



Empirical Results of Hungarian Youth and Family Sociology from a Late Modernist Theoretical Point of View

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Abstract. The present paper is an attempt at describing the drastic changes in schooling and employment searching practices of young people in Hungary, relying on works on post-transitional Hungarian youth sociology. It also aims at describing the underlying driving forces of their attitude and behaviour based on representative value surveys. The empirical researches of the past 25 years were conducted along the lines of the main interests of contemporary academic literature such as identity construction, multi-level socialization, autonomy, project capitalism, and decline of institutions, conflict of roles, anomy and fragilization of the individual. The question is: What do the young rely on? Using and combining their skills of various areas of socialization, are they able to come up to the expectations of a changing world that are hard to understand? Or do they resort to the ingrained habits and internalized values of earlier generations as support? As international value surveys show, there is a tendency of conservativization among the youngest, which is even stronger than in the rest of the society. That is why the underlying aim of the examination was how the increasing drive for autonomy characteristic of late modernity is present in the lives of young Hungarian people. The aim of the paper is an introduction of the Hungarian characteristics of the phenomenon. The analysis is carried out in terms of the various aspects of socialization such as family, school, workplace, and friends.

Keywords: youth sociology, socialization, post-transition, Hungary

Introduction

This present article describes the drastic changes in schooling and employment searching practices of youth and young adults in Hungary, following the change to a democratic regime in the post-1989 period. It relies on works that focus on post-transitional Hungarian youth sociology and based on representative surveys it intends also to portray the underlying driving forces of the attitude of youth

and their behaviour. The contemporary academic literature of the past twenty-five years has attempted significant empirical researches along the lines of identity construction, multi-level socialization, autonomy, project capitalism, the decline of institutions, the conflict of role, anomie, and the fragility of the individual.¹ Therefore, my depiction of the problem of the young is somewhat different from the usual approaches that take political transformation as a basis (and often underlying reason). On the one hand, I wanted to approach the problem from a new perspective, while, on the other hand, I tried to apply the concepts of the Western welfare societies to the Hungarian situation and the data concerned, which is a methodological challenge. One question that I intend to answer is what youth and young adults rely on if the frameworks that used to construct society (institutions serving as means of socialization, the world of work, traditions, norms) disintegrate and become fluid.² Are they able to use and combine their skills of various areas of socialization, and meet the expectations of a changing world that are hard to understand? Or do they resort to the ingrained habits and internalized values of earlier generations as support?

In Hungary, the political transition has fundamentally changed the situation of the young, which resulted in a change in the conceptualization of the young.³

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- 1 See more in Takács (2012), Rényi, Sik, and Takács (2014). The present paper is part of the OTKA research *Modernization in Hungary after the Regime Change*. The Western theories used (Luc Boltanski, Eve Chiapello 1999; François Dubet 2002; Anthony Giddens 1990, 1992, 1994; Alain Ehrenberg 1995; Jean-Claude Kaufmann 2001; Bernard Lahire 2002; Danilo Martuccelli 2010; François de Singly 2006) cannot be discussed here in detail for reasons of space. The present paper is an attempt to compare Hungarian and international results; however, it does not aim at being a comparative study of Central European youth and family sociology. I resorted to comparing data in the region, where Hungarian figures especially stand out and they are different from the tendencies of the regions. [I thank my anonymous revisers for their critical comments of high value.]
 - 2 Individualization of contemporary societies has been a highly studied and problematic area of social sciences since the 1980s. The basic ideas of Ulrich Beck's 'risk society', Zygmunt Bauman's theory of 'liquid society', Anthony Giddens's notion of society focusing on reflexivity, Axel Honneth's focusing on recognition and Bruno Schulze's notion based on experience, German researches on social milieu, and French individual sociologies and criticisms of modernity (Jürgen Habermas, Alain Touraine, Charles Taylor, Bruno Latour) are all acknowledged and accepted; their justification and discussion are not aimed at in this paper.
 - 3 The most disadvantaged strata as a result of the transition to market economy were children and young people due to extreme poverty among children as well as permanent and relatively high proportion of unemployment among young people. Hungary's overall performance on the Social Justice Index has fluctuated since 2008, but in terms of social justice the country has remained among the worst performers: the country is the 23rd in the EU (the Czech Republic 5th, Poland 15th, Slovakia 17th, Croatia 22nd, Bulgaria 26th, and Romania 27th). With focus on children and youth, Hungary ranks on the 26th position. 31% of the total Hungarian population are at risk of poverty or social exclusion, the hardest hit are those under 18 years of age at risk (41%). The gap between generations is growing (SJI 2015: 110–111). Actually, the percentage of the 20- to 24-year-olds who are neither in employment nor participating in education or training exceeds 17%. "About half of all Roma children in Hungary still live in segregated communities and receive substandard education. In many cases, court rulings against segregation are not enforced" (SJI 1015: 111).

Young people appear as “carriers of the social crisis”, and not as “independent social-political participants” (Bauer et al. 2011: 302), and the discipline has become more polarized – more colourful if you will – while researching more and more polarizing, stratifying young people. The most defining topics of the youth sociology of the 1990s were education, educational mobilization, segregation, and social mobility, and since the 2000s lifestyle and free time have got more attention along with the earlier research on systems of norms and values.⁴ At the moment, the most favoured research topics are immigration of young people, political socialization, and radicalization. An area of Hungarian family sociology and youth sociology is the research of socialization that can be characterized by a strong tradition, but this type of youth sociology has been overshadowed by family sociology because the young were approached mostly from the demographic perspective (family formation, having children, etc.). It can be argued that the central problem of Hungarian family sociology focusing on the nuclear family is fertility (or the lack of it), which brings along the examination of changing forms of relationships and becoming an adult as well as the integrative function of the family from the perspective of having children.⁵

In the first part of the paper, I briefly discuss the results of the Hungarian youth and family sociology along the lines of various frameworks of socialization such as family, school, workplace, and friends.⁶ Then I attempt to revisit Hungarian empirical data by applying approaches of Western late modernist theories. I intend to do so in order to re-examine the changes that are normally traced back to the political transition from a different point of view such as identity construction, multilevel socialization, and a need for autonomy.

4 E.g. in the case of the age-group 15–29, researches on a sample of 8,000 individuals approach subjects like school and life course, family background, financial situation, social atmosphere and subjective well-being, lifestyle and political socialization (Ifjúság 2000; Ifjúság 2004, 2008; Magyar Ifjúság 2012).

5 It is important to note that the research culture of both sub-disciplines is strongly characterized by the survey methods.

6 Clearly, this review of the research accomplished along the lines of the three sub-disciplines over the past 25 years has to be limited in its comprehensiveness (e.g. a number of related areas – deviances, religion, free time, and sociology of health – are either not mentioned or merely touched upon).

About some changes in the family as a socialization medium

After the regime change, mass unemployment shocked the society.⁷ Before the regime change, the life-course model was to finish studies at the age of 18, take a job, have a family sooner or later, and live an independent 'adult' life (i.e. get married, found a family, and manage independently a household). The generations reaching adulthood by the 1990s could be characterized by an especially strong eagerness to find employment. As such, families were not at all prepared to support their children who completed schooling but were unable to find long-term employment. In fact, children were often encouraged to find employment as soon as possible and put off further education, particularly because of the mass unemployment that affected parents as well. This was not an easy task: in the age-group of 25–29, half of the surveyed young adults stated that they had already looked for a job in vain (Laki 2006).⁸ The widespread practice that used to be working well was no longer without difficulty, and having to house young adults with earning capability took most families by surprise both psychologically and financially. They did not have either the experiences or the models to solve or endure the situation, and these externally rooted generational differences led to conflicts of role, frustration, and limited autonomous acting and decision-making situations in families. Not only the young but generations of middle-aged parents were also forced to construct new life-course models; not only young people themselves but also their parents had to question the idea of adulthood that used to be taken for granted. It would be of no use reaching the legal age if one was unable to ensure financial independence for a household of their own or see oneself as an adult and make decisions alone (Vaskovics 2000). Today, in comparison with the 15–29-year-old Europeans, Hungarians outrank them in conceiving that the reason for their inability to move away from home is that they cannot afford it financially (Eurostat 2009: 32, Flash Eurobarometer 2007: 202, Király and Paksi 2012): 71 per cent of young adults live with their parents, and the possibility of an independent household has only decreased since 2008; in the middle of the 2000s, twenty per cent of young people could make an independent living and were in possession of

7 Neither the state nor the local governments were prepared for the problem; for example, the institutions dedicated to handle unemployment were established only after the problem had already been reaching massive levels.

8 According to the survey *Ifjúság 2012*, 42% of the young adults are currently not participating in the education system and they have already experienced unemployment (Gazsó 2013), and a considerable part of those in employment can only succeed temporarily on the labour market (Laki 2011). According to a survey of Eurostat 2009, Bulgarian, Czech, Polish, and Slovakian young people are inactive to a similar extent to Hungarians, but if we consider the 29-year-olds (oldest age-group among the young), then the Hungarians are the leaders in the region.

an independent household (Máder 2009). Therefore, the criteria of adulthood have been more and more difficult to determine, and the various stages of life that used to be taken for granted are divergent or convergent – let us just think of the more and more irregular, accidental realization of studies, employment, and having a family. This is especially true for the criterion of responsibility in terms of starting a family. Marriage and having children have been doubted as an essential element of adulthood in the Western literature from the eighties. In Hungary, more than 70% of the population thinks that becoming a parent is *not* an essential aspect of becoming an adult (as opposed to the general opinion of people in most other post-socialist countries: for example, in Romania, Bulgaria, and Ukraine, becoming a parent is considered to be important to become an adult among more than 70% of the population (Paksi and Szalma 2009)). The literature covers the opinion that having children early is the choice of women with poor economic resources and uncertain work prospects as opposed to the tendency of more educated women to postpone family life (for example, Róbert and Bukodi 2005).

Using the latest large sample survey from *Iffúság*, Ádám Nagy (Nagy 2013) introduced the categories of biological, psychological, and social maturity based on various criteria (see *Table 1*). Biological maturity is marked by the beginning of sexual life, while psychological maturity is indicated by the following: one's ability to make decisions independently in regard to the important questions in one's life; the existence of specific plans for the future; the consideration of the possible consequences of one's actions, and feeling oneself adult. In terms of social maturity, family status is considered (whether one is independent or lives together with a wife/husband/partner) as well as children (the presence or absence of them) and the condition of the own household (whether one lives together with their parents/step-parents/grandparents). The data are as follows:

Table 1. *Types of maturity in Hungary*

	Biological maturity	Psychological maturity	Social maturity
Age-group 15–19	50%	30%	9%
Age-group 20–24	93%	59%	28%
Age-group 25–29	97%	69%	63%

Source: Nagy (2013: 46)

It is clear that the definitions used in Vaskovics's paper (Vaskovics 2000), particularly those in connection with the meaning of maturity/adulthood contain more (psychological) criteria that can be interpreted subjectively.⁹ But what

⁹ Definitions based on biological and psychological characteristics and social influences are more and more approached from the aspect of (taking) responsibility for oneself and others, which involves the act of making decisions as well as considering the responsibilities of the decisions.

does it mean to make decisions independently? What do specific plans involve today?¹⁰ Many studies suggest that young adults in Hungary make their own important decisions (career choices, migration) due to a healthy sense of self-awareness or necessity (Máder 2009; Jancsák and Polgár 2010; Takács, Vicsek, and Pál 2013). At the same time, the need for independent decisions – and the need for autonomy – is not common among the youth in Hungary – as we will see from the researches.

About some changes in school as a medium for socialization

“Assigning a special role to schools in one’s upbringing can be considered a Hungarian characteristic”, says Ildikó Szabó in one of her papers (Szabó 1999). Society tends to overrate the role of school in forming students’ personalities, which notion is usually averted by teachers. Other researches point out that the correction of insufficient home socialization is (or could be) the school’s responsibility (Balázs, Kocsis, and Vágó 2011). However, the rules of dividing the tasks between the school and the family are not clear in Hungary. Further examination would be necessary to explore exaggerated expectations towards the school, according to the many fields of the socialization and the development of abilities (Szabó 1999), as it can only be assumed that this phenomenon was induced by the changing of families – that are overloaded due to financial pressures and struggles with lack of free time – as well as by the unprocessed value changes after the regime change.¹¹

The increased expectations from the public towards the schools involve not only the socialization of the students¹² but also the foundations of higher degrees and of a successful and competitive life. In this respect, there is a striking clash between reality and expectations in terms of vocational training: certain school

10 Further questions arise about the criteria: for instance, are those living apart together socially mature or not? In Hungary, about half a million people are in a LAT (living apart together) relationship, two-thirds of whom live with their parents (see Kapitány 2012). This paper does not aim at evaluating any attempts for definition as we are all aware of the difficulties of any attempts to create categories in our world of constantly changing and flowing modernity.

11 The list can be extended with the general mood of anomy that is revealed by specific researches (e.g. Spéder et al. 1998, Tóth 2009, Székely et al. 2012, Ságvári 2012). According to economic indices and to the Human Development Index that conveys information about the general mood, there is a decline or stagnation since 2005 and a decline since 2009 (Lannert 2012). The HDI value has (mildly) declined in Romania as well, while it has stagnated in the Czech Republic and has picked up in Slovakia (HDI 2015: 2012).

12 School has clearly withdrawn from political and civic education as well as from sexual education (Csákó 2009, Csákó et al. 2010, Lannert 2012: 28–29).

certificates and skills (e.g. training skilled workers) that used to concern masses have been depreciated. Yet, a significant part of young people still find themselves in such type of school which provides them with a certificate that is impossible or almost impossible to sell on the labour market. These – mainly vocational schools – are unable to meet their own expectations: “they mainly train students to be unemployed”. This also results in the school “socializing the young for a sort of ‘hopelessness’” (Laki 2006: 194).¹³

In the hope of successful career choices, the parents of students (and an increasing number of students) make more and more efforts to make up for the deficiencies of school education. They do so with private lessons, in a ‘second school’ so to speak. As a severe malfunction of ordinary schools, about 60% of students take private lessons. The commercialization of education also results in parents with more financial resources placing their children with less knowledge than expected into fee-based higher education (Gazsó 2006).

Many studies note that career choices are made independently by the young to an increasing extent (Máder 2009, Jancsák and Polgár 2010, Takács et al. 2013). On the one hand, this has to do with the fact that autonomy becomes a norm in the Hungarian society (Ehrenberg 1995), while, on the other hand, the reason is that parents (and especially teachers) cannot help students in choosing career paths or majors because they have outdated knowledge of the topic or they find it hard to keep up with the constantly changing educational policies. There are also data which assess that parents with lower education participate in the students’ decision-making processes concerning secondary school education to a lesser extent since they cannot recommend a safe career for their children (Török 2008, Bauer and Szabó 2009, de Singly 2006).

More and more academics think that the role of the so-called ‘conscious consumer’ is increasingly present in young people’s career choices (Jancsák and Polgár 2010, Somlai et al. 2007). While one of the studies concludes that “the distribution of answers indicates that the value drive of ‘it does not matter what,

13 I intend to only touch upon the complex problems of failure in school. Predestined school failure that concerns 10% of students is an extreme manifestation of educational inequality: “At the first stage of one’s school studies, 15–30% of children of social groups with lower education and more than half of Roma children suffer a failure that results in marginalized social situation, unemployment for a lifetime or dependence” (Gazsó 2006: 213). Sociologists have been emphasizing since the 1980s that in Hungary primary schools have to (or should) handle an especially difficult task, as almost two-fifths of the students come from a socio-cultural environment with lower education and other disadvantageous factors. “This is the social background to the fact that a significant number of these students finish primary school as functionally illiterate. Major researches show that primary school is unable to help those children to catch up who fall behind the average and develop slower” (Gazsó 2006: 213). In the PISA assessments of recent years, Slovenia, Poland, and the Czech Republic have shown improving or stagnating tendencies (in the fields of reading comprehension, sciences, and mathematics) – the results of all the countries in the region are worse in all three areas. The Hungarian results of 2012 indicate better – stagnating – results (from: OECD PISA 2009 database, PISA 2012).

I just need to study something' belongs to the past" (Jancsák and Polgár 2010: 27), another one writes about the drastic decrease of further education plans (Nyüsti 2013). Judit Lannert has discovered a surprising turn in parents' attitude towards further education: "there is a significant increase in the number of those who think it makes no difference what school children study at" (Lannert 2012: 40–41). The data of *Ifjúság 2012* indicate a significant growing uncertainty in terms of plans about (further) education: while earlier every fourth 15–29-year-old person was uncertain about their further education, it is at least every third in 2012 (Székely 2014).

Various conclusions can be drawn from all this. On the one hand, a number of young people intend to choose more consciously – apparently with more efforts – a trade or major (even abroad) that is considered to be well-paid or safe. On the other hand, more and more refuse to believe in the illusion that a 'diploma' would provide them with (immediate) livelihood. Thirdly, for young individuals of certain social groups, further education does not appear as a viable option. The withdrawal of the state from education obviously did not only trigger democratization and denationalization but also led to large social groups falling behind. It is clear that as the expectations towards schools and their tasks increased after the regime change, much of the trust was also lost. It is interesting to note that the general dissatisfaction with the economic-political system reaching the institutions of education is high particularly among the young, whilst in other parts of the world dissatisfaction increases with growing age (Tóth 2009).

About some changes of the workplace as a medium for socialization

Let us have a look at what kind of influences young people are exposed to in the world of work. The data of *Ifjúság 2008* and *Magyar Ifjúság 2012* reveal repeated changes of workplaces among young people. The question is whether it is related to their plans about personal fulfilment and career building or to the unpredictable fluctuation of the labour market.

A founding concept of the late modernist youth sociology is the disintegration of the standard life-course sequence of school—>graduation—>work as well as changing workplaces and schools repeatedly. The young adults in Hungary are more and more likely to interrupt the school life-course (Nyüsti 2012), which intervals are spent doing jobs, training courses, learning languages, gaining experiences. Some think this kaleidoscope-like series of various activities to gather skills proves to be more profitable later on the labour market (Sági 2012, Nyüsti 2013). Frequent changes of trainings and workplaces can enhance young

people's gathering experiences, socialization at the workplaces and career building in the beginning of their working lives – especially in a world characterized by short-term, project-based working practices (from the employees' point of view) (Boltanski and Chiapello 1999).

Others interpret the data on frequent changes of workplaces as a negative phenomenon affecting the young adults. This is supported by the fact that 37% of the young has already been unemployed during their rather short period of working life as well as the fact that a significant number of young people “can set foot on the labour market only temporarily – for example, they are employed for a fixed term, odd jobs or they work without being declared” (Laki 2011: 120–121).¹⁴

It may appear that young adults with no family ties who are flexible and able to adapt are suitable for a world of project-based working practices as they can do extra work and overtime. Workplace flexibility, the loosening of standard employment, the spreading of atypical jobs (Hárs 2013) are all in favour of young people. These latter working forms make also grey (or black) employment possible for the young; moreover, even employment with legal conditions is often unpredictable and it is accompanied by psychologically and physically exhausting workload and low payment. The great extent of uncertainty and widespread underemployment do not enhance the development of any kind of professional identity, independent livelihood, and financial independence. Péter Róbert's research reveals that the prospects of young people with degrees at the beginning of their working life are far from the ideal. International surveys in 2008–2009 showed that Spanish and Hungarian graduates are in the worst situation.¹⁵ Underemployment was characteristic of 40% of Hungarian graduates; five years after the beginning of their working life, a significant number worked in jobs that are not considered such that require a degree. (Women are significantly more likely to be underemployed, and a higher number of them feel that they are overqualified for their jobs.) The first job has a particular impact on the job five years later. “Practically, if the graduate's first job was not connected to their qualifications, there is a significant chance of underemployment or overqualification in the case of their present jobs” (Róbert 2010: 484). However, people with degrees (especially men) in Hungary have incomes and salary advantage that are outstandingly high – even on an international scale (Róbert 2002, Lannert 2008).

The impossibility of creating one's independent livelihood is not only an obstacle for young graduates in starting a family. The studies of Ágnes Utasi

14 The problem occurs as the start of working life becomes more difficult and unsure. Let us make note of the phenomenon when one's employment starts with leaving one's profession as they considered their training 'useless' even during their studies.

15 The Flexible Professional in the Knowledge Society survey (<http://www.reflexproject.org>). From our region (as well as from the 17 countries), Czech young people show the best results and the Polish are in the middle (Slovakia and Romania were not included in the research) (Róbert 2010: 477).

on single people revealed that the pictures painted by Western literature about the 30–40-year-old single individual who is marketable and not in a steady relationship is only valid for a small number of Hungarian young people. For them, it is really a chosen lifestyle – both in terms of career and free time. Most of young single people in Hungary are not single by choice: two-thirds of women are single mothers¹⁶ and one-third of men delay marriage. Half of the men, as they live in villages and have lower education, are unable to make a living for a family, and therefore they are not desirable partners for the available women (who are oftentimes more educated than them) (Utasi 2003, 2004).

About peer groups and friends as medium for socialization

The young are extremely heterogeneous.¹⁷ Surveys on student lifestyle reveal a sectioned world. The fact that in the last decade position in the consumer culture has become the main aspect in identity formation among young people in their teens and twenties (also) means that a (major) part of young people cannot acquire means that are important or just considered important due to lack of finances. Because of the fast technological developments, this is accompanied by increasing segregation and a series of frustrations.¹⁸ The feeling of segregation and unease triggers the marginalization of some. Lonely young people find it extremely difficult to process negative experiences and defeats.

The loneliness of young people is not only indicated by the habit of watching three hours of television every day (Török, Szekszárdi, and Mayer 2011) but also by “the complete disappearance of the willingness to do social activities” (Bauer 2011: 223). Companies, communities, the desire for social activity are absent, which Bauer explains with the spreading of online communication as well as with the fact that (off-line) community spaces that could serve as the scene for

16 The reason is that those who tend to comply with the traditional expectations marry early but also get divorced by their 30s.

17 This is also true for the value system of young people. For instance, the group of the 18–29-year-olds is very different from the one of those under 18 in terms of “submissive behaviour”. According to the Hungarian data of the last phase of the ESS value survey, among the 18–29-year-olds, rule-following and self-subordination are clearly ranked to the last place, whereas the ideas of freedom, independence are ranked as more important than the country’s average. Among young people under the age of 18, increasing conservatism as well as conformity and decreasing tolerance and solidarity can be detected (Kapitány and Kapitány 2012).

18 This is mainly about possessing ICT technologies. The consumption habits of young people that are distinctively different from those of the adult society are heavily influenced by the different attitude they have towards information technology (Gábor and Szemerszki 2007).

shared activities and conversations are less and less available.¹⁹ It is interesting to note, however, that although among the 13–19-year-old Hungarian people the most typical forms of entertainment are not social activities (listening to music, computer and video games) – on an international scale, they have the most virtual friends in the region (Török, Szekszárdi, and Mayer 2011). In terms of friends, the authors (Utasi 2004, Albert and Dávid 2007) reveal that on an international scale Hungarian people have few friends, relationships are looser, scarcer.²⁰ *Iffúság 2012* also reveals that one-fourths of young people do not have a steady circle of friends with whom they would spend their free time (Székely 2014). The presence or absence of friendships does not only greatly influence the individual's quality of life but friendships are also the building blocks of networking, which (could) greatly influence the employment options of young people. (Young people in employment received the biggest help from acquaintances, relatives, and parents when finding their latest job (Laki 2006).)

Relationships between friends, colleagues, neighbours, and relatives have been operating with instrumental motivation – as opposed to emotional motivation – since the regime change (Utasi 1990, 2013). Therefore, mainly instrumental assistance has worked with the help of a network of strong relationships, while emotional contact and assistance showed severe deficiencies. Since the 1990s, it has been clear from sociological research that among young people in post-socialist countries communal interest was pushed to the background in favour of self-interest.²¹ This indicates a recession to materialistic world view, which has influence on forming friendships.

An outlook on the factors that contribute to the identity formation of Hungarian young people

In the followings, I intend to place the results of Hungarian youth and family sociology into a new perspective by using contemporary Western notions.

19 For example, sitting around in pubs is not a viable option for everyone.

20 According to the 2006 ISS survey, micro-social isolation and narrow interpersonal networks were typical in Hungary. E.g. 41% of those interviewed are in contact with 0–4 people on an average day, including the ones they live with anyway. This proportion in the ex-socialist countries is as follows: the Czech Republic 18%, Slovenia 25%, Latvia 29%, and Poland 32% – all are better than the Hungarian figures. According to ESS's 2010 data on private social activity, Romanians and Hungarians are at the worst place, followed by the Polish. In the other post-socialist countries, friends, acquaintances, and neighbours socialize far more.

21 See many international researches on public affairs, political activity, e.g. the fourth, sixth, and seventh chapters of one of the latest fp7-mayplace survey.

Changes of socialization agents

It is obvious that paths of socialization for young people are not as clear-cut as they used be. Earlier ways of socialization have disintegrated: there is a multiplicity of socialization processes that are of opposite directions. Young people continuously develop in different socialization mediums, and they have to re-form, sometimes reconstruct themselves accordingly (Lahire 1998). It has come to surface about young people of secondary school age in Hungary that students “are forced to take up more and more roles” (Paku 2010), which increases the risk of overloading due to a conflict of roles. Moving among the multiple – and often – simultaneous socialization mediums, the problem of transfer among socialization areas is a fundamental problem for young people in Hungary as well – i.e. knowledge from school inapplicable to everyday problems, skills and mentalities required at the workplace that infiltrate friendships and relationships.

A social theoretical explanation for the crisis of (socialization) institutions that can be applied to the Hungarian situation is François Dubet’s theory about the decline of institutional programmes (Dubet 2002, Takács 2012: 16–17) as well as Anthony Giddens’ theory about the shaken status of expert knowledge (Giddens 1990, 1994; Rényi, Sik, Takács 2014). In his book, François Dubet analyses why the ‘institutional programme’ that socializes individuals and ensures that the coherence of society is on the decline today. The idea of the institutional programme is the socialization of individuals supervised by dedicated professionals – teachers, nurses, social workers, and adult educators – who are trained for this task and whose professional activity is directed to create socialized and, at the same time, autonomous individual subjects. This paradoxical aspiration creates tension between socialization and the requirements of autonomy. The autonomy of an individual can lead to questioning authorities – whether that of teachers or parents – as well as to wavering dedication and devotion on behalf of the executioners of the institutional programme. These professions are shaken to their cores as their representatives face the changed conditions and the representatives change themselves in the course of the process. With the decline of the institutional programme, certain power and hierarchical relations loosen – like the unequal nature of or even the vulnerable position in a teacher–student, social worker–client relationship – and at the same time new forms of power and control emerge.

(Lack of) trust and solidarity

Young people can be characterized by a high level of distrust in Hungary; the indices of system-level trust are the lowest on an international scale. It shows a similar amount of distrust towards systems (e.g. government) as towards people outside the close circle of relationships. According to two-thirds of the subjects

of a Hungarian survey conducted around the turn of the millennium: ‘generally, we cannot trust’ or ‘we can never trust’ other people (Utasi 2004). The lack of trust is accompanied by an ambiguous attitude towards breaking the norms in everyday life. Young Hungarian adults agree with the statement to a great extent that ‘if one wants to succeed in life, they are forced to break certain rules’ (data from Hungarostudy, qtd by Susánszky 2011: 145). On the one hand, they think that it is pointless to act against corruption, while, on the other hand, “young people all think honesty is not profitable today in Hungary, and those who are ready to lie, swindle, and steal can be more successful” (Székely et al. 2012: 4).

According to international value surveys, young people in Hungary can be characterized by a significant lack of cooperation and solidarity (Tóth 2009). This tendency is not only typical of Hungarian young people (although the measurable differences are particularly worrying). Danilo Martuccelli discusses fading solidarity in relation to singularization (Martuccelli 2010). In Martuccelli’s view, singularization is a structural and cultural process in which production, the market, public institutions, and social policy adapt to the various demands and life situations of individuals. Along with the deteriorating interpersonal relations, this enhances the disintegration of normative order in general. The pressure of singularization encourages the individual to create themselves as an individual being – independent of all models, values, and norms, and creating singularity (also) means a complete adaptation to any situation. With the disappearance of a normative framework, the responsibility of an action and its consequences are put on the actor, the individual exclusively, and this diversion of responsibility is identified as a new form of power by Martuccelli. Singularity, the norm of individualization therefore destroys commonness and the feeling of solidarity (Martuccelli 2010; Rényi, Sik, and Takács 2014).

The latest figures of ESS show that the willingness to help has drastically decreased (much under the country’s average) among people under 18. A similar fall-back was measured in terms of tolerance, which “indicates the danger of intolerant young people appearing, who are capable of cruelty,” which is concluded to be a result of negative individualization by the author duo (Kapitány and Kapitány 2012).

Construction of identity

In late modernity, due to weakening traditions and roles, the individual loses their usual footholds. Identity is more difficult to construct by means of roles that have been evident for decades and centuries. With the transformation of the meaning of work, its identity-forming role has become questionable, even though jobs, steady employment was (one of) the most important factor(s) of identity formation (Kohli 1990, Laky 1998). The operating mechanisms of project

capitalism work specifically against identity forming: the authors emphasize the danger of the disintegration of identity due to the multiplicity of contacts and projects with short deadlines and the requirement of pluralization (Boltanski and Chiapello 1999). The question is if profession cannot be a factor of young people's identity, then what other (status) characteristics are relevant.²² Barna Bodó's research shows that in the case of young people living beyond the borders of Hungary, being Hungarian minority does not automatically become an identity-forming factor (Bodó 2013). It seems that education has a key role in some cases. László Laki's research on the 'subjective structure image' of young people (Laki 2006) shows that half of the people interviewed considered themselves as members of the lower class and half of them of the middle class, i.e. much more of them saw themselves as belonging to the middle class than the number of people interviewed in their parents' generation. The author explains this phenomenon with the expanding scale of education, "which is experienced as mobility compared to their parents, and young people anticipate themselves as candidates who can potentially fill these statuses 'assigned' to degrees, ignoring the fact that school and status mobility are separated nowadays" (Laki 2006: 194).

There are many foreign theories about the potential of university and college status in identity formation. However, there are more and more people today who question the role of such communities in the formation of a homogeneous identity due to the multiple identities of students as well as to the high number of students who fall behind and/or have experiences of failure. Student socialization in Hungary manifests in a number of individual patterns – exactly because of its disintegrated and precarious nature. The student setting of mass higher education appears as a turbulent chaos according to students' accounts. Therefore, students create a personal network of relationships, not an independent identity (Pusztai 2010). Pusztai's socialization model seems to be well-grounded in displaying internal and external social environment as rivals that compete for "the most important institutional resource", students' time. According to this, family burdens, friends from the outside, and employment are all against the success of student socialization (Pusztai 2010: 45).

The Hungarian empirical results seem to support Dubet's notion of 'dialogical individual', which claims that individuals try to create, more or less successfully, an equilibrium between their environment and themselves according to different logics of action (Dubet 2005). As society provides neither solid values nor norms nor integrational roles, individuals are never completely socialized – which

22 Bodó writes about *a drive to adapt* as well as about the difference between an awareness of identity and that of origin. He thinks that "although many young people experience their nationality as a characteristic, there are much more who have a reflective attitude towards being a minority: they look at themselves in a multidimensional terrain. They are looking for an answer to the dilemma of 'what I am/what I am not'" (Bodó 2013).

is even more true for young people with uncertain conditions. Their identity is continuously constructed along heterogeneous principles in the tension of different interrelated logics of action (Rényi, Sik, and Takács 2014). Therefore, young people are uncertain, not just due to external conditions (of macro-social nature and created by friends/acquaintances who have also uncertain identities) but also because of their unpredictable reactions originating from their own uncertainty – which also further increases unpredictability.

Multilevel socialization, the plurality of the socialization framework can evoke the feeling of uniqueness in young people, i.e. the feeling of independence, originality. At the same time, these tendencies can result in the feeling of loneliness, not being understood, as they have no (small) community of specific socialization framework at their disposal and multiple socialization makes self-expression difficult as well as it increases the possibility of not being understood by the environment and the frustration that follows (Lahire 1998). According to Bernard Lahire, due to the disappearance of common grounds and as a consequence of individualization, it has become more difficult to relate to friends and peers. As these relationships are of extreme importance when founding one's identity, their uncertainty further intensifies the already heightened experience of frustration and anxiety.

In Giddens's notion, 'pure relationships' are phenomena of key importance in late modernity, and decisions in connection with them are distinctly related to forming identity. As formal and everyday relationships are characterized by existential anxiety and lack of trust, ontological security and trust placed in others, the world, and ourselves can only be founded in pure relationships that are developed during intense, long quality time spent together (Giddens 1992).

Family sociologist François de Singly examines how components of identity are formed beyond the identity determined by the factors of the individual's status. In the centre of Singly's sociology, there is the 'individualized family', whose primary role is the construction of the personal identity of family members. Individualized families can be characterized by autonomy towards parents and relatives as well as within the family (even children of very young age), which has the social consequence of reduced power of authority in relations outside the family as well. A family that develops "individualized identity" suffers from this extra functional burden: couples or teenagers find it difficult to create a balance between "narcissistic" expectations of authenticity and developing originality and statutory expectations of limitations of individual will typical of long-term relationships.

Family has become of utmost importance in Hungary today in terms of identity building. Ágnes Utasi concluded in one of her papers that in terms of the loss of trust, "the desire for security and the need to belong somewhere strengthen the role of family relations and that of a close family that enjoys unconditional

trust”.²³ Paradoxically, the trust in family relations increases the value of family cohesion just when the number of family and relative relations is decreasing, the ratio of single individuals of the population is increasing, more and more are trying to finish their bad relationships and replace them with a better one (Utasi 2004). The most important and most reliable source of information for young people is clearly family and friends, which is further strengthened by a high level of satisfaction with partners and friendships (70 and 82%) as well as a high level of acceptance of the parental value system (Székely 2014).²⁴

It may be the case of two opposing tendencies: the late modernist expansion of autonomy and the weakening of authority as opposed to a defence mechanism of enclosing and finding ontological security only in close family circles.

Routinization – fundamentalism – learned helplessness

Gender and family roles, just like the earlier components of status-defining identity, have transformed, although there seems to be no significant change in terms of attitudes and actual behaviour in Hungary: surveys among young people indicate the acceptance of traditional gender roles (relevant research quoted by Csurgó and Kristóf 2012).²⁵

In order to understand actual behaviour, Jean-Claude Kaufmann’s approach can provide a basis, who is mostly interested in how identity changes amidst the tension of changing roles and unconscious habits from the eighties and nineties. Kaufmann demonstrated a number of examples and concluded that ideas and notions of young people are subordinated to unconscious incorporated habits, modifying the preceding habits of the actors.²⁶ Kaufmann is convinced that the organization of a young couple’s everyday life reactivates the past habits of the family, which can guarantee habitual comfort and certain identity (as well

23 Among the circle of family and relatives, one of the ‘objective’ factors is the guarantee of paying back assistance or loan to each other over generations, as well as the appearance of unemployment that enhanced the collaboration of immediate family members, as well as the fact that the stigma of unemployment also reduced the number of relationship ties.

24 According to the data of *Ifjúság 2012*, the majority of young people between 15 and 29 (46% of whom completely and 36% partly) accepts the views of life according to which their parents live (Székely 2014).

25 The traditional distribution of gender roles, i.e. the man is responsible for the income and the woman for the household, is very highly favoured in Hungary. A relatively large proportion of Hungarians agree with this model of the gender roles (61.2%), while in Poland and Romania less than half accept it (45%) (PPAS 2006). With the statement “a job is all right, but what most women really want is a home and children”, 80% of Hungarians agree (in Romania: 58%, in Poland: 40%), while another traditionalist conviction, “a man’s job is to earn money; a woman’s job is to look after the home and family” reaches 64% (in Romania: 42%, in Poland: 40%) (Philipov 2006 – qtd by Pongráczné – S. Molnár 2011).

26 Being a family sociologist, the author’s most convincing example is the difference between egalitarian discourse concerning household chores of young couples and the actual work done.

as the explosion of tensions and the relationship)²⁷ (Kaufmann 2001). This habituation is described as the wanted or unwanted consequence of family socialization, as an unconscious automatization by the author. Giddens (1994) follows the same logic by claiming that the assumption that life is a series of free choices totally contradicts reality. He also argues with the unavoidable nature of habituation that: everyday life could not exist without creating routines. The psychological effect of routines is essential to create ontological security, as the continuity of life can be created by means of routines. The phenomenon of routinization can lead to the pathologies of late modernity: dependencies and fundamentalism.

Dependencies provide actions with a predictable course instead of taking risks. However, in this case it is not the rituals of the community but compulsively repeated individual rites that set the limitations to actions. Traditions keep attracting crowds due to their routinization that creates continuity. However, as these traditions are based on the refusal of modernity, they take on the form of fundamentalism (Giddens 1994: 100).

Growing conservatism and attraction to fundamentalism among the young in Hungary have an expanding literature along with the growing tendency, which cannot be summarized within the scope of this paper.²⁸ Some explain the strengthening of radical political groups that offer organized experiences with young people's needs for an organized framework (Csepeli, Murányi, and Prazsák 2011). Ildikó Szabó examines young people's attraction to extremist right wing values in terms of national identity (Szabó 2009), arguing that the underdeveloped social consensus of national identity leads to the separation of national socialization and political socialization. The lack of democratic socialization, transforming the theme of nation into political means, and a national identity built on frustrations and resentments are all reasons that the extremist *Jobbik* is able to provide young people with a strong community by mobilizing them vigorously both on online and offline forums. However, surveys on free time greatly contradict the idea of the radicalization of young people. They reveal that young people's free time activities are predominantly passive: most of them spend time on the Internet, watch television, and relax. After the compulsory activities, the 15–29-year-olds spend their weekdays at home, 76% of them staying at home at weekends, i.e. they do not socialize and do not have

27 The effect routinized habits have can be various. Marriage stabilization is a result of a process developing norms, in which all parties let themselves be identified with one role because this allows them some balance. It is obvious though that this process of developing norms creates a trap for women: the precondition of peace and stability of the relationship is their acceptance of a subordinate role, which means carrying all the burdens of the family.

28 International value surveys (European Social Survey, World Values Survey) indicate that Hungarian society is closed, inner-directed, where traditional values dominate regardless of age (Tóth 2009, Keller 2010).

a social life. Almost one quarter of the subjects have no steady circle of friends with whom they would spend their free time, and the idle use of free time is characteristic of them (Székely 2014).

That is why young people today in Hungary are called ‘the new silent generation’ – as the majority of people born between 1982 and 1996 can be characterized with conformity, uncertainty, and passiveness. Surprisingly, no intention of being active can be found in terms of plans for further education or employment; there is a stagnation that can be experienced. At the same time, more than half (52%) of the young people would rather leave the country if they had the opportunity (Székely 2014).

The question is when the phenomenon of passivity, drifting, powerlessness, and uncertainty that pertain to everyday life have become pathological. The feeling of lack of prospects is increasing among the young as well (Susánszky 2011, Oross 2013), which together can trigger paralysis.

In terms of the phenomena that are typically considered the pathology of late modernity, László Laki sees the reason for young people’s generally bad mood in their realistic view of society (Laki 2006). Many of the people that participated in the earlier *Ifjúság*-surveys gave accounts of fears and anxieties – for example, in terms of their entrance to the labour market or being dismissed. A constant state of uncertainty and anxiety brings along psychosomatic illnesses and a deterioration of life quality as well as it increases the risk of lifestyles and attitudes that are considered to be deviant. Since the regime change, health assessment surveys have shown an increase of psychological and psychosomatic illnesses among the young (Pikó 1999). About a quarter of the young people have psychosomatic symptoms such as regular headaches, tension, anxiety, and sleeping problems. Sleeping disorders occur in the case of 20–30% of those under 18, which can cause a deterioration of well-being and cognitive capacity, be harmful to one’s health as well as increase the danger of drug abuse, illegal drug use, and risk of accidents (Susánszky 2011). Youth sociological surveys consider the uncertain state of purposelessness, having no status, not moving anywhere as risk factors in terms of deviant behaviours typical of young people – alcohol, drugs, gambling, eating disorders, workout addiction, compulsive shopping, and workaholism.

(Lack of) autonomy

The question is: what can young people rely on? Do they resort to the imprinted habits and internalized values of earlier generations as support? That is why the implicit question of the examination was how the urge autonomy that is a characteristic of late modernity present in young people’s lives in Hungary.

In Alain Ehrenberg’s central idea, the norm of autonomy, the self-referential act is becoming a general mechanism: the norm of autonomy pervades all – political,

corporal, social, and therefore psychological – levels (Ehrenberg 1995: 2002).²⁹ The norms that encourage displaying autonomous behaviour reach all social classes and can be sensed at the bottom of the social hierarchy as well: even in the case of an uncertain job, motivation and the ability to present oneself need to be displayed. Due to the change in norms, the nature of authority is transformed as well, it is no longer based on automatic obedience but on initiative, the ability to improve, flexibility etc.

It seems that the transformation of social expectations in terms of the young are not accompanied by a pressure of achievement or an increasing extent of autonomy – contrary to Western late modernist social theories. Surveys on the young show the unfolding of tendencies that are reverse to autonomy both in terms of values and behaviour. Reactions typical of the Kádár-era, a need for a paternalist state, authoritarianism, a lack of critical attitude, conformity, a lack of motivation for novelty are becoming common. In this light, it is not surprising that almost every third young person found the petty bourgeois attitude typical of the Kádár-era true for themselves, which claims “it does not matter which system we live in, the point is to survive, we cannot make a difference in terms of politics, anyway” (Kern and Szabó 2011: 56).³⁰ A striking demonstration of the phenomenon is that one quarter of the 18–29-year-old young individuals agree with the statement that: “under certain circumstances, a dictatorship is better than a democratic political system” – the younger and more wealthy they are, the more they agree with it (data from the fifth round of ESS, quoted by Ságvári 2012).

Hungarian young people have grown old to their parents in terms of their value choices – as opposed to expectations (Ságvári 2012). For young people, in today’s Hungary, family is not a scene for generational tensions or conflict of roles, and they do not perceive it as an obstacle to their autonomy. In the setting of new power relations and an uncertain anomic society, it is the (idealized) family (and its values) that serves as the clear (and often the only) reference point for the majority of young people.

29 Ehrenberg sees autonomy as a personal choice and the individual’s initiative, the norm of a society where everyone is supposed to be the agent of their own change.

30 Moderateness in demand for autonomy is also reflected in the fact that 41% of young people between 15 and 29 who live with their parents do not intend to move out in the near future (Székely 2014).

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