

Preface

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The missions of this book

The main mission of this book is to present the artificial towns, in other words the post-socialist new towns in the East-Central European context. The new town is not only a specific, but a unique city type in the framework of the “world city” map, because of the conditions of historical formation, and the features of contemporary transformations. Here we must immediately note that the book does not aim to completely describe the problem as that has been already done by several authors¹, including ourselves (*Haumont et al*, 1999; *Gaborit*, 2010; *Merlin*, 1972; 1991; *Merlin–Sudarkis*, 1991; *Provoost*, 2010; *Szirmai*, 1988; 1991; 1998; 2013). The mission of this book (“*Artificial Towns in the 21st Century: Social Polarisation in the New Town Regions of East-Central Europe*”) is to present polarisation mechanisms, contemporary social structural relationships and their economic, political and architectural determination in new towns and their regions in Hungary, Poland and Slovakia.

Targeted structural analysis of social conditions was less present in earlier works. Although addressing social spatial inequalities and shaping local community life through providing favourable physical conditions including architecture and infrastructure were key planning goals in both Western and East-Central European

The study has been realised within the confines of the research entitled “Social Polarisation in the Hungarian and Eastern-Central European ‘New Town’ Regions: Impacts of Transition and Globalisation” (K 106169), funded by the National Research, Development and Innovation Office.

¹ See them in the extra summaries, for example in the Preface introducing Gaborit’s book. (*Gaborit*, 2010)

new urban developments. This is why the special mission of this book as well as of the research project underpinning it² (titled “*Social Polarisation in the Hungarian and Eastern-Central European ‘New Town’ Regions. Impacts of Transition and Globalisation.*”) is to explore and analyse the mechanisms of social polarisation in East-Central Europe. We were convinced that this research may provide new insights compared to previous works as it has been built on previous research results and goes even further.

This project was preceded by a comprehensive research project³ titled “*Emergence of a New Urban Development Model? Transition and Globalisation in the Hungarian Regions and Their New Towns*”. The results were published in Hungarian (Szirmai, 2013).

Under the research project we compared the social and economic conditions of Dunaújváros and Kazincbarcika, two Hungarian new towns, and of Baja and Gyöngyös, two traditional Hungarian towns and their regions. (We compared the Dunaújváros region in Central Hungary with the geographically close Baja region and the Kazincbarcika region in Northern Hungary with the nearby Gyöngyös region.)

During the course of the project embedded in European context we widened and partly changed research sites. As a result of this decision we examined the Tatabánya and Dunaújváros regions located in Central Transdanubia, the Komló region in Southern Hungary and Kazincbarcika and its region in North-Eastern Hungary. Another important difference is that we applied new research methods as well. Although the previous study was built mainly on social statistical analyses and in-depth interviews, the second project also featured a representative sociological sampling for the 11 Hungarian new towns and their regions. The

² The project realised between 2013 and 2016, was co-funded by the Hungarian Scientific Research Fund. The institutional framework for the research was provided by the Institute for Sociology Centre for Social Sciences Hungarian Academy of Sciences. The research was led by Viktória Szirmai. Project Reference Number: K 106 169

³ The project realised between 2010 and 2012, was also co-funded by the Hungarian Scientific Research Fund. The institutional framework for the research was provided by the Institute for Sociology Centre for Social Sciences Hungarian Academy of Sciences. The research was led by Viktória Szirmai. Project Reference Number: K 81547

empirical sampling significantly improves the analyses by describing the main conditions of Hungarian new town societies by representative instruments. It also provides general knowledge, as this has been the first time that a comprehensive sociological survey has been made of all the new towns and their regions in Hungary.

To explore polarisation conditions in new towns as accurately as possible, we also made comparative analyses, made possible by representative sociological data sampling in two Hungarian large urban regions. The first one was carried out in 2005 with a sample size of 5000 in 9 Hungarian large urban regions with a population of more than 100 000 each⁴, while the second one was carried out in 2014, also with a sample size of 5000 and also in 9 Hungarian large urban regions with populations exceeding 100 000 people⁵. We compared these results with the social polarisation characteristics revealed in the 11 Hungarian new town regions. This has an outstanding importance as we had the opportunity to identify the differences and similarities between the social circumstances of new towns and large cities based on fresh data, and on the basis of these data we could also define the spatial characteristics of new towns and large urban regions and by proceeding from these regional (i.e. new towns or large urban regions) circumstances we could map the differentiated impact of social structural determinants as well.

We considered it essential to analyse the differences and similarities of Hungarian new towns compared to their old (traditionally developed) counterparts of similar size and geographical position, as well as to make a comparative analysis between Hungarian new towns and all other Hungarian cities. Another new element of our research agenda was to present the architectural characteristics and urban structural endowments of new towns.

⁴ The research conducted in 2005 was implemented under the project “Urban Areas, Spatial Social Inequalities and Conflicts – The Spatial Social Factors of European Competitiveness” with the co-funding of National Research and Development Programmes (Project Reference Number: 5/083/2004). The research was led by Viktória Szirmai.

⁵ The 2014 research, “Social Conflicts – Social Well-being and Security – Competitiveness and Social Development” was implemented under the project with reference number: TÁMOP 4.2.2. A-11/1 / CONV-2012-0069 ID. The research was led by Viktória Szirmai.

Compared to the previous project, this book features studies on East-Central European level as a completely new factor, although our financial resources did not make it possible for us to conduct a full empirical survey on the polarisation conditions of East-Central European new towns. Therefore the study focused on the analysis of Polish⁶ and Slovak new towns (based on in-depth interviews summarised in case studies) and on the historic analysis of spatial processes in Poland and Slovakia. Due to financial constraints, a comparison of the conditions of new towns in the three countries was not a priority, nevertheless, we attempted to perform this task based on social statistical data and on the major trends that emerged in the analytical studies.

The structure of this book

In the first major part after the preface (Part 1) we clarify some theoretical issues. As an introduction we present European new towns in the 21st century. Here the main issues will be revealed and a basic question here is whether the new towns' development model is still timely today and what relevance new town theories and development models have today (*by Szirmai*). The second chapter summarises the urbanist doctrines and theories that underlie "socialist" new town developments and describes dominant social and ideological mechanisms. The third part of the theoretical background summarises the historical changes of the social spatial structure and the impacts of transition and globalisation on the social polarisation mechanisms of Hungary, Poland and Slovakia. (*by Szirmai, Węclawowicz, and Gajdoš*)

Part 2 contains the case studies made in the three countries and gives a description of social spatial polarisation processes. We mainly present Hungarian case studies: the results of in-depth interviews and social statistics in the Tatabánya region (*by Schuchmann*), the Dunaújváros region (*by Baranyai*), the Komló

⁶ The selection of the Polish research site was motivated by the existing results of previous researches: as a part of an international comparative research led by Nicole Haumont I myself took part in the research of Polish new cities, including the examination of Nowe Tychy (*Haumont et al, 1999*).

region (by Halász) and finally the Kazincbarcika region (by Berki). This is followed by the case of Tychy in Poland (by Węclawowicz, Hajda) and a Slovakian case study about the Nová Dubnica region (by Gajdoš, Moravanská).

In Part 3 this will be followed by comparative analyses of new towns and other types of towns based on various criteria: Hungarian new towns compared to large urban regions (by Csizmady, Ferencz), new towns compared to all Hungarian cities (by Rechnitzer, Berkes, Páthy), new towns compared to old towns (by Csizmady) and finally we present the similarities and differences between the architectural characteristics of Hungarian, Polish and Slovak new towns (by Kissfázekas).

In the final Part 4 we summarise our conclusions. Here we attempt to answer the original question of what new town societies mean today, and finally, we evaluate whether we can regard this unique city type as the possibility of a new urban development model or as an unfulfilled promise.

Acknowledgements

I kindly recommend this book to the inhabitants of new and old towns, to the planners of new and old towns and their regions, to local authorities, to the professionals, intellectuals, entrepreneurs, NGO representatives in the surveyed settlements, to university students interested in regional processes and to my students as well. But most of all I would like to recommend it to the inhabitants of the Hungarian, Polish and Slovakian new town regions as well. Without them this work would never have been born. Therefore, the first thanks are for them actually. I would like to thank them for being at our disposal for telling us their opinions that helped broaden us in our research.

The support of the National Scientific Research Fund was crucial for the current exploration of the problems of new towns and for an objective and independent from any organisational interests analysis of facts. I highly appreciate it on behalf of all my colleagues as well.

I also thank the authors, including my close colleagues and my team (among them, especially Márton Berki and Levente Halász) for their dedicated work. But I am especially grateful to the

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Head of research project and the editor of book