

HUNGARIAN SOCIOLOGY AFTER A FEW SUCCESSFUL DECADES¹

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Elekes, Zsuzsanna and Zsolt Spéder (eds.): *Törések és kötések a magyar társadalomban* (Cleavages and Linkages in Hungarian Society). Budapest: Andorka Rudolf Társaság – Századvég Kiadó, 2000.

Iványi, Erika and Zsuzsa Solymosi (eds.): *Írások Huszár Tibor 70. születésnapjára* (Writings in Honour of the 70th Birthday of Tibor Huszár). Budapest: ELTE Szociológiai és Szociálpolitikai Intézet, 2000.

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In the second half of the year 2000 commemorative volumes were published in honour of three Hungarian sociologists. The people honoured by the editors and authors are the following: Rudolf Andorka², László Cseh-Szombathy³, and Tibor Huszár⁴.

1 The title refers to a paper by Dénes Némédi, entitled: *A szociológia egy sikeres évszázad után* (Sociology After a Successful Century). (Némédi 2000a.)

2 Rudolf Andorka (Budapest, 1931 – Budapest, 1997), after his secondary studies he was a manual labourer from 1949, attended the evening course of the Faculty of Law and Political Sciences of ELTE between 1949 and 1951, where he graduated in 1963. Between 1960 and 1961 he was a technical translator, between 1962 and 1983 he worked at the Hungarian Statistical Office, at first in the library, next as an associate of the Research Institute for Demography, and subsequently of the Division for Social Statistics. From 1984 onwards he was Professor and head of the Department of Sociology of the Budapest University of Economic Sciences (then named after Karl Marx), from 1991 up to his death in 1997 he was the rector of the same University. In 1995 he was elected chairman of the Hungarian Association of Sociology.

3 László Cseh-Szombathy (Budapest, 1925–) was an associate of the Institute of Social Sciences, founded by Sándor Szalai at the Pázmány Péter University of Sciences. Between 1949 and 1957 he first taught in a primary, and later in a secondary school. From 1957 onwards he was employed by the Central Statistical Office, between 1970 and 1974 he was deputy head of the Division for Social Statistics. He has been teaching at ELTE University since 1973. From 1975 onwards he was an associate of the Institute of Sociology of Hungarian Academy of Sciences (HAS). In 1983 he was appointed director of the Institute of Sociology of HAS. In 1988 he retired. In 1990 he was chairman of the Hungarian Association of Sociology. In 1994 he was elected corresponding member of the HAS.

4 Tibor Huszár (Veresegyház, 1930–) studied in Moscow at the Lenin Institute between 1949 and 1953. From 1960 onwards he was lecturer of the Department of Philosophy of the Faculty of Arts of ELTE University, from 1969 onwards he was professor and head of the Department of Sociology of the same University. Between 1982 and 1992 he was the director of the Institute of Sociology and Social Policy and Extension Training Centre of ELTE University.

The commemorative volume is a special genre. It is difficult and perhaps even pointless to criticise it, as it has a significant emotional content. Yet, the presentation of these collections of papers is not a superfluous task, because in addition to paying homage to people, they also offer a representative image of the work of the professional communities surrounding these personalities, and as such a significant part of Hungarian sociology after World War II can be mapped through them. It may also be of interest to anyone beyond the professional group interested in the field of sociology. It is the younger generation that mostly misses a comprehensive writing on the development and operation of Hungarian sociology after 1945.⁵ Nowadays the situation of young sociologists may be compared to that of anthropologists, who are ignorant of the special practices and beliefs of the “tribe”, and yet they have to observe what the “natives” (Némedi 2000b: 278) are doing, with the addition that they do not only have to observe it, but also have to become part of the given community.

The title of the paper refers to a writing by Dénes Némedi, in which he surveys the changes that have taken place in sociology during the past century: from the angle of the transformation of the university (and the academic field in a broader sense of the term), “society” as a specific sphere of existence becoming doubtful and of the breaking up of the classical intelligentsia. These three approaches offer assistance to the brief survey of the history of Hungarian sociology. It is customary to break up the history of sociology into two phases. The first phase, which lasted up to the 40s, was characterised by the presence of sociology as a semi-legitimate discipline, and was located at the periphery of the university system, whereas the second phase is inseparable from the university, from the evolution of modern higher education (Némedi 2000a). The sudden, explosive growth of the number of university students took place after World War II, when mass education developed. In the early twentieth century the first phase⁶ started with similar ideas and problems in Hungary as in the West. The beginning of the second phase, which is closely linked to the entry of sociology to universities, was far more difficult, which may be explained by the closer relationship between politics and sociology in Hungary, compared to the West. By now sociology has become institutionalised in Hungary too, and it has been legitimated as a discipline. Its emergence is justified by the boundaries of “social reality”, covered and studied by sociology, which can be mostly distinguished from other disciplines by its methodology, university and research institutions, by the development of its teaching network, by its existing system of scientific qualifications, and last but not least by the personal base which has acquired reputation not only at home, but abroad as well.

5 For more information on this topic, see various papers and interviews published in different periodicals. Without trying to be exhaustive, here is a list of a few writings which are relevant: Interviews published in Nos. 1991/2–3 and 1992/1–2 of *Replika*, and of No. 1992/5 of *Magyar Tudomány*; Tibor Huszár 1991; István Kemény 1991 [1987]; Dénes Némedi and Péter Róbert 1995; Dénes Némedi 1996, 2000a; József Saád 1994, 1996; Péter Somlai 1988; Miklós Szántó 1995, 1998.

6 A group with the express goal of the creation of sociology was organised as early as 1900 and launched the periodical *Huszadik Század* (20th Century) with an introductory note written by Herbert Spencer.

Andorka, Cseh-Szombathy, and Huszár are linked by the fact that they have been active in the same period and in the same area of the discipline. The memorial volumes published in their honour demonstrate that they were able to create a real scientific community. Mannheim's concept of generations differentiates among three units: age groups, generations and the unit of a generation. When we speak about a generation, we have to look for a basic experience determining the life and experience of a given generation. Such points were abundant for this generation during the course of history. There were a large number of such cataclysms in Hungarian history after which the definition of reality could not be the same as it had been before. The years 1944–1945, 1947–1948, 1956, and 1989 are such dates when the separation of age group from generations does not work, because those who had lived through these events belong to the same generation even if they assess and interpret the various historical moments differently as individuals. As a result of their activities in the field of sociology they were members of a generation of sociologists which had undertaken a significant part in the development of Hungarian sociology after 1945 and who have been close to one another in its operation.

During the inter-war period several attempts were made to set up a department of sociology. From 1942 onwards sociology was institutionalised for a brief period within the Department of Social Theory, headed by István Dékány. It was followed by the Department of Sociology,⁷ headed by Sándor Szalai, and established at the Pázmány Péter University of Sciences in 1946, which was called Institute of Social Sciences by Sándor Szalai. László Cseh-Szombathy has been present in sociology from the second part of the 1940s. In the early 40s he studied history and geography at the Budapest University, and his views on regional population policy took shape already at that time. He was a student of István Hajnal at the university, who guided his interest even further, towards sociology. Later on he studied sociology proper in the school of Sándor Szalai, together with Géza Perjés, Dénes Szabó and János Harsányi among others. All this can be found in the volume compiled in his honour, in the interview conducted by Gábor I. Kovács, which is one of the most interesting parts of the book.

The history of Hungarian sociology is usually described as a history of interruptions.⁸ The longest period, when sociology was non-existent, was between 1949 and 1959. This situation was characterised by silence and prohibition.⁹ The

⁷ Károly Mannheim and Ferenc Erdei were to be appointed as heads of this department but the talks failed. Finally Sándor Szalai became its head, who was the head of the department of intellectuals of the Social Democratic Party during the coalition period, between 1945 and 1948. Actually he received the Institute of Social Sciences as a result of bargains among the parties, although he was primarily a social scientist and not a politician. When appointed, Szalai did not have great experience in teaching and publications, but could deftly establish external contacts and obtain money for publications. From 1946 up to the summer of 1948 there was a vivid intellectual life in the institute. In 1948 Sándor Szalai was condemned for scientific espionage and was imprisoned in 1949. He was released in May 1956 and was rehabilitated.

⁸ Several interruptions may be mentioned, such as the suppression of the 1919 revolution, the two world wars and the period of changes in authority and removal from power after the war, as well as the abolition of sociology in the 1950s.

⁹ In 1949 the Szalai-school was liquidated, in 1959 a division of sociology was launched at the Institute of Philosophy of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences with the participation of Mária Márkus and Miklós Szántó.

Institute of Social Sciences fell victim to that period, together with the future of students just setting out for a career in sociology, including László Cseh-Szombathy. In these years the Central Statistical Office represented the continuity of sociology, which has been doing statistical surveys and analyses since 1867. Although Hungarian statistics were radically reorganised along Soviet pattern in 1948, and the eminent representatives of the profession were removed during the campaign, the then head of the office, György Péter changed his earlier strategy from the early 1950s onwards.¹⁰ As a result, the representatives of sociology, reborn from the 1960s onwards, could deal with issues of social science within the framework of the Central Statistical Office.¹¹ It was here that László Cseh-Szombathy was employed in 1957, and Rudolf Andorka was also given a chance in the autumn of 1962.

László Cseh-Szombathy, although he had the opportunity, did not leave the country in the 1950s. He stayed at home and has become a decisive figure of Hungarian sociology. In his own words: "I understand those who left the country under foreign rule, even if they were not personally threatened, but I consider it a loss from the angle of Hungarians, and I have always considered migration as such. The intellectual product of those who went abroad was an important part of Hungarian culture, moreover, by the fact that they said what could not be said at home, and sent it back by radio to those who stayed, they provided an important service. But all this would have been aimless had those who stayed on not utilised the remaining opportunities. In the field of sociology it meant acquiring more and more detailed knowledge about Hungarian society and about its changes" (Cseh-Szombathy 1992: 575). The entire oeuvre of László Cseh-Szombathy corresponds to the principle expressed by the quotation, which is also demonstrated by the structure of the commemorative volume. The volume entitled *Emberi viszonyok* (Human Relations) summarises the topics studied by him: deviance, suicide, alcoholism, ageing, demography, family. The title of the first chapter is *Változó család* (Family in change). For László Cseh-Szombathy the discovery of the family as a topic of sociology began at the international congress of sociology, held at Varna in 1970. His manual on the sociology of the family was completed in 1978, which instructed students in the methodology of the sociology of the family. Eminent experts of the topic contributed to the chapter, such as Viktor Karády, Mrs Tibor Pongrácz, Edit S. Molnár, Imre Dobossy, Péter Somlai, Olga Tóth and Ágnes Utasi, who discuss the family as a linkage merging different sets of norms within itself. Different norms may derive, for instance, from marriages of mixed religious denominations, or from following traditional and modern values. The authors of the chapter entitled *Társadalmi szerkezet* (Social structure) are the following: Zsuzsanna Elekes, Borbála Paksi, György Lengyel, Péter Róbert, Zsolt Spéder and István György Tóth, who present aspects of social change in Hungary from the angle of deviance, social

¹⁰ As early as in the year of 1952 calculations of real wages and real incomes were made which caused significant political upheaval because they indicated a decline. In the 1960s the office introduced several "reform techniques", for instance, it shifted to measuring living standards along the Western pattern, where the use of services was also considered, and this technique differed from that of the socialist countries.

¹¹ Among others the following people worked at the Central Statistical Office: Zsuzsa Ferge, László Cseh-Szombathy, Rudolf Andorka, András Hegedüs, Iván Szelényi, István Kemény, Éva Láng, György Vukovich.

articulation and stratification. The third chapter is entitled *Köztereink* (Our public spaces). Its authors include Róbert Angelusz, Róbert Tardos, György Csepeli, Mária Székelyi, Katalin S. Nagy, Mária Neményi. In this chapter one may read about the sociological aspect of the way people are addressed, about the extent and structure of readiness to undertake risk, about the children of deprived families as the district nurses see them, and about research in a public square, at Hunyadi Square in Budapest. The authors of the closing chapter, entitled *Népesezési viszonyok* (Demographic conditions), are László Antal Z, Márta Gyenei, Péter Józán, Pál Péter Tóth, who offer a complex image of Hungarian demographic conditions.

The authors contributed to the high standard of the volume by valuable papers, nursing the tradition represented by László Cseh-Szombathy: they represent clear and well designed research both methodologically and theoretically, yet they do not forget about the human factors either. Cseh-Szombathy's career, just as the entire Hungarian sociology, was largely influenced by political authority. Due to his family background, he was classified as a tolerated intellectual in the state socialist system, and as such he was, for a long time, in quest of a topic which was less interesting to the political authorities, hence it would cause no reason for direct confrontation. Due to this fact, and as a result of his high professional knowledge even by international standards, he had an opportunity to study these topics professionally and in an up-to-date manner, and to participate in international comparative surveys, breaking through international isolation, characteristic of Hungarian sociology. The authors of the volume of papers published and the colourfulness of the institutions behind them show how long a way has been covered by Hungarian sociology during the past, almost half century. One may read the writings of the associates of the Central Statistical Office, of the Institute of Sociology and Social Policy and Extension Training Centre of ELTE University, the Department of Sociology of JATE, the Institute of Political Sciences of HAS, the Department of Sociology and Social Policy and the Department of Pedagogy of BKÁE, of the Institute for Social Research Inc., the Department of Sociology and Communication of BME, and of the Economic and Enterprise Analysis Public Benefit Association.

The volume published in honour of Rudolf Andorka is similar to the volume published in honour of László Cseh-Szombathy, both in its appearance and in structure. It was compiled from the material of the Memorial Conference,¹² and the volume, entitled *Törések és kötések* (Cleavages and Linkages), was published by the Rudolf Andorka Association.¹³ The structural units of the volume cover the major research areas of Rudolf Andorka, namely: social structure, observance of norms, family, demography. How do these topics relate to his career? The relationship between family background and politics had a decisive role in his life. As an intellectual "employee" he could get a job in an office for technical translations only

12 As it is described in the *Foreword*, the basis of the volume is the material of the Rudolf Andorka Memorial Conference, but some writings were also included, which were not presented at the conference, yet are related to the given topic, whereas not all the papers presented at the conference were included in the volume.

13 One of the goals of the Association is to offer the widest possible range of current empirical researches conducted in the fields studied by Rudolf Andorka.

after 1960, before that he was a manual worker, and was in forced labour service, meanwhile, when the authorities permitted him, he was also a law student. In 1962, similarly to László Cseh-Szombathy, he could finally get a job at the Central Statistical Office, primarily because of his knowledge of languages, at first in the library, where Dezső Dányi introduced him to historical demography. From 1963 onwards he was allowed to work as a junior researcher at the same place. He became a close friend with László Cseh-Szombathy and Béla Buda at the Central Statistical Office, and they collaborated (along with a number of others) in social deviance and demographic research. In 1970 he moved to the Division for Social Statistics of the Central Statistical Office.

As promised in its introduction, the volume presents the empirical research currently in progress in the given areas. In the chapter entitled *Társadalmi tagozódás* (Social stratification) one may read about inequalities in education, social welfare in the cities, the entrepreneurial and servicing classes of post-socialist societies, the stratification of the inactive population in Hungary, and about middle-class lifestyles. The authors are Erzsébet Bukodi, István Harcsa, György Lengyel, Péter Róbert, Zsolt Spéder, Ágnes Utasi. Under the title *Normakövetés, normasértés* (Observance and violence of norms) one may read about the social judgement of moral offences, about the relationship between ethnic conflicts and socio-economic characteristics, about alcoholism, about the changes in suicide rates and its background, as well as about preferences related to state expenditures in writings by János Balázs, Károly Bozsonyi, Attila Fekete, Márta Gyenei, Zsuzsanna Elekes, Katalin Kovács, Béla Kolozsi, Borbála Paksi, Tamás Zonda and István György Tóth. The chapter entitled *Család és népesedés* (Family and demography) contains writings like *A házasság minősége* (The quality of marriage) by László Cseh-Szombathy, or a paper on psycho-social factors in the relationship between social cohesion and social capital within the framework of the study of deviance by Mária Kopp and Árpád Skrabski. The writing on *Gyermekvállalás – munkavállalás* (Having children – having a job) by Mrs. Tibor Pongrácz investigates the dilemma of family or profession. The writings of Tamás Faragó, Miklós Hadas, Ildikó Husz and Viktor Karády in the area of historical demography can be found in the chapter entitled *Népesedéstörténet* (The history of demography).

A common shortcoming of the two collections of papers is that they do not pay sufficient attention to the presentation of international comparative studies. Rudolf Andorka, as well as László Cseh-Szombathy simultaneously represented “Europeanness” as well as their attachment to Hungary in their writings, keeping up contacts between East and West. While in the 70s Rudolf Andorka was forced into the background and deprived of the opportunity to do research or publish in Hungary, in the West a volume of his collected writings was published in 1978. He did not only convey the meaning of his own activities and the totality of Hungarian sociology, but also research into historical demography towards international academic life as he recognised at the beginning of his career that as a social scientist he could not remain isolated from international events. One of the reasons for the fact that the volume did not include international research currently in progress may be, beyond the limitations of space, the debate that has emerged since 1989, which is most

commonly referred to as the *colonisation of science*.¹⁴ The discussion evolved about the difficulties that had emerged around social science research after the social transformations and about the “responsibility” of Western scholars carrying on research in that situation. While respecting the views of the participants of the debate, it is interesting to stress Rudolf Andorka’s view about the changes of the 1990s. Rudolf Andorka considered as the primary change the fact that today no political pressure whatsoever limited the choice of topics for research and the assessment of their results. There are several opportunities for international co-operation, where Hungarian researchers may also participate as equals. The only bad strategy is a total rejection of the co-operation with foreign social scientists.

The volume published on the occasion of the seventieth birthday of Tibor Huszár differs from the other two both in its structure and outer appearance. It was published by the Institute of Sociology and Social Policy of ELTE, not accidentally, as the name of Tibor Huszár was, for decades, equated with this institute in the field of sociology. To quote the *Appendix* at the end of the volume – although those few “paragraphs” could have been written more extensively and placed at a more prominent place – “For the larger part of his life Tibor Huszár has lived and worked as a sociologist. He founded and led the institute, edited the periodical *Valóság* (Reality), he has taught, done research, written and not the least has trained teachers and researchers” (Solymosi and Vuray 2000: 450). The volume is not divided into major structural units. It would be difficult because of the topics and the colourfulness of the papers. The abundance of topics is explained by the fact that the institute is a place of complex teaching and research.¹⁵

Instead of trying to be exhaustive when presenting the papers included in the volume, only those authors are mentioned who participated in the launch of the institute in the early 1970s and who still work and teach there.¹⁶ Zsuzsa Ferge, the best known representative of research on Hungarian social policy, has been teaching at the institute since 1970. In her piece entitled *Tiszta és homályos szerződések* (Clear and blurred contracts), she surveys the principles of legitimacy behind the various schemes of distribution and integration as a function of the system of institutions for existential security. Péter Somlai analyses the views of J. Habermas on the international validity of human rights, on the weakness of international organisations

14 Under the summary title *A tudomány gyarmatosítása* (The Colonisation of Science) six papers were published in the 1998/33-34 issue of *Replika*, which is linked to the discussion published in the 1992/1-2 issue of the same periodical.

15 Nowadays research and teaching at universities are increasingly becoming incompatible due to the transformation of the university and the vast increase in the large number of students.

16 Once in a discussion Tibor Huszár said the department was created by very young people. György Csepeli joined after the completion of his studies, Péter Somlai came from the Institute of Theatrical History, Róbert Angelusz may have had a slightly bigger detour as he joined from Debrecen and the Institute for Mass Communication, Pál Léderer came from the Corvina Publishing House. When the department was formed, the average age was about 27–28 years, and it had a staff of 8–12 people for about 5 to 6 years. The present heads of the department were its founders, and the institute produced its own leadership. Another characteristic feature of the shaping of the department is that another group of part-timers represented another generation of international and domestic scholars. Right from the outset, from the establishment of the department part-time teachers have included Zsuzsa Ferge, László Cseh-Szombathy and Ferenc Patáki.

in his paper entitled *Globalizáció és világpolgári szolidaritás* (Globalisation and cosmopolitan solidarity). Ferenc Pataki studies the assessment of Makarenko's pedagogical methods after the social transformations in his paper *Mi maradt Makarenkóból?* (What remains of Makarenko?) László Cseh-Szombathy has been teaching at the University since 1972. Under the title *Őregapám* (My grandpa) he tells the story of how someone chose the medical profession at the end of the 19th century. Róbert Angelusz studied the problem of *stratification and visibility*, i.e., the transparency of social differentiation and the major groups of society. György Csepeli, Antal Örkény, Mária Székelyi and Péter Róbert analyse the perspectives on social change. During the past decades the teaching staff has significantly expanded, which is also justified by the expansion of areas studied by sociology. New departments were set up in addition to the old ones, although training stressing the history of sociology continues to be a characteristic feature of the institute. In his paper Dénes Némédi discusses the usefulness and task of the history of sociology, whereas József Saád studies the same issues related to sociology.

In the history of Hungarian sociology after 1945 the fact that sociology exists in this country itself can be considered a success. The achievements cannot be assessed separately from the changes in the political life and from the international trends. Surely the creation and operation of the institutional framework is a positive result. However, the already existing set of institutions is branded by the fact that its development coincided with the consolidation of the state socialist system. Those who established Hungarian sociology, after the replacement and removal of old elites were largely not trained as sociologists. The "discipline" was gradually shaped by people coming from the nearby, or not so nearby areas. Hungarian statistics, history, philosophy and other related disciplines have had a far longer past, they were more developed, therefore it is understandable that their representatives could make their theories and methods dominant in sociology as well. There was a historical heritage added to this beginning that was characteristic of social sciences already in the 1930s, namely that the critique of the existing political order had to be worded carefully and only implicitly by academics. Professionalisation, launched in the 1970s, promoted the adoption and incorporation of theoretical and methodological results elaborated in the West, and not the development of a specially "Hungarian sociology". "Today sociology is threatened by the danger that it is being increasingly dissolved in the various special branches of sociology. ...Soon such specialists will be found in all these areas that elaborate their specific terminology, theories and methods, inaccessible by non-specialists. Thus we will accomplish the ideal of a high degree of professionalism, and of the absolute autonomy of the new branch of specialisation. ...If we wish to explain what sociology is, we cannot avoid referring to this process, which I continue to regard as taken for granted" (Elias 1999: 49). With the diversification of sociology a new specialist intelligentsia emerges, the members of which do not wish to undertake the role of the "intelligentsia teaching the nation", and, frankly speaking, they would not have an opportunity to do so even if they wanted to under the present economic conditions. As a result, a theoretical and methodological closure has not emerged that would prevent us from paying attention to international trends in sociology.

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