Vol. 9 No. 4 (2023)

intersections

East European Journal of Society and Politics

New forms of social integration

Guest Editors of the thematic issue:
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PUBLISHED BY:

Centre for Social Sciences
Zsolt Boda
Director General

https://intersections.tk.hu
E-ISSN: 2416-089X

Table of Contents

EDITORIAL

NEW FORMS OF SOCIAL INTEGRATION FOSTERING THE AUTHORITARIAN TURN IN HUNGARY

ARTICLES

BOOK REVIEW

Márton Gerő,* Imre Kovách** & Luca Kristóf***

New forms of social integration fostering the authoritarian turn in Hungary

Intersections. EEJSP
9(4): 1–3.
https://doi.org/10.17356/ieejsp.v9i4.1317
https://intersections.tk.hu

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Introduction

Recurrent crises of contemporary societies and radical political changes, such as the authoritarian turn and the decline of democracy in various parts of the world, including Hungary, are linked to new forms of inequalities accompanied by the growing importance of disparities, a renewed urban-rural divide, sharpening political polarisation and exclusive social identities. Under these circumstances, traditional approaches to social stratification provide a less and less satisfactory explanation for how new forms of inequity develop and reorganise our societies locally and globally. Furthermore, this transformation means not only the emergence of new forms of difference but also changing social forms and mechanisms of social integration. Understanding the realignment of social inequalities requires a novel and complex approach to social integration. This thematic issue looked for studies that explore reinterpreted theory and new processes of social integration and their relationship with new forms of inequality, especially those affecting the role of institutions and mechanisms of social integration, political integration, including civil society and social movements, redistributive policies, the territorial context of integration, employment, labour and the labour market, interpersonal relations, trust, values and the perceptions of society on the micro level. The special issue publishes papers that have emerged from a longstanding investigation in Hungary that aims to renew the concept and research method of social integration under the influence of Merton (1938), Parsons (1949; 1970), Habermas (1984; 1987) and Robert Castels (2017).

Huszár and Illéssy's study analyses the labour market integration of Hungarian society in the period after 2010, when employment became almost complete, and the financial situation of active labour market actors improved continuously until 2019. Labour market integration is both integrative and disintegrative, as it advocates entry into the integrative labour market by all means but radically weakens the social protection of those with weak social capital who are left out of it. The increase in employment after 2010 did not lead to an effective reduction in income inequality, and the authors instead identify a widening tendency to polarisation, pointing out that absolute poverty declined and relative income poverty increased.

Gerő and Szabó look for the answer to why the non-reducing occupational class- and income differences do not cause manifest conflicts and political resistance and examine the role of political integration in de-democratization processes. Their novel concept is that politics is less the expression of conflicts and interests tied to the social structure but rather a field of political colonisation and re-essentialization of the Habermasian 'life-world' (1984). The Orbán regime aspires to integrate society through political participation, pacification, and neutralisation. According to the study, the forms of political participation in Hungarian society can be classified into five groups: traditional, direct, online, local, and consumer. The Orbán regime has multiple forms of support, which are present in all groups of social integration, but there is not a single integration group that exclusively supports the illiberal exercise of power.

The paper by Imre Kovách and Luca Kristóf links social integration mechanisms to the occupational class system. Based on Merton's classic theory of social structure and anomie (Merton, 1938), they examine the processes of social integration in Hungarian society between 2015 and 2021. Using three representative surveys, they show how the mechanisms of subjective social exclusion, the number of weak ties, political participation and the acceptance of norm violation have changed in different occupational classes. Their results show a relatively stable class hierarchy in Hungarian society in terms of social integration.

Kristóf Nagy's paper adds to another century-long body of literature that follows Gramsci. It investigates how authoritarian regimes – known for their attacks on civil society – set up and operate new forms of integration through civic organisations. By using the concept of recivilization, Nagy shows how the Hungarian government uses formerly independent yet conservative civil society organisations to strengthen its rule. Drawing on a year-long process of ethnographic fieldwork at the cultural flagship institution of the Orbán regime, the Hungarian Academy of Arts (HAA), this research engages with civic organisations often labelled 'uncivil', 'dark', or 'illiberal'.

We publish three papers that focus on local forms of social integration. Judit Keller and Tünde Virág's paper tells the story of a small town in Eastern Hungary where a particular group of social entrepreneurs, the local project class, eventually took charge of the local welfare system. The authors use the framework of strategic action fields (Fligstein & McAdam, 2011) to demonstrate how local elites were able to maintain their strategic positions in local social networks with the help of their social and cultural capital despite the changing institutional environment. The analysis is based on long-term empirical fieldwork. It contributes to the study of social integration by describing how local perceptions can shape local integration processes through the local elite's framing of narratives. The outcome of these processes is the selective social integration of 'deserving' members of the local community, while both the central and local government eventually abandons 'non-deserving' Roma.

Kyra Tomay and Márk Hegedűs also examine local integration in a rural/small-town setting. They focus on local entrepreneurs in three different wine-producing regions. Using the classic sociological concepts of embeddedness (Granovetter, 1985), social capital (Coleman, 1988), and trust (Putnam, 2000), they show that local integration is indeed a factor in economic success. However, their qualitative data also show that cooperation between entrepreneurs must be accompanied by a supportive and stable institutional

environment in order to be sustainable in the long term. Consequently, the state dependence of small enterprises (Huszár & Berger, 2022) is a persistent source of difficulty for successful local integration.

Luca Bródy's paper focuses on a rarely studied aspect of civil society and social movements: rural local food production. Although the food sovereignty movement is sometimes seen as a primarily Western European concept, studies have already shown its growing importance in the Eastern European region as well (Jehlička et al., 2019). In her research, Bródy describes the various ways everyday rural practices contribute to sustainability. As a member of the critical feminist research collective HerStory Collective, she highlights the marginalised experiences of rural women through oral 'herstory' narrative interviews and auto-ethnography.

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Intersections. EEJSP
9(4): 4–25.
https://doi.org/10.17356/ieejsp.v9i4.1170
https://intersections.tk.hu

Flexibility without security: Labour market integration mechanisms in Hungary during the 2010s

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Abstract

The paper aims to summarise the role of social integration in the labour market processes of the 2010s in Hungary. We have left behind a key decade when employment growth reached unprecedented proportions. However, this unprecedented growth had serious social costs, as those excluded from the labour market during the break-up of the welfare state were left without social protection, and because the financial situation of those entering the labour market improved in absolute terms. Still, their relative deprivation did not change or worsened, and in the meanwhile their ability to enforce their interests has been significantly reduced. That is, today's Hungarian government wants to integrate the members of society into the labour market. To this end, it provides increasingly weak protection for those who, due to old age, long-term illness or unemployment, are forced to stay out of the labour market. Disintegration affects those with the fewest resources, the least capable of conflict and those unable to articulate their problems in public most: these are women, young people and older workers who are 'traditionally' in a worse position in the labour market, in addition to those who are forced out of the labour market. The question is whether the current social model or the situation of those who disintegrated from the labour market will continue to deteriorate after the economic slowdown.

Keywords: social integration, labour market, European Social Model, flexibility, employment

1 Introduction: Scope and data

For many members of society work is not only a source of income but also a means of social integration: a workplace or an occupation form one of the most important building blocks of identity, and disposable income also determines an individual's place in society. The general level of the employment rate, social dialogue at national and enterprise levels, social policy, and such characteristics of job quality as employment relations, access to training and employee participation at the workplace level decisions are all important tools to strengthen social integration or to mitigate the damage labour market inefficien-

cies may cause. In this article, we are looking for the answer to what trends characterized the Hungarian labour market and the basic institutions of the European social model, such as social dialogue or social policy, in the 2010s. We also want to examine whether the unprecedented increase in the employment rate seen in this decade moderated or increased social inequalities. In our analysis, we pay special attention to the development of labour market integration of vulnerable social groups such as the elderly or young people, as well as to changes in the working poor and income inequalities. In our view, employment in itself does not guarantee a greater degree of social integration, which is why we dedicate a separate chapter to the working conditions of those employed, with particular regard to the changes in inequalities found in the knowledge intensity of work tasks, the availability of training, and the level of participation in the workforce. In our study, we rely on three main statistical sources: the Labour Force Survey (LFS), the European Statistics on Income and Living Conditions (EU-SILC) and the European Working Conditions Survey (EWCS). The LFS proved to be particularly useful in mapping general labour market trends, whereas data from EU-SILC were used to analyse income inequalities and poverty. EWCS is a unique resource to describe such workplace-related characteristics as job content, on-the-job training and employee participation in decision-making. Our study is descriptive, our goal is primarily to give an account of the most important labour market processes in Hungary of the decade of 2010, but we also naturally try to point out the possible reasons behind the trends.

2 Labour market trends in Hungary in the 2010s in the light of the European social model

The labour market is one of the key integration areas of societies and the high level of employment is also the economic pillar of the welfare states that emerged in Western Europe after the Second World War. Social integration and social protection were and continue to be important values in the EU, therefore the accession of Hungary in 2004 was an important step in this regard. This remains true even though we cannot talk about a completely unified European social model, as there are countless varieties of the welfare state within the EU, and diversity has only increased with the accession of post-socialist countries. It can be said, however, that recognising that economic and societal or social development goes hand in hand is an integral part of the European idea, and in the long run neither can be imagined without the other. There is also no doubt that, despite the obvious differences between the Member States, the European social model has well-defined elements that are more or less present in all European countries. These pillars are as follows (Vaughan-Whitehead, 2015, pp. 3–10):

1) Workers' rights and improving working conditions (e.g.: promoting mobility, gender equality, occupational health and safety)
2) Universal and sustainable social protection: citizens in all Member States are entitled to a certain level of social protection, and no social group can be excluded from that right.
3) Inclusive labour market: the EU's long-term goal is to support and provide jobs for social groups (the elderly, young people, women, people with disabilities, etc.) who are disadvantaged in some way in the labour market.

4) Strong and well-functioning social dialogue: the formation of welfare states was not necessarily the result of a peaceful process but was managed at the cost of serious struggles. Maintaining social dialogue is a peaceful form of this, which takes place at different levels (corporate, sectoral, national), in a bi- or tripartite manner.
5) High-quality public services: an important goal in the EU is for Member States to provide high-quality public services to their citizens, such as public safety, health, justice, basic infrastructure (road, water, gas, post, etc.) and social protection. Again, their quality varies from country to country, but their development is a common goal everywhere, namely by reducing regional and social disparities in access.
6) Increasing social inclusion and social cohesion: solidarity is one of the oldest social values in Europe, which means that no social group can be left isolated, and members of the political community are responsible for each other.

These six pillars of the European social model also provide a good indication of what can be considered an integrated labour market. However, before we move on, we would like to call attention to the fact that social institutions supporting integration prevail at three levels: some of the basic pillars are linked to micro-level corporate practices (e.g. work organisation, participation, working conditions, wages), others are implemented at the meso level (e.g. sectoral regulations), yet others still relate to the national level (e.g. minimum wage, public services, social security), and finally, certain elements of the social model are present at several levels at the same time (e.g. social dialogue, training system). It is important to draw attention to the fact that these three levels do not operate independently of each other but interact closely with each other and together form an institutional constellation unique to a given country or a smaller group of countries.[1]

In an earlier study, Schmid identified critical life events in which social integration mechanisms are especially important. These critical life events are the following (Schmid, 1998, pp. 8–9):

1) job loss;
2) entering the labour market from the education system;
3) change of job or position change within the same company;
4) becoming self-employed;
5) transition from full-time to part-time employment;
6) transition from unpaid domestic work to the labour market;
7) retirement from employment.

These are the critical points where workers need to make the most successful change, and consequently, labour market integration can best be measured at these points. Of course, it must be taken into account that these life situations are not equally important in all countries; for example, part-time employment is much less common in Hungary than in the Netherlands. In addition, although the labour market statistical apparatus is extensive, the difficulty or ease of transitions is not always measurable.

[1] It is sufficient here to refer to the work of the *'societal effect'* school, whose creators examined these 'institutional coherences' (Sellier, Maurice & Sylvestre, 1982).

It is a question of the extent to which these points are decisive in the Hungarian labour market of the 2010s, which changed significantly after the first two decades of the regime change. Above all, changes affect the relationship between *the labour market and its environment*. The labour market has always been a primary area for the integration of the (adult) population, and this role has further increased since 2010. According to the self-interpretation of the new post-2010 regime, instead of a welfare state, it is working to build a 'work-based society' in which – supported by the principle *'Work rather than benefits'* – one of the key tools is to reduce the level and/or the period of entitlement to transfer income disbursed on social grounds. Among other things, the increasing role of the labour market is indicated by the reduction of unemployment benefits and the shortening of their entitlement period to three months, as well as the introduction of a compulsory public works system; the push-back of social benefits and, in parallel the use of taxation as a social policy tool; but this is reinforced by lowering the compulsory school age, raising the retirement age and tightening up the possibility of early retirement, as well as ending the status of invalidity pensioners and tightening up the assessment of health-related benefits.

There have also been significant changes in the inequality of the power relations of the social partners in the period between 2010 and 2020. The relationship between employers and employees is to be conceived, in principle, based on the freedoms granted to each party: by this, both employers and employees and their representatives are free and independent to decide what contractual relationship they will establish with the other. However, this relationship cannot be considered to be on an equal footing, and several amendments to the Labour Code in the post-2010 period have further increased the dominance of employers. Inequalities in labour market participation have also been fundamentally affected by the freezing or moderate increase in civil service wages, the abolition of the progressive tax system and the introduction of a flat rate tax, as well as the reform of the family support system.

3 Changes in occupational structure

The integrative role of the labour market can be judged, first of all, based on whether it can provide meaningful work for the members of society, and to what extent the earnings for work are sufficient for subsistence.

In the period after the regime change in 1989–90, Hungary was among the countries where the proportion of the economically active (employed and unemployed) was rather low among the working-age population. The transformational crisis and the mass loss of jobs increased not only the number of unemployed, but the acquisition of early retirement, disability pension or other inactive status was also the way out of the social crisis for many. Low labour market activity was one of the main features of Hungarian society, as well as its most pressing social problem in the first two decades after the regime change, but after 2010 this fundamentally changed.

Figure 1 shows the proportion of different activity statuses among people of working age. The share of employees increased only moderately in the 2000s compared to the post-transition period, and this increase almost disappeared during the global economic crisis. In the 2010s, however, substantial changes took place. The proportion of employed

among the population aged 15–64 was 55per cent in 2010; it increased steadily in the following years and reached 70 per cent by 2019. In line with this trend, unemployment has fallen sharply, but the biggest change is that the share of inactive was around 40 per cent for the first two decades after the regime change, but it did not reach 30 per cent in the last years.

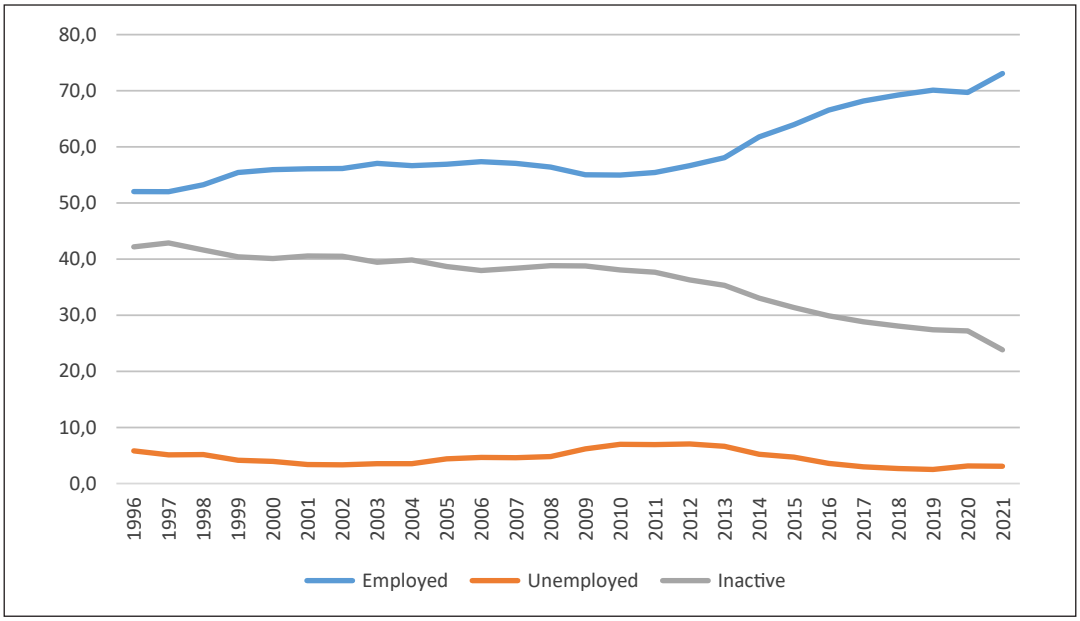

Figure 1 Proportion of different activity statuses in Hungary among 15–64-year-olds (%)

Source: Labour Force Survey

The magnitude of the changes in the decade behind us is shown by the fact that the percentage of the unemployed population returned to the labour market as a percentage of the total unemployed population was more than 40per cent by the end of the period. The development is less spectacular for the inactive, but the proportion of those returning to the labour market reached 7 per cent.

These changes are the results of several processes that affect in various ways how different social groups are integrated in society:

1) The increase in the number of employed is partly due to the greater activity of young people, who are instead of further education channelled towards the labour market by the lowering of compulsory school age;
2) tightening early retirement or raising the retirement age keeps older generations in the labour market;
3) the abolition of disability pensioner status drives those with poorer health conditions back into the world of work; and
4) the reduction of the eligibility period for job search allowance as well as the reform of the system of social transfers reduce the time that those who do not have reserves can spend finding the right job.

Increasing employment was also a key goal in the European Union's strategy for 2010–2020. One of the leading target indicators for 2020 was to increase the employment rate of the population aged 20–64[2] to 75 per cent. This target ratio was met in Hungary by 2019, which has never been seen before in the history of Hungary after the regime change.

In the following, we examine in which segments of the occupational structure the new jobs were created and how the occupational structure itself changed. This is also particularly interesting from the point of view of social integration, because previous studies have reported a polarisation of the occupational structure, i.e. an increase in the share of higher and lower occupational positions, which shows the segmentation of the labour market (Bukodi & Záhonyi, 2004; Bukodi, 2006; Kolosi & Pósch, 2014; Huszár, 2015, Huszár & Záhonyi, 2018). How has the large increase in employment affected the occupational structure?

Table 2 Distribution of employees in Hungary by occupational groups[3]

	2011	**2012**	**2013**	**2014**	**2015**	**2016**	**2017**	**2018**	**2019**	**2019-2011**
	thousand people									
Managers	217.5	192.1	186.7	201.8	199.7	204.1	206.5	198.3	174.7	-42.8
Professionals	586.9	611.6	616.6	628.8	650.2	646.4	638.2	671.2	734.9	148.0
Technicians and associate professionals	481.8	504.8	535.0	564.4	564.9	582.0	608.0	598.4	589.7	107.9
Small entrepreneurs	316.7	312.9	308.3	325.7	319.8	326.6	334.5	330.4	329.7	13.0
Clerks and skilled service workers	436.4	445.6	438.8	465.8	478.5	502.1	496.9	512.9	524.6	88.2
Skilled industrial workers	966.9	976.2	1006.8	1060.8	1080.0	1134.4	1178.8	1214.0	1214.7	247.8
Unskilled workers	718.0	749.6	765.3	807.1	876.0	910.3	910.4	885.5	867.7	149.7
Unclassifiable employees				15.7	6.8	3.4				0.0
Total	3724.2	3792.8	3860.0	4069.9	4175.8	4309.4	4373.4	4410.7	4436.0	711.8

[2] It is important to note that this age composition differs from the population aged 15–64 or 15–74 typically used in international labour market statistics, apparently from the consideration that the socially desirable goal for young people is not to stimulate labour market activity but to participate in the school system.

[3] To examine the change in occupational structure, we use the occupation scheme of the *European Socio-economic Groups* (ESeG). See more details at https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/cros/content/eseg-1_en

Table 2 *(continued)*

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2019-2011
	%									
Managers	5.8	5.1	4.8	5.0	4.8	4.7	4.7	4.5	3.9	-1.9
Professionals	15.8	16.1	16.0	15.5	15.6	15.0	14.6	15.2	16.6	0.8
Technicians and associate professionals	12.9	13.3	13.9	13.9	13.5	13.5	13.9	13.6	13.3	0.4
Small entrepreneurs	8.5	8.2	8.0	8.0	7.7	7.6	7.6	7.5	7.4	-1.1
Clerks and skilled service workers	11.7	11.7	11.4	11.4	11.5	11.7	11.4	11.6	11.8	0.1
Skilled industrial workers	26.0	25.7	26.1	26.1	25.9	26.3	27.0	27.5	27.4	1.4
Unskilled workers	19.3	19.8	19.8	19.8	21.0	21.1	20.8	20.1	19.6	0.3
Unclassifiable employees	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.4	0.2	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	0.0

Source: Labour force survey

According to the data all groups except managers have expanded in the last ten years, so the increase in the number of employees affects almost the entire spectrum of the occupational structure. However, the extent and dynamics of the expansion different for the occupational groups. Overall, by the end of the decade, the number of self-employed had grown at the lowest rate, with around 20 per cent. It can also be observed, however, that the increase in employment in the first half of the decade is largely due to the increase of unskilled workers, suggesting a continuation of the previously observed polarisation trends. However, the results for 2018 and even more for 2019 showed a change in the trend. In these years, the group of professionals grew significantly, while the number of unskilled workers was on a downward trend. These results show a positive change in the occupational structure, opening up mobility pathways for workers. It is a question, however, how the occupational structure will change as a result of the overlapping crisis of the current time.

The occupational structure itself, i.e. the relative proportions of different occupational groups, however, has changed little over the last decade. Therefore, the characteristics of Hungarian society has remained the same: the proportion of higher-status, more prestigious occupations requiring higher education is low in Hungary in European comparison, while the share of blue-collar jobs is high (Huszár, 2013; Kolosi & Pósch, 2014).

4 Poverty and income inequality

As we have pointed out, the number of employees increased sharply in the 2010s compared to the previous period, and those entering the labour market moved into all segments of the occupational structure. However, the success of labour market integration depends not only on quantitative factors. It is a question to what extent the jobs provide sufficient income needed for 'normal life' and how the inequality of income has changed over time. In the following, we examine two indicators of poverty and social exclusion and those of the inequality of income to study these issues.

The indicator of material deprivation that shows the proportion population forced to be deprived of certain goods that are considered essential to social life, informs us on the absolute form of poverty (see Figure 2). According to this, the proportion of deprived people fell slightly from the mid-2000s but jumped significantly in the wake of the 2008 global economic crisis and peaked in 2013. However, in the post-crisis growth cycle their share started to decrease again similar to European trends (see Eurostat, 2018, pp. 103–124; HCSO, 2018) and by the end of 2010s it was at an unprecedented low level.

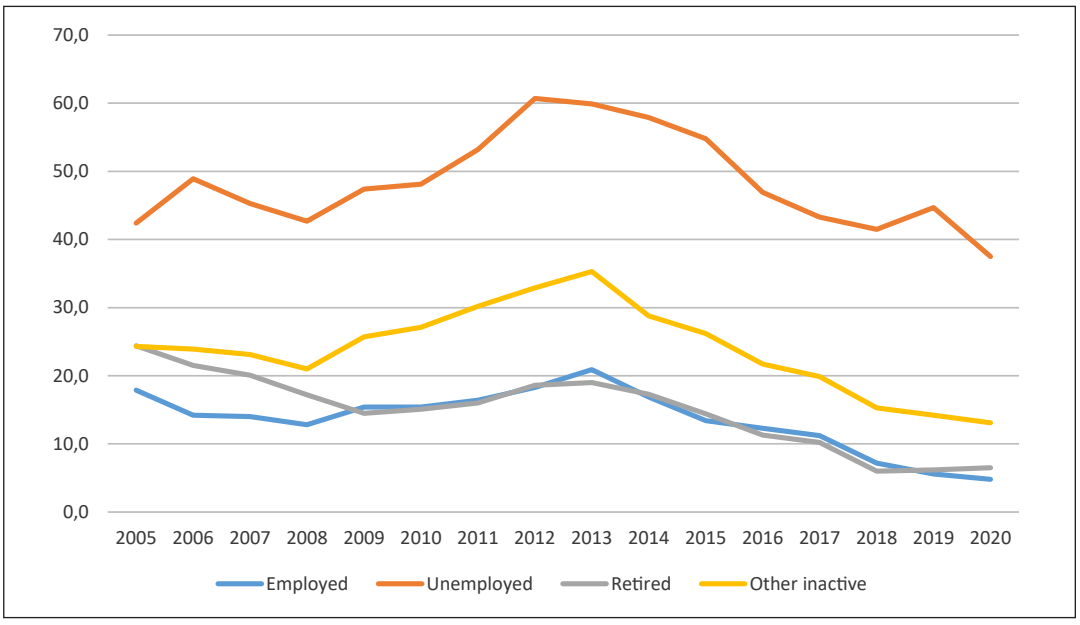

Figure 2 Proportion of those affected by material deprivation in Hungary by economic activity (%)

Source: EU-SILC.

As the figure shows, those with different economic activities are affected differently by absolute poverty: least affected are the employed and the retired, while the level of material deprivation is the highest among the unemployed. During the post-crisis recovery period, the proportion of those affected by material deprivation decreased in all forms of activity, but not to the same extent. In terms of proportion, the situation of the employed and retirees has improved the most, and that of the unemployed the least.

The next indicator we examine is the income poverty rate, which provides information on the evolution of the relative form of poverty (see Figure 3). According to this indicator, those who are forced to live on a low income relative to the median income level of society are classified as poor.[4] Based on this, we can see completely different trends in the change of Hungarian society and in the integrative function of the labour market. Income poverty stagnated or declined slightly in the 2000s but jumped in 2010 and appears to have stabilised at a higher level.

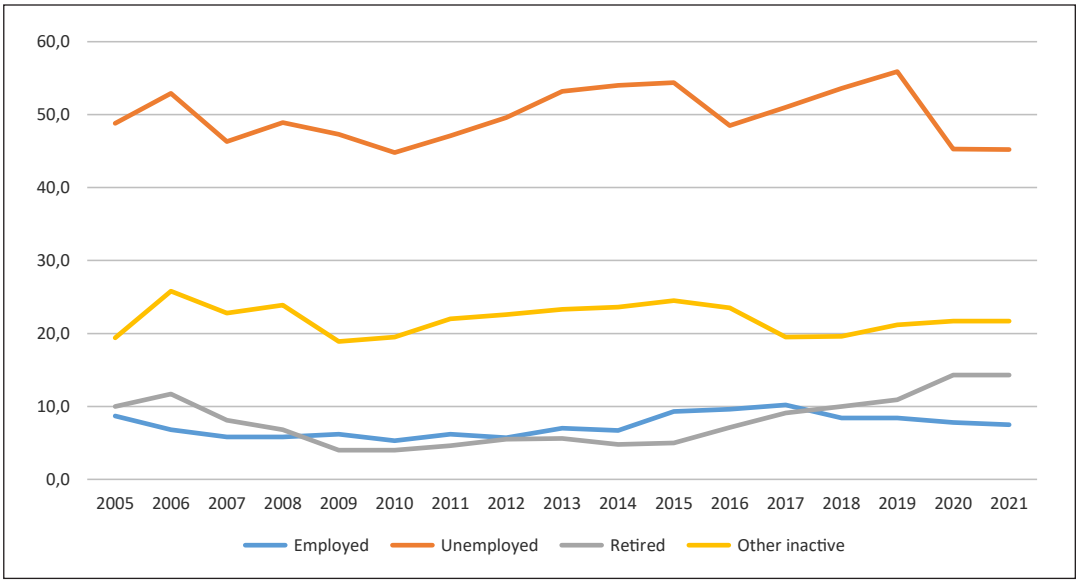

Figure 3 Income poverty in Hungary by economic activity (%)

Source: EU-SILC.

However, different and more diverse processes can be identified in the activity groups compared to what we have seen in the case of absolute poverty. Relative poverty also affects the unemployed the hardest, and their position hardly improved in the 2010s. In contrast, the situation of pensioners compared to the other groups developed particularly favourably in the period under review, but in recent years they have been characterised by increasingly high poverty rates. For employees, the trends are very similar to those for society as a whole. Among the employed, especially from the mid-2010s onwards, the proportion of those below the poverty line based on their income status has stabilised at a higher level. The latter developments in the functioning of the labour market indicate that, although the proportion of those who work and earn an income has increased, their earnings are however not always enough to reach the poverty threshold.

[4] We speak of income poverty precisely when an individual's or household's income does not reach the relative poverty line, i.e. 60 per cent of the median-equivalent income.

This is also confirmed by data on the development of income inequality. In Hungary it increased strongly in the first half of the 2010s and stagnated in recent years. The increase in income inequality is particularly spectacular if we examine the growth of income in the two poles of the income distribution. Figure 4 shows the thresholds of the top and bottom five income percentiles. According to this the higher we move up the income hierarchy the more dynamic the growth of incomes is, but the situation of those at the very bottom has not changed significantly. In the lower percentiles, income levels tend to stagnate.

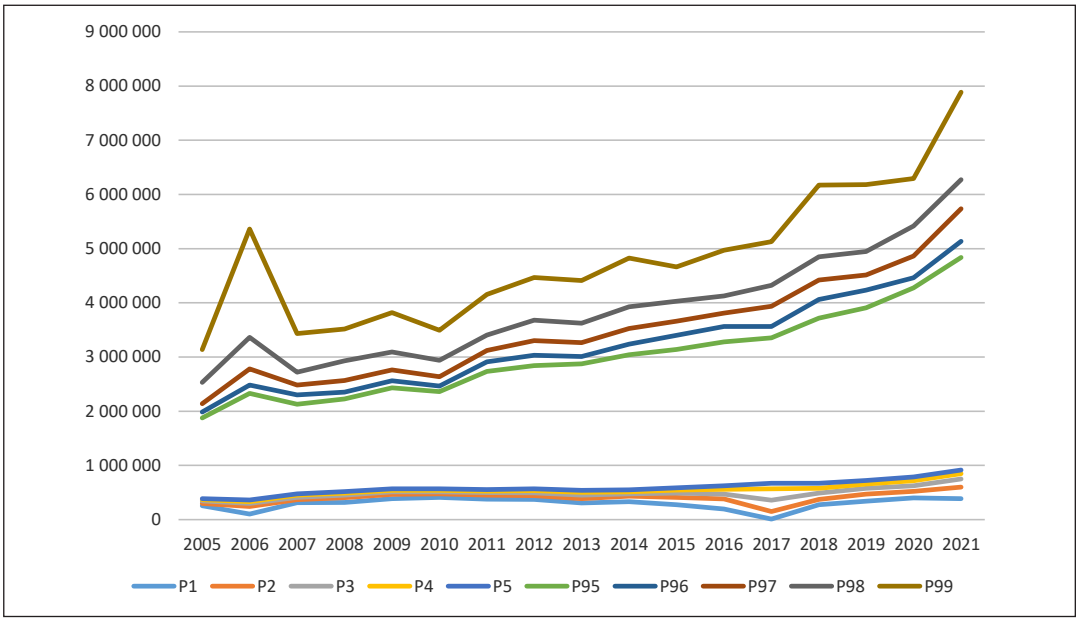

Figure 4 Changes in the thresholds of the lower and upper five income percentiles in Hungary (HUF)

Source: EU-SILC.

5 Labour market and integration: Employment trends of vulnerable social groups

Not everyone in the labour market has the same chance of competing for better jobs. Traditionally, young people, the elderly and women have been singled out as social groups with a weaker bargaining position in the labour market, and it would be socially desirable to reduce this inequality. The following is a brief outline of how the labour market situation of these three social groups developed in the decade of the 2010s. There are two things to highlight here. First, all three social groups are closely related to one of the critical life stages recorded by Schmid. For young people, this transition from the school system to the labour market and, for the elderly, their forthcoming retirement can be such a critical life-stage, and women's labour market participation is affected by childbirth and parenting al-

most throughout their careers.[5] Second, in the course of the analysis, we started from the fact that the examination of the occupational characteristics of vulnerable groups brings us closer to understanding the extent to which the Hungarian labour market is able to fulfil its integrative function. In other words, the more we can offer these social groups a perspective on employment, the more we can talk about an integrated labour market. If, on the other hand, the labour market does not permanently offer the most vulnerable social groups a worthy status, it will lead to the segmentation and polarisation of society.

We first reviewed the employment rates of young people (15–24 years old) and older people (55–64 years old). Figure 5 below clearly shows that while the participation of both groups lags behind the working age population (15–64 years) the elderly are much closer to this than the young. Moreover, the gap between the two groups has not simply widened over the past decade but has almost doubled: while in 2010 the employment rate of older workers was still only 15 percentage points higher than that of older workers, by 2021 the gap had widened to 35 percentage points. This is a relatively new development, since young people were still able to keep up until 2016, but since then their proportion has not increased significantly, as the graph shows.

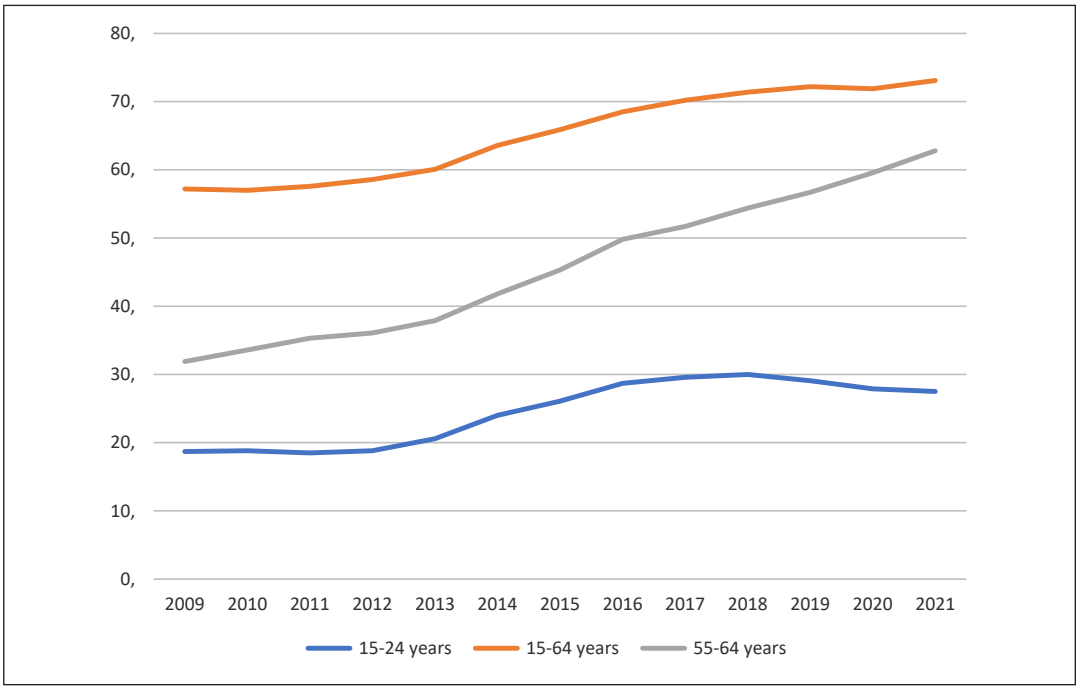

Figure 5 Employment rates of young people, the elderly and the working age population in Hungary

Source: Labour Force Survey

[5] Employers are reluctant to hire people who may be out of work for longer or shorter periods of time and can count on them less after childbirth due to stereotypes about parenting.

Similar inequalities are also found when examining employment rates by gender. While at the beginning of the decade the gender gap was 'only' 10 percentage points, by the end of the period it had grown to 14 percentage points. Women benefited far less from the fruits of economic growth and employment expansion than men, and this was exponentially so in the case of vulnerable age groups: regarding the population aged 15–24, the employment of men increased from 38.6 per cent to 69 per cent (30.4 percentage points), while in the case of women this increase did not reach 17 percentage points. (29.4 per cent to 46.2 per cent).

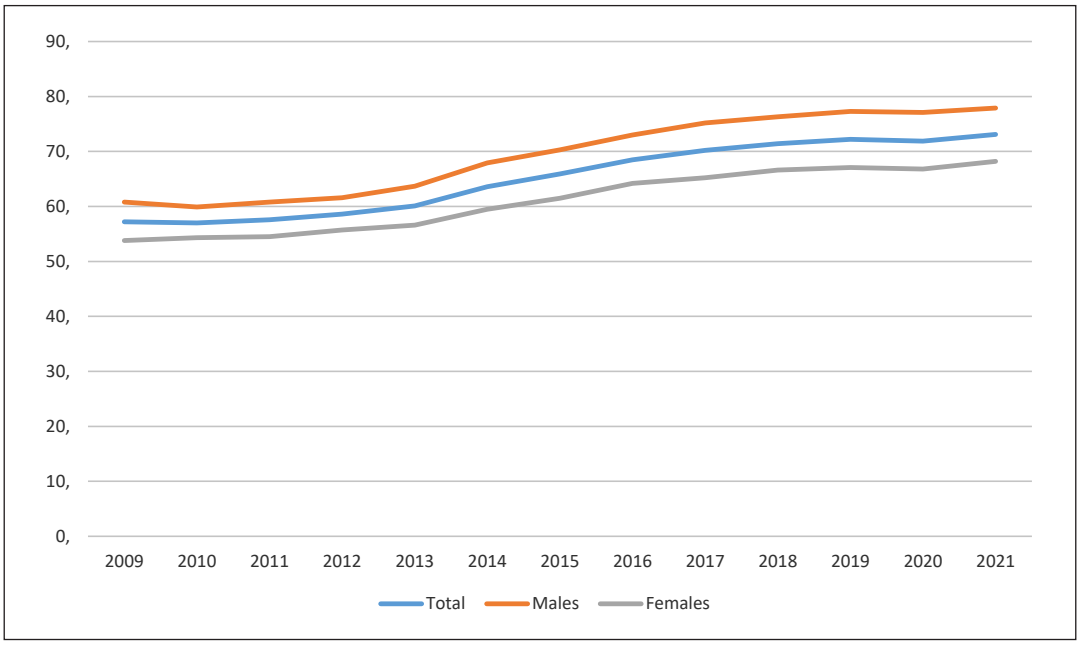

Figure 6 Employment rates of men and women in Hungary

Source: Labour Force Survey

In theory, any increase in labour market activity strengthens social integration, as this way more people from the active age part of society can earn a living from meaningful work. However, in practice, this is only true if participation is accompanied by channels of labour market mobility and if promotion to higher-status jobs is supported at the institutional level. This does not seem to be the case in Hungary: although quantitative indicators are improving, important social groups, especially young people and women, are still at a disadvantage.

6 Integration in the workplace: Qualitative dimensions of labour market integration

We have previously described in detail the mechanisms and consequences of social integration in the labour market from a macro-perspective. As we stated earlier, besides the labour market and income indicators characterising the inequalities, there may also be

significant differences in the quality of work, which are associated with persistent advantages and disadvantages for individuals holding individual positions in society. Better quality jobs improve the satisfaction and physical and mental well-being of individuals, as they provide them with the opportunity to realise their individual aspirations and to have opportunities for personal development, in addition to raising the financial resources necessary for subsistence. Favourable physical and mental working conditions can have a positive impact on their health and life prospects (Green & McIntosh, 2001; Eurofound, 2013; Brian & McAdams, 2010). Thus, if the labour market is one of the most important institutions of social integration, then inequalities in working conditions also determine the quality of integration through their effects on the quality of life.

Of course, it is relatively difficult to define the concept of good work, not only because one should consider many, sometimes contradictory, aspects of work, but also because the definition of good work is subjective by its nature, depending on the individual's life experience, aspirations and future expectations (Felstead et al., 2019). Nevertheless, there are objective factors that have a major impact on the quality of work and can be linked to integration, as in some ways they influence the allocation of and access to resources within work organisations, both material and symbolic, and thus opportunities for access to good quality work. We highlight three such factors: 1. the characteristics of the work process; 2. opportunities for participation; and 3. access to training.

The other reason why it is worth extending our analysis to the working conditions is, that labour market inequalities cannot be captured only through the investigation of macro-level processes and the political practices shaping them. As the representatives of the 'societal school' emphasise, society is a dynamic concept whose coherence is constituted by the structural and relational interdependencies between various actors (and institutions) representing the different levels of this societal construction (Maurice, 2000). Bearing this in mind, we have to note that labour market is a complex and multifaceted social phenomenon formed and encompassed by the activities and decisions of various stakeholders. By the analysis of job quality indicators, very important aspects of labour market inequalities and integration can be captured, but on the other hand, this also represents a mezzo-level of analysis, as they are incorporated in the labour process within the organised frameworks provided by workplaces and are directly influenced by employers' attitudes, habituations and possibilities. Accordingly, the mutual analysis of the macro and mezzo level helps us to gain a comprehensive understanding of the very nature of tendencies determined by labour market inequalities between 2010 and 2020 in the Hungarian context.

For this analysis, we used data from the 2015 *European Working Conditions Survey (EWCS)*[6]. The EWCS employee survey, conducted six times between 1990/1991 and today in various economically active populations over the age of 15 in various European countries. The representative Hungarian sample of employees in organisations employing more than 10 people and self-employed persons is based on a survey of 1,000 people.

Our basic assumption was that education has a crucial role in achieving a certain labour market status, as higher education and specialised knowledge provide individuals greater flexibility in adapting to labour market requirements. The characteristics of the

[6] We used the 2015 EWCS data for two reasons. First, it is the last wave of the survey available, and second, we wanted to analyse the period between 2010 and 2020.

labour process reveal a great deal about the quality of a job. Simple, repetitive and monotonous work tasks mean an unfavourable work environment that does not allow the individual to develop initiative, skills and knowledge, while the worker is more controllable and consequently more vulnerable as well. The place of simpler work in the prestige hierarchy is also lower and disadvantaged in terms of compensation. Complex work tasks, on the other hand, offer an opportunity to accommodate more differentiated work needs related to work, thus giving the individual the opportunity to experience meaningful work and self-fulfilment and gain experience, which can also mean convertible knowledge that also increases the individual's value in the labour market. To identify the complexity of the work process, we used five indicators that measured whether the work of the respondents was characterised by any of the following factors: 1. repetitive tasks, 2. monotonous tasks, 3. complex tasks, 4. the opportunity to learn new things, and 5. the opportunity to implement one's own ideas.

Table 2 Work process characteristics by educational attainment (%)

	Repetitive tasks	**Monotonous tasks**	**Complex tasks**	**Opportunity to learn new things**	**Implementing your own ideas**
Tertiary	14.4	18.5	91.9	77.0	75.7
Secondary	27.5	36.3	72.9	54.0	55.0
Skilled worker	36.5	47.8	59.7	39.7	44.4
Elementary education or less	32.1	54.4	52.6	38.6	39.3

Source: Own editing based on EWCS 2015.

It is clear that education is related to the characteristics of the work process. Among those with lower levels of education, the proportion of those working in jobs with simple, monotonous, repetitive work is significantly higher. It is also clear that a much higher proportion of those with higher (at least secondary) education perform varied, complex work tasks and have the opportunity to learn new things in the course of their work. Here, therefore, we see an accumulation process, where lower educational attainment is associated with more unfavourable working conditions, implying lower levels of skill and knowledge use and limited scope for their improvement, while the opposite process can be observed among those with a higher level of education. In this respect, it is particularly interesting to examine the extent to which employees have access to formal and informal training opportunities provided by companies, depending on their educational attainment. The following Figure 7 shows the proportion of those in each education group who participated in employer-funded or on-the-job training.

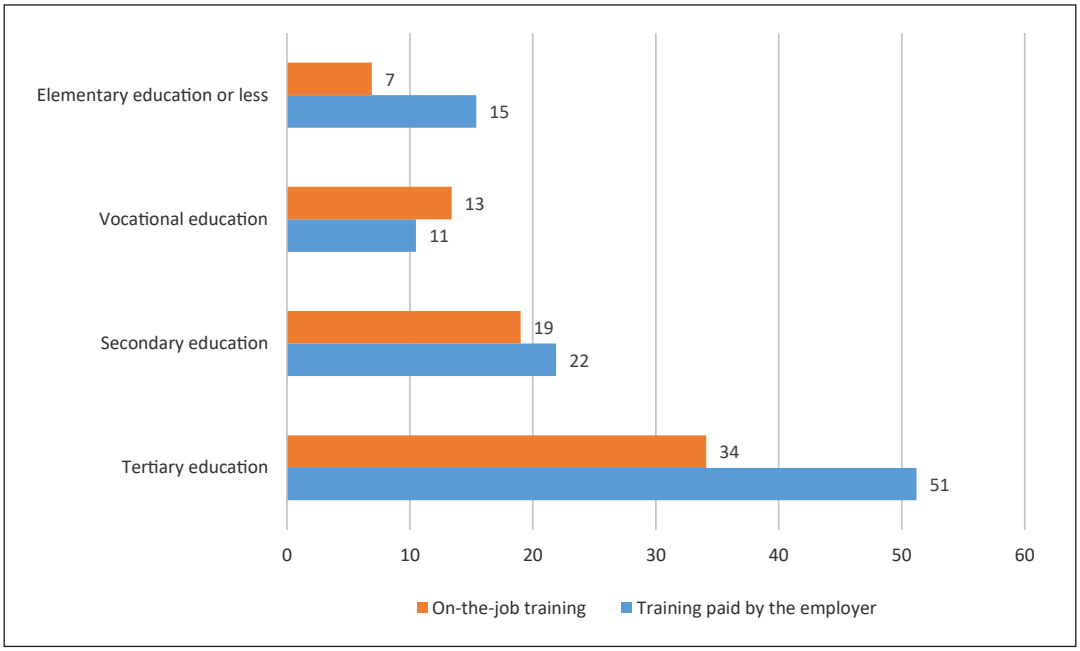

Figure 7 On-the-job training opportunities by education (%)

Source: Own editing based on EWCS 2015.

The figure above is a good indication of inequalities in access to training. There are dramatic differences in the extent to which workers can participate in formal and informal learning opportunities, especially among those with tertiary education and those with up to eight primary school classes and vocational qualifications. The implemented training programmes are obviously related to the complexity of the work tasks, as the more complex jobs are presumably more demanding, but this in itself does not explain such differences in training opportunities. According to our interpretation, it is more about the fact that those with higher education have better advocacy skills in the allocation of resources provided by the company, which again points to the strong correlation between accumulation inequalities and education, already indicated above.

The third factor in the job quality that we examined was the opportunity for employee participation in decisions. Opportunities for participation are indicators of the extent to which an organisation allows room for the development of individual skills and for influencing decisions about work and employees' working conditions. The fact that the individual can at least partially shape the (work) environment within the organisation has a number of consequences that are important for the well-being of the individual.

It also means encouraging better performance, improving individuals' work and organisational attitudes, giving them the opportunity to use their skills and knowledge together to solve problems, and increasing their commitment to the organisation and ultimately their degree of integration into the organisation (Inanc, et al. 2015; Gallie et al., 2017). We examined two levels of participation opportunities: whether employees have the

opportunity to have a say in decisions about their direct work responsibilities, and whether they can express their views on decisions that affect the organisation as a whole. The former was measured by two indicators: whether the individual can participate in work process improvements and whether he or she can influence decisions affecting his or her work. The latter level of participation was measured by whether there is a workplace forum where he or she has the opportunity to express an opinion about events in the organisation.

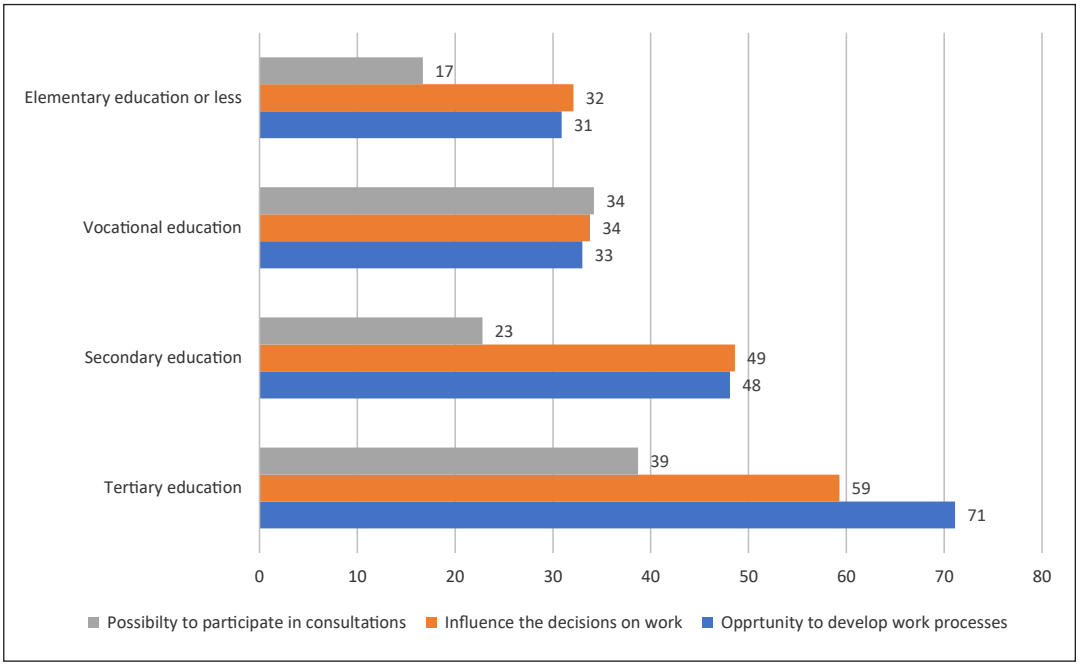

Figure 8 Opportunities for employee participation based on educational attainment (%)

Source: Own editing based on EWCS 2015.

There is a significant difference between the two measured dimensions of participation. To varying degrees, employees have the opportunity to have a say in decisions that directly affect their work to some extent, while few have a formal, institutionalised opportunity to comment on decisions at the organisational level. Those with secondary and higher education have many more opportunities to influence work decisions and to improve their work performance than those with lower education, which again only points to the shortcomings of the organisational integration of the latter groups. There is a similar trend in influencing organisational decisions, but here the differences are smaller, and skilled workers are in a relatively good position vis-à-vis those with secondary education and the unskilled, and so are graduates.

Summarising the most important lessons of the analysis, we can conclude the following. Based on educational attainment, clear inequalities can be identified according to the factors that determine working conditions. The working conditions of those with a

lower level of education are less favourable than among those with secondary education, and especially those with a tertiary education, i.e. the advantages and disadvantages in the world of work accumulate along with the differences in education. Those who have more academic qualifications have better quality work, while those with lower levels of education are more likely to work in a dehumanising, knowledge-undervaluing environment that destroys motivation and living conditions. Work, which consists of complex work tasks, is varied and offers learning opportunities, offers the individual better performance, greater satisfaction with work, identification with work, and a broader development perspective. An environment in which one has the opportunity for self-fulfilment, a deeper and more meaningful commitment and the fullest possible use of one's abilities and competencies. If there are socially defined inequalities in the quality of work, it also indicates that social integration within the workplace is dysfunctional, which is also a problem at the societal level, through the poor use of human resources. Differences in opportunities for employee participation indicate that there are also inequalities in access to organisation-level institutions for dialogue and democratic work, and participation in decisions would provide an opportunity to reduce potential inequalities in access to resources between groups of workers. Differences in educational attainment can be considered a natural social phenomenon, but it does not follow that they should be accompanied by inequalities in the quality of work. Based on the presented data, we conclude that the quality of labour market integration does not depend solely on the amount of labour supply. It is worthwhile to adapt the work, in accordance with the division of labour practices determined by technological conditions, through work organisation reforms that improve working conditions, so that the content of work tasks, access to internal development resources and employee participation opportunities are more favourable for disadvantaged social groups.

7 Conclusions

Increasing labour market activity has been one of the most important social policy goals since 1993, regardless of governments and governing parties. However, all attempts failed to do so until 2010, and the Hungarian labour market participation has been among the lowest in Europe with a participation rate of less than 60 per cent for most of this period. After 2010, the Hungarian government achieved considerable success in this regard by providing increasingly weak protection for those who are excluded from the labour market for a shorter or longer period due to their old age, illness or unemployment (Szikra, 2019), and the weakening of social rights is forcing individuals to return to the labour market as soon as possible, even by taking on jobs that do not match their qualifications. Those most affected by this compulsion are those with the least resources, the least able to deal with conflict, and thus with the least time and resources that they can devote to finding a job; that is, women, young people and the elderly.

This particular version of labour market integration after 2010 has been a great success in quantitative terms, as it has increased employment by breaking decades of trends in a particularly favourable international economic environment and has been able to reduce absolute forms of poverty and exclusion, in part by increasing employment. How-

ever, as inequalities and income poverty increase, this form of integration also comes at a significant price. This affects, above all, the unemployed and the inactive who have less public assistance available through the transformation of unemployment or social benefits, but also those who have been able to enter the labour market but whose earnings are not enough to rise above the poverty line. We can say that this 'low road of labour market activation' resulted in weaker labour market integration in many regards.

Labour statistics for 2010 show that, after the first two decades since the regime change, the number of employed has substantially increased, with the number of the inactive and the unemployed falling in parallel. This represents an unprecedented level of labour market activation, even if we know that 2010 was the year hardest hit by the crisis. This increase in the number of employees had a different effect on the occupational class structure in the period under review: in the first half of the decade, the share of unskilled workers increased mainly in the lower segment of the occupational structure, presumably due to public work programmes (Scharle & Szikra, 2015). However, in the last two years of the decade (2018–2019), the direction of the processes changed somewhat: the number of white-collar workers increased significantly, and the proportion of unskilled workers decreased, ending the polarisation trends in the labour market. Overall, however, the relative proportion of occupational groups has not changed significantly, which is a worrying development because the proportion of higher-skilled, more prestigious occupations in Hungary is very low in European comparison.

Following the peak of the post-crisis years, absolute poverty declined from the beginning of 2010, while relative income poverty started to increase. This latter process is also particularly interesting because the increase in income poverty has affected not only the unemployed and inactive, but also the expanding circle of the employed. This suggests that polarisation processes have intensified, while those in the lower regions of the labour market have jobs, but the resulting income is far below average and has not moved closer to it, while the income of the upper strata has increased significantly. Analysing the data of the working poor, we encounter similar phenomena.

As the evolution of relative poverty has indicated, labour market participation is not a guarantee of social security, in which public policy changes that contribute to the growth of inequalities also play an important role. Among other things, the abolition of the progressive tax system has contributed to the increase in inequalities, determining the wages of public workers below the minimum wage and, in general, restricting workers' rights (Neumann & Tóth, 2018).

Summarising the above, in 2010 the Hungarian Government committed itself to building a model that increases social inequalities and has systematically implemented it over the decade. Transitional benefits for people who have lost their jobs have waned, and employees' vulnerability relative to that of employers in Europe's 'most flexible' labour market has become unprecedented, while life outside the labour market is essentially impossible, as a result of the dismantling of the social safety net that facilitates decommodification.

All this did not lead to open social conflicts for at least two reasons. One is the growing number of people working abroad. It is impossible to write an analysis of the labour market trends of 2010 without talking about it; however, the available data are somewhat fragmented, and in many cases their reliability is questionable. Hárs and Simon (2016)

estimate that by 2016, the number of Hungarian citizens working abroad was close to 350,000. As there has been no significant change in the causes of working abroad since then we can reasonably assume that this number had only increased until the pandemic broke out. This means that almost 10 per cent of Hungarian workers work abroad, remittances are an important additional source of household income, and they partially replace the social services cut back by the state. Another important factor in maintaining the system was the economic growth that had taken place since 2013, which allowed for the employment of larger numbers of employees.

It is perhaps no exaggeration to say that the 'system of national cooperation' has created a very specific 'social contract', albeit not without any tradition in the region. The essence of this is that state redistribution remains unchanged at a high level: according to Eurostat (2019), the state's revenue relative to GDP even increased: at its peak in 2016 it was around 40 per cent; in 2018 it was 37.6 per cent. On the expenditure side, however, the state has been significantly relieved of the burden of maintaining social solidarity: education and social security institutions that previously operated on the principle of solidarity and the richest sections of society have benefited significantly more from direct and indirect payments to the detriment of the poor. This is also supported by the results of the present analysis, in particular the data series on income polarisation and rising working poverty, but the government did not hide its intentions when, for example, it set out to build a work-based society instead of a welfare one.

The simple fact that Western European welfare states, without exception, are all also work-based societies (since, as explained in detail in the introduction, strong economies and activating social policies go hand in hand) has meanwhile been forgotten. Regardless of all this, the Hungarian model is politically sustainable for the time being – the exploration of the causes is not the subject of our analysis – but it has to face serious challenges from two directions.

Extensive labour market processes without the basic pillars of social security, based on flexibility detrimental to workers, will be difficult to sustain if economic growth stops or foreign employment declines.

There is no place in this model for long-term competitiveness factors such as human creativity, a strong education system, and a stable middle class. However, in the absence of these, the system can become uncompetitive relatively quickly without any particular external shocks. However, this may be a future development. The labour market integration of 2010 was marked by a significant increase in the number of people in a highly liberalised labour market through numerical flexibility, but due to working conditions, affordable wages and the breakdown of the social safety net, this labour market is less likely to offer real integration for a great number of employees.

Our study has its limitations, which also indicate possible further research directions. The most important limitation is that we focused on the development of the labour market situation in Hungary. It would be worthwhile to compare these results with European and especially Eastern-Central European trends. On the other hand, the pandemic and the lockdown that accompanied it also shook the Hungarian labour market, but its effects can only be assessed over a longer period. The currently available data indicate that no fundamental changes have taken place so far: employment remains unchanged or even increases, unemployment is low, and deprivation and poverty have decreased rather than

increased. However, the energy crisis that followed the start of the war in Ukraine, as well as the resulting inflation, which is unprecedented in European comparisons, may fundamentally rewrite this situation. Overall, one of the most important sociological questions of the 2020s in Hungary will be whether it will be possible to maintain a high level of labour market participation and whether it will be possible to reduce income inequality.

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Political integration mechanisms in Hungary (2010–2022)

Intersections. EEJSP
9(4): 26–52.
https://doi.org/10.17356/ieejsp.v9i4.1158
https://intersections.tk.hu

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Abstract

Since 2010, Fidesz has won four electoral victories in Hungary with a constitutional majority. In this paper, we argue that the main reason behind this overwhelming electoral success is the specific pattern of political integration that has evolved in recent years. The Hungarian case, as a consequence, may also act as a basis for a theoretical step forward in understanding the role of political integration in de-democratization processes. To understand the role of political integration, we explain how the Habermas-based political integration framework relates to the types of political culture, and then, with the help of representative data collection from 2018 and 2021, we define the integration groups and, using these, examine the party preferences and participation patterns that have developed in today's Hungary. The Orbán regime successfully generates diffuse mass support: this is embedded in multiple social groups, although none of the integration groups can be considered the sole or primary supporters of the system.

Keywords: political integration; party preferences; participation; Hungary

1 Introduction

This study aims to increase understanding of the mechanism of political integration in an increasingly autocratic regime by examining political participation in Hungary. More precisely, our paper investigates how the potential for political participation in groups, defined by their level of social integration, might serve as a mechanism for providing legitimacy for the Orbán regime.

Earlier studies show (see Kovách et al., 2018; Gerő et al., 2020, Gerő & Szabó, 2020) that the political integration of Hungarian society represents a terrain of social integration, independent of other factors such as the labour market or interpersonal relationships. In this study, we take a step towards theorising political integration, understood as one of the – but not the only – system-level integration processes.[1]

[1] See also, for example, redistributive processes, Gerő & Kovách (2022).

This is particularly important in relation to the Hungarian transformation of the political regime. Since the 2010 elections, the two-block party system previously considered to be stable has been replaced by the hegemony of a large party (Körösényi, 2015; Gyulai, 2017; Tóth & Szabó, 2018). As applied to this newly emerging regime, earlier-used stratification models and different sociodemographic factors do not provide a sufficient explanation of why and how the political dimensions of integration are evolving either collectively or separately (Gerő & Szabó, 2017; Gerő & Sik, 2020) As of now, a wide 'coalition' has been formed between different social groups supporting the incumbent, mainly based on their identity and to a smaller extent, the benefits provided to them by the system (see Gerő & Sik, 2020; Huszár, 2022) This also means that political integration mechanisms operate essentially independently of other factors. Political parties and (especially the incumbent) political leaders are at the heart of the process (see also Huszár & Szabó, 2023).

It is important to note that the question is not whether politics or political institutions play a role in social integration but *how,* and what the relationship is between political integration and other social integration mechanisms. Based on previous research (Gerő & Szabó, 2017; Kovách et al., 2016; 2018), we argue that politics has become an independent integration factor in Hungary. This contradicts the traditional view of political sociology, according to which political parties translate political cleavages (conflicts embedded in the social structure) in the competition between parties and thereby mediate them into political and state institutions (Lipset & Rokkan, 1967). In developing our concept, following the theory of Jürgen Habermas (2005), we see political integration as a form of colonisation of the Lifeworld by the (political) system.

The current study reviews earlier empirical work and moves towards a dynamic analysis by adding more recent empirical findings on political participation and electoral behaviour. First, we present the conceptual frameworks of political integration, then analyse the relationship between forms of political participation and the groups thus formulated based on the integration model (Kovách et al., 2016, 2018; Gerő et al., 2020) and party preferences and conditions of political participation between 2017 and 2021. By exploring these dynamics, the study also contributes to our knowledge of how the Fidesz–KDNP government[2] consolidates the Orbán regime (Körösényi, 2015) through political integration.

2 Conceptual framework for political integration and the role of political participation

Our concept of political integration is based on Jürgen Habermas' work, the *Theory of Communicative Action*. Therefore, to arrive at an understanding of political integration, we shall review the concepts of interpersonal and systemic integration and their relationship as used by Habermas.

Habermas first uses the first elements of the basic concepts of his later work in a monograph entitled *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* (Habermas, 1999). He clearly distinguishes between the terminology of the public and the private and that of

[2] Fidesz – Magyar Polgári Szövetség: Fidesz – Hungarian Civic Alliance, the Hungarian governing party.

state and society. The difference between public and private is a precursor to the distinction between the System and Lifeworld, two key concepts used later in the *Theory of Communicative Action* (Habermas, 2005). According to Habermas, modern mass societies are divided into two major spheres: the System, which includes the economy and the state (the public sphere), and the Lifeworld, which consists of the private sphere and the terrain of informal relationships surrounding and interweaving it and includes knowledge based on linguistic and value-based socialisation processes. To simplify, the System provides the goods necessary to satisfy the needs of the mass society and the administrative institutions required for its organisation and operation. In contrast, the Lifeworld provides the practices, language, and identity necessary for operating the System and everyday life.

A specific feature of modern societies is that a boundary between the private and the public sphere, or between the System and the Lifeworld, has been created. According to the coordination mechanisms of the System, aspects of efficiency (goal-rationality), while in the Lifeworld, mutual understanding (communicative rationality) dominates. In Habermas' view, the Lifeworld is constructed from three processes of structural components, culture, society, and personality, with interpersonal integration affecting most of the structural elements of life.

In late capitalism, increasingly complex systemic regulatory processes and mediums (primarily money and power) penetrate the Lifeworld, impeding understanding, and subject the latter to the constraints of material reproduction, threatening to damage the everyday action, that is, the three components of the Lifeworld. Habermas calls this process the 'technicalisation' or the colonisation of the Lifeworld'. During colonisation, the system operates mechanisms that simultaneously integrate and disintegrate the Lifeworld according to its own goals. The basis of the System's integration mechanism is ultimately that its survival, even in late capitalism, depends on the Lifeworld. According to Habermas, late capitalism has a stronger need for legitimacy than the state of liberal capitalism and earlier political arrangements. The legitimacy of the System and the common orientations and interpretive frameworks necessary for it – which determine the state of the social system as a whole – are supported by the Lifeworld. System integration thus reflects mechanisms aimed at creating the widest possible 'content-diffuse mass support,' or unconditional mass-scale system support.

Habermas attributes the possibility of control and resistance to actors in the Lifeworld. Citizens may, consciously or not, oppose the colonisation of the Lifeworld by being unwilling to cooperate with the System or withdrawing their support and loyalty. Support might mean having a supportive attitude to the operation of the state and economy (seeing their operation as necessary or as something positive) or might be enacted through political participation. The trick is that participation itself might work as a legitimising factor: it does not need to be supportive of the state. For example, a high level of participation in elections provides legitimacy for the System, while participation in protests or actively participating in civil society might also signal support for the System itself.

Thus, the purpose of the System is to ensure that citizens participate in the political process in an 'appropriate' way and quantity, generating legitimacy for the System. The explicit goal of the System is to develop and consolidate forms of mobilisation and participation in late capitalism that, while not endangering diffuse mass support, provide reassurance to the actors in the Lifeworld and present opportunities for resistance to the System.

The System thus ensures – through the institutions of formal democracy, often at the constitutional level – the operation of mechanisms in legitimate forms (that is, controlled and maintained by the System) of resistance against the System. This civic privatism, as Habermas calls it, allows the System to start and control both integrating and disintegrating processes (Szabó & Oross, 2017; Habermas, 2005).

Based on Habermas, we assume that of the various dimensions of political integration, ideological and value dimensions can strongly influence political integration as instruments of the System, strengthening political cohesion in society while not necessarily reducing conflicts in it. During the current wave of autocratization (in Central and Eastern Europe and elsewhere), populist political leaders play a crucial role, and one of the main elements of their repertoire is consistently striving to provoke conflicts and produce images of enemies (Arato, 2019; Gerő & Szabó, 2017). These conflicts, on the one hand, polarise the political community but, on the other, create large, integrated political camps with diverse social backgrounds primarily based on identity (McCoy et al., 2018).

Bartolini and Mair (1990) agree that emotions increasingly play a role in the functioning of political integration and that leaders have a major role in the functioning of integration. The naming of various social, economic, and political problems and the reasons for these can take on primary functions in political leaders' interpretations. The emotional mobilisation of political communities can be awakened not only by the presentation of social and economic problems but also by the presentation of dangers lurking in the community (Ost, 2004), especially when their causes appear as personified enemies (Berkowitz, 1994; Gerő et al., 2017).

Based on this, we consider political integration and its integration mechanisms those political actions, attitudes, norms, and ideologies that:

a) increase the political cohesion of society
b) but reduce the chance of political communication breakdowns or political conflict between the incumbent and its constituency (thus maintaining a clear flow of vertical communication),
c) but block horizontal communication (between voting camps)
d) and, at the same time, promote the broadest possible legitimacy of the political system.

Therefore, the system's legitimacy is at the heart of our concept. Thus, in a nutshell, political integration means that the system can operate complex political-economic-social processes in such a way that its support does not necessarily depend precisely or exclusively on the actual performance of the System.

According to Balázs Kiss (2015), institutions of political integration are nation-states, independent institutions for the common good, the mass media, and political parties. Without going into detail about the role of the nation-state and its institutions, it is worth examining the functions of parties. The integration functions of parties are almost incomprehensibly broad and increasingly differentiated and are perhaps the most important channel connecting the System and the Lifeworld (Kiss, 2015, p. 97). It is difficult to imagine research on political integration without any reflection on parties, party supporters, the members of subcultures associated with parties, or party leaders, who often become rigid symbols. Opinions about parties might be aggregated in party preferences (and, of course, votes in national elections).

However, political participation belongs not only to parties but to civil society organisations and social movements as well. In their seminal book, Cohen and Arato (1992) define political and civil society as two mediating spheres between the System and Lifeworld. Both are associational spheres, yet political society, consisting of mainly political parties, is more similar to the System in its coordination mechanisms, while civil society, in principle, engages in coordination mechanisms based on communicative action. In short, political parties always have to aim for voter maximisation. Thus, they need to prioritise among issues based on the responsiveness of their constituency. On the other hand, civil society organisations and social movements can stick to one issue, or certain values even when society does not respond. However, since organisational survival is also important for civil society actors, civil society actors also understand goal rationality.

Political and civil society are interconnected in different ways. First, Arato and Cohen originally emphasised that in 1989–1990, most transitional political parties emerged from civil society. Second, civil society actors, organisations, and social movements engage with the state and political parties in several ways in a democratic polity. They apply public pressure through protest, mobilisation, and public statements, and they negotiate with the executive on various (international, national, local) levels, even through consultative bodies (Della Porta, 2020; Edwards, 2009; Tarrow & Petrova, 2007). That is why Cohen and Arato (1992) assumed that civil society could counterbalance colonisation, defend the Lifeworld from the System, and even democratise the latter.

Recently, the scholarship on civil society, however, has also recognised that populist and autocratic leaders might build on movements at the emerging phase of the development of their populist party and when they are in power (Arato & Cohen, 2021; Hellmeier & Bernhard, 2023) and they may attack democratic institutions and aim to co-opt civil society using various techniques (Fejős & Néményi, 2020; Gerő, 2020; Lorch & Bunk, 2017). The building of movements and mobilisations in civil society, as well as the co-opting of civil society of populist actors, are, in the Habermasian framework, acts of colonisation.

Consequently, mobilisation and political participation play an important role not only in a democracy but are important for emerging populist leaders and remain important in populist or autocratizing regimes as well. Of course, the patterns of political participation expected in a democracy or induced by democratic actors will differ from those we might expect in a populist regime or from populist actors. Thus, political mobilisation can be seen as an active form of system integration (Kiss, 2015). The mobilisation process is integrative, as it mobilises, organises, and involves specific layers and organises different and distant communities of the Lifeworld. In this sense, mobilisation is nothing more than a medium, a channel through which integration takes place.

Teorell (2006) defines three approaches to political participation in a regime that satisfies at least the formal requirement of a democracy: 1) the elitist view, when the citizen's role is only to express preferences about the ruling elite, 2) the 'influencing' approach, when citizens aim to influence policies through various means of participation, and 3) the deliberative approach, when participation aims at discussing issues concerning the polity. Obviously, while the first approach emphasises electoral participation, the other approaches allow more room for various types of participation, such as protests, boycotts, or deliberative action.

Furthermore, forms of political participation, as referred to above, might be connected to different views of the role of the citizens, which means that the prevalence of different forms of political participation might signal these different cultures as well. Thus, the starting point of our present analysis is that social integration may also be reflected in the values associated with politics and its institutions. According to the literature, the political development and level of integration of society are correlated with different political cultures (Almond & Verba, 1963; Dalton & Welzel, 2014; Pye & Verba, 2015).

Almond and Verba (1963) identified three types of political cultures: Parochial, subject and participant. In a parochial political culture, citizens are mainly passive; their only concern is the central government. In a subject political culture, citizens see themselves as part of the political community but only as subjects of the central power. In contrast, only in participant political culture do they see themselves as agents of political processes. However, this last type of political culture does not mean that citizens challenge the political elites: they participate but without questioning the role of the elites in governing the democratic institutions, which means that they will mainly practice their right to vote and engage in formal civil society organisations and local communities Dalton and Welzel (2014) challenge this view, differentiating between the allegiant and assertive citizen. Allegiant political culture is a mixture of subject and participatory political culture, which is based on support for power and the political system and various forms of expressions of trust, while the assertive citizen is suspicious of the elite and the state. In terms of political participation, the different political cultures have different consequences: citizens acquiring a parochial political culture will restrain themselves from any type of political participation, allegiant citizens might mainly participate in electoral activities and, according to Almond and Verba (1963), associational engagement. The assertive citizen will be the only one to add protest-type activities to their political repertoire.

Of course, the differentiation of electoral, non-electoral and civic participation is analytical. In many cases, as we explained earlier, electoral mobilisation is interconnected with civil society initiatives, either in the form of bottom-up or top-down mobilisations. Populist leaders are liable to build movements around them or try to embed their political parties into civil society. In contrast, with social movements, civil society organisations, trade unions, and even political parties might serve as the backbone of the organisational work and resource mobilisation (Diani, 1992; McAdam & Scott, 2005).

However, the recent literature on populist mobilisation suggests that citizens' support for populist actors and even for autocrats yields political participation, even protest-like activities (e.g., participation in mass demonstrations). Thus, in an increasingly autocratic regime, it is important to determine the level of the different forms of political participation and how they change.

3 Political participation under the Orbán regime

In the Hungarian political system, most types of non-violent political participation are formally allowed by legislation. This has not changed much since 2010. However, Fidesz has replaced all the important regulations about political participation: they introduced new regulations on civil society and the right to association in 2011, changed the electoral

law in 2013, and changed the right to assembly in 2018. In addition, after 2013, the government campaigned against civil society organisations, which they perceived as a threat to the main governmental narratives, or fit nurtured enemy images. These campaigns included media campaigns, public harassment, new regulations against human rights organisations, organisations working with the Roma, immigrants, and women's rights, and sometimes even environmental protection (Buzogány et al., 2022; Gerő et al, 2023; Krizsán & Sebestyén, 2019; Roggeband & Krizsán, 2021; Torma, 2016).

Funding and consultations became ad-hoc, favouring selected circles of organisations (Kapitány, 2019; Roggeband & Krizsán, 2021; Szikra et al., 2020). Organisations organising strikes or protests against government policies and similar protests are often framed as pawns of the opposition or international, liberal forces. Protest activities are generally delegitimised by pro-government media (Susánszky et al., 2022). Therefore, although formally nothing restricts non-violent political participation, the government has closed all the formerly established channels of social consultation, and, through discourse – i.e., some of the regulations and campaigns against civil society organisations and protests – it actively discourages political (and civil) engagement. In parallel with this process, loyal or pro-government organisations are favoured, and programs have been initiated to finance non-political (mainly sports and culture) organisations.

However, this does not mean that forms of political participation are limited to electoral participation. On the contrary, civil society organisations that were earlier engaged in negotiations, expert work and lobbying turn to community organising and protest activities (Buzogány et al., 2022; Gerő et al., 2023). Fidesz also organises large demonstrations from time to time and tries to mobilise its constituency by organising the aforementioned large demonstrations (Metz, 2015; Susánszky et al., 2016) or uses other top-down, vertical tools of mobilisation, such as the so-called 'national consultations' (Bocskor, 2018). Thus, it seems that in an increasingly autocratic system, the different forms of political participation also have a role in creating the legitimacy of or challenging the system, which implies that political integration goes together with different forms of political participation, according to the different constituencies, or, in our case, the different groups in our integration model.

The political situation underwent fundamental changes between 2018 and 2021, and substantial shifts took place in party preferences (Szabó & Gerő, 2022). The dominant governing party, Fidesz–KDNP, won the general election in 2018 by a constitutional supermajority. Preference changes can be explained by the 2020 outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, the most significant global pandemic since the Spanish flu (1918/1919). Hungary had one of the highest pandemic-related death rates in the world (around 45,000 deaths between 01/03/2020 and 31/03/2022). The two most substantial waves of the pandemic were in November–December 2020 and March–April 2021, when more than 20,000 Hungarians died.[3] The scale of this is clearly illustrated by noting that this figure represents more than half the annual deaths in a 'normal' or 'peaceful year'. Despite these horrible data, Hungarian society has been positive – or at least not negative – about the government's handling of the epidemic (see Körösényi et al., 2020).

[3] Source: Worldometer Coronavirus cases, Hungary https://www.worldometers.info/coronavirus/country/hungary/#graph-deaths-daily last accessed 2024.02.06.

The opposition parties reacted to the political changes. Six opposition parties[4] announced their close electoral collaboration in December 2020. Between 18/09/2021 and 16/10/2021, the opposition parties, in cooperation with NGOs, organised Hungary's first such pre-election process. In a two-round pre-election procedure, voters selected individual representative candidates for 106 electoral districts, and a non-partisan prime ministerial candidate was also established. As a result of the cooperation, a joint list was drawn up (see Szabó, 2022). The crisis and the political changes could also have affected the outcome of political integration mechanisms. The results of the election, however, did not provide any evidence to support the latter hypotheses.

4 Data and methods

The empirical part of our study is mainly descriptive. As a first step, we analyse the changes in party affiliation in the integration groups between 2018 and 2021. In the second step, we focus on the participatory dimension. We examine the level of political participation in the groups in the integration model between 2018 and 2021. Each analysis is based on the same nationally representative surveys conducted in 2018 and 2021 by the Mobility Centre of Excellence at the Centre for Social Sciences,

The integration model is what Kovách and co-authors (2016; 2018) constructed in response to the challenges of classical stratification models, especially those based on occupation (see, for example, Kovách, 2006). This model focuses on measuring three levels of social integration: interpersonal, social, and system-level. The interpersonal level of social integration is measured by the number of intimate ties, the diversity of weak ties, and subjective exclusion. Social integration is measured by labour market integration and membership in civil society organisations. In contrast, system-level integration is captured by the degree of political participation, trust in institutions and norm-compliance.[5] The model was created using latent class analysis, using data from a survey conducted in 2015 for the first time, and data collection and the model's computation were repeated in 2018 and 2021.[6] The measurements of the surveys conducted in 2018 and 2021 are the same. However, we are aware that using the latent class model limits the possibility of making comparisons between the different years.

In both years, the team decided to accept a similar seven-group version category of the model. However, because of the latent class analysis and the social changes, these

[4] The six opposition parties that cooperated:
Demokratikus Koalíció, DK: Democratic Coalition Party (Hungary);
Jobbik Magyarországért Mozgalom, Jobbik: Jobbik Movement for a Better Hungary;
Lehet Más a Politika, Magyarország Zöld Pártja, LMP: Politics Can Be Different Hungarian Green Party;
Momentum Mozgalom, Momentum: Momentum Movement;
Magyar Szocialista Párt, MSZP: Hungarian Social Party;
Párbeszéd: Dialogue for Hungary.

[5] For a detailed explanation of the variables that were used, see Kovách et al. (2016; 2018) or Kovách and Kristóf (this issue).

[6] The data was collected within the framework of the MTA Excellence Cooperation Programme *Mobility Research Centre* project. Two large sample face-to-face surveys were carried out in 2018 and 2021.

were somewhat different in 2021 (see Table 1). The *relationship-rich, politically active, and locally integrated* groups, distinguishable from other groups particularly by their high level of political participation and higher institutional trust, are considered elite groups or 'over-integrated'.

Of the under-integrated groups, the political activity of the *norm-conform disintegrated* is minimal; they engage in virtually no political activity other than electoral participation. Finally, the last group, the *excluded under-integrated* or in 2021, *at risk of disintegration,* accept the violation of norms, and their political activity is slightly above average due to their twice as frequent contact with politicians and local government representatives (for details, see Gerő & Szabó, 2020).

Table 1 Integration groups in 2018 and 2021

	2018	**2021**	**Comparability**
Over-integrated groups	Relationship rich, politically active	Relationship rich, politically active	High-level of similarity
	Locally integrated	Locally integrated	High level of similarity
Moderately integrated groups	Norm-conform relationship-rich	Norm-conform relationship-rich	High level of similarity
	Norm-conform integrated into the labour market	Norm conform integrated in the labour market	High level of similarity
	Norm-violating, integrated into the labour market	Politically integrated	New category in 2021
Under-integrated groups	Norm-conform disintegrated	Norm-conform, disintegrated	High level of similarity
	Excluded under-integrated	At risk of disintegration	New category in 2021

It is important to note that electoral participation (only 'willingness to participate in elections') and civic engagement ('member of civil society organisation') are part of the integration model. Thus, we only briefly refer to these features of the integration groups. Instead, we examine party affiliation and other forms of political participation in detail. To compare the 2018 and 2021 databases, the parties were merged as follows: Fidesz–KDNP (government party), traditional left-wing parties (DK, MSZP–P), Jobbik, liberal, green parties (LMP, Momentum Movement), and other parties.

Non-electoral forms of participation are examined in five categories: Traditional (party-related and more formal) forms of political participation, online, local, direct and consumer participation.[7] Among these, we see traditional and local participation in align-

[7] Exact question: *'There are different ways to act in public affairs to solve problems. For each of them, please tell me if in the last year you…'*
1. contacted a Member of Parliament or another national politician in any way (by letter, on the internet, in person);
2. contacted a local government representative or mayor in any way (by letter, on the internet, in person);

ment with the subject-participatory/allegiant political culture since these activities usually happen within the framework of party politics or at least a more stable organisational framework, while direct, online, and consumer participation characterises the assertive citizen, thus are more likely to be associated with social movements or civil society organisations because of the elite-challenging nature of these participatory forms.

Table 2 Types of political participation

Participation	**Traditional**	**Online/media**	**Local**	**Direct**	**Consumer**
Type	was active in a political organisation	'liked', commented, posted	participated in the organisation of a local event	signed a petition	boycotted certain commodities
Type	participated in the campaign of a political party	telephoned radio and TV programmes	participated in a public forum	participated in a public demonstration	donated money to a political or non-governmental organisation
Type	contacted a national politician	–	contacted local representative	–	–

As indicated above, parties are perhaps the most important channels and institutions of the political integration mechanism, so it is worth investigating the relationship between integration groups and party voting camps. We can also ask whether the different integration groups are distinguishable on the basis of party affiliation. Do over-integrated groups automatically support parties that, due to their position in relation to government, are

3. were active in a political organization (even a party) or a political movement, attended its events;
4. participated in a political party's campaign (e.g., poster hanging, emblem, badge, flyer distribution);
5. signed a letter of protest or petition or participated in the collection of signatures;
6. participated in an lawful and unlawful public demonstration, parade, or march;
7. intentionally, for reasons of principle, purchased or did not purchase or boycotted certain goods (on political, ethical, environmental grounds);
8. donated money to a political or non-governmental organization or group;
9. telephoned a radio and TV program, sent an SMS or voted in television and radio channels' 'public life' programs;
10. liked, voted on, posted or commented on the internet or Facebook on any public or political issue;
11. participated in organizing a local event or community movement (e.g., village day, saint's day, carnival, parade, local sporting event);
12. participated in a public forum.

For a detailed presentation of the results, see Szabó & Gerő (2019, pp. 103–111).

To identify the types, we followed the procedures of Theocharis and van Deth (2017) and Oross and Szabó (2019), involving undertaking factor analysis for the 12 forms of participation under examination. Rotated factor analysis yielded five distinct types of participation with different levels of individual involvement and commitment: traditional, direct, online, local, and consumer. See Appendix Table F4 for the results of the rotated factor analysis. Compared to our own division (Szabó & Gerő, 2019), we registered only one difference. We classified consumer participation (boycott and related support for organizations) as a direct form of participation.

able to make decisions favourable to them? Do under-integrated groups, as a sort of ultimate refuge, also tend to vote for the ruling parties, or, on the contrary, support the forces most opposed to the government, trusting their willingness to promote their prosperity when they get into government?

In terms of party affiliation, we see relatively large differences among the integration groups (see Appendix, Table F1). The statistical indicators in the table indicate a not-too-strong relationship between party preference and integration groups (2018: Cramer's V = 0.137 and 2021: Cramer's V= 0.145). Although the groups in two years cannot be compared entirely, some significant differences exist. First of all, the proportion of people who are able to choose a party (party-electors) changed significantly: overall, the figure rose from 57 to 64 per cent. The change is especially significant with the locally integrated group, which is among the most similar in the two years: the share of party electors grew from 72 to 84 per cent. Even if we should be cautious comparing the least integrated groups, it is important to note that in 2021, none of these groups had a party-elector share of less than 62 per cent, while the smallest proportion was 48 per cent in 2018. Thus, overall, from 2018 (which was an electoral year, although the survey was conducted after the elections), parties increased their mobilisation potential among voters.

It is also clearly visible that all parties appear more polarised in these groups. Support for Fidesz is not evenly distributed; it has either positive or negative peaks. Fidesz is dominantly supported among the locally integrated, and opposition parties cannot compensate for this advantage. Members of the politically integrated group's most distinctive feature is also a preference for Fidesz. The governing party became a dominant party within this group.

Nevertheless, its support decreased in the group of *norm-conform integrated into the labour market*. Furthermore, and interestingly, this group contains the highest number of non-voters who refuse to say or are indecisive about their party preference. At the same time, real competition between parties also seems to be apparent in this broad group, with both Jobbik and traditional left-wing parties having the highest rates of support.

It is also worth noting that within the under-integrated groups, as opposed to in 2018, support for the governing party is at or above the average level, meaning that over-, moderately, and under-integrated groups all have their highly pro-government clusters. In addition, Fidesz has the most relative support in every group.

It is also clear that the level of political integration of each integration group differs (if the measure of this is the proportion of those who choose the party and those with unknown preferences). Based on party preference, the locally integrated, the politically integrated, and the relationship-rich politically active are the most integrated.

Overall, therefore, party preference is significantly different in the integration groups. Over- and under-integrated groups appeared to be behind the ruling parties to a greater extent in 2021 than in 2018. However, it cannot be said that each integration group is organised exclusively around one party. However, partisan polarisation and political competition in the most integrated group is not dangerous for the government party if it can be communicated as a kind of elite conflict and as a strengthening of their 'own' group.

5 Participation and political integration

In the next step of the analysis, we examined the participatory dimension of political integration. We were looking to identify *which layers of society have the highest political participation and organisation reach* and *whether Hungarian society can be described along the lines of low resistance potential or high.*

To some extent, political participation is already a constituting element of the integration model. The activity of political participation (passive, electoral and other traditional or direct forms of participation), as civic engagement (participation in a civil society organisation), is already built into the groups. Civic engagement was significantly greater in the locally integrated than in other groups in 2021. In terms of civil engagement, the locally integrated are outstanding: their participation in civil associations and voluntary organisations is three to five times greater than the relationship-rich, politically active group's and basically incomparable to the other groups' almost non-existent participation in associational life (see Kovách et al., 2016; 2018).

Regarding political participation, relationship-rich, politically active, and locally integrated groups are outstanding with regard to the first type of activities. Fifty-six per cent of the relationship-rich politically active group engaged in other political activities outside electoral participation and only 1 per cent was passive in 2018, while 69 per cent of the locally integrated participated in any type of political activity outside electoral participation in the same year. The rest of the groups were relatively passive, with a majority of passive citizens.

Table 3 Level of types of political participation, 2018 and 2021, % of adult population

Participation	Traditional	Online/media	Local	Direct	Consumer
2018	6	14	19	6	5
2021	8	10	19	6	6
change	+2	-4	0	0	+1

In the autumn of 2018, 25 per cent of Hungarian society participated in some form of public and/or political action, and three-quarters abstained from activism (see Appendix Table F2). After four years, the political participation rate was extremely similar. Political activity sharply segments society into actives and passives.

In both years, political participation among over-integrated groups was outstanding, with 60 per cent and 84 per cent of the relationship-rich being politically active and 71–73 per cent of the locally integrated being active in at least one form of political participation. The latter group's very high level of multiple political activity is particularly noteworthy. The participation of the other groups either corresponds to the average or is significantly lower than the distribution in the sample (norm-conforming integrated into the labour market, norm-conform relationship-rich, norm-conform disintegrated). The gap in political participation between the under- and over-integrated groups has become even more pronounced over the four years. The latter groups have essentially appropriated and privileged political participation, so the multiplicative nature of participation is especially important in these groups.

The activity of Hungarian society is dominated by participation that is strongly distinguishable from local, regional, or classic political activism (demonstrating, petitions), such as participation in the organisation of local events, local public forums, and relations with a local politician or the mayor, followed by interactive participation on social and in other media (19 and 14 per cent, respectively). Offline types of participation that assume stronger political engagement (such as traditional party affiliation and direct participation that requires relatively greater involvement) appear at a frequency of 5–6 per cent. The political activity of groups at different levels of integration differs significantly regarding each type of participation. More strongly integrated groups were significantly overrepresented in different types of participation (see Appendix Table F3).

The forms of participation are dominated by two groups: the relationship-rich, politically active, and the locally integrated, especially in 2021. Therefore, there is no question that those in a better position in terms of social integration take the opportunity to participate. In the case of traditional, party-related participation, the locally integrated participated five times, and the relationship-rich politically active participated three times more frequently than the general population. A similar proportion of participating citizens is also recorded in the case of direct participation. Interestingly, the activity level of the locally integrated is the highest in this form. Given the strong embeddedness of Fidesz–KDNP in these groups, we assume that here that participation refers to demonstrations on national holidays, Peace Marches, or petitions supporting causes framed in right-wing terms rather than protest activities critical of the government. Whatever type of participation we examine, the middle-integrated groups' involvement is the lowest, often close to zero, which means that under-integrated groups' participation is higher than that of medium-integrated groups. However, they engage in a similar level of local participation, which is also usually higher in these groups than with other forms of political participation.

What is particularly interesting in relation to our topic is that this general tendency appears not only in the types of participation that directly underpin political integration (traditional, direct). The same pattern can be recognised in local participation: the most active in local, regional forums that are more connected to civil society are the locally integrated. Their activity even increased between 2018 and 2021. In the organisation of village days, saints' days, carnivals, local parades, and sporting events, those groups who, as mentioned above, are more ideologically engaged and tend to lean towards the governing parties are the dominant voices (see Kovách, 2020). They can become opinion leaders and influencers of the immediate environment: they may not only influence the local political culture but also play a decisive role in the functioning of civil society. The participation of other groups is weaker and focused on the world of (online) media, as well as the local space.

6 Conclusions

In this study, we analysed the process of political integration. First, we further theorised our concept of political integration. Using the Habermasian concept of System and Lifeworld, we considered political integration and integration mechanisms as those political actions, attitudes, norms, and ideologies that…

a) increase the political cohesion of society

b) but reduce the chances of political communication breakdowns or political conflict between the incumbent and its constituency (thus promote a clear flow of vertical communication),
c) but block horizontal communication (between voting camps)
d) and, at the same time, promote the broadest possible legitimacy of the political system.

We aim to contribute to understanding how an increasingly autocratic regime integrates society to maintain its power by examining the Hungarian case and the Orbán regime. More specifically, this paper focuses on the participatory mechanisms of political integration. Thus, we examined the patterns of political affiliation and non-electoral forms of political participation according to integration model groups to better understand how the Orbán regime can create diffuse mass support that consolidates the regime.

In the theoretical framework, we focused on the process – how and in what way the political system influences, controls, and 'colonises' the Lifeworld, and, in other ways, how the system integrates the Lifeworld.

In short, besides the centralisation and control of mass communication, which targets political ideologies and values (and integration by polarisation), the Orbán regime also seeks to integrate society through political participation. In this process, power does not seek to alienate society completely from politics but to create the minimum information inputs necessary for the system's functioning and to establish legitimacy, maintain mobilisation among its supporters and allow for mobilisation against its critics. The main question is, what types of political participation are 'allowed' for the different groups in society?

We introduced five types of political participation: traditional, direct, online, local and consumer. We see these types as connected to particular civic cultures as well: the regime needs both the loyal (or allegiant) citizen to show support for the incumbent and the emerging regime, and it also requires a certain amount of 'resistance' (thus, groups of assertive citizens) to increase the legitimacy of the government indirectly. However, it is important to note that the Orbán regime's legitimacy is primarily based on the sweeping electoral victories, which rely on the electoral support of large groups of otherwise politically passive groups of society.

From the analysis, the image of a three-part society emerges: over-integrated and politically active groups, medium-integrated (mostly passive), and under-integrated groups, engaging in primarily traditional and local political activities.

The over-integrated groups are characterised by a relatively high level of political participation, mainly reflected in participation in electoral, local, and non-public NGO forms of activity. Although these groups are predominantly affiliated with the ruling parties, they cannot be considered exclusively supporters of the governing parties. Overall, however, relationship-rich and locally integrated groups appear to operate predominantly according to the Almond–Verba–Pye *loyal civic culture model*, thus ensuring the creation of the diffuse mass support required for the system. Through them, the system can strongly invade countless areas of the civil sphere – the Lifeworld, because these groups are not only key players in the integration of Hungarian society due to their relationship with politics but also the most effective integrators due to their social and power positions and economic and cultural capital. Strong partisan polarisation may operate among these

groups, which does not weaken the mechanisms of political integration but strengthens the loyal groups' commitment to the System. In our view, the separation between the private and public spheres and between the System and the Lifeworld does not exist for the committed, loyal strata. Undoubtedly, these politically active, committed, and loyal strata maximally support the System through Life World practices and the language and political identities adopted by the System.

According to Teorell (2006), a deliberative approach to participation is possible in this over-integrated stratum, but in the middle and under-integrated strata, influential but mostly elitist forms of participation exist at best. Democracy that seems to work in the upper, narrow social strata masks the dysfunctions found in all other groups.

Namely, in the other integration groups, we find traces of the *loyal civic culture* of the under-integrated groups. The excluded are characterised by participation close to the average; however, although we can identify their significant frustration, they are likely to trust political institutions despite their situation.

Presumably, in both the over-integrated and the moderately integrated groups, we also find an *assertive civic culture*, as the over-integrated groups include those who do not support the government and, at the same time, strong public-civic participation outside official channels and institutions. It is important to note, however, that while groups with a markedly loyal civic culture are concentrated, block-like, primarily in the over-integrated groups (and most importantly, primarily in the locally integrated one), assertive civic culture is more fragmented and dispersed within groups. In the latter two groups, the self-limiting mechanisms of consumer society are also perceptible.

The third group contains those who stay away from political participation. Under-integrated groups are mainly this type, where mistrust is coupled with vulnerability, a lack of resources and apathy. However, regarding electoral participation, the Orbán regime (and mainly the incumbent actor) increased its mobilisation potential even in these groups between 2018 and 2021. A near-ideal situation has been created for the System: these groups do not resist the System's colonisation. They do not care about or possibly even perceive the consequences of these colonisation attempts. If there is relative security and even more limited material well-being, the functioning of the System is not the subject of communication. The mechanisms of communication and understanding between groups not only do not work, but presumably, they do not need to work.

In summary, the Orbán regime successfully provides diffuse mass support: it is embedded in multiple social groups, although none of the integration groups can be considered the sole or primary supporter of the system. On the one hand, in these groups, the political leadership achieves loyal, appropriate participatory and trust-based legitimacy; on the other hand, it can prevent an assertive civic culture from being embraced by prominent groups. Third, it keeps the most distrustful and assertive groups away from politics. The resistance of the Lifeworld and society to the aspirations of power is thus ineffective since the governing parties also exercise direct or indirect oversight of the mechanisms of organisation, unification, and resistance.

In the present study, we have described how the complex political integration of society takes place in these dimensions. Based on our analysis, the success of Fidesz–KDNP can be traced back to more than one factor. The study, based on an analysis of the above-described integration groups, shows that the stability of the ruling party's support

is to be found in the balance of mechanisms that promote 'integration through polarisation', thus dividing society into three more significant parts (over-integrated politically active, medium-integrated mostly passive, and under-integrated somewhat active locally). The integration logic we use is suitable for going beyond a simple examination of political preferences because it shows how complex mechanisms lie behind engagement with a party.

Naturally, our analysis has limits: We focused mainly on party affiliation and political participation, but mechanisms linked to political leaders and political communication are also important. We could not discuss these processes here in detail. The timeframe of our analysis is also narrow, based only on two surveys. Hopefully, we will be able to continue the research by collecting more data, which could lead to the inclusion of the broader economic context into the analysis.

Further research should go further toward developing a model based on the Hungarian experience that international comparative studies can use to measure different mechanisms that increasingly autocratic regimes use to gain legitimacy. Of course, we are aware of emerging concepts such as information autocracy (Guriev & Treisman, 2020), which also address this issue.

However, to understand the capacity of such regimes to develop and sustain support, from a sociological point of view, we need to embed communication processes and institutional changes into the understanding of the transformation processes of society itself: mechanisms of social integration, political polarisation, increasing inequalities, and other developing phenomena. Also, different countries that have started down the path to autocracy might be able to reverse this process: the 2023 elections in Poland, for example, suggest that resistance to an autocratic power with relatively broad support can be effective. Other cases lead to a more pessimistic conclusion: the Turkish model (where even an earthquake with many victims and a racing inflation rate could not shake the incumbent's power) seems to show that we still have more to understand. In our view, the key to this understanding lies in the deep processes of social transformation.

Acknowledgements

Márton Gerő's work was supported by the research project NKFIH 134768, 'Civil society, enemy images and redistribution: The interplay between structural factors and political action in the process of de-democratization'.

Appendix

Table F1 Party preferences of integration groups, 2018
(data on total population, heat map, %)[8]

2018	Fidesz-KDNP	Traditional left-wing parties	Jobbik	Liberal, and Green parties	Other parties	*Party electors*	Doesn't know	Does not answer	Would not go to vote	*Those with unknown preferences*	Total
Relationship-rich politically active	**41**	10	8	4	2	*65*	22	11	2	*35*	**200**
Locally integrated	**39**	10	6	**13**	4	*72*	13	12	4	*28*	**201**
Norm conforming relationship-rich	31	8	**11**	**11**	3	*64*	19	14	5	*36*	**202**
Norm-conforming integrated into the labour market	23	7	8	4	2	*44*	**26**	14	15	*56*	**199**
Norm- violating integrated into the labour market	**36**	10	5	6	4	*61*	18	14	7	*39*	**200**
Norm- conform-disintegrated	25	13	4	4	2	*48*	**26**	11	**16**	*52*	**201**
Excluded under-integrated	29	**14**	7	6	4	*60*	22	4	14	*40*	**200**
Total	**31**	**10**	**7**	**6**	**3**	*57*	**22**	**12**	**10**	*43*	**1403**

[8] Due to the small number of cases, voters from some parties have been merged:
- Fidesz–KDNP, the government parties.
- Traditional left-wing parties: DK, MSZP–P;
- Jobbik;
- Liberal, green parties: LMP, Momentum, Liberals;
- Other parties: Mi Hazánk (Our Land), Magyar Kétfarkú Kutya Párt (Hungarian Two-Tailed Dog Party), others.

2021	Fidesz-KDNP	Traditional left-wing parties	Jobbik	Liberal, green parties	Other parties	*Party electors*	Doesn't know	Does not answer	Would not go to vote	*Those with unknown preferences*	Total (N)
Relationship rich, politically active	28	23	8	5	6	*70*	15	10	6	*30*	**509**
Locally integrated	44	15	7	8	10	*84*	8	2	4	*26*	**289**
Norm-conform relationship-rich	28	13	6	6	3	*56*	19	10	15	*44*	**726**
Norm conform integrated in into the labour market	15	16	11	5	6	*53*	20	14	14	*47*	**1030**
Politically integrated	56	7	4	4	4	*75*	14	10	3	*25*	**755**
Norm conform disintegrated	34	18	3	3	4	*62*	13	7	17	*38*	**812**
Risk of disintegration	31	16	5	5	8	*65*	12	6	17	*35*	**882**
Total %	**32**	**15**	**6**	**5**	**6**	***64***	**15**	**12**	**12**	***39***	**5003**

2018: Pearson khi^2= 242.703, sig = 0.000. Cramer's V=0,137.
2021: Pearson khi^2= 633.337, sig = 0.000. Cramer's V=0,145.

Table F2 Frequency of political participation by integration groups
(total population, %)

2018 (participated: 25%)	**No participation**	**A single type of participation**	**Two types of participation**	**Three or more types of participation**	**Total**
Relationship rich, politically active	**40**	28	12	19	100
Locally integrated	**27**	8	14	51	100
Norm-conform relationship-rich	**81**	9	4	6	100
Norm conforming integrated into the labour market	**93**	3	3	1	100
Norm-violating integrated into the labour market	**76**	5	9	10	100
Norm conforming disintegrated	**89**	8	2	1	100
Excluded under-integrated	**79**	7	7	7	100
Sample	**75**	10	6	9	100
2021 (participated: 25%)	**No participation**	**A single type of participation**	**Two types of participation**	**Three or more types of participation**	**Total**
Relationship-rich politically active	**14**	29	21	35	100
Locally integrated	**29**	8	9	54	100
Norm-conform relation-ship-rich	**90**	6	2	2	100
Norm-conform integrated into the labour market	**88**	6	3	3	100
Politically integrated	**82**	9	4	6	100
Norm-conform disintegrated	**88**	7	3	2	100
Risk at disintegration	**81**	6	5	8	100
Sample	**75**	9	6	10	100

2018: Pearson Chi^2=646,638; sig=0,000; Cramer's V=0,316
2021: Pearson Chi^2=1949,183; sig=0,000; Cramer's V=0,361

Table F3 Participation of integration groups by type of participation

(ANOVA analysis, means, 0 = no participation; 1 = participation) heatmap

2018	Traditional	Online	Local	Direct	Consumer
Relationship rich, politically active	0.159	0.23	0.482	0.142	0.104
Locally integrated	0.323	0.457	0.572	0.297	0.355
Norm-conform integrated into the labour market	0.006	0.056	0.043	0.004	0.004
Norm-conform relationship-rich	0.026	0.129	0.126	0.024	0.017
Norm-violating integrated into the labour market	0.025	0.188	0.179	0.055	0.034
Norm -conform disintegrated	0.002	0.043	0.086	0.015	0.005
Excluded under-integrated	0.089	0.084	0.142	0.051	0.045
Total	**0.056**	**0.133**	**0.185**	**0.056**	**0.047**
2021	**Traditional**	**Online**	**Local**	**Direct**	**Consumer**
Relationship-rich politically active	0.302	0.271	0.686	0.226	0.184
Locally integrated	0.386	0.402	0.615	0.324	0.338
Norm-conform relation-ship-rich	0.000	0.044	0.080	0.000	0.000
Norm-conform integrated into the labour market	0.017	0.066	0.080	0.018	0.026
Politically integrated	0.040	0.070	0.140	0.017	0.026
Norm-conform disintegrated	0.018	0.043	0.089	0.013	0.010
Risk at disintegration	0.069	0.096	0.126	0.060	0.043
Total	**0.078**	**0.105**	**0.191**	**0.061**	**0.057**

For ease of interpretation, the participation types were arranged separately in a dummy-type variable. Thus, if the mean is close to zero, there is no participation, and the closer it is to one, the higher the participation. Minimum value = 0, maximum value = 1.

F-test: 50.864; sig=0,000; eta^2: 0.124.3
F-test: 34.823; sig=0,000; eta^2: 0.089.3
F-test: 79.266; sig=0,000; eta^2: 0.182.3
F-test: 37.521; sig=0,000; eta^2: 0.095.3
F-test: 57.123; sig=0,000; eta^2: 0.138.3
According to the ANOVA Post hoc Scheffe test, the participation of relationship-rich, politically active people in the traditional type differs from everyone except those excluded. Locally integrated ones are also separated from each group.
Similar findings can be made for online, local, direct, and consumer participation.
F-test: 184.798; sig=0.000; eta^2: 0.182
F-test: 94.130; sig=0.000; eta^2: 0.102
F-test: 313.177; sig=0.000; eta^2: 0.274
F-test: 141.946; sig=0.000; eta^2: .0146
F-test: 133.089; sig=0.000; eta^2: 0.138
According to the ANOVA Post hoc Scheffe test, the participation of relationship-rich and locally integrated ones are also separated from each group.

Table F4 Results of rotating factor analysis

Form of participation	**Traditional**	**Online**	**Local**	**Direct**	**Consumer**
was active in a political organisation (even a party) or a political movement, attended its events	**.678**	.136	.134	.157	.171
participated in a political party's campaign (e.g., poster hanging, emblem, badge, flyer distribution)	**.602**	.143	.181	.350	.030
contacted a Member of Parliament or another national politician in any way (by letter, on the Internet, in person)	**.395**	.031	.360	.154	.026
liked, voted on, posted or commented on the Internet or Facebook on any public or political issue	.071	**.635**	.151	.190	.004
called by telephone to radio and TV programmes, sent SMS, voted in television and radio channels' public life programmes	.127	**.571**	.039	.108	.130
participated in organising a local event community movement (e.g. village day, saint's day, carnival, parade, local sporting event)	.062	**.541**	**.518**	.064	.142
participated in a public forum	.125	.336	**.608**	.122	.126

Table F4 *(continued)*

Form of participation	Traditional	Online	Local	Direct	Consumer
contacted their local government representative or mayor in any way (by letter, on the Internet, in person)	.295	.013	**.506**	.110	.179
signed a letter of protest a petition, participated in the collection of signatures	.200	.277	.094	**.562**	.133
participated in an authorised or unauthorised public demonstration, parade, march	.311	.122	.166	**.515**	.170
intentionally, for reasons of principle, purchased or did not purchase, boycotted certain goods (on political, ethical, environmental grounds)	.087	.089	.171	.185	**.745**
donated money to a political or non-governmental organisation or group	.326	.278	.129	.048	**.366**

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Social structure and integration: Occupational classes and integration mechanisms between 2015 and 2021

Intersections. EEJSP
9(4): 53–79.
https://doi.org/10.17356/ieejsp.v9i4.1240
https://intersections.tk.hu

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Abstract

The topic of the paper is the relationship between social stratification based on occupational classes and the mechanisms of social integration. This was analysed using quantitative data collected in 2015, 2018 and 2021. We sought answers to how we can better understand the interaction of social and integration positions, as well as the functioning of complex integration mechanisms. In the examined six years, a definite stabilisation took place in the integration indicators of the occupational groups: this means that the indicators of occupational groups in some integration dimensions became closer. It is also part of our research results that there is an interpretable correlation between the hierarchy of occupational groups and the examined integration mechanisms: political participation, number of weak ties, subjective social exclusion, and the acceptance of norm violation. The upper strata of the occupational class model (mostly entrepreneurs, managers, professionals, and other white-collar workers) consistently reported more weak ties, less of a sense of exclusion, and greater political participation. We also found consistent yet opposing results for the lower strata, mainly among the unemployed and those in unskilled and semi-skilled work linked to lower-level qualifications. Increasing stabilisation and the impact of the hierarchy of occupational groups are simultaneous integrational characteristics of Hungarian society.

Keywords: social integration; inequalities; norms; networks; participation; exclusion

1 Introduction

The study's primary question[1] is how do different groups integrate into Hungarian society and what integration mechanisms facilitate or hinder the integration of people from different social situations. To examine the social phenomena associated with the decade after

[1] The paper was prepared within the framework of the HAS Excellence Cooperation Program, Mobility Research Center project. The authors would like to thank Ákos Huszár, Andrea Szabó and Karolina Balogh for their valuable contribution.

2010, we chose to apply a normative-functionalist occupational model (Huszár, 2013) used in social stratification analysis and the concepts of integration and disintegration. The mechanisms that result in and operate integration and disintegration offer the possibility of creating a multidimensional framework that can be used to basically complement the approach that considers labour market position a fundamental category in studies of social segmentation.

Most significant authors in the history of sociological theory, even if they did not necessarily use the term 'integration', were clearly concerned with what binds society together, triggers and motivates the cooperation of social actors, or the mechanisms that act counter to it. Understanding the functioning of society and the mechanisms that integrate or disintegrate the actions of individuals and groups has also been a constant subject of research throughout the history of sociology. Integration is a basic condition for social reproduction that takes place at the individual, institutional, and relationship levels, for which the necessary cooperation, security, and a kind of predictability can be ensured by accepted and relatively permanent written and codified and unwritten rules, norms, and values.

Integration mechanisms are those actions, attitudes, concepts, and norms that improve and maintain the cooperation of the actors in a given integration system, increase the feeling of belonging, and reduce the chance of communication disturbances and the development or deepening of conflicts. The agents of integration can be individuals, micro- or macro-level groups, economic units, institutions or states and supra-state organisations. Permanent and stable integration mechanisms have a distinguished role, as their operation determines the status, opportunities, and life chances of members of society. Gidron and Hall (2020) argue that social integration can be used effectively in the investigation of a social phenomenon (in their research, populism) if it combines economic and social approaches. Dupcsik and Szabari, citing Jeffrey Alexander's (1987) analysis of Parsons's proposed research on the integration mechanisms related to employment, occupation, norms, knowledge, social capital and social networks and politics, emphasise that actors' knowledge and ideas about integration mechanisms may be essential determinants of the success of integration (Dupcsik & Szabari, 2015). The renewal of the concept and model of social integration is also justified by the fact that the conditions of social reproduction have fundamentally changed – above all, the magnitude of the central redistribution of resources and development subsidies (Csanádi et al., 2022). Boltanski and Chiapello (2007) directly assume the existence of project-based, redistributive capitalism. The increase in the extent and magnitude of redistribution is a source of new social differences (Gerő & Kovách, 2022; Csizmadia & Szikra, 2019) and opens up space for central political control and interventions.

In our series of studies (Huszár et al., 2020; Kovách et al., 2015; 2016; 2018) we use a novel concept of social integration. The introduction of the new concept of social integration is justified by the fact that occupational class models (EGP and its variants) and income class models do not include the concept of social integration, and our study specifically aims to analyse the difference in the integration of occupational classes. The British new class model (Savage et al., 2013), created due to the need to renew class analysis, combines occupational position and consumption characteristics but also neglects the aspects of complex social integration. The main question addressed in this paper is how the social

integration of individuals is related to their status in the system of social inequalities and what integration mechanisms facilitate or even force interaction between social position and integration.

2 Theoretical background

In the classical theories of social structure and stratification research, the distribution of socially important goods is mainly connected with issues of social integration. For Marx, the class structure and inequality of capitalist societies were essential factors because of the social conflicts that led to the collapse of capitalism (its integrative systems) (Marx & Engels, [1848] 2008). In Weber's theory, an important question is to what extent can a position in a social structure be the basis of community contact and joint political action and how does this affect the validity of a legitimate order (Weber, 2019). Adherents of the functionalist tradition, who emphasise the normative integration of society, also systematically seek to explore the structural and stratification causes that threaten the normative integration of society (Parsons, 1949; 1970).

It was Robert Merton (1938) who probably most effectively reinterpreted the correlations between the place occupied in the social structure and social integration; he reinterpreted Durkheim's concept of anomie and differentiated different types of individual adaptation and their presence in different social structures based on socially designated cultural goals and institutionally available tools (norms, rules, and their controls). According to Merton, there may be different forms of adaptation to the norms and value judgements accepted by society, from full conformity to rebellion. If everyone in a society accepts norms to the maximum extent, then all change and all development stops, while total rebellion leads to anarchy. In stable societies, the most common type of adaptation is conformity, which involves the acceptance of both cultural goals and institutional tools. The other Mertonian types indicate some disorder of social integration. Innovators accept culturally defined, normative goals but no longer the institutional tools that are available. Ritualists, in turn, question goals while adhering to institutional tools. Retractors reject both cultural goals and tools, while Rebels also question goals and tools but actively seek to change them.

Deviant behaviour occurs *en masse* in a society when the cultural value system privileges and highlights success-related goals valid for the whole population, while at the same time, the rigidity of the social structure and the lack of mass mobility restrict or completely block a sizeable proportion of the same population from using the permitted and approved means to achieve these goals (Merton, 1938). For example, exclusion from material goods, a manifestation of poverty and material failure, typically leads to deviance and norm disruption.

In this paper, we focus on how different occupational groups of society integrate into Hungarian society and how their integration changed between 2015 and 2021. The institutional tools assigned to the achievement of cultural goals appear through several different dimensions of social integration (Kovách et al., 2016).

It is particularly important to note that the social policy literature also uses the concept of integration, primarily in the sense of inclusion, the latter which mainly aims to

improve the social situation of the disadvantaged. In this sense, integration/inclusion refers to sub-social groups. However, our scientific endeavour was to understand the integration of the whole of society and the comprehensive mechanisms of integration/disintegration, of which 'exclusion' (Szalai, 2013) and 'citizenship' (Evers & Guillemard, 2012) represent only some, albeit essential, elements that have also been accepted in EU terminology. Robert Castel (2017) expands the interpretation of social integration with the complex dimension of work and the concept of 'civil society' reinterpreted in the direction of Habermas' (1984; 1987) 'lifeworld' construction.

In our series of studies, we distinguished three levels of social integration (Kovách et al., 2016; 2018): system integration, social integration, and interpersonal integration. We consider *system integration* as political and social actions, activities, attitudes and norms that increase social and political cohesion, reduce the chances of communication disorders or political and social conflict, and, at the same time, promote the development of the diffuse legitimacy of the political system (Szabó & Oross, 2016; Gerő & Szabó, 2020; Huszár & Szabó 2023). *Social integration* refers to the ways, actions and tools through which members of society interact, communicate, strengthen and accept their belonging within a community (Dupcsik & Szabari, 2015). *Interpersonal integration* examines how people feel in their narrowly defined world of life (Albert & Dávid, 2012, p. 343; Dávid et al., 2023). Finally, these concepts are ideal-typical and very difficult to grasp on an empirical level. For this reason, we decided to attempt to operationalise all three levels of integration using measurable variables and groups of variables at the most basic level possible (Kovách et al., 2016). The *level of system integration* is covered by mechanisms and knowledge related to the political subsystem, institutions and, at least in part, norms and values. Political values and their differentiation are the subject of both political culture and political socialisation literature. S*ocial integration* includes mechanisms that redistribute available resources among different strata of society (Czibere et al., 2023; Csanádi, 2020) and labour market conditions (Illéssy et al., 2020; 2021). Social networks and the subjective sense of social exclusion belong *to the level of interpersonal integration.* In the 2015 research and its repetition in 2018 and 2021, we sought to measure each level of integration with at least two but rather three sets of variables. The variables captured the most important areas of the given integration mechanism. The specific method and tools of measurement for each integration level are presented in (Kovách et al., 2016).

We assume, on the one hand, that social integration has different dimensions and, on the other, that integration and disintegration-related problems occur in different ways and to different degrees in different segments of the social structure. In this paper, we analyse this on the basis of the normative-functionalist model of social structure (Huszár, 2013). For the purpose of this analysis, we selected four grouping dimensions of two integration mechanisms, political participation and acceptance of norm violation, that play a role in system integration, and two aspects of interpersonal integration: the *number of weak ties*, i.e. nexus diversity and *subjective social exclusion.* All four dimensions are part of the Mertonian theory of deviance, either in a manifest or latent manner.

The selection of these integration mechanisms allows the adaptation of Mertonian inspiration but also expands it in some way when researching integration and its mechanisms. Merton made it clear that the most important tool for adapting to cultural goals is compliance with norms. If we accept social norms and integrate somewhat into a given

society, deviance (and disintegration) can be somewhat alleviated. One's personal network helps with learning about social norms and facilitates adaptation. The broader this system of relations is, the more organic and the simpler it is to adopt or at least accept rules and control mechanisms related to social norms. The narrowing of the personal network can be accompanied by loneliness, social isolation and, ultimately, the intensification of social exclusion. According to Merton, rebellion as a form of action aimed at changing cultural goals and institutionally available means primarily refers to active political participation; 'organised political participation'. Therefore, one of the integration mechanisms we use examines participation. The fourth mechanism is the subjective *sense of exclusion*, interpreted as a form of social manifestation of deviance, involving when an individual feels that, whether or not they accept social norms and adapt to cultural goals, social integration mechanisms marginalise them based on their origin or material/financial, cultural and symbolic capital disadvantages. Without society effectively operating the institutions that control norms, such people are left alone and disconnected from institutional channels for advancement. The following sections examine how these integration mechanisms have changed in different occupational groups between 2015 and 2021.[2]

3 Data and methods

The study is based on three surveys carried out in 2015 (N=2687), 2018 (N=2700) and 2021(N=5000), all of them representative of the Hungarian adult population.[3]

3.1 Description of the variables of integration mechanisms

Acceptance of norm violation was created from four questions based on the *World Values Survey* questionnaire. We asked respondents to mark on an 11-point scale their tolerance of specific violations of social norms.[4] The variable was recoded according to whether the respondent permitted or completely rejected the given violation. A principal component was created using the four responses. Positive values indicate acceptance of the norm violation; negative values indicate norm compliance.

Political participation was captured with a three-category variable (Kovách et al., 2016). Respondents were regarded as politically 'active' if they participated in parliamentary elections and were involved in at least one of eight modes of political participation[5]

[2] In an earlier paper, we carried out the same analysis for the period 2015–2018 (Huszár et al., 2020).

[3] The research was carried out within the framework of the HAS Excellence Cooperation Programme, Mobility Research Centre project. Interviews were conducted face-to-face (CAPI).

[4] (A) giving money to a police officer to avoid punishment; (B) littering in public places; (C) not asking for an invoice so as to pay less; (D) keeping money returned from the store cashier or waiter even though one knows one received more than was due.

[5] Contacted a politician; activity in the work of a political party, participated in its events; participated in other political organization or movement activity; wore or displayed political badges and symbols; signed a protest letter, petition; participated in a demonstration; deliberately did not buy, boycotted certain goods; donated money to an NGO.

listed in the questionnaire in the year preceding the survey. 'Only voters' participated only in elections; politically passive respondents were not involved in any political activities.

The *number of weak ties* was defined as the number of persons known to the respondents from the 21 occupational categories listed in the questionnaire.[6]

Subjective social exclusion was composed of four items (European Quality of Life Survey). Respondents had to state to what extent they agreed with four statements on a five-point Likert scale:

- 'I feel excluded by society'
- 'Life has become so complicated I can barely find my way.'
- 'I feel like the people I meet don't recognise the value of what I do.'
- 'Some people look down on me because of my job or because I don't work.'

The indicator of subjective social exclusion is the average of the four responses. The higher the value of the variable, the more the respondent feels excluded.

3.2 Description of the normative-functionalist class model

The normative-functionalist class model classifies members of society on the basis of their economic activity, occupation and other characteristics of the labour market (Huszár, 2013). Other class models (for example, EGP) incorporate those temporarily or permanently absent from the labour market into the model based on their previous occupation or labour market characteristics. However, the normative-functionalist model does this based on current economic activity. Retired people are grouped according to their previous occupation, such as retired professionals and managers or retired skilled workers. The normative-functionalist model also treats entrepreneurs as a separate group (Figure 1).

4 Results

4.1 Integration mechanisms and the normative-functionalist class model

Figures 2 to 5 show the distribution of the four highlighted integration mechanisms according to the occupational class model. It is important to point out that the relationship between the class model and social integration is fundamentally affected by the fact that the social structure itself has changed. The results of the six-year data collection process indicate this well. In parallel with the significant increase in employment, the share of those belonging to inactive groups decreased significantly, while that of the employed increased (Figure 1).

[6] a) high school teacher; b) driver; c) computer technician, IT specialist; d) tax expert, accountant; e) mayor, local government representative; f) water-gas repairman; g) car mechanic; h) a lawyer; i) waiter; j) engineer; k) company manager, director; l) shop assistant; m) journalist; n) actor, musician, singer; o) surgeon; p) administrator; q) nurse; r) college, university lecturer, researcher; s) unskilled worker; t) individual agricultural farmer (peasant farmer); u) security guard.

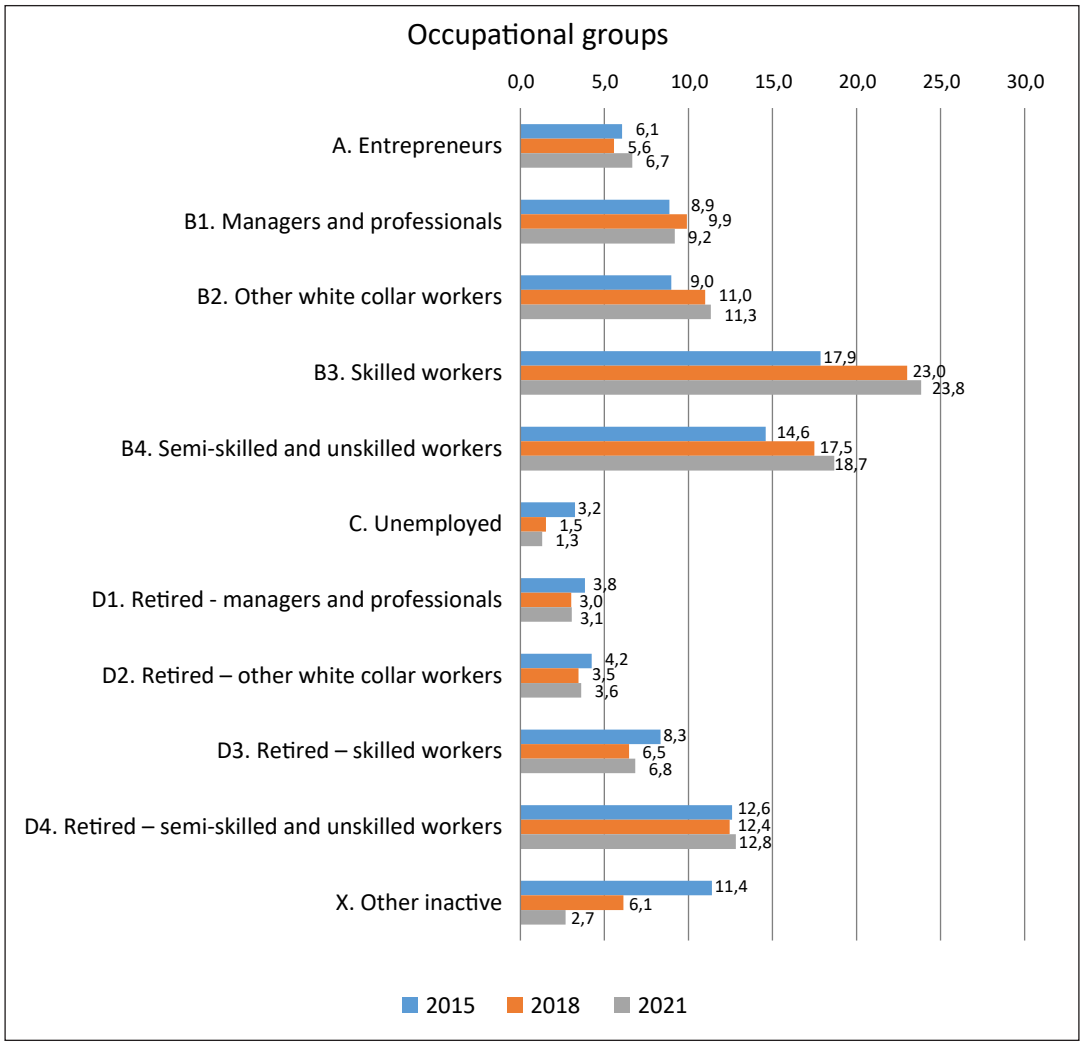

Figure 1 Occupational groups (normative-functionalist class model) 2015, 2018, 2021 (%)

Source: HAS Excellence Cooperation Programme 'Mobility Research Centre' project

Figure 2 shows the distribution of the number of weak ties for occupational groups. The average number of weak ties per respondent in the total sample was 8.5 in 2015, 11.2 in 2018 and 9.8 in 2021.

According to the ANOVA report, the distribution of weak ties significantly differed among the occupational groups on all three data collection dates. Weak ties were distributed among the occupational groups as follows: In 2015, we found managers and professionals had an above-average number (12.2 ties), followed by entrepreneurs (11.1), retired managers and professionals (9.9), other white-collar workers (9.6) and skilled workers (9.1).

The average number of weak ties was mainly associated with the unemployed (8.3); semi-skilled and unskilled workers had below average (7.9), as did other inactive (7.8) and all other retired groups (7.1; 6.5; 5.8).

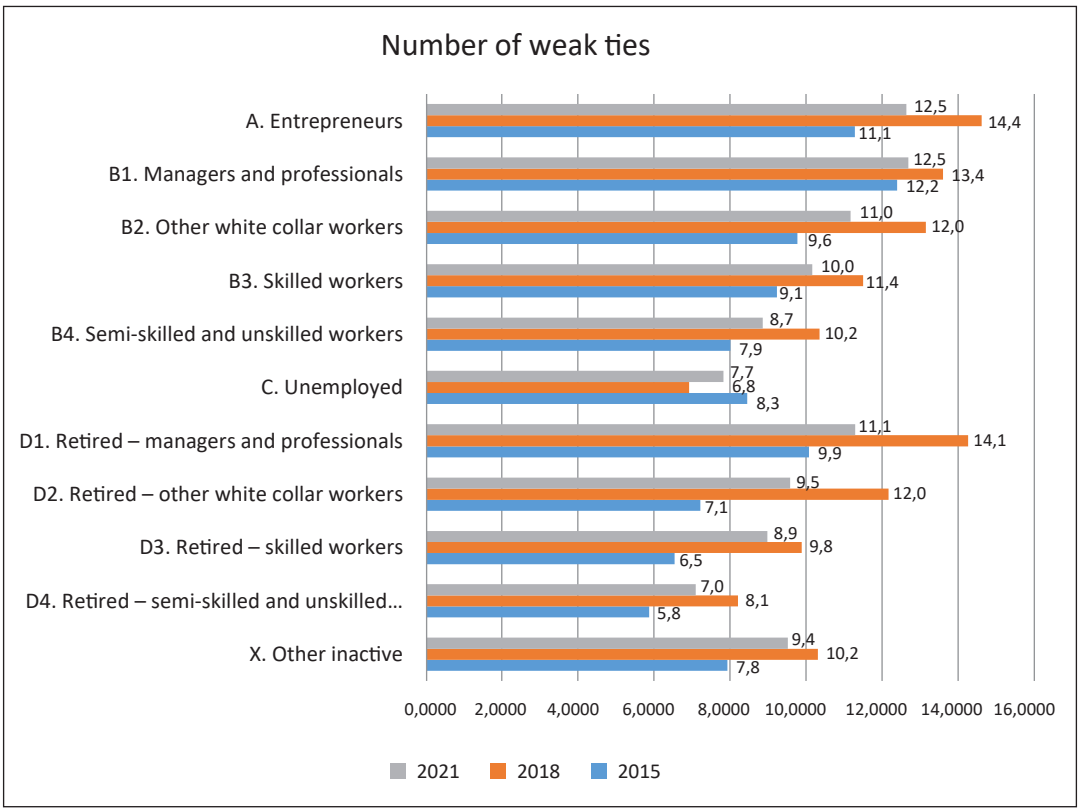

Figure 2 Number of weak ties per member of an occupational group in 2015, 2018 and 2021

Source: HAS Excellence Cooperation Programme 'Mobility Research Centre' project.

In 2018, alongside entrepreneurs (14.4), the average number of weak ties of retired managers and professionals (14.1) also exceeded that of active managers and professionals. We also found both active and retired other white-collar workers to have an above-average number (13 and 12 ties, respectively). The overall societal average number of weak ties in 2018 was best represented by skilled workers (with 11.4 ties). A below-average number of weak ties was identified among semi-skilled and unskilled workers and other inactive people (both 10.2), retired skilled workers (9.8), retired semi-skilled and unskilled workers (8.1) and, with the lowest average number, the unemployed (6.8).

In 2021, entrepreneurs, managers, and professionals had 12.5 weak ties on average. The following groups richest in weak ties were retired managers and professionals (11.1) and other white-collar workers (11). Similarly to 2018, skilled workers had slightly above the average number (10). Retired other white-collar workers (9.5), other inactive (9.4), re-

tired skilled workers (8.9), semi-skilled and unskilled workers (8.7), unemployed people (7,7), and retired semi-skilled and unskilled workers (7) had below the average number in respect of weak ties.

As weak ties are mainly linked to the division of labour, it is not surprising that pensioners and the inactive have fewer of these. It is noteworthy, however, that the average number of weak ties among managers and professionals exceeds the social average, even in retirement. It is also striking that the average number of weak ties for the group of unemployed in 2015 (presumably heterogeneous according to their original occupation) exceeded the average of the weak ties of working semi-skilled and unskilled workers. Overall, for those with an economically active status, a higher occupational position is associated with fewer weaker ties, which may maintain the hierarchy of occupational groups in the long run.

Figure 3 shows the distribution of subjective social exclusion across the occupational classes (Figure 3).

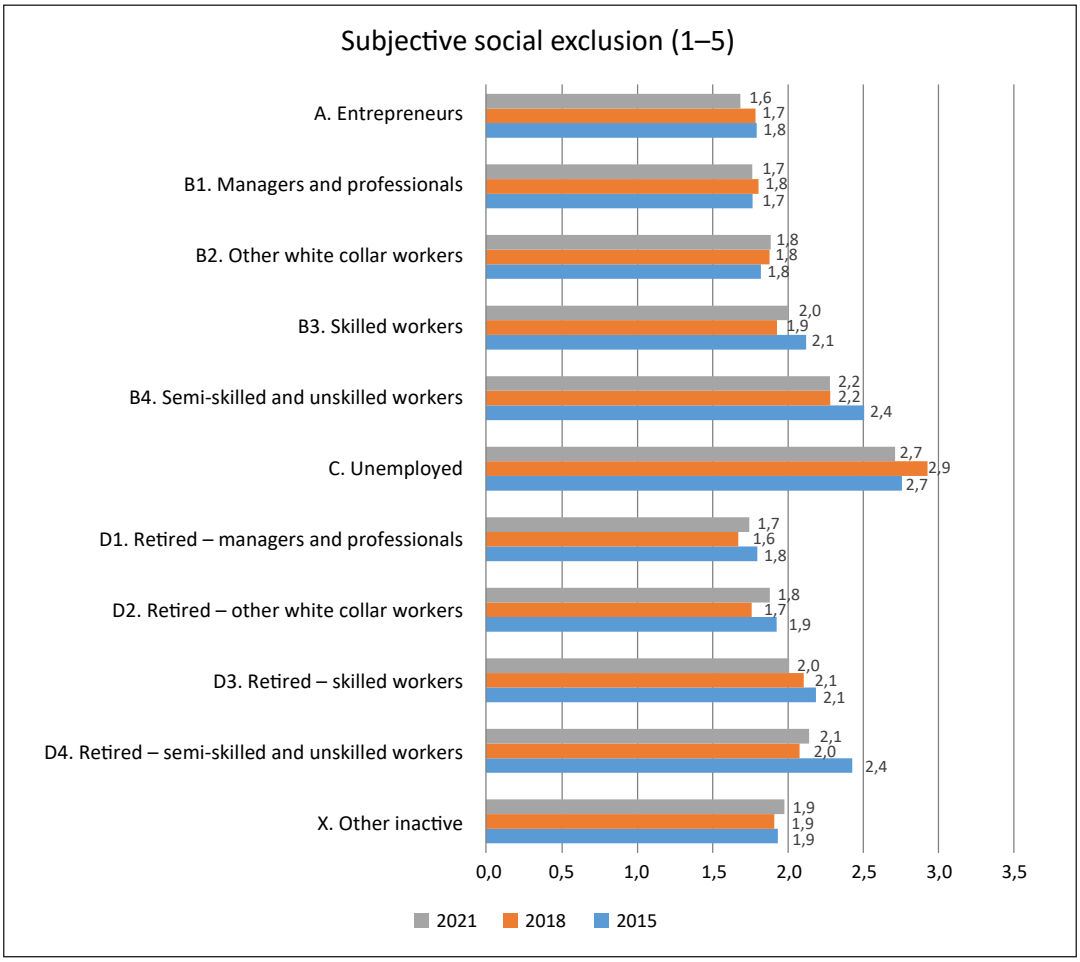

Figure 3 Subjective social exclusion according to occupational group, 2015, 2018 and 2021

Source: HAS Excellence Cooperation Programme 'Mobility Research Centre' project.

Similarly to weak ties, the distribution of subjective social exclusion was significantly different among the occupational groups on all three data collection dates, according to the ANOVA report. Between 2015 and 2018, this indicator declined somewhat, from 2.1 to 1.9, while between 2018 and 2021, it slightly but significantly increased to 2.0. In 2015, entrepreneurs (1.8), active and retired managers and professionals (1.7 and 1.8), active and retired other white-collar workers (1.8 and 1.9) and other inactive (1.9) persons perceived less than average exclusion. The subjective social exclusion of skilled workers and retired skilled workers was average (2.1); it was mainly active and retired semi-skilled and unskilled workers (2.4) and the unemployed 2.7) who perceived exclusion. Retirement status alone did not increase the subjective sense of exclusion – much less than low employment status (unskilled) and, of course, unemployment.

In 2018, retired managers and professionals (1.6), retired other white-collar workers (1.7), entrepreneurs (1.7), managers and professionals (1.8) and other white-collar workers (1.8) were those least likely to perceive themselves as excluded. The feeling of exclusion among skilled workers and other inactive people was average (1.9). Retired semi-skilled and unskilled workers (2), retired skilled workers (2.1), and active semi-skilled and unskilled workers (2.2) felt more excluded than the average. In 2021, similar patterns could be observed. Individuals with a higher occupational class and their retired counterparts felt less excluded; skilled workers and retired skilled workers represented the average (2), while unemployed people continued to feel seriously excluded. The high social positions of the economically active are accompanied by a lower subjective sense of exclusion, which largely persists into retirement. The subjective sense of exclusion experienced by the lower occupational strata, especially the unemployed, is also a lasting feature.

Figure 4 shows the distribution of political participation across occupational classes (Figure 4).

Political participation is another integration mechanism that was significantly different among the occupational groups on all three data collection dates. Political participation averaged 0.8 in 2015, 0.63 in 2018 and 0.64 in 2021. In 2015, political activity among managers and professionals (1.22), entrepreneurs (1.03), retired managers and professionals (1.03) and retired and active other white-collar workers (0.95 and 0.89) was above average. The political participation of skilled workers was closest to the average (0.77). Retired and active semi-skilled workers (0.69 and 0.67), retired skilled workers (0.65), other inactive (0.65), and the unemployed (0.60) were associated with below-average political participation.

In 2018, the order of occupational groups changed somewhat. However, the trend was similar: the values of active entrepreneurs (0.86), active and retired managers and professionals (0.78 and 0.75), and active and retired other white-collar workers (0.74 and 0.71) were above average. The political activity of retired skilled workers was average (0.65), and that of skilled workers (0.58), semi-skilled and unskilled workers (0.58), other inactive people (0.53) and retired semi-skilled and unskilled workers (0.50) was below average. This year, the unemployed (0.42) were also at the end of the line.

In 2021, retired managers and professionals were even more active politically (0.9) than their active counterparts (0.82) and entrepreneurs (0.77). The political activity of retired other white-collar workers (0.74) also exceeded that of their active counterparts (0.65). The same pattern could be observed among retired (0.70) and active (0.58) skilled workers. The political activity of the unemployed slightly exceeded the average (0.65), while that of active (0.58) and retired (0.55) semi-skilled and unskilled workers, together with the other inactive (0.51), remained well below average.

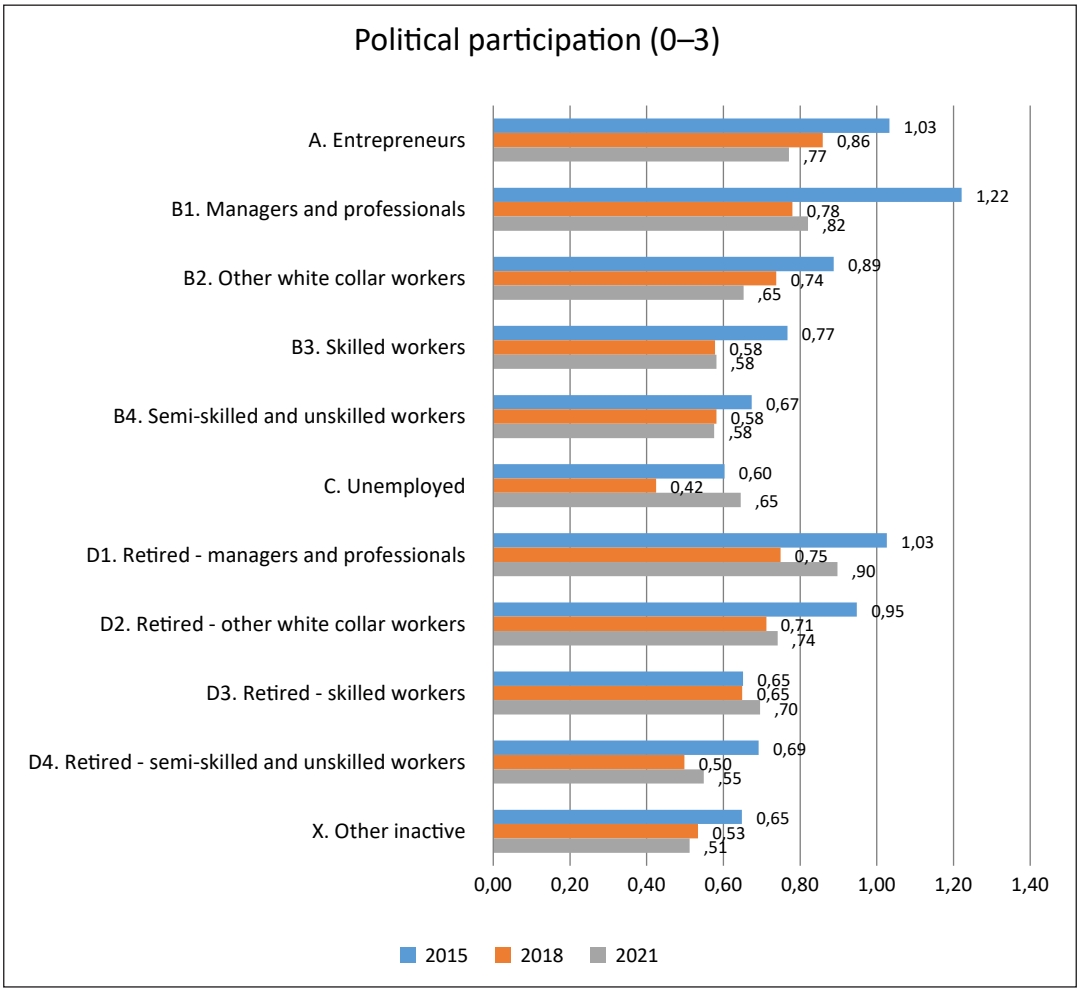

Figure 4 Index of political participation according to occupational group, 2015, 2018 and 2021

Source: HAS Excellence Cooperation Programme 'Mobility Research Centre' project.

Figure 5 shows changes in the acceptance of norm violation across occupational groups.

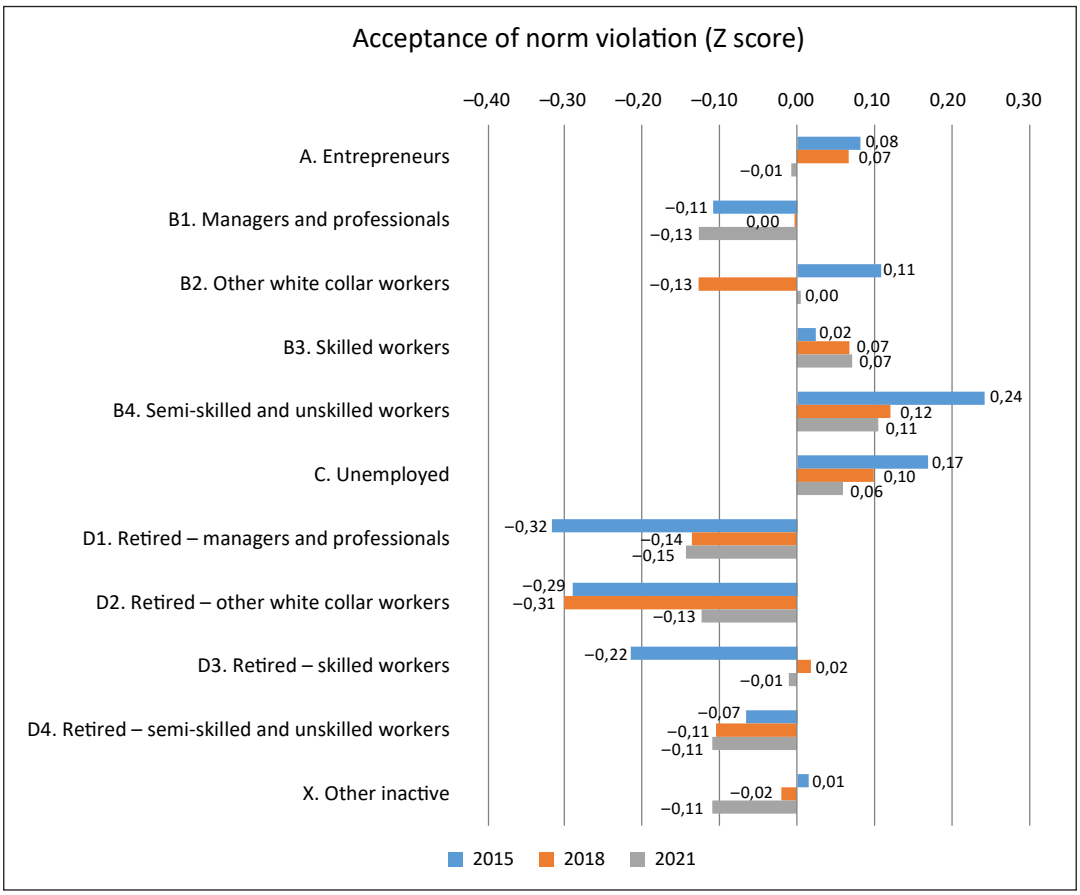

Figure 5 Acceptance of norm violation according to occupational group, 2015, 2018 and 2021[7]

Source: HAS Excellence Cooperation Programme 'Mobility Research Centre' project.

In all three studied years, the acceptance of norm violation was significantly different among occupational classes. The general trend in 2015 and 2018 was that white-collar workers and retired people were more norm-compliant than blue-collar workers, entrepreneurs and the unemployed. This pattern somewhat changed in 2021. While active blue-collar workers were still more tolerant of norm violations, entrepreneurs no longer exceeded the social average in terms of accepting norm violations.

In the following section, we analyse how the above integration mechanisms relate to each other, i.e., how occupational groups can be located in the two-dimensional space stretched by the pairs of every two integration mechanisms. Correlation statistics for the

[7] Positive values indicate acceptance of violation; negative values indicate norm compliance.

four mechanisms (pairwise) are shown in the Appendix (Table 2). Generally, the number of weak ties and political participation is correlated moderately strongly but permanently. At the same time, there is a relatively strong correlation between subjective social exclusion and the acceptance of norm violation that increases over time.

4.2 The location of occupational groups in the space stretched by the integration dimensions

Figure 6 displays occupational groups located on the basis of subjective social exclusion and number of weak ties.

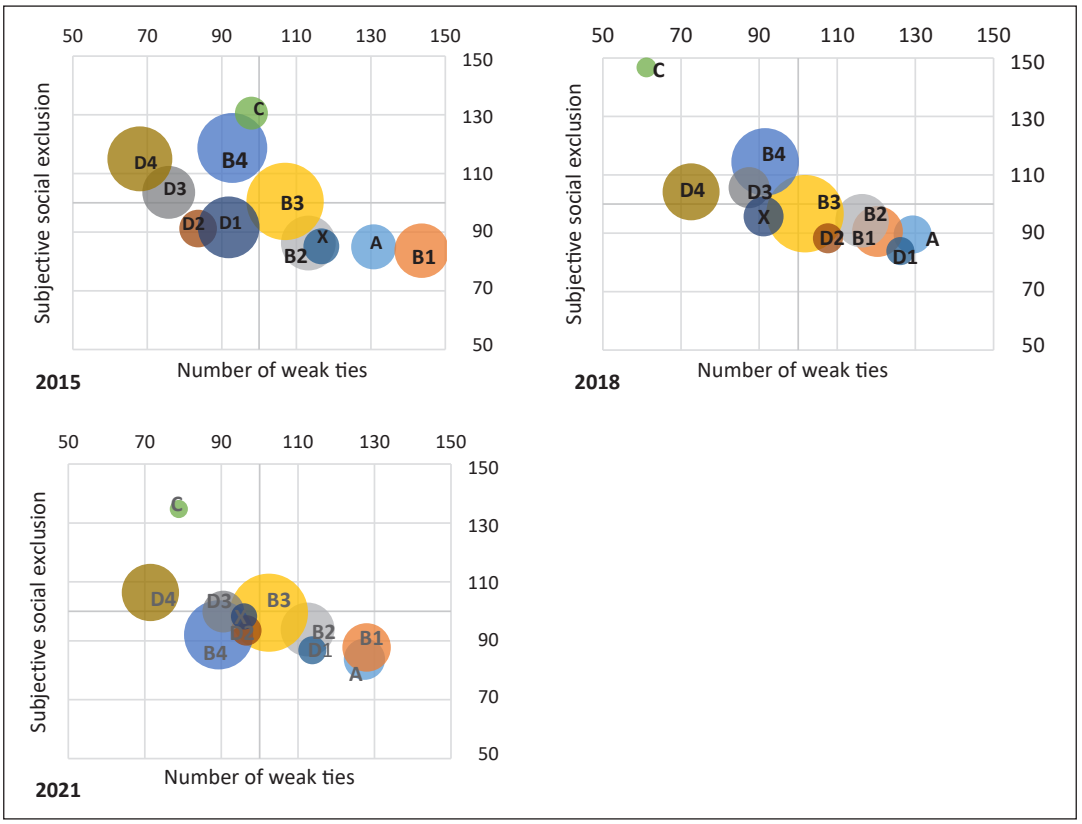

Figure 6 Occupational groups in a space stretched by weak ties and social exclusion (2015, 2018 and 2021)[8]

Source: HAS Excellence Cooperation Programme 'Mobility Research Centre' project.

[8] The size of the circles indicates the size of the given occupational group. Colours help identify groups because the same colour always indicates the same occupational group. Group names: A. Entrepreneurs; B1. Managers and professionals; B2. Other white-collar workers; B3. Skilled workers; B4. Semi-skilled and unskilled workers; C. Unemployed; D1. Retired managers and professionals; D2. Retired other white-collar workers; D3. Retired skilled workers; D4. Retired semi-skilled and unskilled workers; X. Other inactive.

The visualisation clearly shows that the unemployed (marked C) group is separate from the other groups. Even in terms of weak ties, this group is the worst off, but it is really the strong perception of social exclusion that manifests in the form of distance in the figure, especially in 2018 and 2021.

The other occupational groups feel much less excluded and instead only show greater dispersion according to average number of weak ties. For this indicator, the group of retired semi-skilled and unskilled workers (D4) lags, but this cannot be said of the other groups of pensioners (D1-3); instead, they appear to be similar to their own active group with the same occupational status.

The following figure clearly shows the strong correlation (see Table 2 in Appendix) between political participation and the number of weak ties in occupational groups: political activity and the number of weak ties increase almost linearly together (Figure 7).

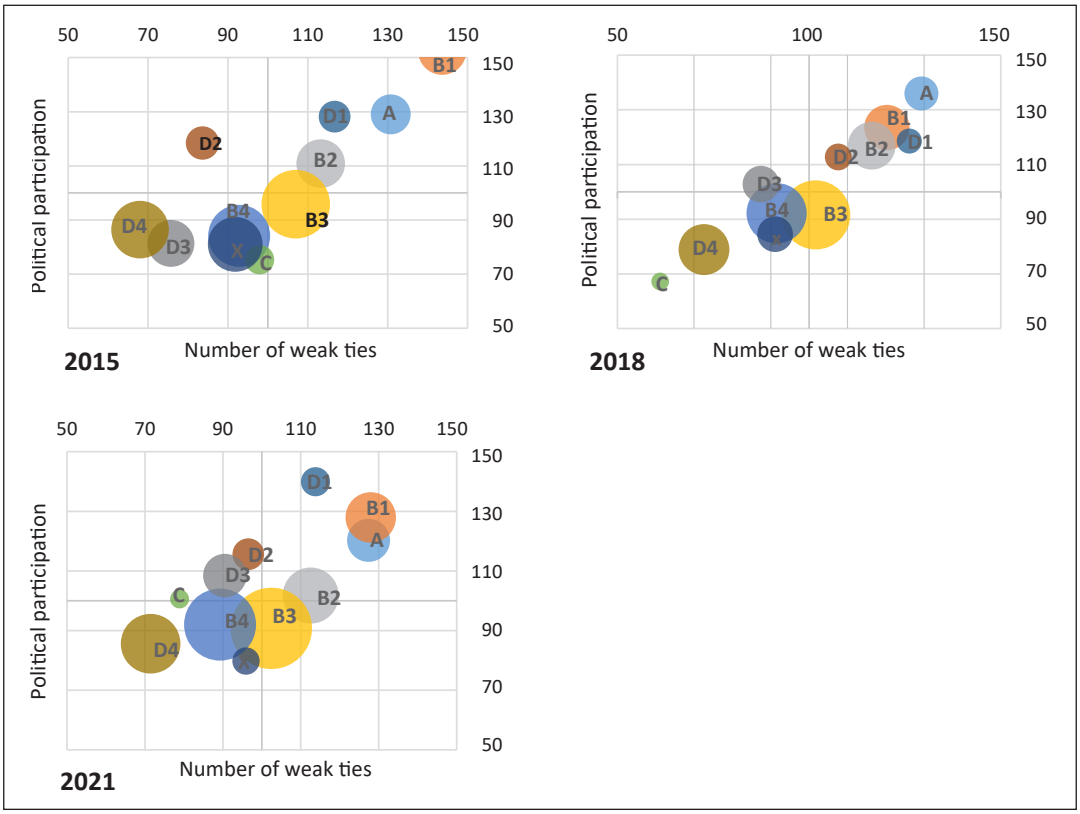

Figure 7 Occupational groups in a space stretched by weak ties and political participation (2015, 2018 and 2021)

Source: HAS Excellence Cooperation Programme 'Mobility Research Centre' project.

The strong political participation/many weak ties quadrant is occupied by the higher strata of the occupational class model: entrepreneurs (A), managers and professionals (B1) and other white-collar workers (B2). Low-skilled workers, unemployed and retired semi-skilled

and unskilled workers are located in the low political participation/few weak ties quadrant, while other occupational groups are roughly oriented around the origin (retired skilled workers [D3] are slightly more politically active, while non-retired skilled workers [B3] have slightly more weak ties). The social groups on the top in the normative-functionalist model have spectacularly high values in terms of both the number of ties and participation.

The figure for political participation and social exclusion (Figure 8), similar to Figure 6, is less scattered according to social exclusion than by the other dimension, political activity.

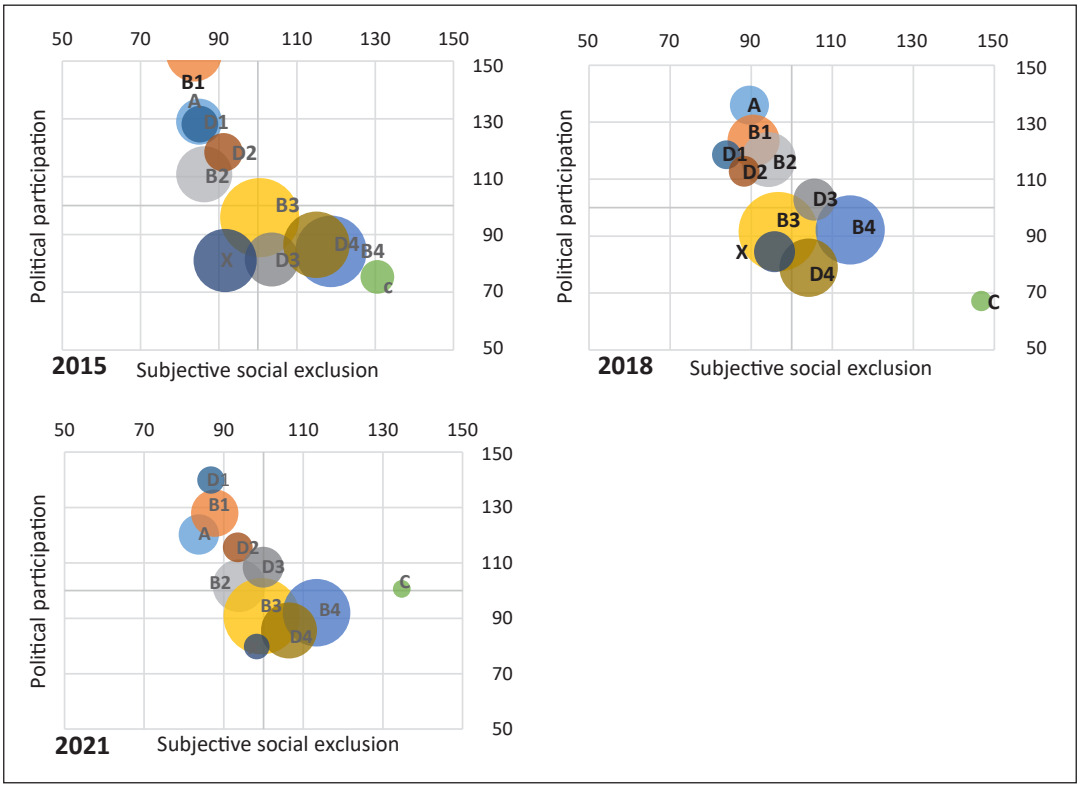

Figure 8 Occupational groups in a space stretched by the perception of social exclusion and political participation (2015, 2018 and 2021)

Source: HAS Excellence Cooperation Programme 'Mobility Research Centre' project.

Here, too, the exceptional group is that of the unemployed (C), who are far from the others because of their subjective sense of exclusion. The other occupational groups appear to be divided into two major groups: blue-collar workers, together with other inactive people, are less politically active. Among them, retirees (D3-4) and semi-skilled and unskilled workers (B4) also feel somewhat excluded. Groups with a higher occupational status (A, B1-2, D1-2), on the other hand, are more politically active and have a weak sense of exclusion.

All three figures above clearly show that the unemployed (C) and retirees who worked as semi-skilled or unskilled workers before retirement (D4) have unfavourable values according to the three mechanisms of the integration model (subjective social exclusion, number of weak ties, and political participation), i.e. they feel more excluded, have a smaller number of weak ties and low political participation. The negative values of the three variables suggest that those with low-status employment positions in the normative-functionalist model may also be considered under-integrated.

4.3 The dimension of norm compliance

Based on Mertonian theory, norm compliance is of particular importance among the analytical aspects addressed in this paper.

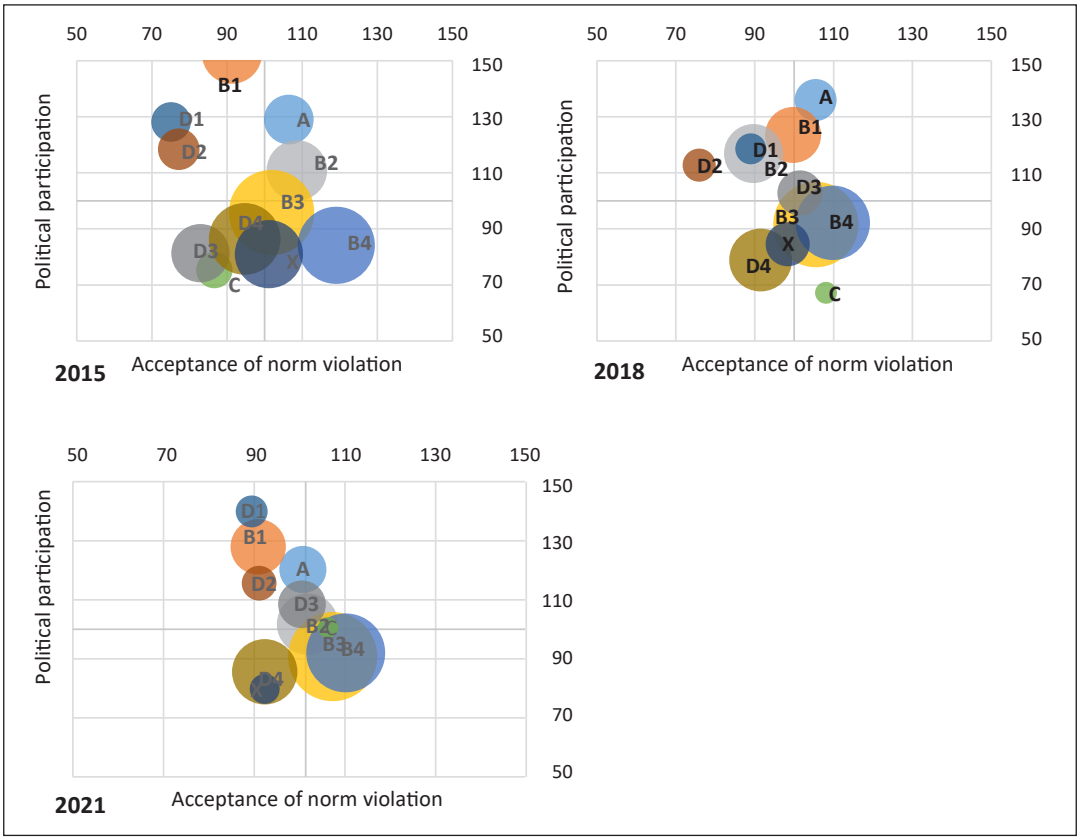

Figure 9 Occupational groups in a space stretched by acceptance of norm violation[9] and political participation (2015, 2018 and 2021)

Source: HAS Excellence Cooperation Programme 'Mobility Research Centre' project.

[9] Positive values indicate acceptance of norm violation; negative values indicate its rejection.

Based on Figure 9, we can conclude that greater political activity is usually accompanied by a rejection of the violation of norms. The participation of other white-collar workers (B2), as well as retired managers and professionals (D1), is among the highest, and these individuals firmly reject norm violations. The group of entrepreneurs is special. The highest political participation is recorded for their group, but the violation of norms is considered acceptable by them to one of the greatest extents of any group in 2015 and 2018. In the case of retired semi-skilled and unskilled workers (D4), adherence to norms is associated with low political participation. An important observation is that skilled workers (B3), semi-skilled and unskilled workers (B4) (jointly 41 per cent of all respondents) with low political activity are more tolerant of norm violation. The unemployed (C) behave very similarly to the strata of active workers: low political activity is accompanied by acceptance of the violation of norms. By 2021, the correlation between political participation and acceptance of norm-violation did not change: the most politically active occupational groups rejected norm-breaking the most. The exception is the behaviour of retired skilled workers and other inactive groups, where the least political activity was associated with strongly rejecting norm-breaking. By 2021, the integration gap between active and inactive managers, professionals, entrepreneurs, and workers decreased somewhat but did not disappear. On the other hand, the deviation between the integration values of political participation and the violation of norms between other (lower-level) intellectuals and skilled workers significantly declined.

Figure 10 shows the occupational groups in the space stretched by acceptance of norm violation and subjective exclusion.

As shown in Figure 10, not surprisingly, subjective social exclusion and acceptance of norm violation tend to correlate strongly (see Table 2 in Appendix). Those who consider their exclusion strong are much more accepting of violating norms. The active workers' strata, with the exception of a larger group of skilled workers (B3), feel excluded, and a large part of them accept norm violations. The weaker degree of social exclusion felt by active and inactive white-collar occupational groups is always associated with a rejection of norm violations. Entrepreneurs (A) do not feel excluded but more readily accept norm violations. The sense of social exclusion among the unemployed (C) and their acceptance of norm violations are extremely strong. Retired semi-skilled and unskilled workers (D4) feel excluded but do not accept norm violations.

Figure 11 shows the occupational groups in the space stretched by acceptance of norm violation and the number of weak ties. Managers and professionals (D1) have the weakest ties among those belonging to the upper social strata (A, B1, B2) and among retirees, managers and professionals; however, the norm compliance of these strata is different. As we have repeatedly indicated, entrepreneurs (A) tended to accept norm violations in 2015 and 2018, while other white-collar workers (B2), as well as retired managers and professionals (D1), tended to be norm conformist. Compared to active skilled workers (B3) and semi-skilled and unskilled workers (B4), the retired strata of workers (D3-4) consistently had fewer weak ties, while at the same time, the violation of norms was judged differently. While active blue-collar workers (B3-4) and retired skilled workers (D3) accepted, retired semi-skilled and unskilled workers (D4) rejected norm violation. Finally, the unemployed (C) are completely isolated from the other strata because of their fewest weak ties coupled with one of the strongest acceptances of norm violation.

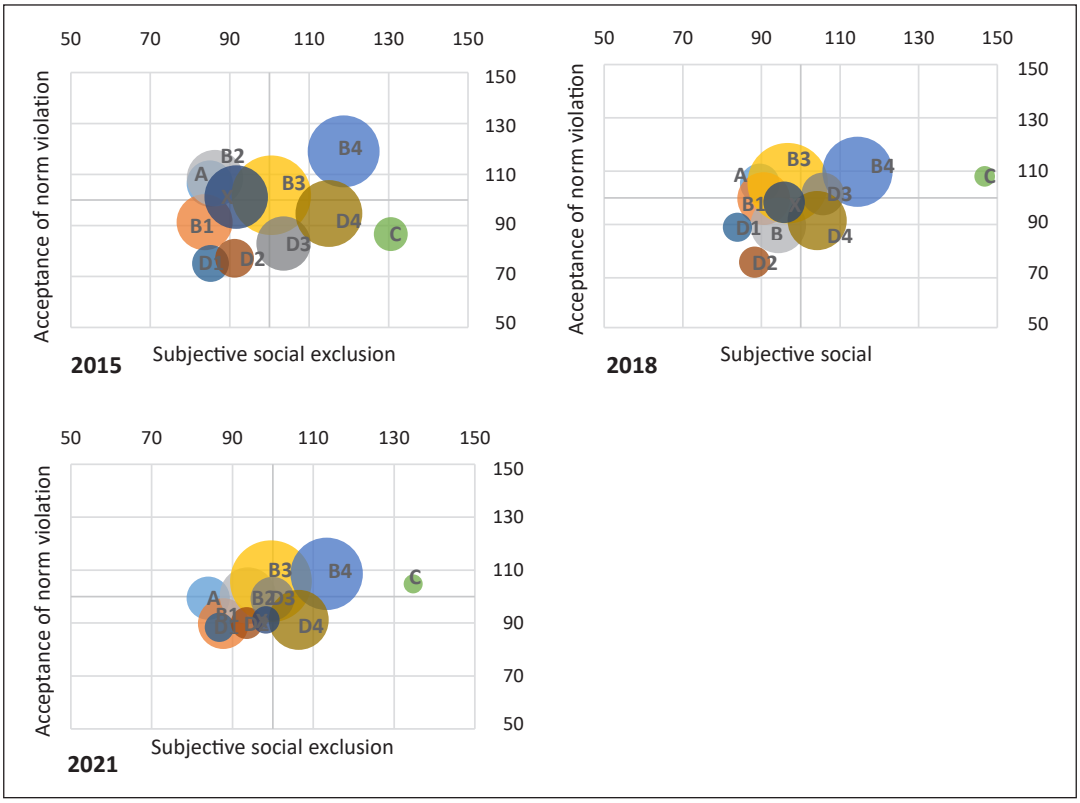

Figure 10 Occupational groups in the space stretched by acceptance of norm violation and subjective exclusion (2015, 2018 and 2021)

Source: HAS Excellence Cooperation Programme "Mobility Research Centre" project.

The changes in the four integration mechanisms and the normative-functionalist occupational class model between 2015 and 2021 represent the essential elements of the social integration of the period, which can be summarised as follows, based on Figures 6 to 11:

Based on all figures, it can be seen that the disintegration of occupational classes that accumulated labour market disadvantages (regarding activity, prestige, income, and working conditions) – the unemployed, semi-skilled and unskilled workers, retired semi-skilled and unskilled workers from other groups in society – had become strong by 2018, according to the interconnection of mechanisms relevant to integration. In particular, the disintegration of the unemployed has led to significant social distance. Interestingly, the 'objective' position of this group has not changed much between 2015 and 2021. There were no significant changes in the means of any of the four integration mechanisms (see Tables 3 and 4 in the Appendix). However, their relative position worsened in the sense that their social distance from other groups increased due to the improving social integration of the others.

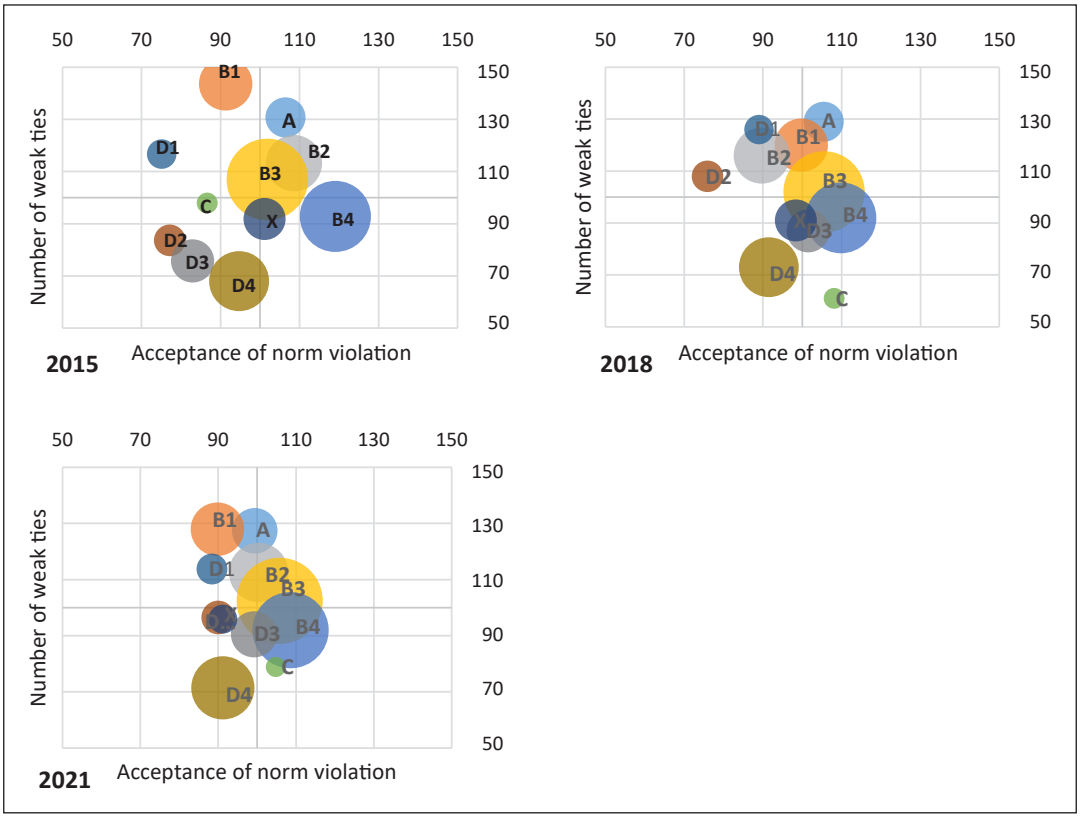

Figure 11 Occupational groups in the space stretched by acceptance of norm violation and number of weak ties (relationships) (2015, 2018 and 2021)

Source: HAS Excellence Cooperation Programme "Mobility Research Centre" project

While in 2015, the occupational group of managers and professionals was at a greater integration distance from general society, by 2018, their place had been taken over by the entrepreneurs, who considered norm violation as acceptable as those belonging to the most disadvantaged occupational groups. In 2021, neither of these two occupational groups was very distant from the other strata of society according to the integration indicators. Regarding social integration, from 2015 to 2021, the upper segments of skilled workers became more similar to managers, professionals, and other white-collar workers.

5 Conclusions

For our paper, we assumed that mechanisms of social integration differ significantly according to positions in the social structure. We believe this assumption is similar to Merton's understanding of the position occupied in the social structure. Namely, Merton discusses

the relationship between social integration and social structure, even if not entirely in the form used by Kovách and his co-authors since 2016. In Merton's theory, deviance and social problems appear primarily when large groups in society are excluded from the goals, norms and values accepted by all or a large part of society, most notably regarding material success.

Our paper examined the relationship between four of the seven mechanisms of the integration model (Kovách et al., 2016) and the normative-functionalist class model (Huszár, 2013). This occupational class model builds primarily on individuals' economic activity, occupation, and other labour market characteristics. The four integration mechanisms were the subjective perception of social exclusion, the number of weak ties, political participation, and acceptance of norm violation. All four mechanisms can be firmly linked to Merton's theory.

Our research found that there is an interpretable correlation between the occupational groups and the examined integration mechanisms. The 11 strata of the normative-functionalist model create a characteristic pattern based on subjective social exclusion, the number of weak ties, political participation, and acceptance of norm violation. Irrespective of the data collection wave (whether in 2015, 2018 or 2021), the upper strata of the class model (mostly entrepreneurs, managers and professionals, and other white-collar workers) consistently reported significantly more weak ties, a weaker sense of social exclusion, and greater political participation. We also found consistent yet opposing results for the lower strata of the occupational class model, mainly among the unemployed and unskilled and semi-skilled workers linked to lower qualifications. One of the most interesting results (which is independent of the date of data collection) is that leaving the labour market (more precisely, entering retirement age and having current retirement status) does not significantly change the integrational advantages and disadvantages associated with the economically active period (Albert, 2016). The measured values of retired managers, professionals and other white-collar workers were much more similar to those of active managers, professionals and other white-collar workers than those of retired skilled workers, especially semi-skilled and unskilled workers.

The distribution of the four integration mechanisms clearly showed the actual differences and inequalities between occupational groups. When we depicted each layer of the normative-functionalist class model in the space stretched by integration mechanisms, social inequalities became even more plastic. Referring back to Merton's theory, we conclude that the weak ties that embody social norms and values are those that reinforce the maintenance of one's position in the hierarchy in the long run.

Groups at the bottom of the hierarchy of the normative-functionalist model, such as the unemployed and retirees who were semi-skilled workers and unskilled workers in their earlier lives, were markedly separate in the space stretched by the partial cross-effects of the four dimensions that created the integration model. The differences between the strata were particularly evident in all the figures showing subjective social exclusion, the number of weak ties, the level of political participation, and the acceptance of norm violation. Retirees who used to work in lower prestige jobs, but mainly those excluded from the labour market, were disconnected from the other occupational groups of society. The situation of the unemployed has not worsened per se. However, it has not kept pace with the improvement in the situation of other occupational classes in this period of economic recovery.

The normative-functionalist class model indicates a weaker relationship between political participation and the number of weak ties, yet it is clear that these two integration mechanisms move together. The classic theories that deal with political participation make it clear that political participation involves collective action, and the participation of those who join through networks is the most active type (Hirschman, 1970; Jenkins & Klandermans, 1995; Kriesi, 1992). In essence, the wider one's network of relationships, the more likely one is to have an acquaintance who perceives participation as a norm and value and who facilitates the participation of others. Research in Hungary has shown that participants of political protests usually go to company events and join events through their acquaintances (Mikecz & Szabó, 2017).

We found that, in terms of social integration, class hierarchy is relatively stable over time. While there were some significant changes in the mechanisms of social integration between 2015 and 2018, the class hierarchy of social integration did not change much between 2018 and 2021. The only exception is the number of weak ties. We can only make assumptions about the possible effect of the COVID-19 pandemic on this dimension of social integration.

Overall, the combined treatment of the traditional, occupational-based normative-functionalist model and the four important dimensions of the integration model is able to present the manifestations of social inequalities in a much more nuanced way, indicating the disturbances in social integration and the resulting conflict.

All this suggests two issues for future research. One is addressing the question of to what extent the stabilisation of the integration system means strengthening social integration – or is it no more than a sign of the effectiveness of political integration, which can effectively mask and eliminate (political) interests linked to occupational class position? The other research task is checking whether the occupational stratification model(s) are suitable for the analysis of the complex issue of social integration and inequality or whether there are social changes underway, the understanding of which requires further development of the model.

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Appendix

Table 1 Descriptive statistics of integration mechanisms per year

2015	**N**	**Minimum**	**Maximum**	**Mean**	**Std. Deviation**
Number of weak ties	2662	,00	21,00	8,5167	5,01041
Subjective social exclusion	2483	1,00	5,00	2,0633	,86824
Political participation	2455	,00	2,00	,7997	,78003
Acceptance of norm violation (zscore)	2567	−,92835	1,81938	,0000000	1,00000000
2018	**N**	**Minimum**	**Maximum**	**Mean**	**Std. Deviation**
Number of weak ties	2668	,00	21,00	11,1625	5,36987
Subjective social exclusion	2621	1,00	5,00	1,9492	,97761
Political participation	2630	,00	2,00	,6316	,76321
Acceptance of norm violation (zscore)	2608	−,90836	1,36035	,0000000	1,00000000
2021	**N**	**Minimum**	**Maximum**	**Mean**	**Std. Deviation**
Number of weak ties	4976	,00	21,00	9,7469	5,33264
Subjective social exclusion	4921	1,00	5,00	1,9606	1,04542
Political participation	4975	,00	2,00	,6342	,74782
Acceptance of norm violation (zscore)	4909	−,72241	1,85203	,0000000	1,00000000

Table 2 Bivariate correlations between integration mechanisms per years

2015		**Number of weak ties**	**Subjective social exclusion**	**Political participation**	**Acceptance of norm violation**
Number of weak ties	Pearson Correlation	1	–,080**	,232**	,011
	Sig. (2-tailed)		,000	,000	,586
	N	2662	2467	2438	2547
Subjective social exclusion	Pearson Correlation	–,080**	1	–,080**	,208**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,000		,000	,000
	N	2467	2483	2301	2412
Political participation	Pearson Correlation	,232**	–,080**	1	–,033
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,000	,000		,112
	N	2438	2301	2455	2371
Acceptance of norm violation	Pearson Correlation	,011	,208**	–,033	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,586	,000	,112	
	N	2547	2412	2371	2567
2018		**Number of weak ties**	**Subjective social exclusion**	**Political participation**	**Acceptance of norm violation**
Number of weak ties	Pearson Correlation	1	–,087**	,208**	–,042*
	Sig. (2-tailed)		,000	,000	,033
	N	2668	2591	2607	2583
Subjective social exclusion	Pearson Correlation	–,087**	1	–,054**	,318**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,000		,006	,000
	N	2591	2621	2560	2548
Political participation	Pearson Correlation	,208**	–,054**	1	,013
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,000	,006		,518
	N	2607	2560	2630	2553
Acceptance of norm violation	Pearson Correlation	–,042*	,318**	,013	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,033	,000	,518	
	N	2583	2548	2553	2608

Table 2 *(continued)*

2021		Number of weak ties	Subjective social exclusion	Political participation	Acceptance of norm violation
Number of weak ties	Pearson Correlation	1	–,150**	,202**	–,169**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		,000	,000	,000
	N	4976	4901	4952	4885
Subjective social exclusion	Pearson Correlation	–,150**	1	–,012	,345**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,000		,385	,000
	N	4901	4921	4897	4845
Political participation	Pearson Correlation	,202**	–,012	1	–,054**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,000	,385		,000
	N	4952	4897	4975	4884
Acceptance of norm violation	Pearson Correlation	–,169**	,345**	–,054**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,000	,000	,000	
	N	4885	4845	4884	4909

Table 3 Summary of significant changes of integration mechanisms in occupational classes between 2015 and 2018 (based on ANOVA reports)

Occupational class	Integration mechanisms	Occupational class	Integration mechanisms
Entrepreneurs	number of weak ties** political participation*		
B1. Managers and professionals	number of weak ties** political participation**	D1. Retired managers and professionals	number of weak ties** political participation**
B2. Other white-collar workers	number of weak ties** political participation** acceptance of norm violation**	D2. Retired other white-collar workers	number of weak ties** political participation**
B3. Skilled workers	number of weak ties** political participation** subjective social exclusion**	D3. Retired skilled workers	number of weak ties** acceptance of norm violation**
B4. Semi-skilled and unskilled workers	number of weak ties** political participation* subjective social exclusion**	D4.. Semi-skilled and unskilled workers	number of weak ties** political participation** subjective social exclusion**
Unemployed	–	X. Other inactive	number of weak ties**

*p<0.1 **p<0.05

Table 4 Summary of significant changes of integration mechanisms in occupational classes between 2018 and 2021 (based on ANOVA reports)

Occupational class	**Integration mechanisms**	**Occupational class**	**Integration mechanisms**
Entrepreneurs	number of weak ties**		
B1. Managers and professionals	number of weak ties** acceptance of norm violation*	D1. Retired managers and professionals	number of weak ties**
B2. Other white-collar workers	number of weak ties** acceptance of norm violation*	D2. Retired other white-collar workers	number of weak ties**
B3. Skilled workers	number of weak ties**	D3. Retired skilled workers	number of weak ties*
B4. Semi-skilled and unskilled workers	number of weak ties**	D4.. Semi-skilled and unskilled workers	number of weak ties**
C. Unemployed	–	X. Other inactive	number of weak ties*

*p<0.1 **p<0.05

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Remaking civil society under authoritarian capitalism: The case of the Orbán regime's Hungarian Academy of Arts

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Intersections. EEJSP
9(4): 80–100.
https://doi.org/10.17356/ieejsp.v9i4.1127
https://intersections.tk.hu

Abstract

Authoritarian regimes are known for their attacks on civic organizations; however, this article demonstrates how such rules also set up and operate new forms of civil society. Drawing on a year-long ethnographic fieldwork at the cultural flagship institution of the Orbán-regime, the Hungarian Academy of Arts (HAA), this research engages with civic organizations often labeled as 'uncivil,' 'dark,' or 'illiberal.' Instead of applying the normative notion of civil society, it joins a century-long body of literature that, following Gramsci, stresses the integral nature of political and civil society. The article contributes to this research trajectory by spotlighting a new hegemonic regime's dynamic remaking of civil society.

The article conceptualizes the process of remaking civil society and reveals four facets beyond top-down command (1) the making of clientelist social relations that affect both the privileged and the rank-and-file actors, (2) the managed articulation of dissent toward the regime that pacifies discontent (3) the relative autonomy of regime-allied civic organizations and (4) the orchestration of pre-existing bottom-up initiatives. By coining the concept of *recivilization*, this article contributes to understanding how emerging regimes remake civil society and mobilize voluntary social practices to maintain their rule. Through this understanding, this article highlights that authoritarianism is more than top-down ruling and suggests the novel notion of *recivilization* as a concept to capture the pro-systemic role of civil society.

Keywords: cultural politics and policy, civil society, authoritarian capitalism, state formation, Magyar Művészeti Akadémia (Hungarian Academy of Arts), Orbán regime

1 Introduction

In August 2020, in the Hungarian village of Kisgyőr, dozens of folk artists from all regions of the country were carving out the Christmas Nativity Scene of the Nation for the Hungarian Parliament. Working voluntarily, they were transforming heavy logs into cows, oxen, and sheep with the help of tractors, chainsaws, and axes. This work was taking place

in a summer camp subsidized by the Magyar Művészeti Akadémia (Hungarian Academy of Arts, hereafter HAA) and organized by the Head of its Folk Arts Section, who also serves as the village's mayor. As I realized between 2019 and 2021, during my more than a one-year-long participant observation at the HAA, its folk artist members were deeply unsatisfied when they saw the previous nativity scene prepared for the Parliament, which they characterized as too generic and Austrian-like. As the head of the camp summarized in one of their meetings: 'if our small village can have a lovely Hungarian Nativity Scene, there must be such a Nativity Scene at the House of Parliament, [because] it is certain that the nativity scene in Kisgyőr is more beautiful than that of the previous one exhibited in front of the Parliament.'[1] The woodcarvers marked the national character of the Nativity Scene not only by dressing the figures in Hungarian folk costumes and building the stable following vernacular architecture. They also carved out a sleigh to contain folk art objects made by dozens of folk-art associations of Hungary and the ethnic Hungarian minorities of the neighboring countries. The makers asked for the help of the constituency's Fidesz MP to find a place for their installation near the Parliament during the Christmas season. However, they did not ask for compensation for their year-long labor. As they proudly recalled among themselves, their volunteering shocked the bureaucrats of the regime that they otherwise endorsed.

While many people think there is no civil society in Orbán's Hungary, this article sheds light on the flourishing of regime-integrated civic organizations. To offer an alternative of the normative descriptions on the rise of the 'uncivil, dark and illiberal' and on the fall of 'genuine' civil society, the article coins the term recivilization to examine how civil society is remade in contemporary Hungary. This concept—established and expanded in the next section—joins a long history of scholarly tradition going beyond the normative approach of civil society and stressing the integral nature of state and civil society.

The case of the Christmas Nativity Scene of the Nation provides an excellent entry point for such an inquiry. The project of the Nativity Scene of the Nation was fostered by the HAA, a cultural flagship institution of the Orbán-regime, although most of the woodcarvers were not its members. The regime has ruled in Hungary since 2010 and enshrined the HAA into the constitution in 2011. Since then, the HAA, comprising ca. 300 predominantly elderly artists, owns a lavish real estate portfolio and has operated from a large annual budget (ca. 35 million EUR as of 2023),[2] spent grants, scholarships, and on the academicians' annuity equivalent to three times the minimum wage (ca. 1200 EUR as of 2023) among others.

Recivilization—the restructuring of civil society and its relationship with the state—is not specific to the HAA or the Orbán-regime's post-2010 remaking of civil society in Hungary. Instead, it is an integral part of any hegemonic shift, and the Academy's case is an illustrative instance of this process. The HAA offers an authoritative example to exam-

[1] Unless otherwise noted, all translations are by the author.

[2] Unless otherwise noted, all the conversions are by the author according to the exchange rate year and minimum wage of 2023.

ine the process of recivilization, for at least three reasons. First, because it operates in the Orbán-regime that is often described as the frontline of 'new authoritarianism.' Within this, the Academy is commonly accused of being the regime's creature to repress the freedom of the arts and artistic civil society. Second, the HAA has had its civic past: for two decades (from 1992 to 2011) it operated under the same name but as a precarious NGO predominantly based on voluntary labor (Nagy, 2023). Third, because the HAA has a paradoxical autonomy. It is formally self-governing and independent of the state apparatus, but its income is entirely derived from the governmental budget.

Authoritarian regimes are often accused of capturing the state and demolishing civil society (Magyar, 2016; Kovács & Trencsényi, 2020; Lindstaedt, 2021), and commentators often refer to the HAA as a paradigmatic case of this process (Artistic Freedom Initiative, 2022). It would be hard to classify the project of the Nativity Scene as an imperative case of the attack on civil society. Still, it can offer an entry point to examine the creative destruction of *recivilization* by asking how the state remakes civil society and how civic initiatives contribute to the cohesion of the regime.

This paper demonstrates through the case of the Orbán-regime of Hungary that authoritarian regimes are not merely destroying civil society but also remaking it to underpin and stabilize their rule. The instance of the semi-autonomous HAA, filled with countless voluntary ambitions (such as creating the Nativity Scene), offers a chance to show that authoritarian regimes' civil society is more than a puppet of the governmental ambitions.

By conceptualizing the remaking of civil society and its relationship with the state as recivilization, this article brings three contributions to the literature. The first is that civil society does not disappear in authoritarian regimes but is recivilized. As a sphere of mediation, it contributes to the regimes' deepening by knotting together the rulers and the ruled. The second emphasizes that bottom-up initiatives make new institutions meaningful and alive. For this reason, the co-optation and orchestration of pre-existing civic forms is a central element of recivilization. The third is methodological, underscoring that instead of scrutinizing the distinction between state and civil society, we should focus on their ceaseless interaction.

In the following, I first highlight the deficiency of the normative usage of civil society and locate the notion of recivilization among other concepts of civilization. Second, I introduce the Gramscian idea of civil society as part of the integral state as an angle that allows us to approach non-liberal organizations not as deviations but as parts of power struggles. Third, I also locate the HAA in the hegemonic process of the Orbán-regime of Hungary, specifically in its cultural politics and policy. Fourth, I demonstrate how ethnographic methods enabled this research and make its limitations transparent. After such theoretical and methodological preparations, I direct the reader toward the four facets of *recivilization*, (1) the establishment of clientelist funding structures penetrating all strata of cultural production (2) the pacifying management and articulation of dissent toward the central government (3) relative-autonomy of regime-bound civic organizations providing space for the (4) orchestration of bottom-up initiatives. As a result of these facets, we can go beyond the reductive juxtaposition of the captured state and critical civic society and shed light on Hungary's state-led recivilization of society.

2 Civil society, state, and culture in and out of the Orbán-regime

2.1 Against the normative use of civil society[3]

This article deploys a notion of civil society that stresses its unity with the state and goes against its widespread normative usage. Although the non-normative analysis of civil society has almost a century-long tradition, dating back to the writings of Antonio Gramsci in the 1920s, such an approach should be reiterated. Its reinforcement is crucial since the prevailing scholarly and public understanding of civil society approaches it as autonomous from the state and market and as the carrier of liberal norms. Such an approach would exclude the HAA and its mediation between the regime and society from the research scope.

Normative uses often equate civil society with values such as independence, democracy, and courage and approach it as an autonomous sphere of liberal democracies limiting state power. However, these applications rarely reflect civil society's material constraints and historicity, such as the fact that 'the very existence of civil society depended on support from the state' (Kocka, 2011, p. 100). A historical-materialist approach would show that civil society 'is a concept from the "core" which claims universality, despite its Western provenance' (Kocka, 2011, p. 103). In East-Central Europe, this universalizing, normative meaning emerged with the post-socialist transition and entailed 'small intellectual circles' projection of 'the "ideal" of Western-type democracy on society' (Gagyi & Ivancheva, 2019, pp. 63–64). A normative notion would overlook non-Western histories of civil society, where its emergence 'went hand in hand with a quest for national identity' (Kocka, 2011, p. 106) and where authoritarian regimes often penetrated social relations through voluntary associations (Kerepeszki, 2016; Taylor, 2021).

The challenge of the Western model of civil society, accompanied by the deconstruction of its association with liberal values, has a tradition in several disciplines, such as anthropology (Hann & Dunn, 1996), social history (Kocka, 2004; 2011), and political science (Kopecky & Mudde, 2003). Despite this fertile literature, dominant academic and public discourses describe civic organizations of authoritarian orders as mere executors of the dominant political-economic power bloc's will and label them as 'the dark side of civil society' and 'illiberal civil society organizations' (Ekiert, 2019). Even the literature that recognizes and inquires about the existence of these regime-allied civic organizations often uses derogative terms to define them, such as Molnár's labelling them as part of an 'uncivil' society in contrast with the 'genuine' civil society (Molnár, 2016; 2020).

[3] The most renowned example of unlearning the normative notion of civilization is Elias's notion of the civilizing process (Goudsblom & Mennell, 1998). Like this term, recivilizing is also historical and processual but has a substantially different focus. While Elias' civilization process on the changes of manners and habits through long-historical shifts, my focus is on the remaking of civil society. We both center on different scales of social integration and bring evidence from separate time and space constellations (Elias' from medieval and early modern Western Europe, mine from contemporary Eastern Europe). As a result, the two concepts co-exist rather than interfere with each other.

Instead of normative stances, this article joins Mikuš' (2018) distinction between 'liberal civil society' and 'wider civil society' (the former as a section of the latter) and shifts the focus on the 'regime-aligned civil society.'

Just as its normative approach perceived civil society 'as a process of civilizing' (Kocka, 2011, p. 98), this article also endorsed the processual approach, but without optimistic overtones. Recivilizing is a process, but not a unilinear and developmentalist one. Instead, it is an integral part of power relations, lined with ruptures and countermovement. By opposing labels such as 'uncivil,' this paper hypothesizes that the non-normatively understood civil society is more than a proxy of the dominant class. It has a relative autonomy which is not equal to the flourishing of liberal civil society. Instead, this semi-autonomous status can stabilize authoritarian regimes, just as liberal democracies. This stabilization operates by maintaining a densely woven interface between state and society that will be defined as part of the Gramscian integral state.

2.2 Integral state: The alternative of the state–civil society distinction

Civil society is as inseparable from the state as the voluntary woodwork of the Nativity Scene, and the HAA's financial and administrative support for the project are bound together. To lay the foundation for understanding the civil society of authoritarian regimes, we need a conceptual framework for the relation between state and civil society. The concept of the integral state introduced below offers a frame that enables us to surpass the state-civil society binary and capture how civil society is part of power struggles (Gagyi et al., 2020).

By building on the previous section's insight on civil society's material dependencies, this paper mobilizes Gramsci's concept of civil society to capture this entangled relation. Gramsci conceptualized this state-civil society relation with the integral state that consists not only of the central government but also the confluence of 'political society + civil society' (Gramsci, 1971, p. 208). According to the Italian thinker, civil society is a state-related social sphere where consent is manufactured and social reproduction takes place.

A Gramscian analysis of state and civil society embraces but also goes beyond the relational approach to the state (Thelen et al., 2017) and the analysis of the polyphonic interaction of state and civil society actors in an authoritarian context (Gerő et al., 2023). This article joins these analyses but deploys an apparatus to transcend the state and civil society dichotomy. The analytical tool of the integral state stresses that the 'State should not be only understood as the apparatus of government but also the "private" apparatus of "hegemony" or civil society' (Gramsci, 1971, p. 261; Jessop, 1990). Still, political and civil society are not analogous: they have a particular division of labor within the integral state. The former uses predominantly coercive means, while the latter principally deploys consensual ones.

We can focus on how this integration operates by considering the integration of state and civil society not as a distortion produced by authoritarian regimes but as a general characteristic of the capitalist state. This approach—originating from Hegel (Lewis, 2004), receiving a critical angle from Marx (1970), and developed by Gramsci—can assist us in looking 'beyond the monolithic notion of the State' (Crehan, 2022, p. 511) and debunk

the simplification of the HAA as the genuine handmaiden of the political class. The notion of the integral state will be also fundamental since it would be challenging to categorize the HAA as an ideal type of civil or state entity.

Gramsci did not assume an unproblematic, unidirectional relationship between the state and civil society. Instead of approaching the latter as the proxy of the former, he perceived them as a 'knot of tangled power relations' (Crehan, 2002, p. 103). Following Gramsci, I approach the integral state as 'the entire complex of practical and theoretical activities with which the ruling class not only justifies and maintains its dominance but manages to win the active consent of those over whom it rules' (Gramsci, 1971, p. 244). This quotation highlights the heterogeneities and potential conflicts within the integral state and helps locate cultural production in it as a toolkit to manufacture consent.

The notion of the integral state also reveals civil society's profound role in stabilizing political-economic power relations. As Gramsci argues, 'the superstructures of civil society are like the trench-systems of modern warfare' (Gramsci, 1971, p. 235) in which the narrowly defined state 'was only an outer ditch, behind which there stood a powerful system of fortresses and earthworks' (Gramsci, 1971, p. 238). Such an approach highlights why civil society is a central element of any hegemonic process and shows how voluntary activities are integrated into hegemonic projects. The concept of integral state also offers a powerful critique of theories of state capture and mafia state (Magyar, 2016). It demonstrates that the state is not purely a political-economic entity that can be conquered by political means in a top-down manner. A hegemonic process is instead 'not only, or primarily coercion "from above" but includes a certain degree of "consent" from "below"' (Streinzer & Tosic, 2022, p. 388). A Gramscian perspective can underscore how hegemonic processes of authoritarian states rely on pre-existing, voluntary forms of civic life and how they orchestrate them into their rule with a combination of consent and hammers. The escape from the juxtaposition of state and civil society offers space to analyze how different factions of civil society are embedded into state projects and offers an angle to inquire about civil society's mediating role in hegemonic processes. By integrating these takeaways, recivilization will be revealing not only regarding civil society. It will also shed light on the state-civil society nexus and the broader process of state-formation.

2.3 Culture and state formation in the Orbán regime

In the summer of 2021, the prime minister of Hungary, Viktor Orbán delivered a mourning speech at the funeral of the HAA's honorary president, Marcell Jankovics, who made his name as an animated film director and a vital figure in the right-wing cultural circles. He addressed the mourners by reflecting on the deceased's role in their hegemonic project:

> When our time came, I was puzzled for many years. I waited for him to swing his sword. Widely, strongly, deeply. Cut them in half, or as his animation heroes, shred them. […] As Prime Minister, I gave him iron, smelter, nitrate, lead, and blacksmiths. But no and no. I did not hear the cracking of bones, the rupture of tendons, or the noise of falling bodies, nor saw heads falling into a basket […]. It took me years to understand that I was waiting in vain. […] His mission was different from my own. His mission was to show us why we were fighting and […] what we need to protect. (Orbán, 2021)

These lines can open a threefold path: conceptualizing the post-2010 cultural politics and policy of Hungary, demonstrating HAA's position it, and recapping culture's role in state formation.

Regarding cultural production, Orbán's lines quoted above accurately capture that culture is not an external but an integral part of the hegemonic struggle. First, the general cultural politics and policy of the Orbán-regime have been recently examined by several scholars (Kristóf, 2017; Barna et al., 2018; Bonet & Zamorano, 2020; Nagy & Szarvas, 2021). This article joins the thread in the literature that emphasizes how the regime's cultural politics should be studied as an integral part of its comprehensive restructuring of the internal and external dependencies from financial policy (Karas, 2022), to housing (Gagyi et al., 2021), from labor-relations (Meszmann & Fedyuk, 2020) to its integration into global value chains (Szabó & Jelinek, 2023). Altogether this shift can be described as a rise of state capitalism in which authoritarian measures serve capital accumulation and national cultural apparatuses of both elite and popular culture—such as the HAA or the subsidy of national pop music—are prioritized. This process occurs because these cultural forms are pillars, supporting the 'the state's role as promoter, supervisor and owner of capital' (Alami & Dixon, 2021).

Regarding the HAA's position in this process, we have to debunk Orbán's lines that exclusively frame the job of the regime's allied intellectuals as producers of artworks and ideas. This approach would obscure that allied intellectuals are not just outlining the goals of the power struggles, but they are fighting for them on a daily basis. It would also hide that they play a vital role in the clientelist allocation of material resources. In the regime's professional culture, the HAA is a central but not the only or an all-dominating institution. Still, it has four characteristics distinguishing it from other institutions: There are many other cultural institutions in the regime that employ cadres, allocate grants or even pay annuities, no other does all of these on a comparable scale and with such consistency. The HAA is one of the few cultural flagship institutions the regime did not radically overhaul over the last decade. Since the Academy's members cover all the branches of elite culture, the HAA can penetrate more than a single sub-field. Lastly, because of its formal self-governance, the HAA has abundant committees and sections where members can meet, debate, and express their grievances.

Regarding culture's role in state formation, Orbán's lines on the division of labor between artists and politicians echo Gramsci's distinction between the coercive state apparatuses and consent-making civil society. This division—of which the HAA-led recivilization of the Hungarian cultural civil society is an obvious case—is more than a Hungarian specificity. Recivilized cultural production underpins the long-term reproduction of other authoritarian regimes (Mikuš, 2018), and broader capitalist structures also accommodate civil society as a sphere that contributes to the reproduction of human lives, communities, and hegemonic order.

The concept of recivilization can be especially productive regarding the field of cultural production. Without expanding their history, it is essential to stress the entangled nature of the ideas of culture and civilization (see Williams, 1976). The notion of recivilization can analytically unfold the underlying intention of any cultural politics: the civilization of its subjects. In this sense, the contemporary conservative or liberal processes of civilization and recivilization are not innocent. They are just as power relations saturated as the colonial civilizing processes of the 19th century.

3 Methodology

This ethnographic study methodologically tackles the lack of academic knowledge on the operation of contemporary authoritarian state apparatuses. Instead of reproducing the traditional division of anthropology (studying the vulnerable) and sociology and political economy (examining elites), this project turns the toolkit of ethnography toward the dominant state apparatus. It aims to fill the gap between anthropologies focusing on street-level bureaucracies and local states (Fassin, 2015; Kovai, 2017), ethnographies of nationalism and the far-right (Feischmidt & Pulay, 2017; Pasieka, 2022), and the rarely ethnographic scholarship on the political-economy authoritarian states (Yurchenko, 2017; Éber et al., 2018).

To implement this objective, the analysis, conducted as part of a PhD project, has a threefold research design. Its first and most central element was a one-and-a-half-year-long ethnography during which time the author was employed as an intern at the HAA's central secretariat and publishing house. The participant observation was conducted by playing with open cards: all the affected actors at the Academy were aware of the ethnographer's background and objective. It resulted in hundreds of fieldnotes, documenting the Academy's informal and bureaucratic operations, public and internal events. Being present as an intern limited the range of events the author could attend but had the advantage that the actors often considered the researcher's presence incidental; therefore, it did not change the agenda and their attitudes. The second applied research method was the interviewing, conducted with key figures, less-known powerbrokers and administrators of the institution. Compared to the participant observation's bottom-up perspective, this resulted in expert interviewing situations and offered the chance to ask direct questions. However, it had the drawback that some actors—having stakes in the internal politics of the Academy—were less willing to speak sincerely and expansively.[4] The third deployed methodology was archival research and policy analysis, essential sources to map the HAA's internal struggles and the policy aspects of recivilization. Through this element, the author processed two thousand previously never-researched documents of the Academy's NGO past, its publications, and the minutes of its post-2011 general assemblies.

In interpreting the empirical materials, this study methodologically mobilizes a variety of anthropological traditions: political anthropology for its passion for understanding how cross-cutting ties among social actors stabilize political regimes (Thelen et al., 2018, p. 6), institutional ethnography for its interest in capturing power relations within a single organization (Burawoy, 1979), the current of anthropology at home for its sensitivity toward conducting fieldwork in a well-known place (Messerschmidt, 1981) and most importantly, global ethnography and the extended case method for their urge to place local social relations into a global historical context (Gille & Riain, 2002; Burawoy, 2009). These traditions can ally to interpret the HAA as an institution that is more than cultural but political and to reflect on the author's local embeddedness by also revealing the global aspects of recivilization.

[4] I anonymized all my interlocutors to protect them unless they were elected leaders during the research period.

4 The first facet of recivilization: The HAA's making of a clientelist institution and the reintegration of cultural producers

> The Hungarian Academy of Arts is the supreme organization of 30,000 Hungarian artists.
> (György Fekete, the late President of the HAA, cf. HAA, 2012, p. 42)

As this line highlights, the HAA aims to be the Academy of all Hungarian artists, but it does not admit more than three hundred of them at a time. To control and coopt the 99 per cent, the HAA has a meritocratic ideology of uniting the most outstanding artists, but this alone would not be enough. To ally the 1 per cent and the 99 per cent materially, the HAA also installed clientelist funding structures. It is the most known facet of the recivilizing process, and its critics often reduce it entirely to this. In contrast with its everyday use, in this article, clientelism is not a derogatory but an analytical category. It is not a trademark of traditional societies or belated modernization since clientelism (or patron–client relations) is also present in contemporary, complex societies (Wolf, 2001). Following the concept's extensive literature, this article underlines that clientelism is a form of social integration, and its key features are reciprocity, hierarchy, and repetitive character (Semenova, 2018).

The following section considers the HAA's clientelist operation as only one, albeit important, part of its attempt to evolve into the supreme organization of all Hungarian artists. It examines how the HAA networks and subsidizes renowned and rank-and-file artists just as artists' associations to create a clientelist structure of cultural producers, which is more than a centrally controlled instrument of the regime. It also shows that this clientelism is not a pre-written masterplan but the product of an institutional arena in which members' and bureaucrats' distinct and often disharmonious intentions clash and materialize.

Two core factors shaped the clientelist facet of recivilization in post-socialist Hungary: the disintegration of the artists' unions of the socialist times and the precarization of cultural production. In the state-socialist regime, artists' unions integrated all the professional cultural producers by providing them welfare benefits (such as a pension, holiday vouchers, and cheap raw materials) and a limited public sphere for socialization and advocacy. With their disassembly, going hand in hand with the collapse of the culturalist state of socialism, cultural producers' organizational integration and the welfare allowance decreased and gave way to a precarization of labor conditions (Nagy & Szarvas, 2021). Precarious conditions and the lack of powerful organizations made the HAA's recivilizing process easier.

The HAA's material resources are not only tools to craft the financial forms of clientelism. These also provide solid material conditions for its members and employees to organize the reintegration and recivilization of cultural producers into the regime's hegemonic project. As one of them formulated it in an informal public interview: 'I was just discussing with fellow academicians that hell knows, who if not us, have the duty to care for the nation when we go to a small village, to communities where talent should be nurtured' (Kiss, 2023). Below, two complementary aspects of the clientelist recivilization will be shown: the reintegration of rank-and-file and the recognized cultural producers.

4.1 Reintegrating the rank-and-file artists

The ambition of making an institution that coopts all the artists of the country is based on financial transfers but also requires a permanent connection with the masses of cultural producers. Therefore—besides its transfers toward the thin elite of cultural producers, analyzed in the next section—the HAA has an ambition to restructure the entire production of elite culture, which they estimate to comprise about 30,000 people.

This idea was prominently featured at one of the HAA's first general assemblies as a constitutionally enshrined organization, when one of its members asked:

> Which organizations [...] should be part of the HAA or be in its area of interest, both because they need the Academy's help and belong to it? There are many kinds of arts organizations [...] in Hungary [...] established in the socialist period, creating many values, so it is not necessarily inevitable that they all go to waste because of government decisions and the economic situation. (HAA, 2012, p. 37)

The affluent HAA rose after the global economic crisis of 2008 in a highly precarious art scene. As a result, after its first year of operation, the president could report that approximately forty art associations' leaders visited him, many to gain financial support (HAA, 2012b, pp. 8–9). In 2023, the HAA redistributes ca. 500,000 EUR directly among artistic civic organizations and double that amount on open calls. The neediness of the scene is made clear by the fact that in 2022, ca. six hundred organizations applied for the open call. Over two hundred got it, but none received more than ca. 2,500 EUR, which shows the all-embracing nature of the Academy. Besides these schemes, the HAA allocates many specific subsidies for rank-and-file cultural producers. Therefore, the total amount is even higher. Besides these grants for organizations, for 2022, the Academy initiated 2000 bank transfers monthly to individual cultural producers, as its general secretary proudly emphasized in a research interview. As he underscored, these did not exist before the HAA's enshrinement in the constitution of Hungary (Kucsera, 2022). The bulk of this number consists of modest artists' pensions (ca. EUR 315—80 per cent of the minimum wage), paid to more than 1000 people.

The clientelist nature of the HAA goes beyond the financial transfers, keeping art associations and elderly artists alive. While the number of academicians is limited, the HAA integrates rank-and-file artists through its non-academician membership (NAM). Besides extending the Academy's outreach and pacifying these cultural producers by giving them some insight and influence into its affairs, NAM also serves as a pool of future members. As the general secretary of the Academy claimed in a research interview: 'I always say that we should, as far as possible, choose among those who have chosen us, i.e., those who have applied for NAM' (Kucsera, 2022).

Clientelism toward the rank-and-file operates by endowing the civil society of the art scene, contributing to the livelihood of elderly artists, and giving some voice and recognition to them. This clientelist reintegration is much more than demolishing cultural producers' civil society. Numerous rank-and-file cultural producers also profit from this relation. Thus, it can be conceptualized as a double-edged protection (Tilly, 1985). In this, the regime forges both the threatening conditions and the protection against them in a way that mixes clientelism with consensual elements.

4.2 Reintegrating the recognized artists

After its rapid expansion around 2011, the HAA became the target of numerous demonstrations and boycotts. These protests involved cultural producers allied with the regime of cultural production and early-career ones disenchanted regarding their career prospects (Nagy & Szarvas, 2021). To recivilize the art scene in this context, the HAA also had to focus on depoliticizing critical voices. This was even more important since concerns that the Academy was nothing more than a vehicle of the regime mushroomed even within it. As a result of the external attacks and internal tensions, after 2011, several recognized figures left the HAA. One of the author's interlocutors recalled the most embarrassing memory of this period as a prizewinner of the Academy described themself as 'a cock on the dungheap of politicized art' in their speech.

To co-opt the elite of cultural producers, the HAA deployed multiple clientelist techniques. Its most self-evident form is the academicians' robust annuity. It contributed not only to the enrichment of the regime's true believers but also made HAA-membership attractive. As an interviewee summarized: 'When we started to get a monthly allowance, new people, scavengers showed up to join. In many cases, they had very vulnerable social circumstances' (Anonymous HAA member, 2021). In 2014, the HAA also initiated the Artist of the Nation *(nemzet művésze)* award as the highest state order for artists. It also came with more financial benefits than the pre-existing ones: the 70 awardees receive a lavish, ca. 1700 EUR (more than four times the minimum wage) annuity every month. This sumptuous annuity made the award attractive to artists who otherwise were highly critical of the HAA or had withdrawn their membership earlier, therefore, it is an effective instrument of coopting the elite. As the Artist of the Nation award tackles the senior figures of the artistic elites, the HAA also established a platform for coopting emerging artists into its clientelist recivilization. Its Scholarship Scheme, providing a three-year-long grant for 100 early-career artists each year, is financially just as outstanding as the Award.

As a result, we can see a twofold clientelism in the HAA's recivilizing project. On the one hand, it aims to penetrate and re-organize the masses of cultural producers, and on the other hand, it appeals to the emerging and established elites of culture. However, clientelism is more profound than merely buying out precarious cultural producers. It also interacts with three other aspects of recivilization.

4.3 The second facet of recivilization: The HAA as a mediator of hegemony-constructive-criticism

Mediation between the state and people is a core function of civil society. This section examines the dynamics of the HAA's remaking—recivilization—or this mediating role. Civic institutions of authoritarian regimes are commonly perceived as the top-down mediators of governmental will. Their bottom-up mediation of grassroots discontent toward the state apparatus is a more concealed but just as important aspect of the recivilization. To capture the role of conflict management in civil society's remaking, this section first reviews the HAA actors' statements about their mediating function. Then, it examines the shift in the Academy's conflict management from battleground to informalization by comparing two of its internal debates a decade apart.

4.4 The HAA as a proud mediator: Its decision makers on their mediation

The bureaucratic apparatus of the HAA is proud of its active mediation between the state and cultural producers. As its Secretary General expressed in a radio broadcast: 'The HAA is […] an intermediary body, mediating back and forth between the civil society and the government. It integrates […] the opinions and ideas collected by the Academy into the governmental will and […] transmits […] that […] outwards' (Kucsera, 2021). This mediating function is not just an aspiration of the Academy's leadership to validate its material benefits but also pervades its operation. Still, those concerned about the state of civil society under authoritarianism rarely consider this aspect. It could stay in the shadows because the mediation between citizens and the state is also a core element of the normative, liberal notion of civil society, from which institutions of authoritarian regimes are seemingly far.

The meditation of criticism is not equal to anti-regime stances. As the Academy's chief officers formulated during our interview: 'Politics always looks at the HAA as its most understanding critic' (Anonymous HAA Officer, 2019). This constructive criticism is more than just a phenomenon tolerated by the state apparatus. Instead, it is a productive feature of the regime that shows how the HAA has a mediating and correcting function. Therefore, recivilized conflict management is not only about concealing criticism from the public but also about stabilizing the regime by giving room for its loyal cultural producers to criticize some of its aspects. Institutions such as the HAA have a bidirectional mediating function in this process. Besides mediating governmental ambitions, they also mediate grievances toward the ruling political bloc to reinforce it.

It would be a mistake to describe the members of the HAA as the unambiguous executors of governmental will, even if the opposition media and artistic factions describe them in this manner. While most sympathize with the Orbán-regime, their alliance with the regime should be constantly reproduced. The HAA also provides platforms where its members can express their discontent. Besides giving space for dissent, the HAA occasionally mediated these grievances toward the government. The following comparison focuses on two events of this *hegemony-constructive criticism* reinforcing alliances between cultural producers and the regime.

4.5 The early mediation of the HAA: Public battlefields

The initial assemblies of the HAA—after its enshrinement in the constitution—were battlefields. These events were frequently interrupted by demonstrators protesting the state-led rise of the Academy. Still, the open-to-the-public assemblies were also the arenas where members mediated their demands to the government. In this section, I analyze these events of 2011–2012 by relying on their official minutes to show the early phase of the Academy's mediation taking place in the public sphere.

The ambition of mediating between cultural producers and the government penetrated the Academy's early general assemblies. Several key figures of the HAA stressed their purpose and vocation to mediate toward a regime that—according to them—made their voices finally heard. The dance choreographer, Ferenc Novák, asked for a 'militant

academy that draws the attention of the cultural administration to certain issues' (HAA, 2012, pp. 25–26). Along his lines, the art historian Katalin Keserü stated that 'It is an essential task of the Academy to sooner or later prevent the wrong decisions and actions that may be taken by the cultural, educational, and other parts of the government' (HAA, 2012, p. 36) by emphasizing the role of intellectuals as the moral standard of the society. The architect, István Dévényi, outlined a more realistic mission statement. He stressed that the Academy might cooperate with state power instead of controlling. He stated that 'artists have a strong demand to impact policymakers and have mutual influence. We know how difficult the country's situation is, and it is not an easy task. However, there is a great need for the Academy to shape Hungary's future together with politicians' (HAA, 2012, pp. 26–27). The film director, István Dárday, most realistically embraced the Academy's subordination to political-economic interests. He said: 'We have to find the dialogue with which the HAA does not act as an obstacle' (HAA, 2012, pp. 39–40).

All the participants were concerned about how the Academy could best support the emerging regime and what forms of critique could contribute to its desired rise. They all agreed that their role in the process is about internalizing criticism. At this early stage, the HAA mediated the dissent and grievance of its members about some large-scale issues, such as the showcase cultural development of the Museum Quarter, the education system, and the social impact of government austerity politics (HAA, 2012). Even if members formulated harsh criticism in the open-to-the-public general assemblies, the HAA transmitted these behind the walls.

4.6 The late mediation of the HAA: institutionalized informality

In contrast with the battlefield-like general assemblies of 2011–2012, these events were emptied by 2019–2021, the time of the research's ethnographic fieldwork. This transformation resulted from careful policies to reduce the publicity of internal conflicts. As a chief officer of the HAA summarized in a research interview: 'If the institutional structure works well, debate in the general assembly is very rare' (Anonymous HAA Officer, 2019). Senior decision-makers of the HAA also endorsed this approach publicly. 'If any question arises among the heads of the [cultural] institutions, we should settle them by dialogue, not by press statements' (Vági, 2022). These lines of a press interview encapsulate the Academy's conflict management strategies.

Over the decade between 2011 and 2021, the HAA gradually institutionalized and informalized criticisms. Around 2011, academicians aired their dissent in general assemblies, and even in the press; a decade later, it became channeled into its closed-to-the-public section meetings and interpersonal relations. This emptying of general assemblies is a deliberate change to conceal criticism from the public. However, this process did not terminate the mediation of criticism. As a result, the HAA continued to serve as a platform for its members to articulate concerns with government politics and policies. During this period, criticism of the regime appeared at the HAA's public events. The mediation of dissent was still present but occurred behind the scenes. Moreover, in contrast with the early times when critiques in the general assemblies tackled critical government politics, around 2020, these revolved around minor, apolitical issues.

The novel regime of conflict management will be unfolded through an event the author attended during the participant observation. The event was the closed-to-the-public monthly meeting of a section of the HAA–uniting academicians of the same artistic discipline. The meeting was loud, and the Section's members were angry because the National Library aimed to merge the special collection of their discipline with another one. An academician raised the issue in the meeting and found understanding among their peers, who agreed that this merger devalued their discipline. The merger of the two special collections carried the risk of the academicians' open politicization. A few weeks earlier, the liberal press published the case in a politicized framework as evidence of the incompetence and barbarism of the new, government-appointed head of the National Library. However, within the HAA, the case did not have time to get politicized. By the end of the session, the Academy's General Secretary—texting during the entire meeting—announced that they had already taken measures in this case. He did not even publicly announce his action; he just whispered it to the member who had raised the issue.

This event shows three aspects of the dissent's management. Firstly, it takes place informally. Without knowing the messages' content and addressees, it is clear that the action did not occur through the HAA's bureaucratic structures. This informality is crucial in managing the hegemonic process, even in an institution established by the regime. Informality and the concealed character of decision-making are entangled. The conflict management of the hegemonic process does not occur in the public sphere but within the informal ties of the bureaucratic structures. Discontent is pacified and privatized since it is articulated in the institutional structure and through informal ties within the institution.

Overall, bottom-up mediation is a central element of recivilization. Although the HAA's key actors proclaim the feature of mediation, external opinion leaders barely recognize it. As recivilization is a dynamic process, the mediation of hegemony-constructive-criticism developed rapidly during the first ten years of the HAA as a state body. The early public and political mediation of dissent evolved into a technocratic, institutionalized, and informal mediation. The mediation is technocratic because it only addresses the regime's partial, technical aspects. The mediation is institutionalized but concealed because the HAA provides a platform for the artists involved in its clientelist structures to express their grievances in an organized but not public framework. Still, the mediation is informal because the articulation of dissent toward governmental actors happens informally. As a result, the HAA not only restructures the civil society of cultural production but also serves as a civic organization that mediates the discontent of the chosen ones.

5 The third facet of recivilization: Right-wing civil society's paradoxical autonomy

It is puzzling to argue that authoritarian regimes' allied civil society can have a relative autonomy. This section will demonstrate this pattern and argue that this model also has a stabilizing function. For this purpose, the following examines the HAA's reaction to the largest cultural scandal of the early 2020s in Hungary. In 2020, the Orbán regime enforced a rapid, politically motivated takeover of the University of Theatre and Film Arts (SZFE).

Its objective was to redesign the aesthetic and political profile of the programs. The case was in the headlines of the local and international press for months. While students and their allies occupied the University and organized sit-ins and large protests, the HAA remained silent. This section utilizes the SZFE case to trace back the HAA aims to establish its autonomy from the regime. It also sheds light on how this paradoxically enhances the recivilizing process.

The Academy's silence was unexpected for several reasons. The takeover of the SZFE—previously run by people who were not associated with the regime—was nothing but a new frontier in the hegemonic struggles that the HAA was already fighting. Key figures of the SZFE's new, government-imposed leadership were also HAA members. The chairman of the SZFE's new board of trustees, Attila Vidnyánszky, has been an HAA member for more than 15 years, while another board member and future rector, Zoltán Rátóti also served as the head of the HAA's Section of Theater and Film. While they were fighting a day-to-day struggle with the full support of the government and its media, the HAA remained silent.

The HAA as an institution remained silent in the struggles around the SZFE, but its rank-and-file members militantly agitated against the protesting students. However, the leaders of the Academy were unhappy with the University's capture. They were not criticizing the University's new ideological, political, and aesthetic regime but were deeply concerned about the takeover method. The leadership was provoked by the fact that the HAA was neither asked nor involved in the so-called reform of the University. This oversight frustrated leaders of the HAA because of their self-image as the leading force in the Hungarian cultural field. Their self-image relied on the law stating that 'the opinion of the HAA shall be sought during the preparation of legislation, governmental programs or measures affecting Hungarian artistic life' (HAA Law, 2011). Due to their omission, one of the HAA's leaders said in an informal conversation, caught during participant observation: 'Since the HAA was not asked, I will now try to keep it far from the conflict.' To strengthen this unaligned, outsider position, he even rejected the request of the University's new board—40 per cent of which consisted of HAA members—to hold a meeting at the HAA headquarters.

The HAA leaders also distanced themselves from the takeover because they considered it unprofessional and inefficient. Their critique was technocratic: it did not touch the objectives of the takeover, just blamed the SZFE's new leaders for not applying the mediated and silent toolkit of recivilizing that the HAA developed through the years. The HAA's discontent with the techniques used and their distancing from the conflict were interrelated. These stem from the SZFE's new board's neglect of the HAA and its know-how on the proper way of fighting cultural wars quietly.

In the internal debates about the case of the SZFE, the HAA's dissent management strategies started to become autonomous. The Academy's demonstration of its outstanding know-how dominated over engaging in the new frontier of the hegemonic struggle. In this case, a recivilizing technique no longer served the de-escalation of the current wave of discontent. Instead, it fostered the stabilization of the Academy's autonomy, even by staying neutral in the actual frontier of the culture war. As a result, this case has also highlighted that a certain degree of autonomy is an integral part of the process of recivilization. However, this limited autonomy is far from anti-systemic political actions.

6 The fourth facet of recivilization: Orchestrating right-wing cultural production in a recivilized society

It is common to think about authoritarian regimes' new institutions as the vanguards of a new order. But the culture of the Orbán-regime did not have to be invented. Just as Poulantzas (1978, p. 31) states, 'the ideological state apparatuses do not create the dominant ideology [...] they rather elaborate and systematize it'; the HAA does not mastermind a new ideology. Instead, the Academy could build on a burgeoning realm of right-wing cultural associations ranging from folk art associations to circles of painters and writers. If we go beyond the normative notion of civil society, we can recognize these 'civic organizations beyond the "Open Society" battle' (Gagyi et al., 2020, p. 1). Still, institutions like the HAA have a pioneering role in orchestrating and upscaling the preexisting initiatives.

By returning to the case of the Nativity Scene of the Nation: an academician initiated it, most of the people involved were not even HAA members, and the Academy took up the cause. Its infrastructure also precedes the HAA and builds on pre-existing circles of folk artists since the folk-art camp where the kings, shepherds, and animals were carved runs from the early 1990s. Furthermore, the woodcarving HAA-member mayor of Kisgyőr had coordinated a similar Nativity Scene project eight years earlier; only then it had been installed in his village of 1,500 people. By 2022, he could scale up the project to place the next version in front of the Hungarian Parliament. This also shows a synergy between the individual ambition of the mayor to expand his project and of the Academy to display representative artworks. In this sense the HAA served as a vehicle of an individual initiative, but at the same time such projects vitalize the Academy. Not only did the project's idea and the infrastructure go beyond the HAA, but also its financial aspects. In 2022, the Academy merely subsidized it with ca. EUR 2,300 EUR. As a result, the project could not have been realized without the village's resources, the participants' voluntary labor, not to mention the sixty-four Hungarian folk-art associations that contributed to its creation.

The role of the HAA in this project is twofold, and it demonstrates the thesis of orchestration instead of creation. Its Section of Folk Art provides an institutional framework authorized to oversee large-scale national artistic projects through which actors can legitimize their endeavors. Besides this, the Academy's formal and informal political embeddedness helps to find political support for the project. But not even political support of the project was channeled by the Academy since its initiator, the woodcarving mayor of Kisgyőr, is a close political ally of the constituency MP, who is also an influential state secretary of the regime.

The Nativity Scene of the Nation is far from the only case in which the HAA relies on voluntary labor. Four years earlier, in 2018, the HAA was launching its first, large-scale folk art saloon exhibition, but selected the curatorial team with a great delay, only 3–4 months before the opening of the show. In this constellation—as one of them recalled in a quasi-ethnographic recollection (Fülemile, 2019) —the curators had no alternative but to rely on the pre-existing networks of folk art in their selection of the 3,500 exhibited pieces.

> The project could not have been successful without a network, based on enthusiastic volunteering that is common in Federation of Folk Art Associations and in the folk craft movement more broadly [...] Without its effective contribution [...] the collection of the pieces would

> have been impossible. Its regional chapters collected the material from the Hungarian and some cross-border areas in seven centers. […] There the curatorial team examined, juried and selected them. (Fülemile, 2019, pp. 617–621)

This quotation demonstrates that although the folk-art saloon drew record visitor numbers, the HAA could not have realized it without mobilizing an extensive, pre-existing civic network. Still, this was a mutually profitable cooperation. The HAA benefited from the social capital of folk-art associations that made it able to realize the saloon exhibition. At the same time, the exhibiting folk artists, among whom a good proportion are from the circles of the Federation of Folk Art Associations, could display their works in a more prominent space than ever before.

The examples of the wood-carved nativity scene and the bottom-up rescued folk art saloon are just two of the countless cases in which the HAA orchestrates and enhances pre-existing forms of civil society. With the orchestrating facet, the regime gains voluntary resources and deepens its rule, while its committed civil society enjoys relative autonomy. This autonomy allows them to come up with and realize their ideas in the reshaped institutional arena.

7 Conclusions. 'Recivilizing': A tool to understand the dynamics of state–civil society nexus

This study challenged the notion that civil society in authoritarian regimes is destroyed by bringing ethnographic evidence from Orbán's Hungary, commonly described as a frontier of authoritarianism. By doing so, it joined an extensive scholarly tradition stressing the integral nature of state and civil society under hegemonic regimes. The article contributed to this body of literature by coining the term *recivilization* to stress that the integrity of state and civil society is not static and to capture the dynamic remaking of their relations under a new hegemonic regime.

Recivilization is more than the weakening and destruction of previously dominant forms of civil society and state-civil society relations. As it was accentuated, this process is a creative destruction. Recivilization is defined as a toolkit through which regimes remake civil society to underpin their rule. Such a term can be central in capturing how consent is manufactured in the rising authoritarian regimes. The analysis of this recivilization mobilized three theoretical cornerstones. The deconstruction of the normative notion of civil society that was allowed to engage with an organization otherwise labeled as 'uncivil.' The concept of the integral state highlighted that recivilization is part of state formation. Lastly, the conceptualization of the regime's hegemony underscored cultural politics and production's role in this process.

By relying on these theoretical pillars, the article distinguished four fundamental facets of recivilization: (1) the rise of clientelist subsidy structures that integrate both the elite and the rank-and-file of cultural producers into the emerging hegemonic process, (2) the conflict management that instead of repressing, channels criticism into the regime in a constructive manner (3) the limited autonomy of the regime-allied civic organizations that is not an error, but a feature of the rule contributing to its deepening and (4) the orchestra-

tion of pre-existing forms of right-wing civic society that conveys bottom-up voluntary volition into the regime. By approaching the civil society of authoritarian regimes through such facets, the article contributed to its extensive literature by stressing that authoritarian regimes do not rule merely by capturing the state but orchestrate pre-existing civic ambitions and initiatives that vitalize the regimes' institutions. As a result, by coining the notion of recivilization, the article not only brought further evidence about the intertwined nature of state and civil society but also demonstrated the dynamics of its rapid remaking.

Acknowledgements

I presented draft versions of this paper on several occasions, such as at the Civil Society and democratic backsliding conference (University of Aberdeen), the colloquium of the Central European University's Department of Sociology and Social Anthropology, and the Social Dynamics in the post-Covid Age Conference (Centre for Social Sciences, Budapest). I am grateful for all the suggestions received at these events. Special thanks go to Alexandra Kowalski, Agnieszka Pasieka, Márton Szarvas, and Violetta Zentai, who provided substantial comments on the manuscript just as the two anonymous reviewers. Besides them, the article would not be the same without the inspiring comradery collective of the Helyzet Working Group. The late Robin Bellers spent much time during summer to improve the quality of the text. I keep his memory.

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Whose integration? The changing position of the local elite in maintaining social order in a peripheral small town

Intersections. EEJSP
9(4): 101–122.
https://doi.org/10.17356/ieejsp.v9i4.1174
https://intersections.tk.hu

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Abstract

Lingering spatial disparities within the EU have often been explained by macro-level structural trends. However, studies have also spelt out the role of local agency in organising social integration processes through local institutional arrangements. The agency of socially skilled local actors is acquired by recombining various resources and denotes their capacity to (re)negotiate the web of local relations and membership in the community through the distribution of developmental goods and controlling access to services. Informed by theories of development as institutional change and strategic action field theory, our paper analyses the evolution and action of this local project class in organising social order by acting as brokers between the institutional environment and local institutional arrangements. Our research question hinges upon the process through which the project class (re)combines resources in order to maintain local social order based on their own perceptions and visions of the locality. Empirical evidence was gathered through various qualitative research projects over two decades, supplemented by recent follow-up interviews with the same actors in a small peripheral town in northern Hungary. Our extended research indicates that maintaining local social order derives from the local elite's perceptions of spatial injustice and it means keeping pre-existing social and class positions. This is a highly selective process and reflects degrees of vulnerability within the local community.

Keywords: strategic action field theory; institutional change; project class; local agency; local social order

1 Introduction

Two decades after the accession of eight Central and Eastern European countries to the European Union (EU), the expectations of a 'catching up' process have not materialised yet. Despite the billions of euros provided by EU Cohesion Funds based on the EU's founding principle of social cohesion, spatial disparities between EU regions (Widuto, 2019) and within countries have lingered. In the EU 13 countries, at the eastern peripheries of the EU, cohesion policy tools financed, on average, 40–80 per cent of all public investment be-

tween 2015 and 2017 (European Commission, 2017, p. xxii). In Hungary, more than half of all public investment was financed by Cohesion Funds in the programming periods 2007–2013 and 2014–2020 (Boldizsár et al., 2016). However, spatial disparities have lingered and have increased lately (Alpek et al., 2018; Lengyel & Kotosz, 2018). The East-West divide of the country and the settlement slope (Kovács & Bihari, 2006; Koós, 2015) have manifested in increasing socio-spatial polarisation between settlements located near dynamic centres and peripheral villages. Besides declining economic and livelihood perspectives, rural peripheries have been characterised by social polarisation and the complex interplay of spatial, social, and ethnic differentiation (Koós & Virág, 2010; Nagy et al., 2015), scarcities of human, social, and financial capital, and low-quality public service provision or its complete absence (Tagai, 2021).

Some studies have explained lingering polarisation by pointing to macro-level trends, such as conflicting domestic policy processes (Tímár & Nagy, 2019; Szikra, 2014; Ferge, 2017) and the transformation of EU Cohesion Policy goals (Avdikos & Chardas, 2016; Hadjimichalis & Hudson, 2014). Others have blamed particular micro-level features of EU development policies, arguing that less hierarchical policy-making mechanisms in Cohesion Policy have masked inequalities in power relations through the projectification of development (Sjöblom, 2006; Shucksmith, 2000). These studies claim that less formal and hierarchical policy steering led to the evolution of new local elites who have a key role in governing place-specific institutional arrangements (Horlings et al., 2018) through which they can organise local social order. Some authors view these actors as the local project class that uses its intellectual and social capital to legitimise its newly acquired power through projects (Csurgó et al., 2008; Kovách, 2007). These actors have the (local) agency, i.e. the capacity and capability to frame actions, (re)negotiate, and (re)assemble the prevailing web of relations. In this way, they decide about membership in the community through the distribution of developmental goods produced by projects.

Scholarship that conceives development as institutional change (Evans, 2004; Rodrik, 1999; Sen, 1999) has called attention to the interplay between structural trends and local agency through the 'effective practice' of institutions (Sen, 1999, p. 159) or 'institutional arrangements' (Rodriguez-Pose, 2013, p. 1037). These provide local leaders with room to design strategies, create initiatives, construct coalitions and ultimately shape places through their own meaningful conduct (Pierre, 2014; Horlings et al., 2018). Some authors have also noted that for local agency to flourish, there is a need for a stable, enabling institutional environment designed in a multi-scalar way (Gertler, 2010) and based on 'true subsidiarity' (Rodríguez-Pose, 2013, p. 1044) that can empower local agency with the capacity to engage in policy design and implementation (Horlings et al., 2018).

Drawing on this scholarship, our paper discusses the evolution and action associated with local agency – comprised of strategic social actors (Fligstein & McAdam, 2012) who organise local social order by acting as brokers between the institutional environment and local institutional arrangements. Our investigation is informed by strategic action field theory (Fligstein & McAdam, 2012), which views actors as embedded in a complex web of relations within meso-level social orders (fields) possessing various resource endowments. The argument we put forward is that for socially skilled strategic actors within the field of local social development, institutional stability is not a necessary condition for the maintenance of local agency. These actors – in possession of intellectual and

social capital endowments – can transform their capacities and relative discretion to frame narratives about local social cohesion by recognising opportunities in the institutional environment and using them for the benefit of their group despite constraining factors, instability, or changing institutional conditions. This analysis contributes to discussions of social integration by studying how local perceptions, affected by interfaces between macro-level institutional conditions and local experiences, can shape local integration processes through the local elite's framing of narratives about belonging and differentiation.

The main research question addressed in this article concerns the process through which the local agency of skilled social actors leads to the use and recombination of means, such as policy tools or project resources, to maintain local social order based on their perceptions of a 'liveable small town'. The article draws on empirical evidence gathered for various research projects in the small town of Encs and its micro-region in northern Hungary over the past twenty years. The authors conducted their doctoral research in this small town from different perspectives: one focused on social entrepreneurs and developmental coalitions (Keller, 2010; 2011), the other on the spatial and social exclusion of Roma (Virág, 2006; 2010). Later on, they participated in various research projects related to this locality that revolved around the same research topic (Virág, 2012; Váradi & Virág, 2018; Keller & Virág, 2019; 2022).[1] Further empirical support for our article is provided by follow-up interviews with a specific group of local stakeholders in different decision-making positions in various institutional periods of social development over the past two decades. This and the secondary analysis of the relevant research material enabled us to analyse the transformation of the local decision-making elite and their endeavour to maintain local social order. The specific group of local stakeholders had worked as teachers and emerged from the local education sector to take up positions in the local project class through participation in various social integration projects over the decades. Our analytical focus is the locality that we conceive as intrinsically multi-scalar and as assemblages of social and power relations (Horlings et al., 2018), where bottom-up and top-down policy interventions as well as project-based and welfare redistribution mechanisms intersect and manifest in regularised face-to-face interaction involving social integration processes (cf. Jansen et al., 2006; Giddens, 1979).

Our extended research indicates that despite the multitude of development projects indirectly or directly targeting social integration over the decades, the integration of the most vulnerable and marginalised members of the local Roma population has remained unresolved. Although the means and goals of social development have significantly changed during the three institutional periods discussed in this paper, reflecting different strategies and institutional logics about social integration, local decision-makers have re-

[1] 21. századi közoktatás – fejlesztés, koordináció (Education in the 21st century – development and coordination) TÁMOP 3.1.1-08/1-2008-0002 (Virág, 2012).
2013–2014: Faces and causes of marginalization of the Roma in local settings Comparative research in Hungary, Romania, and Serbia (Váradi & Virág 2014; 2015; 2018).
2016–2020: RELOCAL: Resituating the Local in Cohesion and Territorial Development (Keller & Virág, 2019; 2022).

tained varying degrees and kinds of agency to organise local social order based on their perceptions of the positionality of the town, that of their own within the local community, and opportunities offered by institutional framework conditions.

Three major shifts can be identified in Hungary's governance and institutional framework of social development that have shaped social integration processes over the past three decades. In the first period (1990–2000), due to an encompassing emphasis on local autonomy and democracy after the fall of socialism, local actors, under the pressure of mounting social crisis, were free to experiment with institutional solutions to organise local social order. In the second period (2000–2010), changes in the institutional logic and framework were directly linked to the Europeanisation of domestic policies that streamlined local developmental coalitions and pushed for institutional desegregation and anti-discrimination in education. The third period (2010–present) has been characterised by ambivalent processes of the radical centralisation of welfare through punitive measures and the abandonment of social integration policy goals.

Local leadership in the small town of Encs has successfully mobilised and (re) combined resources offered by EU and domestic development programs over the three institutional periods and used them for the benefit of their community – selectively. Driven by their perceptions of territorial stigma and relying on their power positions reproduced by project coalitions, local leaders have shaped social order based on social and ethnic differentiation and the selective social integration of 'deserving' members of the local community.

In what follows, we first present our conceptual framework, conceiving development as institutional change produced by the interplay between structure and agency by strategic social actors with different power endowments. This is followed by a discussion of local perceptions and narratives about local inequalities and spatial injustices. The third section of our paper analyses the transformation of local agency and its capacities and strategies to frame local social cohesion/order during three institutional periods of territorial development in Hungary. While there have been several types of developmental coalitions with different sectoral interventions in our locality, our analysis focuses on a particular group of social entrepreneurs who have been active in the field of social integration and development since the 1990s. The final section of the study describes some lessons about the latter and concludes.

2 Conceptual framework

The approach we take in this article draws on institutionalist theories of development (Schumpeter, 1961; Hirschman, 1958; Sen, 1999; North, 1990), specifically strategic action field theory (Fligstein & McAdam, 2012). Institutionalist theories view development as institutional change wherein collective action takes place by means of the mobilisation of social capital, understood as social networks. Collective action takes place in meso-level social orders that are 'socially constructed arenas within which actors with varying resource endowments vie for advantage' (Fligstein, 2001, p. 3).

Defining social capital in terms of social networks entails that access to social and other forms of capital is restricted to those who are part of the networks. Although net-

works are often considered flexible and discretional and cut across territorial boundaries, localities can provide the space for specific forms of social interactions and collective experiences that shape 'the specific physiognomy of a local context' (Piselli, 2007, p. 873). Who can be a member of these social networks evolves in interaction with the institutional framework (Trigilia, 2001; Piselli, 2007) since institutional conditions can regulate the sets of alternatives actors have for action and accessing resources. This ultimately reshapes actors' distributional interests (Lukes, 1974; Scott, 2001; Knight & Farrell, 2003). The setting of balances of power within networks can happen directly or indirectly: erecting restrictions that hinder certain actors would be a direct way of reshaping power relations while raising the institutional capacities of one actor or action field without constraining the actions of others would be an example of indirect interference with balances of power (Lukes, 1974; Scott, 2001; Knight & Farrell, 2003).

However, the institutional framework provided by political action and policies is always subject to interpretation and contestation by actors (Streeck & Thelen, 2005). While the formal institutional environment defines rules and regulates actors' sets of alternatives, local actors always retain some capacity to interpret them. The institutional framework can thus endow local actors with capacities 'from above' to mobilise resources 'from below' (Trigilia, 2001, p. 439). In ideal circumstances, this builds on a 'virtuous relationship' between various levels (Trigilia, 2001; p. 439), an institutional framework designed in a multi-scalar way (Gertler, 2010), implemented through 'true subsidiarity' (Rodríguez-Pose, 2013, p. 1044), which empowers local communities with capacities to engage in policy design and implementation and facilitates collective agency in vertical and horizontal interactions (Horlings et al., 2018). Local agency thus draws on local actors' capabilities to associate – to build coalitions, mobilise resources, and politicise; that is, to shape strategies at various levels of governance (Bruszt & Vedres, 2013).

How local actors draw on their capabilities/agency depends on their position in the field. Actors whose institutional capacities are increased by framework conditions will be in the position to shape interpretive frames, which will encapsulate their views, perceptions and interests (Fligstein & McAdam, 2012). Incumbent actors with social skills will create frames for collective action but only integrate selective members to participate in them and receive their distributional assets; i.e. they aim to defend the status quo and reproduce their group's power in the field (Fligstein, 2001; Fligstein & McAdam, 2012). In this attempt, socially skilled actors' agency also includes juggling lots of balls in the air at the same time, recognising opportunities for resource mobilisation and using them for the benefit of their groups.

Creating interpretative frames is thus central to the actions of social entrepreneurs who comprise the local project class. Relying on their intellectual capacities as members of the local middle class, these actors use interpretative frames for resource mobilisation in projects to legitimise and reproduce their local position and power (Kovách, 2007). Their social and intellectual capital endowments enable them to be brokers and interpreters between framework conditions and local institutional arrangements as well as between local groups while framing collective identities based on their perceptions (cf. Fligstein, 2001; Fligstein & McAdam, 2012). The most important tactic they rely on in this attempt is bricolage, i.e. grabbing any unexpected opportunity, even if it is not exactly what they ideally want and they are uncertain about its usefulness, and combining it into a new frame

(cf. Kovách, 2007; Fligstein, 2001). These tactics are best used in projects whose organisational features are flexible enough to cut through organisational identities, perforate organisational boundaries and generate 'trading zones' of different logics of action and worldviews (Grabher, 2001). This provides space for social entrepreneurs of the local project class to drift between flexible contestation and free interpretation on the one hand and follow rules and hierarchies on the other.

The rules of social development have transformed significantly in Hungary since the system change. At the institutional level, three institutional periods can be distinguished on the basis of the logic of action, i.e. formal rules, requirements and organising principles promoted by regulations and development programs. These have created the framework conditions – opportunities and constraints – for local actors to frame the organisation of local social order. In the first period, institutional logic promoted local democracy, local problem-solving and local service provisions in the face of mounting social problems. Since administrative and public service devolution was not accompanied by financial decentralisation, local actors were free to experiment with institutional solutions to organise social order and development.

In the second period, institutional logics were primarily influenced by the Europeanization of domestic policies linked to Hungary's preparation for and access to the EU. This period was characterised by explicit policy shifts and institutional changes towards mandatory partnerships and the goals of social integration, institutional desegregation and antidiscrimination in education and welfare policies (Szombati, 2018; 2021). The double effect of the 'Europeanization' of domestic policies was the streamlining of developmental coalitions and the erosion of local hegemonies of the rural middle classes (cf. Szombati's 'post-peasantry') and a general feeling of abandonment concerning the loss of privileged access to collective goods and public services. According to Szombati (2018), a growing resentment about these policies and institutional shifts led to the 'revolt of the provinces' and the landslide victory of right-wing politics in 2010.

In the third institutional period, linked to political changes in 2010, radically interventionist policy measures were introduced that increased the role of the central state in nearly all policy domains and reversed the redistribution of resources to the well-off while stigmatising and punishing people with low incomes (Szikra, 2014; Ferge, 2017). Institutional changes begot a system of hierarchical-clientelist governance, in which municipal functions were reduced simply to managing the negative consequences of the central state's withdrawal from social integration policies (Jelinek, 2020). This forced local interventions to align local objectives to the political goals of the national government (Scheiring & Szombati, 2020). The resulting 'double control' system meant that after the period of integrationist policy pressures, the local elite regained discretionary powers to organise local social order through its dependence on central state resources associated with extensive public work programmes (Jelinek, 2020; Szombati, 2021).

The three institutional periods entailed different kinds of agency that local leaders relied on when organising local social order based on their perceptions of the positionality of their town and that of their own within the community. Their agency mediated between local perceptions and the different institutional frameworks by framing local narratives about belonging and differentiation. These narratives operated as place-making processes, affecting the definition of the community through public discourses and pro-

viding models of being in a local context (Blokland, 2009). Such narratives delineate the essence and meaningfulness of a place, and through these common understandings of different parts of the town, local actors create social order.

Narratives of stigmatisation are the most important tools for solidifying segregated areas within given localities. Stigmatisation is present in everyday practices and daily social interactions: various social groups not only perceive spatial and social distinctions and boundaries but they are actively affected by these on a daily basis (Wacquant et al., 2014). Usually, the aim of the municipalities and the better-off social groups is to make vulnerable social groups living in segregated neighbourhoods invisible. Accordingly, these social problems and conflicts are kept at a distance, and daily encounters with 'problematic families' in different institutions can be avoided by the 'regular' families living in other neighbourhoods (Wacquant, 2008; Wacquant et al., 2014). Overall, our analysis views local social order as experienced and negotiated within the social interactions, mundane routines and practices of daily life (Giddens, 1979; Archer, 1995) that constitute social integration.

3 Local narratives about the town and its role in social and spatial distinction

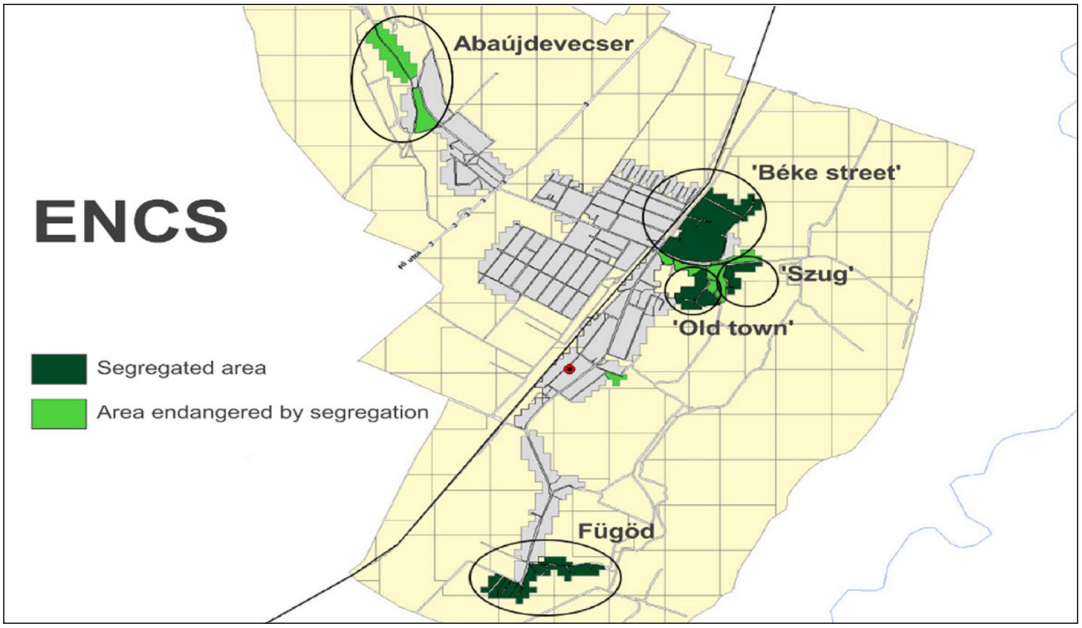
Encs is a small, traditionally disadvantaged town located in Hungary's northeast periphery. Its disadvantaged position is related to historical processes of economic decline accompanied by a concentration of poverty, very high unemployment rates, low levels of educational attainment, demographic polarisation, a concentration of Roma population and selective outmigration. Due to its favourable geographical location, the previously village-style settlement became the centre of public administration (*járási központ*) for neighbouring villages after World War II. As a result, the main institutions of public administration and service provision, like the district court, police and fire stations, the health care centre and ambulance service, secondary schools, and commercial and social services, were all settled in this locality, providing a favourable migration destination for more educated people from neighbouring villages for decades. Despite its relatively favourable position vis-á-vis the neighbouring villages, outmigration from Encs to the county seat and the capital has also intensified over past decades (Virág, 2010; G. Fekete, 2014). This is related to the transformation of territorial governance and the marked centralisation of policies, which changed the positionality of settlements through the mechanisms of power, financial resources, access to public services and living conditions. The main narratives concerning the town of Encs and the district are driven by an interplay between attempts to get rid of territorial stigma and a sense of spatial injustice. These narratives, produced by the local elite, operate on different territorial scales and refer to socio-spatial differences between the district of Encs and the rest of Hungary and within the district and the town. Spatial injustice is understood here as the absence of opportunities, manifested in the general scarcity of human and social capital, infrastructure and employment, entrepreneurship and space-blind domestic policies (Keller & Virág, 2019). The interpretation of the low efficacy of local public services as underperformance appears in local narratives as double-bound spatial injustice: in the comparatively deprived socioeconomic local context ridden with scarce resources, it is difficult to live up to objective standards and produce similar institutional results.

Local narratives also give an account of the way Encs, the district centre, defines itself as the institutional and service-providing centre of neighbouring villages and calls itself the 'centre of Abaúj'. At the same time, it expresses the desire to become a 'nice, liveable small town' (interview with the mayor) and the intention to get rid of the territorial stigma that has been connected to the geographical area of Cserehát for decades (Ladányi & Szelényi, 2004; Virág, 2006). The institutional developments of the socialist period divided the town into two parts. The old town centre, a village-style neighbourhood with small peasant houses that have traditionally been the dwelling places for Roma and non-Roma poor, is located on one side of the railway, while a Roma neighbourhood is situated at the edge of this part of the town. On the other side of the railway is the modern part of the town with new institutions and residential areas that were built during the 1970s and 1980s for young families that moved here from the villages of Cserehát. Over the past decades, the desire to create a 'liveable town' has been achieved through various development projects targeting infrastructure investments in this neighbourhood.

Local narratives and perceptions about the positionality of the town and its neighbourhoods are strongly connected to the presence and growing number of individuals of Roma ethnicity. Generally, representations of Roma ethnicity are based on external categorisation processes imposed by the majority society and are distinguished by unequal social and power relations. Thus, the concept of Roma is a construct of the majority society, reflecting perceptions rather than actual ethnic community/group belonging (McGarry, 2014). In Encs, the Roma appear in the local narratives as a diverse social group in terms of socioeconomic status, lifestyle and spatial location (Virág & Váradi, 2018) based on the deep local knowledge and embeddedness of local stakeholders. This is also reflected in the segregation map of the town and the narratives of different 'Roma' neighbourhoods. Abaújdevecser, one of the small villages that were merged into Encs, is a dwelling place for the 'well-to-do' Roma and thus is not designated as a segregated area in the 'official' map of segregation. The segregated units of Encs are located on the other side of the railway, far from the centre in the old part of the town, which is traditionally Roma and poor. In terms of ethnic composition and infrastructural developments, these village-style neighbourhoods are further differentiated by socioeconomic status. In the 'Béke Street' neighbourhood, the 'traditional' Roma street in the town, most families live in moderate poverty with cultivated gardens and domestic animals. In the local narratives, they are 'our Gypsies' who have been living with us for decades. Due to its orderly exterior and in spite of its physical distance, this part of the town does not appear segregated in local narratives. As a result of the efforts and willingness of the local municipality, the status of this area has been greatly advanced by infrastructural developments in recent years.

The area beyond this neighbourhood, located at the end of the town, is Fügöd, a stigmatised and criminalised space whose residents appear as enemies in local narratives. Previously a small neighbouring village, Fügöd was annexed by the town in the 1980s. Today, there are only a few elderly non-Roma people residing on Main Street in the middle of the neighbourhood, where houses are relatively orderly. On the rest of the neighbourhood's three streets, more than 350 Roma live in dilapidated shanty houses. There are no fences or yards; most households use illegally connected electricity and have no bathrooms, plumbing or modern heating. Families usually get water from public wells, which are closed from time to time. This neighbourhood is not only distant from the city centre

but is also set apart from the town by sharp mental boundaries. From the perspective of local stakeholders who work for the municipality and its institutions, this area is a neighbourhood of exile that hosts the town's outcasts (Wacquant, 2008). In order to keep social and ethnic problems at a distance from mainstream families in the town centre, stakeholders have tried to keep Roma families living in this segregated neighbourhood invisible. The occasional appearance of Roma families from Fügöd in the town centre always brings up fear in the inhabitants of Encs related to their proximity to the stigmatised place. 'In the shop, everybody recognises who is from Fügöd and who is from another part of the town. They feel it as danger' (interview with local stakeholder).



Map 1 Segregated units in Encs

Source: Encs Integrated Urban Development Strategy, 2015, pp. 129–130.

4 The changing role and power position of the local elite

4.1 The birth of the new local elite in emerging bottom-up civil associations

The town of Encs, its micro-region and the wider region called Cserehát has been a laboratory of developmental initiatives since the early 1990s that aimed to promote social integration by mitigating socioeconomic and spatial disparities (G. Fekete, 2001; 2014). In the early 1990s, the central state, facing an unprecedented social crisis, was in need of partners for its development policy. Cross-municipal associations served as potential new partners for the central state to resolve social tensions and developmental bottlenecks caused by economic transformation, hence the former encouraged local institutional ex-

perimentations with financial and institutional incentives. It was in this period that members of the local middle class in Encs, comprised mostly of former teachers, began to organize their first associations to revive former cross-municipal cooperation in public service provision.

Initiatives ranged from special sectoral associations for coordinating education administration and services (Public Education Service District, PESD, *Közoktatási Ellátási Körzet*) to encompassing cross-settlement developmental alliances (the Cserehát Alliance and Abaúj Alliance for Regional Development), which integrated different kinds of actors across the vertical and horizontal spectrum (government agencies, local governments, firms, civil society, sectoral-professional organisations and academia) (Keller, 2010). This period was characterised by informal decision-making mechanisms and strong bottom-up development activism at the local level. The activities and projects implemented by these associations paved the way for the emergence of a new elite, i.e., the project class, which comprised socially skilled actors with the capability to organise local social order through mobilising various resources. Our discussion focuses on one particular group of this local elite that organised itself within the field of education and thereafter in social service provision for early childhood.

In the early 1990s, the legacy of municipal cooperation in maintaining public schools with small villages in this region was still tangible. Originally set up in the late 1980s at the county level and swept away with the decentralisation reforms connected to the system change, these associations eased the burden of service provision for small municipalities. Following the termination of the centralised system of education provision and supervision, teachers in primary schools were left behind without adequate professional services, small schools were isolated and special services closed down, while small municipalities without former experience had to deal with the management of schools in parallel with the social crisis that came with economic transformation. Prompted by these circumstances, municipality leaders, former teachers and educational professionals decided to continue to operate the previous public education management association and established the PESD in 12 districts at the county level in 1997.

The PESD in the Encs micro-region had three employees who organised the provision of professional services for teachers and special services for pupils with special needs based on funding opportunities. They coordinated the professional training of teachers and organised meetings, creating not only a professional forum but also providing day-to-day contact and consulting. One of the most important tasks of PESD officers was coordinating the management of education. The PESD formed the common institutional background for all stakeholders involved in education locally: municipality leaders, notaries, teachers, heads of schools and nurseries. They regularly visited schools, kindergartens and municipalities within the district, trying to find solutions to their problems and mediating conflicts between them. Through these activities, PESD officers built a strong, trustful, and dialogue-based network in all localities within the district: they connected people from different localities for the same purposes and built ad hoc and long-term coalitions between stakeholders to achieve shared and negotiated goals. In this period, the central objective, shared by all stakeholders, was to mitigate the effects of selective migration and to provide proper education services for middle- and lower-class families who stayed behind but were seeking to provide mobility for their children through 'proper' education, i.e. in

schools with a small proportion of disadvantaged Roma pupils. Although almost all stakeholders perceived that 'white flight' from schools was moving in the direction of ethnic and social segregation within and between schools, in the absence of incentives connected with domestic education policy, they did not have the skills or motivation to address these matters.

4.2 Surviving streamlining

Since the turn of the millennium, the institutional framework for local development and education policy has changed as a result of the Europeanisation process. In development policy, the diversity of local organisations was streamlined, and by the time of EU accession, spatially fixed and uniform local developmental coalitions had been put in place. In parallel, the principles of a new European education policy framework were laid down in the Lisbon Treaty, which brought about changes in the public education systems of the associated countries, such as Hungary (Varga, 2018). Integration (co-education) policy became desirable, complemented by the concept of inclusion and the complex pedagogical tools needed for implementation. In line with the EU initiative, the Hungarian government has been committed to an inclusive education policy through various measures from 2002 onwards.

In developmental policy, domestic regulations and financial instruments began to restrict local actors' room for manoeuvre to organise their voluntary associations. Membership came to be defined by the central state, which ordered the establishment of mandatory multi-purpose micro-regional partnerships (MPMP, *többcélú kistérségi társulás*) based on statistical, administrative micro-regional units to organise social provisions in education, social services, regional development and healthcare (Keller, 2010; 2011). Usually, the mayor of the micro-regional centre became the formal leader of the MPMP – in our case, the mayor of Encs – and its operative staff were recruited from the staff of the former PESD. Due to a decade-long involvement in cross-municipal associations, the operative staff of MPMP were deeply embedded in professional and personal networks in the micro-region. This enabled them to continue relying on more or less informal and bottom-up decision-making procedures in planning and implementing development projects. On the other hand, maintaining a good relationship with the operative staff of the MPMP was in the interest of mayors and stakeholders in the villages to guarantee the representation and involvement of their settlements' interests in development programs and obtain information about new tenders and other opportunities.

The significance of PESD is demonstrated by the fact that even following the reduction of state funds and subsequent changes in municipal funding in 2003–2004, local authorities in the micro-region insisted on continuing their cooperation in education service provision within the new organisational form of the MPMP. Hence, the operational costs of education management were voluntarily covered by local governments from their own budgets.

Although in the frame of MPMP the former was able to maintain the education services, the institutional environment prescribed on the national level was too rigid and inflexible to allow new initiatives to be implemented. At the same time, the project class involved in the field of education was hardly connected to EU development projects for a

different reason. On the one hand, in EU-funded developmental programs aiming to tackle the social integration of Roma and disadvantageous families, it was mandatory to incorporate a Roma or pro-Roma NGO into consortia. In most cases, due to the weakness of the civil sector and the lack of local NGOs, it was the local Roma Minority Self-Government (RMSG) (the official and elected representative of the local Roma community) that became the official partner to the local government in these projects. Generally, cooperation between local governments and RMSGs is based on informal, personal relationships and involves unequal power relations (Szalai, 2016). However, in Encs, the local elite had no former experience or relationship to the RMSG, which was not previously part of any development coalition. Therefore, it was difficult to build trusting relations through the mandatory cooperation, which was often tainted by misunderstandings and tension.

On the other hand, triggered by EU conditionality, the shift in education and development policy towards integration came at a time in Encs when the decade-long selective migration process reached its peak, leaving schools and individual teachers to face and manage pedagogical problems and tensions related to the mandatory integration of Roma and non-Roma children without supporting services.

The primary schools in Encs have always attracted pupils from the entire micro-region. However, fundamental differences existed between the two elementary schools in Encs. One was situated in the newly built modern part of the town and had always counted as an elite school in the micro-region and the town itself, while the other was closer to the village-style part of the town with a large Roma community. In the centrally located primary school, the leadership always laid great emphasis on the education of talented and gifted children. Thanks to its good reputation, better-off children from the countryside also enrolled there *en masse* from the early nineties. By the millennium, 40 per cent of the children who studied there were students who commuted from other settlements (Virág, 2006; 2012). The number and proportion of students from the countryside was far smaller in the other elementary schools, which accepted children who could not be accommodated at any other school. Due to its location, the proportion of disadvantaged students was larger in this school, which also had a branch in the segregated neighbourhood of Fügöd, attended only by Roma students living in the neighbourhood. This branch school with primary classes from grades 1 to 4 had been operating in the neighbourhood of Fügöd since the 1980s and, due to selective outmigration processes from the village from the late 1990s onwards, had been attended by Roma children exclusively. The second primary school and its branch in Fügöd had been in need of structural renovation for decades, but local authorities who acted as maintainers at that time did not have enough resources for this. The school building in Fügöd is crowded and rundown; the doorman usually locks the gates of the institution during the daytime to prevent children from running away from school. After completing the fourth grade, pupils from the branch school in Fügöd continued their studies in the main building of the town school. Differences in the behaviour, competence and knowledge of pupils from Fügöd and other parts of the town, even the other Roma settlements, were so large – causing constant tension between pupils and teachers – that the town school was unable to cope. As a result, school leadership and municipal stakeholders, including education professionals from the former PESD, also decided to start classes for students from years five to eight in the Fügöd school. Although this move practically created a segregated primary school from grades one to eight, this was framed by

local leadership, as the local teachers stated, 'to help the children' of Fügöd 'catch up with other children'. Since then, there has been a strong social expectation that the town should keep the ghetto school of Fügöd operational, thus keeping 'problematic children' away from the town and from 'regular' children. 'There would be an explosion if those children from Fügöd appeared in the town school' (interview with school principal). On the other hand, this decision resonated, as 'Fügöd has always been a stepchild' (interview with social workers in Fügöd).

This decision came at a time when the central state supported the integrated education of disadvantaged and Roma pupils in several ways: methodological support, mentoring programs, extra fees and special training for teachers, and the development of the infrastructure. That is to say, the new development plan in 2006 provided funding for the renovation and refurbishment of public institutions, especially elementary schools and kindergartens in disadvantaged areas, on the condition that pupils with different social and ethnic backgrounds are co-educated and integrated into these institutions (Varga, 2018). In Encs, this meant that in the case of applying for these funds, the city would have had to close the school in Fügöd and distribute the disadvantaged pupils among the other schools in the town. The decision would have increased the proportion of Roma and disadvantaged pupils in the elite school, which would have discouraged middle-class families and caused further tension within the town. Concerned about the consequences of this, local decision-makers tried to cover up the segregation between primary schools; hence, they merged the local primary schools into a single mammoth school. Although the unequal distribution of disadvantaged children between institutions and maintenance of a segregated school in Fügöd ruled out the town's application for the tender for school renovation, keeping the ghetto school of Fügöd and expanding it into an eight-year school seemed more advantageous to them than renovating existing school buildings.

4.3 Surviving centralisation

The growing shadow of hierarchy that had started in the early 2000s gained impetus after the landslide victory of the incumbent right-wing government in 2010. Post-2010 processes involved seemingly inconsistent transformations: on the one hand, intensive centralisation pulled away administrative and executive functions from local governments in nearly all policy areas, while selective welfare retrenchment abandoned the principles of social integration in policy-making and introduced punitive measures in social and education policies (Greskovits, 2015; Szikra, 2014; Velkey, 2013) and eroded welfare provisions for low-income families (Keller & Virág, 2022). Increased state involvement in policy administration entailed the drying up of local budgets and local governments losing their mandates to maintain local institutions (Keller & Virág, 2022). Local governments were inserted into a hierarchically controlled system in which they acted as the central state's extended arm to control local social order through centrally allocated state resources (especially in public works programmes) that they depended on (cf. Jelinek, 2020). Since the new public administration structure terminated the funding of MPMPs, reintroducing centrally administered districts, MPMPs were dissolved in most micro-regions. In the district of Encs, however, local stakeholders find ways to perpetuate their organisational flora

by maintaining the institutional form of the MPMP, recharging its focus on the provision of social care services through EU-funded development programmes. It was the operative staff of the MPMP – former members of the PESD – who set out to plan and implement these programmes based on their experiences and competencies with the management of various projects.

Give Kids a Chance was one of these social development programs, with a focus on social integration through the reduction of child poverty and the provision of services for early childhood capability expansion, such as Sure Start houses, integrated public education services, such as after-school tutorials, second-chance programmes and complex forms of family support (Keller & Virág, 2019). The programme aimed to resolve bottlenecks in child welfare provisions and 'modernise' these services to improve accessibility through professional cooperation and the empowerment and integration of the most marginalised groups. However, under the institutional pressure of punitive welfare reforms and centralising public administration measures, the content of Give Kids a Chance went through significant changes, reducing room for manoeuvre for local action and affecting social integration processes. In contrast to its original methodology that targeted social integration by intermingling middle-class and disadvantaged families, the priority component of desegregation disappeared after 2011, and the increasing number of mandatory programme components, defined by the central state, focused exclusively on the most disadvantaged. In other words, the institutional conditions of the policy realm increasingly encouraged the reproduction of segregation by targeting the improvement of services operating within segregated neighbourhoods.

Methods, established practices and pre-existing platforms of collaboration were easily remobilised to meet the new goals of Give Kids a Chance, which guaranteed the embeddedness of the operative staff necessary for the legitimate coordination of the project. Accumulated social capital and synergies associated with pre-existing collaborations enabled these local stakeholders to build a project ecology amidst a volatile institutional environment and project cycles that was more resilient to problems of liquidity and long-term planning than in other localities. On the other hand, hierarchical governance modes of the post-2010 period forced local welfare interventions to align with the political objectives of the national government (Jelinek et al., 2019) and weakened local stakeholders' capacities for autonomous decisions and action. Their activities were guided by the goal of striking a balance between local needs, mandatory programme components defined by the central state, and the recommendations of mentors assigned to supervise by the central state.

This growing external control of local processes on the one hand, and the absence of institutional incentives for social integration and desegregation (cf. the depoliticisation of poverty in Szombati, 2021) on the other, removed the burden from local stakeholders to promote the integration of the most marginalised Roma and gave them the leverage – within the limits of the national government's political objectives – to organise local social order based on local socio-ethnic perceptions and the punitive populist political agenda of domestic politics. Without the commitment of both the central and local state, EU-funded social integration programmes hollow out and are easily hijacked to deliver incumbents' political and social objectives. This can be seen in the 'caring abandonment' of marginalised Roma that reflects a relationship between these Roma groups and the

local elite wherein the Roma and their segregated neighbourhoods are the means for the local elite and external developmental actors to generate resources within an institutional framework that withdraws functions and funds from the local level. In Encs, the most marginalised Roma, who were primarily targeted by Give Kids a Chance, were also only passive 'beneficiaries' of the programme.

The story of the demise of the Sure Start House[2] in Fügöd is illustrative of the collective marginalisation of the most deprived and marginalised Roma in this institutional period. The house in Fügöd first opened as a community house and was transformed into a Sure Start House towards the end of the first project cycle. The purpose of this transformation was to gain access to state funding, thus enabling the sustainability of services when project resources run out. Per capita state funding, however, involved considerably less financial resources than project funding did, and local governments and the operative staff of the local Give Kids a Chance soon faced problems familiar to them from the pre-project period: the great fluctuation of staff in the house, and difficulties finding competent staff due to the low wages that state funding provided without the local government's capacity to compensate them with supplementary resources. Local tensions also arose again as a result of the loss of trust and lack of transparency: local Roma families in Fügöd did not understand the transformation of the community house – which anybody could visit – into a Sure Start House that was specifically designed for mothers and children between zero and three years old. Hence, the House, which had been successful in 'bringing into the house' large numbers of Roma families to participate in programmes during the project, became less frequent. When the head of the House left, it took the local government a long time to find competent staff again, which further deteriorated local social relations. Subsequently, two social workers took jobs in the Sure Start House and undertook the representation of the interests of the Roma in Fügöd vis-á-vis local stakeholders and decision-makers. The staff began to build networks within the community and managed to mobilise families again to attend programmes. They also tried to build professional networks with local (i.e. Fügöd-based) segregated institutions – kindergarten and school – as well as child welfare services, home visiting nurses and special education professionals in the centre of the town to invite them to continue cooperating and providing services to the Roma in Fügöd in the Sure Start House. Local stakeholders, however, did not react to this call and did not – in some interpretations, could not – provide the two social workers with resources to contribute to the House services. Perceptions of the 'non-deserving Roma' living in Fügöd had become aggravated by the end of 2017 when a local conflict broke out, generated by the Red Cross food donation programme based on the premises of the House, and the two social workers were threatened by some local 'rascals'. At this point, it was easy for the local government to find excuses to shut down the

[2] The Sure Start programme was adapted from the British model in Hungary and financed by the European Social Fund to provide services that support early childhood development by linking it to child well-being, family welfare and the development of parental competencies. In order to avoid stigmatisation and improve accessibility, all families living in deprived neighbourhoods have access to Sure Start Houses, irrespective of their socioeconomic background. Since 2009, Hungarian Sure Start houses could also be established within the Give Kids a Chance programme, first as an optional and later as a mandatory programme element. In 2012, Sure Start houses were incorporated into the domestic institutional system of child welfare services financed by the central state.

Sure Start House as it 'could not guarantee the security of the two employees' (interview with the mayor). The collective marginalisation of the 'unworthy' and the most vulnerable Roma is well illustrated by the way this segregated community was abandoned by both the local and central state: both local stakeholders and external actors of the central state ceased developmental activity in this neighbourhood in subsequent years. The two public services maintained in the neighbourhood until 2020 – the segregated primary school and kindergarten – served local decision-makers' continued interests in keeping the Roma of Fügöd away from public services in the town. Although services focusing on children were eventually picked up by InDaHouse, a non-state volunteer organisation, in 2020 within the premises of the Sure Start House, the squalid school building that burnt down in 2021 still has not been renovated by its maintainer, the Szerencs District Education Authority.

5 Discussion and conclusions

Relying on the analytical framework of strategic action field theory (Fligstein & McAdam, 2012), we analysed the ways the local agency of skilled social actors use and recombine means, such as policy tools or project resources, to maintain local social order based on their perceptions of a 'liveable small town'. Maintaining social order means keeping existing social and class positions and striving to uphold the status quo, which is always selective and covers only specific segments of local societies. Local social integration depends on the existence of a stable and embedded local agency that has the authority to maintain social order based on more or less shared agreement within the local society that it covers everybody who deserves it. In our analysis, we focused on a particular group of skilled social actors who have been active in the field of social integration and development since the 1990s. Thus, we studied the interplay between the institutional environment that provides room for manoeuvre for the local agency of these actors and local institutional arrangements.

The argument we put forward was that for socially skilled strategic actors within the field of local social development, institutional stability is not a necessary condition of maintaining local agency. Local leadership in the small-sized town of Encs, having emerged as the local project class over three different institutional periods, has been successful in recombining resources for the benefit of certain segments of local society. In the absence of competing visions for an integrated local social order and relying on their power (re)produced by the accumulation of social capital through subsequent development projects, this group of local social entrepreneurs framed social order and reorganised urban space based on social – rather than ethnic – differentiation. On the one hand, through producing and reproducing segregated places within the town, they maintained social and symbolic borders between the lower-middle class and marginalised groups. On the other hand, through development programmes targeting social integration, the local government used the discretionary power left for them to privilege those seen as deserving of support by providing access to social services generated by the projects. We studied the actions of the local project class embedded in three periods that provided contrasting institutional visions and conditions for social integration. Overall, in none of the periods

were incentives and institutional support for social integration successfully provided, which, together with the absence of alternative voices and visions for integration, eventually led to the collective abandonment of the most vulnerable parts of local society.

In the first institutional period, decentralisation reforms and an institutional environment favouring bottom-up organisations enabled local social entrepreneurs to continue with previous collaborations and practices they had developed before the system change to address problems in local public education. However, these institutional solutions only addressed problems related to the selective migration of the middle class by aiming to offer better quality education services. Although stakeholders perceived the growing social and ethnic differentiation within and between schools, in the absence of incentives in the institutional environment, they did not have the know-how or skills to address this matter.

The shift in education and development policy towards integration came at a time in Encs when the decade-long selective migration process reached its peak, and the one-size-fits-all nationally defined integration policy could not address the enormous amount of local socio-ethnic problems. These problems were related to social differences between children that led to continuous tension in schools. In order to avoid further tension and maintain local social order within the town, decision-makers established parallel segregated institutions for the Roma who lived in the part of the town conceived as 'dangerous'. Although local decision-makers who had transformed their social capital network and power accumulated in PESD into the organisational form of the MPMP had a mandatory cooperation agreement with representatives of the local Roma association, this organisation also failed to represent the interests of the most vulnerable Roma community in Fügöd. This indicates the strength of perceptions of social distinction rather than ethnic differentiation.

In the post-2010 institutional period, radical centralisation and the bureaucratic control of policy processes put the local level at the bottom of the scalar hierarchy. The local level lost its authority to define developmental objectives and organise service provisions at its discretion based on local needs. The recalibration of domestic policies also meant a move away from a limited welfare state that encouraged social integration towards a punitive populism that calls for 'the sanctioning of scroungers by reference to "a conception of fairness that is instilled in the notion of reciprocity", where responsibilities and obligations counter-balance rights' (Paz-Fuchs, 2008 cited by Szombati, 2021, p. 1708). The punitive and socially selective welfare regime of this period thus guaranteed protection for 'deserving' citizens and created a clientelistic hierarchy of dependencies of local stakeholders on centrally allocated funds in public work programmes and of unemployed, vulnerable social groups on mayors and local stakeholders. These domestic institutional constellations trickled down into locally implemented EU-funded programmes, like Give Kids a Chance, whose original goals and means were hijacked through mandatory components and the promotion of segregated services to deliver the political objectives of the national government. In this governance framework, institutional pressures on the local elite to organise social order based on principles of social integration were removed, and once project indicators did not have to be fulfilled, local stakeholders exercised their remaining discretionary rights to organise local social order based on their perceptions of a 'liveable small town' for 'deserving' citizens.

The lesson that the case of Encs provides us with is that the lack of domestic institutional incentives for social integration combined with local anti-poor sentiment and a social order based on the status quo build synergies for the hollowing out of EU-funded social integration projects. The concept of a 'liveable town' deriving from the local elite's perceptions of spatial injustice – the absence of opportunities, the scarcity of various forms of capital, hence its own marginal and peripheral position – is highly selective and reflects degrees of vulnerability within the local community. The 'caring abandonment' of the even more marginalised Roma shows that without the commitment of both the central and local state, social integration projects serve as the means for the local elite to generate resources to preserve its relatively privileged position within a system that reproduces injustices of various degrees.

Acknowledgements

This work was supported by the National Research, Development and Innovation Office, Hungary. The project number is K143606 and is entitled 'Assemblages of local agency for social innovation in peripheral localities'.

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Social capital and trust: The 'fuel' of local integration of rural and small-town enterprises

Intersections. EEJSP
9(4): 123–140.
https://doi.org/10.17356/ieejsp.v9i4.1147
https://intersections.tk.hu

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Abstract

In the present article we examine a sub-segment of the 'locally integrated social group': rural and small-town entrepreneurs. Entrepreneurs are especially interesting from the integration point of view since, in the current academic discourse, entrepreneurship is considered a contextual process in which the former depend on local information and resources and base their activities on the needs of the local environment. Accordingly, rural and small-town entrepreneurs are commonly studied through the concepts of local embeddedness, social capital, and trust. The aim of our paper is to contribute to the understanding of those mechanisms: the impact of trust among entrepreneurs and their social networks that result in the local integration of this rural group. The study, based on 25 semi-structured in-depth interviews, focuses on the role of values, attitudes, social capital, and trust networks in local economic success in three Hungarian settlements of different sizes: a small village of 300, a small town of 3,000 and a medium-sized town of 30,000 inhabitants. Our conclusion is that in the case of rural and small-town entrepreneurship, community resources (values, attitudes, social capital, and trust) play a chief role in the foundation and existence of a local entrepreneurial ecosystem. However, their efforts must be accompanied by an institutional framework to make them sustainable in the long term.

Keywords: rural and small-town entrepreneurship; social capital; trust; locally integrated social group; entrepreneurial ecosystem; lifestyle entrepreneurs

1 Introduction

One of the exciting results of Hungarian research on integration and disintegration processes (Kovách, 2017a; 2017b; 2020; Kovách et al., 2017a) was the identification of the locally integrated group. The locally integrated group – in contrast to the stereotypes about the urban–rural dichotomy and the researchers' hypotheses as well –consists mainly of rural and small-town residents, with several members indirectly connected to agriculture (Csizmady et al., 2017) and was one of the most integrated groups based on the 2015 data collection. Members of this group are characterized by their higher average educational

level and above-average income. They have a wide network of contacts, and many of them are NGO members; they are closely tied to the place and the local culture (Csizmady et al., 2017). Their political activity is significant, but primarily at the local level (e.g., contacting local government representatives) (Gerő et al., 2020). As Csizmady and her colleagues characterize the locally integrated group, they 'live in the countryside, with an independent social character, and presumably specific cultural and political values and norms, and in many respects show [...] similar characteristics to the metropolitan middle classes' (Csizmady et al., 2017, p. 202).

At the same time, survey-type quantitative data collection and data analysis methods do not allow a finer, more detailed characterization of this group, which make up a relatively small proportion of the sample. As Csizmady et al. (2017, pp. 203) stated: 'Further research can contribute to the understanding of the political/power and social stability of the countryside and to the assessment that the local formation of an economic/political elite has taken place, or rural urbanization has reached a new stage by analyzing the political values and party choices, power position and relationship networks, and cultural orientation of this group.' Social integration mechanisms include systems of cooperation and the norms, values, and interests that motivate actors to cooperate (Tamás, 2020, p. 67).

In the present article, we examine a sub-segment of this locally integrated group, rural and small-town entrepreneurs (active mainly, but not exclusively in the gastro/wine sector), and examine with finer, qualitative methods the mechanisms in terms of trust and social capital that contribute to the local integration of this group in order to contribute to the understanding of the dual nature of their situation. The group of entrepreneurs is especially interesting from the integration point of view since, in the current academic discourse, entrepreneurs are less and less considered as isolated actors. Entrepreneurship is rather seen as a contextual process in which potential enterprises depend on local information and resources, base their activities on the needs of the local environment, and receive financing from local banks and investors (Kalantaridis & Bika, 2006). Therefore, rural and small-town entrepreneurs are commonly studied through the concepts of local embeddedness (Granovetter, 1973; Gülümser et al., 2009; Bosworth et al., 2011), social capital (Bourdieu, 1985; Coleman, 1988; Putnam, 2000) and trust.

In the present study, we examine three Hungarian settlements of different sizes: a small village of 300, a small town of 3,000, and a medium-sized town of 30,000 inhabitants. All three have a longstanding tradition of grape cultivation and wine production. Our case studies are exceptional in this regard since the willingness to cooperate of businesses is of paramount importance for the success of the wine-growing and wine tourism sector; thus, we can expect stronger local embeddedness, cooperation, and collective thinking among them (Mike & Megyesi, 2018; Tomay & Tuboly, 2023). In addition – not independently from the grape-growing traditions – all three settlements have Swabian roots, which mentality and habitus may be one of the drivers of entrepreneurial willingness, as Schwartz (2021) proved: based on family resources, knowledge (bonding social capital) and community solidarity (bridging social capital) may be characteristic of these settlements.

The case studies are based on 25 semi-structured in-depth interviews with rural and small-town entrepreneurs conducted between the autumn of 2018 and the autumn of 2020 in the framework of the Higher Education Institution Excellence Program. These interviews were complemented by several field trips and observations.

According to our basic assumption, personal characteristics, the entrepreneurial value system, the social environment, and the local culture in which the enterprise is embedded all affect their successful operation, which means that local integration is extremely important for small entrepreneurs, not only from a personal but also from an economic point of view. Based on the interviews, we aim to explore how successful cooperation functions and the impact of trust among entrepreneurs and their social networks. By studying these patterns, it becomes possible to deepen our knowledge concerning locally integrated entrepreneurs in Hungary.

2 Trust, social capital, and entrepreneurship

Social capital is 'the ability of actors to secure benefits by virtue of membership in social networks or other social structures' (Portes, 1998, p. 6). Coleman (1988) and Lin (2001) describe social capital as a marketplace where people invest in relations and treat them as a personal resource. Social capital enhances cooperation, promotes mutual assistance, and creates bridges (Bodor, 2013; Tomay, 2019). The concept of social capital has become particularly popular for its economic dimension: social capital is important for the creation of exchange relations and can support the establishment of new businesses, open new markets, and promote cooperation; it is, therefore, an essential element of entrepreneurship (Füzér et al., 2006; Bodor, 2013). Fukuyama (1995) also explains that social capital and trust play an important role in the establishment of new companies. He argues that the nature of entrepreneurship is shaped by the cultural context in which an enterprise is located. After analyzing data from the European Social Survey, Bodor et al. (2019) concluded that the location of the entrepreneurial activity and local cultural traditions, social customs, and norms are all of great importance regarding value preferences. In Northern and Western Europe, a greater proportion of entrepreneurs share collectivist values (being strongly motivated and influenced by community and social responsibility as opposed to individual goals) as well as those related to innovation. In contrast, in the Eastern and Southern parts of Europe, avoiding risk and individual values driven by personal goals are stronger motivating factors (Bodor et al., 2019, p. 39). In other words, there is no standard pattern or coherent set of value preferences associated with entrepreneurship (Bodor et al., 2019b; Kovách et al., 2017b). According to Baumgartner et al. (2013), social capital is both a driver and an outcome of entrepreneurship, which is especially important for the regional development of European non-core regions.

There are three types of social capital: bonding, bridging, and linking social capital. Bonding social capital refers to relationships based on strong trust, such as those between family members; bridging social capital indicates relationships based on weaker trust, such as those between colleagues; and finally, linking social capital – the weakest form – refers to relationships with elected representatives or local government workers (Woolcock & Narayan, 2000). Trust is a precondition for organizations and associations created on a voluntary basis because cooperative norms of trust are based on ethical and moral standards that are expected to be followed by those involved in this type of relationship, and participants expect loyalty from their members. However, the wider radius of trust is typically associated with distrust of outsiders. Trust can establish social capital that is

conceptualized as one of three types: bonding social capital is connected to a particular form of trust and is based on trusting relationships with close relatives and acquaintances. Bridging social capital is associated with interpersonal trust, characterized by a wider radius of trust. Moreover, linking social capital assumes high institutional trust (Füzér, 2016). Nevertheless, social capital can also be considered an integration mechanism whose specific individual or group configuration can contribute to the strengthening and maintenance of concrete and symbolic cooperation (Kovách, 2017, p. 14)

Westlund and Bolton (2003), confirming Bourdieu's theory that different forms of capital can be converted into each other, state that social capital both directly and indirectly affects entrepreneurs and enterprises. From a different point of view, a lack of trust (an element of social capital) can cause great disadvantages in the operation of enterprises. The presence of trust is indispensable when establishing an enterprise, at which point informal ties are very much necessary. This necessity weakens over time, to be replaced by a need for formal ties. Local business relations and cooperation with local non-governmental organizations and public institutions are important for promoting competitiveness, which is why informal solutions continue to be necessary in contemporary rural and small-town societies (Savanya, 2013). Such local partnerships and collaborations of local actors can boost the local economy and help enterprises to catch up with the competition, thereby contributing to the better position of the rural area and the launch of other initiatives (Kis, 2006). As Kulcsár (1998) highlights, rural regions that cannot muster the power of community will start to decline. However, entrepreneurial collaboration (business relations, purchasing raw materials from each other, employing local workers, etc.) can stimulate a region's economy, creating a driving force that can benefit wider local society (Shortall & Shucksmith, 1998). According to Floysand and Sjoholt (2007), local networks are informally organized relations that can enhance development. Atterton (2007) notes that networks can help overcome the disadvantages of rural regions and promote expansion into further markets or information sources. The importance of cooperation for rural and small-town entrepreneurs is mentioned by several authors (Pato & Teixeira, 2016), while Meccheri & Pelloni (2006) argue that entrepreneurs with strong social ties in the rural community are more likely to tap into support networks and less likely to turn to institutional help. Consequently, it appears that local social relations are essential for the proper functioning of rural and small-town enterprises (Pato & Teixeira, 2016). However, based on the ESS data, Bodor et al. (2017) found that the trust level in Hungary is directly proportional to the type of settlement, i.e., the smaller the settlement, the lower the level of trust. Rural and small-town entrepreneurship is defined as 'the creation of a new organisation that introduces a new product, serves or creates a new market, or utilises a new technology in a rural environment' (Wortman, 1990, p. 330, quoted in Pato & Teixeira, 2016). Recent research explains rural and small-town entrepreneurship in similar terms. According to the literature, rural and small-town enterprises create something new, i.e., they add value by relying on local resources and traditions and capitalizing on unique local characteristics (Csurgó, 2019). Rural and small-town entrepreneurs are tied to traditional rural forms of activities (traditional or innovative handicrafts, food production) and/or to the creation or preservation of the image of a rural idyll (tourism, hospitality, commerce) (Csurgó, 2019, pp. 26–27). Local embeddedness is an important criterion when defining rural entrepreneurship. Local entrepreneurs live in rural environments (Stathopoulou et al., 2004) and are embedded in the local community, meaning they are

greatly affected by local social networks and peculiarities (Akgün et al., 2010, quoted in Pato & Teixeira, 2016). As such, the notion of rural entrepreneurship is closely linked to elements of social capital: it involves being embedded in the local community, affected by local social networks, promoting cooperation in the region, employing local people, etc., which are all part of the concept of social capital (Füzér, 2015). It is therefore worth paying detailed attention to this field.

The latest results show that there are significant conclusions regarding measures aimed at strengthening trust between rural residents and supporting community life. The rural population forms a closed group, a community, as a result of which its members are not always able to accommodate new people, developments, and activities. The lack of or decreased trust among rural and small-town residents often hinders the implementation of development projects, as people are less willing to cooperate and participate in planning and implementation processes (Domoszlai et al., 2023).

Quantitative research shows that in Hungary, the social capital of rural residents does not differ significantly from urban ones. The amount of social capital grows with the size of the settlement, but weak ties that support entrepreneurship are more significant in rural regions (Csurgó & Megyesi, 2016). A lack of trust and cooperation causes economic disadvantages in rural regions and may even damage their economies (Kis, 2006). Thus, in these regions, informal ties are especially necessary for success (Bodor & Grünhut, 2019). According to the results of social integration and disintegration research, the social capital index is high among small entrepreneurs, mainly because of their high level of relational capital (Hajdu & Megyesi, 2017, pp. 164–165).

Theory on rural and small-town entrepreneurship claims that, besides formal contractual partnerships, informal ties based on trust are of great importance for business and thus contribute to the strengthening of social capital (Patik, 2004). Where social capital is strong, more efficient economic networks can be created and maintained since, without cooperation, the pursuit of common interests is transitory and does not push a region forward (Vadasi, 2009).

3 Materials and methods

For our study, we selected three Hungarian settlements of different sizes: a small village of 300, a small town of 3,000, and a medium-sized town of 30,000 inhabitants. As all three have a long-standing tradition of grape cultivation and wine production, we primarily (but not exclusively) contacted enterprises from these fields. All of our case studies are situated in wine regions and have a Swabian past; both factors facilitate cooperation, strong local embeddedness, and collective thinking (Mike & Megyesi, 2018; Schwartz, 2021). The case studies are based on 25 semi-structured interviews conducted between the autumn of 2018 and the autumn of 2020. During the 1.5–2-hour-long interviews, we asked the entrepreneurs personal questions, questions concerning embeddedness, local and institutional social capital and trust, local entrepreneurial initiatives/associations and collaborations, questions about the business partner network and employment, as well as future visions. In analyzing the interviews, we relied on deductive categories based on the literature review (social capital, trust, embeddedness, local integration). These interviews were complemented by several field trips, shorter and longer discussions, as well as participatory

and non-participatory observation methods applied over the course of several years, thus resulting in a complete and grounded study of the topic. However, given its qualitative nature, there is no statistical generalization in the study.

Grapevine is a Swabian village of almost 300 inhabitants in Baranya County. It has a long history of grape cultivation and wine production, even though years of state socialism diminished its traditional significance. As one of our interviewees put it, 'Those who moved here after the war cut down the grapes and started to produce corn.' Winemaking, specifically the production of quality wine, returned to the village only a decade after the 1989 transition. Since then, however, the village has gained countrywide fame for its wine and gastronomic events and its touristic appeal. There is already an institutional framework for cooperation among successful enterprises in the village, most of which are run by newcomers. The village has become successful and can be regarded as a mature entrepreneurial ecosystem (Tomay & Tuboly, 2023). Two out of ten entrepreneurs we interviewed are natives of the village who run family businesses. One of them works in agriculture, having expanded the stock of cows she inherited by a factor of ten, and produces and sells milk and dairy products. The other native entrepreneur became the owner of the local shop when it was privatized in the early 1990s. Her family also makes and sells wine, while her middle-aged son works as a bus driver for the regional transportation company. The majority of local entrepreneurs arrived from somewhere else and then started a business in the village. Such entrepreneurs arrived in Grapevine in several waves (Nemes & Tomay, 2022), from regional cities, the capital, or abroad. Many of them are innovative lifestyle entrepreneurs[1] for whom freedom, creativity, and innovation are essential values. After (re)laying the foundations of wine culture and wine tourism, many of them moved on to the wider field of gastronomy, opening high-quality restaurants and starting festivals and workshops related to gastronomy.

Barge is a Swabian small town of 3,000 alongside the Danube. While its wine cellars constitute separate enterprises, they nevertheless form an integrated entrepreneurial ecosystem based on local wine tourism (Tomay & Tuboly, 2023). The wine-cellar village held its first official event in 2012, with six wine cellars collaborating in this common project to boost local wine tourism. By 2019, 25 cellars were participating in these events, which have converted the village into a prominent wine-tourism destination with its own identity and budget. The wine cellar owners aim to jointly promote the village and its reputation, which they expect to contribute to the growth of their operations in the long run. In doing so, they have created a particular form of nascent, local association of entrepreneurs. In contrast with the other two settlements, Barge has an endogenous ecosystem of entrepreneurship that has organically evolved from within (Tomay & Tuboly, 2023). Most winemakers are native to the village and have spent their lives there. Most of them are

[1] Lifestyle entrepreneurs are lifestyle migrants who change their place of residence across national borders (Stone & Stubbs, 2007). They differ from traditional entrepreneurs: instead of profit-maximizing, they strive for work-life balance (Newbery, 2011), even if this means having a lower income, in exchange for greater freedom, independence and self-esteem alongside more flexible working hours (Stone & Stubbs, 2007, p. 443). We use this term for any (not only cross-border) mobility involving when real-estate price margins between the places of origin and destination are used as starting capital for the enterprise; at the same time, this type of migration is also aimed at the realization of a slower paced value system and lifestyle focused on personal well-being (Nemes & Tomay, 2022).

first-generation entrepreneurs (seven out of eight interviewees come from families with no entrepreneurial experience) from Swabian peasant families who feel bound to local conventions and traditions. They know each other and have close family, friendship, and neighborhood relations that strengthen the local social network. Their everyday tasks are all done on a voluntary basis, including the organization, preparation, and marketing of events. This case study shows how the mixing of these two characteristics (attachment to Swabian peasant traditions and an innovative entrepreneurial mindset) has spurred the development of a self-generating entrepreneurial ecosystem among the residents.

Hermithill is a town of 30,000 inhabitants that has been famous for its wine and wine tourism for a long time. The area is a historical wine region with a history of centuries of grape cultivation. During state socialism, local winemakers did not have any opportunities for self-realization, but following the transition, they were free to launch businesses and revive the area, a process that was also accompanied by financial support. However, with the appearance of multinational corporations, many enterprises had shut down or left the area by the end of the 1990s, with only a few large, adaptable enterprises surviving in the region. The aim of today's local winemakers is to boost the region, engage young people, and pass their traditions on to them. More and more young people are taking over family businesses or launching wineries independently while older, more established producers continue to operate. As viticulture has a strong tradition in the region, many family businesses are built on winemaking. In the meantime, however, enterprises related to gastronomy have also appeared, contributing to a rise in tourism that is not only related to wine: the spread of a coffee, beer, chocolate, and even whiskey culture, accompanied by the opening and development of restaurants, confectionaries, and bars, and a growing number of events not related only to wine. We thus selected our interviewees primarily from these emerging fields. We conducted seven in-depth interviews with entrepreneurs who were similar in many regards but had different values. In general, our respondents tended to be young to middle-aged (between 25 and 50 years old), had traveled, studied, and gained experience abroad, worked as employees, returned to their hometown, and then launched their enterprises there. Two of them were producers, and four came from different fields of hospitality. One of them worked in a different sector but possessed a great amount of knowledge about the town and a large local social network, having built up relations and partnerships with local gastronomy actors. Our interviewees' entrepreneurial pasts, knowledge, and experiences of rural and small-town entrepreneurship differed. Five respondents came from entrepreneurial families; the other two were first-generation entrepreneurs. None of them had emerged from the field of grape cultivation and winemaking, but they were all directly or indirectly connected to viticulture and the wider gastronomy sector.

4 Results: Social capital and trust in the case study settlements

One of the main aims of our research was to determine what entrepreneurial social capital is like in successful settlements located in regions experiencing social and economic stagnation or decline. The notion of embeddedness is especially important in rural regions because of their regional nature and the strong ties attached to them, and the concept of

social capital provides a good basis for understanding both. Both notions stipulate that social relations, friendships, acquaintances, and neighborhood and social interactions contribute to building and growing trust and commitment; therefore, they contribute to the launching and sustainability of enterprises based on local resources embedded in the local community. Social capital helps us to measure efficiency, as many of its economic aspects are known, including its role in enhancing cooperation and creating bridges. These ties play an important role in innovation and economic development alike and thus act as a connecting element between our case studies and their respective regions.

According to this approach, Grapevine is a special case within our sample since its growth in prosperity was initially driven by entrepreneurs from outside. Later, local entrepreneurs joined in, and the cooperation between the two groups resulted in the success of the village, which can be witnessed today. The rise in local social capital was prompted by external factors rather than by endogenous efforts of already embedded local actors:

> Of course, they [those moving in] played an important role because everyone had a vision [concerning] why they came here. They wanted to make wine or open a wine cellar. So these people already came here with an idea. They didn't just come here to have an easier life […]. So they played a great role. And they played a role in the development of the village because if we cooperate and make something, everyone's business will work out. (G1)

Local winemakers and hospitality operators work well together based on the understanding that individual success can only come from joint success. They do not compete but rather complement each other. The people who moved into the village in different waves tended to seek each other's company rather than that of the native population. With the rising number of urban entrepreneurs who moved in, the village's social capital also became denser – which is necessary for the embeddedness of small and medium-sized enterprises (Kloosterman & Rath, 2001). Informal networks are important for these entrepreneurs, especially when launching their enterprises, as they provide them with information as well as material and psychological support (Stone & Stubbs, 2007):

> Here, people who left the city and the entrepreneurs meet each other all the time; there are friendships, too. There is competition but no jealousy. (G2)

As mentioned earlier, trust and direct, personal acquaintances act as an important 'fuel' for the functioning of rural and small-town entrepreneurship:

> I like to live in the countryside, because although I have business relations in Budapest, I am here today, I will be here tomorrow, and I was here yesterday […]. Trust is very different here […]. In Pécs, you cannot go to a building material shop and get a load of sand by saying that you will pay for it at the end of the month […], it's very different. (G3)

Bridging social capital was not only brought to the village, but new connections and collaborations grew from the events being organized there. Each year, Grapevine hosts one of the top events organized by Hungary's association of rural restaurants, when a small, selected group of guests enjoy delicious dishes prepared by the best restaurants from the countryside, accompanied by local wines. The two-day gathering has a special, familiar atmosphere that has resulted in friendships in the short term and cooperation in the long run.

In our other example, Barge, the ties mentioned previously are based on personal relations rather than an entrepreneurial value system. This may be due to the stronger role of social capital, where a lack of values can be replaced by new relationships. The success of this wine-cellar village can best be understood within this framework, which is evident in the sense of fellowship that emerged from our interviews:

> [It happened] with all the friends […]. So we went on trips at weekends in groups, for two days. We visited two wineries and tasted the wine. We obviously collected information from there, saw the tools, machines, everything. Then we felt the desire and the need to do something. (B1)

This collective way of thinking, which cannot overcome a dependence on local relationships, produces a different result from the ecosystem we observed in Grapevine. In Barge, bonding social capital plays a stronger role in the operation of enterprises than bridging social capital. As such, strong collectivity may hinder the full independence of some enterprises. Strong values linked to the community and its traditions do not necessarily produce a negative outcome, provided that the horizontal ties of dependency do not disintegrate and the community's social capital and system of relations remain robust. Technological innovation and an increase in the number of visitors are also facilitated by bonding social capital, i.e., very strong local ties based on trust and personal relations:

> This enterprise is a bit different. Its sustainability is different. I pay a lot of attention to and strive to have good relations with the locals to support their work, as this enterprise is only viable if I let people live. […] I am not a member of the association; it was my decision not to become a member. I think the young people there are great together. (B2)

When it comes to their various economic activities, the entrepreneurs in the village rely exclusively on family relations instead of looking for partners from outside. This ecosystem is thus dominated by strong ties (bonding social capital), which are strengthened through local events, for instance, among the guests at wine dinners:

> We get a lot of calls, but we only sell here on-site. We don't want to be on any shelves yet for a while because we are not a factory; we want to produce quality and not quantity, meaning here locally. […] I got a call asking me to sell wine to a restaurant. But, no, because they come and would like to deliver it to restaurants, seasonally, we should give it to them, but no. We won't do it. (B3)

In the case of Barge, an integrated entrepreneurial ecosystem is being formed where bonding social capital is the dominant type. The other relations needed for development become indirectly available for the majority of the community as a result. Bonding social capital thus turns into bridging social capital, meaning both types are present in the community. This incorporation of the characteristics of rural and lifestyle entrepreneurship leads to the creation of both a strong local community and the development of economic activities that boost local wine tourism.

In terms of social capital, Hermithill is more similar to Barge than to Grapevine. Locals jointly try to develop the area by sustaining their own traditions, supported by the knowledge they have gained elsewhere. Cooperation is important for those entrepreneurs

who would like to do something for the town while pursuing their own version of innovation by attempting to reinvigorate the region both economically and socially, in addition to maintaining their traditions:

> The main point is that we don't want to disturb each other's business, but we look for ways to cooperate. Some of us are already doing that; we sit down and discuss possible developments every once in a while. (H1)

It is true that there are risk-avoiding people in the town who prefer to trust locals according to their traditional links through personal relations and acquaintances rather than engage with unknown actors; they form their own local social networks and enter cooperation with other locals this way. In this case, real trust (Grünhut et al., 2019) is not present but rather a form of rationality through which distrust can be overcome, thereby promoting cooperation and the daily operation of the local enterprises. All these local entrepreneurs have always imagined their future in their hometown, and after seeing more and more people arriving to discover the region, they realized that it made sense for them to start an enterprise there.

As mentioned above, local and community interests derive from the mistrust of certain actors that do not strengthen local entrepreneurial structures (Labrianidis, 2006) that continue to be based on locality, as local people are employed by these multinational companies and taxes are paid locally, thereby promoting the regional economy:

> People are really attached to locals from the town who know what they bought for their children last year, know their needs a bit, know the person, their families, like the greengrocer on the corner where they always go. […] I knew what each person was looking for, therefore I could give them something extra that multinational companies couldn't. (H2)

Of the three settlements we studied, in Hermithill, the lack of linking social capital is most evident. Almost all our interviewees complained about public institutions not taking their side and about not getting government or other support for their initiatives. This result reinforces the assumptions of Huszár and Berger (2022) about the state dependency of small enterprises. The latter believe that if they want to keep achieving their goals, these institutions cannot be ignored in the long run:

> There are many requirements for getting support, nothing is returned, work is given to non-locals or larger companies who are closer to the 'fire.' Now, there are great promises that because of the change in the local leadership, they will give preference to local entrepreneurs. (H3)

As these examples show, social capital appears in three different ways in the settlements in which we conducted our interviews. Although there are common elements, there is no single path to local integration. While the presence of strong bonding and bridging social capital is essential for any comprehensive change at the regional level, its extent seems to vary. Similarly, there are also differences among the three settlements regarding the perceived importance of institutions and the utilization of opportunities provided by linking social capital.

5 Discussion and conclusions

In our study, we endeavored to examine instances of local initiatives and cooperation that we considered to be successful. We aimed to assess the social factors that influence and guide the flourishing of small enterprises in order to gain a detailed picture of how rural and small-town entrepreneurial local integration can be developed. Based on the interviews, we attempted to identify the common features and social factors behind local integration: the impact of trust among entrepreneurs and the role of social networks. Our case studies confirmed our basic assumption that the social environment of entrepreneurs and the local culture in which they are embedded all impact the process.

If we examine the common features of the case studies, we can see that in all three settlements, a process of shared thinking and action started based on traditional activities and local resources (typically, grape cultivation and winemaking in all three localities). Previous activities were renewed, extended, and complemented in certain ways (in two cases, through quality winemaking and wine tourism, and in two cases, through the conscious expansion of gastronomic offerings). A communal spirit, locality, and willingness to do good motivate entrepreneurs to utilize the assets of the given area and to launch their enterprises. In all three cases, the local actors are tied to each other by dense and intense relations, irrespective of whether they have established a professional or a volunteer-based tourism association or operate through an informal cooperation network. So far, all three approaches seem equally functional. (However, there are some indicators that it is more efficient if voluntary associations are replaced or complemented by the work of experts in the long term.)

Our case studies differ in one regard – namely, in the origin and type of external and internal resources that were available at the start of their development. Grapevine's development is essentially based on external resources, as lifestyle entrepreneurs moved in who relied on their urban roots (material, cultural, and social capital) and travel experiences in order to create a functioning, livable, and economically successful village. New residents can thus make a living from the income generated by their local enterprises, allowing local businesses led by native entrepreneurs to prosper. In Hermithill, many locals had temporarily left the town, traveling or studying elsewhere before becoming entrepreneurs. Their local patriotism and the recognition of market gaps were both important factors in their conscious decision to return to their hometown and establish an enterprise, create a community, and promote local development. All the interviewees from Hermithill expressed a desire to do something for the region; they could imagine their future there and felt that its position had improved, creating many new opportunities for them. They are innovative and flexible and act on new trends and local needs by prioritizing their traditions and their businesses' sustainability. They cooperate and collaborate with the locals, local entrepreneurs, and each other and support civic initiatives and organizations, which has given rise to a new kind of entrepreneurial culture and value system that is different from the traditional one. The example of Hermithill shows that when the local population experiences the world around them from the individual perspective, rational and innovative thinking becomes possible, making visible the market value of the material and immaterial capital that they have unconsciously accumulated over the course of

their lives. This may not only lead to a reversal of migration flows, causing people to return, but it also increases the town's value and can act as a catalyst for a range of similar mechanisms.

In Barge, however, the local entrepreneurs are neither new inhabitants nor have they spent years away traveling or studying. Instead, an endogenous ecosystem has developed, whereby the renewal of old village traditions has led to the pursuit of higher quality winemaking and wine tourism, essentially driven by one or two classical, innovative, and risk-taking entrepreneurs that pulled everyone else with them, based on the recognition of common interests. While the economic and social communities of Grapevine and Hermithill are made up of entrepreneurs with an innovative spirit and a strongly market-oriented rationality, these values appear to a lesser extent in Barge. Nevertheless, the economic success of this cooperation based on very strong local ties and cultural traditions paints a positive picture for the future. The example of Barge suggests that while the entrepreneurial mindset described in the literature is indispensable for the successful operation of an enterprise, in the case of a strong rural community based on strong local ties and cooperation, this process can be extended to many enterprises across a region that may lack these values. For instance, know-how can be shared through informal channels among members of the community, meaning some settlements can acquire and import the classical entrepreneurial values described in the literature thanks to the immaterial elements of capital.

At the same time, albeit in different ways, this raises the question of how the sustainability and further development of local ecosystems built on local resources are linked to the external institutional, policy, and national and local government environments. The opinions of our interviewees also differ in this respect. In Grapevine, the local government has acted as a catalyst and facilitator of entrepreneurial activities related to winemaking (organizing festivals and developing a wine route). It only stopped organizing and providing financial support to these activities in the past few years, at which point the respective enterprises had already been strengthened due to local processes and the establishment of the tourism association. The latter, thus, no longer rely on the local government's budget for event organization and marketing.

> This tourism association is just awakening; now there are resources and an employee who deals with things, and it could be made more viable. It may have its own reasonable budget, maybe within a few years. You could apply for and get grants, etc. Then we won't need the local government or anything; the aim would be that the association manages wine tourism matters and events by itself. (G4)

In parallel, some of our interviewees in Grapevine emphasize that stimulating enterprises produces quick returns for the local government, as opposed to infrastructural investments with larger budget requirements that do not generate any returns:

> Otherwise, I think that the local government put some resources into the budget and played a role so far; it had to do [this] so far [until now]. […] Here, everyone thinks that a sidewalk has to be built, but no one thinks about the fact that this costs HUF 60 million or understands what kind of budget a village like this has. […] So these people simply don't necessarily understand that it's not as if you put 1.5 million [HUF] into a cellar event at Grapevine, and in 99 percent of the cases, it will make it back from the income. And you have the risk

> that, let's say, it rains, then there is a little fiscal failure. But, no… and you cannot mention [the fact that for] a 1.5 km long village, the sidewalk on both sides, […] these are sums that… there is no grant that you can use for this, it would be impossible for a village like this to implement [such developments]. (G5)

Due to their traditional 'Swabian' mentality, the interviewees in Barge do not expect help from outside, except perhaps for some financial support from the local government. This is the reason the village cannot develop as fast as Grapevine, although external support from the local government or the state might have an impact and accelerate its development.

In Hermithill, our respondents almost unanimously believed that small local enterprises would move the region forward but that greater cooperation is needed, which must also be supported by government intervention (institutional support). They all feel that these initiatives could boost the local economy, convince locals to stay (attract young people), and make the region an attractive tourist destination for urban residents. They stress the importance of collaboration among local entrepreneurs, as well as cooperation with local non-governmental organizations and government institutions. Regarding the latter, however, they complain about an absence of opportunities, as they believe the local government does not offer sufficient support to local entrepreneurs. In this context, our interviewees did not talk about a lack of financial support but an absence of institutional backing for their aspirations, given that on their own, the entrepreneurs will not be able to carry out and sustain their plans in the long term.

In conclusion, all three cases require the support of an external, institutional environment in different ways, either in the form of policy measures, financial means, or professional know-how, in order to sustain and strengthen the local economy created by the local entrepreneurs. Thus, our result reinforces the assumptions of Huszár and Berger (2022) about the state-dependence of small enterprises. Cooperation among entrepreneurs and the collective strength of locals with different value systems are important, but their efforts have to be accompanied by an institutional framework to make them sustainable in the long term. The extent to which non-transparent institutional frameworks and centralized control in an illiberal democracy undermine the chances of rural and small-town enterprises developing independently of the state is a topic of further research.

As for the international relevance of our findings, generalization of the results is rather limited; however, they strengthen the claim that the society and entrepreneurs of less developed Eastern European states operate in a specific way – different from the Western European experience. We hope to enrich the literature with insights into the locally integrated group of entrepreneurs in Hungary, knowing that our case studies can only provide a snapshot of a few cases. Therefore, further research is needed.

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank our colleague, Emese Tuboly, for allowing us to use her interviews from Barge. The research was supported by the National Research, Development and Innovation Fund of Hungary, financed under the 2020-4.1.1-TKP2020 funding scheme (Project no. TKP2020-

IKA-08). The study was written in the framework of the project 'The role of gentrification in rural development' (FK-138098) with the support provided by the Ministry of Innovation and Technology of Hungary from the National Research, Development and Innovation Fund, financed under the [NKFI-FK] funding scheme. The research was supported by the ÚNKP-22-3-II New National Excellence Program of the Ministry for Innovation and Technology from the source of the National Research, Development and Innovation Fund.

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Tables

Table 1 Detailed characteristics of cited interviewees

Code	Settlement	Characteristics	Relation to settlement	Gender	Age	Year
G1	Grapevine	native agricultural entrepreneur	native	female	50+	2019
G2	Grapevine	gastro-entrepreneur and accommodation provider	settler	male	30-50	2019
G3	Grapevine	gastro-entrepreneur and accommodation provider, ex-mayor of the village	settler	male	50+	2019
G4	Grapevine	wine tourism entrepreneur, manager in the tourism association	outsider	male	20-30	2019
G5	Grapevine	wine tourism entrepreneur	settler	male	30-50	2019
B1	Barge	local winemaker and wine tourism entrepreneur and founding member of the tourism association	native	male	30-50	2020
B2	Barge	local winemaker, wine tourism entrepreneur	native	male	50+	2020
B3	Barge	member of a local winemaker family and tourism manager	native	female	30-50	2020
H1	Hermithill	owner of a winery and accommodation provider	native	male	30-50	2020
H2	Hermithill	owner of a pastry shop	native	female	50+	2020
H3	Hermithill	service provider	settler	male	30-50	2020

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https://doi.org/10.17356/ieejsp.v9i4.1142
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Local food as resistance: Integrating women's experiences in the Hungarian food sovereignty movement

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Abstract

The weak civil society thesis in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) has been central to scholarly debates that interpret civil society using a Western lens. Touching upon the issue of food sovereignty, we contest this conceptualisation by revealing the wider networks and strength of food-related local practices in Hungary after the 1990s. In doing so, we rely on a qualitative study conducted between 2020 and 2021, based on 25 semi-structured 'oral herstory' interviews with women who have been actively dealing with food sovereignty issues. With the above study, we had three main objectives. First, to counter the widespread (mis)perception of local food production as a mere necessity in CEE. Second, we highlight the importance of rural local food production to counter the understanding of home gardening as a practice unassociated with resistance. Third, we wish to give voice to women concerning their experiences in the movement in terms of the latter's larger structural and historical settings. Our findings concentrate on two key areas: the movement's experience with recurrent crises and political-economic conditions from the 1990s onwards and a subjective assessment of shifting hierarchical dynamics within the movement's milieu. The paper's main goal is to illuminate women's experiences and positionality within the global food system from a Hungarian viewpoint.

Keywords: civil society; food sovereignty; women; gender relations; Central and Eastern Europe; Hungary

1 Introduction

In Central and Eastern Europe, the weak civil society thesis has been central to scholarly debates that identify low levels of engagement, general passivity, and the distrust of citizens after the regime change. Contrarily, criticism has been voiced concerning the overes-

timation of the latter's participation in formal institutions and the interpretation of civil society using a Western lens (Petrova & Tarrow, 2007; Jacobsson, 2015; Guasti, 2016). Although citizen involvement remains highly uneven across CEE countries, a gradual increase can be observed regarding the contestation of everyday grievances (Jacobsson & Saxonberg, 2016; Gagyi & Ivancheva, 2019). The collapse of the Soviet bloc, the 2008 financial crisis, and the latest pandemic acted as distinctive crises of capitalism, inducing new waves of mobilisation.

Additionally, the global pandemic that erupted in March 2020 provided an opportunity to identify and engage in community action. Society responded with self-organisation and mutual assistance to offer a solution not only to arising circumstances but even to acute problems stemming from the climate and ecological crisis, global economic insecurity, precarious livelihoods and housing, and an increasingly widespread care and food crisis (Fraser, 2016). Thus, there is an urgent need to connect civil society research with the analysis of recurring crises, including not only the crisis of democracy but also ecological threats and economic (neo)liberalism on various geographical scales (Purcell, 2013), in order to grasp the interdependent character of these phenomena.

Addressing these issues, the HerStory Collective intends to touch upon issues of food, care, feminism, and social solidarity. Combining considerations of both civic action and academic research, the 13 members of the collective explore urban-rural connections and divides between typically Budapest-based civic groups playing an important role in the food sovereignty movement and rural local initiatives facilitating environmental education, permaculture, community farming (CSA), and creating box schemes. In doing so, we aim to counter the 'weak civil society' thesis by revealing the broader networks and strength of food-related mobilisations.

Between 2020 and 2021, the HerStory Collective conducted a qualitative study based on 25 semi-structured 'oral herstory' interviews with women who are or have been actively dealing with food sovereignty issues or have been part of the movement in a more explicit way. Similarly to the methodology of narrative life history interviews, the former outline hierarchical relations and gender dynamics and highlight marginalised life history experiences alongside prevailing historical and contemporary narratives. During the interviews, interviewees talked about their lives, everyday realities, joys, and difficulties. In the analysis of the interviews, we highlighted aspects that came up several times, as well as those that were decisive at the system level in terms of the future of food sovereignty, the care crisis, and, in general, the social status of women.

The above study had a threefold aim. First, it was intended to counter the common (mis)conception that while local food production in CEE is seen as a necessity in Western Europe, it may be considered a sign of resilience and innovation (Smith et al., 2008). Second, as home gardening is often regarded as outdated and excluded from movement interests, we aimed to integrate such context-specific activities and problematise the multiplicity and uneven relations of alternative food production. Third, we wished to do this by channelling the voices of women in the movement and locating them in their wider historical and structural contexts.

The results presented in this paper focus on two particular aspects of the study: (1) the experience of recurring crises and political-economic conditions during the development of the movement from the 1990s onwards, and (2) a subjective evaluation of the

changing dynamics of the hierarchies in the movement milieu. Ultimately, the paper sheds light on women's positionality and experiences within the global food system from a Hungarian vantage point.

In the following, we discuss the theoretical debate about the weakness of CEE civil society development and propose an alternative understanding for analysing such initiatives. After elaborating on the methodological considerations that drove our research agenda, empirical findings are introduced in two separate sections. Finally, in the conclusions, we invite scholars to revise their estimations of the importance of women's positionality in mundane everyday food-related practices and reposition CEE marginality in future food-related research.

2 The weakness thesis and CEE environmentalism

Environment-related dissent, civil society development, and the process of Europeanisation have all been analysed in Central and Eastern Europe by employing the benchmark of the West (Jehlička & Jacobsson, 2021), inevitably leading to environmentalism being deemed weak. Naturally, there are differences compared to the West in the directions, topics, and terms of mobilisation, but the goal here is to highlight how CEE environmentalism differs and follows different paths than its Western counterpart. In the following section, we demonstrate how these variations have developed while also making three proposals – the recontextualisation of CEE environmentalism, considering everyday local food-related practices to be a potential form of dissent, and integrating women's perspectives into environmental and civic action.

The legitimacy and governance of environmental issues over the past thirty years have changed considerably in the CEE region. In command economies, environmentalism mainly crystallised within conservation activities, which were considered neutral and apolitical in the sense that they were not conflictual. Instead, the local environmental struggles that emerged in the 1980s addressed harmful industrial plants and polluting activities on a local scale, generating temporary coalitions between experts and local residents (Vári, 1997) but leaving political decision-making delinked from environmental consequences (Szabó, 1993; Pavlínek & Pickles, 2000). Nevertheless, environmental dissent played a crucial role in political transformation and bringing down state socialist regimes (Kerényi & Szabó, 2006).

The seemingly strong environmental mobilisation experienced towards the end of state socialism did not weaken after the setting up of democratic institutions but rather dissolved in more formal means of representation, often in the direction of party formation (Mikecz, 2008), moving away from social movement organisation. In parallel with party politics, environmental activists' concerns focused more on risks arising from integration into the global economy and the consequent abandonment of environmental matters (Persányi, 1993; Harper, 2005; Glied, 2016; Farkas, 2017). Such initiatives that privileged self-sufficiency fit the 'small-is-beautiful' type of environmental movement well (Smith & Jehlička, 2013; Farkas, 2017).

Over time, dominant accounts of CEE environmentalism were tainted by the weak civil society thesis that has become a key component of the discussion about Central and

Eastern European societies (Jehlička & Jacobsson, 2021). Scholarship shifted towards a Western-centric evaluation of activism, from which perspective citizens were deemed to exhibit low levels of engagement, general apathy, and a distrust of traditional forms of participation (Petrova & Tarrow, 2007; Foa & Ekiert, 2017; Vándor et al., 2017; Meyer et al., 2020). Political scientists typically argue that the average Hungarian citizen's political attitudes are characterised by statism, servility, and paternalistic relationships inherited from the political elitism that originated in the nineteenth century and were perpetuated by state socialism and regime change (Glied, 2013). Conversely, others have emphasised that the practices of state-socialist environmental organisations have been incompatible with the advocacy-style activism that is preferred and usually considered in the West. To this incompatibility Gille (2010) drew attention by highlighting the anti-political character of post-socialism – the pre-1989 value awarded to authenticity, scepticism, and the rejection of social visions imposed on society from above – in comparison to Western participatory politics that resembled the constant state of mobilisation that society grew weary of.

Meanwhile, the green movement of the 2000s saw food sovereignty as achievable through changes to the global institutional and regulatory environment, with little reflection on the everyday challenges of wider society and the realities of women and other marginalised groups. Shopping communities in favour of locally sourced food and conscious consumption communities started to emerge, integrating with other food-related initiatives. Established eco-political organisations introduced a critique of capitalist and consumerist practices, urging social and environmental transformation (Krasznai Kovacs & Pataki, 2021). The marketing of conscious consumption sharply contrasted with the widespread sustainability practices of CEE non-market food operations, such as homegrown food and sharing, which were ignored in the international discourse (Jehlička & Jacobsson, 2021). The majority of policies targeting sustainable consumption in the EU were thus blind to marginal forms of food production and consumption that were traditionally widespread among the population. Meanwhile, traditional forms of food production were undermined not only by unfolding new narratives and practices of consumption (Nagy et al., 2015) but also by changing structural conditions (e.g. access to land) (Kovács, 2017). Hence, to understand the roots and drivers of food sovereignty, we should scrutinise how old and new narratives and practices are related and limited by macro-scale processes and power relations.

Even if ecology was always an integral part of dissent and subcultures in Hungary, the expertise and style of activism came under heavy American influence (Kerényi & Szabó, 2006) during the European Union (EU) pre-accession years. This period involved the provision of ample financial resources for the NGOisation of the green movement but was associated with the risk of dependence on tenders and focusing on international campaigns instead of domestic affairs. Accession to the EU in 2004 further strengthened these trends (Buzogány, 2015). One of the most active anti-globalisation organisations, Greenpeace, focused on global climate change, seed control, GMO and pesticide-free food production, and consumer protection. Compared to other organisations critical of globalisation, it was more visible due to its spectacular protests, but in many cases, these were not linked to domestic political issues but followed the profile and campaigns of the international organisation (Mikecz, 2018).

Since the second half of the 2000s, the green movement space in Hungary has undergone a number of transformations. Partly as a result of the financial and economic crisis of 2008, its holistic and systemic characteristics began to unfold at this time – when the climate crisis, social crisis, and economic crisis combined to influence the evolution of green thinking. Increasingly, the concept of environmental justice began to gain currency within the green movement, emphasising the mutual importance of environmental sustainability and social justice. The Great Financial Crisis in the CEE region contributed not only to a more complex approach to environmental matters but also helped renew how scholars think about the region conceptually. The tradition of strong but invisible forms of everyday environmentalism in CEE became subject to a renewed perspective that emphasised the need to redefine CEE environmentalism by addressing vernacular forms of non-political practices and drawing attention to marginal participants of the movement, such as the Roma and women.

More often than not, food sovereignty is seen as an issue tightly related to social movements and civic mobilisation. However, in post-socialist Europe, the concept and practice of food sovereignty may strongly differ from Western or global understandings, such as those outlined by the Via Campesina and Nyéléni declarations (Visser et al., 2015), but this does not mean that it is absent or irrelevant. In contrast to urban centres, social movements in rural areas are much scarcer, while evidence suggests that rural everyday practices make a significant contribution to food sovereignty – socially diverse practices that reduce environmental impact and create community benefits – without explicitly aiming to do so (Smith & Jehlička, 2013).

Furthermore, scholars have highlighted the strength of grassroots mobilisations 'from below', whereby 'uneventful' activism leads to collaborative processes. Instead of capturing civil society mobilisation as a merely quantitative phenomenon, it has been conceptualised as the process of 'building relations and achieving collective goals rather than a stable object of research or a structure that can be fully captured by quantitative measures at any given point in time' (Jacobsson & Korolczuk, 2019, p. 139). Individuals, food producers, and local communities who adopt the food sovereignty framework increasingly invest in local tactics instead of addressing grievances targeted at globalised food systems through protests and large-scale mobilisation (Ayres & Bosia, 2011). Citizens often prefer the creation of loose networks that link individuals, groups, and collectivities in a volatile political context amidst recurring crises, as the former are believed to be better equipped to address the need for political change (Balogh et al., 2021; Krasznai Kovacs, 2021). Such grassroots activism may be more capable of mobilising people who have not been engaged in collective action before.

Last but not least, social reproduction scholars stress that labour division within the capitalist world system invisibilises care and reproductive work, such as housekeeping, child care, and food provisioning – all done mainly by women (Federici, 2012). It conceals the fact that there are intricate systems of power, gender, and class interactions in farming households. Not all resources are inevitably combined, and not all labour is recognised or distributed equally (Brent, 2022). Hence, transforming gender relations is crucial to changing the food system and an important element of food sovereignty (Patel, 2009).

3 Methodological considerations

The HerStory Collective came into being as a self-organised collective that currently has 13 members from a variety of professional fields – social, environmental, and permaculture movements, civil society organisations, and academic institutions, covering a wide spectrum of backgrounds in the arts, humanities, social sciences and natural sciences. The members of the group are familiar with green and women's organisations through either practice or research. In the beginning, the diverse experiences and expertise of the group members were mapped out during online meetings in order to formulate socially useful goals and research questions collaboratively. The diversity of members enriches cross-disciplinary knowledge generation, and we used a research-focused agenda-setting methodology to identify shared visions and research directions, which is a critical dimension of scientific knowledge creation. This represents the starting point of the research process, which includes both the interests and aspirations of specific research communities and the identification of uncharted topics (Santos & Horta, 2018). In preceding the organisation of the research process, this methodology helps explore less researched topics and under-resourced research areas (Balázs et al., 2020). Being a critical feminist research collective, HerStory Collective prioritises research that explores the living conditions of rural and farming women and unfolds the burden of care on women. Based on the above, we aim to create new knowledge while also rethinking the relationship between theory and empiricism by acknowledging the role of structures that frame local conditions for action and shape individuals' possibilities but also reflect on who is and is not seen as an agent (Gibson-Graham, 2014).

We jointly developed a structured set of oral history interview questions, which allowed us to conduct the interviews through a division of labour. Similarly, the 'oral herstory' narrative interviews unfold hierarchical relationships and gender dynamics, highlighting marginalised experiences alongside dominant historical and contemporary narratives (Abrams, 2010). We reached out to interviewees through personal and professional connections, conducting 25 structured interviews. Our interviewees are involved in food sovereignty movements in many diverse ways, having different demographic characteristics and backgrounds. They talked about their lives, everyday realities, joys, and difficulties. In the analysis of the interviews, we highlighted those aspects that emerged repeatedly and those that were definitive and systemic concerning the future of food sovereignty, the crisis of care, and the social situation of women. In addition, HerStory Collective members prepared autoethnographic notes, which were coded in the same way as the interviews. Autoethnography is a useful strategy involving the researcher experiencing the events under study (Feischmidt, 2007, p. 226). In such cases, personal narratives are explored through a sociological perspective, reflecting on the social context by mapping power relations (Wall, 2008). Since HerStory Collective members have an in-depth knowledge of the network of organisations under study, autoethnographic notes constitute a distinctive element of the research methodology.

Most of the interviews were conducted through online digital platforms, as the fieldwork was carried out during the COVID-19 lockdowns. This way, we could reach more women living and working in rural areas, although we also faced several challenges. Due to the circumstances, we could not reach out to Roma women, for example. We wished to

open the research to everyday experiences that were different from the reality of the women we had previously interviewed. Roma activists and researchers invited to participate in the research were unable to do so due to their heavy workloads. Furthermore, we witnessed a recurring problem in our group dynamics: the critical narratives of the activist and researcher community are often exclusionary. The professional jargon and entrenched concepts stemming from the institutional environment of researchers may act as a barrier; consequently, we failed to reach all target groups. Our aim for the future is to be able to deconstruct theoretically loaded concepts and internal inequalities as well.

Our interviewees made conscious and reflective statements about rural life. The aspects of these that most often recurred involved the lack of money-making opportunities, satisfaction with spiritual needs, adequate educational opportunities, conditions of food production, the physical safety and social legitimacy of women, and the lack of adequate public services (e.g. schools, kindergardens, and public transport systems). Regarding these dimensions, only a few interviewees reported success or satisfaction in relation to the narratives of the mainstream green movement, the food sovereignty movement, or the traditional female life path. The focus was more on exhaustion, overwork and burnout. In the remainder of the paper, we summarise their experiences by framing the analysis on two levels: structural constraints that were experienced, and hierarchies in the movement milieu.

4 Facing the structural constraints of food self-provisioning in the Hungarian countryside

Food sovereignty was discussed in relation to multiple structural constraints by many interviewees in various positions, from a leader of a failed medium-sized organic farm to a woman processing and selling fruit from a garden in small quantities. A shared critical point in these stories was the thorough reorganisation of food production in CEE and the introduction of new spaces and narratives of consumption. Major food retailers have occupied a powerful position in this process: they have mobilised immense assets to obtain control over the circuits of capital by integrating food processing and distribution on a global level (Wrigley et al., 2005), including in the CEE region since the 1990s. They entered emerging markets seeking high returns by exploiting policy rents (through the inconsistency of regulative systems associated with bargaining), the deficits in supply, and property (land)-related market opportunities for speculative investment. Since retailers are deeply anchored in host economies (Hess, 2004) and have had to act under conditions of increasing competitive pressure since the late 1990s, they have pursued risk-reducing strategies such as making use of crisis-hit CEE food processing capacities to organise low-cost supplier networks for mass production (Nagy, 2014).

In this way, they have integrated food processing firms and their suppliers (farms) in global food value chains through an exploitative and selective process: being 'inside' retailer-driven chains was considered a way to ensure market stability and flows of know-how, yet demanded flexibility and adaptation, which trickled down food value chains to agricultural producers (Velkey et al., 2021). Market restructuring was actively supported by the construction of a new consumer identity by major retailers, confronted with both

state-socialist (shortage-economy-led) and post-socialist (disturbed, valueless, price-driven bazaar-shopper) models of consumption (Grubbauer, 2012; Kornai, 1980; Sulima, 2012) and implicitly, with labour-intensive, traditional means of self-provision.

The changing consumption patterns, emerging supplier relations, privatisation, and formation of the national regulatory system have impacted the opportunities for creating space for alternative food production in many ways. Our interviews crystallised two powerful, complex processes. The first is the low-cost production of food, promoted by CEE suppliers who challenged pre-existing traditional models of food production for self-supply and sharing. Rural studies and official statistics have highlighted the decline in the consumption of self-produced food in low-income rural areas (Kovách & Megyesi, 2006). Our interviewees also reflected on this process:

> When we had the new supermarkets [during the 1990s], people in rural places just gave up producing their own food. They [didn't] realise [...] what precious assets they had and sold their land... People today do not have pantries anymore; they are dependent on buying food every day. (interview NE01)

One alternative our interviewee and her neighbours (many of them settlers from Western Europe) rely on is self-provision and family labour complemented by income from tourism and practical educational activities that channel national and EU funds into their small family farm. Combining their own resources, reciprocal relations with the local community, external funds, and international networks allows them not only to survive but also to educate younger generations and run model farms for self-supply.

The second process many discussed is the multiplicity of structural difficulties associated with establishing and running a farm. One key issue was the production of food beyond household needs in a system associated with strict regulations (defined according to EU principles and introduced by major retailers in the 1990s), which are put into practice through costly bureaucratic procedures and require constant technological development and vast investment. The desire not to exceed related structural limits is a source of differentiation in strategies aiming for food sovereignty. As an interviewee put it:

> There are a couple of families which took this scale jump, as it was their goal, and they invested all their assets. Yet [for a woman with kids] just staying at home and doing [food processing] in her spare time [doesn't] work [...]; a family can't make a living on this. (interview MK01)

Thus, the position of small producers working part-time is marginalised legally, which also cements the status of women with a disproportionally large reproductive burden (Engel-di Mauro, 2006; Gregor & Kováts, 2019). Land ownership is considered a fundamental structural constraint to food sovereignty by our interviewees. The conditions of getting access to agricultural land – i.e. the non-transparent and biased regulation and implementation of post-socialist transition restitution and privatisation practices, national and EU sectoral policies, and the resulting centralisation of power and control in the food sector – have been widely discussed (Kovách, 2016; Tagai et al., 2018). Yet our interviewees highlighted how the conditions of the transition blocked the rise of smallholders who relied on alternative approaches to food production in various forms, from self-supply to agroecological model farming.

> We meant [intended] to get the land that used to be in the family's possession back in the restitution process. Yet we had only shared ownership in the former cooperative land, thus we had to buy others' shares, which cost six times more than buying [the land] for vouchers. We had to invest our own savings and get into debt to start ecological farming. (interview NE01)

> Finally, we could get the land for farming, yet the process was legally and financially difficult, full of traps. We launched the project, including a community college for educating [people about] ecological farming and the attached model farm for practical training… Yet the legal framework was imprecise in regulating the operation of the National Land Trust, which allowed the ministry to rent out the [farm]land … And finally, our [farming] project was destroyed. …Food sovereignty means producing your own food, for which you need land and processing capacities at the community scale. We have no chance [to do this] any more as land has been grabbed from us. (interview NE03)

Despite the unequal chances, the early years of the transition were also considered a golden age of experimenting, building networks and formulating alternative strategies for food production (and obtaining land for this), as our interviewees could find and use the gaps in emerging regulation and institutional systems. Nevertheless, the blind spots ceased to exist, and farmland prices rose due to the global embedding of food production and EU accession, which – along with growing capital and knowledge-intense farming and the ageing of rural society – sped up the centralisation process and the loss of control of communities over their own territory and environment (Fertő & Fogarasi, 2007; Nagy et al., 2015; Kovách, 2016). Such processes and the financialisation of land markets across CEE (Visser, 2017) also limit the entry of new agents seeking food sovereignty:

> We knew that in today's Hungary, leaving a downtown apartment to replace it with [a place] in the countryside is very, very dangerous. (interview BP01)

Alternative organisations that focus on ecological and community aspects of food production go beyond mere farming. In their stories, land use, food production, and organic farming are inseparably linked with the building and maintenance of local communities to counter the polarisation of rural society, the disintegration of local communities, and the spread of patron-client relationships.

> It can already be seen that there will be a serious food shortage in the [20]30s as well. The things that are happening now, and why land grab has started, is because the master of the world will be the one who owns the land and the food. (interview NE03)

The structural constraints discussed in our interviews are rooted in the global organisation of food production and distribution, hence they exhibit the peripheral position of CEE producers in obtaining access to various forms of capital (land, knowledge, and networks) and entail the loss of control over the local assets and processes of communities/residents. The process was exacerbated by legal-institutional contexts, which were in constant flux from the early 1990s onwards, giving way to bargaining and the development of adaptive strategies. Nevertheless, the closing of regulative gaps cemented unequal

relations in the food sector and challenged the agents of alternative production in variegated ways. We discovered multiple areas of differentiation, among which gender relations were identified as ubiquitous and persistent.

5 Gendered hierarchies of the movement milieu from women's perspective

Our study also led to insights into women's position and role in formulating strategies for food sovereignty and putting these into practice. For many of our interviewees, entering the world of alternative food production entailed moving to a rural place, which produced a number of practical problems with organising family life and managing the household. In this section, we focus on women's ongoing struggles within the movement, with a focus on gendered hierarchies. In the movement space, two dynamics can be perceived: on the one hand, hierarchies affect the relationship between male and female actors within the movement and food sovereignty practices, and on the other hand, they also affect the gendered course and direction of the movement.

Looking at the first dimension, the mainstream narratives, definitions and demands related to food sovereignty primarily developed in the breeding ground of conservative values and did not reflect the reality, needs, and possibilities of women, caregivers, and those primarily responsible for feeding their families. One of the consequences of this fundamental problem is that many women experienced that male oppression has been cemented into movement hierarchies in the green movement over the years and is difficult to escape due to the different attitudes of generations.

> In the green movement, there were countless such cases when they made it very clear that they did not think that women were suitable for this field. (interview MK04)

The regime change and the subsequent economic crisis have posed significant challenges for Hungarian women, and there has been a significant 're-traditionalisation' of gender roles since the 1990s (Tsagarousianou, 1995). The state has been shifting the burden of childbearing onto families, while the rigidity of the labour market – and the lack of policy responses – perpetuate the vulnerable position of women (Vajda, 2014; Szabó-Morvai, 2018). These structural constraints are often mutually reinforcing for women living in rural areas: the narrowing of employment opportunities, the concentration of land ownership, the disappearance of opportunities for self-sufficiency, local dependency systems (public works, social benefits, etc.), and confinement to local, household-determined lifeworlds give women little chance to move beyond such structures and change their lives (Váradi, 2013; 2015).

> I experienced it a few years ago – especially as a young woman who also comes from the city and wanted to do something in a rural environment – that they looked at me as if I was stupid, the workers, the older men in the ecovillage movement – so by pretty much everyone, [including] by older women because I had not yet experienced the ridiculing that they already had. (interview BLU01)

Thus, women entering food production in rural places faced multiple difficulties and disadvantages stemming from their status as paid labour and those who must bear a larger share of reproductive work in this very context. Their access to flexible forms of employment (part-time or home office) is limited in rural spaces.

> If I [say] that I need a job that gives me 2–3 hours work per day, I'm turned away… Paradoxically, we could move here [to a small village] because I can work from home on my computer or phone today, which makes us independent of the place of our work. (interview BP01)

> It is really difficult to raise enough income through farming to compensate for a full-time job in the city. If you say 'OK, we'll give up our paid job and start farming,' it takes years to get any stability. (interview MK01)

Hungary, like other Central and Eastern European countries, sought to address the significant economic crisis that followed the regime change by attracting foreign direct investment (FDI), creating an industrial semi-periphery. This meant that the burden of social reproduction (child-rearing, elderly care, domestic work) fell on households, especially women, and not only during economic crises but also during boom times. In the Visegrad countries, the management of the social crisis was embedded in the bargaining process of transition (Bohle & Greskovits, 2012). In Hungary, this led to the inactivation of two-thirds of women, who lost their jobs, and in the absence of a steady wage income, whose vulnerability to state transfers and the active earners in the household increased (Vajda, 2014). The 2008 financial and economic crisis has shaken the living conditions of Hungarian households, including Hungarian women. The reduction in the opportunities and incomes associated with wage labour and the cutbacks in state transfers have again increased the reproductive burden on households. The post-crisis recovery has been built on the separation between the state and (global) capital, the deteriorating and increasingly vulnerable position of workers, reductions in the tax burden on capital, and the further contraction of welfare and social systems, further deepening inequalities between and within households (Czirfusz et al., 2019).

Strategies that combine urban and rural activities and incomes to reduce risk entail the uneven distribution of reproductive work within households, potentially reinforcing gendered inequalities in rural spaces. Such problems are exacerbated by the structural deficits of public services in rural spaces. Our interviews suggest that the declining quality of education and the collapse of welfare services add a lot to women's reproductive work.

> It is a major problem that you can't teach your kids at home. And the schools in rural places are really awful. At least in our village. It's something which is difficult to cope with. (BP01)

Nevertheless, strategies and practices focused on food sovereignty are also sources of more equal, fair distribution of work, as the border between productive and reproductive work becomes blurred.

> There is so much in rural life which makes everything more balanced. You do not experience that men just drink beer and leave the rest to women at home. OK, we [women] have more work in the kitchen, but guys also have a lot to do, such as taking care of animals, building

> things, etc. Yet the garden is a shared responsibility, and we always had intersections in our daily routines. Nonetheless, I think it is a lot more difficult for women to live a simple life, as this [way of living] makes reproductive work incredibly hard. (interview FJ02)

The gender-related elements of the movement have undergone vivid change as well. Starting in the 2000s, women's NGOs in the capital and rural areas started rapidly spreading (Milánkovics, 2013), playing a major role in organising and networking (Csapó et al., 2005). Feminist women's organisations in Budapest focused mainly on human rights, violence against women, prostitution, health and labour market issues (Juhász, 2014). The everyday challenges of women's livelihoods, climate issues and food sovereignty were typically not addressed in the capital. Rural organisations, with a few exceptions, did not discuss critical or feminist approaches but focused on local concerns, care and labour market issues. At the same time, there were a number of rural women's organisations and communities that organised food communities, which tended to be understood within a framework of care, environmental protection, and family life. In these initiatives, food self-sufficiency as an end in itself was generally less thematised and not linked to the green movement (Milánkovics, 2013).

During the interviews, interpretations of food sovereignty movement development showed that while the male actors and the movement built around them mainly went in the direction of party politics – especially during the 2000s – the female actors focused more on volunteer-related activities and the creation of alternative spaces and networked movement dynamics. As our interviewees expressed:

> I have this feeling, I have always faced this, that activism, at least in my circles, or in general, is [seen as] an altruistic thing, and from this point on, it is almost logical that women do it. I have experienced many times that in my activist environment, the bosses are men, are often the inventors and dreamers, more representative people, and at the same time, many women work below them. (interview RA04)

> Both among researchers and in projects, if you approach it from the values and not the business point of view, women always dominate. When the money comes in, men come forward, and they are already present at a higher level. (interview BL03)

The domestic framing of food sovereignty was in line with the main approach of the international anti-globalisation movement, involving a strong left-wing critique of neoliberal economic ideology and the institutions that represent it (Mikecz, 2018). Although NGO experts who deal with the situation, the problems of women, and the gender aspects of ecopolitics have proposed relevant parts of green party programmes, these ideas were unable to take root in the largely male community until 2008 and the unfolding of a holistic approach to food sovereignty after the crisis.

6 Conclusion

Recognising the profound role of women, this article aimed to unfold the structural limitations and gendered hierarchies in the Hungarian food sovereignty movement by proposing an alternative reading of CEE civil society development. With an ongoing research agenda, the HerStory Collective examines the intersections of green, women's, and soli-

darity movements along with care issues. We pay special attention to the intensification of the processes whereby the oppression of women and the exploitation of the natural environment take on ever greater dimensions with the development of the capitalist economy, along with the practices of social reproduction, whose representatives have traditionally always been women. By summarising and evaluating women's experiences, the present study creates insight into the positions of less visible actors in the green movement space.

Small farms, hobby farms, community or permaculture gardens and the like that do not necessarily account for a major portion of household revenue are led mainly by women. These women are often labelled housewives who stay home with their children and primarily engage in care work (cf. Jarosz, 2014). However, our interviewees' life stories illustrated that they are strong individuals who move to the countryside from cities, countering conservative gender roles. They shift between different roles, such as being farmers and mothers, stretching the boundaries of gendered identities. During our interviews, being conservative and independent, feminine and masculine, urban and rural were all part of their self-representations (cf. Bartulović, 2022). Even if women often reproduced traditional gender roles, they remained critical of the everyday reality of rural local food production. Sometimes, they succumbed to existing patriarchal narratives, but their activities were marked by various forms of resistance as well – e.g., in opposition to patriarchy, the traditional division of labour in rural households, the expectations of the village community, or dominant ideas about agricultural development, along with the laws and regulations that support them.

Until recently, urban and advocacy-type civic action has been privileged in scholarly research. Hence, there is a rich understanding of how the green movement entered the world of politics in Hungary after the regime change but less knowledge of vernacular movement experiences and how food sovereignty practices are nurtured and sustained through everyday resistance (Jehlička et al., 2019). At the same time, the structures of food sovereignty, primarily in rural areas, have basically been constructed through the coordination and large-scale participation of local women and mothers – actors who have not, or only very little, participated in the policy-level green movement dialogue. Still, this marked social change at the local level is rarely recognised by movement centres. For these local initiatives to have social strength in terms of advancing the cause of food sovereignty, their joint action and integration into a common movement space is necessary.

Finally, locally embedded examples of food sovereignty led by local women are highly relevant for understanding civil society development in Central and Eastern Europe. In contrast to mainstream findings, practices of food sovereignty constitute a conscious choice, opposing the common understanding that local food production in CEE is a necessity. There have been several attempts to reverse the Western vantage point and provide critique and theory on the basis of CEE examples (Jehlička & Jacobsson, 2021), which we have aimed to complement with a gendered perspective. Instead of rendering civil society weak, we intended to reveal how structural changes have overwhelmingly affected the possibilities of organising in post-socialist Hungary. We have shown how the transition acutely narrowed the possibilities of food self-provisioning in rural Hungary and how EU regulations closed opportunity structures for local food production. In our view, despite the harsh circumstances, these initiatives are viable alternative models of rural self-determination. Nevertheless, these networks remain far less visible and more vulnerable due to their structural limitations and weaker (explicit) political embeddedness than their counterparts represented by the mainstream food sovereignty movement.

Funding

The writing up of this article was made possible by The Foundation for Baltic and East European Studies, under grant number DNR 22-GP-0001.

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Victims' perspectives of sexual harassment prevention measures at work: Using victims' voices to build an anti-harassment working environment

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Abstract

This mixed-method study revolves around female victims' perspectives and voices concerning sexual harassment prevention measures in their workplaces. Two hundred and eighty-nine participants responded to questionnaires, in-depth questions, and interviews. Data were collected from various professionals who had experienced sexual misconduct at work. The research objectives were to investigate victims' perspectives of sexual harassment prevention and the effectiveness of related measures, to examine the impact of sexual harassment measures on work-related motivation, and to explore female employees' voices concerning reforms involving the implementation of sexual harassment prevention measures. The quantitative results reveal that the victims did not highly evaluate the effectiveness of sexual harassment prevention measures implemented at their workplaces. Also, the measures negatively impacted employees' work-related motivation. Qualitative data indicated that the victims strongly recommended positive changes in sexual harassment awareness education, sexual harassment laws, and women's protection policies to create an anti-sexual harassment working environment.

Keywords: sexual harassment; sexual harassment laws; prevention measures; workplace; working environment

1 Introduction

Sexual harassment (SH) has recently attracted much attention from researchers, policymakers, legislators, and activists due to its prominence. Issues related to the sexual violation of vulnerable female workers in society are currently being prioritized for discussion and resolution. Sexual harassment is a partly concealed phenomenon that has become widely entrenched in society, in all fields and occupations, often invisibly. How to identify, control, and prevent it is problematic (Mackinnon, 1979). Sexual harassment is considered a prevalent issue that permeates all working environments. Bondestam and Lundqvist (2020) concentrated specifically on sexual harassment within the higher education setting,

emphasizing the need for the prevention, handling, and response to incidents of such harassment. Even though the growing number of anti-sexual harassment movements, public concern, and laws protecting women from sexual harassment have significantly supported victims in their struggles against sexual misconduct, the quantity of legal complaints submitted to authorities remains unremarkable. Langer (2017) and Puente and Kelly (2018) acquired insights into their legal entitlements, courses of action, and strategies for navigating the intricacies of addressing harassment in different contexts. Guidance on legal rights, steps to take when facing harassment and strategies for managing harassment situations in various settings may be typically offered. However, these studies do not sufficiently clarify the root of the problem and issues pertaining to sexual harassment prevention measures. The present article delves into victims' perspectives about sexual harassment prevention, including: investigating the effectiveness of measures, examining the impact sexual harassment prevention measures on work-related motivation, and exploring female employees' voices concerning reforms involving the implementation of sexual harassment prevention measures. Mixed-methods research was conducted with the participation of employees from various parts of Vietnam to understand how victims of sexual harassment at work comprehensively evaluate the issues regarding sexual harassment prevention measures (SHPM). This investigation will hopefully empower employees to prevent sexual harassment and make employers or authorities more liable for the impact of SH. The study addresses the following questions:

(1) How do victims evaluate the effectiveness of sexual harassment prevention measures implemented in their workplaces?

(2) How do sexual harassment prevention measures at work influence work-related motivation?

(3) What are female employees' recommendations for implementing sexual harassment prevention measures?

2 Literature review

2.1 Sexual harassment and Vietnamese law regarding sexual harassment

Sexual harassment is defined as a form of human rights violation. MacKinnon (2012) contends that sexual harassment constitutes a manifestation of gender-based discrimination and explores its ramifications within professional environments. Sexual harassment refers to when offenders use hostile and disagreeable sexual misconduct to compel targets to indulge in their sexual desires (McDonald, 2012). The U.S. Equal Employment Opportunities Commission (EEOC) recognizes sexual harassment as a form of illegal sex discrimination that negatively impacts victims' employment and job performance and creates an intimidating, hostile, offensive working environment. Similarly, Buchanan et al. (2014) acknowledge that sexual harassment, rooted in sexism, represents a form of victimization. Despite ongoing endeavors to diminish its occurrence, it remains a prevalent type of workplace mistreatment.

Regarding categories of sexual harassment, the Department of Veteran Safaris divides sexual harassment behavior into three types: gender harassment, unwanted sexual

attention, and sexual coercion. The force used to coerce someone into engaging in unwanted sexual conduct is known as sexual coercion (e.g., the offer of preferential treatment in the workplace in exchange for sexual favors). Unwelcome sexual action that is directed at another person is known as unwanted sexual attention. Unwelcome activities that denigrate people based on their sex or gender are referred to as gender harassment (for example, unwanted sexual teasing) (Fitzgerald et al., 1997). MacKinnon (1979) delineated two categories of sexual harassment: sexual harassment and hostile environment harassment, a differentiation subsequently acknowledged by the Supreme Court. Paludi (2005) defines sexual harassment as threats or misconducts of coercion and arbitrary deprivations of freedom occurring in the private or public sphere.

In Vietnam, acts of sexual harassment are currently specified in Clause 9, Article 3 of the Labor Code 2019, and Article 84 of Decree 145 of December 14, 2020. The Labor Code, amended and supplemented (and approved by the National Assembly on June 18, 2012), stipulates 'prohibiting the sexual harassment of employees at work'; and that 'employees suffering from sexual harassment have the right to unilaterally terminate the labor contract'; and that 'the domestic worker must report to the competent authority if an employer commits sexual harassment.' Moreover, sexual harassment may currently only be dealt with through an administrative process (stipulated in Point a, Clause 1, Article 5 of Decree 167/2013/ND-CP of November 12, 2013, by the government on penalties for administrative violations). Accordingly, offenders who commit sexual harassment misconduct are only subject to financial penalties. This is one of the main causes of more serious crimes. Regarding individuals' security in the social space, sexual harassment prevention must be encouraged through criminal sanctioning. It can be seen that, along with the development of social norms, addressing the nature and level of criminal acts that infringe human rights in general, particularly women's rights, requires an increasingly sophisticated and complex approach. Therefore, the legal system of Vietnam must be improved to be able to promptly detect, handle fairly, and best protect the legitimate rights of victims.

2.2 Sexual harassment prevention: workplace measures

Implementing sexual harassment prevention measures in the workplace is challenging for victims and authorities for various reasons, including female victims' sense of insecurity confronting the issue, concerns about potential consequences, lack of trust in the organization's legal mechanisms, and psychological and social anxieties (Harlos, 2001; McDonald et al., 2015; Vijayasiri, 2008). Moreover, underreporting may be exacerbated by blame-the-victim tactics employed by both harassers and employers. Many victims are unjustly held accountable for incidences of harassment due to their clothing or friendly demeanor, which allegedly provokes the sexual interest of predators. The adverse effects of sexual harassment on the lives and careers of victims highlight the urgency of implementing prevention measures. Seeking recourse by filing complaints with authorities is seen as a practical way to hold perpetrators accountable for their misconduct and restore women's rights. Nonetheless, the process of making claims, exposing such offenses publicly, and seeking damages proves challenging for victims due to a number of barriers. Various prevention-related measures, including establishing effective workplace policies and guide-

lines concerning legal accountability and occupational safety and implementing training programs that enhance coping skills, have been devised to foster a secure environment for female employees (including in the case of nurses) (Zeighami et al., 2023). Countries and regions such as Denmark, South Korea, Sub-Saharan Africa, and Iran have contributed specific strategies that address psychological aspects and attempt to mitigate the repercussions of sexual harassment (Nielsen et al., 2017; Kim et al., 2018; Tollstern Landin et al., 2020; Zeighami et al., 2023). However, Nielsen et al. (2017) emphasize that the implementation of sexual harassment prevention measures should be tailored to the organizational and professional culture, suggesting the need for variation across different work settings. Zeighami et al. (2023) underscored the significance of building comprehensive knowledge regarding coping strategies related to workplace sexual harassment to provide support for victims. Drawing on nurses' experiences can be instrumental when devising interventions that identify coping strategies and diminish instances of sexual harassment in the workplace (Najafi et al., 2018).

2.3 Previous research on sexual harassment prevention measures at the workplace

Buchanan et al. (2014) explored which effective strategies may be employed at the systemic level to reduce sexual harassment in work settings, utilizing data from the U.S. Armed Forces to highlight the roles of organizations, sexual harassment policies, and training programs in mitigating such incidents and improving outcomes when they do happen. Emphasizing the crucial role of organizational leaders, the authors argued for clear and consistent anti-harassment messages conveyed through a widely disseminated written policy on sexual harassment, regular educational training sessions for all organization members, and establishing formal as well as informal procedures for reporting, investigating, and remedying incidents. Additionally, they proposed that organizations conduct regular self-assessments of sexual harassment occurrences and the overall organizational atmosphere as proactive measures. Based on a survey, D'Agostino (2019) found that most participants felt uneasy about reporting sexual harassment (74.19 per cent). Freedman-Weiss et al. (2020) examined the frequency, type, and reporting of sexual harassment among surgical trainees and tried to identify why some of them might not come forward. An anonymous computerized survey was conducted with the participation of trainees in general surgery training programs nationwide. This found that 7.6 per cent of respondents who had experienced sexual harassment reported it. The most commonly reported justifications for not reporting were that the behavior was harmless (62.1 per cent) and that reporting would be pointless (47.7 per cent). Accordingly, sexual harassment does happen throughout surgical training, but it is rarely reported. The small proportion of sexual harassment accusations being reported to organizations illustrates that victims face significant obstacles to stymying SH. These include the ineffective response to organizations of reports of SH (Bergman et al., 2002), challenges related to procedures and evidence, financial constraints, limited recourse through legal advocacy, the inadequacy of harassment-related laws that insufficiently protect women; violations of employment entitlements and

agreements; instances of retaliation; and prevalent cultural biases. Employee turnover is often affected by SH, as claimed by Chan et al. (2008), Willness et al. (2007), and Sims et al. (2005). The Indian Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013 is not considered a conventional academic text. However, this document is significant as a piece of legislation. It delineates the legal structure for handling workplace sexual harassment in India and offers guidelines for both prevention and resolution.

Gianakos et al. (2022) systematically analyzed articles published between 2010 and 2020 in the MEDLINE, Embase, and Cochrane databases. The study shows that residents who are undergoing surgical training frequently encounter sexual misconduct, which is linked to depression, anxiety, and burnout. For fear of reprisals, the majority of citizens refrained from reporting such misconduct. Residency programs should identify ways to let residents air their grievances safely. In terms of the ramifications of sexual harassment, detrimental effects in various areas are specified, such as job satisfaction, job performance, health, financial well-being, worker productivity, employee retention, organizational loyalty, and overall reputation (Herschovis et al., 2009; Sims et al., 2005; Willness et al., 2007). Clarke et al. (2016) explored that job satisfaction was influenced by sexual harassment within the company due to the prior position of the harassers. Campbell et al. (2008) indicated that the aftermath of sexual harassment frequently includes post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), characterized by symptoms like stress, diminished self-esteem, despondency, and impaired decision-making. In summary, the discernible consequences of workplace sexual harassment encompass decreased productivity, increased turnover, tarnished reputation, psychological and physical issues, legal fees, and compensatory payouts.

These previous studies have explored significant issues concerning SH, including the problems, impacts, and solutions. However, not much emphasis has been placed on victim evaluations and perspectives about SH prevention measures. Present studies do not sufficiently clarify stakeholders' evaluations of sexual harassment prevention efforts. Moreover, the respective authors mainly used qualitative or quantitative research methods and did not provide comprehensive insights into the issues. The current study involved mixed-methods research that included data from a survey, in-depth questions, and interviews – a significant attempt to shed light on the topic.

3 Methods

3.1 Research design

The researcher employed a mixed-methods approach, integrating quantitative and qualitative methodologies to comprehensively understand the issue. Quantitative data was gathered through the distribution of questionnaires. Qualitative insights were obtained from responses to open-ended questions and interviews, providing detailed information. The interview techniques included direct queries, allowing victims to express their thoughts and assessments, as well as experience-based questions prompting them to narrate stories about instances of sexual harassment they had witnessed, heard about, or personally ex-

perienced (Hard et al., 2016). Ethical considerations were addressed through a voluntary participation agreement, ensuring participants' consent to participating in the survey. The author emphasized the confidentiality of all information, using hidden names or codes to protect anonymity. The answers were ensured to be remain confidential.

3.2 Participants

Convenience sampling was used to collect the data since the group's members are active participants, frequently engaging in interactions like posting, sharing personal narratives on news feeds, and commenting on diverse subjects. This elevated level of engagement greatly facilitated the author's survey administration. This group represented the best sample from which to collect the data since no groups of HS victims were publicly available at that time. A Facebook group including female members (women and girls) were asked if they had ever been victims of SH and if they would be participants in this study. Among them, 289 individuals (282 people provided answers to the questionnaires, 20 participants joined in the interviews) acknowledged experiencing instances of workplace-related sexual violation and subsequently agreed to participate in the research. This yielded an initial response rate of 32.5 per cent. The chosen Facebook group encompasses a diverse cohort of female members spanning various ages and professions across different regions of the country. This selection process was undertaken to ensure a comprehensive and representative pool of data. Participants were chosen to respond to the questionnaires, in-depth questions, and interviews. Their ages ranged from 21 to 42. They were employed in various vocations, from manual labor in the construction, textile, and farming industries to intellectual ones such as journalism, reporting, and accountancy. Respondents were randomly selected from various disciplines to ensure the validity of the samples. The author contacted the participants via social networks, email, and telephone. They were provided with a description of the study and instructions and asked for their commitment to participate in the survey. Additionally, the authors committed to keeping the information from the survey and interviews confidential. After completing the survey, each participant was given a small reward.

3.3 Data collection instruments

Data collection involved gathering information from questionnaires, open-ended queries, and interviews. A survey comprising 25 items was developed, primarily drawing on the framework of sexual harassment theory by other authors. The reliability and validity of this was evaluated by experts. The author identified Cronbach's alpha values for reliability and validity and removed unreliable variables. Other variables were used in the following stages. The items were included in the following sections:

Section 1: Demographics and details of respondents

Section 2: Victims' evaluation of the effectiveness of sexual harassment prevention measures implemented in the workplace

Section 3: The impact of implementing sexual harassment prevention measures on motivation at work.

The author asked the participants to select the level of impact of specified items (see Appendix). Each answer was based on a five-item Likert scale: (1.0–1.79) very low, (1.8–2.59) low, (2.6–3.39) neutral, (3.4–4.19) high, and (4.2–5.0) very high.

Open-ended questions

These questions were delivered to participants to collect more detailed information. For instance, could you clarify how your company implemented the measures? Are you satisfied with these measures? What are the strengths and weaknesses of these measures?

Interviews

After completing the survey and in-depth questions, the participants were interviewed using questions about their recommendations about the changes due to the impact of the implementation of SHPM in relation to building an anti-sexual harassment working environment.

Qualitative data were gathered using the snowball and purposive sampling methodologies. An inductive approach to qualitative research design was employed to gather profound insights from participants systematically during the interview process. The authors conducted a total of 20 interviews involving 20 participants. Of these interviewees, 13 actively participated in both the survey and the interviews, while seven solely engaged in the discussions, abstaining from the survey portion. The data and viewpoints of the respondents remain anonymous and confidential through the utilization of symbols or pseudonyms.

3.4 Data collection and analysis

The researcher collected data primarily by sending questionnaires to participants, synthesized, and presented the data using percentages, means, and standard deviations. The authors conducted the interviews and presented in-depth questions to the respondents through indirect communication (via social networks or mobile phones). The information was noted and rewritten. Descriptive statistics were employed to analyze the quantitative data using IBM SPSS 25.0 software. Participant demographic data underwent analysis through frequency-based descriptive testing. Mean and standard deviation values for victims' assessments of the efficacy of sexual harassment prevention measures were calculated using a descriptive analytical tool. The impact of prevention measures on work motivation was also evaluated using the bivariate correlations formula. Qualitative information was systematically categorized based on the research data using thematic coding by Nguyen (2022). An interpretive description technique was adopted to analyze the categorized data. One coder undertook the coding process, and the consistency of coding was evaluated through intra-observer reliability assessment

4 Findings

4.1 Victims' evaluations of the effectiveness of sexual harassment prevention measures in the workplace

Table 1 Victims' evaluations of the effectiveness of sexual harassment prevention measures

	Min	Max	Mean	Sted. v
Having employers/ees sign an anti-harassment agreement	1	3	2.26	.873
Specifying the disciplinary sanctions for sexual harassment misconduct	1	3	2.20	.771
Strictly punishing harassers (fines, dismissals)	1	3	2.12	.706
Criticizing harassers in front of staff	1	3	2.12	.704
Asking harassers to apologize and compensate victims	1	3	2.12	.697
Supporting victims to file claims to higher authorities	1	3	2.08	.731
Recording misconduct using cameras	1	4	3.27	.750
Establishing a women's protection union/organization at work.	1	5	3.21	.936
Training employees in reaction skills classes and psychology courses	1	3	2.06	.678
Establishing confidential reporting channels	1	3	2.10	.731
Building an anti-SH community at the workplace	1	3	2.07	.734
Educating employees/ers to raise awareness of SH: how to realize, prevent, and complain	1	3	2.09	.720
Lightening up on the relevant legal issues	1	3	2.10	.717
Presenting procedures for investigating complaints and formal/informal resolution processes	1	3	2.16	.746
Denouncing misconduct in public	1	3	2.25	.816
Organizing anti-harassment movements	1	3	2.12	.732

As shown in Table 1, the victims evaluated the effectiveness of sexual harassment prevention measures implemented in their workplace. Generally, measures taken by staff were not thought to be sufficient or effective, with most of the mean values for the items less than three (3). It can be seen from Table 1 that companies and offices have made few commitments to SH prevention since the employers/ees had signed their initial contracts (M=2.2; SD=0.873). Responses to questions were as follows: When SH misconduct happens, did companies react or strictly punish harassers (with fines or dismissal)? (M=2.12; SD=

0.706); criticize harassers in front of staff? (M=2.12; SD=0.704); ask harassers to apologize to victims and compensate them? (M=2.12; SD=0.697); establish confidential reporting channels? (M=2.1; SD=0.731); or lighten up on the relevant legal issues? (M=2.1; SD=0.717). Additionally, community activities were rarely held (M=2.77; SD=0.847), with few anti-harassment movements or anti-sexual violation communities aimed at deterring sexual misconduct in companies. Regarding litigation, the victims acknowledged that staff weakly contributed to legal support for victims, including clarifying details of claim limitation procedures (M=2.16; SD=0.746) and assisting victims in filing claims with higher authorities (M=2.08; SD=0.731). Employee respondents highly evaluated three measures: establishing a women's-protection union/organization at work, setting up recordings using cameras to observe misconduct, and informally informing on harassment misconduct through social networks. Measures regarding educating employees/ers, raising awareness of SH, and organizing anti-harassment movements were awarded low scores of M= 2.09 and M= 2.77. Respondents revealed that sexual harassment was not of concern to the leaders in their workplaces since they perceived there were more important issues for them to deal with regarding women. They had only one or two chances a year to join discussions about SH on 'women's days.' However, the related activities were theoretical, impractical, and unhelpful to employees who were threatened with being harassed. Sometimes, no SH prevention measures were taken. An employee stated the following: 'I'm sure that the SH [incident] was a big disturbance, but no voice was raised, and no drastic measure was taken.' This involved an extreme threat to women's lives and rights. Some people acknowledged that the SH prevention measures were actually ineffective and unsatisfactory.

4.2 The impact of sexual harassment prevention measures at work on work-related motivation

Table 2 The impact of sexual harassment prevention measures on work-related motivation

Coefficients							
Model	**Unstandardized Coefficients**		**Standardized Coefficients**			**Collinearity Statistics**	
	B	**Std. Error**	**Beta**	**t**	**Sig.**	**Tolerance**	**VIF**
Work-related motivation	4.221	.396		10.670	.000		
Sexual harassment prevention measures	−.238	.099	−.149	−2.410	.017	1.000	1.000

It can be seen from Table 2 that the sig value associated with the dependent variable is below the significance level (0.05), indicating that the sample data are substantial evidence for dismissing the null hypothesis across the entire population. The evidence from the

data supports the idea of a non-zero correlation. Changes in the independent variable align with modifications in the dependent variable on a population scale. This variable has statistical significance and is a valuable component of the regression model. More specifically, the beta value (Beta= 0.149) significantly that SHPM impact work-related motivation. In other words, the claim that work-related motivation and sexual harassment prevention measures are unrelated is rejected.

4.3 Employees' recommendations concerning the implementation of sexual harassment prevention measures

4.3.1 Reforming the implementation of sexual harassment prevention measures

The focus of interviews involved women's recommendations for reforms to implement sexual harassment prevention measures effectively, building an anti-sexual harassment working environment where sexual-harassment-related misconduct is discouraged, victims are protected from sexual perpetration, and organizations are made liable for SH-related damages.

4.3.1.1 Educating employees about the issues relevant to sexual harassment

A common barrier preventing employees from reporting incidents to authorities is a lack of awareness and misconceptions about sexual harassment. Many individuals do not recognize such behavior as a violation of women's rights or sexual discrimination, resulting in a less earnest response to instances of sexual victimization. For example, a participant admitted to experiencing harassment from her supervisor but chose not to react or report it to her employer, perceiving the actions as morally inappropriate rather than criminal. A significant portion of female workers may not identify themselves as victims of sexual violation because they associate sexual harassment solely with sexual penetration. However, applying the understanding of feminist rights, they are entitled to make complaints to protect themselves and avoid such action from the first stage. Feminist law should be taught and permeate employees' lives on an ongoing basis, accomplished by holding contests or talks about legal matters. The interviewees admitted gaps in their legal knowledge and an insufficient understanding of sexual harassment at work. They underestimated and were unaware of women's important roles and rights, so they did not take vigorous measures to protect themselves. In some situations, the harassers engage in sexual misconduct that is considered to be inconsequential and does not intensely affect the victims. Thus, the victims tend to neglect or tolerate it. Some SH even resulted in employees becoming pregnant, but the victims raised no voice. Numerous female workers who live precariously tend to tolerate the bad behaviors of their bosses to maintain a stable or good position in the workplace. This creates more opportunities for perpetrators to pursue their villainous goals. Consequently, it is necessary to broaden employees' legal knowledge and social understanding to encourage them confidently raise their voice against SH.

4.3.1.2. Training employees on how to react to emergencies related to sexual harassment

Perpetrators may threaten female workers in tandem with attacking their targets for sexual purposes. As a result, resisting sexual intercourse and powerful harassers is extremely challenging for victims. However, the victims confessed that they should not have taken such threats for granted. Everything would have been better if they had known how to resist. Thus, training employees on how to react to emergencies related to sexual harassment is imperative to help them escape danger effectively, behave properly toward their higher-power harassers to avoid retaliation, and prevent the negative impacts of harassment on their work and lives. Conducting tailored training programs focused on enhancing interpersonal and communication abilities is essential for enhancing employers' effective responsiveness to various scenarios. This proposal is of strategic significance in terms of preventing harassment. Training initiatives should be extended to encompass employees from all sectors as a proactive measure. Training content should center on developing skills related to managing emotions, evaluating potential risk factors, and adopting appropriate measures in response to instances of misconduct.

Ensuring transparency regarding sexual harassment, which employers currently often conceal, is a crucial preventive step that workplaces should adopt. This would signal to potential wrongdoers that their unacceptable actions will be exposed and reported to higher authorities. It is essential to implement strong consequences, such as publicly addressing misconduct or notifying the families of harassers, in order to eradicate instances of sexual harassment from the workplace and ensure a secure and harassment-free working environment.

4.3.1.3. Increasing the responsibility of authorities and staff for harassment prevention

The participants argued that the boards and representative organizations of workplaces should take responsibility for solving SH-related problems promptly and effectively. To fight against the harassers, the support and cooperation of all stakeholders, including victims, witnesses, organizations, and the boards is required.

> At the moment, I feel that a post on Facebook about a sexual harassment story informally shared is more effective than waiting for a formal solution or decision from the board of the company. Pressure from the community is the most powerful effect, which spurs the authority to take prompt measures to address the issue (P.7, 31 years).

Based on their encounters, participants shared their beliefs regarding their organizations' responsibility for averting instances of workplace sexual harassment. They emphasized the necessity for organizations to shoulder responsibility for instances of sexual transgression transpiring within their establishments and to safeguard all employees against sexual harassment through company regulations. Moreover, it is essential that workplaces introduce measures that ensure the protection of victims following legal action. When individuals are hired for the workplace, they enter into agreements in which they acknowledge work-related expectations, and employers assure them of remuneration for their contributions and protection against potential hazards. Consequently, in situa-

tions of harassment, employers should assume accountability. Numerous individuals who have experienced harassment expressed frustration that despite their efforts to navigate obstacles and report the incidents to higher-ups, they witnessed no consequences or actions taken against the perpetrators. Those who engage in harassment, along with the management of the workplace, should bear the responsibility for the emotional and physical harm suffered by employees due to sexual harassment within their organizations.

4.3.2 Reforming current law and policy to ensure women's rights at work

Complaint mechanisms need restructuring to enable workers to report incidents of sexual harassment and initiate legal action more easily. Streamlining the process of lodging complaints is essential, making it easier for employees to report instances of sexual harassment and commence legal proceedings. Simplifying the litigation process, including the burden of proof, evidence requirements, and financial aspects, would benefit those who have experienced harassment. Employees expressed that pursuing legal action related to sexual harassment is a formidable challenge due to the complexities associated with taking such cases to court. It entails a significant investment of time and money, and there is uncertainty about whether their claims will receive the necessary attention from relevant authorities. The challenge lies in collecting evidence, such as proof of physical harm, as witnesses and evidence are often not readily available or conclusive enough for use in court proceedings. Additionally, in cases involving mental health injury due to sexual harassment, determining the extent of harm is challenging. Therefore, laws pertaining to sexual harassment should be based on (levels of) the impact of psychological harm on job performance and private life, serving as legal evidence to convict the accused. Courts should accept evidence recorded through recorders, cameras, and messaging platforms.

Requiring employers to take measures that ensure their accountability for any sexual misconduct at their workplaces should be prioritized. Also, laws should hold both employers/organizations and individual workplace harassers liable for their crimes, regardless of their position in the company. Aggravated penalties should be applied to employers if they are found to have attempted to hide harassers' misconduct, created obstacles to the victim making a report, or taken no immediate and appropriate corrective action.

Additionally, consideration should be paid to whether employees are courageous enough to overcome the related barriers and tell their stories. For this, women's support teams and consultant groups should be established to bear witness to victims' negative feelings caused by sexual harassment and to give prompt legal advice.

Severe penalties or even criminal sentences should be applied to the men involved in sexual harassment misconduct that results in severe consequences for women, including psychological harm. Authorities should promulgate strict regulations about rights violations and ensure appropriate penalties for harassers to ensure an anti-harassment workplace. The accused must be made accountable and compensate the complainants for financial damage, psychological trauma, insult to dignity, and harm to job-related performance. If the victim experiences severe consequences, for instance, psychological treatment at a hospital or suicide, the harasser must be jailed.

Sexual harassment laws should be enacted that include serious financial punishment as a warning to men who commit misconduct against women. Moreover, state laws should

be attached to company employment agreements that define the legal tools and initiatives that support employees to fight power inequalities and discrimination and restore victims' voices. The provisions of employment agreements and laws should be oriented to protect female workers' rights, facilitate employees to file claims or go to court, and stop sexual violations at work through the use of strict penalties such as firing, demoting, and even jailing harassers.

5 Discussion

Results associated with the first research question indicate that sexual harassment prevention measures are not effective and are insufficient. A wide range of measures was mentioned, but participants evaluated their effectiveness as weak, and their knowledge of the implementation of SHPM was problematic. Little vigorous anti-SH action had been taken at their workplaces from when they signed a labor agreement to when the SH issue occurred. Consequently, the victims were not supported, so they could not go forward with filing claims. This finding is in alignment with the results of studies by D'Agostino (2019), Bergman et al. (2002), Clarke et al. (2017), Freedman-Weiss et al. (2020), and Gianakos et al. (2022).

Regarding the relationship between harassment prevention measures and work-related motivation, according to the findings, sexual harassment prevention measures have a significant effect. This result aligns with the findings of Campbell et al. (2008), Clarke et al. (2016), Chan et al. (2008), Sims et al. (2005), and Willness et al. (2007). In companies or offices where harassment prevention measures are intensively applied, employees are motivated to work harder and more effectively. They manifest more job contentment, dedication to the organization, and commitment to the workplace. By fostering a positive work environment where employees feel respected and supported, harassment prevention measures nurture a culture of inclusivity. When employees are highly valued regardless of gender, ethnicity, or background, they are more inclined to experience a sense of belonging, which further fuels their motivation to engage actively in work-related tasks. Prioritizing employees' safety and well-being also increases their likelihood of staying loyal to the organization, resulting in improved retention rates and decreased turnover.

Furthermore, it is critical to mandate that companies take action to stop sexual harassment. The participants' expectations of the responsibility of companies to impede sexual harassment at work were revealed. With regard to improving SH prevention and encouraging victims to make claims, the respondents expressed their expectation that laws against sexual offenses, women's protection policies, and the awareness of sexual harassment should be changed. The individuals recognized that a gap in the legal understanding and misperceptions regarding sexual harassment remains. The survey participants expressed a desire for an increase in awareness about sexual harassment, modifications in policies for safeguarding women, and changes in sexual offense laws to curb instances of sexual harassment and encourage victims to come forward. They emphasized the importance of sharing knowledge and information related to sexuality. Targeted training programs focusing on interpersonal and communication skills are recommended for enhancing employees' ability to respond effectively in emergencies. Reforming complaint

procedures is essential for making it easier for workers to report sexual harassment and pursue legal action. Streamlining the litigation process, including in areas such as the burden of proof, procedures, and financial considerations, would be advantageous for victims. Based on interview feedback, victims indicated that consistent updates to sexual harassment prevention policies are necessary to motivate their engagement and contribution to the workplace.

6 Conclusion and recommendations

The paper sheds light on the implementation of sexual harassment prevention in the workplace and victims' expectations. The quantitative results revealed that the victims did not highly evaluate the sexual harassment prevention measures of workplaces. SHPM adversely affects work-related motivation. Poorly evaluated prevention measures hinder employees from undertaking their work effectively, demotivating them. The qualitative findings illustrate women's recommendations for alterations in policies and laws to prevent sexual harassment, including promoting sources of support to which victims can report incidents. Extensive modifications in law regarding women's rights and women's rights protection policies should be consistently implemented to foster the struggle against SH. Concerning employee psychology and awareness, the broader dissemination of knowledge about sexual violence is crucial. This should involve targeted advocacy, public awareness campaigns, and educational initiatives for female industry workers. The aim is to enhance their understanding of sexual harassment, relevant laws, policies, and their rights in such situations. Continuous skills training, conferences, contests, and forums should be maintained to exchange knowledge and experiences. These platforms will empower female employees to develop effective prevention and response strategies to address sexual harassment. Women's rights advocates must develop comprehensive strategies to empower employees to combat workplace sexual harassment. These strategies should encompass various aspects of employee psychology and awareness, response skills, sexual misconduct laws, woman-centered empowerment, safety assurance policies, and mechanisms for reporting sexual harassment. Emphasizing woman-centered empowerment and safety assurance policies is pivotal for improving employees' living conditions. Such improvements could reduce incidents of sexual harassment among employees. There should be a focus on upholding human rights-related laws, anti-discrimination regulations, and sexual harassment prevention policies. Holding employers and harassers accountable for their actions is crucial. Legal frameworks should establish appropriate penalties for perpetrators, as current laws often fail to deter predators from victimizing vulnerable women.

Reforming the complaint system requires ensuring fairness, accessibility, and affordability for victims seeking legal recourse. This includes reducing the burden of proof, extending time limits for filing claims, and addressing financial barriers to pursuing lawsuits. Organizations and unions should play an active role in supporting victims through sexual harassment complaint mechanisms. This support can encompass legal assistance, financial aid, and guidance through the claims process. It is recommended to investigate resources provided by reputable organizations that focus on human rights, workplace

equality, and legal assistance. These resources can provide comprehensive advice on dealing with sexual harassment, including information on legal rights, appropriate actions to take when encountering harassment, and effective strategies for handling harassment in different environments.

This paper has several limitations that call for further research, such as the limited participant pool. In order to improve the reliability of the findings, larger samples might be used in subsequent research. Researchers should conduct more insightful investigations into female victims' lives and work to draw informative and accurate pictures of the impact of SH on women. By amplifying women's voices, valuable recommendations can be provided to social activists, policymakers, and legislators to safeguard women's rights.

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Examining the characteristics of Roma–non-Roma interethnic romantic relationships using decision tree analysis

Intersections. EEJSP
9(4): 176–195.
https://doi.org/10.17356/ieejsp.v9i4.1122
https://intersections.tk.hu

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Abstract

Interethnic romantic relationships can be perceived as indicators of integration, but they can also be facilitators of successful social integration. This is why we considered it important to study Roma people who had already had a non-Roma partner. We were looking for answers to the question of what is characteristic of these people compared to those who have only been in a romantic relationship or marriage with a Roma partner throughout their lives. In our study, we investigated the correlations using a Khi^2 test and decision tree analysis on a sample of 535 Roma people in Hungary. Among the sociodemographic characteristics, gender, marital status, actual relationship status, educational attainment, belonging to a Roma community (Romungro, Olah, Boyash), occupation and settlement type were significantly associated with whether Roma respondents had ever had a non-Roma partner. Roma people with less than eight years of primary education had the most homogeneous partner choice habits. Roma people with more than eight years of education, unmarried, cohabiting with their partner or not living with their partner had had non-Roma partners in the highest proportion. As educational attainment increases, it can be assumed that more and more Roma-non-Roma romantic relationships and marriages will be formed in Hungary.

Keywords: Roma; integration; mixed marriages; interethnic relationships; educational attainment

1 Introduction

The majority of researchers agree that interethnic romantic relationships and marriages are indicators of the proximity of majority and minority cultures (Hohmann-Marriott & Amato, 2008; Song, 2009; 2016). The more a minority group is integrated into the majority society, the more interethnic romantic relationships and marriages can be observed. Integration weakens ethnic ties and increases the chances of forming a relationship with a potential partner belonging to the majority society, which increases the chances of exogamy. In this way, interethnic marriages can be understood as a logical step in the integra-

tion process (Lieberson & Waters, 1988). Intermarriage is not only a measure of social and economic integration, but also a factor that potentially affects integration (Meng & Gregory, 2005).

In this study, we examine interethnic Roma-non-Roma romantic relationships and marriages using a sample of 535 Roma people from 2019. We describe the socio-demographic characteristics of Roma people who had already had a non-Roma partner. In our study, we sought to answer the question of what is characteristic of those Roma people who enter into interethnic romantic relationships and marriages in Hungary. We compared those Roma people who had already had a non-Roma partner with those who had only had Roma partners in their lives.

2 Partner choice and interethnic marriage

According to the theory of homophily, people's basic attitudes towards partner choice favour homogamous romantic relationships and marriages when the individual chooses a mate of similar ethnicity and status (Kenrick et al., 1993). The fact that the individual can usually communicate better with a similar partner plays a role in this, but the pressure from the family and the community also favours homogamous romantic relationships. From the point of view of the group, the choice preference and pressure from family, religious or other community can be explained by the fact that interethnic romantic relationships can lead to group dilution, weakening of cohesion and ultimately to community disintegration (Bukodi, 2002).

Gender differences can also be observed in the frequency of interethnic marriages. These may be different for each culture and ethnic group. A survey in the USA (Wang, 2015) examined men-women differences regarding interethnic marriages. African-American men were more likely intermarry than women. The opposite trend was observed for Asian-Americans (Wang, 2015). In the romantic relationships of Africans in Hungary, it can also be observed that men are more likely to form relationships and marriages with members of the majority society than women (Komolafe & Komolafe, 2019; Pári & Komolafe, 2017). This may be due to gender roles, cultural beliefs and traditions about women, and the fact that men migrate from African countries at a much higher rate than women, and thus men inevitably find themselves in a situation that leads to heterogamy in their new place of residence, as they have less chance to get into a romantic relationship with African women.

Exchange theory is another idea about partner choice, where everyone looks for a partner who offers them the greatest benefit or reward and the least cost. According to the theory, members of couples tend to have roughly similar values and exchange characteristics of different value (e.g. job, education, kindness, beauty, social status) (Lőrincz, 2006). Merton (1941) and Davis (1941) also applied the theory to interethnic marriages, which they defined as status exchange theory. In their study, African Americans who had acquired high socioeconomic status exchanged it for the higher status of their partner due to their belonging to majority society. Most research of this kind uses educational attainment as a measure of socioeconomic status. In general terms, status exchange theory posits that in an interethnic marriage, the member from a minority background tends to have higher educational attainment than the partner from the majority society (Davis, 1941; Merton, 1941).

Some research has confirmed the theory of status exchange (e.g. Kalmijn, 1993; Fu, 2001; Gullickson, 2006). For example, Kalmijn (1993) used annual marriage license data collected from 1968 to 1986 from 33 US states and found that black spouses were more likely to marry down from the point of view of educational attainment, which is consistent with status exchange theory. Some subsequent studies have failed to confirm the theory of status exchange, while several other studies have found only a weak correlation (e.g. Hwang et al., 1995; Liang & Ito, 1999; Jacobs & Labov, 2002; Rosenfeld, 2005; Hou & Myles, 2013). In addition to the different methods, changing historical and social circumstances may also play a role in the differences in results. At the time the theory was developed, interethnic marriages were much less socially accepted than they are today.

Several studies have concluded that members of interethnic couples have roughly the same status and education (Liang & Ito, 1999; Jacobs & Labov, 2002; Fu, 2008). The theory that more highly educated members of minority groups are more likely to form interethnic romantic relationships is more prevalent in later research examining more modern societies (Song, 2016; Çelikaksoy, 2016). Theories by Furtado (2012) may also explain the connection. According to the 'cultural adaptability effect', more highly educated members of the minority group are better able to adapt to the different culture and customs of the majority society, and thus more easily form interethnic marriages with majority partners. According to the 'enclave effect', educated members are more likely to 'leave' and move out of their own ethnic group, thus reducing the chances of finding a partner from within their own group. As a result of the marriage their ties with their group of origin are loosened and thus they have less pull with other group members. According to the 'assortative matching' effect, for highly educated members, similarity in educational attainment can substitute for ethnic similarity. This is supported by the fact that where highly educated immigrants are surrounded by more, also highly educated immigrants, the chances of marrying outside the group are reduced. The reverse is also true. Where highly educated immigrants are surrounded by many lower-educated people from their own ethnic group, intermarriage is more common. Xuanning Fu's (2006) explanation of this phenomenon is more about individual freedom, in that higher socio-economic status gives minority group members greater freedom of choice to marry out of their ethnic group. The relationship between educational attainment and the propensity to intermarry varies across ethnic groups (Furtado & Theodoropoulos, 2011; Furtado, 2012).

The 'proximity hypothesis' also seeks to explain how we choose a partner; according to it, we prefer people we meet more often because we can get to know them better (Lőrincz, 2006). In relation to interethnic marriages, Blau and Schwartz (1984) found that in cities with a more heterogeneous community, where people of different origins live together, there is a greater likelihood of interethnic marriages, as individuals meet people different from themselves more often. The fewer minority members there are in a place, the more likely they are to form interethnic marriages. The larger the minority group is, the more likely they are to marry within the group. This is in line with Furtado's (2012) theories mentioned earlier, only there the main focus was on the distribution of educational attainment among minority group members. Research by Lichter et al. (2015) also confirms that limited opportunities for social interactions between immigrants and members of the majority society reduce the chances of interethnic marriages between the two groups (Lichter et al., 2015).

Overall, theories of partner choice suggest that ethnically homogamous marriages and romantic relationships are easier to form. It is worth examining what factors are associated with Roma people's interethnic romantic relationships. The main reason is that in research on interethnic relationships and marriages looking for more complex connections, indigenous minority groups such as the Roma people living in Hungary are less frequently studied. That is why we also presented theories that have been tested on African-Americans or minority groups who have immigrated to other countries. These do not allow us to draw clear conclusions about the Roma people, but they are a good starting point.

3 Relationship characteristics of Roma people

Since our study examines Roma-non-Roma romantic relationships and marriages, we will also look at the relationships of the Hungarian Roma population. In Hungary, Roma people tend to be in a romantic relationship or marriage earlier than the other most populous ethnic group, the Germans or majority Hungarians. They have a higher proportion of widows and more live in cohabiting relationships than in the other two groups surveyed (KSH, 2015). They are the most homogamous ethnic group, with 83.5 per cent of husbands and 84.9 per cent of wives identifying themselves as Roma living with a Roma spouse in 2001 (Tóth & Vékás, 2008). According to census data, Roma men in Hungary are more likely to marry non-Roma partners than Roma women (Tóth & Vékás, 2008; Szabó, 2022). However, this correlation may vary across cultures and countries in case of Roma people, as in a study from Spain, Roma women were more likely to marry non-Roma partners (Gamella, 2020; Gamella & Álvarez-Roldán, 2023). In settlements with a higher proportion of Roma people, homogamous marriages were more common (Tóth & Vékás, 2008).

The Hungarian Gypsy population can be divided into three major groups, between which there is often a boundary, also in terms of marriage (Szuhay, 1995; Szuhay, 2005). The Olah Gypsy (Vlach Roma) people, who make up approx. 10–15 per cent of Hungarian Roma people and speak the Romani language, are considered the most homogeneous Roma group (Vajda, 2015; Kovai, 2017; Szabóné Kármán, 2020). The Boyash Roma people are also bilingual, but their language is not the same as the Olah language, and they make up about five to eight per cent of the Gypsy population in Hungary (Kovai, 2017). They also tend to choose a partner from within their own group, and often marriage with an Olah partner is a bigger problem for them than marriage with non-Roma (Binder, 2008). Romungro, or 'Hungarian Gypsies', speak only Hungarian and constitute the most populous part (80 per cent) of the Gypsy population (Kovai, 2017). In addition to these, there are several other smaller communities in Hungary, such as Sinti, and there are other subgroups within larger groups.

Roma people with higher educational attainment are presumably less homogamous than their lower educated counterparts (Komolafe et al., 2022), but relatively little research has examined Roma partner choice and educational attainment. The 1990 and 2011 census data also show that a higher proportion of Roma people with a higher level of education are in a romantic relationship with a non-Roma partner (Szabó, 2022). In a study of students attending a Roma special college (Komolafe et al., 2021), while in theory Roma students tended to consider the origin of their partner to be irrelevant, in practice they tended to

choose a partner similar to themselves in terms of origin and educational attainment. In a Roma special college, it was easier for them to find a partner with a similar educational background and origin (Komolafe et al., 2021). Examining Roma women with higher education, it was repeatedly concluded that Roma women with a university degree had difficulties finding a suitable partner and some of them formed a romantic relationship with a non-Roma partner (Durst et al., 2016). Compared to the traditional pattern of early marriage, family formation was pushed to the end of the longer training period, in line with the majority social pattern, and with this, the chances of finding a Roma partner decreased. Roma women graduates often failed to conform to the image of women that was accepted in their communities (Komolafe et al., 2021). Roma people are at a disadvantage in the labour market (Messing & Árendás, 2022), but Roma women graduates wanted to fulfil their potential in the world of work, not only in household work and raising children (Szabóné Kármán, 2009; Durst et al., 2016). Overall, it can be said that there is no significant amount of literature either on educational attainment, or other sociodemographic factors and interethnic marriages of Roma people. We wanted to fill this gap with our current research.

4 Sample and method

In our exploratory, cross-sectional, quantitative, questionnaire-based research, we wanted to find answers to the question of what is typical of those Roma people who form romantic relationships with (also) non-Roma people compared to those who have romantic relationships only with Roma people.

4.1 Data collection, data analysis

In 2019, we used the Tablet-assisted Personal Interviewing method to collect data from a non-representative sample of Roma adults in Hungary. For data collection, we used non-probability, snowball sampling (Babbie, 2003). We aimed to launch snowballs from as many directions as possible, so that respondents belong to different networks of contacts.

A fundamental problem in all Roma research is to be able to survey a population that represents the Roma population well enough. Since there are only estimates of the number of Roma people, and there are often difficulties in identifying who can be called of Roma origin (Pénzes at al., 2018; Kemény & Janky, 2003; Ladányi & Szelényi, 2001), it is not possible to create a representative sample. The respondents included in the analysis were assumed to be of Roma origin before the data collection, in connection with the snowball sampling, based on a recommendation, but only those who declared themselves Roma were included in the analysis. Thus, the final filter for origin was self-declaration.

As a quota, during the data collection, we determined that the three largest Roma groups (Olah, Boyash, Romungro) should be in a similar proportion in the sample. In addition to these groups, the respondents could enter the category 'Gypsy in general' and could also specify themselves under the other category which group they felt they be-

longed to. There is sometimes crossover between these groups due to interethnic marriages and many sub-groups exist outside the main groups, so clear categorisation is sometimes difficult. In the analysis, we used the main Roma group, as defined by the respondents themselves, to which they think they belong most.

In our fundamentally exploratory research, we aim to compare those respondents who had already had a non-Roma partner in their life with those who had only had a Roma partner. The literature on educational attainment in interethnic partnerships and marriages is the most extensive, so we only formulated a hypothesis regarding this: 'We hypothesise that higher educated Roma individuals choose a non-Roma partner in their lifetime in greater proportion than those with a lower level of education.'

For the analysis of correlations, we used IBM SPSS 28. Statistics software, Khi^2 test and decision tree analysis with CHAID method. The decision tree method was used to divide the sample into parts, as it breaks down complex decision problems into smaller problems and provides an easily comprehensible representation of possible outcomes. It has the advantage of excluding variables that are irrelevant to the situation, i.e. those that do not have a significant grouping effect. Within this framework, CHAID (Chi-squared Automatic Interaction Detector), which was used in the analysis, is a Khi^2-based method, which is an alternative to traditional cluster analysis. The method is able to handle both categorical and continuous dependent and independent variables (Dudás, 2018). The CHAID method is used to study the strongest correlations between the dependent variable and the possible predictor variables, which themselves may interact with each other (Sut & Simsek, 2011). 'The main goal of the exploratory algorithm is to cluster observations in terms of the dependent variable (Y) in such a way that the variance within groups is as small as possible and the variance between groups is as large as possible. During the procedure, a hierarchy of explanatory variables (Xi) emerges according to the extent to which they explain the variance of the target variable' (Hámori, 2001, p. 703). The method is applied in economics, health and social sciences (Chan et al., 2006; Horner et al., 2010; Brewer et al., 2018).

4.2 Participants

535 respondents of Roma origin were surveyed. There were slightly more women (53.5 per cent) than men in the sample. The average age of respondents was 43 years (standard deviation 16.1), the youngest was 18 while the oldest was 84. The sample is relatively young, broken down by age group, 18–29-year-olds accounted for the largest proportion. The uniqueness of the sample is that the three Roma groups were included in similar proportions (Romungro 35.0 per cent, Olah 34.2 per cent, Boyash 30.1 per cent, Sinti 0.2, 'Gypsies in general' 0.6). Their educational level is low, more than half of the sample (55.1 per cent) have eight years of primary education, similar to the Hungarian Roma population. Those with an education above the high school diploma are included in the sample in a similar proportion (6.9 per cent) as in the KSH census data on Roma (KSH, 2011). From an economic point of view, the active are in the majority (57.4 per cent) compared to the inactive (33.5 per cent), unemployed (7.5 per cent) and students (1.7 per cent). In terms of occupation, the proportion of people doing intellectual work is the lowest (6.5 per cent). Commu-

nal workers (15.1 per cent) are over-represented in the sample compared to the Hungarian average population (KSH, 2019). Most of the respondents are semi-skilled or unskilled workers (49.0 per cent), followed by skilled workers (29.5 per cent).

In terms of educational attainment, the majority of respondents (57.8 per cent) are not mobile compared to their parents, neither up nor down, i.e. they have the same level of education as their parents. A low proportion of them (3.2 per cent) are from the capital. More than half of the respondents (51.2 per cent) were born in the settlement where they lived at the time of survey.

Table 2 in the Appendix shows the distribution of socio-demographic characteristics of our Roma sample.

4.3 Instrument

In our questionnaire survey, the sociodemographic factors examined were: gender, age, marital status, actual relationship situation, educational attainment, economic activity, occupation and settlement types. By comparing the educational attainment of respondents and their parents, we created a "mobility by educational attainment" variable. Those with higher education than at least one of their parents were upwardly mobile, those with lower education than both parents were downwardly mobile, and those with the same education as one of their parents were stagnant.

In the questionnaire, we asked respondents about their partner's ethnicity (Roma, non-Roma, other). Relatively few respondents (51) had a non-Roma partner, so we decided to compare two larger groups of respondents: those who had had a non-Roma partner (218) and those who had only had a Roma partner (313) in their life. These two categories are more representative of the preferences of Roma respondents to enter into interethnic romantic relationships than if we only looked at current partners. The examined variable was formed from two questions. One question asked about the respondent's current partner's origin and the other asked whether the respondent had had a non-Roma partner in their life before their current partner. With the new variable, we categorize respondents not only by the origin of the current partner. In the case of couples, we did not distinguish whether the respondent's spouse or partner was Roma or non-Roma. They declared the origin of who they defined as a partner or ex-partner of theirs.

5 Results

5.1 Roma people who had had a non-Roma partner

The following table (Table 1) shows the distribution of respondents who had ever had a non-Roma partner. In the table, the distribution (%) represents the value compared to respondents who had only had romantic relationships with Roma partners.

Table 1 Incidence (%) of non-Roma partners according to different socio-demographic groups

		Has had a non-Roma partner		
		Men	**Women**	**Total**
		Distribution (%)	**Distribution (%)**	**Distribution (%)**
Has had a non-Roma partner		–	–	40.7
Gender (N=535)	Men	–	–	47
	Women	–	–	35.3
Age (N=535)	18-29	57.4	38.5	46.2
	30-39	61.5	37.3	48.6
	40-49	50.0	47.0	48.2
	50-59	38.6	24.4	31.8
	60 and above	26.4	19.0	23.2
Marital status (N=533)	Unmarried	67.3	50.0	58.3
	Married	33.6	21.4	27.8
	Lives in a cohabitation relationship	51.9	44.6	47.7
	Widow, widower	33.3	15.6	21.3
	Divorced	62.5	54.5	57.9
Actual relationship situation (N=531)	Lives with spouse	34.3	21.4	28.1
	Lives with a partner	52.4	43.4	47.4
	Has a partner but does not live with them	66.7	83.3	72.2
	Has no partner	57.8	37.3	45.0
Roma community (N=531)	Hungarian Gypsy/Romungro	58.7	41.1	48.1
	Olah Gypsy/Vlach Roma	43.2	25.0	34.4
	Boyash	40.3	39.3	39.8
Settlement type (N=535)	Capital	100.0	66.7 (n.s.)	88.2
	County seat, city with county rights	51.9	33.3 (n.s.)	41.1
	City	41.2	39.8 (n.s.)	40.5
	Town, village	43.8	30.9 (n.s.)	36.7

Table 1 *(contiued)*

		Has had a non-Roma partner		
		Men	**Women**	**Total**
		Distribution (%)	**Distribution (%)**	**Distribution (%)**
Educational attainment (N=535)	Under 8 years of elementary	16.7	21.2	19.0
	8 years of elementary	49.2	27.9	37.3
	Secondary education, without high school diploma (vocational diploma)	49.3	52.2	50.7
	At least high school diploma	75.0	61.9	67.6
Occupation (N=292)	Intellectual	70.0 (n.s.)	66.7	68.4
	Skilled	51.9 (n.s.)	67.6	58.1
	Semi-skilled, unskilled	46.9 (n.s.)	34.0	42.7
	Communal worker	54.5 (n.s.)	21.2	29.5

For numbers marked with '(n.s.)' the Khi² test yielded no significant results, which are described in more detail after the table.

Gender and the origin of the respondents' partners were significantly related ($\chi^2(1)=7.513$; $p=0.006$). A smaller proportion of women had heterogamous romantic relationships than men.

The age of the respondents was significantly related ($\chi^2(4)=22.104$; $p<0.001$) to whether they had had a non-Roma partner. Examining men ($\chi^2(4)=17.178$; $p=0.002$) and women ($\chi^2(4)=11.371$; $p=0.023$) separately, we also found a significant correlation. While in the case of men it was the 30–39 age group that had the most respondents who had had a heterogamous romantic relationship in their life, while this was typical for women in the 40–49 age group. The smallest difference in the proportions between men and women is seen in the 40–49 age group. Over the age of 50, the proportion of those who had already had a non-Roma partner decreased for both genders.

Marital status shows a significant correlation with the origin of the partners, looking at the genders together ($\chi^2(4)=43.382$; $p<0.001$), as well as men ($\chi^2(4)=19.915$; $p=0.001$) and women ($\chi^2(4)=25.719$; $p<0.001$) examined separately. In the case of married and widowed persons Roma-Roma romantic relationships were more typical. Those who chose a partner from outside their ethnic group were more often in a cohabiting relationship or were divorced or unmarried. The actual partnership situation was related to the origin of the partners (Women: $\chi^2(3)=17.538$; $p<0.001$; Men: $\chi^2(3)=11.730$; $p=0.008$; Together: $\chi^2(2)=25.273$; $p<0.001$). For both genders, those who had a partner but did not live with them had the highest proportion of non-Roma partners. Those who lived with their spouses had only had a Roma partner in the highest proportion.

There was a significant correlation between belonging to a Roma community and the origin of the partner ($\chi^2(2)=7.308$; $p=0.026$). However, a significant correlation was also found for women ($\chi^2(2)=6.276$; $p=0.043$) and men ($\chi^2(2)=6.066$; $p=0.048$) when broken down by genders. Romungro respondents had had a non-Roma partner in the highest proportion. Olah women and Boyash men had the lowest proportion of having had non-Roma partners.

The relationship between the origin of the partners and the type of settlement was significant ($\chi^2(3)=17.252$; $p=0.001$). However, the correlation was only observed for men ($\chi^2(3)=14.565$; $p=0.002$), not for women ($\chi^2(3)=4.502$; $p=0.212$). Table 1 shows that interethnic romantic relationships predominated in the capital, where most Roma men formed heterogamous romantic relationships. (The type of settlement was not related to the level of education; among the respondents, those who lived in the capital either had eight years of primary school education or graduated from secondary school without getting a high school diploma.)

One of our variables was related to territorial mobility. We asked the respondents if they currently lived in the settlement where they had been born or not. Moving away from the place of birth ($\chi^2(1)=1.675$; $p=0.196$) did not show a significant correlation with the origin of the partners.

Economic activity did not show a significant correlation with the origin of the partner either examining men ($\chi^2(3)=1.143$; $p=0.767$) and women ($\chi^2(3)=1.608$; $p=0.657$) separately or together ($\chi^2(3)=1.546$; $p=0.672$).

The origin of the partner was significantly related to the educational attainment of the respondents ($\chi^2(3)=30.533$; $p<0.001$). The more highly educated the respondent was, the more likely it was that they had already had a non-Roma partner. The correlation can be observed for women ($\chi^2(3)=21.768$; $p<0.001$) and men ($\chi^2(3)=16.534$; $p=0.001$).

Mobility by educational attainment, i.e. the difference in educational level of the respondents and their parents, did not show a significant correlation with the origin of the partner both overall ($\chi^2(2)=2.673$; $p=0.263$) and when examining the genders separately (Women: $\chi^2(2)=0.372$; $p=0.830$; Men: $\chi^2(2)=3.402$; $p=0.184$).

The occupation of the respondents and the origin of the partners showed a significant correlation ($\chi^2(3)=14.250$; $p=0.003$). The higher the status of the given job was, the higher the rate of choosing a non-Roma partner was. Broken down by gender, this correlation was significant only for women ($\chi^2(3)=18.468$; $p<0.001$), but not for men ($\chi^2(3)=2.137$; $p=0.544$). (The occupation was related to the educational level: the higher the educational level was, the higher the proportion of people who took on higher level work was.)

5.2 Examining factors related to the ethnic composition of romantic relationships with decision tree analysis

A decision tree analysis was conducted using the CHAID method to find out which socio-demographic variables are the most important determinants of the origin of the Roma respondents' partners. The decision tree shows those variables that had the most significant grouping effect at the given level of the tree. The other variables have weaker effects compared to the selected variables and are therefore not included in the decision tree. The

target variable is the origin of the current and past partners, with the categories of having only had a Roma partner or having had a non-Roma partner. The potential explanatory variables were gender, age, belonging to a Roma group, actual partnership status, educational attainment, type of settlement and occupation. During the decision tree analysis, the variables of Roma community, type of settlement, and occupation did not show significant grouping effects. Significant grouping effects were found for gender, age, educational attainment and actual partnership status (Figure 1).

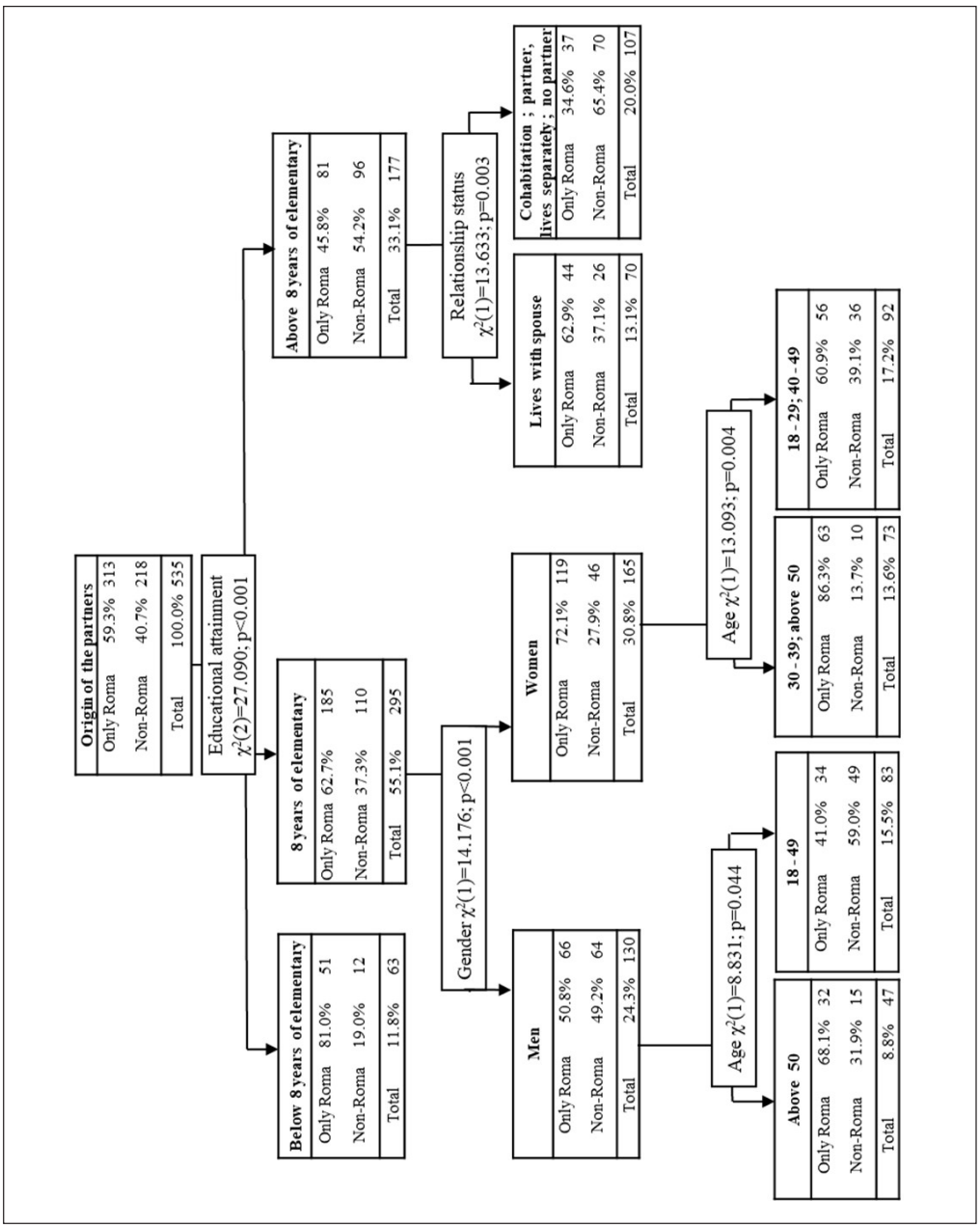

Figure 1 Factors that most determine the origin of partners, decision tree analysis (N=535)

The first, significantly grouping variable was educational attainment. Those with less than eight years of elementary education had had a non-Roma partner in the lowest proportion, and those with higher than eight years of elementary education had had a non-Roma partner in the highest proportion. Within those with eight years of elementary education, the grouping variable was gender. A higher proportion of men with eight years of elementary education had been with a non-Roma partner than women. For both women and men, age was the main grouping variable at the next level of the decision tree, however, while men under the age of 50 chose non-Roma partners at a higher rate, women with eight years of elementary education had had non-Roma partners at the highest rate between the ages of 18–29 and 40–49.

For those with more than eight years of elementary education, the actual partnership situation was a significant grouping variable. Within the whole sample, those with more than eight years of elementary education, those living with a partner and those with a partner who did not live together and unmarried people had had (also) non-Roma partners at the highest rate. Thus, for those with higher education, marriage as the most traditional form of cohabitation tends to lead Roma people towards homogamous relationships.

6 Discussion and conclusion

In our study, we examined, along different socio-demographic variables, the characteristics of Roma people who have had a non-Roma partner. Women were significantly less likely to have had heterogamous romantic relationships than men. In the 2001 and 2011 censuses, the proportion of Roma people reporting their ethnicity had formed interethnic marriages or cohabiting relationships at a similar rate across genders, with only a slight difference of a few percent in favour of men (Tóth & Vékás, 2008; KSH, 2020; Szabó, 2022). However, this correlation can vary from culture to culture and country to country, for example, a study in Spain found that Roma women are more likely to marry a non-Roma partner (Gamella, 2020; Gamella & Álvarez-Roldán, 2023). At the international level, both among African-Americans and among Africans in Hungary, men are more likely than women to enter into romantic relationships and marriages with members of the majority society (Wang, 2015; Komolafe & Komolafe, 2019). This may be due to gender roles specific to the culture, to ideas and traditions about women or to migration characteristics. The fact that Roma men are significantly more likely to choose a non-Roma partner may also be related to their higher territorial mobility. They are more mobile than Roma women within the country for employment reasons, often going to work in areas with a better economic situation, less densely populated by Roma people (Görgőy, 2023) and this may also be responsible for their increased chances of heterogamy and reduced chances of endogamy as they enter the majority society.

Marital status shows a significant correlation with the origin of the current and past partners. With married and widowed couples, Roma-Roma couples were more typical. Those who chose a partner from outside their ethnic group were more often in a cohabiting relationship or were divorced or unmarried. We could see a similar correlation when we asked about the actual relationship situation, with a higher proportion of those living with a spouse having only been with Roma partners in their life, compared to singles,

people living with a partner and those who had a partner but did not live with them. This correlation is also interesting from the point of view that, according to KSH data, Roma women have a lower rate of marriage and a higher rate of cohabitation compared to Hungarian or German ethnicities (KSH, 2015).

The Roma community also played a role in partner choice: examining the genders separately, non-Roma partner choice was significantly lower for Olah women and Boyash men than for Romungro. The reason for this may be that Olah and Boyash people preserved their language and traditions the most, so they are the ones who strive to marry within the group the most (Dupcsik, 2010; Szabóné Kármán, 2020). Romungro people have quit their own traditions and language the most, and they have been integrated into the Hungarian majority society the most (Kovai, 2017). Other factors may also play a role in this.

Settlement type had a significant effect on partner choice only for men. Non-Roma partner selection took place in Budapest in the largest proportion. In a more heterogeneous environment or where the given minority group is represented in a smaller proportion, there is a greater chance of forming a partnership or marriage with someone outside the group (Blau & Schwartz, 1984; Lőrincz, 2006; Song, 2016). Nearly half of the Roma people live in villages or large towns and only a small proportion of them live in Budapest (Pénzes et al., 2018), so Roma people living in the capital can encounter many more non-Roma people. The dominance of the capital in the formation of interethnic couples is also partially due to this. Furthermore, according to research examining Olah and Boyash gypsies, the importance of traditional customs is also decreasing in cities and the capital (Binder, 2008; Vajda, 2015).

In our analysis, educational attainment showed a correlation with the origin of the partners. The higher the educational level of the Roma respondents was, the more common it was that they had already had a non-Roma partner. In the decision tree, educational attainment was also shown to be the strongest grouping variable. Therefore, we consider our hypothesis that 'We hypothesise that higher educated Roma individuals choose a non-Roma partner in their lifetime in greater proportion than those with a lower level of education' accepted. This result is consistent with several studies on interethnic romantic relationships and marriage (Furtado & Theodoropoulos, 2011; Furtado, 2012; Song, 2016), according to which more highly educated members of minority groups marry members of the majority society more often than those with low education. One of Furtado's (2012) theories may explain the relationship between educational attainment and the partner's origin, according to which more educated members of minority groups, where there are many people with lower education who belong to their own ethnic group, enter into interethnic marriages more often than in those minority groups where there is a higher proportion of highly educated people. The educational attainment of the Roma population has improved in recent decades, but they still have a lower level of educational attainment compared to the majority society (KSH, 2016; Bernát, 2018). Thus, if Roma people with a high level of education want to choose a partner who matches their level of education, they have less chance of finding a partner from their own group.

The occupation of the respondents and the origin of the partners showed significant correlation, however, this correlation was typical only for women. The higher the status of the given job was, the higher the rate of choosing a non-Roma partner was. This may also

be due to the correlations obtained for educational attainment, because with a higher education, there are more chances to get a job that requires higher qualifications. An examination of the life course of Roma women with a degree may explain why this is more the case for women based on the data. Judit Szabóné Kármán (2009) shows that Roma women with a degree are often less valued by Roma men. The main tasks of Roma women are to provide for their husbands and families, which is hindered by their commitment to study and work. Women who continue their education are excluded from traditional, early marriage and are often left without a partner or choose a non-Roma partner. In a study by Judit Durst, Anna Fejős and Zsanna Nyírő (2016), Roma women graduates were very committed to their work, even after having children, in contrast to other first-generation graduates whose enthusiasm for work was reduced by having children. For Roma women, having children with a partner who would allow them to fulfil their potential in their work was an important consideration. In their study, Roma women with a degree were unable or unwilling to conform to the traditional Gypsy woman ideal, where housework and childcare would be their main tasks. In the case of these women, it is typical that in their romantic relationships, the man takes on a similar share of housework and childcare as they do (Durst et al., 2016). These findings suggest that the correlation between the status of occupation and the formation of interethnic romantic relationships for women is likely to be due to cultural background, and it is not the interethnic romantic relationship that results in higher occupational status.

We theorize that, as the educational attainment of the Roma population shows a rising trend, more and more interethnic relationships may be formed in Hungary in the future, which is both a measure and a facilitator of integration.

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Appendix

Table 2 Socio-demographic characteristics of respondents

		Amount	Percent
Gender	Men	249	46.5
	Women	286	53.5
Age	18–29	132	24.7
	30–39	111	20.7
	40–49	112	20.9
	50–59	85	15.9
	60 and above	95	17.8
Roma community	Hungarian Gypsy/Romungro	187	35.2
	Olah Gypsy/Vlach Roma	183	34.5
	Boyash	161	30.3
Marital status	Unmarried	115	21.6
	Married	205	38.5
	Lives in a cohabitation relationship	128	24.0
	Widow, widower	47	8.8
	Divorced	38	7.1
Actual relationship situation	Lives with spouse	203	38.2
	Lives with a partner	190	35.8
	Has a partner but does not live with them	18	3.4
	Has no partner	120	22.6
Educational attainment	Under 8 years of elementary	63	11.8
	8 years of elementary	295	55.1
	Secondary education, without high school diploma (vocational diploma)	140	26.2
	At least high school diploma	37	6.9

Table 2 *(contiued)*

		Amount	Percent
Economic activity	Active	300	57.4
	Inactive	175	33.5
	Unemployed	39	7.5
	Student	9	1.7
Occupation[1]	Intellectual	19	6.5
	Skilled	86	29.5
	Semi-skilled, unskilled	143	49.0
	Communal worker	44	15.1
Mobility by educational attainment [2]	Downward	23	4.6
	None	288	57.8
	Upward	187	37.6
Settlement types	Capital	17	3.2
	County seat, city with county rights	124	23.2
	City	195	36.4
	Town, village	199	37.2
Born in the settlement where they currently live?	Yes	274	51.2
	No	261	48.8

[1] among active respondents

[2] By comparing the educational attainment of respondents and their parents, we created a "Mobility by educational attainment" variable. Those with higher education than their parents were upwardly mobile, those with lower education than both parents were downwardly mobile, and those with the same education as one of their parents were stagnant (None).

BOOK REVIEW

Yerkes, M. A. & Bal, M. (Eds.) (2022). Solidarity and Social Justice in Contemporary Societies: An Interdisciplinary Approach to Understanding Inequalities. Springer

https://doi.org/10.17356/ieejsp.v9i4.1201

'Alone, we can do so little; together, we can do so much.'
Helen Keller

Solidarity and Social Justice in Contemporary Societies features a collection of finely crafted chapters authored by scholars and researchers with knowledge and expertise in the subject of social justice. The volume has a special focus on social inequalities with balanced perspectives and empirical evidence. The edited volume is intended for social justice-minded readers, practitioners, academics and a general audience. It informs readers of far-reaching impacts brought by gender, age, socio-economic status and ethnic background in our increasingly diverse and dynamic societies marked by digitalisation, climate (in)justice, and the global pandemic. With an overarching aim to provide theoretical insights into the interlocking issues related to inequalities, the line of inquiry extends beyond enduring, growing or changing faces of solidarity in public discourses that serve as a unifying or dividing force for differences in social and cultural values.

The pioneering volume revolves around three main concepts: social inequality, solidarity and social justice. These concepts remain complex and contested in many ways. The editors conceptualise social inequality as the 'uneven allocation of burdens and valued resources across members of a society based on their group membership, in combination with the undervaluation of these members of society based on this same group membership', marked by 'unfair disadvantage' (Yerkes & Bal, 2022, p. 4).

Likewise, the conception of solidarity evolves and embodies a mutual attachment that transcends group boundaries. It is often expressed through the co-shaping of a shared identity and the willingness to share resources. In allocating resources, two questions are central to social justice: (1) who deserves what and (2) how it should be achieved. Distributive justice (Adams, 1965) deals with the what, whereas procedural justice deals with the how (Lind & Tyler, 1988). The former concerns the burdens and benefits across members of a certain society, while the latter the standardised procedures leading up to the actual attainment and the intended subject (the 'whom') in a particular group of members in a given society (Fraser, 1998).

The book adopts a five-section structure. It starts with an overview of central concepts and issues relating to social equality, solidarity and social justice. Section I contextualises the volume by explicating self-transcending motives, such as solidarity and common identity building, in societal behaviours.

Section II provides five theoretical discussions: (1) Social Identity Theory, represented by the use of 'I' (personal identities) in 'we' (social identities) (Chapter 2); (2) inter-group and intra-group solidarity on individual and societal levels, marked by socio-psychological triggers and barriers (Chapter 3); (3) distributive, procedural justice, interactional justice and justice as recognition, explained by just-world theory and system-justification theory (Chapter 4); (4) capability-based welfare state and self-transcending motive for social justice (Chapter 5); and (5) deservingness and differentiating criteria for resource allocation (Chapter 6).

Building on theoretical bases, Section III provides empirical analyses of social inequality cases, marked by stereotyping based on gender (Chapters 7 and 8), age (Chapters 9 and 10), socio-economic position (Chapters 11 and 12), ethnicity (Chapters 12 and 13), sexual orientation (Chapters 15 and 16), and household constellations (singles, lone parents and multi-parent families). Comparative analyses were conducted cross-country in Europe, Australia, and North America. Key findings include: (1) restricting gender norms and perceptions of people's choices between work and life; (2) benefits of counter-ageism and intergenerational solidarity in elderly and childcare; and (3) social marginalisation and well-being policies of LGBTQA+ groups.

From theories and empirical data to global challenges, Section IV investigates (1) climate change (Chapter 17), (2) digitalisation (Chapter 18), and (3) the global pandemic (Chapter 19), accelerate social inequalities and undermine solidarity in contemporary societies. The main takeaways encompass (1) the impossibility of an equal behavioural change for all social groups in transition to sustainability; (2) the role of digital services as a gap-closer in access to public health services; and (3) pandemic-accelerated bias against the self-employed, flexible workers and citizens with an Asian appearance living in societies outside Asia.

Section V summarises findings and leaves us with several questions: (1) how do our perceptions of stereotypes and perceptions of deservingness influence our understanding of solidarity and social justice in a given society, (2) how do visible fault lines contribute to social inequalities and (3) what we should do in response to these inequalities by fostering solidarity and social justice among different social groups in a certain society.

Evaluating social inequalities seldom follows a linear or singular path, as equalities are experienced differently by different social groups in various societal sectors with varying impacts. Access to care, health, work, and other public services and social resources requires a rethinking of the deservingness of citizens' social rights (income protection, housing, education, and healthcare) and civil rights (due process under the law). Mere stereotyping will neither benefit constructive discussions about under-served social groups nor drive policy changes in the state support system.

The comprehensive volume enriches our understanding of solidarity and social justice in the latest public discourses of contemporary welfare states. By examining patterns of inequality related to visible fault lines (gender, age, sexual identity, and socio-economic status) in the broader global contexts (climate justice, digitalisation and the pandemic), the

contributors to this volume advocate de-stigmatising structural inequalities through solidarity and social justice in several Central and Eastern European countries. This volume provides a panoramic view of social inequalities with practical and actionable insights towards building solidarity.

One sure strength of this edited volume is its interdisciplinary approach to revealing many faces of a complex issue in our contemporary society. The book intends to be multidisciplinary and integrative. It draws on many theory bases from neighbouring disciplines, such as sociology, psychology, and political philosophy in European societies. Another merit is its state-of-art use of empirical evidence to the sense-making process of a complicated and often contended topic. For example, many contributors shed light on the role of governments in the welfare states in response to a cluster of mounting issues, such as employment equality and inclusive growth. By doing so, they challenge readers to reflect critically on patterns of social (in)equality by comparing, contrasting, and making inferences from welfare state responses to these issues and diverging public opinions surrounding inequality.

In Human Rights Studies, there has been a few existing studies on the protection of the right to a fair representation for migrants and minorities in their host society (Yi, 2023). As a reviewer, I resonate with many ideas presented in this volume, in particular with the topic of social justice and inequalities. However, as responsible members of a certain family, community and society, we need to acknowledge the implications of structural inequalities for different groups in various societies. In an equitable society, everyone deserves a fair chance. It is particularly so when accessing public goods and societal resources. Our choice between short-term self-interests and longer-term societal interests holds the key to resolving social dilemmas. Like the prisoner's dilemma, individuals thrive when they do not act cooperatively, but the collective thrives when everyone chooses to cooperate. The very choice defines the destiny of our future generations. Do we want our kids to be worse off than our generation or previous generations?

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BOOK REVIEW

Jensen, J. (2022). Memory Politics and Populism in Southeastern Europe. Routledge

https://doi.org/10.17356/ieejsp.v9i4.1278

This book is a unique ethnographic project that reveals the hidden trajectories between memory politics and populism in Southeastern Europe through eleven case studies. The authors are putting architectural designs, memorials, and commemorations under the magnifying glass and uncovering the forgotten heroes or historic events to find untold stories and understand how memories are being fabricated, reinterpreted, and redeemed from the oblivion or pulled out of the original context to tailor-make populist narratives which are always serving political actors to pursue their goals and ambitions. The case studies show how the same historic events, personalities, and (non)places can be interpreted in different ways depending on the ethnic-nationalist codes used to (re)produce identities and imagined communities which leads to the strengthening of enmities. The authors explain how war heroes and ideological categories merely represent empty signifiers in their quest to debunk myths that underly the official government policies as well as conspiracy theories that persistently undermine the projects of reconciliation in the region.

The relationship between memory politics and populism is under-researched and rarely addressed not just in Southeastern Europe but also in the rest of the world, which is why this volume is one of the ground-breaking attempts to illuminate and explain this phenomenon. One of the key qualities of this research project is its multidisciplinary approach. The authors are breaking away from the limitations of set disciplinary boundaries to connect cultural and memory studies with history and political sciences and provide a new methodological and conceptual framework for researching memory politics.

The introductory chapter written by Astrea Pejović and Dimitar Nikolovski is grounding the concept of the 'ethnographic understanding of enmity' as innovative use of ethnography. Enmity is the underlying idea and a basis for the different 'populisms' which is palpable in each of the case studies, be it the 'nationalisation of chocolate,' posthumous awards to forgotten generals or the project of maintaining the ruins to commemorate wars. Even though this book showcases relevant examples from Southeastern Europe, primarily from former Yugoslavia, it transcends the regional studies because it talks about the mechanisms of the production of memory politics that are universal and present in all parts of the world where populist narratives dominate the political discourses.

In the second chapter, Rory Archer warns that oblivion is also a part of memory politics while he analyses the almost completely forgotten Antibureaucratic revolution in Serbia in 1989. This 'happening of the people' is significant because it is the 'first populist mobilisation of the region' and the ethnography shows how and why the narratives were rejected and never became a part of the populist policies because the ideas behind this revolution are 'diffuse and contradictory.'

Inconsistencies and contradictions are present in all the case studies in this volume. In the third chapter, Gruia Badescu analyses how the urban spaces of Belgrade and Sarajevo are designed according to memory politics and emphasises that the maintained socialist, as well as refurbished buildings, contain subliminal political messages. On the other hand, Igor Stipić ushers the readers into a Rashomon-like story while trying to understand who Herceg Stjepan Kosača really was, who has evoked completely different memories among the representatives of Croats, Bosniaks and Serbs in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Similarly, Marija Ivanović in the fifth chapter shows how the same memorial centre is being used by different political actors and how the production of peoples and identities relies on the production of enmity. In the sixth chapter, Mišo Kapetanović focuses on the use of memorials and stresses the class dimension of populism analysis to reveal that in some cases local communities and individuals tend to replace political actors to become producers of memory politics.

Ana Ljubojević (Chapter 8) and Lovro Kralj (Chapter 9) focus on memory politics in Croatia by analysing the Ustaša movement and the commemoration of Bleiburg. Both case studies show how memories of the Second World War are changing shapes, getting new interpretations, and are being adapted to new political contexts to achieve political goals. It is also visible how the concept of enmity lies at the heart of the definition of national identity.

Even when the aim is to achieve reconciliation, memory politics strengthens enmities because one collective identity is always defined against the other. This is visible in the case Astrea Pejović analyses in the seventh chapter. In the context of the accession of Montenegro to NATO and the EU, efforts of the ruling party in this country to apologise to Croatia for war crimes in Dubrovnik during the nineties have resulted in deterioration of relations with Serbia. Similarly, attempts to repair relations between North Macedonia and Bulgaria have caused a countereffect in the form of resistance to the Good Neighbourliness Agreement, as Dimitar Nikolovski explains in the eleventh chapter.

The region of Southeastern Europe appears complex and dispersed and seems to be a conglomerate of micro-regions. The authors of this volume primarily focus on former Yugoslav republics where populist narratives emerged with the breakup of the country. The only non-Yugoslav state is Bulgaria but by introducing it into the volume, the authors want to start a larger discussion about populism in Southeastern Europe within the international community. In a certain sense, this volume takes into consideration two geographical and conceptual units that are distinguished by their ethnonational identities and populist narratives. Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Montenegro and Serbia comprise the first sub-region, while Northern Macedonia stands on the other side because its memory politics are based on its relations with Bulgaria, Greece and Albania. In the tenth chapter, Naum Trajanovski reveals some of the problems related to Macedonian identity by pointing towards the failed project of 'historic reconciliation' through the apologetic

discourse of the Museum of the Macedonian struggle. Finally, in the twelfth chapter, Filip Lyapov illustrates how Bulgarian nationalism is founded on historic revisionism by analysing the far-right supporters' rally, Lukov March.

By gathering young authors who provided a unique take on topics of memory politics and collective identities, the editor of the volume, Jody Jensen paved the way for future research projects on populism that has become an endemic problem in the contemporary world from Southeastern and Central Europe to the United States and Brazil.

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