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Rudolf Andorka, an Emblematic Hungarian Sociologist of the Second Half of the 20th Century

Abstract

A methodologically based point of view of the second half of 20th century's Hungary shows a society driven by forces of various historical processes and paradoxical consequences of democratisation. Rudolf Andorka, an empirical sociologist examining Hungarian society in the socialist regime and after the transition in the 1990s, proves inherent and historically rooted social and spatial inequalities supplemented with the analyses of the underdeveloped rural settlement structure and village-town dichotomy.

As a social scientist Andorka was stigmatised for his political untrustworthiness. He was arrested for political reasons and had a harsh beginning to his career. Andorka had a multidisciplinary stance in sociology, demography, economics and even beyond the scope of sociology. He took part in various research from regional inequalities through Household Panel Surveys and time series data analyses to deviant behaviour. His criticism of the socialist totalitarian regime was based on a specific approach to analyse social phenomena and gave rise to an innovative trend within Hungarian sociology. He is considered to be one of the founders of modern sociology in Hungary and his concise book of sociology (re-compiled) continues to be the basis of sociological studies at Hungarian universities and his approach to analysing society is prevalent until this day.

Keywords: fertility rates, economic underdevelopment, anomie, socialist society, Household Panel Surveys, late urbanisation, settlement structure, village-town dichotomy.

Andorka, the Moderniser of Hungarian Sociology

As the son of a military official and a diplomat in the democratic regimes in the first half of the 20th century in Hungary, his life was stigmatised at the beginning of the second half in the socialist system. His family was deported

from Budapest to a remote village. He experienced discrimination and was sacked from university where he studied law. After the 1956 Revolution he was arrested by the KGB and had to spend 5 months in prison and could not graduate until 1963. During his years of social exile he worked as a manual worker in factories, then at the beginning of the 60s as the communist regime gained consolidation, he worked as a translator. After obtaining a degree in law he got a job at the library of the Demographic Institute of the Hungarian Central Statistical Office where he could base his scientific career. As he later recalled those years spent at the library were a kind of intellectual cove and he could meet important social scientists and have an overview of prevailing social processes. In the 70s he became a researcher at the social statistics department and in 1984 he quit to start a career at the University of Economics in Budapest, of which he became rector in 1991 until his death in 1997.

Andorka's scientific career had the characteristics of multidisciplinary scope as he dealt with a number of social and statistical issues. His first important role was to prove the economic and social consequences of the low birth rate at a time in the 60s, when the topic was considered to be a political taboo. Another essential analysis was the comparative study of the fertility and birth rates of two Hungarian regions. As a mainstream trend at the time, it was considered that low birth rates could be explained by economic underdevelopment. As a counter example Andorka compared two economically underdeveloped regions (North-Eastern Hungary and Southern Transdanubia) where birth rates varied a great deal. According to his results in the case of the Southern Transdanubian Region the single child model was widespread while in the eastern part of the country the birth rate was relatively high despite its underdeveloped nature. Thus a new explanation was required in order to prove low and high birth rate levels in similar economic conditions (Andorka 1988). As Andorka stated historical and cultural principles had a greater effect on birth rate than mere economic factors. One of his most important international texts was published as a consequence of his research, when he analysed fertility rates of advanced societies (Andorka 1978).

Another important scientific research was that of deviant social behaviour. He statistically analysed the rates of specific categories of deviancy, like suicide, alcoholism, psychological disorders and neuroses, drug-taking and concluded that these behaviours developed as a consequence of anomie present in society. His view could be placed somewhere between that of Robert Merton and Émile Durkheim. As he stated, a part of society could become unable to comply with ethical and moral rules, as well as norms due to negative influences imposed

on society like the effects of a totalitarian regime. The reason why anomie developed under totalitarian power was that it changed historically prevailing values and norms and could not replace them by socially valid and widely acceptable ones. Based on Seeman's views he analysed alienation as a concept similar to anomie. Alienation according to Andorka included dimensions of powerlessness, aimlessness, loneliness, the inability to value oneself and the absence of social norms (Andorka 1994).

Another high-profile survey was the one that examined time series data analyses in two comparative studies: the Finnish-Hungarian and the Polish-Hungarian cases. These surveys proved that in the case of socialist societies time spent at work or other forms of socially compulsory time engagement was relatively high (Andorka 1983: 4).

One of the most important sociological initiatives in Hungary Andorka had a share in, was the launch of the Social Reports based on the traditions of the German Datenriport. These books published at first every second year and later annually functioned as concise accounts of Hungarian society with a short international comparison. The topics varied from social inequality to deviancy, but the main feature were the Household Panel Surveys conducted from the mid-80s onwards which were based on universal methods and thus became internationally comparable. Andorka took part in a number of empirical researches among which one could highlight one of the first political sociological surveys at the end of the 80s. These surveys showed a high level of distrust in the socialist regime and a desire for change. When asked about the need for radical economic change three quarters of those asked responded in a positive way (Andorka 1990).

The first widely recognised university textbook of sociology was written by Andorka in the mid-90s and was considered to be an etalon in Hungarian social sciences having been the most concise book of its kind explaining social processes in Hungary and in comparison in the international sphere as well.

His colourful sociological scope of research stretched from socio-economic writings and demographic analyses to the examination of the Hungarian countryside. The latter could be found in his book titled *Transformation of the Society of Hungarian Villages* (Andorka 1979). Based on other sociologists he emphasised two factors that had a detrimental effect on the Hungarian settlement system: one was the low quality of urbanisation, lacking the required amount and level of infrastructural development and the second was late urban development in Hungary. He argued the importance of the growth of the urban population as it could give rise to negative social symptoms like

an increase in the population of slums, or the spreading of deviant behaviour. The aim was – as he put it – to achieve nationwide social access to the advantages of urbanisation (like trade, health or cultural services) regardless of what settlement type one lived in (Andorka 1979).

While at the beginning of the fifties Hungarian settlement policy concentrated on the capital city, in the second half of the decade it became clear that counterbalances should be set in the settlement system. As a consequence, five former rural towns were chosen to fulfil the counterbalancing infrastructural role (Miskolc, Debrecen, Szeged, Pécs and Győr). From the 60s onwards the centralised state system provided broader independence for the counties¹ including decision making and a higher amount of financial resources. However benevolent the concept of counterbalancing system and the relative independence scheme seemed to be the rural settlements did not develop, moreover smaller towns and most villages experienced further disadvantages. At the beginning of the 70s a Nationwide Settlement-network Development Scheme was put forward aiming at a hierarchic concept of reducing inequalities among settlements, developing infrastructure and introducing a certain level of decentralisation. Taking into account around 3200 settlements in Hungary, almost 2000 villages were left out of the scope of development and would possibly have had detrimental consequences on villages if the scheme were to be launched (Andorka 1979). By the 1980s it had become obvious that small, rural settlements in Hungary were decreasing in population year after year, so the incentive of population preservation had to be dealt with seriously. The problem was, however, that the country's budget faced financial difficulties, thus the resources required for settlement development dwindled. The political transition of 1989–90 brought about a major turn in the concept of settlement structure. On the one hand, the status of counties and their administration decreased mainly due to the lack of political trust, on the other hand, a new system of self-government was introduced providing settlements freedom of decision making as well as taking maximum responsibility. However, from the 90s onwards another form of inequality formed gaps among settlements; it was not simply a geographical division of the country's developed central and western part versus the poverty

¹ There were 19 counties in Hungary, which varied in number and space throughout the centuries, often having different names, but administratively the country always preserved the county system.

stricken southern and eastern regions but inner peripheries evolved based on the economic potential of each settlement (Bugovics 2007).

According to Andorka's analyses conducted at the Central Statistical Office the income inequalities of Budapest, other towns and villages slightly decreased between 1962 and 1982. From the mid-80s these inequalities started to increase slowly, while from the 1990s they soared. Income differences among settlements had long-term consequences on village life, as the poverty rate among villagers had always been higher than in the urban population, not to speak of Budapest. When taking long-term and static poverty into consideration the condition of villagers deteriorated even further. Regional differences showed similarities to settlement inequalities as in the 60s income inequalities among counties decreased slightly and increased from the 80s. The counties with the lowest income rate (88%–90% of the country's average) were situated in the north-eastern part of Hungary. Underdeveloped regions did not overlap exactly with county boundaries but created disadvantaged micro-regions at county level. For instance in northern Hungary, the northern parts of counties showed a lower level of development than the southern parts, while the tiny, remote and underdeveloped villages in the Southern-Transdanubian counties of Baranya, Somogy and Zala were rather distributed at the county boundaries. The two main regional inequality systems could be summoned in the following way: the first was a centre-periphery inequality giving rise to a gap between the central part of the country (Budapest) and the remote regions, while the second was the advantage of the north-western part of the country as opposed to the disadvantaged conditions of Hungary's eastern counties. An interesting comparison could be the spatial distribution of suicide and that of regional inequality, as both decreased on an east – north-west axis. Thus one can conclude that inequalities in Hungary were part of social phenomena that could not be kerbed in the socialist period and could not be handled effectively in the 1990s either.

Andorka fulfilled a special role in Hungarian sociology, creating a 'school' by his legacy, his initiatives and aims which had a great influence on analysing social processes and development.

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INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

Social and Economic Transformation Affecting Rural People and Communities in Central & Eastern Europe since 1990

A major international conference examining rural transformation and rural policies in Central and Eastern Europe will be held on September 2nd–3rd 2013 at the Slovak Agricultural University in Nitra, Slovakia. The conference will focus on four main themes: (a) structural and institutional transformation, (b) poverty, inequality and exclusion, (c) development of land, landscape and environment, and (d) culture, identity and religion. Within these four themes, more specific focuses include: demographic and economic change, social, economic and environmental outcomes of post-socialist transformation processes – successes and failures; winners and losers; the production and reproduction of social and spatial inequalities; changing links between urban and rural areas; global -local linkages affecting local communities and populations; development, technology and the natural environment; agricultural restructuring and the role of agriculture in contemporary society; gender and race/ethnic relations in rural society; health care, income maintenance and other social welfare policies in the context of fiscal stress; local communities, institutions, governance and civic participation; regional and rural development policies that account for post-socialist legacies, but are future oriented; culture, identity and religion; social networks, social participation and development; technology, infrastructure and rural development; the meaning of sustainable development in the context of ex-socialist Central& Eastern Europe; and others.

A special dinner honouring 20 years of *Eastern European Countryside* will be a highlight along with breakfast for junior researchers to provide guidance on establishing a productive scholarly research programme focused on regional and rural development in Central & Eastern Europe. Participation will be limited to approximately 60 participants. We envision a deadline of March 1, 2013 for the submission of abstracts (1 to 3 pages maximum) for the conference. Submission details can be found on the conference website: www.fesrr.uniag.sk/EEC.