Social Reporting and Social Indicators Movement in Hungary before and after the Transformation

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Introduction

It is commonly known that no sign of identity can be put between social indicators and social reports. This statement is particularly relevant in the case of Hungary. Research and systematisation of social indicators had already started at the very beginning of the 70s, whereas the first social report, accessible to a broader public, was published only in 1990. This first report, however, not only contained the social indicators, but had also collected the results of the most important empirical research projects in progress in Hungary. Nevertheless, social indicators research and social reporting are closely linked to each other.

This paper attempts to present the conditions under which the social indicators movement emerged, who the ‘consumers’ of these indicators were, what conditions facilitated the production of the first social report, and how the function of social reports and social indicators research were shaped under the changing conditions. The latter factor, namely the changing environment, more exactly the transformation of the medium absorbing social indicators and reports, occurred through systemic change. Thus the paper will discuss factors of content, organisation, form and of personnel, and, if necessary, the activities of some central institutions and personalities will also be touched upon.

1. The Beginnings of the Social Indicators Movement in Hungary

In Hungary - as opposed to international practice - the development of the system of social indicators did not start in research institutes, but within the framework of activities in progress in the Central Statistical Office. The relevant programme was proposed by the Division of Social Statistics in 1971, itself set up only one year earlier, in the Statistical Standing Committee of the CMEA. One of the basic tasks of the newly established Division was to develop an integrated system of social statistics, which would include social indicators as well. This work was led by Rudolf Andorka, and the necessary theoretical and methodological foundations were also elaborated by him. The role of three factors should be stressed in respect of the beginnings.

Considering the fact that there was relatively little experience in this respect, it seemed to be feasible to utilise and adapt international experience. Under the conditions of the period, one could imagine adaptation only within the framework of the CMEA, hence the first initiatives, too, had to be made at that forum. It is commonly known that in the 60s the social indicators movement resulted partly from the perception that the GDP (or national income), most frequently used for measuring welfare, did not precisely express the real wealth of the society, and partly from the perception that the various social problems were not solved automatically by the growing living standards. These considerations played a role in laying the theoretical foundations of the initiative launched in the CMEA as well, but arguments stressing the statistical foundations of social planning had a greater weight for this initiative.

1 We are grateful to Cordula Zabel for linguistic editing the paper during her stay as a student apprentice at the Social Indicators Department, Centre for Survey Research and Methodology (ZUMA), Mannheim.
The work and materials of the Committee for the Long-term Planning of Labour and Living Standards, set up during the peak of the waves of reform in the 60s, offered a good starting point for social planning in the 70s. Indeed, when evolving long-term plans, this information, though concerning the past, could not be dispensed with, especially as it was based on essentially systematised indicators mostly comparable even internationally.

Finally, reference should also be made to the appearance of sociology in the 60s and 70s in Hungary, as the boom of social sciences offered a favourable atmosphere to systematic social statistics.

2. Work in the Framework of CMEA

The Statistical Standing Committee of CMEA, after the initiative, commissioned the Central Statistical Office to elaborate the system of social statistics and to co-ordinate work done in this field within the Soviet bloc. As a first step to co-ordination, we surveyed the major characteristics of social statistics research in countries participating in the co-operation, as well as the most frequently used concepts and classifications. The report made about the experience thus gathered ("The System and Basic Trends of the Elaboration of the Indicators of Social Statistics") was discussed at a seminar held in Budapest in 1974. The material was considered a novelty, due to its systemic outlook, as the initiative

- covered every major social phenomenon,
- applied uniform concepts and classifications,
- further, it also presented linkages between the individual phenomena.

During the first phase of work, from 1974 to 1976, the indices and the methodological descriptions of nine subsystems could be elaborated. These subsystems were the following:

1/ population and family
2/ education
3/ labour
4/ social structure and mobility
5/ income and wealth
6/ consumption
7/ health care
8/ housing
9/ cultural activities.

Subsequently three additional subsystems were elaborated between 1976 and 1978:

10/ sports, tourism, recreation
11/ time budget
12/ social security.

Finally, five further subsystems were elaborated up to 1980, these are:
13/ public utility services
14/ environmental protection
15/ conditions of work
16/ social pathology
17/ participation in political and social life.

As far as their topics were concerned, the subsystems developed were similar to the subsystems elaborated within the framework of the UN:

1/ population
2/ family and household
3/ education
4/ income generating activities, activity-inactivity
5/ income distribution, consumption and accumulation
6/ social insurance and welfare services
7/ health and nutrition
8/ housing
9/ order and security
10/ utilisation of time
11/ leisure and culture
12/ socio-economic structure, mobility.

Summing up, it may be stated that the objectives within the framework of CMEA were progressive and up to date under the conditions of the given period. The system of indicators developed was far richer than the recommendations elaborated by the OECD for its member-states in 1976, which contained 8 subsystems and 33 indicators. These subsystems were the following:

1/ health
2/ education, learning
3/ employment and the quality of working conditions
4/ utilisation of time and leisure
5/ disposal over goods and services
6/ physical environment
7/ social environment
8/ personal security.

Multilateral comparison of the indicators elaborated within the framework of the CMEA progressed haltingly, partly because of lack of data resources, and partly because of politically motivated confidentialism. Accordingly, the first joint, narrowed indicator wasn’t published until the mid-80s.
3. Experiments at Bilateral, International Comparisons

Due to problems of comparison mentioned already, bilateral comparisons were initiated in the form of recommendations at the meetings of CMEA experts. According to our knowledge, only the Hungarian Central Statistical Office took initiative, and as a result, Czechoslovakian-Hungarian, Polish-Hungarian, Finnish-Hungarian, and later on Finnish-Polish-Hungarian comparisons were made, extending over almost all the subsystems, but the latter ones were restricted to the utilisation of time only, and the way of life based on it.

The first Czechoslovakian-Hungarian comparison was made in 1983 and it included only five subsystems in the first step. They were the following:

- demographic processes,
- health status,
- social insurance,
- education,
- cultural activities.

This experimental comparison partly served the purpose of gathering some experience for the solution of methodological problems deriving from the different international practices, and partly to evolve a system of indicators (based on the CMEA) more or less suited for comparing the social processes observed.

Based on the first experiences, it could be stated that demographic processes appeared more favourable in Czechoslovakia than in Hungary. Similarly, the system of health care institutions was also more developed, due to better finances. Partly, this also explained the better health status there. Similar differences could be observed in the field of education systems. In the case of health insurance, the Hungarian level of domestic care could reach that of its northern neighbours only by the early 80s. It was only in the field of cultural activities that the differences found suggested better conditions in Hungary. (Primarily in respect of book publications and the supply of libraries.)

In the second part of the comparison - in 1988 - a further eight subsystems and their indicators were compared. These subsystems were the following:

- labour and employment,
- income of the population,
- consumption,
- availability of housing,
- sports, tourism,
- utilisation of time,
- public utility services,
- conditions of work.

On the basis of time series going back to 1970, it was possible to identify that real income

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was growing more rapidly in Hungary during the period under survey than in Czechoslovakia, and as a result the same applied to consumption. However, despite this more dynamic growth, our northern neighbours were in a better position in the field of housing and the equipment of flats, which was mostly due to the very high standard of housing conditions of the pre-war times.

As far as the utilisation of time was concerned, it could be shown that socially bound time was of the same length in both countries, but time spent in the main occupation had higher values in Czechoslovakia, whereas work outside an organised framework (mostly in the second economy) was significantly more widespread in Hungary.

As far as public utilities were concerned, the influence of a more developed infrastructure (public utilities in the flats, modern road network, public transport, etc.) was clearly demonstrable on the Czechoslovak side.

Joint work was not only in progress together with the socialist countries, as we did a variety of comparisons with Finnish statisticians as well. The first phase of Finnish-Hungarian work, aiming at the comparison of the utilisation of time, was closed in 1983. Next, on the basis of new data collection, further comparisons were done in 1988 and in 1990. It could be stated on the basis of the indicators published and analyses done, that in the Hungarian society, social differences were much bigger with respect to utilisation of time - which is most decisive of the way of life - than in Finland.

The Polish-Hungarian comparisons made in respect of the time budget (in 1984 and 1991) also indicated that there were somewhat bigger differences between the social strata in Hungary than in Poland.


The first social report which was broadly circulated and not exclusively forwarded to the political decision-makers, was the Social Report of 1990, which was edited by Rudolf Andorka, Tamás Kolosi and György Vukovics. The Social Report, published for the first time, was based on two pillars. One of them was the social indicators movement, mentioned earlier, the other pillar was constituted by the empirical studies based on surveys, usually of small samples, conducted in Hungary.

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4 Andorka et al., 1983; Andorka et al., 1984; Andorka et al., 1988a; Andorka et al., 1988b; Andorka et al., 1990
5 Andorka et al., 1984; Andorka et al. 1988; Adamczuk et al., 1986; Harcsa et al., 1991
6 See the contents of the publication entitled Social Report of 1990 in the Appendix.
4.1 The Fulfilment of Social Indicators Research

In the early 80s we compiled the indicators, presenting the domestic conditions at the Division of Social Statistics, while we also considered the practice developed within the framework of CMEA. However, the then leadership of the Central Statistical Office did not consent to its publication. Meanwhile Rudolf Andorka, who headed work in progress, was transferred to the University of Economic Sciences, where he published the material, significantly refined by him, with the sponsorship of the Soros Foundation of HAS in 1986.\(^7\)

The novelty of the material published was greatly enhanced by its discussion of the social processes and phenomena reflected by the indicators in the context of an interpretation of the theory of modernisation. As the processes of modernisation can usually be grasped by longer-range time series only, Rudolf Andorka tried, wherever it was possible, to assemble series of data looking back on as long a time span as possible. In this first social report the indicators, when it was possible, comprised a whole century. Thus, they could be well utilised in the interpretation of long-term changes. As it was mentioned earlier, the indicators, comprising twelve subsystems, represented and still represent, in a limited form, one of the pillars of the first, as well as of the subsequent, social reports.

4.2 Transformation of the Environment

Before the second pillar of the Social Report of 1990 is presented, it should be indicated by all means that systemic change significantly changed the environment of social reports. While in an earlier phase the "demand" for social reports was held by long-term planning, that is, the central government, with systemic change new potential users have appeared on the scene. One should continue to record the government among the users, but it can be stated that the attention of the government was directed elsewhere by the daily problems posed by transformation. The new potential users who have appeared in the political space were the newly formed parties and social organisations. In fact, quotable data always proves to be a good argument for those participating in social disputes. The media (newspapers, television, and radio too), which have got rid of restrictions, have become large consumers of data in their discussions of the society.

Not only the demand side, but also the supply side has changed. Other actors have joined the Central Statistical Office, who participate in the 'production' of indicators. Public opinion polls companies have appeared in the market. TÁRKI was set up in the late 80s as a consortium of universities and research institutes. Other companies emerged from the dissolution of the Hungarian Institute of Public Opinion Research, whereas others were established as Hungarian subsidiaries of major foreign companies (Gallup, GFK). Finally, it should not be forgotten that a plethora of international research projects was established which wished to follow the processes of social change by means of indicators. (One of the best known projects was the New Democracy Barometer, conducted by Christian Haerpfer and Richard Rose). Thus, with transformation, not only demands changed, but the institutional system of the 'production' of social indicators has also undergone major

4.3 Review of the Survey-Type Empirical Research

Several considerations may have played a role in the decision not to let the first social report stop at the borders of the research area belonging to the traditional social indicators. The basic goal of the publication was to "give a picture about the Hungarian society as complete as possible" (Andorka et al., 1990:7). In the 80s, and in 1990, several survey type data collections, based on relatively small samples, were made. Provided that the editors wished to give a comprehensive picture of the Hungarian society, they definitely had to go beyond the system of social indicators, which was generally regarded as traditional and exclusively based on the data of the Central Statistical Office. It is not less significant, that the editors, seeking to contrast earlier thinking seen as 'dominated by ideology', wished to put 'facts and figures' into the focus of a work on society. The time of publication should not be disregarded either. In Hungary, systemic change was already in progress in 1990. Various public opinion polls companies, including TÁRKI, also conducted surveys about the popularity of new political leaders, and about the assessment of the problems of systemic change. The demands of political public life also became stronger, and it had to be reinterpreted where the country was, what conditions characterised certain fields of co-existence.

All the above considerations can be said to have jointly shaped the theme of the second chapter of the first Social Report.

What does then characterise the papers of the second chapter of the Social Report and in what do they differ from the traditional school of social indicators?

a/ They contain comprehensive analyses of the different areas under study. In each case the orientation is basically empirical, though some of the analyses additionally present and discuss theoretical approaches (for example: social structure, material inequalities, types of knowledge, family relations, religiosity).

b/ Subjective indicators - opinions, attitudes, types of behaviour, etc. - are also analysed. For the first time, papers and analyses were collected that were based on data measuring the attitudes and behaviour of people (economic attitudes, the sense of inequality, etc.) in addition to objective indicators.

c/ Papers discussing key issues that have arisen with transformation are also included. (small enterprise, opinions on politicians).

d/ Finally, Hungarian data are also presented in international comparison (sense of inequality, ISSP).

The papers can surely be classified following other considerations than those we have chosen above, but perhaps we succeeded in listing the majority of their characteristics.

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8 See the structure and the description of the topics of the first Social Report in Appendix 1.
The editors of the first Social Report represented three institutions that together provided the basis for the first as well as for the subsequent reports. These institutions are: TÁRKI (Social Research Informatics Center), BUES (Budapest University of Economics) and the KSH (Central Statistical Office). Naturally, the Social Report of 1990 later on acted as a model, at the same time undergoing some modifications as well.

5. Social Reporting in the 1990s

As it was indicated earlier, the market for socio-political reports was significantly differentiated both in respect of demand as well as supply by the 90s. In the following, we will consider only some products and actors in this market - those who were closest to the social indicators movement. The social report continued to be published every two years, in 1996, the KSH independently published the Social Portrait of Hungary. The reports from the Hungarian Household Panel were published annually between 1992 and 1997. Furthermore, a large variety of intermittent reports was published during that period. There is a table in the Appendix summarising the individual reports along the traditional types of indicators (Appendix 4.). The subsequent volumes of the Social Report are not discussed in the following as they can be considered as a sort of summary of the research of the day.

5.1 The Annual Reports of the Hungarian Household Panel (1991-1997)

The Hungarian Household Panel (HHP) was set up to follow with continuous attention the transformation and changes undergoing in society. Thus it is definitely faithful to the social indicators movement in its spirit. This is reflected by the fact that the programme of the questionnaire (a system of variables), developed for the first questioning, underwent minimum changes only during the years. It was precisely the concept of comparability which has created a 'rigid', but standardised system. It should also be added that in the various waves, inquiry in certain topics was more detailed on an 'ad hoc' basis. The main topics of the research project of the HHP are the following:

- labour market, employment and unemployment
- incomes and their inequalities
- poverty
- housing
- stratification
- coping strategies of the households
- time use
- satisfaction
- anomie
- anxiety
- saving-behaviour
- household appliances

9 See later on.
10 See a more detailed list of topics in the Appendix.
When developing the programme of the questionnaire for the individual areas, the research team\textsuperscript{11} made efforts to adjust our questions, if possible, to the international standards. We have adapted a large number of questions from the German SOEP and from the Wohlfahrtssurvey, but the local conditions and experiences were always taken into consideration.

The panel method, the fact that we recontacted our respondents each year, has led to the development of new types of variables or indicators which also allowed for the presentation of other sides of social change. In addition to the structural changes of the society, and beyond them, one could measure changes taking place in individual lives, too. For instance, we learned, that despite the deterioration of the general living standards, there were people who were able to get out of poverty, etc. The most important fields of the implementation of this new viewpoint were the following:

- mobility in the labour market
- income mobility
- mobility of poverty

The Hungarian Household Panel is the result of the co-operation of TÁRKI and the BUES. It should be noted that KSH was also a member of this co-operation for three years.

The Hungarian Household Panel continuously measured certain changes in social transformation. As a result of constant shortage of resources, the annually produced reports were accessible only in a limited number of copies (grey literature, working papers). Nevertheless, they reached political publicity as well as the media, and the scientific conferences organised on the annual reports represented important events of scientific life. Finally, some results of the reports were 'built in' the Social Report published every second year.

The Hungarian Household Panel ceased to exist after the sixth wave, due to the shortage of resources. It was replaced by the Household Monitoring, which has retained the programme of questions, but questioning is conducted along a traditional cross-section sample, due to considerations of economy. The Household Monitoring is conducted by TÁRKI.

\textsuperscript{11} The head of the project was István György Tóth (TÁRKI). Members of the research committee of issues: Andorka (BUES), Lengyel (BUES), Kolosi (TÁRKI), Sík (TÁRKI), Spéder (BUES).
5.2 Social Portrait of Hungary, 1996

In 1996 the Division of Social Statistics of the Central Statistical Office – to a considerable extent under international incentive (ECE, UNDP) – continued the earlier tradition with a renewed content and published a certain sphere of social indicators, together with short analyses, under the title Social Portrait of Hungary. This volume also had the goal of “... offering a comprehensive image of the major social processes to experts and others interested in these questions who mostly wish to find long-range sequences of data and their statistical interpretation in one and the same place.” It can also be said that with this publication the KSH has returned to the framework evolved by Rudolf Andorka in the 80s.

The volume comprises 11 major topics (subsystems), it presents concise, essay-like analyses of the individual issues, to which long-term data series are attached covering the most important social indicators. In addition to the main topics, considered as permanent ones, special analyses of topics are also included in the material, depending on available current sources of data (such as gypsies, national minorities, elderly population, single-parent families, co-habitation). The classical social indicators are naturally more detailed if compared to the permanent topics found in the Social Reports.

At present, work for the Social Portrait of 1998 is in progress. The reason for the protracted progress of work is that the KSH attempts to remove itself from the tradition of statistical publications and to adjust to the rules of form and content of social reports. The social indicators are intended to be published in a clearer and more comprehensive way.

5.3 Social Reports 1990-1998

The Social Reports have been published every second year since 1990, and the 1990 and 1998 issues had an English language version as well. Right from their inception, the Social Reports wished to offer a kind of summary of empirical (non-market) research conducted in Hungary. For each Social Report, the data series of the evolved system of social indicators is updated also. With the passage of years, the structure introduced in the 1990 publication was somewhat reshaped. As far as the indicators are concerned, there had been no change in the 1990 publication as opposed to the framework evolved by Rudolf Andorka and István Harcsa in the late 80s. The weight of this traditional part, exclusively containing objective indicators, was reduced in the subsequent editions (see Figure 1.). The proportion of subjective indicators has significantly grown, but in this field, long-term time series are relatively rarer, as the subjective indicators have no ‘parent establishment’ which could be linked to the Statistical Office. Questions put in the Hungarian Household Panel and in the Household Monitoring are exceptions, together with the surveys of political behaviour. It should also be noted that the results of the HHP, as long as it existed, constituted a permanent part of the Social Reports. The characteristics of the Social Reports, giving a report of the ongoing, or recently fully, or partly completed Hungarian empirical research projects, has been retained. As a result, the Social Reports play a rather

12 The KSH plans to publish the Social Portrait every second year.
13 The English-language version of the Social Report of 1998 is being revised at present. It is expected to come out in the middle of 1999.
major, constantly changing part for Hungarian empirical social research. For the sake of comparison, please see the contents of 1990 and 1998 (Appendices 1 and 3).

Figure 1  The Shift in the Structure of the Social Reports in Hungary

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<th>Social Indicators</th>
<th>Other empirical investigations</th>
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<td>1996</td>
<td>Social Indicators</td>
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5.4 Temporary Social Reports Covering Certain Areas

In Hungary, a large number of volumes containing data and series of data are published that have a lot to do with the social indicators movement. These publications other than the social reports mentioned above offer further detail on certain life domains covered by the social indicators. Here, mainly the publications of the Central Statistical Office, as well as the reports of some state agencies should be considered.

Various reports, yearbooks and special publications are issued about the surveys conducted in the Central Statistical Office, representing the data base of the above mentioned life domains. These publications include, for instance, the Labour Force Survey reports, the general and problem-oriented reports of Microcensus, reports on people receiving social aid, and the Demographic Yearbooks.

Three of the initiatives outside the Central Statistical Office are quoted as examples: "Main Trends in Labour Demand and Supply" (Laky, 1998), published by the Labour Research Institute, the comprehensive volume entitled "Report on Public Education" of the Institute of Public Education, which had two editions, following the best traditions of the indicators movement, and the "Variations to a Role. Report on Women" (Lévai, Tóth, 1997), published by the Ministry of Social Welfare.

6. In Place of a Summary

As we have shown, in Hungary, social indicators research was evolved, and its foundations were laid by Rudolf Andorka’s activities in the Central Statistical Office in the 80s. According to our knowledge, Rudolf Andorka established close contacts to the international schools right from the beginning. During the course of that work, the system, which still can be utilised very well, was evolved and filled with content. One task was clearly the continuous maintenance of that system.

When surveying the social reports, it can be stated that a professional and scientific
consensus has evolved about what the reports should be all about, what it is that cannot be disregarded (see our comparative table in Appendix 4).

At the same time, an institutional fragmentation has taken place in the 90s, which demands the creation of a new kind of co-operative framework. Its institutionalisation is in progress in the organisation of KSH, TÁRKI and BUES.

Clearly, it cannot be said either, that the system of indicators evolved in the 80s does not require change. The Hungarian Household Panel and other, specifically mentioned empirical research projects definitely represent a good starting point for the renewal of the content of the system of indicators, which is also one of the important objectives of the EuReporting project.
Appendix 1.

Content of the Social Report 1990

I. HUNGARY REFLECTED BY FACTS

1. Population and family
2. Education
3. Economy
4. Employment
5. The income of the population
6. Consumption
7. Housing
8. Health
9. Time use and way of life
10. Culture
11. Environment
12. Deviant behaviour

II. SOCIAL PROCESSES

- Economic structure
- The labour market
- Small entrepreneurs
- Expectations
- Social Structure
- Social distribution of knowledge types
- Social mobility
- Beliefs about inequality in international perspective
- Inequality of material living conditions
- Homelessness
- Options about social problems
- Friendship
- Family relations
- Health status of the population
- Transylvanian refugees
- Religion
- Candidates of the 1990 elections
- Characteristics of voters
- Opinions about regimes changes
Appendix 2.

Content of the Hungarian Household Panel Report 1997

- Labour Market: Employment
- The Structure of Unemployment
- Social Structure
- Income distribution and income structure
- Savings behaviour
- Poverty and poverty dynamics
- Housing
- Health-status
- Subjective well-being
  - Satisfaction
  - Anxiety
  - Anomie
- Attitudes towards
  - Economic and Social System
  - Pollution
- Migration
- Friendship
- Time Use
- Regional Disparities
- Small-scale production in agriculture
Appendix 3.

Content of the Social Report 1998

I. SOCIAL INDICATORS
   13 Life domains

II. SOCIAL STRUCTURE
    The dynamics of families
    Status groups and milieus
    The informal economy
    Losers and winners

III. PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION
    Earnings in public employment
    Soldiers
    Scientists
    Priests, clergyman, monks, nuns

IV. SOCIAL RELATIONS
    Social networks
    Friends

V. WELFARE PROGRAMS
    Welfare assistance and poverty
    Health situation
    Pension system
    Education

VI. ATTITUDES, EXPECTATIONS
    Work attitudes
    Xenophobia
    Anomie and satisfaction
    Saving behaviour
    Legitimisation
Appendix 4.
Social Reporting and the Traditional Life Domains of Social Indicators

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