

Bourdieu in Hungary. Reception and uses of Bourdieu's key concepts in Hungarian sociology

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Introduction

As a relatively small and specific field, Hungarian sociology has always used “Western sociology” as a primary source of inspiration. The works of Marx, Durkheim and Weber are taught at universities across the country, as the proportion of German, French and Anglo-Saxon authors in curricula also reflect a relatively just balance among them. To offer a personal anecdote, as a first grader, I proudly wore my faculty's official T-shirt with a portrait of three serious-looking bearded men and a stick figure, with the phrase: “Karl, Émile, Max and I” on the front. This anecdote is in fact a piece of evidence that perfectly illustrates just how early the inculcation of the importance of the contribution of these three key figures starts within the curricula.

It would not be too audacious to state that, in Hungary, the work of French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu is perceived on equal terms with those of the above-mentioned grounding figures of sociology. Despite the lacunar Hungarian translation of his work, he played a major role in the emancipation of Hungarian sociology from Marx's overarching influence, even though so-called “bourgeois” sociologists

(that is, basically all non-Marxist authors) were seen with suspicion by state officials under the “socialist regime.” (The fact that in Anglo-Saxon social theory Bourdieu oftentimes falls under the category of “Marxist sociology” is a path that shall not be explored here.)

The Pierre Bourdieu we have

Without doubt, Pierre Bourdieu was and still remains the most important and the most often cited figure of French sociology in Hungary. Although his major works are yet to be translated into Hungarian, his key concepts have already been widely adopted, and are taught and discussed in universities, as well as within the broader academic sphere. As early as the 1970s, writings of Pierre Bourdieu were already of great use to Hungarian sociologists struggling to get national, as well as international, recognition for a discipline that in those times — primarily for ideological and power-related reasons — was regarded with suspicion by state officials as well as national cultural policy makers.

The introduction of the Bourdieusian sociology played an important role in counterbalancing Marx's heavy presence within

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the Hungarian intellectual (as well as socio-logical) field.

Our data seem to largely confirm this hypothesis (see Table 1). While Bourdieu's popularity keeps growing from 1970 onwards and only shows a slight setback in the first decade of the new millennium, references to Marx keep falling from a high base in 1970–1979 to reach their historical minimum in 2000–2009. During the examined period, the number of references to Marx dropped by approximately 80% in all Hungarian reviews and newspapers combined. The same applies to Lenin, whose loss in popularity is even more important during the decades under scrutiny, which, together with the references to Marx, provides a good indicator of the progressive weakening of the

“Marxist-Leninist orthodoxy” in the humanities in “socialist” Hungary.

As for Bourdieu, the constant increase in popularity can be interpreted in a way that indicates he played a crucial role in counterweighing Marx's overwhelming position and can also be seen as a sign of the easing of the “socialist” regime. Raymond Aron (Bourdieu's supervisor at the beginning of his career) is only used here as a point of reference to show that, contrary to Marx and Bourdieu, the relative popularity of some authors remained untouched by ideological considerations and historical turbulences.

Korunk, a review dedicated to a wider audience of intellectuals, reproduces almost perfectly the above-mentioned global tendencies (see Table 2). While Bourdieu's

Table 1. Number of total references in all Hungarian reviews and newspapers combined (1970–2009).

	Pierre Bourdieu	Karl Marx	Lenin	Raymond Aron
1970–1979	203	37,430	73,225	206
1980–1989	403	34,377	56,364	161
1990–1999	776	14,220	16,842	251
2000–2009	754	7,650	7,513	221

Source: based on the data provided by the European Union's Seventh Framework Programme, INTERCO-SSH Hungary 2013-2017 Project.

Table 2. Number of total references in *Korunk* (1970–2009).

	Pierre Bourdieu	Karl Marx	Raymond Aron
1970–1979	3	961	18
1980–1989	21	548	14
1990–1999	42	200	10
2000–2009	74	144	14

Source: based on the data provided by the European Union's Seventh Framework Programme, INTERCO-SSH Hungary 2013-2017 Project.

popularity skyrockets from the 1970–1979 period onwards, interest in Marx plummets as it reaches an all-time low in the 2000–2009 period. Aron’s popularity fluctuates in the same 2000–2009 period too, around relatively low values.

As to the two (semi-)official organs of Hungarian sociology (see Table 3), they confirm our previous analysis to a great extent. However, what is remarkable here is the astonishingly low popularity of both Marx and Bourdieu after 2000. This fact might be attributed to a growing dominance of positivistic and computerized research to the detriment of leftist critical thought in sociology, but this assumption here does not go further than a hypothesis.

Our data also confirms that the Bourdieusian sociology must have exerted a much wider and deeper influence on Hungarian sociological thinking and reasoning than one would assume based on the scarce number of his works accessible in Hungarian. Compared to his image in France, Bourdieu is far from being a divisive figure within the field of Hungarian sociology, and this for three main reasons: first, while Bourdieu himself was a key actor within the French sociological field of his era, at best his thought could only become a point of reference or a trump card to be played in sociological debates in Hungary; second, in Hungary, his

most controversial late works (namely those which have been published since the beginning of the 1990s) are almost completely unknown and not even taught at universities; and third, the Hungarian sociological field is incomparably smaller than its French counterpart, which logically makes its stakes — and its potential influence on the state of affairs in the world — accordingly smaller.

Bourdieu made his entry into Hungarian sociology in the 1970s, mainly as a sociologist of education and the theorist of “social reproduction.” A first collection of texts in Hungarian was edited by Zsuzsa Ferge at the end of the decade, offering a relatively global insight into the most important components of the Bourdieusian approach: it is by virtue of this first overview that readers in Hungary could gain an idea of how, amongst others, religious field or symbolic capital functions, what mechanisms make reconversion strategies possible and how Bourdieu’s perception of social classes should be interpreted.

In her original *Epilogue* to the first edition of the book, Zsuzsa Ferge (1979) gave a good synthesis of Bourdieu’s key concepts and an insight into his way of thinking, despite two significant conditions. First, this book was published at a time when Bourdieu’s major works — namely *Distinction* (Bourdieu, 1984), *Practical Reason* (Bourdieu, 1998b), *Homo Academicus* (Bourdieu,

Table 3. Number of total references in *Szociológia/Szociológiai Szemle* (1970–2004).

	Pierre Bourdieu	Karl Marx	Raymond Aron
1970–1979	26	291	1
1980–1989	22	156	0
1990–1999	114	120	5
2000–2004(!)	15	4	0

Source: based on the data provided by the European Union’s Seventh Framework Programme, INTERCO-SSH Hungary 2013–2017 Project.

1990a), and *Weight of the World* (Bourdieu, 1999c), just to name a few — were yet to be published. However, by the end of the 1970s, most of the research that would nurture later works was already underway. Second, we have to bear in mind that during the previous “socialist” regime, Marx was inevitably the most important — and officially supported — point of reference within the Hungarian field of social sciences. This fact explains the exuberant references to Marx that we find in Zsuzsa Ferge’s *Epilogue*, and it also gives an idea of why she presents Bourdieu as mostly inspired by Marx, and influenced by Weber or Durkheim to a much lesser extent (a position which, all things considered, is relatively difficult to defend).

Thirty years later, in the second edition of this volume, Zsuzsa Ferge (2008) explains in a so-called *Epilogue to the Epilogue* the reason why she made the decision to keep the original *Epilogue* unchanged. In this *Epilogue to the Epilogue*, she corrects the initial Marxian bias, adds a few critical remarks, and also gives a hint of Bourdieu’s later works; but all in all gets to the same conclusion as I did while reading the original *Epilogue*: namely, that in spite of the two above-mentioned distorting conditions, her original *Epilogue* already gave a relatively faithful insight into how Bourdieu’s sociology functions.

In one of her later works, Zsuzsa Ferge (2006) revisits the Bourdieusian concepts of field and capital, and tends to describe the Hungarian society as a dynamic web of different fields, not ignoring the excessive influence that the political and/or economic field exerts on other, more vulnerable, ones.

Her concept of capital mostly underlines its economic dimension, while putting less emphasis on its cultural and social manifestations. However, by transposing

the notion of capital into a context basically formed by Hungary’s present and recent past, she sheds light on the fact that, while capital is most often perceived as an important tool that normally facilitates its bearer to gain dominance within a given field, in the specific Hungarian context, capital is more commonly used as a simple means of survival rather than to dominate other agents within a given field.

In line with Zsuzsa Ferge’s analysis, Róbert Angelusz (2010) also emphasises the political field’s excessive dominance on all others within an actual Hungarian context. He also highlights that, instead of getting ahead, people in the 1980s in Hungary simply used their social capital to compensate for some of the negative effects of a scarcity economy. In his essay, he proposes to complete Bourdieu’s concept of capital with the notion of resource in order to give a better grasp of populations being short of capital, while still inevitably possessing some resources to mobilize. As Angelusz (2010, p. 17-18) puts it: “all members of a society disposes of resources, while access to capital is very limited [...] all capitals are resources, but not all resources are capitalized.” He then encourages a more nuanced elaboration of Bourdieu’s concept of capital. While cultural capital, he argues, is broken down into three different (namely embodied, institutional and objectivated) subtypes, concepts of economic and social capital do not show the same theoretical richness.

In addition, instead of focusing on the reproductive use of social capital, Angelusz (2010), as a social network analyst, tends to put more emphasis onto how social capital can be used as a primary source of social mobility. He also criticizes Bourdieu for not including second degree relationships (*i.e.*, acquaintances of people that one directly

knows) in his concept. Mostly based on research carried out by Nan Lin and Mark Granovetter, he also argues that, besides strong, homophilic ties, weak ties, through which we are linked to socially distanced people, can also help us in many ways.

As to more recent usages of the Bourdieusian notion of the “field,” in one of his forthcoming — as of yet unpublished — papers, Ádám Havas (2020) provides a critical reinterpretation of Bourdieu’s field theory based on his empirical research on the Hungarian field of jazz musicians. Havas believes that this differentiation of the Bourdieusian theoretical framework could help us better understand how symbolic hierarchy is constructed and maintained inside the Hungarian jazz field. Instead of positing a rigorous opposition between the poles of heteronomy and autonomy in newly emerging fields of cultural production (electronic music, popular music criticism, glitch, etc.), he finds that, counterintuitively, on the one hand, autonomy claims become also apparent at the heteronomous end of cultural production, while some contemporary avant-garde jazz musicians do not refrain from appealing to the logic of the market on the other. This is why, the author states, contemporary Hungarian jazz music is an interesting case in point, as it features both high culture and “entertaining,” popular music, and interestingly enough, both are embraced by agents. Furthermore, instead of being structured by the well-known duality of autonomy and heteronomy, this field is rather defined by the competition between two relatively autonomous fractions of Hungarian jazz musicians which the author calls “simultaneous hierarchy.”

Iván Szelényi, co-author of *The intellectuals on the road to class power* (1979) with György Konrád, uses the different types of

capital to interpret the social relations of the 1989/1990 transition period in Hungary. In his 1996 article entitled *Changes in the post-communist social structure*, he analyses the particular configurations of social reproduction within different elite groups. As to the pre-1989 “socialist” political elite, against the intuition of many who believed that political leaders have managed to keep or transform their initial political power into all sorts of other capital, data shows that most of them have definitely quit politics and, due to their advanced age, had no ambitions whatsoever to convert their political capital into anything else. However, as opposed to the political elite, most of the top-notch technocrats of the pre-1990 era have used their professional skills to become, after 1990, what Szelényi later defines as a technocratic-managerial social category.

The fact that the legitimacy of their privileged post-1990 social position relies less on the assets they own, but rather on their expertise as technocrats and managers, that is, on their specific cultural capital, makes Szelényi (1996, p. 390) term the period of the early 1990s the era of *postcommunist managerialism*. Due to the logical lack of a bourgeois class at the beginning of the 1990s, access to elite social positions in the post-1990 era was mostly conditioned by the amount of cultural and social capital on which one could capitalize (Szelényi, 1996, p. 399–400). After the 1989/1990 transition, cultural capital still keeps its first place in defining one’s social position, while social capital as a sort of “deinstitutionalized political capital” comes second and logically, in a capitalist society existing only *in statu nascendi*, economic capital lags behind in third place.

In her numerous analyses of Hungarian society, Erzsébet Szalai (2011) often leaned

on Bourdieusian concepts, assigning particular importance to the notion of symbolic capital which she also understands as a capacity to convert different sorts of capitals into each other. The abundance in different sorts of capitals in itself, she argues, does not guarantee that their bearer will also be able to successfully make conversions between them, while others, less abundantly endowed with capital, might ironically be able to skillfully operate such conversions (Szalai, 2011, p. 34).

Szalai also bends the Bourdieusian notion of habitus to the needs of her own research: she argues that habitus, far from constantly adapting to the social structure in which it has been formed, can also become a creator of new structures. In periods of social disintegration when existing social structures collapse, new structures, *faute de mieux*, will likely be called into existence by the existing habituses (Szalai, 2013, p. 376-377).

Miklós Hadas, Bourdieu's former student at the École des hautes études en sciences sociales in Paris, who is probably the most important figure in Hungarian men's studies, often cites Bourdieu in different contexts, as he has been using and aiming to reconsider some of Pierre Bourdieu's key concepts. In one of his articles published in 2001, he gives a global view on Bourdieu's sociology. Hadas (2001) believes that *Distinction* can be considered Bourdieu's most successful, most complete work, in which all elements of the whole theoretical edifice seem to work in concert.

In 2002, Hadas wrote a relatively long review essay on the Hungarian edition of Bourdieu's *Masculine domination*. In his article, Hadas (2002) sheds light on the fact that Bourdieu and most recent feminist scholars and key figures of gender studies have rather mutually ignored each other. The reason for

that, Hadas (2002) finds, resides in the fact that at the heart of Bourdieu's work lies the gender relation based on the perpetuation of a hegemonic masculinity and the *libido dominandi*, while most recent works on the subject tend to underline the erosion and the scattering of such a unified image of masculinity. Most often, these new trends in gender studies do not even feel the urge to contend with what Bourdieu has to say on the matter.

In the second part of his article, Hadas (2002) gives a relatively global critical analysis of the Hungarian edition of *Masculine domination*. He shows that systematic errors of the Hungarian translation stem both from an insufficient understanding of the original work, as well as from the ignorance of an already existing tradition of how Bourdieu's concepts should be translated.

Hadas' contribution to the critical assessment and reformulation of Bourdieu's concept of habitus is also of great significance. In a social historical approach, he sketches the evolution of different and oftentimes competing masculinities, and argues that masculine domination is far from being of universal validity, as its structural weight and character have fundamentally changed in the long run (Hadas, 2016).

In order to give weight to this argument, in a different paper, he distinguishes three types of socio-historically conditioned masculine habituses, namely the situationally conditioned plural habitus of the knight, the structurally conditioned homogeneous habitus of the clerics, and the relationally conditioned homogeneous habitus of the urban citizen (Hadas, 2017a). Mainly drawing on Elias' work, he also underlines the significance of a so-called "violence control" which, in the long historical period between the 14th and the 21st century, has become

part and parcel of the majority of masculinities as the centre of family-life has progressively shifted from paternal authority to maternal care and psychological harmonization (Hadas, 2017b).

It is worth mentioning that Hadas also co-authored several papers on the historical components of antisemitism in Hungarian football with Victor Karady (see, for example, Hadas and Karady 2006), a prominent researcher of modern Jewish social history in Europe, former member of Bourdieu's research network and the second most prolific author behind Bourdieu in the *Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales*, a French social science journal once edited by Bourdieu himself.

As for Bourdieu's *Distinction*, this major work, according to Léna Simányi (2005), can also be considered an important point of reference for researchers within the field of sociology of consumption. Through his notion of habitus, Bourdieu describes how illegitimate efforts of distancing become legitimate through reference to habitual differences. While it would be scandalous to exclude someone from a given milieu with reference to the class they belong to, it is much more acceptable to take a certain distance from them based on their values and interests — which are nonetheless linked to their social position or to the class they come from. Since this symbolic sphere of distinctions can be related to the space of objective class positions, the reproduction of objective inequalities is largely fostered by the ignorance, both by ruling as well as lower social classes, of how the symbolic sphere functions.

Anna Wessely (2003) provides a comparative analysis of Bourdieu and Karl Mannheim, highlighting both similarities and differences. Similarities between the two

theoretical structures are all the more shocking since it is known that Bourdieu rarely used Mannheim explicitly in his works. After citing some similar passages of the two scholars, Wessely (2003) argues that this similarity can be explained through Weber as a common point of reference for both scholars, as they both aspired to combine structural analysis with a Weberian explanation of social action (Wessely, 2003, p. 286-287).

With regard to differences, Wessely (2003) believes they partly stem from Bourdieu's more nuanced conceptual framework, as well as from his particular interest in field work and secondary analysis of representative surveys. As to Mannheim, Wessely (2003) highlights his emphasis on the evolution of some structures into systems which permit nothing but institutionalized roleplay, lending no room for the analysis of the actors' motives, as in such conditions they can only choose between embracing or refusing the roles they are offered (Wessely, 2003, p. 293).

Furthermore, Wessely (2012) and her colleagues drew heavily on Bourdieusian concepts in their empirical research on the Hungarian artistic field. One of the major challenges of the research was to create an appropriate theoretical framework. As the author states: "Due to the lack of previous researches and theoretically grounded comprehensive models, we had to start from ones already well-known, received and partly tested in the international literature" (Wessely, 2012, p. 65). Therefore, along with Bourdieu, other well-known figures of global sociology such as Howard Becker and Bruno Latour are referred to here.

Most recently Bourdieu's insights are fruitfully used by Hungarian representatives of the world-systems theory as well. A group

of young scholars, within the framework of a workshop named *Helyzet Műhely*, seek to apply Bourdieusian concepts to relations on a global level between the centre and the periphery. As one may know, in his empirically-based sociological works, Bourdieu tended to focus on specific French contexts. Thus, his conclusions are mostly valid to a context heavily bound by time and space. This doesn't mean that certain elements of his theories would have nothing relevant to say about other socio-temporal contexts. What I am rather trying to say here is that this universalisation should not be a process taken for granted, and in addition, specific characteristics should be carefully taken into consideration when applying Bourdieu outside the French context. For example, this automatic transposition of Bourdieu's findings led to the debate where British experts on education contested that school in itself would necessarily reproduce social inequalities, arguing that in Britain, for example, these mechanisms of reproduction of the class structure are so weak that it would be legitimate to underline mechanisms that point to the opposite direction, namely those that foster social mobility.

This insight is also emphasised in Gábor Erőss's education-related research. In his article that was probably inspired by Bourdieu to the largest extent, he sheds light on the fact that the reproduction of inequalities within the Hungarian educational system, on an abstract level, should not be taken for granted and thus must be analysed carefully, with a particular attention to the details (Erőss, 2008). Hierarchy between schools is always a matter of constant negotiation and a set of performative actions that take place between parents and school staff. Far from being carved in stone, these local hierarchies of educational facili-

ties can also shift and be easily transformed by rumours, volatile trends in education and by so-called "moral panics," that is, by parents removing their children from a school at the same time and for many possible reasons.

How parents choose a school for their children can be understood through the interplay of specific market configurations (*i.e.*, schools in need of new students turn out to be less "picky"), social position (*i.e.*, lower-status parents are more likely to accept non-admission to a given school), habitus, and finally contingency. When it comes to school choice, schools and parents gradually find each other through a certain process of mutual fine-tuning of their respective antennas, a process in which conformity of *habitus* plays a crucial role.

Domonkos Sik (2012) proceeds to the completion of the Bourdieusian term of habitus from a social critical perspective. He argues that being driven by one's own habitus within a given field can sometimes prove to be purely dysfunctional. In case a given sub-field of cultural production is taken over by a heteronomous logic, economic rationality for example, it will inevitably lead to the colonization of the given field by the economic field, thus undermining its autonomous functioning. In such case, agents who refuse to follow the path paved by the habitus compatible with such a heteronomous field will be pushed to take action against this harmful phenomenon. Their actions will be led by a logic which is not inherent in the dominant habitus: they either rely on their own heterodox habitus to tackle harmful social practices, or take action in a way which cannot be related to any habitus within that given field. This is the momentum Sik calls, referring to Merleau-Ponty and Waldenfels, *spontaneous sense formation*.

Sik (2012, p. 192-196) also argues that the balance of habitually driven practices and spontaneous sense formation is an ideal point of reference for social critique, as the dominance of the former can in some cases encourage heteronomy, while the preponderance of the latter will necessarily entail, in the long run, the disintegration of the given field.

Kiss Lajos András (2014) is one of the extremely rare scholars who show particular interest in Bourdieu's late activism as an "engaged intellectual." In his book entitled *Értemiség az ezrefordulón* (Intelligentsia at the turn of the millennium) he dedicates a whole chapter to Bourdieu as a "critical intellectual." He reflects on the end of the 1980s as a more or less commonly identified turning point in Bourdieu's career, shifting from scholarly exigence towards a role of some sort of "public intellectual." However, in fact, it seems rather evident that, even at the end of his career, Bourdieu drew heavily on his previously accumulated scholarly competence. Furthermore, his anti-neoliberal statements and engagement from the 1990s onwards can be rather understood as a logical extension of his field theory (Kiss, 2014, p. 375).

Kiss (2014, p. 186-188) pinpoints the main inner source of tension of the Bourdieusian sociology as one stemming from a competition between sociology and philosophy for the legitimate interpretation of social reality. He believes that Bourdieu pushes the sociological grasp too far. In order to illustrate this statement, he borrows a metaphor from Sloterdijk: when facing a mountain to climb, most alpinists can potentially reach the last base camp, but only the most talented ones might make it all the way to the top. With reference to Sloterdijk, Kiss (2014) states that sociological com-

petence necessarily ends at this last "base camp," since the matter of intellectual excellence does not belong to the realm of sociological inquiry as its exceptionality tends to resist to sociological deconstruction. In Kiss' perspective, this is exactly why Bourdieu's analysis on Heidegger in *Martin Heidegger's political ontology* turns rather into an absurd attempt of sociological reduction: the thinking of the most eminent thinkers, Kiss believes, cannot be reduced to a sociological level, as well as "in the ultimate questions of human existence, it is *homo philosophicus* who has the last word, not *homo sociologicus*" (Kiss, 2014, p. 191-192).

Dénes Némédi (2005) underlines the somewhat contradictory nature of what he refers to as Bourdieu's "kabyle paradigm." As Bourdieu had coined two of his central concepts, habitus and symbolic capital, with reference to the context of the traditional Kabyle society, he departed from the then prevailing "sociological" consensus reuniting all Comte, Spencer, Tönnies and Durkheim, and which highlighted a fundamental gap between "traditional" and "modern" societies. As a consequence, believes Némédi (2005, p. 38), "a paradigmatic feature of Bourdieu's theory is the denial of the difference between the archaic and the modern in some sense." However, adds Némédi (2005), this denial makes things inevitably more complicated for a critical sociologist like Bourdieu himself, as a key feature of sociological critique, just like in the case of the above-mentioned authors, is to critically assess modern societies from the perspective of traditional ones — and vice versa. A theoretical framework based on the unity of the two radically omits the possibility of such — often normative — comparison.

Last but not least, Márk Áron Éber also draws heavily on Bourdieusian concepts in

his research. Besides his doctoral thesis (Éber, 2013), which comprises a whole chapter on “Bourdieu’s theoretical performance,” most often he refers to Bourdieu in order to better grasp the evolution of Hungary’s class structure throughout the second half of the 20th century. (For a detailed analysis of the recent transformation of the Hungarian class structure in a world systems analysis perspective with special focus on the dynamic relationality between social classes, see: Éber-Gagyi 2019).

Finally, let me sum up my own activity in this matter.

As an editor of the Hungarian social science quarterly *Replika*, I myself also try to contribute to a more complete picture of the works of Pierre Bourdieu in Hungary. In 2009, I edited a special issue dedicated to Pierre Bourdieu’s conception of science. With some young colleagues, we analysed different aspects of the role science played in Bourdieu’s work, and I also translated Bourdieu’s “Le champ scientifique” from 1976 and *Les usages sociaux de la science* from 1997 for this issue. Until then, the only work that could offer a certain insight into Bourdieu’s perception of science in Hungary was the Hungarian translation of the so-called *Science of Science and Reflexivity*, a translation that would confuse readers more than it would give them a key to understanding. (The translation was otherwise critically assessed by Anna Wessely [2005] more than a decade ago.)

In this special issue, Balázs Berkovits (2009) takes a rather critical position on Bourdieu’s sociology of science. He finds that the way Bourdieu presents his own sociology of science as one which can transcend its historical embeddedness is rather unconvincing. Vera Szabari’s (2009) perspective on Bourdieu’s sociology of science is no less critical. In her article, she comes to the conclusion that Bourdieu failed to provide

a sociological analysis of the field of sociology of science, as he had primarily sought to reinforce his own position within the field of the sociology of science through an attempt to redefine its borders. Judit Gárdos (2009) argues that Bourdieu takes a sociological and an anthropological perspective at the same time. While the former focuses on structural determinants, the latter puts an emphasis on the inherent logic of research while not ignoring the accounts of the agents either. Finally, I myself (Fáber, 2009) provide an overview of Bourdieu’s sociology of science focusing on the following question: “how can something like ‘scientific truth’ be used as a weapon in the public struggle for the legitimate definition of social reality?”. This question relates to Bourdieu’s firm belief that science can produce more valid statements on social reality than any other social fields, the political field included. In this sense, he affirms, science is political in nature, as the mere unveiling of hidden social mechanisms by the sociologist can contribute to altered power relations within society.

Later on, I also translated some works written in English or French that either used or tried to interpret Bourdieu in a specific way, along with some other texts that I believed could contribute to a better understanding of Pierre Bourdieu’s work. This was primarily the reason why I decided to translate a chapter from *Distinction*, one of Bourdieu’s major works which, due to a lack of funding, has unfortunately never been translated into Hungarian.

In the last few years, however, some other works have been made accessible to the Hungarian public in their entirety, such as *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (Bourdieu, 1977), *Practical Reason* (Bourdieu, 1998b), *The Rules of Art* (Bourdieu, 1996), *Masculine Domination* (Bourdieu, 2001), *On Television* (Bourdieu,

1990b) and the above-mentioned *Science of Science and Reflexivity* (Bourdieu, 2004), as well as some of Bourdieu's shorter texts published in *Replika* with the aim of granting access to Bourdieu's thoughts through some of his most accessible writings. In one of my articles on the matter, I even made an attempt to put Bourdieu in dialogue with Luc Boltanski through their respective writings in order to gain a better understanding of both, and to point out how Boltanski rediscovers some elements of the so-called Bourdieusian *critical sociology* in order to complete and rectify his own theoretical edifice offered by *the sociology of critique* (Fáber 2008).

Finally, it is worth mentioning that a reworked version of my PhD thesis was published two years ago on the delicate intertwining of science and politics in Bourdieu (Fáber 2018). As for the time being this is the one and only volume dedicated to Bourdieu in Hungary, I allow myself to expand on the stakes and novelties this book brings to the Hungarian reception of Bourdieu.

The Pierre Bourdieu we miss or never had

At the beginning of the 1990s, Bourdieu progressively turns to the public sphere, and starts focusing on the transmission of the insights and results he had accumulated throughout his career as a sociologist.

When considering Bourdieu's public engagements in the mid-1990s, one can legitimately raise the question whether one has to deal with a left-wing public intellectual or rather with a social scientist who tends to ground his arguments on strict methodology and thorough scientific investigations.

First, let's take a quick look at the features that could be linked to a leftist political stance of sorts. Along with typical Bourdieusian concepts, some slogans appear

that are in line with classical leftist topics: precarisation, insecurity, the breakdown of ties of solidarity, the spread of deviant behavioural patterns, social Darwinism, and the model of "struggles involving everyone against everyone," the imposition of mobility and flexibility at the workplace, the increase of income inequalities (see, for example, Bourdieu, 1998a, p. 108–119 and Bourdieu, 2002, p. 349–355) etc.

But, second, if we take Bourdieu's statements seriously, all these phenomena are symptoms of an underlying disease, that is: neoliberalism, which means the imposition of the logic of market and capital on all sorts of fields of activity, which all had gained, over the past decades, a relatively high degree of independence from the influence of the economic field. Nevertheless, market tendencies are bridled, transmuted and canalised in a way that they foster the autonomous functioning of the fields of cultural production.

Some reflections of an explicit interest for public engagement appear for the first time on the last pages of *The Rules of Art* (Bourdieu, 1996), in which Bourdieu sheds light on social changes that pose a threat to the autonomy of the fields of cultural and scientific production. Let me, for the sake of comprehension, cite a not-so-short passage from it. As Bourdieu writes:

The threats to autonomy result from an increasingly greater interpenetration between the world of art and the world of money. I am thinking of new forms of sponsorship, of new alliances being established between certain economic enterprises [...] and cultural producers; I am thinking, too, of the more and more frequent recourse of university research to sponsorship, and of the creation of educational institutions directly subordinated to business [...]. But the grip or empire

of the economy over artistic or scientific research is also exercised inside the field itself, through the control of the means of cultural production and distribution, and even of the instances of consecration. Producers attached to the major cultural bureaucracies (newspapers, radio, television) are increasingly forced to accept and adopt norms and constraints linked to the requirements of the market and, especially, the pressure exerted more or less strongly and directly by advertisers; and they tend more or less unconsciously to reconstitute as a universal measure of intellectual accomplishment those forms of intellectual activity to which they are condemned by their conditions of work (I am thinking, for example of *fast writing* and *fast reading*, which are often the rule in journalistic production and criticism) (Bourdieu, 1996, p. 344-345, emphases in the original text).

If one takes the effort to think this passage through, one will have to see that Bourdieu's critique of neoliberal capitalism, which, again, has been the main target of his critical statements since the very beginning of the 1990s, is deeply rooted in his concept of field, that he had coined — however, still under a different form — as early as in the 1960s.

The passage above makes clear that the autonomy of a field of cultural or scientific production can be severely threatened from two opposite directions — namely, from the outside, by the imperialism of the economic field, and, from the inside, through the surrender of certain agents to the forces of the latter.

In Bourdieu's perspective, every single field has its own rules, stakes and capitals. Within each field, a battle is being fought for dominant positions. Since fields are homologous, but the logic that drives the competition is in each case different, the rules, the stakes and the capitals specific to a certain

field cannot be automatically transmitted to another without disturbing its autonomous functioning. In the 1990s in France (and elsewhere too), it is the inflation of the economic field that menaces the autonomy of artistic and scientific fields, entailing more and more often the surrender of the protagonists of the latter to forces that would be hard, but not necessarily impossible, to tackle. As a consequence, successful attacks from the outside always presuppose the tacit or active support of some agents from within a given field.

Within the intellectual field — and to be more precise: in the field of social sciences —, from a Bourdieusian perspective, these “traitors” are the so-called *fast thinkers*, that is, intellectuals whose renown originates from sources external to the given intellectual field, and who often go for quantity over quality. The value of their intellectual products is set in accordance with the number of readers or spectators they reach, but most rarely defined through a process of fervent debate between agents of the given intellectual field, as it would be desirable in case of an autonomous field. Hence, in a certain sense, these agents fish in troubled waters, for they benefit from the intertwining of two different fields.

As in the era of the *fast thinkers* of neoliberal capitalism serious social scientific research struggles to gain audience, defenders of the autonomy like Bourdieu himself are obliged to shift strategy: his increasingly active role in political issues includes, but is not limited to, the attendance of manifestations, signing petitions and giving radio interviews. However, one must not forget that taking part in political issues does not necessarily mean that this should also be political in nature. In Bourdieu's case, the effort is aimed at accounting for new and harmful social tendencies — to the extent possible — in more or less well-developed scientific terms.

Throughout his career as a social scientist, he has always borne in mind that his duty as a professional sociologist is none other than unveiling social mechanisms that are kept hidden from the masses. In this perspective, “the craft of sociology” lies in a political activity *in the broadest possible sense*, since debunking hidden mechanisms necessarily entails changes in the web of power relations. This was his preoccupation when, in 1970, on the pages of *Reproduction* (1977), along with his co-author, Jean-Claude Passeron, he came to the conclusion that the evaluation of school performance is closely linked to social judgments based on social background, and that the transmission of cultural capital is mediated by institutional mechanisms; or when, in 1979, on the pages of *Distinction* (Bourdieu, 1984), he showed that taste is a social phenomenon *par excellence*, and, as such, the accusation of having “bad taste” is none other than a striving for social delimitation.

In this Bourdieusian sense of sociology, any distinction between critical and non-critical social sciences has to be rejected, for sociology is innately critical. The sociologist’s task of uncovering hidden mechanisms is a constant — not to say moral — duty to be executed regardless of its effectiveness. It is in this spirit that in an interview Bourdieu defines his obligations as a sociologist:

It seems to me that this is a sort of civil obligation to offer to the state that pays me and to my fellow citizens what I believe to be knowledge on the social world and even, eventually, on the state itself. If I were a meteorologist, and I could foresee the coming of an avalanche, it wouldn’t look good if I remained silent (Bourdieu, 2000, p. 44).

This is the kind of intellectual attitude, which is becoming very rare these days —

especially in Hungary —, and which could contribute not only to the better understanding of how the actually existing capitalism of our era functions but also to show that people cannot always be held responsible for their own malaise since most often its source is to be found in structures that are incomparably more powerful than they themselves are.

If we have previously stated that Bourdieu’s critique of neoliberal capitalism grows out from some of his earlier investigations, we can now conclude that, somewhat paradoxically, its very limits are no less directly linked to his perception on agency in general, and to his concept of *habitus* in particular.

His public engagements were meant to mobilise those who had been suffering from the dismantling of the welfare state. They entail at least three problems, out of which the first two are closely connected to the notion of *habitus*.

Firstly, a permanent mobilisation presupposes that ordinary actors repeatedly step out from the framework of their “lifeworld” (to use a Habermasian term here), from the realm of their everyday lives in which, through the effect of socialisation, they tend to feel comfortable and their capitals are valued, and this is the place where their *habitus* is conditioned by objective social factors and also keeps conditioning their further choices. Agents provided with a certain kind of *habitus* can easily feel uncomfortable in situations in that their respective habituses are no longer capable of guiding them in their behaviour (see for instance: “this is not for the like of us” — Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992, p. 130).

Secondly, *habitus* has a deeply rooted mechanism to anticipate and thus avoid situations in which agents are likely to fail (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992, p. 130 and

p. 138). This means, in our case, that, unless agents envisage collective action as potentially effective and being more or less compatible with their respective *habitus*, they are likely to absent themselves from such occasions.

Thirdly and lastly, as in the Bourdieusian framework the sociologist has an incomparably deeper understanding of social processes than ordinary agents do, the latter tend to ignore social problems and refrain from protesting unless their lives are directly affected by these very problems. Although some of these are clearly visible, others remain hidden from their eyes and can only be unveiled by social scientists like Bourdieu himself.

Consequently, the scientific term of *habitus* seems to have a hindering effect when it comes to the collective mobilisation of the dominated class. Although Bourdieu never denied the possibility of conscious and rational actions, he also never forgot to stress that their rarity stems from the specific conditions they presuppose (Wacquant, 1989, p. 45). However, a theoretical elaboration on how agents mostly conditioned by their *habitus*

could gain consciousness of their not so enviable situation and thus become real actors, actors of their own lives, would have helped us understand the potentials and limitations of collective action and mass mobilisation.

Conclusion

Empirical evidence shows that, during the socialist regime, the growing popularity of Bourdieu within the Hungarian field of social sciences has contributed progressively more to the emancipation of the field from under Marxist hegemony. Nonetheless, the reception of Bourdieu's sociology in Hungary still remains somewhat unique, not to say contradictory. On the one hand, Bourdieu is perceived as the most important figure of global sociology in Hungary, while on the other, neither of his two major works have been translated into Hungarian. Furthermore, the last 15 years or so of his career as an "engaged intellectual" had been largely ignored, which has made the presentation of my own contribution in this matter inevitable.

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Abstract

Bourdieu in Hungary. Reception and uses of Bourdieu's key concepts in Hungarian sociology

This paper aims to give an insight into the paradoxical nature of the reception of Bourdieu's sociology in Hungary. Empirical evidence shows that before 1990, during the socialist regime, the growing popularity of Bourdieu within the Hungarian field of social sciences has contributed progressively more to the emancipation of the field from under Marxist hegemony. Nonetheless, despite the fact that his key concepts are by now widely adopted, taught and discussed, the reception of Bourdieu's sociology in Hungary still remains somewhat contradictory. On the one hand, he is perceived as one of the most important figures of global sociology in Hungary; on the other, neither of his two major works has been translated into Hungarian. Furthermore, the most recent period of his career as an 'engaged intellectual' has been largely ignored in Hungary.

Keywords: Pierre Bourdieu; Karl Marx; Hungarian sociology.

Resumo

Bourdieu na Hungria. Recepção e usos dos principais conceitos de Bourdieu na sociologia húngara

Este artigo tem como objetivo fornecer uma visão da natureza paradoxal da recepção da sociologia de Bourdieu na Hungria. Evidências empíricas mostram que antes de 1990, durante o regime socialista, a crescente popularidade de Bourdieu no campo húngaro das ciências sociais contribuiu progressivamente mais para a emancipação do campo sob a hegemonia marxista. No entanto, apesar de seus conceitos-chave já serem amplamente adotados, ensinados e discutidos, a recepção da sociologia de Bourdieu na Hungria ainda permanece um pouco contraditória. Por um lado, ele é percebido como uma das figuras mais importantes da sociologia global na Hungria, por outro, nenhum de seus dois principais trabalhos foi traduzido para o húngaro. Além disso, o período mais recente de sua carreira como "intelectual engajado" foi amplamente ignorado na Hungria.

Palavras-chave: Pierre Bourdieu; Karl Marx; sociologia húngara.

Resumé

Bourdieu en Hongrie : accueil et usages des concepts clés de Pierre Bourdieu dans la sociologie hongroise

Cet article vise à donner un aperçu de la nature paradoxale de la réception de la sociologie de Bourdieu en Hongrie. Des preuves empiriques montrent qu'avant 1990, sous le régime socialiste, la popularité croissante de Bourdieu dans le domaine hongrois des sciences sociales a contribué de plus en plus à l'émancipation du domaine sous l'hégémonie marxiste. Néanmoins, malgré le fait que ses concepts clés soient désormais largement adoptés, enseignés et discutés, l'accueil de la sociologie de Bourdieu en Hongrie demeure quelque peu contradictoire. D'une part, il est perçu comme l'une des figures les plus importantes de la sociologie mondiale en Hongrie, tandis que, d'autre part, aucune de ses deux œuvres majeures n'a été traduite en hongrois. En outre, la dernière période de sa carrière en tant qu'intellectuel engagé a été largement ignorée en Hongrie.

Mots-clés : Pierre Bourdieu ; Karl Marx ; sociologie hongroise.