SOCIAL CLASSES AND THE SELF-IMAGE OF SOCIETY

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1. Introduction

In their 2008 book *Social class: How does it work?* Annette Lareau and Dalton Conley lamented the fact that research into social class and social stratification did not receive enough scholarly attention. However, recently these topics have returned to the forefront of sociology. This resurgence is mostly attributable to the Great British Class Survey by Savage et al. (2013). Their work was inspired by Bourdieu, in that they identified three factors influencing social class membership: economic, structural and societal/social capital. Their findings received so much attention that the prestigious journal Sociology (3/2014) devoted a thematic issue to the commentaries generated by the study. It is indicative of the importance of Savage et al.'s (2013) publication that the Hungarian social science scene also responded quickly, and the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, in cooperation with GFK, designed a well-publicized study entitled *Osztálylétszám* 2014 [Class enumeration 2014]; for an account in English, see Albert et al. (2017). This research used cluster analysis and differentiated between eight classes; it found a broad lower class and a very narrow upper class, with a dwindling middle class. Overall the study depicted Hungarian society as pear shaped.

Yet, for the purposes of this chapter, the most important commentary on this new perspective on social class is Bradley's (2014) neo-Weberian criticism of it. In particular, Bradley took issue with three propositions. First, unlike the mainstream understanding of social class (as defined by Goldthorpe and his colleagues), this new Bourdieusian perspective assumes that economic, cultural and societal/social capital each has a very similar influence on someone's social position. Yet, according to Bradley, this presumption is flawed: neither cultural nor social/societal capital is independent of an individual's economic capital, but both are, in fact, the products of it. Bradley's second – partly methodological – criticism is that it is much easier to capture the cultural capital of the upper classes (e.g. visits to museums) than it is to tap into the lower classes' cultural consumption (which may involve going to

the pub, do-it-yourself activities, and so on). This is problematic, as it can mask the social mobility of certain members of the lower classes. For instance, talented craftspeople could conceivably increase their income and wealth by improving their residential property through their handyman skills; but that would not change their social standing, as their cultural and social capital would remain unchanged. This informs Bradley's third and final criticism: as equal weight is given to all three sources of capital, a manual worker with the same income as a professional could seem deprived – or of a lower class – purely on the basis of other factors that affect the person's position. In other words, despite having a relatively high income, a person could be categorized as deprived due to having low social and cultural capital.

Having considered these criticisms, this chapter follows the classic neo-Weberian perspective, which is in line with other previous publications on the Hungarian social class structure (see, for instance, Fábián et al., 2000; Kolosi and Dencső, 2006; Kolosi and Keller, 2010). Thus, our approach argues that a person's occupation and employment status is the best predictor of his (or her) opportunities, prospects and position in society. However, to broaden the scope of our inquiry, as well as occupational class we also include a person's education and other pertinent economic variables. These factors allow us to go beyond the respondent's social class membership and help establish his social status and place in the social hierarchy, thus revealing inequality and overall social stratification (Wright, 2008; Goldthorpe, 2008).

This chapter contributes to the discussion of Hungary's social class structure in three ways. First, using data from the *European Social Survey* (ESS), we provide an international comparison and show how occupational classes changed between 2002 and 2012 in Hungary, compared to other countries in the region and to most EU-15 countries. Second, relying on data from the 2001 and 2012 waves of TÁRKI's *Household Monitor* survey, we use latent class analysis to assess the changes in social stratification over the past decade. Finally, harnessing data from the *International Social Survey Programme* (ISSP), we track changes in the subjective self-image of Hungarian society between 1999 and 2009 and juxtapose the results with those of other post-communist and Western European countries. We also consider the reasons for this self-image and speculate as to anticipated changes in future perceptions.

2. Occupational classes in Hungary and Europe 2002–12

We used data from the European Social Survey for an international comparison, contrasting Hungary to two other groups of countries. In the first reference group, we included the country's regional competitors – in particular, the

Czech Republic, Poland and Slovenia; the second reference group included the EU-15, with the exception of Austria, Greece and Luxembourg.[1] It is important to note that over the past 10 years, the European socio-economic classification system has undergone fundamental change. Whereas in the early days of the ESS, the *Erikson–Goldthorpe–Portocarero* (EGP) class scheme was used (Goldthorpe, 2000), more recently a new classification system has been established, in line with the pursuit of European integration. This new classification system has reassessed the EGP and offers the *European Socio-economic Classification* (ESeC) in its stead (for details, see Rose et al., 2010). Both the EGP and the ESeC follow very similar principles, and they have a shared goal of providing a taxonomy that is merely descriptive – not theory driven or causal/explanatory. [2] The occupational classes need to be able to describe social stratification, of which the most important element is the division of labour, as theorized ever since Adam Smith (see Smith, 2012). Not only is occupational class instructive regarding social stratification, but it also informs researchers about individual attitudes, behaviour, cultural consumption, etc. As part of the recent shift to ESeC, *the International Standard Classification of Occupations* (ISCO-88), which had been used since 1987, was also revised and replaced in 2007 by ISCO-08 (for further details, see Huszár, 2013a; 2013b).

As indicated earlier – and emphasized by Rose et al. (2010) and Erikson and Goldthorpe (1992) – the number of classes is always determined by the goal of the analysis. So instead of relying on the 10 classes defined by ESeC, fewer classes may be used, depending on the aim of the study. In our analysis, we derived the classes using both the EGP and the ESeC classification; following earlier work in the field, we decided to pursue a five-class model. Because the results were largely the same, irrespective of whether we utilized the EGP or the ESeC (the difference between the approaches was 0.2–0.4 per cent for each class), we chose to include the results according to the EGP. This has the added benefit of being comparable to earlier publications on the same topic, such as Kolosi and Keller (2010), which used the very same five-class solution.[3]

[1] These countries were chosen on the basis of the available data.

[2] The main goal of this initiative is to provide a standardized classification system without subscribing to Marxist, feminist, Weberian, Durkheimian, etc. perspectives, but instead striving for an 'objective' taxonomy to describe social class hierarchy.

[3] The SPSS syntax files used are available on request. For detailed description of the EGP classes, please refer to Kolosi and Keller (2010).

Table 1 *Hungary in international comparison (based on the EGP classes, per cent)*

EGP class	2002			2012		
	Hungary	CZ, PL, SI	EU-12[a]	Hungary	CZ, PL, SI	EU-12[a]
Elite	10.0	11.3	14.8	8.4	12.7	13.7
Intelligentsia	14.4	16.4	21.4	14.0	16.0	21.5
Intermediate	14.4	18.3	15.0	11.1	14.5	15.6
Skilled manual workers	30.9	31.4	28.0	29.5	31.3	28.5
Semi- and unskilled manual workers	30.2	22.6	20.7	36.9	25.5	20.7

Note: [a] EU-12: EU-15 countries, except for Austria, Greece and Luxembourg.

The results of the analysis are shown in *Table 1*; those people who could not be assigned to any of the classes are excluded.[4] Between 2002 and 2012 in Hungary, there was a sizeable drop in the elite (-1.6 per cent) and intermediate (-3.3 per cent) classes; the proportion of the intelligentsia and skilled workers remained largely unchanged; and there was a sizeable increase among semi- and unskilled manual workers (+6.7 per cent). Over the same period, in other regional countries the elite (+1.4 per cent) and semi- and unskilled (+2.9 per cent) classes slightly grew; the intermediate class shrank (-3.8 per cent); and the others stagnated. In the EU-12, the elite decreased moderately (-1.4 per cent) and all the other classes experienced a very similar increase across the board.

These results indicate that during the 10 years between 2002 and 2012, and despite the Great Recession, the EU-12's class structure remained largely unchanged. By comparison, among Hungary's regional competitors there was a sizeable increase in inequality, as the proportion of both the elite (11.3 per cent →12.7 per cent) and of unskilled and semi-skilled workers (22.6 per cent →25.5 per cent) grew. Hungary lagged behind here: between 2002 and 2012, both the elite (10 per cent →8.4 per cent) and the intermediate classes (14.4 per cent →11.1 per cent) shrank; and – despite record enrolment in higher and professional education – only the proportion of unskilled and semi-skilled workers saw a sizeable increase (30.2 per cent →36.9 per cent).

Notably, Hungary was already the leader in semi- and unskilled workers in 2002 (7.6 percentage points more than other regional countries, and 9.5 per-

[4] Students, long-term unemployed, people on maternity leave, people who are mentally or physically challenged and unable to work, etc. Crucially, not all inactive people belong to this category. For pensioners, for instance, their last occupation informs the classification.

centage points more than the EU-12), and lagged behind in both the intelligentsia (regional: -2 percentage points; EU-12: -7 percentage points) and intermediate classes (regional: -3.9 percentage points; EU-12: -0.6 percentage points), displaying a 'bottom-heavy' occupational class structure. Alas, by 2012 Hungary had fallen even further behind, implying that the Hungarian economy's woes are partly attributable to the occupational structure and the strikingly high number of people entering occupations that are considered semi-skilled or unskilled.

These findings chime with Huszár's (2013a) analysis of data from 2010. He found no difference in the proportion of middle classes between other European countries and Hungary; however, Hungary is approximately 15 percentage points behind in the proportion of the upper-middle class (32.2 per cent vs. 47.2 per cent) and 15 percentage points ahead when it comes to semi- and unskilled labour (36.9 per cent vs. 21.6 per cent).

Even though they do not yet show up in the data, current social policy initiatives are likely to maintain – or even exacerbate – the existing trends. The recent 'reforms' in public education followed the example of Germany, a country which can only offer its advanced industries an adequate workforce thanks to highly educated migrant labourers (OECD, 2014; Radó, 2011). Because the Hungarian economic environment is less attractive than the German, and because Hungary is considered a country of transit for migrants, the only remedy would be enhanced investment in education and professional development. Depressingly, judging by government policy so far, such investment seems unlikely to materialize.

Further evidence of the potentially negative impact of regressive social policies can be found in Buscha and Sturgis (2017). Their study on social mobility revealed that in the UK, generations that grew up in the 1970s and 1980s have experienced increased downward and decreased upward social mobility than earlier generations. This implies that social policies do have very tangible effects on the life chances of certain generations and have a profound impact on one's social class trajectory. Williams (2017), also using the UK as an example, showed that such social policies have long-term negative effects on social stratification. His study of inequality showed that (1) occupational classes are still excellent indicators of one's social position; (2) despite the sizeable economic growth of the early 2000s and the Great Recession later, wage inequality remained largely unchanged between 1997 and 2015 across the occupational classes. His conclusion is that the main reason for the negative trends in social mobility has to do with wealth inequalities, which ballooned in the 1980s and early 1990s.

3. Changes in the social class structure of Hungary between 2001 and 2012

We used the 2001 and 2012 waves of the TÁRKI *Household Monitor* survey to examine changes in the Hungarian social class structure. We included four variables in the latent class analysis: (1) the five occupational classes discussed above; (2) household income, recoded into income quintiles; (3) educational background; and (4) a composite indicator for how well equipped the household was (i.e. consumption deprivation index). Importantly, these indicators are often closely related to each other. Taking the income quintiles and educational background as an example, *Table 2* shows not only that these two variables are strongly associated with each other, but also that the relationship had become even stronger by 2012, even though Hungarian society as a whole had become better educated.

Table 2 *Association between education and income quintiles (2001 and 2012, per cent)*

Education	2001					2012				
	1. quint.	2. quint.	3. quint.	4. quint.	5. quint.	1. quint.	2. quint.	3. quint.	4. quint.	5. quint.
Primary or less	27.2	26.7	23.6	16.1	6.2	27.4	23.4	24.9	17.7	6.5
Vocational	22.2	22.3	22.6	20.3	12.5	17.2	21.9	26.1	22.4	12.4
High school or professional qualification	9.9	15.7	18.8	26.0	29.5	7.6	15.8	18.8	27.4	30.3
Higher education	5.1	7.5	13.6	21.7	52.0	2.5	8.2	12.4	20.3	56.3

We conducted principal component analysis on the items of household amenities and selected those that had a high component score (eigenvalue) to form a scale. In 2001, we used five household possessions to form the component (a hifi system, microwave oven, washing machine, VHS player and PC; explained variance: 50.61 per cent, R-squared of the items: 0.399–0.572, component scores: 0.32–0.756); and in 2012, we used seven items (a hifi system, PC, video camera, DVD player, plasma/LCD TV, digital camera, internet connection; explained variance: 50.66 per cent, R-squared of the items: 0.365–0.703, component scores: 0.537–0.839). We derived the component scores and transformed the variables by creating five evenly distributed categories to

enter into further analysis. This methodology is similar to the nine-item deprivation index used by Eurostat.[5]

We excluded from the latent class analysis those individuals who did not belong to any of the occupational classes. These people formed a diffuse category, where students, the long-term unemployed and people on maternity leave were mixed with people who had non-specifiable occupations (e.g. 'foreman', which could be assigned to several occupational classes). Leaving these people in the analysis would have made interpretation of the results impossible.

Table 3 *The classes of the latent class analysis in 2001 and 2012 (per cent)*

Latent class	2001	2012
Upper-middle class	25.5	21.5
Middle class	21.1	18.8
'Left behind'	6.0	6.9
Working class	21.9	24.1
Deprived	25.4	28.8

The latent class analysis identified five emergent classes in both 2001 and 2012, which were described by very similar characteristics (relying on conditional probabilities). The *deprived* [6] category includes people mostly from the lowest income quintile, with limited educational attainment, mostly in semi-skilled or unskilled occupations, and with low values on the component scores of the consumption deprivation index. The most important characteristic of the *working class* is having a vocational education/training, and otherwise being in a better position than the deprived social class. The difference between the *middle class* and those *'left behind'* varied in 2001 and 2012: in 2001, those 'left behind' were in a better income position than the middle class, but they lagged behind in respect of education and occupation; in 2012, people in the middle-class group had a higher income than those 'left behind', but they lagged behind on education and occupational class.[7] Finally, the upper-middle

[5] It is essential to differentiate between the consumption deprivation index – used here – and the economic deprivation index commonly used in studies on poverty.

[6] We used the 'deprived' label to describe this social class so that it would not be confused with poverty, which is defined by one's income.

[7] This implies that the characteristics of those 'left behind' differ in 2001 and 2012, or in other words, this class is idiosyncratic. It is possible that those 'left behind' are distinguishable based on other traits, which could provide further information regarding their position in the class

class scores high on all four variables. Crucially, these labels refer to Hungary's social reality, which means that the Hungarian middle class is not equivalent to the Western bourgeois middle class: here the term only refers to its relative position in the Hungarian class hierarchy. It is also notable that due to the limited sample size, we could not separate the approximately 3–4 per cent of people identified as 'elite': they are merged with the upper-middle class instead.

These results are strikingly similar to the findings of the earlier international comparison of occupational classes, as they show very minimal change during the 12 years under scrutiny. The upper-middle class (-4 per cent) and middle class (-2.3 per cent) dwindled slightly; but the most alarming finding is that the lower classes have increased in size (deprived: +3.4 per cent, working class: +2.2 per cent). To gain a better understanding of the characteristics of each of the classes, *Table 4* shows what proportion of each class belongs to certain income quintiles.

Table 4 *Latent classes and income quintiles in 2001 and 2012 (per cent)*

Latent class	2001					2012				
	1. quint	2. quint.	3. quint.	4. quint.	5. quint.	1. quint.	2. quint.	3. quint.	4. quint.	5. quint.
Upper-middle class	8.3	13.1	16.1	23.9	38.6	2.9	6.5	12.7	21.0	56.7
Middle class	15.1	18.5	18.6	20.5	27.3	7.1	10.8	18.1	24.8	39.1
'Left behind'	8.9	12.4	22.9	31.0	24.8	0.0	38.0	24.4	37.6	0.0
Working class	17.1	22.0	22.9	26.7	11.2	15.9	21.7	26.1	23.7	12.6
Deprived	33.9	27.5	24.4	10.0	4.0	29.4	23.5	24.8	17.1	5.0

These results also imply that not much has changed in one decade. Perhaps the only trend worth mentioning is the increased income concentration of the middle class and the upper-middle class. In 2001 'only' 47.8 per cent of the middle-class belonged to the 4th or 5th income quintile, but this number had increased to 63.9 per cent by 2012. Similarly, the upper-middle class also experienced a jump – from 62.5 per cent to 77.7 per cent. Although it would be easy to attribute these changes to growing inequality in Hungary, the increasing homogeneity may also have emerged because these classes are shrinking in size. It is also worth mentioning the difference between those 'left behind'

hierarchy; but our methodology makes it highly likely that this is, in fact, the same class which possesses different features at the two points in time.

and the middle class. In 2001, those 'left behind' were on a similar or slightly better economic footing than the middle class, but by 2012 the middle class had definitely surpassed those 'left behind'. We will return to this difference when discussing occupational and social classes.

Table 5 *Latent classes and occupational classes in 2001 and 2012 (per cent)*

Latent class	2001					2012				
	Un-skilled	Skil-led	Inter-me-diate	Intel-ligent-sia	Leaders	Un-skilled	Skil-led	Inter-me-diate	Intel-ligent-sia	Leaders
Upper-middle class	0.6	3.5	52.4	33.7	9.9	0.6	2.5	5.2	75.5	16.2
Middle class	7.8	54.1	6.6	24.2	7.3	6.1	46.5	35.1	0.0	12.3
'Left behind'	14.0	58.1	27.9	0.0	0.0	14.0	10.1	48.1	27.9	0.0
Working class	38.0	54.3	0.0	6.4	1.3	4.7	90.0	1.3	0.0	4.0
Deprived	94.8	1.4	2.4	1.1	0.3	91.3	5.8	0.0	2.4	0.6

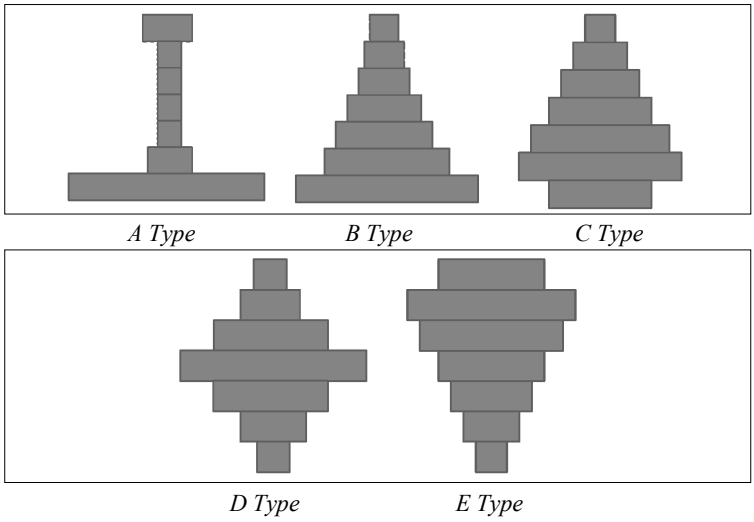
With regard to the relationship between occupational class and social class, there have been significant changes in the past decade. Although the vast majority of the deprived are still in semi- or unskilled professions, the working classes are more likely to have jobs requiring particular vocational skills. There have also been sizeable shifts for the middle and upper-middle classes. Whereas in 2001, roughly a quarter of the middle class belonged to the intelligentsia, this had fallen to close to 0 per cent by 2012. At the same time, the proportion of people in the middle class who were in a position of leadership had increased slightly. It is also noteworthy that in both 2001 and 2012, approximately half of the middle class had skilled positions, which underlines the enormous difference between what is considered 'middle class' in Western countries and the social reality in Hungary. Those 'left behind' also changed over time: in 2001, the majority were skilled labourers, whereas in 2012 the majority had intermediate or intelligentsia positions. This shows that for those 'left behind' (roughly 6 per cent) the term meant something very different in 2001 and 2012: in 2001, being left behind was best characterized as having limited education, but a relatively good income position; in 2012, the opposite was true. Taking account of the age of the people among those 'left behind' can help to clarify the difference. In 2001, most people in this class were in

their late middle age or elderly (i.e. the losers in the system change); by comparison, in 2012 there is no clear age pattern, implying that these people were probably the losers in the Great Recession instead.

4. Self-image of societies in international comparison

As the final topic in this chapter, we focus on the self-image of Hungarian society, especially attitudes toward inequality. We use the Social Inequality module of the *International Social Survey Programme*, and the 1999 and 2009 waves in particular, which presented different pictures of social hierarchy for the respondents. As observed by Kolosi (2000), there was an enormous change between 1987 and 1991 in the self-image of Hungarian society: in a matter of a few years, most Hungarians suddenly found the A-type elitist social hierarchy to be the most representative of their social reality (*Figure 1*). The A-type depicts society with an extensive lower class, a narrow middle class and a relatively broad elite. From the five options, this A-type is the most dysfunctional, antagonistic image of society. We hope that by tracking changes between 1999 and 2009, we can get a better understanding of what might influence the changes in a society's self-image.

Figure 1 *Figures depicting a society's self-image*



In *Table 6* we include the proportion of respondents who picked the A-type as their answer in each country. We ordered the countries according to the proportion of this response in 1999, in descending order from left to right (the only exceptions being West Germany (FRG) and the former East Germany (GDR), which were placed next to one another to aid direct comparison). Among the post-communist countries, the change was mostly positive (i.e. lower percentages, except for the former GDR); in Western countries, however, the change was negative (higher percentages, except for Sweden, Norway and Cyprus). Among the post-communist countries, there were three that experienced an economic boom between 1999 and 2009 (Poland, Russia and Slovakia), and they had the biggest drop in the share of responses; meanwhile the biggest increase in such responses was in Spain and Portugal, the two countries most seriously affected by the Great Recession. Admittedly, Austria and the former FRG also showed an upsurge, despite their growing economies. Yet, for more than half of the countries, not much changed, which shows the rigidity of attitudes to society's self-image.

How can one interpret these results? And most importantly, do these results actually tap into real inequalities in society? Nieheus's (2014) study adopts a sceptical tone, as he finds no relationship between the objective social reality and subjective attitudes regarding a society's self-image. Yet, he found a very strong correlation between a society's attitudes toward inequality and its desire for redistribution, with people who chose the A-type self-image demanding significantly more state intervention.

Table 6 *The post-communist and Western countries and the choice of an A-type model of society in 1999 and 2009 (per cent)*

	Post-communist countries								
	BG	RU	LV	HU	PL	SK	CZ	SI	GDR
1999	69.9	68.3	67.1	60.6	58.6	53.1	31.1	29.6	20.0
2009	63.5	40.7	68.3	56.6	37.1	43.6	30.9	26.4	22.5
	Western countries								
	FRG	PT	FR	SE	AT	ES	CY	NO	
1999	11.9	17.1	14.2	10.7	8.7	7.5	5.8	3.2	
2009	17.0	40.8	16.4	7.1	17.4	16.8	4.5	2.1	

The evidence so far indicates that the changes in Hungarian society's self-image between 1987 and 1991 were due to the rapid social change during Hungary's transition to a capitalist economic system. As shown by Hunyady's (2010) book, the system change was accompanied by 'contra-selection',

where it was commonplace to assume that winners from the transition gained their positions through illegitimate means. For instance, stereotypes regarding business owners and rough sleepers show that in general people find the former more successful, but the latter more moral. Yet, it is difficult to pinpoint the exact reason for the shock experienced during the transition, as it arose even among people whose social status remained unchanged. Some have tried to discuss this experience through the lens of transitional justice (Šipulová and Hloušek, 2013), and have argued that a lack of historical reckoning might have played a role. Whereas in the Czech Republic, the system change ('Velvet Revolution') is considered positive by the vast majority in society and only a tiny minority are critical (Lyons and Bernardyová, 2011), attitudes in Hungary are more mixed. Some indication that Hungary is in a special position is provided by the fact that two different words are used for 'system change': one implies a stark, abrupt difference (*rendszerváltás*), while the other suggests a more gradual, imperfect shift (*rendszerváltozás*).

Assuming that the traumatic experience of the system change is responsible for this distorted self-image, we would expect to find generational differences. Ignácz and Herman (2011), for instance, showed that attitudes toward the fairness of income distribution varied depending on how old the person was during the system change. Those who were already pensioners in 1989 had more positive views on the meritocratic principles of capitalism than did those who were still active at the time. The authors also found that the younger generations – who did not directly experience the economic transition – also have more favourable views on income distribution than the older generations (but not the pensioners). In similar vein, Berkics (2008) found positive trends among young people, who were less likely to view society as contra-selective.

Table 7 *Self-image of society in Hungary across age cohorts in 1999 and 2009 – proportion of people choosing the A-type of self-image in each cohort (per cent)*

	Hungary							
	–	Age 18–24	Age 25–34	Age 35–44	Age 45–54	Age 55–64	Age 65–74	Age 75–98
1999	–	57.5	58.5	59.6	61.1	67.1	60.2	62.1
2009	53.5	56.5	53.1	64.9	56.0	51.9	55.6	–
	Age 18–24	Age 25–34	Age 35–44	Age 45–54	Age 55–64	Age 65–74	Age 75–98	–

Contrary to these findings, our results show an inconsistent picture, without any sign of generational or cohort effects. Neither the elderly nor the young were more or less likely to endorse the A-type of self-image (*Table 7*). In general, our findings imply that views regarding the self-image of society are best predicted by 'between-country', rather than 'within-country' variation. While in Western countries, generally less than 20 per cent of people find their own society antagonistic, in post-communist countries 35–65 per cent do. Between 1999 and 2009, those countries that were more strongly affected by the Great Recession were more likely to see an increase in antagonistic views of society; in post-communist countries with rapid economic development, fewer people endorsed this idea. Yet overall, the self-image of society has barely changed in most countries. Notably, in 1987 in Hungary the figure for the A-type self-image was on a par with West European countries; but it doubled after the system change and has barely changed since then.

5. Subjective and objective social reality

When discussing society's self-image, it is a valid question whether people have a realistic understanding of their own social realities. To answer this, we harnessed the results of our latent class analysis. Assuming that we can create a social hierarchy of classes, the deprived should be on the lowest level, followed by the working class, middle class and upper-middle class. Due to the uncertain position of those 'left behind', who drift somewhere between the working class and the middle class, we incorporated half of its respondents into the working class and the other half into the middle class. Finally, from the upper-middle class we subtracted 4 per cent in 2001 and 3 per cent in 2012 for the proportion of the elite that we estimated to be there but could not measure using latent class analysis.

As a result of this procedure, we created the web-figure shown in *Figure 2* to illustrate the changes in social classes in Hungarian society over the decade between 2001 and 2012. It is very easy to see the increase in the percentage of the deprived and working classes, and the decrease in all other classes.

Figure 2 *The change in Hungarian social class structure between 2001 and 2012 (per cent)*

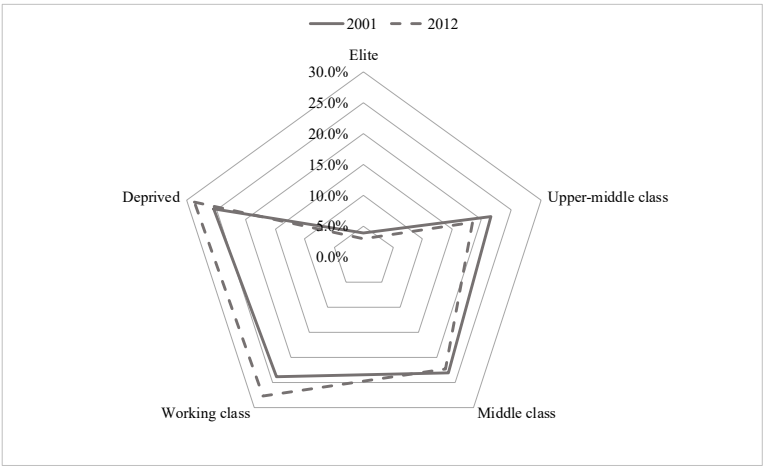


Figure 3 *The social class structure of Hungarian society in 2001 and 2012*

Finally, *Figure 3* shows that the people who, when asked about the shape of society, made the most accurate decision are those who picked the B-type society from *Figure 1*. There has been a negative trend over the decade between 2001 and 2012, in that the pyramid has become more 'bottom heavy', and the steps further up have become even narrower. Notably, not every society resembles a pyramid. For instance, up until the 1950s, British society had a pyramid-like structure, but by 1991 it had become more rectangular (with similar proportions of deprived, the working class, the middle class and the upper-middle class); it is only in the past couple of decades that it has started to revert to a pyramid shape (Goldthorpe, 2016).

6. Conclusion

Our analysis indicates that Hungarian society's social class structure and social stratification in general barely changed between the early 2000s and the early 2010s. Unlike earlier expectations, the middle class did not expand; indeed, it receded slightly, amid increasing economic inequality between the upper-middle class (roughly one fifth of Hungarians) and the rest of society. The proportion of the deprived and working class remained high, and even increased slightly. This suggests that social policy's primary aims should be to assist the unskilled in society and radically curtail the attrition in public education.

We also showed that a society's self-image does not converge with the objective social reality. Self-image is primarily informed by economic development and recent economic growth/recession. Thus, in Hungary – as in most other countries of the region – the antagonistic self-image, initially informed by the shock of system change, has barely altered over the past couple of decades.

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