



Article

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Abstract: The aim of the article is to examine one of the neglected areas in the spatiality of religion, the spatial distribution of religious institutions and the changes that have taken place in this relation over time in the case of Debrecen, a specific city in Hungary, which has hosted several religions both in the past and present. The main findings are discussed in five subsections concentrating on five consecutive periods. During the period under study, the number of institutions run by churches increased steadily until the Second World War. This process was interrupted after the Second World War, and partly as a consequence of the world war (with the deportation of Jews to concentration camps) and partly due to the anti-religious nature of the socialist regime, there was a significant decline followed by a resumption of expansion after 1990. Regarding the location of the institutions within the city and its changes, there were significant differences between the various types of institutions (e.g., churches, administrative centres, kindergartens, elementary and grammar schools). Research primarily relied on document analysis and fieldwork.

Keywords: religious institutions; geographical location; spatial pattern of religion; Debrecen



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1. Introduction

The study of spatial distribution of religions essentially covers two areas. One of the approaches—which has recently received more attention—includes the analysis of the geographical location of the members of the various religious groups and the changes observed in this field together with their causes (Hassan et al. 2022; Knott 2005; Park 2003; Slatter 2023; Sümeghy and Németh 2022; Rombai 2021). In this context, research studies have highlighted the fact that, on the one hand, some of the major world religions (e.g., Christianity, Judaism, Islam, Buddhism, and Hinduism) have shown a very significant spatial expansion in recent centuries (Stump 2008). Starting from the original core area, Christianity has appeared in Africa and in the Americas (Crawford 2005), Islam in Africa, Europe and the Indonesian Archipelago (Michalopoulos et al. 2018; Boms and Aboubakr 2022; Käsehage 2022), while Judaism has appeared in Europe and in North America (Drotár and Kozma 2021). On the other hand, the analyses have shown the spatial consequences of conflicts between (e.g., Christianity–Islam: Fuller 1995; Christianity–Judaism: Abulafia 2004) and within (Ahmed 2022) the major world religions.

The other main area of research is the study of the spatial distribution of religious institutions, with particular attention paid to the geographical features of the settlements and focusing on the most important buildings used for religious purposes (churches,

mosques, synagogues). Studies on the spatial structure of medieval towns have shown that these buildings, and in larger towns the central units (Christian religion—cathedral, Islamic religion—central mosque), were predominantly located in the central parts of the settlements, in order to meet the need for easy accessibility (Atikah et al. 2022; Bitušíková 2022; Hronček et al. 2022; Neumannová 2022; Sági 2022; Sjöberg 1955); this was observed both in the case of Christian churches (e.g., Nicholas 2003; Ballard 2005) and Islamic mosques (Ehlers and Floor 1993; Kheirabadi 2000). Furthermore, however, it has also been highlighted that smaller sub-centres were established in larger cities, of which church complexes constituted a substantial part (Gutiérrez 2015; Burtenshaw et al. 2021).

In the Middle Ages, no such central location could be observed in the case of the Jewish religion, mainly because its followers lived in segregated neighbourhoods due to their discrimination and frequent contempt. As a consequence, the primary sites of places of worship, the synagogues, were predominantly established in these neighbourhoods (Ram and Aharon-Gutman 2017).

However, since the mid-twentieth century, as modern urbanisation has progressed and suburbanisation has intensified, particularly in the United States of America, the spatial distribution of religious facilities has also undergone considerable changes. According to Miller's (2017) study in the Chicago area, the number of Protestant churches in the suburbs significantly increased, while it slightly decreased in the city (similar results were found by Hadaway (1982) during his research in Shelby County, Tennessee). The location of the new churches was influenced by the existing network of settlements and the attraction of long-established Protestant communities in certain settlements.

Moreover, research studies by Warf and Winsberg (2010) called attention to the importance of ethnicity: in Chicago and Atlanta, in the case of megachurches predominantly belonging to the Baptist Church, with a capacity of more than 2000 people, worship facilities for the black population basically remained in the city centre, while the churches of the white middle class were established in the suburbs, following the distribution of the main target group (again, proximity to the freeway and the availability of large parking lots were also important). Regarding the fate of abandoned churches, in their research conducted in downtown Columbus (Ohio), Form and Dubrow (2005) found that after the demolition of the structures (the rate of loss was about 50%), they were replaced by dwellings, offices and freeways, among other things. Selod and Zenou (2001) highlighted the strong relationship between the location and educational choices and its impact on the spatial structure of settlements and ethnic communities in their research regarding certain South African cities under and after the Apartheid period.

Among studies conducted in Central Europe, the analyses carried out in the Czech Republic and Slovakia (Benža and Kusendová 2011; Havlíček et al. 2017; Poláček and Judák 2005) highlighted, inter alia, the specific patterns and temporal changes in the geographical distribution of religions, the regularities of the spatial location of sacred sites, the spatial effects of interreligious relations, and the economic, social and political processes that explain the above-mentioned factors.

In the light of the previous paragraphs, we believe that our study which examines the spatial distribution of church institutions on a specific settlement, Debrecen in the eastern part of Hungary (Figure 1), can be considered a gap-filling study. We believe that it can be considered as a new approach to analysis mainly because of the following aspects:

- It seeks to trace changes and explore the reasons behind them by looking at a period of more than 150 years;
- Building on the fact that Debrecen has/had played an important role in the life of several religions, it shows the interaction of the spatiality of different religions as well as religious institutions;
- In addition to churches, other institutions (educational and social) also constitute the subject for our research;
- The socialist period marked a major break in the organic development of religious institutions, followed by a new revival after 1990.



Figure 1. Geographical location of Debrecen (Source: own work).

In the spirit of the above, our study seeks to answer the following questions in particular:

- What was the characteristic spatial structure of the different religious institutions and what changes can be observed between the mid-nineteenth century and the first two decades of the twenty-first century?
- What are the factors that influenced the spatial location of the religious institutions?

2. Materials and Methods

The study relied mainly on maps of the city depicted in different periods, and on databases of the local government and the city council published during the period of socialism. Using these information sources, the different types of religious institutions were mapped applying a uniform symbol system (Table 1). In addition, a table summarising the number of ecclesiastical institutions operating in each period has been included to provide a more substantial illustration of the changes.

Table 1. Legend of figures.

	Reformed Church	Roman Catholic Church	Israelite Religion	Greek Catholic Church	Other Churches
church, religious centre	Yellow circle	Yellow square	Yellow triangle (up)	Yellow triangle (down)	Yellow diamond
kindergarten, primary education institution	Red circle	Red square	Red triangle (up)	Red triangle (down)	Red diamond
secondary and tertiary education institution	Green circle	Green square	Green triangle (up)	Green triangle (down)	Green diamond
social institution	Blue circle	Blue square	Blue triangle (up)	Blue triangle (down)	Blue diamond

Source: own work.

The period under study is divided into five sections, and each subchapter first discusses the general national and then the local characteristics of the periods. In exploring the factors explaining the spatial location of the institutions, we extensively relied on studies

and books presenting the general history of the settlement and the development of different types of institutions and religions, and visited these institutions in person and explored their environment.

3. Results

3.1. *The Period before 1868/69*

The population of Debrecen, which was first mentioned in official documents at the beginning of the thirteenth century, was Roman Catholic for a long time—in line with the European and Hungarian processes. Protestantism, started in the first decades of the sixteenth century in Western Europe, first appeared in Hungary in the form of the Evangelical and then the Calvinist Church, and by the end of the century, the majority of the country's population followed this new religion. In the spirit of this, the population of Debrecen also converted to the Protestant religion, and the last Roman Catholic priest left the settlement in 1552 (by the end of the sixteenth century, the Reformed Church became the dominant religion in the city). The Counter-Reformation that began in Hungary at the beginning of the seventeenth century, achieved its chief success in the western part of the country, while the inhabitants in the eastern part of the country adhered to the Reformed religion. The citizens of Debrecen also behaved in a similar manner, which is also proven by the fact that the return of the Roman Catholic religion to Debrecen could only be ensured by coercion: in 1715, the Parliament was willing to enshrine the free royal city rank in law for Debrecen only on the condition that the leaders of the settlement allowed followers of the Roman Catholic religion to settle there (Hutay 1940). From among the smaller religions, the Greek Catholic religion, classified as part of Eastern Christianity, spread in Northeastern Hungary to a decisive extent. Its first followers settled down in Debrecen during the fifteenth century, and after their forced departure at the end of the seventeenth century, they returned to the city during the first half of the nineteenth century. The Evangelicals, embodying the other branch of Protestantism, also appeared in Hungary during the first half of the sixteenth century, but their significance was not as prevailing as that of the Calvinist movement. Although they were the first to represent the Protestant ideology in the city, later, the followers of the Calvinist movement pushed them into the background.

In the Middle Ages, Jews played a significant role in the trade and financial transactions of the emerging Hungarian state. At the end of the eighteenth century, however, a considerable part of their flourishing communities disappeared as a result of the atrocities accompanying the expulsion of the Turks. Their reappearance in Hungary dates back to the first quarter of the nineteenth century, but at that time, they still suffered from significant negative discrimination. Article 29 of the Act of 1840 on Jews played a very important role in their emancipation in Hungary, which, inter alia, made it possible for them to settle in the free royal cities including Debrecen. As a result of these processes, at the time of the first Hungarian census in 1869, the majority of the population of Debrecen belonged to the representatives of the Reformed religion (Table 2), while only the ratio of the followers of the Roman Catholic religion exceeded 5%.

The first religious institutions appeared in Debrecen in the twelfth century: the St. Andrew Roman Catholic church was built in the centre of the newly formed settlement (Figure 2). In addition to that, several other churches are mentioned in contemporary documents (Hutay 1940), although their exact locations cannot be determined (the numbers in brackets in our article refer to the figures referred to at the beginning of the subsections showing the spatial distribution and location of each object). The Franciscan Monastery, which operated a school, was located near the St. Andrew church. Following the victory of the Reformation, the church built in the central location came under the control of the reformers, but was largely destroyed by the fire of 1564, and its reconstruction started only in 1626 (it was restored to its present form only between 1805 and 1822, after another fire). At the same time, the building (1) became too small for the gradually increasing population (moreover, the fact that it could be hardly accessed from certain points of the expanding city

also created a problem), and therefore other Reformed churches were also built, starting in the seventeenth century (Nagy 1940). In the middle of the seventeenth century, a new religious centre was built on the site of the present-day Small Church (2), and at the turn of the seventeenth-eighteenth centuries, in line with the territorial expansion of Debrecen, the Ispotály Church (3) was constructed at the southern outskirts of the city. There was a poorhouse (in present terms, a social home) in its immediate vicinity since its construction, an elementary school from the eighteenth century, and also a kindergarten from 1844 (the operation of the latter was taken over by the city in 1913).

Table 2. Religious groups of the population of Debrecen before the First World War.

	1869	1910	1941
Reformed	37,239	63,318	82,580
Roman Catholic	5887	16,584	25,491
Israelite	1919	8406	9142
Evangelical	564	1274	1798
Greek Catholic	416	2655	6404
Greek Orthodox	84	386	194
Unitarian	2	54	n.a.
Other	0	52	324

Source: Census publications of the relevant years.

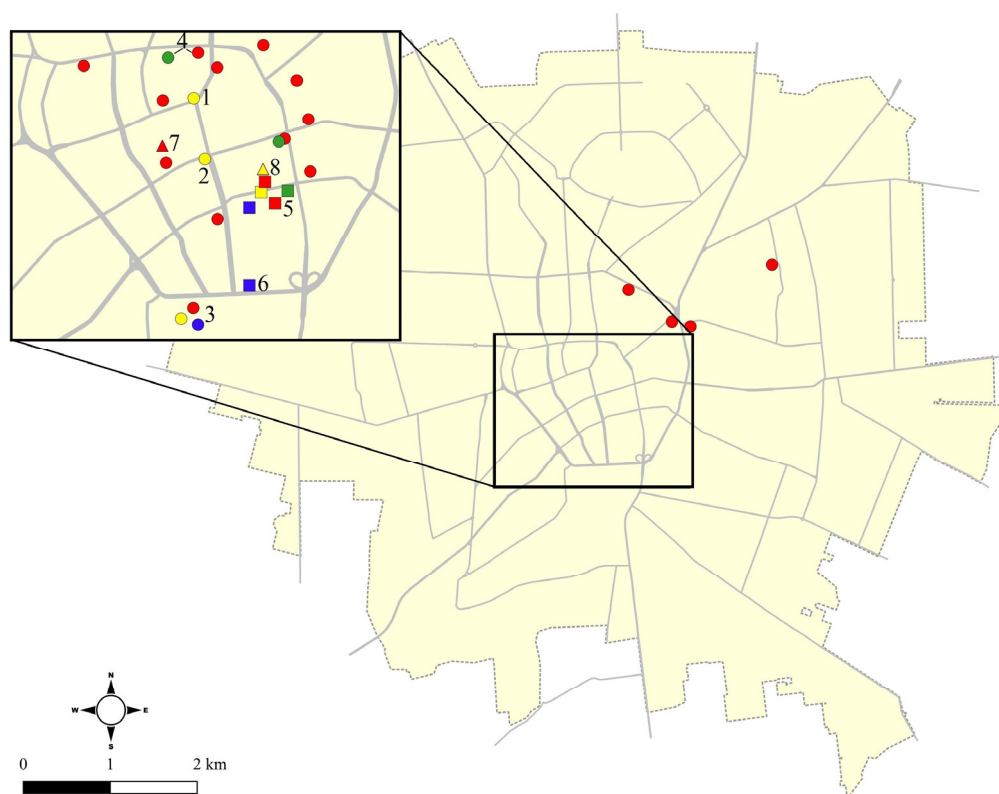


Figure 2. Location of religious institutions in Debrecen in 1869 (Source: own work). Note: Existing institutions from the previous period are shown in a faded colour on the map, but the symbol key is the same. See Table 1 for the Legend of Figures.

The rapid spread of Calvinism is clearly illustrated by the fact that in 1538 it took over the school which was until then operated by the city, and continued to operate it as the Reformed College, which included all three levels of education. By the mid-nineteenth century, it developed into the first educational centre of the city (including an

elementary school, grammar school and a teacher training institute) (4). It was essentially an educational institution for boys, and as a result, more and more schools for girls were established in the early eighteenth century (the reason for this being that the education of the two genders had to be separated by order of higher authorities) (Table 3). These schools were founded by the communities of certain streets, which in several cases purchased the land for themselves and constructed the buildings (Varga 1943). Nevertheless, certain consciousness could be also observed in the location of the institutions, as they tried to distribute them in proportion to the numbers of the population, thus reducing the distance for school attendance.

Table 3. Number of religious institutions in operation in each period.

	Church, Religious Centre	Kindergarten, Primary Education Institution	Secondary and Tertiary Education Institution	Social Institution
1869	5	19	3	3
First World War	10	24	7	4
Second World War	21	29	10	5
1990	22	0	2	1
2022	45	8	11	6

Source: own work.

Catholicism reappeared in Debrecen during the first half of the eighteenth century in the above described manner, and as a result of the hostile attitude of the population of the city, an absolutely significant concentration can be observed in the distribution of Catholic institutions (5). The educational institutions (elementary school, high school, boarding school) and the social institutions (e.g., an orphanage) were built in the immediate vicinity of the St. Anna church and the parish next to it, built between 1721 and 1724 (Bendák 1940). The only exception was the hospital for the poor which was built at the end of the eighteenth century in the southern part of the city centre, though still in the part of the city preferred by the Roman Catholic population (6).

The third major religion, the Israelite religion, also founded its first institutions: the first elementary school (7) was established in the western part of the city centre in 1856 in the district inhabited by Jews in large numbers (Kovács 1927), while—interestingly, near the Catholic Centre in St. Anna Street (8), although in a rented building—a worship house started its operation in 1867. The latter ceased to exist at the end of the nineteenth century—presumably partly due to the proximity and expansion needs of the Roman Catholic Church, and partly as a consequence of the lack of space and better opportunities found in the southern part of the city centre.

3.2. Between 1868/69 and the First World War

After the adoption of the Reconciliation Acts in 1867, the Hungarian legislature voted in favour of the bills that legalised the status of the Church. The churches in Hungary basically retained their previous positions, which is particularly noticeable in the fields of education and teaching: more than half of the elementary schools were under the church, and nearly 90% of teacher training was also carried out in church-run schools (Gergely et al. 1997).

The number (Table 3), spatial development and distribution of the religious institutions was influenced to a great extent by several factors between 1868/69 and the First World War. On the one hand, in addition to the Roman Catholic and Protestant (Calvinist) religions, the Israelite, Greek Catholic and Evangelical (Lutheran) religions also began to play an increasingly important role in the life of the city (Table 2), and as a result, these religions also started to focus on providing a higher standard of care for their followers. On the

other hand, as a consequence of the significant increase in the population of Debrecen, the number of people living outside the former city walls, in the so-called garden districts surrounding the city centre, also increased, and the churches recognized the importance of fulfilling the needs of these followers, too.

Among the factors influencing the location of newly built churches within the city, proximity to the followers played the most important role (Figure 3). On the one hand, as mentioned earlier, the Jewish religious community was mostly concentrated in the western part of the city centre (1) where two smaller synagogues were built in 1894 and in 1909 (Weiss and Strasser 1940), and the office building of the religious community was also inaugurated in 1904. On the other hand, the expansion of the garden districts surrounding the city centre was mainly experienced in the eastern and southeastern directions, and two Reformed churches (2) were built to serve the needs of these congregations, albeit still in the city centre (Nagy 1940). The Jewish population, constituting almost 10% of the total population of Debrecen, wanted to express its increasing role in the city also in the form of richly ornamented religious buildings, but there were only limited opportunities for the construction of such buildings both in the area where the Jews lived and in the vicinity of the already existing worship house. As a result, at the end of the nineteenth century, they purchased land in one of the new growth zones near the railway station where one of the largest synagogues of Hungary was opened in 1897 (3).

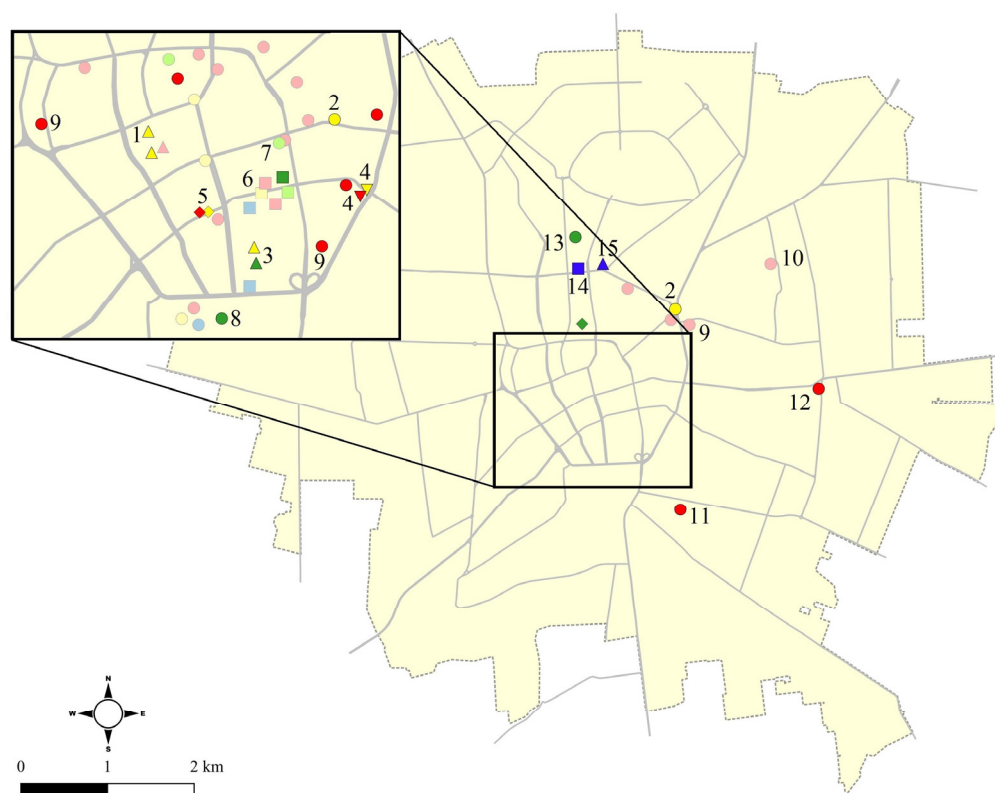


Figure 3. Location of religious institutions in Debrecen during the First World War (Source: own work). Note: Existing institutions from the previous period are shown in a faded colour on the map, but the symbol key is the same. See Table 1 for the Legend of Figures.

For the Greek Catholic Church, which was also growing in importance and was supported by Franz Joseph I, Emperor of Austria and King of Hungary, the city authorities provided land free of charge, and in return, a building was constructed in the southeastern edge of the city centre (4). No spatial concentration could be observed in the case of the residential areas of the followers of the Evangelical Church, and consequently, its church was built in the city centre in 1889 (5), at a location which could be easily accessed by everyone.

In the case of educational institutions, Act 38 of 1868 on public education can be regarded as a determining factor of outstanding importance, which, along with the introduction of compulsory schooling, greatly contributed to the increase in the number of students, and thus necessitated the expansion of the school network (moreover, of course, all religions also considered the education of children as important). Regarding changes in the spatial distribution of the institutions, one of the most important elements in the process was concentration, which took two different forms. On the one hand, in the case of the smaller religious groups (e.g., Evangelical, Greek Catholic, Israelite), the religious building and the school were located close to each other in order to facilitate the provision of religious education for the students. The Evangelicals purchased land in the city centre (5) with the aim to build a school and a church (Pass 1940), the Greek Catholics (Papp 1940) were given plots to build a church, church office and school in close proximity (4), while in the case of the Israelites, it was obvious that the school—similarly to the synagogue—would be built in the neighbourhood (1) where they lived (Halmos 2014).

On the other hand, in the case of the larger religious groups, a further strengthening of several educational centres already existing in the second half of the nineteenth century could be observed: the first education institutions of the Svetits Institute (6) (e.g., girls educational institute, Roman Catholic girls' elementary school, Roman Catholic civic girls' school, Roman Catholic teacher training school) were established in the vicinity of the Roman Catholic church during this period. The fact that the eastern-southeastern part of the city centre became one of the most important residential areas for the Roman Catholic population also played an important role in this process (Kovács 1927). In addition, the Dóczi Institute of the Reformed Church (7), founded in 1838, was also expanded with new elements including a girls' grammar school and a teacher training college (Ady 1931), and the Deaconess Institute (8) was founded in the Reformed Church Hospital Centre south of the city centre, which primarily trained staff for the social and healthcare institutions of the Church.

Territorial expansion should be considered as another important process which could be primarily observed in the Reformed Church. It was the consequence of the already mentioned increase in population in the outskirts, which necessitated the establishment of educational institutions for them. This was to a great extent facilitated by an agreement between the Church and the city authorities, under which the city also supported the construction of new Reformed schools (Szoboszlai 1928). With the help of that, several new educational institutions were founded at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth century, mainly on the edge of the city centre (9), and in three cases in the outer districts (Csapókert—10, Homokkert—11, Nyilastelep—12). It can be also regarded as a kind of spatial expansion that the Church, using private donations, established a boarding school near the Great Forest (13), which admitted secondary school as well as university students after the First World War. In the case of the other two major religious groups, expansion is seen in the area of social institutions: both the Roman Catholics (14) and the Israelites (15) founded an orphanage north of the city centre (Roman Catholic), and a house for the elderly (Israelite).

3.3. *The Period between the Two World Wars*

For a quarter of a century after the Trianon Peace Treaty, the fragmented Hungary was characterised by the dynamic development of the Churches, a renaissance of faith life, and a new kind of intertwining between the Churches and the State. Inter alia, the role of the Churches at almost all levels of public education increased between the two world wars: the Churches had a dominant role in three spheres of public education (elementary schools, grammar schools, teacher training) and an absolute majority in the maintenance of schools (Gergely et al. 1997).

In the period between the two world wars, the spatial distribution of religious institutions was influenced by two factors. On the one hand, the population in the suburbs (garden districts) continued to grow (in 1939, 45% of the population lived outside the inner

city—Kozma 1996); and on the other hand, in accordance with Act 7 of 1926, which aimed to improve the educational situation of children living in suburbs to a greater extent, state financial support was awarded to those who built schools (Pianovszky 1931).

In the spirit of the above, a significant territorial expansion could be observed in the case of churches (Figure 4). In the 1920s and 1930s, several Reformed (1) and Roman Catholic (2) churches were built in the suburbs (garden districts), mostly on plots of land provided free of charge by the city using donations from followers (Hutay 1940; Nagy 1940). In the case of churches, in line with the population distributions, mainly the eastern and southern parts of the city were preferred. One exception was the Reformed church built on the northwestern edge of the city centre (3), while the University church (4) can be regarded as a special case which was primarily aimed at serving the spiritual needs of the Reformed students studying at the University. The establishment of the only non-suburban religious institution of the period may be linked to the Trianon Peace Treaty: a new church was built in the 1920s in the central part of the city centre (5), in an easily accessible location, to provide for the religious activities of the Unitarians who had moved from Transylvania.

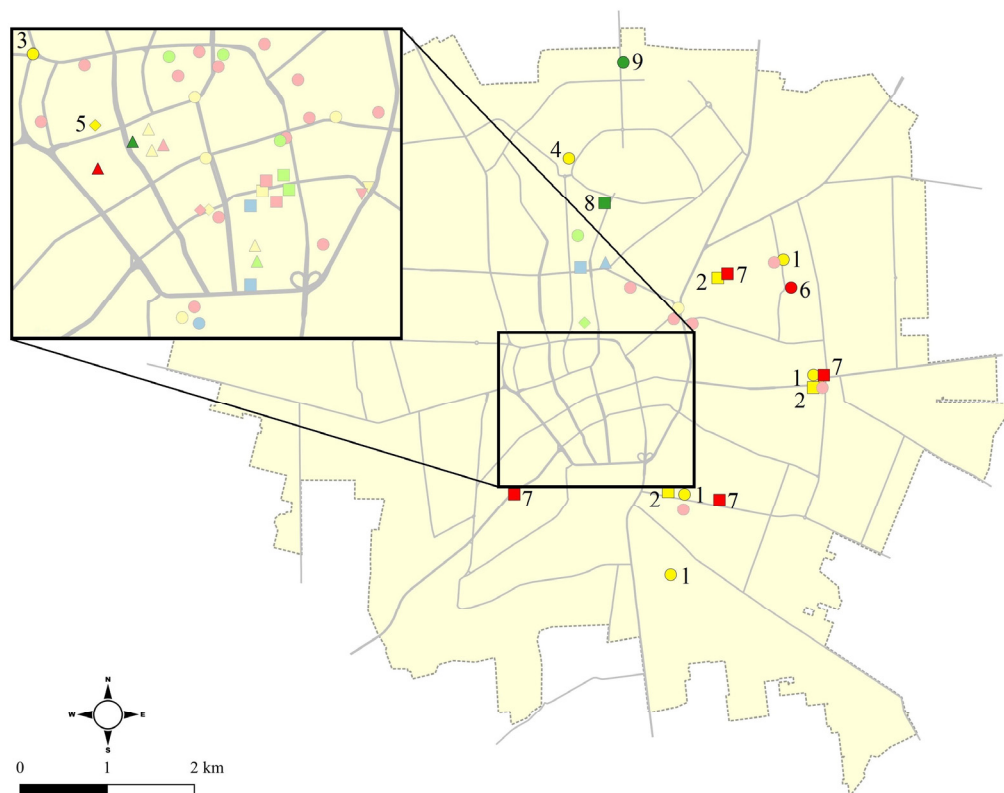


Figure 4. Location of religious institutions in Debrecen during the Second World War (Source: own work). Note: Existing institutions from the previous period are shown in a faded colour on the map, but the symbol key is the same. See Table 1 for the Legend of Figures.

In the case of educational institutions, the territorial concentration that had already existed continued further (e.g., Svetits Institute: Roman Catholic Girls' Grammar School—Figure 3: 6, Reformed Church: Civic Boys' School—Figure 1: 4, Israelites: grammar school on the first floor of the elementary school—Figure 3: 1), though less extensively. The other characteristic spatial trend was the expansion process, as in the previous period, which in this period mostly characterized the Roman Catholic institutions: while there was only one Reformed school established in the suburbs (6), four Roman Catholic institutions (7) were founded by the end of the 1920s. In addition to the above, the Saint László Boarding School (8), built in the northern part of the city and providing accommodation for the Roman Catholic students studying at the nearby University, and the Reformed Deaconess Institute relocated to the northeastern neighbourhood of the University can

be considered to be in a special situation though they also essentially indicate expansion (Petőné Ecsedy 2001).

3.4. The Period between the Second World War and 1990

Under the 1949 Constitution, the Churches were separated from the state, religion was considered as a private matter, and secularisation prevailed in Hungary for four decades. First, the state expropriated church land without compensation when introducing the 1945 Land Reform. Secondly, the state delimited the public activity of the Churches. The third major restriction concerned the teaching and educational positions of the Churches when the religious educational institutions were nationalised (Gergely et al. 1997). The situation and spatial development of religious institutions after the Second World War were influenced by several factors, which in total significantly reduced the number of religious institutions (Table 3). Firstly, during the war, the railway station and its neighbourhood located on the southern edge of the city centre were hit by several air raids, during which the institutions operated there (e.g., Reformed hospital, Reformed church, Reformed elementary schools, Roman Catholic hospital) were so severely damaged that their demolition became unavoidable (Filippinyi and Papp 1997; Sági 1972). Secondly, the Jewish Holocaust can also be linked to the Second World War, as a result of which the numbers of the Jewish population in the city decreased to such an extent that it became impossible to continue the operation of their educational institutions. Thirdly, the leadership that came to power as a result of the Communist takeover aimed to reduce the role of religion, and this had an impact on all aspects of life.

In the spirit of the above, in the case of churches, the first change occurred only in the 1970s as a sign of political thawing (Figure 5): the Reformed Church handed over the building of the University church in this decade, and in exchange for that a new church was built in the northwestern part of the city (1). Secondly, in the 1980s, mainly to reduce territorial disparities, a Reformed (2) and a Roman Catholic church (3) were built in the western and northern parts. Thirdly, the Baptists, who had been present in the city for a long time, built a new modern church on the site of their smaller prayer hall in the city centre (4).

In the case of schools, the most important influencing factor was that the new leadership set the goal of bringing youth education under state control, and as a result, the Parliament passed Act 33 of 1948 on the nationalization of schools, meaning the takeover of the management of non-state schools by the state, the acquisition of the related property by the state and the transfer of their staff to state service, which, with a few exceptions, abolished the role of the Churches in school management and public education. Under the law, primary schools came under the control of the state, while religious higher education remained under Church administration (in the case of Debrecen, it meant that the Reformed College continued to operate under the name Theological Academy). At the same time, the legislative article provided an opportunity for all Churches that had given up a significant part of their rights and institutions to retain certain secondary schools. This agreement was signed with the Reformed Church in 1948, and with the Roman Catholic Church in 1950. As a result of that, the Grammar School of the Reformed College, and the other Reformed institution, the Girls' Grammar School of the Dóczy Institute (Donáth 2009), and the Roman Catholic Girls' Grammar School of the Svetits Institute (5) remained in the property of the Churches (Gergely 1985). In the following decades, however, the Reformed Church suffered a setback in two areas: on the one hand, it gave up the building of the Dóczy Institute in 1952 (the students and teachers of the Girls' Grammar School were merged into the Grammar School of the Reformed College); and on the other hand, the Grammar School, which had thus become co-educational, was forced to leave its former building in 1972 and move into the building of the College. There was also a considerable decline in terms of the social institutions, the only exception of which was the Reformed Church. After the Second World War, the Deaconess Institute located northeast of the University was moved to another property in the Great Forest, but the Institute ceased to function due

to measures taken by the central government in 1951 (Petőné Ecsedy 2001), and from then on, the property was used as a Reformed rest home (6).

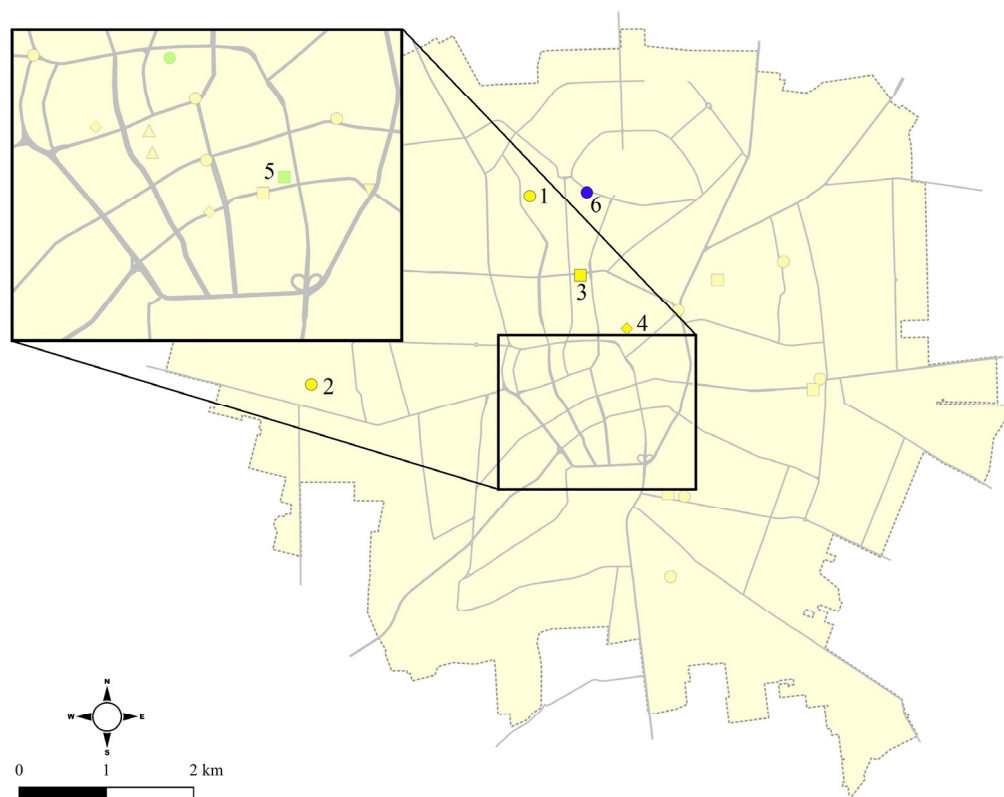


Figure 5. Location of religious institutions in Debrecen in 1990 (Source: own work). Note: Existing institutions from the previous period are shown in a faded colour on the map, but the symbol key is the same. See Table 1 for the Legend of Figures.

3.5. Post-Transition Period

In the period after the political transition and social transformation, the spatial development processes of church institutions have been influenced by national as well as local factors. First of all, regarding the former, Act 4 of 1990 on the right to freedom of conscience and religion (the Church Act) states that Churches in Hungary, in addition to their religious work, play a significant role in the life of the country through their activities in the cultural, educational, social and health care spheres, and the Act facilitated the establishment of Churches to a considerable extent. Secondly, in line with the above, religiousness began to play a more and more important role in the everyday life of the inhabitants within the framework of the freedom of Churches (Table 4) which led partly to the revival of the historical Churches and partly to the emergence of new trends.

Thirdly, under Act 32 of 1991 on settling the ownership of former church properties, properties taken from Churches after 1 January 1948 without compensation and serving public service functions (e.g., religious, educational, cultural, health, social) must be returned to the Churches concerned upon request.

Two important facts should be highlighted from among the local factors (the first one, however, is partly of national or even international significance). Firstly, the role of Debrecen has increased substantially as a result of the reorganisation of Churches in Hungary. Due to the aforementioned weight of the Reformed Church, the city has been the centre of the Tiszántúl Reformed Church District since 1557, and its functions have been further extended after 1990. In the context of the changes in the organisational structure of the Roman Catholic Church, the Diocese of Debrecen-Nyíregyháza was established in 1993, and the Archeparchy of Hajdúdorog was created within the Greek Catholic Church in 2015, both of which have their headquarters in Debrecen.

Table 4. Religious structure of the population of Debrecen in the new millennium.

	2001	2011
Reformed	81,583	52,459
Roman Catholic	32,539	23,413
Israelite	231	165
Evangelical	1104	812
Greek Catholic	17,226	10,762
Greek Orthodox	186	154
Baptist	804	899
Members of the Faith Church	n.a.	238
Other religions	2165	3677
not belonging to a religious congregation, did not answer	75,196	118,741

Source: Census publications of the relevant years.

Secondly, in the 1970s and 1980s, the regional centre of gravity of the population of Debrecen shifted westward due to the construction of new housing estates. Therefore, in the new conditions of freedom, the Churches were expected to meet the religious needs of the population of the affected districts as well.

As a result of the above processes, a rather dynamic growth was observed over the last 30 years in the case of the religious institutions (Table 3) (Figure 6). With regard to churches and other religious buildings, two significant trends should be highlighted: on the one hand, in relation to the aforementioned role as headquarters, the centre of the Roman Catholic Diocese was established in the already existing block in Saint Anna Street (1), while the headquarters of the Greek Catholic Church was established in the southern part of the city centre (2) (both buildings were formerly used as secondary school dormitories).

On the other hand, a significant number of new churches and chapels have been built. The two large historical Churches (Roman Catholic and Reformed) played an important role in these investments, and both of them had the same spatial expansion plans: most of their new churches were built near the new housing estates (3), and prayer houses were built in newly built or enlarged church retirement residences (4), while the Reformed Church took back and started to use the church building from the 1930s, located next to the university, for its original purpose (Figures 3 and 4). In the new millennium, similar trends could be observed also in the case of the Greek Catholic Church: a new church was constructed in the most densely populated residential area of the city (3), and in one of the eastern districts of Debrecen, which has experienced rapid population growth (3).

Among the smaller religious groups, the Baptist Church played a prominent role, with only one congregation centre in the inner city in 1990. In the following thirty years, however, the number of Baptist prayer rooms or worship centres multiplied along an east–west axis (5), in neighbourhoods populated mainly by the less wealthy classes but not in the large housing estates.

The other smaller religious groups established only one or two worship centres, the locations of which were determined by easy accessibility meaning proximity to the historic city centre (Adventist—6, Pentecostal—7) and to public transport facilities (The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints—8, Holy Trinity Orthodox Church of Debrecen—9). The only exception was the Faith Church which envisaged a complex building including religious and educational institutions, and consequently built its church in the outskirts of the city (10).

The spatial development of religious educational institutions was most intensively influenced by the law on the restitution of ecclesiastical property: both large Churches aimed to reopen some of their former schools (this naturally included the restitution of property) and to establish kindergartens, which were partially missing before the Second

World War, in order to provide a full spectrum education. In the spirit of the above, the Reformed Church, on the one hand, reclaimed the Dóczi Institute (11) and the former boarding school nearby the Great Forest (12), received the school building next to the Reformed College (13) as a donation from the municipality and started primary school classes there in the early years (the properties concerned were given church administrative functions—e.g., finance office, architect's office). On the other hand, the building of the former Reformed Grammar School (14), after the former Kölcsey Ferenc Teacher Training College was merged into the Debrecen Reformed Theological University and was moved into the building of the Reformed College, became the headquarters of the Reformed Grammar School and the earlier mentioned primary school. In addition to the above, the Church also founded a kindergarten, but this was located far from the worship centre in the south-eastern edge of the city centre (15).

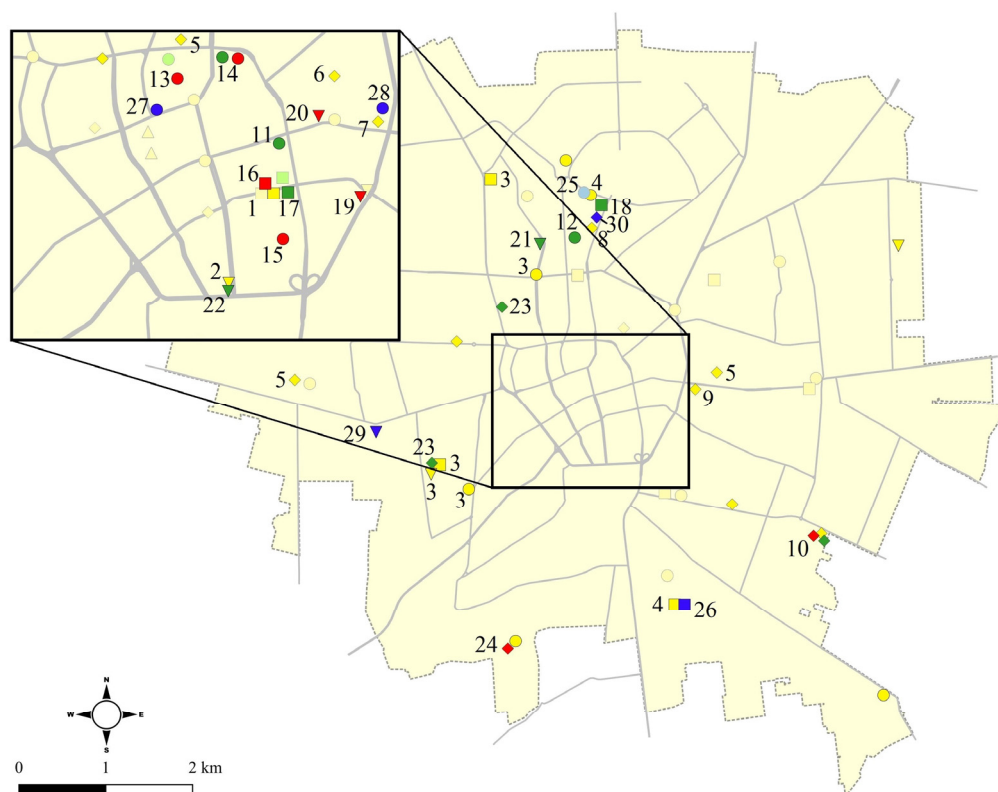


Figure 6. Location of religious institutions in Debrecen in 2013 (Source: own work). Note: Existing institutions from the previous period are shown in a faded colour on the map, but the symbol key is the same. See Table 1 for the Legend of Figures.

The Roman Catholic Church basically aimed at revitalising the educational block in Saint Anna Street, and first it established the Svetits Institute (16), incorporating a kindergarten, primary school and dormitory (in this project, it received the building of the state-run Tóth Árpád Grammar School which had been operating on the adjacent plot since the 1960s), and then also reclaimed the building of the Saint Joseph Grammar School (17). The only new Roman Catholic educational institution outside the centre was also linked to the restitution of church properties: the former Saint László Boarding School building near the university was returned to the Church, which continued to use it for the same purpose (18).

Three of the smaller Churches have sought to increase their role in public education and to build a system covering all three levels of education. The Greek Catholic Church, with its historical traditions, took back the building of a kindergarten near its church building (19). Then, in the 2010s, it took over a municipality-run primary school (20) (the Greek Catholic school building, founded in the early nineteenth century, had already been

demolished, and therefore the Church decided to request the nearest institution to its religious centre) and an institution with both a vocational secondary school and a grammar school (21), and established a dormitory next to the church-administration centre (22). The Faith Church—in the aforementioned context—established a new primary school and a grammar school on the outskirts of the city (8), while the Baptist Church, after taking over the operation of two low-utilised grammar schools (23), started a primary school in 2013 in a building of a previously closed municipality-owned school (24).

After the change of regime, the activities of the Churches became increasingly important in the social sphere too. A common feature of the two largest religious groups was that their efforts to care for the elderly were concentrated in the green belt of the city: the Reformed Church significantly upgraded its retirement residence in the Great Forest which was built after the Second World War (25), while the Roman Catholic Church established a new institution in the southern part of Debrecen (26). In addition, the Reformed Church set up a social care institution run by the Reformed Great Church (27), and one more in another part of the city centre (28). In addition to the two largest religious groups, the Greek Catholic Church and the Baptist Church have also invested in this field: the former established a social care institution in the western part of the city, not far from the new church built in 2010 (29), while the latter established a social care institution in the northern part of the city (30).

4. Discussion and Conclusions

The main findings of the study are the following. In the studied period, until the Second World War, the number of institutions run by religious groups increased steadily in the rhythm of the progressing urbanisation process and the number of the population of Debrecen, which also meant the growth of the religious population. This process was interrupted after the Second World War and a significant decline was experienced partly due to the impact of the world war (with the deportation of Jewish inhabitants to concentration camps) and partly due to the anti-religious nature of the socialist regime. After 1990, in line with the opportunities offered by the national political system, a resumption of expansion could be observed, especially in the case of the two largest Churches with a long history of considerable influence in Hungary, as well as the Baptist Church and the Greek Catholic Church. The former can be in part explained by the fact that the Baptist communities, as denominations of the Protestant religion, were able to spread easily in the city due to the Reformed character of Debrecen. Moreover, László Papp, one of the politicians who has played an important role in the municipal government since the 2010s (deputy mayor until 2014 and then mayor), is himself a Greek Catholic.

In terms of the location of the institutions within the city and its changes over time, a distinction must, of course, be made between the different types of institutions. In the case of churches and church administration centres, accessibility and proximity to the congregation were obvious requirements, and this, especially in the early years, meant the need for an inner-city location. For administrative centres, this ambition remained important in later years as well (see the administrative headquarters of the Unitarian, Baptist and Greek Catholic Churches), but for the church buildings, a gradual change occurred from the first half of the twentieth century. In parallel with the spatial expansion of the city's population, new churches were built in the more densely populated eastern and southeastern districts, especially for the Roman Catholic and Reformed Churches. After 1990, this process continued, but at the same time, a change in the spatial pattern could be observed: the construction of housing estates shifted the population centre of the city to the west, and as a result, new churches were built mainly in that part of Debrecen.

In the case of educational institutions, two parallel processes could be often observed for a long time. On the one hand, there was an ambitious tendency towards concentration, which was manifested in the fact that, during the period of their appearance and early development in the city, the Roman Catholic, Greek Catholic, Evangelical and Jewish religious groups all sought to establish their educational institutions near their centres

of worship. In the case of the Reformed Church, which had the greatest influence in the city, this trend was also evident in secondary education, while in primary schools, new trends had already emerged before the First World War. In line with the fact that there was no considerable spatial concentration of the religious communities, these institutions were mostly established in various parts of the city centre, basically following an even distribution pattern. In addition, following the increasing settlement of the population outside the inner city, Reformed primary schools were already established in those districts during that time.

In the interwar period, the urge for school founding slowed down for most Churches. The only exception was the Roman Catholic Church, which experienced a process of territorial expansion due to the need to be closer to the congregations. In the case of the two largest religious groups, however, it is a common feature that in most cases, educational institutions (elementary schools) were established first, followed by building new churches which required more financial resources. Moreover, in order to facilitate accessibility, the institutions were usually located in the central parts of the districts concerned (e.g., Csapókert, Homokkert).

Following the decline characterising the socialist years, after 1990, a significant development could be observed again with regard to educational institutions, which basically took two forms. On the one hand, both the Roman Catholic and Reformed Churches aimed at regaining some of their schools operated before the Second World War, concentrating on units in the city centre and taking into consideration good accessibility (some of the educational institutions established prior to the Second World War had already ceased to exist). On the other hand, a number of Churches with no educational tradition also sought to strengthen this type of activity, which took various forms. In the case of the Greek Catholic Church, which had a definite historical background, the influence of the city centre and existing centres of worship centres was very strong. The location of the educational facilities of the Baptist Church, which previously had a modest presence in Hungary, was influenced by the location of buildings previously used by the municipality for educational purposes, but which had become redundant as demand had declined. Nevertheless, in the case of the Faith Church, the location of available land not yet built on but capable of accommodating the planned complex was a decisive factor.

In the case of social institutions, there were developments both similar as well as different compared to those in previous years. The former category includes the desire to be close to the centres of worship (i.e., concentration), while a new element is the desire to be located in or near a green belt area, providing a higher degree of recreation.

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