

Applying the Conceptual Framework of “Event Religion” to Two Hungarian Festivals¹



Uporaba konceptualnega okvira ‘dogodkovne religije’
na dveh madžarskih festivalih

Sára Eszter Heidl

1.01 Izvirni znanstveni članek
DOI 10.4312/svetovi.2.1.14-30

ABSTRACT

The event religion framework has been developed to enable the study of event experience using the tools of sociology, ethnography and religious studies, independently of the religious affiliation of the event participants or the events themselves. It examines event experience along four dimensions: spatiotemporality, symbols, community, and inward experience. This paper examines the event religion dimensions at a Catholic and a rock-metal music event in Hungary in order to draw attention to similarities and differences in participant experiences at a religious and a non-religious festival.

KEYWORDS: event, religion, spirituality, religionesque, festivals, empirical fieldwork

IZVLEČEK

Okvir dogodkovne religije je bil razvit za proučevanje izkušnje dogodka z uporabo orodij sociologije, etnografije in religijskih študijev, ne glede na religioznost tako udeležencev dogodka kot tudi dogodka samega. Raziskuje izkušnjo dogodka čez štiri dimenzije: prostor-čas, simboli, skupnost in notranja izkušnja. Prispevek raziskuje dimenzije dogodkovne religije na katoliškem in metalsko-rockovskem glasbenem dogodku na Madžarskem, z namenom prikazati podobnosti in razlike v izkušnji udeležencev religioznega in nereligioznega festivala.

KLJUČNE BESEDE: dogodek, religija, duhovnost, religionesknost, festivali, empirično terensko delo

1

Partly presented at the Contemporary Spirituality Conference, Ljubljana, Slovenia, 6–7 October 2023, under the title “The Event Religion Phenomenon”.

The study of festivals from a religious studies perspective is popular worldwide (Lloyd 2020; Lucia 2020; Nita and Kidwell 2022; Pike 2022; Povedák 2014; Povedák 2022; Sherry and Kozinets 2004; St John and Gauthier 2015; Testa 2019, 2023b; Vitos, Graham and Gauthier 2022). Approaches to festival communities and cultures have given rise to different concepts, such as event communities (Kirchner 2011) or event cultures (St John and Gauthier 2015). In addition to the many themes explored in festivals, such as their liminal nature, community-building and transformative power and the role of the experience, other topics have emerged, such as cultural and religious tourism (Kasim 2011), consumerism and authenticity (Gauthier 2021), and marketing (Bowman 1999; Gauthier 2014). Most of the research mentioned above has involved empirical fieldwork, with the scholars' interest focused on the experiences of participants.

From a religious studies point of view, fieldwork on festivals has shown that the participants' experiences can take on religious – or at least *religionesque* (Heidl 2023d; Testa 2023a) – characteristics,² and that these events function as a substitute or complement to religion, a collection point for those who identify as *spiritual, but not religious, believing without belonging* (Burge 2021; Casanova 2020; Erlandson 2000; Fuller 2001; Mercadante 2014) and other similar categories, and are defining parts of lived (Ammerman 2021; McGuire 2008) or vernacular (Primiano 1995) forms of religion.

This work aims to show that these *religionesque* characteristics of the participant experience can happen not only at a religious event (the Catholic Lélek festival, HU) but also at a secular one (the Fekete Zaj music festival, HU). Employing qualitative methods, two case studies will be presented in order to illustrate the differences and similarities between the events. The case studies are follow-up comparative fieldwork of the project “Event Religion” (Heidl 2024). The questions and methods were developed at the Everness mindfulness festival in Hungary and the conceptual framework of “event religion” was created there. The previous fieldwork showed that a festival can generate strong communal and individual experiences that reflect ritualistic and religious behaviour, therefore creating a temporal, religionesque space, time, symbols, community and personal experiences (Heidl 2024). In my earlier work, I have defined “event religion” as a conceptual approach, which describes a phenomenon that:

creates a temporary community through shared activities, forms a quasi-liminal phase, and thereby endows the place, time and symbols present with religionesque significance. During this period, the person shows a high responsiveness to mystical, peak-, resonant and flow experiences, thus gaining a temporary religionesque experience. (Heidl 2023b: 306)

Therefore, event religion is *not* intended to describe *a new form of religion*. It is intended to show that secular, non-traditional religious and spiritual settings have the ability to

2

My own term for “religion-like”, that is, similar to religion, or has a religious origin, but actually not religion (Heidl, 2023d).

generate such experiences in the participants that have religious connotations, just as the lived/vernacular religion approaches claim. Therefore, “when the term ‘event religion’ is used, religion itself does not refer to a religious event nor to the fact that the participants in the event would be religious, but rather to their vernacular religious behaviour and beliefs” (Heidl 2024: 38).

Event religion can be examined along four dimensions:

- 1) Spatiotemporality: how the participants perceive the place and time of the event;
- 2) Symbols: how the participants relate to the objects, motifs, symbols, and the symbolic message of the event;
- 3) Community: how visitors form a community through shared programmes and exercises;
- 4) Inward experience: what experiences one lives through during the festival, in community or alone, and what characteristics can describe these experiences.

The four dimensions can reveal the religionesque aspects of the experience without claiming that they are religious. Whether or not they are religious depends on the individual interpretation. Without the interpretation, but with certain characteristics, they stay *religionesque* (Heidl 2023d). This approach was developed at the Everness festival based on repetitive empirical fieldwork and theoretical framework in my earlier works (Heidl 2023c, 2024), where the examination of the four dimensions revealed the conceptual framework was applicable to the event studied. This article summarises the results of applying the event religion approach to two other festivals in Hungary, a Catholic music event (Lélek festival, Szombathely) and a metal-rock music festival (Fekete Zaj, Mátrafüred-Gyöngyös), in order to show the applicability of the event religion approach in other settings.

INTRODUCING THE FESTIVALS

The Lélek festival was held for the first time on the Pentecost weekend of 3–5 June 2022.³ The event, which has its roots in Catholicism, has an ecumenical approach and is open to members of all Christian denominations, with a strong influence from the Charismatic Church. The event was organised by a local diocesan youth worker in a Catholic school. The programmes started on Friday afternoon with worship and a concert. On Saturday morning, visitors could attend workshops on religious topics, dance classes, and lectures. In the afternoon, there was a Holy Mass, lectures, concerts, and in the evening a DJ played until 2 am. On Sunday, the whole event was moved to a cinema, where a theologian held a lecture about Pentecostal movements, followed by worship and a concert.

Around 600 people registered for the event. The age distribution of the participants covered a broad range, with larger groups of those around 14 and of young parents (aged

3

Lélek means “spirit” and “soul” in Hungarian, referring to the Holy Spirit. Website: <https://lelekfesztival.martinus.hu/>.

around 30–40). The reason for this was that the younger age group (14–18-year-olds) consisted mainly of students who came to the festival to receive Confirmation in the Catholic Church. According to observations, there were slightly more women at the event, but no precise data were collected. In addition to the organisers, student volunteers, priests, monks, and nuns were also present. The invited speakers included Christian pop musicians, a poet, and an event organiser.

The Fekete Zaj festival (17–20 August 2022) has been held annually since 2009.⁴ It represents an experimental, techno, metal, rock, underground, alternative rock musical line. The festival was attended by 900–1000 visitors per day, with a roughly equal number of men and women (women were over-represented among the respondents). The festival site was a campsite with mobile homes and tents. There were three stages inside the festival area and two stages outside, one on a small island in Lake Sástó and one further into the forest under a lookout tower. As the campsite is located in the Mátra mountain range and is surrounded by forest, there was hardly any data or phone signal in the whole festival area. Many people saw this as a positive thing, helping them to get away from the ‘real’ world, but it certainly made it difficult to communicate with each other.

The programmes started on Wednesday evening with metal concerts. In the following days, the visitors could attend so-called OFF-programmes, which included football, excursions, chess tournaments, boardgames, yoga (including “dark yoga” to metal music), literature and DIY workshops. The concerts started in the afternoon. From Thursday on, many different music genres were featured as indie folk, indie rock, hard rock, and different metal bands performed. The biggest day was Saturday, with mainly metal concerts in the evening.

METHODOLOGY

The empirical work included moderate participation and observation (Spradley 2016), thick description (Geertz 1973), and semi-structured interviews at both events, ten at the Lélek festival, fifteen at the Fekete Zaj festival. The youngest interviewees at the Lélek festival were fourteen, the oldest was 59 years old. In terms of education, they were in secondary school or had started university education, while older respondents were university graduates with full time employment. The interviewees were locals, from surrounding settlements and from Budapest. The youngest Fekete Zaj interviewees were 27 years old, the oldest were 48. People over the age of 35 mainly came with their families, and there were similar proportions of couples and singles. In terms of education, most of them were university or college graduates. A large number of people lived in Budapest (regardless of their registered address) and in county towns. The participants were mainly people with full-time employment.

4

Fekete Zaj means “Black Noise” in English. Black noise means complete silence. It is an ironic name as the concerts at the festival are usually very loud metal or rock performances. It can also refer to the musical genre “noise”, and “black” can refer to the metal and gothic subculture, to the love for the colour black, to the night and darkness, and to the absurd and grotesque. Website: <https://www.feketezaj.hu/>.

All Lélek interviewees were Catholics, while among the Fekete Zaj interviewees – besides one Catholic and one Protestant – there were atheists, spiritual but not religious, non-denominational, or those who refused any religious labels (indicated in the text as *non-religious*). The interview questions had previously been developed and tested in a different environment (Everness mindfulness festival, Siófok-Sóstó (Heidl 2023c, 2024)), therefore the deductive method was used in the settings discussed in this paper.

The interview topics were the following:⁵

1. What does [name of the festival] mean to you?
2. Which areas do you like to visit? (Which ones do you not like?)
3. How do you perceive the festival area?
4. How do you perceive time during the festival?
5. Which objects and motifs do you consider important at the event?
6. How can you connect with others?
7. What experiences and feelings do you have during a practice/concert/during the festival?

THE RELIGIONESQUE DIMENSIONS OF THE LÉLEK FESTIVAL

Spatiotemporality

Investigating the event religion dimensions starts with the spatiotemporal aspects. The role of the calendar and the schedule, as well as the repetitive and transient nature are the most important temporary characteristics of an event (Turner 1977; Zerubavel 1981). The participants' experience of time at a festival can reveal ritualistic characteristics. Arriving to a time out of time, and a space out of space, such as a festival, makes it possible to interpret this period as a liminal phase (van Gennep 1960; Turner 1978). This is a common approach in festival studies (Kirchner 2011). Furthermore, the participants' experiences about the different properties, aspects, or dynamics of space (Knott 2005, 2014) can reveal a heterotopic nature (Foucault, 1994). People visit an event in a role similar to tourists or pilgrims – even if the event itself or the people themselves are not religious (Stausberg, 2011). These characteristics can be understood from a religious studies perspective and described as religionesque (Heidl 2024).

The Lélek festival provided a setting where the religious aspect was obvious: the participants belonged to Christian denominations, and the main purpose of the event was to celebrate the Holy Spirit. In this setting, the event religion dimensions do not show whether the religious/religionesque aspects are present, but rather *in what* these aspects are manifested and how their religion is *lived* (Primiano 1995).

Examining how time and space became special for the visitors showed that personal interpretation was more important than institutionalised religious background. The Lélek

5

In the interview excerpts quoted throughout the paper, all the names used are pseudonyms.

festival was organised around the Christian calendar, as it was the celebration of Pentecost, but it was not strictly linked to it. In a festival setting, the Christian holiday is reinterpreted, allowing visitors to experience it more freely and non-traditionally. These events have fewer rules, are more spontaneous, take place *outside* the church (Povedák 2014) and have their own purpose: community-building and event-experience, similarly to non-religious festivals, providing a platform for lived or vernacular religion.

In terms of how the participants perceived the festival area and time, most responses showed that people experienced the event as an escape from everyday worries and work, as a place to relax, rather than as a religious celebration. The religious part was just an added bonus: by attending the event, they were also fulfilling their religious duties.

Q: How do you experience this time period?

A1: You relax and recharge (Gabriella, female, 34, local).

A2: And a Holy Mass is maybe only 3/4 of an hour of your life, but here [...] you really loosen up a little and relax a bit from the weekdays (Alida, female, 55, local).

Besides the event-feeling, this period provided a quasi-liminal phase (Turner and Turner 1978; Stausberg 2011), an occasion that exists in a “time out of time”. The area reinforced this feeling.

I think it's more relaxed and freer here than going to church, so it's not so strict that you have to stay in your place for the whole time, you can walk around, there are no fixed rules. There is a schedule, yes, just like at any other festival, but compared to weekdays, it's actually completely different. (Mira, female, 21, small town, volunteer)

The church building appeared as a more rigid space, with its rules and boundaries. For some people this was important to experience the “sacred space”, while for others it made it harder to experience the specialness. The sense of “sacredness” (or *religionesque nature*) at the Lélek festival was evident regardless of the lack of “church rules”. Whether this was due to the presence of either God, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit, or something else, was not always clear.

There was a departure from the church, and a constant change and rearrangement of the space, e.g. walking around freely, a DJ in the evening, and dancing until late at night. Dancing, jumping, and singing popular Christian music was part of the event religion experience. It was also special because of the way it brought the church *into* the space: the participants did not go to the cathedral for the Saturday mass, but brought the church into their own religion-esque place, as if to prove the “power-fullness” (Knott 2005: 162) of the liminal space. Thus, it is not the “sacred space” (the church) that makes the period special to the participants, but the liminal space that becomes special through the actions and perceptions of the participants.

Symbols

As symbols, objects, and images usually play a prominent role in Christianity, it was necessary to investigate what motifs and objects were important to the participants at the

Lélek festival. One of these symbols was the cross. In the Catholic tradition, the cross symbolises the death and resurrection of Jesus, and wearing it as an accessory shows the believer's identity, their belonging to the Christian community. Some wear it as a magical object, which shows vernacular religious characteristics (Johanson and Jonuks 2015; Tan 2002).

At the Lélek festival venue, there was no emphasis on religious symbols. As it was held in a Catholic school, there were naturally some Christian motifs, including pictures and a small chapel inside the building. However, the gym was not decorated with religious symbols, there was no cross, and an altar was only placed on the stage during the Holy Mass on Saturday. Most of the participants did not feel the absence of religious symbols. They attributed a material value to the motifs and objects, and emphasised that the religious "vibe" was due to the atmosphere, the programmes and the community.

Here, practically at the moment the programme starts, I think it's different. It already permeates the whole thing, [...] now this room is not a gymnasium, but practically like a large church interior. [...] Maybe there is a cross [missing]. But somehow I absolutely did not miss the cross. [It is special] because of the people and the atmosphere. (Albert, male, 59, local)

Especially for young visitors, the absence of religious semantics created a more open environment than a church building.

It is easier for young people if they see less [symbols] and they don't associate it with all kinds of things, like Christian paintings and pictures. Maybe this way they feel liberated more easily. (Tim, male, 21, local, volunteer)

Some visitors missed a few symbols, for example, the sacrament, but not its materiality, rather its meaning (the presence of the Lord in it). This means that the symbolic *message* of the event was more important than the material objects. Hartmut Rosa explains that rejecting material objects can help to find *resonance* (i.e. a strong connection through a peak-experience with something or someone) with more important things – values, experiences or the subject of belief (Rosa 2019: 228). In such cases, non-material things that are not essentially religious – such as space, time, community – take on religionesque significance (Heidl 2024).

Community

Most researchers examine the presence of collective effervescence (Durkheim 1964) and *communitas* (Turner 1977) at an event when approaching it from a religious studies perspective. At the Lélek festival, these were evident in the religious ritual that bound people together through the practice of a common faith.

At the beginning of the concert, we pray for the musician. Young people make videos, sing, hold each other's hands during the concert and worship, some of them raising both arms to the sky. (Research diary notes, Lélek festival, 2022)

The free body movements expressing joy, liberation and affection generated the

characteristics of collective effervescence and *communitas*. These programmes helped participants to *immerse* themselves, to “get-drawn-into-something” and “let go” (Schüler 2017: 368), even if it meant stepping out of their comfort zone.

Q: What do you think of the community?

A2: Everyone has a good time. They are participating, clapping and singing. It was good to sing with the others because I don't have a good voice, but here I sing with the crowd all day, so actually... music and singing have a positive effect on everyone, including me. It's a stress reliever (Gabriella, female, 34, local).

A1: It awakens spiritual thoughts in a person. Reassurance, reminiscence (Alida, female, 55, local).

The role of transgression can also be considered at a festival. In the context of the Lélek festival, transgression means deregulation (Steiner 2022: 118), stepping out of traditional church rules, with characteristics such as dancing late into the night, free movement, and breaking the event out of the institutional framework. Spontaneous singing, walking around freely, letting people get close to you and even touching them are all characteristics that are not present in the everyday religious practice of the participants.

It is not only through the shared programmes that someone can have a religion-esque experience. On the one hand, the dancing, singing, and the community of the festival generate religion-esque experiences, and on the other hand, the personal experiences of the individual are reflected in the crowd. The inward experience and the common experience thereby influence each other.

Inward experience

When talking about inward experiences at a Catholic event, the experience of a connection with the Holy Trinity is the most obvious topic of discussion. However, the presence of God, Jesus, or the Holy Spirit was mentioned by only a few interviewees. Therefore, if it was not mentioned, I asked directly if they felt a connection with God. There were two types of answers. For some it was obvious that God was present, so they did not mention it, while for others the experiences were simply not God-experiences. One of the interviewees explained this, pointing out that these experiences are uncontrollable (Rosa 2019) and ineffable (James 2008).

Q: Would you say that you also felt a connection with God?

A: Yes. Yes, you know, it's like when you think about something and you don't think about it at the same time. So when I really want it, it's definitely not going to happen... then suddenly it happens and I realise 'oh well, there it is' (Albert, male, 59, local).

Regardless of the divine experience, the role of inner feelings was important at the Lélek festival. The free expression and sharing of inner experiences were encouraged during the praise and worship, especially by members of the Charismatic Church. It was often possible to hear someone shouting or crying freely during a common prayer or concert. Some would cry out the name of God. These experiences could also be shared on stage.

The inward experiences were mostly associated with freedom, joy, strength that can help one cope with the task at hand. These characteristics imply the feeling of *flow*, Mihály Csíkszentmihályi's well-known theory (Csíkszentmihályi, 2009). Csíkszentmihályi, similar to Rosa, described an experience that takes the person into a liminal space, a time out of time, where the person discovers a different, but more real reality. Interestingly, the experiences described by the above scholars reflect the characteristics of William James' *mystical experiences* (James, 2008). This proves that "removing" the experience from the *religious* does not mean that the experience itself is not *religionesque*.

THE RELIGIONESQUE DIMENSIONS OF THE FEKETE ZAJ FESTIVAL⁶

The Fekete Zaj festival, as a non-religious, primarily music event, provided an appropriate setting for continuing the comparative analysis. The aim of comparing the two festivals is to show that similar experiences can occur at a religious and a non-religious event, which means that *religion* can be interpreted as an *experience*. The lived/vernacular religious approach promotes this idea, and the event religion approach supports it. My aim is to show that regardless of their religious or non-religious interpretation by the participants, the experiences can have religionesque aspects. This does not mean that the experience is religious or that *religion* is present at the event. Rather, it means that the participants encounter religionesque features of the experience, which can result in interpreting them as religious, or describing them with religious semantics, regardless of the participant's own belief or denomination.

Spatiotemporality

The liminal nature of the festival area and period enables the participants to approach the event as something special. Festival participants enter a temporary space that they experience physically and mentally during the event (Knott 2005). In the research conducted at Fekete Zaj, the interviewees without exception described these few days as a special time. They perceived time differently, the outside world and everyday life did not matter. However, its religionesque nature became evident when the interviewees started to describe it with religious semantics. They compared it to Christmas, describing the festival as sacred, the most important time of the year.

Actually, it's always the highlight of the year. It comes very early... or very late, [laughs] and goes very quickly [laughs]. So for me it's like 'Advent for the whole year' and it culminates here. So, it's such a sacred time for me [laughs]. Time passes differently here. (Erik, male, 34, Budapest, non-religious)

The festival was a special day in the calendar, visitors prepared for it for weeks or months, or even began waiting for the next one as soon as the last one was over. Its liminal nature was recognised by the interviewees:

⁶

Some parts of this subchapter are paraphrases of an already published Hungarian article, Heidl 2023a.

In this period, you are disconnecting, and then there is a space and a time that only exists here.
(Petra, female, 43, Budapest, non-religious)

For visitors from Budapest in particular, nature played a prominent role. Nature as a space evoking religious feelings is not a unique phenomenon. One of the main elements of religious tourism and pilgrimage is the connection with nature, its meditative character. The placement of man-made buildings and objects into nature means a special point of connection for individuals and the subject of their belief (Mitev, Irimiás and Michalkó 2017; Stausberg 2011). Many interviewees mentioned the spiritual, transcendent power of nature (Heidl 2023a).

Symbols

At a music festival, the focus regarding symbols is on festival merchandise. Previous research has shown that logos, images, and objects (wristbands, cups, bags and other merchandise) used at a festival help create a sense of community and belonging (Kirchner 2011). Festival graphics and design are important for both organisers and participants. Creating a brand for the festival helps with promotion and marketing. Participants are happy to support the event by buying its products, and wearing its symbol gives them a sense of belonging.

The Fekete Zaj logo is unique in that its design changes from year to year. It was originally two squares intertwined to form a circle (Figure 1).

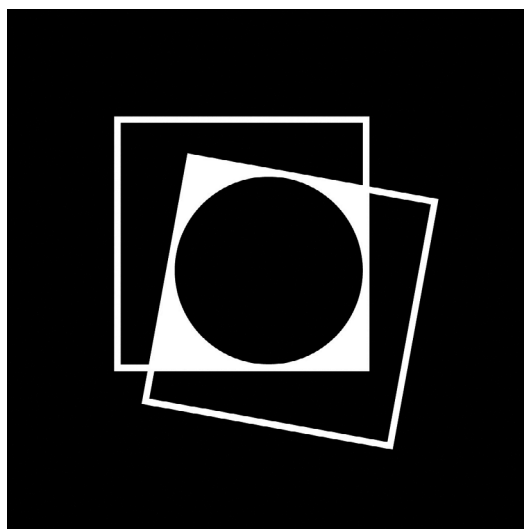


Figure 1: The Fekete Zaj logo. Facebook: Fekete Zaj Fesztivál.

Each year the design incorporates the original image to some extent, but always presents a new visual world and achieves a different effect. The dominant colours are black, white and red, with the addition of green for 2022, symbolising the forest and nature (Heidl 2023a).

Q: And what do you think this symbol means?

A: I always see the moon in it, so the night, geometry, order, but more the calming and self-evident side of all of this, not the scary part of the darkness, but rather its inclusiveness (Cintia, female, 27, Budapest, Protestant).

Many people described *togetherness* as the main meaning of the logo, others the connection of opposites. It essentially meant unity that exists at the event outside everyday life, that is open to everyone, regardless of their appearance, music taste or subculture. These personal interpretations show what Fekete Zaj itself means to the participants, because according to the main organiser, the logo does not really have an original meaning (Heidl 2023b).

Most participants have kept festival merchandise to feel part of the community and the festival has become part of their identity. The identity- and community-forming aspect of the event through its symbolism shows parallels with the functional role of religion (Durkheim 1964) in religious groups, sects, and pseudo-religions (Tillich 1963). The fact that many interviewees had tattoos, clothing, and accessories associated with the event demonstrates this. Religious semantics also appeared here. Cintia said she places the Fekete Zaj objects in her home, which therefore becomes the sanctuary of her “own, private mythology”.

Community

The most prominent keywords regarding the collective experience were *safety*, *self-identity*, and *community*.

For me, this is the only festival so far where I know that if I have a problem, I can ask anybody for help, I can talk to anybody. (Anna, female, 36, Budapest, non-religious)

During a joint programme, many explained that they had a shared experience with the crowd. Feeling the same energies, unity and immersion came to the fore.

Q: How do you feel when other people are around you during a programme?

A: Well, actually it relaxes me. I think the musical environment is good for you to immerse yourself in and become part of a community. The people around us... actually, if I wanted to over-mystify the question, I could say that at this time the person merges with the energies around them (Benjamin, male, 48, county seat, non-denominational).

The characteristics of immersion, of being drawn into the event and letting go (Schüller 2017), are clearly found in Benjamin's description. Others have highlighted ritualistic characteristics.

That we're moving and dancing to the same music in the same way in such a large unit, just because of the musical experience, it gives me such a tribal atmosphere [feeling]. (Erik, male, 34, Budapest, non-religious)

As can be seen from the interviews above, the shared experience and collective cohesion were felt by most people in the music programmes. Rook explains that aesthetic experi-

ences can often generate ritual behaviour. For him, a heavy metal concert is a less aesthetic situation, but he still recognises its ritual character (Rook 1985: 254). For the Fekete Zaj participants, the heavy metal concerts generated an elevated, even meditative state. They considered this music genre to be the most suitable for experiencing their innermost feelings, which were often accompanied by crying and shouting. The study of this music genre has produced a significant body of literature in sociology and the study of religion (Brown et al. 2016; Granholm 2011; Moberg 2009, 2012; Scott 2012, 2014;). Metal music revolves around the themes of darkness, transgression, rebellion and taboo, not only in its symbolism (for example, the representation of death, which helps to bring out the “dark side” of the individual (Barratt 2016: 228)), but also in its musical style. Crying, screaming and yelling are the very first means of expression that humans use as infants, and later in life they use these tools to release emotions, stress, anger, and trauma. It is no coincidence that fans of the metal music genre often report a sense of liberation and the meditative nature of the music. Listening to metal music is emotionally therapeutic (Vasan 2016: 266, paraphrased from Heidl 2023a).

Inward experience

As mentioned above, the common experiences influence the inward experiences and vice versa. The inward experiences, similar to the Lélek festival, showed characteristics of James’ mystical experiences (James 2008), Csíkszentmihályi’s flow (Csíkszentmihályi 2009), and Rosa’s resonance (Rosa 2019), regardless of religious belonging. When describing their personal feelings and experiences, the interviewees mainly emphasised feelings of joy, euphoria, liberation, freedom, ecstasy, catharsis, awe, upliftment, gratitude and happiness.

The experience of ecstasy catches you at concerts, that can be good. If I really like the song, I don’t even care if I’m alone at the concert, I’ll fly out of myself. (Kevin, male, 38, county seat, atheist)

Csíkszentmihályi’s theory of flow has become so widespread in everyday life that the term *flow* even appears in individual use, changing its original meaning in some way. In everyday language, the interpretation of the flow experience is closer to the uncontrollable, intangible positive feeling that Rosa and James talk about, as can be seen in the following interview excerpt.

I really like to feel that sense of flow that draws you in and you can really immerse yourself in it. [...] It takes you with it or takes you in such a way [...] that you get a bit lost in time. A good concert is when I don’t... I don’t pay attention to how long it lasts, what is next, what came before, but I can only pay attention to what is going on there. (Petra, female, 43, Budapest, non-religious)

Whether the feeling is described as spiritual or religious is a matter of individual interpretation. However, the characteristics of the experiences are religionesque, regardless of interpretation and denominational affiliation.

Uh, it’s such a feeling of joy, euphoria, so I wouldn’t necessarily call it spiritual, especially not

because I'm a convinced atheist, so eh. I'm reserved when it comes to spiritual things, it's not my world, but still, the power of live music... It gives me something extra. (Kevin, male, 38, county seat, atheist)

What the presence of a "higher power" is manifested in also varies from individual to individual. There were those for whom it meant nature, the universe, energies. Listening to metal music gave Cintia, who is a Protestant, the same feelings as a church ceremony.

Very often I have such sacral feelings and intuitions [...] it's really like I'm at a religious ceremony and then I really feel that [the same feeling] goes through everyone, maybe this is exactly what was called, I don't know, a thousand years ago, the Holy Spirit. (Cintia, female, 27, Budapest, Lutheran)

Cintia's description shows that religion can be interpreted as an *experience*. She believes that everyone has the same experiences, they just refer to them differently.

CONCLUSION

In this article, event religion was used as a framework to examine the participant experience in the research of festivals and events. The exploration of the meaning of space and time, symbols, collective and personal experiences at the examined festivals show temporary communities that generate religionesque feelings and impressions.

Breaking away from everyday life and crossing boundaries helped individuals find self-identity and relaxation at the events. At the Catholic Lélek festival and the Fekete Zaj music festival I have shown that non-religious features (space, time, community) can take on a religionesque character.

The Lélek festival participants lived through religious experiences not primarily through religious semantics, but through the dimensions examined. At the Fekete Zaj festival, religious semantics were used to describe non-religious features. For example, some participants stated that a metal concert reflects tribal and religious rituals, elements of which also appeared in the personal experience of many visitors. This can be supported by applying theories such as the mystical experience (James 2008), flow (Csíkszentmihályi 2009), and resonance (Rosa 2019) to the experiences described by the interviewees. These theories show the elements and characteristics of religion-related experiences, which I interpret as religionesque experiences.

This comparative analysis showed that these elements can commonly be found in the participants' experience during the festivals studied, regardless of interpretation, traditional religions and denominations. The examination of the four fundamentally non-religious dimensions – spatiotemporality, symbols, community, and inward experience – showed that traces of religion can be found in both events, not only in the context of religious semantics but also in the non-religious context, and thus revealed religionesque characteristics.

CITED REFERENCES

- Ammerman, Nancy Tatom 2021 *Studying Lived Religion: Contexts and Practices*. New York: New York University Press.
- Barratt, Claire 2016 'Death Symbolism in Metal Jewelry: Circuits of Consumption from Subculture to the High Street.' In: *Global Metal Music and Culture: Current Directions in Metal Studies*. Andy R. Brown, Karl Spracklen, Keith Kahn-Harris and Niall Scott, eds. New York and London: Routledge. Pp. 227–242.
- Bowman, Marion 1999 'Healing in the Spiritual Marketplace: Consumers, Courses and Credentialism.' *Social Compass* 46(2): 181–189. DOI: 10.1177/003776899046002007.
- Brown, Andy R., Karl Spracklen, Keith Kahn-Harris and Niall Scott, eds. 2016 *Global Metal Music and Culture: Current Directions in Metal Studies*. New York and London: Routledge.
- Burge, Ryan P. 2021 *The Nones: Where They Came From, Who They Are, And Where They Are Going*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press.
- Casanova, José 2020 'Conditions of Belief and Unbelief in Our Global Secular Age.' *Templeton Project*, Dominican Monastery, Prague.
- Csikszentmihályi, Mihály 2009 [1990] *Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience*. New York: Harper & Row.
- Durkheim, Émile 1964 *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*. London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd.
- Erlanson, Sven E. 2000 *Spiritual but Not Religious: A Call to Religious Revolution in America*. San Jose: Writer's Showcase.
- 'Fekete Zaj' 2022, 'Fekete Zaj.' Internet source: <<https://www.feketezaj.hu/>> (13 June 2024).
- Foucault, Michel 1994 *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences*. New York NY: Vintage Books.
- Fuller, Robert C. 2001 *Spiritual, but Not Religious: Understanding Unchurched America*. Oxford, New York, etc.: Oxford University Press.
- Gauthier, François 2014 'Intimate Circles and Mass Meetings. The Social Forms of Event-structured Religion in the Era of Globalized Markets and Hyper-Meditation.' *Social Compass* 61(2): 261–271. DOI: 10.1177/0037768614524326.
- Geertz, Clifford 1973 *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays*. New York: Basic Books.
- Gennep, Arnold van 1960 *The Rites of Passage* [Translated by M. B. Vizedom and G. L. Caffee]. Chicago: University of Chicago Press; London: Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd.
- Granholm, Kennet 2011 "'Sons of Northern Darkness": Heathen Influences in Black Metal and Neofolk Music1.' *Numen* 58(4): 514–544. DOI: 10.1163/156852711X577069.
- Heidl, Sára Eszter 2023a 'A Zaj-élmény. Egy zenei fesztivál vallásshzociológiai elemzése.' *Kultúra és Közösség* XIV(2): 23–34.
- 2023b *Event Religion. A Conceptual Approach with a Comparative Analysis of Three Case Studies*. PhD thesis. Unpublished manuscript.
- 2023c 'Event Religion: Az Everness Fesztivál vallási dimenziói és azok értelmezése.' *Vallástudományi Szemle* 19(1): 78–99 (Publication of Master's thesis from 2020). DOI: 10.55193/RS.2023.1.78.
- 2023d 'Religionesque: A Term for Dealing with Contemporary Alternative Religious Forms in Empirical Studies.' *Spirituality Studies* 9(2): 18–27.
- 2024 'Event Religion. A Conceptual Approach to Understanding Changing Forms of Religion at a Contemporary Festival.' *Journal of Religion in Europe* 17(1): 32–60.
- James, William 2008 *The Varieties of Religious Experience: A Study in Human Nature*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Johanson, Kristiina and Tönno Jonuks 2015 'Superstition in the House of God?' *Mirator* 16(1): 118–140.
- Kasim, Azilah 2011 'Balancing Tourism and Religious Experience: Understanding Devotees' Perspectives on Taipusam in Batu Caves, Selangor, Malaysia.' *Journal of Hospitality Marketing & Management* 20(3–4): 441–456. DOI: 10.1080/19368623.2011.562437.
- Kirchner, Babette 2011 *Eventgemeinschaften. Das Fusion Festival und seine Besucher*. Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften. DOI: 10.1007/978-3-531-93187-6.

SÁRA ESZTER HEIDL

*Applying the Conceptual Framework 'Event Religion'
to Two Hungarian Festivals*

- Knott, Kim 2005 'Spatial Theory and Method for the Study of Religion.' *Temenos - Nordic Journal of Comparative Religion* 41(2): 153–184. DOI: 10.33356/temenos.4778.
- 2014 *The Location of Religion*. New York: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group.
- Lloyd, Tio 2020 'Understanding Burning Man Through Fundamental Religious Studies Theories.' *SummerResearch* 376: 27.
- Lucia, Amanda J. 2020 *White Utopias. The Religious Exoticism of Transformational Festivals*. Oakland, CA: University of California Press.
- McGuire, Meredith B. 2008 *Lived Religion: Faith and Practice in Everyday Life*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Mercadante, Linda A. 2014 *Belief Without Borders: Inside the Minds of the Spiritual But Not Religious*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Mitev, Ariel, Anna Irimiás and Gábor Michalkó 2017 'Ritusbátólott átalakulás: transzformáció a vallási turizmusban.' In: *Turizmus és transzformáció*. Tamás Régi, Tamara Rátz and Michalkó Gábor, eds. Orosháza - Budapest: Kodolányi János Főiskola, MTA CSFK Földrajztudományi Intézet, Magyar Földrajzi Társaság. Pp. 37–50.
- Moberg, Marcus 2009 'Popular Culture and the "Darker Side" of Alternative Spirituality: The Case of Metal Music.' *Postmodern Spirituality* 21: 110–128. DOI: 10.30674/scripta.67347.
- 2012 'Religion in Popular Music or Popular Music as Religion? A Critical Review of Scholarly Writing on the Place of Religion in Metal Music and Culture.' *Popular Music and Society* 35: 113–130. DOI: 10.1080/03007766.2010.538242.
- Nita, Maria and Jeremy H. Kidwell, eds. 2022 *Festival Cultures: Mapping New Fields in the Arts and Social Sciences*. Cham: Springer International Publishing. DOI: 10.1007/978-3-030-88392-8.
- Pike, Sarah M. 2022 'Do Avatars Weep? Ritual and Sacred Space at Virtual Burning Man.' *Religion* 52(2): 199–213. DOI: 10.1080/0048721X.2022.2051801.
- Povedák, István 2022 "'Come, Look and Hear How the Past Has Been and the Future Will Be!'" Festival Culture and Neo-Nationalism in Hungary.' In: *Festival Cultures. Mapping New Fields in the Arts and Social Sciences*. Maria Nita and Jeremy H. Kidwell, eds. E-Book: Palgrave Macmillan. Pp. 65–86.
- Povedák, Kinga 2014 'Religion, Music, Community.' In: *Religion, Culture, Society. Yearbook of the MTA-SZTE Research Group for the Study of Religious Culture*. Gábor Barna and Orsolya Gyöngyössi, eds. Szeged: MTA-SZTE Research Group for the Study of Religious Culture. Pp. 114–128.
- Primiano, Leonard Norman 1995 'Vernacular Religion and the Search for Method in Religious Folklore.' *Western Folklore* 54(1): 37–56. DOI: 10.2307/1499910.
- Rook, Dennis W. 1985 'The Ritual Dimension of Consumer Behavior.' *The Journal of Consumer Research* 12(3): 251–264.
- Rosa, Hartmut 2019 *Resonance. A Sociology of Our Relationship to the World*. Medford, MA: Polity Press.
- Schüler, Sebastian 2017 'Aesthetics of Immersion: Collective Effervescence, Bodily Synchronisation and the Sensory Navigation of the Sacred.' In: *Aesthetics of Religion*. Alexandra K. Grieser and Jay Johnston, eds. Berlin and Boston: De Gruyter. Pp. 367–388. DOI: 10.1515/9783110461015-016.
- Scott, Niall 2012 'Heavy Metal and the Deafening Threat of the Apolitical.' *Popular Music History*, 6(1): 224–239. DOI: 10.1558/pomh.v6i1/2.224.
- 2014 'Seasons in the Abyss: Heavy Metal as Liturgy.' *DISKUS* 16(1): 12–29. DOI: 10.18792/diskus.v16i1.2.
- Sherry, John F. and Robert V. Kozinets 2004 'Sacred Iconography in Secular Space: Altars, Alters, and Alterity at the Burning Man Project.' In: *Contemporary Consumption Rituals: A Research Anthology*. Cele C. Otnes and Tina Lowry, eds. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum. Pp. 291–311. DOI: 10.4324/9781410610720-24.
- Spradley, James P. 2016 *Participant Observation*. Long Grove, IL: Waveland Press.
- St John, Graham and Francois Gauthier 2015 'Burning Man's Gift-Driven Event-Centred Diaspora.' *Revue du MAUSS permanente*. Internet source: <<https://www.journaldumauss.net/?Burning-Mans-Gift-Driven-Event>>, 13. 6. 2024.
- Stausberg, Michael 2011 *Religion and Tourism: Crossroads, Destinations and Encounters*. Kindle edition. Abingdon, Oxon & New York: Routledge.
- Steiner, Philippe 2022 'Durkheim, the Durkheimian and the Sociology of Festivities.' In: *Émile Durkheim: Sociology as an Open Science*. Giovanni Paoletti and Massimo Pendenza, eds. Leiden and Boston: Brill. Pp. 108–131.

- Tan, Chang-Kwo 2002 'Syncretic Objects: Material Culture of Syncretism Among the Paiwan Catholics, Taiwan.' *Journal of Material Culture* 7(2): 167–187. DOI: 10.1177/1359183502007002638.
- Testa, Alessandro 2019 'Doing Research on Festivals: Cui Bono?' *Journal of Festive Studies* 1(1): 5–10.
- 2023a 'Re-thinking the Concept of Re-enchantment in Central-Eastern Europe.' *Religio: revue pro religionistik* 31(1): 103–131. DOI: 10.5817/Rel2023-1-7.
- 2023b *Ritualising Cultural Heritage and Re-enchanting Rituals in Europe*. Durham, NC: Carolina Academic Press, LLC.
- Tillich, Paul 1963 *Christianity and the Encounter of the World Religions*. New York, NY: Columbia University Press.
- Turner, Victor W. 1977 *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- Turner, Victor W. and Edith Turner 1978 *Image and Pilgrimage in Christian Culture*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Vasan, Sonia 2016 'Gender and Power in the Death Metal Scene: A Social Exchange Perspective.' In: *Global Metal Music and Culture: Current Directions in Metal Studies*. Andy R. Brown, Karl Spracklen, Keith Kahn-Harris and Niall Scott, eds. New York and London: Routledge. Pp. 261–276.
- Vitos, Botond, Graham St John and François Gauthier 2022 'Burning Man in Europe: Burns, Culture and Transformation.' In: *Festival Cultures: Mapping New Fields in the Arts and Social Sciences*. Maria Nita and Jeremy H. Kidwell, eds. Cham: Springer International Publishing. Pp. 87–114.
- Zerubavel, Eviatar 1981 *Hidden Rhythms. Schedules and Calendars in Social Life*. Berkeley and Los Angeles University of California Press; London: University of California Press Ltd.

POVZETEK

Prispevek predstavlja primerjalno analizo dveh empiričnih terenskih raziskav, opravljenih na Madžarskem. Cilj uporabe pristopa dogodkovne religije je prepoznati vidike festivala – ne glede na to, ali je religiozen ali ne – ki so lahko z orodji religijskih študijev interpretirani kot povezani z religijo oziroma religioneskni. V prvem poglavju so na kratko predstavljeni osrednji vidiki razširjenega raziskovanja festivalov v sodobni literaturi, nato so opredeljene štiri dimenzije dogodkovne religije. V drugem poglavju sta predstavljena proučevana festivala na Madžarskem: Lélek v Sombotelu in Fekete Zaj v Mátrafüredu v Gyöngyösu. Dogodka se zelo razlikujeta tako po zasnovi in slogu kot tudi po programu in udeležencih, vidiki dogodkovne religije pa so podobni: poseben čas in prostor, liminalna narava, simbolično sporočilo dogodka, grajenje skupnosti, sprostitvev in odmor od vsakdanjega življenja so najpomembnejši vidiki časovno zamejenega dogodka. Na festivalu Lélek so dimenzije dogodkovne religije pokazale, da religiozni vidiki ne izvirajo nujno iz prisotnosti cerkve, religioznih simbolov ali verskih dejavnosti, temveč iz začasnosti dogodka, možnosti za sprostitvev in skupnostnih programov. Udeleženci niso bili prikrajšani za religiozno semantiko, okoliščine so jim omogočile, da so se povezali med seboj in s svojim predmetom verovanja. Religiozna glasba je nekaterim pomagala doseči višje stanje. Medtem ko nekateri niso zaznavali božje navzočnosti, je bil za druge Bog prisoten tudi ob nereligiozni glasbi in programu. Na festivalu Fekete Zaj, v nereligioznem okolju, so dimenzije pokazale, da so celo nereligiozni udeleženci izkusili vidike dogodka, ki bi jih lahko opisali kot religioneskne. To se je izražalo na primer v dejstvu, da so za opisovanje svojih izkušenj uporabljali religiozno semantiko in poudarjali ritualne, svete in duhovne vidike. Analiza je pokazala, da so dimenzije dogodkovne religije primerne ne le za odkrivanje, ali ima neki dogodek religiozni

vidik, temveč tudi, kako religioneskni značaj dojemajo udeleženci: štiri temeljno nereligiozne dimenzije zajemajo značilnosti, ki jih najdemo pri dogodkih vseh vrst in oblik, ter tako razkrivajo religioneskne karakteristike. Pristop dogodkovne religije lahko osvetli religijo z drugega zornega kota: ne kot institucijo ali vero v določeno višjo moč, ampak kot *izkušnjo*.