as factories, foundries, and public transport to live. Archival sources seem to confirm this: more than 50 per cent of the inhabitants of Vecsés worked in Budapest, at such companies as Ganz,<sup>12</sup> Hangya,<sup>13</sup> Beszkárt,<sup>14</sup> and the Hungarian National Railways (MÁV).<sup>15</sup>

---

<sup>10</sup> Steven Béla Várdy, *Magyarok az Újvilágban* [Hungarians in the New World] (Budapest, 2004), 744. The book is only available in Hungarian, but it includes a 30-page summary in English at the end of the volume.

<sup>11</sup> Ferenc Erdei, *Magyar falu* [Hungarian Village] (Budapest: Athenaeum, 1940). 120–129.

<sup>12</sup> Ganz Works was the biggest group of companies in 19<sup>th</sup>-century Budapest. Operating between 1844 and 1949, the company built tramcars, constructed electric railways, power plants, etc.

<sup>13</sup> Hangya (or ‘Ant’) was a Consumer and Sales Association in the Hungarian part of Austria-Hungary between 1898 and 1945.

<sup>14</sup> BSzKRt, or Beszkárt was the predecessor of the Budapest Transport Company (BKV). It operated between 1922 and 1949.

<sup>15</sup> Edit Sin, “Vecsés a főváros vonzásában 1900–1945,” in *Vecsés története* [The History of Vecsés], ed. Ernő Lakatos (Vecsés, 1986), 134–136.

## Population and Structure of Occupation in Vecsés

Vecsés had been a self-supporting serf village until the abolition of serfdom. But after 1849/1853, due to the growth of Budapest, Vecsés gradually lost its economic independence. While during most of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the population of the village both lived and worked in the same place, at the turn of the century, most worked in Budapest, commuting every day. During this time, Vecsés witnessed a huge growth in population due to domestic labor migration, as illustrated in figure 1. The data is taken from the 10-year censuses of 1850 to 1930. The reason this particular time frame was selected is that 1850 was the year when a census was conducted in Hungary, and 1930 is the closest to the years 1934–1936, from which I found archival records for this research.

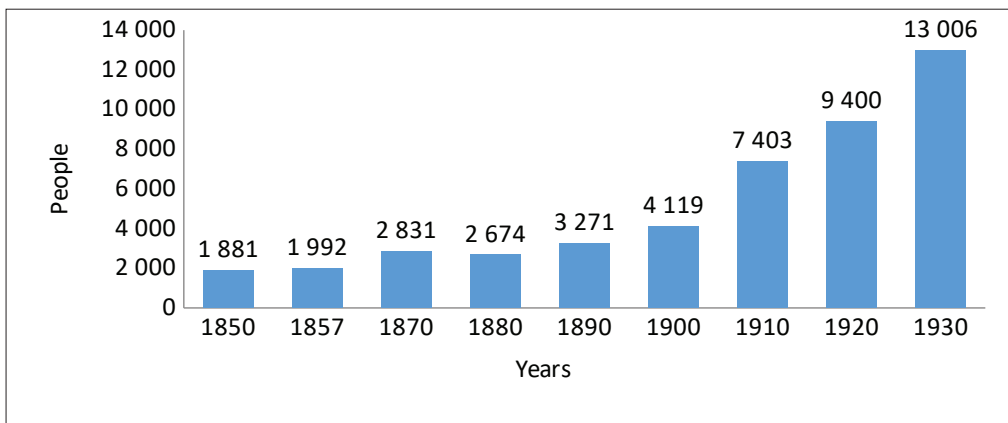


Figure 1: The Population of Vecsés from 1850 to 1930<sup>16</sup>

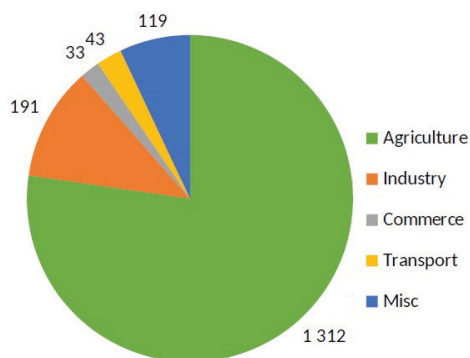
As the chart illustrates, the population of Vecsés displayed slow but steady growth until 1900, with only one small setback in the 1880s due to a cholera epidemic.<sup>17</sup> From 1900, the population grew more significantly every decade. The figures show a moderate shift between 1910 and 1920 which could be as a result of World War One and migration into the United States. What is striking is that during the course of just a century, the population grew five times in size.

<sup>16</sup> All the data were derived from the official censuses of Hungary. Népszámlálási digitális adattár (NéDA). Magyarországi népszámlálások és mikrocenzusok 1784–1996. Központi Statisztikai Hivatal, <http://www.konyvtar.ksh.hu/neda>.

<sup>17</sup> Edit Sin, “Az 1848-as forradalomtól a századfordulóig,” [From the 1848 Revolution to the Turn of the Century] in *Vecsés története*, ed. Ernő Lakatos (Vecsés, 1986), 120.

It may be worth noting that during this period, the population of Pest-Pilis-Solt-Kiskun County was constantly growing. According to the state censuses, 472,744 people lived in the county in 1857. This figure almost doubled by the turn of the century: the census in 1900 showed 825,779 people. The population passed one million in 1910, and in 1930 the county had a headcount of 1,366,089.

In the following figures, the occupational structure of Vecsés from 1900 to 1930 is illustrated. The timeframe is narrower here since Hungarian census data has only included occupational information by settlement since 1900. For the sake of clarity and simplicity, only four of the most important occupation categories: agriculture, industry, commerce, and transport are included. In agriculture, all individuals who were involved in some ways in tillage, livestock breeding, or any other occupation in connection with land cultivation are counted. Within the industry category, people of all craftsmanship are included. The commerce category comprises those working in the field of finance. Finally, the transport category is for those whose jobs involved the fields of passenger and freight transportation, but mostly those who were employed by one of the big transport companies of the time, MÁV and Beszkárt. There is a fifth category, in which all other occupations were included, such as intellectuals (teachers, doctors, etc.), and pensioners. This is called the miscellaneous category, as they are not significant from the standpoint of this research. Servants were completely excluded as the nature of their occupation is in question even among statisticians and demographers, so it is hard to determine whether they belong to the agricultural or industrial category.<sup>18</sup> This is not clearly marked in the censuses and the archival records either.



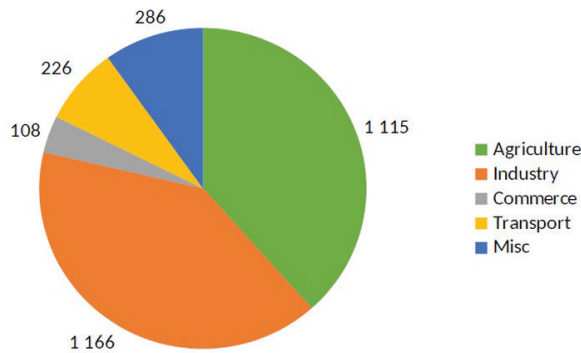
**Figure 2: The Occupational Structure of Vecsés in 1900<sup>19</sup>**

<sup>18</sup> Servants often worked on the estates of noble landowners, but also often for urban middle class families, as wage earners.

<sup>19</sup> Census of the Countries of the Hungarian Crown in 1900, Vol 1. 198–199.



In 1900, the number of wage-earners was 1,698. (Compare this to the population of the time, which was 4,119.) More than 75 percent of the 1,698, 1,312 people were occupied in the agriculture of the village. Of course, this did not only refer to the landholders, but everyone whose work was related in one way or another to farming: farmhands and shepherds. The other categories of occupation add up to less than one fourth of the wage earners, which means the vast majority of the inhabitants depended on agriculture in some form. This demonstrates that Vecsés remained close to the model of a typical 19<sup>th</sup>-century agricultural village.

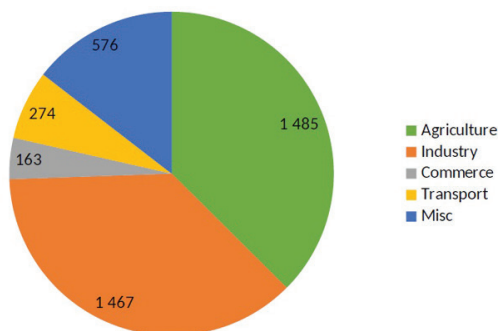


**Figure 3: The Occupational Structure of Vecsés in 1910<sup>20</sup>**

Figure 3 illustrates the occupational structure of Vecsés a decade later. What is interesting here is that the numbers working in industry overtook those of agriculture. Of the 2,901 wage earners, only 1,115 were working in agriculture, so almost 200 less than ten years earlier. The population saw a more than 30 percent growth from 4,119 to 7,403, but these newcomers worked in occupations other than agriculture, and the numbers appear to also indicate that existing agricultural workers began looking for employment in areas that paid better.

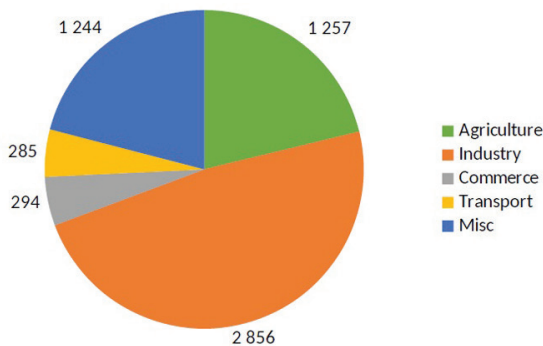
---

<sup>20</sup> Census of the Countries of the Hungarian Crown in 1910, Vol 1. 193–194.



**Figure 4: The Occupational Structure of Vecsés in 1920<sup>21</sup>**

By 1920 the number of wage earners had grown by more than 1,000. Workers in agriculture and industry were growing at a very similar rate, 1,485 and 1,467, respectively. Beside this, the numbers employed in commerce and transport also grew, and the miscellaneous group more than doubled in ten years.



**Figure 5: The Occupational Structure of Vecsés in 1930<sup>22</sup>**

Finally, by 1930 almost half of the wage earners in Vecsés (2,856 from a total of 5,945) were employed in the industrial category. The numbers in agriculture fell from its 1920 high, whereas commerce and transport both showed slight growth, and industrial

<sup>21</sup> Census of the Countries of the Hungarian Crown in 1920, Vol 1. 94–95.

<sup>22</sup> Census of the Countries of the Hungarian Crown in 1930, Vol 2. 56–57.

workers almost doubled. The figures of the miscellaneous category also rocketed, more than doubling from the 1920 census. This was also a result of rapid modernization. Over the 30 years under analysis, once rare professions, such as teachers, entrepreneurs, or people living off annuities, became much more common, which explains the significant growth in the miscellaneous occupational category. These professions are not highlighted here because they do not belong within the four classic categories at the center of the current research.

To put the results into context, it is instructive to examine the figures for Pest-Pilis-Solt-Kiskun County. The sources are also the official census records, but the time frame is somewhat broader as the censuses contained occupation data in the counties from earlier, 1870. The figure below illustrates the main trends in the occupational structure of the county from 1900 to 1930 but also provides an interesting glimpse at the previous three decades.

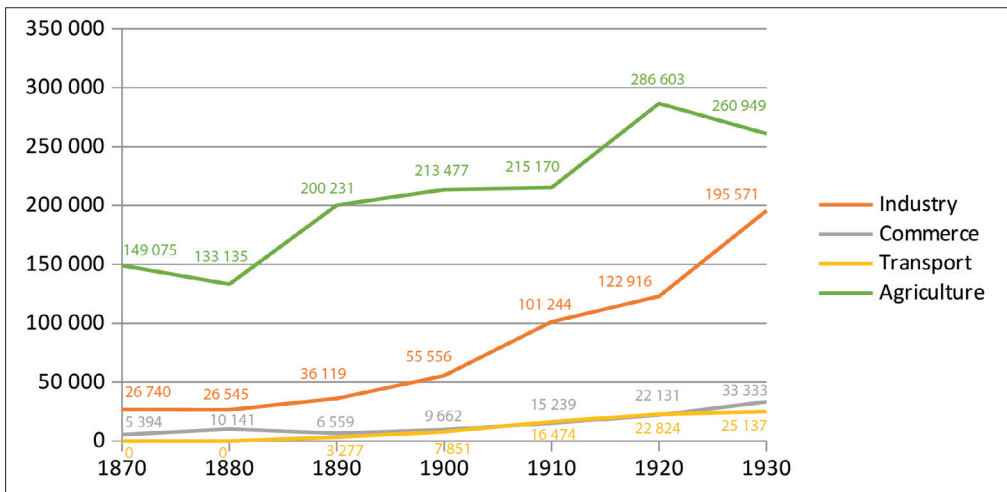


Figure 6: The Main Trends in the Occupational Structure of PPSK County 1870–1930<sup>23</sup>

<sup>23</sup> The data was gathered from the following sources: Census of the Countries of the Hungarian Crown in 1870; 1881; 1891; 1900; 1910; 1920; 1930.

As can be gleaned from the figure, all four categories increased in numerical size, although in different intensities. For example, in 1870, a little less than 150,000 people were employed in the agricultural sector, a little more than 26 thousand in industry, and 5,394 people in commerce. At this time, so few people were working in transportation that it was not included as a category in the census data. It first appeared in the census of 1880, still together with commerce, and finally in 1890 it became an independent category. In the following decades, the number of people working in transport doubled every ten years. Almost the same phenomenon occurred in industry. As is clear, the number of industrial workers increased from 36,119 to 55,556 in the period between 1890 and 1900, and it rose to 101,244 by 1910.

1920 saw a huge growth in agriculture: the number working in this area was 215,170 in 1910, and 286,603 in 1920. This increase was most significant among women. Their numbers rose by more than 50 thousand in ten years. The reason for this may have been the outbreak of the First World War. Women who were forced to replace their husbands in the workplace no longer referred to themselves as dependents, rather they professed themselves as wage-earners so they were counted as such in the 1920 census. This was not noticeably present in the case of Vecsés.

Proportionally, the vast majority of working people in the county, more than 81 per cent, was employed in agriculture in 1870. This decreased to around 50 per cent by 1930. The other three categories, on the other hand, showed steady and sometimes rapid growth. By 1930, the number of people employed in industry had reached 40 per cent on par with those working in agriculture.

These figures demonstrate how modernization saw industry, commerce, and transport replace agriculture as the primary source of employment particularly in the vicinity of Budapest. The figures also indicate that Vecsés, the population of which had swollen due to domestic migration, transformed from a once typical peasant village into one inhabited by individuals working in the city.<sup>24</sup> Typically, a settlement has to maintain three major functions for its inhabitants. The first is the living function, which means that a settlement provides a place of living for its people. The second is the work function. This means that the settlement provides opportunities to make a living. Finally, the third is the recreation function, meaning that the settlement needs to provide opportunities for its residents to spend their leisure time. Based on these features, the secondary literature

---

<sup>24</sup> The topic is widely discussed in both international and Hungarian literature. One of the best-known book on this is József Tóth, *Általános társadalomföldrajz* [General Social Geography] (Budapest: Dialóg-Campus, 2002), 423–425.

distinguishes between basic and non-basic settlements. Basic settlements provide only these three functions. Non-basic ones, on the other hand, are capable of functioning on higher levels as its infrastructure is developed enough to do so.<sup>25</sup>

The main problem in Vecsés was that during the time period examined above, the village slowly lost its work function. This is demonstrated in the continuous decrease in the number of people who were employed in agriculture. It meant that a large part of the peasantry, who used to make a living from their own land, could no longer do so. In this sense then, modernization forced these people to leave their families' traditional profession, and seek work in factories, transport companies and other sectors of Hungarian industry. The growth in the village's population through domestic migration was not as a result of the fertility of Vecsés' soil, but simply because of its close proximity to the capital where the higher paying jobs were to be found.

### Land Ownership and Occupation as Reflected in Archival Records

A more complete picture of society during this period is provided by the archival records. The primary sources include cadastral documents, land registers,<sup>26</sup> feudal court papers,<sup>27</sup> tax books, and other documents. The timeframe here encompasses nearly a century, and is limited by the availability of the archival records.

Research on the cadastral documents of Vecsés began in 2011. Archival records of cadastral documents ideally consist of registers, maps, and personal data sheets. In Hungary, the documents were produced during one of the three cadastral surveys organized by the government land administration. A cadaster is a comprehensive land record in which all the real estate and property of a town are recorded and measured in cadastral jugers. There were several cadastral surveys in Hungary, the first in the 1850s, the second was started in 1875 and lasted 10 years. The result of the latter was the most important and, for a long time, the official land registry for the whole county.<sup>28</sup> There were more surveys conducted in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The records referred to in this paper were produced between 1934 and 1936.

---

<sup>25</sup> John W. Alexander, "The Basic-Nonbasic Concept of Urban Economic Functions," *Economic Geography* 30, no. 3 (1954): 246–261.

<sup>26</sup> National Archives of Hungary – Pest County Archives (Hereinafter referred to as MNL PML) 165/c. 246<sup>th</sup> volume: The Land Registers of Vecsés from 1841.

<sup>27</sup> MNL PML V. 165/a. 83<sup>rd</sup> box: The Documents of the Feudal Court of Vecsés from 1768–1867.

<sup>28</sup> István Hegedűs, Péter Várkonyi, "A történelmi Magyarország statisztikai adatforrásai" [Statistical Data Sources of the Historic Hungary] in *Módszertani tanulmányok. Az EKF Történelemtudományi Doktori Iskolájának kiadványai*, ed. Dániel Ballabás. (Eger, 2013), 46–47.

As soon became apparent, there were many problems with researching these records. Cadastral documents have always been controversial among historians due to the difficulties in processing the vast amount of data they typically contain and the little-to-no success that can be reached by working with them.<sup>29</sup> Also, on many occasions, the records no longer exist, a countrywide phenomenon.<sup>30</sup> The Vecsés records were no exception as most had been destroyed during the course of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Some were burnt in World War II or the Revolution of 1956, others were damaged beyond repair when the archive building was flooded. According to the archivists of Pest County, there were occasions when some of the documents were “recycled:” the cadastral records were made on very fine quality paper with only one side written on, so it was only logical for some people to write on the reverse side instead of purchasing new sheets of paper, resulting in the disappearance of many documents.<sup>31</sup> Consequently, at the time of the research there were only 281 cadastral records available in the Archives, from the time period 1934–1936,<sup>32</sup> instead of the more than 5,000 pieces that should have been there. While these, to some degree, were useful in the first period of the research they proved insufficient to be the basis of the work. In any case, all the data from the records was entered into the MS Access database for further use. The cadastral papers, however few there were, provided invaluable information on several of the inhabitants. This data was compared with the official landholder statistics published by the Hungarian Royal Central Statistical Office.<sup>33</sup>

The following tables are an attempt to show the differences between the results from the two sources mentioned. The goal with these is to provide a glimpse into the proportion of the missing data of the cadastral records.

---

<sup>29</sup> László Ambrus, “A kataszteri iratok kutatásának, a birtokszerkezet megismerésének problémáiról,” [Problems of Researching Cadastral Records and Discovering Land Structure] in *Tavaszi Szél / Spring Wind 2014*, eds. Imre Csiszár and Péter Miklós Kőmíves (Budapest, 2014), 12–19.

<sup>30</sup> József Kozári, “Gyöngyös város földbirtokviszonyai a kataszteri telekkönyvek tükrében” [Land Ownership in Gyöngyös as Reflected in the Cadastral Land Registers] in *Studia Miskolcinsensia* 3. (Miskolc, 1999.) 158.

<sup>31</sup> This information was provided by the archivists at MNL PML.

<sup>32</sup> MNL PML V. 1160. C/d. 2–4. Cadastral documents of Vecsés.

<sup>33</sup> Magyarország földbirtokviszonyai az 1935. évben. [Relations of Landholding in Hungary in the year 1935] (Budapest: Stephaneum, 1937)

Territory Category (jugerum) <sup>34</sup>	Number of Properties
Under 1 cadastral juger	2,978
1–5	550
5–50	234
50–100	2
100–500	2
500–1000	1
1000–3000	1
3000–	0
Total	3,768

**Table 1: Summary of the Data from the Official Statistics of Land Ownership<sup>35</sup>**

As illustrated in Table 1, most privately-owned lands, almost 3,000 properties, fell into the smallest category, those under 1 cadastral juger. These were commonly called “törpebirtok” (“dwarf lands”). This was the result of a process begun in 1786, the year the village was repopulated. The process is referred to as “birtokaprózódás” (“land fragmentation”) in the secondary literature. When a serf father died, he usually divided his property among his (male) children, who then also left their land divided among their children, and so on. This resulted in the gradual deterioration of the soil. A snapshot of this process can be observed in the data above. 550 pieces of land were between one and five jugers, and 234 were between five and fifty. Two of the lots were between 50 and 100, and another two between 100 and 500 jugers. There was only one property larger than 1,000 cadastral jugers. It was more precisely 1,541 cadastral jugers (2,191.4 acres), and it was large enough to be called “nagybirtok” (“large estate”). There was no land greater in size than 3,000 jugers (4266,3 acres) in the village.

This was the structure of land ownership in Vecsés, in 1935. It would be of interest to examine the same figures based on the extremely sparse cadastral documents. The following table shows the findings of the records in a similar distribution as Table 1. But due to the lack of records, it is not complete.

---

<sup>34</sup> Jugerum (in Hungarian: hold) was the official unit of territory in Hungary. Cadastral juger was introduced in 1875 and was counted as 5,755 square meters (1,42 acres).

<sup>35</sup> MNL PML V. 1202. Volumes 2 to 7: The Major Tax Book of Vecsés from 1935.

Territory Category (jugerum)	Number of Properties
Under 1 cadastral juger	692
1–5	13
5–10	5
10–50	0
50–100	0
100–500	0
500–1000	0
1000–	0
Total:	710

**Table 2: Summary of the Data from the Cadastral Records of Vecsés from 1934–1936**

As seen in Table 2, less than 19% of the total number of lots (710 of 3,768) could be recovered compared to the official statistics. Of the 710 pieces of land recovered from the sources, 692, were dwarf lands, 13 were between 1 and 5 cadastral jugers, and five were larger than 5 jugers but smaller than 10. The 710 lots covered 181.56 jugers (258.2 acres), which is extremely low: only 2,3% of the 7,753 cadastral jugers (1,1025.5 acres) of land surrounding the village. This data shows best how big the problem is with the cadastral documents, and why they are not suitable for reconstructing how the society of the village looked in the first part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

A much more useful group of records is the Major Tax Book (*Adófőkönyv*) from 1935.<sup>36</sup> This comprises six thick volumes and is stored in the Pest County Archives. The data from these volumes was also uploaded into the database and analyzed with SPSS Statistics analysis software. The correlations were then analyzed and visualized in tables and diagrams, some of which are included here.

This part of the research was conducted based on a sample of 3,300 people whose data was derived from the tax books. Of the 3,300 individuals, 2,225 paid taxes. There is more information on these individuals in the records, such as place of living, occupation, religion, etc. The most important of these is the occupational data as it shows in what field these people made a living. For 1,076 individuals there is no data in the records except for their names.

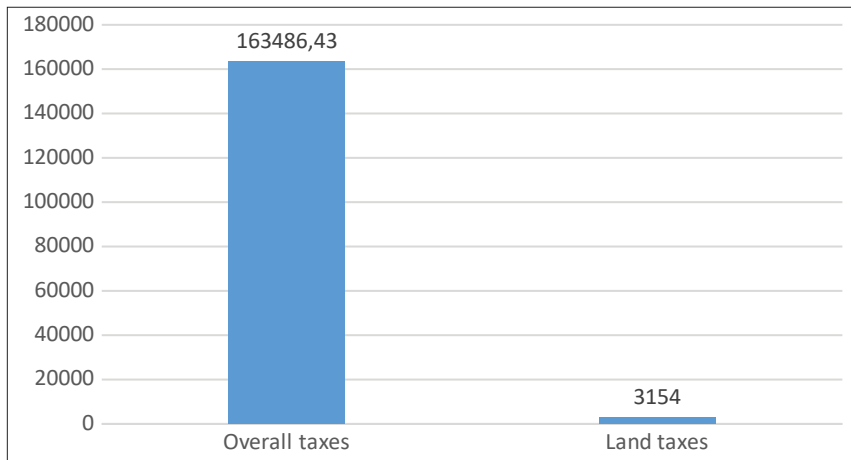
The following section shows a few of the conclusions that could be made based on this data, and how they confirm the claims made above concerning Vecsés and the way the town lost some of its traditional functions.

---

<sup>36</sup> MNL PML V. 1202. Volumes 2 to 7: The Major Tax Book of Vecsés from 1935.



Firstly, the most telling data is the difference between overall taxes and land taxes paid by the people of Vecsés. The following bar chart shows the results.



**Figure 7: Overall and Land Tax Data of the Main Tax Book of 1935**

Overall taxes were 163,486.43 pengős.<sup>37</sup> Only 1,92% of this, 3,154 pengős were land taxes, which, again, demonstrates that agriculture had lost its importance as a means of making a living. The amounts paid were generally small: the 3,154 pengős were collected from a total of 1,289 people. The next table contains some interesting figures concerning land taxes.

Category (pengő)	Number of people
0,1–1	810
1,1–2	386
2,1–5	61
5,1–10	16
10,1–25	9
25,1–100	6
Above 100	1
Total	1,289

**Table 3: The Distribution of Land Tax Amounts**

<sup>37</sup> The Hungarian pengő was the official currency of Hungary from 1927 to 1946. It replaced the korona (crown), which was essentially in use from 1892, when it replaced the forint. The Forint was restored as the official currency in 1946.

Table 3 shows that the vast majority (810) of those paying land taxes paid less than one pengő. 386 people paid between 1.1 and 2 pengős, and 61 paid 2.1 to 5. More than 4 pengős were paid in only 32 cases, of which only one occurred where more than 100 was paid. It is interesting that one person paid almost half of the land taxes of the sample that year, 1,482.12 pengős, and it was not even a person. This outstanding amount was paid by Magyar Tudományos Akadémia (Hungarian Academy of Sciences) after the lands the institution owned in the surroundings of Vecsés.

There is one more aspect of the Tax Book that is worth looking at. Of the 2,225 taxpayers from the sample, we know the occupation of 60 per cent. The following table shows the occupational structure of the village based on the Tax Book. The four main categories mentioned in the first part of the essay are italicized.

Occupation	Occurrence	%
<i>Agriculture</i>	92	4,1
<i>Industry</i>	723	32,5
<i>Transport</i>	171	7,7
<i>Commerce</i>	65	2,9
Post	14	0,6
Law enforcement	36	1,6
Healthcare	7	0,3
State employees	102	4,6
Education	1	0,1
Artists	8	0,4
Self employed	13	0,6
Church	1	0,1
Misc	101	4,5
Unknown	891	40
Total	2,225	100

**Table 4: The Share of Occupations in Vecsés in 1935 based on the Major Tax Book**

Similarly to the census data from 1930, the Tax Book sample also shows a majority of people working in industry. If the numbers of those employed in industry (723), transport (171), and commerce (65) are added together, it shows that more than 43 per cent of individuals were working in these fields, while only 92 (4,1%) still worked in agriculture.

## Closing Remarks and Future Research

So, what can be taken away from these results? Most importantly, it seems clear that the majority of the village's inhabitants worked in the industrial field. What could be gleaned from the census data in the first part of the essay was confirmed by the tax records. Agriculture was no longer a major source of income for the population of Vecsés. The constant flow of people moving into the settlement found employment in the factories and other companies of Budapest, and not in the economy of Vecsés, which led to the village losing one of the important functions. As a result, Vecsés became a residential village, and the majority of its inhabitants lived there but their work did not tie them there. It should be noted that the sudden fall in agricultural employees between 1930 and 1935 is due to the incompleteness of the records. It is safe to say that the actual proportion of industrial and agricultural workers must have been roughly the same in the years 1930 and 1935.

In conclusion, modernization, along with constant domestic labor migration, had a great impact on the economic, social, and demographic structure of the village. The once typical peasant settlement changed beyond measure at the turn of the century and owning a piece of land was marginalized as a source of income. Agriculture soon became ineffective at making a living. This was typical in the surroundings of large cities such as Budapest although not unique to them as it was also extremely hard to do so in the less developed, mostly northern and eastern parts of the country. This was the reason for the enormous emigration occurring in the same period, most importantly to the United States. Vecsés (and Pest County) was not among the areas most affected by emigration,<sup>38</sup> nevertheless, hundreds went to the USA from the county, and Vecsés was not immune either.

The first swarm aims for Pest, trying to find livelihood in the newly built factories. But there is not enough bread there either, so they wander further to find work. This is how some head for the mines and some overseas, to the New World of America.<sup>39</sup>

Although several people did migrate to the United States to find better opportunities, international migration did not have the same impact on Vecsés as domestic migration did. But in order to build a detailed picture of the social processes that occurred, it is required as part of the research. This work is already in progress and a detailed analysis on the opportunities for social mobility, the social networks, and the careers of the emigrated "Vecsésians" based on Hungarian and American primary sources will be undertaken as a part of the author's further research.

---

<sup>38</sup> Erdmann Doane Beynon, "Migrations of Hungarian Peasants," *Geographical Review* 27, no. 2 (April 1937): 227.

<sup>39</sup> János Bilkei Gorzó, *Vecsés nagyközség története* [The History of Vecsés] 1786–1936 (Vecsés, 1937), 67.

## References

### Primary sources

Census of the Countries of the Hungarian Crown in 1870; 1881; 1891; 1900; 1910; 1920; 1930.

MNL PML V. 165/a. 83rd box: The Documents of the Feudal Court of Vecsés from 1768–1867.

MNL PML 165/c. 246th volume: The Land Registers of Vecsés from 1841.

MNL PML V. 1160. C/d. 2–4. Cadastral documents of Vecsés.

MNL PML V. 1202. Volumes 2 to 7: The Major Tax Book of Vecsés from 1935. Magyarország földbirtokviszonyai az 1935. évben. (Budapest: Stephaneum, 1937)

### Secondary sources

Alexander, John W. „The Basic-Nonbasic Concept of Urban Economic Functions.” *Economic Geography* 30, no. 3 (1954): 246–261.

Ambrus, László. „A kataszteri iratok kutatásának, a birtokszerkezet megismerésének problémáiról.” In *Tavaszi Szél / Spring Wind 2014*, edited by Imre Csiszár and Péter Miklós Kőmíves, 12–19. Budapest, 2014.

Bankston III, Carl. *Encyclopedia of American Immigration*. Pasadena: Salem Press, 2010.

Bilkei Gorzó, János. *Vecsés nagyközség története*. Vecsés, 1937.

Daniels, Roger. *Coming to America: A History of Immigration and Ethnicity in American Life*. New York: HarperCollins, 2002.

Erdei, Ferenc. *Magyar falu*. Budapest: Athenaeum, 1940.

Gyáni, Gábor. „Budapest története 1873–1945.” In *Budapest története a kezdetektől 1945-ig*. Edited by Vera Bácskai, Gábor Gyáni and András Kubinyi, Budapest, 2000.

Gyáni, Gábor. *Budapest – túl jön és rosszon. A nagyvárosi múlt mint tapasztalat*. Budapest, 2008.

Katus, László. *Hungary in the Dual Monarchy 1867–1914*. New York, 2008.

Kosa, John. "A Century of Hungarian Emigration 1850–1950," *The American Slavic and East European Review* 16, no. 4 (December 1957): 501–514.

Kozári, József. "Gyöngyös város földbirtokviszonyai a kataszteri telekkönyvek tükrében." In *Studia Miskolcínensia 3: Történelmi tanulmányok*, 157–166, Miskolc, 1999.

Müller, Veronika "Vecsés újjátelepítése és reformkori fejlődése 1686–1847" in *Vecsés története*, ed Ernő Lakatos, 64–104, Vecsés, 1984

Puskás, Julianna. *Ties That Bind, Ties That Divide. 100 Years of Hungarian Experience in the United States*. New York, 2000.

Rakita, Eszter. "A foglalkozásszerkezet elemzésének lehetőségei és néhány aspektusa egy funkciót váltó településen a modernizáció korában." In *Tavaszi Szél / Spring Wind 2014*, edited by Imre Csiszár and Péter Miklós Kórmíves, 307–317. Budapest, 2014.

Rakita, Eszter. "Társadalmi változások a főváros vonzásában. A funkcióváltás és forrásai." In *Vidéki élet és vidéki társadalom Magyarországon*, edited by József Pap, Árpád Tóth and Tibor Valuch, 443–453. Budapest, 2016.

Sin, Edit. „Az 1848-as forradalomtól a századfordulóig.” In *Vecsés története*, edited by Ernő Lakatos, Vecsés, 1984.

Sin, Edit. „Vecsés a főváros vonzásában 1900–1945.” In *Vecsés története*, edited by Ernő Lakatos, Vecsés, 1984.

Tóth, József. *Általános társadalomföldrajz*. Budapest: Dialóg-Campus, 2002.

Várdy, Steven Béla. *Magyarok az Újvilágban*. Budapest, 2004.