



CONCEPTUALISING LABOUR'S SPATIAL FIX: SOCIALIST HUNGARY IN 1980

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Main argument



uneven geographical
development of
Hungarian socialism



workers' social
reproduction and
securing livelihoods

Spatial fix (David Harvey)



- new spatial divisions of labour (geographical “solution” of the contradictions of capitalism)
- fixing capital in space (physical infrastructure)

Labour's spatial fix (Andrew Herod)

- “[W]orkers are likely to want to shape the economic landscape in ways that facilitate this self-reproduction. Struggles over the location of work, new or continued investment (public or private), access to housing and transport, all can play significant roles in allowing working class people to reproduce themselves on a daily and generational basis. Recognizing that workers may see their own self-reproduction as integrally tied to ensuring the economic landscape is made in certain ways and not in others (as a landscape of employment rather than of unemployment, for instance), allows them to be incorporated into analyses of the location of economic activities in a theoretically much more active manner than traditionally has been the case.”
- Herod, A. 1997. From a geography of labor to a labor geography: labor's spatial fix and the geography of capitalism. *Antipode*, 29(1), 1-31., 16.



Labour's spatial fixes under Hungarian socialism

- wage-work: wage differences within the country - proxy: workers in industry; socialist sector
- participation in the second economy - proxy: share of small-scale production or petty-trading households (*kisárutermelő, kiskereskedő*)
- housing – proxy: new housing constructions
- methodology: official statistical data at the settlement level; 1980 (plus changes between 1970 and 1980)

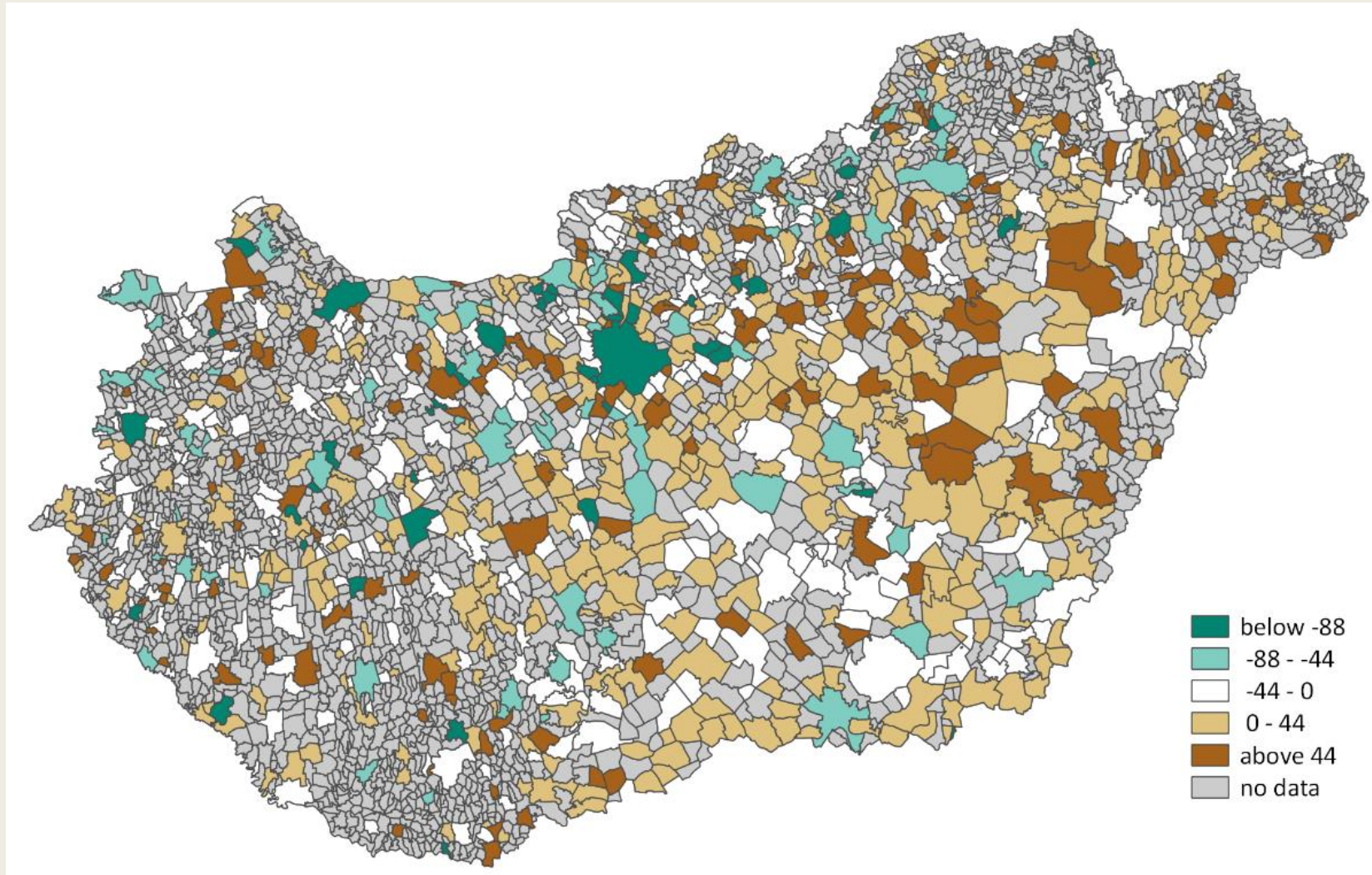
1. Industrial wage-work

- 5% (90 thousand people) drop of workers in socialist industry between 1970 and 1980
- spatial fix for companies and the planned economy in general:
 - *deconcentration of industrial activities (industrialisation of villages – unskilled, low-wage work)*
 - *growing female participation: food/beverages industry, textile industry, porcelain and ceramics industry*
- labour's and companies' spatial fix: subsidising coal mining after the oil crisis / lobbying for securing jobs and wages

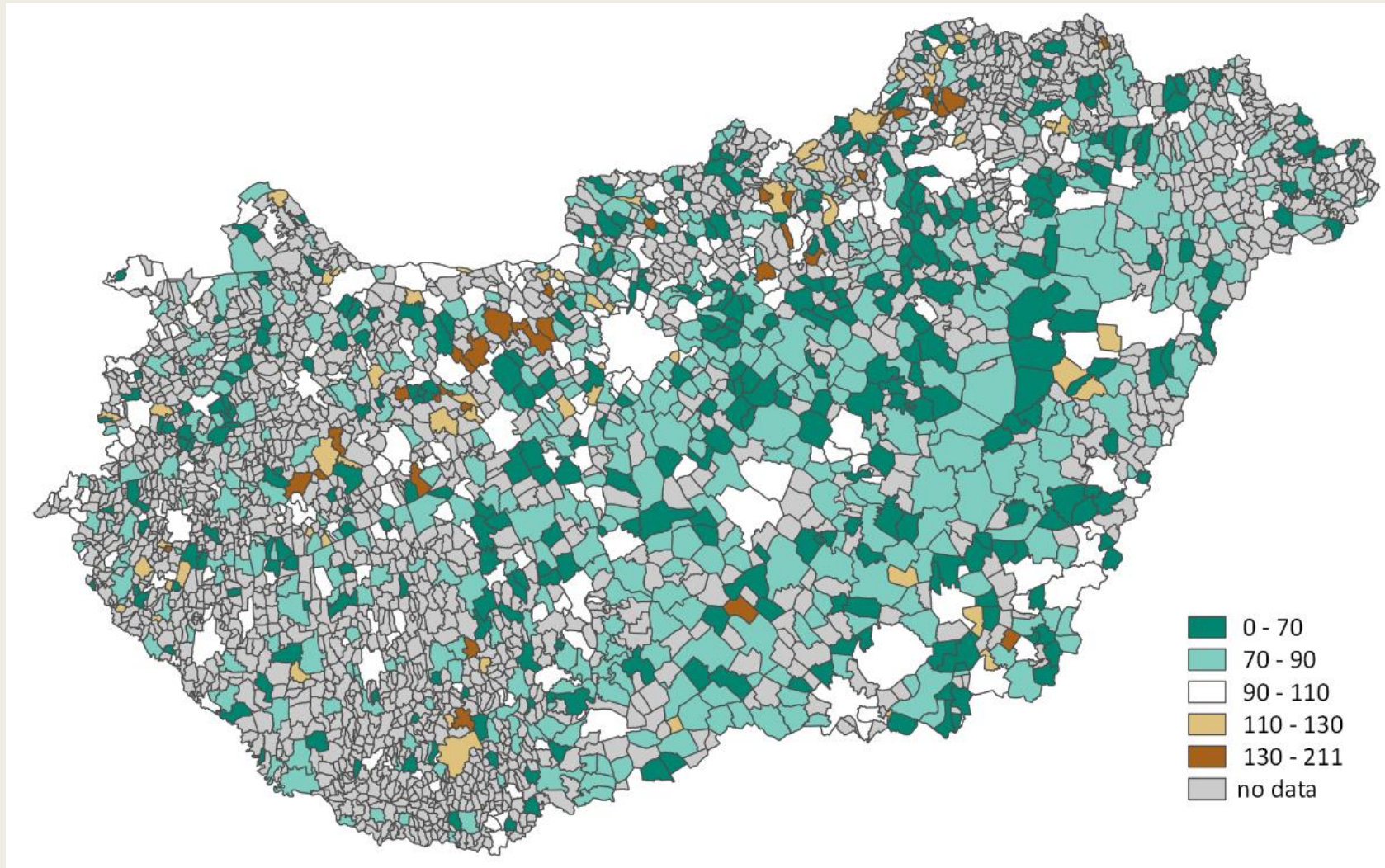
Martfű (1980), Oroszlány (1975)
Source: fortepan



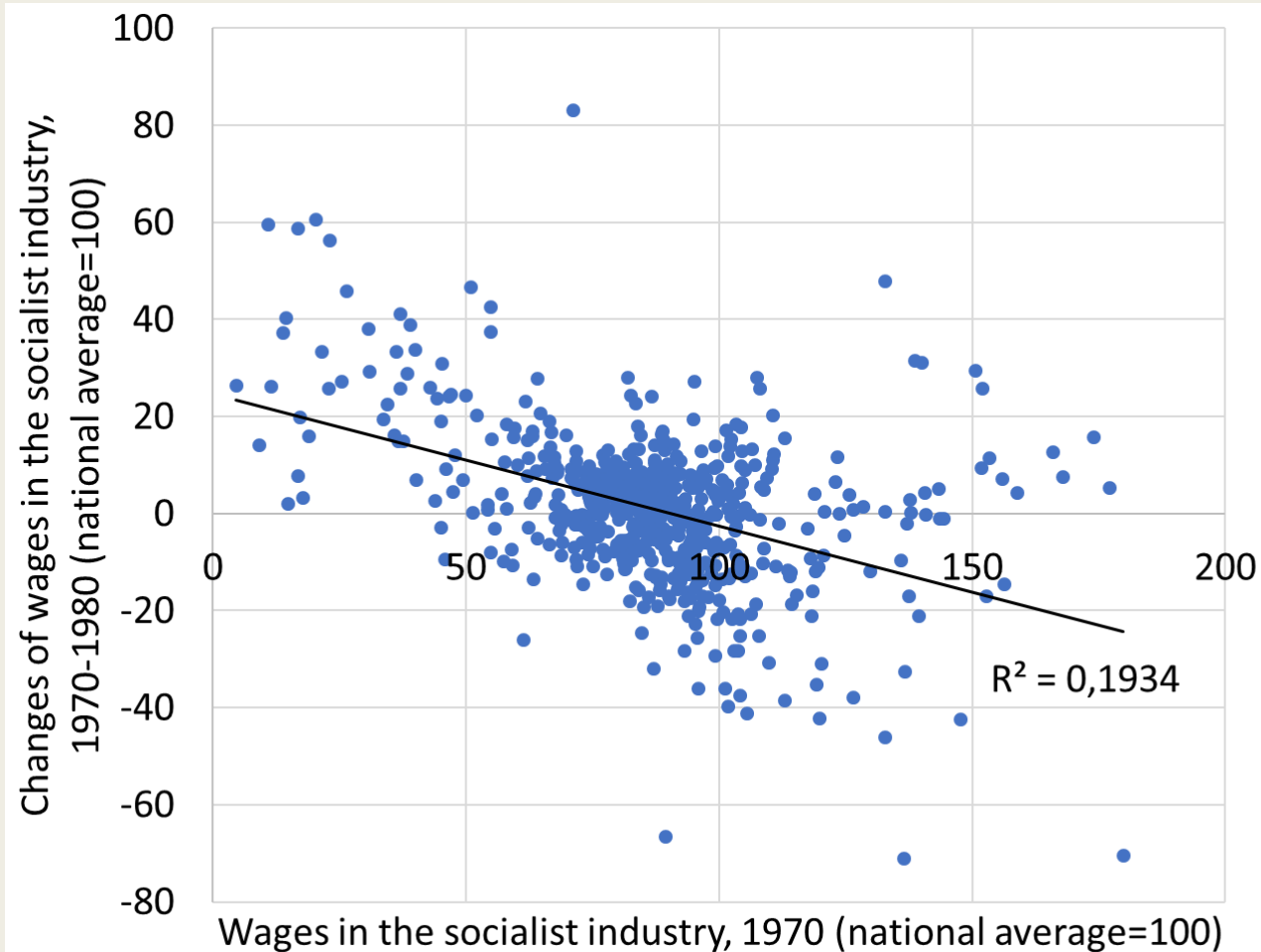
Changes in socialist manufacturing employment (per 1000 inhabitants, 1970–1980)



Average wages in socialist manufacturing, 1980 (national average=100)



Declining wage inequalities in the socialist industry between 1970 and 1980



Note: only settlements with more than 50 employees in industry in 1970 are represented.

2. Participation in the second economy

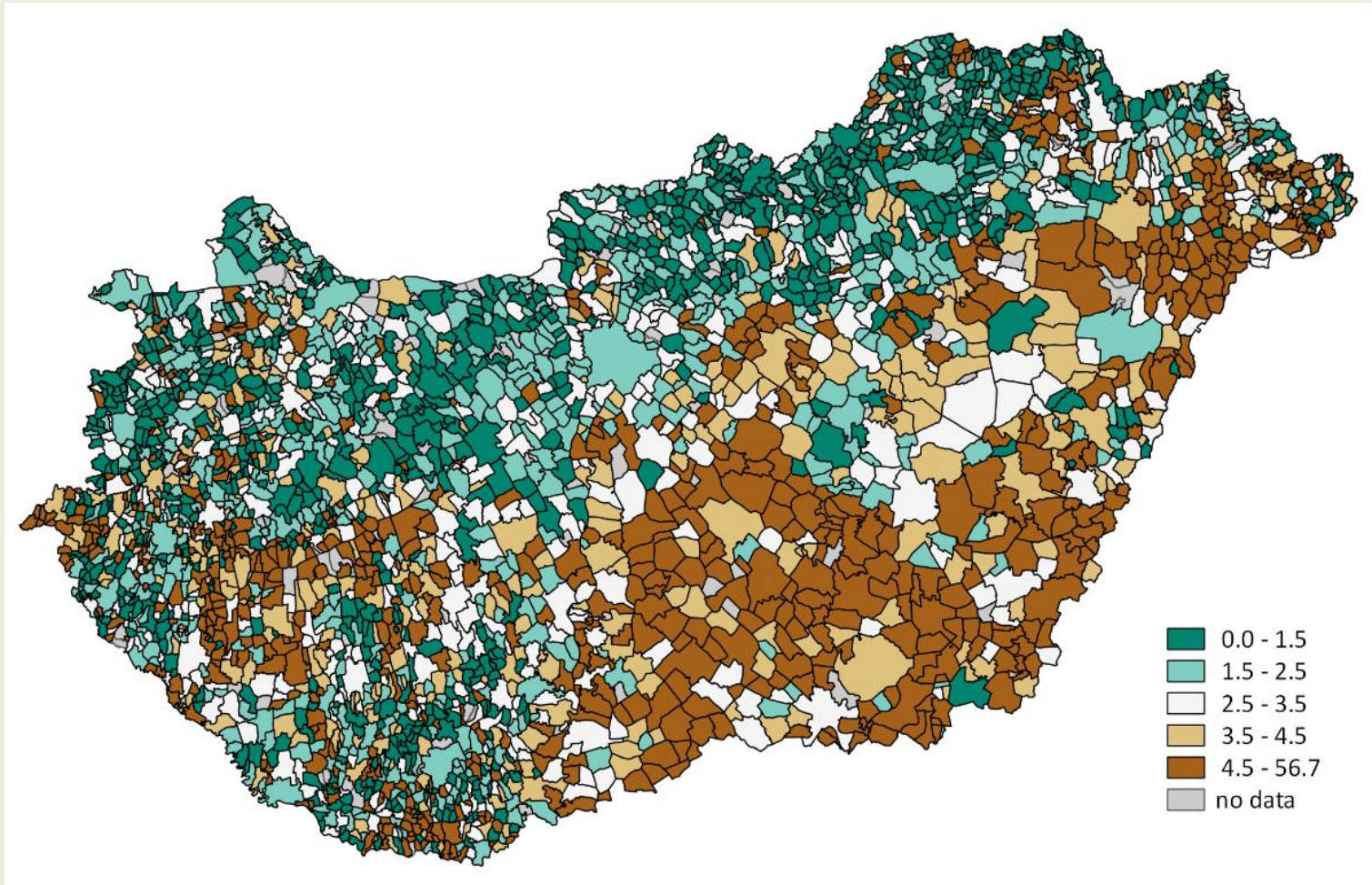
- share of small-scale production or petty-trading households (kisárutermelő, kiskereskedő): national average in 1980: 3.01% of households
- labour's spatial fix: substitute for industrial wage-work – but uncorrelated on the settlement level ($r=-0.0689$)

(1985)

Source: fortepan



Share of households in small-scale production or petty-trading, 1980 (%)



- Great Hungarian Plain,
- wine growing regions,
- around Lake Balaton

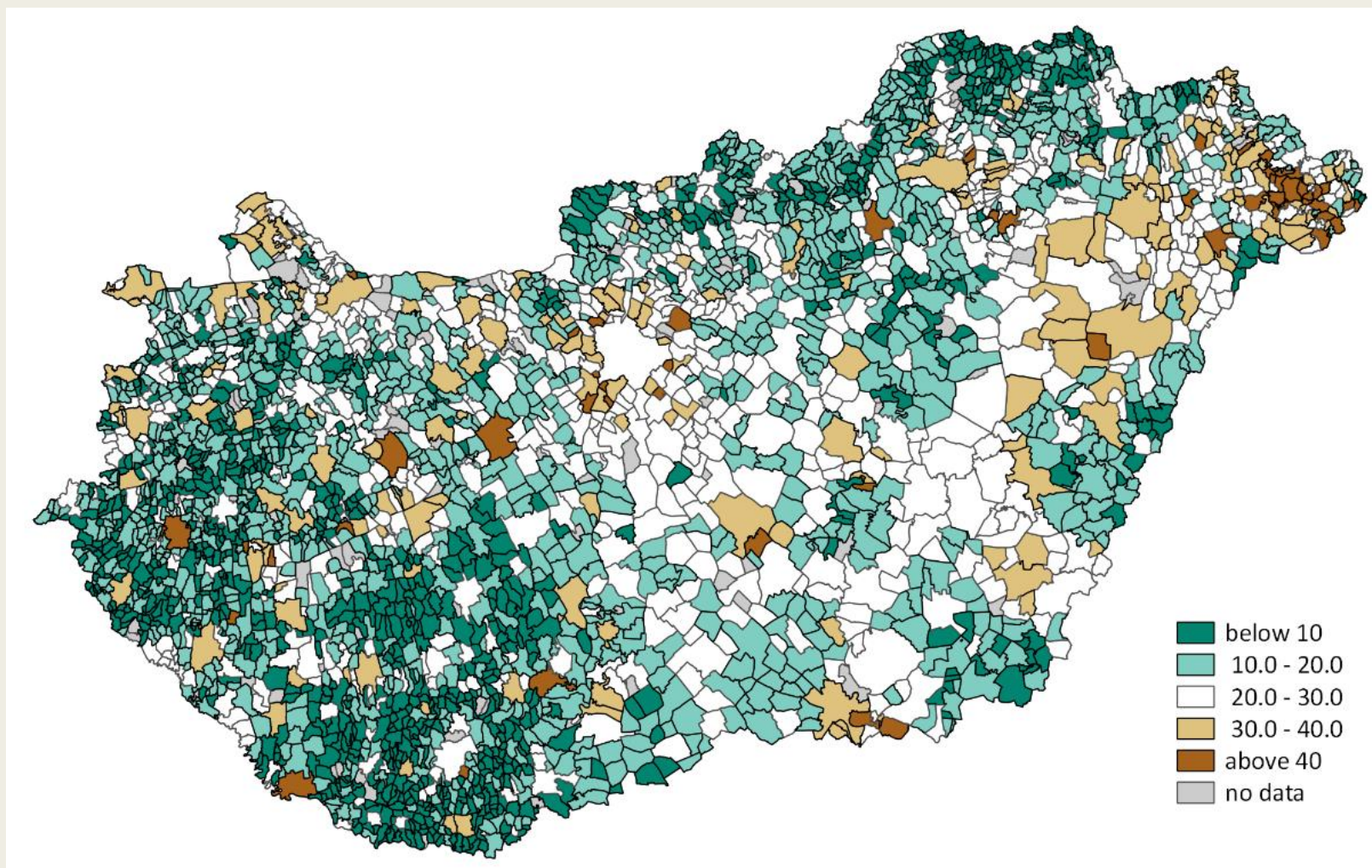
3. Housing

- constraining mobility and indicating mobility
- 1980: 75% lived in private property, 60% in family houses
- 1970-1980: number of housing units grew by 13.5%

Hajdúszoboszló (1977),
Százhalombatta (1976)
Source: fortepan



Share of housing units built between 1970 and 1979 in the whole housing stock, 1980 (%)



- outer and inner peripheries,
- Budapest agglomeration,
- industrial investments,
- recreational settlements,
- medium-sized cities
- Tisza floods

Conclusions

- labour's spatial fix is a useful concept in understanding the space-economy of Hungarian socialism
- comparing labour's and "capital's" (companies') spatial fixes
 - *same direction: securing jobs in mining*
 - *companies: deconcentration*
 - *labour: generating incomes outside the wage-work; investment into housing*
- scale: fixes on the scale of the household or settlement are not necessarily fixes on the national scale (mining)
- to be included into the analysis: agricultural wage-work, internal migration