



Levente Székedi: Limitele Supraviețuirii – sociologia maghiară din Transilvania după 1945 [Limits of Survival – Hungarian Sociology in Transylvania after 1945]¹

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Balázs TELEGDY

Sapientia Hungarian University of Transylvania, Cluj-Napoca, Romania

e-mail: telegdybalazs@uni.sapientia.ro

ORCID ID: 0000-0002-2923-9547

As the author emphasizes in the introduction, one of the specificities of Eastern and Central European sociology is that, in addition to social cognition, it has typically sought to promote social reform and has expected legitimacy from this dual activity (Larionescu 2007, Mucha 2009). For this reason, it is not worth analysing the history of sociology in Eastern and Central Europe from the point of view of the history of ideas alone because the social – and, more specifically, the political – context (also) set the framework for the cultivation of sociology in the 20th century.

Taking a closer look at the topics analysed in the book, it can be stated that Hungarian sociology in Romania was a bit of a “stepchild” of both major national histories of sociology since in most of the evenings both Romanian (meaning practised in Romania) and Hungarian (meaning practised in Hungary) slip over the sociological work of the Hungarian sociologist in Romania – or authors from other fields. This duality, and at the same time a dilemma, persists to this day because the Hungarian sociologist in Romania (and, of course, not only) also must decide for whom s/he intends his/her results: if it is to the Hungarian public, then these results will probably never be included into the Romanian sociological discourse, and, of course, the same is true the other way around.

Returning to Levente Székedi’s book, I think it is important to note that it is based on the author’s doctoral dissertation, defended at the Sociology

1 The first version of this book review was published in Hungarian language in the journal *Pro Minoritate* 2022/Summer: 113–117.

Department of the Bucharest Doctoral School, under the supervision of Professor Zoltán Rostás. In practice, the structure of the work discusses the period under analysis through the four hypotheses formulated by the author, encapsulating it in a homogenous discursive field.

The analysed period in Romania does not have a consistent, collectively accepted phasing, but several authors (e.g. Larionescu 2007, Zamfir et al. 2018, Rostás 2012) have divided this era into stages based on some events that can be considered milestones in retrospect and which Székedi synthesises. To make it easier for the reader to adapt these sections to the events in Hungarian sociology, let us look at Szabari's (2020) chronology from the point of view of the history of sociology in parallel.

Table 1. *A summary of the stages of sociology in Romania and Hungary after the Second World War*

Romania (Székedi 2021: 15)		Hungary (Szabari 2020: 24–31)	
Period	Brief description of the era	Period	Brief description of the era
1944–1947	A “grace period” is the continuation of research projects between the two world wars and the initiation of new projects, the aim of which is to acquire applicable knowledge. Rethinking the institutional framework.	1945–1948	“Coalition period”, where the goal was to introduce the knowledge of sociology from Western Europe and the United States to Hungary and to build the institutional framework.
1948–1958	The period of banning sociology (sporadic and disguised attempts to make sociology acceptable).	1949–1960	The period of the abolition of sociology (disguised attempt to conduct sociological research).
1959–1964	The slow political rehabilitation of sociology.	1961–1973	The gradual re-establishment of the sociological institutional system, reform socialism, and the consolidation of the Kádár era.
1965–1976	The re-formation of sociology institutions (both research institutes and universities), the (partial) rehabilitation of Dimitrie Gusti (and the Bucharest School of Sociology).		

Romania (Székedi 2021: 15)		Hungary (Szabari 2020: 24–31)	
Period	Brief description of the era	Period	Brief description of the era
1977–1989	The re-marginalization and then the annihilation of sociology.	1974–1989	A phase of duality: “professionalization” but also “closure” and “abandonment” of critical sociology characterize this period.

Given this parallel, the author rightly refers to Bosomitu’s observation that, although the countries of Eastern and Central Europe have followed very different developmental paths, the rebirth of sociology in these countries seems to be a common phenomenon (Bosomitu 2012). In fact, this finding highlights not only the fact of parallelism but also the extent of Soviet influence since if we look at the Hungarian and Romanian periods, we can clearly identify the domestic and foreign policy actions by which the Soviet Union influenced the states in its sphere of interest. One need only think of the communist takeover and its domestic effects in Hungary and Romania or the *détente* announced by Khrushchev or the political effects of the latter, which also had a marked impact on the development of sociology, and these stages are all illustrated in the author’s graphic account. However, it can also be seen that this parallel is not complete since in the final phase of the communist period, the two countries followed almost completely opposite paths.

The above phasing also helps to place Székedi’s book in time since the author undertakes (even if this is not clear from the subtitle) to analyse only the period of 1944–1971, and for this analysis he uses three methods: the qualitative document analysis, which is complemented by the methods of oral history and microsociology.

To give the reader an idea of the work invested, I will briefly mention the number of articles and their places of publication that formed the basis of the research: *Világosság* [Light] daily newspaper (Cluj, 1944–1945: 56 articles), *Utunk* [Our Path] magazine (Cluj, 1946–1956: 205 articles), *Korunk* [Our Era] magazine (Cluj, 1957–1964: 493 articles), *Művelődési Útmutató* [Cultural Guide] and later *Művelődés* [Culture] magazine (Bucharest, 1953–1964: 29 articles), *Lupta de clasă* [Class Struggle] (Bucharest, 1948–1960: 90 articles), *Probleme economice* [Economic issues] (Bucharest, 1958: 10 articles), and *Valóság* [Reality] magazine (Budapest, 1945–1948 and 1958–1964: 133 articles).

Most of the research material of the period analysed is taken from one of these journals, and they provide both illustrative material and a unit of analysis to enable the author to test his working hypotheses. These working hypotheses were:

1. The topics analysed by Hungarian sociologists living in Romania are largely identical to the topics analysed by Romanian sociologists living in Romania. This hypothesis was confirmed since the directives and the research topics considered as legitimate coming from Bucharest applied to everyone in Romania.

2. The problem of minority identity, i.e. the problem of nations living together, occupies a specific and privileged place in Romanian Hungarian sociology. This hypothesis has been only partially confirmed since, in the light of communist internationalism, the discussion of the issue of national identity was a rather delicate subject because it was considered by the official directive as a dead issue (the discussion of which could dangerously lead back to the past).

3. The village as a subject of research is (re)focused in several ways: as a “timely” research topic (changes in village society as a result of the change of regime, industrialization, and collectivization, complemented by a significant ethnographic interest), as a way of promoting the results and methods of the Gusti school of sociology in Hungarian, and as a return to the Transylvanian (Hungarian) village work movement and monographic (in the Gusti’s sociological sense) research begun between the two world wars. This hypothesis was also confirmed because, in different periods, one or the other topic became legitimate.

4. Hungarian sociology in Romania looks beyond the borders of Romania and has a broader orientation towards international sociological topics and methods than a significant part of Romanian sociologists. This hypothesis has also been confirmed since, for example, the journal *Korunk* has published a few reviews that were written by Hungarian authors. What is more, according to the author, the *Korunk* journal (when it was not following the hardline stance) took the editorial principles of the Budapest journal *Valóság* as a model, adapting it, of course, to the Hungarian reality, possibilities, and expectations in Romania.

The chapters of the book practically analyse the characteristics of the period along the four working hypotheses described above, where, in addition to describing the themes of the publications, the author goes around the boundaries – typically political – that set the framework for the writings that could be published in that period.

The author of the present volume rehabilitates and brings back to the public consciousness some Romanian Hungarian sociologists because we are a bit like the first lecture of the history of sociology when we talk about the precursors of sociology. Well, these forerunners were not sociologists either, but the history of sociology written afterwards elevated them to this “rank”. And Levente Székedi’s book re-legitimizes some sociologists and brings them back into the collective professional memory.

In conclusion, I think it is important to mention that Székedi’s book is also a resource work for Romanian (with Romanian nationality) sociologists or the public interested in sociology in Romania since, following the path started by

Salamon² (2014) and Telegdy³ (2016), the author includes in the appendix of the book several Romanian translations of articles initially published in Hungarian that reflect the characteristics of the periods described in the book both in form and content.

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2 In the appendix to his book, Salamon includes Romanian translations of several correspondences, typically between members of *Erdélyi Fiatalok* [Transylvanian Youth].

3 In the appendix of his book, Telegdy includes Romanian translations of several articles written by József Venczel.