

**REVIEW**

**MOBILITY AND INTEGRATION IN HUNGARIAN SOCIETY, EDITED BY IMRE KOVÁCH (CENTRE FOR SOCIAL SCIENCES – ARGUMENTUM, 2020)**

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In December 2020, two volumes were published by the Hungarian Centre for Social Sciences and Argumentum Publisher. One of them was *Mobility and Integration in Hungarian Society*<sup>2</sup>, which is the subject of the present review, and the other was *Integration Mechanisms in Hungarian Society*. The concept of the double volume and the choice of topics may be similar to the biennial publication the *Hungarian Social Report*, as this also seeks to present the latest research results based on similarly significant literature.

The volume the book review is based on includes 11 studies in four blocks of subjects (chapters). As a kind of latent organizing principle, the first six studies present the results of large-sample (2700 people) research carried out in the autumn of 2018 by the Mobility Research Center under the Excellence Academic Cooperation Program of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences (or, more precisely, its preliminary research from 2015), typically focusing on so-called integration groups. The method of the research was questionnaires, and the target group was the adult population (18 years and older) living in Hungary. The results are based on stratified two-stage sampling. The sample is representative of the adult Hungarian population by sex, age, place of residence, and education level. Integration groups are theoretical and empirical categories are developed by the researchers according to the interrelated dimensions of the three levels of integration (system integration, social integration, and interpersonal integration).

The five studies in the other half of the volume are based in part on official statistics and in part on the authors' own independent research.

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<sup>2</sup> The original Hungarian title of the book is *Mobilitás és integráció a magyar társadalomban*.

The first chapter, entitled *Mobility and Integration*, begins with a study by Ákos Huszár and Andrea Szabó entitled *Party preference and the perception of social position*, and mainly focuses on the issue of how far individuals' political attitudes are influenced by their political affiliation. Their study question is based on two preliminary assumptions: on the one hand, that the assessment of changes in the social situation cannot be explained solely by the development of objective living conditions, and on the other hand, that political affiliation can play a significant role in the former.

The study approaches the assessment of individuals' social situation through subjective indicators of social mobility. This subjective social mobility was also examined by the authors at the intergenerational and intragenerational level: the former was essentially measured by assessing the social position of the respondents' parents at the age of 14, while the latter was measured by assessing the respondents' own situation 10 years ago (i.e. in 2008) compared to the current situation (using a scale from 1 to 10). The results of the research show that the proportion of those who feel that their social position is improving is large, but there is a difference between the intergenerational and intragenerational aspects of subjective mobility. With regard to intragenerational mobility, the majority feel that their situation is unchanged (immobile), while the proportion of those who report an experience of upward mobility is almost twice as large as those who report to downward mobility. At the same time, the situation is improving for the majority compared to that of their parents, and the proportion of those experiencing downward mobility is the smallest.

The main finding of the study is that perceptions of improving intergenerational mobility do not differ significantly according to party preference, although from an intragenerational point of view the difference is remarkable: supporters of the current ruling party perceive their situation much more favourably than supporters of the opposition. Reviewing the age of the respondents, the authors found that the older individuals are, the more they feel that their social situation has improved compared to the social position of their parents (i.e. that of their childhood).

Many questions arise regarding the measurement instrument used in the study. Although it is not necessarily appropriate to blame a subjective indicator for its subjective nature, it is inevitable that subjective evaluation in the present case is embedded in a historical context; besides, it is also scattered over time due to the age of individuals and due to the joint evaluation of different social situations. The use of this sort of measurement, especially regarding such abstract social positions, requires caution when evaluating results. The respondents are presumably not social researchers who are able to evaluate the positions they may have occupied in the social structure of decades ago, either

alone or especially in relation to each other. For this reason, the model presented by the researchers in fact remains at the level of theoretical construction, and this is especially true regarding intergenerational mobility – i.e. the notion that the perception of mobility can be determined primarily by the current situation and well-being. It is possible that the study did not in fact identify mobility, but rather an optimistic-pessimistic attitude that is associated with party preferences.

In the second study of the first chapter, *Inequality of social mobility between women and men. Convergence or divergence?*, the authors Ákos Huszár, Karolina Balogh, and Ágnes Győri seek answers to the basic sociological question of how far origin determines the social status of individuals in Hungary, and whether gender differences can be detected in this respect. The results of the research confirm the upward mobility trends of women that have been characteristic for decades, and the decrease in gender differences.

Broken down by cohort, a clear narrowing of intergenerational mobility pathways is detected, from elderly to youth, as well as downward mobility replacing the previous upward mobility associated with structural changes in society following the change of the political regime. An important finding of the study regarding upward mobility, which is more characteristic of women, is that it reflects movements taking place typically in the middle of the social structure. In the upper segment of society, the mobility rates of the two sexes are similar, while in the lower part women are in a disadvantaged position. With regard to relative mobility, which shows the chances of someone moving from one occupational class to another according to their origin compared to those from another occupational class, the data highlight a remarkable difference between the two sexes. In the case of men, the ‘sticky ceiling’ phenomenon prevails, while women face the ‘sticky floor’ phenomenon – i.e., according to the results men with a favourable social background are more likely to retain their positions, and in the case of women there is less chance of escaping from an already disadvantaged situation.

In the third paper in the first chapter, entitled *Integration of Hungarian society 2015, 2018*, Márton Gerő, Gábor Hajdu, Imre Kovách, Luca Kristóf, and Andrea Szabó present changes in social inequalities and integration by comparing data from 2015 and 2018. The study also presents the integration groups of Hungarian society and their changes.

The authors distinguish three types of integration of the Hungarian society: system integration (trust in institutions, different types of norm-following, political involvement), social integration (labour-market integration, involvement in NGOs), and interpersonal integration (confidential relations, relationship diversity, subjective social exclusion). Based on the eight dimensions indicated in brackets, seven latent, well-separated groups with tell-tale names

were formed: (1) rich-in-relations, politically active; (2) locally integrated; (3) integrated into the labour market; (4) system integrated; (5) poorly integrated; (6) norm-following disintegrated; and, (7) disintegrated excluded. The authors describe these integration groups in detail. (Their design, system of criteria and the measurement instruments applied – and a critique of these – would require a separate study.)

The study finds that there were few changes between 2015 and 2018 in relation to each cluster-forming variable. It should be noted that assuming a substantial change in such a short time (moreover, insofar as there is no reason for this to be rationally assumed) does not add any valuable content to the substantive analysis. At the same time, the authors' goal of creating a model of inequalities supplemented by integration elements, and verifying its validity, is fully met.

The article *Political integration in Hungary*, in which the authors Andrea Szabó and Márton Gerő, review the presented integration groups according to their attachment to various political parties, can be considered a logical continuation of the previous paper. According to the authors, as a form of system integration political integration has become an independent integration factor that also affects social integration.

The authors' results show that the largest proportion of those belonging to the 'rich-in-relations, politically active' and the 'locally integrated' groups support the ruling party. The other integration groups, on the other hand, are not associated with a political party. Conversely, in terms of proportions, the base of individual political parties is not built around an integration group or groups.

The study also analysed integration groups through certain political attitudes. The statements under review highlighted three factors: statism, authoritarianism, and rejection of government intervention. (It is worth considering here whether it is theoretically correct that statism and rejection of government intervention are treated as separate types of opinion. The same goes for statism and authoritarianism, as two of the three statements in the measurement instrument in fact highlight the state and its leadership role.) Statism mostly characterises the group of 'rich-in-relations, politically active,' while the latter is strongly rejected by members of the groups of 'non-standard integrated into the labour market, weakly integrated' and 'excluded under-integrated.' Authoritarian values, however, are most strongly rejected in the 'locally integrated' group. Rejection of government intervention is least typical of the groups 'rich-in-relations, politically active' and 'locally integrated;' in other words, it is these groups that are most supportive of government intervention.

Another aspect of the study is the concept of 'ideological cluster,' and regarding this the authors have identified groups of 'satisfied rightists,' 'dissatisfied rightists,' 'those optimistic about the future,' 'the frustrated

and hopeless,' and 'dissatisfied rightists.' Within each group, only the strong pro-government embeddedness of the 'satisfied right-wingers' could be demonstrated. Reviewing the participatory aspects of political integration, the study finds that 'those rich in relationships and politically active' and 'locally integrated ones' engage in political activity in the greatest proportions.

The second chapter of the volume addresses the issues of territorial mobility.

In the study entitled *Spatial mobility and the integration groups of Hungarian society*, Adrienne Csizmady, Ágnes Györi, Lea Kőszeghy, and Attila Rácz present the processes of spatial mobility that have taken place since the change of political regime in detail. Thus, they point out the stabilization of regional social disparities, which are analysed in the context of the two aspects of territorial mobility: the processes of housing mobility and job mobility.

They point out that housing mobility, despite its growth in recent decades, is still hampered by an ownership orientation, regionally different real estate market prices, and the lack of regulation of the private rental housing sector. In the context of labour market mobility, the authors emphasize that the movements between labour market demand and labour market reserve tend to preserve and facilitate socio-regional inequalities. They point out that the data still show the longer-term stabilization of the East-West and North-South gap, and a further strengthening of the prominent position of the capital and its agglomeration.

Regarding the integration groups already mentioned in previous studies, it is found that in the two highly integrated groups ('rich-in-relations, politically active,' and 'locally integrated') the proportion of people living in their own property is extremely large, while it is much smaller for the least integrated groups. The mobility of highly integrated groups for employment purposes shows some differences: the 'norm-following rich in contacts' are characterized by their high mobility, the 'locally integrated' typically commute, and 'rich-in-relations, politically active' are usually mobile within their settlement. In the two groups of those integrated into the 'norm-following' and 'non-norm-following' labour markets, the average level of willingness to engage in mobility is coupled with a high level of mobility intention. The data also showed that those with a low level of integration ('norm-following disintegrated' and 'disintegrated excluded') – i.e. those with typically low educational attainment who are characterised by financial deprivation and living in declining rural settlements – have extremely low mobility opportunities.

The paper entitled *Network capital and residential mobility* (by: Beáta Dávid, Fruzsina Albert, and Éva Huszti) studies 'strong' relationships; i.e., the innermost circle of personal networks of contacts itself, and in terms of geographical mobility.

Based on the research data, the authors report the decline in kinship relationships in confidential relationships and, not independent of this, the prominence of friendly relationships. According to the data, only relatives dominate among the elderly, while the proportion of the isolated (those who do not have a confidential relationship) is increasing. The authors establish that, as two extremes of settlement hierarchy, the proportion of people with only friendly relations has increased in the capital and in villages. The data show that, according to the specific type of relationship, the proportion of explicitly confidential friends has significantly increased, and the share of other non-related relationships (co-workers, neighbours) has also increased. At the same time, the proportion of those specifying a partner, a child, or a parent as a confidential friend has decreased.

The study also examines the composition of confidential networks according to whether the respondents are geographically mobile (in the interpretation of the study, this distinction is based on whether someone lives in a different place to the place they lived in at the age of 14). The research identified approximately two-fifths of respondents as mobile. The data show that the extent of the network of confidential relationships does not correlate with the mobile-non-mobile categories. However, the study finds that the rate of kinship is higher among those who did not move to another settlement than the one they spent their childhood in. Mixed (relatives, friends) relationships are in fact more typical of the mobiles, and the proportion of only non-relatives is also slightly greater for them. Based on integration group formation the group of 'locally integrated' remarkably differs from the other groups, with a much higher proportion of mobiles among them than in the total sample.

The study by Tamás Bakó and Judit Kálmán *Has gender inequality changed in commuting? Factors affecting commuting time and their changes between 1990 and 2011 in Hungary* analyses the factors affecting commuting and their changes from an economic point of view, based on the data from the 1990 and 2011 censuses.

The study finds that both commuting time and commuting distance increased during the period under review. It also points out that geographical location / region of residence has the greatest impact on commuting. The study confirms with data that Budapest and its agglomeration are highly involved in commuting, and this did not change during the period concerned. With regard to commuting, the role of occupational status also proved to be decisive – additionally, as a selection mechanism the level of education and the increase in the age of people of working age also affect commuting time. The authors point out that this selection mechanism prevailed much more strongly two decades after the change of regime, as the unemployment rate was higher. The study gives

a positive answer to the question posed in the title. Based on census data, it shows that women are starting to catch up with men both in terms of commuting distance and time spent commuting.

The first study in the third chapter of the volume, *Back to Society*, addresses problems in the social field, and the second focuses on labour market disadvantages for prisoners.

In a study entitled *The impact of social work interventions on social mobility and immobility* Andrea Rácz seeks answers to the questions how and to what extent social work with families with children contributes to the support and well-being of families. In this context, the research reviews the social integration potential of the social system, or more specifically, the child welfare system, by comparing some settlements of a disadvantaged micro-region and the Budapest agglomeration by means of quantitative and qualitative data.

With regard to the data, the author points out a number of shortcomings in the child protection and welfare system. Based on the expert interviews, she points out that child-protection professionals are not able to tackle the problems that arise; they are characterized by burnout and inadequacy, and, in their own opinions, basic services cannot be provided to clients. Experts reported a shortage of resources, poor working and service conditions, low wages, high staff turnover, and a shortage of professionals. The study does not put the functioning of the social system in a good light either. For clients and families with children in the disadvantaged micro-region, the vast majority of health-, child-raising-, education- and family support services are virtually non-existent; even if the people concerned have heard of these services, they hardly ever use them. Clients do not trust specific services nor the care providers who are involved.

The study entitled *Demand constraints in the reintegration of ex-prisoners* (authors: István Boza, Anikó Csáki, Virág Ilyés, János Köllő, Zsófia Kőműves, Lili Márk, and Mercédesz Mészáros) reviews integration from an economic point of view. By means of empirical data, the study addresses the issues of the labour market disadvantages of those released from prison, the prevalence of risk-mitigation procedures used by employers, and their impact on employment conditions. To this end, the authors used data from a large database of public administration data that tracked the careers of more than four million people, including forty thousand prisoners, from month to month between 2003 and 2011. The results show that employer risk expectations significantly affect the fact and circumstances of employment of those released from prison. The authors describe the employment of those released from prison as associated with features of the secondary segment of the labour markets, characterized by simple tasks, occasional, short-term, unstable employment, seasonal and project-like activities. According to their data, the average time spent in the workplace

by (former) detainees who were released at least five years ago lags far behind that of the 'average' Hungarian citizen. The study finds that the labour market disadvantages of ex-inmates are not independent of the disadvantages caused by a low level of education and Romani origin. It also points out that, in addition to these disadvantages, other factors such as training and work undertaken in prison may also have an effect on post-release employment.

The two studies in the last chapter of the volume (*Within the Borders and Beyond*) address the issues of the Hungarian diaspora and the situation of Hungarian immigrants.

Besides offering an interpretation and typology of the concept of diaspora, the study entitled *Hungarian diaspora and the kin-state diasporization and diaspora politics* (authors: Attila Z. Papp, Eszter Kovács, and András Kováts) presents the history of Hungarian diaspora policy and the period after 2010. The authors review the Hungary-related migration trends of the last two decades with statistical data, showing the increase in emigration from 2010 to 2020, mainly to Germany, Great Britain, Austria, and the United States. According to the statistics, emigrants are typically men, younger individuals, and those with a higher level education than those who stay at home; the vast majority of them stay in the destination country for reasons of employment, working mainly in one of three employment areas: trade-services, industry-construction industry, or in unskilled jobs.

The study also presents the results of an online survey conducted in the summer of 2019 involving 18,000 people living in the four target countries. According to the outcome of the survey, attendance at diaspora institutions and events – as an indicator of the maintenance of cultural attachment – is generally uncommon, while attending certain types of events (Hungarian gastro events, festivals) is more likely. Based on attendance at Hungarian events, the authors distinguish three clusters of individuals, including 'committed diaspora or diasporic communities' at one extreme, 'unreachable' at the other extreme, and 'politicizing migrants' as the third group. In terms of proportions, the 'unreachable' make up 80 per cent, and the other two account for similarly small shares. Each group displays remarkable differences in terms of level of education ('politicizing migrants' have a higher level of education), migration motivation (economic reasons play a role in the case of the 'unreachable,' and dissatisfaction with the political situation in Hungary in the case of 'politicizing migrants'), access to news (domestic and economic news; the 'politicizing' group is interested in news from both the target and the country of issue), as well as in the field of interpersonal relations ('diasporicizing' people are more acquainted with Hungarians, while 'politicizing people' are more open to immigrant and non-immigrant groups).

The study by Margit Feischmidt and Ildikó Zakariás entitled *Solidarity and social mobility: Hungarian migrants' philanthropy and paid work in the German immigration system* addresses the driving forces and experience of migration of Hungarians living in Germany, as well as their participation in voluntary – paid and unpaid – support for non-European refugees. The findings of the study are based on 639 online questionnaires and 16 interviews.

According to the results of the research, the migration of respondents to Germany was mainly motivated by the search for better job opportunities; most of them have a job in Germany and their subjective socioeconomic satisfaction is outstanding, with a large proportion following the media in at least two languages. In their quantitative analysis, the authors establish that paid and unpaid forms of activity aimed at helping immigrants are closely interrelated and show similar positive correlation with educational attainment, subjective material well-being, German-language media consumption, and the acceptance of refugees. In accordance with the data, part-time or casual workers are more likely to participate in paid activities aimed at helping refugees than non-working people or full-time employees. According to the authors, this suggests that one potential way of becoming embedded in the labour market is to work at a job that involves dealing with refugees – e.g. participation in activities associated with the refugee system can function as a kind of mobility channel, in which the shift from unpaid to paid work is a decisive step.

In reviewing the volume, the inclusion of some critical remarks is also inevitable. In the first half of the volume several studies treat the categories they present according to integration groups as if the latter were 'living' groups, but for those not familiar with them the category names alone do not really convey any meaning, while the results remain at a descriptive level; it is thus difficult to interpret them and to bring them to the level of analysis.

Going back to the beginning of the book review, it is important to emphasize that the two published volumes are closely and indisputably intertwined. It is difficult to deal with one without the other, and both of them contribute important, up-to-date knowledge to Hungarian social science. The separation of the two volumes therefore gives rise to criticism, as no guiding principle for classifying the studies in them into one or the other of the two volumes can be identified. The choice of titles also only partially and seemingly facilitates the perception of demarcation: both titles include the phrase 'integration in Hungarian society' (transformed into an 'integration mechanism' in one of them), and in one, the term mobility is added. The topic of mobility is undoubtedly more in focus in the volume that is the subject of this review, but the issue of integration is also a central element, while mobility inevitably emerges in the other volume as well.

The editorial preface does not offer an explanation for the guiding principles behind the division of the studies in the volumes into two groups, thus the reader must consider the volumes as what the editor himself considers them to be: a set of not necessarily directly related studies that address mobility and integration/disintegration processes in Hungarian society. These critical observations, however, have nothing to do with the quality or scientific value of the papers included in the volume. According to the editor of the volume(s), subsequent work will yield a summary analysis in relation to which these critical remarks will certainly no longer be valid. The reader will find noteworthy studies in this volume which will contribute significantly to the knowledge of contemporary Hungarian society with completely new approaches and methods.