

After the Systemic Change. Perspectives on Societies of Transition

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Throughout the 1990s, the sequencing reforms toward constructing the new welfare systems of the postcommunist world were formulated along two cardinal concerns of assisting the quickest possible *transition* from a planned to a *market-regulated economy*, and of establishing profoundly new systems of provisions to meet *social justice and efficiency*. Many of these ambitious expectations remained, however, on paper or gave rise to unforeseen new controversies. As it will be shown by focusing on the Hungarian example, by the turn of the millennium, the indicated processes concluded in the evolvement of bifurcated welfare systems with hermetically separated structures of services for the well-integrated and the marginalised groups of society, respectively.

This development raises a number of important questions. First of all, how far do the indicated negative developments follow from the peculiarities of postcommunist transformation? Are they simply transient by-products of the systemic changes that will spontaneously fade away upon the completion of the necessary economic adjustment? Or contrarily, one has to see here a new establishment in the making that takes weak integration into the market and the accompanying fault-lines of the social structure as enduring socio-economic realities and creates its two, sharply segmented, sub-systems of welfare accordingly?

If the latter is the case, then it seems inevitable to think also about the broader implications. One has to ask, whether is it feasible at all to maintain modern democracies with ingrained and institutionally escorted arrangements in line with doubled standards of social rights? The lecture will address some of the likely effects on the longer-term shaping of the “postcommunist social structure”, the quality of social coherence and also on the working of universal political institutions.