Review of Sociology 23(4): 64–71.

Normative-functionalist Occupational Class Analysis in Context

Normativity, Social Exclusion and the EU/Global Dimensions of the Labor Market

Katalin Füzér
kfuzer@yahoo.com

Manuscript received: 1 September 2013.
Acceptance of manuscript for publication: 12 September 2013.

ABSTARCT: This short contribution is designed to reflect upon the whole body of debate that Ákos Huszár's series of studies (2013a, 2013b, 2013c[1]) gave rise to (Berger 2013, Róbert 2013, Tardos 2013, Vastagh 2013, Harcsa 2013, Lakatos-Záhonyi 2013a, 2013b). Two issues seem to have inspired participants of the debate: the current theoretical possibilities of social structure analysis (Berger, Tardos, Harcsa and Huszár himself) and the current challenge posed by the new set of census data from 2011 (Róbert, Vastagh, Lakatos – Záhonyi). This duality was already evident at the workshop "The stratification of Hungarian society" organized by the Hungarian Central Statistical Office back in November 2012, and is likely to prevail on the pages of the current issue of Szociológiai Szemle. I myself try to combine the two issues. First, I would like to add a few ideas to expand Huszár's perspective of a normative-structuralist approach, chiefly in the area of normativity (Part I.). Then I turn to the question of the "social embeddedness" of the occupational system: this prospect entails the problem of the social terrain outside the occupational system, mainly as regards scholarship on social exclusion, including issues of human capital, social capital and spatial social structure (Part II.). In the course of this overview, the merits of various empirical data sources like the census, as well as at least partly longitudinal databases such as EU SILC and the Labor Force Survey will be addressed. Finally, I close with a few remarks on the EU and the global context of the occupational system (Part III.).

KEYWORDS: rights theory, social exclusion, social capital, project proliferation, project class

Part I.

The idea of a normative-functionalist class analysis is a very interesting and refreshing suggestion, especially in terms of its attempt at reintegrating the normative aspect into the theoretical and empirical edifice of social structure analysis. I am not sure that it will ultimately work as a comprehensive framework for occupational class analysis when fleshed out in full detail along the lines of the outline proposed by Huszár (2013a: 50–52, 2013c and Huszár in the present volume). At the same time, I am certain that in order for it to be successful it will have to be more complex in its handling of the normative sphere.

At the moment, the outline of Huszár's theory envisions class structure as composed of so called normative statuses formed against the background of various rights: occupational statuses are predicated upon business, property and labor rights, whereas inactive statues are anchored in social rights. Huszár goes to great lengths to theorize them not only as non-hierarchical (rather, as horizontal) but also as normatively equal. It is puzzling why he does not utilize the possibility of presenting them as "normatively recognized" social statuses (à la Honneth, via Hegel), thereby circumventing the issue of equality, one of the most challenging moral callings of modernity.[2]

I support the idea that the normative dimension shall be part of a sociological analysis of social structure, making it part of a theory on the structural constraints of society. Taking normativity (and not only rights) seriously,[3] however, implies (at least) three areas of investigation: research has to tackle social norms, legal (statutory) norms, and constitutional norms. These are very different fields both in terms of their sociological nature as well as regarding the methodological skills required for their study. I agree with Huszár that "it is an empirical question which values and norms are institutionalized in a society" (2013c: 724) but I would submit that this is a much more complicated issue than simply looking at what positive constitutional or statutory provisions stipulate. The linguistic turn's implications for the social sciences offers a range of methodological possibilities for addressing the understandings of norms and the practices of their institutionalization in these three areas.

There is also the added problem brought to light by the sociology of law: to what extent and in which manner are normative prescriptions adhered to in these various fields (a question which goes beyond the philosophical distinction between Sein and Sollen). Hungarian society is notoriously complex in this regard. There is a certain despising of and disdain for adherence to legal (statutory) norms,[4] in sharp contrast to constitutionality which is held in high esteem amongst Hungarians in general (Örkény – Scheppele 1997).

I address the constitutional terrain in some more detail, as the problem of rights, considered central in Huszár's analysis, arises primarily here. I would like to propose that there is no need to confine the conceptualization of the normative dimension of rights to individual freedom: rights can grasp a much richer, sociologically

1 The latter is the extended Hungarian version of Huszár's English language article in the present volume.

2 Huszár himself refers to this challenge in the concluding paragraph of his study, assigning it to empirical investigations to determine "whether horizontal relationships themselves function as sources of different kinds of inequalities" (2013c: 738).

3 Paraphrasing here Ronald Dworkin's famous book, *Taking Rights Seriously*, serves the purposes of suggesting that any discussion of normativity should be open to legal and political theory as well as to the investigation of the social practice of using various political and legal languages. Huszár does so to the extent of relying extensively on Axel Honneth's scholarship. I propose he goes further.

4 Think of the widely-shared belief that he who pays all his taxes is a dupe, whereas he who pays as little tax as he can get away with is smart.

substantive normative dimension in the life of the political community (as e.g. in Weimar constitutional theory, Füzér 2008: 112– 13). The idea that the language of rights can cover institutions (like the university) and universal or community-based particular values that integrate society (Füzér 2008: 77–97) was shared by a wide range of scholars across the political spectrum of Weimar Germany – in opposition to liberal legal positivists who attributed no great force to rights at all (Füzér 2008: 47–76).[5] These alternative uses of the language of rights can be fruitfully applied when reconstructing the normative context in which the social structure analysis proposed by Huszár is carried out.

Part II.

Any occupational class analysis has to grapple with the problem that the "rest of society" (i.e. those without labor market or independent business positions) also have to be accounted for in a decent social structure analysis. Huszár is in a very advantageous position in this regard as his focus on the normative dimension allows him to take stock of a range of social positions outside the occupational system. He refers to social rights as grounding "new ways of acquiring income", "entitlements that make it possible for the eligible persons to obtain earnings without working" and thereby creating "social statuses that are not grounded on participation in the occupational system" (2013c: 729) – but unfortunately falls short of offering a comprehensive model to either theoretically or empirically grasp these statuses. He explicitly skips two opportunities to do so "at this time" (2013c: 731, 736) and leaves the well-populated category of "other inactive" standing awkwardly beside pensioners and the unemployed.

I would like to propose that scholarship on social exclusion (in the Hungarian context cf. especially Monostori 2004, Hegedűs – Monostori 2005) offers both theoretically and also in terms of empirical investigations a way to complete occupational class analysis in its normative-functionalist version. That is to say, social exclusion research is a perfect match with normative-functionalist occupational class analysis in every important aspect of social science scholarship: theory, operationalization and data sets (and of course the interpretation of empirical results in light of the outgoing theory). In terms of theory, social exclusion scholars strive primarily to counter the paradigm of income poverty research and they do so by evoking various material and non-material dimensions of social exclusion: among the latter, exclusion from the labor market is of prime importance[6] but exclusion from acquiring knowledge (human capital), social capital (Füzér 2007, Füzér–Monostori 2012), health inequalities as well as social conceptions of welfare and poverty, including subjective poverty (Spéder 2002), are also important, as is segregation and the spatial social structure of society (Németh 2011).

The proposed extension would, for better or worse, be in line with a long tradition of Hungarian sociology: that of dual society models (Éber 2011); especially with Iván Szelényi's and Tamás Kolosi's social structure models which conceptualized the two terrains of market and redistribution, spotted with mixed social statuses. The approach of the normative-functionalist theory to the structural constraints of society would have the occupational system be analogous with the market, relying on redistribution to complete the picture for "the rest."

Viktor Berger (2013) has also offered rudiments of theoretical constructs under which "the rest" of society could be grasped. I would like to join him in highlighting the dynamic character of processes which push people away from traditional social statuses towards other ones with less stability to start with.[7] The new structural constraints seem to loosen up positions that earlier were thought to have been entrenched (between the occupational system and those on its outside) as well as distinctions within the occupational system. Professions are being traded during these days of life-long learning in a contemporary knowledge society; processes that have been highlighted by Tardos (2013: 321–322) and shown by Lakatos and Záhonyi (2013a: 635, 2013b: 756–758) to prevail empirically, both in the very debate under discussion here.

In terms of empirical social research there are two key datasets that offer themselves for the study of social exclusion as well as the transformations of professions and the occupational system. While I am no expert on these data sources, to the extent that I am familiar with EU SILC (Statistics on Living and Income Conditions) (Füzér 2007, Füzér – Monostori 2012) and LFS (Labor Force Survey) (Lakatos – Záhonyi 2013a, 2013b), they strike me as apt empirical resources for the detailed study of the varied normative statuses of inactivity outlined by Huszár, and also the dynamic character of occupational statuses. Their research design is such that they offer some longitudinal data (1-4 years on four subsamples of EU SILC and 1,5 years in LFS) on very large samples which respond to the content of internationally-standardized questionnaires, carrying extra (and expendable, cf. Füzér 2007) modules (yearly in EU SILC and in almost every quarter of LFS) which makes the study of various specialized sociological questions using extra-large samples feasible (in contrast to the few thousand-sized samples that research funds normally allow for).

5 Weimar constitutional thought in general and the rights theories of communitarian Rudolf Smend, socialist Hermann Heller, Otto Kirchheimer, Franz Neumann and the riddling Carl Schmitt had a significant impact on post-WWII German social and political thought (including the Frankfurt School, Füzér 2007: 16) as well as on constitutional culture and adjudication (Füzér 2007: 15-20). The latter, in turn, served as the chief orientation point for the emerging post-communist Hungarian constitutional culture of the 1990s (Sólyom 2000, 2003, Füzér 1997).

6 Theorized by Amartya Sen as well as the recently-deceased Robert Castel and empirically examined in the Hungarian context e.g. by Erzsébet Bukodi (2004) or Gábor Kertesi (2005).

7 I would dispute, however, that pensioners (as such) can be adequately assigned to a precarious position, as Berger does (2013:311) – practically all empirical evidence suggests the contrary; namely that exactly because of their stable income and housing conditions, pensioners as a group show remarkable stability in terms of their basic social standing. The group, naturally, is far from being homogeneous: certain subgroups such as widows or pensioners whose pension was determined a very long time ago bear a high risk of poverty, but even with these qualifications the everyday conceptions about "poor pensioners" are ill-conceived.

The merits of the census are manifold[8] and I would like to draw attention to its almost unique role in the field of spatial social structure analysis. Portrayed above as an important dimension of social exclusion, it is arguably also a vital element of any social structure analysis. When we look, as Zsolt Németh does (Németh 2011), at the concentration and migration routes (something like the flocking together) of low status versus high status households and individuals during the 1990s in Hungary, we become aware of the fact that, on the level of everyday social intercourse, in vast parts of the country, experiencing the complexity of "Hungarian society" is no longer possible. Certain social groups (particularly those at the upper and lower extremes) are simply missing from extended areas of the country and the so-called settlement ladder (against a thin layer of normative background) distributes social groups in very radical ways.

Part III

My closing comments reflect upon the fact (also briefly noted by Vastagh 2013: 430–431) that the EU as well as the global context has to be part of a theory about the structural constraints of society – with further implications for the transformation of the occupational system.

Within and across countries there are sites where professionals are organized into global economic activities (dubbed global cities by Saskia Sassen), and there are regions that remain less (if at all) involved in globalized activities, at least as far as occupational statuses are concerned. The reigning paradigm of migration research offers clues to the factors that push and pull potential employees across the globe in search of jobs. A normative-structuralist class analysis has to take note of the fact that the EU, besides being many other things (Böröcz – Sarkar 2005a, 2005b), is also a normatively regulated realm that defines a "common" labor market. This implies that occupational statuses have to be understood in a European context and migration has to be a key issue in any normative-functionalist social structure analysis.

Another element of the EU context highlights an important line of transformation in the occupational system. The normatively regulated EU model of access to public funds via projects is arguably becoming a key element of the structural constraints of European societies. Project proliferation (Sjöblom et al. 2006, Sjöblom et al. 2012, Kovách – Kristóf 2007) within the European realm brings with it the reconfiguration of significant portions of the public sector into (partly) project-based organizational forms (including universities), the spread of short-termism in several areas (including employment contracts central to occupational class analysis) and the rise of an allegedly new social class; the project class (Kovách – Kucerova 2009). Projectification results in "patchwork" employment, where professionals' project contracts might overlap in time and connect them to various locations of work simultaneously.

Another aspect of projectification should also be of interest for Huszár's program of inquiry: development policy (within the EU and internationally) too is normatively anchored and delineates groups of "project beneficiaries" whose statuses are greatly, (albeit not fundamentally) affected by their positions within development projects. Especially so called rehabilitation projects (Bukowski et al. 2007) have come to acquire complexity and are intended to enhance beneficiaries' human capital, labor market positions, health behavior, and via participation[9], their social capital as well (Füzér 2013).

At this closing point we might reflect again upon Huszár's central theoretical aspiration; namely on his objective of including the normative dimension into social class analysis. It seems as though the normative dimension, a political community's ability to regulate its own life, extends only so far: until the boundaries of its sphere of influence and legitimacy, be it the EU or the boundaries of traditional nation states. However, much if not all of the global economy is beyond that and is regulated by few norms which are not transparent in any case – an enormous challenge to normative-functionalist social structure analysis.

References:

Berger, V. (2013): A társadalmistruktúra-elemzés dilemmái és eldöntendő kérdései. *Statisztikai Szemle*, 91(3): 306–313.

Böröcz, J. – Sarkar, M. (2005a): What is the EU? *International Sociology*, 20(2): 153–173.

Böröcz, J. – Sarkar, M. (2005b): Mi az Európia Unió? *Politikatudományi Szemle*, 14(3–4): 151–177.

Bukodi, E. (2004): A munkerő-piaci kirekesztődés folyamata. In Monostori, J. (ed.): *A szegénység és a társadalmi kirekesztődés folyamata*. Budapest: KSH NKI.

Bukowski, A. – Füzér, K. – Jabłońska, B. – Smagacz, M. (eds.) (2007): *Urban Rehabilitation in Segregated Districts of Central and Eastern European Cities: Studying Social Exclusion and Developing Urban Policy*. Krakow: RABID.

Cook, B. – Kothari, U. (eds.) (2001): *Participation: the New Tyranny?* London: Zed Books.

Éber, M. Á. (2011): Melyik kettő? Miért kettős? A magyar szociológia kettőstársadalomelméleteinek hasznáról és káráról. *Szociológiai Szemle*, 21(3): 4–22.

Füzér, K. (1997): The invisible constitution: the construction of constitutional reality in Hungary. *International Journal of Sociology*, 26(4): 48–65.

Füzér, K. (2007): The role of social capital in social exclusion: the segregating district of Pécs East in the light of EU-SILC 2006. In Bukowski, A. – Füzér, K. – Jabłońska,

8 On the applicability of the census to social exclusion research (roughly: for the study of those outside the occupational system) see from the current debate Róbert (2013: 317), Harcsa (2013: 525), Vastagh (2013: 426).

9 Development policy has recently undergone a "participative turn"; a process whose merits have been greatly disputed. Cf. Cook and Kothari's (2001) critique and Hickey and Mohan's defence (2005).

B. – Smagacz, M. (eds.): *Urban Rehabilitation in Segregated Districts of Central and Eastern European Cities: Studying Social Exclusion and Developing Urban Policy:* 43–73. Krakow: RABID.

Füzér, K. (2008): *Rights and Constitutional Theory in Weimar Germany: Debates in Historical, Political and Institutional Context.* Saarbrücken: VDM Verlag.

Füzér, K. (2013): The project class: making and breaking social capital in urban and rural development. Forthcoming in *Szociális Szemle.*

Füzér, K. – Monostori, J. (2012): Social Capital, Social Exclusion and Rehabilitation Policy in the Hungarian Urban Context. In Lewandowski, J. – Streich, G. (eds.): *Urban Social Capital: Civil Society and Urban Life:* 31–75. Farnham: Ashgate.

Harcsa, I. (2013): Észrevételek Huszár Ákos tanulmányához. *Statisztikai Szemle,* 91(5): 523–526.

Hegedűs, P. – Monostori, J. (eds.) (2005): *A szegénység és a társadalmi kirekesztődés jelzőszámai.Elméleti megalapozás.* Budapest: KSH NKI.

Hickey, S. – Mohan, G. (2005): *Participation: From Tyranny to Transformation.* London: Zed Books.

Huszár, Á. (2013a): Foglalkozási osztályszerkezet (I.) – Elméletek, modellek. *Statisztikai Szemle,* 91(1): 31–56.

Huszár, Á. (2013b): Foglalkozási osztályszerkezet (II.) – Az osztályozás problémái. *Statisztikai Szemle,* 91(2): 117–131.

Huszár, Á. (2013c): Foglalkozási osztályszerkezet (III.) – Egy normatív-funkcionalista osztálymodell vázlata. *Statisztikai Szemle,* 91(7): 718–744.

Kertesi, G. (2005): *A társadalom peremén: romák a munkaerőpiacon és az iskolában.* Budapest: Osiris.

Kovách, I. – Kristóf, L. (2007): The projectification of power. The impact of European integration on power and society. In Bayer, J. – Jensen, J. (eds.)*: From Transition to Globalization.* Budapest: MTA PTI, 191–205.

Kovách, I. – Kucerova, E. (2009): The social context of project proliferation – The rise of the project class. *Journal of Environmental Policy and Planning,* 11(3): 203–220.

Lakatos, M. – Záhonyi, M. (2013a): A 2001. évi népszámlálási rétegződési modell alkalmazása a munkaerő-felmérés rendszerében (I.). *Statisztikai Szemle,* 91(6): 633–643.

Lakatos, M. – Záhonyi, M. (2013b): A 2001. évi népszámlálási rétegződési modell alkalmazása a munkaerő-felmérés rendszerében (II.). *Statisztikai Szemle,* 91(7): 750–762.

Monostori, J. (ed.) (2004): *A szegénység és a társadalmi kirekesztődés folyamata.* Budapest: KSH NKI.

Németh, Zs. (2011): *Az urbanizáció és a térbeli társadalomszerkezet változásai 1990 és 2001 között Magyarországon.* Budapest: KSH NKI.

Örkény, A. – Scheppele, K.L. (1997): Rules of law: the complexity of legality in Hungary. *International Journal of Sociology,* 26(4): 76–94.

Róbert, P. (2013): Társadalmi rétegek, osztályok vizsgálata a 2011. évi népszámlálás adatain. *Statisztikai Szemle,* 91(3): 314–319.

Sjöblom, S. – Andersson, K. – Ecklund, E. – Godenhjelm, S. (eds.) (2006): *Project Proliferation and Governance.* Helsinki: Helsinki University Press.

Sjöblom, S. – Andersson, K. – Marsden, T. – Skerratt, S. (eds.) (2012): *Sustainability and Short-term Policies.* Dortmouth: Ashgate.

Sólyom, L. (2000): Introduction to the decisions of the Constitutional Court of the Republic of Hungary. In Sólyom, L. – Brunner, G. (eds.): *Constitutional Judiciary in a New Democracy: The Hungarian Constitutional Court*: 1–63. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.

Sólyom, L. (2003): The role of constitutional courts in the transition to democracy: with special reference to Hungary. *International Sociology,* 18(1): 133–161.

Spéder, Zs. (2002): A szegénység Magyarországon - az arányosított deprivációs index koncepciója alapján. *Szociológiai Szemle,* 12(4): 171–189.

Tardos, R. (2013): Hozzászólás Huszár Ákos: Foglalkozási osztályszerkezet (I–II.) című tanulmányához. *Statisztikai Szemle,* 91(3): 320–323.

Vastagh, Z. (2013): A társadalomszerkezet vizsgálata népszámlálási adatokon. *Statisztikai Szemle,* 91(4): 424–436.