

Sociologies of Religion

National Traditions

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Society under Siege: The Peculiar Story of the Development of the Sociology of Religion in Croatia

Siniša Zrinščak

In a recent sociology class, I was talking about the social position of women in Croatia, using, of course, the concept of gender, and I was explaining to my students the difference between sex and gender. This coincided with an official letter published by the Croatian Bishops' Conference entitled "Man and Woman He Created Them," in which Croatian bishops vehemently opposed what they call a "gender ideology" within which, as they describe it, gender as a social construct allows total freedom about one's gender, which is completely unacceptable from the point of view of naturally given sex differences and is used primarily by those who want to promote the right to alternative sexual styles and behaviors. The letter came after years of heated debates about the content of sex education in public schools and about the position and rights of gay couples. After reading the document, it becomes clear that the bishops equate the term gender with "gender ideology," and in a way they focus only on the content of this "ideology," not referring to other social aspects of the social position of women and men to which the term gender applies.

As the term *gender* is a new concept that has been used in the Croatian society only in the last fifteen years, it has become burdened with opposing meanings. Thus, while using this concept in my class, I felt pressured to argue additionally that the sociological concept of gender was an analytical one, used to describe and understand the differences in the social position of women and men in different societies and in different times. Still, I felt many students looked at me with suspicion. I used much more time than I used in the past to explain the analytical value of the concept of gender, in varieties of its usage which, from my point of view, still do not discredit it as a scientific concept. From the looks of my students, I couldn't be sure that I succeeded.

This story is certainly not an exception. It is what sociology has had to deal with since its beginnings: different ideas, interests, power of groups and institutions. Today, I live in a democratic society and can freely teach my students what I know and believe sociology is, but I have often felt, not only in class but even more in public, under pressure to think how to express myself faced with

the reality of an extremely ideologically divided society. I have to think about how to say something without being misunderstood and without being “put” in an “ideological box.” I have been under pressure to try to defend sociology as science and to defend my sociological work from ideological labeling. I am also old enough to remember the time when an “inappropriate” sociological word could mean a real threat to one’s life. Therefore, the history of the sociology of religion in Croatia is not just a history of a science shaped by society in a sense that sociology is framed by the reality it analyzes. It has been the history of a science the pure existence of which has been seriously threatened.

That is why Bauman’s phrase “society under siege” (2002) is used in the title of this chapter, although with a different meaning. The phrase emphasizes the peculiar ways in which sociology has been shaped by social circumstances and underlines the main argument expressed several times in this chapter, which is that the history of the sociology of religion in Croatia (but also in other post-communist societies) is not only of purely historical interest but has contemporary relevance as well. Hence, the concepts of continuities and discontinuities are used as an underlying logic of this description, mainly in order to stress the need for more reflexivity about the long-term consequences of past development and about the peculiar ways in which social circumstances have shaped sociology today. Who sets the agenda in the sociology of religion and in which way remain open questions that are rarely raised. How is the agenda framed by history, by powerful social groups with their particular interests, and by uncritical use of concepts developed elsewhere?

Besides the introduction and conclusion, the chapter is divided in seven sections. It starts with the description of the development of sociology in the period before and after the Second World War, explaining effects of the social context on the development of both sociology and the sociology of religion. The development of the sociology of religion is analyzed in the course of two periods, during Communism and following its collapse. The last section aims to put the development of the sociology of religion in Croatia in the context of debates about its development in other countries of Central and Eastern Europe.

A Forgotten Early Period

Some might question the need to mention a very early period of the development of sociology (at that time not yet the sociology of religion), but its brief description is a telling illustration of the social circumstances which gave rise to the development of sociology and which lasted, in one way or another,

throughout the twentieth century. The first initiative aimed at establishing the Chair of Sociology at the Zagreb University Faculty of Law was presented at the Croatian Parliament in 1900. As part of the Austrian-Hungarian Empire at the time, Croatia had only limited executive power. However, the Chair of Auxiliary Criminological Science and Sociology (original Latin name: *Artes adiutrices juris criminalis et sociologia*) was established as early as 1906 at the Faculty of Law of the University of Zagreb, with Ernest Miler as its first Chair and Professor (Batina 2008, Ravlić 2008). Interestingly, he was the first Chair of Sociology in the whole Austrian-Hungarian Empire. At the beginning, sociology was an elective subject, while after the First World War it became obligatory, thus gaining full academic recognition.

In 1934 the chair was renamed the Chair of Sociology and Statistics. This recognition occurred in completely different social circumstances as the end of the First World War brought the collapse of the Austrian-Hungarian Empire and the establishment of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, later to become the Kingdom of Yugoslavia. The Kingdom was a predominately agrarian and, moreover, basically an undemocratic state. In 1929 the King took almost all power in his hands by limiting the power of the Parliament and passing laws that enabled repression of his political opponents. Yugoslavia was politically and ethnically divided and unstable, which was reflected in the possibilities of developing sociology. Following the first initiative of 1914, the Sociological Association was formed in 1918, at the very end of the First World War. According to the program it adopted, the Sociological Association sought to understand social processes, but mainly in a practical (positivistic) way in order “to help society flourish with the ultimate aim of finding a way to self-determination and accomplishment of genuine democracy” (Batina 2008: 48).

The practical perception of sociology coupled with the nature of the Croatian society in the first half of the twentieth century influenced the topics that preoccupied sociologists as well as other scientists (such as philosophers, lawyers, economists) whose work had some sociological relevance: theories of ethnic sovereignty, family and organizations in peasant society, social structure, deviance, health issues, and the like (Esih 1938 [2005]). The practical perception was also visible in the decision of 1920, although it was never carried out, to establish the Royal School of Social Work in Zagreb, the Croatian capital, where sociology and social policy was among main theoretical subjects (Ajduković and Branica 2006). All these activities produced few sociological or semi-sociological studies, but they prompted the translation of the book *Principles of Sociology* by the American sociologist F.G. Giddings, originally published in 1896 and translated into Croatian in 1924. Twenty years later the book *Einleitung in die Soziologie* by Hans Freyer was translated into Croatian as well.

The work of the Sociological Association was regularly presented in the *Revue internationale de sociologie*, published in Paris, by Juraj Andrassy who was for years its most prominent member and later the Secretary of the Association. Although important, these activities did not succeed in paving the way for later sociological development. The political situation in Croatia, the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, and across Europe was reflected in political differences among the members, which was one of the main reasons that the Society ceased to exist in the early 1930s. The Student Sociological Club was established in 1931, but was forbidden by the Government in 1933. Similar events followed with regard to sociology at the Law School.

When the Chair of Sociology and Statistics was established in 1934 Dinko Tomašić was elected an Assistant Professor, becoming a Full Professor in 1940. In the same year he got a scholarship and went to the United States, which was his second visit to the country, as he had studied there from 1932 to 1934. However, due to political processes at the time (the German invasion of Yugoslavia in 1941, which caused its breakdown, proclamation of the Nazi-puppet state of Croatia in the same year, and finally the formation of the Communist Yugoslavia in 1945), he never came back. He was appointed a Professor at Indiana University in Bloomington, where he stayed until his retirement in 1972. His work remained completely unknown to the wider public and sociologists alike until the early 1990s, when some of his publications were republished and discussed (e.g., Sociologija Dinka Tomašića 1992; Tomašić 1997, 2013).

The Late 1940s and Early 1950s: Sociology Expelled

The formation of Communist Yugoslavia with Croatia as one of its six federative republics in 1945¹ resulted in a completely new framework which erased from the collective memory the early experience of the development of sociology and, moreover, led to an official accusation that sociology was a “bourgeois” science, a science that was not appropriate for the new political order and therefore not appropriate to be taught at universities or to be developed as such. Though the story is generally well known in the literature about the Communist world, it is necessary to provide some details as the situation differed to a certain degree in different countries. A policy toward sociology

1 This chapter is about Croatia and focuses mainly on Croatia. However, as Croatia was part of the former Yugoslavia, in many instances, particularly in explaining the general social framework, the chapter simultaneously discusses Croatia and Yugoslavia and partly relies on literature by authors from other parts of the former Yugoslavia.

was changing during the Communist period, which is a fact that can explain the development of both sociology and the sociology of religion during the Communist period in some countries. Therefore, the main argument here is that despite problems, restrictions, suspicions, and some questionable results, both sociology and the sociology of religion managed to become respected scientific disciplines, at least to a certain degree, in Croatia and the former Yugoslavia, paving the way for the post-Communist development of sociology.²

There are two basic social factors which are of interest in this respect: The first includes church-state relations. Two basic periods may be identified in the former Yugoslavia (Roter 1976, Zrinščak 1993, 1999). The first one, which can be called a very restrictive period or a period of aggressive domination of state over the church, religion and religious people, encompassed the 1940s and early 1950s. It was primarily marked by the imprisonment of the Zagreb Archbishop Alojzije Stepinac for his alleged cooperation with the Croatian Nazi-puppet state during the Second World War. Archbishop Stepinac, convicted and later kept in home detention until his death in 1960, was to be nominated Cardinal in early 1953,³ which was an excuse for Yugoslavia to break diplomatic relations with the Holy See in December 1952. However, the situation eventually changed, leading to a normalization of relations and establishment of partial (1966) and later full diplomatic relations with the Holy See (1970). There are several internal and external reasons for this: Yugoslavia's independent political position between West and East, limited and controlled liberalization from the mid-1960s accompanied with more or less free crossing of borders, the Vatican's so called Eastern politics, boosted also by the results of the Second Vatican Council, which promoted the idea of dialogue, openness to the world and which was materialized in partial normalization of relations with Communist countries.

All of this brought about an easier life for the Church, particularly in comparison to many other former Communist states, but did not change the basically negative attitude toward religion and the Catholic Church, in particular, as the dominant religion in Croatia. Still, the observation and appreciation of changes allows a more nuanced analysis which could differentiate between the administrative and pragmatic state policy and, indeed, their different combination, even spatially different. Very interestingly, the administrative restriction of Church activities was based on the constitutional principle of church-state

2 This can be claimed also for some other former communist countries, but this is not a topic of this particular chapter.

3 Cardinal Stepinac was declared martyr and beatified in 1998 by Pope John Paul II, while the on-going process of his canonization is drawing to an end.

separation, which was interpreted in a very restrictive sense (religion allowed only on Church premises and private homes). This interpretation, although not very often spelled out, was based primarily on complete political domination of the state, i.e., on an equivalency of state and society. Even more interestingly, the principle of Church-state separation was officially promoted as a modern principle and was very present as a topic in the later development of the sociology of religion. Thus, the sociology of religion had to deal with the principle and reality of Church-state separation, with the related secularization theory, and with the empirical fact of religion being very present in the social life of people. Reinterpretation of the principle of church-state separation has remained a main public issue in the post-Communist period and in the sociology of religion, not only in Croatia, but in other post-Communist countries as well. In what way this contemporary discussion has been influenced by the Communist legacy and by debates about the public-private elsewhere remains an open issue.

The second related fact is the domination by the ideology of the Communist Party, with atheism as one of the basic features (Zrinščak 1999, 2004). There is the possibility to trace changes here as well. An argument may be developed here about changes from a very aggressive atheism demonstrated in the early post-war period to more or less free theoretical debates about aspects of the Marxist relation to religion and even the debate about the need to change this policy (though to a lesser extent visible/meaningful to the general public). Still, the main document of the Communist Party (renamed the Communist League in 1952), the Communist League Program passed in 1958, and remained unchanged until the end of the Communist period, highlighting the need for the “ideological fight of communists against religious and other fallacies and superstitions” (Zrinščak 1999: 57). Although the program did not suggest any administrative fight against religion, it accused religion of being a fallacy that would disappear through ideological battle and (this should be underlined) “social development.” The administrative fight against religion was held for “attempts to use religious feelings for political ends or church for anti-socialist forces,” a phrase the reinterpretation of which was left to those in power, while its usage varied partly due to different combinations of administrative and practical state policy. The last phase of the Communist period witnessed also theoretical debates about the need to change such a view on religion, attempts that were not successful, as the Communist Party missed the opportunity to reform itself.

Therefore, was sociology possible in any way? Yes, it was, although the path to it was far from an easy one.

From the Late 1950s Onward: Emergent Sociology

As already mentioned, the specific Yugoslav political position produced some positive results in terms of sociological developments. Although after Tito's break from Stalin in 1948 political repression became even harder, the first half of the 1950s witnessed slight political liberalization. Even though the word *liberalization* seems to be inappropriate, the fact is that a somewhat changed political climate was accompanied by debates, which were mainly restricted to only a few journals and intellectual circles of the University of Zagreb. These were not so much about sociology as a separate discipline (what makes it a specific discipline?), as they were about the relation between sociology and Marxism, about "Marxist" and "bourgeois" sociology, according to the terms used at the time. In fact, and despite its later development as an "unquestionable" discipline with its full academic status and empirical and theoretical work, the relationship between sociology and Marxism remained as one of the main issues throughout the Communist period. Still, sociology was introduced as an obligatory subject at the Faculty of Law, Faculty of Economics, and the Faculty of Philosophy during the 1950s, while most students at other faculties or schools still had to take a course on the "basics of social sciences," which was in most cases more Marxist oriented. Full-fledged establishment of sociology came with the foundation of the Croatian Sociological Association in 1959, but more effectively with the foundation of the Department of Sociology at the University of Zagreb Faculty of Philosophy in 1963 and the establishment of the social science research centers (the first one, the Institute for Social Research of the University of Zagreb, was established in 1964).

Following that, the scientific journal *Revija za sociologiju* (*Review of Sociology*) was launched in 1971, while sociology was introduced at other faculties of Zagreb University and across other universities in Croatia. The introduction of sociology as a subject in secondary schools (gymnasiums) contributed to its widespread visibility. The evaluation of this development is not possible here and it's basically not fair to summarize it in few sentences. This is also connected with the fact that sociology was diversified in theories and empirical results. Sociologists from the former Yugoslavia, and particularly those from Croatia (and Slovenia), were more Western oriented and had some opportunities to study abroad, in different Western European countries and the USA. As a student at the Department of Sociology of the University of Zagreb in the early 1980s, I can testify from my own experience that we learned, without prejudice and ideological judgments, about different sociological schools. Empirical studies were done following the then-standard methodological guidelines. Some sociologists, particularly those more empirically oriented, found a way

of doing empirical research inspired by different theories, including those of non-Marxists. Still, Marxism was omnipresent. It was the so-called soft, humanistic, Frankfurt-school-like Marxism, the type of Marxism which was promoted in Zagreb, based on the internationally recognized journal *Praxis* (particularly as some well-known Frankfurt school thinkers actively participated in it), and which had a huge impact on the Department of Sociology, although not on all the scholars working there.

Marxism was more present in textbooks used at other faculties of the University of Zagreb, where sociology was taught as an introductory subject. Nevertheless, the sociology taught there was a reality of the Communist state, partly of a different kind than that of other states of the Soviet bloc, but still a reality of a very Communist state. It was the reality of a non-democratic state in which state/party officials carefully monitored all that was going on. At that time the power of monitoring and influencing things weakened slightly but disappeared fully only in 1990, when the non-Communists won the election. In a word, sociology was established as a respectable science, but a science which reflected very specific social circumstances, the development of which was shaped by these very circumstances, particularly in terms of financing, use of results (which sometimes revealed a reality very different from that present in the official image), social expectations about its role in society, and so on.

... And Sociology of Religion

The development of sociology was a crucial precondition for the development of the sociology of religion. Interestingly, the development of the sociology of religion did not come later, after sociology itself had been established, but was happening in parallel. The word “interestingly” should be underlined, as the sociology of religion has to deal with a politically very sensitive subject. In that sense, the story about the sociology of religion is instructive for sociology in general, both in Croatia at that time and still today (Zrinščak 1999).

First, theoretical papers about religion were written by Oleg Mandić and Ante Fiamengo, who wrote a series of papers about religion in scientific journals and other publications during the 1950s, mostly from the Marxist (Engels's) point of view. Mandić was a key representative of Marxist sociology, which is visible in his textbook *Introduction to General Sociology* from 1959—the first general presentation of Marxist sociology (Ravlić 2008). Fiamengo, on the other hand, started his career in Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and later became

a professor at the University of Zagreb. In 1957 in Sarajevo he did the first sociological study worth mentioning. It was a survey among the University students about “their relation towards marriage from the point of view of ethnic and religious belonging” (Fiamengo 1960). The results were later presented at the World Congress of Sociology and published in the *Archive de sociologie des religions* (1963). Still, there is an agreement that the cornerstone of the sociology of religion is to be found in another study in Bosnia and Herzegovina by Esad Ćimić in 1963, who was born in Bosnia and Herzegovina and taught sociology in Sarajevo and later at the Universities of Zadar (Croatia) and Belgrade (Serbia).⁴ Ćimić profoundly influenced the sociology of religion in Croatia and in Yugoslavia as a whole. He studied relations between the so-called self-management (which was a type of socialism present in Yugoslavia at the time which allowed, at least manifestly, the involvement of workers in the management of companies) and religion, on the basis of which he defended his doctoral thesis, later published as an influential book.

There are some other individuals and events that also contributed to the establishment of the sociology of religion in Croatia. Srđan Vrcan, who taught sociology at the University of Split, was interesting for his empirical and theoretical work. He started publishing extensively in the late 1960s. He was involved in or coordinated some of the most influential empirical work like research on youth in Yugoslavia in which, for example, the religiosity of youth was one of the most important aspects of that research (Vrcan 1986b, 1988). However, he published many theoretical papers as well. One of the most important was his study with a telling title: *From Crisis of Religion to Religion of Crisis* (1986a). He was also internationally acclaimed and was for years a member of the Editorial Board of the journal *Social Compass*.

The Institute for Social Research of the University of Zagreb established its Department for Studying Religion and Atheism, which eventually gathered sociologists whose empirical studies and theoretical work marked the period, most notably Štefica Bahtijarević, Ljudevit Plačko, Nikola Dugandžija, and Đuro Šušnjić. The Institute and the Faculty of Political Science of the University of Zagreb coordinated the first postgraduate study entitled “Theories of Atheism and Religion” in 1967. A few of the sociologists who later became influential had completed that post-graduate course and eventually defended their doctoral theses. Still, it took time to establish the first fully sociological postgraduate program in the sociology of religion at the University of Zagreb in 1984. The course was the first and the only postgraduate course (which lasted for two

4 Today (2014) Esad Ćimić is Professor Emeritus of the University of Zadar and lives in Zagreb.

years at the time) in the sociology of religion then in Yugoslavia. It was chaired by Vjekoslav Mikecin, a sociologist and philosopher, professor of the sociology of culture at the University of Zagreb, who published only a few papers on the sociology of religion, but had a vision about advancing the study of religion from the sociological point of view. He also played a key role in introducing a course on the sociology of religion as a subject at the Department of Sociology of the University of Zagreb in the late 1980s. Most of the sociologists of religion active today (including myself) completed this course and obtained an M.A. in the sociology of religion in the late 1980s and defended their doctoral thesis during the 1990s.

In the formative years of the sociology of religion, its development was also boosted, and became internationally recognized, by the decision to hold a Conference of the International Society for the Sociology of Religion in 1971 in Opatija, a small *Croatian* coastal town, although it was recorded that the conference had been held in Opatija, Yugoslavia. But more important, Croatian sociologist Vrcan played a key role when it came to the decision to hold the Conference in Opatija,⁵ while Bahtijarević was intensely involved in organizing the Conference. Papers of three Croatian sociologists (Vrcan, Bahtijarević, Ćimić) and one Slovenian (Zdenko Roter) were published in the Conference Proceedings. Finally, last, but certainly not least important in this section enumerating names and events, the work of Jakov Jukić should be emphasized. A lawyer by education and profession, and an openly religious person, he was a real outsider in comparison to other sociologists of religion who had a chance to work or research at universities (although some of those previously mentioned had problems with authorities, such as Esad Ćimić who, due to his writings, lost his job at the University of Sarajevo in Bosnia and Herzegovina, but found a new one at the University of Zadar in Croatia). Being an outsider, he chose to publish under the pseudonym of Jakov Jukić rather than under his real name of Željko Mardešić, which he used as a writer in the post-Communist period. As a very educated person and having had a chance to follow the most important literature published elsewhere in the world systematically (obtained through Church networks), he published a great number of very important sociological

5 It should be recorded also that the decision to hold the Conference in Opatija had wider relevance for the ISSR: "At the 10th conference in Rome, the general assembly decided to abrogate all denominational references in the new statutes. And to mark symbolically the openness of the association, it was decided that the next conference should take place in a communist country, i.e. in Opatija (Yugoslavia), the theme of this conference being 'religion and religiosity, atheism and non-belief in industrial and urban society'" (Dobbelaere 2014: 221).

papers, mainly in Church journals, but also in those issued by secular authorities. His papers were later collected in a number of books. Influenced substantially by phenomenology, he did not have the possibility (or even interest) of being involved in empirical work. Nevertheless, he produced outstanding pieces of work on secularization, revitalization, folk religion, dialogue, etc. In times when the literature was still not very available, his work was an important link to the varieties of the sociology of religion in the wider world.

The sociology of religion certainly gained its academic and wider social recognition during the Communist period. Scientific papers, books, research, conferences, and M.A. and Ph.D. theses are convincing proofs thereof. There is no space here to provide details, but some empirical studies that played a vital role are worth mentioning. They include research on the religious situation in the Zagreb area in 1972 and 1982, research on small religious communities in the late 1980s, different small-size research on the religiosity of students or youth, etc. Still, many limitations should be noted, and not only from the point of view of a purely historical reference.

The post-Communist times, and particularly the immediate post-Communist period, questioned, among other things, the previous development of sociology in general, and particularly the sociology of religion. The accusation about its profound Marxist orientation influenced the position of sociology and its possibility for development in the post-Communist period. Similarly to the accusation in the early Communist period that the sociology of the pre-Second World War period was a bourgeois science that should be completely forgotten and that a new social science created *ab ovo*, there were attempts to detach the “new” sociological development from its immediate history, which was visible in the creation of some new institutions. Still, the situation was not fully comparable to that after the Second World War, and the legacy of the Communist times continued to be influential as sociologists continued to work and “older” institutions continued to exist, some of them with remarkable success. Ideas about sociology being Marxist and therefore completely irrelevant for further development were not widely accepted and did not result in the intended consequences for the simple reason that the picture was much more nuanced.

Marxism was dominant in its soft, humanistic variety, but it was not an exclusive theoretical orientation. Although a clear non-Marxist orientation was marginal, there were many attempts among those who adhered to the general Marxist framework in order to accommodate to empirical data, which presented the main challenge. Despite considerable changes during the Communist period, Croatian society had remained very religious. The fact is that, similarly to some other former Communist societies, most notably those of Slovenia, Hungary and perhaps Slovakia, Croatian people were very religious in

the late 1940s and early 1950s. The 1953 Census data (the first Census after the Second World War and the last one in the Communist period which included data on confessional membership) showed 73.9% Catholics, 11.26% Orthodox, 0.18% Muslims, 0.5% Protestants, 0.473% followers of other confessions, and 13.59% who declared themselves as non-believers, non-declared, or agnostics (the category “not-known” was included in the last percentage as well). According to some sociological research, the late 1960s, 1970s and early 1980s saw changes that were interpreted in the sociological literature mainly in line with the secularization paradigm. The 1980s gave rise to contradictory trends, but in the late 1980s it became clear that secularization was in crisis and that revitalization was happening, which continued in the 1990s. However, this is a general picture based on the existing research data.

Although much research was conducted, we lack comparative data, and particularly data for the whole of Croatia, in order to gain a more detailed insight. Croatia is very diverse in different social aspects, and even today religiosity varies considerably across Croatian regions (Marinović Jerolimov and Zrinščak 2006). In addition, the link between religiosity and ethnic belonging has been strong in the history of Croatia/Yugoslavia. Yugoslavia was a federation consisting of six republics with many nations and religions. For example, Croats are pre-dominantly Catholic, and throughout the Communist period they were more religious than Serbs, who are pre-dominantly Eastern Orthodox, while in Croatia Serbs accounted for 12% of the population. These facts should be kept in mind when reinterpreting the existing data. Data pertaining to the city of Zagreb supported the secularization trend even in the late 1980s, though no longer at the very end of the Communist period (Bahtijarević and Milas 1990). However, research conducted among Split secondary school students suggested an undisputable revitalization trend already in 1984 on the basis of a comparison with a similar research from 1967 (Vušković 1988). In the city of Zagreb the trend toward greater religiosity was detected between 1987 and 1989, as between these two years the number of those without confession dropped from 34% to 20% (Marinović Jerolimov 1999: 193). There are no data for confessional belonging covering Croatia as a whole, but some other data suggest a slow revitalization trend. For example, the number of those who believed in God rose from 27% to 39% between 1984 and 1989, the number of those who doubted rose from 25% to 28%, while the number of non-believers dropped from 48% to 33% in the same period (Marinović Jerolimov 1999: 194). On the other hand, Slovenian sociologists had more comparative research and due to that, and maybe to some other reasons connected with features of Slovenian society, they were able to detect the crisis of secularization and the evident revitalization trend already in 1978 (Roter 1988, Toš 1993), when the same tendency

was noticed in Hungary (Tomka 1991). This short reflection on empirical data should be concluded with another interesting fact: In the country which was (ideologically) a country of workers, blue-collar workers, peasants and craftsmen were much more religious than professionals and the more educated, who had better chances, if and when they declared to be nonreligious, to occupy higher positions on the social stratification scale.

The general Marxist framework had to deal with data and reality. Explaining the way(s) how this was done calls for a detailed discussion, for which there is not enough space here, particularly as there were differences among sociologists. A significant problem is that there is a need to differentiate between Marxism, which in principle favored the secularizing data, and a secularization theory as such, which cannot be narrowed down to Marxism and which was very influential in the sociology of religion elsewhere. There is no answer to the question of whether data about the non-religious orientation could be interpreted as secularization at all or rather as anomie, as suggested by Tomka (1991), particularly considering the fact that Communist countries did not have a “normal” modernization process as was the case in the West. However, secularization theory was widely used, and even during the 1980s it remained the main theoretical basis for reinterpreting the opposite trends (Vrcan 1986). In explaining the religiosity of the people, Marxism was combined with psychological explanations in many cases, such as in researching the relations between religion and ethnicity, religion and crisis or religion and aging (Dugandžija 1983, 1989, 1991), the existential (functional) need for being religious was underlined. In some cases, data were presented without much explanation, and that can be considered a way of avoiding great official attention.⁶ And, beyond empirical data, to frame religion as culture and /or to underline its “emancipatory” potentials was a way of avoiding strict theoretical explanations.

This was visible in debates about the Christian-Marxist dialogue (for which it was important to find a common ground, thus underlying similarities rather than differences), in appreciation of Catholic social teachings, etc. Interestingly, framing religion as culture was also the way in which some Chinese scholars secured a non-ideological approach to religion. As argued by Fenggang Yang (2012: 54–57), the importance of the cultural approach to religious research is twofold: “First, when religion is studied as a cultural phenomenon,

6 Similar strategies used sociologists in some other countries. As Tomka (1990: 61) argued: “There are countries where Marxist and non-Marxist sociologies of religion exist side by side, the latter also having headquarters of their own (as in the GDR and in Poland). And, finally, in a third model, sociology of religion strives to keep away from Marxist versus non-Marxist debate and maintain its presence in both ways of thinking and subcultures (as in Hungary).”

its ideological incorrectness becomes unimportant and its scientific incorrectness obscured ... Second, the cultural approach makes religious research more wide-reaching and consequently academically rewarding." Similarities in general social situations provoked some similarities in avoiding ideological pressure on the sociological approach to religion.

New Society ...

With the collapse of Communism political suspicion toward religion disappeared and its public perception changed completely. It might have seemed that the new democratic social order would remove political obstacles and create social conditions that would favor the flourishing of sociology, particularly the sociology of religion. However, once again, the story was much more complicated. There are several reasons for this.

The transition from Communism to a democratic society and market economy proved to be much more painful and full of contradictions. The complete change of the social order at a time of rising global uncertainties and opposing ideas about a "good" society turned to be confusing and contradictory in many ways. Which should be the type of liberal democracy, how much social security should be guaranteed by the state, and how to care about "losers of transition"? In order to mark the time, the new political and social elite wanted to underline that a radical break was at stake, and thus everything from the past became suspicious. Sociology was no exception if (as in many cases) it could be accused of its relations with the past political order. Needless to say, such accusations were purely political without any intention of initiating the needed and important discussion about the theoretical and methodological legacy.

The particular Croatian situation was even worse in that respect. The collapse of Communism was at the same time the collapse of Yugoslavia, accompanied by the war started by the Yugoslav army, Serbia and local Serbs against Croatian independence. That complicated the transition process in a number of ways that affected science in general and sociology and the sociology of religion in particular. In the aftermath of the war (which lasted from 1991 to 1995, while the last part of the occupied Croatian territory was integrated into the Croatian order—peacefully—only in 1998), and amidst the state- and nation-building process, democratic development was rather slow and contradictory. Contrary to other post-Communist countries in which the transformation was intense and ultimately aimed at membership in the European Union, Croatia was in a kind of semi-isolation in the 1990s, with no developmental perspective. Isolation, coupled with the lack of money, affected scientific development.

Empirical research remained scarce until the very end of the 1990s. Participation in international scientific life (conferences, comparative research and the like) was not an easy endeavor. Although the situation has changed in the meantime, the consequences for the scientific development are still felt. In addition, sociologists tended to be critical toward political conditions in general, and to slow and painful democratization in particular. Critical voices towards the post-Communist situation were easily discredited as merely nostalgia for the past.

For the sociology of religion the new situation posed another type of challenge. The status of religion changed completely. It is not only that the negative attitudes collapsed, but religion became a very welcome social fact. Even more, the Catholic Church became a powerful social actor and had a privileged position among the public. To be openly religious became almost a pre-condition for being part of the new elite. In addition, and due to reasons already explained (particularly because of the overlapping of religious and ethnic identity), religion was an important factor in all processes connected with the breakdown of Yugoslavia and the war in Croatia and in neighboring Bosnia and Herzegovina. As explained elsewhere, though contested by some authors, religion was neither a cause nor a primary reason for war and conflict, but it was an important social factor used and misused by individuals and groups (Zrinščak 2002, 2013; Pace 2004).

In a word, the question was how to study a powerful social factor in a turbulent time, when social preconditions for sociology (in terms of funding and possibilities of participation in comparative research and international scientific life in general) were limited. Moreover, how would it be possible to study a powerful social actor which did not have much trust in the scientific profile of the sociology of religion?

... And “New” Sociology of Religion

As suggested so far, and irrespective of some official initiatives and actions, the sociology of religion continued to exist, although in changed circumstances. Therefore, the word “new” is to be understood not only within the changed context, but also in the sense of gradual change of generation, which brought new sociologists on the scene, mainly those who defended their theses during the 1990s and got a chance to be active and influence its future development.

1990s: Institutional Setting and Topics Researched

The main social research center, the Institute for Social Research of the University of Zagreb, continued to operate with a group of sociologists of religion. Three important facts influenced its functioning and position. The first one concerns official attempts to marginalize it or even close it down, as evidenced by the foundation of new institutions and difficulties of obtaining public money for empirical research. The second one is connected with the fact that sociologists of older generations retired in the 1990s (Štefica Bahtijarević, Nikola Dugandžija) or left the Institute (Đuro Šušnjić, Ljudevit Plačko). I worked there myself in 1991 but soon opted for a new institution in 1992, which reduced the group of sociologists of religion to only two members of younger generations (Dinka Marinović Jerolimov and Ankica Marinović), although later on a few junior researchers joined the group. The third one concerns the position of all research centers as they were turned to public institutions outside the university by the government decree of 1993, which reflected the wish of the government to have more control over research institutions. Still, the Institute continued research on minority religions, while in the late 1990s there was a research project on religious changes and values in Croatian society, on the basis of which papers were published in the Institute's scientific journal *Sociologija sela* (*Rural Sociology*). The Institute also did some other research within which the topic of religion was included (Marinović Jerolimov 1999).

In line with the governmental actions, a new Institute for Applied Social Research was founded in 1991, which also gathered some sociologists of religion (at the beginning Stipan Tadić and myself, as well as Ivan Grubišić in the Split branch of the Institute). Grubišić, who was an active Catholic priest but also completed an M.A. course in the sociology of religion in 1984 and later a Ph.D. thesis on the topic of the sociology of religion, became head of the Split branch of the Institute. The Institute, later renamed the Institute Ivo Pilar, launched a new social science journal *Društvena istraživanja* (*Social Research*) with myself as its first editor-in-chief. It eventually became a renowned journal for publishing papers and the first Croatian social science journal indexed in the Current Contents database (the Institute for Scientific Information, USA). Željko Mardešić cooperated actively with the Split branch, but this time under his real name as he eventually stopped using the pseudonym of Jakov Jukić, although some publications were still published under this pseudonym in the 1990s. Esad Ćimić also joined the Institute after he left Belgrade in 1991, but was later employed by the University of Zadar where he worked until his retirement.

Srđan Vrcan founded the Center of Socio-Religious Research in the late 1980s in Split, where a group of young sociologists of religion was employed (those attending the M.A. course in 1984), but due to lack of financing it was closed

in 1992. Vrcan, who was a professor at the University of Split and retired in the 1990s and younger sociologists working there eventually found new jobs, but the majority of them stopped being sociologists of religion as their career in other sociological disciplines progressed.

All these changes influenced the fact that only a few sociologists of religion of older generations continued to work and publish their papers (particularly Srđan Vrcan, Željko Mardešić, Esad Ćimić, and Nikola Dugandžija), but more in an individual manner. Works by Vrcan and Mardešić are the most important, and their great influence on the sociology of religion continued. Vrcan published some papers about religion and war in international journals (1994, 1998) and had a chance to do empirical research on religion in parts of Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, which was funded by Sweden and coordinated by Swedish scholar Kjell Magnusson. The research results, together with some other papers he wrote, were published in an influential book *Vjera u vrtložima tranzicije (Faith in the Whirlpools of Transition)* in 2001. By comparing the religiosity of people and the role of religion in Western regions of Croatia (Istria and Primorje), regions that were not directly involved in the recent war and had a rather different historical development, and in the part of Bosnia and Herzegovina populated by Croats, he particularly focused on the relations between religion and identity and the role of religion in the conflicts in Bosnia and Herzegovina. By using Roland Robertson's thesis about politicization of religion and religionization of politics, his principle interpretative framework was about the (mis)use of religion for political reasons, which was at the same time the basis for understanding the crisis of secularization and the evident revitalization trend. To interpret the rising role of religion in the post-Communist period mainly as a result of extraordinary social circumstances has remained an influential thesis, used as a kind of overarching reference by many sociologists, not only sociologists of religion. The link between religion and nation, which became the most prominent fact in Bosnia and Herzegovina, where ethnic identity in particular (Bosniaks, Serbs, Croats) is inseparable from religious identity (Muslim, Orthodox, Catholic), framed his thesis about religions of borders. He delivered a presentation about this topic at the International Society for the Sociology of Religion Conference in Zagreb in 2005, and it was published as a paper in *Social Compass* (2006), being the last of his publications on the sociology of religion before his death.

Željko Mardešić published many papers during the 1990s and early 2000s, before his death, all of them theoretical, as he never did empirical research. Following his theoretical orientation he focused on the future of religion in the modern world, and he particularly explored the concept of "sacred" in the modern world and how "the sacred" was used and misused in modernity (Jukić

1991, 1997). His approach was similar to Danièle Harvieu-Léger's concept of religion as memory and, interestingly, he used the concept of "forgotten" religion way before her, already in his first book about religion in the modern industrial world (1973), but his work was not internationally known. In the last phase of his work he was more preoccupied with the possibility of religion being engaged in peace, forgiveness and reconciliation (2002), and he analyzed the Croatian religious and political heritage, focusing on what was happening with religion and ideas inspired by religion or religiosity during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. That was the main topic of his last book published after his death (2007). His work was influential in the circles of younger sociologists of religion, but even more so among theologians. In this regard, it is worth mentioning that the second 2006 issue of the journal *Nova prisutnost* (*New Presence*) was dedicated to him. The journal was funded by a group, the Christian Academic Circle, in which Mardešić participated and was one of the founders of both the organization and the journal. Also, a Franciscanian Institute for the Culture of Peace from Split published a book in his honor, in which many sociologists and theologians published their papers (Vuleta, Vučković and Milanović 2005).

The Split branch of the new Institute of Applied Social Research was very active, particularly in the first part of the 1990s. It was not engaged in any empirical research, but its first more theoretical project was a book, a collection of papers by associates, on the role of religion in the previous system (Grubišić 1993). Three conferences organized on topics that attracted sociological and public interest, such as confessions and war, religion and churches in transition, and religion and (dis)integration should be underlined as well. Papers from the conferences were also published in books (Grubišić 1995 1997; Grubišić and Zrinščak 1999). These conferences also presented a first step toward internationalization, as some well-known foreign scholars participated in them (e.g. Eileen Barker, Irena Borowik, Patrick Michel, Miklós Tomka, Silvio Ferrari). However, these activities stopped in the late 1990s, and the Split branch became irrelevant in the field of the sociology of religion.

The new social circumstances brought about another challenge to sociology, namely the interest for sociological research and data among theologians, who indeed engaged in empirical sociological research that posed a question about interdisciplinary work with all its challenges. The first such initiative was an empirical project on faith and morals in Croatia, launched by Marijan Valković, a well-known theologian from the Catholic Theologian Faculty of the University of Zagreb (the Faculty was part of the University from the outset, was expelled from the University in 1953, and rejoined it in 1991). The project gathered a group of theologians, two sociologists and one psychologist, which

paved the way for future cooperation in performing the European Value Survey in Croatia in 1999 and 2008, which will be elaborated a bit later.

It should be noted here that Croatia does not have any specific journal on the sociology of religion, due mainly to its small size, while sociologists publish their papers in general sociological journals and, interestingly, much less in the main sociological journal, *Revija za sociologiju* (*Review on Sociology*), which is the official publication of the Croatian Sociological Association. They publish their works more in a journal established in 1991, *Društvena istraživanja* (*Social Research*), as well as in some other sociological journals, most notably *Sociologija sela* (*Rural Sociology*), and in theological journals, most notably *Bogoslovska smotra* (*Review on Theology*). This pattern, at least concerning domestic journals, remains the norm today.

In terms of institutional settings, Croatia introduced a Ph.D. program in sociology only in mid 2000s, meaning that during 1990s the “old paradigm” existed with M.A. courses lasting for two years, while a Ph.D. was obtained upon writing and defending an individual doctoral thesis, as the 1984 M.A. generation defended their M.A. theses in the late 1980s and their doctoral theses in the 1990s.

2000s: Institutional Setting and Topics Researched

The division into two periods is a tentative one and is not meant to suggest any clear boundaries between them. On the contrary, a closer look suggests more continuity than discontinuity. However, the social and institutional changes settled down by the end of the 1990s, and a new generation of sociologists took the leading role. Sociologists became more engaged in comparative research and the international scientific scene, which all marked the last fifteen years of development of the sociology of religion.

The main institution for empirical research has remained the Institute for Social Research in Zagreb. It conducted research about social and religious changes in Croatia and small religious communities, but researched and analyzed such topics as religious education, religion and ethical issues, etc. The Institute also became a partner in the International Social Survey Program, a comparative research project which researched different social topics, and religion was also a module (the last one in 2008). Work at the Institute Ivo Pilar covers topics such as ecclesiastical movements, religion and identity, and religion and identity in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Empirical research about modernization and identity, including the topic of religion, in Croatian society was also done by the Department of Sociology of the University of Zagreb, which resulted in a number of papers published by Krunoslav Nikodem, a young, new-generation scholar coming on the scene. Indeed, there were many small

research projects and the number of publications rose, at least in Croatian journals, while the topic of religion was embraced by sociologists who were not exclusively sociologists of religion. Still, the number of those who can be regarded as sociologists of religion is less than ten.

When it comes to comparative projects, the European Value Study (EVS) was the most important one. Interestingly, sociologists did not take a leading role in implementing this research in Croatia. Following a project done by Marijan Valković from the Catholic Theological Faculty, the initiative for Croatia to join the EVS was undertaken by a Professor of Pastoral Theology at the same Faculty, Josip Baloban, who became the principal researcher. The third and fourth waves of the EVS in 1998 and 2008 were conducted as a project of the Catholic Theological Faculty, although the research team consisted of theologians, sociologists and psychologists. The project was successful in terms of the data obtained and publications issued. Many papers were published, mainly in Croatia but also abroad, and results were published in two books, the first of which was issued in both Croatian and English (Baloban 2005, Baloban, Nikodem and Zrinščak 2014).

Croatia also participated in a comparative project "Aufbruch," led by Austrian theologian Paul Zulehner and Hungarian sociologist Miklós Tomka. The first wave was conducted in ten post-Communist countries in 1997 and the second one in fourteen countries in 2007. The research explored the role of religion from different angles and, in contrast to many other sociological research projects at the time, it closely focused on the role of dominant Christian Churches in the region. Besides the fact that the data on Croatia appeared in comparative publications (Tomka and Zulehner 1999, 2000, 2008), the first wave was coordinated by Croatian theologian Pero Aračić, and the results were published in a book (Aračić, Črpić and Nikodem 2003). The second wave of research was connected with the EU-funded project REVACERN (Religion and Values in Central and Eastern Europe Network), led by A. Math-Thot from the University of Szeged, but this time the Croatian partner was the Institute for Social Research in Zagreb with Dinka Marinović Jerolimov as principal researcher for Croatia. The Aufbruch data and the collaboration of researchers from different countries within the REVACERN resulted in a range of papers published in journals and books. Croatian sociologists participated also in some other projects, such as a project on youth and values coordinated by Hans Georg-Ziebert from the University of Würzburg in Germany and a project on religion and churches in enlarged Europe coordinated by Detlef Pollack, Olaf Müller and Gert Pickel, also German scholars.

As already seen, the internationalization of the sociology of religion has become the main feature of its development in its last phase described here.

The role of ISORECEA—the International Association for the Study of Religion in Eastern and Central Europe—is in that respect decisive. ISORECEA is an organization founded in Krakow in 1995 after a series of conferences organized in Krakow by Irena Borowik. It eventually became an important organization that facilitates the scientific study of religion in the region, particularly through biennial conferences, books based on conference papers, and more recently through an on-line peer-reviewed journal RASCEE (*Religion and Society in Central and Eastern Europe*). Croatian sociologists have become very active in the organization, some of them taking the leading role, while its 2001 conference took place in Zagreb and the 2016 conference will take a place in Zadar. ISSR—*International Society for the Sociology of Religion*—has also been a vehicle for being internationally recognized, and the 2005 ISSR conference took a place in Zagreb.

Plans for a Ph.D. program in the sociology of religion have not been realized. In the mid-2000s a joint Ph.D. program in sociology was established by different Croatian sociological departments and institutes and coordinated by the Department of Sociology of the University of Zagreb. It is a general Ph.D. program in sociology, while the sociology of religion has been just one among elective subjects, which resulted in only a few doctoral theses in the sociology of religion.

Though access to foreign literature is much wider in comparison to previous times, the availability of textbooks in general sociology and the sociology of religion has remained a critical issue, particularly as courses in the sociology of religion, although mainly as elective subjects, are much more widespread today and offered at five sociological departments as well as theological departments. As regards general sociology, textbooks by Haralambos and Holborn and by Giddens were translated, while in the field of the sociology of religion only a textbook by the Italian scholars Sabino Acquaviva and Enzo Pace (1996), the German scholar Hubert Knoblauch (2004), as well as books by Grace Davie (2005) and Enzo Pace (2009). Also, some classical works, mainly by Durkheim and Weber, have been republished.

The impression about an extraordinary development that this report (particularly in relation to the last phase) may suggest is certainly valid. The sociology of religion has advanced in many aspects. The social framework is now much more favorable. Still, this is just one side of the story. Although it may be questioned what could be expected from a rather small community of sociologists of religion in a small country with a rather turbulent history, weaknesses should be acknowledged as well. The reflection about positive and negative sides of development is missing. There is not enough space or will to engage in such a discussion here. At least four issues are the most pressing ones.

The sociology of religion made a huge step forward as regards involvement in comparative research projects. In comparison to the time when research was rather scarce, this is amazing progress, but at the same time, we now have much more data than we are able to analyze, both empirically and theoretically.

Second, and more important, these projects set the research agenda in terms of topics and methods. A wide range of topics have remained unresearched, and there is a great need for more qualitative research. This is particularly connected with what has been termed “religion in everyday life.”

Third, it is very hard to say which theories or which theoretical frameworks or categories are used. The papers that were published could be categorized more as particular case-studies, usually much more descriptive than analytical. A more detailed analysis will certainly bring to light the underlying theoretical concepts, used consciously or unconsciously, mainly by borrowing concepts from the existing Western oriented literature. Although such analysis is more than needed, this task is beyond the scope of this chapter. The fact is that although the work of some Croatian sociologists has become internationally known, any kind of substantial contribution in theories, concepts, or methodology is not able to be recognized.

Finally, a textbook in the sociology of religion is missing—a textbook that would present the sociology of religion, but would also reflect Croatian society and the role of religion in it by discussing theories and concepts used elsewhere. Such a textbook could be a major cornerstone in advancing the position of the sociology of religion in Croatia.

The Wider Context: Sociology of Religion in Central and Eastern Europe

This chapter has neither the intention nor the space to describe in detail the development of the sociology of religion in other post-communist countries. However, a brief reference to it, although mainly based on just a few published papers about its development, can serve as an additional ground for its evaluation. Not surprisingly, there are differences, but also striking similarities, among the countries.

The start was promising at least in some countries. The first sociological institution was established in Russia just before the October Revolution, the first course in sociology was offered in Romania at the University of Bucharest in 1896, in the Czech Republic sociology was taught by Tomas Masaryk in the 1890s, and the Hungarian translation of Durkheim's *Elementary Forms of the Religious Life* appeared soon after its original publication (Borowik 2006). In

the period between two World Wars, the development of sociology and even of the sociology of religion in Poland and Hungary is worth mentioning. In Poland, Stefan Czarnowski, as Durkheim's pupil, and Florian Zaniecki, who established the Institute of Sociology at the University of Poznań in 1920, devoted attention to religion in their work, while Czarnowski even published a book on the cult of Saint Patrick in Ireland in 1919, before he came back to Poland (Borowik 2006). In Hungary, attention was devoted to links between morality and religion as sociologists tried to explore the influence of religion on divorce, birth rates and suicides which, on the other hand, show that sociology did not develop a comprehensive and meaningful theoretical understanding of religion (Borowik 2006). Thus, the Communist period offered new possibilities for the development of sociology and the sociology of religion, but at the same time posing strong ideological obstacles to the scientific study of religion. Although poor, the pre-Communist development paved the way to the developments in the Communist period. Coupled with other specific features of the social development of particular countries, the sociology of religion was developing in the former Yugoslavia (particularly Croatia and Slovenia), Poland and Hungary. In Poland the situation was better due to the strong position of religious scientific institutions, particularly the Catholic University of Lublin, where the work of Józef Majka and Władisław Piwowarski was important. The development of the sociology of religion in Hungary was connected with the outstanding role of Miklós Tomka, who also worked outside universities, but was oriented, at least in the first phase, mainly on empirical research and developed good relations with social research centers abroad, particularly those in Austria and Germany. The reliability of the work done in the Communist period enabled the re-evaluation of social and religious changes in Communism in these four countries, i.e., in Hungary, Poland, Croatia, and Slovenia (Zrinščak 2004).

Still, those who defended the scientific character of sociology during Communism have remained the most critical of its post-Communist development. Thus, soon after the breakdown of Communism Tomka (1994: 389–390) pointed to five factors that significantly influenced sociology's development as an autonomous scientific discipline. The first is connected with the fact that its development is parallel with the overall social reconstruction, which means that the choices and frameworks for studying religion were influenced by political choices. Second, as a discipline which proves the size, function, or relevance of religion, the sociology of religion itself becomes a political force. Third, its institutional stabilization is very much restricted by political and ideological groupings which are trying to instrumentalize its results. Fourth, because of that, the sociology of religion exists more in commercial centers and media than in scientific institutions and universities, which further influences its fea-

tures (the weak scientific control of its products, the extremely variable value of its statements, and the poor theoretical foundations of its empirical findings). Fifth, the development of the sociology of religion may be used as an indicator of the freedom and autonomy of social sciences and educational and scientific institutions in general.

In a more recent account, and although acknowledging its impressive development, Borowik has also remained skeptical about the influence of the past (2006). For her, the heritage of the past is the poor knowledge of the field. In that respect, the situation varies in the countries more familiar with Western publications but, as seen from the Croatian situation, the knowledge about the scientific approach is connected with the possibility of textbooks being translated and of having access to journals and books. According to her, the heritage is also visible in the difficulties of establishing scientific institutions and courses on the sociology of religion at universities. In some countries, institutes and centers for scientific atheism have been closing down or simply transforming into institutes of religion, with not much interest in the *sociology* of religion. This additionally emphasizes the need to be careful about the impact of institutional settings on the development of the sociology of religion.

In their papers both Tomka and Borowik stress the difficulties in understanding the past development (atheization/anomy or secularization?) as well as the present development. How can one understand a religious revival which distinguishes Eastern from Western Europe? Is it just a transitional phenomenon or not? How can one understand, at the same time, great differences among the post-Communist countries, ranging from the almost completely secular Czech Republic, former Eastern Germany and Estonia, to highly religious Poland or Romania. How can heated debates about the social position of religion and churches even in highly religious countries be understood? What should be the sociological position on reconfiguration of the Church-state relations which, in many countries, initially embraced religious freedom but eventually imposed restrictions on the rights of minority religions, mostly the new and non-traditional ones (Richardson and Lykes 2012; Zrinščak 2014)? This question concerns appropriate methodological and theoretical tools for studying religion, and this was discussed in a few papers, albeit very superficially.

Irena Borowik raised the issue of similarities between Eastern and Western Europe and their sociological consequences. She enumerated many specifics related to religion in Central and Eastern Europe, rightly arguing that there were complex and dramatic changes with somewhat unexpected and not fully understandable consequences. Specifically, she set out five reasons for distinguishing CEE from the rest of Europe while discussing the role of religion: (1)

Christianity arrived later than in the West. (2) This is the area of parallel existence of Latin and Orthodox Christianity. (3) Religion was consolidated at the same time and was an important factor of nation and state-building process. (4) The influence of strong anti-religious and anti-democratic communism. (5) Religion was a part of a total social transformation after the collapse of Communism. Although many differences exist (Communist past, strong presence of religion in the political field, strength of institutional power by dominant churches), there are also many similarities between CEE and Western development, mainly concerning de-institutionalization, subjectivization, *bricolage*, and individualization (Borowik 2007: 649).

This provoked two different reactions. In his introductory chapter about the development of the sociology of religion in ex-Yugoslav countries Dragoljub Đorđević (2008) accepted the first three reasons, but rejected the fourth and fifth, at least for the former Yugoslavia. He claimed that the Yugoslav political system was not as atheistic as were the systems of other Communist countries and that in the former Yugoslavia, religion was part of negative, not positive social processes, referring mainly to the connection between religion, dissolution of former states and wars. His argument can serve as an illustration on how past and present are so differently judged, which is also reflected in the way the sociology of religion is developing today. Needless to say, I do not support his arguments and can even claim that such arguments have negative effects on theories and methods in the sociology of religion nowadays. Yes, as already explained in this chapter, the political system of the former Yugoslavia was somewhat different from that of other Communist countries. Still, Yugoslavia never ceased being an undemocratic, atheistic state, although its modes of operation were somewhat different from those in other Central and Eastern European countries. Even in the late 1980s, Zdenko Roter, one of the most prominent Slovenian sociologists, spoke about believers as second-class citizens (1989). Also, religion was a prominent part of social changes after the fall of Communism. These changes had positive sides (fall of Communism, democratization of countries, complete and welcomed social transformation) and some negative ones (religion supporting violence or not supporting full democratization). Therefore, while the former Yugoslavia had some specifics, it was generally not so different from other ex-Communist countries. The same can be said of the sociology of religion, which has to overcome its reductionist view perceiving the visibility of religion in the public sphere mainly as an anti-modern, anti-secular sign, a sign of the link between ethnic identity and religion that has only negative social consequences (conflict, war ...).

Interestingly, but not surprisingly, Miklós Tomka (2006) took a rather radical position in that respect. Tomka openly asked, although mainly in relation

to particularities of Eastern Orthodoxy, for a regionally developed sociology of religion. He particularly questioned methodology, arguing that the sociology of religion was developed according to the reality of Western Christianity, which differs from the Christianity in Central Europe and is completely different from Eastern Orthodoxy, dominant in Eastern Europe. He concluded that “Eastern European religion eludes the criteria of the western sociology of religion, as new religious phenomena do ... An enlarged Europe, a global world needs religious research which can look beyond the conceptual horizon of Western Christianity” (2006: 263). Sergej Flere (2008) criticized this by showing, although based on limited research, that the specifics Tomka enumerated in relation to Eastern Orthodoxy actually do not exist. When discussing Orthodoxy, Larissa Titarenko (2008) mainly follows the arguments offered by Borowik and not Tomka. The debate has not continued so far, although that is greatly needed. While it is difficult to say whether a special methodology is needed, the complexity of the region described by Borowik asks at least for proper theoretical explanations.

Proper theoretical explanations, however, need to be accompanied by an analysis of what is researched mostly and what deserves more attention (Borowik 2006). Rising religiosity has been the most prominent theme, although there are very different approaches to it. An angle widely used has been the connection between religion and ethnic identity, which is similar to a few approaches applied to the territory of the former Yugoslavia. The connection cannot be denied, but as already explained, to see the rising religiosity and the strong presence of religion in the public arena just as a reflection of strong links between ethnic identity and religion may be questioned. Church-state relations is a widely researched topic due to the complete transformation in the post-Communist period, but even more attention has been devoted to new religious movements, a topic appealing primarily to young sociologists. In general, sociologists of religion tend to be very critical of the strong position of traditional churches and the way they are prioritized in church-state relations in comparison to minority religions. Critical standpoints, however, have tended to be based on very normative understandings of church and state (in many cases the focus has been on the constitutional principle and its violation in reality) without much sociological analysis and with an argument that church-state relations in Eastern Europe are very different from those in the West, which is in fact very questionable (Zrinščak 2011).

The well-known French sociologist Raymond Boudon (2012) talked about two sociologies, one that tries to explain social phenomena with procedures of a specific scientific discipline and the other one that discusses social problems that attract media attention. The first one tries to create a science, the

second one wishes to feed public debates. Naturally, the second one is more visible, but its consequences are immediate and short-lived. This does not mean, as Boudon argues, that social issues do not lead to scientific work, but rather social issues attract ideologies and catchwords as well, which can lead to different pathways. The questions of what is researched mostly and in which way and what deserves more attention in should be discussed in the sociology of religion, having Boudon's comment in mind.

Conclusion

This chapter has described the development of the sociology of religion in Croatia. This development is inseparable from the development of sociology itself and, consequently, the context of the development of sociology as such is an important part of this description. In addition, it aims to show how social circumstances shaped the very existence of sociology and the sociology of religion as well as their theoretical and methodological scope. The history presented here shows major discontinuities, which had a strong impact on the way sociology and the sociology of religion have been developed, not only in Croatia but in other Eastern European contexts. An additional argument is that history has long-lasting consequences that need to be taken into an account while thinking about the present situation. The chapter is critical and affirmative at the same time. It acknowledges the remarkable achievement in the sociology of religion in the period when religion was a politically alien object. It remains critical of many of its shortcomings. Both apply to the sociology of religion in the post-Communist period. As indicated in different papers there are promises, mainly connected with the growing internationalization of research and publications and with the new generation of sociologists (Borowik 2006, Zrinščak 2007). However, the main worry is lack of self-reflection. Therefore, this chapter should be seen as just a modest step in this direction.

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