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**THE URBAN POLITICS OF
KOLOZSVÁR/CLUJ 1890–1918**

SUMMARY

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In the dualist period, between 1867 and 1918 the once rather medium-sized town of Kolozsvár/Cluj consistently transformed into a city of sixty thousand inhabitants, managing by the end of the period to reach one of the highest city-rankings in Hungary. Inside its walls it housed a politically active bourgeoisie, wealthy industrialists and bankers, a chunky society of craftsmen, traders and laborers, being one of the three university centers, having the second largest press industry and – by the time World War One entered its final year – hosting the biggest movie studios in the country. Progress was slow in the beginning but speeded up around 1890 due to a nationwide economic consolidation, and steadily helped to transform the city’s urban aspect.

My PhD-thesis focuses on the urban politics of Kolozsvár/Cluj between 1890 and 1918, which can be considered the most dynamic period of modern urban progress the city has seen prior to post-Second World War era, and eventually post-communism. In only 20 years, between 1890 and 1910, the city’s population doubled and much of its infrastructure, housing and development that set the base for posterior improvement downtown and inside the inner-periphery were established in said timeframe. This progress was attained by implementing modern urban policy concepts by the municipal committee, which recognized the necessity, reached for the resources, enforced city regulations, opened up for opportunities and urged for alignment with countrywide and western progress.

The dissertation makes an attempt to present in its first half (Chapters 1 and 2) not the means by which this progress was possible, but rather under what authority, namely the city’s leadership and management structure, also the decision-making apparatus of Kolozsvár/Cluj. Chapter 3 deals with the movements and changes in the balance of forces and in the power relations inside City Hall, largely influenced by national politics. The analysis employs on law decrees, on city regulations, on written documents issued by the administration, but mostly on the minute-books scripted in the General Assembly meetings and on the local press of the period. The research however doesn’t focus on infrastructural development, only in about two sub-subchapters, and doesn’t delve too deeply into city budget, instead unravels and makes an attempt to analyze the political decision making process in City Hall.

Shortly after the 1867 Compromise between Austria and Hungary – the latter having conjugated Transylvania only a few months earlier – the freshly elected Hungarian parliament along with the newly appointed government began the excruciating work of reforming the country's administration – among many other express matters. The debates took three years, with

heavy clashes between the favorers of municipalism and the devotees of centralism. The first laws which were to reshape Hungary's inner borders and administrative structure – and which were to last much in their original form late until 1945 – were passed in 1870, taking effect two years later.

Next to the old and newly established counties, Statute nr. XLII of 1870 appointed the formerly free royal cities and some smaller towns – a total of 66 – the rank of counties, so they became municipalities, which constituted in a wider cue of self-government and a say in state affairs. Kolozsvár/Cluj was among these towns, housing a civilian population of 26 362. The law mandated – among other things – that in the case of municipalities the General Assembly was to hold no less than 48 and no more than 400 members, one member for 250 inhabitants. Accordingly the General Assembly of Kolozsvár was first gathered in a number of one hundred in 1872, but that number quickly changed to a hundred and six the year after, and by 1881 it rose to 112 in conformance to the by now 29 923 civilians living inside city limits. This number however wasn't raised further in spite the fact that the population reached roughly 60 thousand by 1910.

The legislative branch in the local government of Kolozsvár/Cluj, the municipal committee, was a body of 112 men, half of whom were the highest taxpayers in the city, the other half being elected according to parliamentary election rules for a six year mandate. Alongside the rich and the trusted, local political power consisted of a further number of 21 (later 22) town officials, partly elected by the General Assembly for six years of office (the mayor, four councilors, the chief notary, three sub notaries, the chief engineer, the chief treasurer, the chancery notary, two chancery lawyers, the solicitor, the public trustee) and partly appointed by the Lord Lieutenant for life (the chief of police – beginning with 1886 –, the chief doctor, the chief and sub controller, the archivist). Evidently these men emerged from a diversity of backgrounds, social status and wealth, having accordingly a variety of interests.

Presided over by the Lord Lieutenant or – in case of obstacles – by the mayor, the municipal committee gathered once a month (General Assembly), and held extraordinary gatherings on special occasions (such as national holidays and national grief related incidents). Meetings during which the assembly dealt with budget estimates or debated public utility contracts usually lasted over several days.

A rather key figure in the municipal administration was the Lord Lieutenant. Appointed by the monarch at the recommendation of the government, he acted as its local executive agent, implementing legal regulations concerning self-government. Beside the General Assembly he also

presided over the city's administrative committee, one of the two most important self-government authorities (the other being the city council lead by the mayor). The chairmen of other committees, panels and boards were either the mayor, or men appointed by the Lord Lieutenant, or men elected by the committees themselves.

Statute nr. XXI of 1886 overruled Statute nr. XLII of 1870, and left only 24 municipalities in the country – Kolozsvár/Cluj being one of them – and strengthened the Lord Lieutenants authority, who from now on was to hold a disciplinary board twice a year, punishing or firing those civil servants, clerks or beaurocrats who didn't do their job in a satisfactory manner, and was also to appoint from now on the chief of police, thus ceasing municipality's control over its police force. The law also introduced the government's nullifying right to municipalities' objection to a controversial decree issued by the government, thus attenuating the prior existing political power of local authorities.

The mayor, four councilors (of which one deputy mayor), and other senior officials were elected for a six year term by simple majority in the General Assembly. Statute nr. I of 1883, the law on classification of civil servants required the office holder to be a legal or a political science graduate, therefore the position was rather administrative than political. The mayor served as head of the city council, which prepared and presented cases to the General Assembly, and was also responsible for financial and property management.

Cases on which the General Assembly voted in monthly held meetings were prepared by the council, by the administrative commission, by special boards, or by the panels which dealt with parliamentary and city elections, or with elections held in the General Assembly, or with setting up and revising virilist-lists, etc. Special boards were set up to deal with most aspects required by urban management, preparing its cases and presenting them in the General Assembly meetings, having – besides the public administration committee – a decisive role in shaping urban life in general. The four most important special boards were: 1. legal, personnel and organizational board (mostly legal specialists, lawyers, law professors); 2. financial, city managerial and construction board (mostly bankers, industrialists, engineers); 3. the board for education and community culture (mostly teachers, professors, clergymen); 4. the board dealing with public safety and military issues (the chief of police, doctors, lawyers, state officials, etc.). Each of the four councilors was a trustee in one of the special boards, and all board meetings were presided over by the mayor. In each board the General Assembly appointed 20-20 men (25–25 beginning with 1895) from its own

lines in a three to three years cycle (after each city elections), appointing new members if necessary at the beginning of every year due to eventual personnel change among virilists. Attendance in board meetings was mandatory. Beginning with 1895 the General Assembly moved up the four board's personnel count to 25. There were mostly intellectuals elected in the boards, and there are some who entered two boards at the same time.

An intriguing new aspect of the administration was the introduction of the heavily controversial phenomena of Virilism, according to which half the members of the General Assembly of counties, municipalities and parishes were non-elected and consisted of the highest taxpayers, whom succession was renewed at the end of each year. Under these regulations intellectuals (teachers and professors, members of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, magazine and newspaper editors, members of clergy, members of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry, warranted scientists, lawyers, doctors, pharmacists, engineers, surgeons, miners, foresters and land-stewards) enjoyed a tax privilege, so the tax they paid was reckoned twofold. Taxes taken into calculation were the property (land or/and house) tax and the personal income tax.

According to some Hungarian historiographers Virilism, this rather anti-democratic regulation had in fact two hidden purposes: on one hand granted city hall access for the supposedly government friendly wealthy elements and upper middle class intellectuals, thus leaning power and influence over local governments in favor of the philo-Compromise liberal forces in a consistent manner, on the other hand guaranteed Hungarian supremacy in municipal leadership, preventing the accidental takeover of power by members of any nationality with higher numbers and more voters, especially in Transylvania and Northern Hungary. Nevertheless, Virilism had a well-defined aim also, namely to confer political power to independent decision making, impartial intellectuals who understood their times, so the financial interest-driven old- and new-money men should meet their liberal opposition. It wasn't the case nationwide, the high taxpayers' league in most of municipalities was in shortage of the intellectual element, or if not, they had a unilateral representation of one or two branches (mostly lawyers, or mostly health providers, or mostly engineers, or two of these in approximately same numbers). For example, looking at the statistics provided by the *Household of Hungarian Towns in 1910* (issued by the Central Bureau of Statistics of Hungary) in the case of Marosvásárhely/Târgu Mureș, where there were 26 highest taxpayers entering City Hall in 1910, 18 of these were intellectuals with degrees, of whom the lawyers' number is highest: 5, second largest being the health providers: 3. Or in case of

Szatmárnémeti/Satu Mare, the highest taxpayers' number is 39, of which 27 intellectuals, among whom a staggering 18 are lawyers.

Kolozsvár/Cluj presented a countrywide unique picture in terms of virilism. Beginning with 1872 it hosted the second university in the country, along with some of the most important administrative offices of the region, which fact had a considerable effect upon the boost in population. University professors, lawyers, doctors, pharmacists settled, banks and other financial institutions were established, clinics, libraries, faculty buildings, research facilities, public buildings were a new necessity, so the number of architects rose too. If until 1890 the majority of the highest taxpayers in the General Assembly were essentially property-rich nobles, lawyers, factory owners, traders and hotel runners, by turn of the century every other high taxpayer was a teacher or a state clerk (in office or retired). Inside the category the high percentage of wealthy lawyers was eclipsed by the rise in numbers of well-paid university professors, while the proportion of other intellectuals stayed very much the same, this being the sign of a highly differentiated and numerous intelligentsia in the city. Shortly before and during World War One the proportion of intellectuals among the highest taxpayers was around 70%. In fact, if one looks at the same statistics used one paragraph earlier one observes that as far as virilist statistics go, in the year 1910 Kolozsvár/Cluj had the highest number of teachers/professors inside the intellectual category of all the municipalities (10, even higher than Budapest – however, if one takes a look at the virilist tablings coupled to the minute-books of the General Assembly, the number of teachers and professors around 1910 is in fact closer or above 20) and the highest number of public servants and freelancers among virilists in general of all the municipalities (17 – the closest being Szeged with 15).

The lists of highest taxpayers effective for the next year was assembled at the end of every year by the Certifying Board elected by the General Assembly for a one year mandate, with a chairman appointed by the Lord Lieutenant. The lists then were posted on a panel for everyone to see, with a two week deadline for raising objections. Upon considering the eventual objections the Certifying Board rectified the order of succession, eliminated those who didn't accept the nomination or accepted prior elsewhere (at county level), then presented the finalized list to the General Assembly meeting, including it in the meeting records. Meeting records eventually ended up on microfilm and are kept at the Cluj county branch of the Romanian National Archives.

Unfortunately there are some meeting records which are lacking entirely (1891, 1903, 1909, 1915, 1916) and there are some meeting records which don't hold the list (1890).

Existing lists contain the names of the highest taxpayers in tax amount descending order, their occupation or tax motive, their address, the tax amount, and finally the grounds for multiplying (in case of intellectuals). However precise these listings are, social structure-driven research is presented with a dilemma, namely the property owner's category, which wasn't an occupation, but in fact accounted for a process of enrichment. The listing favored the higher property tax over against lower income tax, and on social interconnections level conferred prestige capital. Property owners emerging in the 1890–1918 period could have come from any of the occupation categories, owning a private or tenement-house in the city built from accumulated wealth.

The other half of the General Assembly, 56 in numbers, was elected according to parliamentary election rules for a six year mandate, beginning its course in 1872 in a peculiar but nonetheless democratic manner. To ensure personnel change, half of the first elected shift (28 men) stepped down by coin toss after three years in 1875, and new elections were held, but with the former staff re-electable. After another three years it was time for the remaining half to step down, but again, they were re-electable too. Every mandate lasted six years, but after three years the other half of representative body was up for reelection. When somebody died or stepped down, his mandate was renewed in the first following election, even if it wasn't its time, being specified during campaign, that it is a shorter mandate.

Between 1888 and 1918 the town held ten such elections, each time in four electoral districts, and each time renewing the classical 28 mandates (7 in each district) plus those free due to death or resignation. According to law each of the four electoral districts had to consist of no less than 200 and no more than 600 electors. Having had a boost in population (from roughly 30 000 in 1881 to almost 60 000 in 1910) these numbers were quickly overrun by the electorate of Kolozsvár/Cluj, and by 1910 and by law the city had earned the right to assert not 112 members in the General Assembly, but 240. However, a curious thing happened. Their continuous plea towards the Ministry of Internal Affairs for changing the headcount of the General Assembly, and reorganize the districts was first declined in 1892 (General Assembly: 140, electoral districts: 5), then in 1902 (8 electoral districts) and finally in 1912 (General Assembly: 240, electoral districts: 10, with slightly less than 600 voters each), so they had no other choice then to continue in these boundaries up until 1918.

Statute nr. XXI of 1886 decreed the electable's (fit for public office) profile as it follows: literacy-proven 24 year old Hungarian citizen male, under no guardianship, who for at least two years lived and paid taxes in the municipality, held financial or intellectual essentials which made him eligible to vote in the parliamentary electoral system and wasn't under penal or bankruptcy investigation. Renewing the Voting Rights Bill of 1848, Statute nr. XXXIII of 1874 decreed the profile of the elector, somewhat similarly to the aforementioned: 20 year old Hungarian citizen male, under no guardianship, who held financial or intellectual essentials which made him eligible to vote in the parliamentary electoral system, or had a right to vote on the old law (possessed voting rights between 1848 and 1872). The law also specified the amount of property and income census which made such an individual eligible to vote, and conferred automatic voting rights to intellectuals (much in the same circle as in case of intellectuals with twofold reckoned taxes among virilists).

Traditionally the elections were held in the same buildings over the years, and there was one in every district. In the first, voters gathered at the Redout (today the Transylvanian Museum of Ethnography on Memorandumului street), in the second at the Evangelical-Lutheran school (1989 December 21st Boulevard), in the third at the City Hall (Eroilor Boulevard) and in the fourth at a building which doesn't exist anymore, The City Fencing Club (Eastern corner of Mihai Viteazul Square). Elections were usually held on a Sunday, from 9:00 o'clock in the morning till 4:00 in the afternoon, or if the voters were too many, sometimes deep in the evening hours. Votes were cast in secret, the ballots put in a sealed envelope, and thrown in the ballot-box, a process supervised by an electoral panel, in which each party delegated one or more members. Voters could choose either to select an entire party list, or vote for individuals from as many lists they saw fit (by underlining or encircling the names), but if they selected more individuals than mandates in their district, the ballot was nullified. Individual, non-affiliated candidates were many, but with little chances of winning. Parties usually nominated the same amount of candidates as many mandates were available, even the districts themselves had lists, set up in principle by non-affiliated members of the society over many nightly gatherings prior to election date. The lists were handed over to the voters at registration, or on voting site.

Up until the elections of 1894 there were only two political forces in the city: the local affiliation to the parliamentary majority-holder Liberal Party and that of the ever-oppositional Party for Independence. Accordingly, the elections passed off in relative silence, with prior pacts

and agreements between these two, in several occasions running the same candidates, mostly holders of former mandates (virilist or elected), stepping up on the ever-winning political capital of public trust. But beginning with 1894 almost every election brought a new contender force, even if it was one that didn't hold a chance in changing the paradigm. First, in opposition to the ever-winning Liberal Party some members from the Party for Independence tried out the Party of Citizens, but their electorate consisted of the same voters that voted traditionally for its big sister. Also in 1894 the numerous Israelite community in the fourth district – after a failed attempt to run their candidate on the Liberal Party list – boycotted the elections by not voting on anybody else but their candidate (who thus entered City Hall with a three year mandate, and managed to stabilize his position further on).

In 1897 it was the Syndicate of Artisans and the mailmen who stepped forward in an organized matter and tried to enter a small amount of candidates, but failed. 1901 was the year in which no other organization took a swing at the elections, but a week after some of the disillusioned members of society formed an affiliate to the Democratic Party first organized by Vilmos Vázsonyi in Budapest. Although a great political power in the capital, its affiliates throughout the country did nothing more than vegetate. But three years later the elections saw a smaller storm in terms of new parties and their candidates. The Kossuth Party formed a pre-electoral coalition with the Ugron Party (both Party for Independence-affiliates, with countrywide support), the New Party (organized by Baron Dezső Bánffy) entered elections also, and it was time for the “socialists” (craftsmen, traders, farmers) to try out their candidates, but with no chance whatsoever.

The years 1905–1906 brought a political crisis upon the country; the Liberal Party lost the elections to the Party for Independence and its affiliates, so the local small bourgeoisie of Kolozsvár/Cluj saw an opportunity to gain seats in City Hall. The Liberal party was practically finished, and the Party for Independence couldn't channel its forces, so 11 “new men”, farmers, craftsmen and traders entered City Hall in the third and fourth districts. Three years later, in the 1909 elections, the districts' decided to nominate in high numbers candidates from the small bourgeoisie, and deliberately left out three of the most notorious names in city politics: István Kecskeméthy, Sándor Tutsek – both Members of Parliament in Party Justh (philo-independence) colors – and István Apáthy, a scientist and university professor of zoology, for many years a vocal opposition leader in City Hall. The first two lost the election, Apáthy won on the Party for Independence list, but this year's elections clearly stated that a change is coming. By the 1913

elections the Party for Independence's former power was reinstated nationwide, its only forceful opponents locally could have been candidates of the Traders' Hall or of the Liberal Party's successor, the National Labor Party, but their opposition didn't consist, so the Party for Independence candidates won City Hall in sweeping majority. In 1915, it was time for only filling the numbers (elections were put off after the war nationwide by law) of those deceased and resigned, so this year's elections for 7 mandates were won by those 7 candidates (five from the Party for Independence and two from the National Labor Party) who ran in Party colors.

If before the political crises of the year 1905–1906 the local elections in Kolozsvár/Cluj were a soft battleground for the Liberal Party and the Party for Independence, with candidates arising mostly from the upper middle class, beginning with 1906 there was a slight change in favor of the lower middle class members, the Social Democrats, mostly farmers, craftsmen and merchants, but who chose instead to thicken the numbers of the Party for Independence. Thus, the formerly liberal City Hall was steadily taken over by the Party for Independence and its affiliates, with zoologist István Apáthy as their leader.

Turn of the century found the city of Kolozsvár/Cluj in relative prosperity, with a politically active bourgeoisie due to the diligent press. As seen before, the municipality's ruling body of men was the municipal committee (in its decision making form: the General Assembly), partly consisting of elected representatives, partly of wealthy locals, the highest taxpayers. Besides city clerks, this local parliament included mostly intellectuals, of whom university professors were in the highest numbers, assisted by lawyers and state officials (in office or retired). In much smaller numbers we have industrialists, bankers, craftsmen, traders, farmers, clergy, etc. Among the trusted and the rich there was a restrained group of those few who actively pursued political status, and whose ambitions barely exceeded city borders, but within city walls they were practically everywhere: in the board of directors of banks and other credit institutions, in the leadership of cultural organizations and educational facilities, in the freemason lodge, at the head of other associations, fellowships, etc.

Chapter 2 is an attempt to build the network of this group's interests, hopefully having drawn in the process a map of power on which the city's decision-making apparatus was firmly placed.

During the process of getting acquainted with the mechanisms of Kolozsvár/Cluj's urban politics I stumbled upon the same characters in almost every aspect of the city's public life. Inside the relatively populous circle of local politicians a smaller group of men appear to have dominated

the spectrum, figures of high social status, originating from a variety of income categories, usually with more than one formal position in the local society, and without exception all of them at any time in possession of some form of political mandate in the city's self-governmental authority. A necessity to identify the interests of these men arose immediately, further developments contoured the tight circle of the multi-positional elite of turn-of-the-century Kolozsvár/Cluj.

So in investigating city leadership one of my main concerns was to reveal the background of these key players, of those who supposedly pulled the strings, who had the capability and authority to influence others or to form majorities, so I was preoccupied in finding a viewpoint from which I could select those who apparently shaped the city's public life, who were most motivated to pursue political carriers in the city, even if some of them used it to access national politics. But in 28 years of modern history, when political institutions were run in great strength, thorough research conducted on the total amount of the city-ruling contingency would be way too time consuming and would lead on a path inhabited by mostly unimportant figures. In consequence I had to come up with a rule by which I could select in order to narrow down the numbers to "the core" of city politics, out of which those who consistently pursued mandates and held in the same time a concentrated amount of leading positions in the society could emerge. The criteria on which the first selection was made consists of three political qualities: showing will and ambition, furthermore ceasing the opportunity, paired with a quantitative political measure: the number of mandates. The process, however, presupposes and begins with setting a theoretical and methodological field on which the boundaries of political will, ambition, opportunity and practice could materialize, eliminating those elected who secured only one mandate, or those who found themselves inside but chose passivity, focusing only on those who not only entered but then persisted willingly in the realm of city politics, for whatever reasons. This endeavor unfortunately cannot include those whose death inside the set timeframe, or on a higher note, the end of the system as a whole came too prematurely.

In the last century Hungarian historiography on the dualist period dealt with political elites by drawing up a collection of gradually tightening set of circles, some of them theories, others frames of reference to empirical research, from the wide national perspective down to focusing only on a small town or parish. Kolozsvár/Cluj is somewhere in the middle, being a municipality with county rank and a regional capital city in matters of education, finance and industry, so research on its elites can be conducted using already tested methodology considering that in the

process of local elite-selection the same rules applied as in the case of other equisized cities nationwide, but maybe had slightly different dynamics hosting inside its walls the second highest ranked university in the country.

After sketching up some of the theories that help understand and classify local political elite inside the elites in general, and inside the national interpretation on a narrower cue, I clarified also the concept of multi-positional elite applied on a dualist period Hungarian city with a relatively wide freedom of self-governance. In conclusion, I defined local multi-positional elite in dualist Hungary as that constrained group emerging from the governing elite in a politically autonomous environment, which through accumulated institutional and organizational preeminent positions had secured for itself the monopoly of decisions, thus maintaining a considerable influence over city affairs. That group can be easily identified inside the municipal committee of Kolozsvár/Cluj.

On general headcount of the men who held for any amount of time voting rights in the municipal committee over the years between 1890 and 1918 – even with incomplete sources (lacking meeting records of years 1891, 1903, 1909, 1915, 1916) – the overall list is huge, including over 500 names. In order to identify those who formally, by the sources at hand present themselves as being the most enduring local politicians, I conjured up a set of rules and boundaries to help identify Kolozsvár/Cluj's upper political class, inside of which the pinnacle of local politics may unravel. Each category had to be dealt differently regarding political will, ambition, opportunity and practice.

Data found on the selected, politically active, highly motivated, enduring and multi-positional city leaders was arranged in a list that contains their names, the manner of entering City Hall, their profession/occupation, their time period of activity in the municipal committee, date and place of birth, date and place of death, lived age, confession, education, party membership, parents, spouse, children, known addresses, ties to a bank or other financial institution, kinship to others in the list, freemason membership, role in an association, other details (Hungarian Academy of Sciences membership, firm interests, honorary distinctions, etc.).

The multi-positional branch of city management shows a high degree of interconnections, which leads to regarding the most influential circle of townsmen as one that besides considering supposedly public weal (the common good), had also managed to develop widely extensive interests in the financial, institutional and educational sectors of the society, having to that extent a deep understanding of the city's needs, being firmly embedded in its informal network hubs.

Family bonds and confessional aspect are of importance, and can assert some necessary information on the personal relationship level. What is of higher significance regarding city governance are those semi- or entirely public encounters that probably led to relationships that conferred not only political capital and prestige, but managerial knowledge and momentum also, and could also be used to harvest financial information, to connect interests and businesses.

Data collected on the individuals shows a multi-positional elite of mostly intellectual background, lacking almost entirely men coming from the lower income group of craftsmen, and lacking absolutely the wealthy farmers living on the city outskirts, moreover, absents also the architects. The very little information present on the confessional situation can assert the idea, that the elite was mostly Catholic and Calvinist, which is no surprise, the overall situation being similar. The places of birth also suggest a preponderantly non-native, naturalized composition, although there are too few certain cases for us to draw a solid conclusion.

Interestingly enough, there are members of the multi-positional elite in the board of directors of companies which depended on city contracts, fact which raises a great deal of suspicion about conflict of interests in city governance, furthermore the extremely crowded column with bank interests from the latter list suggests a likewise situation, knowing that the city had deposits in three or four banks in the same time, and credits from at least two at any given moment. Periodically, especially when banks merged or newer ones appeared, the General Assembly voted on moving deposits, which gatherings were an opportunity for heavy lobbying. Having a really numerous freemason composition in the multi-positional elite, it would be extremely useful to learn about what went on in the freemason lodge, the few formal sources show only membership and general chronology.

Research on the multi-positional elite in city governance of turn-of-the-century Kolozsvár/Cluj surely doesn't cover all the aspects, it only uncovers – as much as possible – the thin top layer of a larger network, but that thin top grew deep roots in the society. Identifying this upper layer of the local political elite inside the municipal committee, and having mapped their interconnections as it is possible by the evidence at hand is a new and much needed development in the process of learning about on which grounds and in what conditions city management brought improvement in an era of constant change.

In Chapter 3, first the General Assembly is thoroughly examined, from the necessity of the monthly held meetings up to the methods of electing the town officials, with statistics regarding

decisiveness. The period 1890–1918 is divided according to city management-attitude manifested by the municipal committee, attitudes linked to the three mayors: Géza Albach (1886–1898), Géza Szvacsina (1898–1913) and Gusztáv Haller (1913–1918). During the two mandates of Géza Albach, decisions were taken slowly, speeding up only when the city faced the urgency of the cholera pandemic in 1892–93, managing to develop its water system and sewage, but having no solution in dealing with the periodic intoxication of the water due to city garbage deposited right near the wells. In the fifteen years (two and a half mandates) of Mayor Géza Szvacsina city management succeeded in widen its public water service, the sewage system and the public electricity according to the risen demand, but inside City Hall urban politics was shaken by three major developments. Firstly in 1901, after the brutal murder of an army officer by two policemen and following an uprising, chief of police Pál Deák was pensioned, but then elected chancery lawyer due to incomparable loyalty manifested towards him by the municipal committee. City police was reformed to the extent of conditioning even the private life of police agents. Secondly, and linked to the former chief of police, deputy mayor Mór Nagy was used as a scapegoat in 1902 by Mayor Géza Szvacsina in order to shift blame from himself in the matter of a huge missing sum of money from the city finances due to uncollected penalties by the office of the retired chief of police, who was yet again protected, so the mayor sacrificed instead the carrier and prestige of counselor Mór Nagy. Thirdly, after the major political crisis of 1905–06, City Hall was transformed in a constant battleground in matters of party politics, and although the mostly liberal town officials struggled to keep party politics out of the General Assembly meetings, Party for Independence-leader István Apáthy went to the length of removing (in two elections) counselor and deputy mayor Béla Fekete-Nagy from office, the strong man of the liberal resistance, bringing in lawyer Gusztáv Haller as Mayor in 1913. Soon after the war broke out.

War is a disquieting episode in one's life, even if one sits out the clash of arms, as was the case of the people living in Kolozsvár/Cluj during the Great War. However far from the battle sites, they soon fell victims to the war effort. Between 1914 and 1918 food became more and more scarce, the price of everything rose, and requisitions entered in a monthly routine. Female labor was unable to replace the many thousand men absenting the local economy. Medium sized and lower incomes drastically diminished, thus endangering the livelihood of many families. Moreover, the city was caught in a continuous gush of military personnel, and was practically run over by refugees fleeing the Romanian offensive in September of 1916. Circumstances favored

the traders, the black marketers, the pub owners and the young silent movie industry. Through desperate measures city management tried hard to keep the recession afloat. The end of war erupted in a chaos of disintegration for the Austro-Hungarian Empire, and a new era was soon to begin for the city of Kolozsvár/Cluj.