

DEVELOPMENT AND TRANSFORMATION OF THE RELIGIOUS LANDSCAPE IN PRAGUE AFTER THE FALL OF COMMUNISM

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Abstract: The main aim of this paper is the analysis of trends and processes in the religious landscape of the Czech capital of Prague in the period of political transformation after 1989. Czech society has been secularised to an extent unprecedented in the rest of Europe. The paper uses also the term religious landscape in a broader sense mostly as both territory and society of a selected larger territorial unit. The general trend of secularisation of modern Czech (Prague) society is accompanied by diversification (almost atomisation) of religious communities. The paper attempts to describe the main reasons for the transformation in religiosity in Prague after the fall of communism between 1991 and 2011 as well as outlines the fundamental consequences of these changes. The city of Prague has also experienced regional differentiation of religious development, evidenced by the quantitatively dwindling Roman Catholic Church on the one hand, and the growth of the Brethren Evangelical Free Church on the other. The rising importance of alternative religiosity is probably associated with the trend of secularisation of society and thus the transformation of the original Christian society into a society with prevailing occult or esoteric knowledge.

Keywords: geography of religion, Prague, Czechia, religious landscape, transformation

Introduction

During the last twenty years, research on the interactions between religion and geographic space has significantly changed, and therefore we can speak about a so-called new geography of religion (e.g. Kong 1990; Pacione 1999; Kong 2001; Henkel 2004; Proctor 2006; Havlíček, Hupková 2008).

The world as a whole and Europe specifically are now more interconnected “where what happens here and now is profoundly affected by what happens at other times and other places” (Jackson 2008, 299). Perhaps important is the emergence of more diverse and complex religious landscapes in many countries as a result of migration (Kong 2010). In this case, Peach believes (2006, 353) that religion may now be “a more important variable for socio-geographic investigation than race and ethnicity.” The newest research rather points out the uniqueness of the decline of traditional church religiosity in connection with the ideology of modernisation in Western Europe, while this same process is generating a strong counter reaction. The pluralisation of recent modern religious space is a much more important change.

Large cities are a good example of dramatic changes in religious spaces. This paper discusses the last transformation of the religious landscape (places and people) using the example of the Czech capital of Prague (Praha).

The term religious landscape (e.g. Zelinsky 2001; Knippenberg 2005) is perceived at first in a broader sense mostly as both territory and society of a selected larger territorial unit (e.g. Poland), which is influenced by general religious impacts and, in the strict sense of the term, as specific sacred sites completing or even forming or defining the character of the landscape of a given region (e.g. sacred structures as dominants in rural landscape). At first, religious landscape will be analysed on the basis of regional differentiation of religiosity in the society of Prague (Czechia) during the region’s post-1989 political and economic transformation (Havlíček 2006b; Siwek 2005; Havlíček, Hupková 2008), which is perceived also as a contribution to the mosaic of research on the organisation of society during the transformation process (Hampl 2001). The second main research theme is a reflection on the development of the religious landscape in selected parts of the city of Prague on the basis of statements of key actors and the transformation of sacred sites.

The research presented here lies at the intersection of traditional (i.e. Berkeley School) and new cultural geography (e.g. Peach 1999; Paasi 2003). Old cultural geography is based on the traditional concept of “Landschaft” (landscape), which includes both the natural as well as the cultural landscape, particularly from a historical-anthropological standpoint. Primary emphasis is focused on questions of where, when, and what. The paper draws on traditional cultural geography mainly due to a lack of relevant statistical research on sacred structures in Prague. The database for the presented research has been used and shall certainly continue to be used for additional analyses. Main ideas from the new cultural geography, including the construction of reality through the formation of representation and identity, were taken into account to evaluate the role of alternative religiosity in the process of the construction of the “new” religious landscapes of Prague (Kong 2004; Havlíček, Hupková 2008).

In this context, we presume that after the fall of the communist dictatorship in 1989, religious freedom was established and the religious landscape of Prague became

much more diversified and atomised. Based on general development trends of the post-socialist city (Matlovič 2000, 2004, Ouředníček, Posová 2006), there was also a growth in regional differentiation of religious development in the Prague area.

We surmise that despite the dramatically deepening secularisation of Czech society, a partial development of the country's religious landscape has occurred thanks to quantitative and qualitative change in religious monuments (Havlíček, Hupková 2013).

In field research of alternative religiosity in Prague as a model territory (districts of Praha 1, Praha 6, Nebušice and Přední Kopanina), we shall also attempt to confirm the assumption that the highest concentration of sacred sites related to alternative religions will be found in the central part of the city (Praha 1) and that their number and density will dwindle as we move towards the suburbs.

Historical background of Prague's religious landscape

Prague dominates Czechia, ranks highest among all Czech cities, and is the logical cultural, political, and economic centre of Czechia. This also means a high concentration of religious sites (Havlíček 2006a; Klubal 2010), particularly in the historical core of the city (the districts of Praha 1 and Praha 2), which is listed as a World Heritage Site by UNESCO. The current shape of the capital is the result of how the region's settled area has developed for more than one thousand years. In that period, Prague evolved from a Medieval walled city into a modern metropolis. As late as the close of the 19th century, the city only consisted of the Old Town, New Town, Lesser Town and Hradčany, that is, primarily of the current districts Praha 1 and Praha 2. Not until the 1920s had the surrounding towns been annexed by what became "Greater Prague." Another wave of expansion ensued in the 1960s and 1970s as part of the socialist modernisation movement (Ledvinka, Pešek 2000). Currently, Prague takes up 495 km² and is divided into 57 districts (Fig. 1).

At least a brief outline of the historical backdrop is essential for a better understanding of various trends. In the 10th and 11th centuries, a castle system was built on both banks of the Vltava River, fulfilling religious as well as secular functions. The Prague Bishopric was established as early as 973 A.D. A convent was founded in 970 A.D. and a Benedictine monastery followed suit in 993 A.D. (Havlíček 2006a).

This is one of the peculiarities of Prague, or of the Czech kings, who established a sort of "Landeskirchentum", i.e. a state ecclesiastical system: rulers felt obliged to sponsor the construction of churches, monasteries and chapels not only to be remembered by posterity, but also to consolidate their power with the support of the clergy. It has been documented that more than 40 churches existed at both castles in Prague and its surroundings in the year 1200 (Lichtenberger 1993). This high

density of religious buildings and activities also promoted further sacralisation of Prague's (religious) landscape.

In the Christian world, towns were greatly influenced by religious structures, and sacred buildings helped shape urban characteristics (Rinschede 1999). This process can be observed in Prague as well. Religious and Christian buildings as symbols still represent a crucial determining component of the city's historical core (districts of Prague 1 and Prague 2). In addition to prominent large churches and cathedrals, the city also boasts a number of medium-sized and small religious sites such as chapels, crosses, and cemeteries (Klupal 2010). Some of these are important Catholic pilgrimage sites; for example, the Church of the Virgin Mary with the statue of the Infant Jesus, and the statue of Saint Joseph on Republic Square.

As the city developed, many religious sites sprung up away from the historical centre (Praha 1 and Praha 2), too, but their number and religious importance lag behind the historical part (Havlíček 2006a). This development was later crowned by the baroque sacralisation of the landscape (Havlíček, Hupková 2013).

Just like other European towns in the last millennium, Prague was marked by a conflict between the Church and secular power, which was naturally reflected in changes affecting particularly the most prominent church buildings, e.g. the Prague Castle. Formerly purely religious buildings had partially lost their religious attributes, and Christian and Jewish sites were being used for secular purposes (Havlíček, Hupková 2013).

With progressing industrialisation in the 19th century and with the yearning of the Czech people for more independence from the Austrian-Hungarian Empire, two key processes became active: nationalism and secularism.

Nationalism and the national revival of the Czech people from the second half of the 19th century until the emergence of the independent Czechoslovak state in 1918 found expression in a search for relevant symbols, both in terms of sites and monuments of national significance (e.g. National Theatre, National Museum) and in historical figures (e.g. St. Wenceslas). Nationalism solidified further in 1919 when the Czechoslovak Hussite Church was founded, modelled on the Anglican Church (Havlíček 2005). In 1991, it boasted more than 33,000 followers in Prague itself, but during the post-1989 transformation period their numbers plummeted to only 6,000 by 2011 (Table 1). Prague Castle and St. Vitus Cathedral as well as the statue of St. Wenceslas placed in the square of the same name contributed to the strengthening of the national consciousness after the fall of communism in 1989.

Secularisation was another process that greatly influenced the religious landscape in and around Prague. Although this process began with industrialisation, the biggest boom in secularisation did not occur until the communist era after World War II, and this development persisted after the demise of the country's communist dictatorship in 1989 (Havlíček 2005). Secularisation was so strong that over the last 60 years, the

Table 1. Number of residents with a religious affiliation with key denominations in Prague (1991, 2001 and 2011)

Denominations in Prague	Year		
	1991	2001	2011
Prague population (total)	1,214,174	1,169,106	1,268,796
Roman Catholic Church	338,107	206,039	80,158
Evangelic Church of Czech Brethren	27,014	16227	7,175
Czechoslovak Hussite Church	33,855	17624	6,314
Jehovah's Witnesses	2,294	3027	1,764
Orthodox Church	2,501	5565	6,770
Russian Orthodox Church	-	-	2,614
Evangelic Silesian Church	147	79	90
Evangelic Church of Augsburg Conference	705	917	804
Brethren Evangelical Free Church	419	1,591	1,832
Adventism	620	806	747
Greek Catholic Church	1,047	1,332	2,513
Evangelical Free Church	614	1,088	317
Apostolic Church	134	232	402
Baptist Church	316	404	400
Methodist Church	410	506	300
Unity of Brethren (Moravian Church)	231	300	142
Old Catholic Church	281	327	332
Judaism	576	754	567
New Apostolic Church	30	63	11
Unitarian	190	144	73
Mormons	63	164	166
Islam	207	1,526	1,201
Buddhism	-	1,636	1,464
Hinduism	-	225	171
Movement Hare Krishna	-	72	108
Višva Nirmala Dharma	-	-	180
Islam (in general)	-	-	683
Buddhism (in general)	-	-	666
Hinduism (in general)	-	-	86
Judaism (in general)	-	-	133
Christianity (in general)	-	-	1,449

Denominations in Prague	Year		
	1991	2001	2011
Catholicism (in general)	–	–	7,719
Protestantism (in general)	–	–	761
Christian Church Community	–	1,036	1,224
Christian Community in the Czech Republic	–	–	290
Church of New Hope	–	–	58
Church of the Living God	–	–	31
Church of the Word of Life	–	–	78
Unification Church (Moonie)	–	18	28
Scientology	–	43	97
Church of England	–	128	60
Jedi (Star Wars)	–	–	4,396
Paganism	–	–	168
Atheism	–	–	226
Believers (religion specified)	409,761	261,873	134,768
Believers (in general)	–	–	96,936
Others	2,554	24,694	5,858
Believers (total)	412,315	286,567	239,624
Non-denominationalists	600,810	787,024	469,723
Not identified	201,049	95,515	559,409

Source: *Czech Statistical Office*, 2013.

Prague that was Christian around 1950 (approximately 80% Christian) has become a largely secular city with 80% of residents professing no religious affiliation (Fig. 1).

Communism was intent on removing religious concepts and acts from public life. The isolation, the dogmatic communist propaganda and the prohibition of unregistered, mostly Evangelical denominations brought about this extreme increase in secularisation in Czech society. This development also influenced the landscape of sacred sites during the period of communism (1948 to 1989) when no new Catholic churches were built in Prague (Klupal 2010).

Methodology

This paper is based on population data, as recorded in censuses from the Czech Statistical Office for 1991, 2001 and 2011, which constitute the only appropriate

source of comprehensive information for spatial analyses on religious denominations. A frequently referenced disadvantage of these data, which disclose information on the portion of adherents to various religious organisations in a given territorial unit, is that they are only capable of describing the membership of a given religious organisation. The analysis, however, only concerns the fraction of believers who have declared their membership in a certain religious organisation and not believers in total, which should also include believers who do not feel that they belong to any specific church or religious organisation.

When analysing the results of the census run by the Czech Statistical Office in 2011, it was difficult to estimate the number of people with no religious affiliation because roughly 45% of the people living in Prague did not answer the respective question at all. This means that, unlike the previous censuses (1991 and 2001), the data show a significant drop in people with no religious affiliation (Table 1). This result from 2011 does not correspond to reality and even greatly distorts it. Accordingly, I have decided, despite methodological ambiguity, to merge the categories “no religious affiliation” and “no answer” into a single category called “no religious affiliation” (Fig. 1). I assume that people who wanted to declare their religious affiliation at the census did so and that the remainder (around 82% in Prague) can be added to the “no religious affiliation” category, of which 45% are people who declared no religious affiliation and 55% are people who did not answer (Table 1).

In order to illustrate changes in Prague’s religious landscape for the year 2010, sacred sites related to alternative religions were mapped during field research conducted in the model territory of 4 Prague districts (Praha 1, Praha 6, Nebušice and Přední Kopanina). This study area encompasses the city’s historical core and is characterised by a high population density and historical buildings (Prague 1), but also the large, mostly residential area of Prague 6 (Fig. 1) built primarily during the industrialisation stage of the city. In addition, it includes the suburban municipalities of Praha-Nebušice and Praha-Přední Kopanina, in which I presume a suburban character of settlement (Ouředníček, Posová 2006) due to the dynamically growing number of inhabitants, and therefore probably also a different kind of sacred sites related to alternative religions. The model territory (study area) is thus conceived as a cross-section of morphological structures of the city from the city centre to its suburban areas. Research on sacred sites related to alternative religions was relatively difficult, as such places are often not evident at first sight. Lužný, Nešpor et al. (2008) argue that due to the advanced privatisation of alternative religiosity, it is not possible to identify some of these places with simple field research in the absence of a deeper understanding of the spiritual scene. That is why the method was flexibly complemented with a further search for these types of places, which relied on information from interviews, e-mail correspondence with some actors on the alternative religious scene, and also from websites and adverts in local newspa-

pers. As the relevant area is extensive, under no circumstances can we say that all such places were mapped.

Religious processes in Czech (Prague) society during the transformation period

In the transformation period after 1989, religious heterogeneity increased in Czechia, especially in Prague, both within society (Havlíček, Hupková, Smržová 2009) as well as in terms of religious sites (Havlíček, Hupková 2008).

Unlike during the Baroque sacralisation or sacralisation ensuing from later cultural trends and aesthetic views (for example: classicism, romanticism and functionalism), which was characterised by the construction of many religious buildings, particularly in villages, but also in cities until the establishment of an independent Czechoslovakia, today new religious buildings are rarely built in Czechia, or in Prague. Instead, existing buildings are restored. Scholars often point out the conflict between the growing secularisation of society after 1989 and a new sacralisation of the cultural landscape, which is characterised by a restoration of Christian symbols (usually buildings) that were neglected and often deliberately destroyed during the period of communism (Havlíček 2004). This restoration effort, however, largely lacks religious motivation, which was typical Baroque sacralisation, but relies on historical, social and cultural reasons – government subsidies for the restoration of historical landmarks. Sacralisation is also reflected in the construction of new religious buildings or the conversion of secular buildings into religious ones. Such examples can be found among new or growing religious communities (for example, Church of Brethren). It can be assumed that this development will also foster the diversity of religious buildings (Wunder 2005).

It is obvious that religious processes must be understood in the general context of the development of Czech society (Hampl 2001). An important trend in Czech society in the period of post-1989 transformation has been a significant decrease in the number of persons declaring their support for churches and religious communities. Much more than in the rest of Europe, there exists in Czechia a high degree of secularisation of society (Lužný, Navrátilová 2001). Religious institutions and religious consciousness and behaviour lose their social significance. There exists a shift from religious control to non-religious control. People devote increasingly less time and means to supernatural things. Lužný (1999) affirms in this context that the basic condition is thus the dualism of secular and ecclesiastical power and the separation of sciences defining their branch of study without the use of theology and the interpretation of myths. The process of secularisation is still accelerated and backed by authoritative regimes (in Czechia it was the case of the communist dictatorship)

which see religious communities as opponents. Park (1994) understands secularisation in terms of three pillars: a) exclusion of religious belief (increasing separation of Church and State), b) lack of importance, rejection of religious ideas (decreased interest in religious tradition, less awareness and respect of Church representatives), and c) secularisation of thinking and behaviour, no interest at all in religious ideas. Secularisation is thus one of the most visible processes in the religious landscape not only in Czechia (Prague) but also in contemporary Europe.

In the years 1991–2011 some religious communities manifested a different development than in the period of the communist regime. A census of the population was done in Czechia in the years 1991 and 2001. During the census the religiosity of the population was also ascertained, and that according to data of subjective character when individual respondents classified themselves as members of a certain religious group.

The decline of the dominant Roman Catholic Church continued – from 39% (1991) to about 10% (2011). Larger Protestant churches lost more than one third of their members. In the Czechoslovak Hussite Church, the figure decreased from 1.7% (1991) of the inhabitants to 0.4% (2011). On the contrary, smaller Christian communities such as Brethren Evangelical Free Church, Baptists, Apostolic Church, etc., recorded significant growth. Although the absolute numbers of worshippers of these Churches reach thousands to tens of thousands of members, it is evident that the Czech population does not gravitate towards a fully secular society, but that the interest in God has been growing in smaller communities. Only during the last monitored period, the number of members of these Churches has grown more than seven times. The Orthodox Church manifests also an increase, mainly due to high immigration from Ukraine and Russia – mostly to Prague itself. Also due to immigration, the number of Jews in Czech society has slightly increased. How was, at the turn of the millennium, the trend towards more secularisation of society? According to census results, there is a clearly increasing trend towards a secular culture and society. During this period, the percentage of the non-denominational population grew from 39.9% (1991) to about 80% (2011). We can only add that a lower percentage in this category in 1991 was due above all to a fleetingly higher receptivity of society to transcendent phenomena after the fall of the communist regime. It can be said in general that the Czech religious scene is getting more and more diverse. Large Churches lose worshippers and, on the contrary, smaller Christian communities have more members. In addition, religious communities in Czechia are becoming increasingly fragmented.

An in-depth analysis of religious affiliation of people living in Prague, as shown in the censuses of 1991, 2001 and 2011, is shown in Table 1. It is clear that changes in Prague's religious landscape in the past 20 years have been enormous and often occurred very quickly (Table 1). Besides the already mentioned secularisation of

society, the most significant change is the growing number of new religious communities in the Christian and Far Eastern traditions (Hinduism and Buddhism). This religious pluralism is far from powerful enough to stop entrenched secularisation, though. Many inhabitants of Prague are ever more reluctant to identify with a specific church or religious community, but they still admit a belief in the supernatural or a religious tradition (e.g. a great number of people in the category of believers in general). This process of de-institutionalising religion (Nešpor 2004) can be demonstrated by a sharp drop (every 10 years approximately by one half) in the number of believers in the three largest churches (Roman Catholic Church, Evangelical Church of Czech Brethren and Czechoslovak Hussite Church) and by a large number of people (around 96,000) declaring to be believers. This number is approximately equal to the number of members of the three largest denominations in Prague (Table 1). Thanks to Russian and Ukrainian immigration, the Orthodox Church and Greek Catholic Church are on the rise. Young people are, in turn, most open to Evangelical churches (e.g. Brethren Evangelical Free Church, Apostolic Church), which also see a growth in the number of adherents.

Regional differentiation of the religious landscape in Prague

Secularisation has continued in Prague and throughout Czechia in the 1st decade of the 21st century (Havlíček, Hupková 2008), leading to an average of 82% of people declaring no affiliation with a church or religious community in 2011 (Fig. 1). In 2001 this number was roughly 65% (Table 1). By surveying spatial differentiation among people with no religious affiliation in Prague, we can note the following three spatial categories (Fig. 1):

The central part of Prague with its historical core (for example, Praha 2) and with the inner city (for example, Praha 10 and Praha 4) built at the turn of the 20th century has the lowest numbers (less than 80%) of people with no religious affiliation. This high share of believers is caused by a strong religious tradition in the city centre and by a high concentration of sacred sites (Klupal 2010).

The second part with above-average secularisation, i.e. people with no religious affiliation (more than 82%), corresponds to districts with a high percentage of individuals living in “socialist towns” (for example, Praha 11, Praha 12, and Praha 13), i.e. vast residential neighbourhoods erected in the communist years between 1948 and 1989.

The third part with significant above-average percentages of people with no religious affiliation (more than 86%) mainly includes districts with a high share of recently built houses (after 1995) in residential neighbourhoods (e.g., Lipence, Křeslice, Nedvězí). Local inhabitants have moved to these areas in relatively recent times and have not yet identified with local religious structures.

Just like the majority of European regions at the turn of the 21st century, a drop in the number of Roman Catholics, which still represent the largest religious organisation in Prague, can also be observed in the city (Table 1). The decrease in the number of believers of this denomination has been relatively steep since the fall of communism. In 1991 more than 330,000 people living in Prague declared to be Roman Catholics, but by the year 2011 this number dropped to 80,000, which represents one fourth of the initial number (Table 1). In spatial terms, this drop is more differentiated in Prague, and from a territorial point of view, it can be classified into three categories (Fig. 2):

The central areas and particularly the historical core of the city (Praha 1 and Praha 2) show high below-average indices of change (decrease) in the number of believers (less than -80), whereas the average index of change in Prague oscillates around 60 (Fig. 2). Although the city centre does not display the same rate of secularisation as the remaining districts, the Catholic Church is losing adherents to other religious denominations, particularly to the Orthodox Church thanks to Russians and Ukrainians immigrating to Prague.

The second relatively homogeneous region with below-average values of the index of change among Catholics (less than -70) is represented by districts with high percentages of vast prefabricated apartment blocks from the communist era (e.g., Praha 11, Praha 4, Praha 8).

The last category is the relatively heterogeneous aggregate of different districts with relatively low (below average) indices of change in the number of Catholics from 1991 to 2011 (more than -60). These include regions with socialist residential neighbourhoods (for example, Praha 13) and suburban districts (Vinoř and Kolovraty) with indices of change between -50 and -5 (Fig. 2). Prague has, on the other hand, three districts that have recorded growth in the number of Catholics in this period (Praha 14, Praha 17 and Újezd). This small drop or even growth can be explained by the character of individual parishes, where the personality of the priest and the facilities of the parish may have a significant influence on the development of Catholicism in Prague.

However, not all churches in Prague have witnessed a decrease in the number of adherents. One of the churches reporting a major influx of believers in Prague is the Brethren Evangelical Free Church. In 1991 its believers totalled 400 only, but by 2011 that number had already reached nearly 2,000 (Table 1). It is clear that change indices are relatively high due to low absolute numbers. This church has witnessed variable regional development (Fig. 3). With two exceptions (Ďáblice and Přední Kopanina), all districts have recorded an increase:

The lowest values of the increase index (up to 250) were observed in the central part (e.g., Prague 1, Prague 2 and Prague 3), also due to high costs of housing in the city centre, which is often unaffordable for young families with children that

constitute a significant fraction of the believers of this Evangelical church. In search of cheaper housing, these families often move to the suburbs.

High values (over 1,000) of the change index (increase) are reported in districts that have their own churches (e.g. Prague 13 or Šeberov). Whether they are socialist prefabricated apartment blocks (Prague 13) or suburbs with single-family houses (Šeberov) is irrelevant.

More than one half (33) of Prague's districts did not have any adherents of the Brethren Evangelical Free Church before 1991. That had changed by 2011, so that these areas were included in the "new church" category (Fig. 3). All of these districts are located on the outskirts of Prague, almost along the entire boundary of the city. It is a fairly young Evangelical church that has experienced dynamic development in Prague over the last 20 years.

Alternative religiosity in Prague

The model territory in Prague and in particular its historical core are characterized by a unique richness of the religious landscape, which consists of an unusual concentration of sacred sites of all sizes, forms and religions. This is due to the long-term position of Prague as a logical political, economic and cultural centre of the country, and the seat of secular and religious power. Many a religious building has been established in the city to flaunt the devoutness, but also the wealth and status of its owner.

In this case, alternative religiosity is based on the categorisation of religiosity, which primarily includes occult, esoteric practices of spiritual experience as well as practices borrowing from shamanism, paganism, and Far Eastern traditions. Field research in Prague, along with other information sources, revealed a relatively rich scene of alternative religions. A total of 49 sites were identified that can be classified as pertaining to alternative religions because of the "religious practices" taking place there (Klupal 2010). Here we encounter the problem of accurately determining the boundaries between what can be considered a religious or spiritual practice rather than a non-spiritual or material practice. In other words, the question is whether the practice relies on transcendence or is based exclusively on natural, secular principles. Obviously, the two dimensions are interlinked and one transitions into the other smoothly. In this research, the boundary was defined more or less subjectively based on the author's knowledge of the issues in question. For example, Thai massage was not considered religious although it surely has a certain spiritual dimension, while tai-chi has a more pronounced spiritual basis, and as such it was included in alternative religiosity. Yoga is primarily perceived as a spiritual practice in this study, which also manifested itself during field research. Although the Czech

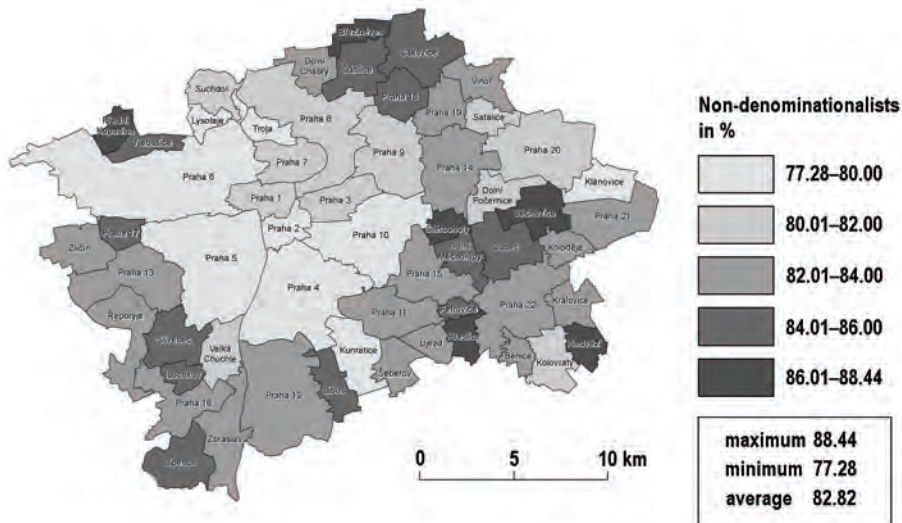


Fig. 1. Share of non-denominationalists in the districts of Prague (2011)
Source: Author's own work; Data: Czech Statistical Office 2013.

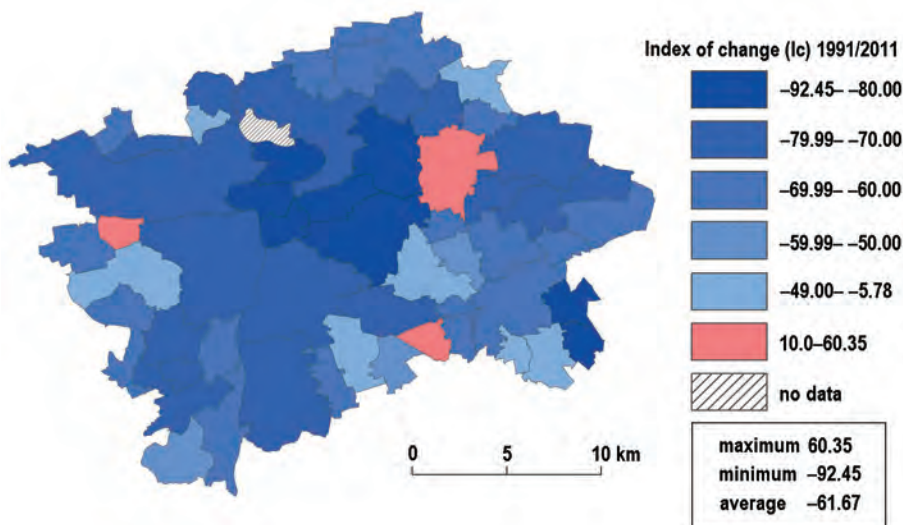


Fig. 2. Index of change for the Roman Catholic Church between 1991 and 2011 in Prague

Explanations: Index of change (Ic) = $100 \cdot (a_{11} - a_{91}) / a_{91}$; a_{91} – fraction of people with religious affiliation with the Roman Catholic Church in 1991; a_{11} – fraction of people with religious affiliation with the Roman Catholic Church in 2011.

Source: Author's own work; Data: Czech Statistical Office 2013.

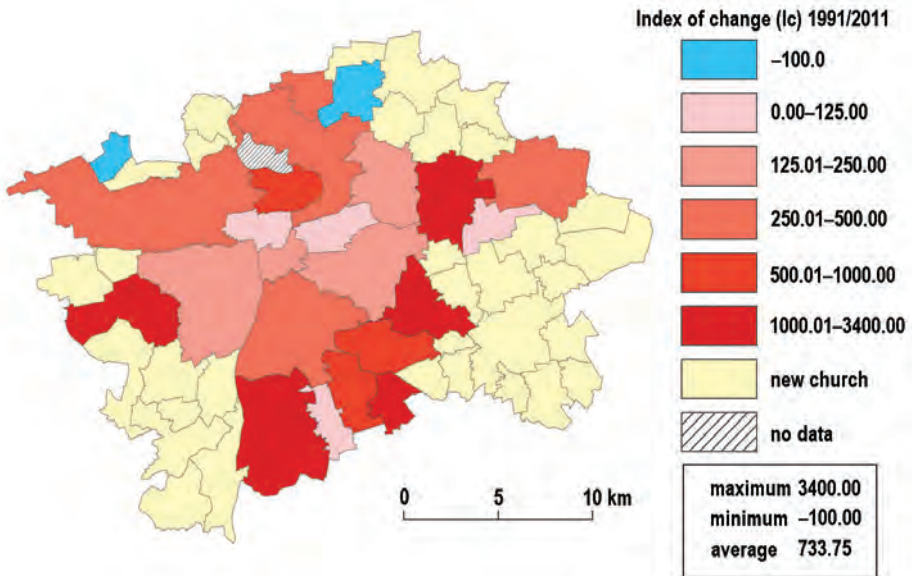


Fig. 3. Index of change for the Brethren Evangelical Free Church between 1991 and 2011 in Prague

Explanations: Index of change (I_c) = $100 \cdot (a_{11} - a_{91}) / a_{91}$; a_{91} – fraction of people with religious affiliation with the Brethren Evangelical Free Church in 1991; a_{11} – fraction of people with religious affiliation with the Brethren Evangelical Free Church in 2011; “new church” – districts with religious affiliation with the Brethren Evangelical Free Church only in 2011.

Source: Author’s own work; Data: *Czech Statistical Office* 2013.

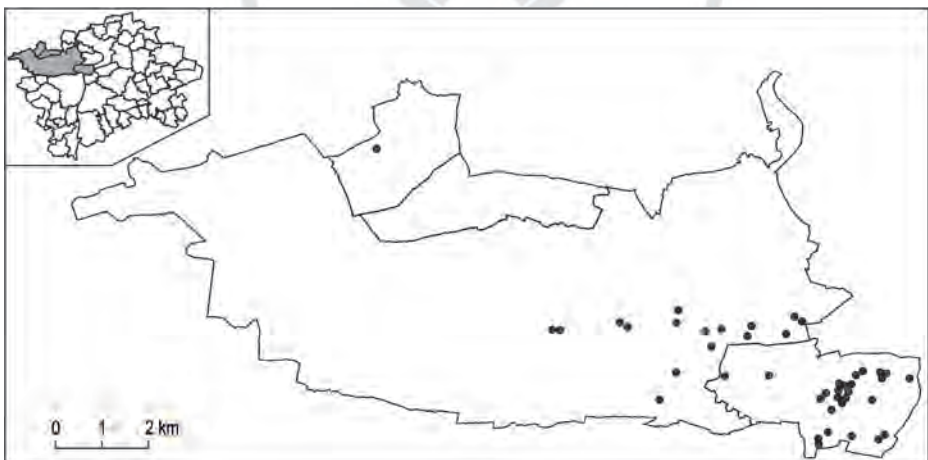


Fig. 4. Alternative religion sites in the NW part of Prague

Explanations: Model area of 4 districts in the NW part of Prague (Praha 1, Praha 6, Nebužice, Přední Kopanina). Location of the model area – compare with Fig. 1).

Source: Klubal 2010.

version of yoga (mostly hatha-yoga where various phases of original Indian yoga are exercised separately without maintaining a spiritual connection) may be considered purely physical exercise, a strong spiritual dimension persists. The key element for determining the character of yoga is the personality of the yogi.

Unsurprisingly, the explored spiritual scene was found to be very complicated, rich in the number of practiced doctrines and schools of thoughts that draw inspiration from a different epoch (neo-paganism, Wicca movement) as well as place (shamanism, Far Eastern traditions).

A mere visit to a typical bookshop corroborates this statement: a wide selection of spiritual literature is almost always available. If we disregard other common information sources, the assortment of books – as long as it flexibly responds to the specific local demand – can be, to some extent, considered an indicator of the ideological and thus also religious orientation of local society. The surveyed territory even hosts two bookshops specialising exclusively in esoteric literature. To a certain extent, the identified sites give evidence of the spread of alternative religiosity in the model territory, but their existence is also influenced by other factors (Klupal 2010).

In particular, by the motivation of each actor to deprivatise their personal religious orientation so it can be captured in field research focused on public spaces in the city. Entirely privatised religiosity is not captured by this research. This motivation can be based on two contrasting approaches – either an egoistic motive related to the possible commercialisation of the practice, or conversely a selfless effort to use one's "supernatural" powers, knowledge or spiritual initiation to aid others on their spiritual path, to spread goodness, heal people, etc. I believe that these two approaches are combined at most of the identified sites. A solely commercial orientation without the personal conviction of the actor results in a poor level of services that stand little chance in the highly competitive religious environment of Prague. Another factor that is conducive to commercialised forms of alternative religiosity is the size of the Prague spiritual market, which generates a large number of people interested in spiritual offerings.

The identified sites were divided in 3 major themed groups according to the presented typology (Table 2):

- a) The first group called "alternative medicine" encompasses methods aiming to restore physical health by methods other than conventional medical practice, including homoeopathy, psychosomatics and a range of other methods relying on various types of energy for healing, e.g. reiki, kinesiology, reflexology, and biotronics.
- b) The second part consists of methods aimed at the mental shape and development of personality. These methods include primarily meditation techniques of Asian provenance such as tai-chi and yoga, as well as a variety of psychotherapeutic and relaxation techniques from aromatherapy to relaxation by means of dancing.

Table 2. Sacred sites of alternative religions in the model region of Prague, 2010

District	Types of alternative religiosity			Total
	alternative medicine	development of personality	fortune telling	
Praha 1	11	15	6	32
Praha 6	7	6	3	16
Nebušice	0	0	0	0
Přední Kopanina	0	1	0	1
Model region (total)	18	22	9	49

Source: Klubal 2010.

c) The last group consists of practices aimed at the future, specifically fortune telling, numerology, astrology and dream interpretation, but also feng-shui, which is a doctrine used to determine a suitable place to build a house and to arrange a room. The sites are typically located in less prominent places. Sacred sites of this kind usually consist of a single room (oracle, consulting room, shop, etc.) usually located on the upper storeys of buildings, or in the basement. If they are located on the ground floor, it is always on less frequented streets. There is a relatively intense connection of the whole spiritual scene, which results from the eclectic nature of alternative religiosity manifested by the sharing of some buildings by more actors to offer a variety of religious paths and to best meet client demands.

Some sites form clusters due to personal connections, with relatives or other close people offering complementary services (e.g., sale of items used for the practice). The size and location of sites, however, attests to the not very high economic potential of the activities.

Conclusions

In the 20 years since the demise of the communist system, the religious landscape of Prague has undergone a sweeping change that can be characterized on several levels. The paper attempts to analyse and subsequently categorise those levels.

A characteristic feature of the religious landscape of Prague is a high degree of religious heterogeneity, which has been increasing lately (Havlíček, Hupková, Smržová 2009).

Prague serves as a “gateway” for new religious movements from the global level, which enter Czechia because it is perceived as potential missionary territory.

An important role is played by the substantial immigration of foreigners who have kept the original religion and live it in the new environment.

The significant increase in religious pluralism or even the atomisation of the religious landscape in Prague have been documented mainly by an increase in the number of religious communities (Havlíček 2006b) which were either registered by the Czech government after the fall of communism or were frequently mentioned by respondents in the 2011 census (Table 1). Prague has also experienced regional differentiation of religious development, evidenced by the quantitatively dwindling Roman Catholic Church on the one hand and the growth of the Brethren Evangelical Free Church on the other hand.

A dramatically deepening secularisation of Prague's population was confirmed – from 50% of people without religious affiliation to more than 80% in 2011. Nevertheless, Prague's religious landscape has been sacralised in part due to the renewal and construction of new sacred sites (Klupal 2010). This assumption has been confirmed particularly due to the physical restoration of Catholic religious buildings (Havlíček, Hupková 2008), but also due to innumerable alternative religious sites (Fig. 4) and the construction of sacred buildings by growing denominations such as the Brethren Evangelical Free Church. The rising importance of alternative religiosity is probably associated with the trend of secularisation of society and thus the transformation of the original Christian society into a society with prevailing occult or esoteric leanings (Hamplová 2000).

It is obvious that all the above-mentioned trends related to the religious landscape of Prague will continue to evolve, also thanks to the ever stronger influence of globalisation and Europeanisation.

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