

INTERVIEWS

Sociology of Entrepreneurship and Beyond: An Interview with Gyorgy Lengyel



LENGYEL, Gyorgy — Professor, Corvinus University of Budapest, Institute of Sociology and Social Policy. Address: 8 Fovam ter, H-1093 Budapest, Hungary.

Email: gyorgy.lengyel@uni-corvinus.hu

Abstract

Prof. Lengyel was interviewed by Maxim Markin, junior research fellow at the National Research University Higher School of Economics in Moscow. Prof. Lengyel was asked about changes in major research streams in Hungarian economic sociology since 2002 when he gave his first interview to the *Journal of Economic Sociology*. In this interview, Prof. Lengyel notes that the Hungarian tradition of economic sociology tends to remain pragmatic. However, Hungarian sociology obviously has become more internationalized due to scholars' participation in international research projects, the establishment of peer-reviewed journals, and offering English-based MA and PhD programs.

In addition, Prof. Lengyel emphasizes that entrepreneurship — along with employment policy, migration, and unemployment — remains a popular topic for sociological research. He proposes that the decline of entrepreneurship inclination among adults observed in European countries can be explained by a number of reasons, including a low level of general trust and crises. At the same time, European integration contributed to the emergence of new social categories such as supranational elites and globalized classes, which have rarely been in the center of sociological studies. Finally, Prof. Lengyel expects that such topics as economic behavior and its social implications under crises will attract serious attention from economic sociologists in the near future.

Keywords: sociology of entrepreneurship; economic sociology; European integration; European elites; academic internationalization; Hungary.

— *Professor Lengyel, more than ten years ago you had a talk with Professor Radaev and described how economic sociology appeared in Hungary and mentioned some research topics which were very popular at that time. So, economic sociology 10 years later. What are the changes?*

— It was ten years ago... Time is speeding up, that's my feeling sometimes. I thought it was only yesterday. But economic sociology in Hungary had some pragmatic traditions. Perhaps I told Vadim Radaev previously in that interview and it means that a version of grounded theory was popular in the beginning of the 20th century. By a version I mean problems emerging from empirical facts were interpreted in a way and this tradition even I can witness today. Although to a growing extent what I predicted has happened that Hungarian sociologists became more and more aware of international research developments and internationalization not only of sociology as a job but also internationalization of the very topic of sociology. Ulrich Beck and some other sociologists used the term "methodological nationalism" [Beck, Beck-Gernsheim 2009]. We took for grant-

ed that we have to think within national frameworks, which is not evident. To a growing extent the very problems of social change and social and economy developments have an international character. And we have to approach this by shedding light on problems which have genuine international, transnational or supranational character. And we have to try to take part in comparative research. The two aspects are not independent of each other but are slightly different. My feeling is that there is an effort on behalf of sociologists to try to move in this direction, to take part in international research, having to do with economic sociology and other problem-oriented approaches, and trying to conceptualize this supranational character of developments.

— *Ten years ago you said that you followed a problem-oriented approach, not a disciplinary-oriented approach. Is this still your way of conducting research?*

— Yes, I think it is a question of having research habits and research traditions as well. And I think it's a useful approach. I've just had to realize that there are other streams and other schools and researchers who share the same view all over the world, and grounded theory is such a broad conceptual umbrella to fit. We can find partners to this approach. On the other hand, obviously it does not mean that we are not supposed to use clear concepts and strong theoretical references. I have quite a few colleagues at the department here at Corvinus University who are interested in this or that aspect of economic sociology and we organized a faculty seminar or something like that, quite an informal thing. We meet every month and to discuss either ongoing research or some interesting readings. Last year we had a nice discussion among each other on the book of Alejandro Portes *Economic Sociology* [2010], which we found quite useful. Another occasion was devoted to Zelizer's new book [2007]. My colleague talked about his own research. This is a useful form. I learned it when in the early 1990s I visited the University of Chicago where James Coleman was still active. He invited me to visit an evening seminar. The title, I guess, was "The Sociology of Markets". He organized it with the economist Gary Becker who at that time was not a Nobel-prize winner, but shortly afterwards he became one. It was obvious that there were good signs of synergy during this seminar.

Because to me, it was very interesting to meet with, although it was an informal faculty seminar, different discussion cultures. Because we got accustomed here in Hungary to a mood of not criticizing each other, not posing sharp questions and critical remarks. Why? Because sociology was on the margin of social sciences, it was just tolerated. Quite a few occasions, it was not even tolerated but oppressed. Sociologists, the community of sociologists felt during the late state socialist period that there was no reason to criticize ourselves or a colleague-sociologist because the authorities criticized us enough. But my impression of this Chicago-seminar was that the young colleague just started to outline the core idea of his new book. In fact there were thousands of questions and comments and the poor guy, I felt, couldn't finish a simple sentence without having a question or a comment. My immediate feeling was they are just trying to test his flexibility whether or when will he say, "OK, no, I stop it. I give up because I cannot tell you what I'm talking about". But later on, I realized that these colleagues, some of them quite prestigious, others quite knowledgeable, young and ambitious, did their best for the fellow researcher at that moment, because that guy just started writing a book. And he got almost all of the important questions and critical comments one can get. And if he organizes himself well and answers all of these questions in time and in a detailed way, it would be an excellent book. So, sometimes it happens. And this occasion ended up with a wine and cheese party and I introduced those to the evening, at the end of these meetings we had these wine and cheese parties.

The topics of employment policy and problems of unemployment are crucial issues. There is a nice interaction at least at the level of research questions between sociologists and labor economists. And since at Corvinus University of Budapest, former Karl Marx University of Economic Sciences, at least at the major campus, we have a good tradition of labor economics and economic sociology as well. That's one possibility of talking to each other.

What are other topics? Entrepreneurship is still a topic with not as high interest as it used to be in the 1990s, but still it does exist. I want to mention my two colleagues Mihály Laki and Júlia Szalai who 10 years ago wrote a book. This book is available only in Hungarian. The title was something like “Entrepreneurs or Citizens” [2004], “citoyen” or bourgeois. The major question behind this book was outstanding medium and large entrepreneurs, successful men, to what extent are they able and willing to fulfill a social position in terms of cultivating sort of “citoyen” culture, being interested in culture or supporting social and cultural events and persons taking part in public life, shaping politics in a broad sense not only in the narrow sense of politics, politics as forming the common good — not only try to find the way of best profit making possibilities. Perhaps it’s a bit naive question, but it was important for many of us, for many of us to figure out who is responsible and who will be responsible for shaping public life in a cultural way and in cultural life, giving a sense of everyday culture. And the answer was rather hesitant at that time, there were signs that they were able to fulfill this economic and social culture function, although there are doubts about that. And ten years later they revisited the interviewees because it was a sort of grounded theory solution, they had no preconception of developments, they had questions arising from the interviews — they had some 60 deep, semi-structured interviews with successful entrepreneurs. Ten years later they went back and what they witnessed was quite surprising, because the vast majority of their former interviewees became unsuccessful. Or quite a few of them ceased to continue the business, some became bankrupt actually. And what was interesting was that the main effect was not the 2008-crisis. Some of them became less successful before the crisis. And they tried to figure out what could be the reason for that. They also had a control sample of newcomers, younger entrepreneurs who just started their business, and they found that some of them in the same branch of the economy became successful, while the older ones were not. So what is the reason for that? The age because they got older? Or the age of the entrepreneurial activity, I mean the extension of entrepreneurial activity? To some extent it could be seen that among the older ones, one characteristic group was former cadres or former managers who privatized their former state-owned enterprises and some of them after a while became less successful, who could not continue to run their business as successfully as previously, their resources were exhausted. But there was another group, mostly of professionals who did not privatize state-owned enterprises but built up small and medium enterprises. Among them there were also signs of decline. So one part of the story is that resources of the managers were exhausted. But the other thing is arising with the age of a person and the age of an enterprise and with some social circumstances, lack of trust or the low level of trust. And here comes the comparative point, that the younger ones are more successful, at least they argue that way, and they are more trustful, not necessarily in politics, but in the social environment as such. While the former entrepreneurs in a sense were more engaged in public life, in politics, in a process, or local politics these newcomers are not involved and not interested in that. They keep their distance from politics. At least that’s how they are described. I recently wrote some friendly critical remarks about these two books [Laki-Szalai 2004; 2014] because it’s a nice example, how this case-study based, interview-based economic sociology and institutional economics — one of them is a sociologist and the other is an institutional economist — can work together and produce something interesting. This is one example.

On other topics, I kept an interest in the topic of entrepreneurial inclination, in the entrepreneurial inclination issue, and I put together a small volume from essays written since the late 1980s [Lengyel 2012] about who would like to be entrepreneur, who would not, what are the social reasons behind that. How is it that there was a relatively high entrepreneurial spirit or entrepreneurial potential during late state socialism. It grew fast, very fast in the early 1990s. And then it did drop. And it is below the level of late state socialism period, the entrepreneurial spirit now. Part of the story is obviously that in the meantime there is an ongoing entrepreneurial class, that’s true. Part of the story, part of the explanation is that there are crises, there are signs of crises and the waves and ups and downs of crises which perhaps had negative effect on entrepreneurial inclination. There is another sign as well, the social and political climate is not very supportive to — there is low trust in public life.

— *Institutional trust?*

— Not necessarily just institutional trust. Institutional trust even in international comparative terms is very low.

— *General trust?*

— But generalized trust is also below the European average. Not very much, but below, to some extent, below the average level in Europe. People feel just in a bad mood. That has to do with a sense of uncertainty. Therefore, there is a narrow, relatively low proportion of people, who feel — as Keynes used the term — the “animal spirit.” When he — quite unusual for an economist — tried to explain why do some people intend to be an entrepreneur, he argued that there is something inside, a spirit, an “animal spirit,” not quite rational, just a force which helps to run and cope with the problems and starts something which is rather uncertain or even insecure sometimes. So this proportion declined in the society. And it has to do with a general climate. That’s one clear message from these investigations.

— *I heard of this book but I didn’t read it. What are the data sources?*

— You mean this entrepreneurial intentions book? Usually the data sources are a representative survey. We ask about the social background information and entrepreneurial inclination. And we had a chance to take part in — I mean I and some of my colleagues participated in the Hungarian Household Panel, which was an exceptionally good opportunity. We visited the same identical people from 1992 to 1997. And then there was in 2007 a last wave organized. So we had 15 years range and the very same people were approached. So we could investigate those who said yes, I would like to be an entrepreneur in the early 1990s, what has happened to them after 15 years? It was quite interesting to figure out what was going on, what are the social explanations of the impact of an entrepreneurial spirit? If I want to answer in one sentence — there is an explanatory role. The early entrepreneurial spirit has an explanatory power in the explanation of a later career, not only that someone became an entrepreneur or not. But also in terms of income chances. And even in terms of, as Weber and Dahrendorf put it, in terms of life chances. Not only strictly in income but also in the sense of how people subjectively feel and interpret their own life chances, and whether they are satisfied with their life or not. There are quite clear impacts and patterns of impacts what the early entrepreneurial inclination has to do with later life chances of people. So that was one interesting research we could do. What else can I mention? Somewhere on the border of economic sociology.

— *What about the topic of sociology of entrepreneurship? You’ve mentioned some research and some data sources, but I know about the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor that provides a lot of data for many countries. Could you comment on the opportunities of this research?*

— Yes, the method is slightly different. I know about the themes of colleagues — economists and others — who are responsible for providing the data information and the analysis of the Global Entrepreneurship issues or at least the Global Monitor on behalf of the Hungarians. We met at conferences and agreed that there are quite a few topics worth discussing. And I’m informed about this, but personally I did not use this source. I used two waves of a special Euro Barometer, which was devoted to Europe-wide comparative, not only Europe, even broader, comparative entrepreneurial research, having to do mostly with the entrepreneurial inclination aspects. In one of my papers I did this international comparative research or analysis from the Hungarian perspective. What did turn out in most aspects, that we are somewhere in between, not on the poles of the European map, that was the impression. So the Global Monitor might be a useful source and even to organize more efforts to exploit it and do comparative research might be useful.

— *I was a member of the Russian team and I know that there are some questions about the entrepreneurial potential.*

— Yes, I learned that, and I think it might be quite useful. Obviously all of these comparative international research projects have genuine problems of comparing in the strict sense, methodological problems and several minor aspects which have to be taken into account when we compare. Just providing an example for that: we finished a Europe-wide comparative Elite Survey where the European political elites, the National Parliament members, the European business elites, top enterprise leaders and top bankers, media elites and trade union leaders were compared in 17 European countries. And I was involved very much in sampling and field-work organizing and quality-control issues of this international team. So I can witness that this is quite a complicated task and as a matter of fact it is a learning process. But after all it was useful and interesting, very, very interesting. One of the results is that there are several articles and even several books. One of the books, the title is *The Europe of Elites* [2012]. It was edited by Heinrich Best, Luca Verzichelli and myself.

— *It was published in 2012?*

— Yes, by Oxford University Press. We got a very nice offer from the OUP, they have an experimental program, that they provide some of the books on an open-access basis, how does it influence their printed sales. That's the question of the experiment. And we said: "Yes, we accept this offer". So this book is available in a printed version as well, but in an open-access version as well. And I just hope that the two will not kill each other, the result of this experiment, this open-access Internet version. Practically everybody can read an open-access Internet version, while libraries and important institutions can buy copies for readers. Here we dealt with business elites as well as compared to political elites in a Europe model. What are the specificities we wanted to analyze? And we had some quite interesting questions and results. Although it is not necessarily well-known, business elites are better educated. The vast majority of political elites have a diploma, but business elites have definitely got higher quality education. We talk about the greatest enterprises, top managers, "number 1"-managers, or one of deputies, because only one organization, one interviewed person that was the policy and methodological decision. So we talk about really the top, and roughly half of them had foreign experience, they did learn or did work abroad. And two-thirds of them or roughly two-thirds of them, I'm talking about the business elite, not political ones, are interested in moving abroad and try an international career or continuing or gain an international career. So the business elites, European business elites became and are growing to become more and more internationalized. That's a quite clear result of our survey. And they think differently, they think more that some policies, especially economic policy issues, taxation, handling of programs of unemployment should be solved more on the supranational level, than now it is. Supranational is the European Union in our case.

What is interesting — we had a question about the ideal form or the ideal level of redistribution of tax incomes and revenues. It is less known, but the national contribution depending on the GDP is roughly one to two, two and half percent of the GDP. Not a very high percent. But we had a question which tried to simulate this problem: which one would be considered fair redistribution level? What percent of a taxpayer's 100 Euro tax should be distributed on the national level, on the subnational level and on European level. The respondents — all the political elites and business elites — said some 16–17% would be fair. They would feel as a fair solution that 16% should be distributed on the European level. And much higher than the actual practice. So in the mind of the elites, although the supranational level is much lower distributive proportion than the national one, or the regional one, it is five or more, five to seven times higher than the actual proportion. We did have some similar questions in an omnibus survey in Hungary and interestingly the population survey did show some similar proportion. So there is not a big difference between the elites' and the population opinion in this respect.

Another interesting issue was about how the elites and how the people feel about European integration, how they evaluate it? Especially in Hungarian context it's partly economic policy, the political context is that Hungarians were very much eager to join the European Union, but they are frustrated, they are dissatisfied with the results, they are very skeptical, Euro-skeptical. Which is a half-truth, because our results show that if we ask people about the immediate impact of the integration, and how it influenced their personal life or the country, economic conditions, their answer is rather critical or pessimistic. They say that the impact is negligible, they cannot see, cannot feel, etc. That is, in a pragmatic sense, they think that the integration did not have too much impact, and therefore they are pessimists, Euro-pessimists. On the other hand, if we ask about the symbolic issues, like identity formation or attachment to Europe, Hungarians if we are talking about not only about the elites, but also about the population, Hungarians are well-above the European average, attached or belonging to Europe, that they feel intensely, that they want to be attached to Europe. It is a strong symbolic issue. In international political science, there is a distinction between hard and soft forms of Euroskepticism, and we can apply or adapt it to a certain extent. Taggart coined the term [Szczurbiak and Taggart 2008]. First, we can apply to this evaluation of integration, and I think that pragmatic aspects are soft, because they can change. If policy changes, if there are better pragmatic conditions, perhaps, these opinions about advantages and disadvantages may change easily. Identity, attachment and ideological symbolic issues are rather hard to change. So in this hard dimension, Hungarians are very much open and not Euro-skeptical at all. So there is a distinction between the pragmatic and the symbolic aspects. That's the message of this research.

And the interesting thing is just to mention, that we are going to continue this research now. There was a wave in 2007, there was the second wave in 2009, so we could even measure the short term impact of the crisis, and now we are going to investigate the impacts of the crisis on European elites' opinion formation and organize the third wave of this research in this year. Even we have a plan, medium-run or long-run plan, to extend these partly economic-sociological aspects by asking about the policy formation, integration and partnership relations. To involve countries and colleagues from Eastern partnership, Eastern and Russian partnership in programs. It would be quite nice once really to ask European elites not only elites of the European Union. I think it would make sense in scientific terms, clearly, but perhaps even in broader and symbolic sense, in the broader public political sense as well to learn a bit more about each other with strict methods of empirical social research.

— *It is a very interesting research. And it will continue.*

— It will continue, that's definitely, yes.

Let me mention just one other topic which has to do with this talk. It is about social and economic aspects of migration. And we were involved in one part of the story, the integration of immigrants. Although I have to tell that there is a growing proportion of young, skilled Hungarians who leaved the country, half a million, it's estimated now, which is a fifth of the labor-force, so that is quite mentionable. I do know some sporadic statistical data but no serious research effort to make empirical well-established research on them. Not in Hungary, I know that there is one in Romania, a huge empirical survey among old migrants from Romania because the number is even higher. But in Hungary the other question is the question of immigrants. And how they can get accustomed to the conditions, how their integration is going, what are the social phenomena around this. And I'm talking about the legal migrants, the legal immigrants, not the refugees, and the monthly commuters from the neighboring countries and illegal migrants. And we did two different research projects on this topic. One was designed that there was a sample of the immigrants, a quota sample of the immigrants according to their destination, major destination points, and connected with that, a sample of the Hungarian adult population. So we could compare strictly the social conditions and opinions and attitudes of the adult population and the migrant population and some similarities and differences between them. We investigated such issues as "sense of social justice," and at least in Hungary it was new, we also had a battery of questions having to do with the

sense of social dignity, because all the constitutions contain human dignity as a major and important factor. But empirical research is relative rare, which really tries to investigate how human dignity is conceived and handled not only by authorities, but in everyday life and by the migrants themselves. We had some interesting results in this respect as well. And also well-being life-chances, subjective well-being, these were all asked. Just mentioning one interesting result — in many respects migrants are better off than Hungarians not only in income chances but also in the sense of dignity and their subjective well-being and the sense of justice. Why? The reasons are obvious if one takes into account that I am talking about legal migrants and among legal migrants young, educated urban dwellers are vastly over represented who come here mostly not as a refugee but as someone who wants to try himself or herself in business. So their educational level, age or position, their “animal spirits” in the Keynesian sense, is usually higher than the adult population. That’s an obvious reason why these migrants are better off. On the other hand, that was another aspect of the research, and it had some methodological implications which I want to mention, we also had some qualitative research in the framework of which we recorded citizens’ civic discussions; this is a version of citizens’ jury, the American system, where a group of people get together and they discuss some topics and then after the deliberation, the discussion, they form and propose suggestions or mutual solutions of these problems. So the stake holders are involved in the decision-making process, or at least if not the decision-making but the proposal-making process how to solve the common problems. That was the idea. A group of migrants and a group of Hungarians were invited for a weekend for a discussion and the question was how they felt during this integration process, and I can assure you that even if they are in many respects better, in a pragmatic sense, they had plenty of problems with integration, and plenty of problems with the authorities, and plenty of problems with their immediate social environment, etc. So this integration into a new society is a complicated process and sometimes a painful process. But these discussions were quite lively and very useful because they put together a very, very long list of the suggestions, how these conditions of integration on behalf of authorities, on behalf of education possibilities, on behalf of the neighborhood committees, could be improved. We submitted to the Ministry this list. These bureaucrats were frightened with these suggestions, because they felt that they have to translate this lay suggestions into legal regulation, which is not an easy task. But after all, although the first version on behalf of authorities was a complete refusal, we cannot use it, after one year and the second and the third year, they started to realize that it is not the immediate usefulness of suggestions is important, but trying to focus where the problems lie, where is the cause of the problems, how they can solve them is another issue. So we had some sort of qualitative methodology which we did apply, and it has to do with a broader experiment. We did organize in 2009 the second deliberative poll in Hungary. I don’t know if you are familiar with the deliberative methods and if they are frequently used in Russia.

— *I would say, no.*

— This is the deliberative poll as it is used, is a bigger event, and an even more expensive event because there is a survey, a representative survey organized in a target population, adult population and then the interviewees of the survey are required for a weekend discussion.

— *It’s not popular in Russia.*

— They discuss in small groups and plenary sessions the core issues of the research. At the end of the research, there is again a survey. And you can compare what was the knowledge level about the issue at the beginning and what is the knowledge level at the end. And what sort of opinions they had in lively social topics at the beginning, what is their opinion at the end. And what was their readiness to participate in public life, going to vote and this kind of going to a city meeting and discuss something, at the beginning, and what is their level of inclination to go to this kind of events and participate in these kind of events afterwards. So we had such a research in a local community and we had the good fortune to invite the two key figures who introduced and

developed this method — James Fishkin and Robert C. Luskin, and they prepared the whole research with us and we did this local research in a small region of Hungary where the core problem was a high level of unemployment and one topic we discussed was the problem of unemployment [Fishkin et al. 2009]. And the result was that, before the event people were not very knowledgeable about unemployment and unemployment policy programs and they were relatively intolerant towards unemployed and blamed them. And then at the end of the research they became more knowledgeable about economic policy issues, especially labor market issues at the local and national level. They also became more tolerant towards unemployed because in the small groups they met with unemployed people who told their personal stories and sometimes these small-group discussions were quite emotional. And the third result was that their level of inclination to participate in public discussion of public issues rose very much, really significantly. They wanted to participate much more in the discussion of public issues and solve the problems together. So we had this method and also we applied this small method, this civic discussion method as well. And we tried to figure out, we tried to apply these research methods, combining with traditional survey technique, and I think that in certain situations especially, for example, discussing policy issues including economic policy issues of local communities might be a useful approach. Not only in a strict sense that the public policy will be demonstrated or will be supported, but in a wider sense as well that the members of the community become more aware of these problems and more aware of their responsibilities. So that is a secondary side effect in terms of social impacts as well. So this was an interesting, in a methodological sense this was interesting research.

— *I also want to discuss the issue about education in Hungary. For example, how many foreign students enter Hungarian universities studying economic sociology? About how many Hungarian academicians take part in different international conferences and such communication?*

— This was one advantage of the European integration, and people very soon got accustomed with the conventions, developments and we take it for granted that we can participate in international conferences, we are not supposed to wait three years to get into a conference or ask special permits and this kind of bureaucratic process which was typical in the state socialist period behind us. Even we can support PhD-students and we do support PhD students to participate in international conferences as much as possible. There are good Europe-wide programs which facilitate these possibilities. As for the economic sociologists, although they are different, and thanks God they are different, doctoral schools in Hungary, because for one decade or so, there were only two doctoral schools in sociology in Hungary: ours at Corvinus and another Budapest University, called Eötvös Loránd. From now, these days at all major Hungarian universities there are sociology-programs and where there are MA in sociology it is also possible after all which meet all standards where there are at least four full-time and three part-time professors in every discipline. They can establish a doctoral school in sociology and there are quite a few in the country. According to my best knowledge, the one which has to do with economic sociology is ours at Corvinus University. And four years ago we switched the program language and whole curriculum and we provide an English curriculum for all students and for visiting scholars and students as well. Right now roughly one third of the students arrive from abroad — from the United States, some from Western European countries, but some from the third world, Pakistan, Iran. These are not great numbers because we have in the doctoral school roughly 14–16 students per year, in one class, I mean. We take seriously that we have a responsibility not only to educate all students, but wherever they can come from, from Romania, I mean from the very beginning we got students from Romania, because those of Hungarian origin, quite a few of them got their PhD here and went back to Transylvania, Romania, to Cluj-Napoca and other places. We established very good connections with them. Also some from Slovakia, neighboring countries, but not only them. At the moment the bottleneck, the problem is that there is not such a policy to provide scholarship for the talented young colleagues who come from the Third World. Because scholarship the Hungarian government provides is available for Hungarian students or for students belonging to the European community, the European Union, but we work on the possibility of finding a regular source for providing a scholarship for the students from Third World countries, because some of them are very ambitious.

— *In Russia the majority of the foreign students are from the former Soviet Union republics and there are some from the Third World. Is it possible to attract students from the Western Europe, from the United States? May be you can't say for Russian opportunities, but for Hungarian?*

— You know Russia is very attractive for the Western scholars because it's a big country with great traditions. Not only cultural life, but scientific life as well. And I realize that if a book is sold in several thousands or ten thousands, that's something for everybody who think about the special profession, the impact of a special profession. So in this sense Russia has advantages. It would be interesting to know whether the Russian system can provide scholarship for the Third World country applicants?

— *As I know, in some universities. For example, in People's Friendship University of Russia.*

— To be more precise, there is such a policy, there is a special office or authority which deals with these international scholarship programs and obviously they may provide some young scholars or artists from abroad. We are just not accustomed with this, I mean, we have a doctoral school. It is not so wide, not so broadly established that we can reach this possibility, so it's very uncertain. There is a very high competition or just very few places. It's not a regular basis of attracting talented young scholars from abroad that you can get a scholarship as do the German, Italian, French, and American doctoral schools. So this is advantage on your side, at the moment. We have to figure out something. I just want to mention one more thing that we established a journal with a Central East European focus and an economic sociology focus — the Corvinus Journal of Sociology and Social Policy, in 2010 I guess it was at that time. And we intend to continue, and from the very beginning, colleagues from the neighboring countries in a broad sense, and not only there. There is a slight focus due to the traditions of economic sociology, but in broad sense sociology and social policy and neighboring disciplinary fields are involved and invited. And I have to tell you that from the very beginning one of the reasons we did it was that we felt that there are two asymmetries in publication possibilities. East Europeans are underrepresented in international journals partly because we were not competitive enough, and partly because traditions differ. There were no so strong driving forces as the western colleagues had. And the other asymmetry was that younger colleagues were very much underrepresented within the publication possibilities. So we provided or established this forum for providing a publication forum for younger colleagues from Central Europe, and the Third World and other countries' researchers. Although quite outstanding American and West European colleagues also did publish in the journal, and it has a growing reputation and it might be useful to draw the attention of others, Russian colleagues as well. In the forthcoming issue there is an interesting Russian publication, and one I expect from Ukraine as well. It is very promising even in the sense of economic sociology topics as well.

— *I have one last question about the sociology of entrepreneurship, the last question. We discussed different research but what about the theories? What are the most influential theories, or theoretical approaches in sociology of entrepreneurship now?*

— The theoretical aspects... If we talk about the preferences of grounded theory and empirically well-established research, it does not mean that we must not be knowledgeable about the theoretical developments and the theoretical aspects of the issue. It is necessary to know in order to be able to interpret empirical developments. What we can, what I do find useful in this respect is — there is a big split from the early 20th century in this entrepreneurial theory, the Schumpeterian versus the Misesian, Kirznerian versions of entrepreneurial aspect [Schumpeter 2008, Kirzner 1973]. One puts the emphasis on dynamic aspects and the innovative aspects, and the habitual aspects of an entrepreneur who is trying to find new waves and new approaches and new solutions.

— *But it was the first half of the 20th century.*

— It was almost the beginning of the story, while the Misesian to the Kirznerian tradition reaches the late 20th century. The emphasis is on the finding the equilibrium position and searching for, trying to find, catching the possibilities to be alert and strives toward equilibrium. In this sense both traditions have their explanatory power. The Schumpeterian aspect is closer to the theory I prefer and I try to apply and try to include this in entrepreneurial inclination and entrepreneurial habit research. And it is called in different ways, in my version, is called the “action potential approach,” where capabilities in the major sense of the word, and inclinations, inspirations, and readiness together shape the social space for actors in a given, in every given moment and strive toward decisions and actions. There is a psychological, relatively close psychological research stream which is established by Ajzen [2005] and others and that’s called the theory of planned behavior. It is slightly similar to us. In this theory, the Ajzenian theory of planned behaviour the emphasis is on an individual habit and a psychological components, while our approach is — we are closer to a down-to-earth sociological approach where social conditions, social relations, social embeddedness have their role in the explanation. Together with aspirations and inclinations, have their role in the explanation of the possible success of future actions. So this is the theory — If you are interested in my theoretical convictions, or what are the basic conceptual frames I usually return to and try to refine, this “action potential theoretical” framework which is closer to the Schumpeterian tradition than the Misesian one. Not that I refuse the Kirznerian “alertness” concept but action potential has more to do with relationship and tensions between conditions and ambitions. So this is the core idea I want to spell out in this respect. I have to add that the “action potential” term was introduced by my Serbian colleague — Mladen Lazić, who applied it rather on collective action, to explanations of collective actions. I cannot add too much to that because I apply this to the individual level, to the case of individuals.

— *Thank you, may be the last question. As it was ten years ago I want to ask you about the future. What fields, maybe research problems will be important in the near future? What will be done in the new economic sociology?*

— At the very beginning of my career as a young sociologist I started a historical piece. I investigated the structural components of the war economy. I don’t want to turn back to that point and I don’t want to do empirical research, up-to-date empirical research, on the current war economy. I’m afraid, and take it as I say, I’m afraid there is a chance for that. There is a chance for that, that controlled economy, war economy, the structure and the real working of this sort of economies could be studied in the near future. And economic behavior under uncertainty is a very hot topic. Economic behavior in crisis, economic behavior and its social implications in the crisis time that’s an ongoing topic, that’s what we are supposed to study, which is slightly different from the period when the economy and social conditions are more supportive. And there are similarities between war situations and crisis situations. There are very important similarities, even in motives of people frightened, uncertain people, motives of politicians, but there are very important differences as well. Answers in war sometimes are very different, should be very different than the answers in the crisis. And it might be what are the major differences between crisis behavior and crisis solution policies and war behavior and war solution policies. This is the topic of one of my recent papers [Lengyel 2014]. That’s not a very rosy future perspective, but that is one possibility.

— *But is that interesting for investigation?*

— That is interesting for investigation, although sometimes very painful, it might be very painful. And one has to find — from the very beginning of my career I felt that the value-free, academic position is my, is the closest to my position. Now I more and more feel that, parallel to that, it is as important to have clear moral points where this academic position is linked with — clear normative points. If we read carefully Weber, he does not suggest that forget about all your values, just that when we investigate we try to control them. It does not suggest that the researcher should not have clear value judgments. More and more I feel that we need — badly need — clear value judgments. Some years ago there was a debate by Michael Burawoy, at that time

the president of the ASA, about the use of public sociology. I think one way of public sociology, one use of public sociology is that if we have research results which show some important implications to public life we have to present them to the public. Not only as scientific results but with their policy implications as well. So to a certain extent we have a responsibility not only to do the job as professional academic people, we have to be able to translate these research results into everyday messages as well, and clearly, clearly demonstrate the value implications of decisions and developments. So I can add this — it's a bit broader than economic sociology but in our days it is more and more important.

— *Sociology about sociologists.*

— Yes, it is indeed, I plan to write about this. There was a conference series organized by some of us, David Lane, and others, and we did put together a volume [Lane et al. 2007] on the restructuring of the economic elite after state socialism, and some of the papers are quite interesting.

— *Thank you very much for this talk!*

March 2014

Interviewed by Maxim Markin

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