

BOOKS

“FROM THIS SIDE OF CLASSES AND BEYOND” – SOCIAL CROSS-SECTIONS –

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Kovách Imre ed.: *Társadalmi metszetek: hatalom, érdek, individualizáció és egyenlőtlenség a mai Magyarországon*. [Social Cross-Sections: Interests and power relations, individualisation and inequality in today's Hungary.] Budapest: Napvilág, 2006.

The volume published jointly by the Foundation for Political History and the Institute of Political Science of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences is an eminent example of a case when the noble intentions of researchers and sponsors meet. The volume contains 17 papers. A significant part of them has ventured to sum up the conclusions of earlier and more recent researches in the given field. The palette of themes is a broad one, for in addition to writings on the social structure, stratification, strata and living conditions and the school system papers outlining the political structure have also been included.

In addition to its riches of themes and the intention to summarize it is a further merit of the volume that it tries to find ways in research, especially it stresses the need for a change of paradigm in the study of the social structure and inequalities. Further on, it should also be appreciated that the authors' approach to their quest for a new way is socially more broadly embedded, while they dwell upon the role and social responsibility of politics, of intellectuals and particularly of those engaged in social sciences. In brief, the result may be regarded as a panorama of social sciences. These issues are more prominent in the first five papers of the volume.

CHANGE OF PARADIGM

A significant part of the issues discussed is centered on the change of paradigm, on catching up with efforts that have been present in international social science for a longer time. Many kinds of phrases have been coined to concisely stress this effort towards the change of paradigm, and it is perhaps Ulrich Beck's "beyond class and stratum" that seems to be the most relevant one, which happens to be the title of one of his writings (Beck 1992).

I wish to state my view in advance, related to the change of paradigm, according to which *a more cautious wording of the dilemma of "from this side of classes or beyond" would express the situation much better* on the basis of conclusions that can be drawn from the research results related to the study of the articulation of society. My interpretation is confirmed also by those papers published in the volume from which I attempt to pick some researcher's statements I consider significant in this issue.

In his opening paper (*Change of Paradigm, Social Structure and Inequality*) Imre Kovách approaches the issue carefully. He states that "The use of the traditional paradigm, of groups based on work has become doubtful because of the past four decades, the change of the political system and of the economic and social models... (p. 11). Next he adds that "The recognition and acceptance of the need for a change of paradigm is not simple because the new phenomena shaping social inequalities are manifest in the majority of cases together with the effects of hierarchical stratification based on occupational classification, the significance of which has not faded even in the present Hungarian society" (p. 11). Next he acknowledges that "The exclusive use of theories and methods responding to the reality of developed societies would make it impossible or would significantly limit the understanding of those structural specificities that have been inherited by the Hungarian society from the 20th century" (p. 13).

The next paper is also basically calling for the reconsideration of issues related to structure (Kovách, I., Kuczi, T. and Jókuthy, E.: *On the Condition of the Study of Classes, Social Structure and Stratification and on the Need for Its Renewal*). Important research questions are worded, namely: "For the time being we have no answer to what precisely the European and world market integration of the Hungarian society means, and whether we live under post-modern conditions, or under pre-modern ones in the case of some population groups falling back? *For what groups the concepts, methods and theories elaborated to the understanding of Western societies are valid?*" (p. 22) This latter question may be legitimately put to one of the papers of the volume, too (Bukodi, E.: *The Structure of Our Society from Various Perspectives*), which, while remaining within the framework of the traditional paradigm, but turning a scheme evolved for international comparisons 'Hungarian' attempted to outline the characteristic features of domestic stratification. Besides its consequent limitations naturally we have to accept willingly the fertilizing role of the information presented, for the structure evolved for the more advanced Western societies may even be an early image of our future social development.

It is an important statement that "...*the structure and stratification of the Hungarian society cannot be described by a single model in the present state of research.*" (p. 13) Incidentally, as a reviewer I only wish to add that *researches wishing to make valid statements about entire societies cannot ever describe any society by a single model*. In order to save the reader from misunderstandings I do not say this as a pessimist concerning academic learning but because I am convinced of the riches and diversity of reality. The riches of reality requires a riches of approaches that cannot be attached to a single set of considerations even if it is complex and apparently consistent, though undoubtedly some dimensions have a more vigorous, whereas others a weaker effect in the different societies.

It is to the credit of the authors that they tried to present almost as a ‘compulsory’ task the most fashionable and widespread approaches to society within the limitations of the volume. They richly quote the authors Crompton and Scott who in one of their three important recommendations stress “the need for the pluralism of the applied methods and theories for the phenomena of class and stratification take place at so numerous social levels that the linkage of individual action to the social structure cannot be very well understood on the basis of a single prioritized explanatory principle” (p. 24).

When interpreting Hilary Tovey’s and Perry Share’s book, the *Sociology of Ireland*, the authors quote an important thought when they write that “class is a historical product linked to social change and not a static category” (p. 25). This idea lures the reviewer to take a subjective detour, for here I wish to mention by way of analogy the considerations that had emerged in relation to the discussion of the elimination of the peasant to the interpretation of the thesis of the “withering away of classes”. It is commonly known that the introduction of this concept in Hungary is associated with the name of the editor and author of the present book, of Imre Kovách, who, in his volume entitled *De-peasantification of the Hungarian Society – in a European Comparison* he outlined the circumstances of the disappearance of the historical peasantry, and also the thesis of the disappearance of peasantry as a social category. When giving a more circumspect interpretation of this statement I also pressed for a dynamic approach of the concept and of the set of social relations in general (Harcza 2003). I considered it important to stress the historical changes of the form of peasantry as a social product, and that their existence and qualification may acquire proper meaning only if related to other social strata.

Enlarging the above logic it is not only the peasantry that has undergone transformations, but other strata, too, such as the workers and the intellectuals. They have undergone significant qualitative changes compared to themselves and to other strata, too, while one should also speak about modifications of the quantitative proportions as well as the appearance of new strata, themselves transforming the set of relations in which these strata could be interpreted from time to time. At this point it is once again worth referring to Tovey and Share, who say that classes and strata change the society, and the society transforms classes and strata (p. 25).

What can this statement mean? Presumably a dynamic form like class and stratification structure is being constantly shaped in a dynamic social space where there is mutual influence between society and the class and stratification structure. The idea of the disappearance of the historical peasantry feeds on intellectually similar sources like the thesis on the withering away of classes.

In this context it can be said that *we are facing a confrontation of static and dynamic outlook in the case of the analyses of society cropping up from time to time*. Specifically the time horizon grasped when studying a given phenomenon may also influence the considerations of approach. For instance, an observation and a conclusion based on it referring to the duration of 5 to 10 years may prove to be ‘quasi static’ compared to a phenomenon projecting its full nature for a period of 30 to 50 years or even longer. Therefore the choice of the time horizon determines how many valid momentums we can grasp in the deep layers of the society.

Another characteristic feature of the dynamic approach is that it does not put emphasis primarily on qualifying the phenomena observed but on the mechanisms of reproductions hidden behind the phenomena in several strata. Meanwhile naturally it does not budge from the position of observation and measuring, but it tries to be clear about the limitations of acquiring knowledge and of measuring.

Returning to the withering away of peasantry and of classes in a broader context, it can be stated that a multi-component formation is in question in both historical products, where the significance and interrelationship among individual components may change from time to time. It is precisely one of the important tasks of social science to monitor and assess changes taking place in the components of social articulation together with the mechanisms moving them.

The explanations of society hallmarked with labels such as risk, experience, body, etc. mostly have emerged as results of and theoretical reactions to the strengthening of one or a few components for shorter or longer periods of time, which is good, for all this proves the dynamism and development ability of the theory and methodology of social science. More over, they have a significant role to produce 'up-to-date' knowledge concerning the dynamism of the shaping of the society by 'blowing up' the component of currently prominent role and turning attention to it. But meanwhile one should not forget that we wish to draw valid conclusions about the actual articulation of the society even for a longer period of time besides utilizing and adapting the results of these fashionable theories. It cannot be taken badly from these theories either if they come forward with the claim of being general. (The adjective 'societal' is added to their theories to stress it.)

It is not worth getting involved in etymological discussions either with these theories striving to have general validity; namely it is not expedient to focus the discussion with them on whether the theoretical approach represented by them would cover the social articulation of several components, for it may even be true from the angle of the given approach. There is no problem in itself with someone trying to characterize an elephant rather with its ears, and another one rather with its trunk. A problem may emerge if the functioning mechanism of the elephant is attempted to be characterized by features haphazardly chosen.

As a result of the above the issue of the broadening and 'dynamism' of the social categories and concepts emerges. How far a concept is capable of following the dynamism of social processes and phenomena?

The new approaches mentioned here and emerged during the past decades presumably find this alternative (increasing the dynamism of the concept) looking for a way less navigable, they would rather make efforts to overcome the existing paradigm such as Clark and Lipset, who "Consider lifestyle as the determining structuring element of the society, and thus they even wish to invalidate the stratification models of the seventies too ...the stratification structure of the society has been fragmented, because everyone could choose a lifestyle suiting him or her from a rather broad offer" (p. 29). Fragmentation as a consequence of the broadening offer of lifestyle is beyond doubt, but it can be interpreted in a longer time span as a change of shape emerging as a consequence of social dynamics. In addition fragments emerging in a given period do not petrify, or are not always petrifying, because after

the moderation of the mechanisms causing fragmentation or the possible appearance of new fragmenting mechanisms the fibres of stratification are woven anew.

The situation is similar with the views of Pakulski and Waters, according to whom “Consumption does not simply mean purchasing goods, but it has become part of self-expression... *Consumption has become the source of social differences, thus it has replaced the traditional bases (ownership, market opportunities) of social group formation*” (p. 31). It can be regularly observed in the various historical periods that consumption has become part of self-expression, and prestigious consumption has always been present in some form or another. *The difference between the periods is mostly manifest in the mediating channels spreading consumer goods and consumption patterns*, further on how deeply consumption taking up various forms of self-expression or even existing side by side would appear (what is the share of prestigious consumption in the total of consumption) and how wide strata it extends over. At the same time it cannot be doubted that these changes in the shape of consumption may result in qualitative changes in social articulation.

Mass media has an important role in the new approaches (for instance in the views of Vattimo), in which the most diverse cultures and projections of reality appear, and since “...there is no central viewpoint to coordinate the various projections and interpretations of reality” therefore “The multiplication of opinions results in that we lose our ‘sense of reality’. Reality disappears, more specifically the reality that has been projected as reality by knowledge organised within the framework of a central worldview” (pp. 34–35).

I wish to add by way of comment that it is the natural interest of mass media to manufacture ‘short-lived realities’, for this is what it lives on. It is another question how harmful or harmless it is. The real problem is that the intellectuals are not in the position to offer guidance by carefully assessing these realities, giving up nostalgias felt for their former sense of hegemony. And to this the presence of a ‘central view’ is not absolutely necessary. In fact this leads us also to the issue of the responsibility of intellectuals, to which we would return later.

A further problem is that it is not only the careful assessment of ‘realities’ manufactured by the mass media, but the comprehensive assessment of the various scientific approaches is also missing. It often gets lost in the jungle of references how long does a theoretical and methodological view setting out brilliantly live its ‘short-lived life’ believed to be valid, and from whence it is regarded as merely an academically interesting one or a compulsory lesson to be quoted.

Basically my aim has been with the abundant quotations and comments on them to try to indicate the difficulties of the change of paradigm, the necessity of which should be stressed with caution. Why?

1. In fact it is not indifferent whether we challenge the validity of the groups of work as technical categories having a relevant social content, or that the prominent role of the dimension of capital and labor can be questioned within stratification on the basis of various arguments. It is expedient to question rather the extent of its prominence or *what kind of new points of cleavage appear in the palette of social stratification* partly because of the significance of these two dimensions at time

differing from each other, and partly because of the revaluation of certain, formerly less important dimensions or of the appearance of new ones.

2. Considering the social and economic specificities of transition it may also derive from the above circumstances that the change of paradigm can evolve only as the result of a longer process, consequently it is the pluralism of methods that offers the most negotiable way during this phase.

At this point my opinion is very close to the statement of the authors according to which “Therefore it is the joint use of the analytical possibilities of the new social phenomena comprehensively regarded as post-modern and the outlook of the traditional paradigm that seems to be an approach that may be applied” (p. 21).

FURTHER PRIORITIZED ISSUES RELATED TO SOCIAL ARTICULATION AND STRATIFICATION

Differently from the editorial philosophy of the volume I do not classify the papers on the topic of social articulation as part of them was written in the spirit of traditional and others of new approaches. The latter one could be qualified as of a new approach if papers of the strength of proof would have been written in the spirit of the change of paradigm theoretically as well as methodologically. Building of a scheme different from the earlier one may be novel, for being different, but if we build, for instance, consumer groups on the basis of a few variables in relation to the consumption of leisure, a single dimension of stratification, it would not become a new approach well founded even theoretically.

SOCIAL NETWORKS

The writing of Angelusz, R. and Tardos, R., entitled *Networks in the Hungarian Society* may be regarded as trying to bridge over traditional and novel approaches. According to my former definition novel would mean here that in Hungary networks of social relations have rarely been associated with stratification, consequently here it is the blowing up of and isolation as well as a more profound analysis of a stratification dimension that is basically the case.

By way of introduction they list reasonable arguments for the handling of efforts related to the change of paradigm within a right framework, when they say: “The mechanical adoption of the paradigm is even more questionable for social media which have been rather characterized by the scarcity of resources to date, and a free choice of a broad spectrum of life forms, milieus and styles has been the property of the few only” (p. 227).

They summarize the results of their research as follows: “Just as the consolidation of the different types of resources and their intertwining does not seem to weaken, similarly the influence of occupational class position based on the most comprehensive categories has also remained significant, moreover, the role of the transfer mechanisms and the effect of the cultural background have even been somewhat strengthened. The

implications of the thesis of individualization suggesting gradual evening up and the blurring of group borders have not been validated at least for the Hungarian case” (p. 243). I consider the paper as one of the best orienting ones because of its academic foundation and the adequate use of the methods of investigation.

Youth. It was interesting to read again László Laki’s *Youth in the Hungarian Society* with the eyes of a person formerly involved in the study of youth, and I would list by way of taste some telling titles from its Contents, namely:

- The appearance and constancy of juvenile unemployment
- Pushing further the time of employment and starting a career
- Extending the time spent at school
- Pushing further in time separation from the parental family and starting an autonomous life.

These titles and the most important conclusions drawn after the discussion of the most important issues can be found with major overlaps in the analyses of youth from the mid-80s to the mid-90s. Lasting unemployment, child poverty as well as the spread of the use of drugs appears as new elements.

Elites. The writing by Kovách, I., Kristóf, L. and Lengyel, Gy. under the title the *Elite and Society in the Nineties*, may even be regarded as a summary and survey of the history of research. The entries properly guide us about the studies of the authors:

- Elites before the change of the system in social scientific analyses
- Change of the political system – the reproduction and replacement of elites
- The economic elite
- Changes and internal stratification of the cultural elite
- The political elite
- Elites, power, social structure.

I regard the closing lines of the paper very important, namely that the elites “...have no influence on and interest in handling those structural processes of the society that are not directly linked to their economic or power interests” (p. 448). I agree with their not having an interest in it, but it is disputable that they have no influence on the economic or structural processes that do not directly affect their power interests. In fact they do exercise influence by not taking measures that would be necessary to positively orient structural processes.

Small entrepreneurs. Tibor Kuczi’s writing on *Small Entrepreneurs in the Hungarian Society* is also characterized by surveying research conducted about the topic. He attempts to give a comprehensive picture of the internal articulation of the stratum consisting of about 800 thousand members.

Social and Territorial Inequalities is the title of the writing by Kovách, I. and Nagy Kalamász, I., in which they survey the inherited settlement structure of the post-communist period, European integration and the related regionalization, the system of settlement interests, segregation and migration. Further on, the already mentioned digression on de-peasantification is also linked to this topic by one chapter.

Social Structure and the School System is the title of Ferenc Gázsó’s mature paper containing clarified thoughts, approaching the issue partly from theoretical and partly from empirical foundations. He states that “Thus the selection mechanisms asserting themselves in the entire educational system and also generated by the educational

policy of the past decade operate in a way that the effects and consequences of a polarizing social structure may assert themselves without any obstacle. Therefore the operation of the school system is actually in harmony with the structural specificities of an extremely unequal society.”

Zsuzsa Ferge qualifies her writing on *Structure and Poverty* as being “Rather an essay than a study...” and it is particularly worth quoting her final conclusion: “If no resolute steps are taken to hinder the reproduction of poverty there would be trouble with economic and social sustainability within a generation. There will be not enough people to operate modern technology, who would produce the resources for the maintenance of the growing number of the elderly and unemployed.” (P. 499.) Based on her earlier researches the author justly projects an image of a deformed society that should justly rouse fear on the basis of growing social inequalities, decisively as a result of the spread and deepening of poverty.

With some exaggeration the writing of Csizse, A., Kovách, I. and Kristóf, L. entitled *Consumer Groups in the Hungary of the Turn of the Millennium* may be regarded as disputing the statements of the authors Angelusz and Tardos, who, as I have already mentioned it, did not see the validity of the thesis of individualization proved. One may fully agree with the starting point of the three authors saying that “...in addition to the division of labor there are also other mechanisms of social group formation in the present Hungarian society” (p. 256). It is less acceptable, however, on which they base their empirical research, namely: “We presume that those reading the same papers and watching the same programmes think similarly about relevant issues, therefore it is justified to classify them in one group” (p. 256). Their similar thinking is not proved, and even if we attempted to test it empirically, we would find ourselves facing very serious problems of measurement and interpretation.

Based on the above they have outlined consumer groups on the basis of questions related to cultural consumption and spending leisure, such as:

- Technocratic elite
- Right wing
- Left liberal
- Young
- Female
- Male
- Boulevard
- Rare consumer.

Two more papers were included in this block of themes; one is *Family Decisions, Division of Labour and Social Structure* by Csurgó, B. and Megyesi, G.B., giving a survey of researches conducted in this topics, and the other one is *Commercial Media and Late Modern Individualization*, studying the consumption of the internet to show how the commercial media is becoming dominant.

POLITICS AND THE RESPONSIBILITY OF INTELLECTUALS

The ‘production’ of scientific knowledge is greatly determined by the framework of the existing set of social and political institutions, and particularly the set of political management and the interests of the political elite, their motivation for partnership, for scientific achievements can be properly interpreted only within that broader framework. Among others why major scientific enterprises are launched in a given period, or why does even the initiative fail due to a total lack of interest, whether the political milieu is favorable to the self-motion of integrative intentions in the sphere of research, or would it rather fragment activity and as a result activities carried on there would become shallow.

The authors have also sensed the importance of the research climate; therefore they do not link it accidentally to activities aiming at the revision of paradigms. Their assumption is important: “The discussion challenging the statements and validity of researches into stratification fast petered off, and the change of paradigm did not come” (p. 14). The reasons of petering off can be partly explained by “the partial introduction of the market and projects into science”, and partly by the not really fruitful relationship between politics and science. The authors justly question the responsibility of politics, for it was *partly due to the senselessness of politics and of the political elite that researches and researchers got into a ‘vacuum’, which was further aggravated by the even less sensitive processes of the market.*

In fact it cannot be doubted that the cultivation of science is a public task, to be basically financed by public funds, but the stinginess of politics as well as being busy with itself has made the realization of this social demand impossible. The researchers in social sciences and mostly the research elite cannot be relieved of the responsibility either, for with due respect to some exceptions, part of them ‘conscripted’ to politics, and forgot about their previous calling and the social role of learning, another part of them joined directly or indirectly the service of politics. After these antecedents, namely that the political sphere received significant ‘reinforcements’ from among the intellectuals after the change of the system, one may regard the wording of the authors particularly grave, when they say that “The political and economic elites, misunderstanding or not knowing the functioning of the Hungarian society try to govern structural processes, and keep on being surprised that the society is not functioning in keeping with their expectations” (p. 12).

László Laki also pries into the responsibility of politics in his paper (*Changes of Systems in Hungary*), namely: “...even the harrowing social consequences have not led to the reconsideration of the basic elements of structural change and to a fundamentally new social policy.” This logic should be further specified in so far as that the expert elaboration of the basic elements of a new social policy is primarily the task of researchers engaged in applied research, whereas it is the task of politics to build these basic elements into the framework of social policy. As a result, however, of the ‘intellectual corruption’ of the research elite joining or serving politics could not allow an opportunity for it.

THE CHANGING ROLE OF SOCIOLOGY

The issues discussed above lead to the analysis of the social role of sociology, on which the paper *The Changing Role of Sociology and the Road of the Intellectuals from Politics* by Kuczi, T., Kovách, I. and Kristóf, L. focuses. In my view the title does not express reality, for – as it was indicated by quotations above – a ‘changing of color’ of a significant part of the social science elite has taken place by being absorbed by politics or getting into its trail. Therefore we cannot really speak about the scientific elite withdrawing from power; they have withdrawn only from science.

After the change of the system the reconsideration of the role of sociology emerged, but after some time “The bad tradition of Hungarian sociology has gained the upper hand: avoiding disputes and objective public professional discussions. Even in the periodical *Replika* no more writings confronting each other were published, though the periodical was launched with precisely this programme.” (p. 81.)

The authors speak clearly when they say that “The differentiation of the roles of social scientists and of the consciousness about roles, further on the change and devaluation of the function of the profession of social scientists in public discourse are related to the changes of the social weight and significance of the intellectuals” (p. 95). Presumably the authors had the intellectual elite primarily in mind. They also add that the decreasing social weight of the intellectuals is not merely a Hungarian phenomenon.

Basically they explain the pushing of intellectual dominance into the background by two important factors, namely: 1. “The political class has increasingly rejected the claim of the intellectuals for controlling politics.” 2. With the growing dominance of mass media the structure of publicity has changed, which the intellectuals can influence within very narrow limits. Certainly these factors have also played a role in the emergence of the situation, but Erzsébet Szalai’s interpretation is closer to me: “...slowly the independence of the intellectuals was eliminated, and disregarding a handful minority, they look for success in the halo of political parties or of the economic elite” (p. 99). Sociology as a profession may also pocket a significant loss of prestige as a result of the changing of hues by the intellectuals.

Discussing the causes of the missed change of paradigm appears in several places in the volume, including the paper by Kovách, Kuczi and Kristóf. In addition to the causes mentioned earlier this writing stresses two more reasons: 1. “The great generation of Hungarian sociology ...shifted to social science in possession of the practice of social statisticians. Sociological analysis based on social statistics, however, is not really open to the acceptance and reception of the post-modern parlance” (p. 104). 2. “In the dialogue of politics and social scientists, if it is established at all, only such a set of arguments and language can be used which is understood by politics, and obviously this does not encourage the change of paradigm” (p. 105). There is some truth in both statements, but the effect of these reasons lags far behind those mentioned above, and particularly of those stressed by Erzsébet Szalai.

INTEREST, POLITICS AND SOCIAL STRUCTURE

The Relationship between Capital and Labour and the Power Structure in the Hungarian New Capitalism, written by Erzsébet Szalai is related to this theme, in which the author attempts to outline the current features of the social structure in the nature of looking for a way. This enterprise, despite the fact that the author herself has made it clear that she was unable to shape completely the image of the new structure and considered her ideas as hypotheses, can be regarded as a very important thought experiment, and as such it becomes one of the leading writings in the volume. It is worth quoting some of her mature statements, which would also indicate the logic of the writing.

“The major engine of the regrouping of original capital and income beginning with the change of the political system in Hungary has been the technocracy of the late Kádár-system” (p. 349). The “...socio-political possibilities” of this technocracy (including the political, economic and cultural elite), arm in arm with foreign capital owners “are more or less restricted to deciding on to which social strata they should transfer the cost of the regrouping of original capital and income” (p. 351). “The most important stage of the pumping over process was the Bokros-package of March 1995,...” (p. 351). And as a consequence of this process “...the growth of the GDP is becoming decisively the growth of the assets of foreign-owned companies” (p. 351).

After having surveyed the career of capital the author puts the question whether the working class, earlier regarded as the most important owner of labor force, existed at all. Moving basically within Marxian terminology she reaches the conclusion that it is open even for the future whether the workers could organize themselves into a class.

It is decisive for the relationship between capital and labor that “...exploitation by the economic elites and the political and cultural elites linked to them is at the same time cultural and political exploitation as well, these elites are capable of devaluating through complicated transmissions the knowledge and political capital of the social actors not linked to them, regrouping it for themselves” (p. 368). In other words, the emphasis is on the extended reproduction of inequalities. Under these conditions, and also considering the vigorous differentiation of the workers, the relationship between the two main actors (capital owners and their representatives and the employees) that has emerged by this time seems to be meant for a longer run.

Two more case studies may be read in this block, one is the writing by József Hack, entitled *The Effects of Political Preferences and Interests on Sensing the Financial Situation*. The author concludes that we may rest assured, “there are no unambiguous trends in the data”, in other words, political preferences have no particular effect on sensing the financial situation.

The other paper was written by László Neumann: *The Functioning of the Institutions of Interest Assertion*. The author wishes to outline the model of collective bargain in companies, between employers and trade unions.

All in all, the book is recommended to all those who wish to have a panorama of sociological knowledge accumulated in this theme, and particularly of the academic difficulties of the quest for a way related to the change of paradigm.

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