

Forms of precarity and the development of its characteristics in Hungary¹

Introduction

In the wake of development of the market model that evolved as a result of the fall of socialism and the process of privatisation, the role of the state, which had played a dominant role during the socialist era in all areas, decreased gradually. Owing to the fact that neoliberal ideology gained ground, as well as to the economic effects of globalisation, this process intensified during the second half of the 1990s in Hungary just like in other countries. The effects of deregulation manifested themselves in almost all areas, but especially in the gradual erosion of the system of institutions that was meant to guarantee security of the citizens, and in the fact that the labour market was becoming more flexible and, moreover, increasingly uncertain. In parallel to this process, a work-based society became ubiquitous, a wide range of welfare services appeared that were tied to “compulsory work”, and this led not only to the loss of social citizenship, but also to a reduction of the importance of the system of democratic institutions during recent years.

Most social groups do not have well-developed and viable survival strategies that they could rely on in the face of multi-dimensional uncertainty that affects increasingly broad classes of society, and that took the place of social security which had existed earlier (Csoba 2010a, 2010b). Organisational structures or bodies representing the interests of marginalised groups, which could provide them with security and guarantees, are almost completely missing, and the constant state of transition, the loss of status and the lack of a future perspective make the frustrated masses more and more susceptible to extreme populism, which promises them

¹ The current article is a shortened version of a longer study. The original study was published in (Csoba 2014).

order, stability and safety. The number of people who sympathise with extreme right-wing movements has grown considerably.

In our article we examine the context and the effects of precarity, especially in Hungary. We will also look at the processes that are developing in some other countries of East Central Europe in order to find answers to the question: What are the consequences and uncertainties arising from the deconstruction of the welfare state and changes in the labour market? The paper starts with analysing the term “precarity” and studying the development and characteristics of the total flexible labour market. In the second part of the study we present three different forms of precarity and survival strategies for the individuals to cope with their precarious situations².

Emergence of the terms “flexibility” and “precarity”, and the development of their meaning

“Precarity” is not a new phenomenon in Hungarian society. Although the description of the situation of social groups with an uncertain livelihood was considered an unwelcome activity during the socialist era by politics at that time (since in the society of equality poverty officially did not even exist), research on marginalised social groups had already started before the fall of the socialist system. “People living on the edge of society” already became visible in the research on social strata that was begun in the 1960s (Ferge 1969; Hegedűs 1966). Since official ideology prohibited the use of negative expressions identifying this increasingly broad social group, the prevailing rhetoric described the phenomenon in the framework of lifestyle research.

The notion of lifestyle (*életmód, életforma, életstílus*) was an adequate tool to capture the economic inequalities and cultural differences that kept reappearing during the 1970s within the Hungarian society despite the ideal of equality advocated by socialism. Research made it obvious that the reasons behind the arising problems had been structural rather than individual (Szelényi and Konrád 1969; Kemény 1972; Losonczy 1977; Márkus 1979). Thanks to the studies of scholars on

² In our study we discuss precarity as a social phenomenon, according to the ILO definition. The ILO determined in 2012 the conditions and consequences of job insecurity as follows: „Contractual arrangements: i. The limited duration of the contract (fixed-term, short-term, temporary, seasonal, day-labour and casual labour); ii. The nature of the employment relationship (triangular and disguised employment relationships, bogus self-employment, subcontracting and agency contracts). Precarious conditions: i. Low wage; ii. Poor protection from termination of employment; iii. Lack of access to social protection and benefits usually associated with full-time standard employment; iv. Lack of or limited access of workers to exercise their rights at work” (ILO 2012, 29). We try to describe the characteristics of precarity (contractual arrangements and precarious conditions) and beyond its employment characteristics we also discuss briefly the social and economic consequences too.

social strata that began in the early 1980s (Kolosi 1981) and the social movements that were launched to reduce the increasing poverty, the knowledge on the marginalised social groups became more and more common, and they became the subject of an increasing number of studies.

In the wake of unemployment starting to appear and affect an increasingly broad group, a new term, “new poverty”, was also being used more and more often to refer to groups that are able to work but do not have access to employment and income, distinguishing them from the traditional notion of poverty that applies to poor groups that are mostly unfit for work. This term was mainly based on the new definitions suggested by Castel and the West German literature (Castel 1997).

The historical analysis of the development of exclusion, self-exclusion, integration and new poverty, based especially on the relationship of individuals to work, moved the earlier questions into a new perspective. The analysis of forms of insecurity around the turn of the millennium and of the deteriorating situation of a rising number of vulnerable social groups was already embedded in the conceptual framework introduced by Castel in Hungary as well.

The notion of “precarity” appeared and became more and more commonly used in Europe around the turn of the millennium, but it was only introduced and became widely known in Hungary after a delay of several years. Although anti-globalisation and anti-neoliberal movements and publications had already devoted themselves to the phenomenon of growing poverty and precariousness starting from the early 1990s, the upper and upper middle classes of the strongly segmented society felt safe from the risk of insecurity until the turn of the millennium (Standing 2012; Szépe 2012).

In an interview for the thematic issue of the journal *Fordulat*, Zsuzsa Ferge expresses similar thoughts: “so I don’t think that the time is ripe (yet?) to introduce the term precariat for a social class or group in Hungary” (Ferge 2012, 123). At the same time, she points out that although this category may not be exact enough to function as a concept of structural research, it is clearly necessary to examine the phenomenon in order to protect the social and legal security as well as the social status of the members of our society.

Accordingly, this notion is not only suited to be used as a category to describe Western states and welfare models. It also fulfils a task or a function in describing the new types of precariousness appearing in the countries of East Central Europe, and in defining their fundamental properties. “We are not simply dealing with precarious situations which are well-known from history but with a destabilisation of a wide range of interconnected systems of security, or rather the intentional destruction of such systems”. Furthermore, great masses of the population are “losing individual or collective securities that they had attained earlier. I think that we need new terms to describe this new reality” (Ferge 2012, 117–119).

The rate of people in a precarious status

Upon examining the precariat³, it stands to reason to ask: What is the proportion of members of this group in the world of work, or, using this notion in its broader sense, in the society? Zsuzsa Ferge defines the concept in a broad sense and considers its members “rootless”, in other words being in a state of precarity in several respects; in the Hungarian society she estimates their proportion at 30 per cent (Ferge 2012). Pál Tamás uses the concept in a narrower sense in one of his studies from 2007, and focusing on the world of work, he writes: “In a country structured similarly to Germany, the rate of the precarious employed has already reached 20–35 per cent. According to estimates, it is probably above 40 per cent in Hungary” (Tamás 2007, 8). The number of people in an uncertain status has not changed significantly in the world of work in the past decades. According to Ágnes Hárs, “the atypical forms provided work for almost a fifth of the employed in 1993; the reorganisation affected mostly men in the first half on the 90s.” (Hárs 2012, 42).

Although different concepts and research results differ with regard to how extensive the target group is, the experts agree that the state of precarity is characteristic of at least a third of the society. How does this rate relate to the indicators of the Western countries that have served as models for Hungary in almost all eras?

According to a study carried out in 2012 by RANDSTAD⁴, in Canada, Japan and in most European countries the rate of people working in flexible employment is about 20–30 per cent of the total number of employed in 2012. Among the former socialist countries, the number of people working in flexible employment is especially high in Poland (42 per cent in 2012) (Berkhout et al. 2013, 13). This rate is similar to that of the Mediterranean countries which have the highest indicators, and it is 10 per cent higher than the standard rate in Europe⁵. Among the

³ The concept of precariat consists of different layers. Firstly, it can be defined as a group of people whose employment situation is insecure (see section “The rate of people in a precarious status”), secondly, we can talk about groups of people for whom insecurity is not restricted to the precariousness of their employment but has a broader significance, although this aspect does not necessarily involve the activity or movement (see section “Increasing inequality and poverty as social consequences of precarity”), and thirdly, the definition could be a movement of uncertain social status groups (see section “Precariat as a movement in Hungary”).

⁴ The authors classified the following forms of work as flexible employment: open-ended contract, flexible labour (all forms of labour that enable the external numerical adjustment of the labour intake by employers. This can be achieved by employing workers on fixed-term contracts, hiring workers through temporary employment agencies or by hiring labour services from self-employed workers), fixed-term contract, agency work, self-employment (Berkhout et al. 2013, 13).

⁵ The Netherlands, for example — known as the leading country in flexible employment — was one of the countries involved in the survey, and the proportion there was 31 per cent in 2012.

countries of the Eastern Bloc the rate is the lowest in Estonia (11 per cent in 2012) (Berkhout et al. 2013, 13).

Among the former socialist countries Hungary is third considering the rate of fixed-term employment contracts (Eurostat 2012). The Central and East European countries compensate for the economic crisis in 2008 by strengthening the flexible labour market, including the fixed-term employment contract, which is the most important of its forms. The crisis helped to spread the fixed-term contracts in two respects: “on the one hand businesses could adapt to the quickly changing economic circumstances better, and on the other hand job-seekers became more open towards temporary solutions in order to avoid unemployment” — as Sándor Baja, managing director of Randstad Hungary, explained the trends. According to the data of Eurostat, in 2012 70 per cent of Hungarian employees working on a fixed-term contract chose such an employment because they could not find permanent jobs (“Egyre...” 2012).

Table 1. The rate of employees with a fixed-term employment contract [%]

Country	Year				
	2005	2008	2010	2012	2014*
Czech Republic	7.2	7.9	7.4	8.3	10.2
Estonia	2.3	1.8	4.2	3.1	3.8
Hungary	7.2	7.8	9.7	9.6	10.7
Poland	25.4	26.9	27.0	27.5	28.8
Latvia	8.4	2.8	6.7	4.7	3.5
Lithuania	3.8	3.7	2.6	3	3.7
Romania	2.6	1.3	1.1	1.9	1.5
Slovakia	4.9	4	5.7	6.9	9.3
Slovenia	1.8	16.9	17.7	16.7	18.1

*2014Q3.

Source: Berkhout et al. (2013, 42) on the basis of Eurostat (2012) and Eurostat (2014).

Considering the rate of workers with a fixed-term employment, Hungary lies in the mid-range of the European countries. In 2008 only 62.8 per cent of the companies had employees who worked in this form of employment; by 2012 this rate had reached 71.4 per cent. This represents a total increase of 6.8 per cent (Székács 2013, 37). In 2010, 9.7 per cent of the employed were engaged in a fixed-term contract. After the breakout of the crisis, between 2007 and 2009, the number and rate of the employed with a fixed-term contract started rising and compared to 2009 (8.5 per cent) it became 1.2 per cent higher in 2010. A particularly high proportion of those employed in this way were young people. While 24 per cent of the employees aged between 25 and 64 have fixed-term contracts, the rate is 67 per cent among the employees aged between 15 and 24. These rates are somewhat more favourable in Hungary where 9 per cent of the

employees between 25 and 64 and 22 per cent between 15 and 24 are engaged in this form of employment (Berkhout et al. 2013, 18). However, in Hungary it was also young people that were mainly affected by this change: a quarter of them were engaged in fixed-term contracts but the rate was also above average among 25–29 year-olds.

Table 2. The proportion of persons employed part-time compared to the total number of employees [%], according to the OECD definition (less than 30 hours a week)

Country	Year						
	2005	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2014
Bulgaria	1.9	1.5	2.0	2.1	2.2	2.2	2.5
Croatia	7.8	6.1	6.5	6.5	7.0	7.2	5.6
Czech Republic	3.3	3.5	3.5	3.9	4.3	3.9	5.5
Estonia	6.7	6.8	6.2	8.4	8.7	8.8	8.3
Hungary	3.2	2.8	3.1	3.6	3.6	4.7	6.0
Poland	11.7	10.1	9.3	8.7	8.7	8.3	7.1
Slovakia	2.6	2.6	2.7	3.0	3.7	4.0	5.1
Slovenia	7.4	7.8	7.5	8.3	9.4	8.6	10.0

Source: Eurostat (2014).

In Hungary, it is traditionally only a small fraction of wage-earners that work in part-time employment. Until the 1990s the reason why this form of employment did not appear was that full employment also included women, and from the 1990s on it was due to unemployment and alternative welfare benefits. According to the EU statistics, even today it is 6 per cent of all the employees who work part-time. In Europe we find lower figures only in the Czech Republic, Bulgaria, Croatia and Slovakia. Like in the previous decades, employees mainly stay away from part-time work because it provides a low income, and employers avoid it because of high costs. After the political transition the introduction of part-time employment was not supported by the trade union, nor by the majority of women's organisations, and as the unemployment rate rose, the government also preferred systems of support that encouraged people to leave the labour market. In addition, the opportunities for part-time work also worsened because of the drastic decrease in real wages (Laky 1998, 28). Presumably this is one of the reasons why not only the proportion of part-time work is low, but also its acceptance and its prestige in society.

Those working in this form of employment often regard it as a choice that was forced on them: there was nothing better available. The fact that the proportion of part-time employment is quite high in Hungarian-owned companies that are relatively small and/or not covered by a collective bargaining agreement indicates that the creation of part-time positions is mostly initiated by the

companies rather than employees (*Magyarország 2011* 2012, 29). At the same time, it must also not be ignored that as a consequence of the crisis different survival strategies have evolved in each country. Whereas in Western Europe the number of the self-employed has increased, for example, because part of the employees who have lost their jobs are trying to make a living by launching a company of their own, in Hungary it is still the employee status that is seen as the most secure way to support oneself even if the job only offers fixed-term or part-time employment.

Agency work — the third type of flexible employment — is one of the least widespread flexible forms of employment in the countries of East Central Europe. While this form of employment looks back on a long tradition in the United States, and it is also relatively widely used in the English-speaking countries of Europe, it is less common in the Scandinavian and Mediterranean regions. After the fall of socialism this service appeared in Hungary rather late, and even today, Hungarian-owned companies tend not to use agency work willingly. Another distinctive characteristic of agency work is that it is one of the most important forms of employment in East Central Europe that acts as a counterbalance in times of crisis. Consequently, we have witnessed a slight increase in the number of people employed in this way during recent years. Whereas in 2001 almost no employees were employed as hired-out workers, this rate was already 1.1 per cent in 2011 (“Munkaerő-piaci...” 2011). The lower the segment of the labour market that this form of employment targets, i.e. the more it focuses on young and low-skilled people, the more vulnerable it is to economic crises.

The situation is more severe in those social groups in Hungary which cannot find any form of work. No solution has been found in the past 30 years to compensate for 1.6 million workplaces lost during the years of economic crisis in the wake of political transformation. The rate of employment decreased by almost 4 per cent between 1980 and 1990 and by more than 9 per cent in the first half of the 1990s. Beside unemployment, the factors responsible for this decline included early pensioning (to avoid unemployment) and disability pensions. In 1997 3.646 million people worked legally, which meant a decrease of 1.6 million compared to the situation before the end of the socialist regime. At that time, the rate of employment did not even reach the level of the 1930s. Even today, Hungarian economy still lags far behind with respect to the employment rate compared to the average European rate — primarily because of structural problems — but also compared to former socialist countries starting from similar positions. Considering all EU member states, only in few countries the rate of female employment among the economically active age population is lower than in Hungary (Figure 1).

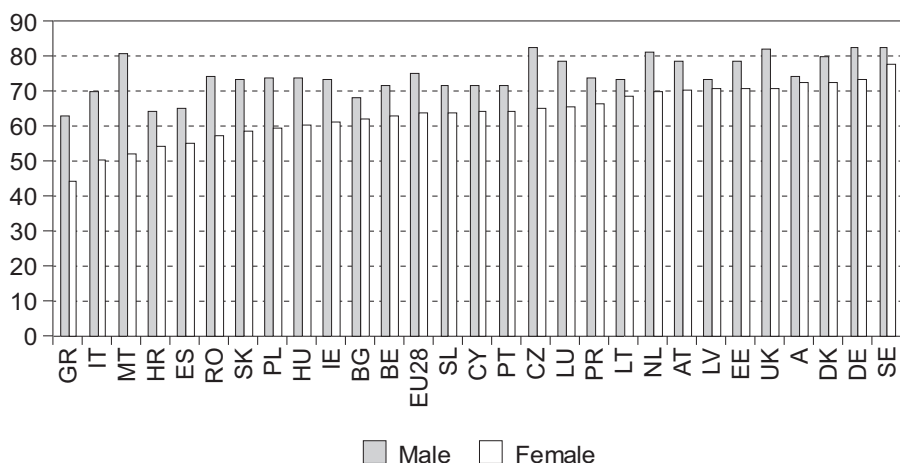


Figure 1. EU-28 female and male employment rates [in %] of people aged 20–64, 2014

Source: Eurostat (2015).

Increasing inequality and poverty as social consequences of precarity

During the past ten years the number and proportion of people living in poverty have grown significantly in Hungary. The 2008 crisis contributed greatly to the phenomenon of precarious situations becoming omnipresent and permanent. Its economic and social consequences, including rising unemployment and lower real incomes, become more and more visible. The fact that people were forced out of the labour market, had difficulties repaying mortgages (which affected broad social groups), and rising costs of living (rising taxes, prices, inflation) resulted in a reduction of the consumption of households and the broadening of gaps in society. With the exception of 2005 and 2006, the income inequality index (defined as the quotient of the incomes of the top and bottom 20 per cent of the population with respect to income) was constantly below 4 in Hungary, whereas between 2010 and 2011 this metric again approached the value of 4 (3.9) (*A fenntartható...* 2013, 108).

The structure of poverty also changed due to transformation of the redistribution of income among the social groups. The standard of living of families raising children deteriorated significantly, especially in single-parent families. It was observable that income shifted away from young citizens — and especially children — to older people, and from the economically active members of society toward pensioners (Vastag 2012, 293). In 2010 the proportion of poor children was distributed along a broad scale, from 11 per cent in Denmark to 31 per cent in Romania. The rate in Hungary (20 per cent) lay around the middle of this scale. In households with children poverty is 2.5 times as frequent as in those without children. During the past two years the situation of families raising children has become even worse. For example, poverty among 0 to 17 year-olds has increased from the value measured in 2010, 20.3 per cent, to 23.0 per cent in 2011. More than 16 per cent of children

live in households that do not have any economically active members. The proportion in Hungary is twice as high as in the Czech Republic or in Poland, but it is also significantly higher than the similar indicators in Slovakia and Romania, or the average rate in the EU (10.6 per cent) (*Magyarország 2011* 2012, 30; *A fenntartható...* 2013, 107). Thus in Hungarian society it is children and families raising them who live in the most precarious living situations! Bulgaria and Romania are the only EU countries where the child poverty rate is higher than in Hungary (see Figure 2).

In single-parent families, poverty rate in 2011 was nearly 30 per cent ("A relatív..." 2013, 2). According to data published by the KSH⁶, the minimum subsistence level in 2011 was 84,000 Hungarian Forints/month for singles (1.01 million Forints/year)⁷. For families, this figure is — for 2 adults and 3 children — 277,000 Forints/month (3.32 million Forints/year). For comparison, the average gross income in Hungary is 2.52 million Forints/year. For families with children to earn income that exceeds the minimum subsistence level, there should be at least two wage earners in the family earning at least the average income. However, in the current employment situation, where the proportion of active wage earners is only slightly higher than 50 per cent, this is rather unlikely. Atypical forms of employment, which are in fact widely recommended in such contexts, do not represent a real solution to emerge from poverty either. In 2011, due to the spread of atypical forms of employment (especially part-time employment), the income situation of people employed in this form has deteriorated to a degree higher than average, and their poverty risk rose from 0.43 to 0.45. It seems that in the context of the standard of living in Hungary, part-time employment does not offer adequate

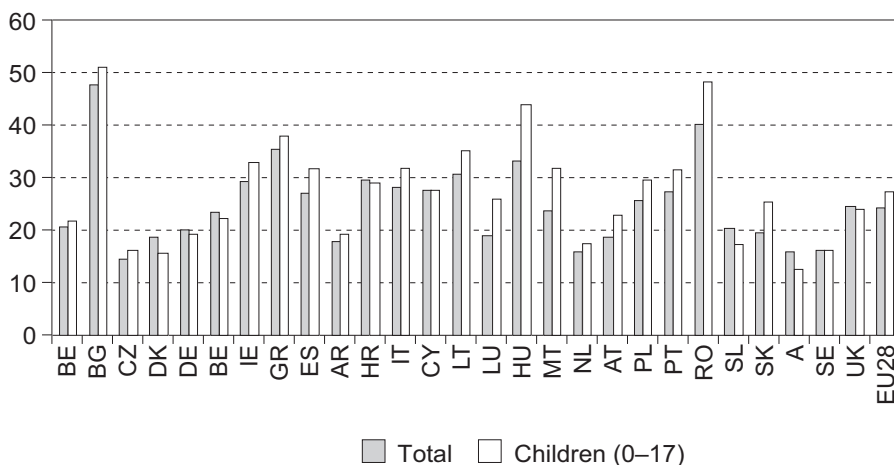


Figure 2. EU-28 People at risk of poverty or social exclusion [in %], by age group, 2013

Source: Eurostat (2013) *At-risk-of-poverty or social exclusion rate* (ilc_peps01). http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=ilc_peps01&lang=en. Accessed February 10, 2014.

⁶ KSH is the Hungarian Central Bureau of Statistics.

⁷ Calculated in Euro: 304.15 euro/month and 3657.03 euro/year (as of 1 January 2011 valid exchange rate).

protection against poverty. Their rate of poverty is higher than the national average (16.7 per cent) and close to the corresponding average rate for people who are not employed (16.4 per cent) (*Társadalmi...* 2013, 2). In many cases, even a full-time job does not yield enough income to avoid poverty.

Precariat as a movement in Hungary

The fact that people's personal situation became precarious and that social control was strengthened led to a series of protests in many countries. In almost all countries — especially on 1st May, in connection with the EuroMayDay movement — spectacular actions took place. Despite the continually worsening conditions with respect to the security of people's livelihood in Hungary, members of society have not joined forces, and the protection of interests in connection with social issues is extremely weak. MayDay itself is a pop music festival rather than a forum for the public participation of people in precarious situations. Maybe the Hungarian saying about certain situations in life applies here as well: "We carouse, crying".

Instead of organised actions⁸, we mostly witness aggression in the streets⁹ (similar to events that have occurred in many European cities in recent years), when people take their anger out on the objects of consumer society (cars), or symbols and institutions of the state (e.g. the headquarters of a television station). Actions in the streets also express

a deep mistrust ... against state institutions and old forms of political organisation and representation. It is a case of "destroying the whole thing", that is, the refusal of any integration. Alternatively, subcultural and deviant individual and collective survival strategies are developed. (Candeias 2007, p. 6)

The power and level of organisation of the trade union movement, which is the traditional movement that aims to represent the interests of employees, has declined significantly during the past decades. The greatest drop in numbers occurred in the former socialist countries, which was mainly due to the fact that the level of organisation, which had been nearly 100 per cent during the socialist era, rapidly decreased after the political transition. In Hungary the major factor behind this decrease of the level of organisation was the fragmentation of the trade union movement. In 1992 the wealth of the hitherto cohesive trade union movement

⁸ An organised action of this kind was the taxi drivers' blockade in Budapest in 1990, when members of society were demonstrating against the increase of petrol prices in Hungary. In the course of this action, several thousand taxi and van drivers paralysed Budapest for three days. Another organised action was a series of demonstrations in 2012 against the government after the introduction of tuition fees.

⁹ An example of this was the unrest in the city centre of Budapest that broke out on the 50th anniversary of the 1956 revolution, and, as part of this, the siege of the headquarters of the Hungarian Television in September 2006.

was distributed, and confederations were formed. By 1993 the internal conflict between the confederations had been fought out, and since then there has been a visible effort to unify the fragmented structure again in order to strengthen the bargaining positions. However, specific initiatives have mostly failed. Reaching an agreement is difficult because of the wish to retain the trade union's wealth and personal power that had been won earlier through the struggles. Due to this, according to the data of the KSH, the level of trade union density decreased between 2001 and 2009 from 19.7 to 12 per cent, and the most recent estimates report a level of under 10 per cent. Diminishing membership also entails diminishing income from membership fees, which reduces the chance of the trade unions to be renewed (Szabó-Morvai et al. 2010, 10).

Thus the reason for the helplessness of employees is mainly the fact that the country-wide opportunities for the reconciliation of interests among the social partners and the forums of social dialogue are becoming limited or purely formal. The new laws¹⁰ restrict the framework of collective protection, and individual agreements between an employer and an employee become more and more widespread, which results in individual helplessness.

In order to organise an effective representation for people in precarious situations, it would be necessary to generalise the interests and respect the differences. However, fragmented trade unions are not suited for this. Thus the following statement by Bourdieu is also valid for the situation in Hungary:

people in precarious situations can barely be mobilised, since they are limited in their ability to draw up plans for the future, and the majority of those who take it upon themselves to represent them live in the present or just the near future. (Bourdieu 1998, 98)

Bourdieu, Wacquant and Castel unanimously claim that since it is impossible to organise the precariat, it needs to be provided an adequate representation. Since the precariat cannot find its proper representation in the existing political parties and the system of institutions, these authors believe that the key figure are the intellectuals, who, as a "critical authority" (Bourdieu 2001, 65), are to "remind the state of its social responsibilities and to put it back in the position to intervene in a regulatory way against an unleashed market" (Candeias 2007, 5).

However, in Hungary it is not the intellectuals but the prevailing political parties and their programmes that promise to represent the interests of social groups unable to represent themselves. Thus the conflicts between interests regularly take shape in fights between political parties rather than societal movements. Ultimately, this leads to a situation which was characterised by Pál Tamás as follows:

It is also visible in a Hungarian context that for now people are much more willing to give up their collective rights than their rights of integration at the individual or family level, and do so in a way that is much less painful for the state that is lacking resources. It is also clearly

¹⁰ For example Art. XVI of the 2001 Law of the Labour Code and Art. I of the 2012 Labour Code, Part Three, industrial relations, chapter XXI of the union.

visible that the difference between the temporary withdrawal of rights and those that “seem permanent for some time” is often blurred. But even if it were not blurred so much, people would still gladly believe that a backward step is only temporary (in order to maintain their psychological condition), even if they had to suffer its consequences immediately and concretely. With respect to the structure of employment we are clearly returning to the states of affairs that predated Fordism. (Tamás 2007, 9)

Conclusion

Precarious situations appear in Hungary in a broader sense than that related to labour market status. Due to the reduction of transfer incomes and the revocation of welfare services, precariousness also endangers those social groups in Hungary for which the welfare state had provided a degree of security even outside the labour market, considering their age, state of health, family status or responsibilities. During the past two years, the extent of poverty (and especially child poverty) has grown, the number of households without work income has increased, and the gaps between social groups have broadened. At the same time, the real income of households and the extent of public spending on welfare have decreased, as have the role of social responsibility and the scope of democracy.

For in parallel to the reduction of transfer payments, the social rights — which people had had to struggle for to attain earlier — are also being curtailed. Instead of the collective protection that is reduced as a result of this deregulation, under these uncertain circumstances members of society can represent their interests relying on individual bargaining, or they can try to get organised, if they are able to do so. However, according to the experiences of the past two decades, the number of bottom-up initiatives is extremely small, and even if we experience actions, these mostly follow destructive rather than constructive goals, and their participants are drifting along the prevailing streams of demagoguery. During the past years it seemed to be impossible to organise this “atomised, anomic and resigned group” and to shape it into a force able to transform the current state of affairs¹¹. The still existing trade union movement has lost its credibility and is ineffective.

For the sake of survival the individuals adapt to their precarious situations, developing legal and/or illegal techniques to cope with change. They question the credibility of the system of legal institutions, but also their own ability to change their situation. And because they do not believe in their ability to change their circumstances, they try to develop their own systems of self-defence, they strengthen their reciprocal relationships that are based on personal, informal contracts, and they try to improve their survival strategies that are rooted in the local society.

¹¹ However, this hypothesis needs more empirical studies. Examination of characteristics and organisation of these groups has just started in Hungary.

However, the detailed analysis of these social phenomena requires further empirical studies.

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Forms of precarity and the development of its characteristics in Hungary

Abstract

The transformation of employment relationships and the process of uncertainty becoming general are breaking apart the structure of society and not only have an effect just on the marginalised social groups, but endanger the declining middle class too. The atypical forms of employment that are created as an alternative solution do not provide a generally valid recipe for integration. In our paper we will examine the context and the effects of the social changes in order to find answers to the

question what alternatives the uncertainties arising from the deconstruction of the welfare state suggest to impoverished social groups today.

Formy prekaryjności i rozwój jej charakterystyk na Węgrzech

Abstrakt

Przekształcenie stosunków pracy oraz rozprzestrzeniająca się niepewność rozrywają strukturę społeczną i mają wpływ nie tylko na zmarginalizowane grupy społeczne, lecz także na zmniejszającą się liczebnie klasę średnią. Nietypowe formy zatrudnienia, które są tworzone jako rozwiązania alternatywne, nie zapewniają zwykle właściwego sposobu integracji. W naszym artykule przyglądamy się kontekstowi i skutkom zmian społecznych w celu znalezienia odpowiedzi na pytanie, jakie możliwości zostają zubożonym grupom społecznym w sytuacji niepewności związanej z dekonstrukcją państwa opiekuńczego.