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‘...the opium of the people’? Religiosity in socialist new towns

‘... l’opium du peuple’? Religiosité dans les villes nouvelles socialistes

Márton Berki and Brigitta Sivadó

The research was realised within the confines of the project entitled ‘After Postsoviet: A Geographical Analysis of Social Processes at the Shifting Eastern European Buffer Zone’ (K 124291), funded by the National Research, Development and Innovation Office (NKFIH). In the case of Márton Berki, it was completed in the ELTE Institutional Excellence Program (1783-3/2018/FEKUTSRAT) as well, supported by the Hungarian Ministry of Human Capacities.

Introduction

- 1 It is now a commonplace to say that a rapidly growing body of scholarly work deals with the post-socialist transition, understood as ‘[a] broad, complex, and lengthy process of societal change starting with the refusal of communist regimes and central planning, leading to democratic political regimes and a market economy’ (Sýkora, 2009, p. 387). As a result, a large amount of knowledge has undoubtedly accumulated on the economic, political and institutional transformation of post-socialist cities (for the most comprehensive overviews and recapitulations, see Andrusz *et al.*, 1996; Stanilov, 2007; Sýkora, 2009, among others). On the other hand, however, the no less profound *cultural changes* former socialist cities have undergone since the beginning of the transition still remain relatively under-theorised compared to the above aspects (for notable exceptions, though, see the works of Czepczyński, 2008; Stenning *et al.*, 2010; Diener and Hagen, 2015). In order to contribute to a more nuanced understanding of these overwhelming cultural transformations (and thus, to shed light on the complexity of post-socialist urban cultural geographies), this paper scrutinises *religiosity* in two Hungarian socialist new towns, with particular emphasis placed on the processes of secularisation and de-secularisation. Here, the former is understood as a systematic erosion of religious practices, values and beliefs (Norris and Inglehart, 2004, p. 5), whereas the latter is a

process through which religion reasserts its societal influence in reaction to previous and/or co-occurring secularising trends (Karpov, 2010, p. 250).

- 2 After the fall of the Iron Curtain, two separate Europes emerged in terms of religiosity: the ‘West’, which is – with a few exceptions – getting more and more secularised, and the post-socialist ‘East’, which is mostly characterised by a process of de-secularisation (see Smrke and Uhan, 2012, pp. 492-494). In this regard, Hungary is no exception either; the détente of the socialist regime’s control over the religious sphere led to de-secularisation and an overall revival of religiosity at the turn of the 1990s. According to the data collected by Hungarian sociologist of religion Miklós Tomka, the share of the country’s adult population who considered themselves religious was 53.9% in 1983, rising to 62.9% in 1989, and then to 76.8% in 1993 (Tomka, 1995, p. 18). This trend was, however, unfolding in a spatially uneven matter (Kocsis, 2009, pp. 90-95), with a number of typical areas where religiosity did not increase significantly. These include (1) Budapest and other large cities, (2) the central part of eastern Hungary (where impoverished peasants had already been highly susceptible to socialist ideas at the turn of the 20th century, and where the Hungarian Communist Party achieved extraordinary success in 1945), and last but certainly not least, (3) heavy industry regions characterised by the dominance of working-class populations. Concerning the latter, the most representative examples of these areas are definitely socialist new towns, the quintessential constructs of the inherently atheist experiment of socialist modernity.
- 3 Our paper provides an overview of religiosity in *Dunaújváros* (former Stalin Town, founded on iron and steel industries in 1951) and in *Kazincbarcika* (founded on coal mining and chemical industries, also in 1951) before and during the post-socialist transition. These two case studies, at the same time, also offer broader implications for the international literature on (post-)socialist cities. Through the enquiry of the two towns’ local religious landscapes, two significant, yet unrelated bodies of research are interlinked; the one on mono-industrial socialist new towns (i.e. urban geography), and the one on religiosity and various religious practices (i.e. cultural geography).
- 4 The structure of the paper is as follows. In the next section we outline the theoretical background of the empirical case studies by providing a brief review of our two key topics; socialist new towns and the geographies of religion. It is followed by a concise historical overview of the development of *Dunaújváros* and *Kazincbarcika*, and then by the introduction of our research methodology. After that we discuss the most important results and develop our main arguments. Finally, we draw the conclusions and outline further research directions.

Theoretical background: Socialist new towns and the geographies of religion

- 5 In the post-World War II period, there was a programmatic call in state socialist countries to ‘develop a new pattern for the city which will indicate clearly the inherent unity of the people, the classlessness of the society’ (Fisher, 1962, p. 252). In this regard, however, ‘the ills inherited from the era of capitalism’ (*ibid.*) represented significant barriers; therefore, the most ideal terrains for the creation of a quintessential form of socialist urbanity were *socialist new towns*. In our paper, we understand socialist new towns as settlements that were either designed and constructed from scratch, or established

through the mass-scale industrialisation of already existing small villages. Mostly planned and constructed in less urbanised areas, these towns were politically and economically privileged settlements, the beneficiaries of the socialist countries’ central redistributive systems. They were characterised by the overwhelming dominance of the industrial sector, accompanied by a less significant services sector. Even though they were representative showcases of architectural modernism, their (newly arrived) local societies generally lacked urban traditions. In terms of their demography, they were initially characterised by a rapid population growth and a high share of young age groups (therefore, many of them were commonly referred to as ‘the city of youth’ – including Dunaújváros and Kazincbarcika). (For more definitions and possible understandings of socialist new towns, see Germuska, 2003 and Uzzoli, 2013)

- 6 Since there is no academic (nor lay) consensus about the characteristic features of this group of settlements, no exact numbers are known either; the understanding of which towns should be – or should not be – considered as socialist new towns vary from author to author, as well as from country to country. According to French and Hamilton’s (1979, p. 6) seminal book on socialist cities, 1.200 new towns have been constructed across the former Eastern Bloc, out of which more than 1.100 in the area of the Soviet Union. Concerning the satellite states, Wakeman (2014, p. 105) recently estimated that ‘some 60’ new towns have been constructed after the war. In the case of Hungary, given the above set of criteria, 11 settlements can be defined as socialist new towns: Ajka, Dunaújváros, Kazincbarcika, Komló, Oroszlány, Ózd, Paks, Százhalombatta, Tatabánya, Tiszaújváros, and Várpalota (see also in Szirmai, 2016). It is important to underline that our two case study towns, Dunaújváros and Kazincbarcika are consensually considered as socialist new towns by all Hungarian authors dealing with the topic (see the extensive literature review by Germuska, 2003).
- 7 Within the confines of this paper, the past and current cultural transformation of these two towns is scrutinised in the context of the *geographies of religion*, a long-standing subfield within human – or, more specifically, cultural – geography. Throughout several decades of theoretical and empirical work spanning from early attempts (Sopher, 1967) to more recent syntheses (Stump, 2008), this avenue of research is concerned with ‘*examining spatial patterns arising from religious influences, (...) the diffusion of religious beliefs and organizations, the relationship between religion and population, the impact of religion on landscape and landscape on religion, religious ecology, and the politics and poetics of religious landscapes, community and identity*’ (Kong, 2009, p. 642). Studies at the nexus of geography and religion witnessed a remarkable reinvigoration starting from the late 1980s, with the gradual retreat of the Berkeley School’s traditional cultural geography and the simultaneous emergence of new cultural geography (for a recapitulation of works published in this turbulent time period, see Kong, 1990). A decade afterwards, the then-full-fledged new cultural geography’s studies on the topic were deliberately called as ‘new geographies of religion’, with central issues revolving around the politics and poetics of religious places, identities and communities, and the sites of religious practices beyond the ‘officially sacred’. (For a comprehensive literature review of the works produced in the 1990s, see Kong, 2001). After the turn of the millennia, the topic remained at the forefront of debates; a special issue of the journal *Social & Cultural Geography* was aimed at ‘*[p]lacing religion and spirituality in geography*’ (Holloway and Valins, 2002), a forum consisting of six articles was devoted to ‘*[t]heorising and studying religion*’ in the *Annals of the Association of American*

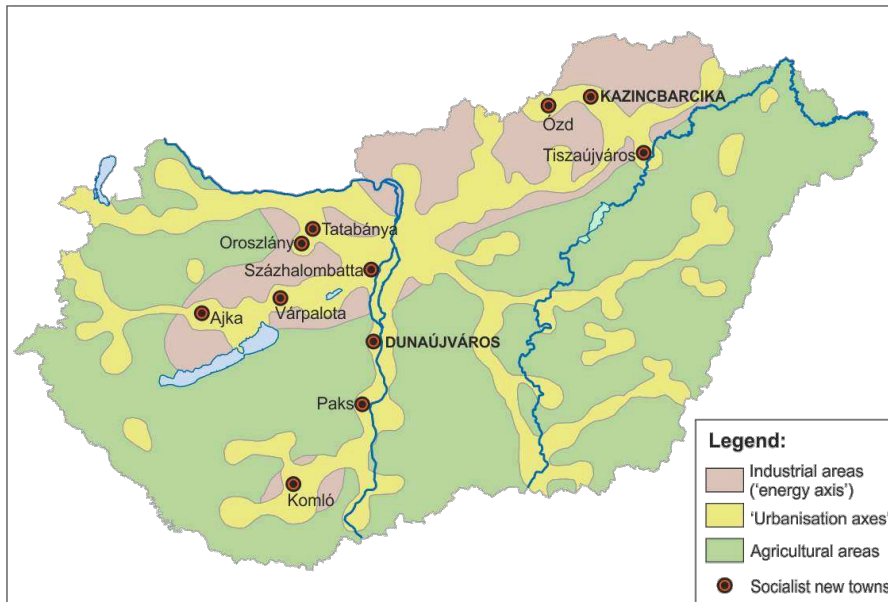
Geographers (Proctor, 2006), along with another themed issue (also in S&CG) focusing on geography and religion, as well as on the dialogue between these two domains (Yorgason and della Dora, 2009)¹.

- 8 Even though the (new) geographies of religion is a significant field of research, relatively little empirical work has been done on religiosity in (post-)socialist cities. (This research gap might also be linked to the 'double exclusion' of the post-socialist context, i.e. from the knowledge production of mainstream Western [Anglo-American] theory, as well as from its post-colonial critiques – see Tuvikene, 2016). Most of the sources on the (post-)socialist realm adopt a macro-regional research focus (such as in the case of Tomka, 2005; Hann *et al.*, 2006; Pickel and Sammet, 2012; Pollack *et al.*, 2012; Borowik *et al.*, 2014; Betts and Smith, 2016) or, partly as chapters of some of these comprehensive volumes, a national one. On the urban scale, however, in the form of case studies carried out within (post-)socialist cities, there is a relative scarcity of literature. Some of the exceptional counter-examples include the study of popular religiosity in the formerly closed city of Dnepropetrovsk by Zhuk (2013), some notes on local religious life in Nowa Huta by Pozniak (2014), or the recent scrutiny of the features of post-secularism in the religious landscape of Prague by Havlíček and Klingorová (2017). Concerning Hungarian socialist new towns, however, no case studies have been conducted on the topic of religiosity to date.

An overview of the history of Dunaújváros and Kazincbarcika

- 9 Both of our case study towns were constructed in key positions within the socialist era spatial structure of Hungary (Figure 1). *Dunaújváros* – initially, *Sztálinváros* (i.e. Stalin Town) – is situated right by the Danube in the central part of the country, whereas *Kazincbarcika* is located in the hilly area of Northern Hungary, on the country's so-called 'energy axis' (Krajkó, 1982). Both towns lay along different 'urbanisation axes' branching out from the capital city, constituting significant centres of forced industrialisation and urbanisation from the early socialist period onwards (see Dienes, 1973, p. 36).

Figure 1. The location of socialist new towns (including Dunaújváros and Kazincbarcika) in the socialist era spatial structure of Hungary.



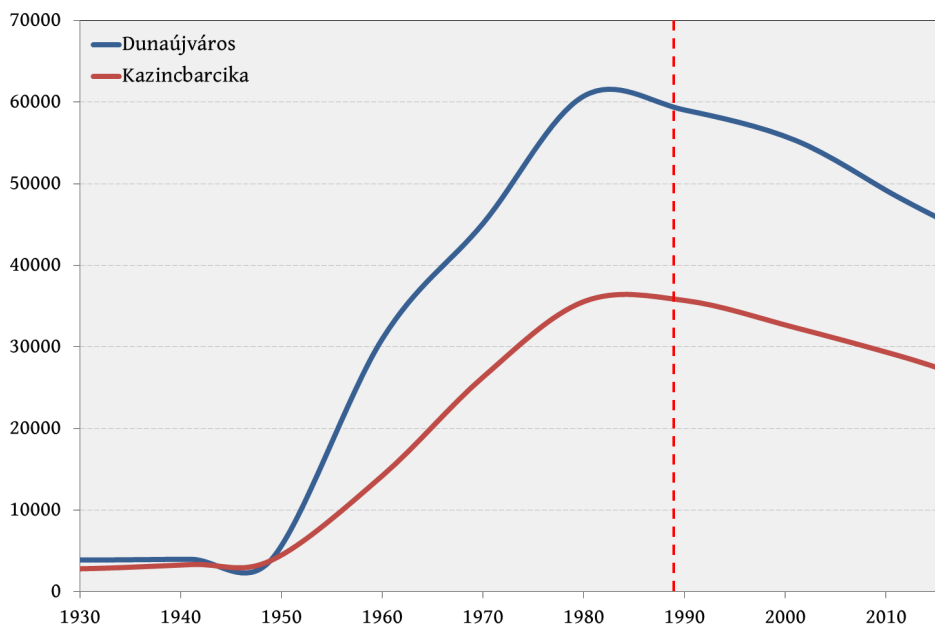
Source of base map: modified after Krajkó (1982), socialist new towns added by the authors

- 10 Dunaújváros and Kazincbarcika were both constructed besides smaller settlements with long histories. Dunaújváros was founded right next to Pentele, a town with a significant share of agricultural population and fishers (owing to its location by the Danube), whereas Kazincbarcika was founded on an empty tract of land besides two villages, Sajókazinc and Barcika, having evolved as predominantly agricultural settlements since the Middle Ages, supplemented by smaller-scale coal mining activity from the mid-19th century. The construction of both new towns started in 1951, constituting the most important representative investments of Hungary's first Five-Year Plan (1950–1954).
- 11 Dunaújváros was the outcome of the socialist leadership's idea to turn Hungary into 'the country of iron and steel', as declared by Ernő Gerő, the 'economic Tsar' of the country (Berend, 2013, p. 206). However, since Hungary did not have sufficient reserves of iron ore necessary for the planned metallurgical industries, it had to be shipped from the Soviet Union via the Black Sea and River Danube. Consequently, riverside locations were sought as possible sites for the new town: initially an empty area near Mohács – at the country's southern border – was designated but it was considered insecure due to Stalin's split with Tito's Yugoslavia. Therefore, a new site near Pentele was chosen, more than 100 kilometres north of the originally planned location. Here, the construction of the new town went hand-in-hand with that of the Stalin Steelworks, the new flagship of Hungarian heavy industry. Meanwhile, Kazincbarcika was also built at an overwhelming pace – as a less-propagated episode of the town's construction, however, not only by ideologically committed volunteers but also by prisoners of war and political prisoners from a forced labour camp operating here between 1950 and 1953. Just as in the case of Dunaújváros, Kazincbarcika's iconic industrial facility, Borsod Chemical Plant is also practically as old as the town itself. In addition to

chemical industry, the local mining sector was significantly boosted as well, and a power plant was also built here.

- 12 The new town character of Dunaújváros and Kazincbarcika is best illustrated by their long-term population dynamics (Figure 2). Even though they vary in size (since Dunaújváros has always been larger), the overall trajectory of their population change is almost completely identical. Their growth was the fastest during the 1950s and the 1960s, skyrocketing from the roughly four thousand inhabitants of their ‘ancestor’ settlements to several ten thousands within only two decades. As bedrocks of socialist industrialisation and modernity, they became showcase cities of state socialist Hungary: Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev visited Sztálinváros in 1958, whereas Kazincbarcika in 1964. Even though Sztálinváros was renamed to Dunaújváros (literally, ‘New town by the Danube’) in 1961, it still remained a highly privileged settlement. (The name of its emblematic symbol, Stalin Steelworks, was changed to Danube Steelworks even earlier, in 1956, three years after the death of Stalin – and definitely as a consequence of the revolution). The same holds true for Kazincbarcika, as it was also greatly supported by the central government, becoming one of the wealthiest settlements in socialist Hungary.

Figure 2. Population dynamics of Dunaújváros and Kazincbarcika between 1930–2017.



DATA SOURCE: HUNGARIAN CENTRAL STATISTICAL OFFICE (HCSO) – CENSUSES (FOR THE YEARS 1900; 1910; 1920; 1930; 1941; 1949; 1960; 1970; 1980; 1990; 2001; 2011) AND THE GAZETTEER OF HUNGARY (FOR 2017)

- 13 Following this upwards trajectory lasting up to the late-1970s, the first signs of crisis appeared during the 1980s: in the case of Dunaújváros, it was caused by the decline in global steel production, while Kazincbarcika was first hit by the mining sector’s crisis, as a result of which large numbers of local coal miners were laid off. After the collapse of the socialist regime, the two towns were characterised by diverging development pathways. In Dunaújváros, the state decided not to privatise – and therefore, saved – the steelworks, which resulted in a kind of ‘delayed transition’ (although other industries of the town suffered from the structural crisis of the early-1990s).

Kazincbarcika, in contrast, just as the entire highly industrialised Northern Hungarian region, was in a critical situation throughout the 1990s. After the turn of the millennia, both towns received foreign direct investments: in the case of Dunaújváros' steel industry (eventually privatised in 2002), it was primarily Ukrainian (and then Russian) capital, whereas in the case of Kazincbarcika's chemical industry, it was Chinese capital.

- 14 Concerning their current situation, however, the two towns are still in significantly different positions. Based on a complex index calculated by the Hungarian Central Statistical Office (HCSO) in 2011, a social-economic development ranking of all Hungarian settlements has been established. In this, Dunaújváros turned out to be the 117th, while Kazincbarcika the 572nd. (The best ranking socialist new town was Százhalombatta, being the 18th most developed Hungarian settlement, whereas the worst was Ózd, ranking 2.155th out of the total number of 3.155 Hungarian settlements). Therefore, Dunaújváros might be considered as an example of *relatively prosperous* new towns, whereas Kazincbarcika is an example of *stagnating ones*. (For further details about the historical and recent development trajectories of Dunaújváros and Kazincbarcika, see Baranyai, 2016 and Berki, 2016, respectively).

Research methods

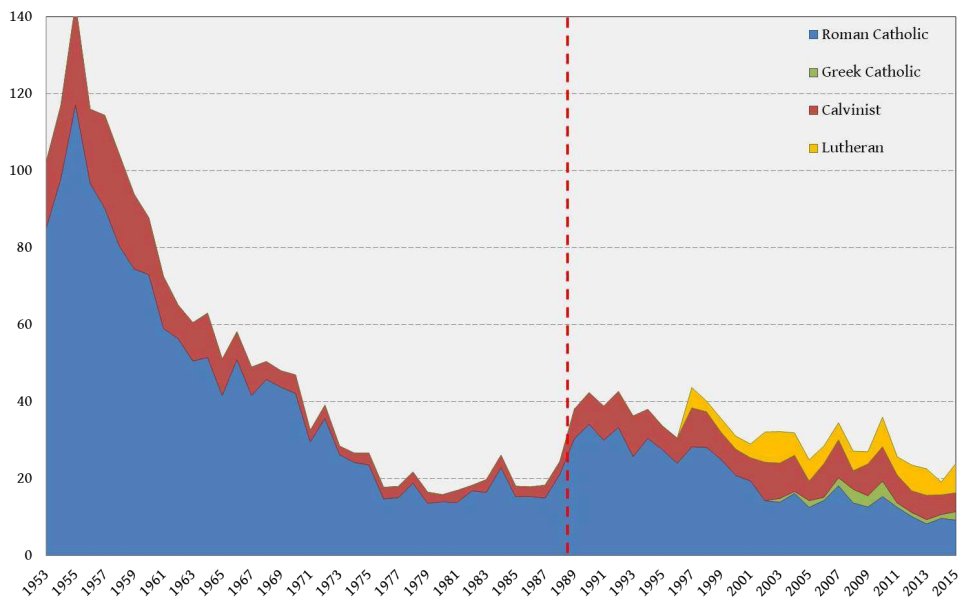
- 15 Our case studies on religiosity are based on the analysis of quantitative as well as qualitative data. As an initial step, long-term *parochial datasets* obtained from the local churches were analysed. The most important indicator was the number of baptisms per annum, from which the rate of baptisms per live births (%) was calculated. This indicator is available for the largest denominations for all years between 1953–2015, in the case of both towns; in Dunaújváros, for Roman Catholics, Calvinists, Lutherans and Greek Catholics, whereas in Kazincbarcika, for Roman Catholics, Calvinists and Greek Catholics. These datasets allowed us to reconstruct long time series both for the socialist era and the post-socialist period. (N.B.: The construction of both towns started in 1951, hence this data covers almost their entire existence). In addition to these parochial sources on baptisms, datasets of the Hungarian Central Statistical Office (HCSO) were also analysed: since most censuses of the state socialist period (in 1960, 1970, and 1980) did not include religiosity-related questions for obvious reasons (nor the one carried out in 1990), only the data of the 2001 and the 2011 censuses could be used. (Prior to these, the last census which included such questions was the one in 1949, when none of our case study towns existed).
- 16 Additionally, in order to gain a deeper understanding of religiosity in the two new towns during and after the socialist era, these quantitative measures were complemented by qualitative data derived from *in-depth interviews*. The interviews were conducted with priests, pastors and competent representatives of the local municipalities in both towns. Our questions were aimed at obtaining historical and recent information on the role of religiosity in local residents' everyday lives and on the forms of people's religious practices, both for traditional and for recently emerged churches. During the socialist period, religiosity by and large meant the traditional (largest) denominations, however, after 1989 a remarkable diversification unfolded. It could not only be observed in terms of (conventional) religiosity but in the case of spirituality in general as well, understood here as a broader notion than people's faith

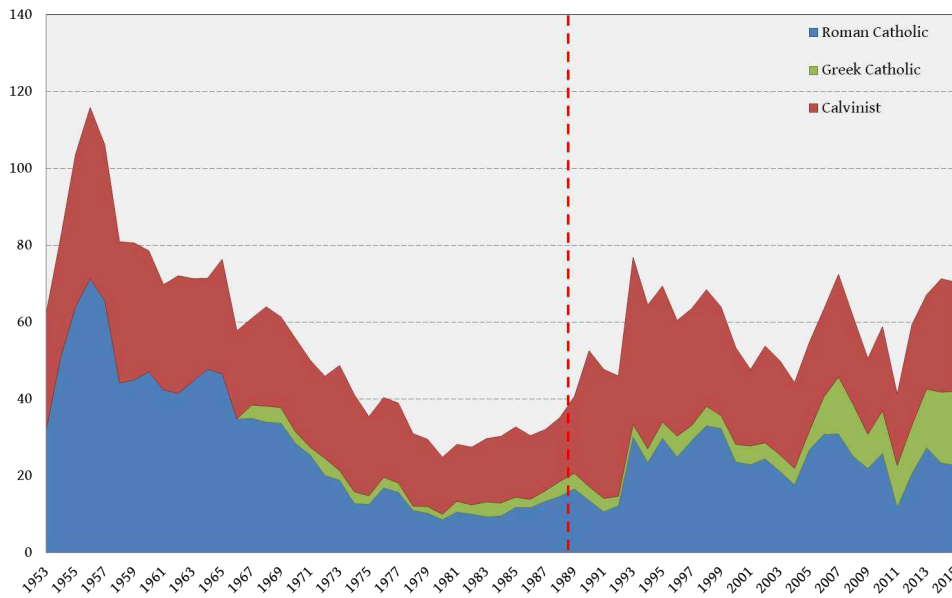
in traditional religious denominations. Therefore, the respondents of our interviews were also asked about their perception of this diversification in the case of both towns.

Results and discussion

- 17 The general trend of religiosity in Hungary during the state socialist period, as summarised by Tomka (1990), was as follows. As a common phenomenon after wars and other kinds of armed conflicts, religiosity significantly increased after World War II as well. It started to decrease after the 1956 revolution and the subsequent realignment of the socialist system, lasting up to the 1980s with different velocities, followed by a slightly increasing tendency till the fall of the Iron Curtain. Notably, our data on the rate of baptisms per live births (Figure 3) are exactly in line with these trends for the socialist era, both in the case of Dunaújváros and Kazincbarcika.

Figure 3. The annual rate of baptisms per live births in Dunaújváros (top) and Kazincbarcika (bottom) between 1953–2015 (%).





DATA SOURCE: OWN CALCULATIONS BASED ON DATASETS OF BAPTISMS OBTAINED FROM THE LOCAL CHURCHES, AND DATASETS OF ANNUAL LIVE BIRTHS FROM THE HUNGARIAN CENTRAL STATISTICAL OFFICE (HCSO)

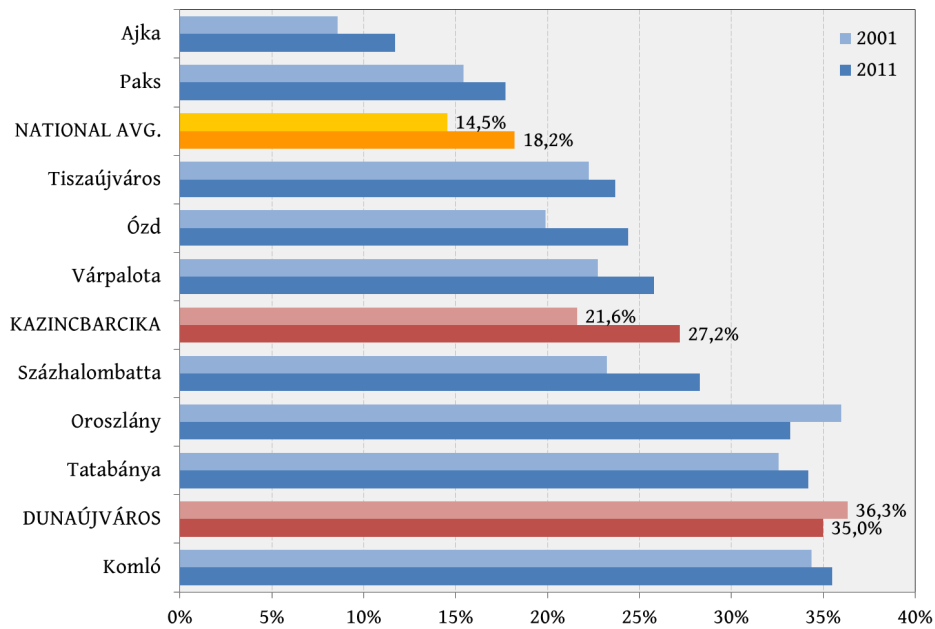
- 18 Throughout the 1950s, this rate was exceptionally high. For several years, it was even above 100% because not only new-born babies were baptised but also a number of older (previously unbaptised) children whose parents moved into the new towns. According to our interviews, the rate of baptisms could be even higher than shown on the figure because there were many people who actually lived in Dunaújváros or Kazincbarcika (as their first dwellers), however, tended to hold the most important and solemn events of their lives – including the baptism of their children – in the villages they were originating from. Albeit the rate steadily decreased in the 1960s, it still remained high during that decade (in fact, higher than in the post-socialist period). It is important to note that our data for the mid-1960s almost exactly corresponds with the results of a survey carried out in the Soviet Union in 1966 (as cited by Pospelovsky, 1988, p. 192). That survey, conducted among teenagers aged 14–17 (all of them being Komsomol members), revealed that 52.7% of the respondents were baptised – in comparison, even though we work with the ‘rate of baptisms per births’ instead of the (simple) ‘rate of baptisms’, for the year 1966 our rate was 58.2% in Dunaújváros, and 57.8% in Kazincbarcika. In the Soviet sample, two additional interesting facts should be pointed out: first, the rate of children baptised in larger towns and cities was higher than in smaller towns, and second, a higher proportion of industrial workers than of collective farmers have baptised their children. If such patterns existed in socialist Hungary as well, that might explain the relatively high rates of baptisms observed in the rapidly booming mono-industrial towns of Dunaújváros and Kazincbarcika.
- 19 After the 1960s, the lowest levels of religiosity were observed throughout the 1970s and the early-1980s in both of our case study towns, partly owing to the (seeming) economic security of Kádár’s ‘Gulash communism’ which turned Hungary into ‘the happiest barracks’ of the Eastern Bloc². Even though sacral objects existed in both towns³, they were getting more and more sparsely visited. In spite of this decline, however, religiosity – understood as a rhizomatic formation (Deleuze and Guattari,

1987) – survived the entire state socialist period, even if mostly ‘under the surface’. During those decades, its offshoots were either ‘cut off’ by the authorities, or were regulated and conformed to the system. The regime’s attempts to ‘cut back’ religiosity were ranging from the appropriation (nationalisation) of church-maintained schools and other institutions, through the prohibition (or in some instances, even criminalisation) of religious orders, to the everyday discrimination of religious people. Later on, the authorities elaborated more refined techniques to conform religion to the system, such as via surveillance or, as probably the most well-known phenomenon, the enrolment of the so-called ‘peace priests’ (in order to divide clergy). As it was reported by the respondents of our interviews, the same (‘soft’) techniques have been used in Dunaújváros and Kazincbarcika as well. Nevertheless, these attempts also created ‘underground’ counter-reactions in a lot of people, gradually adopting religiosity as a form of anti-socialist attitude. Therefore, during the state socialist period, religiosity was not simply a connection between humans and the deity, between the mundane and the sacred, but for many people it also represented a sort of cultural opposition against socialist ideology (or, more simply, against authority).

- 20 After all these years, the offshoots of this rhizomatic formation could come out in various forms, both old and new, both as the revival of traditional denominations and as the discovery of previously unknown ones. Concerning the first, traditional churches witnessed a moderate reinvigoration (as seen on Figure 3): since being religious ceased to be an official stigma after the fall of state socialism, several new churches were built⁴, and the number of church-goers, baptisms and church weddings also apparently increased (even though this religious stir did not last for a very long time). In addition to that, as another result of the post-1990 pluralisation of religiosity, a multiplicity of new actors emerged beyond the ‘officially sacred’ as well: besides the come-back of the largest (historical) Christian denominations, several other smaller churches, religious movements and faith-based organisations (FBOs) appeared in both towns.
- 21 In Dunaújváros, the most significant and active is the so-called Faith Church (in Hungarian, Hit Gyülekezete): beyond religious practices, they pursue charitable activity as well. Besides them, Jehovah’s Witnesses, the Love of Christ Church, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (LDS), Seventh-day Adventist Church, and the Church of Scientology are also present in the town. According to our interviews, their familial atmosphere and novelty turned out to be attractive for many people, partly because traditional denominations are considered by many as too ‘archaic’ and less easily comprehensible. The expansion of these forms of religiosity and spirituality in Dunaújváros might be traced back to another specific reason as well: since the largest employers of the town are MNCs and TNCs characterised by shift-work schedules, for most workers it is not easy to attend conventional Sunday masses and church services (as they usually have only one Sunday off per month). In contrast to that, newer churches and movements offer more flexible forms of religious practices. In Kazincbarcika the Faith Church, Jehovah’s Witnesses, the Seventh-day Adventist Church and the Church of Scientology are also present, predominantly attracting younger people. As opposed to Dunaújváros, however, they are not so significant and active in this town (and also own fewer buildings). Here, on the other hand, traditional Christian denominations have more bottom-up local organisations, with a broad variety of activities including pastoral care, charity or youth programmes. They also play an important role in maintaining formerly state-funded institutions including a kindergarten, two primary schools and two secondary schools, along with two student

dormitories. Moreover, as a massive investment, Kazincbarcika's new sports centre was also built by the Salesians of Don Bosco, opened in 2016. Nonetheless, even in spite of these efforts, our interviewees reported an overall crisis of religiosity in Kazincbarcika.

Figure 4. The share of people not belonging to any religious communities, churches or denominations in Hungarian socialist new towns, including Dunaújváros and Kazincbarcika (%).



DATA SOURCE: HUNGARIAN CENTRAL STATISTICAL OFFICE (HCSO)

22 According to the data of the 2001 census, the share of people *not belonging* to any religious communities, churches or denominations was 14.5% in Hungary, increasing to 18.2% in the latest (2011) census. Compared to these, Figure 4 shows this rate in all socialist new towns. With the exceptions of Ajka and Paks, all other new towns' rate exceeded the national average – in Kazincbarcika, it was 1.5 times as high in 2011, whereas in Dunaújváros, almost 2 times as high. (Taking into account all new towns, the share on non-religious people was only higher in the economically extremely disadvantaged former mining town of Komló). Additionally, the above-discussed trends can also be linked to these numbers. In the case of Dunaújváros, although the role of traditional Christian denominations is clearly shrinking (see Figure 3), the rate of non-religious people even slightly decreased from 2001 to 2011. As demonstrated above, it might be the result of the expansion of their recent alternatives; smaller churches, religious movements and other FBOs. In contrast to that, in the case of Kazincbarcika, the rate of non-religious people significantly increased from 2001 to 2011. This is also the consequence of the declining role of traditional Christian denominations (despite their struggle to keep their believers) – as a notable difference, however, here this tendency was not accompanied by the rise of new kinds of religiosity and/or spirituality. Additionally, Kazincbarcika experienced an immense deindustrialisation and unemployment, and was severely hit by the 2007–2008 financial crunch as well, resulting in an overall value crisis of the local community. (In terms of economic restructuring, Dunaújváros might be considered as more fortunate – see Baranyai, 2016).

- 23 Finally, still concerning the share of non-religious people (derived from the latest census), spatially uneven patterns were revealed within the internal structure of our case study towns. In Dunaújváros, the highest proportion of non-believers live in the town's newly emerged elite villa quarter and its gated communities, as well as in the town's higher-status socialist housing estates. Regarding the latter, as it was widely covered in Hungarian media in 2007–2008, local residents (predominantly former and current steelworkers) prosecuted the Roman Catholic church because they were disturbed by the tolling of the bell of the new church built in the middle of the housing estate. In contrast to these areas, the lowest share of non-religious people live in the town's most impoverished neighbourhood and in the lower-status inner city areas. As opposed to this spatiality, in the case of Kazincbarcika the highest proportion of non-believers reside in the dilapidating lower-status socialist housing estates and in the lower-status (quasi-rural) fringe of the town. Here, the lowest share of non-religious people live in the former village centres of Sajókazinc and Barcika, besides which the new town was constructed from scratch – in these areas, long-suppressed religious traditions were seemingly reborn.

Conclusions and further research directions

- 24 Based on our analysis of parochial datasets, census data and the in-depth interviews, two main conclusions might be drawn. On the one hand, it was revealed that religiosity – although mostly 'under the surface', in a less explicit form – played an important role in the daily lives of the residents of both Dunaújváros and Kazincbarcika during the state socialist period. This finding is especially compelling, since these mono-functional industrial towns (should have) represented the quintessence of socialist urbanity, planned to be classless and inherently atheist. On the other hand, a remarkable religious revival might have been expected in the wake of the politico-economic transition, with the advent of the 'free world' (like elsewhere across the former Eastern Bloc). In contrast to this assumption, however, only a slightly increasing (and then, rather stagnating) religiosity was observed in both case study towns. It might be traced back to the overall value crisis of these communities after having lost their formerly privileged position. Therefore, our research results might help us to deconstruct the over-simplified common view and the dominant binary imaginations of 'atheism under socialism' vis-à-vis 'a religious revival in the post-socialist period'.
- 25 In order to expand the scope of these findings, several further possible research directions can be outlined. First, a comparative analysis of religiosity in socialist new towns and in historical Hungarian towns (for instance, traditional ecclesiastical centres) with similar population sizes and geographical locations might shed light on the overall impact of the socialist system on religious life in Hungary. Second, within the confines of an international comparison, Hungarian socialist new towns might be compared either with new towns selected from more secularised societies (such as Eastern Germany or the Czech parts of former Czechoslovakia), or with less secularised ones (such as Poland or the Croatian part of former Yugoslavia). Third, with an even broader international reach, former socialist new towns might also be compared with post-World War II 'Western' (for example, British or French) new towns. We argue that such further investigations into the topic may offer novel perspectives both for urban geographers and cultural geographers. Since the topic of religiosity is still almost

completely absent from the international academic discourses on socialist new towns, our paper might hopefully serve as an initial step towards filling this gap in the broader domain of urban cultural geography.

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NOTES

- Beyond this Anglo-American dominance, it has to be noted that significant contributions have been made to the discourse on religiosity by authors from other countries as well, although not always from an explicitly geographical perspective. Among others, reference has to be made to the religiosity-related publications of Hungarian–French political scientist François Fejtő, German theologian Thomas Bremer, Austrian theologian Paul Michael Zulehner, Austrian psychologist and psychotherapist Wilfried Daim, Belgian Roman Catholic dean Claude Castiau, Polish historian Jerzy Kłoczowski, Ukrainian–British–Canadian scholar Taras Kuzio, or Russian historian Leonid Luks. In addition, a number of other sources have to be mentioned as well, such as the volumes of the ‘Ost-West Informationsdienst des Katholischen Arbeitskreises für zeitgeschichtliche Fragen’, the journal ‘Transit – Europäische Revue’ (established in Vienna), the Belgian journal ‘Irenikon’, the French journals ‘Istina’ and ‘Cadmos’, or the French-language weekly entitled ‘Goliath’.
- Nonetheless, it has to be noted that this secularisation was a more general phenomenon in that time period, observed both in Western Europe and in Central and Eastern Europe, irrespective of the countries’ underlying socio-political systems.

3. There was a Roman Catholic and a Greek Catholic church in Dunaújváros, along with a Roman Catholic and two Calvinist churches in Kazincbarcika, all of these being located on the area of the new towns' 'ancestor' settlements, dating back to much earlier historical periods. The only notable exception is a Calvinist church in Dunaújváros that was built in the late-socialist period, during 1982 and 1985 – however, although it was eventually permitted by the authorities after a rather long struggle, it could only be built in an out-of-the-way location, and had to reflect the town's steel industry profile (its chandeliers, for instance, were manufactured in the Danube Steelworks). According to our interviews, when believers first saw the plans, they said they wanted a church but they were told that the building would either look like that, or there would be no church at all.

4. In Dunaújváros, the construction works of a Lutheran church started in 1992, and that of a Roman Catholic one in 1993 (even though the latter was only consecrated as late as in 2008), whereas in the case of Kazincbarcika, a Greek Catholic church was started to be built in 1992, along with a Roman Catholic one later, in 2003.

ABSTRACTS

Although an undoubtedly growing body of scholarly work deals with the economic, political and institutional transformation of post-socialist cities, the no less profound cultural changes former socialist cities have undergone since the beginning of the transition still remain relatively under-theorised. In order to contribute to a more nuanced understanding of these overwhelming cultural transformations, this paper scrutinises religiosity in two Hungarian socialist new towns, Dunaújváros and Kazincbarcika, during and after socialism. Our case studies are based on quantitative and qualitative research methods: in addition to the analysis of religiosity-related census data and long-term parochial datasets obtained from the local churches, in-depth interviews were also conducted with priests, pastors and representatives of the local municipalities.

Based on our analyses, two main research results might be outlined. On the one hand, it was revealed that religiosity – although mostly 'under the surface', in a less explicit form – played an important role in the daily lives of the residents of both new towns during the state socialist period. This finding is especially compelling, since these mono-functional industrial towns (should have) represented the quintessence of socialist urbanity, planned to be classless and inherently atheist. On the other hand, a remarkable religious revival might have been expected in the wake of the politico-economic transition, with the advent of the 'free world'. In contrast to this assumption, however, only a slightly increasing (and then, rather stagnating) religiosity was observed in both case study towns. It might be traced back to the overall value crisis of these communities after having lost their formerly privileged position. Therefore, our research results might help us to deconstruct the over-simplified common view of 'atheism under socialism' vis-à-vis 'a religious revival in the post-socialist period'.

En dépit du fait que des recherches de plus en plus nombreuses sont consacrées à la mutation économique, politique et institutionnelle des villes post-socialistes, les changements culturels majeurs auxquels ont été confrontées les anciennes villes socialistes depuis le début de la transition restent toujours relativement peu théorisés. Pour mieux comprendre ce phénomène, cet article se penche sur la question de la religiosité dans deux villes nouvelles socialistes de

Hongrie pendant et après le socialisme : Dunaújváros et Kazincbarcika. Notre étude de cas se base sur des méthodes quantitatives et qualitatives: outre l'analyse des données du recensement en relation avec la religiosité et les données paroissiales obtenues des églises locales, des entretiens approfondis ont été menés avec des prêtres, des pasteurs et des représentants des municipalités locales. Suite à notre analyse, deux résultats principaux peuvent être mis en évidence : d'un côté, la religiosité – bien que surtout de façon superficielle – a joué un rôle important dans la vie quotidienne des habitants des deux villes sous le socialisme. Une telle observation est particulièrement inattendue, vu que les villes industrielles monofonctionnelles représentaient (auraient dû représenter) la quintessence de l'urbanisme socialiste, planifié pour être une société sans classes et forcément athée. D'autre part, on aurait pu s'attendre à un renouveau religieux considérable avec l'avènement du « monde libre ». Cependant, nous ne pouvons constater qu'une augmentation minimale (ou plutôt stagnante) dans les deux cas étudiés. Cela pourrait s'expliquer par la crise de valeurs de ces communautés après la perte de leur position autrefois privilégiée. En conséquence, les résultats de notre recherche pourraient contribuer à déconstruire le point de vue simpliste de « l'athéisme sous le régime socialiste » vis-à-vis du « renouveau religieux dans la période post-socialiste ».

INDEX

Mots-clés: religiosité, paysage religieux, villes nouvelles, Hongrie, socialisme, post-socialisme

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