Rural society, power, & social integration

Festschrift for the seventieth birthday of Imre Kovách

Edited by
Bernadett Csurgó
Nicole Mathieu
Boldizsár Megyesi

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Centre for Social Sciences, Budapest
Debrecen University Press
LADYSS – Social Dynamics and Recomposition of Spaces Laboratory, Paris
2023

Published by:
Centre for Social Sciences, Budapest, tk.hu
Debrecen University Press, dupress.unideb.hu, and
LADYSS, Social Dynamics and Recomposition of Spaces Laboratory, ladyss.com
Responsible editor: Zsolt Boda
Reviewer: Márta Kiss and Melanie K. Smith
Proofreading: Nina Leeke
Book design and layout editing: Orsolya György and Mariann Kovács
Cover design: Mariann Kovács
Cover photo: Annie Spratt, Unsplash
Typeset: Kadarka
Printed by OOK Press Veszprém
Funded by the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, and Krisztián Orbán
ISBN: 978-963-418-055-5

Centre for Social Sciences tk

LADYSS Laboratoire Dynamiques Sociales et Recomposition des Espaces

Contents

Tabula gratulatoria

Ábrahám, Katalin
Alanen, Ilkka
Albert, Fruzsina
Andersson, Kjell
Asztalos Morell, Ildikó
Bai, Attila
Balázs, Zoltán
Balogh, Karolina
Balogh, László Levente
Balogh, Péter
Bartus, Tamás
Bayer, József
Biró A., Zoltán
Boda, Zsolt
Bódi, Ferenc
Bódi, Mátyás
Bodó, Julianna
Bozsó, Beáta
Böcskei, Balázs
Bruckmeier, Karl
Czibere, Ibolya
Csata, Zsombor
Csizmady, Adrienne
Csoba, Judit
Csurgó, Bernadett
Dávid, Bea
Dupcsik, Csaba
Egedi, Ildikó
Egedi, Tamás
Ehrström, Peter
Eklund, Erland
Elek, Judit
Elekes, Zsuzsanna
Fedinec, Csilla
Feischmidt, Margit
Fényes, Hajnalka
Ferencz, Zoltán
Ferge, Zsuzsa
Fonte, Maria
Foryś, Grzegorz
Földi, András
Gárdos, Judit
Geambașu, Réka
Gergely, Orsolya
Gerő, Márton
Gorlach, Krzysztof
Granberg, Leo
Győri, Ágnes

Hajdu, Gábor
Hamza, Gábor
Havasi, Virág
Horváth, Gergely Krisztián
Horzsa, Gergely
Huszár, Ákos
Husz, Ildikó
Huszti, Éva
Igbeghe, Christian Barika
Janky, Béla
Jastrzębiec-Witowska, Anna
Juhászné Marosi, Edit
Kapitány, Ágnes
Kapitány, Gábor
Kiss, Dénes
Kiss, László
Kiss, Márta
Kiss, Zsuzsanna
Kocsis, Veronika
Kopasz, Marianna
Korinek, László
Korthals Altes, Willem
Kovács, Eszter
Kovács, Éva
Kovács, I. Gábor
Kovács, Katalin
Kovács, Mariann
Körösényi, András
Kristóf, Luca
Kusztor, Éva
Lajos, Veronika
Laki, László
Lamm, Vanda
Laschewski, Lutz
Lengyel, György
Loncsák, Noémi
Lostak, Michal
Majerová, Věra
Márton, Sándor
Mathieu, Nicole
Megyesi, Boldizsár
Megygyesi, Edina
Meiszterics, Enikő
Messing, Vera
Molnár, Éva
Nagy, Beáta
Neményi, Mária
Nemes, Gusztáv
Nemes-Zámbó, Gabriella
Németh, Krisztina
Nikula, Jouko
Orbán, Krisztián
Oross, Dániel
Orosz, Éva
Osti, Giorgio
Papp Z., Attila
Peltonen, Matti
P. Tóth, Tamás
Paksi, Veronika
Pálné Kovács, Ilona
Péli, Gábor
Perpék, Éva
Peti, Lehel
Pires, Iva
Rácz, Andrea
Rácz, Katalin
Ragadics, Tamás
Rajna, Renáta
Ritter, David Merle
Róbert, Péter
Saád, József
Salmi, Pekka
Schmidt, Andrea
Sebők, Miklós
Sivini, Silvia
Sjöblom, Stefan
Śpiewak, Ruta
Starosta, Paweł
Swain, Nigel
Szabari Vera
Szabó, Andrea
Szabó, Szilárd
Szabó-Tóth, Kinga
Szalma, Ivett
Szarka, Melitta
Szikra, Dorottya
Takács, Judit
Tamás, Veronika
Tardos, Katalin
Tardos, Róbert
Tibori, Theodosia Timea
Tisenkopfs, Talis
Toma, Stefánia
Tóth, Ágnes
Utasi, Ágnes
Valuch, Tibor
Váradi, Monika
Vattayné Orosz, Nicolette
Vitale, Annamaria
Zagata, Lukas
Závecz, Tibor
Zsigmond, Csilla

Imre Kovách – European ruralities in confrontation

Nicole Mathieu

To pay tribute to, and therefore praise, Imre Kovách is an honour for me, but it is also a real challenge given the breadth and complexity of the qualities possessed by this Hungarian rural sociologist researcher. To achieve this, I will adopt a personal approach by revisiting the experiences we have shared since our first meeting in the group he led on *Leadership and power* within the EU COST Rural Innovation Programme (1996–2000), where I represented LADYSS. I shall attempt to explore in greater depth their scientific and political significance by addressing two aspects which, in my view, make my relationship with this researcher profoundly heuristic: his role as a thinker on European ruralities under construction, and his dual identity that harmoniously combines that of ascientist and an 'intellectual' passionate about intergenerational and inter-European collective work.

A new focus in research on Europe and its countryside

Interacting with ruralists from the countries of 'Eastern Europe' and therefore from Central Europe, whose post-Communist 'rural restructuring' is one of Imre Kovách's favourite themes, was far from being a new orientation for me when we met in the lecture hall and then in a small group during the COST programme. Relations between French ruralists and their Hungarian, Polish and Romanian colleagues were long-standing and recurrent. Personally, my involvement began in 1968 when I made my debut on the subject of *The development of French rural areas* at the Franco-Hungarian colloquium held in Budapest under the leadership of the geographer György Enyedi. This was followed by a number of research exchanges, such as the joint comparative analysis of two 'villages', Tard in Hungary (Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén county) and Millay in the orbit of the small town of Luzy in the Nièvre department, and even family exchanges (with his daughter, the filmmaker Ildiko). My connections with the social science community in Poland were also very close and regular, especially as the latter was itself linked to the Hungarian ruralist community by a solidarity that could be observed during events such as the period of martial law (stan wojenny) under Jaruzelski (1981–1983).

And yet, the meeting with Imre ushered in a new period in the conception of rural research in Europe. It was no longer a question of Franco-Hungarian or Polish relations, not only because the French language was no longer used in exchanges, but because the whole of Europe, with its cultural and historical diversity – the 'Europes' – became the central theoretical question for both of us, united by the use of the English language. The ongoing agricultural and rural processes, sometimes shared, and sometimes regionally specific, are shaping the emerging ruralities in accordance with the contradictory trends of homogenization and the accentuation of distinctions based on renewed cultural bases and local knowledge.

To verify this hypothesis, Imre Kovách has multiplied his experiences and responsibilities at various levels. At the European level, he became involved in the European Society for Rural Sociology, of which he was elected president (2003–2007). He built up a network that combined scientific affinity and friendship, playing an important guiding role within it. The European programmes (Rurban, Corason and the recent Ruralization) give researchers from different countries the opportunity to compare their points of view, which are sometimes vigorously debated, and to advance the understanding of the 'European rural identity' in all its diversity. At a 'local' level, to refine his understanding of these 'Europes', Imre Kovách travels to the university towns where he conducts his PhD courses, focusing on those in the North (Finland and Sweden) and the West (Ireland, Great Britain, Belgium and the Netherlands), without forgetting the former Eastern European countries (Czech Republic, Slovakia, Poland and the former GDR). At the turn of the twenty-first century, it is notable that he is trying to extend his knowledge and cooperation to the 'Latin' countries whose languages he does not master: Portugal, Spain, Italy and, of course, France.

I apologize to the reader for emphasizing Imre Kovách's place in France and particularly in our CNRS team at CNRS Ladyss, where he stayed on two occasions. Firstly, in 2006, he was involved in assessing the Rurban project (publications in English) and building the ambitious European FP7 Europolis project on rural/urban relations in ten European capitals, for which Ladyss had agreed to take the lead. Then, in 2010, he was a visiting senior foreign researcher funded by the City of Paris, for which he received the award on 10 February 2010. Imre Kovách's reputation in France was confirmed with his election as a Foreign Corresponding Member of the French Academy of Agriculture in 2015.

On the issue of the unity and diversity of rural Europe, and over and above this uninterrupted cooperation with France, Imre Kovách has succeeded in making Budapest one of the central hubs for reflection on rural Europe, as was demonstrated in the 2022 Social Dynamics conference, which gave all Europes an equal place.

A scientist as well as an intellectual

However, my attachment to Imre Kovách's personality is not only due to his role in the awareness of the necessary change of scale and interrelation that research on rural Europe requires to be relevant and solid. It is also linked to my own research conception which aims to bring together and make the 'scientific' and the 'political' interact. Some of the titles of my books are proof of this: *La ville durable, du politique au scientifique or Les relations villes-campagnes: une histoire scientifique et politique.* Perhaps because my generation admired the figures of Jean-Paul Sartre and Marc Bloch, as well as the mathematical philosopher Albert Lautman, I find it difficult to distinguish between the scientist and the committed intellectual. And it is these two qualities that I find in Imre Kovách.

I need to explain because this statement is not self-evident. I'll quickly highlight the qualities that make him a sociologist who meets the criteria of the social sciences through his methodological rigour (combining measurement with a qualitative approach), and through his choice of research subjects, which are always oriented towards facts that are little known or even neglected by the elites in our milieu (small farms, for example). But I also see in him the figure of the intellectual, concerned with this time, the present time linked to the past time and engendering the future (cf. *Les temps modernes* magazine founded by Jean-Paul Sartre will become *Les temps qui restent*). Not content to simply record the obvious forms of social change, the intellectual Imre, based on his socio-political culture including Marxism, combined with intelligent observation of the 'terrain', aims to produce a vision of a society in the process of restructuring, where new classes are emerging. For proof of this, we need only refer to the powerful article he wrote with E. Kucerova (2008) announcing the rise of a 'project class', which he localized in Central Europe but which resonates elsewhere and certainly in France. This heuristic blending of scientific and political perspectives is also evident in the attention he pays to words and concepts. He seizes on all those that refer to processes that need to be seriously investigated by moving away from their conformist or stereotyped meanings: 'social order', 'peasant' and 'de-peasantization', 'sustainability', 'ruralization', 'rural regeneration', and so on. However, this theoretical quest cannot be carried out alone; everything needs to be discussed, confronted and shared with great names (I won't mention them because they are part of the book dedicated to him) as well as with the younger people on whom the future depends. Is it not the most difficult task facing us, as social science researchers, to form 'socially useful' groups? I wish a long life to Imre Kovách and to his way of thinking!

Laudation of Professor Imre Kovách on his seventieth birthday

Krisztián Orbán

It took the creators of the Hungarian public discourse quite a while to realize just how different Hungarian society had become from the one it referred to constantly. Almost all opinion leaders of the 1990s and 2000s assumed that the world they saw from Budapest was by and large the everyday reality of the country, or at least the ideal towards which the rest of the country was progressing. Although everybody realized that the country was not a monolith, that large cities were bigger and richer than the rest, and that education had a massive impact on one's output in life, it was also assumed that the country constituted one political community, sharing very similar, so-called European and democratic values. That belief was first challenged, then destroyed, and finally inversed in the 2010s. The one-time confidence of the elite was replaced with a fear of the unknown.

Imre's research, as well as the ensuing books and interviews on the integration of Hungarian society arrived at the scene in this intellectual vacuum. Arrived and started to fill it. For the first time, one could find an explanation for some of the major Hungarian mysteries of the 2010s. How did the new political regime solidify its support so fast? How come the seemingly banal political slogans resonate so well with large swathes of Hungarian society? What do Hungarian people want from their political leaders? Imre's works have provided a new frame of reference for understanding Hungarian society. His focus on integration, or more precisely, the lack of it within Hungarian society, proved to be an approach yielding numerous new insights. Most importantly, it forced many of us to pay attention to what fundamental needs this political regime satisfies instead of exclusively analysing its shortcomings. To this day, it remains a point of departure for any kind of serious analysis of where Hungary is today. We are all indebted to Imre's intellectual courage and leadership.

Editorial

Foreword of the editors

Bernadett Csurgó
Nicole Mathieu
Bodizsár Megyesi

It was our honour and pleasure to collect these articles for the volume as a Festschrift to Imre Kovách. This is our congratulatory offering to our colleague, mentor and friend and the array of topics reflects his rich research interests, themes and approaches and his scientific impact as a result of his more than 40-year career in (rural) sociology.

His scientific work is based around three main concepts: rural society, power and social integration. The chapters in this volume relate to these concepts in several ways.

Imre started his university studies in the Faculty of Humanities at the University of Debrecen, and he graduated in history and Hungarian in 1977. He then graduated in sociology from Eötvös Loránd University, Budapest in 1982. He started his academic work in the Sociology Department of Kossuth Lajos University in Debrecen as assistant lecturer and then he started to work as a researcher at the Social Science Institute in Budapest from 1982.

Imre's first degree was in history. His interest in and impressive knowledge of history are present not only in informal conversations; his historical approach and interest have always been emphasized in his work too. One of his first social scientific pieces of work was a computer-based analysis of historical data in TÁRKI from 1986 to 1989. Later, in his PhD thesis, he analysed small-scale farming in the socialist second economy in the 1980s and placed it in a social-historical perspective in an attempt to understand the role of small-scale farming in the process of embourgeoisement in the socialist era. He emphasized the role of small-scale farming in achieving middle-class status, especially in rural areas (Kovách 1988). His theory on de-peasantization also explores the historical-structural peculiarities of Hungarian rural society and shows how political decisions and historical changes affected the structural, cultural and social restructuring of rural society. This theory aims to understand the historical role of peasantry in countries and societies where its role was significant (Kovách 2001).

Leo Granberg's essay in this volume entitled *From peasants to ecosystem gardeners – Transformations in rural Europe* sensitively tells the story of the birth of de-peasantization theory and the work of the very inspiring international community of scientific European rural sociology, of which Imre has been a leading figure in the last decades. Although Granberg's chapter starts with a history of European peasantry and its changing roles, it goes further and presents some new features of rural transformations such as food crisis and climate change and seeks to understand the roles of rural people in transforming societies.

Peasantry is at the centre of Csaba Dupcsik's chapter entitled *Perceptions of the peasantry in the last century of the Hungarian social sciences* which discusses the background of Imre's theory on de-peasantization from a social science theoretical and historical point of view. It focuses on three dimensions in order to understand the so-called conceptual cloud of Imre's concept of peasantry and de-peasantization. The three dimensions are (1) the scope of the concept of the peasantry; (2) the social mechanisms of the decline or disappearance of the peasantry and de-peasantization; (3) the normativity associated with the concept of the peasant. In elaborating these dimensions, Dupcsik provides a number of sociologically relevant and/or typical examples for understanding the concept of peasantry and its scientific representations. There are three further chapters in this volume which reflect Imre's historical and especially social historical interests.

Recent history, particularly understanding the impact of socialism is significantly involved in Imre's work. Tibor Valuch's chapter in this volume which presents *Labour coercion in Hungary before, under and after communism* strongly connects to Imre's research interests on the social changes during socialism and on the social transition in the post-communist period and is also connected to one of his main concepts, that of power and power relations. Valuch's chapter analyses the external and internal factors of work coercion and incentives. It describes disciplinary practices, and the economic and non-economic instruments of work coercion. Based on the analysis he compares the practices of work coercion in different periods and different socio-economic systems. He found that before the Second World War, economic resources, the role of socialization, identity formation and social integration factors were important. In the second period, under communism, economic factors were replaced by political and ideological factors, and punishment based on criminal law became important in work coercion. In the third period, the majority of coercion and the incentives to work were legal and again mainly economic and financial.

The two further chapters approaching Hungarian society from a social-historical perspective involve another important concept of Imre's research interest: social integration/disintegration. Takács and P. Tóth's chapter discusses a case of social disintegration and exclusion from a micro-historical point of view. They analyse the personal experiences of homosexual individuals', more precisely gay men's, 'gay life' during the state socialism era. They found that gay men were members of a disintegrated

minority group under state socialism. The high level of social repression in parallel with the lack of systemic integration resulted in cognitive isolation and homosexual men were often forced to choose secrecy and maintain a heterosexual facade. Their case presents the mechanisms of social exclusion through which they were forced to become an almost invisible minority.

The last historical chapter in this volume, Ágnes Tóth's chapter entitled *"The most important thing we can do for our nationality today".* Some issues of personal amends for the Germans in Hungary also focuses on a minority group's experiences during the state socialism era. She analyses the attitudes and reactions of the German community in Hungary to personal reparations. She also discusses the activities of the National Association of Hungarian Germans and presents how the German community in Hungary incorporates the rights violations it has suffered historically in their collective memory. She states that on the eve of the regime change, the leadership of the National Association of Hungarian Germans and also the community faced many challenges. They created a grassroots, democratic, national organization capable of representing the interests of the German minority. In the first half of the 1990s, the way in which their interests and past grievances were presented in the reparations process was crucial. The leadership of the Association was at the forefront of this struggle for moral, political and material reparations. Power relations were crucial in their success.

The second part of the volume reflects Imre's roles as driver and organizer on the Hungarian sociological scene. He builds and organizes research teams and collaborations to explore and understand the structure and mechanisms of Hungarian society. Imre initiates the application of new methods and approaches and the involvement of different perspectives such as power, integration and disintegration mechanisms, spatial inequalities and redistribution. The seven edited volumes (Kovách 2020a, 2020b, 2017, 2011, 2006, 2002; Kovách Imre et al. 2012) between 2002 and 2020 present the main results of his and his research teams' work on these topics. Many of his students or younger colleagues were inspired and developed by their work on his research projects, while his senior colleagues also get chance to develop their research topic through their joint work. The authors of this part of the volume are his students and younger colleagues who were mentored by him, or his colleagues involved in his research.

The social stratification of Hungarian society and a comprehensive approach to it have been a crucial part of Imre's scientific work since the beginning of his sociological career. He started his academic career in the Research group of Social Stratification of the Social Science Institute. The second part of this volume includes chapters by his colleagues and reflects and presents the results of several research projects on social stratification and social inequalities from the last decades which were led by him.

Imre participated in the Szelényi and Treiman international research project on elite and social stratification in the 1990s, which focused on other post-communist

countries such as Bulgaria, Poland, Russia, Czechia and Slovakia, alongside Hungary. He then conducted three more research surveys on elite groups – political, cultural and economic ones – between 1997 and 2009. One of his students, Luca Kristóf, participated in and did her doctoral research based on this research on elites. She continued the research of the cultural elite and cultural field from the 2010s using similar methods as the original research. Her chapter in this volume presents the pathways to and recruitment of the Hungarian cultural elite before and after 2010. Her analyses of the cultural elite are significantly related to, and at the same time contributed to, Imre's influential research question of why the Hungarian semi-authoritarian political system is so stable and how it can be integrative for social groups. In the case of the cultural elite, her analysis shows that the recruitment base of the elite changed after 2010. The left-wing and liberal predominance in some parts of the Hungarian cultural elite decreased after 2010, even if the overall characteristics of the cultural elites' political attitudes in 2018 were very similar to those in 2009, and the cultural elite remained ideologically polarized. She states that the presence of political patronage can be seen in particular segments of the elite. Institutional leaders who might be more easily replaced by loyal actors such as media or cultural institution leaders were much more right-wing than the rest of the elite in 2018.

The role of politics and power in social stratification and inequalities is also significantly emphasized in Imre's work. In addition, we could say his interest in politics and policy was strengthened by the collegial company and research atmosphere of the Institute of Political Sciences of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, where he worked from 1989 to 2010. He was always able to combine sociological approaches with political issues in a fruitful way. His analysis on the redistribution and development system became a significant part of his analysis and approaches toward social structures.

There are three papers in this volume on different topics of political science and political sociology. Ferenc Bódi and Mátyás Bódi analyse a traditional political science question, the political elections and voting turnout, from a less studied but very important, geographical point of view in their chapter entitled *Where are the voters?* They analyse both the general and the local elections from 1990 to 2019 through a political geography approach. They focus on the social background of voting, and they emphasize the spatial characteristics of voter turnout in Hungary. They state that geographic location is one of the primary factors in electoral decisions. They also examined the spatial feature of participation; they focus on smaller settlements too and also analyse the question from a social-historical point of view.

In their chapter, Ákos Huszár and Andrea Szabó link political preference to the subjective perception of social mobility. Their analysis is based on one of the large-scale sample surveys from the comprehensive research series on social mobility and integration led by Imre from 2015 until now. A new theoretical-analytical model – the so-called integration model, to describe the social stratification of Hungarian society – was developed as the main result of this work. As eminent members of this research

team, Ákos Huszár and Andrea Szabó used the large-scale sample survey of 2018 to analyse the characteristics of subjective intergenerational and intragenerational mobility after 2010 in their paper here. They proved that the supporters of the governing parties more strongly perceived the improvement in their social status than the opposition voters. However, they found that party preference has a stronger impact on intergenerational mobility than intragenerational mobility. Nevertheless, they conclude that government supporters have the highest rate of subjectively perceived improved social status. The subjective perception of social status is significantly influenced by the messages of the governing parties in Hungary nowadays, even if objective social changes have an impact too. They state that the governing parties' integration strategy functions very efficiently even if it is selective and it does not involve the entire society of Hungary. In addition, a large number of 'losers' also support the governing parties, even though they perceive a failure in their mobility.

The third chapter in this part focusing on political issues is Márton Gerő and Hajdu Gábor's paper on the processes of political polarization in Hungarian society. Their analysis is based on the ten waves of the European Social Survey (ESS). They state that the opinions related to the state's policies, satisfaction and trust in the state are strongly related to political orientation. Their analysis also proves that the distance between left and right-wing groups has increased during the last decades.

The three papers mentioned above show the integrative role of politics and political orientation. The following four chapters of this part of the volume focus on the spatial aspects of social integration from the rural-urban difference to the migration patterns. Czibere, in her paper, reviews family systems, and analysing the large-scale sample survey of 2018 from the same research as Huszár and Szabó, she argues that there are four typical family types in Hungary: (1) deprived, ageing, rural, childless working families; (2) stable, rural, childless, middle-class families; (3) stable, rural, lower-middle class families with children and (4) highly educated middle-class families living in a large city, in a couple or living alone. Reviewing the classification presented in the paper, we see that family ties are different in urban and rural areas, and that an average rural family is more likely to be smaller, and without children, than an urban one.

Other papers of this volume analyse the spatial dimensions of social networks. Huszti et al. give a broader view on the effects of spatial differences on personal networks. They reveal how neighbourhoods shape the structure of the social networks of three segregated areas of a medium-sized Hungarian town. The novelty of the analysis is that it also focuses on ethnic differences. They found that the populations of all three segregated areas are primarily locally bounded, segregated communities and are much less spatially integrated than in the other residential areas of the city. There is one more article analysing the spatial differences of social capital: the one written by Csurgó and Megyesi on the imagined differences between urban and rural areas, placed in the third part of this volume.

Balogh and Győri's chapter entitled *The spatial pattern of educational attainment in Hungary* also focuses on the spatial inequalities of Hungarian society. They used the newest, 2021, data set of the above mentioned large-scale sampled research series led by Imre. Their results strengthen the previous research findings and prove that the settlement slope is very strongly present in the distribution of educational attainment. Knowledge is concentrated in Budapest and its agglomeration, and the East-West divide in knowledge is still dominant.

The last chapter in this part of the volume, written by Papp et al. scrutinizes another social-spatial issue: migration abroad, and more precisely the intention to migrate during the fourth wave of the COVID-19 pandemic. They also used the newest dataset from 2021 for their analysis. They examined the correlations between satisfaction, trust, political attitudes, COVID-19 vaccination status and migration intentions alongside the socio-demographic background of migration intentions. They found that political attitudes correlate with migration intentions; respondents who are considering emigration are less satisfied with the functioning of democracy, have less trust in political institutions, and among them there is a higher proportion of people with left-wing political preferences than among those not planning to migrate. The intention to migrate is connected to less willingness to vaccinate, too.

As well as his major achievements in classical sociological issues, Imre has gained international recognition and leadership as a rural sociologist. As we mentioned, the commitment to rural sociology emerged naturally from Imre's interest. He became a member of one of the first COST Action groups opened for Central-European countries, and the network established during that time became decisive for the next decades[1]. In this book we can read from authors who conducted research following the path defined by the ideas formulated in the Green Ring (Kovach–Granberg 2001). Vera Majerova has a paper on Czech rural sociology, Karl Bruckmeier's paper overviews how rural sociology changed in the last decade, Krzysztof Gorlach and co-authors write on sustainability and governance and there is also a paper on de-peasantization theory by Leo Granberg, as noted above. Besides them, other authors from these times also contribute, such as Nicole Mathieu, an editor of this book, or Katalin Kovács. Her paper discusses the role of the project class in contemporary Hungary. A long line of influential international research stems from this cooperation. The first one was perhaps a project analysing rural-urban connections; an imprint of it is an article from Peter Ehrström discussing rural-urban transformation; and the last one is a project analysing the living conditions of new generations in rural areas. Willem Korthals Altes and Silvia Sivini present the findings of this recent research. We included in this part-chapter another recent research area of Imre, a paper about the social aspects of energy use by Christian Barika Igbeghe, Attila Bai and Péter Balogh. We also have a paper here on the governance of marginal (rural) areas by Giorgio Osti, and another

1 Rural innovation EU COST A /12 .: Leadership, local power and rural restructuring (1998–2002)

one on the challenges of the CAP by Iva Pires. And finally, there are two papers, one from Lehel Peti about the role of farming in rural Transylvania and another from two of the editors of this book (Csurgó–Megyesi) about the differences in social capital in rural and urban areas.

Vera Majerova describes the history of rural sociology in Czechoslovakia, the Czech Republic and Slovakia. Her paper presents how rural sociology survived during the socialist times by studying rural living conditions and agriculture. These studies aimed at revealing rural life after collectivization and forced industrialization and understanding how the lack of a proper workforce, technology or management influenced farming. In the sixties, rural housing and working conditions were worse than urban ones, and in parallel to it, socialist cooperatives re-arranged power relations through new managers and new farming systems. The late sixties and early seventies brought the abolition of rural sociological research. Later, as research started again, it focused on lifestyle, describing how rural and urban ways of living were becoming closer, and on urbanization. At this time research into farm management became more important again. In the nineties, similarly to in Hungary, understanding the changes brought about by the change of political regime became the most important research goal.

Gorlach and his co-authors revisit the concept of sustainable development – a concept studied by Imre in several research projects, such as the CORASON project[2]. The EU- financed research analysed the use of knowledge in sustainable rural development, and found that not only local and scientific knowledge, but also managerial knowledge plays an important role in development processes. A consequence of it is the emergence of the project class (Kovách–Kučerová 2006) or the intermediary stakeholders. Gorlach et al. analyse sustainability as a political concept and argue that it can also help in improving representative democracy and moving it towards direct democracy. They found that Empowered Participatory Governance (EPG) can be a tool of deliberative democracy. This way of thinking about governance is a natural continuation of the results of the CORASON project, but also of other research conducted by Imre in the last decades. Similarly to this paper, this research found that democracy can gain from involving civic movements in decision-making, and multi-actor governance may help maintain balance between power holders.

But we all know that Hungarian rural societies followed a different pathway. It was not only Imre who analysed the role of the project class in rural development. While the nineties witnessed the ascendance of the project class, the last decades have witnessed its decline, as the paper by Katalin Kovács in this book illustrates. According to her there are three main reasons for this: management knowledge was no longer rare, tenders became simpler, and the whole system became highly centralized after 2012. Referring to Vági, she also points out that after the elections in 2010

2 A Cognitive Approach to Rural Sustainable Development. The Dynamics of Expert and Lay Knowledges CORASON (EU F6 2004–2006)

political (and personal) connections and loyalty to the ruling party became a major determinant of access to funding. Imre and other authors of the Special Issue of Sociologia Ruralis on LEADER in 2000 (Kovách 2000) argued that the new approach did not modify existing power relations in most of the rural areas in Europe. Katalin Kovács uses several case studies on the implementation of the LEADER approach in Hungary. A possible reading of these case studies is that centralization broke local power relations at least in certain areas and to a certain extent, but not in the way that the authors of the special issue had thought more than two decades ago.

The paper of Giorgio Osti also focuses on the governance of marginal rural areas. He argues that corporatism could be the governance model to overcome the always recurring power relations, to avoid centralization and to build resilient and autonomous rural communities in fragile rural areas. Furthermore, he is brave enough to argue that we already have examples: the historical ones could be the monasteries, and eco-communities could serve as contemporary examples. If we read in parallel the three papers, Gorlach et al., Kovács and Osti, it becomes clear that they are discussing almost the same problem, and the two theoretical ones even offer a possible solution.

Peter Ehrström also advocates for deliberative methods in his paper. He analysed rurban areas (as he calls peri-urban areas affected by urban out-migration and rural gentrification, and referring at the same time to the already mentioned RURBAN project[3]) using a cobweb octagonal figure to show how the multitude of transformation pressures appear in certain localities and to highlight the variation in degrees of concurrent processes and pressures. These pressures clearly show the need for local action plans and strategies argues Ehrström, but also the need for implementing deliberative methods, and improving (social) sustainability in potentially contested rurban territories. Ehrström's paper analyses how rural goods and services correspond to urban needs, and how this fuels counter-urbanization. He argues that the balance between the two could be found if proper governance methods, supported with sound evidence, are used. His final argument: *"A rurban 'brand' could prove even more valuable in the long term in both urban and regional marketing with the emphasis on sustainable neighbourhoods, places that combine green, urban and rural values"* brings in another research topic of Imre's: rural image.

Csurgó and Megyesi analysed the rural-urban differences using the differentiation of Tönnies between society and community. They analysed how the different elements of social capital appear in urban and rural areas, and how it is linked to the perception of the urban and rural character of an area. This paper also refers to certain elements of rural image. The authors argue that the original differentiation of society and community corresponds neither with the administrative classification nor with the subjective perception of rural/urban areas. Certain elements of social capital are more typical in urban areas, or areas perceived as urban, while others are more

3 Building new relationship in rural areas under urban pressure RURBAN (EU F5 2002–2004)

typical in rural areas, or areas perceived as rural. These results show that the Hungarian rural image has a dual face. Spatial representation and spatial segregation are complex phenomena that cannot be linked to a single characteristic of a community.

The role of agriculture and agricultural production decreased in the last century; this is also reflected in rural sociology. Research on farming is still important, but food production, and the food system transformation are more in focus. Still, the status of farmers themselves in (rural) societies is a research question which appears from time to time in Imre's work. In his last EU funded project (RURALIZATION[4]) the consortia of more than a dozen European researchers and civic activists aimed to explore the factors influencing rural regeneration. A case study from Italy, written by Silvia Sivini, presents agricultural regeneration in Italy. There is no doubt that EU rural areas and EU agriculture need generational renewal; statistical data and a host of different studies prove it, including Imre's and his co-authors' works (Czibere et al. 2021; Kovách et al. 2022). Sivini argues that the key to generational renewal can be the strengthening of novel initiatives, alternative methods and niche markets. Although Imre does not deny it, but using Hungarian agriculture as an example (Győri–Kovách 2023; Kovách 2016, 2012), he argues that the ageing of farmers, and consequently the decrease in the number of farmers and farm units, results in the concentration of land-use, thus clear agricultural and rural policies are needed to open-up rural areas for newcomers and new entrants into farming. Sivini found that the Italian CAP Strategic plan lacks such clear policies and points out that without generational renewal the chances for sustainable rural areas are low.

In his contribution, Willem Korthals Altes reviews, based on research and reports written in the context of the similar Horizon 2020 project RURALIZATION, the relationship between quality of government, access to land and rural development using the Romanian example of Teleorman. The paper is linked to Imre's most recent investigations on the land use of different kinds of farms and on the classification of rural areas according to land use patterns (Győri–Kovách 2022). Altes points out that the inequalities of land use go hand-in-hand with social inequalities. He argues that the low quality of government is a result of land concentration and an unsustainable development pathway. He concludes that equal access to education and health services is crucial in improving government.

Lehel Peti presents the changes in rural farming in a Transylvanian settlement; the same country, but a different perspective. Reading these two case studies, it becomes clear that Romanian land use is highly diverse. In Peti's paper we read about the farming practices of a peri-urban village. Being a peri-urban settlement, some of the locals were professional farmers selling their products at the urban markets, others, mainly newcomers considered farming as a hobby or a free time activity. Peti finds that besides the emotional motivations, economic ones also play an important

4 Ruralization: The opening of rural areas to renew rural generations, jobs and farms, 2019–2023

role in farming, especially in the case of market-oriented farming. As Kovách and Megyesi (2023) found in a recent paper on food self-provisioning in Hungary, economic factors are more important in times of crisis.

We have two papers in this collection which discuss the challenges of the twenty-first century. Christian Barika Igbeghe, Péter Balogh and Attila Bai explore the role of biomass in achieving a sustainable bioeconomy. They argue that there is increasing competition for biomass among the food-industry, animal husbandry and energy production. The transition to the bioeconomy needs to be done responsibly, respecting the principles of climate change mitigation, economic growth and sustainable development, as the authors argue. Although there are uncertainties around biomass imports in the global North, the dominant discourse on policy promotes the large-scale substitution of fossil and mineral resources with biomass-based materials as a feasible goal for achieving a sustainable society. The topic is especially important, because there seems to be a general ignorance about climate change itself, and at the same time it is gradually gaining the role of a proxy for left/right ideology. By improving the framework for assessing the ecological, ethical or social sustainability of the bioeconomy, such dead-end disputes can more easily be avoided.

In her paper, Iva Pires discusses the challenges ahead for the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) to create a healthy food system in the age of poli-crisis. The main question of the paper is whether the CAP and the new European strategies, such as the Farm to fork strategy or the Biodiversity Strategies, are able to answer the challenges. Similarly to others, she found that the CAP subsidies are still not sufficient: *"despite some innovations in direct payments and the introduction of the eco-schemes, the CAP remains largely ineffective in supporting farmers to adopt more environmental and climate initiatives"*. Similarly to Gorlach, Pires also emphasizes that there is no healthy, sustainable and equitable society without food sovereignty.

Finally, we, as editors, offer you the essay of Karl Bruckmeier in which he systematically overviews how sociological knowledge production became more and more sensitive to natural and environmental sciences. We have placed Bruckmeier's essay in the concluding chapter of the volume, both to emphasize the crucial role he played in Imre's work and thinking, and because it provides an opportunity to summarize the main points, themes and findings presented throughout the volume in relation to Imre's current and future scientific work. Bruckmeier argues that rural and environmental sociology were the first sociologies which could no longer ignore societal relations with nature and the ecological environment. At the beginning of the twenty-first century it is clear that disciplinary boundaries are a hindrance to the study of global problems. A possible reading of this volume is exactly this recognition. Imre's various research, on social integration, rural studies, and sustainability aims to reveal how the unequal distribution of resources and power results in the over exploitation of both nature and humans. By better understanding this complexity, new options to tackle contemporary challenges can appear.

The rich collection of topics, methods and approaches presented by the chapters of this volume are not able to summarize Imre's works and impact, even though all the papers are connected to or inspired by him. However, it is not the goal of this volume to make a summary of the more than 250 articles, book chapters or volumes he has written. This volume is not able to present his impact as shown by over 2500 citations. Here, in this volume we are celebrating his seventieth birthday, we would like to pay tribute to Imre with these papers which only can show a glimpse of the range of his impressive work.

By constantly deepening his knowledge of his own country in a quest to conceptualize social change, by considering that scientific debate is essential in order to compare theoretical points of view and, above all, the realities of each of Europe's countries, by daring to step out of the scientific tent where the elite often take refuge in order to bring to the attention of policy makers the diversity of (rural) societies and the processes of change underway in European territories that they often ignore or neglect, is Imre not the common link in this book? This homage is only the beginning, a whetting of appetites! It calls for new projects to strengthen the relationship between social sciences and agricultural, rural and even other policies.

Most of the colleagues, students and friends here, who are celebrating Imre, are continuously involved in his research projects, are working on new ideas, and applying new approaches to understanding the world around us, with him, led by him and inspired by him.

Happy birthday, Imre!

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I

Historical perspectives

From peasants to ecosystem gardeners

Transformations in rural Europe[1]

Leo Granberg

Introduction

It was in October 1997, when a group of European social scientists came together in an old gentry house in Erdőtarcsa, Hungary, owned at that time by the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. In this poor village, an agricultural cooperative was trying to survive in the storms of global markets. Hopelessly. We, instead, set ourselves the task of understanding the role of a large rural population and peasant movements around the industrial core of Europe, as well as the heritage of the peasantry in the modernizing society. Two such seminars were held in Hungary and they resulted in two books: *Actors on the Changing European Countryside* (Granberg–Kovach 1998) and *Europe's Green Ring* (Granberg–Kovach–Tovey 2001).

What was the reason for our effort in writing these books? Above all, we found it important to understand the historical roles of the peasantry in changing European societies instead of just describing history as an abstract evolution from traditional to modern, from agricultural to industrial society. An important source of inspiration for the research setting came from Immanuel Wallerstein. He argued in *The Modern World System* (1989) that, historically, the forms of agricultural organizations in a region depended on the region's relation with and distance from the centre of the world system. Historically each rural village was a part of industrializing society, always as a producer of food, and often as a supplier of recruits for military troops or as a supplier of workers for urban centres and industrial needs. At the time of

1 This paper is a larger version of a keynote presented in the Working Group: *"From de-peasantisation to pathways of rural innovation and regeneration"*, at the Conference on Social Dynamics in the post-covid age – inequalities, integration, migration in regional, urban and rural context, 17th October, 2022 in the Centre for Social Sciences, Budapest. The writer is grateful to Imre Kovách and to his Hungarian colleagues, who – once again – arranged such an important meeting. Karl Bruckmeier, Jouko Nikula, Olli Poropudas, Sauli Rouhinen and Pekka Salmi commented on the draft giving valuable advice and recommendations to improve it. The writer is, naturally, responsible for the contents and arguments presented in the text.

writing the *Green Ring* the key dilemma in most rural areas in western countries was agricultural overproduction and the search for alternative livelihoods. The time of 'post-productionism' was emerging – and soon thereafter passing.

This text returns to some of the ideas processed in these seminars in Hungary *and* takes a look at some new features of rural transformation that have been observed since the seminars. The first part of the text recalls the history of European peasantry from its empowerment to depeasantisation. The second part discusses three important factors which are currently changing the countryside and the role of the rural population: the European Union's transformation, global food crises, and the ecological awakening. The greatest focus is on the third factor. The final part discusses rural development and the new roles of rural people in a transforming society.

Europe's Green Ring

Peasant empowerment. In the first half of the twentieth century European landed aristocrats lost their status and much of their property as well. An agrarian reform was a strong dream among the rural population in Europe. Such a dream came true, in many countries, as a result of peasant revolts and European wars in the twentieth century – but also because parliamentary democracy gave political power to the agricultural population.

Europe was industrializing. Yet cities, factory communities and the whole industrial core of Europe remained surrounded by a 'green ring' – areas with peasantry and other rural population – for decades. Political changes gave poor rural people opportunities to receive their own piece of land and to improve their life through farming. However, successes were soon turned into disappointments in Western Europe because of small farmers' economic difficulties, as well as in socialist countries because of the forced collectivisation of peasants' property.

Naturally, the social and political position of peasants varied greatly in different countries and regions. However, the peasantry became a political power and governments needed to listen to its voice in the West and the East. Land reforms took place around Europe. After the Second World War different measures favouring agricultural producers entered the political agenda. Free-trade liberalism gave way to agricultural protectionism. Furthermore, the empowered peasantry contributed to the construction of welfare states and in some countries elements of welfare policy were adopted even in agricultural policy and regional policy.[2] To make it clear, peasants were not the prime motor for changes in Europe, even if their contribution modified both the capitalist market economies and the socialist planned economies.

The European Economic Community was established by a group of countries, each of them with their own historical and cultural legacies. Peasants and their descendants had a strong impact on the organization in its early phase, when members of the Community decided to protect their agriculture and aim at income parity between workers and farmers (Milward 1992: 224–229).

De-peasantisation. Despite agrarian reforms and subsidies paid for agricultural production, a rapid de-peasantisation process started soon after the Second World War. Mechanized agriculture could produce much more food with many fewer workers than before, and the urbanizing society offered higher incomes for those who left countryside. The need for workers decreased on farms, and, all over Europe, petty producers and peripheral villages closed down. Subsistence farming fell in importance in Western Europe and peasant farms were transformed into family farms. Rural actors were turning towards markets.

During the 1960s and 1970s agricultural overproduction became an alarming economic and political problem in market economies. Since that time attempts have been made to slow down production, to move the focus from the quantity of food produced to quality, and to find new sources of income, for instance in welfare state jobs and rural tourism. The concept of post-productionism[3] describes that time. It was a most contradictory and Eurocentric concept, ignoring the successive periods of food crises and famines outside of Europe. Post-productionism and the rationalization of farming took place in the West and the struggle to survive the transition from socialism to capitalism in the East. That was the spirit at the turn of the Millennium.

Countryside in our century

In the new century agriculture is once again experiencing deep changes, also called *the fourth agricultural revolution* (Jakku and Fleming 2021: 364). The digitalization of agriculture involves new forms of information and communication technologies. Consumers are reacting to health concerns and worries about environmental sustainability. Organic farming, urban farming, fair trade and other alternative production methods are winning space, and new ideas such as alternative proteins are emerging in the food industry (Beacham–Evans 2023). Such changes are challenges for agri-food systems, which have been transformed towards large-scale farming, and integrated to the food industry and energy production.

In the present European Union, peasantry has disappeared as a social class. Those, who are left in the villages have become old and their descendants have either moved to cities or developed the farm into a market-oriented enterprise, not necessarily connected with agriculture at all. Another path in food production is to keep alive small

2 Well organized Finnish farmers succeeded in putting enough pressure on governments in 1940s–1970 to have subsidies enacted for small farmers and for regions in periphery.

3 Post-productionism was not post-materialism, quite the contrary. Rural life experienced a process of commoditization. What was earlier a part of the lifeworld of a peasant farm was marketed to tourists who paid for the opportunity to enjoy a rural style of life, being *"part of a peasant family"*. The home garden of a former peasant, his sauna, his family's kindness while meeting travellers, and anything they made, could become valued as a product to sell.

gardens, and to construct alternative food networks (AFNs) in rural areas and also in cities (Zoll et al. 2021). Many of those who moved to the cities have become tourists in their grandparents' old homesteads, others keep a second home there, which they visit during leisure time or for periodical work.

In addition to changes in the structure of agriculture, the context of the countryside has been shaken by three major events after 2000.

1. The enlargement of the European Union.
2. The global food crises.
3. Climate change and related policies connected to numerous ecological problems.

The enlargement of the European Union. Most of the countries discussed in *Green Ring* have become members of the European Union. The European Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) certainly helped many new farmers in the former socialist counties to establish private agriculture (OECD 2009). European rural policy was developed to complement agricultural policy and opened new possibilities for non-agricultural local activities. It often involved little funding compared with agricultural subsidies and met problems with local bureaucracy but, all the same, contributed to generating small enterprises, local cultural life and civil society. At its best, this policy change had many positive features and cumulative effects, when it contributed to the empowerment of the population in peripheral rural areas. (Csurgó–Kovách 2015: 73–74.)

The global food crises. A crisis in food safety broke out in 2007–2008 and was, after a short break, followed by another phase in 2011–2012. These years witnessed a scarcity of food production in relation to consumers' needs and a sharp rise in wheat prices along with some other products and finally in food prices more generally. Food prices reflected suddenly rising fuel prices, and while ethanol production for fuel increased, food and energy markets were connected together. Also, Russia and many other countries reacted by banning food exports from their country for a while, in order to secure the food supply for their own consumers. Furthermore, the rise in wheat, maize and other agricultural prices was fuelled by speculation (George 2010: 126-128, Wegren 2023: 6–7). The turmoil in financial markets in 2006–2007 gave reason for banks and other large institutional investors to search for profits from food commodity markets through the use of derivatives. Commodities futures markets had existed in the United States for 160 years, however, in December 2000 a modernization act gave more rights to investors. Susan George argues that this reform replaced important restrictions in the legislation, which had defined the maximum holdings of each commodity, and opened opportunities for large investments, which caused the radical rise of price levels (George 2010: 127).

Food and oil prices were reasons for large social protests around the globe. The Financial Times collected information about these protests into a map, and were soon able to report on protests in 40 countries around the world (Barrett 2013, Granberg 2012: 51, Wegren 2023). These protests indicated how weak and threatened the global food system was, while also questioning the idea of post-productionism. The

crisis stimulated new market arrangements in food-importing countries and led to wide rearrangements of farming systems. Agriculture returned to being an interesting business, not least because ethanol production turned out to be an alternative business to food production. Food policy returned to the agenda in the meetings of political leaders. The reasons for food crises were well identified, but conclusions on what to do varied among the analysts and no solution was found. One disagreement concerns free markets. Stephen Wegren suggests that protectionist measures should be forbidden in order to let market forces keep prices in balance. Alternatively, Susan George points out the need to reform the system of capital markets. Her proposal is to restrict investments in food commodities in order to avoid the manipulation of price levels.

The war between Russia and Ukraine in 2022 caused a food crisis once again. Each food crisis has verified how important food production is for the increasing global population. They also indicate serious problems in connection with the existing global food regime. And other major problems are emerging, such as how should food producers respond to health concerns and how could they restrict environmental damage. This applies not only to agriculture, but to other nature-oriented industries, such as forestry and fishery, as well.

Ecosystem gardeners and rural inhabitants

Changes in the ecosystem. A most fundamental dilemma in the countryside of the future is the changing ecosystem: the effects of industrial activities on water and air, the consequences of chemicalization in farming, the losses in biodiversity, and global warming (Folke et al. 2021, Wilson, E.O. 1992). These alarming processes are taking place around us right now, in a modern, scientifically and technologically-advanced, 'smart' society. How smart is it in reality?

Today, an increasing amount of research pays attention to such problems in terms of socio-ecological systems and sustainability[4] (e.g., Folke et al. 2016). The focus in this paper is restricted to rural areas, which, however, cover a remarkable range of ecosystems. A core dilemma in the mentioned research is whether it is possible to construct a new synthesis of social and ecological development. Approaching a new synthesis between society and the ecosystem would mean finding a path of action and politics which complies with the needs of both. On the one hand, this sounds like an impossible task, thinking only about such disasters as ongoing wars, and the consumption culture in prosperous countries. On the other hand, we can observe

4 The German social scientist Niklas Luhmann (1986) developed system theory and found 'ecosystem' to be a problematic concept. According to him, ecosystem doesn't have an environment in the same sense as the subsystems of the social system have and this makes it a different concept – if even a possible system. Luhmann had an interesting debate with Habermas on their different views on systems (Harste 2021, Luhmann 1986). In this text ecosystem is accepted to describe the counterpart of social system.

many processes supporting such a development on the grass-roots level, for instance organic farming and the construction of alternative food networks, as well as on the global level, for instance business and political initiatives for biosphere stewardship (Folke et al. 2021).

Indeed, many steps have been taken to protect ecosystems in quite a short time, – in a couple of decades. Because of them, today we can see wind turbines all around the European landscape, we remark on electric cars filling the roads, and we can read about carbon emission trading taking place worldwide, as well as about plans on how to use land sinks to offset carbon emissions (Pihl et al. 2021). Naturally, the changes mentioned are not harmless. They have defects, which need to be paid attention to. For instance, wind turbines disturb local residents and kill birds. Innovations such as electric cars, wind turbines and recycling are proof of a deep change in European policy, in business and in everyday life. What is happening in Europe at the present time is a change in values and thinking, a change in rules on how to act, and in our rationality. Yet, how far this is leading us is, so far, unclear.

Let us assume that the mentioned synthesis of social and ecological transformation became a serious, long-term goal for humankind. This is what Folke et al. (2016) propose, arguing for an emerging ethic that *"embodies the responsible relationship of humans as part of and dependent on the biosphere"*. Partly dream, partly true? However, if this path of transformation could be forwarded, what kind of role might rural areas then have in the future?

The countryside would be deeply involved in such a transformation, simply because natural resources are to a large part located there. A good example is energy production with wind turbines. When located in the countryside, they produce 'green' energy for electricity networks and are also potentially important sources of income for the rural population. Who gets the benefits from such production depends on political decisions. In some cases, it may really make a difference to rural development. If a farmer builds a wind turbine, he/she normally uses the electricity for his/her household and for agricultural production and, if allowed, also sells the surplus to the national electricity network. Even if built by industrial investors, the taxation system may reward rural municipalities and local inhabitants through the municipality budget.

The case of Kyyjärvi[5]. As an example, are wind turbines in Kyyjärvi, in central Finland. Kyyjärvi is a small municipality, which is actively facilitating projects to build more than 80 wind turbines (MT 2023). The small municipality of 1,300 people has experienced a continuing decrease in the number of inhabitants for 30 years. They have high taxes, the municipality is in economic crisis, and faced proposed integration with some of its neighbouring municipalities. Wind turbines are its survival plan: 80 turbines are planned and 15 of them are already under construction in two separate parks. Furthermore, a solar energy park is under plan. The municipality has calculated it will collect enough real estate tax from new investors to balance the budget after some years and to get out of the crisis. This would improve the communal economy and make it possible for the municipality to decrease general taxation to a moderate level. The arrangements to build wind turbines are progressing, even if other problems arise: in the region one needs not only permission to build the wind turbines, but also other permissions, such as permission to connect new turbines to the regional electricity network – the capacity of the network is limited. There is light at the end of the tunnel: the building of new electricity transmit lines from the region is on the way.

5 In English: Viper Lake

Ecosystem gardeners. A synthesis of social and ecological transformation would open new kinds of opportunities for work in rural areas. The farmers and forest workers do not work just for ethical reasons even if their moral and religious thinking often includes pro-nature ethical aspects. They work first and foremost for incomes for themselves and their families. Also, during the transformation, one needs to cultivate fields, raise animals, and to cut down trees. The work itself would change to more knowledge intensive. Further opportunities in rural areas are connected to energy production and preparing carbon sinks, and to taking care of fresh air and pure water. The ecosystem needs much space and a large part of the ecosystem services are located in the countryside. The basic dilemma for society is who takes care of the ecosystem, and transports its products for human consumption. Many questions follow on such issues as the ownership structures, transfer of education and know-how , rights of access to and rights to change an ecosystem, as well as ways to safeguard it from unsustainable use.

These questions are connected to Chapin's considerations on *"ecosystem stewardship"* and *"grassroots stewardship"* (Chapin 2010 and 2020, here from Folke et al. 2021: 853). According to Chapin, *"Stewardship is an active shaping of social-ecological change that integrates reducing vulnerability to expected changes, fostering resilience to sustain desirable conditions in the face of the unknown and unexpected, and transforming from undesirable pathways of development when opportunities emerge"*.

In modern history, nature parks were the starting points for human agency to protect the ecosystem. The staff working in these parks can be called the first ecosystem gardeners. Farmers, forest workers and fishermen, instead, collected, processed and transported of the ecosystem's various products. The number of farmers, foresters and fishermen is diminishing and the countryside is becoming populated by entrepreneurs, internet-users, commuters and second-home owners instead. The Covid-19 pandemic caused migration to rural areas, but we do not know whether the trend will continue. Without some additional economic incentives, it probably won't. The problems of the diminishing rural population could be studied together with the need to take care of the ecosystems. Trying to solve them together might help in finding innovative solutions.

Proposition 1: Ecosystem gardening will generate increased opportunities for employment in the countryside, proportionally and often absolutely.

Ecosystem gardening would continue the traditions of foresters and the staff of nature parks. The overcrowded world needs people who take care of the working of the ecosystem services: those who protect the ecosystem, and those, including farmers, who transform the ecosystem services into a usable form for human consumption. Also, the ecosystem's products need to be transported to the consumers, most of whom live in cities.

A wind turbine or a solar panel is a concrete example: someone has to build it and maintain it, some others have to maintain the existing electricity network. Several stakeholders are involved in this process: the owner of the land, the owner of the turbine, the municipal authority, the tax collector, and others. Their motivation is economic benefit, today often because of added state subsidies. The distribution of economic benefits from a wind turbine depends on the economic system and the political solutions; however, a wind turbine gives the opportunity of a win-win situation to the stakeholders.

Beyond neoclassical rationality. People and their organizations make decisions on a rational basis. They take a decision which benefits them in one way or another. However, what looks to be rational one day, is perhaps no longer rational thirty years later. Rationality changes as society changes. Profit-making is a basic rationality in all capitalist economies. However, it is modified by the evolution of capitalism. For example, in a welfare state the moral principle of 'equality of returns' is largely institutionalized and implemented through political decisions on taxation, budget transfers and investment in welfare institutes. A welfare state modifies a free market economy when it modifies the rules of profit-making. Stakeholders in a welfare state internalize this policy in their planning and action. A successful actor does not need to make moral decisions. It is enough for him or her to know the rules of the game and to take them as given. The welfare rationality is an outcome of reforms of the state and its institutions, which in turn resulted from the demands of social movements and compromises in political and legislative institutes. In practices, welfare rationality is blended with profit-making rationality.

Greenhouse rationality. Welfare state rationality was largely adopted in the twentieth century. In an analogous way, in the twenty-first century states and global organizations are in the process of adopting a new rationality connected to environmental concerns, above all to climate change. New measures and rules are used to support this new policy. There is no question whether social movements exist; they do. Some scholars have even suggested that a new ecological class might be emerging (Latour and Schmid 2022). The change described here is, however, transiting social structures in present societies regardless of class divisions. Economic and political processes are taking place at different levels of society. Subsidies are paid for solar panels and electric cars, rules are enacted to use forests as carbon sinks, methods

are improved to organize the circulation of raw materials, and so on. In addition to global warming, other reasons for such efforts also exist: to sustain biodiversity, and to save necessary resources like fresh water. However, because global warming has been the prime motor for global efforts, it makes sense to call the emerging new rationality 'greenhouse rationality'.

Misunderstanding rural development

One conclusion of this article is that rural research should become more aware of the threats and the opportunities of the ecosystem. I don't want to deprecate the progress which science has made in this issue during the last decades. The emergence of 'environmental studies' 30–40 years ago, and of 'transformation research' and 'sustainability science' later on are very welcomed. Also, many steps have been taken along the same lines in social sciences and in rural research, such as anthropological research, agro-ecological and bio-economic research, human ecology and studies on human/animal interrelationship. I am not so optimistic, however, as to believe this is a stable direction in rural research. For me, this feeling arises from the blindness surrounding what is meant 'development'.

Rural research too seldom discusses what 'development' really means. Is it anything more than economic growth, improved infrastructure, and a growing population in the rural place in question? If we think so, what happens if the population is decreasing? Wherever it happens, there seems to be a crisis, because the economic and political system are built to reward a growing population. A municipality with population growth gets new shops and schools, more tax income, investment, infrastructure, and employment, and the municipal leaders get a higher salary than in smaller places. The ecosystem is, however, a different thing.

Understanding rural development. Folke et al. (2021: 847–848) have made an attempt to update the concept of 'development' following the thinking proposed in sustainable science. The desired type of development is sustainable development, which is an outcome of a good synthesis of the ecological system and the social system. They identify some factors necessary for sustainable development: the need for new types of human-environmental interactions, social innovations and feedback.

In the referenced articles, Folke et al. do not discuss the role of rural areas. However, their argumentation is an important challenge for rural research, because large ecosystems are located in rural areas. The ecological environment should be included in the analysis of rural development. If so doing, economic growth or population increase stops being the starting point of analysis. Then, arguments of what development is can be turned upside down. Each step of development is no longer coupled with population. Increasing population decreases the size of ecosystem per capita and therefore, each population increase will potentially impoverish the local ecosystem and may therefore have a negative impact on well-being. From this point of view, de-

velopment looks different: when people are moving out from a region, the population is decreasing and therefore the remaining inhabitants may enjoy more space and a richer ecosystem than before. Isn't it positive development from their point of view? Whatever the answer is, development is worth a debate.

To make it clear, this argument concerns not only rural villages or small towns, but also cities, metropolitan areas and states. A decreasing population is nothing that normal politicians and city leaders would wish to see in their own town or country. There is no simple way to get out of this situation. However, it is possible to start with observation and experiments. Why not try to find places with good practices, places which have succeeded in maintaining and increasing well-being in spite of a decreasing population. Perhaps Kyyjärvi will be listed as one such place in ten years. Secondly, a government can facilitate opportunities for ecosystem gardening in its innovation policy. The aim of economic policy in rural areas could be to contribute to the construction of a knowledge-based, positive development – positive in the socio-ecological sense. One way to start is to take a look at the new generation of innovation research and how it could be applied in rural circumstances. Haddad et al. present third-generation innovation policy which calls for a new discussion of 'directionality' (Diercks et al. 2019, Grilitsh et al. 2019 here from Haddad et al. 2022: 15). It implies that innovation should be pursued not for the sake of innovation or economic growth only, but instead should be aimed at addressing important societal challenges, such as sustainable transformation. It undoubtedly needs several premises.

Folke et al. underline the importance of resilience in socio-ecological systems, which can be supported by maintaining diversity (2016: 40). The importance of ecological diversity is much discussed. Another type of diversity, socio-diversity has received much less attention recently, even if there is a long history of dispute between big and small organizations. E.F. Schumacher simplified this topic 50 years ago by asking whether small or big organizations are better (Schumacher 1973). *"Small is beautiful"*, was his famous answer and the argument against it was *"big is efficient"*. However, both ideas make sense in restricted environments and real life has witnessed the importance of the cohabitation of big and small organizations, often against the existing governmental plans.[6] Instead of trying to plan the new world order from one type of organization, we should promote socio-diversity. It would assure higher resilience, and allow organizations to be built up in ways best fitting to the ecological, social and economic circumstances, as well as take into account existing cultural traditions. New forms of governance can promote this aim. One suggested solution is bottom-linked governance. It seems to be a promising approach which includes

6 An utmost example is Stalin's collectivisation of agriculture in the 1930s. He had to revise the original plan according to which everything was collectivised. His revised plan accepted kolkhoz workers' households keeping some animals and cultivating limited private plots to produce food for the family. During the 60 years long collective period (and even thereafter) these plots produced around half of the whole agricultural product of the Soviet Union, sometimes less, sometimes more.

in planning and implementation practice a simultaneous interaction of bottom-up and top-down collaboration. The case study by Castro-Arce and Vanclay (2020) in Costa Rica shows that well-functioning bottom-linked governance is able to promote sustainable social innovations in a region with both rural and urban areas.

Big or small? Farms, enterprises, states, and NGOs are big or small or in-between. Each of them can contribute to sustainability in its own way. You may pose the question, what if an important actor does not want to contribute to sustainability? The answer is that an actor's behaviour much depends on the rules of the society. When these rules are reformulated to facilitate greenhouse rationality, actors will too , in normal cases, adapt themselves to the rules. Greenhouse rationality steers actors to plan their agency concordant with sustainability.

Considerations

While writing *Europe's Green Ring*, European peasantry was about to become only a memory. In the modernizing society, other social groups, such as farmers, forest entrepreneurs, villagers, commuters, and the tourism business took care of peasantry's heritage. The aim of this article is to shed some light on the transformation of the European countryside since publishing that book. Three major changes were noticed to influence Western Europe.

These changes were, first, the integration of the countryside to the political system of the European Union, while at the same time the priorities of the Union were changing from agricultural protectionism to improving standards of living in the countryside and then towards climate change -related policy. Secondly, the shocks of the global food system, which reminded us of international interdependences, and of the importance of food for political stability. Thirdly, climate change and decreasing biodiversity, which have called for a search for a better balance between society and ecology. I find the third change to be the most challenging for future rural research.

Ecological awakening is already changing the inner structure of societies. Economic and political decisions are launching new mechanisms which steer people's actions in a new way – generating a new rationality. I call the outcome 'greenhouse rationality'. As to the countryside, a major consequence is an increasing need for 'greenhouse gardening'. Actors are needed to take care of well-functioning ecosystems, produce commodities from nature's raw materials and transport them to urban centres. This is not a new activity, because it concerns among others food, wood and water. There is, however, a new motivation for this activity. It is the needed awareness of the limits of the sustainability of ecosystems. To take care of it is a challenge as well as an opportunity for rural areas. It is a challenge because rural actors need to learn much, in order to be able to work as ecosystem gardeners. Nevertheless, it is an opportunity because natural resources are there in the countryside. There is water, air, wind, sunshine and earth and therefore, a lot of work to do.

The text also concerns 'rural development', which is a much-used term in both research and rural policy. This article argues that 'development' and 'rural development' are too often used in a fundamentally misleading way because rural development is connected with the aim of increasing human settlements instead of focusing on the balance between society and ecology. Questioning this tradition can open a new way to understanding the role of the countryside in a future society.

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Perceptions of the peasantry in the last century of the Hungarian social sciences

Csaba Dupcsik

At the centre of Imre Kovách's work is the conceptual cloud of the *peasant (paraszt), peasantry, peasant de-peasantization*[1] (for some examples, but not for completeness: Kovách 2001, 2003, 2010, Harcsa–Kovách 1996). The term *peasant,* however clear it may seem in everyday life, is far from clear in social scientific discourses (again, without claiming completeness: Benda 2003, Granberg–Kovách–Tovey 2001, Gyáni 2003, Harcsa 2003, Hoffmann 1998, Redfield 1960, Service–Sahlins–Wolf 1973, Weber 1976). In what follows, I will first group the possible conceptions along three dimensions, and then give some typical or sociologically relevant examples of the most important or most prominent conceptions of this categorization.

The three dimensions:

1. the *scope* of the concept;
2. the social mechanisms of the reduction/repression, or disappearance/abolition of the peasantry *(de-peasantization);*
3. the *normativity* attached to the terms.

In more detail:

Scope of the concept

There is a wide range of possible conceptions, around one end of which there is a simple identification: peasant = all persons working in agriculture (and their families). This extended concept is actually also found in everyday usage.

Moving to the other end of the scale, we find socio-geographical concepts of the peasant (peasantry) delimited in space and time, i.e. referring to a specific notion. It is very common, however, that such particular conceptions cannot escape the influence of the ordinary term, and also invoke the extended concept through specific linguistic games. Put differently, some authors, while explicitly committing themselves to a narrower, socio-historically defined conception of peasantry, use the term again and again in sentences that only make sense in the extended (peasant=tiller) definition.

1 In the following, for the sake of simplicity, I will generally use the term *peasant* or peasantry for the conceptual cloud as a whole.

And in the second stage, that is, for authors *interpreting* such authors, the game of double meaning typically becomes even more frequent.

An unmissable example is Ferenc Erdei (1910–1971), if only because his approach is still a benchmark in Hungarian literature on the subject at the beginning of the twenty-first century. In a chapter[2] of my volume I argued in detail that the later impact of Erdei's notions of *'dual society'* or *'embourgeoisement'* was due in large part to *'fertile misinterpretations'*.[3] (Dupcsik 2022: 244–272). In my opinion, the same is true with regard to his conception of peasantry.

Erdei first rejects the essentialist myth of the *'eternal peasant'* and then poses the rhetorical question

> *'So, the question is: is the peasantry nature or society? (…) The answer has already been given: peasantry is not nature, nor is it paradisiacal peace, but society, enslavement at the cost of struggle and permanent bondage. Not eternal, but very much changing…'* (Erdei 1973/1938: 57)

Erdei, after emphatically explaining the peasant≠ploughman thesis, delimits the scope of the concept, although he repeatedly gets into self-contradictions.[4] First, he delimits

- along the temporal dimension: he claims that from prehistory to the early modern period there was no peasantry at all (although he is ambivalent about the age of estate-based society,[5] see below);
- On the other hand, Erdei, along the geographical (and underlying cultural/social) dimension, excludes from the peasantry the peasants of the non-European continents, explicitly including the settlers of European origin in the New World.

> *'If the peasantry were to include everyone engaged in agriculture, two-thirds of humanity would be peasants. But not the peasants are the tillers of Asia, the cultivators of America, Australia and South Africa, and finally the primitive ploughmen of Africa, Asia and Australia. The primitive tillers of Asia… are not the same as the peasants as we understand them. (…) The only true peasants left are the European cultivators. (…) Peasants cultivate of the land of Europe and their population is a minority of half of the population of Europe.'* (Erdei 1973/1938: 111)

2 About 61,000 characters in length.

3 Erdei's significance is inestimable – *in the history of* sociology. However, Erdei's significance is more due to the prevailing 'deficit economy' in Hungarian (proto)sociology before the 1970s and 1980s, his personal charisma and his political weight after 1945. Because of the latter, Erdei also played a significant role in the institutionalization of Hungarian sociology too.

4 It would be an over-interpretation to examine how Erdei's views have changed, how they have 'evolved' – self-contradictions can appear and disappear within a single work. And many of his views, which were considered relevant by the *later* reception, were either quietly withdrawn or interrupted after his 1944–45 turn (Dupcsik 2022: 270–272), and only three decades later, through posthumous publications, could they have a significant impact.

5 The Hungarian *'rend'* is 'estate' in English, but it is harder to translate the *'rendiség'* or *'rendi'* society terms. I will use the *'estate-based society'* term which is not synonymous with the *'feudal society'*.

The last sentence of the last quote, however, only makes sense by using the extended notion of the peasant – while Erdei repeatedly states that 'the peasant' is a much narrower group than the agrarian population.

Before continuing, a short terminological note is necessary: In the following, I will use some expressions in Hungarian which are difficult to translate into English.[6]

Úrbéres (peasant) = a peasant living dependent on the landlord during the age of estate-based society.

Jobbágy = *úrbéres* peasant with a plot of land (so-called *jobbágytelek*) which was legally owned by the landlord, but the *jobbágy* had control over it. Although this is a common translation solution, the 'serf' does not reflect the specific combination of rights and dependence characteristic of a *jobbágy*. Not to mention that some of the *úrbéres* peasants did not have their own plot, so they were not *jobbágys*.

Some further steps in the process of narrowing down the use of the term:

- At the intersection of the temporal and social dimensions, Erdei explicitly excludes the peasant status of the *jobbágy*. *'When he was a jobbágy, he was not really a peasant, only a peasant ancestor and a peasant being broken in [törés alatt álló paraszt].'* (Erdei 1973/1938:37-38). This use of the term – unfortunately, not only by Erdei – is inaccurate. In 1770 'only' 66.7% of the *úrbéres* peasants were *jobbágys,* and then, by 1847 this proportion had dropped to 39.5% (Katus 2007: 576). Since there were also groups of free peasants too, the above data implies that in the last year of the estate-based society, about two-thirds of the peasants in the extended meaning were *not jobbágys.*
- The exclusion of the *'jobbágy'* from the peasantry is a surprising development, because elsewhere Erdei writes effective sentences about the fact that it is precisely that in *his* time peasantry was peasantry even because of the heritage of the estate-based era (the metaphor of the 'frozen barrel').

> *'The survival of the peasant order is perfectly illustrated by the example of water frozen in a barrel. Water frozen in a barrel over the winter stays together in the form of barrel-shaped ice even when the tyres and dongles are broken off and the spring sun shines warmly on it. Eventually it will melt, but… to dissolve it, it is not enough to break up the barrel, it needs constant and persistent sunshine. To add to the analogy, the only thing that has happened so far to dissolve the Hungarian peasant's block of solidified stone is that some of the dongles and tyres have come off and the ice that remains intact has been half-removed into the spring sunshine. The peasantry has been stripped of its religious laws and the socio-economic climate has changed. However, neither the framework of rules surrounding the peasantry has changed perfectly – there are still countless order conventions in Hungarian society today – nor has the structure of society been transformed perfectly – Hungarian society is not even today completely bourgeois in its class structure.'* (Erdei 1980b/1942: 142–143)

This is in fact the essence of the standard interpretation of Erdei: the peasantry = the peasantry living in the bonds of the (surviving) estate-based society's order.

6 On the same problem, see Gyáni 2003: 73.

Not coincidentally, since the Erdei corpus is full of similar ideas: *'In the end, only the development of vassal-estate-based society led to the emergence of the peasantry.'* (Erdei 1980b/1942: 103) The hyphenated structure of *'vassal-estate-based' [hűbéri-rendi]* in this quote – and in several other places in the text – again shows Erdei's problematic interpretation of history. The *vassal [liege]* relationships had characterized peculiarly the Western European societies, and even *before* the estate-based *era.* (Szűcs 1983: 27–35, 61–63).

Or, more strongly:

> *'The peasantry is therefore an estate-based* [rendies] *social formation. It is the lower stratum, the lower order, of the social structure of the estate-based order. (...)* [Therefore] *it is essentially different from the servants of "crude" societies, or the working class of bourgeois society."* (Erdei 1980a/1943: 264) *'[T]he peasantry is really an order, but not in the legal-historical but in the social sense of orderliness. And in this sense, it is precisely this subordinate position that is the main determinant of the meaning of peasantry.'* (Erdei 1980b/1942: 13)

Yet, in other places Erdei himself – quite rightly, in fact – explicitly rules out the possibility that the peasantry was ever an order.

> *'The peasantry is not an order* [Nem rend a parasztság]. *Order belonged to the lords: a position surrounded by arms and rights; order belonged to the citizens [polgárok]: security within the walls of cities, protected by the right to buy, by money and privileges. A peasant was one who had no qualifications, no protection and no security. A peasant was one who never had a job in the order and who had all the privileges of the order at his disposal."* (Erdei 1973: 14)

And within Europe, in Erdei's conception, there are no longer peasants in Northern and Western Europe. In the context of Southern Europe[7] Erdei uses the word peasant throughout the thematic chapter, and at most distinguishes the region on the basis that life is easier here. A typical choice of words is *'the life of the Italian and Spanish peasants is the most idyllic.'* (Erdei 1973/1938: 128).[8] Later, however, he seems to omit

7 In this chapter, Erdei introduces a particularly climatic explanation of society, which could be regarded as a modern approach perhaps in the era of Montesquieu (2000/1748). Just one extract: *'The North, home of long nights and cold winters, has bred a solid society. The contrasts between people and groups are blunted, people are closer together, can associate with each other and have never tolerated among themselves the rigid system of rule that exists in the South. In this social environment, it was not difficult for peasants to rise to the level of other classes and it was not impossible to get the whole of society to accept the strict and communitarian peasant morals.'* (Erdei 1973/1938: 127)

8 It is part of this *'idyll'* that *'despite his/her civilization, the peasant remained religious and humble, and this ultimately allowed the fascist regimes to consolidate.'* (Erdei 1973/1938:132) Interestingly, the Hungarian context strongly relativizes the relevance of religious affiliation and, in general, of religiosity in the peasant world; elsewhere it explicitly links *revolt* to the contemporary peasant condition. In a letter to his father in 1936, for example, he wrote: *'I am a peasant! (...) I am a peasant, and therefore a ban protects from me a life of liberation and self-fulfillment (...) This is peasant fate. That is why I now understand rebellion, and that is why I understand my father's rebellion in all its depth...'* (quoted in Huszár 2012: 122–123)

the (extended sense) peasants of the Southern European region from the European peasantry in the specific sense.

Still within Europe: *'**Real peasants*** [emphasis mine – DCs] *are now only found in the eastern countries of Europe. Jobbágyness lasted here for a long time, and in addition to the thin nobility, a wider civil society did not develop later either'* begins the chapter titled *'In the East' [Keleten].* (Erdei 1973/1938: 132). It is hard to believe, but the names of, for example, Ukraine or Russia (Soviet Union), or the peoples living there, do not even appear as part of *'Eastern Europe'.*

At least that is the case in the chapter *'In the East'* of *Peasants* (1973/1938). In another paper, Erdei, in contradiction to the thesis that there are *'real peasants'* in Eastern Europe, says that *'in Eastern Europe and the Balkans, by contrast, there was no vassal-estate-based [hűbéri-rendi] development in the Middle Ages, in other words, no social development that could have created a peasantry. Hungary was the eastern frontier of this kind of European historical formation.'* (Erdei 1980a/1943:262)

In the previous paragraph, I quoted an article by Erdei published in 1943. In the same year, the author began to draft his famous work generally named *The Dual Society,* which he finally decided to leave in manuscript in 1944 (Dupcsik 2022:270-272), and thus was published *for the first time* posthumously. In this work, Central Europe 'disappeared',[9] and he already clearly classifies Hungary as part of *'Eastern Europe'* (Erdei 1980c/1943–1944). It can be assumed that the change of terminology was accelerated primarily by Erdei's becoming a crypto-communist[10] and the Russian army's approach to Hungary.

But in the chapter *'In the middle of Europe'* of *Peasants,* originally published in 1938 (and a second time after Erdei's death), we could read

> *'In the middle of Europe, the stage of peasant development is no longer so calm. Neither are the well-trodden peasant laws in force here, nor have newer and more sophisticated forms been able to take root, a crisis in the life of the peasant. Even now he must be a peasant, although all his desires are already leading him to other landscapes. Everything is full of confusion, unrest and unresolved, and it does not help that the old peasant laws have lost their force, since nothing has replaced them but uncertainty and backwardness.*
>
> *Hungary lies at the centre of this critical peasant continent, and to the north, Poland and to the south, the peasants of old Croatia share its fate. The crisis is most complete in Hungary...'* (Erdei 1973/1938: 138)

These are strong, although somewhat confused thoughts. Central European peasants are no longer peasants – but do they *still have to be* peasants? The title of a later chapter says it all: *'To be a peasant is no longer possible'*, and then begins: *'Peas-*

9 At this time, when the prospect of East-Central Europe falling into the Russian sphere of interest was raised, and especially later, when it did happen, a similar 'geographic' turn was not only made by Erdei, see Dupcsik 1997b, 1999, 2000.

10 *'Ferenc Erdei has asked to join the [Communist] party. Our decision was to admit him, but to keep it secret.'* Ernő Gerő report to Mátyás Rákosi, 28 December 1944. (Izsák–Kun 1994: 13)

antry is a thing of the past, both for culture and society, even if it is still there.' (Erdei 1973/1938: 191).

Not incidentally, Russia also appears in *Peasants,* but not in the chapter *'In the East'* (that is, in the chapter *officially* about 'Eastern Europe'), but in the chapter on *'jobbágyness'*, titled as *'The Ancestor':*

> *'The jobbágyness is the period when the peasant was not yet a peasant, but was accustomed to this life from above, and accustomed to it from below. The life of the jobbágy is peasant life, but the man himself is not yet a peasant (...) Yet at last, everywhere in Europe, both the maturation of the jobbágy into a peasant and the abolition of jobbágyness by law have taken place. The great revolution meant two things in visible reality [a látható valóságokban]: the abolition of jobbágyness and the creation of the peasantry... In Hungary, the most typical state of the Middle Europe [középrész], liberation came in 1848. The eastern part of our continent was the last to remain. In Romania, the peasants were freed from part of their burdens in 1864, and in Russia in 1883.'* (Erdei 1973/1938: 77, 83, 85)

In this chapter, beyond the details quoted, Erdei consistently distinguishes between the Eastern and Central regions of Europe.

Despite the firm definition of the particular notion of the peasant, we could note again and again, that Erdei 'slides' towards the extended category. To give just two brief examples: in *Peasants'* chapter *'In the West',* Erdei makes it clear that in these countries *'peasants are no longer real peasants. Peasant is their past... but slowly... nothing remains but the name and a few external reminders. These peasants are now only titular peasants.'* (Erdei 1973/1938: 113) Nevertheless, 83 of the 2,570 words in this chapter are 'peasant' or its derivative (3.2%). Similarly, the chapter *'In the North'* begins with the sentence *'In the North, the peasants are no longer real peasants either'* (Erdei 1973/1938: 121) – followed by 71 more 'peasant' terms in this chapter alone.

Mechanisms for the eradication/retrenchment of the peasantry

Discourses on the decline, disappearance or abolition of the peasantry nowadays tend to refer to changes in the population figures. At first glance, it seems convincing, since while for thousands of years the vast majority of humanity were tillers and stockbreeders, today 'only' about a quarter of it is (see e.g. *Our World in Data).* In Europe, the decline was even more marked in the twentieth century, in many countries from a level below the world average. In Hungary, for example, according to historians' estimates, the agrarian population accounted for about 90% of the whole population in 1850, 75% in 1875 (Gergely 2003: 345), and 64% in 1900. (KSH 1996: 88) From then on, the rate of decline slowed down for about half a century: in 1949, more than half of the population were still peasants (in the broad sense) (KSH 1996: 88) However, the process of decline accelerated again, and by the turn of the millennium, only 6.5% of the employed worked in agriculture or forestry. (KSH Stadat)

Compared to other European countries (Tomka 2020: 147), the dynamics are also peculiar: the rate of decline slowed down at the end of the nineteenth century, then accelerated in the mid-twentieth century. The correlation is, however, obvious with the fact that the improvement in average wheat yields slowed down at the end of the nineteenth century (data from 1871 to 1915: Romsics 1999: 28) and then stagnated from the early 1920s to the 1960s, apart from short-term fluctuations. It was only afterwards, i.e., at the same time as the number of peasants began to decline significantly, that a significant improvement in average wheat yields began (KSH 1996: 104–105).

The decline in ratios does not seem to be in itself evidence of the disappearance of the peasantry in the broad sense, especially if we take into account that the natural production indicators of agricultural products have meanwhile increased faster globally than the number of people. An interesting parallel: in the mid-nineteenthth century, the proportion of industrial workers was still small globally (and did not constitute a majority even in the most industrialized countries). However, even at that time a significant proportion, perhaps even a majority, of social scientists were attaching a high importance to this class in present and future societies. In the 1960s, however, proportions of the working class were just beginning to decline in economically advanced and moderately developed countries (while industrial production continued to grow dynamically), when the discourse on the advent of a *post-industrial* society began (Bell 1974).

The situation is different, however, in the case of what we used to call the particular concept: if the socio-historical-cultural condition included in the definition of the peasant is radically changed or disappears, then we can speak of 'legitimate' de-peasantization. However, it is perhaps more correct to say that social mechanisms have emerged or spread which have led to the peasant ceasing to be a peasant, even if he or she has remained in the agrarian economy.

The two most commonly discussed mechanisms in the literature are
a.) the *'Polgárosodás [Embourgeoisement]',* i. e., when *a part of the* peasants became (agricultural) entrepreneurs, who do not differ in their essential socio-cultural parameters from the other entrepreneurs of their society.
b.) *'Proletarianization',* i. e. when *a part of the* peasants became (agricultural) manual workers, who do not differ in their essential socio-cultural parameters from the other manual workers of their society.

I will come back to the names of the two mechanisms – which I deliberately put in quotation marks.

Under modern demographic conditions, exit channel a) would have been accessible even theoretically only to a narrow group of the peasantry. Between the two world wars, the intellectual-political circle that included Erdei, the group of populist writers *[népi írók],* considered it evident that the core of the land question was the unequal distribution of land, i. e. that only a few hundred families owned about a third of the cultivated land. However, in the political vacuum of 1945, on the orders

of the occupying Russians, a truly radical land reform was adopted, which resulted in the following:

- 17% of the peasantry still had no land at all (possibly less than 1 acre) – down from 46% previously;
- 68.1% of peasant holdings were still less than 5 acres and 86.9% less than 10 acres (Valuch 2001: 191), while
- in the era, *'the limit above which a farm can support a peasant family without additional earnings or employment is set at 15–20 acres."* (Fél–Hofer 2010/1969: 69).

In the last third of the twentieth century, however, a part of the Hungarian intelligentsia emphatically did *not* speak of 'becoming an entrepreneur', but of the process of *polgárosodás.* Although, ironically, the term can be translated into English only as *'embourgeoisement'*,[11] the term *polgárosodás,* which was already popular in Hungary in the nineteenth century (Dupcsik 1997a), could refer to the improvement of lifestyle, mentality and civilizational conditions. The Hungarian citizen could be either *bourgeois* (capitalist entrepreneur or owner), *citoyen* (citizen), or *Bildungsbürger* (to put it somewhat simplistically: a skilled, intellectual employee in a capitalizing society). Those who evaluated *polgárosodás* positively claimed that the essence of the process was greater independence from the state, a sense of autonomy and an increase in self-awareness – so that, logically, it did *not even* require private property sufficient for production.

In the 1970s–1980s, that is, in the last era of the communist regime in Hungary, few people in Hungary were able to break through the political and legal barriers to becoming a *real* entrepreneur (in 1980, only 1.6% of workers were non-agricultural *'self-employed or helping family members'*, KSH 1996: 89). However, millions of people were involved in the so-called Second Economy after (or sometimes *during)* their working hours in state[12] employment. Observers at that time very often

- regarded it as *polgárosodás* (which meant *more* than capitalization downgraded on a normative basis), or
- seen that there was a long-run continuity between this *'socialist polgárosodás'* and the pre-1945, mainly peasant *polgárosodás* which was violently interrupted by the establishment of the socialist system. (Dupcsik 1997a, 1997b, 2008, 2018, Megyesi 2020).

These hypotheses have caused the revaluation of Erdei's legacy. In his early works he often wrote about peasant *polgárosodás,* and it was easy to overlook the fact that by the mid-1940s he had already abandoned his earlier views on this subject.

11 Although the Hungarian translation of Iván Szelényi's relevant volume used the term *polgárosodás* (Szelényi 1992), the original English version still used *embourgeoisement* (Szelényi 1988). A similar symbolism can be seen in the fact that the title of the American edition uses the term *entrepreneurs,* which refers to Capitalism, while the Hungarian version uses the term *'Third Way'*, which carries anti-capitalist connotations – however, with a question mark.

12 So-called 'agricultural cooperatives' *[termelőszövetkezetek* or *téeszek]* are quasi-state-owned estates, and the translations 'cooperative' or 'collective farm' are misleading.

According to a 1975 survey, between 1.6 and 1.7 million families were engaged in small-scale agricultural production, of which 'only' 800,000 were on the very limited private use of so-called *'backyard estates' [háztáji]* allocated to members of the agricultural 'cooperatives.' Such small (most often rather dwarf) farms accounted for 36% of total agricultural production (Gábor–Galasi 1981: 47–48), including more than half of pigs or grapes, 92% of garden produce, and so on. (Romsics 1999: 443)

The author of these lines, as a student and then as a young researcher, sympathized with these ideas, so his critique is a self-critique as well. In hindsight, *looking back from the post-2010 era,* we could classify this concept of *polgárosodás* as a *social science myth.* In fact, a poorly efficient sphere of income supplementation was created, in a mutually parasitic relationship with the poorly efficient public sphere. The common intersection of the state and the second economy is the institutionalized neglect of infrastructure and the forced exploitation or self-exploitation of human resources. (For a more detailed substantiation of what seem to be rough findings, see Dupcsik 2018, 2022: 386–409).

The process of change referred to in b) above is, to put it in neutral terms: the process whereby peasants become workers who differ from other workers only in the classification of their jobs (agricultural sector). It is important to note, however, that until the middle of the 20th century this process was typically referred to as *proletarianization* – a term that had as strong normative implications as the aforementioned notion of *polgárosodás.*

The concept of proletarianization has

- a negative conception: proletarianization = individuals become atomized members of modern mass societies, deprived of tradition, communal bonds and real solidarity; and has
- a positive conception: the Marxists in particular thought that the proletarians = the currently exploited but prospective *ruling class* of capitalism, the real *'ruling class' of* state socialism, the Subjects of History, the forgers of a wonderful future.

In his legendary speech in Szárszó in 1943, Ferenc Erdei says that the *'most characteristic feature of peasant society is its polgárosodás.'* Interpretations of Erdei in the 1970s and 1980s ignored the fact that in 1943 the author interpreted the concept of 'polgárosodás' quite differently than in his legendary book *Futóhomok (Quicksand,* n.d./1937). Let us read the quote further: *'Thus the process which invalidates and destroys peasant traditions and peasant isolation, and transforms the former peasant farmers and peasant workers towards the bourgeoisie and petty bourgeoisie on the one hand, and towards the working class on the other* [emphasis mine – DCs].' (Erdei 1987/1943: 41) Erdei thus includes proletarianization under *polgárosodás (embourgeoisement),* which can be seen as a process in virtually 'opposite directions' (and then, in the same lecture, he describes the path of *polgárosodás* as completely impassable).

And two years later, as Béla Köpeczi put it in the posthumous double edition of *Peasants, 'Ferenc Erdei was an active politician'* (Erdei 1973/1938: V) who actively

contributed to the policy of violent proletarianization of the peasantry. And this is not 'just' a moral[13] question: totalitarian regimes demand with brutal clarity a kind of intellectual degradation[14] from their intellectual adherents.

A paradigmatic scene: at the end of 1944, Erdei met József Révai, a leader of the Communist Party, in Szeged, to whom he handed over an extended draft of his then still-planned volume and arranged a meeting with some peasants from the area. Afterwards (according to Erdei's account given decades later), the communist politician told him: *'They love you, they consider you their own in this land, Ferenc. This relationship will be fruitful for our popular front policy, but these "bourgeois peasants" [parasztpolgárok] will later be considered kulaks, and then you will have to choose: "with us or against us". And if you are with us – which I sincerely hope you are – you will have to forget the argumentation of your manuscript* [emphasis mine – DCs]' (quoted in Huszár 2012: 14). And indeed, Erdei dutifully forgot the volume that was intended to be his magnum opus, and the manuscript became his *'A Study of the Dual Society'* only after his death. (Erdei 1980c/1943–44, Dupcsik 2022: 264–270)

I'm afraid that this is also a story with symbolic meaning too: in 1955, Ferenc Erdei, as Minister of Agriculture, wrote a letter to the President of the Central Statistical Office forbidding the recording of the number of people who had left the 'cooperatives', even for reasons such as death. This *'would cause serious confusion…[as] it would destabilize the whole membership and cause a movement in the membership which would destabilize the stability of the cooperatives and could be exploited by hostile elements. If someone is expelled from the guild, dies or for other reasons the membership is reduced, this should of course not be included in the report.'* (cited in Rév 1996: 148). *'Of course,'* since *'hostile elements'* could exploit the real data.

The official conception of the socialist era, according to which *'the peasantry in cooperatives'* became one of the two *'ruling classes'* – *'in alliance with the working class'* – can safely be described as an ideological slogan. It is enough to think that while a tractor driver in a village was considered a 'worker' if he worked on a so-called state farm *openly* owned by the state [*állami gazdaság*], his neighbour, also a tractor driver, but working in a 'cooperative' *[téesz]* was a 'peasant' – because they had a different *'relationship with the productive forces.'*

13 Even from Tibor Huszár's detailed 501-page biography (2012) we learn almost nothing about what Erdei actually did in the 8 years he was minister of the Rákosi regime (György Gyarmati [2011] suggests that the whole period from 1945 to the summer of 1956 should be considered the Rákosi era).

14 Hungarian-born Arthur Koestler lived in Berlin in the early 1930s and was a member of the German Communist Party. In his memoirs, he formulated the expectations of intellectual party members as follows: *'not to write, not to say and, above all, not to think anything that a street cleaner [szemetes] couldn't understand. We threw up our intellectual baggage like passengers on a panic-stricken ship, until our speech was reduced to the most necessary jargon, dialectical clichés and quotations from Marx… Intellectual self-castration seemed no great price to pay to become like Ivan Ivanovich.'* (Koestler 1994: 150)

Until now I have been forced to touch on the subject at several points, but now let's look in more detail at the third dimension along which I categorize the conceptions of peasantry:

The normativity of the peasant concepts

The normative suggestions or statements about peasantry by different authors differ in the extreme (Csite–Kovách 2002, Csurgó 2007, Kovách 2007). Perhaps the possible motives behind this diversity are to be found in the fact that the peasantry has almost always been perceived as a premodern group or left over from the past which is characterized by more or less traditional elements of life. It logically followed that the peasantry could also be seen as the loser, the victim, the obstacle, the opponent of modernization. And from this latter connection it also logically followed that

– Conservative thinkers and ideologies, which essentially took up the symbolic representation of the losers of modernization (Mannheim 1994/1927), *could* be empathetic to the peasantry.

Which, of course, does not at all imply that in the real world there are not tensions with other traditional strata that also view modernization with a minimum of ambivalence. In fact, Róbert Braun, for example, the first – and for more than half a century the last – sociologist who spent weeks in the field among peasants, writes without using the word, but about a kind of *traditional culture of hatred* in relation of the peasantry:

> *'I think there can hardly be any conscious hatred of the lords; the traditional hatred of the jobbágys (the lords must be exterminated, etc.) has completely disappeared or completely changed direction. However, clashes between peasants and lords are very common. The peasant has become more sensitive and not only gets frightened when, for example, the railway conductor shouts at him, but also feels insulted because he feels entitled to better treatment. However, the hatred of the urban gentry class, especially women, is sometimes very noticeable (I have also experienced this in the Hungarian countryside). I have often received passionate answers to my most indifferent questions, which deny the peasant any human feeling… and the men say indignantly: If a gentleman goes through the village, they don't even say hello.' (Braun 1913: 695)*

Until the middle of the twentieth century, the progressivist schools – Marxism being both an extreme and a typical example in this respect – most often saw the working class as the Subject of History, and they had no 'emotional capacity' for the peasantry, even if they were outraged by its exploitation. It was typical that they simply had nothing to do with the peasantry from a theoretical point of view – at least, until roughly the late 1960s (see below for a continuation of the line of thought).

According to the recollections of Arthur Koestler, mentioned above:

> *'At that time* [i.e., the early 1930s – DCs], *one of the peculiarities of party life was the cult of the proletariat and the vilification of intellectuals. It was the obsession,*

the guilt complex of every middle-class communist intellectual. We were just shunned in the movement, we had no right to be there; it was rubbed in our faces day and night. They pushed us out because Lenin said so, and because Russia could not do without the engineers, scientists and hated foreign experts of the pre-Revolutionary world. But they could only get as much trust and respect as the "useful Jews" in the Third Reich… The "Aryans" of the Party were the proletarians, and the origin of parents and grandparents was as much a factor in membership or routine biannual purges as Aryan origin was for the Nazis.' (Koestler 1994: 149)

The communist regime, if we look at its actual policy rather than its ideological slogans, had from the outset aimed at breaking the peasantry and forcibly proletarianizing it. Edit Fél and Tamás Hofer's fieldwork in Átány[15] began in the 1950s, and they made a conscious effort to record the workings of a doomed world using the tools of ethnography and cultural anthropology.

'We were looking for a village where the functioning of social institutions and the style of relations between people preserved as much as possible of the old peasant state and showed relatively few signs of decay or transformation. We were not looking for an average village, which belongs to the post-peasant types typical of the majority of Hungarian villages, and where the process of depeasanting[16] has progressed. In the material observed and recorded in the village, we also paid more attention to the old features.' (Fél–Hofer 2010/1969: 26)

Fél and Hofer's attempt to *reconstruct* the 'old world' often becomes *a construction*, with the conscious, reflective contribution of the (former) smallholders, the *'correct peasants'*, who are interviewed by the researchers. The inevitable problems that arise are, however, counterbalanced professionally by the material of their monumental trilogy of the Átány (Fél–Hofer 1972, 1974, 1997/1972, 2010/1969) and morally by the gesture of at least symbolic resistance to the communist regime (Dupcsik 2015: 107–120, 2022: 373–382).

The new type of right-wing radicalism that emerged after the First World War, which was also highly critical of modernization, often explicitly idealized the peasantry.

A well-known example is Dezső Szabó, who in his confession of love quoted below states twice that he is *not* a romantic.

'…the only eternal antiquity: the Hungarian peasant. The Hungarian peasant is the keeper of our ancient face, the cradle of our strength, our spiritual values, our ancient cultural treasures, our language. Our peasant politics is not a romantic outburst of sentiment and imagination, nor is it the demand for an abstract truth. We see in the Hungarian peasant – both in terms of numbers and spiritual content – the depository of the ancient Hungarian soul, the true and only Hungarian, the only sure foundation of all our renewal, our historical creation, our

15 Village in Central Hungary.

16 This English term was included in parentheses in the Hungarian edition as well behind *'a paraszti életforma felbomlása'*.

unique cultural development. This is not a romantic vision of the "unspoilt hut" as opposed to the "sinful palace". We see the Hungarian village and the Hungarian peasant in all its realities, and we know that here too we find all the human frailties that exist elsewhere. But with the preservation of the millenary values of the Hungarian soul, with its healthy and ever-vigilant selfishness and its greatest number, only the peasant can be the basis of all Hungarian life. The peasant is the only true antiquity for the Hungarian politician, the Hungarian artist and Hungarian knowledge alike. Whatever other differences there may be between us, the Hungarian peasant is the unshakable unity before all those who work for a new Hungarian future.' (Szabó 1991/1936: 117–118)

The progressive, new left, critical current that had peaked in the 1960s entereda trough after 1968. In its wake, *'in the 1960s not only the virtues of the countryside, but those of the peasantry were reinvented in both East and West,'* says István Rév (1998: 57), looking at the international scene. According to Rév, Western left-wing intellectuals aspiring to material prosperity, increasingly disappointed in the revolutionary ambitions of the white-collar working class, looked elsewhere for a subject for their radical hopes.

It is ironic that in the decades before the fall of the Berlin Wall, the *de jure* progressive, *de facto* conservative apologists for the socialist system could quote Lenin on how the small factory also reproduces capitalism.[17] Yet, at the same time, the anti-capitalist but non-communist Left, both in the West and in *contemporary* Eastern Europe, could rally enthusiasm for what it saw as a revival of peasant small-scale production with those who *genuinely* preferred a capitalist system.

In everyday life, it was primarily the everyday competition for social prestige that determined the normative content of the term peasant – and rather negatively. It is worth reading the observations of a sharp-eyed Dutch researcher on the Hungarian Alföld region between the two world wars:

'Despite the similarities in consumption, the different classes feel much further apart than one would expect from the differences in income. Every peasant looks down on something or someone, the poorest if not the Gypsy. The subtle distinction between the many classes is not easily known or perceived by the stranger, but he soon finds that people keep a certain distance between themselves out of pride.' (Hollander 1980/1947: 95)

The last quotation is of course about distinctions *within* the peasantry, but the social techniques it describes could be 'extended': the peasantry had become a negative reference point for second- or even first-generation urban workers who had come from peasantry. As a study of the working class in Marosvásárhely (Târgu Mures, now in Romania) in 1909 notes:

'An industrial assistant with peasant background would consider himself to belong to a higher social class and would regard a marriage with a servant girl [typically

17 *'Small-scale production constantly, every hour of every day, by itself and on a mass scale, gives birth to capitalism and the bourgeoisie.'* (Lenin 1974 [1920]: 6)

from a peasant background – DCs] *serving in the town as a mésalliance. Since the girl also regards a laborer as more prestigious than, for example, a peasant boy from the village who is a soldier in the town, the affair is easy to arrange, but marriage is more difficult.*' (Braun 1909: 517)

In the everyday discourse of the twentieth century, *peasant* has generally become a negative term, and even the dominant ideological discourses have had little impact on this development. The sociologist Tamás Kolosi gives an amusing example of the latter connection: '*In my empirical study in the 1970s in a Budapest Tsz, two people considered themselves peasants: the "cooperative's" president and the party secretary* [that is, the most important managers/leaders of the villages – DCs], ***but not a single manual worker*** [emphasis mine – DCs]. *The term peasant had been used for centuries, but the consciousness of belonging to the peasantry was perhaps only in the minds of the populist writers, the 'peasants' considered themselves smallholders, farmers, tillers etc.*' (Kolosi 1990: 17; first publication of the story referred to here: Kolosi 1983/1974: 204)

The historian, István Papp, born in 1979, in his book about the populist writers also recalled an instructive personal experience: '*When I was seven or eight years old, I asked my mother one morning if my grandmother was a peasant. I still remember the stunned silence and the subsequent rebuke: my son, don't say that, especially in front of others.*' (Papp 2012: 11)

The term de-peasantization has both the greatest advantage and the greatest disadvantage in that, *while* it captures a social phenomenon in a theoretical way, it *also* evokes 'discrete' but clear normative associations. If we do not want to take advantage of this opportunity, we could perhaps, by analogy with the term post-industrial society mentioned earlier, speak of a *post-peasant* instead of *de-peasantized agrarian population* in our time – although in Hungarian this would sound rather colloquial.

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Labour coercion in Hungary before, under and after communism

Tibor Valuch

Introduction

Between 1930 and 2000, three political, economic and social regime changes took place in Hungary (For more recent descriptions of the twentieth century history of Hungary, see Romsics 1999, Gyáni et. al. 2004). The market economy, which had existed until the end of the Second World War, was replaced in the second half of the 1940s by the communist planned economy. Then, following the democratic political transition of 1989/90, there was a return to a market economy, which by the turn of the millennium had created more or less consolidated social and economic conditions. It should be noted that during the seven decades, Hungary's economic and social structure also changed, from an agricultural-industrial to an industrial-agricultural country, and although its economic performance increased, it could only partially catch up with the average European level (Berend 2016) of development of the respective periods. These changes, in opposite directions, had a decisive impact on the world of work, and on the practices of coercion and incentives to work (to the summarizing historical overview of coercion to work see Kuczi 2011) in everyday life.

My paper consists of three parts. Firstly, I will examine the relationship between workers, employers and work in the classical market economy system between the Great Depression of 1929–33 and the end of the Second World War. In the second part, I summarize the characteristics of the coercion and incentives to work in the communist era, and lastly, I will describe the specificities of the world of work in a re-emerging market economy, whose development has now been influenced by globalization. In each of these three periods, I will pay particular attention to the extent to which the status of workers in each category of labour corresponded to the legal fiction of free labour. The analysis will be conducted mainly at the macro level, but I will also refer to local cases and examples.

The world of work in Hungary in the 1930s and 1940s

After the world economic crisis, in the 1930s, the Hungarian economy can be described as a classical market economy, which worked with little state intervention. Agriculture was the main sector of the economy, but the role of industry was increasing and that also increased the number of industrial workers (Gyáni 2012).

In agriculture, some of the workers - especially the laboruer on the larger peasant farms and large estates – were only partly free wage labourers. Under the one-year contract, the agricultural labourer partly gave up the exercise of his own personal rights and placed himself entirely under the disciplinary authority of his employer. In 1930s Hungary this also meant that corporal punishment was not uncommon among this group of workers. Anyone who left their job before the end of their contract would be rounded up by the gendarmerie and taken back to the big estate. These agrarian proletarians were compensated for the partial loss of personal freedom with free housing, a share of the produce, and the free sale of the so-called "salary land" crops (Gyáni–Kövér 2005).

In the Hungarian industrial society of the same period, there was also some vulnerability, but the legally regulated wage-worker relationship was basically the dominant one. The large Hungarian companies (e.g. Rima-Murányi Mining and Metallurgy Corporation, MÁVAG Machine Works, Weiss-Manfréd Steel and Machine Corporation, Láng Machine Factory, Magyar Vagon- és Gépgyár Corporation) followed the general European labour and employment policy of the time (Bódy 2010). This included both the rule of law, strict disciplinary practices, detailed regulation of expected worker behaviour, economic incentives to increase labour productivity, and the operation of a kind of essentially paternalistic welfare and social policy system. The latter was of particular benefit to those workers who were important for the continuity of production and whom the factory management wanted to employ on a long-term basis. It was also important that a large factory also played a decisive role as a social integrator in the local society, and thus had a decisive influence on the socialization of the next generation of workers.

How did the complex practice of work coercion based on the creation of individual interest, work discipline, and extensive social policy benefits work? This is what I show by analysing the employment policy of one of the largest Hungarian heavy industry plants of the period.

The Ózd Ironworks (Berend 1980) was one of the large plants of the Rima Corporation. In the late 1930s, 7,000 workers were employed here. During the long decades of its existence, the factory was not only the largest employer, but also a social integrator of the municipality and its surrounding area. It was present in all aspects of life, from social and health care, to the maintenance of schools, the organization of food supplies for factory workers, the promotion of culture and the development of the local community. The personal and working strategies and aspirations of the workers

employed here developed, changed and adapted accordingly. The factory's role as a social integrator continued, albeit in varying forms, until its closure in the 1990s.

The number of people working in the factory constantly increased, but when recruiting workers, it was an advantage if the applicant had relatives, such as a father or grandfather who worked there. This was seen by employers as a guarantee that the applicant would be a hard-working and reliable worker. By signing the contract of employment, the person also accepted the workers' code of conduct. Factory society was highly structured and hierarchical (for the social stratification of factory workers see Nagy 2016). In order to advance, a worker had to work his way up the ladder within his occupation, and had to perform consistently high quality work.

The need to get the job done accurately was not only an external constraint but also a kind of internal expectation, especially for workers from multi-generational working families. Prestige within factory society was also fundamentally influenced by the quality of the work done, individual skills and experience. Efficient and effective work was a general prerequisite for higher wages. On average, the wages paid by the ironworks were 25–30% higher than the national average wage for workers. The incentive to work was also to keep a job that provided a stable livelihood.

Iron and steel production is a dangerous industry, so precise and disciplined work was both an individual interest and a collective expectation. Failure to comply with workplace rules and breaches of the general code of conduct were subject to disciplinary sanctions. In less severe cases, this was a warning, in more severe cases or a repetition of the breach of discipline it came with a reduction in wages, followed by dismissal. The factory management kept a so-called "black book" of workers who had been dismissed (Nagy 2021).[1] It indicated the reason for dismissal (drunkenness, unreliability, refusal to work, regular tardiness, theft, disrespect) and also recorded whether the worker concerned could be re-employed after a certain period or not re-employed at all.

In addition to labour market and disciplinary measures, non-wage welfare benefits were important. These included the provision of low-rent housing, free electricity and household fuel.

Social integration and socialization, driven by the factory, played an important role in the attitude to work and in encouraging work. The majority of the people living there, were born in the factory hospital, went to the factory school and then to the vocational school, from where they had a straight path to becoming factory workers. Many of the workers, often living next door to their immediate co-workers, lived in the factory housing estates, which also had a strict code of conduct. Housing in a factory colony meant prestige and a living wage, so most were careful to obey the rules (Valuch 2021b).

1 Feketekönyvek – *MNL OL Z 376. 3. kötet, Fekete-könyv.* Borsodnádasdi Helytörténeti Gyűjtemény., MNL OL Z 373 2. csomó 2. tétel., see Nagy 2021.

And last but not least, there was a so-called Workers' Reading Association (Valuch 2021a), of which two-thirds of the factory workers were members. The association had cultural and social functions, such as providing aid to the families of those who died in a factory accident. In general, the association played a very important role in strengthening the factory's identity.

The factory appeared as a specific point of reference in the minds of the inhabitants of the village from childhood onwards, as an institution and organization providing a livelihood and sustenance, where both father and grandfather worked. The process of socialization for work, mediated by the family, school and factory, was essential for workers and employers alike. The apprenticeship years, provided the acquisition of the basic concepts of professional knowledge and the awareness of a hierarchy based on rank and performance. In addition it provided models of behaviour to be followed and made obedience and acceptance of the work organization automatic, obviously not only by example but also by strict regulation and discipline. Many of the workers, especially those whose families had lived and worked there for generations, were proud to be RIMA workers. It can be seen, therefore, that there were complex economic and social incentives to shape attitudes to work.

"We own the factory!" We own the factory? – the relationship between workers and employers in the state socialist system 1947/48–1989/90

After the end of the Second World War, the relationship between employers and employees remained essentially within a market economy framework, which also determined the conditions of employment. Working conditions, wages, rates of pay, length of working time, the level of special allowances and supplements for each post, and the rules on overtime were governed by collective agreements. The working week in industry remained at 48 hours. Wages gradually approached the level of the last year before the Second World War (1938).

During the period of repairing the war damage, there were already labour competitions. However, realistic elements still dominated until the end of 1947. The general aim was to rebuild a country in ruins in the shortest possible time. *"The aim was not to complete a certain amount of work within a certain period of time in a much shorter time, but to complete more work within a certain period of time, as the company itself had undertaken to do. It was not to be constantly overworked, but to achieve tasks that could be completed within a realistic timeframe."* (Kresalek 1988).

The communist takeover radically transformed the system and working of the economy. The market economy and private property were abolished, factories were nationalized and the so-called planned economy system was introduced, which in practice meant highly centralized economic management based on bureaucratic coordination (Kornai 1992). The propaganda proclaimed that the factories were owned

by the workers. In reality, however, the workers had no say in the management of the factories, even though, trusted cadres of workers were temporarily appointed as directors in the process of nationalization. In the state socialist era, the majority of workers were classic wage workers, only then in state-owned factories (Pittaway 2012, Belényi 2009).

Until the revolution of 1956, the following attempts were made to influence the attitude to work and the achievement of higher performance:

1. Through wages, which on average were lower in the first half of the 1950s than in the last year of peace, 1938. The state propaganda, meanwhile, promoted increasing prosperity.
2. Through permanent labour competition, also known as the Stakhanovist movement, and the mass propaganda built on it. The promotion of work and work performance was politicized and ideologized to an extreme. The propaganda was for an unrealistic overachievement in work performance. Participation in the work competition was essentially compulsory. As a result of intense political and ideological pressure, the first half of the 1950s saw a succession of so-called world triumphs, such as the achievement ofa performance of several hundred percent during a single shift, the vast majority of which were clearly impossible. These results were usually achieved quite simply by tricks of work organization, by simplifying the work process to a single phase.
3. A general work obligation was introduced. If someone did not have a job – this had to be recorded in their identity card – it was a criminal offence. A category of public nuisance, punishable by 6–18 months in prison, was introduced into the current criminal law.
4. Work was criminalized. Criminal law also became a tool to organize work and improve performance. For example, by extending the criminal law category of sabotage and introducing the concept of plan offender (Act IV of 1950). The legislation provided for a penalty of up to five years' imprisonment for anyone who *"endangers the implementation of the national economic plan or a partial plan … performs work late, defectively or incompletely … carries out production which involves an unwise waste of material, energy or labour power …"*. In addition, voluntarily leaving the workplace was also a criminal offence, in 1952–53 15,000 people were prosecuted on this charge (Gyekiczky 1986).
5. Expectations of performance were regularly raised for workers on performance wages, to their serious detriment as it which usually meant a disguised pay cut.

In the first half of the 1950s, during the period of the construction of the state socialist system, political, propaganda and psychological methods became the primary means of enforcing work, while economic factors lost their importance.

At the local level, they followed the practice of enforcing work which developed after the transformation. The Ózd Ironworks had already become state-owned in 1946. In 1947, the factory's competition office was set up. In the first half of the 1950s,

the Stakhanovist movement and strict discipline were the two main instruments of performance enforcement. Workers and workers' brigades who achieved several hundred percent work performance were often awarded state medals. The factory management held them up to the workers as an example to be followed and encouraged. On the other hand, with the communist takeover, a large part of the previous social benefits were withdrawn from the workers. The politically and ideologically based compulsion to work, together with falling wages, worsened the income situation of factory workers and lowered their living standards. Workers, who were seen as the social base of communist power, mainly perceived a steady deterioration in living and working conditions, rather than the benefits of "workers' power, the dictatorship of the proletariat". After 1945, the devaluation of skills can be observed at the local level, too, in a somewhat fluctuating way, varying in time and degree. At the same time, political capital – e.g., the acquisition of Communist Party membership – became much more important in building and maintaining career paths. This had a major impact on workers' behaviour.

The practice of coercion in agriculture also changed significantly after the Second World War. Land reform abolished large estates and re-regulated the employment of agricultural workers. After the communist takeover, the forced collectivization of agriculture began. In the cooperatives that were set up, the members were essentially both part-owners and wage labourers. Those employed on the state-owned farms worked as wage labourers under contract. On the whole, the legality of the employment system improved, but the political and ideological coercion of the period was also marked. From the end of the 1960s, economic incentives also became dominant in agriculture (Varga 2021).

During the Kádár era, between 1956 and 1989, work was gradually decriminalized, but the general obligation to work remained in force. Public nuisance continued to exist as a criminal offence, but was less strictly enforced, especially in the 1980s. In the decades following the 1956 revolution, the work competition remained, but gradually moved to a more realistic basis – it was called the socialist brigade movement – meanwhile state propaganda encouraging work also survived. A significant change was the steady increase in the role of monetary/economic interests alongside non-economic means, especially after the economic reform of 1968. So-called target bonuses were introduced to reward the successful completion of a particular task or extra work. The militant workers' policy was gradually replaced by a paternalistic political practice that was capable of taking account of interests, without abandoning the need to increase performance.

In the 1960s and 1970s, more attention was paid to ensure that the real value of wages rose steadily, if only slightly. It was also in these two decades that social transfers from the state came to the fore (e.g., construction of workers' housing). Workers still had no real representation of their interests vis-à-vis the managers of state enterprises. They tried to assert their interests in the form of informal organization,

in relation to the need to work and to obtain additional income (Héthy–Makó 1972). The relatively low wages paid by state-owned enterprises were supplemented by the majority of workers working also legally or illegally.[2]

From the early 1980s, the creation of "enterprise economic working communities" was made possible. This was a form of internal enterprise, providing those who undertook it with the opportunity to earn extra income after official working hours. The move was intended both to improve performance and to reduce the black economy, which had by then become all too common. Importantly, from 1982 – eight years before the post-communist transition – it was made possible for anyone to set up small, privately-owned businesses. This was an early step in the return to a market economy.

Under state socialism, non-economic constraints initially gained in importance and, as the crisis of the system deepened, economic rationality, the combination of a moderated planned economy and the market economy system, or more precisely some of its elements, came to the fore. The role of economic factors in the world of work gradually became more and more important.

Back to the market – workers and labour in the post-communist transition and the globalizing Hungarian economy 1989/90–2000

The third major regime change[3] of the period I have been studying was the collapse of the communist regime in 1989/90. In the 1990s, the Hungarian economic structure was once again completely transformed. The state-owned factories were privatized, large multinationals arrived in the country, globalization started in parallel with the transformation crisis, and small and large Hungarian private enterprises were created.

In the early 1990s, insecurity became widespread as the number of unemployed had risen rapidly due to the continuous closure of factories (Bartha 2011). The risk of unemployment threatened everyone employed in the public sector, but especially workers in the oversized heavy industry sector.

The following factors and processes influenced the world of work and attitudes to work in this period.

1. The generalization of insecurity/uncertainty – no one could know whether they would have a job tomorrow. This was independent of the quality of the work done. The fear of losing a job became a specific incentive. *"If I do a good job, I might not get fired, or I might get fired later..."*
2. The feeling of being redundant – no need for me, my work or my skills – had a demotivating effect on many people (Alabán 2020).
3. The emergence of market economy expectations and the need to adapt to them.

2 See István Kemény: *Velük nevelkedett a gép.* Budapest, 1990. Vita, especially the paper which is analysing the behaviour of workers of Csillaghegyi Brick Factory.

3 On questions of workers' memory of the post-communist transition, see Valuch 2023.

After decades of state socialism, the transition to the new work culture was not easy for many people.

4. The introduction of more rigorous work discipline through economic instruments, wages and labour policies compared with the state socialist era.
5. Performance-oriented work organization and wages in Hungarian-owned medium and large enterprises. The emergence of a kind of peculiar, somewhat paternalistic, somewhat familiar worker-employer relationship, especially in the case of family businesses. The offer of predictable career paths.
6. Political propaganda about work disappeared completely in the early nineties. However, various type of work motivation systems were introduced by multinational companies.

During the transition to the market economy, the relationship of workers (Szalai 2006, Pittaway 2012) and employers to work was transformed, which was basically determined by market considerations. In the period of post-communist transition, economic means and market rationality became the primary tools for coercing and encouraging work.

Conclusion

I examined in my paper the practices and factors of work incentives in three consecutive periods. Before the Second World War, in addition to the weight of economic resources, the role of socialization, identity formation and social integration factors was important. In the second period, under communism, economic factors were replaced by political and ideological factors, and criminal law became important in the enforcement of work. This practice was partially modified after the 1956 revolution. In particular, after the Hungarian economic reform of 1968, with the emergence of market socialism, economic means gradually came to the fore. The interest of the individual in work was no longer sought to be created by discipline, but by money. Part of this process was the authorization of private enterprise in the early 1980s.

In the third period, workers and employers tried to find a way back to the market economy. Most of the coercion and incentives to work were now legal and again primarily economic and financial, following the end of the post-communist transition.

If we compare the three periods in terms of the extent to which the situation of workers corresponds to the fiction of free labour, it is under state socialism that freedom was least present in the everyday lives of workers.

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Disintegration and social exclusion

Gay life under state-socialism in Hungary

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Introduction

In this study, we focus on specific forms and manifestations of same-sex attraction and their social contexts in the period before the political system change of 1989–1990. We seek to answer the question of whether there was a "gay life" in Hungary in the period from the 1950s until the 1980s.[1] More specifically, we look at how our interviewees thought about their own sexuality and how this affected their emotional lives and the ways they formed their relationships with their partners. Consequently, we take a primarily micro-historical approach to how homosexual individuals reacted to the constraints of a rejecting social environment, which was reflected, among other things, in the legal prohibition of a significant part of sexual practices between same-sex partners. This also means that, at least in terms of their sexual identity, homosexual people formed a socially disintegrated group during the examined period, with the degree of social disintegration varying from one individual to another, also depending on individual characteristics. We will show how they tried to cope with social exclusion and what coping strategies they used in order to integrate more successfully into state-socialist Hungarian society.

Regarding the social control of homosexual practices, it is important to note that between 1878 and 1961, Hungarian criminal law punished consensual homosexual practices between adult men under the heading of "unnatural fornication". Thus, legally speaking, (male) homosexuality could only be considered a private matter after the abolition of the general penalization of homosexual acts, which was made possible by the first state-socialist Criminal Code, entering into force on 1 July 1962. This law provided special punishment for committing an offence "in a manner offensive to others", thus drawing attention to the need to take the narrow limits of private life seriously. For conducting "unnatural fornication" in a scandalous manner, *"causing*

1 This chapter is based on our previous findings (for more details, see Takács–P. Tóth 2017).

disgust, displeasure, anger, etc." (OGyI 1961: 271), the presence and disapproval of only one person other than the perpetrators was sufficient (Takács–P.Tóth 2016: 213).

One of the major innovations of the 1961 Penal Code was the introduction of the criminalization of homosexual practices between women conducted in a scandalous manner and/or with an underage partner (i.e. under the age of 20). This new provision was introduced with reference to the equal treatment of men and women (since previously only men could be prosecuted for conducting unnatural fornication). From 1962 until 1978, the practice of "unnatural fornication" with a same-sex partner under the age of 20[2] continued to be punishable by imprisonment, even in the case of mutual consent of the partners, while for heterosexual relations a lower age of consent (14) was applied. (In Hungary, equal age of consent for all was introduced only in 2002, when the Constitutional Court abolished the discrimination in the treatment of sexual relations between same-sex and opposite-sex partners in Articles 199 and 201 of the Criminal Code.)

It is difficult to find reliable sources on the social perception of homosexuality in the state-socialist era, but the first and still largely unexampled Hungarian empirical sexual-sociological survey is worth mentioning. In 1969, Sándor Heleszta and János Rudas, researchers at the Institute of Sociology of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, began the preparation of their empirical sociological study of sexuality, which was conducted in Budapest during 1971 with 250 young workers and university students, aged between 18 and 24, (Heleszta–Rudas 1978).[3] As part of the research focussing on the respondents' sexual behaviour and attitudes towards sexuality, the researchers asked the respondents to assess certain forms of sexual behaviour that were considered typical and prevalent in Hungary in the late 1960s. One of these was represented by the figure of the homosexual Konrád who was introduced to the respondents in the following way: *"Konrád is not interested in women, he has always been attracted to men. [...] He seeks the acquaintance of men who are like him, with whom they can satisfy each other's sexual needs. He is discreet in his relationships; he has never gotten himself into a scandal* [because of his homosexuality]. *He thinks it is completely his and his partners' business that they deal with their sexual life in this way*" (Heleszta–Rudas 1978: 227). This narrative presented Konrád in a slightly distancing neutral – i.e., non-judgemental – way: the only potentially negative element in the text was the reference to the possibility of scandal, which could be linked to the specific emphasis on conducting homosexual acts in a scandalous manner in the 1961 Penal Code. The approach to homosexuality reflected in Konrád's narrative assumed the public invisibility of homosexual practices, which suggests that in the given social context only "private" – i.e., publicly unnoticeable – homosexuality could be considered a typical and prevalent form of sexual behaviour.

2 Between 1978 and 2002 the age of consent for homosexual practices was 18.

3 For a more detailed discussion of the Heleszta–Rudas study see Takács 2015: 167–169.

Sources and methods

In this study, focussing on themes linked to the histories of emotions, private lives and sexualities, which have been under-researched in Hungary, we rely on a collection of in-depth interviews and original archive material. The main source of our archive material was the Budapest City Archives, where we examined the surviving records of the Budapest Criminal Courts. The registry of the Budapest City Archives included approximately 900 entries about cases involving charges of "unnatural fornication" between 1917 and 1970, but some of the original records were no longer available. It should also be noted that after the decriminalization of homosexual activity between consenting adult men in 1961, there was a significant drop in criminal charges against homosexual men. In this chapter we will use archive material from the 1950s only, when Hungarian homosexual men were prosecuted in unprecedented numbers (for more details about these court cases see Takács–Kuhar–P.Tóth 2017).

We also conducted in-depth interviews with 56 gay men during 2014 as part of a broader social-historical research project. Most of our interviewees were men over 60, self-identifying as gay, who had personal experience of the social consequences of homosexual behaviour under state-socialism. We recruited our interviewees through various community groups, by using social media advertisements and the help of LGBT NGOs. From the initially recruited interviewees we proceeded by contacting their personal network members, using a snowball method where that was possible.

The interviews lasted on average one and a half to two hours and were preceded by a short demographic questionnaire. In all cases, the interviewees were informed in advance about the research topic and the procedure, emphasizing that their participation in the research was voluntary and could be halted at any time. To ensure the anonymity of the participants, the audio recordings of the interviews were destroyed after they had been transcribed and each interviewee chose a pseudonym: this was the only way of identifying them in the research.

During the interviewing process, following the usual course of semi-structured interviewing, we mostly asked the interviewees open-ended questions along pre-defined themes. These included the following: self-identification as gay/homosexual or bisexual and the main factors influencing this process; coming out (or not coming out); family relationships, family of origin and long-term relationships; history of sexual relationships (including views and experiences of condom use and HIV infection); personal experiences related to homosexuality from the state/socialist period (including experiences of blackmail or other criminal or police-related offences); views and experiences of social discrimination and the rights of LGBT+ people; and future plans. Of the topics discussed in the interviews, we will now focus only on those that are relevant to the topic of the present study.

The interview texts were structurally coded, which also allowed a certain level of quantification in the processing of qualitative material: the different frequencies

of each code could indicate which themes were more individual, and which ones reflected the collective experiences of several interviewees. The results of a content analysis of structurally coded texts with a social interactionist focus are discussed in this chapter.

The average age of the men in our sample was 67 (the youngest was 55 and the oldest 82). Most of them (38) had a university or college degree, while 16 had a secondary education and two interviewees had completed vocation school. Almost all of them lived in Budapest (only one interviewee lived in a town and another one in a village), but 27 of them were born and raised in the countryside and two were originally from Transylvania (Romania). Most interviewees (40) were old-age pensioners, two were disabled pensioners, two were unemployed, one received a care allowance (for looking after his mother) and eleven were still active in the labour market. Based on subjective self-classification, 25 reported living in average financial circumstances, 16 said that they were better off than the average and nine said that they lived in worse than average circumstances. 21 interviewees identified as religious.

21 interviewees lived in long-term relationships: at the time of the interview, they were all living with a male partner and nine of them were in a registered partnership. At earlier stages in their lives, more than half of the interviewees had been in a relationship with a female partner for a shorter or longer period: 21 had been married (three of them twice), nine of these interviewees admitted that these were only nominal or fake marriages. Ten of those who had been married had children from a previous heterosexual relationship, while in an eleventh case a lesbian couple had asked a gay man to be the father of their child.

The (dis)integrative elements of our interviewees' lives

In the following, we will explore how our interviewees' narratives reflected the lack of systemic integration of gay people during the state-socialist period which could also make their interpersonal integration impossible (see: Kovách et al. 2012, Kovách 2017, Gerő et al. 2020, Huszár et al. 2020). We use the concepts of system integration, social integration and interpersonal integration in the sense defined by Kovách and his colleagues (Kovách 2017, Huszár et al. 2020), while also attempting to show how a theoretical framework that emerged from the study of the stratification of contemporary Hungarian society can be applied to the social historical context of an earlier period. [4]

4 The integration model developed by Kovách and his colleagues was developed in order to study the stratification of contemporary Hungarian society, so we could not use it in our social history research.

Cognitive isolation as a factor reinforcing disintegration

In the context of sexual self-definition, the development of a gay self-identity was hindered by the cognitive isolation that was common in relation to homosexuality in the examined period. For example, Vencel (60) described his situation in the following way: *"I didn't even know what* [homosexuality] *was. […] I was completely isolated […] My mother always thought that I had been seduced by someone. [Unfortunately] this was not the case. At least somebody should have seduced me! But nobody seduced me either. […] There was nothing. I was completely alone with this whole dilemma".* Cicisti (65) reported on similar experiences: *"When I was a kid, interestingly, I thought the word gay was the male equivalent of* [the female] *whore, so this shows how unaware I was of things. In a way, I envy the youth of today, that you don't need any personal* [touch] *in the world of the internet to bring this topic up, not to mention that there is not a week that in movies or on television this topic wouldn't come up in one way or another. At that time* [when I was young] *this* [topic] *was never mentioned".*

For our interviewees, traces of the *homosexual way of existence* (Bech 1997) could be identified only in an implicit way as reflected by literary or other artistic works. Bertalan (57) describing his experience reported: *"I was born into a family of intellectuals, our apartment was full of books, full of albums, art albums, and I remember that I liked the image of St. Sebastian and the statue of David […] and the Snake Slayer [a statue of a naked muscular man with a snake] very much, and there was a statue of that kind on public display in Budapest too. […] we didn't even have TV for a long time because my father was against TV, so I had no other option. There was no internet, there were no videos. I knew only one thing: that I liked boys […] today it's not an issue because you just type it into a search engine".* For Balázs (72), Tony Richardson's 1961 film A Taste of Honey, which was also shown in Hungary, became a defining experience: *"We didn't have a family library. When I was a student, the world opened up a bit and that's when I started looking for [more information on homosexuality]. […] My first memory is of A Taste of Honey. It was also shown as a theatre play* [in Hungary]*, but it was a very nice English film. It was in this film when* [homosexuality] *first appeared for me evidentially".* Misi (59) complained about how difficult it was for him as a young man to cope with the lack of homoerotic visual representations: *"Imagine that I once bought a book from a newsagent just because the cover had a tiny black and white photo of water polo players throwing a ball in the water. It was so hard to get any erotic material, it was impossible […] so I bought this book, and I flipped through it to see if this picture* [of the water polo players] *was in it, but there was nothing else in it, and it was quite expensive for my pocket money. This gives you an idea of the impossible situation a young gay man was in at the time".*

Scientific books played a prominent role in transmitting knowledge about homosexuality in the pre-internet era and before the spread of entertainment mass media. Valter (81), for example, recalled a defining negative book experience: *"when I was 16*

[in 1949] *My aunt saw that I was not courting any girls, I was just knitting, knitting, knitting, so she gave me a book to enlighten me. It was written by Dr. Forel, the title was »Die sexuelle Frage«. It was a well-known book, published in Hungarian. It is mainly about homosexuality. […] From this book I got the impression that* [homosexuality] *is a terrible mistake, because they are deviant beings who turn to their own sex. This book terribly condemned* [homosexuality]. *[…] It was the first time in my life that I encountered the word 'homosexual'. I had never heard it before. I had no idea what it was that made me like the* [male] *gym teacher […] It was in this book that I first read the word homosexual. Jesus Christ! Am I such a monster? This was very hard to digest".*

Ede (67) found some fascinating reading material in their home library with descriptions of homosexual cases, but the condemnatory tone of the book soon led him to the conclusion that he had to keep this topic a secret: *"I found a book at home about sexual deviance, and I read about homosexuality with great fondness. […] I was a child, in primary school* [late 1950s], *when I found this book on a shelf. I don't know how it could happen [that they had this book] in my rather conservative and prudish family. […] It was very exciting. I read it a lot. […]it had everything from necrophilia to all sorts of horrible things in it, but I wasn't interested in those, I just read the normal gay stuff. […] This book described* [homosexuality] *as a disease, a deviation and an aberration. It was a textbook published in the first half of the twentieth century. […] I'm sure that's what I was afraid of, that it shouldn't be told to anyone else. I couldn't discuss this topic with anybody in the world".*

Csillag (66) also reported that *"I suspected something was wrong with me from books"*, and that one particular book made him realize what the "problem" was: *"Once when I was in high school [in the mid-1960s] I bought a book called »Questions of Sex Life« and was reading it on the bus on the way home. I opened it by chance under the heading of The Aberrations of Sexuality and read about homosexuality, and then suddenly I realized that I was one because I liked men. […] There were these deviances listed like having sex with animals. It was also under the heading of these aberrations. It also came to my mind that in our village people used to refer to some men as a capon. He lived alone and he might also have been a homosexual, but that's not what they called him in the village. I remember it as if they had said capon. I just didn't understand the meaning of it as a child".*

At the same time, Bruno (64) had a great liberating experience with an English-language book, which offered freedom from cognitive blockage, especially because he could relate to its contents in a positive way: *"When I was a freshman at university, 19 years old,* [in 1969] *there was a foreign language bookshop opposite the university, and books from the West came in. I bought a book, »Homosexuality«, that was the title, and it was a serious monograph, and it was very sober and very clever for its time, but there was not a single pejorative word in it, it just* [listed] *the psychological reasons, the medical reasons, whether it could be cured or could not be cured, the criminal part, the police part, the legal part, and so on. The author argued gently that there was no*

reason to maintain the criminalization [of homosexuality]. *This came out in the early 1960s, when the debate was already starting in England, and in 1967 they decriminalized* [homosexuality]. *It was a great pleasure for me to read this at the time.* [I read it] *with great interest. There were case histories in it, I fell in love with them all: the young army officer and the architect and I don't know who, like a teenage girl falling in love with a D'Artagnan at 15".*

These reports on our interviewees' experiences highlighted that the socially available knowledge on homosexuality in Hungary was limited in quantity and content during the examined period. Other studies based on the experiences of lesbian interviewees have also shown similar results in relation to the representations of homosexuality available to them during state socialism, and the effects these representations had on them (see, for example, Borgos 2014, 2016). In most cases among our interviewees self-definition of being gay was not linked with any forms of public coming out – if the concept of coming out can make sense at all in the state-socialist context: in a society of *"isolated individuals who had lost their moral and cultural autonomy"* (Lázár 2006). Thus, cognitive isolation was often accompanied by emotional isolation in the sense that most of our interviewees did not know of any other gay men in the environment where they grew up. Later they often found that the men they met not only concealed their homosexual relationships but also advised others to do so. These experiences can illustrate how the lack of systemic integration also made integration at the (inter)personal level impossible.

János (71), for example, who *"never came out publicly in front of anyone"*, explained that *"I had a friend who said: remember one thing, you are not gay until you admit it. If they catch you having sex with a boy and you say you haven't done it, they can't prove it. I never admit to being gay. I'm free to come and go, I'm not afraid to meet people, I'm not afraid to talk to anybody, but I never admit that I'm gay"*. Ede (75) was advised decades earlier by a man, at least 20 years older than him, in a gay social gathering to *"always deny that you are gay. And that is exactly what I did, although I never ended up in a situation, either in the family or at work, where I was asked the question* [whether I am gay or not]. *I think they thought that I was [gay], but […] they never bothered me with it".*

These reports highlight that cognitive and emotional isolation were major barriers against our interviewees' developing a publicly recognizable gay self-identity. Since the recognition of their sexual orientation often coincided with the misrecognition of what it means to be gay, due to the limited (and distorted) information available to them, our interviewees often came to the conclusion that their sexual orientation was a norm-breaking deviation that should be somehow left behind or overcome, and certainly kept concealed. In other words, they were forced to choose concealment as a coping strategy for their social integration into a heteronormative society.

The heterosexual facade – an effort for inclusion

Looking back to the 1950s, the explanations and arguments that regularly appeared in the Budapest City Archives case files we examined showed the social expectation to maintain a "heterosexual facade", as the default option of social functioning was heteronormativity. These official and normative explanations also implied that public commitment to heterosexuality, especially through marriage and family formation, could somehow override private homosexual acts. For example, according to the case file of a 1958 court case, S.I., a 42-year-old cook, married with two children, met a young man in a bathhouse and invited him to his home: the young man *"waited outside the house while S.I. went to see if his wife was at home".* When it turned out that the wife was away at work, *"they went upstairs to S.I.'s apartment and […] they fornicated."* When imposing the sentence, the court considered the following factors: *"the accused is of working-class origin and working-class status. The court took into account that the defendant did not have a criminal record and his family status* [having] *two children, and found that […] because of his family status, there is no risk of re-offending"* (BFL, 1958).

We can also refer to the story of a MÁV [Hungarian Public Railways] worker, married with one child, who was first convicted of unnatural fornication in 1951, at the age of 40, when he received a suspended prison sentence. He was tried for a second time on charges of committing the offence of unnatural fornication again in 1954, at the age of 43. On that occasion, after an unsuccessful appeal, he was sentenced to four months' imprisonment: *"although he admitted his guilt and confessed to having committed the offence […] the motive put forward by the accused, namely that he wanted to create a reason for getting divorced from his wife by this* [homosexual] *act, is a nefarious motive and is therefore considered not as a mitigating but as an aggravating circumstance"* (BFL 1954). In 1958, the same defendant was tried again for *"unnatural fornication* [conducted] *in a toilet of the Western Railway Station"*, and received a six-month prison sentence in the first instance, which was later reduced to a fine of 600 forints (his monthly income at the time of the 1958 trial was 1200 forints), with the following explanation: *"The defendant himself is apparently struggling with this disease [of homosexuality], since for many years his first suspended sentence did not have to be enforced, because the probation period was effective. His second offence occurred years later, and now, after his third offence, he requested to be transferred to another workplace where the risk of temptation is much lower [than in the previous place]. The accused has been working in one place for 20 years, there were no objections raised to his work, his monthly income is relatively low, he supports his wife and daughter, thus the court of appeal found that the imposed fine was sufficient to have the necessary deterrent effect on the accused and also to serve as a general preventive effort"* (BFL 1958).

In the context of this latter judgment, we can observe the application of the legal approach that interpreted homosexual practices as symptoms of a disease, which may reflect the emergence of a pathologizing legal interpretation of homosexuality in the late 1950s in the Hungarian courts. In the earlier files we examined there were no pathologizing interpretations of homosexuality: rather, homosexual behaviour was presented as a socially undesirable "conduct" that could be overcome individually and moved in a socially desirable direction by marriage and family formation – and at least controlled by suspended prison sentences and/or fines imposed by the criminal courts. The shift in the direction of medicalization may have also contributed to changes in the social perception of homosexuals, which did not necessarily promote their social integration, but placed their dis-integration in a different context. The framing of exclusion changed: the essentializing medical explanations took away the edge that homosexuals were "intentional" criminals; in the eyes of society, they could now be seen as patients.

It is not a coincidence that the official justification of the 1961 Penal Code emphasized the biological roots and determination of homosexuality: *"Homosexuality is either an inborn sexual perversity rooted in a developmental disorder, or such an acquired anomaly that develops mainly within neurotic people as a result of some sort of sexual impression during childhood, adolescence or at a young age. According to medical observations even in the case of acquired homosexuality or those who wanted to free themselves* [from homosexuality], *the soundest therapy could hardly ever lead to the desired result. Homosexuality is a biological phenomenon and can therefore not be handled legally as a crime"* (OGyI 1961: 270).

Based on our previous research findings, we can also point to the significant role Hungarian psychiatric experts played in the 1961 decriminalization of homosexuality in Hungary. Members of the "Neurology Committee" of the Health Science Council made the first decisions leading to changes in the Criminal Code of 1961 so that it no longer penalised consensual homosexual acts between adult men (for more details, see Takács–P. Tóth 2016, 2021).

Thus, from the summer of 1962, it became legally possible to form and maintain homosexual relationships among adults as part of private life, but the previously mentioned social expectation to maintain a heterosexual facade continued to exist. In addition, the lack of protection of the boundaries of private life in this period may also have contributed greatly to the fact that fewer than half of our interviewees were able to lead some sort of gay life in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s. Others began building and maintaining their heterosexual facades towards society, either by marrying or by regularly going out and being seen in public with female partners. We had one interviewee who reported on another kind of solution: János (71) had *"a little detour" in his life when he was "a Catholic theologian for four and a half years"*, which came with the benefit that people around him thought that *"he must be unmarried because he is going to be a priest".*

Our formerly married interviewees' attitudes to marriage differed in many ways, but a common feature was that they looked back on their past marriages and saw them as a kind of forced solution, or at least as a sub-optimal outcome. Bruno (64),

for example, recalled his relationship with his wife with a certain self-critical melancholy: *"I knew I was gay, but I didn't practise. Partly out of cowardice, partly because hoping that it would go away. […] She was a very nice woman [my wife] and we loved each other very much. She had a good sense of humour, and we had a lot in common. I didn't really have to lie because there was nothing to lie about, except my dreams, of course, and my fantasies. And [there was my] guilty conscience. Because she seemed to tell me everything. About her previous relationships. […] She shared her secrets with me, but I didn't tell her that I also had a secret. This has hurt and disturbed me".*

Jonas (81) stressed that his religious beliefs also played a role in his marriage: *"I went to the priest and confessed* [my homosexuality] *to him, and he advised me that it would be best if I got married […] I was tormented by the question of why I could not be like the other* [non-homosexual] *men. Everybody was nagging me, why don't you get married, you're at that age, you're already 29, you're not going to have children. And this woman was so much in love with me, she loved me so much".*

Nine of our once-married respondents said that their marriage was not a real one; they entered only into a nominal marriage. István (75), for example, spoke of his "fake" marriage as a very positive experience, as it *"helped someone in Romania to come over and get Hungarian citizenship"*. He also spoke of the peace of mind that comes with being officially married as a particular advantage: *"It also played a part [in the decision of getting married] that I could say at work that I was married"*. For him, it was easy to reconcile being gay with being married: *"It was no problem because my wife was fully aware that I was gay before she married me, and we never lived together".*

Petrow (69) decided to enter into a fake marriage for similar reasons. This was necessary because *"a lot of people at work were very concerned about why I wasn't getting married"*. They stayed married for seven years and Petrow still remembers his wife positively: *"She was a very nice and intelligent woman, so I was lucky".*

The marriages of our once-married interviewees invariably ended in divorce, which then led to a new start of (sometimes openly gay) life. Towards the end of the 1980s, fewer and fewer of our interviewees felt it was worth investing too much energy in further reinforcing the heterosexual facade, which had previously seemed a vital strategy to many (and we could see that this strategy was reinforced by the examined court cases too). Instead of maintaining their heterosexual appearances, from the 1960s onward many tried to live their gayness as part of their everyday life. In addition to the narratives of our interviewees, these changes were also reflected by the preparations leading to the establishment of the first Hungarian homosexual association in the late 1980s (for more details, see Kurimay–Takács 2017).

Looking back at the decades preceding the political system change, in the period from the 1950s to the late 1980s there were still many opportunities to engage in homosexual behaviour. Changes in the legal framework in 1961 – and then in 1978 – tended to expand these opportunities in practice, at least regarding men. It should be noted, however, that legal emancipation is a still ongoing process (and as it turned

out, not necessarily a linear one either).[5] We already mentioned that the age of consent for heterosexual and homosexual relationships was equalized only in 2002. Same-sex couples have been able to enter into registered partnerships in Hungary since 1 July 2009, giving them rights similar to marriage.

Conclusion

In this chapter we focussed on two main themes in the story of how to live as a gay man during state socialism: cognitive – and consequently emotional – isolation and the maintenance of a heterosexual facade. The central question of our study, whether gay life was possible at all in Hungary under state socialism, can be answered with a definite yes, although the life of gays at that time was in many ways different from what we know as "gay life" today. The cognitive isolation of our interviewees, which made it difficult for them to conceive of homosexuality as a potentially relevant form of sexuality, meant that very little homosexuality and/or bisexuality related information reached them during the examined period – not only from Hungary, but also from other countries. This factor contributed significantly to the uncertainties with which they thought about their own sexuality.

The shaping of their emotional lives and partnership formations often reflected these insecurities in the sense that half of our interviewees reported on having had heterosexual experiences too. Many of these men had a significant heterosexual history, both in terms of the frequency of partners and sexual practices as well as the duration of the relationships. These interviewees explained that they had moved between different points of reference for self-identification several times in their lives, so they could not claim to be exclusively homosexual or heterosexual either; looking back over their lives to date, the homosexual and heterosexual categories could only be used to describe certain periods of their lives.

The general criminalization of "unnatural fornication" up to the summer of 1962, the subsequent decades of criminalization of certain specific aspects of homosexual acts (such as those conducted in a "scandalous manner") as well as institutional discrimination in relation to the age of consent and lack of marriage equality, had a long-term impact on people with same-sex attraction. In Hungary, from 1 July 1962, when the new state-socialist penal code entered into force, it was, at least in principle, possible to form and maintain homosexual relationships as part of private life. However, only a minority of our interviewees were able to make use of this possibility, due to the lacking development of private life as a concept and the lack of practical protection of private life. Most interviewees had developed a heterosexual facade towards society, often by entering into a (fake) marriage – or showing themselves with female partners.

5 About the recent Hungarian developments see, for example Takács–Fobear–Schmitsek 2022.

From the narratives of our interviewees, we could conclude that even the recognition of their sexual orientation was often a difficult task due to the lack of available social knowledge. The practical realization of homosexual behaviours was hindered by the legal environment and the closely related social stigma, as well as by the limited accessibility of private spaces: fear of being caught forced the majority of our interviewees to maintain a heterosexual facade for certain periods of time. However, we have also seen that, despite (or in combination with) all these barriers, they had emotional and sexual experiences during the examined period that they interpreted, at least in retrospect, at the time of interviewing, as part of their gay life histories.

There were many limitations of our study: a major one is related to our interview sample, consisting of mainly white middle-class cisgender men, living in Budapest. When interpreting their narratives, it is important to take into account the characteristics of their social status, which in many ways can be considered privileged. However, despite the limitations, we have been able to make use of the opportunities offered by our archive research and qualitative interviewing. The stories unfolding from the court case files and the interviewees' narratives have contributed to a more complete picture of the histories of emotions, private lives and sexualities in the state-socialist period.

On the basis of our findings, we can see gay men as members of a dis-integrated minority group during the examined period. As a result of social repression and lack of systemic integration, many of them were forced to conceal their sexual orientation. Cognitive isolation, resulting from systemic oppression, led to the impossibility of interpersonal integration in many cases. In order to better integrate into the Hungarian society of that time, they typically maintained a heterosexual facade. In sum, it can be concluded that during the state-socialist era, gays were a disintegrated minority group, and in order to be integrated, they were often forced to choose secrecy, hide their sexual orientation and/or lead a double life as coping strategies.

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"The most important thing we can do for our nationality today"

Some issues of personal amends for the Germans in Hungary (1989–1992)

Ágnes Tóth

In times of political regime change, the need to confront the past becomes particularly sharp and multiplies. Those groups and members of society who suffered personal persecution, discrimination and pecuniary loss on the basis of laws that were largely valid at the time of their perpetration in the preceding decades but were created specifically in the interests of political power, demand recognition of these violations. Thus, an important feature of any political regime change is the way in which society and the newly forming political forces/parties relate to the actions of the political authorities in the past decades and the reparations that those who have suffered wrongdoing receive.

Previous studies of the claims settlement process in Hungary in the 1990s have examined the process in terms of the aspirations of political parties and the changes in their positions, and contextualised the legislation enacted (Petri 1998, Noszkó-Horváth 2016, Noszkó-Horváth 2018). So far, barely noticeable attention has been paid to the opinions and aspirations of the various groups concerned in relation to the compensation process, and to the opportunities for the group(s) to assert their interests. The social cost of the violations suffered, the impact on the groups concerned and on the lives of individuals has hardly been addressed in research carried out so far. However, the documents attached to the compensation applications (life stories, photographs, correspondence, other records) reveal a wealth of stories, which, in addition to the personal survival strategies and struggles, also reveal the existential, psychological and physical effects of the violation of rights that affect generations.

In my study, I discuss the position of the German community in Hungary on personal amends, the activities of the National Association of the Hungarian Germans in this regard, and the efforts of the community to include the impairment of rights suffered historically in the community's memory.[1]

1 I will not go into details about the legal process of personal compensation, the changing posi-

The end of World War II and the half decade that followed was one of the most tragic periods in the history of the German minority in Hungary. Between December 1944 and the end of January 1945, the Soviet army, with the help of the Hungarian administration, deported some 32,000 people to the Soviet Union for 'reparational public work'. From the spring of 1945, the Hungarian government also subjected members of the community to a number of rights-restrictive measures based on the principle of collective guilt – restrictions on civil rights (deprivation of citizenship and voting rights, designation of forced settlement), confiscation of property (complete confiscation of the Volksbund members' estates, confiscation of their housing), internment. Between January 1946 and June 1948, 220,000 ethnic Germans were resettled in Germany with the approval of the great powers (Fehér 1988, Tóth 1993, Tóth 2008). Although the equal citizenship rights of the members of the community who remained in Hungary were enshrined in the Council of Ministers Decree 84/1950, the stigmatization of members of the German nationality as collective criminals was maintained by the state power until the late 1960s. It was reflected in many areas of everyday life: employment, redress of the previous impairment of rights, use of language, distribution of development funds, and social advancement (Tóth 2020, Schlachta 2020). As a result of the process outlined above, members of the German community – both displaced and remaining residents – lost the basis of their existential being, and the disruption of the families tore apart those networks of bonds and solidarity within the community that had previously functioned well. At the same time, the state's taboo on the traumas of the war and the collective punishment prevented the events from being absorbed and processed in the community, family and in personal memory. This had a profound impact not only on the life potentials of those who suffered a legal disadvantage, but also on those of the second and third generations. Therefore, on the eve of the regime change, the German minority community sought immediate and full recognition of the legal disadvantages it had suffered in previous decades.

In Hungary, the compensation process began in the summer of 1988 with the drafting of a law on the rehabilitation of all people who had suffered persecution for political reasons, mainly those convicted in 1956, except for common law criminals. In response to social pressure, the political leadership – the Political Committee and the Central Committee of the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party – in January-February 1989 authorized a review of the criminal trials for crimes committed between December 1945 and the end of 1962, and allowed the establishment of a commission of historians and lawyers to ready the process. Following this political authorisation,

tions of the government and the political parties. I will also only mention the legal regulation where it's necessary. Due to the lack of documents, I cannot present the debates within the Social Committee of the National Office for Compensation and Reparations. Primarily, I rely on the records of the Democratic Association of Germans in Hungary, the press and other personal sources in the course of writing this study.

the party-state structures began to formulate the principles of a future reparation process, and at the same time, as immediate reparation, to settle the employment and social security status of certain groups who had suffered legal disadvantage, and to provide the moral rehabilitation of the groups concerned, as laid down in parliamentary and government decisions(Petri 1998: 24–26).

At the start, there was no consensus among those in political power, the newly formed political parties and society itself on the violations suffered by different sectors of society between 1945 and 1989, what should be considered as amends, why and to what extent; and what should be the principles of this process. In this context, the state's actions in the first months were influenced by the size of the groups affected and the strength of the political pressure exerted by their organization (Historical Justice Commission, Recsk Association). From the spring of 1990, following the establishment of a democratically elected parliament, the political struggle among the parties shaped the political process. The consequence of this was that compensation of the social groups that had suffered the same or similar rights violations was not provided at the same time and in the same way. The groups further down the reparation process experienced the devaluation, negation and repeated disregard of what they had suffered. This process created tensions among the groups that had suffered the same injury and triggered a competition for having their sufferings recognized.

At the end of the 1980s, the leadership of the Association of Germans in Hungary (German Association) had to face some extraordinary challenges. It had to steer and coordinate the development of the new, democratic organizational structure of the German Federation bottom up, and to strengthen its own legitimacy through elections. In formulating the long-term goals of the German minority, it had to take into account the different interests and aspirations within the community. At the same time, it had to become an equal negotiating partner with the political authorities and the newly forming parties in order to ensure that the interests of the German minority were channelled into the process of the regime change. During the period under review, the development of the principles and legal regulation of the reparations and the drafting of the Minority Act were of particular importance for the German minority.

Since the German minority had suffered the most deprivation and restriction of their rights between the end of 1944 and 1949, it was considered offensive that the reparation process had not begun with the redress of the rights violations that had occurred then, but instead with the rehabilitation of those wrongfully convicted in connection with the events of 1956. The community was particularly sensitive to the fact that the legislator had first settled only the issues relating to the employment and social security status of people detained in police custody between January 1949 and December 1953 (Decree No 72/1989 /4 July 1989/ of the Ministry of Justice). At the same time, it had not settled the pension issues of those people of German nationality who had been deported, in fact interned, to the Soviet Union for forced labour at the turn of 1944/1945.

In the spring and summer of 1989, the leadership of the Association of Germans in Hungary was urged by several members of the community to act in order to 'fulfil our legitimate claim'.[2]

Above all, the letter writers demanded that the state and the majority of society had to acknowledge the violation of rights suffered, that it had to be judged in the same way as other social groups, and that the taboo on what had happened had to be dissolved. They would form their demand for financial amends once that had been done. They pointed out the negative existential, psychological and mental effects of a violation of rights that can last for generations, and often expressed their perplexity – who is responsible, from whom they can expect help – and their agonising uncertainty about where to turn.

From the spring and summer of 1989 and onwards, the Association's leadership was intensively involved with both government agencies and the community on issues related to personal compensation. It unsuccessfully advocated to the political authorities the principle that the legislator should compensate at the same time and in the same way for the same or similar impairments committed between 1945 and 1989. However, it took action against discrimination in all cases. Decree No 72/1989 (4 July 1989) of the Council of Ministers, which regulated the employment and social security status of people detained by the police authorities between 1949 and 1953, only concerned people of German origin who had been displaced from their original place of residence during the construction of the southern border zone. Therefore, in the days following the publication of the decree, the German Federation demanded that the employment and social security status of those who had been deported to the Soviet Union at the turn of 1944/45 and interned in Tiszalök after the war should also be settled. In parallel with the negotiations with the Ministry of the Interior and the Ministry of Justice, it also assessed the numbers of people involved. In the absence of statistics and research, the number of displaced people was estimated at 55,000-60,000. It was assumed that 12,000–15,000 of them were still alive. The number of people entitled to their spouse's benefits was estimated at around 5,000.[3] In order to better inform the community and to facilitate the day-to-day operational work on amends, a rehabilitation committee was set up and a local network was established. In many municipalities, a junior volunteer coordinated contact between the people concerned and the Association's management, passed on information on what had to be done and helped to fill in forms.

2 Dr György Such had already demanded compensation for the Germans in a letter to the readers at the beginning of the year. See *Hitel*, 15/02/1989: 25. Many people were encouraged by his speech and appealed to the leadership of the German Association.
György Such also objected in a letter to the President of the Parliament, Mátyás Szűrös, on 11 May 1989, MNL OL XXVIII-I-1 b. 38

3 Circural of the Presidency of the Germans in Hungary (13/07/1989) MNL OL XXVIII-I-1, b. 38
According to the latest research results, 32,000 people were taken from Hungary to the Soviet Union for forced labour. (Márkus, 2020)

In a certain sense, a turning point was the publication of Decree No 104/1989 (X.4.) of the Council of Ministers. The legislation extended the scope of Decree No 72/1989 of the Council of Ministers to the following: people who were interned between 1945 and 1948, people who were restricted from their place of residence or from certain parts of the country between 1945 and 1953 and placed under the supervision of the police authorities (displaced people), people deported to the Soviet Union for work in order to serve part or all of their sentence imposed by the Soviet military court, and people who were sent to a temporary camp after their return from the Soviet Union. If the conditions laid down in the decree were met, the time spent in deportation or internment was to be included in the period of service of these people, and they became entitled to a pension supplement of HUF 500. Taking into account the previous decision4 of the Council of Ministers, the legislator excluded from the group of people who were entitled to this benefit those who had been convicted of war crimes and crimes against humanity, those whose internment was ordered by Prime Ministerial Decree No 302/1945 on the detention of German citizens by the police, or those who were interned because they had held a leading position in an organization referred to in Prime Ministerial Decree No 3820/1945 (Hitlerist, Volksbundist, Fascist, Arrow Cross, etc.) or were displaced as a member of the family of such a person. It also excluded people interned for public offences and those who had been expelled from their place of residence on the grounds of the above.

The legislation was detrimental to the German minority in two ways. The Minister of Justice, Kálmán Kulcsár, who proposed the decree, justified the detention of these people, including those who had served in the SS, by the police authorities and the exclusion of these people from legal redress by arguing that their internment was based on the Armistice Treaty, an international provision. It ignored the fact that many of the interned people had lost their Hungarian citizenship precisely because the Hungarian state had passed them over to the German army in 1944. The exclusion of people who had been classified by the committees set up by Prime Ministerial Decree No 3820/1945 in the summer of 1945 as the leader of a Hitlerian organisation or a member of that person's family was also a matter of concern. These commissions, which were not courts of law but classified the political attitude of the German nationals in Hungary, did not have to provide evidence to support the classification of the person concerned. Just as the people concerned could not appeal against their classification, they had no legal redress. However, the proposer argued that the committees were composed of representatives of the coalition parties, which reduced the possibility of bias in the decision. These points in the legislation reflected the former one-party state reasoning and practice that the state interest took precedence over fundamental human rights, i.e., not to deprive anyone of their liberty without a court ruling.

4 Decree No 3264/1989 (21/09/1989) of the Council of Ministers on settling the adverse consequences of certain measures limiting personal freedom. (Mikó 2017)

The leadership of the German Federation was not involved in the drafting of Decree No 104/1989 of the Council of Ministers. The Federation's activities were focused on making it easier for elderly people who were unfamiliar with the maze of bureaucratic procedures. Following the publication of the decree, the German Association, in cooperation with the Ministry of Interior, sent a data sheet to the more than 5,000 people who had already registered their claims during the summer. In addition, the community was also informed through the national press – Neue Zeitung and Unserer Bildschirm, the latter is the German section of Radio Pécs.

In the following weeks, many members of the German community voiced their dissatisfaction with the government's actions and demanded clearer and stronger support from the leaders of the German Association. In addition to the inconsistencies in the principle and content of the decree, the inconsistent procedures of the bureaucratic apparatus involved in its implementation were also strongly criticised. It was appalling that there were some people whose years of service in the Soviet labour camps had already been taken into account as service for determining their pensions and were thus unable to receive any supplement to their pensions. Even though the person concerned had had no income for these years, the amount of their pension was minimally affected. This passage of the regulation was particularly damaging to those women who could only work part-time due to their weakened health conditions caused by their forced labour, childcare and limited job opportunities in the villages, and were therefore only able to receive a very low pension.

Mrs Mátyás Guth returned home ill from the Soviet Union in July 1948. Her father died with her in the camp, and her husband and brother were killed at the front. Their house was confiscated, and her mother and daughter were deported to the Soviet occupation zone of Germany. She was a domestic servant in Szekszárd in exchange for food and housing for two years. In 1950, she took a job at the State farm in Hőgyész, as a so-called permanent worker, to get rations, firewood and corn. In that year she had her mother and daughter brought home from the German Democratic Republic. Her mother became seriously ill and needed nursing care, so she had to give up her two-shift job in 1967. *'So I retired in 1977, after 32 years of work, and I also spent three years underground in a mine in the Soviet Union. From such a forced situation my first pension was HUF 1,187. This amount is still the minimum today: HUF 3,640'.*[5]

The applicants support their criticisms of the regulation by presenting their entire life stories and making it clear that the deportations did not cause them legal infringement at a particular stage of their lives only, but that they have suffered its effect throughout their lives.

'I have several illnesses regarding my heart, high blood pressure, and my legs. I can hardly walk, I've been walking with a cane for 13 years, I've been diabetic for three years, I'm very badly ill, so I couldn't work in the state farm or keep up with the brigade. In 1970 we came to live in Kaposvár. It was difficult to get a job here, but I finally could work for 6 years. Then, I became a pensioner due to my health conditions at the age of 53. For the pension settlement I collected 10-12 years of certified service, but only two of them were counted in the service, so I don't know which years were counted in the pension and which ones were not, because only 10 years were counted together with the years worked, so I only get a little of pension, my current pension is HUF 3,840'.[6]

The pension supplement of HUF 500 granted by Decree No 104/1989 of the Council of Ministers was therefore significantly higher than the amounts already established for the period of service in the Soviet Union. Those who did not previously take advantage of crediting those years spent in the Soviet Union typically did so for two reasons. Firstly, they had not kept or had destroyed the certificate that they had received in the reception camp in Debrecen. The political authorities concealed the deportations and expected the same of those who had suffered them. Thus, until the regime change, many people did not even talk about what they had experienced, even within the circle of their immediate family. Even at an official occasion such as retirement, the fact was kept in silence. There was outrage that the worst-off, who were unable to work because of their illness or disability caused by their forced labour and thus unable to accumulate the service time needed for the retirement pension, were also denied the support.

The leadership of the German Association was forced into action by a number of circumstances. On the one hand, Decree No 104/1989 of the Council of Ministers did not clarify the situation of the people of German nationality deported to the Soviet Union, nor did it provide a solution or comfort for the individuals. In fact, as the opinions quoted above reflect, it generated tensions within the community. On the other hand, as there was no consultation with the German Association, as the representative of the community, it became clear that the government did not consider the leadership of the organization as a negotiating partner. This recognition as a negotiating partner was important because the parliamentary debate on the principle of compensation for the harm suffered by displaced and interned people had just begun. The Secretary General of the Federation had also only learnt about this from the press. It was therefore feared that the interests of the German minority would be marginalised in this process too. Therefore, Géza Hambuch appealed to the Speaker of the Parliament – Mátyás Szűrös and his successor István Fodor – and asked that the German minority should be named among the deported (interned) people, because these people had suffered persecution on account of their nationality. On behalf of the community, he asked for moral and financial compensation for those affected.[7]

5 Mrs Mátyás Guth's application (27/11/1989) MNL OL XXVIII-I-1, b. 46

6 Remembrance and letter of Mrs József Hollán to the German Association (10/1989) MNL OL XXVIII-I-1, b. 37

7 Letter from Géza Hambuch to Mátyás Szűrös (16/10/1989) MNL OL XXVIII-I-1, b. 38 Parliamentary Resolution 20/1989 (XI.1.) declared that the deportations and interments were to a considerable extent the result of faulty political practices, and therefore on behalf of the Hungarian society it apologised to the victims, but it did not specifically mention the German minority.

The leadership of the Association called a meeting on 24 February 1990, partly to gather opinions within the community and partly to strengthen its negotiating position with the government. The meeting was attended by 170 elderly people (aged 65–75) from more than 100 municipalities, who, in addition to recalling their experiences, voiced their opinions and demands regarding the violation of their rights. Many expressed their views in writing. In these recollections, the people concerned reacted to the current political developments in addition to sharing their life stories.

The stakeholders, both those who participated in the meeting and those who expressed their views in writing, expressed their dissatisfaction and disappointment and called for more vigorous action from the German Federation. It was considered unjust that the violations of rights suffered by the German community based on the principle of collective guilt were marginal, if they were visible at all, in the process of political, moral and legal rehabilitation. They criticised the fact that, while the recognition of the rights suffered by other social groups was a matter of course, the German nationality had to battle for recognition time and again. The anomalies in the implementation of Decree No 104/1989 of the Council of Ministers were also highlighted.[8]

'What is very insulting is that the women and girls who also worked for 3–5 years in the coal mines have no pension years, so they have no independent pension. They don't get a penny. I don't know, what the honoured Council of Ministers think, that these women have spent their years with their arms folded? […] We were forced to join the collective farms. The men were the members. I was employed as a bricklayer. I earned HUF 16 per work unit. I went because they took my horse, cow, and equipment. There was no other way out. The wives were forced to take on a so-called "tercia".[9] They had to hoe, thin the carrots, shuck the maize and take care of the housework and the family at home. The co-operative did not take into account that the wives should be included as members […] so that they would not have to give them a backyard and pay the social security contributions. This is the reason why they were left without an independent pension'.[10]

Those who talked about their recollections, expressed their opinions, refused to be stigmatized and transcended the former taboo, voiced sharp criticism of those – who 'did this to us' – behind the former political power, and who by salvaging their positions, were also the beneficiaries of the regime change. At the same time, they expressed disappointment at the inconsistent stance of the newly formed parties on amends and their dismissive attitude towards the demands of the German minority.

Although the discussion focused on the contradictions in principles and the inconsistencies in the practical implementation of Decree No 104/1989 of the Council

8 Documents of the meeting on 24 February 1990

9 Tercia meant that one-third of the crop went to the farmer, and the rest, two-thirds, belonged to the collective farm while the land was cultivated by the farmer.

10 Letter of Mihály Schiffert to the Association of Germans in Hungary (03/02/1990) MNL OL XXVIII-I-1, b. 48

of Ministers, the stakeholders clearly expressed their demand for moral and material compensation.

'We do not ask for charity. […] The leadership back then put us at the mercy of the occupying power, so-called liberators. It is regrettable that today's leadership is still unwilling to acknowledge and redress our legitimate grievances. […] This shameful attitude is unacceptable that we cannot ask the Hungarian state for compensation because the Hungarian state is not responsible for the damage caused by a foreign power. This can only be described as postponing our legitimate claim at the highest level'.[11]

In the Resolution adopted at the meeting, referring to the above-mentioned facts, they deemed Decree No 104/1989 of the Council of Ministers as unacceptable, again criticising the fact that Parliamentary Resolution No 20/1989 did not mention the German minority. They also emphasised that the German nationalities had been deported on the basis of an agreement between the Soviet military authorities and the Hungarian government, in the context of 'actions supported by the local authorities'. They therefore requested Parliament acknowledge the wrong political decisions that were made earlier, to express its condolences to the relatives of the deceased and 'in the spirit of humanity, in proportion to the damage suffered, and according to the possibilities of the country' to treat the Germans in the same way as other Hungarian citizens. It was considered indispensable that all deportees should receive the HUF 500 pension supplement, regardless of whether they had already received any benefit. The same applied to those who did not have a pension of their own or a widow's one.[12] They also demanded that all claimants, including the legal heirs of those who had died in the meantime, should receive financial compensation in proportion to the time they had spent in deportation.[13]

In a letter to Prime Minister Miklós Németh, they requested that the government present a proposal to Parliament on 14 March 1990, which would include the needs of the German community. We *'believe that seeing the transformation taking place in the country, we can ask based on our rights and demand: […] the Parliament should declare that the collective political, constitutional and civil condemnation of the Germans in Hungary after the Second World War was a grave crime and a violation of fundamental human rights; at the same time, declare the need for their compensation. We are convinced […] that the Hungarian state will only be able to provide lasting and truly meaningful assistance to the Hungarians living beyond its borders if it objectively assesses the past of the German minority in Hungary and of course other minorities, and if it does this responsibly and in fact ensures the conditions for our survival as a*

11 Letter of Pál Brandt to the Association of Germans in Hungary (29/01/1990) MNL OL XVI-II-I-1, b. 37

12 Resolution on the rehabilitation of Hungarian Germans deported to the Soviet Union for forced labour (24/02/1990) MNL OL XXVIII-I-1, b. 38

13 Resolution on the rehabilitation of Hungarian Germans deported to the Soviet Union for forced labour (24/02/1990) MNL OL XXVIII-I-1, b. 38

nationality and state-creating factor – beyond words – in addition to the constitutional guarantees'.[14]

In response to the community's discontent and clear support for change, the communication of the leadership of the German Association changed in early 1990. Even the Resolution was more assertive than before and expressed the need for rehabilitation and reparation for the community as a demand rather than a request. The publication of the Resolution in the press made explicit the grievances of the German minority – like those of Recsk or the 1956 convicts – in the competition for recognition on an equal footing with those of other social groups. The very act of making these claims public to decision-makers was a form of pressure. This was reinforced by the invitation of representatives of German-speaking countries to the meeting. In this way, the German Association succeeded in making the contemporary problems of Germans in Hungary an issue in international and bilateral relations. The letter to the Prime Minister confronted the state leaders with the double standards that had characterised the nationality policy of the Hungarian governments since Trianon, and due to which they could not represent the interests of Hungarians living beyond their borders effectively and credibly. It is also important that the process of regime change was a time of setting expectations for nationality policy and confronting state actors with their unprincipled or insufficiently principled decisions. The stronger stance and the protest of the German nationality also contributed to the fact that Decree No 65/1990 (28.III.1990) of the Council of Ministers increased by HUF 500 the pensions of those former forced labourers whose time spent under certain measures restricting personal freedom had already been counted as service time. In addition, this amount was also paid to those who had not received any pension-like benefit previously.

Parliament also adopted two resolutions on the political rehabilitation of the German minority: (1) Parliamentary Resolution No 35/1990 on the redress of collective grievances of the German minority in Hungary, and (2) Parliamentary Resolution No 36/1990 on the redress of grievances of Hungarian citizens deported to the Soviet Union for reparation work and convicted by Soviet courts and rehabilitated in the meantime for lack of criminal offence. Parliament recorded in these resolutions the fact of the violation and declared that *'[…] the deportation of the Germans in Hungary from 1944 and onwards and their subsequent expulsion was a gross violation of human rights and an unjust procedure. The people concerned suffered innocently because of their nationality'.*[15]

> *'The Parliament distances itself from such methods of law-breaking, and on behalf of the Hungarian society, it apologises to the victims. It commits itself to create guarantees that will prevent Hungarian citizens from being sentenced and deported by a foreign state in a similar manner at any time in the future'.*[16]

The emergence of the German Association accelerated the adoption of the resolutions, but the assessment of the events of the past and the formulation of the dissociation indicate that Parliament still did not acknowledge the role of the former Hungarian government in the events, and clearly shifted responsibility to the 'foreign state'.[17]

Although the claim for personal reparations for the persecuted was accepted by the previous Parliament in its last session, the method, the procedure and the amount of compensation were not clarified for more than two years. It was only Act No XXXII of 1992 that opened the way for those who were deprived of their lives and freedom as victims of various dictatorships in the half century between March 1939 and 23 October 1989 to claim compensation. The compensation for the loss of life was HUF 1,000,000. In this case, the victim's relatives were entitled to compensation only if there was no doubt as to the deliberate role of the Hungarian authorities. Regarding the wrongful deprivation of liberty, the compensation was payable only for violation exceeding 30 days. Beneficiaries living in Hungary could choose to receive compensation in the form of a compensation voucher or an annuity, depending on the age of the person concerned and the length of the deprivation of liberty. Those living abroad could only receive a compensation voucher. Considering the age of the recipients and the low amount, payment was made in a lump sum.

The widely divergent views of the different parties on certain issues – the numbers of people concerned, the level of compensation for certain groups of victims, the procedural rules – explain the long delay in the submission of the draft law. The legislator sought to ensure consensus and a proper resolution of the controversial issues by amending the law, largely on the basis of the resolutions by the Constitutional Court.[18]

For the German community, the law provided a largely reassuring settlement for the personal compensation of those concerned. However, it did not succeed in having the judgments annulled of Volksbund members who had been declared war criminals by the People's Courts under Act VII of 1945, or of people who had become

14 Letter from Géza Hambuch, Secretary General of the Association of Hungarian Germans to the Prime Minister Miklós Németh (28/02/1990) MNL OL XXVIII-I-1, b. 38

15 Parliamentary resolution No 35/1990 (III. 28.) on the redress of collective grievances of the German minority in Hungary., (WWW Document). URL https://mkogy.jogtar.hu/?page=-show&docid=990h0035.OGY (accessed: 20/10/2021)

16 Parliamentary Resolution No 36/1990. (III. 28.) on the redress of grievances of Hungarian citizens deported to the Soviet Union for reparation work, and of Hungarian citizens convicted by the courts of the Soviet Union and rehabilitated in the meantime for lack of criminal offence., (WWW Document). URL https://mkogy.jogtar.hu/?page=show&docid=990h0036.OGY (accessed: 20/10/2021)

17 Géza Hambuch sent a letter to the delegates of the congress informing them of the results achieved (20/03/1990) MNL OL XXVIII-I-1, b. 38

18 Please also see:
Act LII of 1992 (VII.21.) on National Care, Act XII of 1994 and Act XXIX of 1997, which amended the original Act on Compensation for those unjustly deprived of their life and liberty for political reasons, Constitutional Court decisions 1/1995 and 22/1996.
The rules for the implementation of the Act were laid down in the Government Decree No 111/1992 (VII.1.).

German soldiers by enforced SS military conscription and were subsequently convicted of war crimes. Thus, these people had to first obtain the annulment of their court judgments by means of a retrial, and only then could they submit a claim for compensation. The designation of forced settlement in Hungary and moving in with other families could only be considered as deprivation of liberty until the cancellation of the prohibition to leave the place of residence (Decree No 4247/1949 (7.X.) of the Council of Ministers). However, some of these people were not allowed to return to their original place of residence thereafter either. Compensation was not paid for the time spent in Western captivity, nor for those who had served in the Hungarian Defence Forces between 1951 and 1956, but the aforementioned group were able to receive a pension supplement.

In summary, on the eve of the regime change, the leadership of the Association of the Germans in Hungarian and the community itself faced numerous challenges. First and foremost, a grassroots, democratic, national organization had to be established, which was not only committed to but capable of representing the interests of the German minority. The legitimate leadership, empowered by the membership, had to become both an equal negotiating partner for the old-new power elite and for promoting the needs of the community to the decision-making process. In the first half of the 1990s, the way in which their interests and past grievances were argued in the compensational process was of crucial importance. The leadership of the Association took the lead in this fight for moral, political and material recognition. Without disputing the legitimate claims of other social groups to reparations, it argued for recognition of its own group at the same time and in the same way. The position of the leadership of the Association was made more difficult by the fact that it was not seen as an equal negotiating partner by those in political power and was often informed of legislation affecting the community after the fact, and its requests and arguments were not considered. The fact that the legislator did not compensate the German minority for similar grievances at the same time and in the same way as other social groups, naturally led to dissatisfaction among the members of the community. Moreover, it prompted them to break out of their role as second-class citizens. The distinction was also seen as offensive because the people with German nationality had suffered several rights violations at the same time – deportation, loss of property, restriction of civil rights, internment, and deportation – under the principle of collective guilt. The impact of these on an individual and on a family was also multiplied. Another difference in the situation of the German minority was that they suffered a significant part of the violations because of their nationality. Thus, the impact of these events had a decisive effect on their identity, in addition to their existential and legal status. The leadership of the German Association, in addition to its active participation in the legislative process, played a decisive role in the commemoration of the grievances suffered by the community. Those who wrote about their own sufferings and stories of their own experiences transgressed and undid

decades of internal and external taboos. The freedom of remembrance and facing what happened was somehow liberating, even if it was painful. It strengthened the sense of community belonging and allowed us to see the impact of what happened in ways that shaped the lives of several generations.

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II

Social integration, & social stratification

Elite change and division

Pathways to the Hungarian cultural elite before and after 2010[1]

Luca Kristóf

There is broad agreement in Hungarian social science that the Orbán governments that came to power in 2010 and have been in power since then have sought to replace not only the political but also the economic and the cultural elite on a large scale. The change of the perceived leftist majority in the elite was a declared intention of a political regime that was set up for stability and an unprecedented length of government. A good part of the economic elite had already sided with Fidesz in the 2000s (Kovách 2011a), and those who had not were later forced to accept at least the primacy of the political elite (Scheiring 2020). In the case of the cultural elite, a permanent culture war could be observed in the last decades and the situation in the last few years only worsened.

Viktor Orbán had already foreseen the intention of cultural elite change in his famous 2009 speech in Kötcse, and his governments and the various cultural policy officials he appointed later implemented a number of cultural policy measures to promote elite change. In the light of all this, it is perhaps surprising that, although there have been numerous analyses and case studies on the subject (Kristóf 2021, 2017), no one has yet attempted to demonstrate, using quantitative, statistical methods, how successful the elite replacement has been. If we look not at individual leadership positions but at the cultural elite as a whole, has the cultural elite changed in terms of its composition, socio-demographic characteristics and political attitudes? This paper explores this question as a modest contribution to the great work done by Imre Kovách and his research team over the last decade to better understand why our semi-authoritarian political system is so stable and integrative, in the context of research on the integration of Hungarian society.

1 The Hungarian version of this paper was published as a book chapter in Kristóf, Luca: Kultúrcsaták. Kulturális elit és politika a mai Magyarországon. Budapest: Gondolat Kiadó, 2021

Data and methods

This study is based on a survey among the members of the Hungarian cultural elite (N=411) conducted in 2018. The survey was the fifth wave of elite surveys conducted in the Centre for Social Sciences since 1993, led by Imre Kovách (Kovách 2011b, Szelényi et al. 1995).

In the survey, the elite was operationalised broadly as actors who are influential in the process of cultural production; either because of their strategic position, cultural reputation, or market success. Hence, a person could be included in the elite sample in different ways.

47 per cent of the sample was part of the *positional elite.* This is the most accepted way to operationalise the elite of a social sector (Hoffmann-Lange 2017). The *leaders* of universities, scientific and cultural institutions (museums, theatres, libraries, research institutes etc.), and the media were included in the positional sample. *Members* of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, and the two (left-liberal and right-wing) Academies of Arts were also included in the positional sample, because these are the most prestigious institutions in the cultural field. Membership of these academies is a demonstration of a long scientific or artistic career and provides a considerable life-annuity, and new members are elected by the existing ones.

Positional sampling is well supplemented with *reputational* sampling in elite studies (Hoffmann-Lange 2017), especially in the cultural field, where elite membership is often based on formal and informal reputation. Thus, 44 per cent of our sample was included according to two different forms of reputational criteria. First, individuals' reputation was measured by their *awards:* the living recipients of the highest cultural state awards were included on our list. Second, members of the cultural elite participating in the survey were asked to nominate a maximum of five persons they considered as *'the greatest figures of contemporary Hungarian culture'.* The most often nominated individuals, if they had not been in the sample already, were also included in the sample of the Hungarian cultural elites (snowball sampling, five per cent) and could nominate the five greatest actors of the cultural elite as well. Finally, a small proportion of bestselling authors and music performers were also included in the cultural elite sample, based on the criteria of market success (9 per cent) (Table 1).

The composition of the cultural elite in terms of socio-demographic variables is the following: the majority are very highly educated, middle-aged males, Budapesters overrepresented. They mostly come from white collar families and are alumni of elite Budapest universities (Table 2).

Table 1
Composition of the cultural elite sample

Elite group	N
Leaders of cultural institutions and the media	148
Members of academies	84
Recipients of cultural awards	149
Invited by votes of elite members (reputational elite)	50
Market elite	42
Total	458

Table 2
Basic socio-demographic characteristics of the Hungarian cultural elite

Women	19%
Average age	64 years
Place of birth: Budapest	54%
Share of graduates	93%
Fathers with a white collar occupation	66%
Alumni of Budapest elite universities	50%

Results

Time of entry and sense of belonging to the elite

Elite members were asked whether they felt part of the elite. 70% of them answered yes to this question, which is high compared with other (political, economic) elite groups. The least likely to feel part of the elite were media executives (less than half), and the most likely were members of academies of science and arts and the reputational elite (more than 80 per cent).

A relevant question for my research question on elite exchange is when elite members became elite and how long they have been considered members of the elite. My own research classification was based on the criteria for inclusion in the sample (when the award was given, when the first institutional leader position was reached, etc.). On this basis, I distinguished between incumbent elite members, who were already considered members of the elite before 2010, and 'newcomers', who joined the elite in 2010 or after (Table 3).

There were significant differences in the proportion of 'newcomers' between the different groups of elites, both in terms of researcher classification and elite members' own perceptions. As well as by age, the leaders and the market elite are differed from the members of the academies, award winners and the reputational elite. The former two groups have a much higher proportion of those who joined the elite after 2010.

Table 3
Proportion of 'newcomers' by researcher classification and by elite members' own perceptions

Elite group	Percentage of newcomers to the elite in 2010 or later (%)	
	Researcher classification	Members' own opinion
Leaders	47	27
Members of academies	15	10
Recipients of cultural awards	15	7
Invited by votes of elite members (reputational elite)	8	5
Market elite	48	42
Total	27	15

The elite members' own perception of how long they have felt part of the elite differed slightly from the researcher classification for each group. Among those who felt part of the elite, only 15 per cent thought they had joined the elite in 2010 or after. It seems that the 'fulfilment' of the research criteria for elite status precedes the career stage at which cultural actors are subjectively judged to be already part of the elite.

Is there a difference between the elite before 2010 and the elite in 2010 or after? This question is interesting from the point of view of whether the recruitment criteria for the appointment of institutional leaders or even for the distribution of cultural prizes have changed under the Orbán governments. In other words, can the impact of cultural policy be detected? I used multivariate analysis to investigate the differences between those who were appointed to the elite before 2010 and those who were appointed after 2010.[2] The results show that those who joined the elite after 2010 are – not surprisingly – younger. It is also not surprising that fewer of them were included in the sample with the votes of other elite members, since elite members with decades of performance and recognition tend to get the votes. However, two further differences between incumbents and newcomers suggest a slight change in the criteria for elite recruitment: among the latter, there are significantly fewer Budapest-born elites and fewer elites who identify themselves as left-wing. While 57 per cent of the pre-2010 incomers were born in Budapest, only 41 per cent of the post-2010 incomers were born in Budapest. 45 per cent of the incumbents declared themselves left-wing, while only 28 per cent of the newcomers declared themselves left-wing.

2 In the model explaining the dependent variable (whether they were a member of the elite before 2010), I included the following variables: gender, age, place of birth, father's education, respondent's elite university degree, art degree, former communist party membership, political position (right–left scale), which sub-sample they belong to, whether they have received professional awards in their career, whether they had been in the national media in the previous year. These factors explained relatively much of the variance of the dependent variable (Nagelkerke R = .389). See Appendix for the binary logistic regression model.

Political attitudes

The political attitudes of elite members are of great importance for the research questions of this paper, and it is therefore worth discussing how this can be investigated. In quantitative studies, political attitudes are typically measured by self-reporting on a right-to-left scale, a commonly used instrument to measure political preferences (Coughlin–Lockhart 1998, Lesschaeve 2017). In Hungary, it is also a well-established measurement instrument that clearly indicates political divisions (Kmetty 2014), despite the fact that the two sides of the scale do not show coherent differences on public policy issues, being much closer to party identity (Tóka 2005).

Traditionally, the cultural elite is a social group in which left-wing and liberal attitudes are more dominant than in society as a whole (Brym 2010, Lipset 1959, Shils 1958). This is also true for the Hungarian cultural elite (Kristóf 2014). At the same time, the Hungarian cultural elite operates in a social context that is highly polarized compared with other European countries (Patkós 2022). The trend for polarization spread from top to bottom in society in the decades after the regime change: a polarizing elite increasingly polarized the electorate, and in this process the ideology-producing intelligentsia played a major role (Körösényi 2013, Kristóf 2014). In the 2000s, the distribution of Hungarian citizens on the right-left scale became increasingly U-shaped as the centre became more and more empty. However, the shift away from the centre was not symmetrical; political attitudes shifted to the right of the scale (Enyedi–Benoit 2011).

Table 4 shows a leftward predominance in the cultural elite at all the points in time studied. However, it also shows that a significant change took place between 2001 and 2009: the emptying out of the centre, i.e. polarization. In comparison, the change between 2009 and 2018 no longer constituted a significant difference.

Table 4
Position of the cultural elite on a right-left scale (1- very right-wing - 9- very left-wing), percentage distribution

	Left (6–9)	Centrum (5)	Right (1–4)
2001	39	37	24
2009	47	24	29
2018	40	26	34

Looking at the different groups of cultural elites, compared with the distribution of the whole sample, leaders of institutions and media leaders placed themselves 46% to the right (28% left, 26% centre), a very significant difference compared with the other groups. At the time of the elite recruitment in 2009, this group of leaders did not yet show a different attitude from the others, suggesting that by 2018, the patronage nature of public institutional leadership appointments had shifted this elite group to the right (Table 5).

Table 5
The position of cultural elite groups on the right-left scale, percentage distribution (2018)

Elite group	Left (6–9)	Centrum (5)	Right (1–4)
Leaders	28	26	46
Members of academies	49	20	31
Recipients of cultural awards	42	31	27
Invited by votes of elite members (reputational elite)	48	19	33
Market elite	46	27	27
Total	40	26	34

There was a significant difference in political attitudes between the elite before and after 2010. While 45 per cent of those who entered the elite before 2010 were left-wing and only 30 per cent were right-wing, this proportion was almost exactly reversed among those who entered after 2010 (Table 6).

Table 6
The position of incumbents and newcomers on the right-left scale, percentage distribution

Time of entry	Left (6–9)	Centrum (5)	Right (1–4)
Before 2010	45	25	30
2010 or later	28	27	45
Total	40	26	34

The conservative-liberal axis showed a similar distribution to the right-left scale. Across the cultural elite as a whole, 31 per cent were conservative, 21 per cent placed themselves in the middle, and 48 per cent were liberal. We don't have data going back 20 years on this question, as we do on the right-left scale, because it was first asked in the 2009 wave of elite surveys, so we can only assume that a polarization process has taken place here too. In any case, compared with the 2009 data, the 2018 liberal-conservative self-ratings show no significant change. The differences between the different cultural elite groups in this dimension are also similar to the right-left axis: the reputational elite are more liberal than the average, while media and academic leaders are more conservative. Likewise, the proportion of those who joined the elite before and after 2010 reversed on a right-left scale: 53% of those who joined the elite before 2010 said they were liberal, compared with only 35% of newcomers.

Party preference is more volatile than ideological position, but it is also an interesting indicator of political attitudes. In 2018, many of the cultural elite did not know or did not say which party they would support or would not have voted in any case if 'national elections took place this Sunday.' 24 per cent would have voted for the governing Fidesz-KDNP, with similar proportions of 6–7 per cent respectively voting

for oppositional parties such as LMP, DK, Momentum and the Two-Tailed Dog Party. The Hungarian Socialist Party would have won only 3% of the votes (even back then in 2018, that foreshadowed the most recent weakening of that historical party), and the right-wing oppositional party Jobbik would have won a total of 1 piece of votes among the cultural elite.

Political attitudes were therefore an important segmenting factor among the cultural elite. I used regression models to investigate what explained the difference in political attitudes, i.e., which variables were related to the position of elite members on the right-left and the conservative-liberal axis.[3]

Among right-wing elite members, there were more people born in the countryside, fewer former communist party members, and they were more likely to have been featured in the national media in the year before the survey took place.[4] Left-wing elite members were younger, more likely to be born in Budapest and to have been members of the elite before 2010, were not part of the 'members of academia' sub-sample, and were more likely not to have been featured in the national media. Those who placed themselves in the middle of the right-left scale were also younger, more likely to have received some kind of award or distinction in their careers, and less likely to be members of academies and the reputational elite.

The conservative-liberal axis also reflected the 2010 breakpoint: self-described liberals were more likely to have been in the elite before 2010, in contrast to conservatives, who were more likely to be newcomers. Moreover, liberals were more likely to have been born in Budapest and to have attended an elite university in Budapest. Paternal education had an effect only for conservatives of all the political attitude dependent variables: they were more likely to be the children of a graduate father. Those who placed themselves in the centre of the conservative-liberal scale were less likely to be part of the reputational elite, more likely to have been born in the countryside, less likely to have attended an elite university and more likely to be artists.

Finally, I examined factors associated with party preference in a similar way. Because of the small number of items, it would not have made sense to treat all party supporters individually, so I combined them into a bivalent pro-government/opposition variable. On this basis, Fidesz voters are older, less likely to have been communist party members, more likely to have been born in rural areas, less likely to have belonged to the market elite and more likely to have joined the elite after 2010.

3 In the models explaining different political attitudes (left, right, centrum, liberal, conservative, centrum, voter of the Fidesz) as dependent variables, I included the following variables: gender, age, place of birth, father's education, respondent's elite university degree, art degree, former communist party membership, whether respondents were a member of the elite before 2010, which sub-sample they belong to, weather they received a professional award or been featured in the national media in the previous year. See Appendix for the seven binary logistic regression models. The models could explain only a small part of the variance of the attitude variables.

4 In the 2009 sample of elites, this was the other way around: left-wing elites were more prominent in the media, which illustrates the change in media 'market' over time.

Conclusion

In this paper I have used statistical methods to explore correlations about cultural elites in relation to elite replacement and political divisions. I sought to find out whether the cultural elite database reveals a change in elite recruitment before and after 2010, the beginning of the Orbán-regime. Has the recruitment criteria changed, and if so, how has this affected the composition and political orientation of the elite?

In terms of socio-demographic characteristics, the Hungarian cultural elite is elderly, heavily male, and significantly over-represented by those born in Budapest. The majority of its members are the children of educated parents whose career paths have usually led them to the elite through elite universities in Budapest.

Around a quarter of the cultural elite members entered the elite in 2010 or afterwards, i.e., in the Orbán era, but in the institutional and media leader group and the market elite this is almost half of the elite members. On the one hand, it signifies a natural circulation of the elite and is also caused by sampling peculiarities (for example, those who are in the elite on the basis of their cultural awards or elected members of academies are considered members of the elite until their death, while the leadership position lasts only for a certain period of time). However, the analysis suggests that the recruitment base of the elite may have changed after 2010, with fewer 'newcomers' being born in Budapest and having leftist ideological attitudes.

Nevertheless, this change in recruitment criteria does not mean that the left-wing and liberal predominance in the Hungarian cultural elite has disappeared. Overall, political attitudes in the 2018 cultural elite were similar to the proportions in the 2009 elite sample; the cultural elite had already become ideologically polarized during the 2000s. However, there were significant differences among different groups of the 2018 elite in terms of their political self-identification: institutional and media leaders were much more right-wing than the rest of the elite. This difference suggests the presence of political patronage: institutional leaders in the cultural sphere are easily replaced by the government with more loyal cultural actors. In this sense, elite replacement was partly successful in the positional cultural elite.

Political attitudes are difficult to explain by socio-demographic variables. The multivariate analyses presented in this paper, although of low explanatory power, showed how elite members with different political attitudes differed in their other characteristics. These included their age, place of birth, but also, importantly for the research question of elite replacement, left-wing and liberal elites were more likely to have entered the elite before 2010, again supporting the thesis of the political influence on cultural elite recruitment.

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Appendix

Regression models (binary logistic)

Dependent variable: Incumbent (Entering the elite: before 2010) Nagelkerke R = -389

	B	S.E.	Wald	df	Sig.	Exp(B)
gender	.450	.365	1.525	1	.217	1.569
age	-.088	.015	35.292	1	.000	.915
art degree	.142	.466	.092	1	.761	1.152
former communist party membership	-.645	.467	1.910	1	.167	.524
father with tertiary education	-.477	.326	2.138	1	.144	.621
alumni of an elite university	-.396	.347	1.303	1	.254	.673
place of birth: Budapest	.659	.316	4.346	1	.037	1.932
award winner	-.108	.440	.061	1	.805	.897
subsamples (reference category: leaders of cultural institutions)			8.189	4	.085	
members of academies	-.517	.503	1.055	1	.304	.597
recipients of cultural awards	-.611	.421	2.108	1	.146	.543
reputational elite	-1.513	.692	4.782	1	.029	.220
market elite	.500	.559	.799	1	.371	1.648
performance in the national media	-.401	.344	1.359	1	.244	.670
right-wing	-.144	.366	.155	1	.694	.866
left-wing	-.825	.375	4.842	1	.028	.438
Constant	6.789	1.919	12.523	1	.000	888.264

Dependent variable: Centrist on the left-right scale Nagelkerke R = .088

	B	S.E.	Wald	df	Sig.	Exp(B)
gender	.063	.328	.036	1	.849	1.065
age	.036	.013	8.072	1	.004	1.036
art degree	.267	.365	.536	1	.464	1.306
former communist party membership	.441	.372	1.409	1	.235	1.555
father with tertiary education	-.006	.267	.000	1	.983	.994
alumni of an elite university	.155	.304	.260	1	.610	1.167
place of birth: Budapest	-.136	.265	.264	1	.608	.873
entry to the elite: before 2010	1.281	.532	5.791	1	.016	3.600
award winner	.191	.287	.441	1	.507	1.210
subsamples (reference category: leaders of cultural institutions)			7.987	4	.092	
members of academies	.514	.323	2.533	1	.111	1.673
recipients of cultural awards	-1.153	.448	6.637	1	.010	.316
reputational elite	-.410	.362	1.286	1	.257	.664
market elite	-.920	.495	3.455	1	.063	.399
performance in the national media	-.258	.529	.238	1	.626	.773
Constant	-7.261	1.915	14.382	1	.000	.001

Dependent variable: Conservative Nagelkerke R = .107

	B	S.E.	Wald	df	Sig.	Exp(B)
gender	-.136	.319	.181	1	.670	.873
age	.002	.012	.017	1	.896	1.002
art degree	-.526	.375	1.963	1	.161	.591
former communist party membership	.445	.389	1.307	1	.253	1.560
father with tertiary education	-.526	.269	3.823	1	.051	.591
alumni of an elite university	-.084	.286	.086	1	.769	.919
place of birth: Budapest	.364	.254	2.047	1	.153	1.439
entry to the elite: before 2010	.939	.299	9.893	1	.002	2.558
award winner	.400	.421	.901	1	.343	1.491
subsamples (reference category: leaders of cultural institutions)			1.726	4	.786	
members of academies	.498	.530	.885	1	.347	1.646
recipients of cultural awards	.616	.587	1.101	1	.294	1.852
reputational elite	.537	.553	.944	1	.331	1.712
market elite	.205	.643	.101	1	.750	1.227
performance in the national media	.360	.285	1.605	1	.205	1.434
Constant	-4.320	1.815	5.668	1	.017	.013

Dependent variable: Liberal Nagelkerke R = .101

	B	S.E.	Wald	df	Sig.	Exp(B)
gender	-.005	.287	.000	1	.986	.995
age	-.010	.010	.888	1	.346	.990
art degree	-.390	.330	1.394	1	.238	.677
former communist party membership	-.143	.328	.190	1	.663	.867
father with tertiary education	.201	.237	.719	1	.397	1.222
alumni of an elite university	.555	.273	4.135	1	.042	1.742
place of birth: Budapest	-.673	.237	8.087	1	.004	.510
entry to the elite: before 2010	-.788	.292	7.292	1	.007	.455
award winner	-.726	.392	3.436	1	.064	.484
subsamples (reference category: leaders of cultural institutions)			5.794	4	.215	
members of academies	-.548	.486	1.273	1	.259	.578
recipients of cultural awards	-.142	.528	.072	1	.788	.868
reputational elite	-.103	.499	.043	1	.836	.902
market elite	.479	.569	.710	1	.399	1.615
performance in the national media	-.337	.251	1.794	1	.180	.714
Constant	3.896	1.664	5.486	1	.019	49.223

Dependent variable: Centrist on the conservative-liberal scale Nagelkerke R = .069

	B	S.E.	Wald	df	Sig.	Exp(B)
gender	.222	.332	.449	1	.503	1.249
age	.012	.013	.977	1	.323	1.012
art degree	1.131	.399	8.017	1	.005	3.097
former communist party membership	-.244	.369	.435	1	.509	.784
father with tertiary education	.302	.269	1.261	1	.261	1.353
alumni of an elite university	-.742	.338	4.831	1	.028	.476
place of birth: Budapest	.538	.280	3.683	1	.055	1.712
entry to the elite: before 2010	-.161	.342	.220	1	.639	.852
award winner	.514	.489	1.105	1	.293	1.672
subsamples (reference category: leaders of cultural institutions)			5.174	4	.270	
members of academies	-.638	.434	2.154	1	.142	.529
recipients of cultural awards	-.627	.389	2.596	1	.107	.534
reputational elite	-1.182	.559	4.461	1	.035	.307
market elite	-.129	.561	.053	1	.818	.879
performance in the national media	.075	.294	.065	1	.799	1.078
Constant	-2.674	1.859	2.069	1	.150	.069

Dependent variable: Party preference Fidesz-KDNP Nagelkerke R = .140

	B	S.E.	Wald	df	Sig.	Exp(B)
gender	.280	.372	.564	1	.453	1.323
age	-.028	.014	3.994	1	.046	.973
art degree	.065	.455	.020	1	.887	1.067
former communist party membership	-1.167	.484	5.801	1	.016	.311
father with tertiary education	.230	.307	.561	1	.454	1.259
alumni of an elite university	.150	.341	.194	1	.660	1.162
place of birth: Budapest	-.697	.298	5.463	1	.019	.498
entry to the elite: before 2010	-.705	.347	4.132	1	.042	.494
award winner	.193	.498	.150	1	.698	1.213
subsamples (reference category: leaders of cultural institutions)			6.258	4	.181	
members of academies	-.292	.469	.388	1	.533	.747
recipients of cultural awards	.140	.426	.108	1	.742	1.151
reputational elite	.618	.615	1.012	1	.314	1.856
market elite	1.266	.711	3.173	1	.075	3.547
performance in the national media	-.445	.321	1.926	1	.165	.641
Constant	5.987	2.024	8.748	1	.003	398.407

Where are the voters?

Three decades into a silent democracy (Electoral geographical approach)[1]

Ferenc Bódi
Mátyás Bódi

For a relatively long time, there was no wide range of academic literature on this research topic in Hungary, due to the fact that only a few researchers tried to examine the political elections in accordance with its spatial dimension (Kovács 2000, Hajdú 2006, Benkő 2008). During the communist era, political geography – like political study and human geography themselves – did not belong to the studies preferred by the communist authority. In 1990, general and local elections were held, which meant the official fall of communism in Hungary. In the country's history, these were the first, pure democratically held elections, where citizens could express their political minds; Hungarian political research originates itself from that time.

After these first elections (1990), initial publications about electoral geography were published by the help of more experienced Western European co-researchers (Kovács–Dingsdale 1998). Later on, Hungarian researchers (Institute for Political Science of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences) started publishing their own recurring papers, in which annual sociological and political reports are found for every county, as well as for the capital, Budapest. These reports are sociological reviews where electioneering methods, social background of local candidates, etc., are provided, and geographical approaches are also maintained. Historical geographical works of László Hubai are also worth mentioning in this paper. He made an attempt to find a relationship between the results of elections of the early 20th century and the outcomes of recent ones (Hubai 2004). The territorial and ideological continuity of the votings' outcomes are described on a comprehensive appendix map of his book which is titled,

1 This study is based on a previous research which was repeated by the authors. Therefore, eight elections were compared in Hungary; eight local elections and eight parliamentary elections assessing the citizens' participation between 1990 and 2019. Original study is: Bódi, F. and Bódi, M. (2012) "Where are the voters?" in Bódi, F. and Fábián, G. and Lawson, R. T. (eds.) *Local Organization of Social Services in Hungary – Crises, Reactions, Changes,* Bremen: Europäischer Hochschulverlag, pp. 59–77.

The electoral atlas of Hungary in the 20th century. The author's works were also based on the achieved research results of Péter Benkő, whose name was also associated with the idea of regional electoral geography. He examines the phenomenon of domestic elections in regional aspects, seeking to find relationship between electoral results and socio-economic indicators of smaller territorial units (micro regions). Research on electoral geography by László Hubai and János Rechnitzer is also found in Hungarian political yearbooks.

In Hungary, political and electoral geographical works have been influenced by numerous factors during the past century. By the second part of the 20th century, much more complex examinations were published, in which moderate relationships, and social background of voters were investigated instead of simple monographic works (Weiner 2010), although these latter kind of works are still being produced (Hajdú 2006). After the political changes, Hungarian researchers also wanted to find the hidden connection between the voting behavior of citizens and their social background or even inherited cultural identity. As they learned, there was no clearly defined answer. Experts still have academic debates on how much historical continuity and/or cultural background of voters should be considered in geographical electoral researches. Clashing opinions of experts can be observed in Zoltán Hajdú's papers. Subsequent to his work, many examples (Europeans as well) show that there have been no direct connections between previous election results and those of present elections (Hajdú 2006). On the contrary, however, other authors pay their attentions on examining election results from the 1920s or 1930s or even from the 19th century to find relationships between those. As far as the authors of this paper are concerned, all political decisions (voting) are the result of a relatively long deliberation process. Voters with their individual ways of living, experience their individual lifestyles, which are also based on their individual experiences. Naturally, one's individualised experience is determined by many factors, including social, financial, educational, as well as geographical ones.

More recently, in case of Hungary, geographical analyses have been utilised to uncover aforementioned social cleavages (initially introduced in the 1960s [Lipset –Rokkan, 1967] and later adapted to Western parliamentary democracies). These works (Vida–Kovalcsik 2018, Kovalcsik–Bódi 2023) proved that the electorate of either the governmental party or its opposition can be described by defined social indicators (primarily by educational and income levels) and, as we proceed closer to our present, these correlations are getting stronger and stronger. Results also encouraged them to invoke the term *"class-voting"* (Bódi–Kovalcsik 2023), especially when it comes to the gradually strengthening Fidesz' electoral performances in areas with low social status.

Finally, a different kind of geographical approach must be mentioned which attempts to analyse the social background of voting differences (Angelusz–Tardos 2002). This work was published by the Hungarian Central Statistical Office, who have included for research focus indicators which were expected to influence voting outcomes. Their research results drew attention to the role of education, age, and the type of municipality where voters lived. This was also confirmed by the report of Gábor Hegedűs (University of Szeged) whose empirical urban research work showed that people with low income would participate less than others.

The aim of the authors of this paper is to uncover the social background of the phenomena of voting, and, in essence: 'what makes people vote'. A major finding is that voter turnout in Hungary has a spatial characteristics which is observed year after year due to its spatial regularity (Map figure 1–2). As shown, voting results are not only explained by the unique hysterical atmosphere of pre-election campaign periods. All elections held since 1990 were examined to obtain an understanding of the spatial pattern and social characteristics of voting. The phenomenon which led the authors to include the geographic feature as one of the primary factors in election research is the almost firm spatial order of voting results with respect to participation in Hungary. This study examines the spatial feature of participation, the possible historical reasons for low participation, and tries to extend the authors' locality hypothesis onto a national level (Hegedűs 2007) and finally tries to justify another older hypothesis with quantitative methods (Bódi 2006).

Eight elections with one result – low voter turnout in Hungary

It is often considered that voter turnout is a significant feature of a society which is able to show how relevant political decision-making is among the citizens of a certain territorial unit. From the politicians' viewpoint, a high turnout is generally seen as evidence of the legitimacy of the current system; whilst others emphasize that more educated citizens are more likely to vote in France (Durovic 2022) in Finland (Martikainen–Martikainen–Wass 2005) and in Cyprus (Kanol 2013). One of the special Hungarian features of voting is the huge difference between general and local elections in term of participation. Generally, much more citizens go to the polls at a general election than at a local election. This can be related to the size of the towns, as presented later, where relatively high voter turnout is observed at the smallest settlements, and where the role of local authorities is outstanding in social benefits. Even the local elections of 2006, which were characterised by the highest participation ever (53.1%) since 1990 didn't reach the participation level of the general election of 1998, which had the lowest turnout in general elections (56.3%).

Municipalities with larger populations have higher participation in general elections, and the smallest Hungarian municipalities behave the same way as the most populated cities. Thus, the social conditions of those smallest villages could be worth examining, in particular the distinct voting trends in rural areas. Another interesting fact is that, municipalities with urban statuses participate in general elections to a higher degree than rural municipalities with the same number of inhabitants. This may be due to the urban milieu of these smaller cities or the urban identity of their inhabitants which influence voter turnout.

The voter turnout of municipalities with rural statuses is in inverse proportion to the number of inhabitants (the smaller the population the higher the turnout), therefore, voting in local elections is considered to be a more important way to make political decisions by the citizens of smaller municipality groups, while bigger urban cities are characterized by a higher participation in general elections.

The fact that certain municipality types have no interest in local elections, while they keep their eyes on general elections, suggest that further examinations may be necessary (urban cities). Moreover, it raises questions about the society, within which local affairs are more important than national ones (smaller rural municipalities). Finally, the societies of the smallest municipalities (with less than 1000 or 500 inhabitants) are also worth mentioning, where both local and national elections are followed with high attention by their residents.

As shown, the sizes of municipalities make a huge difference between Hungarian cities and towns in terms of voter turnout. While reporting about the findings according to types of municipalities, the spatial dimension of voting habits is also important to be discussed (Map figure and Table 1 and Table 4).

When the spatial patterns of political elections' turnout are examined, year after year distinct regions can be described as areas with high or low participation levels. This distinction can be seen clearly, especially at the general elections of 2002 and 2006. Voter turnout, as a special social feature, has its own spatial patterns in Hungary, just like other socio-economic indicators. For delimiting the areas with extremely high or low turnout, aggregative methods were used in which every territorial unit (at municipality level) was rated from minus 8 to plus 8 for each of the eight general or local elections (Map figure 1–2). Using a rough generalisation, the northern (northwestern) part of the country with its high participation can be distinguished from the southern (southeastern) part which has a relatively low participation in general elections, however, an exception to this generalisation can be seen around the bigger regional centre cities in the south.

Table 1
Voter turnout at the parliamentary elections 1990–2010 (%)

	1990	1994	1998	2002	2006	2010	2014	2018
Budapest	71.1	74.3	63.6	77.5	74.6	69.7	68.1	74.7
Cities of county rank	67.5	71.1	59.2	73.4	70.1	65.6	63.1	71.6
Cities*	63.6	68.7	54.6	69.3	66.8	63.4	60.0	68.5
Cities over 10,000	63.9	69.1	55.4	70.3	67.8	64.2	61.5	70.1
Cities under 10,000	61.5	66.7	51.8	66.2	64.1	61.4	57.1	65.4
Villages**	61.6	65.2	52.1	66.3	64.1	61.7	57.1	65.8
Villages over 10000	61.0	67.5	56.7	67.3	71.5	69.4	67.6	75.9
Villages 3,000–9,999	59.4	63.4	49.4	65.2	63.3	61.9	57.4	66.2
Villages 1,000–2,999	60.8	64.5	50.8	65.4	63.3	60.8	56.3	65.0
Villages 500–999	65.3	67.8	55.6	68.2	65.5	62.0	57.3	65.9
Villages under 500	70.4	71.9	61.8	71.9	67.7	64.1	59.4	67.6
Hungary	65.0	68.9	56.3	70.5	67.8	64.4	61.1	69.4

Source: calculated by Mátyás Bódi from the data of the Hungarian National Election Office (without Budapest and towns of county rank, ** all the villages by legal status, *** calculated according to the votes on body of representatives).*

Those municipalities which were in a politically active zone – the above mentioned smallest municipalities located on the northeastern and southwestern periphery – were basically suburbs of the relatively highly populated county centres in their broader agglomerations.

Some areas of Hungary can be described as politically active zones, whose relatively high participation rate is not related to the size or type of municipality. The western border land is a wide belted area characterised by a high participation in general elections. Additionally, a high participation rate occurs in the capital (Budapest) with its large agglomeration zone (especially the northern commuter-belt area). Here it is important to point out that Budapest had the highest turnout in every general election of all municipality categories (Map figure 1). Last but not least, the so-called Hungarian 'sun-belt', which contains the municipalities around Lake Balaton, is an area with a high participation.

As the opposite end of the participation rate a huge, almost continuous area with low turnout can also be seen. This area covers the Great Plain, in which smaller active zones can be found around the regional centres, but the lack of concern towards the general (as well as local) elections is the typical social feature of this region (Map figure 2).

It is the same outcome when the local elections in different municipality categories were examined. The geographical and economic peripheries of Hungary, where the least populated municipality groups are located, show the highest participation. The municipality structures of these northeastern or the southwestern rural areas are dominated by small villages where both general and local elections have really high turnouts at every election. The Great Plain (eastern, southeastern) area shows its political impartiality again, no matter what types of municipalities are included, however, in case of local elections, the region of the capital (Budapest) and its agglomeration are part of the passive voting zone. The smaller municipalities of the western bend area also have high participations, but they don't form a continuous area spatially. To summarise, there is no huge territorial continuous region with high voting turnout in Hungary, except for those smaller peripheral regions in which almost only small villages are found (Map figure 3).

Finally, the aggregate scores of every municipality were calculated (aggregate outcomes of general and local elections). The purpose of this method was to look into those municipalities whose turnouts were above the annual average in every year at both general and local elections. This way the so called *hyperactive* and *hyper passive* municipalities could be located with respect to political behavior. To clarify, hyperactive stands for those municipalities whose turnouts were above the national average in every election (eight general and eight local), whilst hyper passive stands for those whose turnouts were below the national average in every election. As seen, particular groups of the hyper passive municipalities exist form geographically distinct units on the Great Plain region, while only a few small municipalities appear hyperactive, scattered sparsely in the country. To conclude, municipalities with extremely low participations are concentrated in one certain landscape of Hungary (the Great Plain), independently from the size of municipalities, whilst the locations of municipalities with extraordinary high turnouts reflect the spatial structure of small municipalities in the country.

Regarding the spatial pattern of election turnouts, it can be deduced that socio-economic differences and inequalities do exist in Hungary in their spatial order and their territorial features driving political behavior. These factors can be well measured and tracked by their geographic dimensions.

Future researches by the authors are planned to further examine the social feature relations of those municipalities whose voting behaviors differ in any respect. What socio-economic indicators characterise the smallest municipalities in remote rural areas? Or, conversely, what social and/or cultural factors are related to individuals' voting in every election and also what factors are related to the lack of participation? In the latter case, the geographic feature of the phenomenon is worth studying (see the *hyper passive* Great Plain area) since these municipalities' turnouts were below the national average in both local and national elections.

Hungarian society as a whole is featured by this duality and a long-term rural-urban division is recognisable. The authors plan to develop studies to better understand of what social factors underlie this clear division which is evident among Hungarian voters.

Reasons for low voting turnout (socio-historical approach)

In the political era before the 1990s, the basic source of legitimacy was consumption based on pleasure and partial autonomy of private life. In the early 1980s, the Institute for Social Sciences conducted a survey on behalf of the governing communist state party to assess whether workers were truly loyal to socialism, and, if 'yes', primarily what was the basis of their faiths in the system. The research showed that the majority of the country was bound to the political system through consumption, therefore, only one element of the criteria in the Weberian sense of legitimate validity could be shown in the society before 1990.

The legitimacy of *traditional* patriotism, based on the principle that '*it has always been so*', could not work at that time as the system aimed at demolishing the past. The legitimacy of the *passionate faith*, newly declared and exemplary, could not work either since, even for egalitarians, it was clear that there were '*ones who were more equal*' in socialism. Legitimacy based on *value rationality*, the purest type of which is natural law, couldn't exist given that the politics building the socialist system cut back on its basic institutions. A *legality-based* system, however, existed, and was considered legitimate on the grounds that the stakeholders agreed with- or simply accepted it under constraint (Weber 1987: p. 63). Only the validity of the legality-based system could be shown in the socialist era. However, the welfare system (e.g. easily obtainable pension rights, free health care and full employment) underlying its legitimacy was built upon an extremely fragile economic basis.

The modern and so-called stable democratic societies and nations cannot exist permanently without *traditional bonds and value rationality*, because these hold together the old communities in the long-term and stabilise the modern states (Lipset 1995: p. 81).

Until the end of the 1940s, legitimate power could be built on the basis of passionate faith (devastating the rules of natural law). Then, until the amnesty of 1963, the political system gained its validity through constraints, which gradually converted to a consensually legitimate system agreed on by the stakeholders from the 1970s, wherein there was an emphasis on relative welfare. The value-based legitimation of the political system prior to socialism was built upon life experiences and the institutions of Church, school and family. The socialist system first overtly, and later covertly, made attempts to eliminate or 'revolutionarily' transmute and transubstantiate the former institutions. It was well known that, in order to achieve overall success, the changes had to be started in the 'clerical and reactionary' countryside (Kovách 2001).

Socialism abolished the basic institutions of the traditional local system in villages and in small towns, as well as the notary representing the former legitimate state, the priest or pastor representing the church, the teacher providing education and last, the free individual; the farmer (the so-called *kulak*). After demolishing the institutions underlying the legitimacy of the former authorities, the disintegration and disassembly of local communities followed; the culmination of which took place in the 1970s, when local councils and agricultural cooperatives were merged by orders from 'above'.

Socialism created a new society, which had no roots, but its almost forty years of reign was sufficient that even those who transitioned from the former pre-socialist times were not able to 'find their ways back' to the preceding era. The socialist system, which destroyed the previous system, failed, but left behind collapsing socialist large companies, districts of blocks of flats, ruined city centres (e.g. Miskolc), neglected small towns (e.g. Balassagyarmat, Esztergom, Sátoraljaújhely and Abaújszántó) and hundreds of depopulated and aging villages. The integrity of local communities has been damaged, reshaped and sometimes shattered into pieces - see centres of tiny and small villages - due to the migration caused by the political and then the economic constraints (Enyedi 1980, Andorka 1979). It's always easier to remediate the tangible damages of an era than the harmful legacy of it as the latter is much longer lasting in the deeper layers of society, in its spiritual components.

After 1989, democracy in rural Hungary essentially left only little room for local societies, since people could predominantly vote on parties or party representatives whom the national parties above them put in place. The disinterest of rural societies was shown in the absence of crowds who did not participate in general elections, even when the national turnout was close to the European (EU15) average.

This study seeks to answer the question whether the election participation willingness can be a feature of the society, especially in a geographically defined locality, i.e. in a local society. Voting behavior may be related to a number of social factors, such as religiosity, gender, age, income, educational attainment, etc. (Mészáros–Szakadát 1998). In addition, it may also express the relationship of a particular era to politics and society, provided that the institution of elections is an open system (direct and not excluding) and is based on free will, i.e. it is not obligatory. The following is a brief overview of socio-political factors which are likely to affect voter activity.

One of the components is '*civic duty*' (Milbrath 1981: p. 201), which originated in the archaic democratic culture, was derived from the ancient Greek democratic traditions, and is still in evidence in the modern age. *Aristotle* in his *Politics* considered dealing with public affairs to be the most manful act – today we would rather say the most human act – in the forefront of which stood to serve the public good, at least in that fragile equilibrium which the Greeks called *politeia*. Aristotle, who synthesised classical Greek culture, put elections as the focus of the selection system for the governance, which is one subtype of the twelve political systems. More precisely, he wanted to answer the question of who fills the positions by whom they are elected and how they are elected.

Political science also considers *patriotic acts* as a factor influencing voter turnout (Powell 1986, Milbrath 1968). High turnout is particularly prominent in countries which have recently obtained their independences or made many sacrifices to preserve it. A good example is Western Europe, which suffered at least two world wars, where at least four out of five citizens in each country went to vote in the 1950s (Borg 1995: p. 441). After the wars, electoral habits in Europe were strongly influenced by the fact that in two large countries (Italy and France) women received voting rights at that time. As time passed after the war, electoral activity strongly declined in the decades of prosperity and security, as if the system of the *welfare state* might have lulled politics as well. In the rebellious world of the 1960s, the young become estranged from their inherited freedom. By that time voter turnout in many countries had already decreased to 75%. By the end of the 1980s, electoral activity decreased even further and such was especially evident in Germany (77.8%) and in France (65.7%).

International political scientists perhaps don't ignore the most important factor; the purpose of "*impacting and influencing politics*" (Verba–Nie–Kim 1978). Why would we go to vote if not to politise? At this point, it is worth mentioning how effectively voters can influence the chances of candidates or those elected to take office. In this respect, European voters are rational and consistent (similarly to those of the United States) as local affairs, including local elections, have always been of greater public interest than regional or state-level politics, and notably exceeded voter turnout for European Union (or federal) elections. Oddly enough, Hungarian voters, similarly to voters of Eastern European countries, are lazier concerning local affairs. Where the impact on the governance is greater, that is, concerning local interests, much less people go to vote than in elections concerning national affairs. They do so despite the fact that their votes in general elections weigh much less than locally, where a small town mandate can be gained even by a few hundred votes. Furthermore, members of the local governments – and their political decisions – can be monitored more closely and held accountable. The highest voter turnouts at local elections have never exceeded the lowest turnouts at general elections. Let us start from the assumption that electoral activity, whether local or national level, can essentially be determined by three things:

- First, *patriotism, local patriotism and the experience of independence;*
- Second, *civic duty* as the classic component of active politics, where citizens vote out of duty;
- Third, *the intention and faith of influencing the government.*

After it obtained its independence, 85.6% of eligible voters went to vote in Slovenia at the first general elections. The same occurred in Lithuania (71.7%), the Czech Republic (76.4%) and Bulgaria (83.9%). In Slovakia at the first two general elections in 1994 and in 1998, voter turnouts were 75.6% and 84.2% respectively. Among all the Central and Eastern European states, only the Polish electoral activity was weaker than that of the Hungarians. In Hungary in 1990, more than a third of the citizens didn't participate in the moment of liberation at all – they didn't vote.

The regime change did not essentially affect the influence and privileges of the political elite of the old order since political influence was converted to economic benefits. The disintegrating system – along with the collapsing economy (through wild privatisation) – accelerated society's polarisation and social differences became evident, even spatially. In the first half of the 1990s, the country split into three parts, particularly in terms of income formation: 1) the urbanised and developed North Transdanubia, 2) the capital (Budapest) and its surroundings and 3) rural North East Hungary, South Transdanubia and the Great Plain which lagged behind the others (Bódi–Mokos–Obádovics 1999).

Contrary to the rational Western voters, the Hungarian voters seem particularly strange, even possibly irrational in the sense that in Hungary, at local elections about local affairs, a higher voter turnout can be expected, even where the competitive spirit is low and where there is no real stake in who to elect into a position. In many case there is not more than one single candidate for one position or at least the number of the candidates is considerably fewer than the national average (Bódi 2006: p. 309–310).

In rural local societies, especially in the ones far from the towns – and not yet influenced by urban circumstances – the percentage of taxpayers in the working-age population barely reached 50%. The percentage of people living on social benefits was over 40%, thus, the majority of the working-age population got their minimum income by depending on the goodwill of the local authorities (Map figure 4, Table 6). Therefore, control of local politics could not evolve from such a mass of people whose existence depended so much on the local authority. In short; the local society didn't become able to control the local power (Bódi 2009).

The quality of life of the local society, as well as the existence and quality of the local services depended largely or completely on the goodwill and 'enlightenment' of the local elite. These rural societies also lived in social dependences where money, services and sources necessary to subsist personal and family lives were assured by the performers of local politics through benefits, public works and other means for the majority of the working-age population who lived there (Bódi 2005).

It is only worth examining the operation of the local autonomies and the local elections when the above-mentioned social factors are considered, as well as the knowledge of the referred social deficit. In municipalities with less than 10,000 inhabitants, because of the noted reasons, it wasn't the existence of a strong nominating organisational background (i.e. parties, civil organisations) which dominated, but rather strong individual personalities. This is the reason why first the local employers (entrepreneurs, institution leaders) and people with relatively larger economic potential, as well as *patres familias* of families having a greater number of relatives and secondary social relations (i.e. people likely capable to arrange official affaires, or at least told to be capable to do so) became members of the executive bodies of villages and small towns (Csite et al. 2002).

In the majority of rural Hungary, the local governing body of a village has become an exclusive institution of the local elite and the advocate for the interest of a narrow group of patricians rather than a forum of the larger local society. As no other organisation could undertake the articulation of interests of the local societies (due to the lack of advocacy groups for the interest of local social organisations in rural municipalities), the general assemblies and sometimes the mayors themselves have become the almost unappealable and exclusive executive leaders at the top of the local societies (Bódi 2005) (Map figure 4 and Table 6).

The higher activity of the villages in the elections, especially the ones with small population, does not suggest a greater need to have a larger social participation in public affairs, but it is simply the product of rural poverty. In the countryside the fact is that people are more likely to go and vote because they don't want to be ashamed in front of their local mayors. The high voter turnout is neither the result of the campaign, nor the consequence of a larger electoral competition, but is a kind of alignment with the expectations of the local authorities. Especially where the ratio of the people living on social benefits reaches or exceeds 40% of the taxpayers, there is a large likelihood that these villages are ruled by powerful local oligarchies, as there is neither a substitute nor control of these local authorities. They have no alternatives, for instance, due to the lack of local intellectuals. More than 800 schools and several hundred kindergartens have been closed and at the same time thousands of teachers have lost contact with the local societies between 1970 and 2002 (Bódi–Fekete–Bódi 2022: p. 559). The administrative exclusion from the public affairs of general practitioners can also be partially considered such exclusion of intellectuals; GPs could help people see problems or even organise alternatives to the local authorities. There is no local social control either, since there is no one to keep it alive locally and the local governments have no superiors at middle level (i.e. at county or district level) either where appeals may be lodged. This way the local oligarchies could be limited or at least could be restrained by law.

Such an experienced deficit in democracy is a reminder of the dependent and subordinate relations of earlier ages; this *deficit in democracy* revives and sustains the antidemocratic traditions of historical times. Here, especially in the impoverished rural Hungary, history hasn't caught up yet.

Reasons for low voter turnout related to social factors

When undertaking to summarise the relationship between the local authorities and the first twelve years of the local elections, a hypothesis of the *deficit in democracy* of rural societies was proposed (Bódi 2005) using the electoral datasets by the types of municipalities and summarising the local *in situ* experiences. Since then, this hypothesis has been applied in determinant handbooks (Pálné 2008, Enyedi–Pálné 2008, Kovách 2012) as a reference. The hypothesis that "*the more the population of a*

municipality was socially defenseless, the more active it was in the local elections" could not be confirmed directly using quantitative methods although it was supported by data tables in each election year showing that electoral activities were higher in municipalities with lower population than in ones with larger population. However, lower population is not always associated with poverty and social defenselessness in all cases.

Table 2
Percent of voter turnout in local elections (1990–2019) (%)

	1990	1994	1998	2002	2006	2010	2014	2019
Budapest	42.1	39.3	43.7	52.7	55.9	43.6	42.5	50.3
Cities of county rank	33.8	31.2	37.6	44.9	48.8	37.9	36.6	44.2
Cities*	44.0	39.6	41.9	47.4	49.8	44.1	41.5	44.1
Cities over 10,000	36.3	38.1	40.9	46.5	49.5	42.4	39.6	43.3
Cities under 10,000	50.3	46.4	46.0	50.3	50.6	48.3	45.0	45.6
Villages**	59.3	54.6	53.8	56.9	57.3	56.1	50.7	50.4
Villages over 10,000	36.8	38.9	40.1	43.2	52.3	42.9	38.5	48.5
Villages 3,000–9,999	49.8	47.1	46.3	49.9	50.6	48.8	43.6	43.6
Villages 1,000–2,999	58.6	56.1	54.7	57.1	56.7	56.1	49.8	49.5
Villages 500–999	67.4	64.2	63.0	65.0	64.4	62.7	55.4	54.9
Villages under 500	76.2	71.5	70.6	73.0	71.5	70.8	61.7	61.2
Hungary	45.9	43.4	45.7	51.1	53.1	47.1	43.4	47.1

Source: calculated by Mátyás Bódi from the data of the Hungarian National Election Office (without Budapest and towns of county rank, ** all the villages by legal status, *** calculated according to the votes on body of representatives)..*

The social and territorial context of social beneficiary status was explored in connection with more recent research into the local organisation of social services and, through this analysis, such local societies could be identified where the exact number of the social beneficiaries, i.e. the people receiving allowances could be determined (Bódi 2009: p. 19). The masses receiving social allowances (which reached about two million people in the nineties) are located mainly in those parts of the country where participations at the local elections were high, but at the general elections such were rather moderate. However, the statistics on social allowances at municipality level have been available only for the last few years representing only recent years.

The other component of the allowance index is the number and spatial distribution of taxpayers for which data has been maintained since the early 1990s, therefore, all the election years could be tested. The number of taxpayers – to be more exact, the number of people submitting a tax return – has been compared to the working-age population

in municipalities and in counties. In Hungary there are higher proportions of taxpayers in the northern counties of Transdanubia, in Budapest and in large enclave-like towns where higher voter turnouts could be shown at general elections. The proportion of the taxpayers within the working-age population in 2006 was above 70% in the following counties: Vas, Győr-Moson-Sopron, Zala, Fejér, Veszprém, Komárom-Esztergom as well as in Budapest, while in Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén, Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg and Hajdú-Bihar counties such was only 50–60% (Map figure 1 and Map figure 4).

If we accept that taxpaying attitude is a reflection of civic duty, then we can also posit the hypothesis of the relationship between the Milbrathian civic duty and the activity in elections as a factor positively influencing the voter turnout. This hypothesis can be tested in those geographical territories of the country where the new economic system – which emerged following the regime change – didn't keep employment low for too long. The rate of unemployment has remained low even in the critical 1990s in the counties of West and North Transdanubia, in Budapest and its agglomeration (Bódi–Obádovics 2000). In addition to the number of the taxpayers and their average income, income differences should also be considered. It was seen at the end of the 1990s that in regions and areas with lower average income, most notably the northern regions of the Great Plain and North Hungary, there was higher income polarisation than in the North West Transdanubian counties with high average income (Bódi–Mokos–Obádovics 1999). It can be presumed from the above facts that higher voter turnouts at the general elections can be found in municipalities where, in addition to high local average income, a high ratio of taxpayers exists, income distribution is less polarised and – most importantly – where the main source of income is wages from official employment (any legal income – salary).

Table 3
Municipalities where the income/person did not reach 60% of the national average

Elections	1994	1998	2002	2006	2010	2014	2018*	2019*
Parliamentary	63.7	48.7	63.6	61.9	60.1	53.7	61.5	.
Local election	49.8	53.7	56.8	56.8	50.9	51.1	.	52.3
Hungary in total								
Parliamentary	68.9	56.3	70.5	67.8	64.4	61.1	69.4	.
Local election	43.4	45.7	51.1	53.1	47.1	43.4	.	47.1

Source: calculated by Mátyás Bódi from the data of the Hungarian National Election Office and of the TeIR database "National Spatial Development and Spatial Information System"

**The local and parliamentary elections were in two different years in 2018 and 2019 because the local self-government mandate changed from 4 years to 5 years, as long as, the duration of parliamentary mandate did not change, it remained 4 years – according to 2010, Act 50; 2013, Act 34; 2011, Act 189.*

Tax statistics of the last five election years were compared with voter turnouts in both general and local elections of the same years highlighting separately those municipalities where the personal income tax did not reach 60% of the national average. In each election year the turnouts at general elections were lower by 4–8% than the national average in municipalities with low average income. As for local elections, the tendency was just the opposite as figures were 4–8% higher than the national average. The number of local governments examined each year in the study where the income per person was below 60% of the national average totalled around 2,000 with approximately 2.5 million inhabitants. Derived from the data, the willingness to participate at general elections was highly related to the ratio of taxpayers in a county. In case of local governments, high ratio of people with lower income is related to voter turnouts at the local elections.

Thus, the former statement should be modified: *the Hungarian voter – similarly to the voter of any other country – is a rational social actor.* As it has been shown, a higher activity in paying tax at the state level goes together with a higher level of participation in the general elections, while a higher social defenselessness results in a higher level of voter activity in the local elections. Surely, in the first case the rational attitude towards higher level political involvement is a feature of the citizens of the modern states, however, in the second case – with respect to local level political involvement – a pre-modern social phenomenon can be seen. It is carried over from the past and is regenerated by a false system of local governance and by a rural existence that directs development down the wrong path, where there is no end of history.

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Appendix

Table 4
Parliamentary Elections between 1990–2018 (score scale)

Municipality size/ legal status	0	1–3	4–6	7–8	0	1–3	4–6	7–8
Budapest (districts)	0	1	5	17	0	4.3	21.7	73.9
City of county rank	0	5	5	13	0	21.7	21.7	56.5
10,000–	32	27	26	34	26.9	22.7	21.8	28.6
3,000–10,000	169	75	35	44	52.3	23.2	10.8	13.6
1,000–3,000	434	247	97	98	49.5	28.2	11.1	11.2
500–1,000	209	228	126	104	31.3	34.2	18.9	15.6
500–	158	342	284	362	13.8	29.8	24.8	31.6
City	*130*	*82*	*46*	*64*	*40.4*	*25.5*	*14.3*	*19.9*
Village	*872*	*837*	*522*	*578*	*31.0*	*29.8*	*18.6*	*20.6*
Hungary	1002	925	578	672	31.5	29.1	18.2	21.2

Between 1990 and 2018, 8 parliamentary elections had been held in every four years. Municipalities with higher turnout rate than annual average were marked with +1, while the ones below average received 0 score. Thus, the highest rank, a single municipality can receive is 8, indicating the high voter turnout at each elections, while the lowest possible rank is 0, meaning that the city was always below annual turnout rate.

Source: calculated by Mátyás Bódi from the data of the Hungarian National Election Office and of the TeIR database "National Spatial Development and Spatial Information System"

Table 5
Municipal Elections between 1990–2019 (score scale)

Municipality size/ legal status	0	1–3	4–6	7–8	0	1–3	4–6	7–8
Budapest (districts)	6	8	4	5	26,1	34,8	17,4	21,7
City of County Rank	7	13	3	0	30,4	56,5	13	0
10,000–	32	57	24	6	26,9	47,9	20,2	5
3,000–10,000	26	101	124	72	8	31,3	38,4	22,3
1,000–3,000	5	81	362	428	0,6	9,2	41,3	48,9
500–1,000	2	23	220	422	0,3	3,4	33	63,3
–500	0	24	206	916	0	2,1	18	79,9
City	*45*	*115*	*99*	*63*	*14*	*35,7*	*30,7*	*19,6*
Village	*20*	*171*	*837*	*1781*	*0,7*	*6,1*	*29,8*	*63,4*
Hungary	78	307	943	1849	2,5	9,7	29,7	58,2

Between 1990 and 2019, 8 municipal elections had been held in every four years. Municipalities with higher turnout rate than annual average were marked with +1, while the ones below average received 0 score. Thus, the highest rank, a single municipality can receive is 8, indicating the high voter turnout at each elections, while the lowest possible rank is 0, meaning that the city was always below annual turnout rate.

Source:calculated by Mátyás Bódi from the data of the Hungarian National Election Office and of the TeIR database "National Spatial Development and Spatial Information System"

Table 6
Percent of recipients of social allowances compared to the total number of taxpayers, 2009

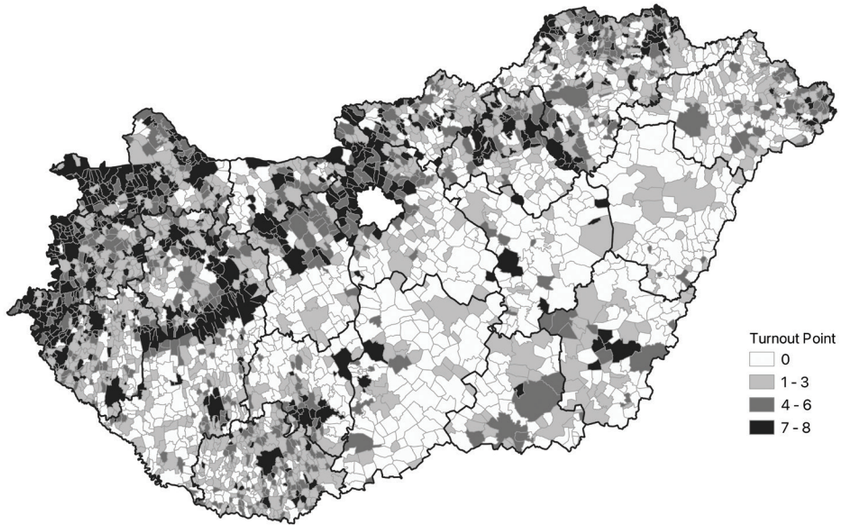
Municipality size and legal status	Number of taxpayers *	Number of aggregated social allowances	Distribution of number of taxpayers (%)*	Distribution of number of aggregated social allowances (%)	Percent of aggregated social allowances compared to the total number of taxpayers (%)
Budapest	no data	132,482	no data	10.1	no data
Town of county rank	941,441	246,272	25.8	18.7	26.2
10,001–	1,935,573	663,884	53.1	50.5	34.3
3,001–10,000	740,74	260,384	20.3	19.8	35.2
1,001–3,000	662,126	260,665	18.2	19.8	39.4
501–1,000	195,83	81,095	5.4	6.2	41.4
–500	109,563	48,107	3.0	3.7	43.9
City	1,378,679	426,166	37.8	32.4	30.9
Village	1,323,724	509,216	36.3	38.7	38.5
Hungary	3,643,844	1,314,135	100.0	100.0	36.1

Source: TeIR data "National Spatial Development and Spatial Information System" calculated by authors

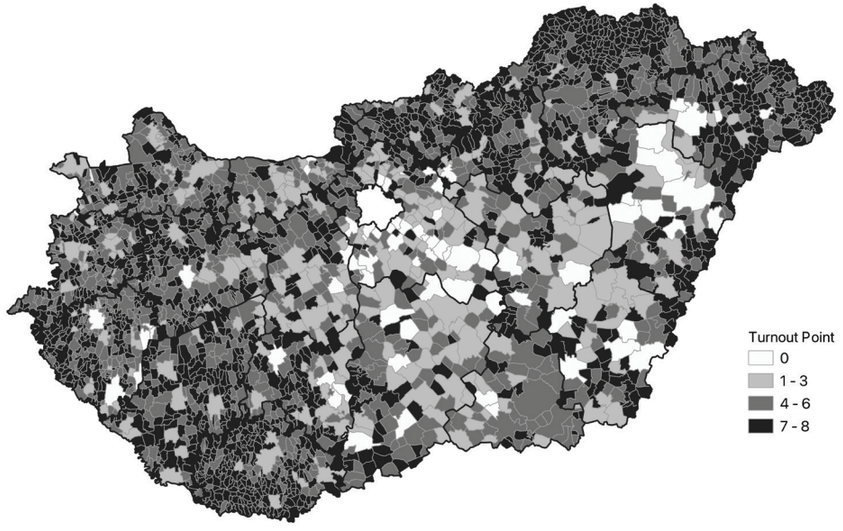
**Without Budapest*

Method for the calculation of the Rate of Aggregated Social Allowance: Number of aggregated social allowances per total number of taxpayers = Number of Aggregated Social Allowance = disability pensioners (people on pension or pension-like benefits, disability pensioners under retirement-age and over retirement-age) + number of persons receiving an allowance for changed ability to work + number of persons who are recipients of regular social assistance + number of total unemployed per number of taxpayers multiplied by 100. It is an important criterion that a person who gets more social allowances at the same time, is taken into consideration only once.

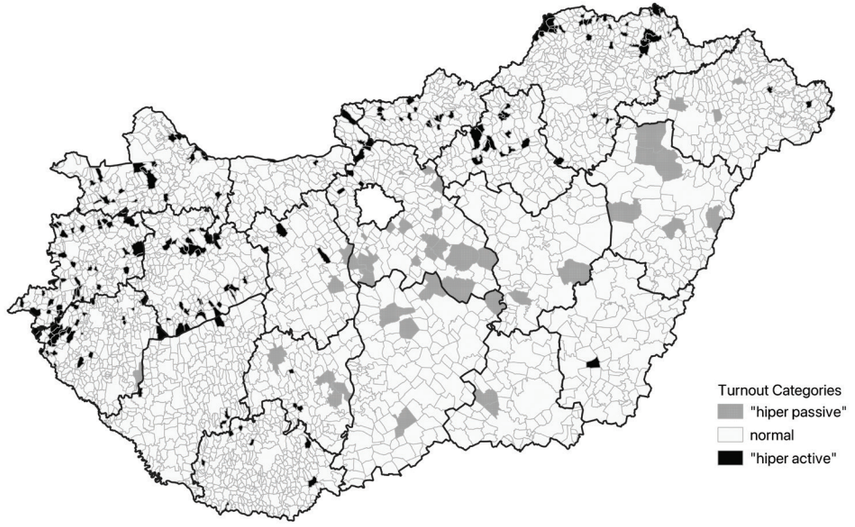
Map figure 1
Parliamentary Elections between 1990–2018



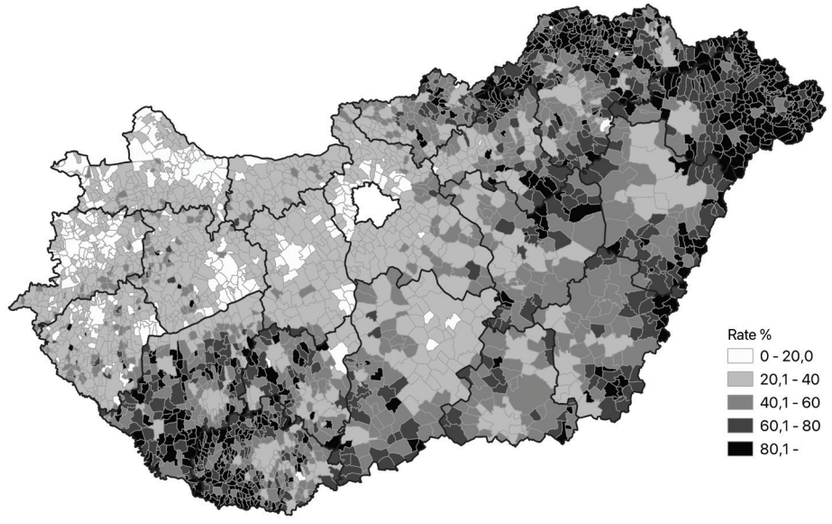
Map figure 2
Municipal Elections between 1990–2019



Map figure 3
Hyper active and hyper passive settlements, 1990–2019



Map figure 4
Percent of recipients of social allowances
compared to the total number of taxpayers, 2009



Party preference and subjective social mobility

Ákos Huszár
Andrea Szabó

The paper focuses on how individuals perceive their own social position depending on their political party preferences. This question rests on two fundamental assumptions. Our first hypothesis is that the perception of individual social position (improving or deteriorating) cannot be explained solely based on the changes in their objective conditions. Several other factors may have a key role in whether individuals view their own lives as an advancement or deterioration. Secondly, we hypothesize that political affiliations, more specifically, party preferences may have a significant role in the perception of social position and/or the changes thereof in today's Hungary. In their analyses, Gábor (2018a, 2018b) and Andrea Szabó (2022) suggest that Fidesz–KDNP' four consecutive election victories are not independent from the population's perceived economic status. In his research, Tóka found a close correlation between the population's consumption indicators and Fidesz' approval ratings. Depending on their party preferences, opposition voters have a different view on the economic situation than pro-government voters. As far as the legitimacy of political power is concerned, it is highly important which narrative (i.e., the pessimistic or the optimistic one) becomes dominant, since (as suggested in Tóka 2018b) it can decide elections (see 2006 as well as 2018).

Similar hypotheses can be put forward in terms of mobility as well. The political power may persist and retain its legitimacy if the society is characterized by a stronger, more assertively or at least more loudly represented view that Hungary's mobility channels are not blocked, and everyone ultimately has the *opportunity* to move forward. However, it is not evident whether every segment of society shares this sentiment, and it is particularly not evident whether everyone, based on their political affiliations, has the same perception of their own status. The theory of partisan polarization (Patkós 2019, McCoy–Somer 2019, Somer–McCoy–Luke 2021) suggests that pro-government voters may have a much stronger perception of progress opportunities for progress than opposition supporters.

In what follows we first present our question and our related hypotheses, then we demonstrate the methods we used to test them. Further on, we present our findings starting with the descriptive statistical results of subjective mobility, followed by a linear regression analysis to investigate what factors affect subjective mobility and

how. This paper aims to contribute to the literature on political behaviour as well as the area of sociology focusing on social mobility and the perception thereof.

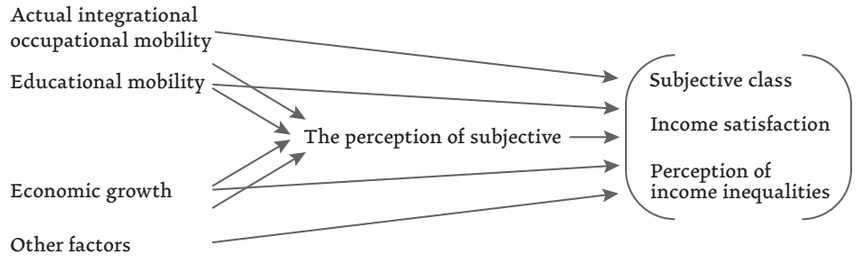
Objective and subjective mobility

In the broadest sense, social mobility is defined as the change of the social position of individuals (and/or families) (see Andorka 1982: 7). Depending on the reference base of the change, we talk about intergenerational mobility when the individual's social position is compared with their parents, and intragenerational mobility when it is compared with their own earlier social position. Changes may be examined based on several different dimensions (e.g., occupation, qualifications, income, assets). This study investigates the subjective perception of social position.

The subjective indicators of social mobility are in many ways similar to the traditional indices of mobility studies, but they are also significantly different at certain points. The most important difference lies in the fact that while the latter typically grasp the individuals' current and/or former social position based on their occupational position, the subjective indicator reflects personal opinions. The potential variance of actual changes in social position from their subjective perceptions is not in the least surprising. Although the two (may) correlate, they are two distinctly independent phenomena after all (Merllié 2008, Kraus–Tan 2015, Huszár 2018).

The question is what factors cause subjective mobility to vary from objective mobility and to what extent. The nature and/or the potential consequences of the mechanisms driving the subjective perception of mobility are highly debated (Duru-Bellat –Kieffer 2008, Kelly and Kelly 2009, Kraus-Tan 2015, Merllié 2008, Harcsa 2018). The systematic interpretation of such mechanisms was perhaps explored the furthest by Sarah Kelly and Claire Kelly (2009). According to them, subjective mobility may firstly be derived from the individual's social movement, i.e., from the change in their school qualifications and/or occupational status. On the other hand, economic growth may also affect the perception of mobility, which can invoke a perception of rising or sinking purely as a result of the collective movement of the individual's social group even in the lack of actual individual movement. Furthermore, the perception of subjective mobility may also be affected by several other socio-demographic factors whose mechanisms of action are hard to assess in advance.

Figure 1
Explanatory factors and consequences of subjective mobility



Source: Kelly and Kelly 2009.

A particularly significant element of the Kelly and Kelly model (Figure 1) is that it represents the perception of subjective mobility as a form of transmission medium which, depending on the underlying societal processes, may impact the individual's socio-political attitudes and/or political positions as well. In this case, it is difficult to take a clear stance on the direction of causality, but Péter Róbert (1999) interprets subjective mobility itself as a kind of political attitude. In this interpretation, respondents declare whether they experience the changes in their lives as an ascension or descent, which is intertwined with their judgement on the state of the country and/or the society and their satisfaction related to them.

In his paper written at the end of the first post-communist decade, Róbert investigated how members of society evaluated their own societal status compared to that of their parents and their own from ten years before, as well as how these evaluations correlate with the objective processes of social mobility. 43% of the respondents believed their social status deteriorated compared with their parents, while two-thirds of them reported a perceived negative change in relation with their status ten years prior, i.e., the period right before the change of the political system. Róbert also found that the objective indicators of intergenerational mobility did not show such a rupture after the change of the political system. Instead, they demonstrated a continuation of the earlier mobility processes. The first ten years of the new political system was typically experienced as a deterioration by even those people whose occupational position did not change or, in fact, improved relative to their parents'. The picture was somewhat nuanced by intragenerational occupational mobility studies conducted by Balogh and Róbert later (2008). They found that Hungarian society became more open in terms of mobility after the collapse of Communism, especially for men. However, "the doors closed" in the early 2000s and upward mobility became more and more infrequent afterwards.

We hypothesize that the subjective perception of changes in social status and the causality of political affiliations may be two-directional. Conceivably, citizens may vote for a particular party because they believe its policy resulted in an improved social status for them. On the other hand, it is also possible that supporters of a particular party may report an improved social status even if their occupational situation or income does not justify it. The analysis of the results may allow us to estimate which effect had a larger role in terms of causality.

As we noted above, our investigation is based on the hypothesis that highly politically driven value choices may influence subjective mobility in today's Hungary, and political affiliations may have an independent role in how individuals evaluate the changes in their own societal position. Since 2010, Hungary has been led by a political party alliance with a two-thirds constitutional majority in Parliament. This fact may have a major impact on the framework that determines and forms the channels of objective mobility (educational system, labour market, public administration). The party alliance can shape the media environment to enable the formation of the perception of daily life for certain social groups to conform to its political intent (Tóth–Szabó 2018, Szabó 2022, Gerő–Sik 2022). On the other hand, according to multiple papers by Márton Gerő and Andrea Szabó (2017, 2019, 2020, 2022), and Huszár (2022) Hungarian politics function largely independently from the other (for the sake of simplicity, let us call it objective or stratificational) integration mechanisms. Social stratification and socio-demographic factors have also been proven to be limited for understanding political dimensions, party preference and the choice of political values. According to the authors, politics are not determined solely by the structure and state of the society. On the contrary, politics integrate society as well.

Considering the above, we investigated how members of Hungarian society experience the changes in their own social position and what factors have an impact on their experience. Do political party preferences influence individual views regarding mobility? In this study, we assumed that the answer to this question is yes. More specifically, we identified the following hypotheses:

- H1. Firstly, our main hypothesis is that political preferences impact subjective mobility: the more somebody sympathizes with the ruling party, the more they believe their own position has improved over recent years.
- H2. Secondly, we believe this connection applies to intra- as well as intergenerational mobility, albeit not to the same extent. Since intergenerational mobility uses parental social position as a frame of reference while intragenerational mobility passes judgement on the individual's own recent career, we assume party preference has a larger impact on the latter case.
- H3. Thirdly, we hypothesize that politics have a significant impact on subjective mobility. Furthermore, we believe that political affiliations may actually override the perception of objective factors as well as the evaluation of shifts in the dimensions of traditional mobility. We maintain this hypothesis for both intra- and intergenerational mobility.

Data and methods

The study is based on the large-scale sample survey conducted under the "Mobility Research Centre" project of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences' Cooperation Excellence Programme in the autumn of 2018.[1]

The subjective perception of mobility was measured with a set of questions where we asked respondents to, first, estimate their parents' position on the social ladder on a scale from 1 to 10 (at the respondent's age of 14) and second, locate themselves on that scale ten years prior to the survey (i.e., in 2008) and third, to determine their own current position on the scale. The questions were as follows:

Our society consists of people with different social status and lifestyle. Imagine a ladder the uppermost step of which represents the higher part of the society while the lower step means the lower part. On a scale from 1 to 10, please rate:

Which step of the ladder was your family on in your childhood (at the age of 14)?

And 10 years ago? (Only for those who were born in or before 1991)

Where would you place yourself on this ladder today?

According to their responses, individuals were considered intergenerationally immobile if they placed themselves at the same level as their parents, while they were identified as intragenerationally immobile if they gave the same score to their own social status now as ten years prior. For both inter- and intragenerational mobility we created a continuous variable ranging from -9 to +9, based on the variance between their current and previous social position. Negative values mean that the individual's subjective social position deteriorated, while positive values indicate an advancement. The greatest advantage of this solution is that it concurrently indicates the extent and vector of mobility, and it can be applied to building linear regression models as the variable is measured at a high level.

After discussing the key features of subjective mobility, below we test our base hypotheses through a linear regression analysis. For this purpose, we transformed the multi-step modelling strategy applied by Péter Róbert (1999) to suit our own special questions.

As the first step, we only involved party preference related variables in the analysis. We used them to find out whether our first hypothesis can be supported by some

1 The applied method was a personal survey questionnaire with 2700 successful interviews completed in the autumn of 2018. The target group was the adult (18+) population living in Hungary. Implemented by ZRI Závecz Research Institute, the sampling was carried out with a two-step, stratified probability process. The composition rate of the sampled individuals complies with the composition of the entire adult population in terms of the key socio-demographic indicators (gender, age group, school qualifications, type of settlement). The sampled population is Hungarian citizens living in Hungary, aged18 and up. The poll was commissioned by Mobility Research Centre. Project leader: Imre Kovách. (For more details, see: Szabó–Gerő 2019: 123–124.)

type of connection between party preferences and inter- and/or intragenerational subjective mobility. If our Hypothesis 1 is correct, pro-government voters will report a rise, whereas opposition voters are expected to report a fall on the social ladder. Furthermore, if H2 is also valid, the trend will be much more markedly manifested in intragenerational mobility than in intergenerational mobility. Looking at the party preferences of voters, we considered government parties as one unit (Fidesz, KDNP), but we created three blocks of opposition parties:

a) the traditional left-wing parties MSZP–P and DK[2], which ran in a kind of alliance in the 2018 national elections;
b) the 'new' liberal and green parties LMP[3] and Momentum[4], as justified by their similarities in terms of ideology and age group; and
c) right-wing and formerly radical Jobbik[5], which made no alliance with any of the parties mentioned here when running for the 2018 national elections.

We have considered the situation where the six opposition parties cooperated in the 2022 election campaign. However, our data is from 2018, when there was no political cooperation. And on the other hand, the six co-starter parties were heavily defeated in the 2022 election. As a result of the defeat, all aspects of collaboration fell apart.

As far as the next steps of the analysis were concerned, we involved further variables that could be instrumental in explaining subjective mobility. With regard to these steps, the main question was whether H1 and H2 correlations still apply if we involve other variables in the process.

The second step introduced the key socio-demographic variables into the model (gender, age, household size, type of settlement, labour market activity), so we could filter their effect and thus examine the correlation of subjective mobility and political affiliation.

In the third phase, we inserted objective data related to the individual's family origins and/or objective mobility, which were measured by the individual's and their father's occupational group. We assumed that these variables distinctly correlate with the perception of subjective mobility. Firstly, we expected individuals with a less favourable starting position to perceive a higher improvement in social status as they had more room to rise. Secondly, we hypothesized that objective occupational mobility is positively correlated with subjective mobility, i.e., individuals with improved occupational positions are more likely to feel a rise in their status. We analysed the 28+ age group because we wanted to make sure that the respondents were already adults (18+) at the time of their prior social position (ten years before the survey) used for investigating intragenerational subjective mobility. This limits the study in the

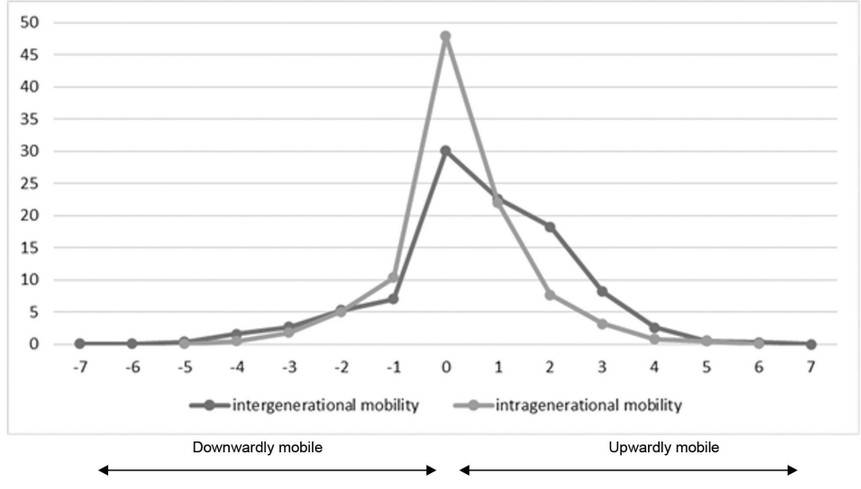
2 MSZP: Hungarian Social Party; DK: Democratic Coalition Party (Hungary); Párbeszéd: Dialogue for Hungary.
3 LMP: Politics Can Be Different Hungarian Green Party.
4 Momentum: Momentum Movement.
5 Jobbik: Jobbik Movement for a Better Hungary.

sense that the youngest age group, which also shows particular political behaviour, was left out of the analysis.

Intergenerational and intragenerational subjective mobility

With regard to the relation of objective and subjective mobility, we first found that there were huge variances between occupational mobility and the subjective perception of changing social positions in the 2010s as well. Our findings support Péter Róbert's conclusions (1999) related to the earlier period, but the vector of the variance is the opposite this time: while the latest intergenerational mobility studies show that Hungary's society became more closed, and in fact is one of the most closed ones in comparison with Europe(Bukodi et al. 2017, Jackson–Evans 2017, Eurofound 2017, OECD 2018, Róbert 2018, Tóth–Szelényi 2018, Huszár et al. 2022), subjective mobility indicators demonstrate the highest ever rate of respondents who believe their social status has improved (Huszár–Záhonyi 2018, Balogh et al. 2019). However, the intergenerational and intragenerational subjective mobility indicators show significant variances, as we discuss below. Figure 2 displays the distribution of the two subjective mobility variables. The trend lines of the two diagrams clearly demonstrate the difference between the two indicators.

Figure 2
Distribution of subjective inter- and intragenerational mobility in the 28+ age group (%)



Source: Mobility Research Centre, 2018.

The variance compared with their own position ten years prior shows a classic normal curve, i.e., it peaks in the middle and gradually diminishes, then flattens toward the edges. This means that the majority of respondents do not perceive significant mobility compared with their former position, neither upwards nor downwards. (Nevertheless, the perception of upward mobility is slightly higher (34%), 48% feel immobile, while 18% detect downward mobility). The mean value of intragenerational mobility is 0.24, so it is relatively close to zero, i.e., immobility.

The graph of perceived intergenerational mobility is completely different. The distribution leans to the right, i.e., to the positive, and it does not peak as much as the line diagram of the respondents' own career. This suggests that the majority (precisely 54%) of respondents feel their current status is better and their social position is more favourable than that of their parents. 28% are immobile while 18% are downwardly mobile. Consequently, the mean intergenerational mobility is 0.63 points, which is 2.5 times higher than that of intragenerational mobility.[6]

Comparing the two types of subjective mobility, it is significant that the rate of immobile respondents is considerably higher than upwardly mobile ones in terms of intragenerational mobility, while the rate of sinkers is identical in both types. The higher levels of immobility are easier to understand: there is a shorter time and less opportunity for individuals to change their social status within the time frame of their career. It is interesting, however, how the relative rate of downwardly and upwardly mobile individuals change in inter- vs. intragenerational comparison (see Table 1).

The table's "total" fields show that upwardly mobile individuals make up the majority in both types. Perhaps it is not an exaggeration to define them as "winners". The second largest groups (21% each) consist of individuals who feel their status remained unchanged compared with both their own position ten years prior and that of their parents, as well as those whose own situation remained the same, but feel upwardly mobile compared with their parents.

Based on their subjective mobility, those who feel downwardly mobile in both aspects (11%) can be considered as the "losers", since their situation changed for the worse compared with both their parents and their own position ten years before.

For us, the most interesting group consists of the respondents who feel that the past ten years have changed their mobility trajectory.

One such group is formed by individuals who reported a deterioration in generational comparison, but they feel their social status improved (or remained unchanged) compared with ten years ago. The other such group comprises those who sense a regression compared with their parents' and their own position ten years ago as well. The third group (12% of the respondents) contains individuals with downward intergenerational mobility but upward intragenerational mobility; they can clearly feel like the winners of the past decade.

6 By the way, the correlation of the two types of subjective mobility is significant and moderately strong (Pearson r=0.545).

Table 1
Distribution of inter- and intragenerational mobility in the 28+ age group (% distribution)

		%	Subjective intragenerational mobility			Total
			Downwardly mobile	Immobile	Upwardly mobile	
Subjective intergenerational mobility	Downwardly mobile	Row	59	29	12	100
		Column	59	11	6	18
		Total	11	5	2	18
	Immobile	Row	11	76	13	100
		Column	18	45	10	28
		Total	3	21	4	28
	Upwardly mobile	Row	8	39	53	100
		Column	23	44	84	54
		Total	4	21	29	54
	Total		18	48	34	
			100	100	100	

Pearson Chi2= 904.205, sig=0.000, Cramer's V=0.447 Correlation: 0.545
Source: Mobility Research Centre, 2018.

The largest share of the respondents who feel immobile compared with their parents considered themselves immobile in the past ten years as well (76%). However, 11% of the sample think their status deteriorated over the past ten years, while 13% believe it improved.

53% of the respondents with upward mobility compared with their parents reported an improved social status relative to their own situation ten years before, too. 39% reported an intergenerational improvement coupled with an unchanged social position over the past ten years, while 8% declared that their social status improved relative to their parents but deteriorated compared with their own position a decade prior.

We also asked how inter- and intragenerational mobility correlates with party preferences, if at all. We hypothesized that respondents with a dedication to the governing parties would particularly consider the past decade as a successful period. In other words, they connect their own status improvement with the political processes going on in Hungary. The ANOVA test is not suitable for analysing impacts (for which we used linear regression models in the next part of the study), but it certainly allows us to demonstrate the variance of opinions among the different preference groups (see Table 2).[7]

7 The applied statistical procedure examines the response variances between preference groups. More specifically, it shows the variances between the averages and the extents thereof.

Table 2
Inter- and intragenerational subjective mobility by party preference (total population, ANOVA, averages)

Accumulated party preference	Intergenerational mobility	Intragenerational mobility	Average age
Fidesz–KDNP (Fidesz-Christian Democratic Party)	.85	.38	49
Traditional centre-left and left-wing parties	.80	.17	56
Other parties	.64	.67	44
Jobbik	.45	-.02	42
Green, Liberal, new parties	.42	.24	43
Don't answer	.63	.23	48
Don't know	.52	.20	46
Would never attend	.34	.08	49
Total:	.63	.24	48

F=4.324, sig=0.000, eta2=0.012; The post hoc-LSD test is significant in terms of the voters of Fidesz–KDNP and Jobbik, green, liberal, new parties, the undecided, the "do not answer" group and those who are sure not to vote. There is also a significant difference between the traditional left-wing parties as well as Jobbik, green, liberal and new parties, the undecided and those who are sure they would not vote.

F=3.872, sig=0.000, eta2=0.012. The post hoc-LSD test is significant between Fidesz– KDNP, the traditional left-wing parties, Jobbik, the undecided voters and those who are sure they would not vote. Furthermore, the opinion of traditional left-wing parties differs from the other parties, beside Fidesz– KNDP. The voters of other parties have a different opinion than Jobbik, green, Liberal and the new parties' voters.

F=16.480, sig=0.000, eta2=0.041.

Source: Mobility Research Centre, 2018.

With regard to mobility compared to the parents' social position, we can identify two voter groups whose perceived subjective intergenerational mobility is significantly higher that the calculated average of the sample population: supporters of Fidesz–KDNP (0.85) and the traditional left-wing parties (MSZP, DK) (0.80). So, interestingly enough, both pro-government voters and the supporters of the two left-wing opposition parties believe their current status is higher than that of their parents. The two left-wing parties have the oldest voter base, so their age may have a distinct role in their perception of subjective mobility. Jobbik voters, non-voters and especially the supporters of small green and liberal parties demonstrated results with the opposite vector, i.e., below average and downward.

The perception of subjective mobility relative to their own earlier status shows a high value in voters for other small parties (upward mobility), but this value is negative in Jobbik voters, in other words, Jobbik supporters feel their societal movement was explicitly unfavourable over the prior ten years. The mean values of the ANOVA analysis, along with the related post hoc results, also indicate that Fidesz voters have

a consistently positive subjective mobility, i.e., they consider their current status to be higher than their parents' and their own earlier position.

The distribution of subjective mobility values (see the "total" rows in Table 1) demonstrates that the group of Fidesz– KDNP voters has the highest rate of "winners" (one third). Voters are considered winners if they view themselves as upwardly mobile both in terms of intergenerational and intragenerational mobility. Compared with the sample's distribution, the variance is four percentage points, so it exceeds the level of coincidence. In contrast, the rate of "losers", who perceive an unfavourable change in both dimensions of subjective mobility, is six percentage points lower in the pro-government voter group than in the entire sample. This 5% belongs to the Fidesz–KDNP voter base even though they consider their status to be worse in both dimensions of mobility. There was only one other category where we registered a change higher than the margin of error compared with the sample's distribution: immobility. 25% of Fidesz–KDNP voters believe their status is the same as that of their parents; they do not perceive a significant change.

Table 3
Correlation of inter- and intragenerational subjective mobility with voting for Fidesz–KDNP (%)

***p<0.01, **p<0.05	sample*	Fidesz–KDNP	Variance (Fidesz–KDNP sample)
Loser	11	5	-6***
Comp. parent downw., comp. self immobile	5	4	-1
Comp. parent downw., comp. self upw.	2	1	-1
Comp. parent immob., comp. self downw.	3	3	0
Immobile	21	25	+4**
Comp. parent: immob., comp. self upw.	4	3	-1
Comp. parent upw., comp. self downw.	4	3	-1
Comp. parent: upw., comp. self immob.	21	23	+2
Winner	29	33	+4**

**The values of the sample are identical with the "total" rows of Table 1.*

Source: Mobility Research Centre, 2018.

Determining factors of the perception of mobility

In addition to descriptive statistics, we applied linear regression analysis to investigate the factors that may explain why respondents' subjective social status changed relative to their parents and/or their own position (see Tables 4 and 5). What factors are instrumental in the respondents' subjectively improved social status and what factors are connected with the experience of sinking? Secondly, are our preliminary assumptions correct and does party preference have a role in respondents experiencing an improvement or a deterioration in their social status? Finally, do the analysed factors have a consistent effect in both intergenerational and intragenerational subjective mobility?

Table 4
Linear regression models of intergenerational subjective mobility

***p<0.01, **p<0.05	(Step 1)	(Step 2)	(Step 3)
Party preference (ref. unknown preference)			
Fidesz–KDNP	.102***	.101***	.106***
MSZP, DK, Párbeszéd	.043**	.043**	.044
Jobbik	-.001	-.003	-.003
Other small parties	.007	.008	.004
Gender		-.011	-.002
Age		.063**	.056
Household size		.061***	.049**
Lives in Budapest		.018	.025
Lives in village		.006	.001
Employed		.057**	.062**
Lineage (ref. unskilled labourer father)			
Father – manager, professional			-.048***
Father – other white collar			-.021
Father – skilled worker			.007
Father – semi-skilled worker			-.003
Occupational mobility			.112***
Adjusted R2	.008	.016	.028
N	2278	2278	2134

Source: Mobility Research Centre, 2018.

Table 5
Linear regression models of intragenerational subjective mobility

***p<0.01, **p<0.05	(Step 1)	(Step 2)	(Step 3)
Party preference (ref. unknown preference)			
Fidesz–KDNP	.076***	.079***	.077***
MSZP, DK, Párbeszéd	-.001	.026	.027
Jobbik	-.035	-.048**	-.049**
Other small parties	.064***	.054**	.062***
Gender		-.005	-.004
Age		-.087***	-.074**
Household size		.043	.053**
Lives in Budapest		-.010	-.008
Lives in village		.023	.027
Employed		.086***	.092***
Lineage (ref. unskilled labourer father)			
Father – manager, professional			-.006
Father – other white collar			.019
Father – skilled worker			.010
Father – semi-skilled worker			.014
Occupational mobility			.102***
Adjusted R2	.009	.037	.045
N	2286	2286	2141

Source: Mobility Research Centre, 2018.

Analysing the effect of different factors, we can firstly note that political affiliation (at least in terms of certain parties) independently impacts the individual perception of social status changes, even after the introduction of control variables. This impact remains present regardless of whether the respondents' current social status is compared with their parents' or their own status ten years ago. The impact's strength and vector validated our preliminary expectations in several aspects, but they contradicted it in certain others.

First: government supporters have the highest rate of subjectively improved social status, which is in line with our initial hypothesis. Furthermore, the impact of pro-government sentiment is one of the strongest among all the factors we included in the analysis. The second half of our initial hypothesis suggested that citizens with

an anti-government sentiment, i.e., opposition party supporters, were less likely to experience a subjective improvement in their social status, in fact, we expected them to report a deterioration. However, we did not lay down any preliminary hypothesis as to the potential variance among the supporters of the different opposition parties. With regard to the above, let us highlight three notable phenomena:

1. Analysing the supporters of opposition parties, we found that party preference among the voters of the (previous) establishment's parties, i.e., MSZP and DK, had a positive impact on their subjective intergenerational mobility, but it did not demonstrate a significant correlation with intragenerational mobility.
2. In contrast, no significant correlation was detected between party preference and subjective intergenerational mobility among the voters of small liberal and green parties (LMP, Momentum etc.), while we did find a positive correlation between their perceived intragenerational mobility and party preference. Consequently, the supporters of these parties, despite their opposition stance, feel their social status has improved during the ten years of Fidesz–KDNP governance.
3. Jobbik supporters did not demonstrate a significant correlation between intergenerational mobility and party preference, but there was a correlation between their affiliation and subjective intragenerational mobility. The model shows a negative correlation between voting for Jobbik and subjective intragenerational mobility. In other words, Jobbik voters do not feel their status changed (improved or deteriorated) relative to their parents, but they clearly consider themselves as the losers of the past ten years.

The findings confirm our initial hypothesis in terms of Jobbik voters, but they explicitly contradict it with regard to the supporters of left-wing and liberal parties who, despite their pro-opposition stance, still perceive an improvement in their status, albeit only when it is compared with their parents' earlier position. They certainly do not feel they are the losers of the past ten years. We also hypothesized that being a supporter of the governing parties would have a stronger impact on the respondents' subjective intragenerational mobility than on their perceived intergenerational mobility. We argued that the past decade roughly overlaps with Fidesz–KDNP's now more than two terms in government, so we expected the respondents' perceived change in social status to be more closely connected to their evaluation of the government's performance. This expectation did not proved incorrect: a pro-government stance is more closely connected to the intergenerational aspect of subjective mobility than the intragenerational one. As far as opposition party supporters were concerned, the findings only partly validated our preliminary expectations: while Jobbik voters demonstrated markedly negative evaluations of the past ten years, the supporters of other small parties considered their status to be better than ten years ago.

These contradictions may partly be explained by the other variables involved in the model, which may allow us to estimate the role of party preference in subjective mobility, compared with other factors. Of these variables, we found that family origin

had a weak effect, whereas occupational mobility had quite a strong impact, which was in line with our expectations. Occupational mobility was the strongest predictor of subjective mobility in both the intergenerational and the intragenerational aspect: whoever currently has a better occupational status than that of their parents or their own ten years ago was highly likely to feel that they have advanced in society. Labour market status also has a strong impact on both forms of subjective mobility: whoever is currently employed is more likely to feel they have advanced in society than the unemployed or the members of any inactive group. This variable's effect was particularly strong in intragenerational comparison, where it showed the second highest correlation with the dependent variable after occupational mobility.

Notably, age also had quite an interesting role in intra- and intergenerational mobility. When we introduced the respondents' age into the analysis of their intergenerational mobility in the second step, it showed a positive correlation with perceived mobility, i.e., the older the respondent, the more they feel their social status improved relative to their parents. However, this impact no longer proved significant after the third step, when we introduced family origin and mobility. In contrast, when it came to intragenerational mobility, age demonstrated a significant negative correlation with the dependent variable, i.e., younger respondents are more likely to feel their social status has improved. As far as intergenerational mobility is concerned, the correlation with age may arise from the fact that younger respondents simply had a shorter time to change their social status, but the correlation may suggest lower chances for mobility as well. With regard to intragenerational mobility, the previous decade may understandably have brought the biggest changes for young respondents, since this is the period when they leave school and start a career, which typically comes with fundamental changes in their social status. Furthermore, the age correlation may be largely explained by the fact that older respondents, who form the voter base of the traditional left-wing parties, are no longer involved in the labour market, so they are less likely to experience changes in their occupation and/or status. In contrast, a large number of the economically active voters in Fidesz–KDNP's base (average age: 49) may have perceived the benefits arising from the governance of the past years. However, it is also notable that the period we investigated in this study, i.e., ten years prior, exactly overlapped with the time of the global financial crisis and the subsequent economic boom that affected all developed countries. The labour market situation became more favourable not only in Hungary but in every EU member state, leading to increased employment rates and significantly diminished unemployment.[8] This is an external, structural impact that distinctly separates the different age groups, i.e., those who are not yet or no longer in the labour market from those who entered the labour market during this period or were always there.

8 See more here: https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Employment_statistics/hu.

Discussion and conclusions

This study investigates the characteristics of post-2010 subjective intergenerational and intragenerational mobility. We assumed that the supporters of the current governing parties were more likely to feel their social status improved than opposition voters. The most important finding of the study is that intragenerational and intergenerational mobility function differently: there are different mechanisms of action affecting the perception of the respondents' subjective mobility compared with their own status ten years ago than relative to the status of their parents.

Analysing the effect of the different factors, we concluded that political affiliation independently impacts how individuals perceive changes in their social status, even after the introduction of control variables. In accordance with our initial hypothesis, the supporters of the governing parties have the strongest perception of an improved social status. Furthermore, this effect is one of the strongest among all the factors we involved in the analysis. Contrary to our expectations, however, pro-Fidesz–KDNP sentiment more potently impacts subjective mobility when it is compared to the parents' position than relative to the respondent's own social status ten years prior. Also contrary to our initial hypothesis, MSZP–DK voters instead reported a rise in terms of their perceived intergenerational mobility.

Contrary to our expectation, party preference seemed to have a stronger impact on intergenerational mobility than intragenerational mobility, which may significantly be mainly due to labour market status. When comparing their own social status with that of their parents, respondents' pro-government stance was the second strongest factor after occupational mobility. However, when they compared it with the changes of their social status over the past ten years, occupational mobility was followed by employment status as the second strongest factor. This leads us to the conclusion that individuals who were or became inactive or unemployed during the past decade obviously did not feel that their social status improved regardless of their party preference.

Finally, in light of the findings, we should revisit the problem raised by Kelly and Kelly (2009), i.e., what causal relation is there between party preference and the perception of subjective mobility? Do pro-government voters cast their ballots for Fidesz–KDNP because they feel their social status improved or, on the contrary, do they feel they have advanced in society because their political affiliation makes them think so? Each phenomenon likely exists on its own, too, but they can also be interconnected. However, the findings of this study do not enable us to exactly identify cause and effect. If social status changes had a direct impact on party preference, it would mean that the party structure would increasingly be associated with socio-economic inequalities. Consequently, one side of the political spectrum would be characterized by a block of pro-government winners whose social status showed a tendency for improvement over the past period, while the opposition side would consist of disenfranchised losers. Although our study did find a higher rate of

winners by subjective mobility in the pro-Fidesz–KDNP group than in the sample's distribution, they still made up only one third of the two parties' voter base. So, they have a positive opinion on Fidesz' performance in government, but only one in three of them perceives a rising social status over the past decade.

We can assume that Hungary has recently seen the beginning of certain processes where winners and losers are increasingly concentrated on the government's and the opposition's side, respectively, but our knowledge of the party structure's progress shows a significantly more nuanced picture. Even though the social embeddedness of party preference increased around the 2018 elections according to Zsolt Enyedi and Róbert Tardos (2018), it would be an exaggeration to call Fidesz–KDNP the party of the winners, because Fidesz–KDNP's third consecutive two-thirds majority victory could never have happened without collecting votes from the "losers". The findings also showed that the unemployed and the economically inactive living in the peripheral regions, who are often typically called losers, form an important voter base for the governing parties. According to Tóka (2018b), the improvement of subjective economic well-being may very rapidly influence party preferences. He claims that, in addition to the structural factors, Fidesz–KDNP's 2018 election victory may have been indirectly affected by the Hungarian society's *"uniquely persistently … and unusually high"* level of consumer confidence (Tóka 2018: 371).

Structural factors may have a stronger effect in Jobbik's case. Jobbik's voter base has the highest rate of individuals who consider themselves as the losers of the past ten years. It is no coincidence that Jobbik made the most effort in the 2018 election campaign to reach out to the social groups that feel disenfranchised. However, opinions vary on how effectively they managed to reach out to the losers. Jobbik's loser-focused communication strategy was quite successful in the urban population of the impoverished industrial zones in the north-east of Hungary (Enyedi and Tardos 2018).

The phenomenon that party preference, subject to the existing highly stable party structure, shows a strong correlation with the respondents' perceived social mobility allows us to conclude that these subjective views are significantly influenced by the messages of the different political blocks, in addition to the objective changes, of course. This conclusion supports Gerő and Szabó's (2017, 2020) claim that political integration functions as an independent mechanism of integration in Hungary.

Fidesz-KDNP is able to integrate the society by creating a universal world view that is almost completely independent from objective socio-economic factors, which allows its voter base to get a clear point of reference (message) that supports and confirms their own convictions, existing opinions or helps them to dissolve their potential uncertainties. As a key component of their integration and disintegration strategy, the governing parties strive to integrate their own base while also disintegrating opposition voters as much as possible (see Gerő–Szabó 2020).

To achieve this goal, they try to convince citizens that Hungary has a favourable environment for social progress, so even if you cannot make giant leaps ahead, you

can still advance with baby steps, thanks to the government's performance. Therefore, the governing parties' integration strategy is selective; it does not involve the entire society of Hungary, but it still functions very efficiently; it has a leader, and it has a complex ideology which results in a pillared and strong voter base where other political players have only a minimal chance to enter. This process may also have been essential in the fourth two-thirds victory in 2022.

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Appendix

Table F1
Descriptive statistics of the variables used

	Mean	Distribution	Minimum	Maximum	N
Subjective mobility compared to parents	0.661	1.776	-8	7	2278
Subjective mobility compared to 10 years before	0.243	1.267	-5	6	2286
Fidesz voter	0.292	0.455	0	1	2369
MSZP, DK, Párbeszéd voter	0.103	0.304	0	1	2369
Jobbik voter	0.060	0.237	0	1	2369
Voter of other parties	0.056	0.230	0	1	2369
Unknown party preference	0.469	0.499	0	1	2369
Woman	0.536	0.499	0	1	2369
Age	51.439	14.879	28	95	2369
Household size	2.205	1.117	1	9	2369
Lives in Budapest	0.188	0.391	0	1	2369
Lives in a village	0.294	0.456	0	1	2369
Employed	0.666	0.472	0	1	2369
Father – manager, professional	0.110	0.313	0	1	2369
Father – other white collar	0.067	0.251	0	1	2369
Father – skilled worker	0.386	0.487	0	1	2369
Father – semi-skilled worker	0.125	0.331	0	1	2369
Father – unskilled worker	0.261	0.439	0	1	2369
Occupational mobility	0.630	2.011	-6	7	2210

Funding

This work was supported by the National Research Development and Innovation Office (Grant No. FK 131997) and the MTA Cooperation of Excellences Mobility Research Centre project.

Political polarization and political cleavages in the Hungarian society

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Introduction

The past decade has seen an unexpected process of de-democratization in Hungary. Now, more than a decade after Fidesz grabbed power and started its immediate attempts to weaken democratic institutions, there is a vast amount of literature trying to identify the new Hungarian regime, follow its course, and determine the main reasons behind its backsliding. Most of this literature, however, focuses on the institutional settings and political actors' work in this process. This is understandable, given the fast pace of institutional changes over the past years. However, despite the disputes about the precise label to describe the newly developed regime, by now it is unambiguous that the system is leaning toward an autocratic regime (Bozóki–Hegedűs 2018, Delbois-Corfield 2022).

Thus, the time has come to identify the social roots of the development of this regime.[1] Naturally, there might be a multitude of causes. There are causes that go back to the period preceding the 2010s elections, such as the low trust in institutions and the fragmented – and politically increasingly homogenous – social networks in Hungary (Angelusz–Tardos 2010, Boda–Medve-Bálint 2020, Hajdu 2012, Kmetty et al. 2018) the so-called triple (economic, political, and EU-integration) crisis of the late 2000s (Ágh 2013), and the insecurity they caused. Due to the political and economic crisis in 2006 and 2008, the social demand for populism increased, and the extreme right grew in strength (Pirro 2018, Tóth–Grajczjár 2015). Naturally, Fidesz, an actor in opposition at the time, exploited the multiple crisis, and made efforts to further sharpen political cleavages along the left-liberal vs. Christian-conservative lines (Enyedi 2005), establishing ties in the conservative, religious, local civil society (Greskovits 2020) in order to successfully enlarge its own electorate. After 2010, Fidesz transformed the media system, captured state institutions, and built a prop-

1 The research was supported by the projects *Civil society, enemy images and redistribution: The interplay between structural factors and political action in the process of de-democratization* (NKFIH-134768), and *The significance of class in a chaning perspective* (NKFIH 131997).

aganda machine to maintain its rule and legitimacy (Gerő–Sik 2022, Polyák 2019).

Interestingly, although there is a strong agreement in the literature that polarization is among the main causes of de-democratization, it is only partially studied in the Hungarian case. In this paper, we focus on almost twenty years of polarization tendencies. Polarization represents a cause and a consequence of de-democratization and leads to considering a wider phenomenon: the modes of social integration. As we have shown in our earlier studies on social and political integration (Gerő–Szabó 2017, Kovách et al. 2016, 2018), de-democratization is deeply connected to the mechanisms through which a society is integrated.

Yet, most studies focus only on political polarization or the polarization of opinions on a single issue. In this paper, our aim is descriptive: using ten waves of the European Social Survey (ESS), we analyze the polarization tendencies of the Hungarian society with regard to questions related to political and public policy issues. The ESS enables us to study polarization in a comprehensive way: political polarization in the strict sense, thus opinions about the political system, polarization tendencies related to wider state institutions, and polarization of attitudes on certain social issues, primarily not ones connected to party politics.

De-democratization and polarization

According to Bogaards (2018), de-democratization is a process in which the partial regimes of a democratic political system lose their functions, and their internal embeddedness weakens, or one or the other becomes dependent on the political elite. This concept is based on Merkel's theory of embedded democracy that defines five partial domains of a regime (2004). Each domain might suffer from a defection that results in a different type of 'defected' democracy. For example, the defection of the electoral system (the exclusion of citizens from voting) leads to *exclusive democracy;* when forces outside elected bodies, such as the military, have a veto regarding certain questions, it is a *domain democracy;* while a democracy where "constitutional norms have little binding impact on government actions" (p. 49) is labelled an *illiberal democracy.* These defections might be due to the socio-economic context (mainly inequalities, such as the extent of poverty and polarization), the limits of civil society and the public sphere, and the low density of international embeddedness. These elements of a democratic regime are mainly legal and political institutions and their relationship, surrounded by civil society and the social and economic environment.

One of the reasons of de-democratization, according to McCoy and Rahman or Charles Tilly, is growing polarization (McCoy–Rahman 2016, Tilly 2000, 2003) In simple words, the argument is that severe political polarization blocks communication between social groups and divides society into two blocks regarding each other as enemies. According to McCoy et al., this state of affairs in a society then allows politicians in power to legitimize attacks on the democratic institutions in the name

of their people, to defend them from the "Other". They define *"political polarization as a process whereby the normal multiplicity of differences in a society increasingly align along a single dimension, cross-cutting differences become instead reinforcing, and people increasingly perceive and describe politics and society in terms of 'Us' versus 'Them'"* (McCoy et al. 2018: 18). It is an important consequence of polarization that every difference between political camps could be explained by the identity of the two (or sometimes more) blocks.

The question is how these camps are built out of several parties' electorates or of social groups that identify with different values or interests. McCoy et al. (2018) argue that polarization is often an outcome of political entrepreneurs' actions aiming to highlight or emphasize existing political cleavages, or to create new ones. But still, how do they do this?

Charles Tilly (2000, 2003) proposed that there is a close relationship between the sharpness of boundaries between groups and processes of democratization (or de-democratization). He contended that categorical inequalities, understood as maintained and *"organized differences in advantages by gender, race, nationality, ethnicity, religion, community or similar classification categories"* (2003: 37) are central to the relationship between democratization and social structure. Where inequalities are larger, the chance of de-democratization is higher for several reasons, but his main point is that, intentionally or unintentionally, political actors always manipulate inequalities. We should emphasize that when Tilly uses the term "categorical inequalities" he refers not only to inequalities based on social, cultural, or economic capital but also to the strengthening or weakening of group boundaries.

The important feature of newly de-democratizing countries is that polarization processes are facilitated and exploited by the political elite. Tilly argues that political actors' impact on polarization processes is simply the outcome of their effort to maintain power. For example, even by applying a simple redistributive policy, they enforce or change group boundaries. However, although the ruling elite might have more possibility to facilitate polarization, it is not necessarily the only actor aiming at and benefiting from polarization. For example, Fidesz's efforts at polarizing Hungarian society before the party won the 2010 elections clearly helped it to seize power (Enyedi 2005, Greskovits 2020).

It is not difficult to see the connection between Tilly's proposal and the process of polarization. The process blocks communication between social groups and leads to distrust, animosity, and stronger homogeneity. With increasing polarization on the one hand, and increasing homogeneity on the other, from a certain point onwards, rather than traditional cleavages, it is identity that plays the most significant role in the realignment of society.

Tilly's idea and, later, McCoy's approach also emphasize political agency in creating polarization, which is different from the traditional approach to explaining the formation of a political system, since the mainstream approach of political sociology

assumes unidirectional causality between structural conditions (e.g., political cleavages and inequalities) and the configuration of politics (e.g., party systems, political strategies, certain policies, regime types, etc.).

Hungary is probably one of the most advanced cases of sharpened polarization: the evaluation of most of the important issues is based on political orientation (Vegetti 2019): evaluation of the state of democracy, level of corruption, the view on immigration, the trust in institutions andeven how one trusts in his/her own future, or immigration are all heavily influenced by political orientation. (Bognár et al. 2018, Gerő–Mikola 2020, Gerő–Szabó 2017, Janky 2020, Kmetty 2018, Susánszky et al. 2021). Recent studies of the elections reflect that responsiveness to the political communication of Fidesz, emphasizing enemy images and threats, defines almost exclusively whether someone votes for the incumbent or otherwise (Gerő–Sik 2022). Thus, the Fidesz electorate shows increasing homogeneity through the 2010s, and the only divide is the urban-rural one (living in a village vs. living in the capital). However, in defining the success of the incumbent, the political regime's contribution to maintaining one's economic status is an important aspect (Huszár 2022).

Data and methods

Data

We use ten waves of the Hungarian data of the European Social Survey (ESS ERIC, 2012, 2018a, 2018b, 2018c, 2018d, 2018e, 2018f, 2020, 2021, 2022). This dataset covers 20 years (2002-2021, collected approximately every two years).[2]

To measure political identification, we use an item where respondents are asked to place themselves on a left-right scale from 0 (left) to 10 (right). The scale is recoded into three categories: left (0–4), center (5), and right (6–10). We use the left-right scale because the party system underwent significant changes during the period analyzed. Although the position on the left-right scale is difficult to represent as a clear ideological position, it is often used as an indicator of polarization, as it can be used as an indicator of the pro- or anti-government position, whether we look at the period before 2010 or after 2010 (Vegetti 2019).

To describe the dynamics of polarization and cleavage formation, we use two sets of dependent variables:

1. Attitudes towards the state and politics
   a. Satisfaction with the national government
   b. Satisfaction with democracy
   c. Trust in institutions (politicians and parliament; the legal system, and the police)

2 The Hungarian surveys were conducted in 2002, 2005, 2006, 2009, 2010, 2012, 2015, 2017, 2019, and 2021.

2. Attitudes towards certain policy areas
   a. Satisfaction with the state of the economy
   b. Opinion on the state of health services
   c. Opinion on the state of education
   d. Opinion on immigration

Satisfaction questions were measured on an 11-point scale (ranging from 0 – extremely dissatisfied to 10 – extremely satisfied).[3] Opinions on the state of the health services and education were also measured on an 11-point scale (ranging from 0 – extremely bad to 10 – extremely good).[4] Trust was measured on an 11-point scale (ranging from 0 – no trust at all to 10 – complete trust).[5] When measuring trust in politicians and parliament and when measuring trust in the legal system and the police, the mean of the two responses was used. We measured opinions on immigration with two sets of questions. First, respondents were asked whether they would allow people of the same race or ethnic group, people of a different race or ethnic group, and people from poorer countries in Europe to come and live in Hungary.[6] The variable of rejection of immigrants measured the number of responses in which the respondent would not allow any people to live in the country (ranging 0 to 3). Second, using three questions, we measured attitude toward immigration. Respondents were asked whether immigrants are generally good or bad for the country's economy, culture, and whether they make the country a better or worse place to live.[7] They answered the questions on 11-point scales (ranging from 0 – negative attitudes to 10 – positive attitudes). The mean of the three responses was used.

We exclude observations with missing age or sex variables (n=16) and observations with missing answers on the position on the left-right scale (n=2789). The final sample size is 13,837. Summary statistics are reported in Table A1 in the Supplementary Materials.

3 *"Thinking about the Hungarian government, how satisfied are you with the way it is doing its job?", "Overall, how satisfied are you with the way democracy works in Hungary?", "Overall, how satisfied are you with the present state of the economy in Hungary?"*

4 *"What do you think overall about the state of health services in Hungary nowadays?", "What do you think overall about the state of education in Hungary nowadays?"*

5 *"Please evaluate on a scale of 0-10 how much you personally trust each of the institutions."*

6 *"To what extent do you think Hungary should allow people of the same race or ethnic group as most Hungarians to come and live here?", "How about people of a different race or ethnic group from most Hungarian people?", "And how about people from poorer countries in Europe?"*

7 *"Would you say it is generally bad or good for Hungary's economy that people come to live here from other countries?", "Would you say that Hungary's cultural life is generally undermined or enriched by people coming to live here from other countries?", "Is Hungary made a worse or a better place to live by people coming to live here from other countries?"*

Empirical Strategy

Since we want to detect and describe the dynamics of polarization and cleavage formation over time, we are interested in how the differences in the dependent variables between respondents who identify themselves as right-wing and as left-wing changed over the 20 years.

We estimate the following equation via ordinary least squares:

$$Y_{it} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 R_{it} + \beta_2 C_{it} + \gamma \boldsymbol{T}_{it} + \tau R_{it} \cdot \boldsymbol{T}_{it} + \varphi C_{it} \cdot \boldsymbol{T}_{it} + \omega \boldsymbol{X}_{it} + \varepsilon_{it},$$

where Y_{it} denotes the dependent variable for individual i at time t. R_{it} is an indicator variable that takes the value of 1 if the respondent identifies as right-wing, and the value of 0 otherwise, and C_{it} is an indicator variable that takes the value of 1 if respondents place themselves in the center of the left-right scale, and the value of 0 otherwise. $\boldsymbol{T}_{it}$ is a vector of indicator variables for each year of data collection. Since the composition of the right, the center, and the left may have changed over time, $\boldsymbol{X}_{it}$ is a vector of the personal characteristics of individual i.[8] We use post-stratification weights provided by the ESS. The standard errors are robust to heteroscedasticity.

We present the results by showing predicted levels of the dependent variables for the left, the center, and the right.[9]

Important political events between 2002 and 2021

The period examined was rather tumultuous for Hungarian politics and society. The Hungarian political system was seen as a stable two-block system: One of the blocks consisted of the Hungarian Socialist Party (MSZP) and the Union of Free Democrats (SZDSZ), while the other was an alliance of conservative parties. Thus, after 2002, when Fidesz lost the elections, it stood as the only challenger of the MSZP–SZDSZ coalition. The MSZP-SZDSZ coalition was re-elected in 2006, but the party system went through subsequent changes until 2010: SZDSZ left the coalition in 2008, MSZP lost the majority of its electorate, the extreme right JOBBIK party became the third strongest party and a new green party (Politics Can Be Different) emerged. These changes were apparent in the 2010 elections, when Fidesz gained a supermajority, SZDSZ fell out of parliament, while the new parties gained seats (Horváth–Soós 2015).

Since 2010, Fidesz has achieved a supermajority in each of the elections. Formally, it governs in coalition with the Christian Democratic People's Party (KDNP). However, practically, it is a one-party government: KDNP has never run independently in the elections since 2010 and has never questioned its loyalty to the prime minister. The prime minister is Viktor Orbán, the unquestionable leader of Fidesz (Körösényi et al. 2020). Apart from the elections, the period is marked by events of great importance: First, in 2004, Hungary joined the European Union. Then, in 2006, there was

8 Age, sex, marital status, education, occupation, subjective health, minority status, household income, household size, type of settlement, region. Dummies for missing regressors are included.

9 The detailed results are shown in Table A2 – Table A10 in the Supplementary Materials.

a political crisis when a speech by Ferenc Gyurcsány, the then prime minister and president of the re-elected Hungarian Socialist Party, was leaked, admitting that the socialist government had been lying throughout the previous period about the country's economic situation.

Violent protests erupted, and the police also reacted violently. The situation contributed to the rise of the extreme right and also supported Fidesz's claim against the government. On top of the political crisis, the global economic crisis emerged in 2008, further eroding trust in state institutions and the government (Ágh 2013, 2016).

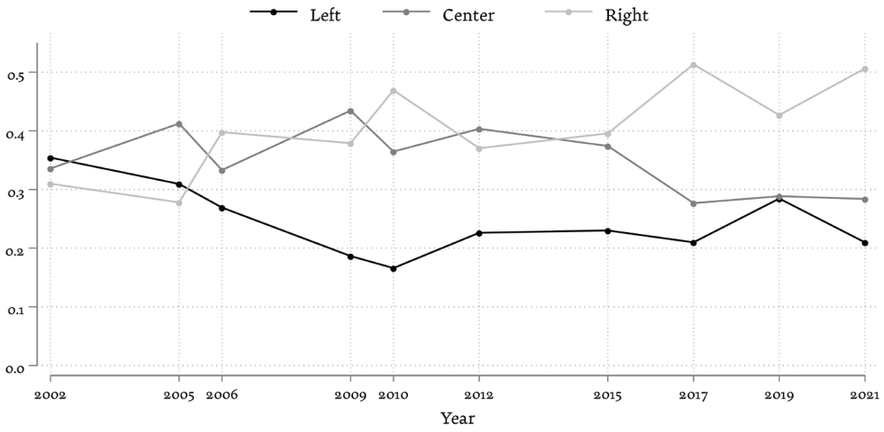
After gaining its first supermajority, already in 2011, Fidesz initiated the transformation of the legal and political system, adopting a new constitution, a new media law, and a new law on local and national elections (Bogaards 2018). However, in 2014-2015, when the popularity of Fidesz started to decline, they turned to a populist mode of governance, mainly based on campaigns that created enemy images. Since then, campaigns against immigrants, George Soros, Brussels, civil society actors, and the LGBTIQQ community have taken place (Bajomi-Lázár 2019, Bocskor 2018, Bognár et al. 2018, Gerő–Sík 2022). With the so-called migration crisis in 2015, Fidesz also initiated the state of emergency, which has been in place ever since, allowing faster and less controlled legislation procedures and supporting the constant crisis communication, thereby controlling public discourse (Illés–Körösényi 2017). Although the Covid 19 crisis hit Hungary unexpectedly, as well as the Russian war in Ukraine, Fidesz was able to take control: during the pandemic, it managed to introduce more centralization, and in relation to the Russian war in Ukraine, it slowly turned Fidesz voters' opinion from an anti-Russian towards a pro-Russian stance, further polarizing the society (Batory 2022, Bíró-Nagy et al. 2022)

Results

The left-right self-identification

First, in Figure 1, we show how the share of respondents identifying themselves as right-wing, center, and left-wing changed in the ten waves of the ESS. The first and most visible change is the rightward shift of the Hungarian population. The proportion of people positioning themselves on the right side of the scale increases throughout the period under study went from 31% in 2002 to 51% in 2021. Parallel to the increasing share of the right, the share of the center and the left decreases: the center decreases from about 35–40% in the first half of the period to 28% in 2021. Between 2002 and 2010, the left lost about half of those who positioned themselves on the left side of the scale. After 2010, the left's share remained largely stable, rising to the 20–23% level.

Figure 1
Shares of right, center, and left between 2002 and 2021



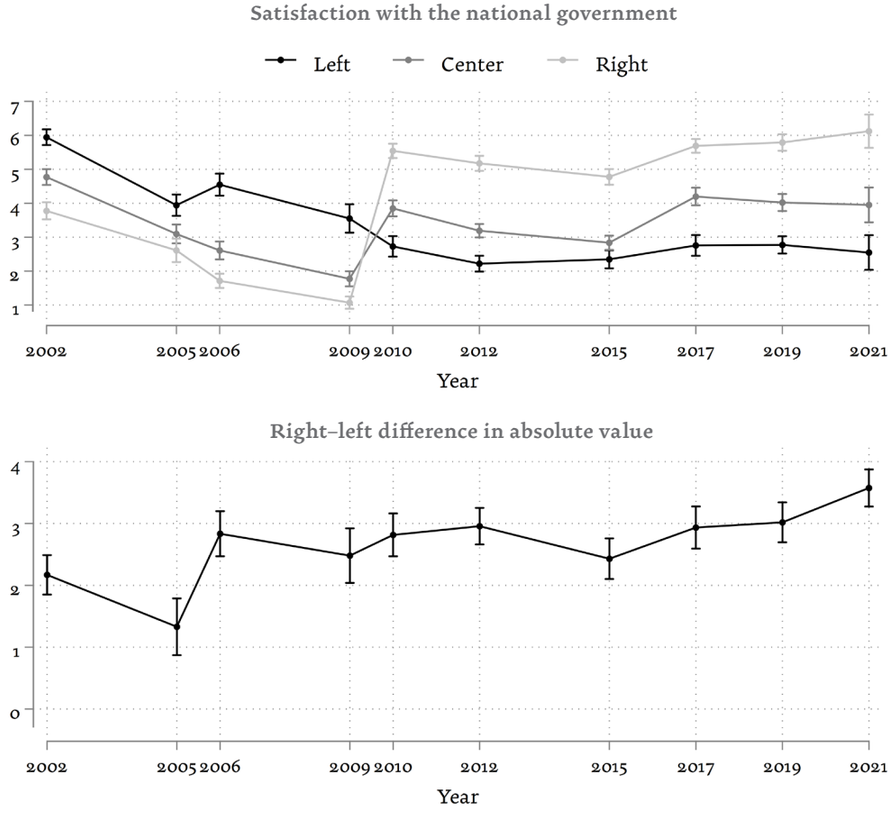
Attitudes towards the State and politics

The decreasing proportion of the center might (in itself) indicate a polarizing tendency, but it may simply be a sign of a shift to the right in society. Thus, according to the definition of McCoy et al. (2018) applied above, political polarization should be characterized by the alignment of a range of opinions with political affiliation. The first set of opinions is the closest to politics: satisfaction with the national government, satisfaction with democracy, and trust in institutions.

Figure 2 shows the polarization trends in satisfaction with the national government. The first panel in Figure 2 displays how satisfaction of the left, the center, and the right changed between 2002 and 2021. The second panel displays the satisfaction difference between the right and the left in absolute value.

The left was more satisfied than the right as a left-liberal coalition governed the country between 2002 and 2010, however it is worth noting that, between 2002 and 2009, there was a downward tendency in the satisfaction of each of the three groups. After 2010, Fidesz governments were elected, therefore, the right was more satisfied with the national government. Since satisfaction with the government is closely related to the position on the left-right scale, it is not surprising that even prior to 2006 there was a large difference of about 2 points between those who identified themselves as right-wing and as left-wing. However, there was a huge increase in the difference between the satisfaction of the right and the left in 2006 (2.8 points). In 2009, the difference dropped somewhat (however, the change is statistically insignificant, p= 0.225). After 2010, the right-left difference (in absolute value) stabilized at the 2006 level, going even higher in 2021. In other words, after 2010, the level of polarization

Figure 2
Polarization trends in satisfaction with the national government

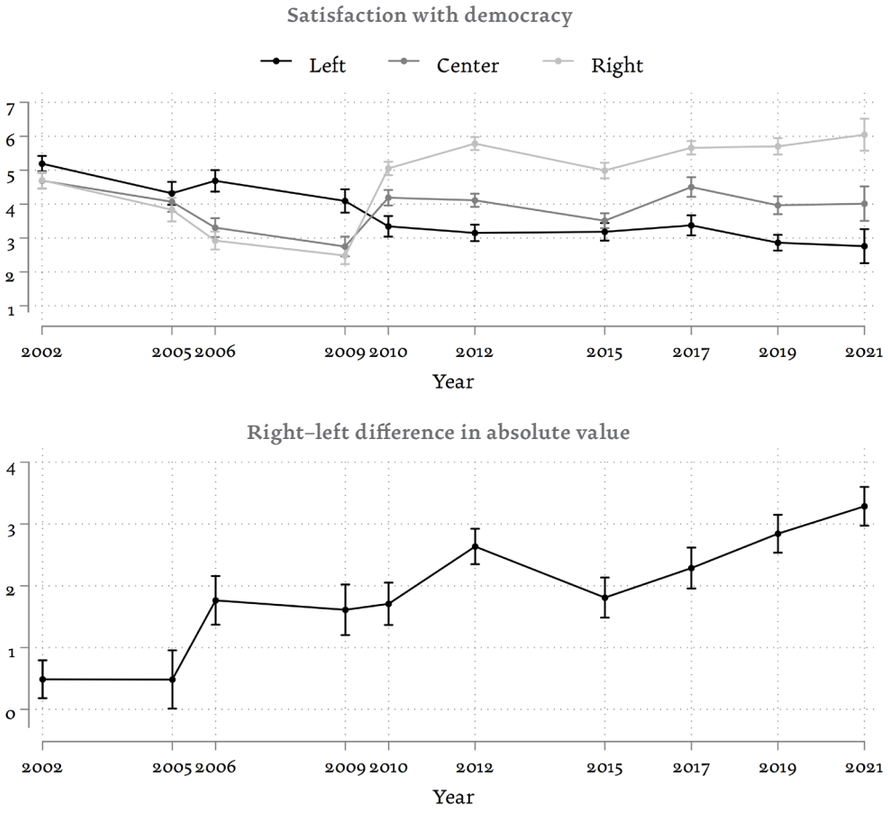


Notes: Satisfaction with the national government was measured on an 11-point scale (0 – extremely dissatisfied, 10 – extremely satisfied). The first panel in the figure shows predicted levels of satisfaction by position on the left-right scale. The figure depicts average adjusted predictions based on Equation (1). The second panel in the figure shows the right-left differences in predicted levels of satisfactions in absolute value. The error bars represent 95% confidence intervals.

was similar to that after the extraordinary 2006 event in Hungarian politics, and in 2021 opinions seem to have been even more divided.

Figure 3 shows the polarization trends in satisfaction with democracy. The overall trends were mostly similar to the trend in the satisfaction with the government. Those whose position on the left-right scale was similar to the position of the government were more satisfied. However, differences between the right and the left, prior to 2006, were smaller, about 0.5 point, than the differences in satisfaction with the

Figure 3
Polarization trends in satisfaction with democracy

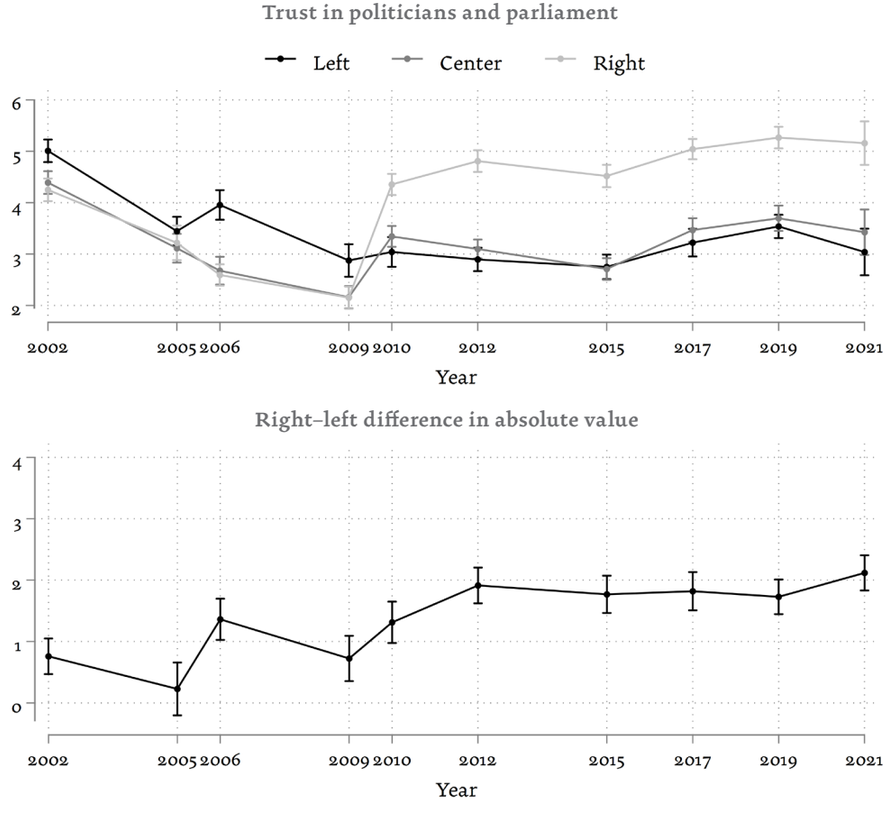


Notes: Satisfaction with democracy was measured on an 11-point scale (0 – extremely dissatisfied, 10 – extremely satisfied). The first panel in the figure shows predicted levels of satisfaction by position on the left-right scale. The figure depicts average adjusted predictions based on Equation (1). The second panel in the figure shows the right-left differences in predicted levels of satisfactions. The error bars represent 95% confidence intervals.

government. After 2006, the difference increased to 1.6–1.8 points, and this fairly large difference increased more after 2010, reaching the level of 3.3 points in 2021. (Remember, respondents were asked to rate their satisfaction on an 11-point scale!) This means that the evaluation of the current state of democracy is closely related to the position of the left-right scale. Those on the right and on the left seem to perceive a completely different picture.

Figure 4 shows how trust in politicians and parliament changed between 2002 and 2021 by the position of the left-right scale. There are three remarkable elements

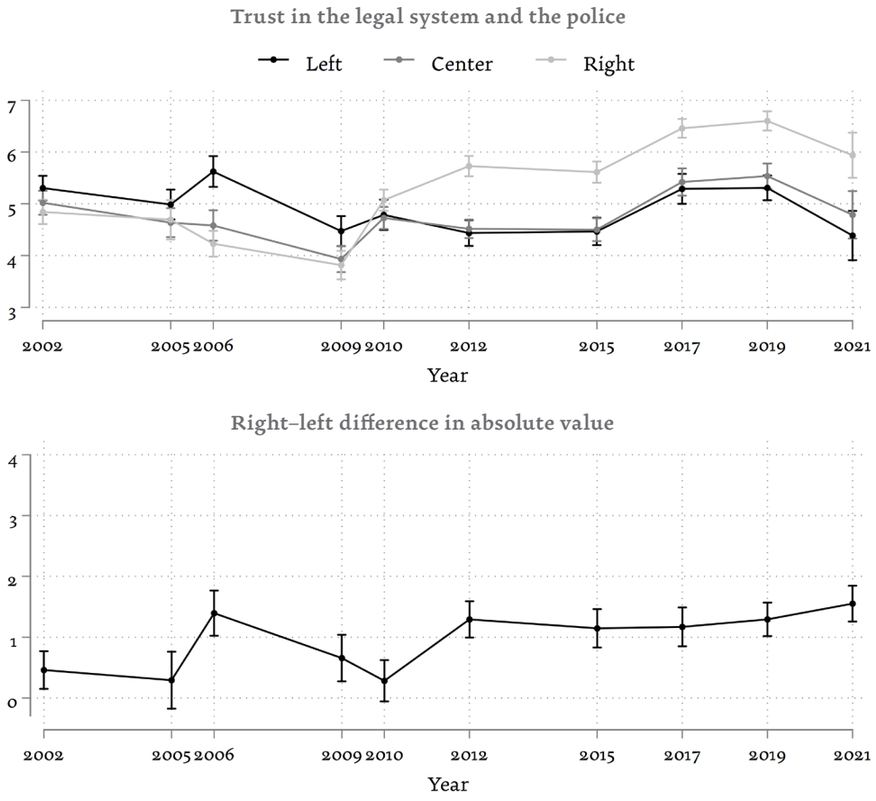
Figure 4
Polarization trends in trust in politicians and parliament



Notes: Trust in politicians and parliament ranges from 0 (no trust at all) to 10 (complete trust). The first panel in the figure shows predicted levels of trust by position on the left–right scale. The figure depicts average adjusted predictions based on Equation (1). The second panel in the figure shows the right-left differences in predicted levels of trusts. The error bars represent 95% confidence intervals.

of the graph. First, between 2002 and 2010, there was a large downward trend in each of the three groups. Second, between 2005 and 2006, there was a large, 1.1-point increase in the right-left difference (p=0.000). About half of this increase was diminishing in 2009 (p=0.012), reflecting the unusual characteristics of the 2006 political events. Third, after 2010, polarization was much higher. The difference between the two groups increased to the level of 1.7–1.9 points in 2012–2019, and to 2.1 points by 2021. This means that the difference in trust in the two groups on the two sides of the left-right scale is 50% larger than in 2006.

Figure 5
Polarization trends in trust in the legal system and the police



Notes: Trust in the legal system and the police ranges from 0 (no trust at all) to 10 (complete trust). The first panel in the figure shows predicted levels of trust by position on the left-right scale. The figure depicts average adjusted predictions based on Equation (1). The second panel in the figure shows the right-left differences in predicted levels of trusts. The error bars represent 95% confidence intervals.

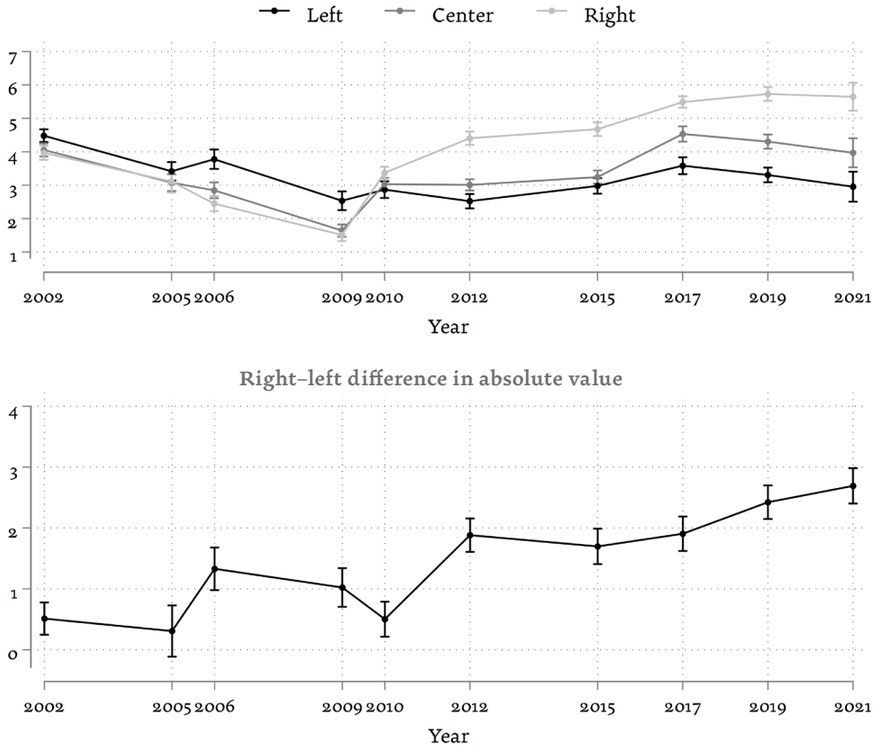
Figure 5 shows polarization trends in trust in the legal system and the police. The overall picture is similar to trust in politicians and parliament. Before 2006, there were small differences by political orientation. In 2006, we see a large increase, and a gradual return to pre-2006 levels by 2010. Subsequently, the right-left gap widened again and stabilized around the 2006 level. Given that in the 2006 the evaluation of the police's work was highly controversial because of previously unprecedented violence, this level of polarization can be considered high.

Attitudes to policy areas

When answering the question about satisfaction with the state of the economy, respondents may interpret it as an indicator of a country's performance, and its interpretation may be confused with the possibility of an increase in living standards. The first panel in Figure 6 shows that – similarly to other satisfaction items – under a left-wing government, left-wingers are more satisfied, while under a right-wing government, right-wingers are more satisfied.

The second panel in Figure 6 shows that, prior to 2010, differences in satisfaction with the economy were small, however in 2006 they started to diverge according to

Figure 6
Satisfaction with the state of the economy

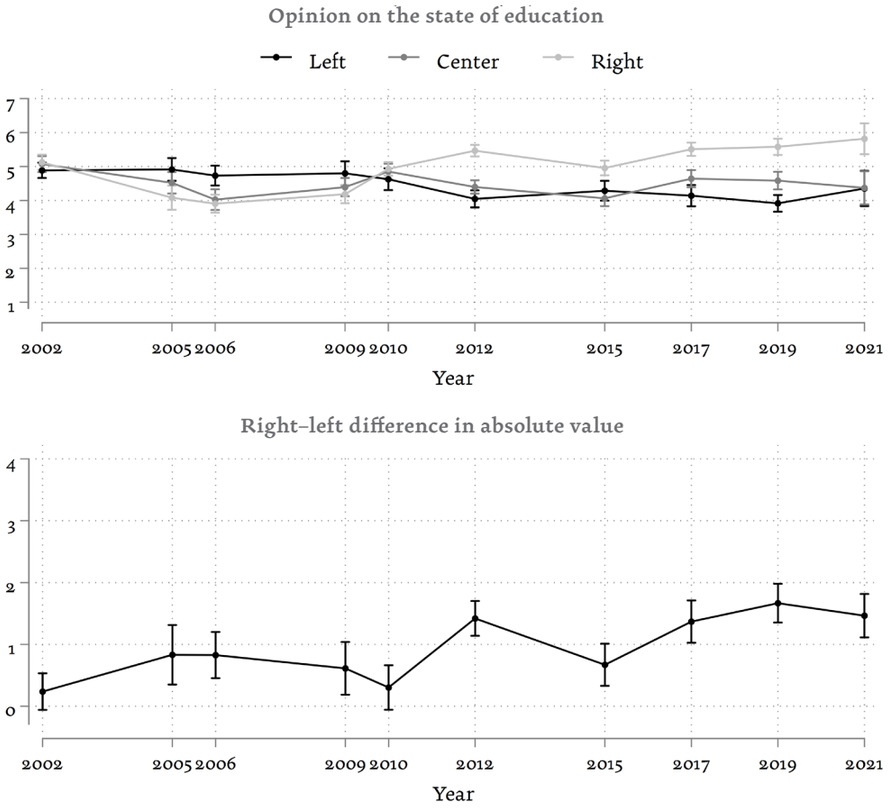


Notes: Satisfaction with the state of the economy was measured on an 11-point scale (0 – extremely dissatisfied, 10 – extremely satisfied). The first panel in the figure shows predicted levels of satisfaction by position on the left–right scale. The figure depicts average adjusted predictions based on Equation (1). The second panel in the figure shows the right-left differences in predicted levels of satisfactions. The error bars represent 95% confidence intervals.

political orientation. After 2010, however, these emerging differences grew much larger, and the divergence continues until 2021. In 2021, the difference in the satisfaction of respondents identifying themselves as right-wing and as left-wing is 2.7 points, which is highly substantial given that respondents had to rate their satisfaction on an 11-point scale.

Figure 7 shows polarization trends in opinions on the state of the education. Education (and health care even more) is a system that a sizable number of citizens have experience of, through their families or themselves. Thus, it could be assumed that

Figure 7
Polarization trends in opinions on the state of the education



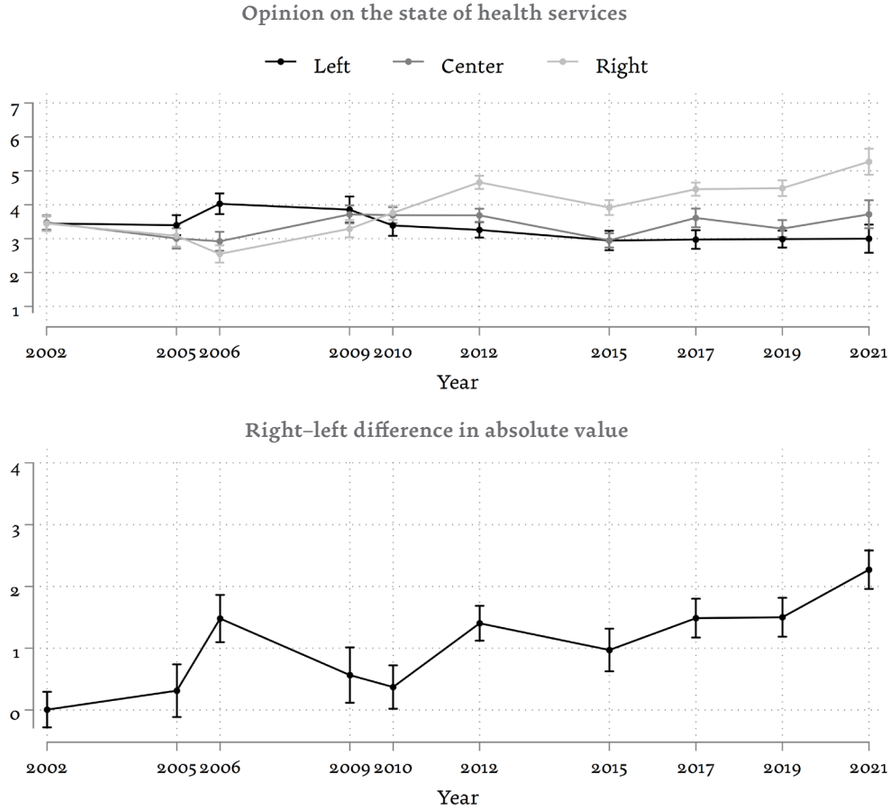
Notes: Opinion on the state of education was measured on an 11-point scale (0 – extremely bad, 10 – extremely good). The first panel in the figure shows predicted levels of satisfaction by position on the left-right scale. The figure depicts average adjusted predictions based on Equation (1). The second panel in the figure shows the right-left differences in predicted levels of satisfactions. The error bars represent 95% confidence intervals.

the divergence will be smaller than in other cases. Earlier research suggests that although these policy areas have recently been contested, political affiliation does not affect them the way it affects other areas (Gerő–Sik 2022).

Indeed, polarization of opinions in relation to education is not as strong as in the case of democracy or the economy. However, it is again worth noting that the polarization between the left and the right strengthened after 2010.

Figure 8 displays trends in opinions on the state of the health services between 2002 and 2021 similarly to trends in opinions on the state of education. It is a notable

Figure 8
Polarization trends in opinions on the state of the health services

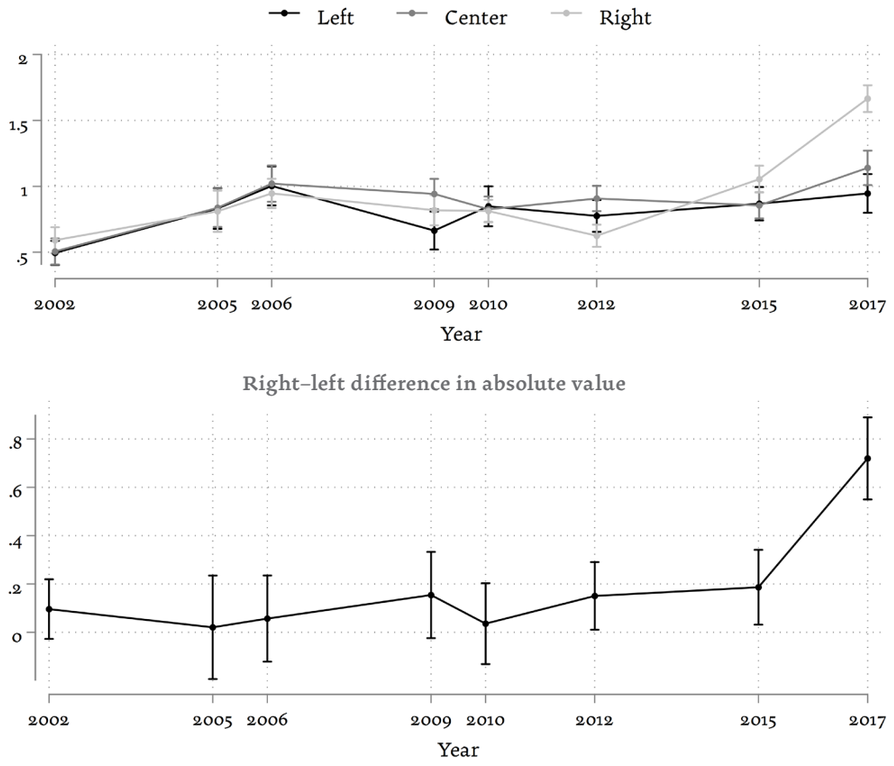


Notes: Opinion on the state of health services was measured on an 11-point scale (0 – extremely bad, 10 – extremely good). The first panel in the figure shows predicted levels of satisfaction by position on the left-right scale. The figure depicts average adjusted predictions based on Equation (1). The second panel in the figure shows the right–left differences in predicted levels of satisfactions. The error bars represent 95% confidence intervals.

difference that polarization tendencies appear to be much stronger. In 2002 and 2005, there were only minor differences between the satisfaction of the right and the left. By 2006, the gap widened to 1.5 points, and by 2010 narrowed significantly. After 2010, it rose to the 2006 level, and in 2021 it was even higher, reaching 2.3 points.

Questions on the rejection of immigrants are included in a uniform way in ESS questionnaires until 2017. According to Figure 9, until 2015, there are only small differences between the left and the right, then – most likely due to the government's anti-refugee campaign in 2015 – the right–left difference increased dramatically.

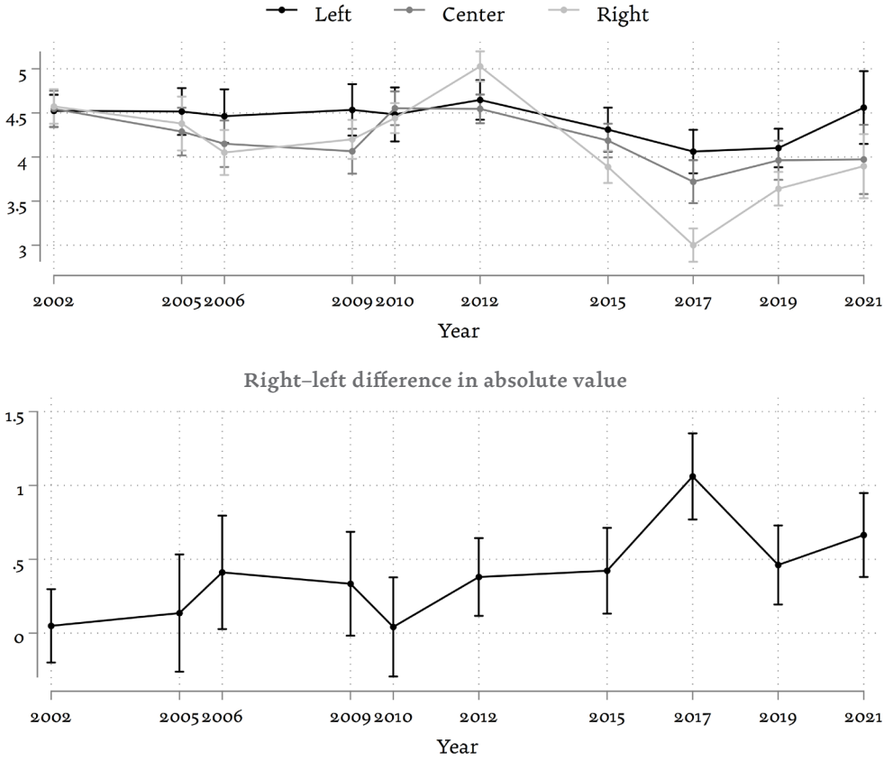
Figure 9
Polarization trends in rejection of immigrants



Notes: The variable "rejection of immigrants" ranges from 0 (low level of rejection) to 3 (high level of rejection). The first panel in the figure shows predicted levels of rejection of immigrants by position on the left-right scale. The figure depicts average adjusted predictions based on Equation (1). The second panel in the figure shows the right-left differences in predicted levels of rejection of immigrants. The error bars represent 95% confidence intervals.

Data on the attitudes toward immigration are available for the entire period. Figure 10 depicts the polarization trends. The dynamics are similar to those shown in Figure 9. Before 2015, there are only small changes and minor differences between the right and the left. In 2017, there is a large increase in the anti-immigrant attitudes of the right. By 2021, the attitudes of the right are still more negative than those of the left.

Figure 10
Polarization trends in attitudes toward immigration



Notes: Attitudes toward immigration range from 0 (negative attitudes) to 10 (positive attitudes). The first panel in the figure shows predicted levels of attitudes toward immigration by position on the left–right scale. The figure depicts average adjusted predictions based on Equation (1). The second panel in the figure shows the right–left differences in predicted levels of attitudes toward immigration. The error bars represent 95% confidence intervals.

Summary and conclusions

This paper aimed to present the processes of political polarization in the Hungarian society. The data shows that, in most cases, opinions are strongly related to political orientation: when the government's political orientation changes, satisfaction, trust in the state, or the state's policies also change. In these cases, the variously leaning groups reverse places.

Second, in most cases the distance between left and right-wing groups widened throughout a period. This tendency might have started prior to 2010 (mainly in 2006) but accelerated after Fidesz had won the elections in 2010.

The data introduced above shows strong similarity for the three types of opinion: Whether we examine opinions about the political system (politicians, parliament, and satisfaction with democracy), attitudes towards less political state institutions (police, legal system), policy areas (economy, health. and education), or immigration, there seem to be similar tendencies in the polarization of opinions. The main tendency is that of increasing polarization: thus, not only do supporters of the incumbents have a more positive opinion, while members of the opposition's electorate have a more negative opinion, but the distance between them is growing, mainly in two waves - after 2006 and after 2015.

The first "event" polarizing the public were the scandal of the leaked speech of Prime Minister Gyurcsány and the subsequent protests in 2006. Right-wingers' opinions dropped significantly, while left-wingers became more supportive of the state. However, there are exceptions: in the case of education, left-wingers' opinions did not change substantially, but the center and right-wing supporters' opinions decreased. Immigration is a clear exception: it was not in the forefront of public discourse, thus, left, right, and center had similar opinions about rejecting immigrants.

Already in 2006, trust in politicians and parliament is polarized, however all the groups grew less satisfied with the political institutions, only the center and the right were even more dissatisfied than the left. 2010 marked a sudden change in the position of the left and right, with right-wing supporters becoming supportive of almost everything; the one exception is immigration, where left and right moved together until 2015.

The second wave of polarizing came in 2015: this year, the government initiated its anti-immigration campaign, which caused immediate changes in attitudes. The significance of this campaign is shown in other figures though: not only did attitudes towards immigrants change, but the distance between the left and right also started to grow in practically all areas.

The polarization trends discussed above mark two types of tendencies: first, when an event pushes different political camps into two directions: this happened with the legal system in 2006, and with the state of the economy after 2015. The other way of polarizing is to change the supporters' opinions, as it happened, for example, in the

case of immigration or education. Left-wingers' opinion did not change considerably, but right-wing supporters appeared to be much more supportive of the government's policies.

Both "waves" of polarization show events perceived as crises at the time. The events of 2006 were seen as a political crisis, while in 2015, the immigration crisis was perceived as an external shock (see Illés–Körösényi 2017). However, both involved the strong agency of Fidesz, either from the opposition, or from the government. Further research is tasked with exploring the consequences of the different tendencies of polarization to see if the two camps are pushed into different directions, or one of the camps changes, and the role of the various types of crises in polarizing the political community.

Supplementary Materials

Supplementary Materials are available at https://osf.io/n7ps2.

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Do settlement forms determine family forms in Hungary?

Characteristics of family structure in urban and rural households

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Introduction

The diversity of family systems and the complexity of processes and changes make it almost impossible to provide a comprehensive picture of the (re)shaping of family structures and the forces behind them. This paper therefore only deals with a small slice of this issue, namely family structure characteristics that can be described through differences in individual perceptions and subjective satisfaction levels within different family structures. After a theoretical introduction, the most important features of the data collection on which the research is based are described, as well as the variables illustrating the different patterns of cohabitation and the methodological procedures used. The data collection for the analysis was carried out in 2018 within the framework of the Mobility Research Centre of Excellence Cooperation Programme. The focus of our analysis is on the combined interpretation of family characteristics (class position, satisfaction, livelihood security, progress, etc.), as assessed subjectively by family members, and their variation within family cohabitation patterns defined by different settlement types. In this set of results, we present formal patterns of family cohabitation based on place of residence, material well-being and subjectively perceived status position. We interpret the mobility trajectories experienced in each family structure relative to the status of the family members as children and relative to their status 10 years previously, in relation to other characteristics of families experiencing stagnant, upward or downward mobility. The ultimate aim of the study is to construct typical Hungarian family types that can be cluster analysed on the basis of settlement type, number of family members, marital status, educational attainment and subjective class position. The results show that four family types can be distinguished according to the given criteria, which are suitable for typifying Hungarian families in the developed approach.

Theoretical foundations

Until today, the nuclear family model of the 1950s has defined its social, legal and religious vocabulary and identified itself with a narrow family form consisting exclusively of parents and their children living in a common household. The model of the breadwinner husband, the housewife and their children is now only true of a very small proportion of families (Fields 2004). The spread of the two-earner family model, the slow transformation, sometimes disappearance, or even the reversal of traditional roles, has become a feature of the family, and previously unknown family forms are becoming more typical, such as single-parent families, three-generation families, mosaic families or even homosexual cohabitation and marriage. Recently, the concept of households has also gained importance, which, including non-family arrangements, can be understood as a more comprehensive system than the family. The twentieth century also saw a reduction in the number of people living in a household and a simplification of its structure. Multi-generational cohabitation has slowly disappeared, while the number of single-parent households has increased significantly (Fields 2004). In the most typical household type of the twenty-first century, two adults living together without children is now the most common (either because no children have yet been born or because the adult children have moved away). Families have lost their rigid structure and the people living in them are making fewer and fewer life-long decisions. It is no longer uncommon for individuals to reassess their earlier family-related decisions throughout their lives. Of course, these decisions are not independent of the social pressures, norms and beliefs of society or its structural constraints that influence them. However, this process also works in the opposite direction: individuals can influence their environment and generate social change (Smock-Gupta 2002). Today, the gap between familist and individualist values constitutes the most intense debate on families. The coexistence of communal and individual values, the paradox of permanence and change, seems to be an insoluble conflict (Bengston–Biblarz–Roberts 2007). Longer life expectancy and declining birth rates indicate that the adult population is spending less and less time raising children (Cherlin 2005). In this context, some authors (Popenoe–Whitehead 2005, McLanaham–Donahue–Haskins 2005) link the decline of child-centredness to the weakening of the institution of marriage. Others argue that the institution of marriage has become more flexible and more optional than before, i.e., that marriage is undergoing revolutionary changes, but that this does not mean a marriage crisis (Coontz 2005). The marked change in family patterns has made family life much more unpredictable than in the mid-twentieth century. At the same time, a supportive partnership has a positive impact on an individual's well-being, the quality of his or her human relationships is closely related to his or her sense of social esteem, i.e., his or her behaviour in private relationships (family, kinship, friends, relationships and sexual relationships) is strongly influenced by his or her satisfaction with his or her role in society (Jamieson 2011).

Since the second half of the twentieth century, Hungary has also experienced structural changes that have transformed the patterns of family cohabitation. Fewer and fewer children are being born, which has a significant impact on the proportion of young people in society, and the steady increase in life expectancy at birth has also led to an increase in the number of elderly households without children, with the vast majority of one- and two-person households. Due to the age distribution shifts and the decline in the number of households with children, three- or multi-generation cohabitation has also disappeared (Harcsa–Monostori 2018). Education structures have also changed, with the share of people with only primary education declining significantly, while the share of people with education only up to secondary level and the number of graduates has increased significantly.[1] Different educational attainment affects fertility, the timing and forms of family formation and the risks of relationship breakdown, while life expectancy by social strata causes significant differences in cohabitation patterns among different educational attainment levels (Monostori–Murinkó 2018). Educational attainment also affects the evolution of family patterns by number of children. In recent decades, *"in Hungary, the two-child family model is declining, with the share of one-child families increasing among higher-educated parents and the share of families with three or more children increasing among lower-educated parents."* (Harcsa–Monostori 2017: 303). European trends, however, show that the correlations between educational attainment and couple stability, and between educational attainment and the propensity to have children, are changing. In several European countries, there is a different pattern of increasing fertility among women with higher educational attainment and higher relationship stability (Bernardi–Martínez–Pastor 2011, Salvini–Vignoli 2011). Based on these trends, the new family theory of Esping-Andersen and Billari (2015) argues that the redefinition of male and female roles and the rebalancing of the two sexes, the rebalancing and more equal sharing of labour market and family roles between the two sexes, increases individuals' motivation to start a family, which also has a positive impact on childbearing and the stability of couple relationships.

1 According to a comparative analysis by Harcsa and Monostori (2018), 56 per cent of the population aged 15 and over had completed primary education in 1990, a figure that fell to 24 per cent in 2016. Over the same period, the share of people with a secondary school leaving certificate rose from 19 per cent to 32 per cent, and the share of people with a university degree from 9 per cent to 22 per cent.

Data and methodology

The aim of the study was to describe the patterns of family cohabitation in Hungary and to identify the typical Hungarian family constructions based on the given criteria, primarily on the basis of the respondents' individual perceptions of their living situation and quality of life. For this purpose, I used a database of 2,700 respondents from a survey carried out within the framework of the Mobility Research Centre of Excellence Cooperation Programme of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. The database was representative for gender, age, education and type of settlement. The survey was conducted in 2018.

In the analyses, descriptive methods such as standard mean indicators (mean, median, mode) and percentage distributions were used to explore the diversity of phenomena, while analysis of variance and cross-tabulation analysis were used for multivariate relationships depending on the level of measurement. In the latter case, particular emphasis was placed on taking into account the minimum number of cases in a cell (five people) due to the large sample size. The reference confidence level for all analyses was 95 per cent, so that a relationship was considered statistically valid if its significance level was less than 0.05. The analysis aimed at describing well-interpretable family constructs that interpret cohabitation through the relationship between family composition and certain dimensions of subjective quality of life. The individual perceptual dimensions selected were:

- subjective class position
- subjective perception of downward or upward mobility compared to childhood
- subjective perception of downward or upward mobility compared to 10 years ago
- material well-being.

Basically, we worked with the available set of variables, supplemented by four categories of derived variables illustrating different patterns of coexistence. Based on these, we distinguished as a starting point:

1. people living alone
2. spouses/partners without children
3. parents raising a child/children alone, and
4. the cohabitation of spouses/partners raising the child/children.

These categories can be used to describe formal family structures (which will be described later), but they cannot by themselves be used to create homogeneous groups (typical family constructs) combining multiple aspects of family patterns and dimensions of subjective quality of life. As a tool to construct the respondent groups on a statistical basis, we chose the method of cluster analysis, which was performed using a non-hierarchical procedure, the so-called K-score cluster analysis.[2] The variables included in the cluster analysis were: *type of village, family size (number of people in the household), subjective class position, respondent's educational attainment, and respondent's marital status.* The clustering set of variables was initially extended, but to avoid multicollinearity, variables that were highly correlated with each other, such as occupational mobility and living conditions, were excluded. The clustering resulted in four groups with the following item numbers:

Cluster 1: N=786; Cluster 2: N=602; Cluster 3: N=493; Cluster 4: N=689.

2 The reasons for this are: the number of available elements is large, outliers are not typical for clustering variables, and the distance measure used is not crucial in this case.

Sample characteristics

Household size is relatively small, with an average of 2.27 people living together in a household. Less than a third of these households have children, meaning that the proportion of families with no dependent children is very high. The majority live with a partner/spouse, a quarter are widowed/divorced and less than a third are single (unmarried Young people aged 18–39 and middle-aged people aged 40–59 are represented in a one-third to one-third ratio, with older people aged 60+ being slightly less represented. The proportion of people living in Budapest and the metropolitan area of the county is about the same, just under 20 per cent, with one third living in other cities and slightly fewer in villages. In terms of their self-defined status (subjective class classification), one third feel middle class (the most numerous group), more than a quarter working class and a quarter lower middle class. The majority of those surveyed have difficulties in making ends meet, with one in two feeling that they have some level of difficulty in meeting their household's day-to-day expenses.

Settlement differences: household size, dwelling size, livelihood, class position

The average household size differs significantly by settlement type. The smaller the village, the larger the average household size. Budapest has the smallest households (2.16 people/household), while the municipalities have the largest, although even here there are only 2.36 people per household (Table 1).

Table 1
Average number of people living together in a family (household size)

Type of settlement	Average	N	Std. deviation
Budapest	2.16	490	1.025
County seat	2.24	482	1.087
City and town	2.28	946	1.137
Village	2.36	782	1.212
Total	2.27	2700	1.133

**One-way ANOVA, significance value: p ≤ 0.001*

The size of homes is significantly larger in non-metropolitan settlements (Table 2); the smaller the settlement, the larger the floor area of the homes people live in. However, the dimension of subjective quality of life shows an inverse correlation: the smaller the village, the greater the proportion of people who have difficulty meeting their daily expenses. More than 60 per cent of people living in towns and villages have difficulty meeting living costs (Table 3).

Table 2
Dwelling size by settlement type

	Average dwelling size (m^2)	Average number of rooms
Budapest (N=490)	59.3	2.3
County seat (N=482)	67.8	2.5
City and town (N=946)	77.8	2.6
Village (N=782)	86.7	2.7

One-way ANOVA, significance value: $p \leq 0.001$

Table 3
Subjective livelihood: ability to cover everyday expenditure

	Budapest (N=470) (%)	County seat (N=462) (%)	City and town (N=912) (%)	Village (N=755) (%)
Can cover your expenses	55.1	48.9	39.8	36.5
Difficulty covering your expenses	44.9	51.1	60.2	63.5
Total	**100**	**100**	**100**	**100**

** Pearson's chi-square test significance value: 0.000*

** Cramer's V value: 0.14, significance value: 0.00*

The subjective class position shows that the two lowest classes (the lower class and the working class) are over-represented among the municipal and urban population, while the upper classes are over-represented in the cities. There is almost no appreciable difference between the subjective class classification of respondents in villages and small towns, with the highest proportion of people in both types of settlement classifying themselves as working class (one third in both cases), fewer than this, but also at a similar level in the lower middle class, and also at a nearly similar level in the middle class. The majority of the population in the capital and the county seats, on the other hand, classify themselves as middle class, with far fewer considering themselves lower middle class, and a distinct upper-middle class group (Table 4).

It can be said that as you move down the settlement hierarchy, there are proportionally fewer middle-class and more working-class people, while for the upper social groups, the larger the settlement size, the more people belong to the middle and upper classes. In this sense, too, there is a gap between the two extremes of the settlement slope.

Table 4
Classification by type of settlement

	Budapest (N=474) (%)	County seat (N=477 (%))	City and town (N=915) (%)	Village (N=735) (%)
Lower class	4.0	6.3	10.4	8.4
Working class	14.1	24.5	31.9	33.9
Lower-middle class	22.6	25.8	26.7	25.7
Middle class	46.2	36.9	27.5	29
Upper-middle and upper class	13	6.5	3.5	3
Total	**100**	**100**	**100**	**100**

** Pearson's chi-square test significance value: 0.000*

** Cramer's V value: 0.15, significance value: 0.00*

Results

Formal patterns of family cohabitation – the impact of settlement types

In this chapter I identify the most typical cohabitation patterns in Hungarian society based on family size and family composition. My aim is to describe the characteristics of family/coexistence patterns in terms of bivariate correlations based on the place of residence of families (settlement type) and some individual perceptions of living conditions (subjective class ranking, subjectively assessed mobility characteristics and subjective perception of material well-being)[3] .These (formal) family categories will also form the basis for the homogeneous groups constructed in the cluster analysis.

Four derived categories of cohabitation patterns were formed: 1. single people, 2. parents raising their children alone, 3. cohabiting partners/spouses without children, 4. cohabiting partners/spouses with children (this family form mainly refers to cohabitation of one or two children and two parents, those with three or more children are not represented in the sample in an analysable proportion). In the following, I present the most important correlations of these cohabitation patterns.

1. Single people

Almost a third of the sample live alone, with a significantly higher proportion of widows. The majority of those living alone are over 60, a quarter are middle-aged (40–59) and slightly fewer are young (18–39). There is no significant difference between those living alone and those not living alone by place of residence, so there is no evidence that there are more single-person households in smaller rural settlements. They live in relatively large homes, with an average living area of 63.89 m² , but this is significantly smaller than that of non-single people (79.44 m²)[4]. It is significantly more difficult for single people to manage financially, with 70.7 per cent of them struggling to cover the household expenses. For those who are not living alone, the corresponding figure is 51.6 per cent (Table 5). In this respect, the widowed/widower and single categories do not present statistically verifiable differences.

Respondents living alone also rank themselves lower in terms of subjective class position. While non-single respondents tended to classify themselves as middle class, single respondents tended to classify themselves as working class.

3 Timea Tibori (2017) summarised the directions of Ágnes Utasi's lifestyle and mobility studies in her study, in which she interprets the lifestyles and consumption habits of individuals and communities, their impact on mobility and attitudes, and describes the empirical research methods used.

4 One-way ANOVA, significance value: p ≤ 0.001

Table 5
How can they cover their everyday expenses?

	People living alone (N= 706) (%)	People not living alone (N=1891) (%)
With great difficulty	7.1	3.8
With difficulty	20.0	10.9
With minor difficulties	43.6	36.9
Relatively easily	22.4	34.6
Easily	5.7	12.1
Very easily	1.3	1.7
Total	100	100

** Pearson's chi-square test significance value: 0.000*

** Cramer's V value: 0.20, significance value: 0.00*

2–3. Civil partnerships/partnerships without children

For two-person households, the vast majority of cohabitations take place in a spousal or cohabiting relationship. Families/households of two persons, which do not consist of two adults but of one child and one adult (single parent), are not present in the sample, with only 69 people, and are therefore not described in detail in this section but will be discussed in other contexts later.

The majority (nearly two-thirds) of childless couples living in a two-partner relationship live in small towns and villages. Their educational attainment is representative of the total sample (less than half of the sample have no school leaving certificate). Within families without children, the largest proportion (one third) is in the 40–59 age group, one third are aged over 60 and one quarter are under 40. Childlessness for two-parent households means, on the one hand, that adult children are no longer living with the parents and, on the other hand, that those who have not had a child (de facto childlessness) are also included. These are mostly middle-class households, with a significant working-class group. The lower classes are less represented, and the proportion of upper-middle and upper classes is negligible. Families without children are characterized by average housing conditions, and as they are mostly residents of smaller towns or villages, the vast majority (one in two families) live in average semi-detached or detached houses, and one in five live in housing estates in medium housing market areas.

4. Domestic partnerships/partnerships with children

In this family type, families of two parents and one or two children are typical, while families of five or more (i.e., three or more children) are not. There is no significant

difference between families with one and two children in the dimensions of quality of life examined (type of settlement, housing market situation, size of dwelling, subjective class classification), probably because both types represent only 8–12% of the total sample. The majority of them are urban/small town and rural families, with a much lower proportion in the metropolitan population. They are in an average housing market situation, living mostly in detached houses and in housing estates. Three-room homes characterize the sub-sample, with less than a third of families in this category living in smaller flats/family houses. Mostly they are middle-class families, but almost a third of them categorize themselves as working or lower class. More than half of the family members have at least a high school diploma. In terms of age categories, young and middle-aged families are more likely. Three quarters of parents live with a child under 20 years of age, which also indicates that in this type of family, a quarter of parents continue to live with their children who have already reached adulthood.

Family cohabitation patterns and subjective status situation

There is a statistically verifiable difference between family samples by educational attainment (Table 6). The highest proportion of those with only up to eight years of primary education is significantly higher among those living alone. This category also has the lowest proportion of graduates and school leavers. The highest number of graduates and the highest number of people with vocational qualifications are found in two-parent families with children. They have the lowest proportion of people with only primary education, but also the lowest proportion of graduates. Among single parents, the proportion of graduates and school-leavers is high, but the number of 8th-grade graduates is also high.

Table 6
Family samples by educational attainment

	People living alone (N= 719) (%)	Single parents raising their children (N=69) (%)	Spouses/ domestic partners without children (N=840) (%)	Spouses/ domestic partners with children (N=641) (%)
Up to 8 overall	37.7	31.9	24	19.2
Vocational school	17.5	14.5	24.2	28.5
High school graduation	27.3	31.9	31.8	32.3
Degree	17.5	21.7	20	20
Total	**100**	**100**	**100**	**100**

* Pearson's chi-square test significance value: 0.000

** Cramer's V value: 0.157, significance value: 0.00*

Subjective class position in family patterns

Significantly higher proportions of single parents and parents raising their children alone identify themselves as belonging to the lowest social groups, mainly working class (32.4%) and lower class (12.4%). The majority of those in a relationship without children, on the other hand, consider themselves more middle class and working class. The two-parent families with children consider themselves most middle class (63.6%) (Table 7).

Table 7
Subjective status classification by family type

	People living alone (N= 703) (%)	Single parents raising their children (N=67) (%)	Spouses/domestic partners without children (N=820) (%)	Spouses/domestic partners with children (N=632) (%)
Lower class	12.4	10.4	5.2	6.8
Working class	32.4	31.3	29.0	23.3
Lower middle class	23.5	26.9	25.0	27.5
Middle class	26.9	25.4	34.1	36.1
Upper-middle and upper class	4.8	6.0	6.6	6.3
Total	**100**	**100**	**100**	**100**

** Pearson's chi-square test significance value: 0.000*

** Cramer's V value: 0.172, significance value: 0.00*

Subjective mobility in family patterns – compared to the childhood family

Compared to the family position in childhood, all family constructions are essentially characterized by upward mobility. The largest differences between family forms are found among those living in downwardly mobile and stagnant (non-mobile) families. A very significant proportion of non-mobile people are living alone, while downward mobility is experienced most by single parents (Table 8).

Table 8
Direction of mobility in relation to respondents' childhood family status (subjective perception)

	People living alone (N= 707) (%)	Single parents raising their children (N=68) (%)	Spouses/domestic partners without children (N=814) (%)	Spouses/domestic partners with children (N=623) (%)
Downwardly mobile	19.2	25.0	15.4	15.7
Not mobile	33.2	22.1	26.5	25.4
Upwardly mobile	47.5	52.9	58.1	58.9
Total	**100**	**100**	**100**	**100**

** Pearson's chi-square test significance value: 0.000*
** Cramer's V value: 0.153, significance value: 0.00*

Subjective mobility in family patterns – compared to 10 years ago

Respondents seemed to associate mobility primarily with their perception of their class position in childhood, as far fewer respondents than before perceived their situation compared to the shorter term, 10 years ago, as an upward movement, but rather as stagnation. A very significant downward slide was perceived by people living alone and parents raising their children alone. A significantly lower proportion of those without children and with children in a couple perceived their situation as worsening. In terms of being upwardly mobile compared to 10 years earlier, a significantly higher proportion of two-parent families with children compared to families in other forms of cohabitation were upwardly mobile (Table 9).

Table 9
Direction of mobility compared to respondent's situation 10 years ago

	People living alone (N= 662) (%)	Single parents raising their children (N=66) (%)	Spouses/domestic partners without children (N=772) (%)	Spouses/domestic partners with children (N=598) (%)
Downwardly mobile	23.1	25.8	15.0	11.9
Not mobile	48.6	37.9	50.5	46.3
Upwardly mobile	28.2	36.4	34.5	41.8
Total	**100**	**100**	**100**	**100**

** Pearson's chi-square test significance value: 0.000*
** Cramer's V value: 0.174, significance value: 0.00*

Typical Hungarian families in villages and towns – family types based on the cluster analysis results

Before defining the clusters, we asked how the internal structure and perceptions of families (or households) living in different types of settlements typically differ according to the number of family members, marital status, educational attainment and subjective class position. In the analysis, we were able to define four clusters based on the inclusion of the following variables: family size, marital status, type of settlement, educational attainment and status (subjective class position). As a starting point, we formed three clusters using the K-means method because the age categories and family size percentiles justified this. In turn, two groups had 1000+ counts and one had <100 counts, the others were missing values due to non-response. For this reason, four categories were requested during iteration to form the four groups. These already met the requirements of the analysis in terms of number of items and interpretation of content. In describing the characteristics of the four clusters, we have primarily interpreted significant differences between the clusters, but where we were unable to demonstrate statistical correlations but still considered something an important characteristic for the cluster, we have indicated it separately.

In characterizing the clusters, we have deepened our knowledge of the family constructs we have constructed by including additional variables that can indicate the relationship between family stability and 'well-being'. The new variables included are age group, subjective mobility compared to childhood, subjective mobility compared to 10 years ago, ability to cover household expenses, satisfaction (with work, family, life),[5] cultural consumption.[6]

The cluster analysis revealed the following four typical family patterns based on the selected characteristics:

1. Deprived, ageing, rural, childless working families
2. Stable, rural, childless, middle-class families
3. Stable, rural, lower-middle class families with children

5 The survey measured satisfaction in three areas. It asked how satisfied respondents were with *their jobs, their relationships within their families and their lives overall.* Answers were marked on a scale of 0 to 10, with 0 indicating total dissatisfaction and 10 indicating total satisfaction.

6 The questionnaire measured the different cultural opportunities on a scale of 1 to 4, where respondents could choose from the options of *not at all; rarely; sometimes; often*. From this, a new bivariate was created, according to whether it is *not common* (not occurred; rarely) or *sometimes/often occurs*. The variables that were excluded from the study did not reach 15% of the total sample of regular participants, so the breakdown by cluster was not relevant. The following cultural activities could not be included in the clusters due to the low sample size: opera, ballet, classical music, museum, exhibition, music festival, theatre, musical theatre, operetta, wine, gastronomy, craft festivals, local fundraising, local association ball, historical, traditional local festival, local sporting event. Tímea Tibori (2013), Cultural attitudes and value changes, offers a primer on changes in cultural attitudes.

4. Highly educated middle-class families living in a large city, in a couple or living alone

Cluster 1: Deprived, ageing, rural, childless working families (N=786)

This is the smallest family size cluster, made up of people in a couple and those who are single due to divorce or widowhood. It has only 1.6 members in the household. It is a cluster of single people without children and families without children living in smaller towns and villages rather than in large cities. It is the oldest age group cluster, with members mostly over 60 years old, but also middle-aged people. Young people are the most absent from this cluster, with a higher presence in all other groups. This cluster has the lowest educational attainment with the education level of its members barely exceeding 8 years of general education. It is characterized by an almost total absence of graduates and school-leavers. Its members are classified in the two lowest social groups, mostly workers, but also with a significant presence in the lower classes. They have experienced the least upward mobility compared to 10 years ago, and their situation is mostly unchanged, but they also have the highest proportion of downward movers of all clusters. The families in the most difficult financial situation, their members have great difficulties in making ends meet,[7] and in covering everyday expenses. They are the most dissatisfied with their work of all family types. They are somewhat more satisfied with their family and kinship relations than with their work, but this cluster is also the most dissatisfied in this area. In terms of cultural consumption, they are the least likely to read the newspaper and go out to restaurants, but they are the most likely to attend town and village festivals and the most likely to garden of all the clusters. As in all the other clusters, television is the most frequent activity and internet use is the second most frequent activity[8].

Cluster 2: Stable, rural, childless, middle-class families (N=602)

The proportion of families with children and the average number of children in this cluster is also very low, with a family size of 2.01, which means that the presence of children is not typical here either. The majority are married or cohabiting couples, but there is also a significant single group who are either single according to their legal status (unmarried, single) or currently living alone according to their marital status following divorce/widowhood. Similarly to the 'working class cluster', they live mainly in rural spaces, towns and villages, the only cluster where metropolitan life is not evident. For this reason, they also have the highest proportion of rural population. Among

7 The differences in the results between clusters of the answers to the question *"How can your household cover its usual expenses?"* are not significant, but we thought it important to report them for the sample.

8 The results for the question *"In the last year, how often did you participate in the following activities, did you do the following activities…?"* show significant differences between clusters for reading the newspaper, going to a restaurant, gardening and town or village festivals, while for all other cultural consumption the results are only valid for the given family construct.

the clusters, this cluster contains the largest middle-aged group (40–59 years old), whose families are presumed to have raised their children. Besides the middle-aged, single young people (18–39 years) are the most typical age group within the cluster. The majority of its members have a secondary education, with more of them than any other cluster having completed secondary school. The level of educational attainment is dispersed upwards, not downwards, with no graduates of only primary school in this cluster. There is also a relatively high proportion of graduates, the second highest of the four clusters, making it one of the most educated clusters. Its members are mainly classified as middle class or lower middle class, with no lower class classification at all. The majority of family members are not mobile, their status has not changed within 10 years, but a distinctive group has also experienced an upward shift over the period under study, with no downward mobility. Subjectively, it is one of the best financially positioned clusters, where financing household expenditure is not a major difficulty for the majority. This is a significant difference between the two childless clusters, although no statistical correlation between the two could be detected. All clusters are dissatisfied with their jobs, but those with no children are among the most dissatisfied. They are also the most dissatisfied with their family relationships after the worker cluster (cluster one). However, this group of people who have already raised their children, educated, rural, middle class, in a stable financial situation, are still one of the most satisfied with their lives overall.[9] In terms of cultural consumption, they stand out from the other clusters in terms of the frequency of reading newspapers and going out to restaurants, while in other areas they also have a high frequency of television viewing and internet use, and although there is no statistically justifiable difference, reading books is one of the most frequent activities.

Cluster 3: Stable, rural, lower-middle class families with children (N=493)

This is the cluster with the largest family size, with an average of 3.92 people living in each family. It is mainly concentrated in households with children in rural towns and villages, rather than metropolitan areas. A slight majority of families have at least two children, but the outliers give an average of 3.23 children. It is the youngest cluster in terms of age composition, with the majority in the 18–39 age group, but with a distinctive group in middle age. The elderly are not present at all. Of all the clusters, the highest number of skilled workers is found here. Educational attainment is spread (relatively proportionally) in the range from one level above (A-levels) to one level below (8th grade), but the presence of parents with a degree is not predominant. The cluster is composed mainly of married/cohabiting couples, most of whom rated their status as working class or lower middle class. Compared to 10 years ago, they perceive their present situation as either stagnant or upwardly mobile. They are not a financially vulnerable cluster; they do not report serious difficulties, and

9 We could not find a significant relationship between clusters in the differences in life satisfaction, and our results are not generalisable.

most of them cover the cost of their daily living relatively easily or face at most minor difficulties in this respect. They are slightly more satisfied with their work than the previous two clusters, but like all the other clusters they are the most dissatisfied in this area. However, they are extremely satisfied with their family relationships, the most satisfied of all clusters. Overall, they are also the most satisfied with their lives, although this difference is not statistically supported, but is specific to this cluster. In terms of cultural consumption, they are also frequent TV and internet viewers. Reading newspapers and going out to restaurants are slightly less common than in the more educated clusters, but gardening and attending town and village fairs are more common. Gatherings of friends in their own homes are relatively common and book reading is also marked among the more frequent activities, but differences between clusters cannot be statistically justified.

Cluster 4: Highly educated middle-class families living in a couple or alone in a large city (N=689)

This cluster has a small family size with an average number of 2.1 people in the household. The majority are families without children, but a quarter of them have children. The average number of children is low at 1.26. They live mostly with a spouse or partner, but all other forms of habitation are also prominent (single and living alone as divorced or widowed). They live only in the capital and in large cities in the county seats and are absent in smaller municipalities. Young people are in the majority within this cluster, but there is also a significant presence of middle-aged and older people. After the cluster of working families, this cluster has the highest proportion of people aged 60 and over, and the highest proportion of young people after the youngest cluster 3. It is a highly educated group, made up exclusively of families with a high school diploma and a university degree. This cluster has the highest proportion of graduates and, after cluster 2, the highest proportion of high school graduates. Most consider themselves middle class, fewer lower middle class. Upper- middle and upper- middle class are also most prominent in this cluster. Compared with their position 10 years ago, this is the most upwardly mobile group in terms of size, but there is also a stagnant group that has not seen any significant change. They can easily finance their daily living costs and face minor difficulties at most. They are the most satisfied with their jobs, but this satisfaction index is as low as in all other clusters compared to the other satisfaction indicators. They are more satisfied with their relationships within the family, most in line with the satisfaction level of middle-class rural families without children, but below the satisfaction level of lower middle-class rural families with children (cluster 3). Overall, they are much less satisfied with their lives than lower-middle class and middle-class rural families (clusters 2 and 3), and are the least satisfied with their lives after the cluster of the worst-off working families. Their cultural consumption scores are higher than the other clusters in the frequency of reading newspapers and going out to restaurants, similar in gardening and lower than the other clusters in town and village festivities. Computer games, socializing with friends and reading books show somewhat higher scores than the other clusters, but these are not statistically justifiable differences.

Instead of a summary: typical Hungarian families

As a result of our research, we were able to isolate four family types, which were formed in the cluster analysis on the basis of the variables of residence, number of family members, marital status, educational attainment and subjective class position, and which can be considered the most typical on the basis of these criteria. In the following, we provide a brief, summarizing characterization of this family typology.

Deteriorating, ageing, rural, childless working families live in small families in small towns and villages. They are made up of ageing singles or childless couples. Their extremely low education and working-class status distinguish them from other family formations. They have not experienced upward mobility during their lives and those whose situation has not stabilised over the years have become the ‚downwardly mobile'. They live in material deprivation and have difficulty in meeting their daily living expenses. Their situation is aggravated by the fact that they are not satisfied with their jobs or their family and kinship relations. They are low-status families whose children have left home, live in a small urban environment and face daily difficulties.

Stable, rural, childless, middle-class families also live in small families and almost exclusively in rural areas. Highly educated, rural middle-class families have already raised their children. Their situation has been stable for a long time, if there has been mobility it has been upward mobility, and downward mobility is not a feature of this family type. As a consequence, they live in good financial conditions and, although they are not very satisfied with their jobs or their existing family relationships, they are, on the whole, a very satisfied family type.

Stable, rural, lower-middle class families with children are large families with mostly two children living in rural areas. They are made up of young family members, mainly with a vocational qualification or a school-leaving certificate, and graduates are not common. They are workers and lower-middle class. Their situation is also stable and stagnant, but if there has been a shift in their social status, it has been experienced as upward mobility. They live in predictable, good financial conditions, with no daily financial problems. They are only moderately satisfied with their jobs, but they are very satisfied with their family relationships and with their lives.

Highly educated middle-class families living in a large city, in a couple or alone are small families living in small, largely childless, couples. They live in large cities and are not found in small towns and rural areas. Where there is a child, there is a maximum of one. Young and elderly families are also concentrated in this group, linked by above-average high levels of education and strong middle-class ties. Some families are now more upper class. They live in good conditions, without financial

difficulties. They are moderately satisfied with their jobs, but more satisfied with their family relationships. However, it is the members of this highest status, best-off family formation (after the poorest working families) who are most dissatisfied with their lives.

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When spatial dimension matters

Comparing personal network characteristics in different segregated areas[1]

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Introduction

Social capital is embodied in interpersonal relationships (Bourdieu 1986, Coleman 1988 Portes 1998). The availability of social support is particularly important for poor people since it can decrease the negative impacts of their disadvantaged economic circumstances (Saegert et al. 2001). The stigmatising nature of poverty, together with social networks, that are characterised by homophily (McPherson et al. 2001), result in lower resource-strength networks, as these networks are more likely to consist of similarly disadvantaged people. Numerous studies have examined the relationship between interpersonal social networks and poverty (Albert–Hajdu 2020, Böhnke–Link 2017, Eckhard 2018) and found a negative link between them (e.g. the quantity and quality of interpersonal relations). This finding supports the so-called accumulation hypothesis and warns of the "downward spiral of social exclusion" (Mood–Jonsson 2016: 637).

However, research on social networks and poverty does not always take the spatial context into account. Traditionally, international research has been limited to describe relationships within a well-defined area (e.g., colleges; see Doreian–Conti 2012, Faust et al. 1999) or to study the spread of disease (social and spatial clustering of disease; see Emch et al. 2012, Logan et al. 2016). Our study is in the context of urban sociology rather than following these lines of inquiry. Spatial separation and

1 The research was supported by the *National Research, Development and Innovation Office* – NKFIH, K124940, and the *Közösen a Kiútért* (Together for Integration) project no.: TOP-6.9.1–16-NY1–2017-00001.

barriers to spatial mobility often hinder social mobility and may result in ethnic segregation. Spatial integration is just as important concerning a stable social position as, for example, labour market integration (Massey 2001), and we may expect that spatial separation reduces the chances of social integration by marking physical boundaries for inhabitants of segregated areas and thus producing more homogenous interpersonal networks.

In our article, we analyse how the physical and social characteristics of a neighbourhood can shape the structure of the social networks of its residents by analysing the network characteristics of people living in three segregated areas of a medium-sized Hungarian town. We also study whether there are network differences between the non-Roma and the Roma people living together in the same area. We expect that, in general, spatial segregation facilitates the formation of certain ties but hinders others. We suppose that the spatial dimension influences network size and composition more than ethnicity. Our data facilitates the evaluation of how "far" personal networks can reach both spatially and ethnically.

The novelty of our analysis is that it focuses on both the ethnic and spatial homogeneity of the ego-networks in three deprived areas of the same city, which at the same time differ in their level of integration into the city fabric. We found subtle differences concerning the degree of spatial disintegration.

Theoretical background

Social relations are an important dimension of social integration (Coleman 1988, Granovetter 1985). A lack of social integration does not only mean limited access to resources, but it may also cause anxiety and depression, decrease well-being and lead to increased morbidity and mortality (Putnam 2000, Wilkinson 1996).

In terms of integration, bonding and bridging ties function differently. The former creates relatively closed and socio-demographically homogeneous groups with shared resources and information, high levels of intimacy and trust. Weaker but more heterophilic ties with more distant individuals (bridging ties) connect the ego to different social groups, even from greater social distances, contributing to the structural mobility of the individual (Lin 2008).

Network analysts identify two basic types of homophily: baseline and inbreeding (McPherson et al. 2001). Baseline homophily refers to the fact that we have a limited pool of potential ties defined by our demographic characteristics and foci of activities (e.g., as in our case, ethnicity, or place of residence) and the main source of these ties is geographical space. Inbreeding homophily is conceptualised as any other kind of homophily. As a result, we form and maintain ties more easily with those who are geographically close (Wong et al. 2006). Bidard et al. (2020), building on Fischer (1982), point out that strong ties are more resistant to distance, which means that in general, in personal networks, strong ties are more dispersed in geographic space

than weak ties. Those who live in closer proximity have to spend less money and time to meet; thus, supportive ties, which are especially important for the poor, may form faster and more easily and can be maintained over long periods more efficiently (Emch et al. 2012). Proximity remained an important characteristic despite the spread of info-communication technologies (Mok et al. 2004).

Researchers have long studied the relationship between social integration and urban structure. Roberto and Hwang (2017) argue that there is a causal relationship between the physical separation of urban spaces and the formation and sustainment of segregation. People living in areas that are difficult to reach and less integrated into the urban fabric have limited access to transport and urban space, and their social integration is hampered. Physical barriers such as railway tracks, motorways, industrial areas, forests, fences, etc., create clear divisions among various areas. Some of these barriers are natural; others have been created artificially, often to clearly separate deprived areas from those populated by more affluent residents. At the same time, these barriers also physically limit the growth of areas populated by low-status residents not only with regards to the number of available housing units but also the scope of available services, thus sustaining social and spatial isolation and increasing social inequalities.

Tóth et al. (2021) found that the physical arrangement of residential areas in a city is connected to social network fragmentation: Existing inequalities are exacerbated by physical barriers, significant distances, physically concentrated amenities, which make social networks more fragmented. Thus, through social networks, the geographical characteristics of a place compound economic inequalities.

Spatial segregation can also have benefits, including a cohesive community organised on a geographic basis, making it easier to navigate the world and everyday life. However, living in spatially isolated, segregated neighbourhoods and the associated stigma both hinder assimilation (Massey 2001). According to previous research (see Massey–Denton 1988), a high level of segregation isolates minority groups from the services and opportunities that can contribute to raising their quality of life to the level of the majority population. Thus, any movement towards concentrating poverty in an isolated neighbourhood increases the likelihood of socio-economic failure within the segregated group (e.g. teenage pregnancy, school dropouts, low educational attainment, low income, criminality, and victimisation). Therefore, municipalities should handle poverty and spatial exclusion together to intervene successfully (Massey 2001).

Roma people are the most numerous and most disadvantaged ethnic minority groups living in contemporary Central and Eastern Europe, including Hungary. Ethnic identity is considered a private matter, and, for data protection purposes, it is not included in the mandatory national data reporting in Hungary.

According to the 2011 census, the latest available official data on the number of minorities living in Hungary, approximately 3% of the total population identified themselves as Roma (Központi Statisztikai Hivatal, KSH 2014). While the widespread

stereotypes, attitudes and prejudices concerning the Roma minority suggest the existence of a homogenised group, the actual population meant by the category of Roma varies, not only among the non-Roma majority but also among the Roma. Data on self-categorisation show a smaller number of Roma than data resulting from categorisation set by outgroup members (Csepeli–Simon 2004). Thus, it is not possible to measure the size of the Roma population, but it is estimated to be 600,000–700,000 (Bernát 2014). The age composition of the Roma population is significantly younger, and their at-risk of poverty and social inclusion index is three times higher compared to the non-Roma population, which means that the majority of Roma people in Hungary are affected by poverty and social exclusion. Roma people have more children, lower education attainment (the share of Roma with at most primary education is still four times the level for non-Roma), and higher unemployment. They tend to live in small settlements, often in less developed regions (Bernát 2019, European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights 2016).

Most Roma are concentrated in underdeveloped areas of the country, representing a significant territorial disadvantage (Kertesi 2005, Nemes Nagy–Németh 2005). There are 10 districts of settlements where their ratio is between 30 to 40%, 62% lives in towns and 38% in villages, primarily in small ones, with a population of less than 2000. In towns, their numbers grow mostly due to immigration. In the villages, their proportion increases due to the out-migration of the non-Roma and their higher fertility rates (Pénzes et al. 2018). In big cities, most of the Roma live in segregated areas.

Based on the most recent available survey result (from 2010) and the last census (from 2011), there were 1633 poor and ethnic ghettoes and segregated areas in Hungary with 280–300 thousand inhabitants, which is 3% of the Hungarian population. These areas are concentrated in the North-Eastern and Southern regions of the country, to 26% of its settlements (820 municipalities and 10 districts of Budapest out of 22). 39% of these areas are in towns, 2% in Budapest, the capital city, and 32% in villages. 20% of them are in or close to the centre of the settlement, 66% are on the periphery, and 14% are outside the settlement limits (Domokos–Herczeg 2010). The spatial distribution pattern of the Roma population has remained essentially unchanged since 1980 (Pénzes et al. 2018). The ability or willingness to move is strongly correlated with demographic characteristics, occupation and regional position of residence (Hárs–Simon 2015) and financial situation. The Hungarian population is less mobile than the European average (3–4.5% move house every year). Willingness to move is also low. According to KSH (2016), 79% of the population do not plan to move. This proportion is slightly higher among Roma (83%). In fact, they would be willing to move only if there were significant financial benefits (Varga 2020). Hungary is one of the CEE countries with a private homeownership rate above 90%; Hegedüs et al. (2016) point out that homeownership has a strong attenuating effect on domestic moving decisions.

In Hungary, socially disadvantaged people have very few opportunities to move to a more spatially integrated area. They live in social housing units (mostly municipally-owned) with poor quality. The spatial mobility of Roma has become increasingly limited as the number of social housing units has started to decline significantly since 1990. The share of these housing units is very low (2.6%; KSH 2016).

According to Hungarian studies, although Roma had ethnically homogeneous networks of contacts in the early 2000s, their family ties were stronger, and they had more friends than members of the majority society (Albert–Dávid 2006). The ethnically homogeneous network was even more characteristic for those who belonged to an ethnically closed community and identified themselves as Roma (Messing 2006). However, more recent research reveals a change: Roma people no longer have a richer network of contacts. Their circle of friends has been significantly reduced and has become even more ethnically homogeneous, and the proportion of relatives among their confidants has decreased. Despite improving educational and economic indicators in general, only a small fraction of people established contact resources. Isolation from each other and mainstream society continues to be present (Dávid et al. 2020).

In segregated areas, social network characteristics vary and contribute to sustaining the existing power relations. Some of the few Hungarian studies on the topic highlighted that relational characteristics of poor and deprived segments of the population are quite different in various settings/regions (Dávid 2010, Messing 2006, Messing–Molnár 2011), which provides the rationale for our study to compare the network characteristics of people living in poverty and social exclusion in different territorial segments of the very same city. Katona et al. (2020), analysing segregated areas in four Hungarian and four Romanian settlements, found that the integration of local communities can only be realised if they receive support to build ties to form external contact networks and then they actively use those contacts on their own.

Data and method

In 2019, we surveyed the living conditions in two segregated areas of a Hungarian city, which included a detailed module on interpersonal network characteristics. According to Government Decree 314/2012 (8.XI), *"a segregated area or an area at risk of segregation [is] a contiguous area where families of low social status are concentrated or show signs of social status decline, and therefore community intervention is required in the area"* (NYITS, 2014, p. 44). The identification of segregated areas was based on the segregation indicator (the proportion of people of working age with no more than primary education and no regular income from work) produced from the 2011 census data of the KSH (total number of segregated areas is 1633, where 280,000–300,000 people, roughly 3% of the total population, live).

Interviewers reached 271 households in these two segregated areas (S#1 and S#2). The number of social housing units owned by the local government in these two areas is 394 (131 in S#1, 263 in S#2), with a total population of 1374 people (525 in S#1, 849 in S#2; see Nyíregyháza City Integrated Settlement Development Strategy, 2014). Based

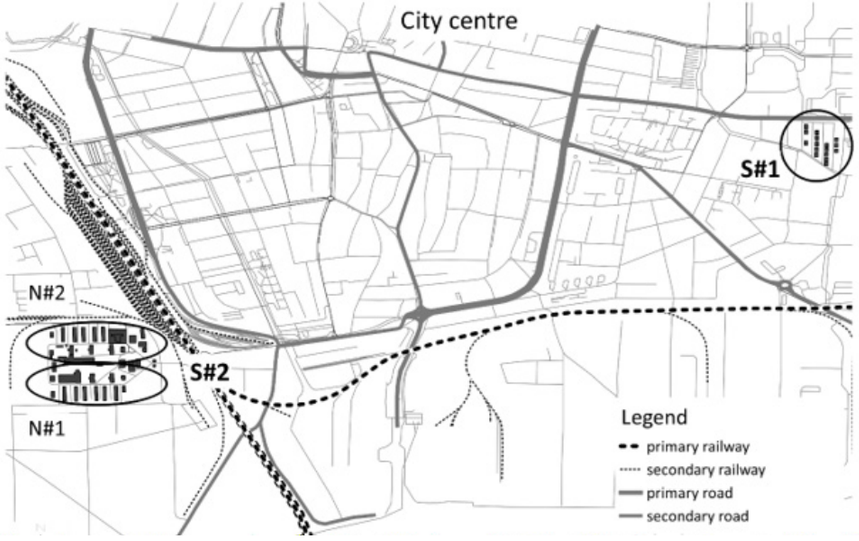
on this, and considering the number of housing units, the response rate was high (Huszti 2019, Takács–Huszti 2019). We analyse our data in three main dimensions: spatial, network, ethnicity.

The areas in focus

The segregated areas in our study are situated far from the city centre, occupy relatively small space, and are far from each other (see Figure 1). Most of the apartments are social housing units with relatively low rent owned by the local government. Both areas are marked by medium-level ethnic segregation (with a mix of Roma and non-Roma poor population), but they have different potentials regarding social integration.

As shown in Figure 1, the smaller S#1 is less isolated; therefore, we label it as spatially integrated. It is only 1.5 km away from the city centre, situated between two main roads, near the former city limits. Despite the development of the city and the wider neighbourhood, its segregated character remained. Given its location along main roads, residents have good transportation access to public services. The bus service is frequent and regular, and the inner city can be accessed by bicycle. The 4-flat housing units were built in the early 1960s with minimal conveniences. They are still without any modern amenities. They only have electricity and are in a very run-down condition. Households have the most members in this area, with an average of 4–6 people per household and 2–4 people per room. The surrounding public roads

Figure 1
Segregated areas (S#1 and S#2) and different neighbourhoods (N#1 and N#2) within S#2.



are in good shape but getting around within the area among the buildings is more problematic since there is no rainwater drainage system. Inhabitants predominantly have low educational attainment, which limits their employment opportunities. As the city centre and another housing estate are close by, several educational institutions are available. General practitioners are available in the city centre, outpatient clinics and emergency care are only a couple of minutes away. Social workers and district nurses are actively present.

The larger segregated area (S#2) became part of the city fabric after the 1850s; it primarily functioned as a military base for cavalry. Its population changed in the 1960s; the more affluent military and administrative elite were replaced by Roma people moving into the city. The average household size is 3.7 (N#1) and 3.8 (N#2). The average density is 3.4 (N#1) and 3.2 (N#2) people per room. The segregated nature of the area is well-indicated by its spatial characteristics: The railway lines separate it from the major parts of the city, the neighbouring, more modern city area can only be accessed on foot. Public services provision can be considered good, as there is a crèche, kindergarten, and primary school in the area. However, children from S#2 attend these mostly. It is also possible to send children to other educational institutions in the city. Family and child welfare services are available locally, together with day-care provision for the old. Various social, healthcare, religious, and civil organisations provide in-kind support for the inhabitants.

Within S#2, we identified two neighbourhoods based on various characteristics (the degree of spatial separation, infrastructure, availability of services, etc.) as shown in Figure 1. The spatially semi-integrated neighbourhood (N#1) is more integrated into the surrounding residential area but isolated from the city. The spatially non-integrated neighbourhood (N#2) is less integrated, as the railway cuts off direct transit routes to other areas on three sides of the area, and only one street connects it to the rest of the city. Spatially it is well-separated from the semi-integrated part. It is closed off from other residential areas by the railways and industrial plants on the northern side.

Social capital: bonding and bridging ties

We consider confiding relations to be bonding ties, which we elicited by a core discussion network-generated question (McCallister–Fischer 1978). The following name-generator was applied: *"Most people sometimes discuss important matters with others. If you consider the past 12 months, who are the people with whom you discussed the most important things, your problems, sorrows, complaints (e.g. personal and/or family matters, questions concerning work, etc)?"*

We followed up by asking questions concerning the listed alters, including gender, age, educational attainment, type of relationship, length of knowing each other, living distance , type of support given, and ethnicity. The maximum number of alters was limited to five. In the analysis, we focus on the kin and non-kin composition of these

networks and their ethnic and spatial characteristics. We consider weak ties (Granovetter 1973) to be bridging ties, which we elicited by a position generator containing 30 different occupations: actor/actress, administrator, banker, chief executive, civil welfare office administrator, clerical officer in local government, dress shop owner, driver, engineer, entrepreneur, farmworker, hairdresser, health visitor, housing administrator, interior designer, journalist, NGO worker, nurse, paediatrician, politician, sales/shop assistant, scientist, security guard, skilled worker, social worker, solicitor, surgeon, teacher (secondary), unskilled worker, waiter.

If the respondent knew somebody with the named occupation, we asked the person's gender, if they lived in the same area, and their ethnicity (Lin–Dumin 1986). In the analysis, we include the number of weak ties and their ethnic and spatial characteristics.

Ethnicity

Csepeli and Simon (2004: 134) wrote:

> *There are two theoretical ways of Gypsy identity construction: as an imposed and as an adopted identity, i.e., the labels used by the majority or as a procedure of self-identification performed by the Gypsies themselves, based on their being culturally different.*

For our research purposes, we defined Roma ethnicity based on self-identification.

Based on Leszczensky and Pink (2019), we considered the relationships ethnically homogeneous if the respondent identified himself as Roma and described the other person identified as Roma as well. We also considered the relationships ethnically homophilic where the respondent did not identify himself as Roma and described the other person identified as not being Roma.

Empirical strategy

We examined whether there is a difference between segregated areas according to network characteristics taking into account socio-demographic control variables. Since these control attributions generally do not have a significant effect on dependent variables, we analysed the links between network characteristics and place of residence using discriminant analysis. We calculated the percentage that our dependent variable, living in one of the segregated areas, can be estimated by the independent variables. Since bigger and more diverse interpersonal networks may enhance social integration more effectively, we tested whether those living in a spatially more integrated area are more integrated socially based on their interpersonal network characteristics. The variables we included in our analysis are core discussion network size, number of weak ties, rate of ethnic and spatial homogeneity, ego's ethnicity, and the length of residence in the given area.

Results

Description of the segregated areas

68.6% of the sample are women: 45.7% are at most 40 years old and the average age is 43.5 years. The rate of women is higher in N#2 (74%) than in the other two areas. The rate of ages 40 years or younger is higher in N#1 and N#2 (47.6 and 46.6%). The average age is the highest in N#2 (45.2 years). Most of the sample have low educational attainment. 77.3% has at most primary school education (8 years of schooling). The share of those with a higher educational level than primary school is the highest in N#2 (28.8%). 67.9% of the sample did not work at the time of data collection. There is no significant difference among the three surveyed areas in terms of sex, age, educational attainment, and economic activity.

The analysed population is a homogenous group based on their basic socio-demographic characteristics, but there are significant differences based on ethnic composition and length of residence (see Table 1). The overall rate of Roma respondents is 57.9%, but it is significantly lower in N#2 (41.1%) compared to the other two areas.

Table 1
Some characteristics of respondents (N = 271)

		S#2	
	S#1 (n=70)	N#1 (n=128)	N#2 (n=73)
Ethnicity			
Non-Roma	34.29%	36.72%	58.90%
Roma	65.71%	63.28%	41.10%
Born in area			
Non-Roma	12.50%	2.10%	0.00%
Roma	26.10%	3.70%	0.00%
	Mean		
Length of residence in the given area	21.96	12.55	9.97
Non-Roma	22.79	13.64	10.14
Roma	21.52	11.91	9.72
At what age the respondent moved to the given area	21.09	30.59	35.27
Non-Roma	26.50	30.00	36.26
Roma	18.14	30.94	33.83

All effects are significant at $p < 0.05$

A total of 19 (only 7% of the total sample) were born in the area, the highest rate is in area S#1 among Roma residents. Residents in S#1 have lived there on average for 21.9 years, while in N#1 for 12.6 and N#2 for 9.9 years. In S#1, there is a difference between the Roma and non-Roma population: the Roma moved there at a younger age than the non-Roma (18.1 vs. 26.5 years).

Social capital

The number and composition of bonding ties

The respondents, on average, mentioned 1.41 bonding ties in the core discussion network name-generator situation (min 0; max 5). In line with our expectations, those living in the spatially more integrated area have significantly more ties (on average 2) than those from N#1 (1.23, p<0,001) and N#2 (1.16, p=0,001). There is a difference within the areas regarding ethnicity. In the spatially non-integrated part (N#2), Roma respondents had fewer bonding ties than the non-Roma (1.00 vs. 1.28; see Table 2).

We found no statistically significant differences regarding the number of bonding ties concerning the sex, age, educational attainment, and economic activity status of the egos.

When analysing the composition of the bonding ties, we differentiated four groups: Respondent has (1) no bonding ties, (2) only kin bonding ties, (3) only non-kin bonding ties, and (4) both kin and non-kin ties (see Table 2). We found a significant difference in this composition by residential area (p=0,002). The share of those with no bonding ties was the highest among those living in N#2 (24.7%). The most diverse, "mixed" composition was most prevalent in S#1 (15.7%). The highest rate of people with only kin bonding ties was found in N#1 (75%).

Table 2
Size and composition of bonding ties

	S#1 (n = 70)	S#2	
		N#1 (n = 128)	N#2 (n = 73)
Bonding ties, mean	2.00	1.23	1.16
Non-Roma	1.75	1.30	1.28
Roma	2.13	1.19	1.00
Composition of bonding ties, %			
0 kin 0 non-kin	20.00	10.16	24.66
Only kin	50.00	75.00	50.68
Only non-kin	14.29	10.94	13.70
Mix	15.71	3.91	10.96

Note: All effects are significant at p < 0.05.

Ethnic and spatial homophily of bonding ties

Table 3 shows that the bonding ties of the Roma are ethnically and residentially more homogenous than those of the non-Roma, irrespective of their place of residence. For non-Roma respondents, we found a significant difference in in the three areas: The core networks are ethnically more homogenous in the non-integrated neighbourhood (N#2, 67.59%) and the most heterogeneous in the case of the non-Roma living in the integrated area (S#1, 25.69%). The ethnic homophily of the core networks of the Roma and non-Roma is quite different in S#1: The core networks of the non-Roma are ethnically heterogeneous, while those of the Roma are homogenous.

Table 3
Ethnic and spatial homophily of bonding ties

	S#1 (n = 70) %	S#2	
		N#1 (n = 128) %	N#2 (n = 73) %
Ethnic homophily	64.79	69.42	72.42
Non-Roma	25.69	60.61	67.59
Roma	81.84	74.88	81.58
Residential homophily	74.82	75.51	82.76
Non-Roma	63.43	71.97	79.91
Roma	79.79	77.70	88.16

Note: All effects are significant at p < 0.05.

Most of the alters live in the same area as the ego, that is, they are spatially very close, either from the same household, street, or at least from the same segregated part of the settlement. This is most pronounced for those living in N#2, as 82.76% of their core ties live in the same area. There is a significant difference between the Roma and non-Roma in S#1: Non-Roma have more spatially and more heterogeneous bonding ties and several ties that live further away, while Roma have more ties to their residential area (see Table 3).

The number, ethnic, and spatial homophily of bridging ties

Respondents have an average of 8.43 weak ties, which is significantly influenced by their age and activity status. First, younger respondents (those younger than 40 years old) have more bridging ties than older respondents (9.58 vs. 7.57 persons, p = 0.003); and second, those who were employed at the time of data collection have more weak ties than those who did not have a job (9.53 vs. 7.91 people, p = 0.067).

There are significant differences in the number of bridging ties among the three areas (see Table 4): On average, respondents from N#1 had the most ties (9.71) and those from N#2 the fewest (6.21). This is true for both the Roma and non-Roma. We found no statistically significant differences within the areas between the Roma and non-Roma, although Roma people tend to have more bridging ties in all three areas (see Table 4).

Table 4
Network characteristics of bridging ties

	S#1 (n = 70)	S#2	
		N#1 (n = 128)	N#2 (n = 73)
Number of bridging ties, mean	8.41	9.71	6.21
Non-Roma	7.54	8.85	5.77
Roma	8.87	10.21	6.83
Ethnic homophily, %	38.16	50.81	67.84
Non-Roma	87.80	78.48	87.57
Roma	17.43	35.52	39.93
Residential homophily, %	14.47	29.37	23.68
Non-Roma	17.47	20.64	17.97
Roma	13.14	34.20	31.76

Note: All effects are significant at p < 0.05.

There is no difference based on which area they live in for non-Roma as far as the ethnic homophily of weak ties is concerned. Non-Roma have predominantly non-Roma weak ties, which is not that surprising since non-Roma people are over-represented in the occupations listed in the position generator. The ethnically homogenous ties of the non-Roma poor may enhance their social integration. In the case of the Roma, there is a significant difference in their bridging ties based on which area they live in. Roma people living in S#1 have the smallest proportion of Roma weak ties (13.14%). Thus, their more extended network is ethnically heterogeneous, containing a large number of non-Roma people, indicating greater social integration. In this respect, they differ significantly from both N#1 and N#2, where the share of Roma weak ties is higher (34.2 and 31.76%). The spatial heterogeneity of bridging ties is more pronounced for those living in S#1, in other words, their weak ties are the most spatially dispersed, and for those living in N#1, they are the most homogenous, limited to their residential area.

Spatial segregation and social capital

We analysed the links between the structure of social networks and the level of spatial integration using discriminant analysis. Classification results show that 69.3% of the cases from the original three neighbourhoods were correctly classified by linear discriminant functions, which, in fact, indicates a strong relationship between the two types of integration. The first distributed function explains 77.5% and the second 22.5% of the explained variance between groups (p<0,001).

The first function (see Table 5) is where positive values embody several bonding ties, a long period of residence in the given area and spatially heterogeneous bridging social capital. The second function is where positive values refer to richness in bridging social capital, the dominance of ethnically heterogeneous weak ties and the Roma ethnicity of the respondents. The first function indicates some kind of local embeddedness, thus named "bonding-based non-Roma and Roma," while the second, characterised by the heterogeneous bridging ties of the Roma, is called "bridging-based Roma."

Table 5
Structure matrix of the discriminant analysis

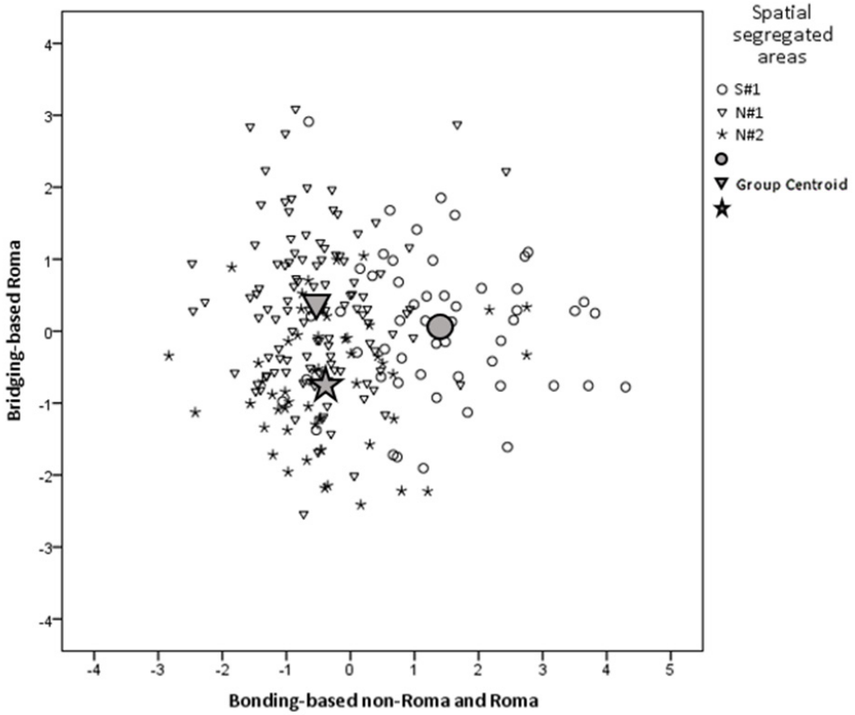
	Function 1	Function 2
Number of bonding ties	0.65	-0.12
Length of residence	0.52	0.25
Spatial homophily of bridging ties	-0.34	0.20
Ethnic homophily of bonding ties	-0.06	-0.05
Number of bridging ties	0.00	0.61
Ethnic homophily of bridging ties	-0.32	-0.56
Ethnicity of ego	0.19	0.55
Spatial homophily of bonding ties	-0.05	-0.16

The three group centroids are significantly different from each other (see Table 6 and Figure 2). The spatially more integrated area (S#1) is characterised dominantly by the first function: several bonding ties, strong attachment to the area (living there for the longest time), and spatially heterogeneous bridging ties. The so-called "bridging-based Roma" function mostly characterises the spatially semi-integrated neighbourhood (S#2 N#1) where mostly the Roma respondents are the ones who have more numerous bridging ties, preferably non-Roma and locally bounded. In this neighbourhood, the "bonding-based non-Roma and Roma" function is the weakest. The spatially non-integrated neighbourhood (S#2 N#2) is where the first function is also weak, along with an extremely disadvantaged position on the "Bridging-based Roma function": Most of these respondents are socially isolated from the fabric of the city.

Table 6
The discriminant functions in the three areas studied

		Functions at group centroids	
Area		Bonding-based non-Roma and Roma	Bridging-based Roma
S#1		1.401	0.050
	N#1	-0.510	0.334
S#2			
	N#2	-0.379	-0.738

Figure 2
Plot of discriminant functions



Conclusion

The population groups in our analysis do not differ in the three areas based on their socio-demographic characteristics, yet the characteristics of their social networks differ in meaningful ways. Moreover, even inside a seemingly homogenous spatially segregated area (S#2), we may find significant differences regarding social capital. Those living in the more spatially integrated area (S#1) have the most bonding ties, and the number of these ties decreases with the level of spatial integration of the given area. Ethnic differences are also clearly visible: the Roma in the spatially non-integrated part (N#2) have fewer bonding ties than the non-Roma. Those living in the spatially non-integrated area (N#2) are the most bounded locally.

The number of bridging weak ties varies greatly by space and ethnicity: Those from the spatially semi-integrated area (N#1) have the most, while those in the spatially non-integrated area (N#2) the fewest. Roma respondents tend to have more weak ties than non-Roma respondents. The number of weak ties of non-Roma respondents does not differ spatially by the area in which they live. However, in the case of the Roma, the network of those living in the spatially integrated area (S#1) is most diverse both ethnically and spatially, and those of the spatially semi-integrated are (N#1) most locally bounded. The discriminant analysis supports our original claim. The level of spatial integration matters and is reflected in the characteristics of the interpersonal network structures: Those living in more spatially integrated, less segregated areas have somewhat larger, more spatially and ethnically diverse networks, both in terms of their strong and weak ties, while the opposite is true for those living in less integrated and most segregated areas. Those who live in the spatially semi-integrated area (N#1) are "halfway" in both respects: Their mostly kin-based core networks are supplemented with wide but predominantly locally bound weak ties.

Although we could detect relevant differences, the populations of all three segregated areas are primarily locally bounded, segregated communities and are much less spatially integrated than other residential areas of the city. Those living in the spatially more integrated area (S#1) not only have the largest and most diverse networks but also seem to have a strong, "bonding-based" cohesive community network as well. Even the non-Roma who live there have ethnically heterogeneous, that is, Roma network members. The disintegrated area (S#2) is characterised by both spatial and social isolation; the network resources of the population cannot enhance their social integration as their spatial exclusion coincides with their social exclusion. Moreover, it seems that even the neighbourhood cannot function as a community.

The survey was part of a project initiated by the local government aiming to ensure the social inclusion of people at risk of social exclusion at the community and individual levels. Specific objectives, such as strong community cohesion at the neighbourhood and municipal levels, promoting social inclusion, overcoming long-term disadvantages for children and increasing access to public services, guide the

implementation of the project. The city's long-term plans include the eradication of S#1 and the creation of a habitable housing environment and increased opportunities for social inclusion in S#2.

The project staff will build on the existing resources of the population, taking into account the principle of "do no harm" (Charancle–Lucchi 2018) to local social resources. In light of the foregoing, our policy recommendation for local urban planning authorities is to consider that populations in segregated areas may have different needs based on their different network resources. The more deprived and spatially and socially segregated area (S#2) has nothing to build on, while the more spatially integrated area (S#1) has resources both within the community and "external" links that could be exploited for more efficient social integration.

The positive or negative qualities of the existing relations should be taken into account in executing a move from the part of the settlement with poorer infrastructure (#S1) to a more modern and comfortable area (S#2). The more favourable network indicators of the territorially integrated part of the settlement (S#1) should be considered when the settlement is dismantled: Strong family and neighbourhood ties should be prioritised as potential resources when they are moved to the new residential area. To ensure a positive outcome and avoid conflicts, these should be built upon as a priority in neighbourhood and community activities. Both the strong local cohesion and the change in perspective are well illustrated by the fact that people in settlement S#1 were initially reluctant to move, despite the promise of better housing. However, currently, those who have not yet moved are looking forward to the move and taking their children to see their new home. The desire to move also reflects the importance of strong ties: People are keen to move to where their trusted relationships and familiar support system are located.

In the other part of the settlement (S#2), in addition to infrastructural improvements, efforts should be made to increase the network resources of the population, to promote the development and maintenance of core relationships, and to raise awareness among the programme staff of their significant role as bridging ties in the social integration of the inhabitants of the settlement. The number, geographical extent and ethnic composition of core and weak-ties of the people living in the settlement area are also increased and enriched by the community activities organised as part of the project (joint landscaping, joint organisation of events, sports events with members of the majority community, the storytelling-based "Meséd" programme, Lego building), neighbourhood discussions, involvement in training courses and activities.

The COVID epidemic and the resulting restrictions have disrupted community activities and slowed the hard-won progress. The effectiveness of the programme and the organised activities, the involvement of residents and their need for social interaction is reflected in the fact that the May 2021 opening was eagerly awaited by the inhabitants of the municipality. Thus, the programme can rely on the results achieved before the onset of the COVID epidemic and continue effectively.

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The spatial pattern of educational attainment in Hungary

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Background

The composition of the population by education is related to a number of demographic and health factors as well as other aspects affecting quality of life (Graetz et al. 2018). It has also been proven that education is closely related to the economic development and competitiveness of specific countries and regions, although their cause-and-effect relationship is disputed (Czaller 2016, Krueger–Lindahl 2001); considerable inequality of education moderates economic growth (Castello–Doménech 2022). Based on macro data, it is also known that educational inequalities have decreased globally since the second half of the twentieth century (Morrison–Murtin 2010), but the gap between developed and developing countries has barely changed (Barro–Lee 2013). According to Zhang and his co-authors (2015) the explanation for this lies in the fact that in developing countries, there is still a big difference between rural and urban areas in the extent of education.

Domestic research focusing on inequalities in terms of education has also revealed the fact that the educational level of the population plays a crucial role in regional economic growth in Hungary as well (Nemes Nagy–Németh 2005). However, a high level of human capital in a region is beneficial not only for the territorial unit concerned, but also for the individuals, for example in terms of lifestyle, healthcare and culture (Uzzoli 2017).

In Hungary, the education level of the population increased continuously, even during the period of socialism, and this positive trend continued after the 1990 census (Forray–Kozma 2000). Besides, the proportion of those with less than primary school education decreased amongst those older than the age limit of compulsory education, and the proportion of those in education increased at all levels of education. In addition to Budapest and its surroundings, the biggest winners of the favourable trends after the change of the regime included the Budapest–Szeged axis and the Lake Balaton area (Kiss et al. 2008). Reviewing the individual settlement types, not only did the proportion of people with a higher education level increase in the capital

and suburban settlements around the capital, but an above-average increase was also registered in larger cities, primarily in the vicinity of higher education hubs (Jancsó–Szalkai 2017). Even though education indicators have improved in recent decades, the lower education indicators of areas with unfavourable socio-economic indicators have remained unchanged, and a permanent polarization has evolved between developed and less developed areas of the country (Forray–Híves 2013). While the proportion of graduates increased even in the peripheral regions after the turn of the millennium, the rate of growth was well below the national average (Németh–Dövényi 2018).

With regard to the development of regional inequalities in education, it can be established that the equalization process typical of the period of socialism failed to continue after the change of political regime, and convergence started again only after the turn of the millennium (Kiss et al. 2008, Sánta et al. 2015). In terms of most education indicators, a reduction of inequalities can be observed after 2001, except for in terms of those failing to graduate from any classes (Szakálné Kanó et al. 2017). The equalization in the proportion of graduates is significantly modified by its specific territorial pattern, which forms prominent island-like regions (Németh–Dövényi 2018). According to the results of the latest analysis by Pénzes et al. (2018), based on the 2011 census data, the educational indicators of the backward settlements are lagging behind the national average or a permanent gap still exists. However, the trend towards equalization confirmed by other studies can only be observed in terms of occupations requiring lower levels of education which are less valued on the labour market.

The current study shows what education differences can be observed at the regional level in Hungary today by means of a data collection from 2021, and it also examines what education level characterizes each type of settlement.

Data and methods

During the analysis, we relied on the data of a survey based on a personal questionnaire conducted in the autumn of 2021 within the confines of the *HAS Cooperation of Excellence Programme, Mobility Research Centre* project. The data collection was carried out through a nationally representative sample of 5,000 persons aged at least 18, living in Hungary and having Hungarian citizenship. During the selection of the sample, a two-stage, proportionally stratified probability sampling procedure was used. The primary sampling units were the settlements involved, while the final sampling units were the relevant age groups of the population. In the settlements included in the sample, the residential addresses were randomly selected according to the number of cases in the sample frame, and, in addition to the residential address, the address card allocated to the interviewers included the gender and age group of the person visited. The sample reflects the proportions typical of the entire adult population in this area according to gender, age (three age groups), education (four education levels) and settlement type (four settlement levels).

In our study we distinguish four levels of education in our analysis: Early Childhood and Primary Education (ISCED 0–1), Lower Secondary Education (ISCED 2), Upper Secondary and Post-Secondary Non-Tertiary Education (ISCED 3–4), and Tertiary Education (ISCED 5–7). In the analyses we examine the respondents' educational attainment by the territorial differences.

We have created an index with the adaptation of the social stratification index (TRI) of Németh (2008) for the analysis of territorial differences: the respondents Educational-Index (EI). The index expresses in a single value the proportion of groups with different levels of education in a given territorial unit. In this study we use the second and third level of NUTS classification (NUTS 2 and NUTS 3) to divide up the territory of Hungary.

The calculation method of the Educational-Index of the respondents:

$$EI = \left(\frac{e_1}{e_2} + \frac{e_1}{e_3} + \frac{e_1}{e_4} + \frac{e_2}{e_3} + \frac{e_2}{e_4} + \frac{e_3}{e_4}\right)$$

e1= ISCED 5–7 (Tertiary Education)
e2= ISCED 3–4 (Upper Secondary and Post-Secondary Non-Tertiary Education)
e3= ISCED 2 (Lower Secondary Education)
e4= ISCED 0–1 (Early Childhood and Primary Education)
or it can be written as a formula in the following form:

$$EI = \sum_{i=1}^{K-i} \sum_{j=i+1}^{K} \left(\frac{x_i}{x_j}\right)$$

K=4 (K: level of education)

With regard to the index we have created, we emphasize that its values cannot be interpreted in themselves. The index is suitable for comparing different areas or populations. Thus, the value of the index cannot characterize the level of educational attainment of a region in itself; it is only suitable for describing the regional differences. Since the index is based on four levels of hierarchical interpretation of educational attainment, a higher index value is obtained if more people have higher education. It follows that the higher proportion of those with higher educational attainment in the region moves the value of the index upwards, while their lower presence or the higher presence of those with lower educational attainment move the value downwards. It is also important to emphasize that the value of the indexes is sensitive to the relative proportions of the groups within each territorial unit. The aim of our analysis is only to provide a snapshot of regional differences in Hungarian educational attainment based on the data of a recent cross-sectional survey.

Results

By regional comparison, the results show that high educational attainment is still highly concentrated in Budapest and Pest county (Table 1). The share of graduates (ISCED 4-5) in the capital is twice as high as in other regions of the country, but it also has the highest proportion of people with high school graduation (ISCED 3–4). The proportion of people with only lower education – Primary Education (ISCED 0–1) and Lower Secondary Education (ISCED 2) – is lowest in Budapest and Pest County. In contrast, the proportion of graduates (ISCED 4–5) is lowest in the North Great Plain and North Hungary and the proportion of those with Primary or Lower Secondary Education (ISCED 0–1 and ISCED 2) is highest.

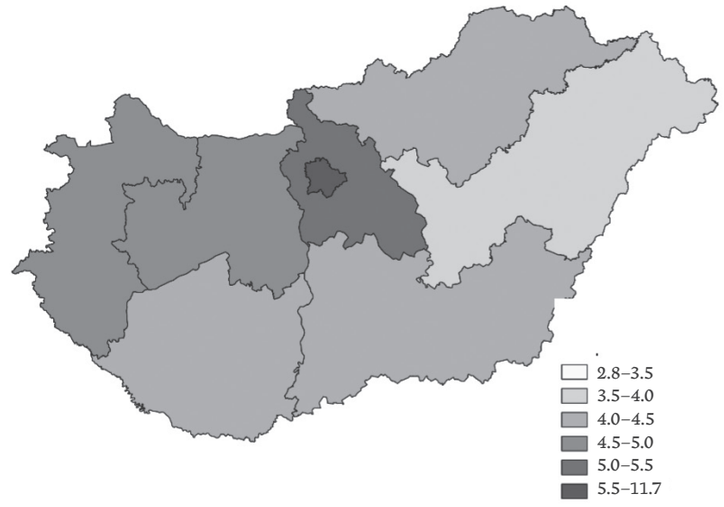
Table 1
Distribution of educational attainment (%) and the values of the Educational-Index by NUTS2 region

	ISCED 0–1	ISCED 2	ISCED 3–4	ISCES 4–5	Educational-Index
Budapest (capital, region)	16.0	12.9	39.2	31.9	11.52
Pest (county, region)	27.0	23.7	31.7	17.6	5.32
Western Transdanubia	28.4	25.6	30.4	15.6	4.84
Central Transdanubia	29.6	24.6	30.8	15.0	4.73
Southern Transdanubia	32.3	25.5	28.0	14.2	4.38
Northern Hungary	34.1	22.8	29.7	13.4	4.28
Southern Great Plain	31.8	24.9	29.3	14.0	4.27
Northern Great Plain	36.8	23.0	27.4	12.7	3.92

Source: KEP3 survey, 2021

This concentration is reflected in the Educational-Index value (Figure 1). The differences between the eastern and western parts of the country are confirmed by the values of the Educational-Index. Figure 1 clearly shows that the EI index value is highest in the capital (11.52), followed by Pest County (5.32), which is only half of the capital's EI index value. Consequently, the capital city has a particularly high population with a high level of education, while Pest County has a high level of education. The regions of Western Transdanubia (EI=4.84) and Central Transdanubia (EI=4.73) have an average level of education. The population has below average and low levels of education in Southern Transdanubia (EI=4.38), Northern Hungary (EI=4.28) and Southern Great Plain (4.27), while the lowest levels are found in Northern Great Plain (EI=3.92). The pattern emerging from the application of EI shows that the regions of Central Hungary and the northern and western parts of Transdanubia are a cluster of regions with high or average educational attainment. Southern Transdanubia and the regions of east Hungary are a cluster with low educational attainment.

Figure 1
The Educational-Index by NUTS2 region



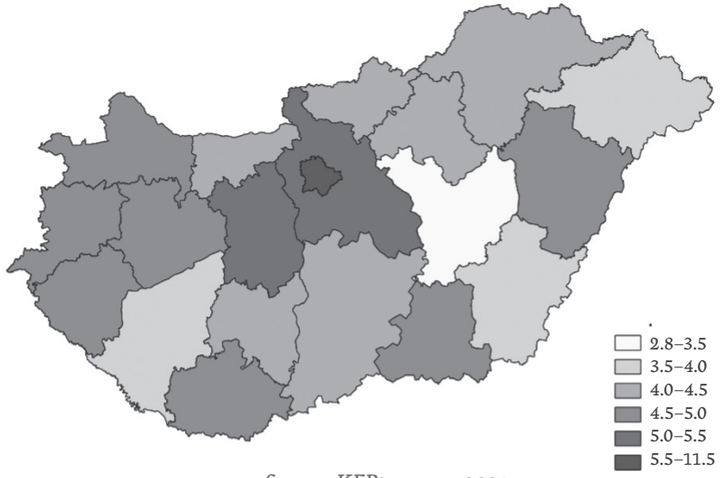
Source: KEP3 survey, 2021

If we look at the Educational-Index by smaller territorial units, it is clear that the educational composition of the population tends to vary within regions (Figure 2). For example, within the Northern Great Plain region, which has the lowest Educational-Index, the value of the index in Hajdú-Bihar county is one and a half times higher than in Jász-Nagykun-Szolnok county. This result confirms that university centres (in this case Debrecen) concentrate populations with higher educational attainment (Sánta et al 2015). The same differentiation is also present in the Southern Transdanubian region and in the Southern Great Plain region, where Baranya and Csongrád-Csanád counties stand out, presumably because Pécs and Szeged are also considered university centres.

Unfortunately, our data do not allow comparisons over time. Taking into account that the educational attainment of a society changes slowly, the analysis requires data series spanning several decades. However, we believe that by disaggregating the sample into birth cohorts, we can still get an indirect picture of how the educational attainment of each region has changed over time. In order to investigate this, we have created three birth cohorts: (1) the first is for 18–35-year-olds (born 1986–2003), (2) the second is for 36–55-year-olds (born 1966–1985), and (3) the third is for 56-year-olds and older (born in 1965 or earlier).

The results show that the oldest generation as a whole had much lower educational attainment, so the educational expansion affected mostly the two younger cohorts (Table 2). Most regions show the Educational-Index values to be twice as high for the

Figure 2
The Educational-Index by NUTS3 region



Source: KEP3 survey, 2021

36-55 cohort than the oldest cohort. There is no significant difference in education between the two younger cohorts in terms of the Educational-Index values.

However, the reduction in spatial inequalities in educational attainment (Sánta et al. 2015, Németh–Dövényi 2018) is confirmed by our data. It can be seen that while the 36–55 age cohort is more disadvantaged in terms of educational attainment in certain regions (Northern and Southern), the youngest cohorts are more equal in rural regions. However, our data do not find a decline in Budapest's knowledge-concentrating power. In all birth cohorts, the capital city stands out significantly.

Table 2
The Educational-Index by birth cohorts and NUTS2 region

	Educational-Index	Born 1986–2003	Born 1966–1985	Born in 1965 or earlier
Budapest (capital, region)	11.52	19.16	19.05	8.31
Pest (county, region)	5.32	7.06	7.90	3.73
Western Transdanubia	4.84	6.99	7.69	3.63
Central Transdanubia	4.73	7.08	6.68	4.33
Southern Transdanubia	4.38	6.29	6.02	2.95
Northern Hungary	4.28	6.20	6.27	3.68
Southern Great Plain	4.27	6.91	5.44	4.10
Northern Great Plain	3.92	6.18	4.07	2.87

Source: KEP3 survey, 2021

If the spatial differences are interpreted by settlement type, a clear settlement gradient in educational attainment is evident (Table 3). While the share of graduates is 9.5 per cent in villages, it is 14.6 per cent in cities, 23.3 per cent in major cities and 31.9 per cent in Budapest. The distribution of the population is reversed for those with only primary education. In Budapest the proportion is 16.0 per cent, while in the villages 39.3 per cent. These differences are also reflected in the EI-index value.

Table 3
Distribution of educational attainment (%) and the values of Educational-Index by settlement type

	ISCED 0–1	ISCED 2	ISCED 3–4	ISCED 4–5	Educational-Index
Budapest (capital)	16.0	12.9	39.2	31.9	11.52
Major city	21.5	18.6	36.6	23.3	7.51
Town	30.2	24.8	30.5	14.6	4.61
Village	39.3	26.7	24.5	9.5	3.19

Source: KEP3 survey, 2021

When the Educational-Index is examined by the type of settlement within regions, there is no spatial equalization (Table 4). People living in villages have significantly lower educational attainment and the value of the Educational-Index for villages in each region is closer to each other than to other types of settlement in the region. Only the villages in the Western and Central Transdanubian regions show a slight increase. The Educational-Index values for cities and major cities reflect the presence of university centres; in regions where the major city is a large university-centre city (e.g., Pécs in Southern Transdanubia), the value of the Educational-Index in the major city is proportionally higher than in other cities.

Table 4
The Educational-Index by settlement type and NUTS2 region

	Educational-Index	Major city	Town	Village
Budapest (capital, region)	11.52	–	–	–
Pest (county, region)	5.32	–	5.95	4.31
Western Transdanubia	4.84	6.94	5.47	3.50
Central Transdanubia	4.73	7.58	4.65	3.73
Southern Transdanubia	4.38	8.38	3.96	2.82
Northern Hungary	4.28	7.96	4.80	2.95
Southern Great Plain	4.27	7.48	4.56	2.82
Northern Great Plain	3.92	7.04	3.45	2.72

Source: KEP3 survey, 2021

As an illustration, we have selected some freely available indicators of quality of life to compare with the index of educational attainment (Table 5). The table shows that regions with lower levels of education also have a lower quality of life. Unemployment is higher, so a higher proportion of the population is at risk of poverty and social exclusion. Poorer living conditions can also lead to poorer health. In these more disadvantaged regions, life expectancy at birth is also lower among both men and women. It is therefore clear, that the three regions with the lowest EI values are also the regions characterized by the worst socio-economic and quality of life situation.

Table 5
The Educational-Index and other indicators of the quality of life

	Educational -Index	Proportion of at risk of poverty or social exclusion 2021 (per cent)	Unemployment rate 2021 (per cent)	Average life expectancy at birth for men, 2021	Average life expectancy at birth for women, 2021
Budapest (capital city)	11.52	15.20	2.92	72.84	78.80
Pest (county, region)	5.32	16.60	2.95	71.50	77.94
Western Transdanubia	4.84	15.20	2.23	71.99	78.20
Central Transdanubia	4.73	11.90	2.10	70.42	77.37
Southern Great Plain	4.38	20.30	4.47	70.37	77.24
Northern Hungary	4.28	25.90	6.20	68.34	75.87
Southern Transdanubia	4.27	26.10	4.78	70.19	77.46
Northern Great Plain	3.92	25.40	7.09	69.50	76.92

Source: KEP3 survey, 2021; HCSO Stadat-database

Conclusion

In our analysis we have attempted to examine spatial differences in educational attainment based on recent data. For this purpose, we adapted Zsolt Németh's territorial stratification index, which is able to show spatial differences in education.

Most of our results are in line with previous studies. Although Budapest continues to have a prominent concentration of knowledge, in rural regions there are smaller spatial differences in educational attainment between younger age groups than between older age groups. Previous analyses at the level of municipalities have found that not only regional equalization is observed, but also shifts at the sub-regional level and by settlement type (Sánta et al. 2015). Further investigation of the problem has revealed that this equalization is highly asymmetric. The size of settlements, economic development and proximity to universities have a positive influence on this process. The results clearly show that this levelling off mainly affects the large city agglomerations, which is referred to as "suburbanization of the degree" by the researchers who conducted the study (Németh–Dövényi 2018). As it was not possible to conduct a study at the level of municipalities in our study, we treated the settlement types in aggregate. Our results highlight that the settlement slope is still very strongly present in the distribution of educational attainment. Our results show that the value of the Education-Index for villages in different regions is much closer to each other than to other types of settlements in the region.

Our results also show that the East-West divide in the country remains dominant. While the more developed western regions have a concentration of knowledge, the population of the eastern regions is less educated. Our research also clearly shows that this is where university centres disrupt the pattern. Within regions with a poorer education index, counties with a university centre had significantly higher levels of education.

Finally, it is important to confirm here that education and economic development and quality of life are strongly correlated. Regions with lower levels of education also have worse living conditions. Another line of research is to examine the spatial concentration of schooling and migration together. The study of the relationship between access to education, concentration of knowledge and spatial mobility can make a significant contribution to territorial development projects.

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Migration intentions in Hungary during the fourth wave of COVID-19

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Introduction

The paper examines the migration intentions of Hungarian citizens based on a 2021 survey. The survey was carried out by the Research Center for Social Sciences, with the support of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. It was an N=5000 survey looking into the post-COVID-19 social processes in Hungarian society, among those the migration intentions of the population. The research outlines the intention of moving abroad for different (short, longer, permanent) periods of time based on two major aspects. First, we examine how trust, satisfaction and one's integration affects the willingness to move abroad. Secondly, we examine migration intentions in relation to COVID-19. A brief literature review is followed by bivariate analyses to examine the correlation between migration intentions and socio-demographic background variables (gender, age, education, place of residence, marital status, financial situation, labour market situation), as well as satisfaction, trust, political attitudes, integration models, COVID-19, and vaccination status. Then, with regression models we outline the profile of those who plan to migrate, and we explore the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on the intention to migrate.

Migration intentions and the pandemic – literature review

Migration intention measures the intention or plan to work abroad or to emigrate; it expresses the proportion of those people within the population who plan to migrate. However, as Sik (2018) points out, the intention to migrate is not necessarily applicable to estimate the volume of expected population movement, as it is determined much more by the demand side of the labour market than by the supply side. Therefore, migration potential can be used to predict the extent and composition of the supposedly mobile labour market supply.

In order to increase the reliability of the migration intention, it is common to inquire not only about the respondent's intention to migrate, but also about the time frame and date of the planned migration, the potential destination countries, and as an additional filter, the reason or purpose of the migration. In our survey, we asked about the time frame of migration (going abroad for work for a few weeks or months (commuting included), moving abroad for work for a few years or moving abroad to live there) and the potential destination countries.

According to Sik (2018), among the socio-demographic factors affecting the intention to migrate, the explanatory power of gender, age and place of residence is obvious, because, on the one hand, they precede the willingness to migrate in terms of time, and on the other hand, they cannot or can only be changed very slowly over time. However, the effect of background variables such as education, labour market situation, satisfaction, trust, and political attitudes on migration potential is less clear. Our analysis intends to see whether there has been a shift or change in this regard in recent years.

Literature on international migration trends traditionally holds that there is a significant difference between men and women in terms of the willingness to migrate. Men generally plan to work abroad at a higher rate than women (Krieger–Maître 2006). This is also confirmed by the fact that over the past 20 years, the proportion of men among people who migrate internationally has increased from 50.6% to 52.1% (McAuliffe–Triandafyllidou 2021).

There is also a consensus in the literature that the younger the individual, the more inclined they are to plan migration. Planning to work abroad is mostly typical for the age group of 20–39, and the possibility of migration intention decreases over the age of 40 (Hárs–Simon 2016). Regarding the place of residence, the urban population has a greater migration potential because they are more closely connected to global networks (labour market, communication, culture, etc.) than those living in villages (Sik 2018).

In addition to the traditionally examined factors, Koltai et al. (2020) included the individual's network of relationships as an important aspect in the measurement of migration potential. In their study, they pointed out that migration decisions are strategic decisions that cannot be understood without examining the system of relationships surrounding the individual, and that among the various relationship networks, the so-called migration-specific network capital plays the most important role in short- and long-term migration decisions and emigration plans. Migration specific network capital refers to the people with migration experiences from their immediate environment. Regarding the strength of the non-migration specific weak and strong ties, it was determined that while strong ties in this category do not have a deterrent effect in short-term employment abroad, they can act as hindering factors in the case of longer-term migration goals.

The Hungarian population's short- and long-term willingness to migrate was steadily around 3–4% between 1990 and 2000, and it started to rise afterwards. The highest migration willingness was measured in 2012: at that time, the proportion of those planning short- or long-term employment abroad was 13–16%, and those planning emigration was 7%. After 2014, the intention to migrate stabilized at around 9-11% with minor fluctuations (Sik–Szeitl 2016). The three most attractive destination countries for emigrants from Hungary have been Germany, Great Britain and Austria since the 2010s (Blaskó–Gödri 2014).

The Hungarian emigration trend that culminated in 2012 was not a national specificity, but rather a flexible reaction to the international labour market demand, which resulted from the global economic upswing and the free movement of labour following the EU accession of CEE countries. Although in the early to mid-2010s there were reactions in the Hungarian public discourse that perceived the level of emigration as dramatic, emigration from Hungary was actually far below that of other countries in the region, such as Poland or Romania (Ionescu 2015).

The appearance of COVID-19 at the beginning of 2020 created a new situation in international migration, since travel restrictions and border closures made the free movement of workers impossible within a few weeks of the outbreak of the pandemic. According to the IOM's estimate, as a result of COVID-19 the volume of international migration decreased by two million people, 27%, compared with expectations (McAuliffe–Triandafyllidou 2021), but the report also states that the long-term effects of the coronavirus on international migration trends cannot yet be predicted. Nevertheless, the epidemic has called into question some of the previously existing conditions of international mobility that individuals may have taken for granted, such as the right to leave their own country at a time of their choice, unconditional return to their homeland at any time, free movement within the EU, and unrestricted entry into the labour market of another EU country.

O'Brien and Eger (2021) point out that the demographic and social processes induced by COVID-19 might strengthen anti-immigration political forces and attitudes, and as a result, the pace of international migration may slow down even further. In relation to the consequences of the pandemic, McAuliffe et al. (2021) also forecast that international migration will slow down, but their approach highlights the impact of COVID-19 on the development of digitalization; they predict that the previously necessary physical movement will increasingly be replaced by information technology solutions. Although these assumptions seem convincing and logical, analyses for 2021 and 2022 show that instead of continuing to slow down, the volume of international migration has actually returned to the pre-crisis level (OECD 2022). Finally, although our data collection proceeded it, the Russian-Ukrainian war has to be mentioned as another factor that created a new situation in international migration.

Analysis

Based on the survey, migration plans of different durations can be examined. Compared with the 2018 survey, the proportion of those who plan to stay abroad for a few years, as well as the proportion of those who plan to live abroad permanently has increased. On the other hand, the proportion of those who plan shorter-term employment abroad (a few weeks, a few months) did not change between 2018 and 2021. Our data indicate an increase in migration potential; thus, they seem to contradict predictions related to the impact of COVID-19. However, if we accept that this potential only represents labour market supply (Sik 2018), then this increased ratio indicates the intensification of wishful plans as a reaction to COVID-19 closedowns.

Table 1
Migration plans

Do you plan to...	2018			2021		
	yes (%)	no (%)	DK/ NO (%)	yes (%)	no (%)	DK/ NO (%)
work abroad for a few weeks or months (commuting included)	6	88.5	5.5	6.2	89.7	4.1
work abroad for a few years	3.8	90.3	5.9	6	89.5	4.5
move abroad to live there permanently	3.3	89.9	6.8	4.3	90.4	5.4

In terms of destination countries, the most popular countries to stay abroad in for any duration in line with previous research results are Austria, Germany, Great Britain, the Netherlands, and Ireland. The USA, Belgium, Finland and France have also been attractive for Hungarian migrants in the past decades.

The analysis of the migration plans on the basis of sociodemographic factors shows trends that support and align with previous international and Hungarian tendencies. Planning to work or stay abroad for any duration (for a few weeks or months, for a few years, or living abroad) is significantly more common among men than among women (see e.g., McAuliffe–Triandafyllidou 2021). The younger one is, the more mobile they seem: the 18-29 age group is the most likely to migrate, followed by the 30–39 cohort (cf. Hárs–Simon 2016). Planning to work abroad is less common among the economically inactive population, while employed and unemployed people intend to work abroad to a larger extent. The sociodemographic profile of those with migration plans is in line with the characteristics of the population relevant in estimating migration potential (Sik 1999).

Table 2
Destination countries (first option)

Destination country:	work abroad for a few weeks or months (commuting included)		work abroad for a few years		move abroad to live there permanently	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Austria	162	52.4	102	34.1	68	32.1
Belgium	6	1.8	8	2.8	9	4.4
Denmark	2	0.6	4	1.3	2	1
Finland	5	1.7	6	2.1	6	2.8
France	6	1.9	5	1.6	6	2.8
Greece	2	0.7	3	1	2	1
the Netherlands	8	2.6	14	4.6	6	2.8
Ireland	7	2.3	10	3.3	6	2.8
Luxembourg	1	0.4	2	0.7	0	0
Great Britain	14	4.6	25	8.2	18	8.5
Germany	55	17.8	62	20.5	39	18.1
Italy	3	0.9	2	0.7	4	1.9
Spain	2	0.7	5	1.7	2	0.9
Sweden	1	0.4	2	0.7	2	1
countries bordering Hungary (except for Austria)	1	0.3	2	0.7	2	1
other European countries	2	0.6	4	1.4	4	1.9
USA	6	2	9	3	7	3.2
Canada	2	0.6	1	0.3	2	0.8
other countries	2	0.7	2	0.7	3	1.4
do not know	22	7	32	10.6	25	11.6
sum	310	100	300	100	213	100

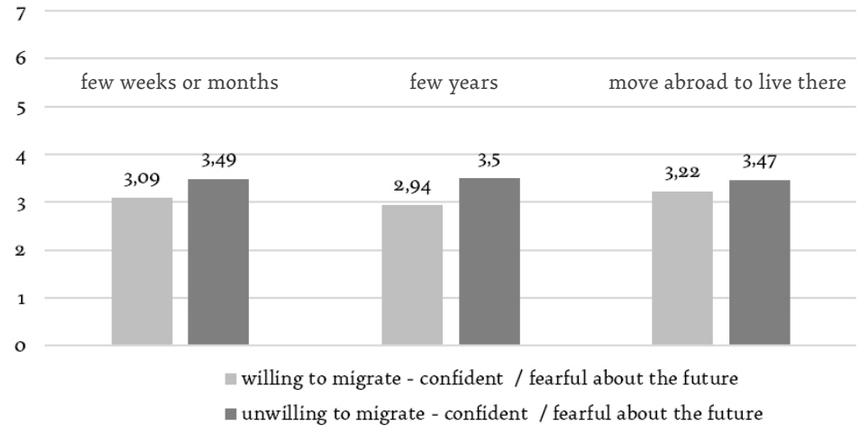
Migration plans in relation to satisfaction, trust and integration

In the next part of the analysis, bivariate tests are used to explore the correlations of migration plans with satisfaction, trust, political attitudes, entrepreneurial spirit and risk aversion. With these tests, we aim to outline the characteristics of the population planning to migrate. Finally, the analysis of migration intention is complemented with the integration models describing Hungarian society in the system of inequalities and integration, first introduced by Kovách et al. (2016).

Satisfaction, trust, entrepreneurial spirit, and risk aversion

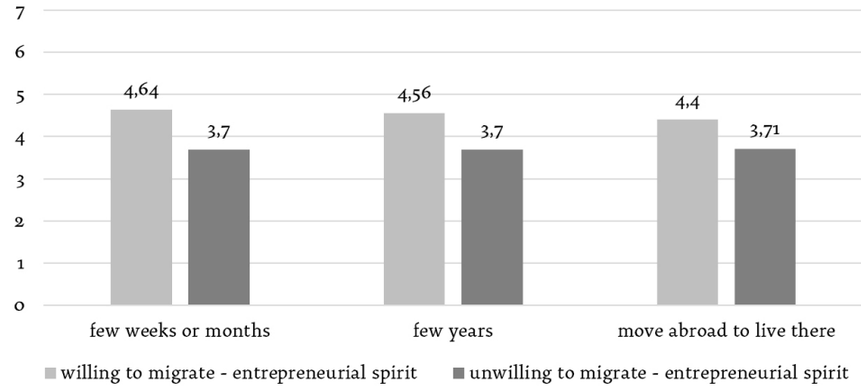
Firstly, indicators of satisfaction were included in the analysis. Based on the bivariate analyses, satisfaction or dissatisfaction with one's work, family relationships, living environment, and neighbourhood has no effect on migration willingness. However, the general satisfaction with life is at a higher level among those who plan a shorter stay abroad and those who would move abroad permanently, than among those who plan neither a shorter nor a longer stay abroad. These trends indicate that the intention to migrate does not stem from dissatisfaction with the immediate environment, and that general satisfaction with life and migration plans positively correlate. This outcome is partly related to the literature that claims that life satisfaction in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe is related to the intention to migrate. According to Otrachshenko and Popova (2014), people with the same level of life satisfaction plan to migrate from the countries of Central and Eastern Europe in a higher proportion than those living in Western European countries. Migration plans are also positively related to confidence in the future: those planning to stay abroad have more confidence in the future than those without migration plans.

Figure 1
Migration willingness and confidence in or fear of the future (significant differences, scale 1–7, 1: I have confidence in the future, 7: I fear the future)



Planning either short-term or long-term migration also positively correlates with the entrepreneurial spirit.

Figure 2
Migration willingness and risk aversion or entrepreneurial spirit (significant differences, scale 1–7, 1: risk-averse, 7: entrepreneurial)



As a conclusion, the intention to migrate has a positive correlation with both confidence in the future and entrepreneurial spirit.

Political attitudes

Satisfaction and dissatisfaction with the immediate environment showed no correlation with the intention to migrate. However, we thought that it was important to include the broader social and political context in the analysis, and thus we involved the dimensions of political satisfaction and trust as well. In the following, with the help of bivariate analyses, migration plans in relation to satisfaction with democracy, political trust, political interest, and political self-classification are examined.

Satisfaction and dissatisfaction with democracy indicate a significant correlation in the case of those who plan to move abroad: they are less satisfied with the functioning of democracy in Hungary (average 2.12, scale: 1–4) than those who do not plan to move abroad (average 2.43, scale: 1–4). In other words, intention of short-term migration and satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the political and democratic context do not constitute a significant relationship. However, the intention to emigrate does correlate with dissatisfaction: among those planning a permanent stay abroad, the assessment of the functioning of democracy in Hungary is significantly worse than among those who do not have emigration plans.

A similar picture unfolds with regard to political trust and emigration plans. Those considering longer-term employment abroad or permanent emigration have significantly less trust in the political institutions than those not planning to work abroad (Figures 3 and 4).

Figure 3
Plans to work abroad for a few years and political trust
(significant differences, scale: 0–10, 0: no trust at all, 10: complete trust)

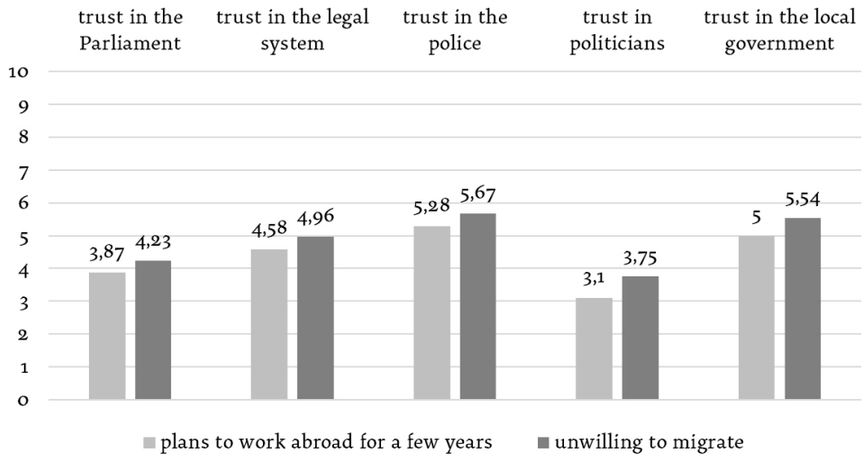
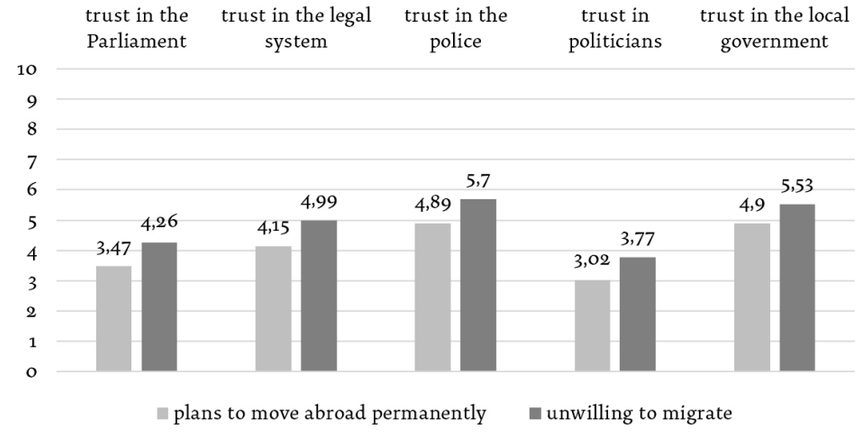
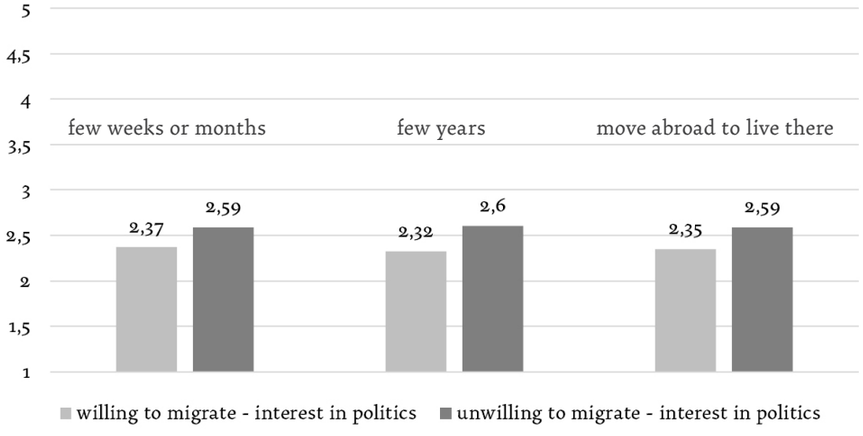


Figure 4
Plans to move abroad permanently and political trust
(significant differences, scale: 0–10, 0: no trust at all, 10: complete trust)



In addition to the migration plans, political distrust and dissatisfaction seem to coexist with a decrease in political interest as well: those who plan to migrate are less interested in politics than those who do not plan to migrate.

Figure 5
Migration intention and political interest (significant differences, how interested are you in politics? scale: 1–5, 1: not interested at all, 5: very interested)



The correlation between political self-classification and the intention to migrate is related to this trend. Political self-classification shows significant differences in the case of those planning to move abroad: those who plan to emigrate define themselves as more left-leaning (average 3.91, scale 1–7, 1: left-wing, 7: right-wing) than those who do not plan to move abroad (average 4.32).

As a conclusion, with regard to political attitudes it can be underlined that plans for long-term or permanent migration correlate with political dissatisfaction. Those who plan to emigrate see the functioning of Hungarian democracy more negatively, have less trust in political institutions, and define themselves as more left-leaning than those who do not plan to emigrate.

Integration models and migration intentions

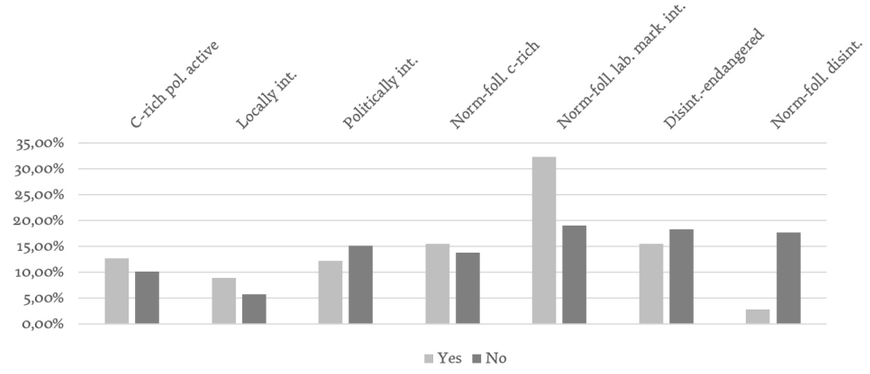
In the previous section we detailed how the relationship between the immediate environment and the wider social context (for the most part satisfaction and trust) show correlations with migration intentions. The inclusion of integration models in the analysis is the next step in this examination. The integration dimensions of the Hungarian society were defined by Kovách et al. based on the data of a 2015 survey (see Kovách et al. 2016). They examined eight integration dimensions along which they determined seven latent social groups. Later on, how these groups changed in the system of social inequalities and integration until 2018 was also addressed (Gerő et al. 2020).

The contact-rich politically active group's strongest characteristic is a high ratio of direct political participation, that is, election participation and activities beyond voting. The locally integrated group is characterized, among other factors, by an outstanding number with NGO membership. The politically integrated group is

characterized by rich political contacts. The norm-following contact-rich group is characterized by high institutional trust and, at the same time, political passivity (except for electoral participation, which is high in their case). The norm-following labour market integrated group is characterized by the fact that although they are politically less integrated, their social integration is strong through their active labour market connections. The group of disintegration-endangered entails people with limited social integration and a high perception of exclusion. Finally, the norm-following disintegrated group is characterized by a limited network of connections, low system integration and strong political passivity (see Kovách et al. 2023).

Based on our data, integration reinforces migration potential. The proportion of respondents willing to migrate within the norm-following labour market integrated, within the locally integrated, and within the contact-rich politically active groups is significantly higher than the proportion of respondents with migration plans in the less integrated groups. Furthermore, political integration is also more typical for those who have short- and medium-term migration plans than for those who do not intend to migrate. The only exception occurred among those planning to permanently move abroad, as they proved to be politically less integrated. The same trend was shown in the bivariate analysis of political attitudes and migration intention, as indicated earlier.

Figure 6
Emigration plans and the integration models
(Do you plan to move abroad to live there permanently?)



The results of the bivariate analyses indicate that the intention to migrate is independent of satisfaction with the immediate environment. Respondents with confidence in the future, with entrepreneurial spirit, and who are socially integrated are more likely to plan to work abroad than the risk-averse and disintegrated respondents.

In terms of political integration, political trust and satisfaction, there were significant differences in the case of those who planned to emigrate permanently. Those who

are planning to emigrate include a higher proportion who are more dissatisfied with the current political system; they are politically less integrated and less interested in politics, they define themselves as more left-leaning, and they see the functioning of democracy more negatively.

Migration intention in the light of sociodemographic background, trust and satisfaction, and social integration variables – explanatory models

In this section, explanatory models are used to explore the effect of individual variables on migration plans. Due to limitations in the number of items, we cannot examine the profile of those planning to stay abroad for different periods of time separately. For this reason, a dummy variable was created that measures the migration plans regardless of the time period. Based on our data, the proportion of those who plan to stay abroad for some period of time is estimated at around 9%.

First, we intended to explain the dummy variable potential of emigration (0 – not planning; 1 – planning) with the help of logistic regression models. In the first step, we examined the effect of only four socio-demographic factors. It was determined that while gender, age, and the settlement type of residence have a clear effect on migration intentions, education does not. Summing up the effects of these factors, it can be said that young men from Budapest most cherish the dreams of moving abroad. In total, these three factors can explain 22% of the variance of the dependent variable, that is, the willingness to emigrate.

If we expand the model with certain elements (e.g., confidence in the future, political self-classification, risk avoidance), the explanatory power of the model increases minimally (by 0.8 percentage points). The previously used background variables still exert a significant effect, and out of the newly included value variables, only the political attitude and risk avoidance strategy are significant. Thus, it can be claimed that, in addition to the previously explored structural effects, entrepreneurial spirit and left-leaning political attitudes determine the migration potential to a small but recognizable extent.

In order to examine the potential impact of the patterns of domestic integration on the willingness to emigrate, the integration group membership variable was added to the previous model. The characteristics of domestic integration are undoubtedly related to the migration potential, but model 3 indicates that the migration potential cannot be explained solely by domestic integration in general. The results show that those who are integrated in the labour market and belong in the norm-following group do not want to go abroad, and migration intentions are most likely in the case of the contact-rich politically active and the locally integrated groups.

The role of relational capital in migration is a well-known phenomenon in the emigration literature (see Koltai et al. 2020), therefore it is not surprising that migration potential is the most likely to occur among individuals belonging to the locally integrated group. Those who are locally well-integrated are the most likely to plan to

leave the country. The proportion of people living in smaller settlements is extremely high within the locally integrated group. Moreover, they have the highest (declared) monthly income, and an above–average network of contacts (Gerő et al. 2020). Taking these characteristics into account, it supports the result that migration potential is also high among the people belonging in this group, since they are precisely the stratum of the rural population that is rich in contacts and is active at the NGO level.

Table 3
Explanatory models of migration potential (logistic regression models, dependent variable: aggregate migration potential, 0 – no; 1 – yes)

	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3	
	Sig.	Exp(B)	Sig.	Exp(B)	Sig.	Exp(B)
Gender	0.000	0.51	0.000	0.54	0.000	0.54
1 - man; 2 - woman						
Age group	0.000		0.000		0.000	
ref. category: 18–29						
30–39	0.000	0.40	0.000	0.43	0.000	0.41
40–49	0.000	0.29	0.000	0.34	0.000	0.31
50–59	0.000	0.17	0.000	0.19	0.000	0.18
60–69	0.000	0.01	0.000	0.01	0.000	0.01
70+	0.000	0.01	0.000	0.01	0.000	0.01
Level of education	0.489		0.574		0.958	
ref. category: elementary school						
Vocational training	0.429	1.14	0.833	1.04	0.982	1.00
High school diploma	0.249	1.20	0.504	1.12	0.808	1.04
College degree	0.127	1.31	0.209	1.28	0.640	1.10
Settlement type of residence	0.000		0.000		0.000	
ref. category: village						
Budapest	0.000	1.87	0.000	1.86	0.000	2.20
County capital	0.287	0.83	0.453	0.87	0.584	0.90
Town	0.968	1.01	0.675	0.94	0.689	0.94
Confidence in the future vs. Fear of the future			0.738	0.99	0.906	1.00
1 - Confidence;... 7 - Fear						
Left-leaning vs. Right-leaning			0.024	0.92	0.042	0.92
1 – left-leaning; ... 7 – right-leaning						
Risk-averse vs. entrepreneurial			0.000	1.17	0.000	1.14

	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3	
	Sig.	Exp(B)	Sig.	Exp(B)	Sig.	Exp(B)
1 – risk-averse; ... 7 – entrepreneurial						
Integration group					0.000	
ref. category: norm-following disintegrated						
Contact-rich politically active					0.034	2.40
Locally integrated					0.025	2.60
Politically integrated					0.479	1.34
Norm-following contact-rich					0.426	1.38
Norm-following labour market integrated					0.242	1.59
Disintegration-endangered					0.398	0.70
Constant	0.000	0.344	0.000	0.247	0.000	0.19
Nagelkerke R Square	0.22		0.228		0.246	

Analysis: Migration plans and COVID-19

Among a number of other effects, COVID-19 brought about lockdowns, which certainly had an impact on international mobility and plans related to international movements. Closedowns often made it impossible to work abroad, which inevitably resulted in return migration. At the same time, in addition to the temporarily suspended plans for emigration and employment abroad, we assume that vaccination willingness could have been incorporated into the emigration strategy. In other words, having been vaccinated could theoretically be a situational advantage for those who had specific migration plans. Therefore, it is important to see how migration plans are connected to vaccination willingness.

To examine the relationship between migration plans and vaccination, at first we applied bivariate analysis, and then supplemented the previous migration willingness model with the variable related to vaccination. Based on our data, contrary to our preliminary expectations, migration plans are not associated with a stronger vaccination willingness. The results revealed that among those who plan to migrate for any length of time, the proportion of those who have already been vaccinated is lower, and the proportion of those who clearly reject vaccination is higher than among those who do not plan to migrate in any form.

If we compare the aggregate migration potential with vaccination willingness (Figure 8), we see that 75% of those who are not planning to migrate at all have been vaccinated, while this proportion among those who intend to migrate for any period of time is only 64%. At the same time, the proportion of those who refuse or hesitate about vaccination is also higher among those thinking about emigrating than among those who do not plan to leave the country.

Figure 7
Migration plans according to vaccination willingness

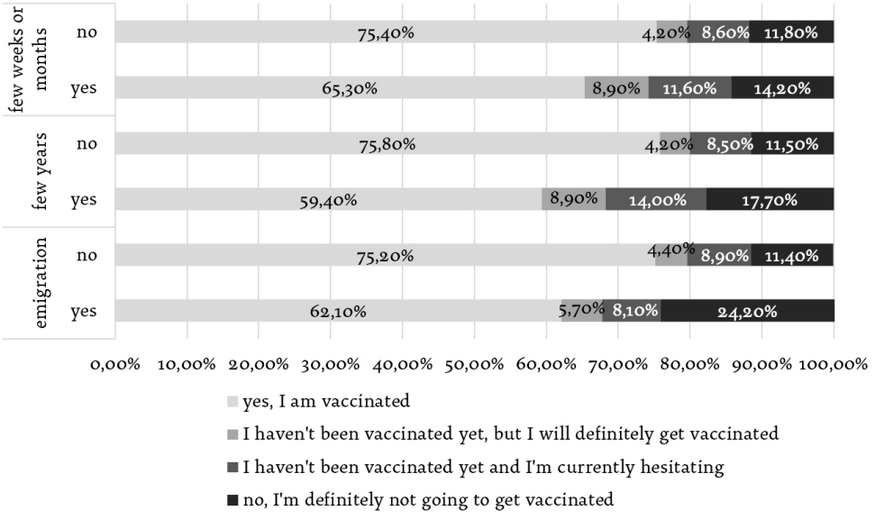
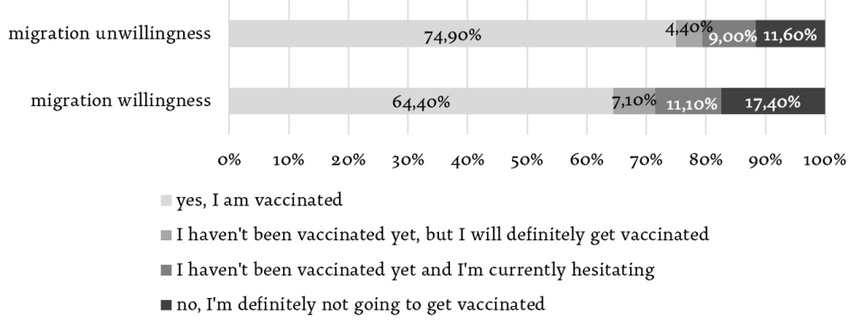


Figure 8
Aggregated migration plans according to vaccination willingness



The pattern of the connection between emigration and vaccination willingness is obvious again if the explanatory model of the migration model is complemented with the vaccination willingness variable. By adding the vaccination willingness to the model, its explanatory power increased, reaching almost 26%. As a result of the inclusion of the new variable, out of the integration group affiliations only the effect of the locally integrated group remains significant. The recognizable effect of political self-classification disappears, while the effect of the other variables (age, type of settlement) remains. Those who rejected vaccination are 1.5 times more likely to plan some form of emigration than those who got vaccinated.

Our research thus did not support the hypothesis that vaccination is integrated in the emigration strategy as a pragmatic tool. On the contrary, the rejection of vaccination is more pronounced in the case of those interested in migration. It can be assumed that those who do not wish to leave the country follow the norm in this respect as well and thus accept vaccination, while those who are thinking of emigrating want to get away with no vaccination and thus go against the norm. It seems that the entrepreneurial spirit that promotes emigration does not extend to the conscious management of one's own health. Based on these results, it can be argued that emigration willingness and vaccination unwillingness both represent the rejection of existing social expectations. In a related vein, a British study points out that distrust in the government may be among the reasons for low vaccination willingness (Woolf et at. 2021). Considering this argument, the question arises as to whether low vaccination willingness among those planning emigration stems from a general distrust, which also affects the intention to migrate.

Table 4
Explanatory model of migration potential supplemented with vaccination willingness (logistic regression models, dependent variable: aggregate migration potential, 0 – no; 1 – yes)

	Sig.	Exp(B)
Gender (1 - man; 2 - woman)	0.000	0.56
Age group(ref. category: 18–29)	0.000	
30–39	0.000	0.41
40–49	0.000	0.30
50–59	0.000	0.17
60–69	0.000	0.01
70+	0.000	0.01
Level of education (ref. category: elementary school)	0.779	
Vocational training	0.948	0.99
High school diploma	0.668	1.08
College degree	0.421	1.18
Settlement type of residence (ref. category: village)	0.000	
Budapest	0.000	2.22
County capital	0.580	0.90
Town	0.691	0.94
Confidence in the future vs. Fear of the future (1 - Confidence;... 7 - Fear)	0.822	0.99
Left-leaning vs. Right-leaning (1 – left-wing; ... 7 – right-wing)	0.072	0.93
Risk-averse vs. entrepreneurial (1 – risk-averse; ... 7 - entrepreneurial)	0.000	1.15

	Sig.	Exp(B)
Integration group (ref. category: norm-following disintegrated)	0.000	
Contact-rich politically active	0.063	2.17
Locally integrated	0.040	2.40
Politically integrated	0.625	1.22
Norm-following contact-rich	0.577	1.26
Norm-following labour market integrated	0.287	1.53
Disintegration-endangered	0.276	0.63
Vaccination willingness (ref. category: yes, I am vaccinated)	0.082	
I haven't been vaccinated yet, but I will definitely get vaccinated	0.376	1.23
I haven't been vaccinated yet and I'm currently hesitating	0.879	1.03
No, I'm definitely not going to get vaccinated	0.012	1.50
Constant	0.000	0.18
Nagelkerke R Square	0.256	

Conclusion

Compared to the 2018 data collection, the analysis showed that the proportion of those who plan to work abroad for a few years and those who plan to move abroad permanently had increased by 2021. In terms of destination countries, Austria is still the most popular destination, followed by Germany, Great Britain, the Netherlands and Ireland.

In accordance with previous international and Hungarian trends, the intention to migrate is the strongest among young men (McAuliffe–Triandafyllidou 2021).

Based on the bivariate analyses, migration willingness cannot be explained by dissatisfaction with life. On the contrary, those who plan to migrate have more confidence in the future, are more satisfied with their lives, and are more entrepreneurial than those who do not plan to migrate. Social integration is also more typical for them than for those who want to stay in the country.

There seems to be a dividing line in the political attitudes between those planning permanent emigration and those planning shorter stays abroad. Those considering emigration are politically less integrated, less satisfied with the functioning of democracy, have less trust in political institutions, and define themselves as more left-leaning than those not planning to migrate.

Migration plans are not associated with a stronger willingness to vaccinate, on the contrary, those who plan to migrate are less inclined to get vaccinated. This can probably be explained primarily by their age (according to a related research, rejection of vaccination is stronger among young people, see Arvantis et al. 2021), but presumably, distrust in the Hungarian political institutions also plays a role in this regard.

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III

Rural society

Rural sociology in practice

The Czechoslovak countryside and agriculture

Vera Majerova

Introduction

Czechoslovak rural sociology has undergone a relatively dramatic development from its beginnings to the present day as a result of the changing political, economic and social conditions in Czechoslovakia, and later in the Czech Republic and Slovakia. Twice in history, its teaching at universities was completely abolished, and rural sociology was deemed an undesirable scientific discipline in contradiction with the Marxist-Leninist worldview. In these periods, it survived only in the form of empirical research under other designations – the study of human resources, the human factor, lifestyle and standards of living, always exclusively preceded by the adjective 'socialist'.

The advantage of rural sociology was the practical applicability of the empirical data of sociological research in the management and organization of agricultural production. But at the same time, it meant narrowing the topics examined, taking them out of the broader social context and adapting the results to an ideologically acceptable interpretation. During the decline of sociological activity, something of what had already been created was necessarily lost in theoretical work and empirical research.

After 1989, it seemed that the reopened opportunities for teaching, research and international cooperation would mean the rapid development of rural sociology and yield significant scientific results. In common with other disciplines, the reality looked somewhat different. There was the lack of an experienced and professionally educated upcoming generation; it was necessary to create functional pedagogical and research institutions and to re-establish interrupted work contacts, including foreign ones. The topics of rural sociology began to be adapted to the international competition of raising funds for empirical research.

The emergence of Czechoslovak rural sociology and agriculture

The Czechoslovak Republic was established in 1918 as an independent state of Czechs and Slovaks, separated from the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy. The first Czechoslovak president was Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk. His personality largely determined the direction of the newly established republic, among other things, through his strong ties to the United States of America. As a philosopher and sociologist, he was aware of the role of the social sciences, and his publications included a wide range of themes with which he sought to combat chauvinism and nationalism. The question of the position of a small nation in Europe and its self-awareness was key.

In the American environment, the rapid development of agriculture was the impetus for the emergence of rural sociology as an independent and practically usable science. It was caused by the expansion of cultivated land in the original territories of the indigenous people. Migration waves from Europe and Asia had significantly increased labour productivity, and agriculture had become an economically important sector.

Rural America lacked functional forms of 'social organization' that could unite social groups of different languages, religions, life values, and ways of life that the migrants brought from their ancestral homelands. Thus, rural sociology focused primarily on practical agricultural and rural life issues.

The need to develop rural sociology also resonated in Europe, albeit for different reasons. Migration, which significantly impacted the economic growth of agricultural production in the USA, deprived the European countries affected by the second agrarian crisis of productive labour and worsened their trade balances. The second agrarian crisis began in 1873 and was a typical crisis of overproduction. The European market could not sell agricultural surpluses, and the prices of agricultural products fell. Small farms were hit hardest. Casual work in other sectors, including work abroad, and overseas migration were often the only ways to support a family. The result was a vicious circle – European migrants contributed to the development of American agriculture, whilst imports of cheap grain and other agricultural products lowered European prices, prolonged the agrarian crisis and intensified its consequences.

The First World War made the domestic situation even worse. Young men from the Czech and Slovak countryside had to enlist in the Austro-Hungarian army, the extent of cultivated land decreased, and the military requisitioned food, feed and other necessary agricultural products. Hunger became a concomitant of the war period. However, the threat of starvation persisted even in the early days of the new republic, as Austria's food stocks had been exported before its proclamation and the common markets had been lost. The solution to the economic and social issues of the Czechoslovak countryside remained highly topical.

Sociology was conceived of much more generally before the establishment of Czechoslovakia. Rural and agricultural life was only one of the topics, important, but relatively marginal. This was related to the fact that sociology was cultivated in the

academic environment where sociological science, sociological systems, and research methodology into social phenomena and processes were created as a main area of interest. However, the institutional basis of sociology was not very broad.

The conditions mentioned above for building a new state, the Czechoslovak Republic, favoured the need for the practical use of science. There was a rapid development in sociology at universities, and space opened up for applied science. American rural sociology was rapidly gaining attention and resonance. American textbooks were being translated and brought to the attention not only of the academic public. Also significant was the contribution of some economists and politicians who solved agrarian problems and also commented on social issues (Tauber 1969: 11).

All these factors contributed to the rapid expansion of empirical sociology and an emphasis on the problems of agriculture and the countryside. The consequences of land reform, social policy, the rationalization of agricultural production, the indebtedness of peasant farms and other contemporary problems were addressed. In 1924, the Czechoslovak Academy of Agriculture, which sponsored economic, social and cultural analyses of agricultural and rural issues, was founded (Tauber 1968: 59).

The 1920s and 1930s were a period of significant scientific expansion and development in empirical investigation. Monographic studies of villages were increasing in number. In addition to the official line of research, the contemporary knowledge of the countryside was also enriched by student initiatives – both articles of a reportage nature and empirical research organized by students, especially in backward areas of the republic. At the same time, sociology tried to build theory, develop methodology and transfer scientific knowledge into practice.

The post-war development of Czechoslovak rural sociology and agriculture

The Second World War divided the Czechoslovak Republic into two states – the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia (stripped of the border part of the territory, the so-called Sudetenland) and the Slovak State, which was established and functioned under the patronage of Nazi Germany. Czech universities were closed, and many Czechoslovak intellectuals were imprisoned and executed.

It was in the interest of the occupying power to maintain an available food supply for the military machine and the civilian population, so agriculture was not massively damaged. German commissioners were deployed to all Czech agricultural and trade institutions to supervise the economy.

Both the Soviet and American armies liberated the republic. However, the post-war order of Europe with its division into two political-power blocs, the elections in February 1948 and the consistently communist orientation set limits on the development of all areas for the next forty years. The strong wave of post-war emigration deprived the country of educated specialists from all fields.

The new line also included the introduction of censorship and the consistent suppression of freedom of speech, discussion, and independent thought. The education of sociology was abolished at all Czech and Slovak universities, no further empirical research was carried out and membership of institutions and individuals in all international scientific organizations was terminated.

The renewal of rural sociology and agriculture in the sixties

The short period between the end of the Second World War in 1945, the nationalization of 1948 and collectivization begun in 1949 was not enough to restore and stabilize teaching at universities and scientific research. Sociology was classified as a "bourgeois pseudo-science", and its teaching was severely restricted. Only sociology based on Marxist-Leninist ideology was taught, which was accepted in the countries of the socialist bloc. The scientific approach was replaced by the unconditional acceptance of Marxist doctrine and the so-called development of Marxist-Leninist thought, which meant only memorization and repetition of permitted theses.

Nevertheless, distinct opportunities for the gradual renewal of sociology, including rural sociology, were successfully promoted. In July 1965, the Institute of Rural Sociology and History of Agriculture was established at VUZE[1], led by the director Prof. Jan Tauber. In the same year, the first independent journal focused on these problems was launched: *Sborník pro sociologii a historii zemědělství*. For the next thirty years, it was the only specialized periodical that provided information on the economic and social problems of rural areas. In 1965, systematic lectures in the field of rural sociology and agriculture were initiated at the University of Agriculture in Prague and Brno, where later "Institutes of Rural Sociology" were established in the departments of scientific communism (in Prague) and Marxism (in Brno). Since 1966, rural sociology has also been taught at the University of Agriculture in Nitra (Tauber 1968: 258–260).

The focus of rural sociology was determined by the reality of the time. The first decade of collectivized agriculture was complicated, but it was clear that the cooperative and state sectors would remain the decisive owners of agricultural enterprises.

Although the European (and overseas) scientific world of rural sociology was strictly separated politically and ideologically, the impulses of the pre-war years had, thanks to the socialist orientation of the revolting European intellectual strata, a similar tone. It was based on the ideas of unlimited growth in production and consumption, which also applied to the countryside and agriculture.

Convergence theories had some resonance on both sides of a divided world and did not look implausible. The apparent reformability of the socialist development path gave hope for a convergence of positions. Generational change and information barriers softened the emotional elements of memories of collectivization, nationalization and the violent methods of promoting socialist and communist ideas.

1 Výzkumný ústav zemědělské ekonomiky (Research Institute of Agricultural Economics)

Attempts to reform socialism certainly did not look back to before 1949. If they offered anything to the village and agriculture, it was in the style of the developing consumer Western European society, only with a slightly different ideological make-up but with almost the same goals.

The approach of the village to the city and agriculture to industry, as the main conceptual idea of the late sixties, practically the entire seventies and the early eighties of the twentieth century, was a variation of the Western European vision of the industrialization of agriculture from the late fifties and early sixties.

At that time, Michel Ragon wrote:

> *"... There will come a time when the farmer and the worker will have the same appearance, needs, living and leisure. While transport development blurs the boundaries between town and country, the rural apartment equals the comfort of the urban. Television, radio, electricity and gas cylinders enable constant contact with the world and a comfortable life regardless of location."*
> *(Ragon 1967: 33)*

The reduction of the work and life of farmers and the rural population to the material essence of food production developed absurdly simplistic predictions until – although directed to the future – they began to resemble the utopias of the early sixteenth century but now enriched by the magic of artificial and chemical substitutes that could conserve or supplement natural resources.

The content of rural sociology and agriculture

In the sixties, a discussion about the scientific and technical revolution began in our country, the importance of which for agriculture began to be theoretically justified mainly by Prof. Jan Tauber. Its consequences for the lives of people working in agriculture and living in the countryside were to be systematically examined by the methods and techniques of the sociology of agriculture and rural areas (Tauber 1969: 40–59).

Although the sociological approach had been discussed, socio-technical diction was evident in the economic-organizational outline of the main features of industrialized agriculture. Agricultural progress can only be achieved by accelerating the industrialization of agriculture. The basic prerequisite for industrialization is centralization, so that only large-scale socialist production can become a suitable organizational environment for the full development of science and technology in practice.

> *"The ultimate goal of the scientific-technical revolution is to increase production, the number of products from one hectare of agricultural land, reduce the labour streak, increase the cultural environment of work, improve the standard of living of agricultural workers in general." (Lom 1969: 66)*

Economic and social progress was identified with the growth of production and subsequent consumption; it was seen as the only possible way of 'satisfying needs'. Logically, Prof. Tauber oriented the direction of sociological research to large-scale

production agricultural enterprise and its social system as one of the main conditions for the functionality of agriculture.

Parallel research into the countryside – as a space for the life and work of farmers – tended towards the theories mentioned above of the rapprochement of village and town, because this concept fit well into the ideological idea of a common state of workers and peasants.

The living and working conditions of the agricultural and rural population only gradually approached the average level of the population in other sectors of the national economy.

The strong differences in the working and living conditions of farmers resulting from the character of their agricultural work as dependent on natural factors, the location of agricultural enterprises, often also the historical development of the territory and links to other factors for the implementation of agrarian production – the transport system, the administrative structure, the territorial infrastructure, etc., – has repeatedly led to the consideration of 'social differential rent' similarly to 'differential rent I. and II.'

This was one of the reasons why, under the conditions of a centralized and planned economy, the development of large-scale agricultural enterprises proved to be the only guarantor of economic and social development. This approach prevented the development of refined opinions, the prerequisite of which would have to be a plurality of economic and social trends and competition between different types of producers and types of business activities. Instead, specific manifestations of social mobility processes emerged in the countryside, often based on negative choices, which preserved the non-competitive environment.

The central question of rural sociology in the sixties was – who lives in the village? Involuntary collectivization, cadre politics and the transfer of labour to industry significantly changed the socio-demographic structure of the rural population and agricultural workers. A team of researchers, led by Prof. Tauber, published a publication of the same title in 1965 (Tauber 1965). It was the first attempt at a systematic approach to the empirical study of the agricultural workforce and the rural population after the forced pause caused by the war and the post-war closure of sociological workplaces.

The fundamental problems of socialist agriculture were its poor economic performance, a lack of qualified labour, inadequate technology, management deficiencies and the resulting constant supply shortages for the population. Villages lacked basic amenities and services. Transport links were inadequate, remuneration in agriculture was low, and agricultural work had low prestige. Without fruits, vegetables and other products from gardens and plots, farmers would not have been able to survive. The results of empirical research confirmed these facts but placed their hopes in the industrialization of agriculture and the achievement of a socialist way of life. It would be characterized (according to the results of the research) by the improvement of rural housing (building sewerage and water mains in municipalities, connecting houses

to the public power grid, renovating rural dwellings), achieving equal remuneration, unifying the length of holidays and other elements of social consumption between the cooperative and state agricultural sectors, introducing shifts and observing working hours in agriculture, expanding mechanization and new technologies, improving the food supply of villages, expanding transport facilities, improving the hygienic conditions of agricultural work, supporting sports and culture in the villages and developing neighbourly cooperation.

Renewed rural sociology mapped the social reality of post-war development and the consequences of collectivization. Its role was primarily ideological (concerning the accepted doctrine of the Marxist worldview); it was expected to explain and defend political decisions. But the rich data material collected through empirical research was and still is very informative, regardless of contemporary interpretations.

The socio-demographic structure of agricultural workers and the rural population was the essential starting point for the productivity of farms and the improvement of the quality of life in the countryside. Following the economic tasks of the first post-war five-year plans, great emphasis was placed on the development of agricultural enterprises and the ways of managing their economic and social processes (Horáková, 1969: 3–10).

Western European and American rural sociology focused primarily on the countryside. It corresponded to a general understanding of the importance and place of agricultural production in the economy of individual countries, but also to the fact that agriculture, dominated by the private sector, was not centrally managed and planned. State interventions regarding agricultural products manifested themselves only in the form of export and import quotas and tariff measures. It was different in socialist countries.

In a centralized national economy, leadership roles were of paramount importance. Therefore, great attention was paid to the training of managers and how they could fulfil their leadership roles effectively. Research work was aimed at the systemization of social relations arising during the performance of management activities in agricultural holdings. However, the essential connection between the economic results of agricultural holdings, as a factor of a highly complex nature, and the effectiveness of management (including personality characteristics, knowledge and abilities of management work and cooperation, and objective possibilities for the implementation of management activities) was given little attention (Němcová 1969: 7–8).

The social dimension of the collectivization of agriculture was that it violently broke the existing social structures and set various limits on the formation of another social network – adapted to fulfilling the idea of socialist large-scale farming. Therefore, the class aspect played a significant role in solving any problems in the social sphere. This fact is not openly named in sociological research of this period but reflected in it, because it is an indispensable feature of social reality. An empirical investigatio of this period shows that the managers of the time to a large extent lacked professional training.

Although from the point of view of sociologists of rural and agricultural matters, it is necessary to appreciate the increased interest in the social sphere of this time and the solidity of the scientific research carried out on this range of topics, one cannot fail to see a specific effort, conscious or unconscious, not to go to the roots of social phenomena and processes, in the event that such an analysis could draw attention to what was not entirely in line with the accepted conceptions of the contemporary political, social and economic development.

Sociology criticizing would not survive the first empirical research; it was a common experience before and after this period. Ignoring thorny topics to preserve the possibility of at least a truncated research survey has become a common practice, especially since the seventies.

If we summarize some tendencies of the sixties, especially their second half, then the main thesis, *"the use of sociological knowledge in the management of agricultural holdings"*, was going through a period of formation of its content. The impetus was, among other things, the influence of scientific and technical knowledge in the world. In our country, too, the need for a certain counterweight was felt in order to humanize the dehumanized world of technological progress. We can also speak of a belated penetration of the influence of 'human relations' into our social conditions and attempts were made to incorporate similar concepts within a socialist framework.

These ideas bore the hallmarks of scientific bias, faith in the future, black-and-white vision, class approach, and the simplification of problems. The idea that developing the sociology of agriculture and rural areas as scientific disciplines could stagnate or even be interrupted seemed absurd. The end of the sixties and the subsequent normalization of economic, political and social life was initially somewhat shocking. Another strong wave of emigration drained prominent personalities from all areas, including science and research. Sociological research into rural and agricultural matters continued, but the diction changed.

The liquidation of sociological institutions and the normalization of society after 1968

Until 1968, one of the main objectives of sociological research was to map the contemporary state of agriculture and rural areas and contribute to creating scientifically based models of the optimal functioning of large-scale agricultural enterprises and the optimal development of rural municipalities and regions.

After the invasion of the Warsaw Pact troops, the content and objectives of the social sciences, including rural sociology, changed. The subsequent normalization of society brought numerous sanctions against individuals and scientific institutions. These were sometimes justified by deviations from ideological orientation, sometimes based on personal motives and served to settle scores, or used only to supplement the

guide numbers of prescribed repressive interventions that preempted any disagreement with the policies of the Party and the government.

At the beginning of this period stood the abolition of the Department of Sociology of Agriculture and Rural History at the University of Agriculture in Prague. This was followed by the abolition of the Institute of Rural Sociology and History of Agriculture at the Research Institute of Agricultural Economics in Prague and its replacement with the "sociology of agriculture" department with limited personnel and finance.

These first steps certainly cannot be considered happy and inspiring of hope for the continuation of the work begun to depict the truthful representation of reality. Few things were as undesirable as an independent view and a true picture. The confused and intimidated scientific public behaved according to its principles and previous experience – in short, in the way they could.

The political Newspeak of the seventies was inspired by militant expressions such as *struggle, offensive* and *victory*. Still, it was already adopting the stiff language of the political party apparatus that did not deny its low level of education. The poverty of the vocabulary was replaced by the use of comparative adjectives and made special by exaggerated expressions such as *unprecedented, powerful, growing, exclusive, dynamic* and *qualitatively new*.

The economizing concept of agricultural and rural development did not pay much attention to the social sphere. Among the basic factors of development, the material-technical basis of agriculture, the influence of the scientific-technical revolution, the intensification of production and the replacement of human labour had greater weight.

Agricultural workers and the rural population were initially reduced to the 'human factor', but later they became the subject of social planning and, backed on a theoretical level by Marxist-Leninist conceptions of the socialist way of life, returned to empirical research. Official propaganda sought:

> *"A socialist living man – an educated, culturally advanced, physically healthy person – who bases his existence on his work, which is not only the source of his high standard of living but stands as one of the decisive educational factors at the root of all other parameters of the socialist way of life. … In the dense web of social relations, he manifests himself as a socialist moral and socio-politically engaged personality, guided by socialist collectivism, socialist democracy, and socialist humanism." (Collective 1978: 25–26)*

The agricultural worker lived his normal life, faced problems in collectivized farms and supplemented his family's food supply with produce from the backyard, which was an anachronism but often necessary. He dealt with the lack of services in rural communities by equipping his home workshop and developing his poly-professionalism. He eliminated the housing problem through self-help construction with the help of relatives and neighbours.

Socialist man lived on the pages of publications and creatively tried eliminating natural differentiating factors and persistent socio-economic disparities in society.

His long-term goal was to implement a social equality programme for all. The growing emptiness of words and the inflation of noble socialist aims gradually made such theses a kind of rhetorical backdrop, which, in the interest of conveying messages and out of convenience, cowardice, indifference or a lack of commitment to this ideological libation, accompanied his work. Almost all publishing authors did this to a greater or lesser extent (with rare exceptions).

But what happened to the original idea of using sociological knowledge in practice?

Normalization at the beginning of the seventies brought structural change, mainly in terms of expanding the original agricultural enterprises, cooperatives, and state farms. Several reasons led to this. It was undoubtedly an expression of the 'second' (or further) wave of collectivization. It was supposed to indisputably confirm the political and economic course taken after 1948, unequivocally excluding alternative forms of agricultural production to suppress the signs of privatization of agriculture from the late sixties.

In addition, it was again necessary to replace the management structures and reshape the entire sphere of management according to much stricter political criteria, for which the process of merging was quite suitable, as it would have meant organizational and personnel changes anyway. Larger units were easier to manage in terms of central planning and control, and new people accepted entrusted functions under strictly predetermined conditions.

For this reason, the sociology of agriculture focused on describing and examining the social structure and the main social processes taking place in agriculture and rural areas. Moreover, the search for ideas for improving the working and living conditions of agricultural workers and the rural population seemed quite reasonable. The planning of research tasks took place in five-year cycles, so each five-year period forms a closed circle of meaning, although there was, of course, a link between them.

A relatively separate range of research topics concerned the way of life of agricultural workers and the rural population. Naturally, it was a "socialist way of life", which was presented as a development phase of class society, characterized by specific features: a new class structure of society, the leading role of the working class, socialist principles of distribution according to work, the satisfaction of certain necessities of life in the form of social consumption, a qualitative change in people's relationship to work, a general increase in the level of education and culture and the development of socio-political engagement (Magdolen 1974: 5–35).

So-called *strategic* components of the way of life were examined, which, according to the cited authors, were work, participation in the life of society, participation in decision-making and management, worldview orientation, education and other components associated with the reproduction of human life such as family, relationships

between partners, relations between generations, childcare, health, nutrition, standards of housing, the household, clothing, etc (Filipcová 1976: 251–252).

Frankly, these components are probably strategic in every social order, and their *higher quality under socialism* could only be pretended behind closed borders and until the moment of a more mass confrontation of the population with the capitalist way of life.

The industrialization of agricultural production changed the character of labour. In the fifties and sixties, there was a quantitative increase in mobile and stationary mechanization. In the seventies, it was more of a qualitative growth, i.e., the introduction of modern technological processes, especially in animal production, and there was also the control of the entire technological process using control panels.

However, this progress, in addition to positive benefits, also had (similarly to in industry) negative consequences – diseases and injuries related to mechanized work, various types of mental stress, changes in work rhythms and work relationships, etc. In contrast to the universal character of the peasant profession, other new elements were the pronounced specialization of the agricultural disciplines and the growing importance of administration and management.

The standard of living of farmers rose slowly but steadily. However, relatively high remuneration in agriculture was achieved at the cost of longer working hours. Hence, the hourly earnings of blue-collar professions on the collective farm were lower than those of workers in industry. In agriculture, especially in agricultural cooperatives, regional differences and differences in farm management also played an important role, reflected in the farmers' earnings. Farmers' standard of living was further affected by the relatively high consumption of products from personal farms, which, however, involved additional work at the expense of leisure (Matoušková 1973: 82).

Two-way influences characterized urbanization processes. The dense network of public transport, the growth in car ownership and other means of transportation of the agricultural and rural population, commuting to work and the migration of people caused the blending of urban patterns and models into rural life. The general spread of radio and television contributed greatly to this. On the contrary, the weekend outflow of the urban population to the countryside and recreational areas, a strong wave of cottage farming, including the adoption of certain customs and adaptation to local conditions, resulted in the enrichment of the urban way of life with new elements and sometimes meant the rescue of otherwise dilapidated housing stock in the villages (Charitonová–Hudečková–Kohn–Krůček 1981).

Sociological research into the lifestyle of agricultural workers focused on three primary areas of life – work at agricultural enterprises, work in personal farming and extra-work activities. In terms of work at enterprises, this stage of development was characterized by an effort to look for elements of satisfaction in the overall demanding agricultural work, to propose adjustments to short-term and long-term working time regimes and to ensure the improvement of qualifications, all of which led to attempts

to establish a better workforce and thus improve the social structure of farms. However, the reality tended to be that those workers whom businesses would like to get rid of if they had a replacement were more stable, and more promising younger people often left with agricultural training and easily found employment outside agriculture.

The reflection of the reconstruction of the economic mechanism in the topics of rural sociology

This period includes the last phase of the socialist economy before 1989. Social and economic development took place differently in the two sectors of agriculture (state and cooperative), in groups of enterprises and particular enterprises. Regional influences modified the directive administrative system, especially in the sense of the different use of local advantages given by natural conditions, the infrastructure of the territory or job opportunities.

In the second half of the eighties, questions began to appear in Czechoslovak society that had been unthinkable ten years earlier. Independently, empirical research began to map the real situation. In the sociological research of agriculture and agricultural enterprise, the mid eighties (the break between the two five-year plans) was characterized by a split into two rather distinct directions.

One focused on analyzing business social consumption, its tools, development, business institutions and satisfaction with social conditions (Němcová–Jílovcová 1986, Němcová–Bočková–Majerová 1988).

The second direction was initially conceptually marked by both personnel changes and the vague requirements of the contracting authority. There had undoubtedly been an improvement in agriculture and working and living conditions in the countryside. People lived better than before, construction activity took place in the villages, the savings of the population grew, and household facilities improved.

At the same time, the economic difficulties of businesses and the state grew, and natural resources were depleted. The ecological conditions of life deteriorated, the confusing system of redistribution of funds became more complicated, corruption, protectionism and nepotism spread, the health of the population deteriorated and the moral aspects of the relationship to work weakened.

The development of the socialist system had passed its zenith and its disintegration began. Fortunately, the attempt to stop it, which was called "rebuilding the economic mechanism" in our country following the example of Soviet "perestroika", was unsuccessful. Fear of a possible repeat of the Prague Spring of 1968 tied the hands of those who were supposed to be the bearers of change. After all, even very slight changes could threaten most of the positions of power, based on the leading role of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia and the uncontrollability, opacity and imponderability of its actions, including criminal ones.

The reluctance to change was hidden in phrases that tried to reconcile the incompatible: the democratization role of the Communist Party in enterprises, the development of polemics and constructive dialogue to strengthen workers' political awareness, etc. *Effective intensification, development of motivation, stimulation, initiative and engagement, optimal use of human potential, search for reserves and activation of the human factor* became fashionable terms.

Projects of this period were selected as thematic areas of the business sphere research in agriculture for the year 1988. Unwittingly and unintentionally, this allowed us to ask more openly than before about certain problematic areas of farm management and operation.

Not all research yielded interesting findings. However, the tone of the answers was significant and largely free from concerns about whether it was appropriate to answer in this way. Our research had always been strictly anonymous, yet each bore its time stamp. Regardless of whether the interviewee was sure that his opinion would remain anonymous, he chose the vocabulary, expressions and style of answers. He often adopted the valid official views of his time and often styled himself into the role of the interviewee whose opinion matters, so he must weigh the answer very seriously and adapt it to what is socially appropriate. The end of the eighties already allowed considerable openness of opinion, and the interviewees used this opportunity.

For the first time, the errors of the management and organizational system of farms and the limits of applying workers' knowledge and abilities were discussed more openly. The levelling of remuneration was not surprising, but rather the admission that both low-quality and unperformed work were sometimes paid for, that penalties for bad workers were mild or sometimes non-existent and that the powers of managers were limited. The most serious shortcoming, which stopped the natural development of corporate structures for almost forty years, was the cadre and personnel policy.

The uncertainty of the prospects, both personal and social, was beginning to have obvious manifestations. The veracity of party and government statements was already publicly doubted; the economic situation, and the lack of interest and the inability to resolve it were criticized (Majerová 1992: 32–33).

On the other hand, however, there was no alternative to offer. People had got used to the malfunctioning of the system and found new ways to move in it. The shadow economy permeated the state economy to such an extent that one could hardly exist without the other. In the social field, however, this meant a permanent retreat from the rules that make society a society.

Benevolence towards violations of regulations in the economic sphere, lax punishment of property crimes, publicly tolerated bribery of all kinds, concealed criminality, the practical impunity of nomenklatura cadres and various expressions of power pride made the ruling class a target of criticism and ridicule, but still did not provoke incentives for radical change, especially in the countryside. Power was often ridiculous,

but not powerless. Almost every ordinary citizen was connected by many ties to the existing system and participated in it in some way economically and socially.

Everyone had weak points where they were vulnerable and tried to protect them because they had had enough bad experiences, either their own or of those around them (interrupted working careers, denied access to their own or their children's education, sanctions for family members, difficult contacts with foreign relatives, inability to travel, etc.). Declared rights were not rights but could be given as a reward for loyalty to a person. There was no appeal against injustice and anyone who tried to do so continued to endanger themselves and their families. Revenge on children was perhaps the previous regime's strongest and most offensive weapon. Fear was part of every decision, and self-control worked even when nothing was at stake. But the boundary between when nothing is at stake and when it is was blurred and movable. The polarization of society, verbally expressed in terms of 'us' and 'them', existed, but it was not entirely clear who was who. Moreover, some people sometimes found themselves in the role of "they" and identified with it. Society was hierarchized according to rules that differed from the legal order, and the legal order did not correspond to the meaning of the word 'law'.

Different values and behaviour patterns have always been and will continue to apply in rural and agricultural areas. In my opinion, it is not so much about the earthy character and peculiar character traits, which have been treated many times in literature, although there is no doubt that such things exist. More important, however, seem to me the logical limits to and opportunities for social action.

Agricultural work, despite its specialization, has a coherent content and teaches man, whether he wants to or not, to accept the power of nature. Every mistake and every failure in this work ultimately results in a waste with an existential subtext (death of an animal or plant, destruction of a germ, etc.). An animal's illness is different from a machine malfunction; the death of cattle cannot be compared to a car crash and the car's depreciation, except perhaps at the accounting level. Responsibility for the results of work occurs in other dimensions and implies different types of cooperation. Agriculture can be industrialized, but farmers in the professions of crop and livestock production will never become workers with the mentality of factory workers.

Each profession shapes a person in its way. The variety and unpredictability of nature force people to cooperate, even those who would otherwise not voluntarily meet to work together. It forces them to accept the rules necessary for their existence, and if they are uncomfortable, they have little choice but to submit to them. There has never been a large range of job opportunities in the countryside. Economic results immediately confirm the effectiveness or non-effectiveness of cooperation and are the most effective argument for or against it. However, the need for collaboration paves the way to compromises because without them, it would not be possible to endure work and life in the community.

The political attitudes of farmers and the rural population cannot be considered in the same categories as those of the urban population. The sorely lacking freedom of assembly in the village looks quite different. If there is political gathering, there will always be a certain number of the same people attending as few are politically active.

As a rule, freedom of speech in a small community, where everyone has known each other down to the smallest detail for decades, no longer has anything to manifest. It can free an individual from fear and pretence, but how much has he managed to conceal? The mob psychosis, which radicalizes even the hesitant in the political struggle, is wrecked in the village by the absence of crowds.

The farmers are aware that their decisions carry personal and group repercussions. They also recognize the importance of maintaining strong relationships with their community and neighbours to preserve their respectability and avoid the need to relocate. This awareness of their role and relationships sets them apart as a unique group.

Political arguments are useless if they offer the countryside something irrelevant to it, and the evaluation of political and social attitudes in a manner appropriate to another (albeit majority) part of the population only testifies to the uninformed approach of the evaluators.

The phenomenon of dissent was a manifestation of an urban way of life. If it manifested itself in the village, it was either concerning the urban communities or as an individual brave attitude, but without much resonance in rural society. Thus, the formation of rural dissident structures ready to offer and implement a new alternative was practically non-existent. It has nothing to do with the question of the character of rural people; they were able to defend and maintain their opinions and beliefs for many decades (Christian faith, neighbourly help, hospitality, etc.). But the changing establishments, typical of political power reversals, find few suitable candidates in the countryside. Therefore, the path of social development in the countryside and agriculture after 1989 reflects the limitations of the social structure.

The transformation of agriculture and rural renewal in rural sociology

The original concept of empirical research in rural sociology was revised after 1989 because it was clear that future changes would substantially affect society's entire economic and social system. It was clear that most of the restrictions would soon fall away, but new alternatives would be introduced gradually. Although from the beginning of 1990 the media placed great hopes in privatizing farms and there was expected to be interest in a return to private farming, the reality was much soberer.

There was considerable uncertainty in the overall attitude of agricultural workers towards private enterprise, both agricultural and non-agricultural. At the level of general considerations, opinions on private business were much more positive than when they were related to the specific situation in the municipality and individuals' intentions.

Smaller surveys and research probes on farms have revealed very different attitudes, especially among managers and ordinary (manual) workers. While managers were mostly looking for information and trying to prepare alternative solutions for themselves and their companies, manual workers showed distrust and uncertainty. They waited to see what the development would bring. Many years of being unaccustomed to decision-making, difficult access to information, and poor orientation put some manual workers again in the role of manipulated objects.

Researchers found themselves in a similarly precarious position. The phasing out of institutional funding for empirical research and the gradual transition to a grant funding system set different rules, emphasizing personal responsibility and the scientific and practical benefits of research findings. On the one hand, the range of examined topics has expanded, international cooperation has been renewed, and research resources have improved. Still, on the other hand, systematic mapping of the economic and social reality of agriculture and rural areas has ended. Funding from various sources influenced both thematic areas according to the interest of contracting authorities and the scope and depth of research.

In conclusion, the acquisition of sociological data and its use in the period of the centralized and planned management of agricultural holdings had its fundamental limits.

However, at the level of the empirical research on agricultural holdings, a certain continuity of sociological surveys has been maintained, and their results now form a valuable database. In individual time stages, it is possible to follow the development of social trends, and their beginnings, course, and culmination in economic, social and political changes.

Finding a suitable topic, maintaining conceptual coherence and securing funding for sociological research of rural and agricultural areas under the conditions of market relations is as difficult as maintaining space for an independent view in centrally planned and managed scientific research of recent times.

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On sustainable development once again

Development as movement

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Introduction

One of the ways to present sociology is to show it from the perspective of development theories. Sociological concepts related to the evolution of society appeared in their initial stages in the second half of the nineteenth century and had their continuation about a hundred years later in the concepts of social change, modernization theories, and growth theories. While possessing a wide array of differences, these concepts nonetheless seem to share certain characteristics, especially the assumption that societies go through certain stages of change. The mechanisms of these changes reveal themselves in economic practices, transformations of social institutions, or changes in the value systems shared by members of society.

The final decades of the twentieth century saw the emergence of new types of social development concepts, which no longer emphasize the stages of change. They focus on empowerment and the formulation of diverse development paths, linking them to values that are meant to eliminate, or at least ameliorate, the negative effects of societal transformations. These concepts are referred to as human development theories.

Basic Principles of Sustainable Development

The reflection here is based on the most representative concept of sustainable development, that presented by Cavanagh and Mander (2004: 78–102), who formulated a distinctive set of ten principles of sustainable development and sustainable society.

The starting point is the principle of new democracy, asserting that the governments or ruling elites should serve the citizens and not the interests of large corpora-

tions. In other words, a turn from procedural (election-based) democracy towards participatory democracy is much desired. Fulfilling the requirements of new democracy does not end with voting for preferred candidates but calls for everyday engagement in public matters. This implies active civic participation in various formal organizations, social movements, or even spontaneous gatherings and initiatives. Participatory democracy manifests itself through civil society, resulting in a transformation of the rules of government into the rules of governance. In such a system various social actors (including formal authorities and many other entities of civil society) make crucial decisions together in a process of negotiation.

The second principle is subsidiarity, which might seem somewhat vague. Subsidiarity indicates a certain type of solidarity between various parts of society in the context of ongoing economic and social changes. However, in the context of corporate, global development it means something more. It also indicates a certain sense of local bonds, of belonging to the place that these social entities might share. Globalization has the power to delocalize and objectify local communities and local entrepreneurship, as the global economy introduces a monolithic dictate of market regulations and standardization everywhere, regardless of national, regional and local characteristics. As Cavanagh and Mander (2004: 84) point out: *"the principle of subsidiarity recognizes the inherent democratic right to self-determination for people, communities, and nations as long as its exercise does not infringe on the similar rights of others."* This right includes local ownership, the monitoring of resources and means of production, as well as support from more centralized systems of power and dependencies for local initiatives taken up to achieve certain goals and to ensure fulfilment of fundamental needs on the local level. If possible, this should be done with the use of local resources.

The third principle is the idea of ecological sustainability with its multifaceted message entailing three important characteristics. First, environmental exploitation must be no greater than its regeneration. Second, consumption of resources must be no greater than their renewal. Third, environmental pollution must be no greater than the ability of the environment to absorb the pollution. In the context of globalization processes, the principle of ecological sustainability is put at great risk. Globalization encourages growing consumption and the radical exploitation of resources resulting in increased environmental pollution. This brings about the sacrifice of the natural environment in the name of increased productivity. In agriculture, relations between production and the use of environmental resources are the closest of all economic activities and the impact of economic globalization leads to the dominance of large-scale agricultural holdings, monocultures of crops, and industrial animal production, (in all cases limiting natural biodiversity). More and more areas are absorbed for intense agricultural production resulting in the separation of farmers (oftentimes indigenous people in various regions of the world) from their land and local conditions.

The fourth principle places an emphasis on common heritage as a multifaceted phenomenon. Most authors dealing with this matter distinguish between natural

heritage and cultural heritage (material aspects of human activities, knowledge, etc.). In academic reflection, heritage is also defined as various achievements of the welfare state (public services, universal healthcare, etc.). All these types of heritage are threatened by the processes of economic globalization, which aims to subject all principles to the rules of the market, moving it to the domain of private ownership (privatization of heritage) with the elimination of all specific cultural characteristics distinct to regions and communities.

The fifth principle of diversity entails the message that remains in opposition to the 'flatness' of the contemporary world, in which the aforementioned tendencies of economic and corporate globalization go against heterogeneity and any polycentric type of development. The diversity principle encompasses various types: cultural, biological, social, and economic diversity. They are *"central to a dignified, interesting, and healthy life"* (Cavanagh–Mander 2004: 89). What does it mean for contemporary societies?

Let us start with cultural diversity, understood as the multitude of human experience manifesting itself in various values systems, ideas, and preferences which, all combined, might result in innovative thinking followed by innovative activities. No less important is economic diversity, which might be viewed as a 'soft cushion' for the processes of economic transformation. Economic diversity is about the coexistence of various forms of ownership (private, cooperative, communal, state ownership) and different enterprise sizes (small, medium, large enterprises, or even transnational corporations). Such diversity within a certain territory might be conducive to a 'soft landing' for particular economic units during economic globalization. Economic diversity makes it easier for these units to support each other through embedment in local and regional social networks. And finally, there is biological diversity, which aims to preserve the variety of plant and animal species in a certain area and, at the same time, combine crop and animal production in agriculture, as active application of biodiversity might amortize the negative effects of some globalization processes, especially those related to the damaging consequences of crop monoculture and the increased susceptibility to various diseases in animal husbandry. To quote Canvanagh and Mander (2004, 95): *"Diversity may be bad for corporate profits, but it is essential for healthy, sustainable, vital communities."*

The sixth principle guiding the functioning of a sustainable society belongs to a different realm of values, namely human rights. In the analysis of human rights and sustainability three important issues should be considered. First of all, the substance of the term 'human rights' deserves some attention. Traditionally, this term is often associated with political and civil rights in highly developed societies, particularly freedom of speech, religious freedom, and voting rights. Over time, these rights have been expanded to include economic, social, and cultural rights. Therefore, an individual person not only has the right to certain beliefs and his/her own worldview, or to support a political party of his/her choosing but, most importantly, that individual

has the right to a decent, dignified life (with the ability to fulfill basic needs) and to use cultural heritage and social achievements to his/her own liking.

The seventh principle pertains to work and the livelihood that work provides. In the context of sustainable development and its ideas, several issues should be addressed. One of them is the types of jobs offered on the market and the possibility of individual people to secure employment. Globalization processes, with their dominance of market rules and the dictates of large transnational corporations contribute to the shrinking number of jobs with good social benefits, as well as the simultaneously increasing prevalence of temporary jobs which do not provide additional social perks. As jobs become direct work agreements between employers and employees with a minimal social safety net, a new mass scale phenomenon emerges in the form of a new social category, described as precariat.

The principles of human rights and livelihoods must play two important roles in the functioning of sustainable society, namely to *"(...) protect the rights of workers in the formal sector and address the livelihood needs of the greater numbers of people who subsist in what has become known as the informal sector, as well as those who have no work or are seriously underemployed."* (Cavanagh–Mander 2004: 97)

The eighth principle deals with food security and food safety. The meaning of this principle is twofold: people not only need adequate amounts of food, but the food they consume must be safe for them, meeting certain health and hygiene requirements. Paradoxically, corporate globalization, which has changed the face of contemporary agriculture, puts both of these types of safety at risk. Food security and food safety are threatened by industrial agriculture promoting the monoculture of crops and large-scale animal production in concentrated animal feeding operations (CAFOs). Mega-farms are destined for a global scale economy as is the large production volume at their disposal, which gives them a privileged position in trade relations. Due to their size and intensive manner of production, they might not be the best guarantors of food safety and food security. A small number of large actors on the market increases consumers' dependence on them. If one of these actors experiences production problems, entire populations might be affected. Matters might even get worse in cases of food contamination in the corporate food chain, which could be detrimental to the health of a large number of people. Therefore, when discussing food security and food safety, the priorities of international trade should be revised. Cavanagh and Mander (2004, 98) put it this way: *"New rules of trade must recognize that food production for local communities should be at the top of a hierarchy of values in agriculture. Local self-reliance in food production and the assurance of healthful, safe foods should be considered basic human rights. Shorter trade distances and reduced reliance on expensive inputs that need to be shipped over long distances are key to a new food system paradigm."* In other words, the principle of localized food production and consumption should become one of the components of sustainable development. In sustainable communities, members should turn to local produce and the meat of animals raised in close

proximity. The slogan *"eat locally"* appears to be one of the most crucial fundaments of sustainable development.

Real life application of this principle would not be easy, as the processes of globalization tend to go in the opposite direction. The 'shrinking of the world' allows the transport of food products to places very distant from their areas of original production. Technical achievements enable food preservation and facilitate long-distance food transport. Consumers develop a taste for exotic products – which in some circles are indicators of social status – and enjoy the year-round access to fresh fruits and vegetables. All of these perks of globalization make it harder to convince people to focus on local products and forgo imported ones. Therefore, any mobilization towards a sustainable society would need to involve changes in the food consumption habits that have been acquired in the era of globalization.

Another principle which facilitates the functioning of a sustainable society is the widely understood principle of equity. This challenges the ongoing processes of globalization that, according to Cavanagh and Mander (2004, 98-100), are responsible for the growing inequalities between countries and also within particular societies, (between the rich and the poor, men and women). Minimizing these inequalities is an essential condition to strengthen the functioning of sustainable communities and democracy. Activism in the name of equity, fairness, and social justice requires comprehensive efforts. The authors propose the following measures: a) the necessity to invalidate illegitimate foreign debts of low-income countries b) replacement of existing international organizations responsible for the architecture of globalizing tendencies with new institutions that operate according to a different set of values, which should stand to guard global justice and social order c) limiting or monitoring the ruthless rules of the free market that give preference to those actors that have easy access to resources and therefore are able to subjugate or even eradicate smaller players whose access to resources is minimal or non-existent.

The last principle of sustainable development is the precautionary principle, which means that every change should be preceded by an attempt to estimate its potential consequences, especially those which would lead to negative effects. Cavanagh and Mander indicate that this principle was not observed in the moments of important changes greatly affecting social reality. Quite to the contrary, the history of humanity shows the following: *"Great technological change takes place with little advance understanding of its impacts, and virtually no process for democratic evaluation, often until it is so far too late to reverse a technology's negative effects."* (Cavanagh–Mander 2004, 100) Random examples of this could include the introduction of automobiles, artificial fertilizers, antibiotics, or nuclear energy. In all of these cases, the positive effects of new developments were emphasized, such as: the radical increase in crop harvest yields in agriculture, better transport and travel opportunities, the ability to move between distant places, lowering the mortality rate of bacterial infections, and securing nearly unlimited energy resources. The negative consequences such

as environmental pollution, climate changes, bacterial resistance to antibiotics, or challenges related to storing durable toxic (radioactive) wastes were not considered.

The precautionary principle was already codified years ago in the final declaration of the 1992 international Earth Summit organized by the United Nations in Rio de Janeiro. Broadly defined, environmental protection was the main goal of such codification. Nevertheless, it was also stated at the summit that the possibility of important unfavourable changes or even irreversible ones, as well as a lack of scientific certainty, should not be the basis for rejection of costly innovations and effectively replacing them with inaction which would prevent these unfavourable and consequential changes. Thus, the precautionary principle is a very prudent and conservative rule allowing for innovations only when a lack of negative consequences can be ensured.

We have some serious doubts about the usefulness of such a position. The precautionary principle in some ways implies that no risks should be taken for the sake of human development. If that were the case, any human progress would not be possible, as every change necessarily implies some risk, whether big or small. Cavanagh and Mander (2004, 101) emphasize that: *"Precautions even in the absence of absolute certainty of danger and the deliberate shifting of burdens of proof to proponents are two fundamental components of the precautionary principle. Two other important ones are that where doubt exists, preference should always be given to alternatives and that there must be full public participation at all levels of decision making."* It turns out that the precautionary principle is positively correlated with the level of democracy in contemporary societies. *"Universal acceptance and adoption of the precautionary principle is thus essential if citizens, through their democratically elected representatives, are to have the right to learn about, decide upon, and control the risks that they or the natural environment should be exposed to. Global trade bodies should either codify and incorporate the principle, as was done at Rio, or at least take no restrictive stance when countries apply it."* (Cavanagh–Mander 2004, 102) The appeals to the "goodwill" of transnational corporations that shape the globalization processes might sound somewhat naive. Their proclivity to act according to the rigid rules of the market can only be limited by the power of other entities, such as nation-states, alliances and unions of states or perhaps other supranational institutions that would not be afraid to act against the principles of the market logic.

Cavanagh and Mander (2004, 103–104) finalize their reflection with three conclusions which could ensure the introduction of sustainable development principles to the transformation processes of the contemporary world. In their words: *"International trade and investment systems should respect the legitimate role of democratic governments at all levels (...) International trade and investment systems should safeguard the global commons and promote human rights, the rights of workers, women, indigenous people, and children (...) Finally, all international agreements should support the goal of creating sustainable societies."*

All these conclusions are formulated in the language of obligation and with the use of the *"should"* modal and they present a desirable model. The fundamental question

is how this model can be achieved. Another question is whether that is even possible. The answers will be discussed below.

Development as Movement?

What some describe as populist democracy appears to be close to social movements, especially those dealing with civil and socio-cultural matters in terms of desired political models. Others see that link in direct democracy, deliberative democracy, or empowered democracy. These proposed types of democracy are meant to serve as a remedy to the imperfections of representative democracy, such as: lack of true representation in the decision-making process, lack of citizen access to many institutions, lack of citizen engagement in public matters, limits on public debate or the tendency of political actors to plan and act only in consideration of election cycles. While the postulates to improve democracy in the above areas are legitimate, they are hard to implement. If they are to become more than a naïve hope, they must be formulated within the concepts applicable to the development mechanism. Let us look into two selected concepts of development: Empowered Participatory Governance and the concept of the Multi-Organizational Field.

As it may be inferred above, deliberative democracy is a form of democracy that falls between representative democracy and direct democracy. This last type of political system is promoted by social movements. Similar to deliberative forms of decision-making, direct engagement in that process is welcomed. It is seen as helpful to overcoming certain weaknesses of contemporary democracy, including a lack of civic engagement, insufficient transparency of actions, and inadequate levels of representation. One of the proposals that is close to deliberative democracy but also contains some elements of direct democracy is the concept of empowered democracy. Fung and Wright (2003) described this type of citizens' engagement as Empowered Participatory Governance – EPG – that implements the principles of empowered democracy. It is expanded both horizontally, in terms of encompassing new areas of politics, and vertically, by reaching for new, upper and especially lower levels of institutionalized social life. This concept deserves a closer look, as it plays an important role in connecting human activism and empowerment with social movements' activism and development. Currently, it is also the most realistic and applicable model of the deliberative and direct decision-making process that gives significant consideration to social justice issues.

The EPG concept has its origins in three theoretical perspectives. Firstly, it embraces issues characteristic of the theory of deliberative democracy. Secondly, it tackles matters related to citizens' engagement and non-government organizations, which situates it in the framework of theories of civil society. Thirdly, its interests in the effectiveness of, participation in, and rebuilding of democratic institutions indicate links to new institutionalism. A broadly defined theory of democracy is a common denominator for these theoretical perspectives. In our view, the entanglement of the

EPG concept in more alternative forms of democracy and civil society matters indicates the need to complement it with social movements theory and, especially, the concepts of new institutionalism.

What are the founding principles of empowered participatory governance? The answer to this question will show the links between this form of governance and human empowerment, civic activism, and the mobilization of social movements. It could be said that the EPG concept is about the engagement of regular citizens in solving social problems that affect them. The focus is on real, tangible problems, experienced by regular people and solutions achievable through deliberation. There are three main characteristics of the model of EPG: practical orientation, bottom-up participation and deliberative solution generalization (Fung and Wright, 2003: 16–17). These deserve some explanatory remarks.

What does the practical orientation to problem solving really mean? The authors intend to highlight the differences between problem solving through EPG involving the engagement of regular citizens and the way it is done on the level of political parties or social movements. The parties and social movements are seen as devoted to problems and issues that pertain to the narrow interests of these organizations and their members and therefore do not appear practical to ordinary citizens. Obviously, this is not to say that political parties or social movements do not engage in local level activism of regular people but Fung and Wright stress that in such cases there is a risky possibility of engagement in a larger conflict, or quite to the contrary, of actually narrowing the focus to particular interests that are far from the needs of ordinary citizens. Bottom-up participation is meant to provide effective solutions with adjustment to existing conditions. This is possible through a certain degree of novelty, open-mindedness, knowledge, and experience offered by citizens who engage in practical matters. The involvement of experts in problem solutions, without inflating their status vis-à-vis regular citizens, and their participation in discussions might foster the type of relations that reduce the role of intermediaries connected with political parties and their bureaucratic bodies. Consequently, citizens remain in direct relations with the bureaucratic apparatus, but this apparatus does not have sole authority in the most important decisions. The role of the experts is to attain synergy between the professional perspective and the citizens' point of view. Finally, deliberative solution generalization aims at arriving at the most reasonable decision and not the one that would maximize the interests of any of the adversarial sides of the problem. Two criteria such as communal interest and social justice are crucial here and these are also the goals that, in the work of Habermas (1985), are attributed to deliberative democracy.

This deliberative and participatory manner of decision-making is in opposition to more common methods of social choice, such as: 1) vote aggregation that combines individual preferences of the dispute participants, who elaborate a solution of the problem 2) adopting a legal act in the form of a directive that was decided by experts

without citizens' involvement, 3) strategic negotiations that enact the interest of the dominating party of the dispute in the process of negotiations. Therefore, deliberation can be treated as an alternative to the decision-making procedures described above and it forms a key component of the EPG model.

In the EPG concept, institutional implementation is crucial for the policy scheme to become a real action. It entails the reconstruction of existing institutions and adjusting them to citizens' demands– direct participation in the decision-making process. Such reconstruction of the state apparatus requires several measures. First of all, political and administrative power would need to be transferred to communities at the most local level. Obviously, this does not mean transferring all the competencies to them but just specific, very concrete projects, in the conceptualization and implementation phases. Citizens are expected to assume the role of experts, as they know best what their needs are in particular areas. Secondly, for the effective implementation of such projects, it is necessary to create communication channels between citizens and governing bodies. The intention is to arrange relations in the form of a coordinated decentralization. This term implies a certain amount of supervision over citizens' activities on the local level but far from the example of centralized democracy and not yet close to complete decentralization. In other words, there is a need for coordination of bottom-up efforts and actions conducted by appropriate institutions in order to detect and correct errors, lack of competencies, and incorrect decisions that could sometimes lead to pathological situations. Such coordination should not infringe on the empowerment and interests of citizens. Finally, a sustainable state which is not overly expansive does not impose its solutions and allows citizens to act freely and creates opportunities for these citizens to use some authority and resources to effectuate concrete projects. It is quite desirable for the mechanism of state authority to engage in the process of constant mobilization for deliberative democracy.

Additional commentary seems warranted after the above introduction to the EPG concept. Firstly, the proposal of Fung and Wright includes a very strong implementation component that clearly indicates which actions need to be taken to achieve the practical effects from applying this concept. Secondly, we assume that this mobilization includes social movements, although Fung and Wright situate these social entities outside of the EPG model. They claim that social movements work on and achieve their goals outside of social deliberation. Later they might take up and push for goals that benefit the community, but they are more likely to fight for power. Furthermore, the EPG project is a result of institutional transformation, and it may lead to lasting consequences such as the ongoing and enduring participation of citizens in public matters. It is the continuity of citizens' participation that distinguishes EPG from social movements, in which the engagement is cyclical and based on campaign work. It appears, however, that today's new social movements have some merits in fostering discursive fora for general social debate pertaining to issues that engage regular citizens (some examples can be found in Poland, includ-

ing the Tenants Defense Committee or urban movements). This could serve as an argument that social movements aiming to achieve general social goals are not that different from the model of activism described by EPG. Obviously, this is not always the case but it's not uncommon for local authorities to include various social bodies in the decision-making process. Such situations are good examples of the real-life application of the EPG model described above. Finally, the necessary conditions for the successful implementation of EPG must be underscored. It is not easy to fulfill them but without them the proposed model will not function properly. They are: 1) finding effective solutions to specific problems (without this, citizens will not be convinced to participate), 2) social justice (this is sometimes a conflicting issue, and thus leads to the principle of maximizing justice and minimizing harm), and, 3) citizens' participation in the decision-making process (this is a condition that allows the most comprehensive consideration for the involvement of social movements).

Considering the conditions listed above, the role of social movements in the implementation of such a model should be discussed. We notice certain links between these conditions and the functioning of social movements. It is clear that social movements treat effectiveness, justice, and participation as important components of their success. Effectiveness and participation increase their mobilization, while they aim for social justice. For EPG, effectiveness, justice, and participation are necessary conditions to flourish. It is not surprising that social justice is more important for EPG than for social movements. For social movements, it might be one of the goals or a lasting constitutive component. However, its meaning is quite significant, especially in new social movements. It can also be stated that efficiency, participation, and justice play similar roles in EPG and in social movements. Especially, the effectiveness of activities and focus on social justice are the factors that increase public interest in EPG and social movements. They can be seen as incentives for joining these kinds of activities. While these three factors are jointly present in EPG, and thus enhance the citizens' involvement in decision-making processes, they look a bit different in social movements, where they mark their presence in mobilization processes and methods of action through participation and effectiveness. In terms of social justice, the EPG model holds some advantage over social movements, according to Fung and Wright. The authors see social justice as an incentive to participate in the EPG model. It also means moving away from less fair, or even unjust, decisions that are made through decision-making procedures other than EPG, be they directive, aggregation of votes, or strategic negotiations. In other words, EPG allows for the maximization of social justice. In this context, social movements that map out goals that are usually overlapping with the interests of movements' participants only implement EPG to some small degree. It is more apparent in new social movements. While they aim for general social goals including the principles of social justice, they unknowingly follow the path of EPG. Habermas (1985) saw new social movements among the main driving forces of public debate. In emancipation movements, first related to the ideas of the bourgeoisie,

and later of socialist provenance, he saw hope of defending "the lifeworld". He was in favor of the implementation of deliberative democracy, as politics could become a process through which citizens have authority over themselves. Social movements, especially new social movements, are so embedded in politics that, in our view, they clearly follow the decision-making procedures proposed in the EPG model.

The EPG model is not without weaknesses and dilemmas regarding the decision-making process, and most of them relate to the issue of authority. Fung and Wright note that deliberation might be prone to dominance executed by one discussion party with the greater extent of power. Similarly destructive might be the role of external actors, manipulating the decisions and planned activities elaborated through deliberation. Furthermore, deliberated issues might be "intercepted" by political parties and skewed according to their interests. Finally, the EPG model might involve expectations for an unrealistically high level of actor engagement, which could discourage people from participation in such an arduous decision-making process. As indicated, the EPG model faces the same problems and challenges as social movements, and entanglement in power and the authority structure is a major one. If the EPG model is able to manage it, then social movements are also up to the task.

The EPG model is quite demanding in terms of requirements that are difficult to meet. It can be seen as too idealistic or utopian. Social activities conducted within its framework might attract quite specific organizations, and in our opinion, new social movements, as well. Their distinctiveness stems from the external support they get but is also rooted in mutual solidarity. The resources characteristic for an adversarial model (operations maintaining organization, mobilization strategies effective in winning conflicts) are less important. It appears that social movements – described through the lens of an organizational field, despite their qualities that are characteristic for participation in the adversary model – are able to achieve their goals, not just through conflict, but also in accordance with the EPG model. Let us look into the concept of the organizational field from the perspective of empowered participatory governance, as well as development processes.

Several sociological theories share an interest in the concept of the organizational field, starting from the theory of resource mobilization, including network theory, organizational ecology, and even neo-institutionalism. *"One area of organizational sociology that maps closely with a social movement research agenda is theory and research on organizational populations and fields. Despite differences in their theoretical assumptions, methodologies, and units of analysis, resource-dependence theory, network theory, organizational ecology, and neo-institutional theory, share a common concern with the embeddedness of organizations in their environments."* (Minkoff–McCarthy 2005: 290) These links between the theories are also noticeable in the nomenclature they use. In the realm of the sociology of organization the following terms are used: "central organizational unit" (the principal organization in a particular field and its partners), "organizational population" (organizations competing for common

resources and depending on them), and "organizational field" (distinct, functionally divided, and interdependent organizations). Neo-institutionalism takes an interest in the stabilization and institutionalization of organizational fields. The questions about the possibility of overcoming resource deficiencies through cooperation and mutual exchange between organizations appear in resource mobilization theory and in network theory. Organizational ecology focuses on the interactions between environments and organizations, as well as the contextual influence on the emergence, the function, and the decline of an organization. Terms such as "population" or "field", although used in sociology of organization, seem to be closely related to expressions such as "social movement industries" or "social movement sector" used in other studies of social movements. "Organizational population" might twin with "sector" and "organizational field" with "industries". All of these terms discussed above are quite useful in an analysis of social movements for two reasons. They help with putting the peculiar "market" of social movements in order, and properly locate social movements in the settings of other entities within the field.

Before we start a more detailed analysis of the organizational and multi-organizational fields, some explanations of these terms are due. According to DiMaggio and Powell (1983, 148), the organizational field consists of "those organizations, which in the aggregate constitute a recognized area of institutional life: key suppliers, resources and product consumers, regulatory agencies, and other organizations that produce similar services or products". The multi-organizational field refers to the *"total possible number of organizations with which the focal organization might establish specific linkages"* (Curtis–Zurcher 1973: 53).

The concept of the organizational field can be perceived in a variety of ways, as proposed by da Silva, Filh and Rossoni (2006, 34). They present six ways of understanding it.

First, a field might be understood as the "totality of the relevant actors". These actors engage in interactions that are so densely organized that they might be easily distinguished from external actors. The actors share the understanding of the field and constitute a common institutional structure, jointly competing for resources, clients and power.

Second, the field can be seen as a specific functional domain and the emphasis is placed on its boundaries. The boundaries of such a field are not geographic but functional and based on specific activity characteristics for that field. Therefore, it may include organizations of a diverse portfolio, not just those of a similar nature. In this perspective, Scott first defines the term of social sector as a *"collection of organizations operating in the same domain as identified by the similarity of their services, products or functions, together with those organizations that critically influence the performance of the focal organizations"* (Scott, 1991: 117).

Third, the field can be seen as central to dialogue and discussion, in terms of building common communication channels, and helpful to integration of various

subjects and actors with diverse goals. Such an approach concentrates on the main topic that engages collective actors into the debate. Therefore, the field can be seen as a result of negotiations revolving around the central idea for a particular field at a particular time. The structure of the field is a derivative of interactions and exchanges of information between the organizations that are recognized as participants in the same debate. According to da Silva, Filho and Rossoni (2006, 36) *"the organizational field is a dynamic entity constituted as arenas of power but, from our point of view, these powers are pluralist and each of the engaged subjects or actors enjoys them, with a certain degree of autonomy. The choice of the problem's solution depends on the course of negotiations and dialogue."*

Fourth, the field can be viewed as an arena of power struggle and conflict and such a perspective is inspired by the concept of power reproduction popularized by Bourdieu (1996). Power and its reproduction become the main factors influencing relations between the participants of the field. The organizational field becomes the outcome of the conflict between the organizations regarding their authority, dominance, allocation of resources and power over them, as well as the position of particular organizations in relations to others. We can speak of a de facto field of authority, where social space is dominated by power struggle and relations of interdependence. Resources and discourse are dominated by some actors and socially accepted rules of the game. The power struggle revolves around the resources and who will have better access to them. It also pertains to rulemaking; the ones who get to decide about the rules and freely access the resources are the ones who form the organizational field.

Fifth, the field can be defined as an institutional arena, where the power struggle takes place in order to assert particular interests. Such an understanding of the field stems from the institutional approach. Bourdieu`s concept describing relations between various entities as interconnected due to power and particular interests is the starting point of this definition. This is very similar to the previous description of the field as an arena of power struggle and conflict. However, despite our underscoring of the political aspect of institutionalization processes, the structure of power still plays a crucial, determinant role. Attention is focused on actors and their abilities to create institutional order for securing their own interests. Organizational field is a cultural phenomenon that engages existing social practices and rules embedded in relations of power between the groups that fulfill the function of the cultural frame, the habitus. However, the system of power and the field of activities that the actors conduct is not just interpreted through the lens of cultural frames but also through the positions that the actors occupy in a particular field, which determines their goals and interests. In other words, actors that have the ability to recognize and interpret cognitive structures of the field, as well as to form, contest, and reproduce the rules through interactions, do so in order to pursue their interests.

Sixth, the organizational field can be analyzed as a structured network of relations. The field might be defined here as social activism or economic activity that results

in relations that actors create among themselves as they reconfigure their manner of operation and even the social structure as a result. Therefore, the organizational field presents itself as a network of relations structured by, and at the same time structuring, the environment for activities conducted by the organization and individual actors.

Let us stress the particular ways of thinking about the organizational field presented above from the point of view of power relations. It seems that the first two approaches treat power relations within the field as objectively existing, and in some sense natural. The entities constituting the organizational field use the power to fight each other and also to guard the rules of the game. In our view, these two approaches might be qualified as examples typical for the collaborative, expert structure of governance. The situation looks quite different in the fourth and fifth models of the field, which share many similarities. In both cases, the field is perceived as an arena of power struggle for dominance and the clashing of interests, indicating the model of adversarial structures of co-governance characteristic of conventional interest groups. The third and sixth approaches to the field can be placed along the continuum between the adversarial structure of co-governance in the form of "city meetings" (sixth approach) and EPG (third approach). Obviously, this way of organizing various definitions of the organizational field from the point of view of power relations should be treated with some scepticism and viewed as an oversimplification. We do not intend to build a detailed classification here but to identify some dominant tendencies that are present in the concept of organizational field, which could serve as a foundation for EPG.

To support the arguments in the above reflection we would like to refer to some additional characteristics of the organizational field and the social movements. First, Curtis and Zurcher identify the environment in which social movement organizations operate. The authors studied the relationships between various types of social movements and the character of their relations with their surroundings. They classified social movement organizations according to two variables. The first relates to their goals (expressive, instrumental and mixed) and the second variable is connected to the membership requirements (exclusive, inclusive and mixed). For Curtis and Zurcher, social movement organizations might be combining these characteristics and thus differ significantly in terms of communication within the community setting. Not surprisingly, two types of environments have a significant impact on social movement organizations: 1) a hostile environment, highly critical of social movement activism, fostering counter-movements, 2) a friendly environment, empowering and enhancing the activities of a movement with friendly public opinion, free access to resources, with open and visible citizens' support. A hostile environment increases the isolation of the movement and mechanisms of solidarity that exist in an exclusive-expressive organization while the inclusive-instrumental type of organization is transformed into an expressive and exclusive one. A friendly environment fosters the instrumental orientation of the inclusive-instrumental type of social movement organization and

weakens the isolation mechanism of the exclusive-expressive type (Rucht 2007: 199). Simply put, the environment that is friendly and beneficial to social movements contributes to greater openness to the community setting and maximizing the number of supporters. At the same time, the movement can focus on the concrete goals that also absorb public opinion. Such a situation can also have a positive influence on the presence of the movement within the framework of EPG.

Second, from the EPG point of view, the term of discursive fields is helpful to understanding the role of the organizational field as crucial to dialogue and discussion. Discursive fields are conceptualized broadly as terrains where contests of meaning occur. *"Such fields emerge or evolve in the course of discussion or debate about contested issues, and events, and encompass not only cultural materials (e.g., beliefs, values, ideologies, myths and narratives, primary frameworks) of potential relevance, but also various sets of actors whose interests are aligned, albeit differentially, with the contested issues or events, and who thus have a stake in what is done and not done about those issues and events."* (Snow 2007: 402) Among these sets of actors there are social movements and their counter-movements, the targets of actions and change that, for some, are worth achieving and for others constitute the potential for conflicts. Organizations, clusters of individuals, media, or public opinion should not be omitted either, as they could also be perceived as sets of actors in the discursive fields where, along with various other entities, they can articulate their positions. The development potential and abilities of the discursive field depend to some extent on the structure of political opportunities, which indirectly determines the structure of discursive opportunities and influences the discursive field. Here, we would like to conclude that empowered participatory governance might foster a structure of political opportunities. Such a structure is conducive to development of the discursive field and the engagement of social movements in the decision-making processes, in accordance with the EPG model.

To summarize, we can state that the concept of the organizational or multi-organizational field might be useful in linking the issues of human development to the emergence and functioning of social movements. As the term field applies to the mezzo level of social reality, it is quite suitable for analyses pertaining to the functioning of local communities and other organizations that operate in their settings. Therefore, to some extent, it corresponds with the concept of EPG. If a multi-organizational field is regarded as a place of debate and dialogue it truly becomes a discursive field. Such an interpretation might foster conditions for a participatory decision-making process which might be, to some extent, a remedy to the crises of contemporary democracy. The EPG concept might be quite useful in describing local development, especially the realm of functioning of local communities, where a certain development model is coined, debated, and implemented.

It is worth noting that EPG is well augmented by the concept of the multi-organizational field. It describes a crucial developmental mechanism with the consideration of sustainable development principles. In this perspective, the type of human

development that is closest to the ideals of a sustainable society gets placed in the mechanism of the functioning of social movements. Therefore, we might say that development becomes a social movement.

Conclusion

This logic has an added value. From such a perspective, social movements not only become the engines of development but are also able to correct the shortcomings of democracy. Interdependencies between the activities of social movements and the state of democracy involve several fields of influence and reaction. It is not enough to say that democracy creates the most desirable conditions for the functioning of social movements. It should also be noted that social movements influence democracy in several ways. Social movements allow societies to overcome the weakness of representative democracy. Social movements, be they ones with political or cultural goals, increase the likelihood of citizens' engagement in decision-making processes, which makes the political system closer to the typically ideal, desirable form of democracy, with power being in the hands of the people. Moreover, through their involvement in decision-making processes, social movements build a place for themselves in political debate as they increase the citizens' level of knowledge and awareness. This argument is particularly important in contemporary mass societies where the alienation of individuals is quite common and pervasive. Such societies are prone to manipulations, which may turn them against democracy and contribute to its fall. The willingness of a social movement to participate in decision-making processes relates to the problem of representation in democracy, which especially new social movements are quick to point out. The interest that social movements take in the condition of contemporary representative democracy serves to raise the awareness of public opinion about the necessity to improve it. Social movements accentuate the social activism of local governance, as well as social justice, human empowerment, and agency. Not only do they become natural allies of the actors who promote democratic values and freedoms, but they also advocate the kinder, improved version of democracy. Social movements increase the level of decision legitimization in a globalized world, where the engagement of citizens in public matters is declining and decisions are often made without the needed transparency in panels and caucuses that do not have true, fully democratic legitimization. Social movements play an important role in the process of contemporary democratic transformations, whose outcomes are not yet fully formed. Citizens' mobilization, prudent activism, self-awareness, competences, consideration of the public, maximum effort to secure direct participation in decision-making processes, and modified democratic procedures can all provide important inputs, or perhaps could emerge as results of such a transformation.

All arguments presented above are meant to highlight the role of social movements in modern democracy and constitute a foundation for the model of sustainable development presented in this work.

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The rise and fall of the project class in Central Europe. The Hungarian case.

An essay dedicated to Imre Kovách

Katalin Kovács

Introduction

Let me begin this essay for Imre with some personal reflections. We have had parallel careers from when I began my work: on many occasions my path crossed with Imre's and, over time, with those of his students who matured into leading researchers – we shared alike 'rites of passage' as significant qualifications were gained, mutual support as partners in research proposals and projects, organising conferences and workshops. Imre's achievements in strengthening and maintaining the position of rural sociology will stand the test of time, and not just in Hungary – their roots in international comparison give them a pan-European significance. I thank and congratulate Imre on this, from the bottom of my heart!

Why did I choose this theme to acknowledge the significance of Imre's work? It is partly because the study of the 'project class' that he wrote with Eva Kučerová is one of his most frequently cited and most influential works. But it is also because, as a planner, I too was a member of the 'project class': I helped elaborate programmes for regional and local development at various levels. Thanks to this, I can state on the basis of my personal experience that the 'project class', that began as a key player in regional and rural development and strengthened over the course of a decade and a half, went into decline after 2010 as a consequence of the structural changes then introduced.

Let me give a sense of this decline by my experience as a member of the Council of the Hungarian Rural Network (HRN). In 2017 I was honoured by a request to become a member of the Council which had just been reduced in number. I accepted the request and thereafter actively took part in developing its programme. But the Council was swept away by the storm that was COVID 19. While the pandemic reigned, there were at least occasional meagre and ultimately fruitless attempts to bring it together,

but, after 2021, not even the attempt was made. Despite the fact that, according to the home page of the HRN, the Council 'remained in office' notwithstanding the closure of the 2014-2020 programming cycle, it had lost its significance in the second half of the cycle, just as the 'project class' did whose members were over-represented amongst its delegates.

I assume that the decline of the former structures and positions of the 'project class' has general validity. The science and specialist knowledge used for project development that Kovách and Kučerová accorded to the 'project class' at the beginning of the 2000s did not turn out to be a 'class-forming' force. One reason for this was that the scarcity value of the ability to write grant applications significantly fell: applications were simplified, and the numbers engaged in grant applications increased very significantly: for example, one after another rural accounting offices added grant-application writing to their sphere of activities to improve their service provision for their clients and increase the competitiveness of their businesses. Likewise, the number of experts offering their service was increased (simultaneously depreciating the market value of their specialist knowledge) by the mass of development managers who suddenly became unemployed, when agencies at micro-regional and regional levels were dissolved at the end of 2012.

The background to all of this was the centralising turn in the institutional system for development which came into effect from 2013. Perhaps even more important was the fact that access to competitive resources became dependent to a large extent on political (and personal) embeddedness and connections. There had doubtless been examples of this in previous cycles too, but after 2010 it became (practically) systemic. Although with minor modifications in form, the late-socialist system has returned in which access to development resources is dependent for the most part on the strength of a network of connections to leadership circles (Vági 1982).

A quotation from an interview can serve as evidence for this view. A mayor who described himself as having opposition views characterised the 'agreement' which took place, over multiple rounds of negotiation, about the distribution of county Regional Operational Programme funds across villages in the summer of 2019 as follows. *"You must fall in line politically. If you fall in line then your town or village will get something too (…) The good thing about LEADER is that it has none of that, under LEADER we are our own people."* Now, when the distribution of most funds takes place in advance in open or closed circles of negotiators, this has implications, in fact very considerable ones, for the situation of the 'project class'. Parallel with the degradation of its role to a formal, 'technical' one, its formerly highly valued, both materially and socially, position becomes more modest: its social position merges with that of a service provider.

As a rural development professional, I dealt for the most part with the LEADER programme, so in what follows I will present the rise and fall of the 'project class' through the lens of my own experiences implementing LEADER programmes. In doing so I make use of a case study written in 2019 and a work of comparative analysis (Kovács–Nemes 2019, Brooks–Kovács 2021).

Rise of the 'project class' – early years of post-socialism

First, about the context which prevailed when the concept of the 'project class' was born. In Hungary during the 1990s and early 2000s, decentralisation was considered the most appropriate and desirable form of governance, for two reasons. On the one hand, it contrasted with the former Communist regime and, on the other, it was in line with prevailing neoliberal political thinking. The latter required not only a weaker central state with competences devolved to lower levels, but also more collaborative and more autonomous governance enabling faster and more efficient local development. The notions of decentralization and local autonomy are closely connected in a large body of the literature; the central hypothesis of a recently published volume, for example, is that the *"degree of decentralization and the level of local autonomy correlate positively with the level of development"* (Silva 2020: p. 2).

In addition to the above-mentioned factors, as Kovách and Kučerová emphasise, the process of Europeanization also played a pivotal role in the creation of more decentralized, multilevel governance structures in Central and Eastern European Countries; the 'regionalization' of government was considered an important condition for EU membership across the region. When considering institutional settings in their article, Kovách and Kučerová, who specify the 'projectification' process by fields, do not distinguish between regional and rural development. In this essay, however, it is important to emphasise that, unlike the regional institutional system aimed at implementing regional/territorial development, decision-making of agricultural and rural development was not regionalised, only the management and control of the application process was devolved to lower levels of governance, such as branches of the Paying Agency located at county and regional levels. LEADER LAG programmes were handled by these agencies as specific 'group projects', whose component parts, the individual projects, required the same kind of examination as ordinary (individual) projects, thus each and every project proposal, which had already been subjected to controls at LAG offices, was checked again at the regional-level agencies. Fundamental differences in institutional structures and proceedings between regional and rural development reflected the differing concepts of how Structural Funds and CAP grants should be distributed. Furthermore, the LEADER approach and its implementation was always an outlier in terms of CAP subsidy principles, and this caused much mistrust, misunderstanding, and duplication of work; and, in consequence, much ill-functioning.

In line with dominant views of the time, the OECD's New Rural Paradigm was issued in 2006, the same year that the Kovách–Kučerová article was published. It advocated a new approach to rural development based on three main factors, with de-

centralization and changed regional policies among them. The shift of focus pointed to the increasing importance of the local (focused on place, rather than sector) and investment, rather than subsidy (OECD 2006: pp. 56–58). The LEADER Programme was highlighted in this publication which valued positively its integrated and endogenous approach to rural development and its multi-level governance model (OECD 2006: pp. 90–94).

LEADER in this context also deserves attention because LAGs are locally organised; they are governed mostly at the local level in a collaborative manner; and there is a requirement that decisions over the distribution of resources be taken by an autonomous body: the LAG board. LEADER LAG agencies can also be considered to be both local strongholds and generators of the 'projectification' process. The strength of the 'project class' locally corresponds with the level of autonomy of LEADER LAGs, as indicated by the scope for independent decision-making over development issues, whether strategic, operational or project-related, of their board and agency.

There has, however, always been evidence of top-down management of LAGs, because LEADER LAGs have been overseen and funded by higher levels of governance. In the Hungarian case this is the centre of government, the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MARD) via the Managing Authority (MA) and the Paying Agency (PA). One of the major decisions that is made at the centre is determination of the proportion of the overall budget of the national Rural Development Programme (RDP) that is allocated to LEADER. In the last two programming periods, this proportion has not exceeded the mandatory five per cent minimum set by EU legislation. This low proportion, together with the consequential small amount of national funding resource for LEADER, has strongly limited the potential local impact of the programme; the sum available had to be distributed between 103 LEADER LAGs since the 2007–2013 cycle. It is not just a matter of the amount of financial support, the local impact of LEADER Programmes is also greatly influenced by the mode of top-down management, whether enabling or restricting, as will be illustrated below.

During the 1990s and early 2000s, decentralisation prevailed. New funding schemes, offered as 'learning programmes' for innovative approaches to development, were already in place (Phare, SAPARD, ISPA, LEADER experimental programme) and new, much more generous, ones were expected following EU accession in 2004. All these development schemes were implemented through projects, so there was a desperate need for knowledgeable experts to generate them, and in doing so, contribute to mediating resources for all kinds of development. This enhanced need for application and project management expertise, taken together with the scarcity of its availability, explains the high expectations concerning the birth of a 'project class'. Its rise was fast but, in my estimation, the new-born class was less influential, especially as regards social stratification, and its influence much less long lasting than was foreseen in 2006 when the concept of 'project class' was introduced by Kovách and Kučerová.

The explanation for unmet expectations was partially provided in the introductory part of this essay that is a significant decrease of market-value of this kind of expert knowledge, and an emerging and ever increasing clientelism.

The re-centralisation turn and its impact

It was already the case prior to 2010 that resources aimed at project funding, especially those supporting high prestige and high priority projects, had increasingly been distributed by upper levels of governance, and at these levels the expert knowledge of the ordinary 'project class' member was of secondary importance. The remainder, such as small-scale regional development or LEADER funding, was too small to maintain the 'project class' for the long term. After the political changes of 2010, pre-arranged decisions over high priority projects almost became the norm, but this, in the main, did not strengthen the 'project class'. Instead, the changes contributed to the rise and strengthening of a clientelist economic elite, closely linked to the political centre. The scale of systemic corruption in Hungary is exceedingly high, as symbolised by the rapid enrichment of a former classmate, neighbour and friend of the prime minister, a gas-fitter by profession, who by 2021 already headed the list of the richest Hungarians with assets and goods worth of about 1.3 billion Euro (https://www.portfolio.hu/gazdasag/20220526/kijott-a-friss-lista-ime-a-100-leggazdagabb-magyar-547017). Meanwhile, Hungary's rank on the Transparency International corruption index dropped from 46th in 2012 to 73rd in 2021, sharing its score (43) with Senegal, Kuwait, Ghana, and the Solomon Islands. Bulgaria was the only European country to score worse (42). (https://www.transparency.org/en/cpi/2021/index/hun)

By the time the 2014–2020 LEADER period started, a sharply different development scenario had unfolded. Due to the political turn occasioned by the second Orbán government of 2010 and its centralizing policy consequences delivered in 2012–2013, decentralization and even (relative) local autonomy faded away (Pálné Kovács 2020: p. 46). According to Ladner et al., between 1990 and 2014 Hungary had thereby become an outlier among European countries: it was the only one where local autonomy significantly decreased (Ladner et al. 2015: p. 60–78).

Governance cycles and the LEADER Programme

As far as the LEADER Programme is considered, the first programming cycle that was implemented from the beginning till the end was that of the 2007–2013 iteration. Being a LAG manager was not always attractive in a working environment which was frequently confining, rather than enabling. At the beginning of the cycle, managers of LAG agencies were traumatised by top-down procedural issues and strict prescriptions with regard to Local Development Strategies (LDS). LAG Agencies were overburdened during the entire period by administrative duties and overstressed by strict bureaucratic control by the Paying Agency; these were a considerable source of

frustration for the staff and their clients (beneficiaries) alike. (Csurgó–Kovách 2018, Finta 2020, Kovács 2018). Nevertheless, in retrospect, this phase seems to be most in line with what Kovách and Kučerová expected anticipating the path leading to a 'project class', at least in terms of influence and impact. Shrinking autonomy was less obvious across LEADER LAGs because they were part of, and institutionalised by, the Rural Development Programme still in operation; they were thus defended from direct intervention. The implementation concept of Axes 3 and 4 of the Rural Development Programme in the 2007–13 programming cycle also contributed significantly to this perceived autonomy.

During this programming phase, LEADER in Hungary was not implemented as a separate axis (Axis 4) of the Rural Development Programme, but rather as a cross-cutting instrument in the delivery of four of the six[1] measures of Axis 3. Delegating the administration of Axis 3 measures to LAG agencies was a burden for inexperienced staff at the beginning, but it significantly increased the impact and prestige of LAGs and their agencies during the entire period, so strengthening the positions of project managers within and outside LAG agencies alike. The 2007–2014 cycle was the period when LEADER was extended to the entire rural territory of the country. At the time, the positive impact of the latter step was mostly celebrated, but, later, several negative consequences became evident too, such as a decrease in the quality of LDS-s due to financial constraints and competition between LAGs for funding being cancelled; these became painful, when resources fell drastically in the following programming cycle.

Implementation of LEADER within the RDP changed drastically in the next iteration starting in 2014. The biggest hit was caused by recentralising the management of former Axis 3 measures. This move resulted in a sharp drop, to about one third of the previous level, of financial resources managed by the LAG agencies, implying a parallel drop of vitality, prestige, and impact of LEADER LAGs on local development. The radical reduction in funding was particularly bitter because the tendering process in the new cycle started after an unprecedentedly long delay caused mainly by upper layer management (both the Managing Authority and the Paying Agency were accused of lengthy procrastination). This three-to-four-year delay provides a further example of the vulnerability of LAGs to central management processes that hinder, amongst other things, LAG-level autonomy and generate serious frustration in the ranks of LAG management. This vulnerability was extreme in Hungary: according to the mid-term evaluation of the Hungarian LEADER programme, in December 2018, four years after the start of the programming period, the amount of EU money absorbed by LAGs was precisely zero (Nemes–Magócs 2020). One may wonder whether the effort preparing the midterm evaluation made sense if nothing had yet been spent for projects?

1 The four measures delivered in a devolved manner were: Village renewal, Cultural heritage, Developing micro-enterprises, Rural tourism. Two measures (Village buses, Integrated Rural Centres) were put out to a centrally directed tender process.

In the years between 2015 and 2018, staffing levels of LAGs shrank to a minimum. There was a considerable flight of management, which could not be replaced because of reductions in remuneration and the scope of managerial tasks. These conditions transformed the current and future career prospects that LAGs offered; a shrinkage in the absorption capacity of a once promising profession was inevitable. According to the midterm evaluation of the LEADER Programme, large-scale reductions in human capital were common across LAG offices in Hungary (Nemes–Magócs 2020).

In the field of regional development, the ground was pulled out from under the feet of the 'project class' even more evidently: the regionalised institution system, in place for the 2007–2013 cycle, was dissolved when the cycle ended. Since then, the poorly funded LEADER LAGs remained the sole agents of rural development at the LAU level. This represents a huge erosion of capacities targeting local development compared to the previous period. As it was mentioned briefly in the introductory part of this essay, parallel with the fall of a highly ranked segment of 'project class', the 'market value' of expertise related to programme and project management was also devalued, due mainly to loss of career perspectives but also to the sudden mass influx of former staff of the dissolved development agencies.

And finally, an example. In 2018–2019 we developed a case study dealing with one of Hungary's most successful LEADER LAGs, a case we termed the Balaton Uplands programme. (Kovács–Nemes 2019) Since the case study is available on the RELOCAL project website (www.relocal.eu) and a comparative study with Liz Brooks has also become available (Brooks–Kovács 2021), I here limit myself to shedding light on some important details that underpin my concept of the decline of the 'project class'. (Grant number of the H2020 RELOCAL project: 727097)

The Balaton Uplands LAG area, which is one of Hungary's largest LAGs, was established in 2007 through negotiations between the 60 participating municipalities and civic organisations (Éltető Balatonfelvidék, 2014). Expertise of the top management had been built up with LEADER Plus, and an extremely hardworking staff was recruited. The three offices of the LAG Agency were distributed evenly across the LAG area, thus making its services more accessible to the population. The Agency was set up and staffed by people reflecting a variety of expertise from lay through different kinds of expert knowledge to vernacular knowledge, which is *"place based but crucially nourished by outside sources and agents"* (Lowe et al. 2019: p. 28.).

The LAG significantly exceeded its original commitments. Originally it was allocated a budget of 1.8 billion HUF for axes 3 and 4 (approx. EUR 6 million), however, this amount was topped up several times by the Managing Authority and finally 155% of the original budget had been spent by 2015, the closing date of the Programme. There were 454 winning projects altogether from 600 applications. Some 146 projects were supported under axis 3 managed by the LAG Agency (typically larger projects over ten million HUF value covering village renewal, heritage, rural tourism, supporting micro-enterprises) and 308 under the LEADER axis (typically smaller projects

of a maximum 5 million HUF approx. 18,400 EUR). The funded projects resulted in 200 buildings being refurbished, 1,500 instruments/devices acquired, and 160 events supported.

The staff in the three offices of the LAG development agency soon swelled to 10 and then to 12 in 2010–2011 at the peak of its operation; but the number gradually declined to seven by 2014 when two of the offices were closed. The functioning of the agency cost in all approximately 8% of the allocated rural development funding, financing all management, administration, project-generation and other costs. Some 1200 ideas for projects were collected, most of which were included in one or other iteration of the local strategy and the project calls connected to it. The number of LAG members remained more or less constant (around 130) throughout the whole period (the result of conscious policy), however, an additional 120 'supporting members' (lower fee, no vote, but in receipt of all LAG services) also joined.

Board and staff members received a shock when data on eligible funds for the LAG in the next round were published. According to the 2014–2020 LDS, the total budget was 988 million HUF (3.2 million Euro), 90% of the combined sum allocated to the LEADER axis and operational costs in the former period and only 37% of the total of spending of the 2007–2014 era.[2] The chief executive officer, whose work had been central to the LAG's outstanding achievements, left at the end of 2017, after which management fell to three people, one experienced and two young, inexperienced recruits; the latter were 'borrowed' from the local public works (workfare) programme, which covered their salaries. Nothing could be further from the smart-suited 'project class' than an employee on a workfare scheme! When, finally, the 2014–2020 iteration actually started, the management team increased in number again, from three to four.

Concluding remarks

The demise of LEADER-type rural development over the past decade poses a serious challenge. It is the outcome of dramatic political change in 2010 and the strength of the 'illiberal democracy' that has been established in Hungary since then which reinforced in stone the parallel shift from governance to government, from decentralisation to recentralisation. As a consequence, earlier concepts and institutional structures of development ceased to exist; significantly weakened LEADER LAGs apart, LAU-level development agents disappeared from the Hungarian countryside. The dissolution and weakening of development agencies jeopardised the prospects of the 'project class' in a phase when it was still on the increase, during the 2007–2013 programming cycle. Its rise therefore turned into its fall. The liquidation of regional and micro-regional development agencies as well as financial and functional weakening of LEADER LAGs suddenly ended career paths and the market value of the 'project-class'. Other factors

2 Calculated from figures of the final financial account of the LAG for the 2007–2013 programming cycle.

also contributed to the fall of the popularity of the profession: budget cuts, bureaucratic control and upper-level mismanagement, which impacted work (and salaries) of project managers directly. Nevertheless, LAGs and LAG managers continue to play an extremely important role rescuing the culture of collaborative and participative governance for the future; if they are able and permitted to do so.

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Still the century of (rural) corporatism?

Trends in Italian marginal areas

Giorgio Osti

Introduction

The paper addresses the issue of political representation of peripheral rural areas through a historical-ideological interpretation: corporatism. The socio-economic and demographic weakness of these areas has always made the representation both of municipalities and of the political parties problematic. In fact, the critical mass for local mobilization is lacking. At the same time, these areas, precisely because of their systemic fragility, are invested in by many *development projects* that end up 'representing' the local community outside in a completely original way. From this, there is a heightened focus on participation, co-planning, and centre-periphery relations, all of which are ingredients of modern local development.

The sense of abandonment that pervades many marginal areas is real, but the very fact that these have, albeit in a different way, a *set of projects* available gives them a *voice*, that is, the ability to make themselves heard by national public opinion. The scheme becomes a form of representation alongside other more institutional ones. This has several consequences at least on the interpretative level: a) the marginality of those areas is not absolute but relative to several factors, not least communication; (b) multiple channels of representation do not necessarily lead to political fragmentation of marginal rural areas; on the contrary, it can increase the chances of development.

The representation of peripheral rural areas is therefore not only through bodies elected by universal suffrage at the various territorial levels, but also takes place through a wide range of actors operating in these areas. Among many, the example of non-profit organizations is emblematic; at the end of the last century, they began to sit around different 'tables' representing local issues. According to Rhodes (1996), their entry into the public arena marked the birth of *governance* over traditional *government*.

The key to understanding the paper is the concept of corporatism and the research question is whether and how this phenomenon of undoubted historical depth illumi-

nates the governance of fragile rural areas even when it is expressed in the co-design of development (Baibarac–Petrescu 2019). Corporatism has a utopian side. Even in rural areas, ideas of general change, of the purification of public action, and of building ideal communities, are rightly and opportunely poured out. The examples of the monasteries' experience of the past or the most recent ecovillages are evidence of this (Marcus–Wagner 2012). Both have found a place in remote areas. Corporatism is generally not considered a utopia. It carries with it a negative halo of practice in defence of particular, if not patron-client, interests. Nevertheless, it was already indicated at the end of the nineteenth century as an ideal of government at the highest level, as suggested by Emile Durkheim (Hearn 1985), on the one hand, and the Encyclical Rerum Novarum, on the other (Ortega 1998).

Literature on rural corporatism

The setting of our topic is the rural world in the broadest sense, the one in which local development policies have been most exercised in recent decades. Certainly, there are policies for urban areas, and many aim to overcome the urban-rural dichotomy (Barbera–De Rossi 2021), to access visions of *territories* (Magnaghi 2000). Nevertheless, the focus remains on rurality, which is still capable of provoking fruitful analyses of local development.

Modern corporatism was born as a political goal to be realized in national contexts and concerns the regulation of relations between the state and the different economic sectors. It provides for the creation of regular consultation (also referred to as a 'pact') between the economic ministries and the highly centralized representation of the branches of the economy. This model was immediately taken over by the authoritarian regimes of the twentieth century, which saw in this arrangement a way to control the economy and the nascent labour movement. In fact, most of the studies are of a historical nature and concern fascist corporatism (Salvati 2006).

After the Second World War, another approach emerged, called *neo-corporatism*. It no longer concerns authoritarian or *colonial regimes* (Popkin 1976), but the most virtuous countries on the world stage, those that establish a broad and loyal agreement between workers' representatives, employers' associations and the nation state (Streeck–Kenworthy, 2005). In this case the champions are the Scandinavian countries, as well as other continental European countries such as Germany and Austria. In these, the welfare state is realized at the highest level as a compromise between the market economy and the protection of citizens, including non-workers (Blom-Hansen 2000).

After this period (1950–1990) studies are less univocal in cataloguing the neo-corporatist countries. So much so that some scholars decree the inadequacy of the concept for modern times (e.g., Baccaro 2002). Western societies would be definitively *pluralist* with the loss of centrality of the working class and fragmentation of organ-

ized interests, in constant competition for public resources, regulatory concessions and social legitimacy.

A season of reflections on the *variants* of corporatism linked to Schmitter's works emerged. This author, together with Streeck, even imagines a form of regulation on a national scale of an associative type (Streeck–Schmitter 1985). They are echoed by those who speak of *associative democracy* (Hirst 1993), just to demonstrate how the links between corporatism and utopian impulses never fail (Baccaro 2004, Muñiz-Fraticelli 2014). In this literature, corporatism does not disappear but becomes the prerogative of particular sectors or no longer arises on the national level but on intermediate or meso levels, such as territorial negotiations among economic actors.

The concept of sectoral or meso-corporatism has been put in order by Lehmbruch (2001). The possibility that there are agreements or intermediaries on more limited scales and areas seems to be able to coexist with the general characteristics of the concept of corporatism highlighted by Schmitter (1974: p. 95): few associations that claim the monopoly of the representation of specific interests, their *de jure* or *de facto* recognition by the state, mandatory membership, a centralized leadership and internal hierarchical structure. Probably, the most weakened features are the monopoly of representation and compulsory membership. But this does not only affect sectoral and meso corporatism, but all social systems, now characterized by *weak ties* (Felder 2020).

Yet Lehmbruch's intuition seems to persist in fields as diverse as climate change (Gronow et al. 2019, Kronsell et al. 2019), energy (Horváthová et al. 2021), vocational training (Atkinson–Pervin 1998) and agriculture (Winter 1984, Ortega 1998). The latter is of particular interest to us as the primary sector is affected both by the oldest corporate approaches and by the most recent rural development policies. However, Daugbjerg and Swinbank (2012)'s work on corporatism in the agri-food sector identifies papers from two decades ago. An internet search also gives similar results, at least for developed countries. One reason for this decline in interest[1] is perhaps the fact that the neo-corporatist literature is focused on the macro-level, while

> *"network analysts disaggregate the analysis to the meso-level, arguing that macro-level analysis misses the significant variance in policy-making arrangements across policy sectors. Agricultural policy was the archetypical case of policy making through policy communities in which farm groups and agricultural ministries controlled policy making, excluding or marginalising consumer, taxpayer, environmental and nature conversation interests, and most often side-lining treasuries and trade ministries" (Daugbjerg–Swinbank, 2012, p. 262).*

Despite the idea of Schmitter (1974: p. 96) who advocated *"the decline in the importance of territorial and partisan representation"*, corporatism seems to re-emerge in a country such as China precisely territorially. In fact, in that country in the post-Maoist reform phase, industrial development was set up in rural areas under the

1 For Italy, such studies are also lacking, the historical approach clearly prevailing. There are hints at corporatism in Nardone and Zanni (2008) and Di Iacovo et al. (2013).

control of local authorities, who were able to withhold part of the income on the spot through taxes. According to scholar Jean C. Oi (1999) this goes by the name of *local state corporatism*. This was an original blend of market economy and territorialized public control (Ping, 2005). Even in Europe there has been talk of local corporatism, but for a limited period, for countries such as Denmark and Norway and for the welfare state system alone (Villadsen 1986, Hernes 1979).

The phenomenon in China appears much wider but, according to other scholars, superseded by new policies decidedly more liberal as the Asian giant aimed at guaranteeing building rights to international mega companies and real estate agencies (Zhan 2015). This would have resulted in a loss of power for local authorities and an impoverishment of rural areas. Moving into the immense peri-urban areas of China, Hsing (2010) notes another phenomenon, this time in favour of local corporatism: rural villages around large expanding cities have managed to establish a relative "territoriality" (local identity, recollectivization of the economy, autonomy from the metropolitan government) thanks to the negotiating skills of their representatives with those companies that want to make large real estate investments on site. These *corporatist villages* seem the exact opposite of what Zhan (2015) argues, but they confirm the relative and changing positioning of rural institutions in the dynamics of governments (Galeone 2022).

The relative position of rural areas is also important for assessing the resilience of the corporate villages model; in fact, in the central and interior part of China it seems that the situation is much more precarious both from an economic point of view (low productivity) and with regard to the ability of local party *cadres* to govern. According to Maria Edin (2003), national incentive measures for local administrations could be more effective than taxation and management on a local basis, concentrating their effects on already economically prosperous areas of China.

To the territorial corporatism of China must be added the ethnic variable, which leads entire local communities, in the name of their own linguistic-cultural identity, to become economic entrepreneurs and on this basis obtain a power of representation (Peralta et al. 2008). The case of Western Sahara is interesting: El Maslouhi (2011) finds the existence of a point of mediation offered by local development networks, recognized both by the central government of Morocco and by the movements fighting for the independence of the area. Obviously, economic development becomes a 'bargaining chip', provided that the parties ensure a stable and centralized representation of their base, be it an economic sector, a social class or, as in this case, an entire residential community.

The analytical element of corporatism – centralization of representation – is therefore respected. But the novelty of this article is that the local unison is not static and based on fixed identities, as we can imagine certain religious or class affiliations. It is instead continuous internal work that derives from various mobilizations, either ethnic or deriving from circular migrations and the local desire for economic redemption. Local representation is therefore dynamic, almost fickle, and uncertain in its outcomes.

The concept of corporatism, summarizing the literature, seems on the one hand transfigured in terms more flexible and less burdened by history such as the *policy community*. On the other hand, it still seems useful in non-Western countries with very centralized, if not authoritarian, institutional structures (Bartra and Otero 2005). Even neocorporatism in the virtuous Scandinavian countries gives way to its antagonist – the pluralist model – combined with the affirmation of policies of the liberalization of the economy and services.

An underlying factor in the development processes of rural areas is the role of the non-profit sector.[2] For those who adopt a critical posture on neoliberalism, the so-called third sector is often palliative, a way to mask discriminatory market liberalization policies for global companies in the field of health and local services, thanks to *governmental* measures (Bryant 2002, Sending–Neumann 2006). For those who look at a more genuine and relatively independent role for the third sector, it is a question of checking on a case-by-case basis how NGOs enter into the corporatist pacts of individual sectors and at what level of management (Seibel 1990). The third sector is internally complex, both in terms of styles of intervention and territorial scales. Regardless, there are four-party corporatist agreements, involving the public body, employers' organizations, trade unions and third sector bodies. In the field of the protection of migrant farmworkers, these local agreements are realized sporadically and with results to be carefully evaluated (Arora-Jonsson–Larsson 2021).

It is time to identify some *dimensions* of corporatism that are particularly suited to grasping the dynamics of rural development policies. These dimensions are summarized as follows:

- the presence or absence of strong territorial disparities, which leads to political representation at regional level (regional/ethnic parties)
- the presence or absence of a few large interest organizations capable of monopolizing membership and maintaining a strong centralized leadership
- the presence in the rural area of a compact agro-industrial district or a large dominant company
- the presence or absence of large national and international third sector organizations
- the multipurpose nature or not of important local organizations such as workers' unions and environmental associations

2 Salamon and Anheier (1998) within the model of the social origin of the third sector (an interweaving between class and institutional dynamics) identify 4 types of relations including the "corporatist" one that concerns countries with "high government spending and a large nonprofit sector"; in these the State signs *iron pacts* with large non-profit organizations, including the Catholic Church, which ensure consensus to the political elites and in return obtain support and delegation to the management of important services such as school and health. The exemplary case of State-Third Sector corporatism would be Germany (Bode 2003).

- the emergence of ideals unifying centre and peripheries such as green tourism development, landscape protection, cosmopolitanism, territorial equity
- the tradition of "policy concertation" (Compston 2003) applied at the local level. The main empirical references for Italy have been the *territorial pacts* and the negotiated programming (Negrelli 2004, Magnatti et al. 2005).

From agricultural to intellectual corporatism

Compared with the dimensions of corporatism that emerged in the previous paragraph, the data available in the Italian countryside is scant and was formulated with other interpretative criteria. It is therefore possible to analyse publications on rural areas developed for other purposes, trying to highlight whether and how the issue of political representation is addressed. It involves the composition of fragments and clues without the availability of dedicated research. In order, the LEADER programme, the representation of agricultural associations, and new forms of rural voices represented by third sector bodies and planning experts will be analysed.

The LEADER Community Initiative and its epigones

A typical representation of rural areas is doubtless LEADER "Liaison entre Actions de Développement de l'Économie Rurale", which resulted in the creation of Local Action Groups (LAGs). The development of the LEADER Community Initiative undermines the old national corporatism based on the privileged relationship between agricultural associations and the national government. Thanks to this relationship, in the 1950s the peasants had obtained social security and insurance coverage that did not exist before. But the rural exodus and partial industrialization of the countryside changed the conventional relationship between the interests of marginal areas and agricultural ones. LEADER introduces an economic-productive intersection into rural development schemes. In so doing, it has created a *new voice* for those areas, albeit from the perspective of *rural self-reliance* rather than *integration with the central areas*. This last aspect marks an important point in the representation of economic and social interests: the areas of intervention are designated on the basis of homogeneous self-contained interests, for example those of an agro-industrial district or an Alpine valley, rather than on the basis of functional integration with urban services and markets. This, in particular, was characteristic of LEADER in the first phase of implementation.[3]

3 LEADER has evolved since 1991 when it started as a Community initiative. It is now an "approach" that is a method of EU intervention that is mandatory for member countries if they want to take advantage of rural development funds (source: https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/leader-clld/leader-toolkit/leaderclld-explained_it, accessed September 15, 2022). The most significant change in terms of representation has been that the Local Action Group's plan has had to conform more and more closely to the planning of the Region in which it operates, determining a more stringent control of the same through in particular the accounting of the individual measures implemented locally (Osti 2015).

Other characteristics such as self-government and local economic planning, similar to the spirit of the Italian Mountain Communities (Gubert 2000), serve to strengthen this rural *voice*, to give it importance and external recognition. LEADER initiatives have evolved into various models in each Italian region (Cacace et al. 2011, Osti 2015). Regionalization suggests an abandonment of corporatism in favour of pluralist approaches, also under the pressure of regulatory changes (Di Napoli–Tomassini 2017). However, this shift may be only superficial, reinforcing the notion that agricultural-rural corporatism may have changed in form, but not in essence (Ortega 1998). Indeed, the LEADER variations that *do not affect the hard core of local corporatism* are at least three.

The first concerns the fact that the local action groups resulting from the LEADER programmes are federated at various levels, becoming a kind of multi-scale lobby, i.e., capable of operating at regional, ministerial and community level. The scheme of sectoral corporatism is changing in the direction of a polycentric structure of representation, in the sense that the various levels of territorial coordination are not integrated with each other according to the pyramid shape of national associations.

The second variation concerns the evolution *towards the development agency*. Cacace et al. (2011) placed this outlet of Local Action Groups as an expression of maximum functional and political autonomy. These agencies, in fact, can become independent from the mayors and the regional administration, securing funding from a variety of sources. In some cases, they become the most accredited interlocutors with external local development foundations, as they are able to reduce the institutional fragmentation of rural areas (Calvaresi 2008, Osti–Jachia 2020).

The third change concerns the strengthening of the Regions both at the administrative and economic levels. In the 1990s the main farmers' associations in Italy, centred on the provincial level, decided to strengthen their regional offices for strategic reasons, even dreaming of some kind of merger between them. The way LEADER has evolved – a package of measures that must conform to the Regional Rural Development Plan – shows the choice was appropriate, in parallel with the formation in some regions of a fair coordination of the LAGs.

In conclusion, LEADER has been an important innovation for rural areas compared with the sectoral corporatism of farmer associations. It was a large-scale programme that helped democratize the Italian and European countryside. LAGs can aspire to carry out *"a constant lobbying activity with the central government (and the region itself), also in relation to the implementation in Italy of the 'Amsterdam Pact' on the European urban agenda, since this, fortunately, is well aware of the importance of a better relationship between cities and rural areas"* (Bonetti 2017).

However, such lobbying is likely to be too ambitious because of *short-circuits* in rural areas: 1) traditional associations or simply a few large local farms have managed in some cases to 'capture' LAGs through the imposition of old power games; 2) the inclusion of groups outside the agritourism and craft axis has been limited, reducing

the capacity of LAGs to represent the entire rural community; 3) the hope that LAGs will become interlocutors of cities, as Bonetti (2017) argues, clashes with purely commercial visions of local aggregation, almost a sort of rural marketing agency; 4) there is probably no idea among the most influential members of rural communities that the LAG can be a social mediator, as it is in the doctrine of democratic corporatism (Pabst 2022).

Organizations in the agricultural supply chain

Farmers' associations and interbranch organizations appear to be the most prominent political bodies in rural areas. Their status is characterized by a reciprocal reflection: while the former exhibit significant historical and social roots, the latter are relatively young and lack substantial coherence. The curious aspect is that in both cases the studies in Italy are very few. Paolo Feltrin summarizes the evolution of the largest Italian agricultural union as follows:

> *"In the golden years of its political strength, Coldiretti elected over 60 parliamentarians within its current in the DC (the so-called 'Bonomiana') and a large part of the public functions in agriculture were exercised by the Federconsorzi; today, its capacity for electoral influence has declined, the mission of Coldiretti has undergone a reorientation along three (successful) lines: the enhancement of farms via services; regional, national and European lobbying; social alliances with environmental movements. In short, it is really possible to decline by growing – and it is not said that it is a misfortune, indeed from an economic point of view it is almost always an improvement passage, simply we have entered a later phase of the associative life cycle" (Feltrin 2015: p. 6, my translation).*

The paradox of "declining by growing" is explained by the accentuation of the organizational dimension of the farmers' unions. Among the four functions they usually perform – membership, representation, social protection, selective services to members – it is precisely the latter that contributes to the strengthening of the union organization in every sense. Coldiretti and other agricultural associations are part of this evolution. Then, it must be said that the linearity mentioned by Feltrin is not entirely corresponding to recent changes. For example, Coldiretti, after a phase of mutual understanding with some environmental associations, has returned to more conflictual relations, while in terms of services to rural communities it is in a very crowded and competitive field. If with LEADER a modus vivendi had been found between agricultural and non-agricultural organizations, with the arrival of new tenders for local development projects – think of those proposed by the charitable foundations – the provision of local services has become more laborious. This also leads to new frictions and basically the end of the prospect of unifying the agricultural world in one union.

The development of cooperation in rural areas deserves a separate chapter. The Italian cooperative world is organized at the national level in "Centrali", that perform

all the four union functions highlighted above. Therefore, they are to be fully integrated into local corporatism. Suffice it to recall the origin and development of the cooperative credit banks, notably once called 'rural' banks. As long as the "ideological pillar" system lasted (Santilli–Scaramuzzino 2021), there was a certain correspondence between farmers' associations and the cooperative system. With the collapse of the ideological glue and the outbreak of major crises of some national cooperatives, there was a *disarticulation* of alliances and the emergence of bitter competitions, whereas a concertation style – typical of rural corporatism – dominated.

The thesis that traditional organizations operating in Italian rural areas have undergone the dual process of "political" decline and "market" rise (Feltrin 2015), finds a certain correspondence with the reading of Ortega (1998) on the existence of a very strong supply chain pact in Latin American countries. The farmer associations focus on services, leaving the representation of interests to sectoral organizations, often concentrated on a single product, closely linked to processing companies. According to Ortega, the empirical referent of this model is *inter-professional organizations*.

The European Union expressly supports the formation of interbranch organizations between farmers and processors and commercial operators in a supply chain. These adopt measures to regulate the supply chain, are extraneous to the business management of the members and may derogate from some rules of free trade but in a visible way (transparency). To date, the EU has recognized 133, only four in Italy,[4] for reasons linked to representation: *"excessive fragmentation of agricultural representation, difficulties in dialogue between the numerous subjects in the supply chain, late adhesion by large-scale distribution .... numerous problems that characterize relations in the agri-food supply chains in Italy and that generate obstacles in identifying shared objectives and strategies"* (Frascarelli–Salvati 2012, my translation).

Since the time of the Frascarelli and Salvati article, the situation has improved, but not so much as to make such organizations as powerful and pervasive as in France. In this, if we compare it to Italy, agricultural unionism is more compact, the agri-food industry and large-scale distribution more concentrated and the state has always worked to create great national champions. They are all ingredients of a solid corporatism, but also closed to the innovations of small farmers and social movements. The *trade-off* between the level of concentration of a supply chain – therefore its ability to represent an agri-food interest on a global scale – and the level of inclusion of companies and experiences not in line with highly specialized technological paths is

4 https://www.reterurale.it/flex/cm/pages/ServeAttachment.php/L/IT/D/5%252Fb%252Fb%252FD.1728cf66235a39969eca/P/BLOB%3AID%3D19025/E/pdf, accessed September 22, 2022). The same source mentions the Producer Organisations (POs) created by the EU to increase the bargaining power of very fragmented operators (farmers). In Italy, according to the same source, there are 583 POs. Such a large number undermines the corporatist criterion which implies a few large representatives on a very large scale. This is achieved with second-level associations or cooperatives, for example AssoMele, which claims to represent 70% of Italian apple producers (see Petriccione–Solazzo 2012).

clear. Think, for example, of organic farms or those that practise social farming. It is no coincidence that in France, unlike in Italy, movements for alternative agriculture are more entrenched and rural discontent often results in large protests (Waters 2010, Piersante 2019).

The disarticulation of Italian rural corporatism is not only attributable to administrative fragmentation, asymmetrical regionalism, or the ideological legacies of intermediate bodies, but also to an extraordinary variety of social experiences, certainly weaker, but less rigid than those existing in France. It should also be remembered that, in the 1970s, France was a model country for the innovative representation of rural areas. The *Contrat de Pays* represented for a short time an experiment of collaboration between municipalities and local interests not only agricultural (Bonerandi 2005). Then they evolved towards a growing integration with higher-ranking territorial public bodies, revealing a lack of consideration for civil society associations (Cordellier–Mengin 2009).

Civic associations, projectification and culture

Italian rural associations have enjoyed some attention from international scholars. The political scientist Putnam (1994) noted a great liveliness of civil society in some parts of Italy. He identified the roots of economic development and good administration in the number of small associations capable of producing social capital, even in peripheral contexts. His analysis was later accused of reproducing in different words the 1950s stereotype of Banfield, based on *amoral familism*, especially in the south (Trigilia, 2001). Beyond its empirical relevance, the last concept is useful because it captures the range of action of local interests, at that time limited to family clans. *Mutatis mutandis*, it is interesting to see if rural associations have been able to unite various demands and bring them to provincial, regional or national tables. It is therefore a question of assessing the strength and consistency of organizations capable both of maintaining multifunctional local offices and of interacting with governments. At first glance, there are very few Italian associations that meet such requirements.

Sports clubs, widespread even in the countryside and in the mountains, usually have a local sphere of action (Osti 2001). Their federations are weakened by the loss of the monopoly of representation. *Partecipanze* and *Misericordie* are examples of mesolevel organizations. They are very active in rural Tuscany for the transport of sick people, but outside that region less effective. The organizations which are heirs of the aforementioned "ideological pillars", such as ACLI for Catholics and ARCI for Communists, have in fact an organizational structure that covers all territorial levels. But according to Feltrin (2015), these have undergone the same evolution as the farmer unions: a drastic drop in members and persistence as service providers thanks to paid staff.

The plurality of weak organizations in rural society in the face of few and strong central ones on an urban and national scale make plausible a typical centre-periphery interpretative framework (Gräbner–Hafele 2020). The non-profit sector does not escape this rule, because the few national NGOs which provide private and public services also have to close their peripheral offices. The problem of third sector organizations is even more evident for the political parties: the ability to represent remote areas requires enormous efforts and often leads to serious failures. Thus, rural populism spreads (Carrosio et al. 2022).

If we derogate from the corporatism criterion of centralized representation and a loyal and compact membership, we could think of new political forms such as *coalitions* or new participatory processes such as those that take place through *projects*. The two are linked. In fact, many policies now take place on the basis of tenders that require the project to be supported by a broad and varied base, made up of public, private and non-profit bodies.

On the tendency to use more and more projects (projectification) a literature is developing that shows how the meanings of the process and its fields of application are disparate: *"projectification as a managerial approach, projectification as a societal trend, projectification as a human state and projectification as a philosophical issue"* (Jacobsson–Jałocha 2021: p. 1589). None seem particularly relevant to our theme: representation through projects. There is a strand that speaks of a *project class* or the emergence of a category of planning professionals that concerns rural areas (Kovách–Kučerová 2009, Lukić–Obad 2016). It mostly refers to Eastern European countries struggling with local development opportunities provided by the EU to fill the gap left by the planned economy. Uses of the concept of projectification with some reference to corporatism concern public administrations and policy implementation (Torrens–von Wirth 2021).

All studies insist on the pervasiveness of projectification, on the fact that it has a strong push from the European Union and that it brings with it typical mechanisms such as the tendency to self-reinforce, the short-range perspective (*ad hoc* and *short-termism*) and a low ambitious incrementalism. It is possible to envision representation through experts who specialize as agents of local development. These experts would stabilize themselves in this role through a continuous stream of calls and proposals. This new project class is highly mobile and independent, without a permanent contract with an agency or public office dedicated to development Thus, it is doubtful that this class of professionals has the objectives of representing rural communities. It will do so in terms of advice and assistance, which is very different from political pressure.

If anything, representation via projectification appears as an *emerging side-effect*: from the assembly of several professionals, mobilized by winning calls for development proposals, an implicit representation structure emerges, with a few selected actors exerting pressure on the institutions that finance development projects. We could speak of an *experts' community*, in terms similar to a *policy community*. The skill in building development projects serves to select experienced personnel, establish a mode of intervention, legitimize proposals for change – project in fact means 'to throw

forward' – and finally introduce new forms of leverage to the political arena which originate neither in parties nor unions.

This interpretative baggage is to some extent applicable to the story of the Italian Strategy for Internal Areas-SNAI (Carrosio 2016). This has given rise to the emergence of a new representation of marginal rural territories, identifying a primary criterion of analysis: the temporal distance from basic services. More than LEADER, the SNAI has produced new 'representations' of the rural world capable of establishing itself on a national level that is not merely governmental. LEADER, at least in Italy, has been sucked into the ministerial and regional sphere, producing a rather formal representation, a process similar to that which happened in France with the *Contrat de Pays*. It is also true that SNAI is younger than LEADER, so the same thing could happen to the former as to LAGs and other transalpine initiatives.

In any case, there is no doubt that SNAI has called for a new form of representation that we will call *intellectual*, witnessed by the creation of various university research centres, by countless training experiences, by many conferences and publications, including international ones. The criticism of having created opportunities for rural "parlour" development or worse, such as to aggravate the gap between educated urban elites and rural classes tempted by anti-scientific populism, has its plausibility. However, following SNAI-style interventions, school training experiences have flourished, promoting intense experimentation (Luisi–Tantillo 2019). Anthropologists and writers try to award dignity to staying in remote rural areas, so called "restanza" (Cunnington Wynn et al. 2022). In the field of education as well as the artistic-cultural sector, a generation of operators has been formed, especially in southern Italy. This generation lives on development projects, but with a "claimant" attitude aiming to strengthen local democracy (Pazzagli 2018, Carrosio–Zabatino 2022). These are new phenomena which require cautious interpretation. For now, there is a flourishing of initiatives, not only cultural, accompanied by the requirement to maintain a wide range of tenders for projects. Of course, reliance on projects is a double-edged sword. It foreshadows change, but it raises serious doubts about the continuity of initiatives. To function over time, the use of projects needs a plurality of sources of funding and reference bodies, a sort of *institutional biodiversity* that serves to cushion abrupt and unexpected changes.

Still the century of rural corporatism?

Rural corporatism in Italy, possibly in some European countries with a similar history, has deeply changed without losing some basic characteristics. The first one is the need for representation of economic interests. The evolution has been clear: no representation of countryside *(Ancien regime)*, representation through notables and landlords (liberal phase), the start of mass participation through political parties and peasant-farmworker movements (the turn of the twentieth century), the turbulent

interwar years (authoritarian regimes promoted corporatism) and finally the institutionalization of farmers' unions, favoured by the European Community and universal suffrage (the wonderful 50 years after WWII).

After that long period, a sectoral or meso level corporatism persisted in the form of vertical lobbying and service provision to members according to the rule of *selective benefits* (Olson 1971). Beside the traditional farmers' unions, other forms of representations emerged. They were economically and geographically various but politically weaker and temporary. Intermediary bodies, such as cooperatives and NGOs, had inconsistent fortunes. In some cases, they declined, especially the farmworkers and consumption coops; in others they rebirthed in new forms, such as the community cooperatives in Italian remote areas. There is a difference however between cooperative and third Sector associations: the former have national representation, while the latter are much more fragmented. The emergence of a project class, as acutely envisaged by Imre Kovach and other scholars, has some relevance in western European countries. Its capacity to assume a corporatist identity and mission needs verification. Thus, corporatism did not disappear, but it multiplies its forms and cumulated in social strata with historical forms, demanding a renewed research effort. It is what Imre Kovach has been doing tirelessly in Hungary and in all rural Europe.

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Rurban transformation – with or without gentrification

Visualizing degrees of change within eight core variables

Peter Ehrström

This paper discusses eight variables that influence, or are influenced by, local transformation processes and potential gentrification pressures in urban and metropolitan ruralities. Positioning these core variables in a cobweb octagonal figure illustrates how a locality is affected by simultaneous transformation pressures in concurrent variables and highlights the variation in degrees of concurrent processes and pressures. This visualizes challenges for local action plans and strategies, but also the need for implementing deliberative methods, and improving (social) sustainability in potential contested rurban territories.

"A constant challenge in regional planning practice is how to effectively implement development and projects that bring sustainability to rural regions", according to Castro-Arce & Vanclay (2020), who state that *"the ultimate goal of planning and regional governance processes is to achieve social-ecological development"* (Castro-Arce–Vanclay 2020: 45, 53). According to Castro-Arce & Vanclay (2020: 47-48) *"local interests and context situations are both triggers of social innovation"*. Social innovation initiatives must then *"have the ability to build bridges and... creating a space for collaboration is essential if planning practice is to address major sustainability challenges"* (Castro-Arce –Vanclay 2020: 53).

Katajamäki (2022), in turn, proposes a "Geography of Hope" concerning regional development, a concept first used by Chris Turner. According to Katajamäki (2022), a Geography of Hope respects people's wishes to live where they feel that life can best be fulfilled and offers the greatest opportunities. He proposes a Finnish professorship in this specific research field, in a country voted many times the happiest in the world, and also hope for a master- and doctoral program in "The Geography of Hope".

The views presented by Castro-Arce & Vanclay and Katajamäki are also in line with highlighting the importance of a social dimension of sustainability. Many metropolitan and urban ruralities are currently experiencing transformation and (rural) gentrification pressures, which may pose opportunities, but also significant chal-

lenges, for these localities and their populations. Metropolitan and urban ruralities are in essence rural-urban border zones, either administratively part of a city, or of a metropolitan/urban region, and are often referred to as rurban (rural-urban) areas. Buciega, Pitarch, and Esparcia (2009) emphasize that the growth of new development possibilities in rural areas often depends on their location, in particular concerning rural areas under pressure and influence from metropolitan areas.

To understand local-level transformation processes and gentrification pressures it is important to first identify main and concurrent variables that influence, or are influenced by, ongoing transformation processes. Then placing analyzed concurrent variables in a cobweb figure is illustrative of how and to what degree a locality is affected by simultaneous transformation processes, and this can highlight different levels of pressures, to be considered in future action plans and place-based strategies.

Various illustrative instruments have been developed and presented, for example the current habilitability instrument for measuring the development on islands, based on participatory citizen research. *"It is made for islands, by islanders, for islanders. It is a gauge of what is attractive on an island as a place to live and what is lacking"*, according to Pleijel (2023). It is complex in that it contains seven main variables and many sub-variables, but it is also specifically developed for the challenges of islands, which clearly limits its use in urban and metropolitan ruralities.

In this paper I focus on the construction of an octagonal figure for illustrating the simultaneous levels of transformation in core variables, in a single locality. The eight concurrent variables, with emphasis on socio-economic, politic, and perceived/experienced development, are connected to transformation processes with or without gentrification. These processes may then be negative or positive, depending on the locality and underlying factors.

I first constructed an octagonal figure of core variables when studying a pilot case in Finland, Sundom (Ehrström 2016).

By choosing Sundom I wanted to highlight that these transformation processes and gentrification pressures may also occur lower on the urban scale, not only in metropolitan ruralities but also in urban ruralities. Sundom is administratively part of Vaasa, but my paper was published in a work on Metropolitan ruralities, where all other case studies were set in metropolitan regions. It highlighted that processes on a metropolitan rurality level can also be experienced on an urban rurality level, although generally not on the same scale or intensity. In Ehrström (2010) I coined the concept 'mild gentrification' for when and where a traditional definition of gentrification might be considered too harsh, but gentrification effects are still evident. Gentrification is not confined to inner-city districts in major cities, but also occurs for example as newbuilt or rural gentrification. I will now turn to a short discussion on rural gentrification.

Rural gentrification

Rural gentrification can most easily be described as traditional gentrification, but in rural areas. The drivers of rural gentrification and transformation of metropolitan ruralities is traditionally a growth of ecological and 'green' assessments by part of the middle classes. The return of the middle classes to the urban core is well documented (cf. Lees et al. 2008, Lees et al. 2010), but a similar, if not as strong, ecologically driven red/green counterwave has occurred to the nearby countryside. This outward migration (from urban places to rural) is followed by a more growth- and suburbia minded middle class migration, as the attraction of place grows. These movers could then be described as second generation gentrfiers. Phillips (2010/2004) argues that *"an examination of geography of gentrification has been almost exclusively urban in focus, but... many of the arguments raised with respect to urban space are complimentary, if not necessary fully commensurable, with a series of rural studies"* (Phillips, 2010/2004: 438). Even when, like in Sundom, most inhabitants own their own homes and are not experiencing gentrification effects in the form of increasing rent gaps, increased tax pressure on real estate property (rural land) can lead to displacement and thus negative gentrification effects. Farmers may have large values in property (land), but not the financial means to pay off increased property taxes, and thus be displaced from the property. Narrower financial margins may also increase poverty among those staying behind. These effects need also to be further studied, as rural gentrification effects may be opposite to ambitions of social cohesion.

The Covid-19 pandemic crisis, at least temporarily, affected both the interest to move to, and to invest in a second home in the countryside, as the concentration of people in urban centers were perceived as sources of infection. However, it is too early to say if these reactions are more long-term or a temporary peak, which disappears with an active perception of pandemic crisis. I would be very careful in assuming that there has been a paradigm shift in urbanization. On the contrary, urbanization can be assumed to continue. However, we are in a time when interest in rural and rurban environments has increased, and this will benefit development in at least some places.

Katajamäki (2022) note that rural population research has mainly been interested in questions connected to migration, moving away from rural areas, or, when connected to rural gentrification, moving to rural areas, but much less with the question why people also remain in rural areas. Nordberg et al. (2023), in turn, stress that interest has concentrated on the dynamic action (of migration), while staying is considered a static and passive condition (Nordberg et al. 2023: 9). However, you could argue that the role of stayers is as decisive as the role of immigrants for strengthening social sustainability and a welcoming attitude as important for inclusion as respecting local traditions when moving in. Recent research by Nordberg et al. (2023) argue that unity has a dominant role in influencing people to stay in rural areas, as exemplified by

Molpe and Terjärv in Finland. This is evident in interviews, in colourful descriptions of each village, in the value of village identity to individuals and their decisions to stay, and the enthusiasm that these 'stayers' exhibit towards their local communities. Bodman (2019), in turn, found two strategies to cope with stress in adulthood in her interview material, a "Back to nature" strategy, where respondents had moved from urban alienation and loneliness to the place of their childhood memories, the rural village, and a "Roots in the soil" strategy, where respondents had chosen to stay in the rural environment where they had grown up (Bodman 2019, non-numbered abstract).

Rural areas, according to Andersson et al. (2012: 18), *"seem to be laboratories for new kinds of rural-urban life-styles, new industries and livelihoods, as well as new kinds of governance and regulation".* The key processes for the transformation of the countryside, according to Dünckmann (2009), are a shift from productivism to post-productivism in agriculture, transformation of rural areas from production space to consumer space, increased susceptibility to gentrification processes that transform rural areas to 'middle-class territories' and increased disintegration and differentiation of rural places (Dünckmann 2009: 58). This is on par with what Andersson et al. described as the new middle class's *"quest for the natural, the healthy, the genuine and the authentic"* (Andersson et al. 2009: 6). This countryside, then, is no longer the traditional farmer's countryside, but rather what Murdoch, Lowe, Ward, and Marsden (2003) considered a differentiated countryside.

According to Dünckmann (2009), the rural areas need not lose their rural character as the new settlers also may influence a revival and reinforcement of certain 'neo-rural' elements, perhaps romanticizing a rural way of life or searching a more sustainable, green, way of living. At the local level, the transformation is not only socio-demographic but also political and cultural:

"Newcomers who move from the urban areas to the countryside in order to 'escape' the city bring along their urban cultural background and with it a set of values and ideas. In this manner, they soon start to question the traditional socio-political structure of local politics …. The ideal picture of rurality held by the newcomers contains central social values of the middle-class like community, stability or order" (Dünckmann 2009: 76).

Divergent strivings and claims may also increase and provoke tensions and, in the worst case, turn the locality into a contested territory.

Nordberg et al. (2023), in turn, conclude that newcomers can also be offered a way into the local community and develop a connection to this place. What is demanded in these communities, however, is models for how local societies learn to act together (Nordberg et al. 2023: 120).

This also speaks strongly for creating relevant participatory and deliberative methods and structures for participation, for promoting local-level social sustainability. I have previously mainly participated in constructing such methods for contested urban spaces (cf. Raisio–Ehrström 2017, Ehrström 2020, Lindell–Ehrström 2020), but strongly argue for the realization of deliberative methods also in contested rurban territories.

Let us now turn to the central variables to be analyzed and included in the octagonal figure, which visualize current levels of transformation and gentrification pressures. I will briefly discuss each variable, and then the results from the pilot case, before discussing future considerations in using this method and figure.

Research methods and octagonal variables

Qualitative and quantitative methods are combined in research conducted in a triangular study, that is, combining analysis of quantitative socioeconomic, political (election) and media data with a qualitative interview analysis of perceived and experienced change. Jick (1979) concludes that triangulations may be used not only to study the same phenomena from different perspectives, but also to increase our understanding by allowing new and deeper dimensions to evolve. Hussein (2009) emphasizes that *"when combined there is a great possibility of neutralizing the flaws of one method and strengthening the benefits of the other for the better research results"* (Hussein 2009: 2).

In order to visualize ongoing transformation and gentrification pressures, an octagonal figure is constructed that combines the studies of eight main variables: distribution of income, education, occupation, real estate/property prices, perceived and experienced change (interview analysis), media image, political change and language profile. The intensity of the ongoing transformation processes is graded separately, for each variable, on a scale from 0 to 3, depending on the level of transformation: 3 for major transformation, 0 for imperceptible transformation.

First step is identifying central variables for visualizing transformation processes and gentrification pressures, and study the intensity in each variable, which varies, based on a combination of local and external factors.

Eight significant variables were chosen for visualizing transformation processes, as well as potential (rural) gentrification pressures:

Distribution of income. This is a major variable for identifying change and for revealing transformation and possible gentrification processes. Significant change in household income is revealing for socio-economic change, signaling an inflow of higher-income inhabitants. This inflow may then be the result of increased place attractiveness.

Education. Significant change in education level, and changes in education profile, is another main variable for identifying transformation processes and gentrification pressures. Higher average level of education is expected to interact with higher average level of income.

Occupation. A third important variable is the occupational structure. Transformation processes are expected to bring about a change from mainly primary sector occupations and secondary sector to tertiary sector and service economy occupations. This may be a direct consequence of migration and linked to concurrent trends in higher education and income levels, and thus signal gentrification pressures.

Real-estate/property prices. This variable is significant for revealing both transformation and gentrification pressures as it can signal upgrading of place attractiveness and place image, which often connects to gentrification pressures. The smaller the locality, though, the less reliable this variable may be. A single large-scale real estate transaction may significantly affect the statistics and make it difficult to draw conclusions about whether it is a general trend or statistics being wired by one or a few large property sales. This need to be considered especially in small ruralities with small numbers of real estate transactions. Property price increases can reveal signs of gentrification, as increased market values indicate an upgraded sense of (valuation of) place. Concerning real estate prices, official statistical data from National Land Survey, or an equivalent institution, is to be studied. However, I would propose that the largest deviating single sale, if necessary, is not included in the statistical analysis but is mentioned separately in the conclusions. Price development in real estate is an important variable, answering how transformed characteristics and a mediated and perceived sense of place may be converted into market value (increased property prices).

Perceived/experienced change. This variable provides more detailed and personal views on how transformation and potential gentrification is perceived and experienced, by both older and newer population groups. It may also reveal social tensions, especially if older and newer inhabitant groups are clustered in different spaces of the locality. This is often the case when new housing areas are planned and built, and newcomers are attracted to the same part of the rurality. This was for example the case in my pilot study. This qualitative variable is also important for a more profound understanding of local transformation processes and gentrification pressures and can reveal if and how inhabitants feel overrun in the transformation process. Thus, interviews also provide important background information for constructing and organizing mini-public deliberations and, if necessary, to find least-common-denominators. The preferred research method is a qualitative interview analysis with narrative approach where interviews are conducted as half-structured interviews. Interviewees are ideally chosen to represent different inhabitant groups as well as different views on perceived and experienced transformation. Preferable they are representative in terms of gender, age, occupation, language, and local background (old or new inhabitants). Participants belonging to major language groups are to be included if the area is bilingual or multilingual. I want to emphasize the importance of the interview material, as statistical data may be rather limited in small case studies (cf Ehrström 2016) and interviews are of great informative value concerning sense of place and views on transformation and gentrification pressures. More detailed views are also easier to expose in interviews and there is also room for more local-historical aspects on how transformation is perceived.

Media image. This variable is connected to the prior variable, in that media image and visibility can influence perceptions in, and of, a locality. Media interest and visibility can also reveal early gentrification pressures. The media analysis is

conducted by selecting a relevant time period (for example May 1973, 1993, 2013, and 2023), during which the place name is searched in a local newspaper database or social media database (a newspaper database may be more optimal for a more long-term timespan,) and texts are then analyzed and divided into positive and negative hits, major and minor, as well as sections (news or feature articles, short news items, columns, editorials, advertisements…). Number of hits reveal media visibility in the region and type explains what kind of visibility. I would suggest the inclusion of a control case, another urban rurality in the same area, to compare if there are common or diverging trends in media image and visibility. Changes in perceived image of place, media image, and a slight rise in real estate prices may for example signal pre- or early gentrification, which may precede a more in-depth transformation.

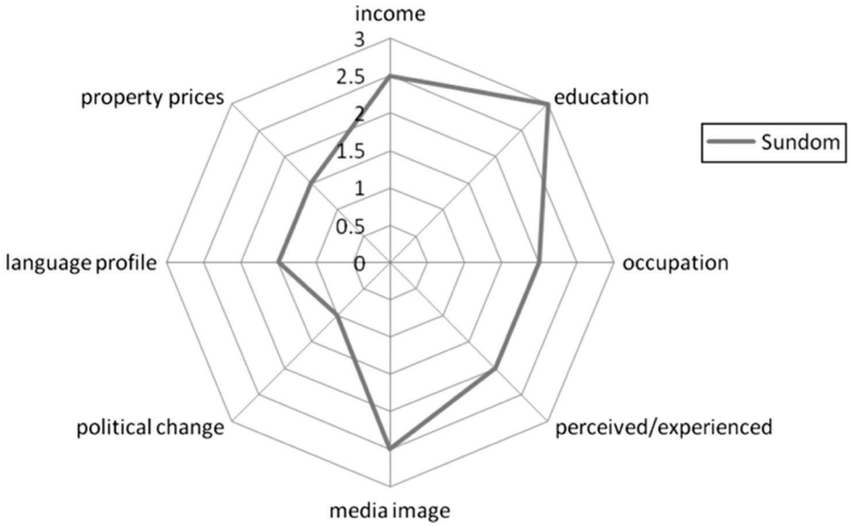
Political change. Changes in the population structure, as part of a ongoing transformation process, is expected to also have a political impact. Political change may signal that socio-economic and/or socio-cultural transformation has taken place. For example in Palosaari, a transformed working-class district in Vaasa, significant de-radicalization also took place over time (Ehrström 2010). Political data are either to be retrieved from municipal or parliamentary election statistics. If possible, cast votes within the specific area of interest are analyzed. If that is not possible, political change can be considered a more uncertain variable.

Language profile. This is a significant variable in bilingual countries and regions, but also in monolingual environments, as it also covers changes in the proportion of other language speakers. Thus, it is also an indicator of cultural diversity and inclusion. The language variable may also include the increased or decreased use of dialect, which may be interpreted signaling a more profound socio-economic development. The variable can be modified, to answer specific cases and linguistic environments that are to be studied. Transformation within this variable can mean either place upgrade or downgrade. The language profile variable is therefore not ideal for revealing gentrification pressures, although for example the majority of newcomers regardless of language in pilot case Sundom, represented affluent, well-educated tertiary/service sector professionals.

Statistical data is mainly collected from National Bureaus of Statistics and/or municipal statistical offices, or other sources when appropriate (National Land Survey, official election statistics, Media archives). Socioeconomic (distribution of income, education, occupation, language) and political data, interviews on perceived/experienced change and media image are thought to give further information on the perceived and actual transformation process. Analyzing the various converging variables, grading the intensity of transformation in each variable, after which the resulting octagonal cobweb figure can visualize converging transformation processes and gentrification pressures in a locality. The octagon figure may easily be extended with comparative case studies. By conducting comparative research, it is possible to identify and visualize common trends, as well as similarities and differences, in how

transformation is conceived. Similar, if not necessarily fully commensurable, trends can be revealed when visualized, irrespective of urban scale and intensity differences.

Figure 1
Octagonal Figure of Transformation within Core Variables



(Case Sundom, in Ehrström, 2016)

Returning to pilot case study Sundom

The octagonal figure visualizing degrees of transformation within eight core variables was first pilot tested in case study Sundom (Ehrström 2016). Sundom is administratively a district of Vaasa. In 1976 the Myrgrundsbron bridge between the village Sundom and the city of Vaasa was inaugurated, and the distance between Vaasa and Sundom shortened from 30 to 10 km. A direct consequence of improved communications was an inflow of migrants to Sundom from the 1980s. Traditionally Sundom was a fisherman's and farmers village, but currently a large majority of the work force are wage earners, commuting to work, mainly in Vaasa.

Official population statistics (City of Vaasa) show a clear increase in population during the period 1973–2013, from 1,303 inhabitants at the end of 1973, to 2,422 in 2013. The population has continued to increase to approximately 2,600 in 2022. In 2013 24.3 % of the population had Finnish as mother tongue and 74.6% Swedish. The percentage of Finnish-speakers and other language speakers is increasing, but still approximately 70 % are Swedish-speakers (in 2022). Another trend is the diminished

use of dialect among youths, as implied in the interview material (Ehrström 2016).

Contemporary district Sundom has one of the most well-educated populations in Vaasa and already in 2009, 38.8% of the working population were either university or college graduates. In 2001–2009 the increase in income/capita was the highest in Sundom of all Vaasa districts (Kommonen 2011) and Sundom is one of the districts in Vaasa with the highest level of income per capita. Public sector and administration dominated as employing sector, but mean income studies showed that the most well-paid group in Sundom were employed in the industrial sector. Real estate prices increased, but the statistical material was small, and some atypical property transactions may affect the statistics. New middle-class migrants gathered in places like Svarvarsbacken, where only one in 34 grown-up first-wave residents had a prior connection (roots) in Sundom. Ten inhabitants, roughly a third of the adults there, worked in the industrial energy cluster (seven at the largest enterprise), five were teachers, five had a university position. Others were academics (3), entrepreneurs (3), medical doctor (1) or occupied in social- and health-related sectors (6) (Wiklund-Engblom 2008).

The Swedish people's party (SFP) strongly dominate the political scene in contemporary Sundom, more so than during the 1970s, when more than a third of the votes were cast on Social Democrats (as compared to 12% in 2023). SFP reached a historical top of nearly 70 percentage of the cast votes before a slightly negative trend occurred. In parliamentary election 2023 SFP still scored 62.4 %. During the 2000s there were some signs of increased right-wing political activity. True Finns gained some support in 2012 and reached 8.1 % in 2023. The National Coalition Party's support increased steadily from the 1980s (6.5% in 2023). The Christian democrats had their largest support, around 15%, in 1984–1992 (4.5 % in 2023).

Analysis of the use of search word "Sundom" in regional newspaper Vasabladet's database for May in 1973, 1993 and 2013 suggest that Sundom's media visibility increased over time. Still, the statistical material is very limited. It is, therefore, difficult to draw far-reaching conclusions, but Sundom was more visible in local media over time, and the visibility increased dramatically from the 1990s. The comparison district Orrnäs scored no major hits in 2013, compared to 13 for Sundom.

The interview material consisted of eight interviews: three representing 'old' Sundomers and four represented 'new' Sundomers (two Swedish-speakers and two Finnish-speakers). One represented the first wave of migrants. Interviews showed a consensus regarding the importance of preserving the rural heritage and village structure and that it should remain a village and not develop into a semi-urban/suburban district in Vaasa. However, a few interviewees predicted a more (r)urban future for Sundom, rather as a district than a village. New inhabitants clearly indicated that it was a good investment to buy property and land in Sundom. Only small frictions were noticeable in the interview material. Sundom have mainly attracted new arrivals with a rural background, who commute to work in Vaasa, rather than

exurbanites. Although there is evidence of upgrading, the reasons to move in seemed more practical than elitist. Environmental values and rural romanticism may play a part, but less so than for the migrants in the 1970s and 1980s. Safety and security issues were frequently mentioned, indicating typical middle or upper class values. What may distinguish Sundom from many other attractive ruralities is that the migrants typically have a rural background. They are not exurbanites moving out but 'exruralite' residents moving in. It seems the combination of commuting to an urban workplace, and residence in a rurban environment, was the prevailing way of life for most new Sundomers. However, how the pandemic crisis affected perceptions and migrant flows needs to be further studied in detail, also in small urban ruralities like Sundom.

Discussion

The octagonal figure for visualizing trends of transformation within core variables in a cobweb figure is expected to visualize ongoing transformation processes within converging variables as well as highlight gentrification pressures. The pilot case of Sundom resulted in analysis of the proposed eight variables, but this was not followed up with any deliberative experiments, as the locality was not considered contested, at least at the time. The results, however, were presented at an international conference and a book, as well as locally in Sundom, where an active discussion followed the presentation.

Katajamäki (2022) argues that society should be developed bottom-up and that the old "everywhere in the same way"-principle is treating citizens unequally and parity is not realized. Uusitalo (2013), in turn, stresses that local democracy should be based on trust and stability. However, Holmila (2001) noted a worrying trend already in her work on the village in an urbanizing society. She found that the social networks in village communities seemed to be crumbling, marked, as she wrote, by lesser people, lesser services, and lesser social contacts (Holmila 2001: 91). This may be a challenge especially affecting more remote rural areas, and less prominent ones in metropolitan and urban ruralities, but also closer to growth centers there are both winning and losing localities, that is, those that experience positive development trends, and those that do not.

Counter-urbanization, which, according to Andersson (2007), has first and foremost affected areas near cities and towns, is linked to the neo-rural middle class. Kovách, Kristof & Megyesi (2009) described urban consumers in the rural area (in Hungary) as generally new inhabitants who consume the non-material rural goods that they purchase with their plots (Kovách–Kristof–Megyesi 2009: 119). Andersson further stressed that local counter-urbanized communities are quite heterogenous and characterized by contradictory and competing strivings and claims (Andersson 2007: 14). And as Marsden (1999) noted:

"At its most extreme, people feel dispossessed, excluded from the changes going on around them and affronted by debased images of their local culture and environment. But in other cases the images projected of a locality become a new source for defining identity, which may affirm for local people their distinctive place in the world" (Marsden 1999: p. 514)

This continue to be the case, as urban and metropolitan ruralities continue to transform, potentially also under gentrification pressures. Competing strivings and claims is then expected to also increase tensions, especially when or if transformation processes are fast and (rural) gentrification pressures occur. Analyzing core variables of transformation and visualizing the intensity of ongoing processes and pressures in a cobweb octagonal figure may identify the intensity levels of several simultaneous and interacting processes. A rurality can be considered contested if competing strivings and claims are mounted, and tensions build up. That may also suggest a more urgent need for introducing a deliberative or participatory method that can bring together representants of different groups and stimulate communication, and at least help identify a least common denominator, through common deliberations. A least common denominator, although not a quick-fix, is a building-block for improving social sustainability step-by-step in a contested territory, one step at a time.

Ideally, the octagonal figure of core variables is helpful here, to visualize the polygonal intensity of ongoing transformational processes and thereby make visible contemporary interacting challenges.

Comparative studies of core variables are also easy to visualize in an octagonal cobweb figure, revealing multiple interacting processes in each comparable case, as well as divergent variables and processes. However, it must also be emphasized that the statistical material is more limited and smaller in urban areas than in metropolitan areas, with fewer real estate transactions, fewer residents and fewer voters, for example. Unfortunately, this can also make detailed studies of smaller localities vulnerable to the effects of extreme one-offs in the statistics.

Municipal planning decisions have a profound importance in countries like Finland, that has a municipal planning monopoly. It is vital that its goals are inclusive rather than exclusive, and that it is open for bottom-up initiatives and participatory and deliberative methods that supports communication and sustainability in contested localities. Approximately a decade ago there was much discussion about a "New Countryside", and according to Andersson (2013), the new countryside was mainly defined by its connection to the urban, to the center (Andersson 2013: 74). You may argue that this is still the case, that the countryside is still defined by its connection to the urban, with political focus continuously shifting towards urban growth centers and attractive ruralities near urban growth centers, leaving the traditional and deep countryside behind. This has been met with resignation and disinterest in participation, and Pyy & Rannikko (2013) warned that people are ready for political participation mainly when conflicts occurs and then more often in an opposing role

than a supporting one, a typical case being the abolition of village schools (Pyy–Rannikko 2013).

However, post-pandemic changes in work habits (more remote work) and re-evaluation of rurban and rural life will improve and favor the development of some rurban and rural localities, but not all, and not everywhere. Inflow of inhabitants with socioeconomic and cultural capital, may increase the inflow of capital, investments, and municipal planning (infrastructure, schools ...) to the locality, but also increase the challenges of conflicting strivings and claims.

Metropolitan and urban ruralities are valuable. It is vital to realize strategies for involving new and old inhabitants and create new local opportunities in these border zones between the urban and the rural. But this also presupposes responsiveness from the planning authorities, concerning the worries that a local population may feel against fast-track transformation.

A rurban 'brand' could prove even more valuable in the long term in both urban and regional marketing with the emphasis on sustainable neighborhoods, places that combine green, urban and rural values.

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Imagined differences

A quantitative study of rural and urban communities and social relations

Bernadett Csurgó
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Introduction[1]

The rural-urban division is a social construction according to the widely shared assumptions of contemporary rural sociology. The countryside is essentially constructed as a representation, and social differences cannot be linked to rural and urban spaces (Cloke 1997, Mormont 1990). Our aim is to test this hypothesis using a nationally representative survey by analysing the most important factors representing the rural-urban dichotomy, namely the importance of community and social capital.[2]

In the classical literature (e.g., Tönnies [2004] *Community and Society* or Wirth [1973] contrasting urban and rural lifestyles) the concepts of rural and community are linked. The community-based image of the countryside is also a key element of the contemporary idyllic representation of the countryside, which is associated with high levels of social capital, where both weak and strong ties are more numerous than in the city, and where both the general level of trust and interpersonal trust is higher. The city, in these theories, appears as a space of alienation. The available data allow us to test both the Tönnies' and Wirth thesis, i.e., that townspeople are characterized by a higher degree of individualization and fewer relationships, while rural people are characterized by a stronger link to the community and higher social capital. Our

1 The Hungarian version of this paper was published in the Socio.hu Social Science Review journal in 2016/3. DOI: 10.18030/socio.hu.2016.3.48

2 The study was prepared in the framework of the OTKA research project entitled Integration and Disintegration Processes in Hungarian Society (108836) and also connected to Rural resilience and local identity: OTKA 135676 and Sustainable consumption patterns, behavioural strategies and knowledge use in the Hungarian society OTKA138020 projects. Boldizsár Megyesi and Bernadett Csurgó were supported by the Bolyai János Post-doctoral Stipendium. and Bernadett Csurgó was supported by the ÚNKP-22-5 New National Excellence Program of the Ministry of Innovation and Technology.

aim is to test the images of the differences between rural and urban, especially one of the most important elements of it, which is related to community and social capital.

Our hypothesis is that the difference between rural and urban – objective and subjective – cannot be justified by analysing network differences, differences of community or social capital. We argue that the rural-urban dichotomy, which is present both in academic and everyday discourses, cannot be described in the space defined by categories of settlement structure, although using social capital and community perceptions some characteristic spatial differences can be found, but the rural-urban dichotomy intersects at several points with different types of space; the administrative settlement categories and the subjective residential typologies. Our aim is therefore on the one hand to explore the indicators of social integration related to the perception of the rural-urban dichotomy that create objective and subjective spatial differences and mappings in contemporary Hungarian society, while on the other to analyse whether the rural-urban dichotomy can be detected alongside certain indicators.

In the following, we will first look at the characteristic similarities and differences between rural and urban communities. To do this, we construct a 'community importance' index and then analyse whether the nature and extent of social capital differs between rural and urban spaces; this is examined using a 'social capital' principal component. Moving on, we use the data to analyse spatial patterns of subjective integration and the spatial and social characteristics of subjective maps. We use these to find out to what extent spatial representations can be linked to social integration indicators (community, social capital, subjective integration) and to what extent these represent real spatial differences.

The tradition of the rural-urban divide

In the next section we review how previous research has interpreted spatial differences of community. Rural-urban as one of the most fundamental spatial differences has traditionally been represented in the presence or lack of community. This notion is rooted in the perception of rural-urban contrast by Tönnies (2004). He formulated the theory of community and society in response to the modernization and urbanization processes of the nineteenth century. According to him traditional societies forming communities emerge organically, while modern societies are the product of human intervention. The theory of Tönnies describes these changes as a modernization process and states that in rural spaces the survival of traditional social institutions is more likely. These institutions are often linked by other authors to the strength of communities, or to a higher level of interpersonal trust (Füzér 2015). For Tönnies, the integrative forces of the communities are religion, locality and kinship. For him community means the village community. In contrast, the urban space is the space of alienation, where close interpersonal ties and elements of community integration are weakened. The

society symbolized by the metropolis is characterized by individualization, looseness of relations, and the predominance of politics and public opinion; the main integrating elements are institutions, economy and politics. Durkheim's theory of the social division of labour also refers to and draws on the difference between city and countryside in the contrasting pair of mechanical and organic solidarity. Premodern societies, i.e., rural communities, are characterized by mechanical solidarity, with a low level of division of labour, close community ties, little individualization, few but close and direct ties and the strength of collective norms. By contrast, modern societies, marked by cities, are characterized by organic solidarity, which implies a more developed division of labour and a higher degree of specialization and individualization. Urban societies are also characterized by a greater number of looser ties and the greater importance of institutions, according to Durkheim (Durkheim 2001).

Wirth goes even further in describing the rural-urban divide. He defines urban and rural lifestyles as two opposite poles of a scale. Metropolitan life is secularized, impersonal, heterogeneous, lacking group solidarity, with less important family and kinship ties, and characterized by loose relationships, and formalized rules and systems. In contrast, rural life is characterized by religiousness, close relationships, the importance of the family, a high degree of group solidarity and the importance of traditions (Wirth 1973).

The classic rural-urban dichotomy outlined above is still alive today, in both academic and lay discourse, and is still shaping social practices. The positive image of the rural community is a key motivator for rural-urban migration and rural tourism (Bajmócy 2000, Boyle–Halfacree 1998, Csapák 2007, Csurgó 2013, 2014, Csurgó–Légmán 2015; Csurgó–Szatmári 2014, Hardi 2002, Jetzkowitz–Schneider–Brunzel 2007, Kovách 2007). The interconnection between the countryside and the community is a fundamental element of the idyllic representation of the countryside (Bell 2006, Csurgó–Légmán 2015, Kovách 2007, Short 2006). Several studies show that the representation of the countryside is typically defined in relation to the city (Bell 2006, Csurgó 2013, Halfacree 1995, Kovách 2007). In the contemporary image of the countryside, there is a strong contrast between the negative characteristics of the city and the positive characteristics of the countryside, which are essentially idealized and valued. This representation of the countryside emphasizes safety, tranquillity, healthy living, the beauty of nature and the importance of community and traditions (Csurgó 2013).

More recent research, mainly using a post-structuralist rural sociological approach, has overcome the conceptual power of the rural-urban dichotomy and questioned the prominent role of structural differences in capturing the characteristics of rural (and urban) society. Recent research has shown that rural areas are not necessarily different or less developed than areas defined as urban. Researchers argue that both the modernization of agriculture and associated labour market changes, and the increasingly consumption-oriented use of rural areas (tourism,

nature conservation, rural migration), indicate that the rural-urban divide cannot be sustained (Cloke 1997, DuPuis 2006, Frouws 1998, Halfacree 1993, 1995, Kovách 2012, Mormont 1990). Mormont (1987) was the first to articulate that the question is not what the countryside is, but how different actors interpret and perceive the countryside and what this tells us about the structure and power relations of society. Mormont introduced the concept of rurality as a category of analysis, and representation and discourse as tools of analysis. Cloke (1997) argues similarly by emphasizing that the distinction between the rural and the urban has essentially been erased. The rural as a category no longer exists, but it is a socially constructed complex discursive category and therefore difficult to define. Halfacree (2007) also attempts to create a general descriptive model of rural space based on representations and characteristics of everyday life. The model is built up of three main elements. The first element is the specific socio-economic character of the locality, which represents the relatively different social and spatial practices, linked to consumption and production activities. The second element is the formal representation of the countryside, which is influenced by planners and politicians, and which in fact corresponds to objective (administrative, development) spatial categories and the discourses associated with them. The third element describes the everyday practices. These are subjective and varied, with different levels of coherence and fragmentation, and influence the other categories to a greater or lesser extent. The model above also shows that objective spatial categories and the discourses associated with them can only be one element of the description of spatial differences, as those are influenced by socio-economic characteristics, everyday practices and subjective notions of space.

It is an important Hungarian peculiarity that although both the discourse on rural-urban dichotomy and the positive (idyllic) image of the countryside, linked to the community, is present in Hungary, there is a clear and strong dissonance: besides the idyllic, there is also a rather problem-focused discourse, which reflects poverty, social tensions and the negative elements of living conditions in the countryside (Csurgó 2007, Kovách 2007, Megyesi 2007). Most researchers point out that the rural-urban dichotomy persists at the level of discourse and representation, even if it is not directly related to actual spatial-social categories (Kovács–Vidra–Virág 2013).

Based on a poststructuralist rural sociological approach, the aim of our study is therefore to use the data to confirm the theory that the rural-urban dichotomy is essentially a discursive category and does not follow administrative territorial categories. We aim to test the idea that the rural-urban dichotomy, although represented by the differences of different types of social capital and by the differences in the importance of community, does not show clear spatial patterns and is only one of, but not the main determinant of subjective perception of space. In our analysis, we argue that spatial integration cannot be captured in the rural-urban dichotomy.

We do not aim to explore and analyse either the indicators of social cohesion or the indicators generating the notions of space. Within the framework of the present study, we merely wish to examine and describe whether the differences that appear in the discourse on the rural-urban dichotomy can be justified in terms of objective and subjective differences between real rural and urban spaces.

Towards measuring the rural-urban dichotomy: the importance of community and social capital

One of the most important elements of the rural-urban divide, as we have seen above, is community. While the countryside is usually identified with community and the importance of communities, the city is represented as a space of alienation and the falling apart of community (Tönnies 2004, Wirth 1973). We have created an index to measure the importance of community, adapted to the possibilities of the database we use.[3] In the survey, we asked respondents how important different communities were to them: (a) family, (b) friends, (c) work/school community, (d) neighbourhood, (e) networks at the place of residence and in the local community. Based on the responses to this question, we created the community importance index.[4] The mean of the community importance index was 18.78, which is above the midpoint of the scale, so in general we can say that the above listed communities are important to the respondents overall.

Besides the importance of communities, the rural-urban dichotomy is also represented in the difference of the characteristics in social capital. In the following, we present our theoretical considerations on measuring social capital, the variables we have in the survey to measure social capital and finally how we constructed our tool to measure social capital. Using the variables as proxies of social capital, we constructed a principal component. In designing the principal component, two aspects were kept in mind: the results of previous research and the nature of the data available. In this paper our definition of the concept follows the Bordieuan tradition of social capital (Angelusz, 1997; Bourdieu, 1985; Megyesi, 2015, 2014). According to it, the effects of social capital can be understood at the level of an individual, while at the level of a group it can only be understood metaphorically. The source of social capital lies in the relationships and networks among people and in communities (Szreter–Woolcock, 2004: 654).

In the following, we examine how relevant previous research operationalized the concept of social capital. There are many ways of measuring social capital and authors are influenced not only by theoretical considerations, but also by the nature

3 The sample is representative of the Hungarian population aged 18 and over by sex, age, educational attainment and type of municipality.

4 The variable measured the importance of the community on a scale of 1 to 5, and the index was a sum of the responses to each question, with the index ranging from 5 to 25.

of available data when working with the concept; we have to admit that we are also in a similar situation. A significant part of the papers emphasize the network nature of social capital and consequently use the method of network analysis, which can be considered as a separate field of research (Csizmadia 2008: 308). Network analysis became an independent paradigm in recent decades (Albert–Dávid 2004, Sík 2006, Tardos 1995). In the present study we apply an attribute-based approach to social capital, measuring the social capital at an individual level with well-known indicators. These are: trust, shared values, community characteristics, civic and political activity, volunteering, cooperativeness. This approach is based on the work of Putnam (1993), Fukuyama (2007), Grootaert & Bastelaer (2001), and Ostrom et al. (2011). They used traditional surveys and statistical data to assess the extent of social capital in larger communities by measuring the above indicators.

However, this approach has been criticized most for relying on indicators about which it is difficult to draw a clear line between the cause and the effect, i.e., whether the indicator is an indicator of social capital, or whether a given measure of social capital implies the value of that indicator (for example, crime rates or bureaucratization are indicators of such contested status). To overcome this criticism, we accept the argumentation that these indicators are proxies of social capital, signalling its presence (Grootaert–Bastelaer 2001: 27-30).

The *network approach* seems to be essential to grasp social capital, so the variables describing respondents' relationships were included in the main component.

On the dilemma between *trust and reliability,* Megyesi (2015, 2014) argues in his previous writings that Ostrom and Ahn's model is the most acceptable, which prioritizes trustworthiness over trust when it comes to describing the nature and extent of social capital. The authors argue that trustworthiness, which refers to the ability to reciprocate trust in someone regardless of the social structure, is an appropriate indicator of social capital. In this research, however, we had to make a compromise: trustworthiness is a difficult indicator to identify, and the questions of the questionnaire survey make it possible to capture the level of general trust, which is suitable for the present study to investigate the differences in the rural-urban dichotomy based on social capital.

Social participation can be an important indicator of social capital and is part of the rural-urban dichotomy discourse. Knowing and accepting the possible criticisms (see for example Sík 2006, or in detail Megyesi 2014), we built participation in elections, and being a member of different communities and organizations into the principal component measuring social capital.

To sum up, the following variables are built into the principal component measuring social capital:

The nature and extent of the *relationships* are captured by the following variables[5] :

- number of strong relationships[6]
- number of weak relationships[7]

The number of strong and weak ties, in addition to being a key component of social capital, is also a fundamental element of the rural-urban divide. According to the classical discourse, rural areas tend to have strong ties, while urban areas tend to have weak ties. And the quality of the weak ties that can be mobilized are more characteristic of the rural areas, than of the alienated city.

Trust is an important indicator of social capital. In the rural-urban dichotomy, interpersonal trust[8] is more rural, while institutional trust is more urban. The trust variable is captured by a variable formed by averages of the variables measuring interpersonal trust and institutional trust[9] .

Participation and institutionalized relationships in general are seen as an urban specificity, where individuals become part of the community and society through institutions, as opposed to the direct, interpersonal relationships that characterize rural areas (Durkheim 2001, Tönnies 2004, Wirth 1973). We aimed at capturing social participation and the impact on local and national issues with questions on organizational participation[10] , willingness to participate in the elections[11], and in public affairs.[12]

In constructing the variable measuring social capital, we aimed to give the three dimensions approximately equal weight, so we created a principal component. The

5 The variables that were created jointly by the members of the research team are not described in detail in this paper.

6 The variable shows the number of strong relationships, i.e., people with whom the respondent has discussed important things and problems, with whom he or she can do things together, go out, have fun, get together for recreation, or even visit when he or she has some free time, or get help from.

7 The variable measures the number of weak relationships, i.e., responses to this question: please tell me if you personally know people in this profession. Personally known here means they are on good terms; they know each other by name.

8 In general, what would you say? Most people can be trusted, or rather that we can't be too careful in human relationships.

9 How much confidence do you have (a) in the Hungarian Parliament? (b) in the Hungarian legal system? (c) in the police? (d) in politicians?

10 Has the last been involved in (a) a religious or church organization (not a congregation), (b) a political party, (c) a trade union, (d) an association or foundation, (e) any other organization? Number of activities in which the respondent was involved.

11 If the elections were this Sunday, would you go to the polls?

12 In the last 12 months, have you (a) been in contact with a politician or local government representative, (b) been active in a political party or participated in its events, (c) been involved in the work of another political organisation or political movement, (d) worn or displayed political badges or symbols, (e) signed a protest letter or petition, whether in traditional or online form, (f) participated in a demonstration, (g) deliberately not bought or boycotted certain goods, (h) donated money to a non-governmental organisation?

table below shows the average values of each dimension on the principal component measuring social capital:

Table 1
Dimensions of the social capital principal component

Dimension	Sub-dimension/variable	Average value
Relational dimension	*Number of strong bonds (num_st):*	*2.42*
	Number of weak ties (num_wt):	*8.40*
Contact index	Average value (strong bonds are double weighted)	33.1
Confidence index	Average value	13.31
Civic participation		*0.024*
Political activity		*0.74*
Participation index	*Value*	*7.64*

Table 2
Weight of the indexes for the social capital principal component

	Factor weights
Voting, participation in organizations, political activity index	0.751
Combined trust index (institutional + interpersonal)	0.476
Number of weak and strong bonds	0.734
Extraction method: main component	

Empirical analysis of rural-urban differences

The main variables used in the analysis are:

Table 3
Basic distribution of the variables under study

Importance of communities index	N=2249
Average:	*18.78*
Standard deviation:	*3.50*
According to administrative classification	N=3553
Percentage of urban residents (%)	*70*
Percentage of people living in municipalities (%)	*30*
Subjective self-assessment	N=3541
Proportion of people living in urban areas (%)	*47.3*
Percentage of people living in a rural environment (%)	*52.7*
Municipality size (by population)	N=3553
Average:	*43804.56*
Standard deviation:	*52233.4*

Rural-urban dichotomy

The central issue of our analysis is the rural-urban dichotomy, which can be captured by two variables (1) administrative classification and (2) subjective perception of place of residence (self-classification of the residential environment).

Table 4
Correlation between administrative and subjective place of residence classification

N=3541		Administrative classification	
		City	Countryside
Subjective classification	Urban	67.2%	0.9%
	Rural	32.8%	99.1%

Sig=0.000, i.e., the relationship between the two variables is significant.

Our data show that the administrative rural-urban classification and the subjective perception of place of residence, i.e., whether the respondent feels rural or urban in the municipality where he/she lives, do not coincide. There is a significant difference in the case of urban areas, with 32.8% of those living in an administratively urban municipality perceiving the municipality where they live as rural, while 99.1% of residents of rural municipalities (communes, large villages) consistently perceive

their place of residence as rural and only 0.9% as more urban.

Our data therefore indicate that there is a substantial difference between subjective perceptions of place of residence and administrative classification. In the remainder of the paper, we will examine the relationship between administrative classification and subjective perceptions of place of residence and the indicators describing the rural-urban dichotomy presented above.

First, we examined whether the social capital of individuals and the importance of the community differed according to the administrative classification of the place of residence as rural-urban:

Table 5
Correlation between the social capital principal component and the administrative and subjective classification of residence

Administrative classification		Social capital principal component (N=3070)	The role of community in an individual's life (N=2251)*
City	Average	0.008	18.611
Countryside	Average	-0.020	19.167
Total	Average	-0.000	18.784
	Sig	0.475	0.000
Subjective classification		Social capital principal component (N=3062)*	Role of community in the life of the individual (N=2244)*
Urban	Average	0.043	18.553
Rural	Average	-0.041	18.992
Total	Average	-0.005	18.788
	Sig	0.021	0.003

**significant correlation*

As shown above, the social capital of individuals does not depend on the administrative classification of their place of residence, but community is more important (even if only to a small extent) for rural residents than for urban residents.

When we examine the extent to which the two variables differ according to respondents' perception of their living environment as urban or rural, we find that there is a relationship, albeit weak, between subjective classification of residence and social capital. Perceptions of residence as urban are positively linked to social capital, while perceptions of residence as rural are negatively linked. Similarly to the findings for administrative classification, community is perceived as more important by those living in a rural residence.

The correlation between the population size of a settlement and the importance of social capital and community was also examined, and a weak correlation was found between the level of social capital and the size of the settlement. It is interesting to

note that the correlation is reversed here, i.e., we find that social capital increases with the increase in population size of a settlement, but there is no correlation between settlement size and the importance of community.

Since there is no or only a very weak correlation between social capital and settlement type, which contradicts the traditional discourse, and the existing literature suggests that some dimensions of social capital may have different values in urban and rural areas, we have examined the relationship between some dimensions of social capital and the administrative classification of the settlement and subjective perception of place of residence separately.

Table 6
Correlation between each dimension of social capital and administrative classification of residence; mean of each value

Administrative classification	City	Country-side	Total	N	Sig.
Interpersonal trust	4.87	4.47	4.75	3542	0.000
Institutional trust	4.20	3.86	4.10	3349	0.000
Number of weak ties	8.15	8.99	8.40	3517	0.000
Number of strong ties	2.46	2.34	2.42	3553	0.052
Percentage of weak ties that can be mobilized	0.61	0.56	0.59	3423	0.000
Organizational membership	0.02	0.028	0.02	3539	0.078
Participation in	1.95	1.93	1.95	3248	0.681
Direct participation	0.22	0.15	0.20	3533	0.000
Traditional participation	0.06	0.13	0.08	3536	0.000

There is a difference between settlement categories on most dimensions of social capital (Table 6). It can be seen that interpersonal trust, institutional trust, the number of weak ties and the proportion of weak ties that can be mobilized differ significantly between urban and rural areas. Both the overall interpersonal trust and the institutional trust indices show that rural residents are more distrustful than urban residents. Institutional trust is also an urban trait, as previous research has shown. The number of weak ties is significantly higher for those living in rural areas, while there is no difference in the number of strong ties between those living in rural and urban areas, so the data could not confirm the rural image including the image of closer ties, closed communities and interpersonal relationships. While the traditional rural-urban discourse suggests that the number of weak ties is higher in rural areas and lower in urban areas, the proportion of weak ties that can be mobilized is lower in rural areas, which also contradicts the alienated city and more tightly-woven rural community thesis. The data do not show any difference between rural and urban residents by administrative classification in the case of participation and organizational

membership, but when political expression is further disaggregated into direct and traditional participation, significant differences are found, and they are also in line with the pattern expected: participation considered as traditional is more common in rural than in urban areas. However, overall, the data tend to contradict the image of the alienated city and the traditional representation of rural-urban dichotomy.

The following table analyses the relationship between each dimension of social capital and the subjective nature of the settlement.

Table 7
Correlation between each dimension of the social capital index and subjective classification of residence: mean of each value

Subjective classification	Urban	Rural	Total	N	Sig.
Interpersonal trust	4.96	4.57	4.76	3530	0.000
Institutional trust	4.38	3.85	4.10	3339	0.000
Number of weak ties	8.00	8.78	8.41	3505	0.000
Number of strong ties	2.57	2.30	2.42	3541	0.000
Percentage of weak ties that can be mobilized	0.61	0.58	0.59	3411	0.054
Organizational membership	0.02	0.03	0.02	3528	0.103
Participation in	1.97	1.92	1.95	3237	0.255
Direct participation	0.24	0.15	0.195	3521	0.000
Traditional participation	0.06	0.11	0.08	3524	0.000

For subjective spatial representations, we also find differences between perceived urban and rural space (Table 7). As in the case of the administrative rural-urban classification, both the interpersonal trust and the institutional trust indices show that rural residents are more distrustful than urban residents, which contradicts the image of an alienated city. The number of weak ties is significantly higher for those living in a place perceived as rural, while the number of strong ties is lower, contradicting the classic rural-versus-urban discourse. Subjective perceptions of place of residence and the proportion of weak ties that can be mobilized, in contrast to place of residence by administrative classification, show no significant relationship. Neither do participation and organizational membership, as before, but here again we find that, when (political) participation is broken down into dimensions, the prevalence of traditional and direct forms of participation already differs significantly in relation to the space perceived as urban versus rural. The patterns of the previous table are repeated and slightly strengthened: the presence of traditional forms of participation is more frequent in rural spaces, while in urban spaces, the practice of direct forms of participation is more likely, although both are very small.

Alienation and subjective perception of place of residence

Through the analysis of the dimensions of social capital and the importance of communities, we have not been able to confirm that there are differences between urban and rural spaces as the literature suggests: the differences are possible but do not form a clear pattern, so we have had to include additional variables. In the following, we analyse how respondents perceive their place of residence and analyse in more detail the forms of social participation. First, we examine the differences between urban and rural respondents in terms of the administrative classification of residence, and then we look at the effect of subjective classification of residence.

To capture the rural-urban dichotomy, our database offers further affordances beyond the dimensions of social capital described above. In the rural-urban dichotomy discourse, the city appears as a space of alienation, while the countryside appears as its opposite pole. The database offers the following questions to test this notion.

Alienation is measured by a perceived social exclusion index based on the extent of agreement with the following statements:

- I feel marginalized by society.
- Life has become so complicated that I can hardly find my place.
- I feel that the people I meet don't recognise the value of what I do.
- Some people despise me because of my job or because I don't work.

The opposite pole can be measured by the subjective social inclusion index:

Overall, to what extent do you consider yourself an important and useful member of society?

The database also contains information on the subjective assessment of the place of residence.

Please answer how typical you think the following characteristics and phenomena are for the place where you live!

- Everyone knows everyone
- Neighbourliness
- Envy, competition
- Working together, helping each other
- Openness, acceptance
- Malice, enmity
- Preserving and fostering cultural traditions

According to the classic rural-urban dichotomy discourse, the idyllic image of the countryside is of everyone knowing everyone else, neighbourliness, cooperation, openness, acceptance and the cultivation of traditions. In contrast, the alienated city is characterized by competition and hostility, and the absence of all mentioned above. In addition, the community-based rural idyll is associated with the perception of rural residents as an integral part of society, while the image of the alienated city is associated with social disintegration, for which the indicators of subjective social

importance and perceived social exclusion are the appropriate measures in our database. Using the above questions, we can test whether the above-mentioned stereotypes correspond to the administrative categories and whether the subjective residential image categories correspond to the classic rural-urban image.

Table 8
Correlation between neighbourhood characteristics and administrative classification of residence: the average of each value

Administrative classification	City	Country-side	Total	N	Sig.
In the neighbourhood, everyone knows everyone	3.22	4.17	3.51	3525	0.000
The neighbourhood is characterized by neighbourliness	2.54	3.06	2.7	3528	0.000
The neighbourhood is characterized by envy, competition	2.31	2.65	2.42	3205	0.000
The neighbourhood is characterized by cooperation and helping each other	2.96	3.20	3.04	3377	0.000
The neighbourhood is characterized by openness, acceptance	2.96	3.24	3.04	3400	0.000
The neighbourhood is characterized by malice, hostility	2.29	2.48	2.35	3222	0.000
The area is characterized by the preservation and cultivation of cultural traditions	2.28	2.94	2.48	3237	0.000
Subjective social importance	6.56	6.42	6.52	3470	0.999
Perceived social exclusion	4.01	5.05	4.31	3299	0.000

Those living in rural areas according to administrative classification consider that their place of residence is more characterized by positive rural image features such as 'everybody knows everybody', neighbourliness, openness, acceptance and cultural traditions than those living in urban areas. This would seem to support the rural image of the classical discourse. At the same time, those living in administratively rural areas also tend to perceive competition and hostility as more prevalent, which seems to partly contradict traditional rural-urban images – although these elements can also be seen as negative effects of community enclosure. However, and more importantly, the main indicator of alienation, perceived social exclusion, is not, as expected, a characteristic of urban dwellers but rather of rural dwellers, which is in complete contradiction with the contrasting image of rural-urban. And there is no significant relationship between the subjective social importance indicator and administrative residence classification (Table 8).

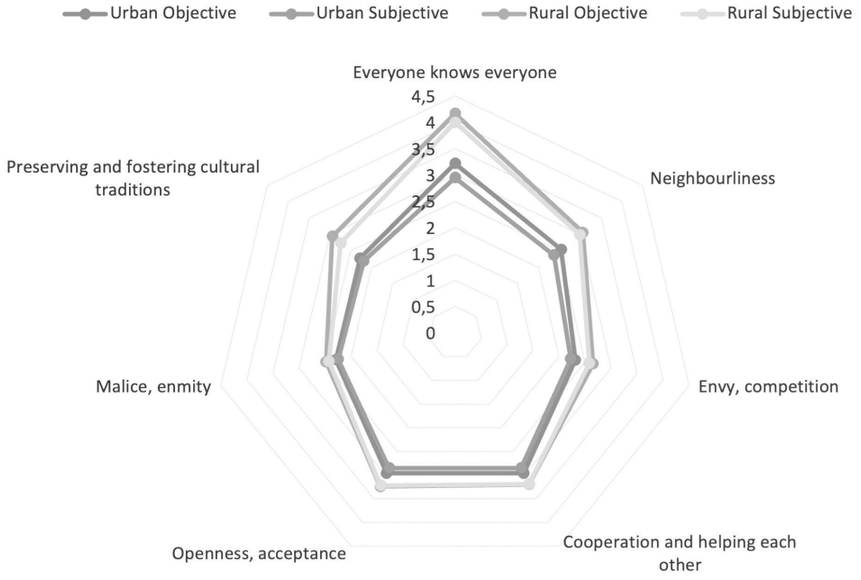
Table 9
Correlation between neighbourhood characteristics and subjective classification of residence: the average of each value

Subjective classification	Urban	Rural	Total	(N)	Sig.
In the neighbourhood, everyone knows everyone	2.95	4.00	3.51	3513	0.000
The neighbourhood is characterized by neighbourliness	2.37	2.99	2.70	3516	0.000
The neighbourhood is characterized by envy, competition	2.22	2.58	2.42	3194	0.000
The neighbourhood is characterized by cooperation and helping each other	2.85	3.19	3.04	3367	0.000
The neighbourhood is characterized by openness, acceptance	2.85	3.22	3.04	3389	0.000
The neighbourhood is characterized by malice, hostility	2.25	2.43	2.35	3211	0.000
The area is characterized by the preservation and cultivation of cultural traditions	2.19	2.74	2.48	3228	0.000
Subjective social importance	6.65	6.39	6.52	3458	0.000
Perceived social exclusion	3.76	4.82	4.31	3288	0.000

The results connected with subjective classification of residence and perception of residence are consistent with the administrative classification. Positive characteristics, such as the fact that everyone knows everyone, neighbourliness, openness, cooperation, and the cultivation of traditions, which are less characteristic of the living environment of people living in urban areas, appear as features of rural residence. At the same time, negative characteristics such as envy or malice are more characteristic of the rural dweller. At the same time, the image of the alienated city at the level of subjective residential classification is not borne out by the data. Perceived social exclusion is lower for urban dwellers and subjective social importance is higher. At the same time, perceived social exclusion is higher and subjective social importance is lower for those living in rural areas.

As Figure 1 shows, there is a significant relationship between both the positive image of the countryside and the objective and subjective classification of rural residence, while the negative image of the city does not appear and is not associated with any of the classifications of the settlements. Based on the above, it seems that our data show a combination of positive perceptions of the countryside and feelings of exclusion, i.e., feelings of exclusion, disregard, misunderstanding and insecurity, which seem to support a dual perception of the Hungarian countryside.

Figure 1
Neighbourhood characteristics and subjective and objective place of residence classifications (average of each value)



It should also be stressed that there is no significant difference between objective and subjective residence classification and neighbourhood characteristics as a kind of place perception. Based on the available data, the subjective perception of one's own residence, i.e., the representation of one's own place of residence, does not seem to confirm the classic rural-urban dichotomy, and elements of the rural image are not more strongly associated with the perception of residence as rural than with the objective settlement categories. To understand how perceptions of place of residence are related to social indicators and, most importantly, what might be the reasons for the perception of place of residence as rural by a proportion of people living in urban ranked settlements, further research is needed, but is beyond the scope of this study.

Perceived social exclusion and importance differ similarly for both objective perceptions of residence and subjective perceptions of residence. The discursive elements of the rural-urban dichotomy cannot be justified by either the objective or the subjective rural-urban difference in residence.

Conclusions

In our study, we investigated whether the hypothesized differences between urban and rural communities, individual relationships and trust can be confirmed by an empirical data survey.

Our analysis suggests that although the rural-urban dichotomy is strongly present in the discourse, it cannot be clearly linked to either the subjective perception of place of residence or to any of the administrative residence categories. On the variable measuring social capital, there is no clear correlation with either the objective rural-urban administrative classification or the subjective rural-urban classification, but individuals' social capital increases with settlement size, which partially contradicts our hypothesis based on the literature presented.

Based on previous research, we also assumed that the discourse of the rural-urban dichotomy can be captured in the importance of community and the characteristics of social capital, and therefore we analysed in detail the dimensions that constitute the main components of social capital. Two important results of this analysis emerged: on the one hand, we found that some of the indicators included in the main component of social capital are higher in cities (e.g., trust index or number of strong ties), while others are higher in rural settlements (e.g., number of weak ties). Some of our results are consistent with the literature's idyllic image of rural areas as the home of communities, while others are contradictory.

Another important finding is that there are no significant differences between urban and rural characteristics in subjective perceptions of place of residence and in administrative rural-urban classification. Residential representation and administrative classification show very similar results for the social integration and residential perception indicators examined. The perception of the rural-urban dichotomy (Tönnies 2004, Wirth 1973) cannot be linked to either subjective or objective residential classification.

The classical discursive elements, such as the image of rural community, are somewhat more pronounced in the case of subjective rural residence classification but are also observed for those living in an administratively rural residence, while the image of an alienated city is not confirmed. These results support our initial hypothesis that the traditional rural-urban contrast cannot be justified on the basis of residence classification.

An important finding, consistent with the existing literature, is that despite the strong presence of certain image elements, people living in rural areas have higher perceptions of social exclusion and lower perceptions of social utility than people living in urban areas. This is a significant difference for subjective residential classification and for administrative classification.

Our analysis seems to confirm once again the dual character of the Hungarian rural landscape (Csurgó 2007, Kovách 2007, Megyesi 2007). Elements of a positive

image of the countryside are present, but only in their details; they are overridden by the social problems and the feeling of social disintegration that are perceived as typical of the countryside.

All in all, then, we see that the thesis of the post-structuralist school is justified. Spatial representation and spatial segregation are complex phenomena that cannot be linked to a single characteristic of a community. Rural-urban differences are captured in the representation of the two types of space and cannot be linked to specific spatial categories. When describing rural-urban differences, the image, the specific socio-economic situation and the everyday practices (Halfacree 2007) are the guiding principles. It is therefore worth exploring the differences through more subtle analyses, for example of the different types of space or countryside (Kovács 2005) and by analysing the relationships between the studied variables.

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Agricultural regeneration in Italy

Silvia Sivini

Regeneration and generational renewal in rural areas are debated topics at both academic and European political-institutional levels (Osborne et al. 2004, Robert-Boeuf 2023, Jank et al. 2023, Sivini–Vitale 2023). In this framework, agricultural generational renewal is a crucial issue (Kovách et al. 2022) as ageing in farming is an ongoing process, especially in some European countries. In Italy, census data clearly shows this process, which is also accompanied by a reduction in the number of active farms. The aim of the paper is to present agricultural regeneration in Italy and a paradigmatic Italian practice of young rural people who have chosen to enter agriculture, and to analyse their potential role in regenerating rural areas.

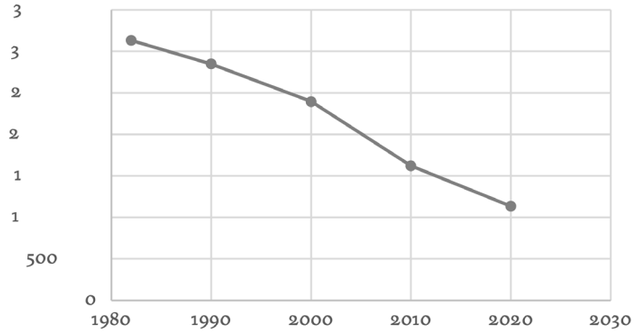
Italian agricultural regeneration

In this part, we analyse Italian agriculture on the basis of statistical data focusing mainly on farms managed by young farmers (less than 40 years old).

In Italy, there is an ongoing process of land concentration. In the last 50 years, there has been a steady decrease in the number of holdings (Figure 1) while, on the other hand, the Utilized Agricultural Area (UAA) and Total Agricultural Area show a slight decrease (Figure 2). In the last 20 years, the number of farms has more than halved, while the UAA has decreased by about 5%.

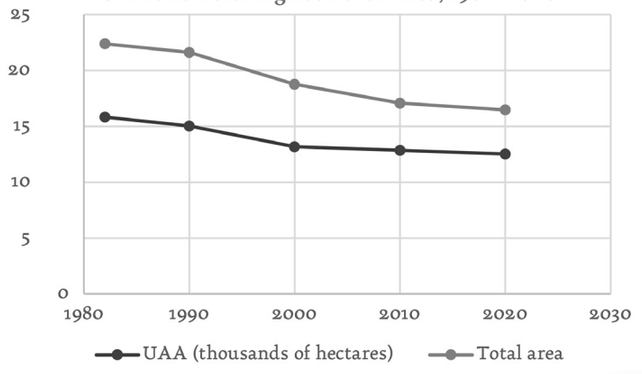
Over the last 10 years, more than 487,000 farms have been lost. These were all small and medium-sized holdings of under 30 hectares. In particular, there was a decline of about 42% in farms of fewer than three hectares. In contrast, holdings of more than 100 hectares increased by almost 18%. Although about 51% of Italian farms still have fewer than three hectares (in 2010 there were 61.4%), the reconfiguration of the agricultural system is clearly moving in the direction of an increase in farm size. The average farm size has in fact gone from 7.9 hectares (2010) to 11.1 hectares (2020).

Figure 1
Number of Italian farms, 1982–2020



Source: Our elaboration on ISTAT data (2020)

Figure 2
UAA and Total Agricultural Area, 1982–2020



Source: Our elaboration on ISTAT data (2020)

Table 1
Share of Italian farms by UAA class (%). Years 2010 and 2020

Farm size category (in ha)	Composition %	
	2010	2020
Up to 2.99	61.4	51.1
From 3 to 9.99	23	27.1
From 10 to 29.99	10.3	13.7
From 30 to 99.99	4.3	6.5
From 100 and above	1	1.6

Source: Our elaboration on ISTAT data (2010, 2020)

Family farms continue to strongly characterize Italian agriculture. Although the 2010/2020 comparison of standard working days of family labour shows a decrease of 27.6%, they still account for 68% of the total. Over the same period, however, the standard working days of non-family labour increased by 37.5%.

Despite policy interventions to support young farmers, between 2010 and 2020 the percentage of farms managed by young farmers (less than 40 years old) decreased by more than two percentage points. This data indicates the need to intervene with adequate measures to foster the generational renewal process, implementing actions that can be more effective than those adopted so far.

In order to understand the specificities of farms led by young people, we analyse the first available data from the last agricultural census (ISTAT 2020), which allow us to highlight similarities and differences in holdings managed by people over or under 40 years old.

According to ISTAT data (2020), farms managed by young farmers are 9.3% of the total number of farms and use about 15.9 % of the total UAA. These farms are therefore on average larger than those managed by over 40s. The former make greater use of rented or free-use land than the latter. Approximately 42% of the holdings managed by young farmers and over 60% of the UAA employed is rented land. In contrast, 67% of the holdings managed by the over 40s and 52% of the UAA used by them is owned. (Table 2 and 3)

Table 2
Italian holdings by land tenure and by age of farm manager
(<=40 years, over 40 years) (%), 2020

	Number of holdings (%)			
	With owned land	With leased land	With land in free use	Total
Managed by young farmers	41.3	42.2	16.4	9.3
Managed by over 40s	67.0	18.7	14.3	90.7

Source: Our elaboration on ISTAT data (2020)

Table 3
Italian UAA by land tenure and by age of farm manager
(<=40 years, over 40 years) (%), 2020

	UAA			
	Ownership	Rent	Free Use	Total
Managed by young farmers	27.4	60.8	11.8	15.9
Managed by over 40s	52.4	37.5	10.1	84.1

Source: Our elaboration on ISTAT data (2020)

The succession process is still predominantly family related. More than half of the farms managed by young people belong to their family members; nevertheless data show that 27.9% of farms managed by young farmers are new farms. This percentage is about 10% higher than for farms managed by over 40s. (Table 4).

Table 4
Italian farms by subject from which the holding was taken over (%)

	From a family member	From a relative	From third parties	From nobody, is a new farm
Farms managed by young farmers	56.1	8.5	7.5	27.9
Farms managed by over 40s	66.8	8.2	7.3	17.6

Source: Our elaboration on ISTAT data (2020)

Young farmers have a higher level of education than the over 40s (Table 5). It should be noted, however, that slightly more than half have either a non-agricultural upper secondary diploma or a non-agricultural degree. The choice to become a farmer does not therefore appear to be influenced by a specific course of study, much less by studies on agricultural topics. Much more often it is a life choice that also drives young farmers to make choices, such as multifunctionality or organic farming, where their worldview and skills are more likely to be fulfilled and employed respectively.

Table 5
Italian farm managers by educational level (%), Italy, 2020

	No title	Primary	Lower secondary	Upper secondary with agricultural subject	Upper secondary other type	University degree with agricultural subject	University degree other type
Young farm managers	0.3	1.1	19.8	17.6	41.9	4.5	14.8
Farm managers over 40	2.5	24.1	36.1	6.6	22.0	1.3	7.4

Source: Our elaboration on ISTAT data (2020)

Young farmers show a greater propensity for innovation, the use of information technology and greater attention to the impact of their activities on the environment (Table 6).

Table 6
Characteristics of Italian farms
(% of total farms managed by young farmers and by over 40s), 2020

	Innovative farms*	Computerized farms	Organic farms	Farms with direct sales on the holding	Farms with direct sales outside the holding	Sales to other agricultural holdings	Farms with other gainful activities
Managed by young farmers	24.3	33.5	14.6	18.5	10.1	10.0	27.0
Managed by over 40s	9.7	14	5.9	9.2	5.4	7.2	5.2

** Innovative farms are those that have made at least one investment to innovate production technology or management in the three-year period 2018–2020.*

Source: Our elaboration on ISTAT data (2020)

Organic farming is chosen by 14.6% of the holdings managed by young farmers and by only 5.9% of those managed by over 40s. On-farm or off-farm direct sales are carried out by 28.6% of the former, but this percentage almost halves in the farms led by over 40s. Multifunctionality is a choice that characterizes farms managed by young people. Italian farms with other gainful activities are 5.7% of the total but this percentage rises to 27% in farms managed by young farmers. Multifunctionality is mainly articulated in the offer of agrotourism services (about one third of the multifunctional farms), contract work, product processing and solar energy production. The differences, compared with the data of Italian multifunctional farms led by over 40s, appear blurred. This seems to indicate that those who opt for a multifunctional farming model, regardless of age, adopt similar behaviour (Table 7).

Table 7
Italian farms with other gainful activities by main activities offered (%), 2020

	Agritourism	Contractual work using production means of the holding for agricultural activities	Processing of animal products	Processing of vegetable products	Initial processing of agricultural products	Solar energy production
Managed by young farmers	34.7	15.8	12.7	12.3	10.0	10.6
Managed by over 40s	38.5	14.2	8.4	9.7	7.9	14.4

Young farmers and Restanza

The academic literature highlights the innovative character of young farmers (Zagata–Sutherland 2015) and their propensity to implement sustainable farming systems, making efficient use of resources and land (Mili–Martínez-Veja 2019, Kovách et al. 2022).

A generational renewal in agriculture thus offers an opportunity to foster the spread of a sustainable agricultural model in line with the EU Rural Vision 2040. Objective 7 of the new CAP explicitly refers to the need to *"attract and sustain young farmers and other new farmers and facilitate sustainable business development in rural areas"*.

Scholars highlight several challenges faced by young farmers in entering agriculture and in the farm succession process, including access to land (Kovách et al. 2022), lack of attractiveness of the farming profession, lack of succession planning (Farrell et al. 2022), lack of knowledge and skills (Lobley 2010), and lack of information.

Many researchers on young farmers have focused on the figure of farm successors (Farrell et al. 2022, Mann 2007) and new entrants to agriculture (McDonald–Macken-Walsh 2016, Monllor and Fuller 2016), although Zagata and Sutherland (2015) point out that new entrants can be of any age and are not synonymous with young farmers. However, the distinction between the two figures appears blurred, as pointed out by the EIP-AGRI Focus Group on New Entrants in Agriculture (2016: 7) which highlights *"a substantial grey area between the extremes of new entrants and direct successors to farms"*.

Scholars focusing on the "back to the land migration", identify new entrants as a specific group whose primary motivations are the search for an autonomous and experimental way of living and a rejection of urban work and consumerism. (Wilbur 2014, Orria–Luise 2017). Monllor and Fuller (2016: 533) defined new entrants as "newcomers" in opposition to continuers, considering them as people *"who do not, in general, have a connection to an existing farm and who find a way into farming by various routes, many of them unorthodox, to start new and often innovative enterprises"*. In this framework, Orria and Luise (2017) point out the role that neo-ruralists (new entrants to agriculture with an urban background) play in promoting local sustainable development, increasing the quality of food and enhancing the area's cultural and environmental resources.

We acknowledge that farm succession is still the privileged way to enter farming, nevertheless, as the recent census data show, in Italy about 27.9% of farms managed by young farmers were new farms. Previous research has focused mainly on new entrants with an urban background. In this paper we want to focus on rural people that want to enter farming even if they are not farm successors. Italian scholars (Teti 2019, Membretti et al. 2023) show the emergence of a new dimension of remaining in rural areas: no longer as the acceptance of a destiny but as a conscious choice made by

those who stay or return to the rural and inland areas where they were born. The concept of *Restanza*, as framed by the Italian anthropologist Vito Teti, refers to this new dimension and highlights how the choice to stay or return is connoted by a dynamic and creative agency aimed at establishing a new present, starting from the history of places without ever being characterized by a nostalgia for the past. Remaining and/or returning is often more difficult than going; it is an act of courage to get involved and work to preserve places by giving them new meaning.

Restanza is not only a concept, but it is also, and above all, a concrete action. Young people who experiment with bottom-up actions, often without the support of public policies, promote original and innovative practices which demonstrate that staying, and farming, is not a utopia but a concrete possibility. There are young successors who innovate the farms inherited by choosing multifunctionality and an agro-ecological approach and there are young people who start new farms (Sivini, Vitale 2023). Those who stay, but also those who return to their villages, making alternative choices and developing new relationships, contribute to giving new life to places and to farming.

In the following part of the paper, we discuss a paradigmatic practice of *Restanza* implemented in the south of Italy. Based on the results of a Horizon 2020 research project (Ruralization: The opening of rural areas to renew rural generations, jobs and farms, GA 817642), we aim to describe the practice of the Association and the Agricultural Cooperative *Casa delle AgriCulture Tullia and Gino* operating in Castiglione d'Otranto, a small rural village of 1000 inhabitants located in the Salento peninsula (Apulia Region). The agricultural sector has been characterized by a high degree of farmland fragmentation and very small farms, and by a low diversification of crops, with a dominance of olives and cereals. According to the last available data at the municipal level (2010), more than 79% of farms have fewer than two hectares, which is in line with the province data (78%) but higher than the regional figure (63%). Young farmers were only 4.5% of the total farm managers, which is less than half the number at regional level (8.8%). Over the last decade, the Xylella bacterium has desiccated millions of olive trees in the Salento peninsula, causing the abandonment of many fields and the disappearance of several farms. This phenomenon has clearly shown the limits of monoculture and pesticide-intensive agriculture.

We conducted 21 interviews with: the promoters and members of the Association and the Agriculture Cooperative (9 interviews), other Apulian farmers (3 interviews), representatives of associations and local entities cooperating with them (8 interviews), and one key informant . We paid attention to the motivations of the actors involved, their agency and the impact of their actions on rural regeneration. By understanding these elements we aim to show the potential role that new entrants into agriculture, whether those who choose to return or to stay in their native village, can play in rural regeneration.

A paradigmatic practice of *Restanza*

The promoters of the Association and the Cooperative *Casa delle AgriCulture-Tullia e Gino* are all young people, mostly university graduates, who demonstrate a strong sensitivity to environmental and social issues and an openness to different perspectives and diversity. They share the farming experience of their grandparents and the migration stories of those who left the village in the 1950s and 1960s. They are friends who, after leaving the village for study or work, decided to return to stay. They have the desire to live in the place where they were born but are convinced that to do so they must create the conditions to be able to remain.

> *When we said OK, we want to stay in this territory but also create job opportunities because otherwise we will always be forced to leave, we looked around, we have abandoned land (…) and we have young people who don't want to leave. Let's combine the two* (Int.1).

Agriculture, in the stories of their grandparents and parents, is associated with the idea of hard work and exploitation, but this group of young people find in the stories of what they call the 'rebels' – Italian farmers who cultivate traditional cereals – the stimulus to develop a new vision of agriculture.

> *The rebels exist and work, in the sense that they create a system of local economy. They are on the right side* (Int.21).

They organized a trip to a small municipality in the Marche Region. They wanted to visit and understand how a flourishing organic farming model based on local resources has been implemented by Tullia and Gino Girolomoni, Italian organic farming pioneers.

> *When we returned home, we said OK, if they made it, that means it's up to us (…) from there we started with many attempts (…) because when you experiment with forms of re-inhabiting the territory (…) you also encounter (…) failures* (Int.1).

Thus, in 2013, the Association, that bears in its name –Tullia and Gino – the memory of this journey, was created. They decided not to set up an economic entity right away; their aim is not just to return to the land, but to work within the context to create the conditions for a collective rather than an individual *restanza.*

> *We founded the association first because we conceived of it as an incubator of the project, also of the economic project (…) of raising the community's awareness on what we were doing* (Int.1).

The objective, as stated on their website, is *"to revive abandoned land, repopulate the countryside, generate sustainable economies and strengthen community relationships"*, fostering a model of sustainable and inclusive rural development, based on natural and multifunctional agriculture, the preservation of agrobiodiversity, the recovery of traditional crops and the *"experimentation of unprecedented models of restanza in marginal territories"*.[1]

1 https://www.casadelleagricultureturlliaegino.com/chi-siamo

Action and narration are two intertwined elements of their agency. They are aware that *"the world is changed by example"* (Int.13) but also that the example must be explained and narrated so that it can be understood and imitated.

Abandoned land has been put into cultivation, granted on a free loan basis. Traditional biotypes have been recovered. In 2019, the Agricultural Cooperative was set up. Today there are about 20 hectares on which cereals, vegetables, a small olive grove and fruit plants are cultivated. The cooperative also runs a community mill, opened in response to the need of other farmers in the area as well as their own. An agro-ecological approach and a strong multifunctionality are the features of their way of farming (Sivini, Vitale 2023).

Promoting and supporting collective processes of change is a feature of their action. Several initiatives have been promoted. For example, the promotion of a GAP (Popular purchasing group), which is a rare initiative in a rural area. People mistakenly believe that fresh food is available in the countryside, whereas today small villages increasingly resemble the so-called American food deserts: areas where access to fresh and quality food is difficult. Over a hundred families participate in the GAP, not only from the small village of Castiglione d'Otranto but also from neighbouring areas.

The GAP is therefore an important win-win innovation. It allows access to fresh food for consumers and represents a new market for small local producers.

> *Guaranteeing healthy food to all even at the cost of earning less* (Int.1).

They also promote the so-called "Supply Chain Pacts" *(Patti di filiera)*. This is an agreement with other farmers who guarantee the production of traditional grains using natural farming systems and which the cooperative undertakes to buy at a price almost three times higher than that of the Commodity Market.

> *The supply chain pacts guarantee that more people will return to agriculture, not just Casa delle AgriCulture* (Int.2).

Art and culture can be a powerful social and political transformative engine (Alonso-Fradejas et al. 2022). In order to raise awareness of environmental issues, agro-ecological systems, strong multifunctional agriculture and to build a radical new common imaginary on sustainable rural regeneration (Leitheiser 2022), the Association and the Cooperative promote several events, workshops and activities.

> *When a cultural, imaginary action stops acting, it also ends up living the place; too often economic development and rural development activities are placed at the centre of the actions, and very little is understood about the value of cultural actions as regenerative within territories… giving oneself a narrative about the present and the future may seem a secondary issue but if politics are not able to provide it, nor the institutions, the people must create it themselves from below, and this narrative from below must shape the political agendas* (Int.13).

For example, they organized, with the support of the Free Home University, social-practice arts residencies, involving artists from several countries. They also organized theatre workshops, in cooperation with a local association, involving refugee,

asylum seekers and the local population. Every year they organize a collective sowing, involving children, families, elderlies and migrants.

> *It becomes a means of fostering knowledge and know-how, intergenerational exchange and allows children, but also adolescents, to experience work in and with the land* (Int.4).

Another initiative is the Green Night and the Preludes, a successful event, promoted at the end of August, that focuses on the issues of natural agriculture, biodiversity protection and social inclusion.

> *It is an event that really impresses… impresses for the quality, for the international openness that it has, for the quality of the meetings, of the workshops and the link with the territory* (Int.12).

It is not just an event with music, debates and a market of Salento producers, it is rather and above all a way in which new narratives can be created and relationships can be built and expanded. For example, the network of "cultivators of change" *(coltivatori di cambiamento)* was founded during a Green Night. It is a network that brings together a group of Salento farmers who recover biodiversity and adopt natural farming methods.

They have an impressive networking capacity. Over the years, they have welcomed and integrated into their activities many people, bringing different skills, knowledge and points of view. This agency has been helpful for mobilizing resources and overcoming local limitations.

> *The question of the network is always present in the action of Casa delle AgriCulture… We have grown, because we have this constant ability to take energies from outside and bring them here…there is this idea of building important networks based on many common feelings* (Int.13).

The initial mistrust of the local community and the tendency to preserve established habits have been overcome by the association and the cooperative – with patience, tenacity and perseverance – by disrupting the process of individualization that characterizes the conventional agricultural production model. Over the years, the relationships with the local community have been changed. *They* (Association and Cooperative) *have been great, they have resisted, … they have managed to create… consensus in the village, which was not easy because is a village, let's say, like so many other rural ones, substantially asleep … lying on its routine … but they have managed to be loved … starting with the elderly* (Int.20).

Their agency brought issues such as social inclusion, agroecology, multifunctionality and *restanza* into the local public discourse.

> *We have built up our own identity and so now there is also an economy of return… We are used to the idea that we are nothing, that we have nothing, we are convinced that we are worth less than zero,… we have helped to create a greater awareness from the point of view of social inclusion … we have brought new themes, that of depopulation was a theme that was completely ignored in Salento and now everyone is talking about it and it is obvious that they see in Castiglione a laboratory, the forge of "restanza" (remaining) practices* (Int.1).

4. Concluding remarks

The younger generations seem to be less attracted to work in agriculture considering both the numerous difficulties that this choice entails (Hounsome et al. 2012) and the low social prestige which, in many areas, it is associated with (Proctor–Lucchesi 2012). These elements can partly explain the decline of young farmers that emerges from the latest census data. There is no doubt that the policies promoted so far have not been able to reverse the trend and intervene effectively.

The new CAP has prioritized generational renewal, but the Italian strategic plan does not seem to have fully seized this opportunity. The interventions dedicated to objective 7 focused mainly on complementary income support for young farmers, under Pillar I, and Start-up Aid for young farmers, under Pillar II. These interventions do not appear sufficient to face the issue of generational renewal at national level. There is a need for a new vision and, as the analysed practice shows, it seems necessary to create the enabling territorial conditions for a collective return to the land.

Young people who deliberately choose to stay or return to their native places can be active players in this process. In the case of the *Casa delle Agriculture Tullia e Gino* Association and Cooperative, getting into agriculture has been about working for a collective return to the land. It was not just a matter of working to recover local biotypes and abandoned land, but to support collective processes of change. This specificity seems to be linked to an emotional attachment to their village, to the desire to remain in the place where they were born, in the knowledge that it is possible to build *"here and now a new world, even starting from the ruins of the old"* (Teti 2019: 23–24). Kovách et al. (2022: 11) analysing farm generational renewal in Hungary highlight that *"family and the personal attachment to farming as a way of life was a crucial issue for the young farmers to continue farming"*. Research shows that for new entrants, whether returnees or remainers, mental attachment to their places of origin and their history can play an important role in encouraging them to farm.

The activities promoted by the Association and by the Cooperative have shown how generational renewal in farming can be based on socially inclusive and environmentally sustainable actions. Their agency has opened up new perspectives to people with different skills and interests who are motivated to remain in the area, has encouraged new entrants into the agricultural sector, and has boosted the cultivation of traditional biotypes and the reuse of abandoned land with an approach based on the agroecological model and multifunctional agriculture.

Generational renewal opens the space for a transition towards sustainability (Kovách et al. 2022). Data show that young Italian farmers tend to be innovative and multifunctional. They tend to pay attention to the environment, to adopt organic

farming practices and to market through short supply chains. They are therefore important players in this transition.

When new entrants into agriculture are people who as a life choice decide to stay or return to their native villages their mental and personal attachment to the places allows them to *"connect the past with the future"* (Teti 2019: 22) and agriculture can become a desirable option. By promoting the diffusion of new ideas and new ways of farming and living in rural areas, they can also play an important role in the regeneration of these areas.

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Quality of government, land and rural development

Willem Korthals Altes

Introduction[1]

Land is an important asset in rural areas. Access to the land for the rural population has an impact on rural development. This contribution reviews, based on research and reports written in the context of the Horizon 2020 project RURALIZATION, the relationship between quality of government, access to land and rural development. In the next section, quality of government will be discussed, then a case study of the region of Teleorman in Romania (Korthals Altes 2021) will be presented, and outcomes will be discussed.

Quality of Government

There is a vast literature indicating that the quality of government affects social and economic development. There is a clear link between good governance and the UN's sustainable development goals (Massey 2022). Bad governance falls *"...short of those elements such as accountability, transparency and opportunity to achieve the redress of grievance that lie at the heart of enlightenment notions of what it means to be well-governed"* (Massey 2022: p. 82).

The quality of government also relates to political equality, *"countries where political power is more evenly distributed tend on average to have higher levels of institutional quality"* (Ezcurra–Zuazu 2022: p. 290). There are not only differences in the quality of government between nations but there are regional differences – the *"peculiarities of the regional governments"* (Raya-Quero et al. 2023: p. 15) – that matter (Charron et al. 2015, Charron, Lapuente–Annoni 2019, Rodríguez-Pose–Muštra 2022). These impacts are relevant for developments in the rural areas themselves and the

1 Part of this contribution has been published before in the *"Technical Report on Quantitative Analysis of Land Holdings and Land Market Trends"* (2021) written in the context of the RURALIZATION project. This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No 817642. Thanks to Attila Szőcs-Boruss for his comments on an earlier version of the case study.

ways in which rural areas can use their urban hinterlands through intermediate actors, as was found by Kovách and Kristóf (2009) in a comparative study.

"The transformation of administrative structures and development policies is the key to explaining the emerging number and strengthening role of intermediate actors (...), as well as the shift in leadership and local power relations." (Kovách–Kristóf 2009: p. 51)

In less organized systems 'quasi chaos' conditions may result in 'unclear' regulations and a *"dominance of political and economic stakeholders"* (Kovách & Kristóf 2009: p. 56). This affects rural development and the social fabric of rural areas. *"Representatives of land users involved in traditional economic activities (such as agriculture) lose their position"* (Kovách–Kristóf 2009: p. 57). Csurgó et al. (2019) found the following: *"The methods of governance and involvement of actors significantly determines the success of interactions and synergies between rural and urban areas."* (Csurgó et al. 2019: p. 91). Good governance plays a role in sustainable development. In rural areas, it relates to issues in land markets (Korthals Altes 2021) and government support for cohesion policy (Wishlade et al. 2019) and agricultural policy (Gonda 2019). Moreover, even in localized, bottom-up programmes such as LEADER and its Local Action Groups (LAG), quality of government plays a role, such as in a case in Hungary in which it was noted that *"The question of accountability is not central to the thinking of the LAG"* (Csurgó–Kovách 2013: p. 86). Instead, it followed an approach that was *"too general and bureaucratic"* (Csurgó–Kovách 2013: p. 86). This resulted in less optimal outcomes. Quality of government may also impact social society. For example in Hungary, the *"financial resources of rural civil associations were mainly from state and local government budgets and not from private society or economy"* (Kelemen et al. 2006: p. 60). Therefore, the quality of government may have an impact on the way civil associations function.

The Quality of Government Institute has executed regional surveys of quality of government in 2010 at regional levels, (Charron et al. 2014, 2015), 2017 (Charron, Lapuente–Annoni 2019, Charron, Lapuente–Rothstein 2019) and 2021 (Charron et al. 2022). These surveys aim to measure the quality of government based on matters such as *"control of corruption, rule of law, government effectiveness, voice and accountability"* (Charron et al. 2014: p. 71). In these surveys, people respond to 16 questions and statements such as *"The police force gives special advantages to certain people in my area. (Agree/disagree, 0–10)"* (Charron et al. 2014: p. 83) or *"All citizens are treated equally in the public healthcare system in my area. (Agree, rather agree, rather disagree, or disagree, 1–4)"* (Charron et al. 2014: p. 83).

The outcomes show large differences between regions in the European Union; in regions of Finland, Denmark, Sweden, the Netherlands and Luxembourg higher scores can be found and in the South of Italy, Croatia, Greece, Hungary, Bulgaria and Romania, lower scores can be found (Charron et al. 2022).

An example of this relationship between quality of government, land and rural development will be illustrated using Teleorman, a region in Romania on the plains

along the Danube, where the issues of land accumulation by large companies with close relationships with government officials play a role.

Teleorman in its Romanian context

Teleorman is a rural NUTS 3 region located in the Romanian NUTS 2 region of Sud Muntenia. Romania is characterized, like many other areas in Central and Eastern Europe (Korthals Altes 2022), by a dual land market of many small holders and a few large landholders, and an absence of the *"medium-sized European farm"* (Alexandri–Luca 2019: 12). The farmland holdings in Sud Muntenia are very unequal, with a GINI of 0.86 (Korthals Altes 2023). In the EU, only seven NUTS 2 regions, that is, Sud-Est (RO), Bucuresti – Ilfov (RO), Bratislavský kraj (SK), Dél-Dunántúl (HU), Severoiztochen (BG), Nyugat-Dunántúl (HU) and Pest (HU) (Korthals Altes 2023), have a more unequal division of landholdings than Sud Muntenia. Some other regions in Central and Eastern Europe also have a very polarized farmland holding structure (Győri–Kovách 2023, Korthals Altes 2022). Moreover, there is an issue in the rule of law in the Romanian land market resulting in unclarity of property rights and who is entitled to exercise them (Korthals Altes–de Wolff 2021).

In Romania, over 80% of the farms use over 50% of what they produce for their own needs. According to EUROSTAT, in 2013 there were 4.7 million *"Farms whose household consumes more than 50% of the final production"* in the EU, of which 3.2 million (67%) were located in Romania (EUROSTAT 2017). Romania has about 7.5 million households (EUROSTAT 2023); so, about 40% of Romanians are fed from their own farms. Most of the Romanian farms *"...are subsistence and semi-subsistence farms, having an important role in the food security of peasant households, but a minor role in the formation of food supply crossing the chains to processors and final consumers"* (Alexandri–Luca 2019: 5). However, as indicated above, a large share of the final consumers are peasant households. So, subsistence farming plays an important role in food supply for the population.

The production per hectare of Romanian small farms is, in addition, a lot larger than that of the bigger farms: on 12.1% of the land, farms under two hectares account for 25.1% of agricultural production (Miron–Lup 2013, Varga 2020). They use more labour-intensive ways of production, which pays off in higher productivity per hectare. Generally, these smaller farms have a mix of crops. However, a large part of the land is held by a few very large farms, which produce a few crops on a large scale (Alexandri–Luca 2019). The lack of diversity of crops on large farms has been growing (Alexandri–Luca 2019). Likewise, the share of land controlled by these large farms is also growing.

In Romania farms held by legal persons are 175 hectares on average, but in Teleorman these legal person-owned farms are over 250 hectares on average. Farms held by natural persons are only 1.3 to 2.2 hectares on average, depending on the region.

Overall, in Romania, land ownership held by natural persons has been decreasing and land owned by legal persons has been growing (Luca 2019: 5). In Teleorman, legal persons hold a larger share of the land than natural persons. The NUTS 2 region of Sud-Muntenia, in which Teleorman is located, has, on the other hand, a share of 87.2% of the farms that produce mainly products to be consumed by their own household (EUROSTAT 2022). So, there is a large gap between different types of farming, which is expressed in the high score on the GINI index (Korthals Altes 2023).

Large companies and the State

In the study on land grabbing by Szőcs-Boruss et al. (2015) *"The TOP 100 Recipients of agricultural subsidies in Romania"* (pp. 25–29), 8 out of the top 100 recipients are located in Teleorman. The largest in these regions (and top three in Romania) is InterAgro, who held 55,000 hectares of land in Teleorman in 2014 (Szőcs-Boruss et al. 2015). According to its presentation on their old website, farming is just one of their lines of activities. Although InterAgro SA and InterAgro SRL (InterAgro 2020) have been in insolvency proceedings from 2nd February 2016 (InterAgro 2016b), it has been active in re-opening fertilizer plants (Banila 2020). Activities have included utilities, such as natural gas, in the town of Zimnicea in Teleorman and the operation of a ferry across the Danube (from Zimnicea to Svishtov). Zimnicea (about 15,000 inhabitants) seems to have been transformed into a company town in which all major economic activities are owned by one company. In Romanian news messages Zimnicea is characterized as "fieful lui" (the fief of) the president of InterAgro (Chiruta 2014, ECONOMICA.net 2020). Undercover reports indicate that day-workers are not properly paid by InterAgro (Chiruta 2014). Also notable is the fact that InterAgro has been grown based on "State sell-offs and the privatisation of key Romanian companies" (InterAgro 2016a). Such a growth supported by opportunities presented by the state fits with a low quality of government context in which residents perceive that there is no level playing field as the state provides more chances to some people than to others.

InterAgro has attracted the attention of the Romanian Anti-Corruption Directorate (Roque 2015). Senior officials have been prosecuted for corruption (Grădinaru 2019, Romgaz 2020), and the CEO has got a five year prison sentence for tax evasion, money laundering and buying influence (Berzuc 2021, Marica 2021).

In this context it seems to be challenging for new generations to achieve access to land in competition with such a *"dominant force in the domestic market"* (InterAgro 2016a), who also proudly present that they have been *"harnessing and utilising the available European finance opportunities"* (InterAgro 2016b). Although land grabbing is often labelled as something foreign, and something which can be stopped by banning foreigners from access to the land market (Petrescu–Petrescu-Mag 2018), many of the land grabbing organizations are domestic (Petrescu-Mag et al. 2017). In relation to this debate, and based on experience with the Romanian context, Baker-Smith and Szőcs-Boruss (2016) have also developed a broader, multi-faceted, definition of land grabbing:

> *"Land grabbing can be defined as being the control (whether through ownership, lease, concession, contracts, quotas, or general power) of larger than locally-typical amounts of land by any person or entity (public or private, foreign or domestic) via any means ('legal' or 'illegal') for purposes of speculation, extraction, resource control or commodification at the expense of peasant farmers, agroecology, land stewardship, food sovereignty and human rights." (Baker-Smith–Szőcs-Boruss 2016: 2)*

Having domestic ties provides relational capital that proves beneficial in areas of low quality of government. Local knowledge is also necessary to convince the *"rural population (i.e., the elderly and the vulnerable)"* (Petrescu-Mag et al. 2017: 180) to lease their land to the mass land holder, as the base underlying the mass holdings is a very fragmented structure of ownership. However, foreign investors may provide access to capital.

InterAgro is, as mentioned, not the only organization active in this region. Others can be found as well, including companies connected to the leader of the Social Democratic Party (PSD), and former president of the County Council of Teleorman (Dimulescu et al. 2013), who has been convicted and sentenced to jail for corruption related activities including the misuse of EU funds (Deletant 2018).

Specific to the Teleorman area is that the land was part of the Danube's marshland until its drainage in the 1960s (Lup 2018). These former swamps were not returned to their former owners after 1989, but remained in the hands of the state which

> *"...allowed for different political-mediated arrangements to be made (distribution of parcels to political clients and concessions accorded to the newly-emerged local "barons") and determined the sort of agriculture that was implemented in the area." (Troc 2012: 90–91)*

This fits with the developments of land held by large companies with a special relationship with state officials,as indicated above.

Minorities

In contrast to these large landowners are the Roma population, as analysed by Troc (2012) in a case study in a few villages in Teleorman.

> *"Even if they are strictly dependent to land and its cultivation, they represent also the only "proles", being the sole group from these villages which does not possess land, and which, very likely, was all the time entirely dependent on the working needs in agriculture that were available in different historical moments." (Troc 2012: 96)*

In interviews they recalled the socialist times in which they were employed for seasonal work.

> *"If this form of engagement seemed to be profitable at the time, being employed on a daily-basis contract, they were excluded from some of the social benefits other agricultural workers get in the present, especially from the right to get a pension, or, also important, the right to get land during the re-privatization that took place in the first half of the '90's." (Troc 2012: 96)*

So, currently most of the Roma have access to the land around the house only.

The Adventists, a protestant minority in these villages, also *"have less land than the majority population"* (Troc 2012). Demographically they behave differently. They have a higher birth rate than the majority population and have been less involved in rural-urban migration. Before 1990, this related to their difficult situation.

> *"Like all the other neo-protestant communities, the Adventists were under a constant state officials' harassment before 1990, which limited their mobility, and constrain most of the young and educated people to stay in the villages and, while they were not welcomed as employees in the state's institutions, to position themselves mostly towards crafts." (Troc 2012: 97)*

Troc expects that the relatively poor were attracted to this church as it practises a high rate of solidarity between members, and which explains their limited land-ownership.

The Orthodox majority of the villages are landowners who often have one and a half to three hectares of land divided between fields further away from the village, vineyards or orchards nearby and gardens. Most household also get small pensions or medical contributions based on previous work. These are aging communities in which the number of deaths is a multiple of the number of births (Troc 2012).

Common Agricultural Policy and land holdings

In Romania CAP grants are 40% of farm income (Alexandri–Luca 2019). As CAP decoupled payments are area based, large farms owned by legal persons get a very large share of the CAP grants. That is, *"... 97% of farms receive only 40% of the total amount of direct payments, while the remaining 3% receive 60% of the amount"* (Alexandri–Luca 2019: 12). The decoupled payments have had some adverse effects on Romanian farming:

> *"At the same time, it has amplified the 'land grabbing' phenomenon, under various modalities, both by the Romanian and the foreign land owners." (Alexandri–Luca 2019: 15)*

This issue of land grabbing has been studied based on case studies (compare Szőcs-Boruss et al. 2015) and it relates to issues in the quality of governance.

> *"The effect of Common Agricultural Policy implementation has been mainly materialized into the increase of farmer subsidies, which practically increased their value five times in the investigated period. Farm incomes steadily increased, yet the increase of the incomes is almost exclusively due to the increase of subsidies received by farmers, in a progressive amount from year to year. The share of subsidies in farm incomes increased from 10% in the year 2007 to 40% in 2016. In this context, we consider that many farms depend quite heavily on the direct payments received, due to the low productivity of agricultural activities." (Alexandri–Luca 2019: 15)*

So, there is a process of accumulating land in very large farms to harvest decoupled payments. This is not beneficial for the new generations in terms of access to land. Here land grabbing is sometimes equated with land in foreign ownership:

> *"...the only rigorous but internal estimation, carried out by the Romanian authorities in the year 2016, shows that the agricultural land owned by foreign firms or Romanian firms with foreign shareholders totalled 958 thousand ha, i.e. about 8% of the agricultural area (or 12% of the arable area, taking into consideration that the largest part of land sold to foreigners is arable land)." (Luca 2019: 11–12)*

Land grabbing is of course not purely a foreign issue. Domestic parties also take up their share in this practice. After all, 3% of the farms control about 60% of the CAP grants and foreign-held farmland is only 12%. However, it must be noted that there are companies actively advertising that promote investment in Romanian land and who are also interviewed in publications targeting agricultural professionals indicating that you can acquire full ownership in Romania for the price of a one-year lease in the Netherlands (Engwerda 2017, van der Woude 2017). Reports of study trips to review 'opportunities' for investments in Romania (Boekhorst 2018, LTO Noord 2018) are, however, critical of the orientation of buying more land to grow instead of channelling investments into the improvement of current land. In the proceedings of this business trip, observations are shared that, for example, Romania has a dual land market of many very small farms and a few very large ones that predominantly lease their land. These farmers

> *"...appear to be motivated to increase income on short-term with as low input as possible. Long-term soil improvements are less on the agenda, partly because a lot of the soil is not owned. The average Romanian would be tending to acquire extra land to increase income, instead of investments to increase the income of current hectares." (Boekhorst 2018)*

It is probably best to read 'average Romanian large landholder' as it can be doubted whether the participants in this study trip have been meeting many smallholders, who are not so active in accumulating land.

The system of CAP decoupled payments clearly supports such an orientation to acquiring extra land. Investments in land improvements are not the main way to receive extra grants; investments in extra land does provide these. This seems to be a major disturbance in progress towards a more sustainable development of rural areas.

There is a *"reverse tenancy configuration"* (Amblard–Colin 2009) of many small landowners having large tenants that consolidate land holdings in *"large-scale corporate farms"* (Amblard–Colin 2009: 829). This development has been continued in the last decade (Alexandri–Luca 2019). In neo-classical economics:

> *"The efficiency of land markets is measured through their ability to transfer land from less productive to most productive users. The transactions costs, which complicate or hinder these transfers, lead to efficiency decrease. Several studies have shown that the agricultural markets from the countries that had already passed through the transitional period were characterized by the existence of significant transaction costs, which represented a constraint for the farms that intended to increase their size, also in the case of Romanian farms. These constraints came from the costs related to the asymmetric information, co-ownership of land (as*

result of the land restitution process), the precarious situation of the registration of properties, the high level of commissions and fees in connection to property transfers." (Luca 2019: 3)

The transparency of the Romanian land market is limited. The statistics on operations in the land market are of limited use (Luca 2019). Various sources provide different data on land transaction prices; the general consensus is that the prices have been going up considerably since Romania became an EU Member state (Luca 2019).

Discussion and conclusion

A low quality of government in a remote, non-mountainous region, creates conditions for the accumulation of land in the hands of a few large landholders. The low quality of government means that governments are weak, and that the population experiences the situation that not everyone has equal access to government services. This is critical for rural development. The fact that matters of local development are not addressed adequately, complicates access to land for new generations. Land and access to it is a crucial resource for new generations who aim to start a farm (Kovách et al. 2022). The non-mountainous character of the land means that economies of scale can much more easily play a role than in areas where natural conditions support small-scale farming. So, large inequalities in land holdings are typical in these regions, as is an ageing population.

Improvement of the quality of government may be a key action to be taken in these regions if the aim is to promote rural development and to ensure that new activities will flourish. The quality of government includes more than the rule of law in relation to property and transactions, and a well-functioning police force, it also includes equal access to important public services, such as public education and healthcare. It is an issue not only of whether the services and infrastructures are available (Győri–Kovách 2023), but also of whether they are equally accessible. It means in general that the elites in society (compare Szelényi et al. 1995) have a smaller role in relation to access to services.

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Changes in rural farming in a Transylvanian settlement

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In my analysis I study changes in the system of rural farming in a settlement called Sárdok (fictitious name) in the Transylvanian Mezőség region.[1] The aim of the analysis is to outline the economic strategies currently followed, with a special regard to the income structure of the households. In formulating my research questions I was inspired on the one hand by the issues formulated in studies that approach the families' economic strategies from the viewpoint of pluriactivity and farm diversification (e.g., Blad 2010, Walford 2003, Gidarakou et al. 2004), and on the other by analyses which present non-industrial food self-provisioning from the viewpoint of its importance in the income system (Smith–Jehlička 2013), as well as by the debate of Petr Jehlička and his fellow researchers (Jehlička–Kostelecký–Smith 2008) regarding Jens Alber and Ulrich Kohler's analysis of the role of informal food production in the European Union countries. These are the following: What cultural prefiguration influences the strategies followed by rural households and what changes did the agricultural support system trigger after EU-accession? What is the importance of the agricultural income and non-agricultural income in the functioning of the households? How do the economic strategies relying on the combination of incomes from agricultural activities and non-agricultural ones influence the financial stability of the households and what is their role in the crisis management of economies and in their possibilities to evolve? Do economic activities or economic strategies built on diversification exist which are not agricultural in their nature, but are linked to the rural?

1 The study has been funded by the Bolyai János Research Scholarship. For the fieldwork (2012–2014) and its antecedents, see previous versions of the analysis. Previous publications of the paper in Romanian and English: *Schimbări în agricultură rurală într-o localitate din Transilvania. Studii de atelier. Nr. 56.* Cercetarea minorităţilor naţionale din România. Institutul pentru Studierea Problemelor Minorităţilor Naţionale, Cluj, 56/2014. 5–27. / The changes of rural farming in a Transylvanian settlement. Working Papers in Romanian Minority Studies. Nr. 56. Institutul pentru Studierea Problemelor Minorităţilor Naţionale, Cluj, 56/2014. 28–50. In Hungarian: A falusi gazdálkodás változásai egy erdélyi településen. *Magyar Kisebbség,* XIX. évf., 3–4 (73–74) sz., 2014. 32–75. Also published in: A falusi gazdálkodás változásai egy erdélyi településen. In Jakab A. Zs. – Vajda A. (szerk.) *Változó ruralitások. A vidékiség mai formái* (Kriza Könyvek, 45.) Kriza János Néprajzi Társaság, Kolozsvár, 2019. 85–120. The current version of the study is a substantially shortened, edited version of the previous ones. Traslated by N. (Gál) Fazakas.

The first part of the article gives a brief insight into the theoretical concepts *(pluriactivity, diversification, food self-provisioning)* and the conceptualizing scholarly literature with the help of which the ethnographic material will be interpreted. Next, the farming, economic and social characteristics of the settlement will be presented, which is an attempt to outline the economic and social context of the settlement. In the second part of the study the economic strategies of Sárdok's farming society will be presented, attempting to identify the most important types of economic strategies.

Pluriactivity and diversification

In the scholarly literature there is some overlap between the semantic fields of pluriactivity and diversification; in the following we present a number of scholarly conceptualizations of these two terms which are paramount from the point of view of our study.

According to Nigel Walford the first formal typology of farm diversification was created by Brian W. Ilbery (Ilbery 1991) who *"distinguished between its agricultural and structural forms, with the basis of this division being whether or not a specific activity represents an extension of the traditional agricultural role or engagement with a different industrial sector"* (Walford 2003: 52). Ilbery defines the concept of *diversification* as the non-traditional agricultural farm enterprises *"taking place on predominantly agricultural-proprietal units which (...) are not based on the primary production of food and fibre"* (Ilbery 1991: 208).[2] According to Ilbery, diversification also includes new production sectors initiated by the farms (the author mentions – among others – snail processing and the cultivation of herbs), or cases which add value *"to traditional products through either non-farm processing and/or forms of direct marketing, and new enterprises not associated with food production, like farm-based accommodation and recreation"* (Ilbery 1991: 208).

The way Anthony F. Muller conceptualizes *pluriactivity* covers some aspects of diversification as defined by Ilbery. According to Muller pluriactivity *"describes those farm households which engage in activities in addition to farming"* such as *"employment on other farms (e.g., hired labour); para-agricultural activites such as food processing (e.g., wine making for direct sale); other, non-agricultural activities on the farm (e.g., tourist accommodation, furniture making); off-farm activities (wage labour)"* (Fuller 1990: 367).

Taking into consideration the above quoted authors I define *pluriactivity* as the off-farm, gainful activities and incomes of the members of the farm, which do not originate from the selling of the products of the farm (e.g., salary, services, pension, social benefits, etc.) but which are not necessarily independent of the life of the farm (e.g., EU or state subsidies). I define *diversification* – mainly based on Ilbery's typology (Ilbery 1991) and N. Walford's critical comments (Walford 2003: 52–53) – as the gainful strategies which are to some extent or even completely different from the main

2 For the similar interpretation of the concept of diversification see: Knickel et al. 2003 quoted by Blad 2010: 156.

profile of the farm and which constitute new opportunities for income for the farm. Here I include domestic dairy production techniques, through which – though traditionally practised in most of the households – the households gain new prosperity in the selling of their products.

Self-supporting, domestic/household food production

The concepts of pluriactivity and diversification, in fact the role of multiple incomes in the sustainability of farms in the 1980s, developed during the rural crisis emerging because of the spread of the agricultural industry (see Walford 2003: 52, Fuller 1990: 362, 367), a period in which the researchers and the decision-makers were interested in the problems in subsistence and those of mass rural unemployment (see Fuller 1990: 367, 368). Prior to this *"part-time farming or pluriactivity has been seen both as a symptom of insufficient farm income and as a threat to productive efficiency in agriculture"* (Jervell 1999: 102), and which open the door to giving up farming and finding a way out (see Jervell 1999: 102, 110, Nrydan et al. 1993 quoted by Gidarakou et al. 2004: 153).

One of the directions presented in the scholarly literature problematizing the phenomenon of food self-provisioning in Eastern European post-socialist countries explains this phenomenon mainly through non-economic factors. As Joe Smith and Petr Jehlička have demonstrated with Czech and Polish examples, besides the mercantile aspects of domestic/household production and food self-provisioning (FSP) there is also an equally important component: that of sustaining personal relations (giving the food away), in which the quality of the food is an important concept, as well as the valorization of the food produced by the individual as being healthy, which motivations even exceeds the money-saving aspect (see Smith–Jehlička 2013: 13, 25, 29).

Smith and Jehlička consider that food self-provisioning in the post-socialist countries cannot be included in the paradigm of alternative food networks of the Western countries when the motivational factors sustaining the phenomenon as well as its non-economic aspects are considered. In a previous article, Jehlička and his co-authors reject Jens Alber and Ulrich Kohler's (Alber–Kohler 2008) approach which assumes that this phenomenon can be explained in the light of poverty in post-socialist countries, as well as by the habits emerging due to erratic food-supply in the socialist era (see Jehlička–Kostelecký–Smith 2008: 2). Nevertheless, in their study aimed to refute Alber and Kohler's results they consider Romania to be an exception. According to Alber and Kohler's quantitative data, the percentage of "informal food production" is significantly higher in Romania than in other European countries, which cannot be solely explained by the cultural motivations, free-time peculiarities or the role of alternative ideologies on food highlighted by Jehlička and his fellow authors. Alber and Kohler's notes which connect food production with the socialist shortage economy, unemployment and poverty seem to be as (or even more) important.

Sárdok (Fictitious name)

Sárdok is a settlement in the ethnographic region of Mezőség, 35 kilometres east of Cluj-Napoca (Kolozsvár). According to the 2002 official census the number of inhabitants was 1451, while the ethnic distribution is as follows: Hungarian: 902 (62.16%), Romanian: 430 (29.63%), 119 Gipsy/Romani (8.2%).[3] In the Romanian administrative system Sárdok has the status of village centre, under which the institutions of the administrative bodies can function in the settlement: the mayor's office, police, a municipal medical clinic, a veterinary clinic, post office and village school.

The settlement has a significant Romani population. According to the estimate of the social worker with the mayor's office, approximately 200 Romani families live in the settlement.

Following land collectivization, the working age population of the village looked for jobs at the industrial companies in the nearby town which resulted in a commuter lifestyle in the 1960s and 1970s. The number of commuters decreased by the end of the 1970s, when the inhabitants of Sárdok took advantage of a decree which stipulated that workers from villages more than 30 kilometres away from the town would benefit from subsidized housing purchases.

The enactment of law 1991/18 regarding the distribution and re-privatization of land was followed by many problems across Romania. The lands not distributed in the first two years were worked by the County Council of Trade Unions (CCTU), which functioned until the autumn of 1992. The distributed 50 hectares of land were worked by the tractor drivers of the CCTU for themselves in such a way that they could use the tractors and machines, for which they paid a price three times the used fuel to the CCTU. In 1992 the lands were distributed in a way that broadly restored the land distribution of before collectivization.

Joint farm

As the CCTU became dysfunctional and as a result of its re-privatization, 30 farmers founded a joint farm in 1992. It was not officially registered, and operated informally, based on oral agreement. The joint farm came into being under the leadership of two friends who were farmers. The farmers contributed to the purchase of tractors and machinery needed, which became the group farm's common property, with a sum based on the size of land they owned. They bought their equipment from the CCTU, which was privatized that year. The two farmers leading the joint farm were bound to work the lands of the farms belonging to the group. In the first years the farmers paid only for fuel, later on they received services much cheaper than the going rate of a given work phase in the village. The two farmers worked approximately 150 hectares of land using the common property machinery.

The joint farm functioned as a joint estate only in terms of the machines which they purchased from the jointly raised money. The manual work phases were managed by the farmers. The crops produced in the fields remained in full to the farmers owning the land.

The operation of the joint farm was hindered by a vast array of problems. First of all, it did not have formally laid down rules, and determining which farmer was next in the completion of the given work-phases was chaotic and haphazard. People were suspicious and impatient, trying to get their lands worked as soon as possible, ahead of each other.

To a small extent the joint farm offered machine services to farmers who did not belong to the group. As the purchase of tractors and the most necessary equipment occurred in the village only by the middle of the 1990s, working the land with horses, buffalo, and cows was of great importance during this period.

As there were no funds to renew the machinery due to the conflicts and disagreements on the joint farm, it became more and more difficult to work the lands of the members of the joint farm with the used equipment, which needed constant reconditioning. The farmers, especially those who owned more land, left the group, reclaiming part of the money they had invested in buying machinery, which they received either in cash or as machine services from the two leaders of the joint farm.

The joint farm was founded due to the lack of agricultural machinery in the years following the regime change. It did not have a long-term strategy; its demise was thus inevitable. The second-hand tractors and machines were not replaced by new ones, which was an expression of the loss of trust in the joint farms.

Caritas

After the privatization of collectivization and that of the CCTU, as well as land distribution, the year of 1993 was of great importance for the village in terms of equipping the farms with agricultural machines, as it was greatly influenced by the cash won in the Caritas pyramid scheme functioning in Cluj-Napoca. Several of the most successful farmers, who were the first to start building their estate, mentioned the importance of the sums they or their parents had won in the Caritas scheme. Many of them had the opportunity to purchase their first tractor and associated equipment with the money won from Caritas.

Paradoxically, the Caritas scheme proved to be one of the most important tools in the strive for independence of the Sárdok households in the context of the unfavourable political and economic processes which hindered agricultural development.

Creamery

At the end of the 1990s and beginning of 2000s an entrepreneur, a former inhabitant of Sárdok, living in Cluj-Napoca at that time, established a creamery in the village. The creamery employed a few people from the village, and according to my present information, it functioned for around three years. The creamery bought up the entire milk production of the village, making sour cream, cheese and telemea (traditional Romanian cheese), that was sold in stores in Cluj-Napoca. Some of the villagers say that the venture was unsuccessful, and that is why the owner closed it.

3 Romanian Institute for Research on National Minorities: 2013 Ethnic maps. Source: http://www.ispmn.gov.ro/maps/county/59657_cj_etnii_maghiar. Retrieved on: May 21, 2013.

According to one of the workers at the factory, employed for three years, the factory was the victim of wealth distribution in the divorce of the entrepreneur.

Milk collection companies and centres

There are six milk collection centres in the village at present. Five of them collect the milk produced in the village. The five centres are managed by three companies. All three of them are national dairy companies.

In the households where a milk collection centre operates, one or two members of the household are officially part-time employees of the company. Their tasks usually include the administration of the centre, quality-check and inventory, as well as the cleaning of the building, washing of the milk cauldrons, etc. Although their wage is minimal, the stability and predictability of the income, and the fact that the company pays the employees' pension contributions and health insurance is extremely important in households where cash cannot be accessed every month as it is connected to cycles of selling products and the sometimes uncertain payment of subsidies.

The common strategy of the milk purchasing companies is that the price they pay for the milk varies based on the quantity produced (as long as it meets quality standards, for example adequate fat content). The bigger the quantity produced on a farm, the higher the price for one litre of milk.

One of the centres stores only the milk from one of the households before transport. This farm has the most livestock in the village. The farm is the shareholder of a regional sales cooperative. Unlike smaller farms giving milk to the different company centres in the village, the cooperative is a real partner in the relationship with the milk purchasing companies. As several farms of the region producing a relatively large amount of milk are part of the cooperative, it is a factor which cannot be ignored by the milk purchasing companies. As opposed to village farms, it sells milk at a significantly higher price to one of the companies, which has two milk collection centres in the village.

The cooperative is thus the only form of advocacy of the market interests of the farmers against the giant firms. Being part of the cooperative has other benefits besides being able to sell milk at a higher price. One of these benefits is the ability to access the most important market input needs of the farms at a lower price. Despite the obvious benefits of being part of the cooperative, only one farm is a member of this organization.

Grant tenders

Only a few people in the village took the opportunity to enter competitions in order to modernize and boost their agricultural activity. Some of the reasons are the farmers' distrust in the formal organization of farms, their high level of distrust in the officialization of their activity, and in fact against any kind of formal bond.

The farmlands are the property of several members of the household, not to mention the arrangements between relatives regarding the use of the land. In a joint farm household one part of the land is usually the property of the older generation as a

result of restitution. Another part of the jointly worked land is land bought by their descendants post-land redistribution, a significant proportion of which became their property through non-official sales activities. The young families consider the land bought to be their own, although they work it together. After the death of the older generation these lands will naturally not be the object of land distribution. The fact that ownership is still unresolved from the legal point of view constitutes the biggest obstacle in the eligibility of farmers in agricultural development tenders. Farmers have an extremely difficult time in making their estates official in order to meet the conditions of the given tender. The general trend is that based on the characteristics of their farm (e.g., the size of land, amount of livestock and machinery) the majority of farmers would be eligible for tenders aiming to support their production efficiency, land development and purchase of agricultural machinery, etc. However, the official parameters of their farms do not meet these conditions. For example, in the case of farmers under a certain age the size of their land is considered "too small" or "too large" according to the conditions of most of the tenders.

Table 1
The social stratification of Sárdok based on economic strategies

<table>
<tr><td colspan="2">Profit-oriented farm groups</td><td colspan="2">Groups involved in agricultural activities mainly for domestic food production (FSP)</td><td>Groups not independently active and not engaged in FSP</td></tr>
<tr><td>Large farms</td><td>Medium-size farms</td><td>Small farms</td><td>Households with small gardens</td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Local administrative and cultural elite</td><td>Pensioners</td><td>Living in Cluj-Napoca/ Kolozsvár</td><td>Administrative and cultural elite commuting from the town</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Mixed farms and farms specialized in cattle</td><td>Commuters, merchants, artisans</td><td></td><td>Servants</td></tr>
<tr><td>Sheep farms Grain producing farm</td><td>Mobile vendors (gardeners/ cattle farmers)</td><td>Beekeepers</td><td>Romani households</td><td></td></tr>
</table>

The local groups of the settlement – except for several members of the administrative and cultural elite who do not live in the village but work there (excluding the priests living in the village) – are all connected to agriculture to some extent due to domestic food production. The volume of food production mainly aimed at subsistence or (mostly) at the food supply of children/relatives living in towns varies significantly for each household, from a few fowl and the garden around the house to a few pigs, one or two cows and agricultural activity on a few hectares. There is a significant overlap between the members of the administrative elite living in the village and the group of the farmers.

In the following I will discuss three major groups of society, identified by the importance of their agricultural income: the **profit-oriented farmers**, the **food self-provisioning farmers**, as well as the groups which **do not farm independently and do not work in food self-provisioning.** Further sub-categories of profit-oriented farms as well as of groups working in food self-provisioning were distinguished based on the economic strategies they follow as well as on the size of the farms.

Groups not independently active and not engaged in FSP

Administrative and cultural elite commuting from the town

This group represents an exceptional situation: unlike the administrative and cultural elite living in the village, they are not involved in independent farming, and their belonging to the local community is problematic, even though some of them have been working in the village for a longer period, everybody knows them, and they are embedded in the local system of interpersonal connections.

A significant part of the elite working in administration, education and culture commutes from Cluj-Napoca/Kolozsvár or the neighbouring villages. Together with the labourers employed on larger farms they constitute the group not farming independently and not engaged in food self-provisioning.

Servants

The servants are employed permanently on farms mainly specialized in extensive animal keeping. They usually work on the largest cattle and sheep farms in the village which exceed 20-30 cows or several hundred sheep. Usually, one-two servants work in such a household. Their main role is looking after the animals, but the largest farms employ them for the more important seasonal agricultural work too, in addition to the occasionally hired day-labourers. The servants are not usually part of the local society; they are from other settlements of the county or even other counties. It is a general opinion that the servants only work under the landlords' permanent supervision, otherwise "servants do not farm".

Groups involved in agricultural activities mainly for domestic food self-provisioning (FSP)

Small farms

Pensioners

Pensioners represent the largest group of the local community. They usually work one or two hectares of land by investing their pension/invalidity pension in agricultural activities. According to the village social worker approximately 80 people in the village receive some disability support. Almost every old person has a pension; most of them receive a so-called collective pension. They rent their remaining land to the farmers who cultivate more extensively. With the crops they receive and from the yield of the land cultivated by them, they keep a few pigs, one-three cows and poultry aimed at the supplementation of food for themselves or for their children's families living in towns.

These farms are not sufficiently equipped with machines; they only have carts or horse ploughs, harrows, etc., and often they pay for work carried out with the help of horses.

Commuters, merchants, artisans

The group of commuters, who work mainly in Cluj-Napoca, is around 40-50 people. The men usually work at construction sites as machine operators, drivers or doormen, while a group of younger women work as cleaning ladies, cooks, etc.

The commuters do not own an extensive farm; nevertheless, they maintain a smaller household farm: in the garden around the house they grow vegetables for their own consumption, keep one or two pigs and a few poultry. More rarely one or two cows are also kept in such households, especially those whose working hours are more flexible (as in the case of several doormen) or of those who perform less physically demanding work.

The shopowners and pubowners in the village, as well as the few artisans (carpenters, masons) earn money from their business ventures, as well as from jobs they perform. Nevertheless, they cultivate a small farm as well. Similarly to other groups of non-profit-oriented households the aim of their agricultural-type activities is mainly the provision of home-grown food: vegetables, potatoes, maize, wheat flour, etc., as well as the production of grain and forage for their poultry, their one-three pigs and their few sheep. Such farming habits do not exclude the occasional sale of the surplus produced, or its exchange for crops lacking in other households.

Apiculturists

This includes approximately 7 households, both Romanians and Hungarians . The evolution of these businesses has been significantly aided by a tender announced three years ago, which aims at the gradual expansion and development of beekeeping. The winning young beekeepers receive a yearly grant of 1500 euros for five years.The income from beekeeping is not the only livelihood of these households. Three of the apiarists belong to the cultural elite: the family of the former and the current reformed minister and of the kindergarten teacher. The rest – except for a retired farmer, who works only in beekeeping – own a small farm besides practising apiculture.

Households with small gardens

Residents of Cluj-Napoca/Kolozsvár

This group originates from Sárdok, moved to the town in the 1970s, and received land during land distribution. At the beginning of the 1990s, up until approximately 2000 they managed to work the land with the help of their elderly parents by investing their income from town jobs and pensions into agriculture. Thus, they could provide the necessary basic food for their family and the family of their adult children (mainly flour, milk, pork, sunflower oil). The surplus (mostly produce, grain and corn, a couple of pigs, milk) was sold locally by the parents.

Such households began to gradually deteriorate due to labour shortage as the parents and grandparents became disabled, as well as due to the lack of machinery and the high price of machine services. The majority maintain the uninhabited parental homes, in the garden of which they grow vegetables during weekend agricultural work. It can be observed that some of these houses have been turned into weekend houses by their owners and the adult children living in the town.. This is signalled by the grass lawns, the bowers and the orchards planted around the houses.

This group often formulate the idea of the superior quality of what they produce: "it has a different taste", "we only spray it as much as needed".[4] Pluriactivity in their case fulfils the aspect described by Marta Blad, according to which the households involved in such activities can both enjoy the benefits of rural life and the securities of a permanent job (Blad 2010: 163).

Romani households

The majority of Gypsy families usually work the small gardens around their homes. In most of the households they cultivate vegetables and keep one or two pigs for subsistence. According to the land privatization law 50 hectares of land were given to the Gypsy families who lived in the village during the socialist era and worked on the local collective farm. The Gypsy families who did not sell the received land cultivate it as part of supplementary food production, mainly to grow the corn needed to feed their one or two of pigs and poultry. This land has significant importance in the case of horse-keeping Gypsy families for the feeding of their one-two horses.

Profit-oriented farm groups

Medium-size farms

Mixed farms and farms specialized in cattle

This is the most significant group of the local society. It is engaged in extensive farming and gets the most important part of its income from agriculture.

The most important group is represented by farms specialized in cattle-keeping; there are approximately 15 such farms. A smaller group combines cattle-keeping with sheep-keeping. In the case of the mixed farms (specialized in sheep and cattle-keeping) about 7–10 cows and 100–300 sheep are bred. The farms specialized solely in cattle-keeping usually have a larger herd (10 to 25), than the combined farms.

They usually work lands of 10–15 hectares; the farms are significantly mechanized, having the most important agricultural machines needed.

This group is usually made up of younger farmers, in their 40s, and every member of the family helps in the agricultural work. External labour force is used only rarely, during seasonal agricultural work. The start of these farms was greatly helped by the lands and buildings inherited from the parents, and the channelling of the workforce of the parents into the farm also had a significant role after the regime change.

4 Man, over 60. Cluj-Napoca/Kolozsvár, March 5, 2013.

The two-five hectares of land inherited has been doubled by continuous purchases. Besides the land they own, they rent two-five hectares. They do not sell any crops; they feed their animals with the grain they produce. There are approximately 10 such farms, with a herd of 10-25 cows each. The most important source of income for these farms is milk, which is sold to one of the companies operating milk-collection centres in the village. In the price structure determined by the dairy companies based on the quantity of milk produced they are located "in the middle".

The members of this group are a determining factor in the local power structure, however not the most important.

The common strategy of these farms is that the crops (cereals) and the feed are not sold but are fed to their own animals. Thus, they do not buy feed for the animals. However, the fertilizers and herbicides needed for agricultural production are usually bought from nearby Mócs, while others buy them from the markets in Cluj-Napoca/ Kolozsvár.

Their main income comes from the milk sold locally to dairy companies, and in the case of farmers with a larger flock of sheep it is supplemented by the income from the sale of lambs. An important constituent of the financial stability of the farm, as well as the subsidy received for their animals, is the fact that they own their land.

Mobile vendor farmers

Approximately 8 households belong to this type. While the dairy farms mentioned above sell their most valuable product (cow's milk) to the companies operating milk-collection centres in the village, the vendor farmers sell it directly to the consumers. Sales consists of the delivery of the milk to Cluj-Napoca every other day, which includes delivery to the customer's home as well. On average approximately 100–150 litres of milk are delivered to be sold in the town on every trip. In addition to sales at the homes of the customers they occasionally rent tables at the markets in Cluj-Napoca, although they sell other products at the market; they sell milk there only on exceptional occasions.

Every vendor farmer has acquired a network of buyers over the years, who – besides attributing a better quality to the milk bought from local farmers – can buy milk at a lower price than in supermarkets. Thus, the vendor farmers receive one and a half times or even twice the price they would if they sold their milk locally. Nevertheless, the door-to-door sale of the milk is a very time and energy consuming occupation. Most of the farmers who sell their milk locally for a cheaper price, stated that they did not choose this method of selling because of such challenging aspects. In the case of the vendor farmers the other members of the household also work on the farm as a main occupation.

In the case of the other vendor farms the sale of milk in towns is supplemented with the sale of other dairy products as well. Most often dairy products from domestically processed cow and sheep milk are sold (cheese, cottage cheese, "telemea"

or salty cheese,[5] butter, sour cream), but other "village-produced domestic products" are also delivered according to the buyers' demands (usually bacon and other pork products, poultry, etc.). These products mostly come from the specific farm, but quite often the vendors buy them locally from other farmers and then re-sell them in the markets. Such farms usually have a herd of 7–10 dairy cows.

The vendors farms are different from the type of farming presented above not only in terms of the sale of the products, but also in the input factors of their farms. They report that, unlike the other farms, they more often buy products which increase the crop/milk yield: seeds, fertilizers, herbicides, nutrients. As a result, they can have the same product yield on a smaller farm and with fewer livestock than their non-vendor counterparts. The fact that on the input side there are more significant investments than in the case of the non-vendor counterparts can be explained by the cash permanently on hand. Unlike in the case of the non-vendor farmers the cash access of these households is much wider, and the return on their investments is much faster, so the pursued strategies of diversification manifest their benefits in this respect as well.

Compared with their counterparts who sell their milk locally, their input investments are larger and more frequent as they have extra costs such as transport, refrigeration, the costs of vegetable and fruit cultivation, market authorizations, market table rental and car purchase and maintenance.

The vendor farms differ from the non-vendor farms both from the point of view of financial calculation and from the point of view of their formal and non-formal relationships. While in the case of non-vendors the operation of the farm is the least formal (they have no legally registered form, they do not pay any taxes, etc.), most vendor farms are as a legal entity, and they pay taxes and medical insurance. The vendor households are significantly more financially calculated: they have bookkeeping and do much more administration than the non-vendor households. This explains their higher level of trust in the tenders as well, as more vendor farmers are successful in grant tenders.

A part of the vendor households is different from the others from the point of view of product specialization. Some of the households sell vegetables and flowers which they grow in polytunnels..

Two households are involved in selling on the market solely by being specialized in dairy; they only sell cow's milk. They own more livestock (approximately 20 milking cows) than the other vendor farmers

5 Cheese soaked in salt water.

Large farms

Mixed farms and farms specialized in cattle keeping

Three of the large farms specialize in cattle keeping. There are no significant differences in the strategies they follow compared with the farms presented at medium-size farms with a similar specialization. These farms can be distinguished from the ones presented above based on the number of their livestock and the size of their cultivated land, as well as the extent of their machinery. The size of the cattle herd is between 30 and 80, and they cultivate a minimum of 50 hectares, much of which they own. In addition to the livestock-centred specialization, which represents the main source of income of the farms, grain is occasionally sold as well, depending on the yield. One farm – unlike the others – specializes solely in growing crops.

During the past years they made major investments: they bought high-value and high-capacity agricultural machinery as well as extensive tracts of land.[6] In addition to the land owned, they rent significant areas, especially from the descendants of former landowners (who received fields under the land restitution law), as well as from the churches. Similarly to other farms, several generations work together; farming is thus carried out in the framework of the so-called "extended family". The fact that the land concentration and the accumulation of wealth is more successful in these households has been greatly influenced by their early start – and the leader/manager of the farm belongs to the older generation in each case. The key position of the head of the household in the local society during communism resulted in the accumulation of a much more significant capital in terms of a wider network of connections (the head of the agricultural machinery department, forester, driver).

Sheep farms

There are three farms specialized in raising sheep in the village, with between 500 and 1000 sheep. The amount of the state subvention is much higher than the subsidies received for other agricultural activities. Similarly to farms specialized in cattle keeping, these farms also cultivate the land. The most important income is the subsidy received for the animals, as well as the sale of lambs and of sheep's milk products. Two of the most important farmers are father and son, who each have their own farm and livestock. The wife of the younger farmer has a table at the central market in the town, where she sells their sheep's milk products herself. A trader buys the bulk of cheese from the older farmer, and occasionally the inhabitants of Sárdok and other neighbouring settlements also buy from them, especially during the weekly village market held every Monday.

6 During the research the price of one hectare of good quality land could reach 2000 euros (approx. 9000 RON).

A farm specialized in grain production, a "special" economy
The case of András

The only farm in the village whose main income comes from grain cultivation is unique in the village due to its economic orientation as well as several other aspects.

András is 42 years old. He became unemployed in 1993, when the town tailor where he used to work paid him only slightly more than the cost of his daily commute. He continued to work at home as a tailor, and occasionally worked in day labour.

In 1994 he bought a low capacity, barely functional tractor during the privatization of CCTU with the money he had won in the Caritas game. He did not think of farming at that time; the tractor was a hobby for him. He worked on it for two years performing significant mechanical changes and improvements on it, and then he sold the restored and upgraded tractor (which attracted media attention and the attention of the original manufacturer because of the innovations he had made) for a price multiple to the purchase price.

In 1999, with the money he received for the upgraded tractor he bought a higher capacity tractor from a newspaper ad, together with a disc and a plough, and started offering machine services to those requiring them, as well as working a few hectares of private land. He started working his first two-three hectares of land in 2004. With the money he received from his machine services and the occasional under-the-table tailoring, he started to gradually buy further machines and land.

He now owns six tractors, four of which are functional and two high value (over 10,000 euros), a harvesting machine, six ploughs, discs, weed control machines, a fertilizer spreader and a trailer. He purchased used tractors and then upgraded them himself. He did not apply for any support or bank loan in the purchase of the machines.

His buyers are the largest farms in the village and in the region, mainly shepherds who buy large amounts of grain from him to supplement the winter feeding of the animals. He tried to sell his produce in the weekly markets of the different villages of the region a few times, but he sold much less than expected, only five–six sacks a time. As he puts it, he does not really need market sales, as he does not need contracts with his large-scale purchasers, as he can sell his grain nonetheless.

Despite his more advanced machinery, he cannot exploit it appropriately at the local level. He cannot buy or rent enough land to be able to have significantly larger production, and – as mentioned before – his services are rarely required. According to his calculations he would be exploiting his machinery to the fullest if he cultivated approximately 100 hectares of land and employed two-three men.

Besides his improperly exploited and in some respect "over-equipped" machinery he is struggling with other infrastructural shortages hindering more efficient production, the remedy of which would mean an immediate expense of several tens of thousands of euros, for which there is no possibility under the circumstances. One of his biggest problems is that for the storage of the large amounts of grain produced he only has improvised warehouses, in which the prolonged storage of crops is possible only with a gradual deterioration in quality. The lack of buildings for the storage and maintenance of the machinery is also a big issue. At present he is forced to keep it in his yard, around the house and by the side of the road. Another major problem is that in delivering his grain to his customers he is forced to use an improvised, overloaded trailer pulled behind a car.

In addition to the lack of resources on the input side of the farm, András faces a significant expense in his everyday life as well: he needs to build a house. A few years ago he bought a plot with an old, small farmhouse with a low ceiling, which has provided modest housing conditions. Nevertheless this was planned to be a temporary solution, even at the time of purchase. He needs around 50,000 euros to build a new house.

András was able to raise his farm to the present level by restricting his other needs to a minimum. Although his achievements are significant in terms of Sárdok, his path shows several differences from the patterns the other large farms followed in their formation. His late start (he founded his farm approximately 10 years after the others), and the lack of a significant inheritance (lands buildings, forest, production tools) represent significant obstacles in the development of his farm. He follows a completely different strategy from the farms specialized in animal keeping, which has made it possible for him to fill a previously unfulfilled market segment (niche). His personal competence (his hobby engineering skills and innovations), his more calculated mentality as opposed to other farmers (he performs informal bookkeeping), the presence of the marketing element in the output side of the farm, and his continuous self-education (the purchase of engineering and agriculture books) resulted in the success of his farm.

Conclusions

A certain amount of food is produced in every household in the village for personal use (except for the case of the daily commuting administrative and cultural elite). The newest forms of agricultural non-food production are met only occasionally in the settlement (the flower-growing businesses of the vendors, vegetable cultivation under plastic, the contract sunflower seed production of one of the cattle keeping large farms). In this sense *agricultural diversification* as defined by Ilbery is not among the dominant economic strategies of the village. However the forms of *structural diversification* as defined by Ilbery (Ilbery 1991) are much more common: the new added value with home food processing and delivery to the market (in the case of vendor households the "extra services" of the grain producing business through the milling and home delivery of goods).Although the vendor farmers carry out a more active economic and more money-oriented activity, in which several innovations and "modernizations" can be identified, the system is built upon a traditional pattern. During socialism and even after the regime change it was not uncommon for the old folk from the village to take a few litres of milk to the town on the bus to sell.

In the farming strategies of Sárdok, pluriactivity is a major behaviour. As Marta Blad has discovered, this phenomenon has shown an increasing tendency in other countries of the EU as well, in which EU funding plays a significant role. She claims that the EU funding promotes consumption rather than development, and maintains the current unfavourable agrarian structure (Blad 2010: 164).

Pluriactivity is operated by somewhat different motivations in the case of the different types of farms presented above. In the case of retired farmers, the investment of their pensions, invalidity pensions, social support and European Union subsidies into the farm, and such financing of the machine-based activities implies a deep attachment to the land and a mental attitude supportive of farming. This farming habit is not mainly profit-oriented (although selling the surplus is not unusual) but is focused on food self-provisioning. Giving away the produced food – mainly, but not exclusively to their children living in towns with families of their own – has an important social function, which is similar to that which Smith and Jehlička report based on their research in the Czech Republic and Poland (Smith–Jehlička 2013: 25). In return for the food the parents can expect occasional weekend visits and work from their children and grandchildren.

In the case of the farms in Sárdok the regime change was followed by a progressive centralization of the land which can be exploited agriculturally. This process was manifested through land sales and purchases in the years following the regime change, while after the EU accession of the country through the informal leasing of lands. The aging, retired families and the ones moving to Cluj-Napoca/Kolozsvár form the groups which have reduced the size of the land they cultivate most significantly. The largest problem of the farms in Sárdok with the most intensive agricultural activity is the lack of land (in addition to the lack of resources hindering major improvements).

Despite the reduction in the size of cultivated land through sale or lease, the members of the group defined as inhabitants of Cluj-Napoca/Kolozsvár are also engaged in food production in the few hectares of land around their houses either for themselves or to give away. The group of the pensioners have the same activity on the one-two hectares of land kept for food self-production or in the garden near their houses. The scholarly literature presents examples in which landowners living in a situation similar to that in Sárdok, in an urban centre not too far from the village are engaged in part-time farming activities within the framework of pluriactivity (Gidarakou et al. 2004: 158).

At the same time the families of Sárdok do not apply for bank loans even in the case of the development of their farms. That is why the resources for such developments come from the reinvestment of profit into the farms, or from pluriactivity.

As well as the presently active younger farmers committed to farming, there are some who chose to farm out of necessity as a result of losing or quitting their poorly-paid urban jobs in the 1990s. Farming was also a last resort for the inhabitants without a high-school education or a profession who stayed at home.

It seems that in Romania, unlike in the majority of post-socialist countries, domestic food production is much more to do with self-sustainability and avoiding expenses, than in the Czech case investigated by Jehlička and Kostelecký (Jehlička–Kostelecký 2008), although it is not yet clear whether it is exclusively the strategy of the poor as Alber and Kohler state (Alber–Kohler 2008). In the answers regarding crop and food use, only the inhabitants of Cluj-Napoca/Kolozsvár who are engaged in backyard farming in the village, mentioned the hobby nature of the agricultural activity as a motivation for it, that is the healthy, quasi-organic idea of food (produced with only the most necessary chemical treatment). Nevertheless, besides the other aspects of domestic food-production, the main motivation for the pluriactive strategy of the inhabitants of Cluj-Napoca/Kolozsvár is its cost-effectiveness. The other cultural motivations of food self-provisioning mentioned especially by Joe Smith and Petr Jehlička, such as altruism, sharing, exchange (Smith–Jehlička 2013: 28–30) constitute an important motivation also in the case of the non-profit oriented pensioner farmers.[7]

7 I wish to thank Dénes Kiss for his comments regarding the present study.

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Food, feed and fuel

The place of biomass in a sustainable bioeconomy

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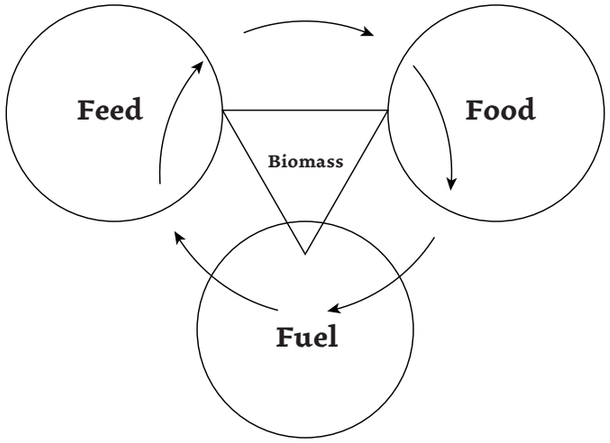
Introduction

In recent years, there has been growing interest in the potential of a sustainable bioeconomy to provide a pathway towards a more sustainable future and facilitate the attainment of net zero goals (European Commission 2018). A sustainable bioeconomy is defined as "*the production, use, and conservation of biological resources, including related knowledge, science, and technologies, to provide information, goods, and services across all economic sectors, while ensuring the sustainability of ecosystems and enhancing food security*" (FAO 2018). Biomass, defined as organic matter from plants and animals, is a critical resource in the transition to a sustainable bioeconomy. Generally, it can be stated that green energy demand is inversely proportional with population density and directly proportional with GDP (Peng et al. 2022).

Scholarly sources have emphasized the pivotal role of various forms of biomass in fostering a sustainable bioeconomy, highlighting the critical importance of this approach in mitigating the impact of climate change, promoting sustainable economic growth, and ensuring social stability (Boyer et al. 2022). Nevertheless, it is imperative to ensure that these attempts and efforts to address existing challenges do not inadvertently create additional complications and give rise to new problems. The expansive adoption of bioeconomy across nations and regions will doubtlessly trigger increased use of biomass which can change the equilibrium of biomass in the global food, feed and energy market. This increased use of biomass also has the potential to escalate the food, feed and fuel trilemma. Therefore, this paper aims to provide a comprehensive and in-depth analysis of the role of biomass in a sustainable bioeconomy, with a focus on food, feed and fuel. Specifically, the study examines the environmental and social implications of the bioeconomy transition on biomass for food, feed and fuel, including its impact on land use, biodiversity and rural economies.

Figure 1
Conceptual demonstration of the role of biomass in bioeconomy



Source: Authors' design

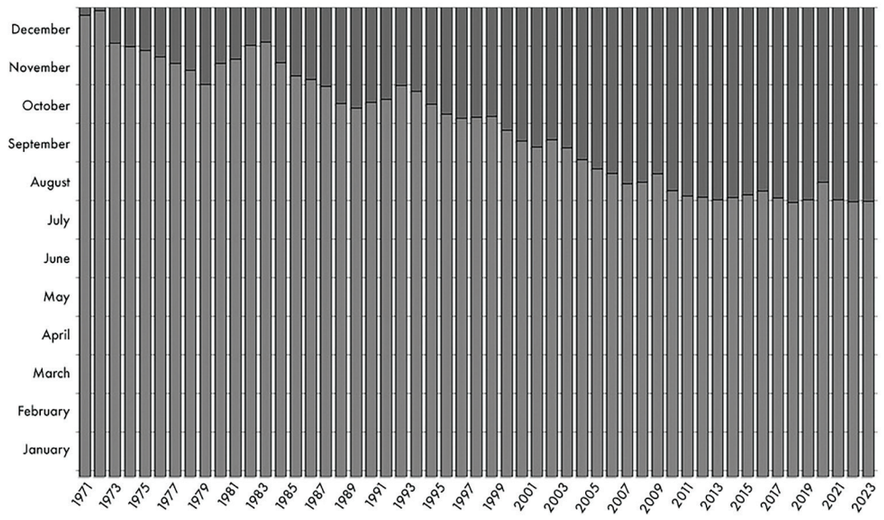
This work is essentially an excerpt from a thesis (Barika 2022) that examined the primary sectors of different countries of developed and emerging economies where biomass plays a critical role. It provides insight into how bioeconomy transition can influence the use of biomass for food, feed and fuel based on the Malthusian theory of demographic change and resource use. In the context of this study, the Malthusian theory is applied to the use of biomass resources similarly to Nikola (2022). It implies that as the global population continues to grow, and the demand for resources increases, there is a risk of overusing biomass to the point of depletion, and ultimate shortage of resources leading to potential economic disruption and social unrest. Therefore, it emphasizes the necessity of responsible, efficient, and sustainable biomass utilization. Notably, bioeconomy is primarily considered to be at its emerging stage, hence no work has been done to demarcate its impact from other programmes yet. Consequently, this work relies on a scientific review approach to explicate the subject matter.

Importance of bioeconomy

Generally, the concept of bioeconomy synchronizes the efficient utilization of natural or biological resources with economic growth rooted in social, economic and environmental sustainability (Boyer et al. 2022). The essence of the bioeconomy transition is to decouple economic growth from carbon emission thus changing the long-existing order in which economic growth happens at the expense of the environment (European Commission 2018). Bioeconomy has also been seen as a major political project in recent times that promises to address discrete environmental issues through dedicated problem-solving techniques harmonizing technology use with resource efficiency to promulgate social stability (Baasch 2021). Interestingly, over 60 countries globally have embraced the bioeconomy framework which largely focuses on biomass as the primary economic raw material and substitute for fossil fuel. Most nations in the global North have developed dedicated pathways for economic transition to a bioeconomy. Meanwhile, in the global South many countries have also embraced the bioeconomy but only a few have developed a dedicated transition pathway, while others appear to be contemplating or indecisive at the moment (Boyer et al. 2022). From a more general point of view, the rapidly increasing connection between political stability and energy and food security has contributed to social restiveness and economic crises in many countries (Popp et al. 2013).

The events unfolding across the globe in recent times serve as stark reminders of the alarming pace at which natural resources are being depleted, placing the entire ecosystem at risk (Gills–Morgan 2020) as depicted in Figure 2. The increasing rate of technological advancement, as well as human population growth and increasing development demands, is exerting new pressure on ecological resources that were primarily involved in food production and conservation of biodiversity, thus shortening the resource utilization period, as evident in the Earth Overshoot Day chart. It is obvious that the period of ecological consumption is getting shorter as the year goes by hence increasing the margin for the non-renewable use of renewable resources. This is coming together with the increase in demand on natural resources for food, feed, energy and environmental safety, all of which will no doubt impact every sector and activity that rely on ecological resources in the future. This predicament has catalysed a global campaign against the continuous exploitation of non-renewable resources and the unsustainable utilization of renewable ones, thereby propelling a transition towards renewable resources and their sustainable use. To this end, biomass, which is seen as the most abundant renewable biological resource and hence sustainable, naturally plays a central role in the transition to bioeconomy (Boyer et al. 2022, Priefer et al. 2017).

Figure 2
Earth Overshoot Day 1971 to 2022



Source: National Footprint and Biocapacity Accounts, 2022.

Biomass is a renewable resource derived from a wide range of natural materials, useful in different industries among which food, feed and energy are most prominent, especially because of the increasing drive for sustainability and energy transition (Szarka et al. 2021). As a source of food, biomass can provide a sustainable and nutritious source of calories and protein. For example, crops such as corn and soybeans are commonly used to produce food products such as oils, sweeteners and protein supplements. As a source of feed, biomass is used to provide sustainable and affordable animal feed. Finally, as a source of fuel, biomass is useful in renewable energy generation, such as biofuels, biodiesels, and biogas (Bai–Gabnai 2021, Igbeghe et al. 2023).

Notably, the locus of the bioeconomy transition revolves around biomass, especially because of its multi-functionality and its abundance in nature, in addition to its social, economic, and environmental benefits in the bioeconomy framework (Szarka et al. 2021). However, the use of biomass for food, feed and fuel is not without its challenges. One of the key challenges is balancing the demand for biomass as a resource for different applications (Igbeghe 2022). For example, using crops for biofuels or bioplastics may compete with the demand for food and animal feed. Another challenge is ensuring the sustainability of biomass production, particularly with respect to land-use change and biodiversity loss. More so, the production of biomass can have significant environmental impacts, including on greenhouse gas emissions and water use.

Interestingly, the bioeconomy has been characterized by the utilization of biological resources for the production of goods, services, and innovations. It involves the sustainable use of resources to ensure long-term viability; an interdisciplinary approach that integrates knowledge and practices from various fields to create value-added products, processes, and solutions; innovation and technology-driven transformation of biological resources to high-value products, services, and solutions; economic and societal benefits through sustainable and responsible utilization of natural resources; and an ethical and responsible approach to sustainable development (Szarka et al. 2021, Wohlfahrt et al. 2019). From the foregoing, one can sufficiently infer the centrality and indispensability of biomass in the bioeconomy from farmers to researchers and organizations to policymakers, and indeed all stakeholders.

Furthermore, stakeholders have raised concerns over the feasibility of the sustainable use of biomass amidst the increasing global population and pressure on the limited and finite agricultural resources necessary for biomass production (Igbeghe 2022). Meanwhile, the competitive use of biomass for food, feed and fuel, which has witnessed significant growth lately with biomass contributing about 10% of the global energy supply, also calls for worry (Muscat et al. 2020). Some other relevant concerns include the growing imbalance in food consumption that is widening the gap between food-secure and food-insecure countries, changing dietary demands, food consumption patterns, and economic status, especially in emerging economies (FAO, IFAD, UNICEF, WFP, WHO 2020). However, the context of bioeconomy seems to provide answers to all of these issues via advanced technology deployment in sustainable production, circularity in consumption approach, waste minimization, and resource use efficiency. Existing studies provide general insight into the economic, social and environmental impacts of bioeconomy on biomass, but the question of the implications on land use, biodiversity and rural economies, especially as regards biomass for food, fuel and feed in a sustainable bioeconomy has been largely underexplored. Consequently, this study aims to bridge this gap and provide answers to these essential questions.

The role of biomass for food in a sustainable bioeconomy

In the context of a sustainable bioeconomy, biomass can play a vital role in providing food security and supporting economic growth while reducing greenhouse gas emissions and mitigating climate change. Meanwhile, food systems constitute the largest share of the bioeconomy at about 71% (FAO 2018). Food demand is undergoing structural changes due to factors such as population growth, urbanization, religious habits, increasing per capita income and other trends in consumption, for example, changing dietary patterns, the knowledge of the origin of meat/food, and characteristics of production (Vida–Szűcs 2020).

Biomass is naturally the largest share of the food basket in every country, region, or

locality. According to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO 2022), biomass contributes significantly to global food production, providing around 80% of the dietary energy intake of people in developing countries. This is especially true for rural communities where biomass serves as the primary source of food, fuel and income. In the context of bioeconomy, waste products from the food and food production process can be transformed to produce biofuels, bioplastics and other bioproducts, which can replace fossil-based products and contribute to the circular economy (Nikola 2022). Through this, new niches and value chains will be introduced to the food supply circle ensuring maximization of resources.
Sustainable biomass production and utilization are most critical for a sustainable bioeconomy. The production of biomass must be done in a way that does not harm the environment, compromise food security or exacerbate social inequality. According to Chen et al. (2022), sustainable biomass production can be achieved through the use of diverse cropping systems, agroforestry and sustainable land management practices that conserve soil health and biodiversity.

Additionally, biomass production for food must be prioritized to ensure food security for the population. According to the United Nations World Food Programme (2023), the current scale of malnutrition and hunger globally is increasing at an unprecedented rate, with statistics showing about 828 million people facing food insecurity, more than 900,000 striving to survive calamitous climatic conditions, and over 345 million others projected to slide into food insecurity. Regrettably, these conditions are worsened by increasing global uncertainties such as pandemics, war, floods, drought, and famine. The situation, therefore, calls for an urgent need for action through the bioeconomy framework. The sustainable use of biomass in a bioeconomy can help to reduce food insecurity and poverty by providing alternative livelihoods for smallholder farmers and creating new markets for bio-based products. However, the production of biomass for food must be done in a way that does not compromise the availability of land for other crops, forests and biodiversity conservation. Sustainable land management practices can ensure the optimal use of land while preserving natural resources for future generations. With the proper policies and investments, biomass can contribute significantly to a sustainable bioeconomy that benefits people, the environment and the economy.

The role of biomass for feed in a sustainable bioeconomy

Statistical sources show that the livestock sub-sector accounts for 14.5% of global greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions (FAO 2022) which is one critical factor the bioeconomy aims to address. In the context of biomass for feed in a sustainable bioeconomy, circularity, feed efficiency, and sustainable production appear to be the most essential driving factors. Climate change and related environmental issues affect all people globally and should be solved simultaneously and within a short time (Gabnai 2022).

Biomass has been an important component of livestock feed since time immemorial. However, it is relevant in the bioeconomy because of the necessity of reducing emissions from livestock production, ensuring sustainable production, and providing livestock feed efficiently. According to FAO (2022), biomass contributes significantly to global feed production, providing around 40% of the dietary energy intake of livestock.

Biomass production for feed must ensure feed efficiency and animal welfare. The use of high-quality biomass for feed can improve the efficiency of feed conversion and reduce the environmental impact of livestock production. However, the use of low-quality biomass or feed ingredients that compete with human food can lead to negative environmental and social impacts, such as deforestation and food insecurity. Therefore, biomass for feed is best sourced from non-food sources or through circularity, where the use of food waste or agricultural residues as feed ingredients can reduce the environmental impact of waste disposal and contribute to the production of renewable energy and bioproducts. Besides, it is important to mention that innovations in agriculture, by increasing production efficiency and reducing the negative environmental impact, play an important role in resolving the conflict between food and energy production (Szőllősi et al. 2021).

The role of biomass for fuel in a sustainable bioeconomy

The use of biomass for fuel has gained increasing attention as a sustainable alternative to fossil fuels lately. The potential for biomass to contribute to a sustainable bioeconomy has been explored in numerous studies. According to Gutiérrez et al. (2018), biomass-based energy can reduce GHG emissions by up to 70% and help to mitigate climate change, reduce dependence on imported oil and create multiple jobs in rural areas. Regarding energy types, electricity energy is absolutely critical to development, as it is required in all nations and sectors (Németh et al. 2018). Unlike heat energy, which may not be in high demand in temperate regions, no nation can achieve development without electricity regardless of geographical conditions. Despite the efforts towards energy savings and transition, living standards are increasing around the world. This is particularly evident in developing economies and thus drives an increase in energy consumption (Nagy A et al. 2022, Tumiwa et al. 2022). However, limited land and sustainability criteria may limit future biomass use for energy (Popp et al. 2021), which will be in the range of 100–300 EJ/year by 2050, contributing 25–33% to the future global energy mix, according to Popp et al. (2013).

The bioeconomy will actively encourage and strengthen biomass-based energy production from various non-food biomass sources including agricultural residues, forest residues, and energy crops. This diversity in biomass sources makes it possible to produce energy locally, reducing the need for long-distance transportation of energy sources. Thus, it creates room for rapid rural development, especially due to

the strong positive connection between energy and economic growth. The possibility of producing portable biofuels, biogas and biodiesel, which are viable alternatives to fossil fuel, makes biomass for fuel a vital component of the bioeconomy.

Despite the potential benefits of biomass-based energy, there are challenges in implementing this technology on a large scale. According to Baasch (2021), the high cost of biomass production, transportation and storage has been a major barrier to the widespread adoption of biomass-based energy, but a massive investment in bioeconomy can reverse this trend. Additionally, the lack of infrastructure and regulatory policies to support biomass-based energy production and distribution has also inhibited biofuel expansion. On the other hand, there is the issue of competition between biomass-based energy production and food production. As the demand for biofuels increases, there is a risk that agricultural land could be diverted from food production to energy production, which could have negative impacts on food security. In the case of biofuels, the current conventional production cannot provide a long-term solution (Mizik 2021, Mizik–Gyarmati 2021).

Therefore, to address these issues and ensure the sustainable production of biomass-based fuel, the bioeconomy approach should focus on using waste and residue streams from food and feed production, as well as the production of energy crops on marginal lands. Additionally, the use of technological tools for biomass monitoring may be essential for sustainability in the use of biomass for fuel. Meanwhile, the entire life cycle of the product, from production to disposal should also be considered in order to help identify the environmental impacts of biomass-based energy production and guide decision-making to minimize negative impacts.

Conclusions

Bioeconomy offers great potential for the emergence of new sectors and value chains that will drive a resource-efficient, competitive and low-carbon economy. This will lead to the expansion of the biomass market through both local and international trade and collaboration, creating employment opportunities in the agriculture sector. Technological advancements will also enhance the multifunctionality of biomass in various industries, including food, beverages, forestry, agro-industrial products, aquaculture, the wood and timber industry, biochemical and biopharmaceuticals, biotechnology, bioenergy and agro-services. Nonetheless, it is crucial to channel dedicated and deliberate efforts towards organizing rural development in the context of bioeconomy to transform rural areas, especially in the global South, where more resource potentials exist, but there is the possibility of being left behind. Also, the technicality and complexity of bioeconomy management, which entails some novelties, requires competent hands in overseeing and managing sectors and resources. Furthermore, rural dwellers in such areas must be actively educated on how to organize and manage the dynamics of biomass use between food, feed and fuel, considering that the bioeconomy could

destabilize the country and unsettle the entire economy if it goes wrong. Therefore, a conscious effort must be made to manage the pressure on land use for agriculture that comes from construction and urbanization, in both the global North and South. Particularly, while bioeconomy provides a unique economic advantage to the global South to facilitate sustained economic growth that creates employment and opportunities, their low technological applications may constitute a constraint. Therefore, stakeholders should consider deploying affordable technologies and encouraging local innovations along with international collaboration to overcome this limitation.

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Funding

This research was funded by the National Research, Development and Innovation Fund of Hungary, project no. TKP2021-NKTA-32, financed under the TKP2021-NKTA funding scheme, by the bilateral scientific collaboration agreement 2019-2.1.13-TÉT_IN-2020-00061 and by the ELKH-11016 High Tech Technologies for Sustainable Management project.

Sixty years of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) and the challenges ahead to create a healthy food system for people and planet

Iva Pires

Introduction

Food is one of the basic needs of human beings and producing enough food has always been one of their main concerns. In addition to its economic relevance, agriculture has a social function of producing quality food at affordable prices for everyone to have access to at the same time as ensuring a fair standard of living for the agricultural community.

The EU's Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) was launched in 1962 to address the challenge of population growth and the need to provide affordable food for EU citizens. By providing financial support, the policy aimed to improve agricultural productivity and ensure a fair standard of living for farmers. CAP's subsidies led to a considerable increase in production and a fall in food prices, making food almost universally accessible for European citizens. Additionally, the globalization of food systems has contributed to the diversification of diets, that include fruit, cereals, meat and fish from increasingly distant and diverse geographical origins.

In 2022 the CAP celebrates its sixtieth anniversary. However, the present political, economic and environmental contexts, marked by climate urgency, the need to contribute to the fulfilment of the Paris Agreement and the Convention on Biological Diversity, the war in Ukraine, rising food and energy prices, water scarcity and soil erosion, are significantly different from the ones in which this policy was created. Food is a crucial economic commodity, with international trade rules enforced by the World Trade Organization since 1996. Farming went through a process of production intensification, and the current agricultural practices prioritize quantity over quality leading to negative consequences for the environment and for human health. Climate change is intensifying weather conditions, posing significant risks for farming, which has become capital-intensive. Furthermore, unexpected events such as the COVID-19 pandemic and the Russia-Ukraine war have created uncertainties in food supply chains. With the world population predicted to reach between 8.5 billion

and 10 billion people by 2050, the demand for food will only increase, putting more pressure on scarce resources such as water and land, as well as expensive ones such as energy and technology.

A transition towards environmentally- and climate friendly farming practices focused on quality instead of quantity, that ensure universal access to food at the same time as improving the resilience of the Food Supply Chain (FSC) and helping the stakeholders in coping with instabilities and uncertainty is of crucial importance.

The European Union is determined to accelerate that transition. To address the double challenge of increasing production while reducing the environmental footprint of food production the revised CAP has committed 40% of its budget to supporting farmers in adopting environmentally and climate-friendly farming practices and standards. This approach aims to accelerate the transition to a fair, healthy and environmentally friendly food system. This goal is seen in the Farm to Fork Strategy that is part of the Green Deal and the Commission's strategy to implement the United Nations' 2030 Agenda of Sustainable Development.

This essay aims to assess whether the revised CAP has the potential to create a healthy food system for people and the planet and support the many economic, environmental, and social challenges that European agriculture faces, and will continue to face, in the twenty-first century.

The Common Agricultural Policy (CAP): aims and unintended impacts

Food Policy is *"(..)the area of public policy concerning how food is produced, processed, distributed, and purchased. Food policies are designed to influence the operation of the food and agriculture system. This often includes decision-making around production and processing techniques, marketing, availability, utilization and consumption of food in the interest of meeting or furthering social objectives."* (Drake University, Agricultural Law Centre, 2011, cited by Smith, 2016: 1). Timmer et al. (1983) emphasize the social objectives of a food policy that *"encompasses the collective efforts of governments to influence the decision-making environment of food producers, food consumers, and food marketing agents in order to further social objectives. These objectives nearly always include improved nutrition for inadequately nourished citizens and more rapid growth in domestic food production"* (Timmer et al. 1983: 6). Pinstrup-Andersen and Watson clarify that "*By setting regulations or changing incentives for different stakeholders, food policy shapes the structure and functioning of the food system in the direction of the intended goals, and sometimes toward unintended effects"* (Pinstrup-Andersen–Watson 2011: 29).

The European Union's Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) was launched in 1962 as the first common policy under the Treaty of Rome, which established the European Economic Community (EEC) in 1957. The CAP aimed to support farmers in increasing

food production, which was in short supply due to the aftermath of World War II, to feed a growing population and to stabilize farm incomes. The main objectives defined in Articles 38 to 44 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU), are: (a) to increase agricultural productivity by promoting technical progress and by ensuring the rational development of agricultural production and the optimum utilization of the factors of production, in particular labour; (b) thus to ensure a fair standard of living for the agricultural community, in particular by increasing the individual earnings of persons engaged in agriculture; (c) to stabilize markets; (d) to assure the availability of supplies; and (e) to ensure that supplies reach consumers at reasonable prices (202/62 EN Official Journal of the European Union 7.6.2016 62 Consolidated Treaties).

The CAP has been successful in supporting farmers, increasing production considerably and reducing the price of food, providing almost universal access to food for European citizens. It has also contributed to the modernization of farming, although the number of farmers and those employed in agriculture in the EU has declined. Nonetheless, the sector remains a relevant economic sector, with 9.2 million people employed in agriculture in 2018, and the EU's agricultural industry contributed 1.3% to the EU's GDP in 2019, with a gross value added of EUR 181.5 billion (Eurostat 2020a). At the same time a process of concentration is taking place, as the utilized agricultural area in the EU-27 stagnates at 172 million hectares, and the number of farms has been decreasing consistently, leading to an increase in the average size of European farms (Heinemann and Weiss 2018).

Despite its success, the CAP is considered one of the most controversial EU policies, mainly because of its cost as a proportion of the EU budget, the huge regional imbalances in the distribution of benefits, the inadequate wages and working conditions for many seasonal migrants who seek employment, and the risks associated with food consumption due to the excessive use of agrochemicals or contamination during the production process. The environmental impact of food production, the CAP's objectives and measures that may contradict and conflict with other policies, and its unfair protection of European agriculture from overseas competition with adverse consequences for developing countries are also major concerns. We will briefly discuss each one of them.

The Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) has been strongly criticized for representing a substantial share of the Community budget. While the funding for the CAP has declined from 66% of the EU budget in the early 1980s to 30.9% in the 2021-2027 Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF), it remains the second-largest expenditure after the New and Reinforced Priorities (31.9%), and ahead of Economic, Social, and Territorial Cohesion (30.4%).[1] Despite the gradual decrease in funding, the CAP's significant allocation continues to be a matter of concern. Moreover, the budget's distribution is inadequate, and the majority of funding is misdirected, according to

1 The 2021–2027 EU budget – What's new?

Scown et al. (2020). Since 2000, the CAP has been divided into two pillars. Pillar I is focused on production-oriented policies, while Pillar II aims to support rural development. Despite their shared objectives, the two pillars receive vastly different levels of funding. Pillar I receives three-quarters of the total CAP budget and is fully funded by the EU, while Pillar II is substantially underfunded and requires co-financing from Member States. Additionally, the direct payments are primarily based on the amount of land utilized, which results in either excessively high or low payments for the average farm, as noted by Heinemann and Weiss (2018).

Although it was successful in improving the standard of living for those engaged in agriculture, it failed to ensure it for the entire agricultural community. Instead, it created significant regional differences between farms and farmers' incomes, which have persisted until now. In 2018, there was a 14-fold difference between the highest regional income per annual work unit (AWU) (Champagne-Ardenne) and the lowest (Małopolska–Pogórze). The Netherlands achieved the highest Family farm Income (FFI) per family work unit (FWU) (€57,100), and Slovenia the lowest (€5,100). Differences are also evident across different types of farming, as farm income was approximately five times higher in the horticulture sector than in the mixed crops and livestock sectors (EC 2021a). On top of that, although average farm incomes in the top 40% of regions are already well above the EU median, income support payments still average an additional €6,000–€11,900 per full-time worker in these regions, while CAP income support payments add only €1,200 per year to the average income of farmers in the lowest-income 10% of regions (where average annual agricultural factor income is €5,900), which are mostly in Eastern Europe and parts of Spain and Portugal (Scown et al. 2020: 240-1).

In addition to the profound inequalities in terms of the ability to benefit from CAP support that exist between regions and farmers, there are also issues related to family employment (mostly unpaid or part-time labour), the aging of farmers, rural areas having the highest proportion of people at risk of poverty or social exclusion compared to urban areas, and the precarious working conditions of seasonal migrants.

The share of people employed in agriculture fell from 6.4 % of total EU employment in 2005 to 4.4 % in 2018. Family labour (unpaid labour or part-time) accounts for 74 % of the total labour hours in the EU and was the most prevalent form of labour in most Member States, although it varies from region to region and according to the type of farming and the size of the farms (EC 2021a). In 2015, just over one quarter (25.5 %) of the rural population was at risk of poverty or social exclusion. Rural populations in the EU were more likely to have unmet needs for health care, higher rates of unemployment, low levels of education and lack of access to the internet. Eastern and Southern European countries are the most affected by these poor living conditions, which are unattractive for young people (Eurostat 2020b). The outflow of labour due to ageing of the farming population and lack of generational renewal is expected to increase (Schuh et al. 2019) thus creating seasonal short supply for the farming tasks

that are still heavily reliant on large amounts of labour, in particular, the harvesting of fruits and vegetables. To compensate for that seasonal labour scarcity, EU large farms rely more and more on migrant workers (both intra and out of EU), creating an *"agriculture–migration nexus"* between low-wage migration countries and regions of specialized intensive agricultural production and their associated processing and packing industries (King et al. 2021).

An estimated 800,000 to 1 million seasonal workers are hired each year in the EU, mainly in agriculture. A precise number is difficult to obtain due to undocumented migrants. Germany receives around 300,000 workers a year for agricultural, horticultural and forestry work, many of whom come from Central and Eastern Europe, especially Poland and Romania; in Sweden, about 3,000 to 5,000 migrant workers, mostly from Thailand, enter the country for the berry harvest every year; Polish agriculture is heavily reliant on Ukrainian workers, especially for the picking of soft fruit and apples; In Italy, 370,000 migrants from 155 countries are employed in agriculture, accounting for 27 % of the legal agricultural workforce; France and Spain employ 276,000 and 150,000 seasonal workers respectively, mainly from Morocco (Augère-Granier 2021). The crucial role of seasonal agricultural workers remained largely unnoticed until the COVID-19 pandemic. The successive lockdowns and border closures during the pandemic prevented the usual seasonal flows of workers, revealing the extent to which European agriculture relies on them. As a result, many crops were left unharvested in the fields, leading to significant losses for farmers and causing certain food supply failures. Meanwhile, those workers and their families were left struggling to survive. The Seasonal Workers Directive of 2014 grants migrant workers' equal treatment as regards terms of employment and some social benefits, but the COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the precarious working and living conditions of many of them (Augère-Granier 2021). Urgent Guidelines were issued by the European Commission to grant them additional protection in the context of the COVID-19 outbreak (European Commission 2020a). However, the scale of these flows and the vulnerability to which these workers are subjected require a more structured response to provide them with working conditions, housing and decent wages. So far *"The subsidies received depend on the size of the farms and their environmental practices, but there are no requirements related to the working conditions of the workers."* (Sajir et al. 2022: 13).

In addition, citizens are demanding an active voice in the transition of the food system towards sustainability. The increasing number of EU citizens who are overweight or obese is a consequence of more sedentary lifestyles and the higher consumption of processed and ultra-processed foods (Monteiro et al. 2017). Citizens are also becoming more aware of the risks associated with food consumption (Eurobarometer 2019). They are concerned about the safety of the final product due to the long food chains that lack transparency, the use of agrochemicals in food production, and controversial innovations such as GMOs, which involve genetic interventions that

are ethically and morally debatable (Scott et al. 2018: 460-61, Boccia–Punzo 2021). Despite the European Food Safety Authority's (EFSA) assessment that the likelihood of European citizens being exposed to pesticide residue levels that might be harmful to their health is low (EFSA 2019), a certain level of distrust still exists. While initially it was justified that the support of the CAP was mainly oriented towards increasing food production, nowadays consumers demand more quality instead of quantity. Alternative food movements, through food activism and political consumerism (Lorenzini 2022, Siniscalchi & Counihan 2014), are actively engaged in transforming food relations and the food system itself; they identify problems such as food safety, social inequalities and injustices related to food and they want to contribute solutions to overcoming them (Motta 2021).

The current food system and the way food is produced, and, in particular, processed by the agro-industry, is creating 'externalities' not only for consumers and the public health system but also for the economy as a whole as *"In OECD countries, overweight and its related conditions will curb gross domestic product by an estimated 3.3%."* (OECDa 2021:2). In the EU *"it is estimated that in 2017 over 950,000 deaths (one out of five) and over 16 million lost healthy life years were attributable to unhealthy diets, mainly cardiovascular diseases and cancers"* (ECb 2020: 13) and *"the disease-related malnutrition is estimated to cost the EU €120 billion annually"* (SAPEA 2020: 50). Therefore, there is an unbalanced distribution of profits. Large multinational food companies, such as Unilever and Nestlé, retain most of their profits while the costs, which are becoming increasingly unsustainable, are mainly supported by the consumers and the national health services, a burden that they will not be able to support forever (Pollan 2008: 150–173).

The transition towards a sustainable food system is crucial because the agricultural sector has a significant impact on the environment. The Food System's hidden socio-economic, health and environmental costs are estimated to be around 12 billion dollars per year, which is higher than the world's production value of 10 billion (Pharo et al. 2019: 12–13). On one hand, climate change has a significant impact on agricultural activity, reducing production and increasing costs through extreme events such as heatwaves, heavy rains, storm surges, flooding and droughts, especially in the case of irrigated crops. Agricultural activity also contributes to accentuating climate change through deforestation and greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions (Zurek et al. 2022). On the other hand, the agricultural sector impacts many environmental issues, such as cycles of nitrogen and phosphorus, water contamination and soil degradation and is considered one of the sectors that has most contributed to exceeding the 'planet's boundaries': *"The global food system is a prime driver – and generally the first victim – of the Anthropocene"* (Rockstrom et al. 2020: 3).

Despite including environmental concerns in the CAP agenda, the EU has not been able to prevent the reduction of biodiversity, the increase in GHG emissions (Heyl et al. 2021), land degradation and soil erosion (Panagos et al. 2021). Furthermore, European agriculture is becoming increasingly vulnerable to the intensifying occurrence and severity of extreme weather events, such as droughts and heatwaves, which have the largest negative economic impacts on Southern Europe, while Northern Europe and mountainous regions will likely experience more heavy precipitation extremes (Devot et al. 2023: 14). While the combination of climate change impacts on agriculture with unexpected events such as the COVID-19 pandemic and the Ukraine-Russia war are contributing, directly or indirectly, to the rise in food prices and to increased food insecurity, 20% of total food produced is lost or wasted. In the EU, this represents 88 million tonnes or 173 kg per person, with an estimated cost of 143 billion (Eurostat 2020c).

The CAP has also received criticism for including objectives and measures that may contradict and conflict with other policies or may even exacerbate problems or introduce new challenges when the effects of policies in one sector on another are not taken into account, for instance:

- ambitious anti-obesity strategies coexist with agro-commercial policies that make ultra-processed food cheap and abundant;
- the CAP offers bonuses to young farmers, along with a model of agricultural subsidies that drives up land prices and impairs access to land;
- the EU imposes rigorous environmental standards, while the counseling services that farmers would need to comply with are increasingly ill-equipped to support the transition;
- the EU has committed to addressing climate change under the Paris Agreement, while simultaneously promoting increased exports in high-emitting sectors such as meat and dairy through new trade agreements (IPES 2019: p.22).

Finally, policies such as the CAP, bioenergy policy, trade policy, fisheries policy and development aid policy are not always coherent in their objectives. Despite much change in the last decades, the CAP also affects global agricultural markets and has perverse consequences, particularly on developing countries, including the food security of the poorest countries. For example:

- the EU's renewable energy policy (biofuels), especially since the Renewable Energy Directive of 2009, which sought to reduce GHG emissions, establishes the mandatory incorporation of 20% of biofuel in transport fuel, and this has caused an increasing demand for food raw materials, which were diverted to the energy market (mainly rapeseed, and to a lesser extent sugar beet, wheat, corn and palm oil), undermining food security in the poorest countries; therefore, it is also accused of inconsistency with EU efforts to combat nutrition and food insecurity in the world;
- imported palm oil for EU-biodiesel production stimulated the expansion of palm plantations and led to negative environmental consequences, such as deforestation, degradation of water quality and impact on the local climate, as well as negative social consequences, including undermining traditional food systems

on which poor people rely for their food security;
- the food aid policy to minimize situations of hunger and food insecurity often has perverse consequences while there is no evidence of significant positive impacts, especially when the goal is to shift surplus products from the donor country, which does not always coincide with times of greater food shortage in the recipient countries, but ends up having a negative impact on local production and subsistence agriculture; the EU currently adopts codes of conduct to minimize these situations;
- despite the fact that the EU exempts many less developed countries from paying protective tariffs or has reduced the amount, which facilitates their exports, the very strict food standards of the EU are creating non-tariff trade barriers and excluding poor farmers from accessing markets (unable to meet quality standards and certification requirements due to high costs or lack of knowledge to do so) (Bureau–Swinnen 2018: 109–112).

Learning from the past: The challenges for the new CAP to create a healthy food system for people and planet

The Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) policy has undergone significant changes and reforms since its creation in order to address new challenges, including environmental concerns, food safety and the changing needs of the agriculture sector. These reforms include: (a) the 1992 reform which replaced the system of protection through guaranteed minimum prices for products, that resulted in high levels of overproduction, with a system of compensatory income support; (b) the 2000 reform, which introduced the "second pillar of the CAP" by reinforcing socio-structural and accompanying measures within a new rural development policy; (c) the 2003 reform, which decoupled aid from volumes produced to make farms more market-oriented and to reduce overproduction, introduced cross-compliance criteria concerning the environment and public health, ensured compatibility with WTO rules and established a single common market organisation (single CMO); (d) the 2009 reform, which reinforced complete decoupling of aid through gradual elimination of the remaining payments coupled to production and reoriented first pillar funds towards rural development; and (e) the 2013 reform which converted decoupled aid into a multifunctional support system, consolidated the two pillars of the CAP, consolidated single CMO tools and adopted a more integrated, targeted and territorial approach to rural development (Scown et al. 2020, Heinemann–Weiss 2018).

Sixty years after its creation, the CAP is currently undergoing another reform process. On one hand, the economic, political and social context is marked by turbulence and uncertainty and the challenges are far more complex and demanding. On the other hand, as discussed in the previous section, CAP has failed to provide both regions and farmers equal opportunities. Despite the several reforms, it created

a divide between the EU Northern countries, which received the lion's share of the funds and developed, and the Southern countries, where the rural regions progressively became impoverished and empty of population, and between the large farms, which modernized and mechanized, and the small farms that can hardly compete in a competitive economy and offer acceptable incomes to farmers. It also contributed to reducing biodiversity and to soil erosion.

The discussion on the transition to more sustainable agricultural systems is not only taking place in the EU but globally. Broad discussion is justified due to the complexity of the food system, the breadth and diversity of the stakeholders involved, the extensive environmental, economic and social impacts, and the massive challenges faced to nourish an increasing global population ensuring food security and nutrition for all and simultaneously improving environmental sustainability while creating the resilience to cope with unexpected events.

The OECD proposes that better and more coherent policies are needed to meet the triple challenge facing food systems around the world: simultaneously ensuring food security and nutrition for all, providing livelihoods along the food chain and improving environmental sustainability. Policies should take into account relevant synergies and trade-offs at the international, national and sub-national levels (OECD 2021b).

FAO built a common vision for sustainable food and agriculture based on five key principles: (a) Increase productivity, employment and value addition in food systems; (b) Protect and enhance natural resources; (c) Improve livelihoods and foster inclusive economic growth; (d) Enhanced resilience of people, communities and ecosystems; and (e) Adapt governance to new challenges (FAO 2014). Aligned with these five principles a guide was published in 2018, primarily directed towards decision-makers, presenting 20 practical and interconnected actions with the aim of transforming food and agriculture and driving achievement across the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (FAO 2018).

In response to criticisms of the CAP and the limitations of existing solutions to reconcile the multiple aspects of sustainability (economic, social and environmental) (Pe'er et al. 2020), there is ongoing discussion in the European Union about the need for a new approach to integrated governance for food systems.

The discussion on reforming the CAP after 2020 began informally during the Dutch Presidency of the Council in May 2016. This was followed by the formation of thematic task forces, a public consultation on the future of the CAP from February to May 2017 and the release of a communication on The Future of Food and Farming by the European Commission in 2017, which highlighted the challenges facing agriculture and rural areas, and set objectives and pathways for a *"smarter, modern, and sustainable CAP."* The new CAP for 2023–2027 was formally adopted on 2 December, 2021, and became effective on 1 January, 2023. The new CAP is designed to be a "greener CAP" in line with the European Green Deal and make a significant contribution to the Farm to Fork Strategy. The CAP is focused on ten specific objec-

tives, including environmental goals such as addressing climate change, preserving landscapes and biodiversity; social goals such as ensuring a fair income for farmers, supporting generational renewal and protecting food and health quality; and economic goals such as increasing competitiveness and fostering knowledge and innovation. The farm payment scheme is now known as basic income support for sustainability (BISS), and the new Eco-schemes have been introduced, which allocate at least 25% of the direct payments budget to reward farmers for environmental care and climate action.[2]

It is very important, considering the diversity of the EU territory, the farm sector, and the socio-economic fabric, that the CAP offers more flexibility for Member States. Through tailored CAP strategic plans, countries can specify how CAP funds will address local needs to achieve measurable results on common objectives. This is a significant achievement because it gives Member States more autonomy to spend funds in a more efficient way according to the specificities of their agriculture.

Another important development in the new CAP is the introduction of a social conditionality rule, which, for the first time, links CAP income support to basic social and labour rights for farm workers, particularly immigrants, who are often in vulnerable situations. These rights include transparent and predictable employment conditions, paid leave, social security and on-farm health and safety related to farm machinery, equipment or dangerous substances. However, it should be noted that these new rules will only become mandatory in 2025, although they can be implemented voluntarily starting in 2023. Four CAP Strategic Plans (CSPs) have already included social conditionality in their rules starting in 2023 (France, Italy, Austria, and Luxembourg), while Spain and Portugal will begin enforcing these rules from 2024. The other Member States will apply it from 2025 (EC 2023: 16).

The eco-schemes in the new CAP aim to incentivize farmers to adopt more sustainable agricultural practices, such as agroecology, agroforestry, organic farming and high nature value (HNV) farming. These practices must contribute to achieving the EU Green Deal targets, including reducing pesticide use and increasing the agricultural area under organic farming and high-diversity landscape features. The eco-schemes are funded by the CAP and require farmers to go beyond the baseline requirements and obligations, as defined according to national/regional priorities (EC 2021b).

Despite considering eco-schemes as a promising approach, the CAP reform agenda does not provide the instruments to effectively and urgently respond to climate change and biodiversity loss (Heyl et al. 2020). Eco-schemes can hardly reverse the current situation and support the transition towards more sustainable farming practices throughout the EU. On one hand, they are voluntary, and the flexibility of member states to determine the share of direct payments invested in eco-schemes and how farmers will have to justify the additional costs (or earnings foregone) induced by a change in production will create inequalities between farmers in countries that will be more restrictive and farmers in countries that might transfer direct payments as a kind of a lump sum (Heinemann and Weiss 2018). On the other hand, as long as *"CAP payments are biased against, rather than in favour of, marginal regions that provide public goods in the form of climate- and biodiversity-friendly agriculture..."* (Scown et al. 2020: 242) and the highest GHG-emitting regions with intensive livestock production systems continue to be given an advantage in the distribution of financial aid, there will be no incentives for farmers to adopt more extensive and environmentally friendly farming practices.

The 2013 reform had already been criticized because, despite introducing some innovations in direct payments, they were insufficient for European agriculture to respond to economic, social and environmental challenges (Popp and Jambor 2015). Under the new reform, direct payments – almost three-quarters of the budget is reserved for direct payments to farmers within Pillar I (€265 billion) – are not very different from the previous ones that already proved to be inefficient, and will contribute to maintaining regional and social imbalances in incomes (Heinemann and Weiss 2018). Only with reallocating funding from Pillar I to Pillar II and among instruments will CAP be able to finance environmental and climate measures and to support the fulfilment of other objectives and targets of the Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development (Scown et al. 2020).

The new reform is criticized for lack of ambition as it would need a more in-depth reform to deliver on both environmental and socio-economic challenges (Pe´er et al. 2020) and to solve inconsistencies, incoherencies and policy gaps (Galli et al. 2018). In light of ongoing challenges related to sustainability, climate change, changing consumer preferences and health issues, the current CAP, based on two main objectives (to secure low food prices for consumers and income for farmers) is *"out of date"* (Fresco and Poppe 2016). EU governance structures are also ill-adapted to deal with unhealthy diets and with other negative externalities of the food system (De Shutter et al. 2020).

There is growing support for an overarching European food and nutrition policy that would replace the fragmented landscape of policies that affect the functioning of the EU food system (SAPEA 2020, De Schutter et al. 2020, iPES Food 2019, Candel–Pereira 2017, van 't Veer et al. 2017). Fresco and Poppe suggest a broader Common Agricultural and Food Policy (CAFP) that would strengthen the resilience of the entire food chain, recognising the changed power relations within the chain and the interaction between consumption and production (Fresco–Poppe, 2016: 39). The International Panel of Experts on Sustainable Food Systems (IPES) advocates for a Common Food Policy for the EU that integrates policies across the food system and all levels of governance, establishes a governance framework for a transition with a long-term vision (IPES 2019), and empowers social actors beyond agribusinesses and

2 https://agriculture.ec.europa.eu/common-agricultural-policy/cap-overview/cap-2023-27/key-reforms-new-cap_en

large agricultural stakeholders to create a healthy food system for people and the planet (De Schutter et al. 2020). Such a policy must take an interdisciplinary, integrated and inter-sectoral approach and evolve at local, national, European and global levels (SAPEA 2020). It must adopt a holistic approach to the food system, bridging gaps, inconsistencies and contradictions between policies, such as agriculture, health, distribution and consumption, trade, food safety, environment and development policies, and ensuring alignment with the objective of creating a sustainable food system that prioritizes dietary quality, public health, sustainability and social inclusiveness (Candel–Pereira 2017, van 't Veer et al. 2017). Moreover, the transition in food systems must occur in harmony with a broader transition to sustainability across the entire economy (IPES Food 2019).

The European Union is currently discussing a legislative framework, expected to be published in 2023, that will form the basis of a "truly integrated food policy" aimed at sustainability. The framework will include definitions, general principles and requirements for implementing the Farm to Fork Strategy. The goal is to eliminate current incongruities resulting from independently formulated policies, where objectives and policy instruments have multiplied in a confusing and ineffective manner, and with inconsistencies and contradictions among them (Bock et al. 2022).

However, a truly integrated food policy needs to address ongoing challenges related to sustainability, climate change, changing consumer preferences and public health and also consider the role of new technologies and digitalization in agriculture, including precision farming and data analytics, and the contribution of agroecology and sustainable farming practices such as organic farming, conservation agriculture and agroforestry. Moreover, it must involve a debate on potential risks and their acceptance by consumers, along with the role of science in boosting innovations. Stakeholders, including farmers, NGOs, social movements, academia, industry groups, distributors and food services, should be involved in policy debates. Finally, the social and economic impacts of new policies and programmes should be assessed both within the EU and in third countries.

This is not an easy task when there are several stakeholders with different interests, different strategies and different power and policy positions within the Food Supply Chain. These stakeholders use culturally embedded frames to promote their own views and may attribute different meanings, sometime contradictory, diametrically opposed and conflicting, to a concept, such as food security or sustainability, which adds complexity to the process of negotiating and discussing food policy reform (Candel et al. 2014, Van Gorp–van der Goot 2012).

Conclusion

The transition towards more sustainable food systems is crucial to address the challenges faced by European agriculture. The revised CAP and the Farm to Fork strategy have the potential to create a healthy food system for people and the planet by supporting farmers in adopting environmentally- and climate-friendly practices and ensuring universal access to food. However, the implementation of these policies is crucial to achieving the desired outcomes.

The current Common Agricultural Policy of the European Union has been criticized for its lack of ambition in addressing the so many environmental and socio-economic challenges food systems face nowadays. The allocation of the CAP budget has always been a controversial issue due to its significant share of the EU budget. Still, despite some innovations in direct payments and the introduction of the eco-schemes, the CAP remains largely ineffective in supporting farmers to adopt more environmental and climate initiatives. The need for a more in-depth reform of the CAP is evident in light of the ongoing challenges related to sustainability, climate change, changing consumer preferences and health issues. An integrated and sustainable approach to agriculture and food systems is needed to ensure the well-being of citizens, protect the environment and support economic development in the EU and beyond. The development of an overarching European food and nutrition policy is being advocated to substitute the fragmented landscape of policies that affect the functioning of the EU food system. This requires an integrated, interdisciplinary and inter-sectoral approach that aligns all policies with the same objective of ensuring a transition towards a sustainable food system. The EU is already discussing a legislative framework that will provide the basis for a "truly integrated food policy" aimed at sustainability. Such a policy should not only address ongoing challenges but also the role of new technologies and digitalization in agriculture, the contribution of agroecology and sustainable farming practices, and the social and economic impacts of new policies and programmes.

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Rural societies in the 21st century

Interdisciplinary perspectives

Karl Bruckmeier

The themes of Imre Kovách's research stretch from agriculture and rural sociology through social integration and stratification, policy research, and elite studies to energy use and sustainability; they show in exemplary form how sociological research has expanded thematically since the late twentieth century. In a recent publication this is shown in a study on interacting problems in the social and ecological transformation of agriculture. Farming is *"changing at a rapid pace. The traditional peasantry is permanently disappearing from the European countryside – and is being replaced by a variety of farmers, of which an EU research study lists ten types. The comprehensive reports on sustainability and precision agriculture emphasize that, without supporting for generational renewal, the necessary restructuring of agriculture will not take place."* (Kovách et al. 2022: 1). The connection of such themes is already visible in his earlier publications, for example in Csurgó et al. (2008). The theme of sustainability transformation shows the direction of the changing knowledge practices in his research, which is not only part of sociology in Central and Eastern Europe. It shows in exemplary form the opening towards interdisciplinary research about complex social and environmental problems that happened in the past decades: global change in forms of land use, urbanization, natural resource use, energy problems, sustainability, climate change and biodiversity. Why and how sociological research needs to be integrated with broader, global and interdisciplinary research is discussed here – to show the difficulties of such broadening of research agendas and transgressing of disciplinary boundaries.

Dominant themes over the long term in European rural sociology include agricultural and rural development, social stratification and integration, rural communities and ways of life, mobility and modernization. Newer themes have emerged from environmental sociology since the 1970s, with a renewal of the older tradition of human ecology by Catton and Dunlap, where especially the "human exce(m)ptionalism paradigm" was criticised for ignoring the dependence of humans on nature. The devel-

opment of the two subdisciplines shows that sociology as an academic discipline was for a long time cut off from knowledge exchange with the natural and environmental sciences through its specialization. This remained the dominant worldview guiding modernization in science and society, for example, in the reasoning that modern society has, with the help of science and technology, become independent from nature. In rural and in environmental sociology the societal relations with nature and the state of the ecological environment could be ignored less and less when dealing with problems of land and natural resource use, which are as much part of nature as of society. The disciplinary boundaries of knowledge production are crossed because of the complexity of problems to cope with: pollution of air, water and soils, natural resource use, climate change, biodiversity loss, land use change and population growth are problems that do not follow the disciplinary specialization of knowledge production. With these problems society appears as connected with, embedded in, or dependent on nature and the scientific division of labour in disciplines becomes a hindrance in studying complex interconnected problems. Such problems show disciplinary boundaries as artificial, dissecting and fragmenting "real world problems", for which piecemeal solutions become inefficient. Interdisciplinary knowledge creation and integration developed rapidly, together with the broader epistemic discourse about "new knowledge production" since the 1990s (described below), although it has existed for longer. The opening towards interdisciplinary cooperation in social scientific research and the adoption of knowledge from environmental research brought a series of conceptual, epistemological and methodological problems that remain insufficiently solved until today.

The changing discourses of rural sociology in the twenty-first century

The changes in rural sociology in the past decades originated from outside sociology, mainly through the adoption of new, environmental themes. Rural societies are not separate or autonomous, but part of larger societal systems, where the term society is more complex. Modern societies are differentiated functionally and spatially, stretching from local to global levels. With the processes of economic, political and cultural globalization, rural societies become more and more dependent on changes in society at large and on the global environmental changes of late modernity.

New research themes in reaction to global problems affecting agriculture and food production, rural areas and rural development have appeared in the international discourse of rural sociology in Europe since the end of the twentieth century. The new themes required the integration of knowledge from social, natural and environmental sciences and corresponding practices of knowledge application in public policies, governance, and collective action. Environmental and resource use problems affecting agricultural production and rural development seem the main issues, studied

in several disciplines and subdisciplines; they have appeared in the global, as much scientific as political, discourse of sustainable development, since the Brundtland report *Our Common Future* from 1987. Although an opening of sociology and the social sciences to new themes can be observed since the 1990s, for example, in the report of the Gulbenkian Commission (Wallerstein 1996), it is not necessarily one towards interdisciplinary knowledge creation and integration, more one with new specialization in the form of subdisciplines, as paradigmatically in the new environmental sociology, where both orientations conflict with each other.

Interdisciplinary knowledge practices and the inclusion of environmental knowledge in social research show the difficulties of integrating knowledge created according to different paradigms, theories, epistemologies and methods. In social-scientific rural research, environmental problems, interdisciplinary knowledge practices, and the future of agriculture and food systems under the conditions of growing damage to ecosystems and the reaching of the limits of the global resource base turned out to be complex themes that changed the dominant view of science as producing reliable, sufficient and objective knowledge. The adoption of knowledge about environmental problems happened slowly, although the risks for the future of modern and rural society have been discussed since the 1970s, after the paradigmatic debate about "the end of peasants" began in French rural sociology (Mendras 1967), and global environmental problems entered the research agenda with the first conference of the United Nations on the Human Environment in Stockholm, 1972 and the first report of the Club of Rome on *Limits to growth* published in 1972. The themes and problems of environmental pollution, climate change, biodiversity loss, land use change, rapid population growth and urbanization began to change the research agendas in most social scientific disciplines. In the new geo-sociology (Schroer 2022: 17) the boundaries between social and natural sciences are blurred; the author sees knowledge exchange between biology, geography and anthropology as necessary in sociology in order to understand the current problems in late modern society. The efforts to deal with such complex problems resulted in contrasting trends in scientific knowledge production – further subdisciplinary specialization as in the sociology of risk (Beck 2009) and the environment (see below), or interdisciplinary knowledge integration and broadening of the research agendas. The complex problems were mainly investigated empirically and with the use of models; theoretical reflection and knowledge integration remained limited in the new subdisciplines as well as in the interdisciplinary research, for example, in research on the nexus between social and ecosystems, the nature of systemic risks, and the future threats to agricultural and rural development.

The dominant global trend that has necessitated the understanding of complex global systems is the "great acceleration", characterized by rapid economic and population growth as well as excessive exploitation of natural resources. This trend has been subject to critical analysis in the discourse on the "limits to growth". Attempts to counter the trend through "sustainable development", first and insufficiently dis-

cussed in the Brundtland report from 1987, today discussed with the concept of social–ecological transformation, have so far had limited success. The achievement of seventeen sustainable development goals formulated by the United Nations (in the *Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development*, adopted by the members in 2015), has hardly advanced; activities to redirect the "great acceleration" through a "great transformation" towards sustainability are more and more delayed and the processes of building global governance are slow, with many hindrances through the fragmented architecture of international relations in the UN system. Global governance as a collective name for a variety of transformation processes since the 1980s is a torn concept which includes heterogeneous phenomena in international relations, for which the global North-South relations discussed in the Brundtland report and in the report of the Commission on Global Governance (1995) have become the critical question. Expectations that global governance can develop into an alternative to neoliberal globalization (Brand et al. 2000) have not yet been realized, which requires a more critical analysis of the hindrances to and possibilities for social-ecological transformation and the development of a research agenda for global environmental governance (Bruckmeier 2019). The UN-guided sustainable development process has so far not succeeded to fulfil the expectations of overcoming the North–South divide. The new global governance project (Biermann 2014) continues to address the challenge of realizing sustainable development through a social-ecological transformation. This requires new forms of political and economic cooperation that include the transformation of agriculture and food systems.

Interdisciplinary knowledge practices have a longer history, although not always under this name. Forms of the exchange of knowledge, concepts and methods between specialized disciplines can be found since the development of modern sciences from the sixteenth century onwards. Early examples are found in political economy (the detection of blood circulation in the human body, for example, stimulated the development of the first economic circulation and reproduction models), but also in the development of sociology in the nineteenth century. Before it became established as an academic discipline, it was influenced by natural-scientific ideas, for example, as a social science imitating the exact methods of physics in the positivistic tradition, a new science of social physics; the evolutionary sociology of Spencer was influenced by the biological evolution theory of Darwin. New forms of multi- and interdisciplinary science developed mainly after World War II, from practice-oriented or applied research, driven by the insight that real problems cannot be understood and solved with the knowledge produced through ever increasing disciplinary specialization in academic science that fragments the problems (Klein 1990). Research to deal with the complex problems of late modern society requires inter- and transdisciplinary knowledge practices and joint action in science, governance and civil society.

The academic traditions of disciplinary knowledge specialization are still dominant. However, the term discipline does not clearly separate specialized knowledge

fields, as the often-overlapping research themes in the disciplines of the social sciences show. Since the rise of environmental research and policy in the 1970s, interdisciplinary research and boundary crossing have been spreading quickly, culminating in the forms described as "new knowledge production" (Funtowicz and Ravetz 1993, Gibbons et al. 1994, Etzkowitz and Leydesdorff 2000, Nowotny et al. 2001), with "mode 2" and other forms of heterodox, non-academic science supported either by new social movements, or by powerful players such as those in the triple helix (science, governments, industry). The research funding of the European Union shows its support for forms of the new knowledge production – mode 2, interdisciplinary, transdisciplinary (through the participation of stakeholders and adoption of their knowledge), and problem-driven research. In non-academic research interdisciplinarity seems more advanced than in the universities, however, cognitive and methodological problems arise when crossing disciplinary boundaries and leaving the "disciplinary comfort zone" (Lidskog and Waterton 2016: 396). The discussion of these authors about the relations between environmental sociology and research on the Anthropocene or Earth shows the dilemmas of opening sociology to post- and inter-disciplinarity: rather than leading to interdisciplinary knowledge integration, environmental sociology tends to create sociological sub-narratives of the Anthropocene and to shift disciplinary boundaries to bring the new themes onto the sociological research agenda. The critical environmental sociology of Burns and Schaefer Caniglia (2016) comes closer to an interdisciplinary approach, similar to human ecology, where human and societal relations with nature are studied (Steiner 2016).

The broadening of rural research

The changes in rural social research are not easily described by the vague formula of "enlarging the research agenda". The publications in social scientific journals such as *Sociologia Ruralis*, *Journal of Rural Research*, *Rural Sociology* or *Environmental Sociology* show that disciplinary boundaries are crossed in many forms of empirical research and theoretical reflection, but reflections about interdisciplinary knowledge cultures and practices are rare. It is easier to describe the enlarging of the research agenda thematically than to specify the forms of interdisciplinary research epistemologically and methodologically. Social research on environmental problems cannot be reduced to the perception and representation of environmental problems within society and through social actors and groups. Structures and processes in complex societal systems do not dissolve simply in the action forms of individuals and groups and environmental communication; a variety of structural and institutional components affect the development of social and ecological systems at different scale levels; to change them requires knowledge, which is often not reliable or sufficient, as well as power. Also, a Habermasian discourse ethics, in which the strength of the convincing argument counts, faces challenges in the environmental discourse, when no single and exclusive

truth exists, but competing and conflicting knowledge claims, the vested interests of powerful actors and asymmetrical power relations influence knowledge production and its application.

The interdisciplinary nature of research on environmental problems, with the research in interdisciplinary fields, such as human-, social- and political ecology, or sustainability science and transformation research, becomes clearer than through disciplinary lenses. All these are exemplary forms of inter- and/or transdisciplinary science, with specific epistemologies and methodologies. In paradigmatic form Fischer-Kowalski and Haberl (2007) describe the complexity of land use and its change in terms of interdisciplinary social-ecological research, where the energetic constraints of agricultural and other land use become visible through the analysis of societal metabolism. Interdisciplinary environmental research and its results are, for example, documented in the following handbooks and sources: in the handbooks of political ecology by Bryant (2015) and Perreault (2019); in the compendium of human ecology by Steiner (2016); in the compendium of social ecology by Haberl et al. (2016); in the handbook of transdisciplinary research by Hirsch-Hadorn et al. .(2008); in the handbook of sustainability by Caradonna (2018) and in the handbook of sustainability science and research by Leal Filho et al. (2018); in the descriptions of transformation research by von Wissel (2015) and in the handbook of transformation research by Merkel et al. (2019). Sustainability science is a paradigmatic form of interdisciplinary science that reflects the problems of knowledge production under conditions of complexity and uncertainty.

Within the academic tradition of specialization-driven knowledge creation, the changes in research are described as new forms of specialization – regional, problem oriented, or following the differentiation of society into sectors and spheres of action (rural, urban, etc). The epistemological discourse of knowledge production in the second half of the twentieth century tended to relativize and dissolve disciplinary boundaries by showing the temporary nature or validity of scientific knowledge that was generated with changing paradigms (Kuhn 1962: paradigms) and research programmes (Lakatos 1977); after that came the debates about new forms of knowledge production, limits of knowledge, competing forms of knowledge, and unreliable knowledge. Within the interdisciplinary forms of research, the differentiation of research is thematically specified and relational (studying relations between different types of systems such as society and nature), as it is for example in the interdisciplinary ecological research mentioned above, analysing in different forms and with different approaches the changing relations between modern society and nature.

Social-scientific rural research has included the new themes mentioned above since the 1990s, but how has this affected the conceptual, methodological and theoretical tools of this research? It becomes necessary to reflect on the basic concepts and their changes, that of rural society, rural areas and rural development. The overarching concept of rural society was not closely connected with general socio-

logical theories that appeared during the twentieth century; it remained a concept with unclear boundaries, used pragmatically, in varying forms, mainly in empirical research. The concept of rural areas shifts the problems of cognition simply to a spatial and territorial perspective that seems easier to apply than the theoretically-shaped concept of rural society. The concept of rural development inherits the difficulties of working with the unclear concept of development.

Fuzzy concepts – rural society, rural area, rural development

From the traditional concept of rural society being different from urban society, it is obvious that both concepts require further elaboration and specification: is the relationship between the two forms more one of spatial differentiation (as in the notion of rural area) or more of social and economic differentiation (as in the term society)? Are they sufficient to describe and explain modern societies? How much do these concepts carry the properties of modern societies as functionally differentiated and multi-scale societal systems? How can we assess the amalgamation of rural and urban areas through processes that have been studied in rural sociology? In accordance with the modernization paradigm, for example, rural areas appeared first as backward and lacking in modernization, whilst later catching up with modernization through their urbanization, in the sense that urban lifestyles and work practices spread to the countryside, and the two spheres became networked through the infrastructures of the "information society": new forms of mobility, communication and work based on modern transport and communication technologies. How to explain, for example, the relationship between the spatial differentiation (local, national, global societies) and the functional differentiation of modern societies (societal subsystems as economy, polity, education, science)? How did the development of a globalizing, multi-scale society change the local, national and global organization scales in the interconnected forms of rural and urban societies? In the historical development of rural sociology since the early twentieth century, one cannot find definitive answers, but instead contested and competing concepts, explanations and approaches.

Regarding the term "rural society", the description of the historically changing forms of its research (Box 1) does not resolve the controversial discussion about its nature.

Box 1. Rural society

"Sociological investigation of rural society may be classified into four broad categories: studies using rurality as the independent variable; comparative studies of rural societies; studies for which rural society is the setting within which family systems, ecological systems, cultural systems, personality systems, and other phenomena are analyzed; and studies of social change within each of the previous three categories.
A major attempt to generalize on rural-urban differences that are repeated in time and space was made by Sorokin and Zimmerman in 1929, drawing upon the comprehensive compilation of then existing knowledge and theories and research in European, Asiatic, and American scientific literature represented in A Systematic Source Book in Rural Sociology (Sorokin et al. 1930–1932). They hypothesized that the differentiation between rural and urban does not tend to increase perpetually but, rather, that the historical curve of the differentiation shows something similar to a parabolic curve without complete obliteration of all differences (Sorokin & Zimmerman 1929, pp. 608-636).
No comparable comprehensive compendium of the much more numerous and more sophisticated studies completed since the 1920s is currently available. Summarizations for major substantive areas of sociological research are represented for North America by the papers given at the 1961 annual meeting of the Rural Sociological Society ...; for the major regions of the world by the papers prepared for the First World Congress for Rural Sociology (1964); and by monographic studies, such as those on the adoption and diffusion of ideas in agriculture ..."
Source: https://www.encyclopedia.com/.../rural-society

The description of rural society through the sociological research on it seems a plausible approach, but does not clarify the term theoretically, nor provide a generally accepted definition, rather it avoids this by a phenomenological description of changing research themes over the course of time. The intensive theoretical reflection and research on modern societies in sociology during the twentieth century, especially in the "grand theory" tradition, have not influenced research on rural societies significantly; instead, this research continued with simple dichotomic conceptualizations from the early phases of sociology, such as traditional – modern, community – society, status – contract, rural – urban. General theories of capitalist or modern society are rarely discussed in rural research.

With the changing research agenda in rural sociology in the late twentieth century and the weakening of the theoretical discourse in sociology after the end of the "grand theory" tradition (Parsons, Luhmann, Habermas), expectations of theoretically clarifying the concept of rural society faded away too. The research in the subdisciplines of rural and environmental sociology as well as in the interdisciplinary subjects mentioned above is theoretically fragmented; it is no longer bound together by a concept of society. This concept has itself come under pressure and lost value since the dependence of modern societies on nature, natural resources and the environment has been studied using such interdisciplinary terms as coupled social-ecological systems.

The spatially connoted term "rural areas" is even more fluid and inexact than

that of rural society; it is mainly derived from statistical indicators to distinguish rural and urban areas for administrative and policy purposes, for example by the European Union (Box 2).

Box 2. Rural areas in Europe

"Rural regions in the European Union (EU) are diverse in terms of their nature, geographical patterns, development levels and socio-economic and demographic trends. Covering 44.6 % of the EU and home to 93.1 million people (20.8 % of the total EU population), the EU's rural regions are multifunctional spaces facing a range of challenges. These include: demographic ageing leading to a decline in the number of people of working age, a weak labour market and even depopulation of certain rural and remote areas. Other challenges facing rural areas when compared with urban ones include the lack of infrastructure and service provision, a poorly diversified economy, low incomes coupled with a higher poverty and social exclusion risk, farmland abandonment, a lack of education facilities, high numbers of early school leavers and a digital gap and divide (i.e. a lack of reliable internet connections limiting both individuals and businesses). These circumstances have been perceived as representing a 'vicious circle driving rural decline', ... as more people move to urban areas in search of better job prospects and provision of public services. Despite these challenges, rural areas offer many opportunities. Their diversity is one of the EU's richest resources. They provide food and environmental resources and can contribute to the fight against climate change, providing alternatives to fossil fuels and developing the circular economy. Their role in ensuring a balanced territorial distribution of the population avoiding overpopulation of cities is crucial, while their quality of life is increasingly valued as is the contribution that the cultural heritage of rural areas makes to sustainable tourism. Furthermore, the Covid-19 crisis could potentially bring long-term changes in society, such as an increase in teleworking or greater valuing of green spaces, to the benefit of rural areas."
Source: Martinez Juan and McEldowney (2021:2)

The description of rural areas shows that with this concept rural research can be carried out with limited theoretical reflection, or even without theoretical reflection. It is also possible to use both the terms "rural society" and "rural area" in simply descriptive forms.

Shucksmith and Chapman (1998: 230) use the terms rural society and rural areas alternately, without precise distinction, in an attempt to specify the key processes affecting rural areas: "it will be an important part of any future research to develop adequate theoretical accounts of the links between processes of social exclusion and integration occurring in rural Europe and social and economic change at macro, meso and micro scales. These processes should be analysed in relation to the institutional context of rural societies: the labour market, the family, the social security system, the educational system, and others." The authors see it as useful to link the research on social exclusion to theories of social class, status and mobility; welfare regimes; citizenship theories; social cohesion; theories of economic and social restructuring and globalization of industrial production; theories of regulation and deregulation;

demographic changes, gender, family and community; policies and processes of European integration; and changing social representations of rurality. Whatever the complex and interlinked processes show about social exclusion in rural areas and how many theories are accumulated here, in the end, as the conclusion of the authors says, social exclusion should be linked to rural development policy, thus specifying power relations and clarifying these as the practically important variable.

The concept of "rural development" shows similar problems of interpretation and of being applied in only provisional or tentative forms as that of rural society and area. It has been described by van der Ploeg et al. (2000: 393, 405) as a "multi-scale, multi-actor and multi-faceted process" in which agricultural and other forms of business compete with each other. Since the late twentieth century, rural development has been more and more influenced by global social processes (Puhlisani Solutions, 2009: 8f; Box 3).

Box 3: Rural development

The definitions of rural development are more often from global perspectives, focusing on development in the Global South, where the concept is connected with UN strategies for poverty abatement and shows the changing thinking about rural development over time, beginning with technology-oriented modernization through other forms of development where the modernization concept came to be seen more and more critically.

"Rural development has to be located within a context of extremely rapid urbanisation and economic change, including powerful trends towards market fundamentalism and global economic integration driven by trade liberalisation. This has resulted in increased economic interdependence among nation states and reductions in national economic sovereignty. At the same time, the disparity between rich and poor continues to grow, both within countries and between them. … Rural development is a term which like 'sustainable development' is sufficiently vague to allow the user to let it mean what she or he wants it to mean. Nevertheless, there are a number of definitions which have been developed over the years, the majority of which aim for simplicity."

Chambers 1983: *'Rural Development is a strategy to enable a specific group of people, poor rural women and men, to gain for themselves and their children more of what they want and need.'*

Singh 1999: *'A process leading to sustainable improvement in the quality of life of rural people, especially the poor.'*

World Bank 1997: *'Sustainable Rural Development can make a powerful contribution to four critical goals of poverty reduction, wider shared growth, household, national, and global food security and sustainable natural resource management.'*

Van der Ploeg et al. 2000: *'It is not possible to construct any comprehensive and generally accepted definition of rural development. The notion of rural development (emerges) through socio-political struggle and debate.'*

Source: Phuhlisani Solutions 2009: 9

For rural development in Europe, van der Ploeg et al. (2000: 404f) highlight the centrality of agriculture in rural development, but finish with rather insecure reflections, oscillating between the possibilities of the decline of modernized agriculture, aborted initiatives for rural development, and still unknown new forms of rural development. The authors urge the connection of empirical research to the building of a strong and coherent theory of rural development, whatever this may include. Whether this is the only option for developing the concept may be doubted. The three terms discussed here need to be, can – and are – also used in rural research in simpler, pragmatic and descriptive forms, to describe processes of change and of collective action studied in empirical research, as in the example of the description for EU policy (see Box 2).

System concepts and their interdisciplinary nature

The discourse of systems theory since the early twentieth century has not been oriented to rural societies, areas or problems, although systems became an important component in the research on social systems which developed after 1945. This was particularly evident with the functionalistic theory of Talcott Parsons in sociology (Parsons 1949) and the critical theory of the Frankfurt School, in which the concept of system developed in a more critical variant as the system of capitalist society; here the term "system" developed more implicitly than explicitly, referring to historically specific systemic forms of social relations, such as modes of production. The history of systems theory in the first half of the twentieth century can be described in two paradigmatic forms: the formulation of a general theory of systems of biological origin (Bertalanffy 1950) and as sociological theory of societal systems (Parsons 1950, Luhmann 1984). A first attempt to formulate an interdisciplinary theoretical framework to deal with system complexity was the term "complex adaptive systems" (Holland 2006), which included many different types of systems, not only social or ecological. These two forms were, however, relevant for studying the interaction between society and nature and were theoretically elaborated with the concept of "social-ecological systems", that was, beside its simple form used for empirical research (bio-geo-physical unit and associated actors or institutions) developed in social ecology for the study of long-term processes in coupled social-ecological systems, especially societies and their relations with nature, including the processes of global social and environmental change (Haberl et al. 2016).

System concepts alone were not sufficient to study at the global scale the complex and interacting systemic processes which are summarized as global social and environmental change. It required intensive empirical research on the complex and connected processes that affect societies, social and ecological systems and the ways of life in modern society, to gain new knowledge of the development and the future prospects of rural societies that are now part of global systems and processes.

The process known as "great acceleration" (Colvile 2020) is composed of many constituent processes and changes. The term refers to phenomena characterized by

exponential growth, which have been described in social ecology and earth science research; they include manifold processes of natural resource use and the human modification of ecosystems as well as economic and population growth. The forms of change result in environmental pollution, overuse of natural resources and disturbance of the functioning of ecosystems.

Researchers and actors are confronted with a future for rural and other areas in which development is less driven by peaceful governance, adaptation and transformation, and more by negative factors, institutional failure and disaster (Newig et al. 2019). The compounding of more and more complex problems, conflicts, crises and catastrophes exceeds the knowledge and the capacity for action of each actor, including the major global players, governments and business, and the emerging global civil society.

Knowledge and power remain the key variables in the social-ecological transformation of all parts of the globalizing society, including rural society. The process of knowledge creation has evolved beyond the research and technological development approach dominant in science. It now involves more interdisciplinary knowledge creation, integration, and utilization of various forms of knowledge, not just scientific. However, these sources of knowledge have their limitations. As a result, new knowledge must be found by experimenting and seeking social, rather than just technical, innovations. The processes of capacity building and empowerment, including of civil society actors, will be similar to that in knowledge production: cooperation and participation, learning and joint learning, and collaboration on resolving the conflicts and problems arising in the transformation process. These methods are similar to those developed in sustainability science.

Regarding rural areas, inter- and transdisciplinary forms of knowledge creation and cooperation developed more in connection with the research on food production and consumption and food systems that requires more use of knowledge sources than traditional research in rural sociology. Fonte (2008) exemplifies such interdisciplinary approaches through the knowledge production and application in the processes of the re-introduction and re-evaluation of local food production in a globalizing food system, based on the European research project CORASON.

> *"The perspective on local food here adopted derives from analysing the knowledge dynamic between the informal, variable, place-dependent systems of lay knowledge and the more mobile, codified system of scientific knowledge. A rich stock of lay knowledge is a patrimony of European rural areas, but its evolution has been stopped by the process of restricting knowledge to the 'scientific' that has been brought about by the industrialisation of agriculture. Initiatives to relocalise food mobilise again local forms of knowledge and may contribute to enhancing, valorising and recreating that patrimony. That trend is reinforced by a redefinition of the social functions of agriculture and food and by new pressing objectives of environmental sustainability and ecosystem management." (Fonte 2008: 218).*

> *A dominant factor in these knowledge dynamics is "a peer relation of learning among actors. This seems quite straightforward in the producer - consumer reconnection strategy: local actors are trying to rebuild local knowledge through networking as equals, shared experiences, discussions and observation. Scientific knowledge may be a starting point, but it needs to be evaluated, adapted and integrated, according to local circumstances."* (Fonte 2008: 219).

Here seems to be the point where complexity can no longer be studied in formal ways only (through modelling the manifold relations between different variables or factors affecting development processes), but through historically specific, empirically and theoretically informed analyses of the processes of change that decide the future of rural societies, areas and people. This requires more elaborate conceptualization of the relations between system and action theories in sociological research. The latest variant of a grand theory of society in sociology that attempts to connect system and action theories with the guiding concepts of system and lifeworld, is the theory of communicative action by Habermas (1981), a combination of functionalist systems theory of modern society and non-functionalist theory of communicative action. It has not been intensively discussed or adopted in rural research or in the newer environmental research; it is not significantly influenced by interdisciplinary and environmental research, and it says little about the problems and crises that affect today's modern societies, especially environmental problems. Theoretical analysis of complex social-ecological systems and their transformation is expected to evolve into a new kind of "inter-theoretical" reasoning. This approach involves connecting and combining various theories and concepts from social and environmental research through research collaboration and collective action. It is a more practical and problem-oriented approach compared to the academic science forms of sociology.

Complex processes and the future – global change and societal transformation

Instead of systems, the new research on global change focuses more on processes, which, however, are part of, and structured through, many forms of systems. Global and multi-scale processes that influence the development of agriculture, food systems and rural societies in the coming decades include those described as the exponential growth of the global economy and of natural resource use (reaching its global limits in this century according to the reports of the Club of Rome); demographic transition (the exponential growth of the global population is expected to peak in the second half of this century according to the projections of the United Nations, and is predicted to then decrease); urbanization (since 2007 more than half of the global population lives in cities, but mobility is not only in one direction, the trend to move to the countryside is also growing and intensively discussed in rural research); climate change (the goal of the Paris Agreement 2015 to limit global temperature rise to 1.5–2 degrees Celsius, is illusionary; instead, climate change is accelerating and causing more disasters); bi-

odiversity loss (in the last 50 years many wild species have become extinct; the sixth and hitherto biggest mass extinction in earth's history is caused by humans); land use change (rapid urbanization does not solve the problem of decreasing soil fertility for agriculture; agricultural land has reached its global limits, and the loss of fertile soils through erosion and pollution is progressing). Connected with these change processes are manifold forms of the deterioration of the environment and degradation of ecosystems through pollution, overuse of natural resources and waste.

Under such conditions, social-ecological transformation towards sustainability requires us to think about and envision possible futures that comply with the conditions of sustainability. How to think of the future and how to research the future is permanently controversial and involves contested concepts. In theoretical terms it is difficult to conceptualize the future – advanced theoretical reflections are found in "big history" by Christian (2022), who sees the history of society and the history of nature as connected. The practical forms of research into the future examine the near future as it appears in the research and discourse of planning, whilst using mainly scenarios, especially those connected with the phenomena of global social and environmental change as mentioned above, when exploring the more distant future.

Scenarios are limited by the imagined future they conceptualize and describe, that is: subjective or wanted futures, for which then possible ways of achieving them can be formulated. There are many kinds of imagined futures, including both wanted and unwanted futures. Controversies begin when the probability of trajectories of change or "realistic" ideas of the future forms of society are to be specified. Moreover, the time horizon of scenarios is limited, usually to several decades, whilst long-term processes stretching into the distant future of hundreds or thousands of years, seem impossible in the social sciences, that do not deal with long processes of evolution as in biology and ecology, or cosmic processes as in astrophysics. The long-term processes in the history of human society stretch over hundreds or thousands of years and can be classified into three main forms of human societies based on their social structure and activities: societies or cultures of hunters and gatherers, agriculture and industry. What can be concluded about possible future societies from such historical and anthropological research, or from world system research such as that of Wallerstein, is unclear. It is not as simple as imagining the future as a return to earlier modes of living and production.

When the problems of global social and environmental change are studied, it is the future of the globalizing society which is at stake. We must ask how to deal with the global problems and crises, which necessitates identifying the processes and pathways of transformation. Theoretically speaking, the complex global problems need to be dealt with simultaneously, which is practically impossible, at least within the present world order and the fragmented nature of global governance (Biermann 2014).

Regarding the transformation of rural societies, agricultural and food systems, the question for their future is not mainly one of land availability and land use; the key question is the transformation of energy systems to non-fossil, renewable sources.

Energy systems are interwoven in complicated forms in technical and societal systems, at different scales from the local to the global. The present crisis of fossil energy systems cannot be simply solved through new high-tech forms of energy harvesting, such as that of the fusion reactor. The crisis requires the development of forms of cheap energy from renewable sources, for which effective technologies are necessary and need to be developed, but these alone are not decisive. Energy system transformation and the connected attempts to limit climate change, require social innovations and modifications in the "imperial modes of living" in the Global North, as well as the sharing of global resources between rich and poor countries, as envisaged in the sustainable development discourse. Very little of that has happened until today, in spite of all the commitments of governments to the sustainable development goals of the United Nations. The process can be expected to be long, arduous, and conflictual, as evidenced by the experience of European countries in their attempts to implement significant advances in the use of renewable energy sources. For the transformation towards sustainability, it is necessary to establish priorities and improve the processes involved in bringing about transformation. This involves exploring feasible pathways towards sustainability. Rural areas will become more and more important for energy "production", in the forms of bio-, solar, and wind energy.

The difficulties of energy system transformation are insufficiently tackled when they are fragmented in specialized research; or only seen as technical problems; or as resulting from the social, cultural, political differences in local energy consumption; or as economic problems (innovation costs, costs of market adaptation and transformation);or as dependent on the environmental awareness of consumers and their willingness to pay; or bound by political and governmental resistance and unwillingness.

Instead of taking a fragmented approach to the complexity and transformation of energy systems, it is necessary to think more in terms of the societal and systemic complexity of energy systems as social-ecological systems of energy are integral to other forms of natural resource use in agriculture, rural societies, food systems or households. The modern industrial energy system is an organizationally complex, global system managed in fragmented forms in national energy systems. Finally, the transformation of energy systems is a process of innovation and part of a great transformation of the industrial society; for such a transformation that has never happened before in human history, no experience exists, and knowledge from history offers little help. The contours of the post-industrial energy system are rather clear: the replacement of fossil energy sources with energy from renewable sources and the reduction of the risks and vulnerability of the industrial energy system, which is currently mainly one of large-scale technical and economic organization supported by and supporting economic growth and the overuse of natural resources. However, the transformation process has to manage an unknown future; it requires experimentation and the pursuit of possible pathways of transformation towards socially, economically and ecologically sustainable systems.

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