

# CROSS-BORDER AND TRANSNATIONAL STUDIES

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## RAJKA – RAPID CHANGES OF SOCIAL, ARCHITECTURAL AND ETHNIC CHARACTER OF A CROSS-BORDER SUBURBAN VILLAGE OF BRATISLAVA IN HUNGARY

### ABSTRACT

The Northwest Hungarian village, Rajka has special geographical location: it is only fifteen kilometres from Bratislava, the capital city of Slovakia. This settlement is an excellent example of the phenomenon of cross-border suburbanization which means the migration of the urban population from the city to the not too distant rural area even if it is in another country. This process is transforming the original character of Rajka. There are huge differences between the lifestyles of the indigenous and the immigrant community. The autochthonous inhabitants are worried about Rajka's fast alteration, there are considerable problems between Hungarians and Slovaks due to language differences and a lot of tensions because of the village's changing atmosphere, congested local traffic and the new challenges in Rajka's educational institution. Besides the presentation of social changes, this paper is focusing on the ethnic and residential ancestry of the immigrants to show new linguistic and social patterns in Rajka. On the other hand, examining the specifics of the dramatic transformation of the architectural character of this settlement is also an important element of the study.

### INTRODUCTION

Suburbanization is one of the main factors, which changed dramatically the urban structure of the cities and nearby settlements in Eastern-Europe during the last three decades (Bajmócy 2007, Berg et al. 182, Dövényi et al. 1999, Timár 1999). After the years of mass-urbanization the processes changed totally, new housing estates emerged around the large cities of the regions. It was the strongest around the capital cities and if the large cities are close to international borders, cross-border suburbanization could start. Because of the large differences of land prices, ethnicity and social systems this kind of suburbanization can be very fast, but it can cause different types of conflicts as well. This is the situation in Rajka, the fastest growing "Hungarian suburb" of the Slovakian capital city of Bratislava.

Rajka, that can be found in the north westerly periphery of both Hungary and the county of Győr-Moson-Sopron, have until recently functioned as a border crossing to Slovakia, from the Paris Peace (1947) that had ended World War II, and the community remained part of Hungary against the wills of the Czechoslovakians. The mass deportation of the German-speaking residents and their replacement with mostly ethnic Hungarians from Czechoslovakia caused big trauma in the history of the village, which was originally mainly inhabited by Germans. The village that was regarded as peripheral in terms of its spatial-connections, and due to its position was hardly developed during the socialist era. For this reason, its typical social process was migration, mainly towards Mosonmagyaróvár and Győr.

A new situation occurred when Hungary and Slovakia joined the European Union (2004), then border control was ceased (2007). Rajka lies only 15 kilometres away from the Slovakian capital of Bratislava, therefore with the abolishment of the border alterations from the early 20th century the regional relations were revitalised – just like in the case of several other border towns (Oradea, Arad and even Szombathely) – bringing with them the possibility of reorganization within the urban agglomeration. Rajka was “promoted” to be Bratislava’s potential suburbia and gained instant advantage over the already saturated suburban villages: property prices were much lower than those of its Slovakian “fellows”, and it was also much less saturated.

The influx of immigrants from Bratislava to Rajka received strong publicity in the Hungarian national press, too. The changes in the community, social transformation, coexistence within the community together with the possible consequences all appear as relevant questions, which can also become relevant in other Hungarian villages (mainly in the Romanian border regions mentioned earlier) in the near future. The articles published can only be interpreted as snapshots, providing information about the current situation, based mainly on the locals’ reports, and require new field-days due to the fast-changing nature of social statuses. Only a few words have been said so far about the process regarding spatial formation, furthermore the changing language and social relationships presented street by street or perhaps by households were completely left out, or putting changes into the context of time and space. Based on what has been said so far, the aim of this study is the following:

- Our first goal was to define the processing of domestic and foreign (Slovakian) reports from the written media, the changes in the situation in Rajka, completed with information from the few scientific publications existing and our own information sources.
- Regarding Rajka’s ethno-linguistic pattern our preconception was that the changes in the ethnic characteristics – although they do not create any conflicts in everyday life – has a perceptible effect not only on the local community, but on Rajka’s visually measurable parts (e.g. public places). Our second goal was therefore to survey the local ethnic language circumstances, to characterize the current situation, and to analyse the temporal changes of the relative proportion of indigenous and immigrant populations.

- We also aimed to present the physical impact of the suburbanization process on the appearance of the village, and to compare the current and previous state of the settlement. We assume that the transformation of the built environment on this local scale is very significant and reveals a lot about the direction and speed of this process.

Rajka, in its own complex case offers a rather diverse academic subject, in fact there are hardly any past or present social changes in the village which would not offer significant professional results when assessed. Furthermore – like it often happens on a local scale – information arising while carrying out the research or extra information experienced during field trips can lead to several further questions (i.e. migration within Rajka or the condensation of the built-in areas in the settlement). These questions – since they are in line with our two main objectives – were also included within the topics we wanted to analyse.

## METHODS

In order to present the current situation of Rajka, reports from previous domestic publications provided a sufficient background; we regard these articles and field trips as academic literature, which complement the actual information provided to us by local sources. Thanks to their local knowledge, we could not only discover parts of the village that is relevant to our topic, but from their opinions and personal anecdotes (the state of the local property market, the characteristics of the migration or local conflicts) we could discover their point of view regarding the landslide-like changes that happened over the past decade. It was important to us that both the native and the immigrant side was represented, so we worked with two informants. We present the reasons for the social changes in the settlement by looking at material already published together with the opinion of the locals; we also show which are the factors that still have an effect, and what new effects lined up with them since. By shedding some light on to the questions not yet examined we establish the foundation to our research.

The previous researches – despite being well-founded – need updating due to the dynamic changes that occur in the area. The academic literature relevant to our subject requires further expansion, which is the aim of this article, together with assessment of the changing pattern of the inner language- origin and the changing appearance of the settlement. Despite the fact that the number of professional publications is fairly low, the Hungarian and Slovakian media quickly snapped up the subject. Besides the regional publication called *Kisalföld*, journalists from other countrywide press releases (*Magyar Nemzet*, *Heti Világgazdaság*) and from Slovakian newspapers and periodicals became “regulars” in Rajka, presenting from time-to-time the unique development in the community and other actual changes. Apart from the academic publications, we analysed 20 articles out of the ones that were published in these journals, both in the printed and online versions.

When examining the appearance of the settlement we concentrated on the changes, which in the case of Rajka can be well detected even within a few years. 250 photographs were taken during the field-day (April 2017). Due to the lack of previous field-research we compared the photos taken by us to those from the database of Google Street View from December 2011, identifying the locations on the pictures and then comparing the two stages. Besides the fact that we are talking about a mere six-year period, we are convinced that the substantial transformation proves

In Rajka`s case we have to be careful when using the terms native and indigenous, since a large percentage of Hungarian nationals living in Rajka today can only trace back their family members coming from Rajka to the end of World War II. The village was mainly inhabited by Germans residing in Hungary, who were only replaced with Hungarians following their deportation in 1945. Regardless, we can call the Hungarians and the few Germans who stayed behind natives, in order to clearly distinguish them from those who moved here from Bratislava after the year 2000.

Besides the facts above, any kind of visual information can play a part, which in any way contributes to understanding the general linguistic aspect, or to establish the original background of the population. This is how registration numbers of vehicles on and off the road or the occurrence of cars with different number plates (Hungarian or Slovakian) could qualify as usable data. The monitoring of the cars` number plates as a research tool mainly appears when detecting the cars or when conducting criminal investigations. Many case studies draw attention to the wealth of information when it comes to number plates (Du et al. 2012, Prates et al. 2014), which aims to partially identify the owner. It is also mentioned by László et al. (2011) in a similar context, but with a different topic. He focuses on identifying the origin country of visitors in tourism related research. Both approaches can be useful to us. However, it is important to stress that since the method is based on simple observations, it can only be used with necessary caution or together with other methods.

Based on previous information it became clear that during the investigation we cannot ignore Rajka`s unique inner structure, fragmented build. Consequently, we differentiated between the “old” part of the village that can be traced back to many centuries, but in terms of its buildings was predominantly established between 1960 and 1980, and the “new” part which was built after 2007 and almost entirely inhabited by people originating from Bratislava. The two parts show significant differences, comparing them further enriches our research.

As we mentioned in the introduction, previous publications dealing with Rajka were missing the presentation of the changes in the spatial structure, therefore visualisation with the help of a map became an important method, giving an insight into the social-immigrational process and the current linguistic structure.

## SUBURBANIZATION IN CROSS-BORDER ZONES

The enlivening of the cross-border migration with aims to settle down in Western-Europe can be linked to past few decades' integration process, but in the same time the development of the transportation infrastructure plays an important role, too. The increase of cross-border residential mobility is in coherence with some level of decrease of the state's power, and with EU guidelines urging free movement and ensuring the right to stay (Jagodic 2010). To the west from us, this could be felt straight after signing the Schengen Treaty in 1985, especially in the German-Dutch (Strüver 2005), Belgian-Dutch (Van Houtum and Gielis 2006), and the French-German (Terlouw 2008) border zones, but it appeared relatively quickly in the Central-European countries that joined after the turn of the millennium, first of all at the Slovenian-Italian border (Jagodic 2011).

After the process had become widespread in Western-Europe, it could also be experienced in Central-Europe in an increasing number. The increasing level of mobility mentioned earlier falls into this category, at part of the Italian-Slovenian border, but we can detect several similar cases in the Pannonian Basin, too. The abolition of passport checks in 2007 (within the Schengen region towards Austria, Slovenia and Slovakia) and checks being simplified (towards Romania and Croatia) in many cases leads to unionisation of the agglomerations of towns (e.g. Oradea / Lovas Kiss 2011/ and Košice [13][14]).

In Slovakia a suburban process can be detected near several urban centres, out of which two are very significant on a national level (Bratislava and Košice), apart from these, movement to suburban areas can be noticed in Banská Bystrica, Prešov, Trnava, Nitra, etc. (Sveda 2014). Authors who are engaged in this subject stress that the process is very significant on a Slovakian scale, however rather low-key when compared to Western-Europe (Sveda, Krizan 2011). The only exception is Bratislava, where the level of the population affected by suburbanization and the speed of the process proves to be especially remarkable. The core of the city of Bratislava had significantly started to lose its population at the mid-1990s, the surrounding settlements could register a considerable level of immigration from around the turn of the millennium (Slavik et al. 2011). Although the most intensive period of immigration falls between 2003 and 2008 (Sveda 2011; Sveda, Suska 2014), its intensity is still notable today; the constantly appearing new property development plans and investments show that demand for newly built property in the Bratislava area will remain significant in the next decade (Sveda, Suska 2014).

On the Austrian and Hungarian side settlements that lie the nearest to Bratislava and can easily be reached on the motorway (Berg, Hainburg, Kittsee, etc. and Rajka, Bezenye, Mosonmagyaróvár, etc.) became the targets of the newcomers (Ira et al. 2011). In the first few years Rajka was mainly chosen by high earners who were highly qualified and at the beginning bought already existing properties, which they then renovated. Even then a still existing practice was detectable (this worries many of the local residents), which involves local residents of Rajka selling their

houses or flats to buyers from Bratislava at a price that is much higher than their realistic value, then leaving the village. This resulted in a population decrease in Rajka before 2009, however this was also the result of the fact that a large proportion of the newcomers did not formally register in the village (Slavik et al. 2011). This, as the number of the non-registered residents keeps increasing, is proving to be a growing problem for the local authorities, while it is taking its toll on services and infrastructure of the village, since they were designed for a settlement with a lot smaller population. Ira, V. and their colleagues (2011) write about the problems of Rajka in great detail, which in fact appeared when the first wave of newcomers had arrived. Our study can be interpreted as an answer to the topics and questions raised by them (the unique nature of suburbanisation in Rajka, language barriers, the social status of those moving out, the position of the community etc.) for further analysis.

The development of a suburban zone in the Bratislava area and its spreading across the Slovakian-Hungarian border is a well-known process for social scientists thanks to the works of Hardi, T. and Lampl, Zs. in particular. The negative effects of the political transformation were reasonably small on the Slovakian capital; Slovakia's independence gave the country an even stronger growth economically and in its regional organisational powers, after 1993. Its population grew fast in the second half of the 20th century: from 193 thousand to 442 thousand within four decades. Large percentage of the growth was made up of the influx of workforce ensuring the operation of new industrial sites. The immigrational background – with generational time lag – is shown in the flexible approach toward moving on, and in Bratislava's case this forms an important base for the suburban process (Lampl 2010). The intense and mutual relationship of the western part of the Slovakian-Hungarian border was already developed during the socialist era, mainly in the form of work exchange (Hardi 2011). Also, a telling data, that 50% of Slovaks living in the Slovakian-Hungarian border region of the Bratislava area regarded being near the neighbouring country as an advantage, while out of those living on the Hungarian side only one tenth said the same (Hardi and Lampl 2008). Hardi, T. paid special attention to linguistic attitudes during his 2009 research, and he established that 80% of the immigrants had Slovakian nationality, but every other person spoke or understood Hungarian to some level. According to the author's new research only 29% of those living on the Slovakian side of the Bratislava agglomeration said that they could manage without speaking Slovakian, while on the Hungarian side 76% of the immigrants said that they could get by without speaking Hungarian. This is of course strongly related to the fact that part of those who move to Hungary have no intention of adjusting to their new environment, they have no need to do so; the fact that they feel at home in Rajka does not mean a change in identity (Hardi 2011). Four fifth of them agreed that they had a helpful and friendly welcome by the locals, regardless whether they had Slovakian or Hungarian nationality. Their positive experience however has little impact on their mobility for work, 82% of them worked in Bratislava, and only one tenth in their current place of residence (Lampl 2010).

If we do not just focus on the relationship between Bratislava and Rajka, but we examine one of its main unique features, the language issue on a European scale, we can find many examples where migration from central towns to suburban zones had a significant effect on the linguistic-ethnic pattern of these zones. Crossing the border is not the only way for this process to happen, like in the Italian, German and Dutch examples we have mentioned earlier. It can also originate from the central town being more ethnically diverse than its surroundings, and because of this the linguistically and ethnically heterogenic migrating population will turn the population of the neighbouring settlement heterogenic, too. The case of Lugano in Switzerland is an excellent European example for this process, where 40% of the city's population is not from Swiss origin, but immigrants who had arrived from nearly a hundred different countries. Diversity in residential preferences can be shown in how certain ethnic groups place themselves within a city, for example the level of segregation, and it also shows great diversity when it comes to moving into suburban areas (Ibraimovic, Masiero 2014). One thing is sure, that due to this process the neighbouring rural settlements become linguistically much more mixed. The diverse city – homogenic countryside dichotomy is not only a unique feature of the suburbanisation in Western-Europe, we can also experience this in Eastern-Central Europe. The clearest examples can be discovered at the Baltic region, where in the Soviet era the industrialization was in connection with the influx of Slavic (mainly Russian) speaking nations, altering the nationality ratios of scarcely populated areas. More than a third of the population of Tallinn and Riga is still Russian, but the Slavic population also makes up a significant proportion in other cities (amongst others in Tartu in Estonia). Since the latter had arrived within organised frames, all in all they were met by ready housing estates (providing relatively modern living facilities), while the Estonian and Latvian population lived in the more scarcely populated outskirts of towns in detached houses. Segregation deriving from this and segmentation experienced in the standard of living had fallen since 1991, however it is still an important characteristic of cities in the Baltic region (Kontuly, Tammaru 2006; Hess et al. 2012; Krisjane, Bezins 2012; Leetmaa et al. 2015).

### **CAUSE OF THE CHANGES: BRATISLAVA**

Between 2004 and 2008, 130-140 properties came under Slovakian (Bratislava) ownership, the number of those who moved across reached 400. After the first impressions it became obvious that:

- the new arrivals have a much higher income than the residents of Rajka, which soon led to a rise in otherwise attractively low property prices on this side of the border;
- the rise in property and land prices led to the departure of the residents of Rajka, because those who are about to start a family are unable to pay such high prices, and property owners are better off selling and moving away;

- the new arrivals' social (community life, education, health and social services, local interaction, self-organisations) and economic (using local shops and services, adding to the income of the settlement) integration into the local community is minimal, although there has been a slight improvement in the past few years.

The phenomenon of rising property prices has been a common scheme in both the closer and wider areas outside Bratislava; but in Rajka's case – due to the previously relatively low prices and the fast-accelerating demand – this rise is a lot more dynamic than that experienced on the Slovakian side. Based on data collected from Hungarian property sites and on Slovakian statistics, in 2008 house-, flat- and land prices in Bratislava were three to five times as high as those in Rajka. Only nine years later the difference is only one and a half to twice. In the meantime, property prices in Rajka are getting closer to those in villages in the Bratislava area, which are much more affected by suburbanization, whereas the difference there, too used to be significant (Table 1). Meanwhile the price of a house or a flat in Rajka is twice as much as it was in 2008; in terms of land prices the rise was somewhat slower.

	2008			2017		
	house	flat	building plot	house	flat	building plot
Bratislava	320	470	450	147	222	228
Bratislava region	220	0	375	123	156	158
Rajka	100	100	100	100	100	100

Table 1. Property prices in Bratislava, Bratislava region and Rajka between 2008 and 2017

(Rajka=100; source: [1][3][5] [21] [22] [23])

The never-before experienced, dynamic transformation in the local area means new challenges to the community, both native and immigrant:

- the number, income, qualification etc. of those moving in is attractive, which according to the native residents contributes to – through the rise of the population and proportion of young people, and also through changes in the physical surroundings – the invigoration of community life;
- both the leaders and the residents of the community resent the fact that even though the immigrants are using the infrastructure of the settlement the majority of them still works and pays taxes in Bratislava, or many of them live in Rajka without being registered there, which leads to a controversial position in the – normative and task based – Hungarian social support system [3];
- the native residents of Rajka are not in favour of the fast-changing appearance of the village, the spreading of the urban lifestyle, the increasing traffic, nor the poor knowledge of the Hungarian language within the Slovakian residents;



- there are frequent complaints that the fast-rising property prices put great pressure on the native families, who in many cases bought their houses with a mortgage, this way the immigrants, by offering more than the market price, effectively force the locals to sell up and leave the village.

10% of Rajka`s population was changed until 2008, one fifth of the population was “Slovakian” in 2009. Until then 13 children were taken out of the kindergarten, because of moving [2], however after 2009 the institution became more and more popular amongst the immigrants, which made it necessary to employ a Slovakian nursery teacher [5]. In 2015 one third of the 69 children enrolled came from Bratislava [18], in 2017 this proportion rose to 35-40%. Uniquely, the local school does not follow the same trend, almost everyone chose schools in Bratislava: in 2015 out of the 149 pupils only one has Slovakian nationality [16]. The effect of moving away can also be felt here, the number of pupils decreased by 13% between 2006 and 2009. The German ethnic heritage can be detected at primary school, in the institute that teaches the ethnic language, German is taught in a high number of lessons since year one, the Local Government of German Ethnicity contributes to the running of the school. The bilingual German minority with dual identity is active in maintaining traditions, and according to the informers adopts well to the new situation (other minority groups also turned up in the village). The immigrants however cannot form a Slovakian Local Government until they take up Hungarian nationality. This however cannot be expected due to Slovakian law that makes having dual nationality impossible.

As Lampl (2010) summed it up residents of Rajka who originally came from Bratislava have had a high level of satisfaction rate right from the start .

***“This is my home, but I am also a guest here. We have to bear this in mind and behave accordingly. We are European citizens with common interests. It is important to avoid negative stereotyping, and not to consider only our own interests” [15]***

The quotation above is from a man who moved from Bratislava, his wife is an ethnic Hungarian from Slovakia, his children are bilingual. They arrived in Rajka at the start of the “moving out fever”, their jobs and other connections ties them mainly to Bratislava, but at the same time they have a good relationship with the locals, and unlike other immigrants they enrolled their children at the school in Rajka. The few sentences above describe the new residents` cautious attitude well, they show the willingness to integrate, but also that the right approach from the natives is necessary in order to achieve this. However, not everyone wishes for integration in the community: it can happen, that the new residents are happy, because “there is a close Slovakian community” [17] in the new residential area in the outskirts of Rajka. This view can suggest a different meaning when phrased differently:

***“For us it is good that they are coming here, because the village is developing nicely. Sometimes people are cursing each other, but this happens in other villages, too. In the so-called Slovakian quarter people are closer than the natives of Rajka.” [18]***

Conflicts and more significant protests only happened in the first few years, in forms of signs in public places, graffiti (“*Slovaks, the Hungarian land is not for sale!*”) [1], vandalization of vehicles with a Slovakian number plate, protests organized by the border (in which, according to the locals no one from Rajka participated). Provocation also happened on the Slovakian side, coming from an estate agent who painted a depressing picture of the immigrants’ situation, he stated that “*70% of the Slovaks wants to pack up because of the incidents, the rest is contemplating weather to stay or not.*” This statement was received with an uproar from the Slovaks in Rajka, stressing their peaceful coexistence with the locals [4]. According to similar experiences of the informants and local reports the difference between the new and the old residents lost its ethnic dimension at an early stage, today it is fed -with low intensity- by differences in points of view and lifestyle (city vs country life, locals vs immigrants) [6]. One of our informants who is a native Hungarian but lives in a mixed marriage mentioned the following statement that refers to those who come from a different environment (other settlement, other country): “*It happened that my children were mocked as Slovaks at school*”. Nowadays there are only very few frictions, there is an opportunity for the two communities to get closer to one another through programmes that are open to everyone, clubs, special occasions (mother and baby club, sport club etc.). According to our informant, unfortunately the new residents very rarely visit local community events in Rajka, which shows that their local identity is still in an immature state. Restaurants and pubs are proving to be more suitable to spend time together, one in particular, a “Slovakian Pub” which opened a few years ago in the south part of the village and run by a native Hungarian businessman who moved here from Slovakia. This pub is visited by both Hungarians and Slovaks [15].

As we mentioned earlier, Rajka is not the only target destination of the immigration. In 2011 Rajka had the highest number (535 people, 19% of the residents). At the same time significant Slovakian community can be found in Mosonmagyaróvár (284 people, 0.9%), Bezenye (131 people 9% [1][7]) and Dunakiliti (126 people, 6%), which means that in 2011 only 40% of Slovaks of this area lived in Rajka [24]. In 2017, the second largest Slovakian community after Rajka could be found in Mosonmagyaróvár (500-600 people) [9].

Year	Number of properties	Population		%			Proportion of the registered newcomers (%)
		Census	Estimation	Indigenous	Newcomers		
					Slovak	Hungarian	
2007	930	2 504	2 500	100	0		100
2009	949	2 385	2 800	80	16	4	85
2012	1 161	2 561	3 600	61	29	10	71
2015	1 339	2 607	4 500	49	36	15	58
2017	1 556	2 843	5 300	43	38	19	54

Table 2. Examination of the number of properties and inhabitants by timeline in Rajka

(source: [1][5][8][18][19][20][25])

In 2009 the number of immigrants was 500, in 2010 it was 900, and in 2012 it was up to 1400, which shows that the recession during this period did not affect the growing number of immigrants from Bratislava. Thanks to the continuous demand – unlike in other parts of the country – property prices did not drop here, on the contrary, they continued to rise. Due to increasing demand not only detached houses were built or purchased, in 2012 four blocks of flats with 29 flats in each were under construction, which in the meantime were all completed [8]. In 2013 the Local Government allocated 131 new building plots [14]. We only have indirect information about the origin of the immigrants, at the beginning they probably arrived from the nearest part of Bratislava, called Petržalka, which is the home of 106.000 people and consist almost entirely of high rise blocks of flats [14].

In 2015 the population of Rajka exceeded 4500, 50% of which are originally from Bratislava [18]. In the freshly allocated new living quarters, which was saturated within a couple of years practically everyone is from Bratislava, but their number rapidly increased in the old, central part of the village, too. According to our informant they were also in majority here by the year 2017.

***“For the first sight visitors would think that they are in a settlement of Csallóköz, there is perfect reception from the Slovakian mobile network provider. In some shop windows Slovakian, as well as Hungarian signs can be read. The street signs are in Hungarian, there are Hungarian and German signs on the walls of official buildings. The ratio of Hungarian and Slovakian cars is about fifty-fifty.”*** [18]

In 2017 the number of residents reached 5300, out of which 3300 had a registered address (Table 2). The remaining 2000 residents are without exception from a Slovakian origin, but out of those who have registered still at least a 1000 belong to this group. Their number all together gives almost 60% of the residents of the village. Out of them at least a 1000 people have Hungarian as their mother tongue, which means that so far, the Hungarians are still the majority in Rajka. Over the past few years the number of the ethnic Hungarians from Slovakia rose continuously, while 10 years ago, out of those originally from Bratislava 18% regard themselves as Hungarian, this number today is 33% (Lampl 2010). The departure of Rajka’s native residents is continuous, but has somewhat decreased since 2012, today purchasing property that became vacant (its owner diseased) from the inheritor is more significant. Besides building new properties, buying new flats or refurbishing old properties are all part of the process: so far approximately 500 properties were bought by Slovaks [7]. According to current planning the population of the village can rise up to about 7000, any higher number will require the assignment of new areas that can be built on. The population of Rajka is expected to reach the above number within five to six years [6].

Analysing the relationship between the two communities instead of peaceful co-existence – despite the many examples of mutual contacts and relatively conflict-free environment – we are more likely to talk about living next to one another. It is an unnerving thought that the spatial (separate living quarters where still more

than half of the immigrants live) and mental seclusion and the low level of interest in each other forms a gap between the new and the native residents, while the immigration continuous, with the lack of conscious integration and willingness to fit in this will stay the same or will keep re-occurring. As Lampl, Zs. said, spatial proximity has an effect on building a community (...), but whether they live segregated or together (...) they have different values, lifestyles, habits, and most probably financial situations (...). Perhaps this why they do not want or cannot participate in community life (Lampl 2010, pp. 102-103). Rajka`s residents who came from Bratislava so far kept a distance from important matters regarding the village and from the local elections, however in a few years` times they might want to express their wills in a much more determined manner [19]. It matters whether there will be two separate groups in Rajka, who hardly acknowledge one another or a much more united community.

### **HETEROGENIC VILLAGE CENTRE, HOMOGENIC NEW AREAS**

The monitoring of the ethnic spatial-pattern is the categorisation of public places with unique local relations, based on the linguistic-origin, illustrated in individual households. It was also monitored by surveying the registration numbers of local vehicles (as a unique add-on to the linguistic landscape). Based on the facts above we only examined one street (Móricz Zsigmond Str.), for the following two reasons: our informant could provide detailed information about this public space, plus conducting a similar survey in the "Slovakian quarter" was regarded unnecessary, due to their origin being identical. In the case of the registration numbers – since here the objects examined represent a much more dynamic category - we examined three different parts of the village.

Before presenting the results, it is important to stress that the area-pattern is first determined by the origin based on a person`s (former) address, this is followed by differentiation based on linguistic origin. On the one hand this came about when the informant clarified the situation, saying that the differences between Rajka`s social sections can be traced back to their lifestyle, and the main cornerstone of that is the place of origin. On the other hand, the informants could in every case determine the immigrant background or the lack of it (are there immigrants living there or not) of a community within households, or in public places, but determining their mother tongue proved a lot more difficult. Therefore, the aim was not to draw up Rajka`s ethnic map, but to present the diversity of a typical part of the village, based on origin.

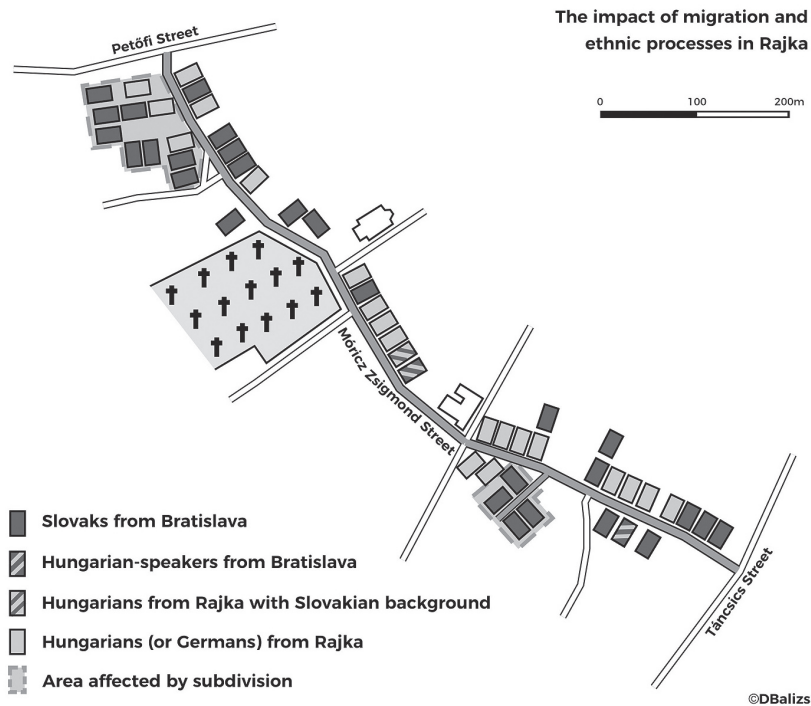


Figure 1. The impact of migration and ethnic processes in Rajka (Mórícz Zsigmond Street, source: own illustration)

Out of the 51 households identified 30 (59%) have a background from Bratislava. Our informant indicated that only in two of those households did the residents spoke Hungarian. This low figure can be explained with the fact that the informant could not identify the linguistic relationships within the households; in the same time, he stressed that the number of Hungarian speakers must be much higher than what he identified. The other 21 properties are inhabited by native Rajka residents; it should be noted here, that amongst them there are people who fled to Hungary, and there to the nearest village, Rajka, from the “Bratislava bridge-head” area, which was given to Czechoslovakia after World War II.

*“An old man standing in front of me in the queue talked with rage about the number of Slovaks coming to Rajka. It did not even occur to him that after the war he arrived from Čunovo, and the two things are not really that different.”* (Informant, Rajka)

The over-all view of the Mórícz Zsigmond Street is remarkable in the sense that despite the fact that it can be found in the centre (old) part of Rajka, the majority of the households have background from Bratislava (Figure 1). Based on the above, a so far hardly documented transition can be detected, which shows an influx of the new residents to the older parts of Rajka, too.

Surveying the number plates confirms the continuous influx of people from Bratislava into the old part of Rajka. In order to present the real-life situation, we conducted the survey on three different roots:

- in the new, easterly part of the village;
- in the centre of the village;
- in the west, which is a mixed zone regarding the age and characteristics of the buildings (older and new detached houses, old blocks of flats next to new housing estates).
- At the beginning of the survey we expected cars with Slovakian number plates to have clear majority in the new parts, while in the centre and other older parts of Rajka, besides a significant number of cars with Slovakian number plates we expected Hungarian ones to be dominant. During our field-trip we tried to only get each vehicle once into survey.
- In the newly-built area 95% of the vehicles out of the 196 we surveyed had Slovakian number plate.
- In the village centre we noted the SK mark on 51% out of the 147 vehicles surveyed. The primary school located here has hardly any Slovakian pupils, so all the cars parked outside had a Hungarian number plate.
- On the route leading to the west part of Rajka we counted 124 vehicles, out of which almost half (48%) had been registered in Slovakia (Figure 2).



Figure 2. Migration and ethnic processes in Rajka  
(source: own illustration)

## CHANGING APPEARANCE

The changes in Rajka`s settlement structure and buildings are happening in various ways, but the intensity and simultaneity of the changes are undoubtable. The number of flats (1430 in 2006) grew by 70% between 1990 and 2016, almost nine tenth of which happened after 2007. The growth speed in the past three years – despite the fact that the areas that currently have a building permit are becoming saturated, or perhaps for this very reason – has accelerated further (80-90 new flats per year).



*Figure 3. Fakopáncs Street and Pisztráng Street /in December 2011 and April 2017/  
(source: Google Street View [10] and own photos)*

The five and a half years that passed between downloading the pictures from Google Street View and our field-trip proved sufficient to notice significant changes in some parts of Rajka, in many cases the volume of these changes made it difficult to identify certain locations. Out of the newly built areas, north of the road leading to Dunakiliti, the building of the infrastructure had only just finished (or was still in progress) at the end of 2011, the freshly allocated pieces of land were either empty, or had half-built buildings on them. This area is now completely built-up, or shows further saturation (by dividing lands). South of the Rajka-Dunakiliti road we could find land untouched by developers (fields) even a few years ago. By now this is also a fully developed area, and living space per person – thanks to building rows of houses – is smaller than areas north of the main road (Figure 3).

Still we cannot talk about a complete change in appearance, the new arrivals are also obliged to keep to building regulations (which for example does not allow the building of flat roofs). The area fitted with public utilities was only included in the



village a few years ago, is now almost 100% saturated with only two or three streets that can still be built on. Further land suitable for building can be found north of the village, however allocating it is hindered by two factors:

- providing public utilities and building an access road would mean a one and a half to two billion Forint investment;
- both the leaders and the residents of the village disagree with further developments being carried out in Rajka, which in the long run, according to some people would lead to losing the feel of the countryside and the deterioration of living standard in the village; by which it would lose the attraction that defines its development at the moment.

The lack of space does not mean a decline in demand; this is why the local government is again forced to allocate new building sites, like in the 2007 period, despite “protests” against further developments. Even though property prices are stagnating at the moment, after a continuous rise in the previous years, a rise can be expected again when the available lands are all sold out. This does not slow down immigration but continues to force native residents to sell their property, and then move away. In addition, in 2008 the local government developed 50 building plots, especially for families in Rajka, and offered them significantly under the market price (3-4000 HUF per square metre), which attracted only 4 Hungarian, but 304 Slovakian bids [2].

People from Bratislava can find different solutions for the already existing problem of the shortage of land that can be built on or for restricting immigration, since so far there is no sign of decreasing demand for local property. One of the possible solutions is choosing another settlement; of course - as we have mentioned before - for many Rajka is not the number one target destination. The other solution is moving into the old part of the village by buying and renovating existing properties. This was already noted during field research - both by a survey carried out in Móricz Zsigmond Street and by looking at the number plates of cars here; photographic evidence taken here only confirms this statement. At the same time, local handling of the lack of space in the new streets does not only make the old part of the village more popular but leads to sub-dividing plots of communal land.

***“The process in which all the existing plots are being built on has really accelerated in the past few years. And the plots are fast running out. Because lots of the people, especially Hungarians arriving from Slovakia say, that they want to buy land in the old Rajka, not in the outskirts. Because this has more atmosphere.”*** (Informant, Rajka)

Dividing the building plots is becoming more and more common in Rajka, because there is plenty of room for one more building (detached house) at the back of the fairly big plots. To some extent this can be traced back through generations: it was a tradition in Rajka, that there was more than one house on each plot, separate one for the old and for the young.



The diverse nature of immigration is shown by the fact that the immigrants simultaneously move into the old and the new parts of the settlement, but the move can also happen at different stages. This means that the new resident first moves into one of the new housing estates (or old blocks of flats), then after a short while moves on to the old, usually central part of the village.

## CONCLUSIONS

The process happening in Rajka is in many ways; similar to others experienced in Hungarian or other European settlements (Strüver 2005; Van Houtum and Gielis 2006; Terlouw 2008; Jagodic 2010, 2011; Lovas Kiss 2011); amongst these can be mentioned the cross-border aspect of suburbanisation (as the foundation of changes), the conflicts of interest between the immigrants and local residents, the changes of appearance, and the somewhat contradicting transformation of the language issues. By this we mean the appearance of many Hungarian-speaking residents, who only change certain elements of the language pattern of the effected are, since taking part in the community's life, and the usage of local institutions and services (so far) only partially happened (Hardi and Lampl 2008; Hardi 2011). For example, in Rajka's case the local kindergartens have a large number of immigrants while their number is insignificant in local primary schools. Clearly this issue is not only very important in terms of ethnic pattern, but also in relation to local economic and social relations, and the every-day operations of the village. A certain percentage of the newcomers are native Hungarians, which can be traced back to the regional positioning of Hungarian people within the Pannonian Basin.

The unique nature of Rajka comes from the outstandingly high intensity of this process, which without a doubt can be traced back to the demographic and economic "strength" of Bratislava as a capital city. The fact that Rajka's language pattern is going through significant changes for the second time within a barely 70-year period can also be regarded as unique. Furthermore, the rate in which the originally local residents leave the village is particularly high, which is probably in connection with the facts stated in the previous sentence, and can lead to further acceleration of the process happening in the community.

Rajka's population and appearance has significantly changed in the last decade, the village is very attractive due to its geographical location, being near to the border and to the Slovakian capital city. Its population more than doubled, 60% of which are Slovakian nationals, still since part of them are ethnic Hungarians from Slovakia the leading language of the village remains Hungarian. The new residents occupy 500 properties all together, two-third of them found homes in the newly-built east side of the village, but many moved to the older streets, where there is a mosaic-like pattern in terms of co-habitancy. With the lack of new building plots, the new residents are increasingly targeting the old parts of the village, where in contrast, the native residents tend to move away from. Part of the reason for this is the

change in Rajka, the disappearing rural milieu, but the better financial background of the new residents also plays an important part: in several cases the immigrants buy the natives out of their properties, often by offering a much larger amount of money than the market price. Thank to this the property prices in Rajka started to rise fast, they in fact doubled within a few years.

There is a constant rise and change in the population, and although the relationship between the two groups is not effected by ethnic-linguistic conflicts, there are difficulties in integration, and the almost complete lack of purposeful integration keeps the interaction between the old and the new residents to a minimum. Residents from a Slovakian background are still tied to Bratislava through their work, social life and education, they hardly use services offered by Rajka, most of them live here unregistered. This means that the number of people using Rajka's infrastructure is a lot higher than those who contribute to its maintenance. Rising population and heavier traffic, difference between urban and country life lead to tension between the native residents and the immigrants. However, there are no conflicts when it comes to every-day communication, the future aim is to bring the two communities closer and help them to understand each other.

The appearance of the village has changed, the population's linguistic-origin diversity has significantly increased. Today many new resident, renovated or newly-built houses, Slovakian signs can be found even in the older parts of the village. The old part also became more attractive to the immigrants, as opposed to new residential quarters or flats in newly-built housing estates. The state of the buildings often makes the origin of the owner obvious even to the outside viewer. The demand for property remains high, which not only results in changes of the residents, but in more densely built-up areas (land division). Residents (old or new) who would like to preserve the rural feel of Rajka face a difficult decision: without extending the building areas the locals will move away and be replaced by those from Bratislava, on the other hand by assigning new building plots the population is expected to rise sharply. In either scenario the transformation of Rajka will continue.

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## NOTES

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