

**Katalin Szende**

*Town Foundations in Central Europe and the New World in a Comparative Perspective*

Founding towns has been the motor of urban growth over the last few millennia. This complex process, presupposing terms set by a founder, a population who obeys to these, and not least, a territory where it can be carried out, readily lends itself to comparative investigations. Nevertheless, most historical research on town foundation is carried out on the level of individual settlements, political entities or founding personalities. This paper sets out to explore the possibilities of studying this phenomenon over a broad time span, in regions far apart. It will compare patterns of organizing space in newly founded settlements in East Central Europe in the thirteenth century and later with that of Spanish towns in the Americas of the sixteenth century. Although evidently no genetic connection can be assumed between the two processes, towns in both territories have been termed “colonial” in various contexts. Taking this term in its most basic meaning of “territorial expansion”, one can inquire, through a set of selected examples, about the role of creating towns in “colonizing” physical spaces as well as in the extension of rulership over the people inhabiting them. I will argue that identifying general and comparable features can improve our understanding of developments in particular localities, and that the history of town foundations in East Central Europe can provide meaningful contribution to such a discussion.