

Csaba Makó:

HOW AND WHAT CAN WE LEARN FROM EACH OTHER?

The 1980's was the decade for the erosion of the monolithic Communist systems based upon command economies. The Central-Eastern European societies are still in a phase of rapid change, and it is difficult to know in advance what results this process will have in different countries. But whatever will be the course of events and the pathways followed, it is clear that new values, norms and behavioural patterns are emerging, based on the social fabrics of everyday life rather than any dominant ideology. The new values and social norms will form the institutions and laws of the new "civil society".

We may observe numerous attempts to identify and characterise the social quality of changes in the ironically named countries of 'real socialism'. It is my view, however, that in making such attempts any simple labelling of the current transformations with terms like 'communism' or 'post-communism' should be avoided. It is also misleading to speak about a period of straightforward transition from socialism to capitalism. The essential character of social change in Central and Eastern Europe is that these countries are setting out on a leading to freedom: i.e. from a closed society into a more open one. The open society does not mean a system, but rather a mechanism for the evolution of alternative solutions.

The 1990's will be the decade in which social scientists will be assisting, studying, evaluating and also shaping the emerging civil society: institutions

which are based on voluntary membership, which are organized to express the individual and collective interests of their members and which almost totally ceased to exist in the Central and Eastern European countries.

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A less visible and dramatic, but in fact much more devastating social consequence of the so-called 'real socialism' was the dissolution of civil society, as well as its replacement with an illusion of it. For instance many constituent elements of civil society have been simply destroyed: free trade unions are lacking, politics and ideology are monopolised by the one party system, there are neither autonomous associations nor an independent judiciary. The basic needs for creating a new political and social order are:

- a market economy, and
- a representative (democratic) political structure.

In the course of the development of a new social order, the democratically elected Hungarian government (since May 1990) and the political forces are confronted with a number of urgent problems, such as rapidly growing unemployment, skyrocketing inflation, intensive marginalisation and poverty among the population etc. In addition, the lack of democratic traditions in the former socialist countries - with the exception of Czechoslovakia - makes political struggles, even of forces devoted to the promotion of democratic principles, more time-consuming and their outcomes more uncertain (see for instance the slow and contradictory process of privatisation).

It is therefore not surprising that under these conditions of the 'political arena' very little priority has been assigned to the creation of social insti-

tutions that could have a stabilizing effect on social and economic changes (for instance: an Industrial Relations System, a Social Security System, Labour Market Agencies, etc.).

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The Third Finnish-Hungarian seminar held in Helsinki - 11.-13.09. 1990 - produced an extremely rich and stimulating discussion about the role and functions of short-term signals within the market as well as of the longer-term effects of social and cultural regulations in the field of work-related institutions. In the present context, the participants' debate about the role of the market and non-market forces was especially important, since expectations about the results of market mechanisms - even among social scientists - are extremely high in the Central and Eastern European countries. Naturally, market forces are powerful and indispensable tools for the allocation of resources and the balancing of short-term economic decisions. Their absence from among the mechanisms of resource allocation was one of the main causes of inefficiency in the command economies.

The seminar participants have presented 21 contributions (papers and comments) - in an extremely stimulating intellectual atmosphere - about the macro-global and local-organizational dimensions of the social organization of work-related activities. Experiences in relation to flexible specialization, and strategies of organizational change have shown e.g. that market forces, by their nature are sensible to short-term signals, and take little account of the long-term problems. One of the most important lessons learned from our Finnish colleagues' contributions is: the role and function of market forces must be cor-

rected and complemented by appropriate actions of social forces in economic life. This means, for instance, the involvement of different groups of citizens, based on socially and culturally conditioned actions.

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In addition to discussions on flexible specialization, organizational changes and development, we have to pay particular attention to the generally neglected role of managers in shaping the future. Even in the USA, where managers have the status of 'folk-heroes', there are very few really deepgoing professional analyses of their behaviour. (The management literature is on the other hand full of so-called pop-sociology, done by nonprofessional sociologists, which uses some methods of sociology but very little of its concepts and theory, and much of it so poor that every half a year another book becomes a short-lived best-seller.)

The contributions dealing with the global-macro changes in work/society focused our attention on the mutations of the Nordic welfare states, on the changing character of the societal division of work, and finally to the nordic type of 'social corporatism'. The 'Europeanization' of the national economies gives access to a free exchange of goods and services, and to continent-wide labour markets. The labour market legislation in the individual (national) states will increasingly be shaped by decisions taken on a European level. However, Industrial Relations function on a national basis. The contradictions resulting from the duality of labour market regulations call for a new thinking and approach in the field of the global regulation of the Industrial Relations System. The elaboration and creation of a European IRS supposes, for in-

stance, comparative analyses of the national bargaining systems. In the Central and Eastern European countries, not only the creation of a single European market and its social institutions, but also the introduction of national markets and the rebuilding of civil society plus European integration represent serious challenges.

Civil society, as part of the 'social fabric', has been absent for a period of some forty years in the former socialist countries. Its construction must be mainly - we have also learned from the Finnish experiences - the work of local people, making their decisions about the form (design) and practice of their basic social institutions. In relation to which we also had to learn, that it is impossible to copy on a 'turnkey' basis, for instance, the Nordic-type 'social corporatism'. Its two main characteristics are incompatible with the past and present conditions of our Industrial Relations Systems. After several decades of 'overcentralized and hierarchized' wage bargaining systems, the majority of employees in the Central and Eastern countries are hostile to the first of the characteristics of the 'Nordic-type corporatism'. The conditions for the second dimension of the democratic corporatism i.e. a solidaristic wage policy or the non-exclusiveness of the labour market are also lacking in the present stage of economic development in these countries.

In the introduction to this volume, Antti Kasvio raised the major issues and the need for new and innovative solutions in the sphere of work and employment in all European societies. I fully share his conviction and approach concerning the treatment of the European and national-local dimensions of working life: "there surely remain lots of room for fruitful mutual exchange of experiences with in a European framework,

too... in the form of a rich European laboratory of different social experiments, implementation of innovative solutions and learning from each others' successes as well as failures" (p. 5).

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Instead of final conclusions, I would like to set up some priorities for possible future scientific cooperation between Finnish and Hungarian sociologists. Naturally, this list of suggestions reflects my own socialization in certain research fields, and a different structure of priorities emerge provoked during the future scientific 'rendez-vous'.

a. An important, but underestimated institution of the integrated 'European economy' is the emerging 'European industrial Relations System'. The current process of the European Integration threatens both to undermine long established trade union roles and practices and destroy the long-shaped patterns of the Industrial Relations Systems in the different national economies. This process is conditioned by the industrial (economic) restructuring and its consequences (technological and social innovations), but the social partners' reactions to these changes are shaped by their social norms and values. This means that the structural conflicts accompanying the above mentioned changes are 'filtered' by the social and cultural regulations of economic behaviour. In relating to that process an important research priority would be to develop a network group - and later on perhaps an international research team - to make comparative analyses of the European Industrial Relations System.

b. According to the experiences of the most developed countries, the majority of the new jobs that have been created in the last decades have been created in

the service sector. The term 'service' has various meanings, so its use is a source of misunderstanding and confusion. (See the discussion about the societal division of work and the future of the Nordic welfare state). In relation with service work, we must distinguish between the 'standardized' and 'non-standardized' service sectors.

The first of these sectors is - like industry - based on the use of complex information processing instruments and systems (banking, insurance, etc.), and in this sector Fordist-type rationalization increases productivity in a way which produces an substantial job loss. The non-standardized or 'relational' sector (Roustang, 1990) on the other hand is represented by personalized relations (care service, doctor-patient relations, teacher-student relations), in which the productivity increase destroys the quality of service. In this 'fourth' sector there are opportunities for job creation, but even the Nordic type welfare states have difficulties in meeting arising costs in this area. In the future, a growing number of different societies will have to rely on a combination of 'paid' and 'non-paid' work systems. A new division of the state-family-private spheres could afford the necessary 'relational or non-standardized' services in our societies. In developing the 'fourth sector' it is important to use an active labour market policy, and to secure the social participation of the large non-working population. One of the most important pre-conditions of this shift in 'services' is the creation of a new and comprehensive social security system which integrates the variety of 'non-standardized' service activities.

c. The reflections of the Finnish, British and Hungarian scholars focused on the various dimensions of work and innovations in the European context. During

the discussion, the participants succeeded to cross freely arbitrary disciplinary boundaries in the social sciences. That way, we could avoid the risks arising from increasing specialization, which cannot produce a common language and dialogues among social scientists. However, it was not our intention to produce one single approach to reintegrate sociology. In the introductory chapter, we stressed the importance of an integrative approach instead of a segmented one.

The integrative approach - in our interpretation - does not mean one dominant concept in a pluralistic discipline of sociology. Nevertheless, "...this approach may be to identify intellectual cores that are common to many of us. These can be concepts, frames, theories, methods or other intellectual forms and qualities that we continue to share... Such a project might even increase the sharing of terms and reduce the excessive numbers of terms in the discipline" (Gans 1989, 13).

Finally, I would like to stress the following most important lessons of our three day's debate: the two countries' social, cultural and historical conditions are very different, and their importance is growing because of the increasingly equal access to advanced technology. Technology and capital infusion alone cannot do the trick. Instead of imitating or copying other people's experiences, we have to use our access to all available knowledge, contacts and discussions. The 1990 Finnish-Hungarian seminar, and possible future cooperation in the fields of research and training, do help in speeding up the mutual learning process.

References:

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Roustang, G.: Tertiaire relationnel et quatrieme secteur. *Partenaires* (Suppléant) 1990, 3, 11-14