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why
do
Hungarians
dislike
politics

DEMOS
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Contents

3	INTRODUCTION
5	THE PROBLEM: WHY DO PEOPLE DISLIKE POLITICS IN HUNGARY?
5	The situation viewed from a distance
6	The situation in close-up
9	How bad is it in fact?
12	So why do Hungarians really dislike politics?
16	THE POLITICS OF EVERYDAY LIFE
19	The vicious circle
20	<i>The problems of politics</i>
21	<i>The problems of the media</i>
22	<i>The problems of society</i>
25	A NEW DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONSIBILITIES
25	Service state
26	The participants in the political competition
27	Media
27	The society of citizens
29	NOTES
30	REFERENCES

I N T R O D U C T I O N

In the public discussions of the last few years, comments on various aspects of the political culture of Hungary – including the public sphere, the status of citizenship, the state and achievements of the media – were often organised around a few commonly accepted assumptions. This essay examines these assessments in a novel and unified conceptual framework. Apart from analysing the phenomena which give us cause to hope as well as – or to an even greater extent – to worry, we shall suggest that one of the so-called ‘diseases’ of Hungarian public life is the very method which is occasionally used to evaluate its features and its development. For Hungary, joining the European Union meant crossing an historical boundary, with the result that now we can call our home simply ‘Europe’, without any qualifications. The fundamental idea behind this essay is that this shift of epochs requires a new set of assumptions in investigating the state of the republic as a symbolic community. The conceptual starting point of this research is the experience of everyday life, and the view which considers the public sphere and public affairs as a network formed by public sub-spheres, and of more or less stable temporary publicities. We are convinced that the ‘social entrapments’, the hysterics, the self-fulfilling catastrophic predictions of public life are largely caused by

blame-shifting and the evading of responsibilities. People blame politics for their difficulties, the participants of political life keep pointing their fingers to each other, and if there is no-one else left, one can always say its all the media’s fault. What we propose – on the basis of a novel interpretation of the situation – is the possibility of a new distribution of responsibilities.

According to this proposal, the vicious circles formed by the relationships among citizens, politics and media – resulting from incapacity, cynicism, lack of trust, and indifference – can be transformed into virtuous circles, where

- serious norms of public life are formulated
- the public and citizens are regarded as grown-ups
- instead of the contrast between blind faith and paranoia, we have the various registers of trust and competition based on the respect of others
- when someone says ‘I don’t care’ this means ‘I care about something else’
- political participation means more than collecting membership cards; it means that people are capable of connecting their interests and motivations to the actions of public life and public policies
- politics aims to interfere with affairs and not with minds
- the media is not only formally independent, but it is also an area of professional autonomy
- the neurotic rituals of public life are replaced by the entertaining or captivating new culture of the republic
- people relate to the uncertainties, ambiguities and doubts of everyday life in the 21st century in a different way: they experience it not as a negative phenomenon, but as a possibility or an inspiration for creativity

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THE PROBLEM: WHY DO PEOPLE DISLIKE POLITICS IN HUNGARY?

The situation viewed from a distance

If we wanted to describe the present state of Hungarian public life or politics to someone who is entirely new to the situation, the resulting picture would probably be confusing and include somewhat contradictory elements. On the one hand, since 1990, there has been no need to bring forward election dates, which means that each winning coalition has served the full four years for which it was elected. Another indication of the stability of the political and social system is the fact that Hungary didn't make the cover pages of the international press in the last fifteen years in connection with armed conflicts, terrorist attacks or an incipient civil war – while the same is not true of a number of countries in Europe. The annual country rating of the Freedom House (2004) has awarded Hungary the status of 'free' for a number of years, which means that political and civil rights are not under threat, and the institutions of the constitutional state are firmly grounded.

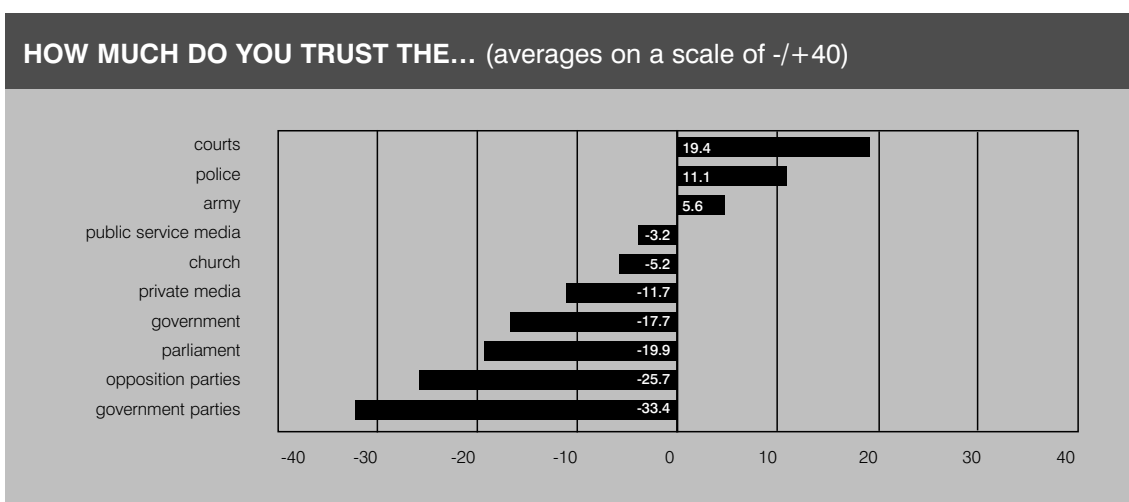
Assessed by the usual criteria for the freedom of the media, Hungary's achievement is satisfactory. The majority of the harmonisation of media regulations required by the EU was in place well before Hungary's accession. The media has undergone a technical-technological modernisation after the transition, the tangible evidence indicates a colourful media culture. The selection offered by newsstands should not embarrass even a country of a greater size. The number of students applying for media studies departments has been steadily growing. According to a research conducted by the World Internet Project, Hungarians are enthusiastic buyers of info-communicational products, the data of

Eurobarometer indicate that they are passionate consumers of news, and on occasions when citizens feel the stakes are serious, they turn up at the ballot boxes in relatively large numbers.

The situation in close-up

At the same time, many complaints are voiced about the state of public life. A dream inconceivable for many years, free elections, mobilised only two thirds of the citizens eligible for voting. In the last fifteen years, each local parliamentary by-election had less than half of the constituents showing up. A cynical observer may draw the conclusion from this that valid elections are possible in Hungary only when the (otherwise passionately disliked) election TV programs succeed in whipping the populations into a frenzy. The referendum about one of the most important – if not *the* most important – events of recent Hungarian history, the accession to the EU, sank into a surprising lack of interest. True, the 2002 parliamentary elections mobilised a large percentage of the population, but many thought this was a mixed blessing; the political rivalry between the left and the right created tensions and strong feelings on the street, at the workplace, and in families, in dimensions and depth which had been unknown hitherto.

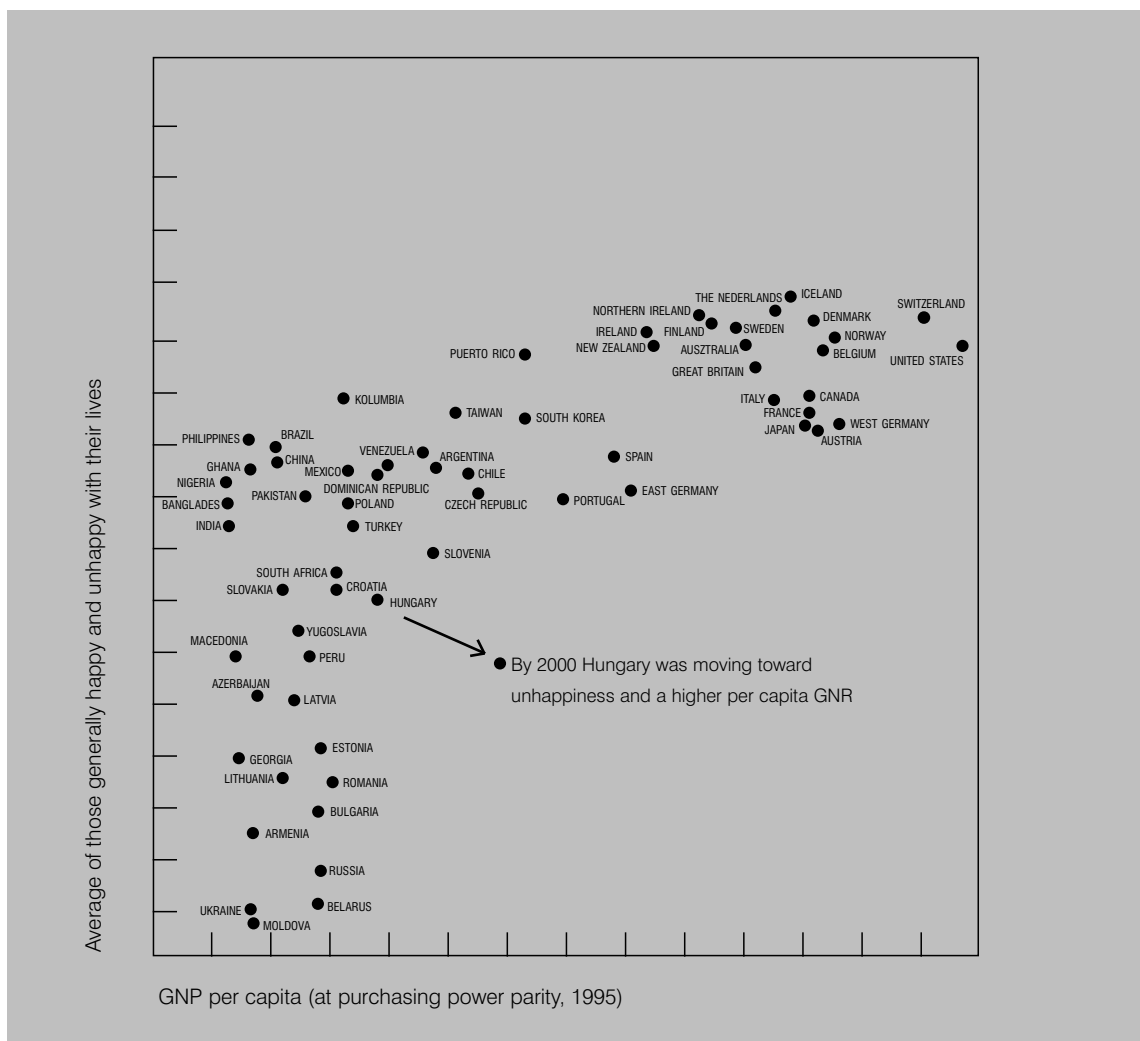
Focusing on the younger generations, certain aspects of public life seem to be in a particularly worrying state. According to a survey conducted in 2004, political activity, interest in politics, and willingness to vote is lower among the 18–29 year olds than in 2000, and lower than in the entire population. In every hundred young people, only one is member of a political organisation.¹ And there is more here than mere indifference: the younger generations do not have faith in public institutions. According to the survey ‘Youth 2004’, the only institutions which enjoy a status of being relatively trusted are the courts, the military and the police (Bauer & Szabó 2005). Among the most visible representatives of public institutions – including the media, the church or the political parties involved in legislation – no-one is really trusted by the younger generations.²



When compared to the citizens of other former communist countries, Hungarians are the most pessimistic about their prospects in the future (Róbert 2005). Hungarians, together with the Czechs, have the smallest trust in political institutions and the media (CEORG 2004). According to the data of the comparative international 'World Values Survey', people's subjective feeling of satisfaction usually correlates with the economic development of their country (Inglehart 2000). The only countries where this correlation visibly fails to hold are the former communist countries, whose citizens usually profess themselves unhappier than those of significantly poorer countries like Nigeria or India.

The survey thus shows that apart from economic development, people's feeling of satisfaction depends on whether they have lived under communism or not. Another correlation pointed out by observers holds between a society's subjective feeling of satisfaction, and the state of the democratic institutions. Dissatisfaction destabilises the political and social institutions, whereas contentment has a beneficial effect on the functioning of the institutions of democracy (Inglehart and Klingemann, 2000).

Everyday experience is full of instances where we feel let down; the bus door closes just before one can get on, there is corruption in the bureaucracy of everyday affairs, one witnesses others cynically abusing legislative loopholes. The mistrust emerging in the wake of these phenomena weaves through the whole of public life, and damages our common national assets.



Citizens do not trust the services provided by the state, and try to find individualised solutions for themselves. Tax paying moral is appalling, but the state lays its severity on those who cannot hide their resources: employers, employees and consumers. All this give cause for great concern, since many researchers have concluded that people's trust in each other and in institutions, reinforced by shared norms, is the safest investment for a society (Putnam 1993). When trust is lacking, corruption will bloom, business transactions become more expensive and hence less economic, and state services turn out to be wasteful and therefore usually more unjust.

We saw that people don't trust politics, but politics does not seem to have a high opinion of people either. Members of parliament sometimes expect society to offer them feudalistic privileges: for example exemption from parking restrictions, or from the ban on drink driving. A memorable leak revealed a leading political figure declaring the membership of his own party to be 'terrible'. At a high-stake secret ballot in the parliament, one of the parties showed its mistrust in its own representatives by requiring them to show their voting slip to a 'supervisor'.

Economic Nobel prize winner Amartya Sen pointed out that – contrary perhaps to the usually held opinion – a colourful public life or freedom of the press is not a privilege of the richer countries. Identifying social problems and responsibilities, discussing norms of justice, achieving transparency in public affairs – how effectively these activities are conducted in the public sphere contributes significantly to the welfare of a country. Observations about the media in Hungary pointed out a number of troubling phenomena. The hierarchy of prestige in the media is changing, pushing up more and

more the entertainment sector, while the rest looks on with despair or with cynicism. Some of the most widely circulated dailies occasionally fail to separate information and opinion; local media is often overtaken by dilettantes; investigative journalism extends as far as the love life of pop stars, or simply the publications of documents obtained from the political black market. The prestige of the media is low in the eyes of the public, the politicians and the profession alike. Professional solidarity is a virtually unknown notion among media workers, and while this may favour some in the short term, it results in the increasing vulnerability of the profession to both political and economic powers. In the last few years, the share of the tabloid press has dramatically increased at the expense of the 'serious' segment of the press. This phenomenon is probably not unrelated to the fact that the 'serious' press seems to consider more important to write according to the taste of their readers, than to take indeed seriously the task of objective reporting.

Which radio or TV channel one considers as 'trustworthy' is by now strictly determined by ideological preferences; and many seem to think that unbiased and reliable information is 'just one opinion among the others'. The public TV channel is a marginal affair with a one-digit viewing percentage. This phenomenon is perhaps not independent of the fact that the left and the right seem to agree at least on one question: that whoever is on government, a high-quality, popular, professionally and financially independent public TV can only harm political interests. There is no hope for a remedy for the constant

organisational and financial crisis of the public media, because the chance for the acceptance of a new media law is minimal. (Bajomi & Sükösd, 2003). Other worrying phenomena concern the connections among the agendas of the media, the public opinion and politics. Even though one of the most important functions of the media is supposed to be keeping an eye on politicians, the occasional expositions are hardly more than empty words, if the exposed politicians almost always remain in their posts. The political vendettas formerly characterising the more bitter end of election campaigns have become everyday occurrences even between the elections.

Sometimes one hears that the press would like a final and definitive ethical code, following the example of the BBC Producers' Guidelines. The ultimate authorities for intellectuals with an interest in the media are George Gerbner and Marshall MacLuhan (whose works by now belong more to intellectual history.) Public thinking about the role of media in our everyday life is dominated by antagonistic notions like 'media manipulations', 'subliminal influence', or the victim-consumer 'helplessly exposed' to the influence of advertisements. When the question of professional norms is raised, the press points at the almighty audience; at the same time public discussions about the shortcomings of the media blame everything on the commercial TV companies.

How bad is it in fact?

The reader has perhaps started to feel slightly dizzy when presented with such an array of difficulties and failures. One might be tempted to draw the conclusion that public life in Hungary is beyond redemption. However, some of these worrying phenomena deserve a second, closer look. The proper assessment of the negative and positive experiences listed in the previous two sections presents a serious theoretical challenge.

Let us start with the end of the list. When considering issues about the media, first we have to separate the problems specific to the Hungarian

situation, from those which emerge in most democratic systems. For example, if we want to form a realistic picture of the state of public media, we have to remind ourselves that the idealised norm of the public TV with the BBC as its model, is about as exceptional in the world's media culture, as a classic English lawn is in horticulture. There is no similar public TV in the US, and there is no public media to the East of the Elba with an achievement comparable to that of the BBC. A first-rate public media with high viewing rates seems obtainable in countries where self-control displayed by political forces is part of a long political tradition – self-control, that is, concerning administrative-financial interference with the activities of the media. And traditions take time to develop. The rule of law requires a fine balance of powers and self-controlling mechanisms, embodied in traditional norms and conventions of behaviour – and these cannot be introduced in one day by simply passing a bill, just as Hungarian cannot be learnt in one week by buying a phrase-book. This does not mean that only time will bring a solution to our problems, and until the tradition is cemented, there is nothing anyone can do to improve the situation. It is quite clear, however, that without a pronounced political will of the society, the political elite will be slow in finding solutions; and consequently, society itself will have to fight for a public media with a higher quality. The way to achieve this is through political and professional lobbying for forming social policies concerning the regulation of the media. A further point is that due to the changes in info-communication technologies, even the BBC finds itself in circumstances very different from those of the

era of a few terrestrial channels. The task therefore is not to pine after the BBC, but to figure out which type of digital communication medium should fulfil the role traditionally associated with the public media.

Somewhat similar observations can be made about the lack of trust permeating the various aspects of private life-worlds and the public life. Respect for the dignity of the free individual and a system of norms and relations of trust weaving through civil society are part of the tradition of Western societies. The tradition of our society is different. For many decades, one of the most important public norm of behaviour has been the denial of personal preferences (Kuran 1995). An important source of revenue has been the 'privatisation' of some structural social problem – for example exploiting the possibilities provided by an economy of shortage. Furthermore, our society has not gone through a common cathartic experience, which would have provided opportunity for openly discussing the events of the past, when the Hungarian state systematically killed or terrorised some of its own citizens. To expect this society to adopt, from one day to another, the norms of responsible citizenship and caring for the abstract notion of the public good – this may sound about as arrogant as the advice of Marie Antoinette to her subjects, to eat cake if they don't have bread. Sometimes assessments about the state of public life and the ensuing directions for improvement seem to suggest that at the moment, Hungarian society,

lead by some 'hysterical' or 'self-destroying' pathology, is incapable of following common sense and is therefore incapable of adopting the culture of the rule of law. Our proposal is that instead of declaring social problems to be pathologies, and instead of hand-wringing over the 'illness' of society, we should focus on the motivations, actions, values and convictions which together form what we know today as public life in Hungary.

In a similar vein, we also suggest that the negative or detached attitudes towards politics – discussed above in section 2.2. – should be viewed in a more differentiated manner, one which does not demonise or declares pathological the bearers of these attitudes. First, a remark about the participation at elections – which is perhaps the most prominent embodiment of the citizens' responsible behaviour towards their country. In fact, the percentages of participation in Hungary are not especially low compared to other countries.³ In any case, it is rather questionable whether the ideal politically conscious citizen, who wakes up with the political news, goes to public inquiries or political debating societies after work⁴, and never forms an opinion without weighing the views of all interested parties, exists anywhere outside the pages of democracy textbooks.

Critics of the politics of mass democracies sometimes make the mistake of mechanically summing the worrying attitudes displayed by citizens, and believe that this results in a valid diagnosis of the pathologies of public life. What does it mean exactly to say that people are ignorant about, or not interested in, public affairs? Let us consider an analogy: if someone made a survey in a car factory about the information the workers have about each of the different phases of the production, or about each of the hundred different parts of a car, then wouldn't it be surprising – in light of the presumably very low average level of information –, that the factory ever produced a functioning vehicle? Politics, just like every complex activity requiring cooperation, is subject to a social division of

labour. Apart from being useful, this is also fair, since it makes possible that those who pay more attention to, and invest more energy into public affairs, receive a larger share in the process of decision making. Furthermore, it is a commonplace in political science that collective wisdom emerges from the individual ignorance or incoherence of citizens (Page & Shapiro 1992).

The interpretation of the phenomena of public life is of course a challenging and complex task. Theoretical studies in political science as well as empirical research have been trying to find an explanation for the following peculiar combination of phenomena. According to surveys conducted in the nineties, Hungarians are the most dissatisfied with the results of the transition from communism compared to other former communist countries, and yet Hungarians are also the most patient, in terms of the number of political demonstrations (Greskovits 1998). Should we simply conclude that we are a pathetic lot—though we complain all the time, we let anyone to do anything to us. If one wants to step beyond these kind of commonplaces – as the creators of social policies or election campaigns certainly would –, one has to take a closer look at what these results might mean. (In any case, since

none of the prime ministers of the Hungarian democracy has been so far given a chance to serve more than four years, they would probably have a different view of the infinite forbearance of Hungarians.) Our suggestion for the explanation of the dissatisfaction is that the Hungarian middle classes invested a great effort into surviving the gradually escalating economic crisis of the eighties, the recession of the early nineties, and the difficult period afterwards. At the same time, the source of patience was the fact that these people still had a lot to lose even in these hard times. They simply had to compare the situation of the seriously disadvantaged segment constituting about one seventh of the population, with their own material and symbolic assets which they managed to save from the Kádár-regime. Besides, the wariness about demonstrations might have a source in the fact that in the modern history of Hungary, civil disobedience never lead to stable result.

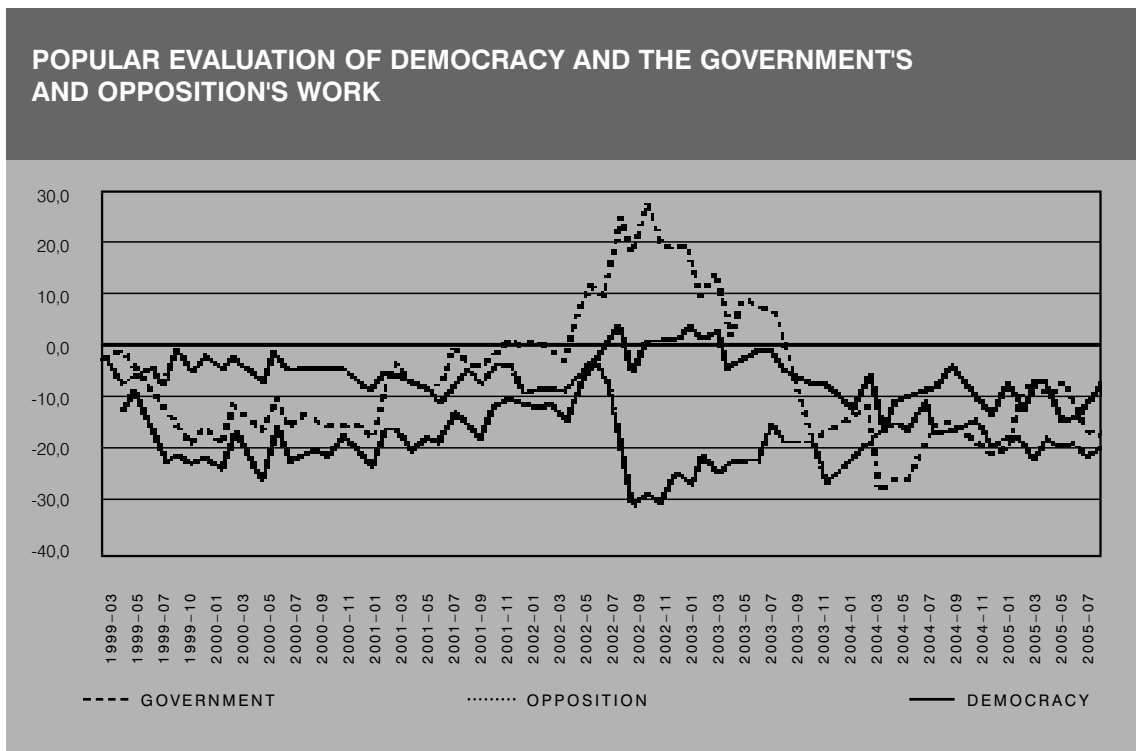
In order to understand the peculiar paradox of dissatisfaction and patience, we could use the metaphor of *queuing*. The transition from communism could not do away with the old instinct, acquired back in the communist times, that bettering oneself is simply a matter of time, patience and stamina; and that is why people are patient. At the same time, the queues leading to betterment (decent living conditions, a new car, professional promotion) started to display increasingly stranger dynamics after the transition. For example, it could turn out that even though someone is uncomplainingly standing in a queue, more and more people turn up in front of them. Others may have found that the desired goods are sold at the beginning of a queue that they don't even have the chance to join. And the dissolution of the prematurely born socialist welfare state occasionally resulted in some queue-ers suddenly finding themselves face to face with a sign saying 'service is temporarily out of order'. In Saigon, the restaurant-owners fleeing before the Vietkong takeover of the city, took not their TV sets or other valuables with themselves, but their old, worn, cracked and smoky pots, which preserved the flavours of decades of cooking. In a

similar way, when entering the new era after the transition, many Hungarians took their low-budget, simple and durable life-plans which helped them to survive the previous epoch with more or less success. Hungarians are dissatisfied because they have something to lose, and patient because they have something to lose.

So why do Hungarians really dislike politics?

Understanding the forces behind the bitterness felt by many after the transition from communism, and the forces behind the attempts to do something about this, poses a serious challenge. According to Péter Róbert (2000), the interaction among the various economic, political, cultural and psychological factors is so complicated that the question in the title of this section cannot be answered directly. One probably doesn't have to be a political scientist to see why, at the beginning of the nineties, people turned away

from politics, when the most manifest effect of the activities of this politics was that most of them lost about one quarter of the value of their income. International comparative surveys have shown that another factor contributing to the negative attitude towards democracy in Hungary was the tough or occasionally aggressive tone in the public sphere, and the egoism and unscrupulousness experienced in everyday life. Negative attitudes towards the political elite were shown to have resulted from the lack of democratic traditions, the inexperience of politicians, and the suboptimal achievement of institutions.



SOURCE: TÁRKI (2005) A lakosság véleménye a demokrácia működéséről (Popular Opinions of the Functioning of Democracy)

When we try to answer the question of why people have grown suspicious of politics, we have also have to take into account the fact that they 'dislike politics' not to the same extent, not in the same way, and not for the same reason. A survey by TÁRKI (2005) shows first of all that the extent of satisfaction with democracy almost always correlates with the popularity of the actually serving government. This suggest the somewhat troubling conclusion that what people consider as the essence of democracy is not so much political competition, but rather the rule of the political forces they prefer. At the same time, the survey helps to dispel a common misconception. Looking at the changes in the popularity of the Orbán and Medgyessy governments, it turns out that state distribution of goods is not really a stable factor in the rising of the government's popularity.

Several surveys have pointed out another important factor in the dislike of politics: this is due to a sort of double lens through which people view the present and the pre-transition period. Compared to people in other former communist countries, Hungarians are least critical about the past regime. They weigh the achievements of democracy against those of the past regime, while in their memories the past somehow started to look better than it actually was; and this process contributed to the formation of negative attitudes about the workings of democracy (Simon 2001). Furthermore, they compared their present situation with their conception of the West formed in the eighties, and this comparison also played part in their disappointment (Csizmadia 2001).

Some additional factors which contributed to the rejection of politics were the following. For the majority of people, it took some time to get used to certain features of the workings of politics – that is, if they got used to them at all. For example, they didn't realize right away that participants in the political competition do not really aim at understanding and solving the problems of individuals, but rather try to sell bigger packages combining ideological, cultural and professional elements. Perhaps this misunderstanding causes the incomprehension shown by many of the mere idea of political conflicts: the feeling that can be expressed by saying that 'these guys are just fighting each other, instead of caring about the affairs of the country'. The conception of politics favoured by the political elite and the institutions differed from that of the rest of the society for example with respect to certain norms of democracy and constitution (say on the question of replacing ID-cards for reasons having to do with data-protection, or on the apparently negative effects of freedom of press and freedom of speech.) Careful deliberations about the political possibilities were missing; and hence members of the society could hardly be expected to join a segment of the political spectrum according to a political worldview formed in the usual way of political socialization (Fricz, 2001). Instead, the largely arbitrarily formed political preferences were solidified by ritualised political conflicts, and the resulting inflexible fronts reproduced the same rituals of conflict and resentment. In the course of happier versions of political socialization, the ideologies and worldviews embedded in values produce political emotions; in Hungary, it happened the other way around (Marián & Szabó, 1996).

* * *

So it seems that we have a distressingly large array of factors to take into account in deciding what is exactly wrong with the achievements of the Hungarian democracy. The remarkable results of a variety of research conducted in political science in the nineties reveal a rather peculiar situation. With enormous efforts, the bulk of Hungarian society have made it through the hardest years; yet most people did not experience the transformation of the economic system as a financial or cultural improvement. Hungary is a stable constitutional democracy, but the public perception of politics often registers a failure, due to the conflicts among parties and other interest groups. In international comparison, Hungary has a high number of social organisations; yet the citizens' interest in the affairs of the community is shown to be minimal by various surveys. The conclusion starting to emerge from all this is that the concerns about the state of the public life, the political scene and the democracy in general, are nothing but a vague matter of belief, supported by a handful of phenomena selectively picked for this purpose. Dissolving these tensions may be achieved by an apparently simple method: we should take into account not only what people tell pollsters about their interest in politics, but also their participation in affairs which keep them occupied in their everyday lives quite apart from the business conducted by opinion polls.

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THE POLITICS OF EVERYDAY LIFE

Was it a coincidence that state socialism collapsed in East-Europe just about the time when the West also witnessed a social transformation of an historical dimension? We do not know yet. In any case, the process called 'late capitalism' or 'second modernity' or 'neo-liberal system change' has brought a change which effected the entire structure of society. Let us just highlight a few crucial elements. Today's employees do not have a lifelong 'direct ticket' for their journey on the labour-market; instead, they have to secure their positions with various 'transfers'. They have to learn languages when they are grown up, they continuously have to update their knowledge of new technologies and regulations. 'Work' as traditionally conceived has also changed a lot; the typical working environment of informational society is not the shop-floor in the factory, but the workshop or office offering services. The social and cultural changes made many 'pre-societal' family relations the subject of choice and calculation. For example, these days the issue of having children is influenced by people's carrier possibilities, or simply by their choice of a certain form of life (Beck, Bonss & Lau, 2003). The formerly clear distinctions

between work, leisure and entertainment are hopelessly blurred. In late capitalism, work is supposed to be a passion or a form of life. If people used to relax with a friendly game of soccer with the loser paying the beers afterwards, today's 'working out' in the gym seems to be considered more like a duty. Television used to offer news and entertainment; now the main attraction is prime-time infotainment. 'Escape from the everyday world' is provided not by sentimental operettas or the adventures of Zorro, but by programs where decidedly everyday people reveal their decidedly everyday problems. One important factor in the political competition brought to us by the media is how photogenic a certain politician is, and the winner of a parliamentary debate is usually the person whose amusing rejoinder or catchy turn of phrase is broadcasted in the evening news panel. Political campaigns are based on the everyday cultural or lifestyle aspirations of people, and at the same time election campaigns extend to the entire length of a parliamentary cycle.

The competition in national politics is conducted on a different battlefield. The ranks of traditional players of shaping politics – that is, political parties, trade unions, and the relatively small number of media channels devoted to political affairs – are joined by new players: societal organisations, single-issue movements, economic lobbies, professional-scientific-intellectual networks, popular entertainment business and various commercial media channels (Blumler & Kavanagh 1999). Politics is formed not by the cooperation and rivalry of a handful of easily identifiable goals; today's making of politics is a much more inscrutable, contingent and complex process. In the new political space, the content of political messages matters less than the rules of the game and the trustworthiness of the participants (see Hajer & Wagenaar, 2003:9). The work of the government in late capitalism consists not so much in the production of decrees, but rather in cooperation, sharing of responsibilities, and the management of trust. In the politics of late capitalism, the question is not only what the government does, and to what extent they win the support of citizens' to back their actions, but also whether the public policies managed by the government succeed in actively involving the citizens and other social organisations.

This way of governing is naturally less formalised, less 'carved in stone' than the traditional institutional-administrative way of governing. It is not the case that in late capitalism, the state acts in an *ad hoc* manner; but since its goal is to provide opportunities for citizens (and not merely to satisfy their needs), the solutions are occasionally temporary, spontaneous and experimental. In the activities of the service state aiming to conform to a diverse range of sub-politics, the contingencies and ambiguities of neo-liberal society do not appear as problems, but as the natural context for performing the tasks at hand (Stone

1998/2002). Accordingly, the activity of the government offers self-evident solutions to some people, while others will see the same activities as unpredictable, chaotic, and, at the end, arbitrary. One of the important aspects of late modern society and politics is that the disappearance of a universal social policy covering the affairs of the 'big society' results in the disintegration of the public sphere. People find the events and messages relevant for them in parallel public sub-spheres, which have their own values, and occasionally their own characteristic forms of media (Gitlin 1998). The public sphere of the former 'big society' had a 'finished', and relatively simple structure. The pluralisation of this sphere means that those who prefer unambiguous, authoritative and comprehensible tones will still find political and cultural messages according to their taste; just like say the protectors of the Hun tradition descending from Attila the Hun, who can benefit from downloading the 'Hun alphabet' from various internet sites. The parallel lives of the traditional and the late modern politics can be found in virtually every segment of the society. Consider for example the issue of media regulations: here, the latest European norms of communication regulations face the opinion of those who think that media regulation should involve a strict regulation of tastes.

Hungary was not entirely unprepared for the changes brought by these developments. The important influences in the Hungary of the eighties included the cultural and consumerist aspects of globalisation, the environmental disaster of Chernobyl, certain signs of crisis in

the socialist economy, the change in the structure of families, or a noticeable individualisation of life-styles. Almost everyone blamed state socialism for the troubling aspects of this slow transformation, whereas the more encouraging phenomena carried the promise of a more autonomous society. It came as a shock that the birth of democracy brought an economic crisis that had not been seen for generations. What happened was similar to a type of recurring phenomenon in the history of East-European countries: the economic underdevelopment required a radical development program in the new democracies, for example in transforming the economics, or in cutting back social benefits, and all this caused a kind of trauma that the – in any case better situated – Western societies hardly ever had to suffer. No wonder that an economic crisis comparable to the Great Depression necessarily brought with it the scepticism, rejection and faithlessness about politics.

At the same time, we will venture to say that the political elite in charge of the transition from communism, and especially the first freely elected government, was blameable for not making it clear for the rest of the society how catastrophic the state of the economy was. The catharsis provided by the transition gave a chance to the political elite to tell people straight about the depth of the crisis, and about the difficulties to be expected. It is a commonplace in sociology and political science that in the time of crisis, honesty about the situation increases people's willingness to accept the burden they have to bear in order to overcome the crisis. The same political elite is justly praised for their self-control and for the compromises they made in the interest of a functioning governance. They would have also needed courage and openness towards the society, but here they failed to do the right thing.

The system of political sub-spheres in late modernity, despite some deceptively similar features, is fundamentally different from the individualistic, atomistic citizenship of the state socialist era, when security seemed to lie in isolation. Perhaps it is true that the citizens of the democracy do not care more about the political events broadcasted in the news panel than the previous generation did during state socialism. However, the attitude of 'non-politics' is replaced by a passionate interest in a few specific public affairs, which vary from person to person, from group to group.

The citizen who does not pay too much attention to politics is still a subject of public policies, an agent who recognises and tries to handle the new risks of the transforming world – and hence cannot be regarded as an isolated, passive victim in the traditional sense. The vision of an idealised public life or public participation, one that figures in the methodology of research on political action, hides the multiplicity of the occasionally temporary, occasionally marginal and certainly contingent public sub-spheres populated by people's everyday concerns. We have already referred to the indifference and distrust the younger generations seem to show towards politics. This phenomenon will be seen in a new light once we take into account the changes which young people realise through the choices of their forms of life. When they are contemplating their career choices, given the possibilities to start a family, or to receive state funding to buy their first home; when they worry about the quality of foodstuff, or about the increasing use of drugs; that is, when they test new norms and values in their own lives – this is when they bring decisions as the subjects and actors of the politics of everyday life. Consider another example.

In Hungary, it is a widespread custom – for those who can afford it – to give a considerable sum of money to the doctor who helps a mother through childbirth, even if the doctor and the medical services are paid by social security. Recently, someone set up an internet site, where potential and practising mothers shared their experiences about where, and who, and how much – and about hospitals, nurses, doctors and so on. If a political scientist had asked them whether they were interested in politics, the answers would probably have shown nothing above the average. These young women, however, participated enthusiastically in a dialogue which had serious implications to public policies, since they felt it had something to do with their own life.

It is not possible these days to enlist the whole society in support of ambitious and shared political goals; one reason for this is that the rival political parties of late modernity do not leave a single segment of the public life uncovered by their ideological or evaluative labels. At the same time, the members of society purposefully express their opinion and bring their decisions about many smaller political issues which affect their lives more closely (Hauser 1999). Some people are seriously concerned about the fate of poppy-seed cakes in the EU-member Hungary – since one of the curiously popular urban myths before the country's accession was that poppy-seed would be banned in the European Union. Others worry about the E-components in food, yet others see globalisation as an immediate threat, and some consider national identity or the future of the language as the most pressing issue in contemporary life. Those who would like to protect children from the effects of violence on TV, or those who are committed to the use of bicycles in the cities, would probably fail to find many points of shared interest with the patrons of Hungarian dog breeds, or the followers of pedagogical reforms. One thing, however, is true of all these people. None of them matches the fictional character of 'citizen' inherited from traditional politics, and therefore they will all appear as indifferent about politics in the surveys about political culture.

The occasionally chaotic system of political sub-spheres interwoven with the issues of everyday life is possibly less grand and less 'finished' than the vision of idealised democratic participation – though perhaps the latter has never actually existed. But since these political sub-spheres are rooted in the experiences of everyday life, this sort of politics, and not apolitical isolation, is the essence of democracy in late modernity.

The vicious circle

Most of the problems with contemporary democracy result from the interaction of certain smaller problems and their self-generating reproduction. Some of these smaller problems are outcomes of inevitable necessities; others are consequences of bad decisions. To put it briefly, the competition of post-modern politics, the 'wall-to-wall' total contest, which activates the codes of everyday life, and employs the recent media techniques, gains people's trust less and less (Chaney, 2001). This fact induces political communication to invest even more creativity into the mobilisation of people's everyday likings and dislikings. In this way, however, the abstract allegiance to the republic is becoming more and more meaningless.

of elections increasingly depend on the extent a political party can mobilise their own supporters (and less on the extent they can convince uncertain voters). This factor in itself makes for a more antagonistic tone in politics, which is further fuelled by the media, since personal scandals form much better news material than the abstract questions of public policies.

The problems of politics

One of the main issues concerning successful public policies, or simply the success of democracy, is how politics, and the public sphere in general, can regain the trust and sympathy of people. To regain trust in politics, just like in everyday life, is not an easy matter. One of the main obstacles in this process is the consequence of a peculiar feature of contemporary politics. The general perception of national politics is mainly influenced by the work of the government and by the relation between government and opposition. The opposition is not in the position of gaining sympathy from the citizens through measures which are available to the governing parties; so their only chance to score in the political game is to continuously criticise the work of the government. Moreover, these criticisms are directed personally against the members of the government, and imply that the outcomes of otherwise very complex governmental policies depend on the individual qualities (expertise, honesty, etc.) of these people. Accordingly, first, government and opposition will never work in true cooperation; and second, opposition forces are not likely to give up the weapon of criticising the government through the personal condemnation of government politicians. Politics could regain the trust of citizens through the activities of the government; one of the most important aspects being that government and state measures should place citizens in positions they can make the most of in a predictable sort of way. In the situation sketched this is not likely to happen, since the fight between the government and the opposition alienates many people from politics. Another aspect is connected to the tactics of political competition. In the long run, the percentage of uncertain voters is decreasing, and the results

According to studies in political science, in political competitions where the political personages play an important role (for example in the case of presidential elections in the US), some of the most important factors are reliability, authenticity and honesty – increasingly more important than stances on particular political issues. As a consequence, the candidates' past becomes a central feature of the campaigns. In the next elections in Hungary in the spring of 2006, present socialist prime minister Ferenc Gyurcsány will face conservative opposition leader and former prime minister Viktor Orbán. Gyurcsány is a former Communist Youth Organisation functionary, who became a billionaire, and pursues a largely social-liberal political program with a socialist party; Orbán is a former radically alternative and anti-authoritarian student leader, who became a conservative politician operating with the notions of tradition and authority. Clearly, this situation is bound to be confusing. The only answer to the doubts created by these confusions is faith, and indeed, the supporting camps of the two parties seem to become more and more inflexible. And it is to be expected that raising doubts in the followers of the opponent will not rely on the discussion of policy issues, but rather on undermining the personal credibility of their leader. Another point is that single issue politics, which replaces the more uniform and finished public life of the 'big society', forms a better

material for the media than say the political program of a party. It is not a coincidence then that nationalist conservatism lives in a peculiar harmony with the tabloid press (as it is witnessed for example by the recent events in the US). Experience shows that trust in politics is not increased by the larger presence of issues of foreign politics in the press, since this area can be exploited most effectively by the politics operating with the usual means of political communication, and this is of course registered by people. In Hungary, 'wall-to-wall' total politics had the strange result that everyone knows for example which writer, architect or wine-maker belongs to which political side. And it is indeed almost comical, that according to the view of those in the know, the magazine 'Magyar Horgász' ('Hungarian Angler') serves a left-wing clientele, whereas the rival 'Sporthorgász' ('Sport Angler') is preferred by anglers of more right-wing sentiments.

The changes in the methods and contents of politics caused difficulties also for politics itself. Politicians participate in the jungle-fight of spin-politics with varying enthusiasm and boldness; some of them obviously enjoy being 'souped-up' for the purposes of media entertainment. When, however, things turn so to speak 'serious', politicians clearly regard distribution of goods as the only miracle weapon to maximise votes; this is obviously influenced by the economic necessities of the last fifteen years. One problem with these

'let's party as if there was no tomorrow' type campaigns is that they are nothing but preliminaries for the next package of restrictive measures; another is that they do not even succeed in their intended purpose. Neither former conservative prime minister Viktor Orbán, nor former socialist prime minister Péter Medgyessy managed to convert the distributed goods into long-lasting popularity.

The problems of the media

The most radical cultural changes after the transition from communism took place in the media. A sharply increasing variety of media outlets took the place of the former state-controlled media, and in this range, the 'serious' segment occupies a decreasing percentage. This process provided an opportunity for many young people to become the founders of new media genres without any previous experience or training; a new system of relations started to form between media and politics; and audiences enthusiastically threw themselves into the enjoyment of the extended selection. However, the fundamental categories of the discussion about the media have not been properly articulated. Many critics seem to expect the commercial channels to perform an educational function, they laugh at the suggestion that media consumers are autonomous agents in control of their decisions, and there is still widespread ignorance about the actual regulations governing the activity of the media. Public opinion – strongly supported by the media – often overstates the effect of the media on politics and society. In hindsight, it would be an overstatement to hold television to be solely responsible for the postmodern dominance of political communication. Besides, research has shown that the media had an especially important political role in the post-communist transition, but this role decreases in consolidated democracies (Vltner & Schmitt-Beck, 2002). New research also shows that the internet reproduces, but does not create the already existing active and isolated dispositions; this should have a sobering effect on both the optimists and pessimists about the fundamental social effects of the internet (Uslaner 2000).

The relation between media and politics is made problematic by a number of self-reproducing conflicts. It seems that understanding the 'mystical' nature of freedom of speech and freedom of opinion is still an unconquerable task for both politics and the public opinion. Hardly anyone outside academic circles would recognise that freedom of the press serves the interests of the community not necessarily only if every speaker is led by the best intentions, formulates the most virtuous messages, with the nicest choice of words. Given that most messages do not conform to this idea, the abstract value of freedom of the press is dwarfed by the – otherwise probably justified – torrent of complaints about various productions in the media. Media and politics inevitably have to relate to each other – but their relation is characterised by mutual deceptions, conspiracies and suspicions. Politicians fear the traps set by the media, while journalists regard virtually everything politicians do as eye-wash or campaign manoeuvre. The state communication of social policies is labelled as 'government PR', and the lack of proper regulations about election campaigns forces every participant to gamble at the expense of the hoped for governmental position. Investigative journalism tries to save the effort required by actual investigations with simply publishing documents acquired at the political black-market. Thus by turning political scandal into a marketable product, the tabloid press has also entered the world of public policy makers.

A simplified view of political communication creates the widespread view that the more we see a politician, or the more popular he or she is, the more votes they can count on at the elections. This misconception produces a real vicious circle. The frequent presence in the media can be achieved only by surrendering the content and form of public appearances to the editorial principles of the popular media genres. Politicians then blame the media for increasingly turning parliamentary debates to a farce, since the evening news broadcast will pick on the most ludicrous comments to amuse their viewers. Meanwhile citizens are simply flabbergasted, and cannot comprehend what it is that the media offers under the label of 'politics'. Single issue movements have learnt the elementary rules of the media's needs, and so they burn things or chain themselves to things or raise roadblocks accompanied by the attention of the cameras. This sort of media attention questions the competence of politics as a whole; since the truth is that the opposition hardly ever really benefits from cornering the government through this kind of manoeuvres. Another interesting point is that long-term experience shows that even well-organised interest movements sooner or later inexplicably lose the support of the public (Page & Shapiro, 1992: 344).

The problems of society

The post-communist transition posed trials worthy of mythical heroes for the citizens of the Hungarian democracy. Consider this: amidst the destruction following the economic transition, they also had to witness a thorough transformation of the norms of success, benevolence, rule following or fairness, which was moreover accompanied by a radical transformation of the public language. The people of this late modern Babel learnt through their own bitter experiences that no-one else will stick up for them in their troubles. No wonder then that the arguments condemning the democratic deficit, and promoting instead trust, acceptance of norms required for welfare,

or voluntary participation in the sharing of burdens – all these sound merely as unrealistic fantasies or even worse, cynical pretence, for the majority of the public opinion.

The skills, motivations and stock of roles that many people developed in an earlier era for survival often form an obstacle to progress. This is not a new experience in Hungary. In the later period of state socialism, relaxed economic regulations provided room for some private enterprise. But the same socialist entrepreneurs often failed among the circumstances of capitalism, since the skills developed in the earlier context – effective for the privatisation of the problems caused by state-redistribution – proved to be useless in the framework of real competition. The pretence of efforts and the acquired attitude of helplessness, the successful exploitation of an ‘it’s not my fault’ attitude when faced with administrative authority – all these formerly successful techniques became hindrances in the new circumstances. The popular view always suspects cheating behind achievements, and this is combined with the equally popular mythologies of ‘one must not try too hard’ and ‘one should not appear different’. All these attitudes contribute to a self-fulfilling prediction which becomes an obstacle to change. A similar cultural or rather psychological trap is to be found in the fact that most people experience unpredictability as an oppressing threat, and not as an opportunity to actively form their future. Depressing everyday situations and the discouraging state of public affairs is not the only consequence of the lack of initiatives or enterprises based on dignified personal attitudes. One’s own time, own efforts,

own body or own health becomes valueless and subject to exploitation. This is the root of problems which affect the whole of society.

The dysfunctions of the dialogues in the public sphere, portrayed and realised by the media – and discussed above –, are accompanied by further worrying aspects. In the absence of a sufficiently colourful and robust publicity, no public appearance can shed the suspicion of dishonesty. Lack of information necessarily brings susceptibility and obsessive mistrust. People have no difficulty in believing the most outrageous gossip about politicians, and of course everyone knows that the lottery is fixed and that the results of popular TV contests are settled well in advance. The new democracy hasn’t had time to develop its own consensual and shared rituals, celebrations, or symbols. The arbitrariness of selective memories calls into doubt the whole process of remembering the past. There has been no proper discussion of the historical traumas of Hungary’s twentieth century history, and there is no real consensus about the results of the post-communist phase in our history either. In politics and public discussions, problems are usually blamed on the previous regime or on the previous government. The unquestionable values produced by the democratic transformation so far are under the threat of becoming relativised or invisible.

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A NEW DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONSIBILITIES

The vicious circle formed by the negative characteristics of the Hungarian democracy is not an unchangeable fate. Obviously, only fantasists could claim that the present political system and political culture which continuously reproduces these problems could be changed from one day to another. This, however, is not really necessary. The institutions and processes of the Hungarian democracy do not require a radical transformation comparable to a system change.⁵ However, breaking out of the vicious circle requires a contribution from all interested parties: this means governmental politics, the institutions of political competition, civil society, media, and of course, the citizens themselves.

Service state

The information society requires that not only people, but also the state should perform a new role.⁶ The key moment in this new relation is the sharing of responsibilities. The fair and effective social policy of an information society is called the service state. Shared responsibility among the society, the service state, the civil and business sphere makes sense only if each party can trust the predictable achievement of the others. People should envisage the future not as owners of life-long occupations and careers; instead, they can better themselves by a constant maintenance of their skills and expertise. As long as the state expects people to bear the burdens and tensions created by the information society, this expectation can be justified only if the

activity of the state itself is transparent, foreseeable, user-friendly and ethical. One cannot gain experience of these ideal features of the service state merely by reading the papers or watching TV; actual engagement in these activities is required. The political state in the information society is not represented anymore by the templelike atmosphere of governmental institutions, but rather by the user-friendly, colourful and interactive online surface.

One of the minimal requirements of the service state is to perform the traditional functions of the state at the high level which is reasonable to expect. These functions include administrative affairs, and service- and infrastructure-related activities – at the registries, the state pension funds, in state education or in the courts. The service state should strive to achieve the following situation: when in the future a visitor expresses surprise over the effective functioning of a service or an institutions, we shall say ‘well of course, this is state run!’. This – at present admittedly Utopian – situation is still only the minimum we should expect from the service state. The point is not only better performance, but a different way of performing the job.

The service state expects society to do more than passively demand benefits and services. The state is entitled to this expectation only if it helps the citizens – who live amidst the uncertainties and risks posed by everyday life – to bring their own decisions. This is the extra which gives the essence of the service state. The service state should support and motivate people to preserve their health and try to avoid becoming ill.

Attractive internet sites run by city councils should help and inspire people to do something for their local environment. The parents of talented children will expect the state to foster and develop the talents of their children, just as the parents of children with learning difficulties will count on support and help. And so on. However, the system of sub-politics does not mean that governmental service turns into the local deli where customers can do their little bits of shopping; the essence of sub-politics is that people get involved and share the responsibilities. To sum up, in the information society, the most important task of the service state is to help people to experience the contradictions and uncertainties of the twenty first century as opportunities to be exploited, and to help them to do something for their own betterment.

The participants in the political competition

It is important to see that the players in the political competition can be realistically expected to change things, that is, to exercise self-control, only if this does not threaten their interests in maximising votes. It is also clear that, for the reasons mentioned above, it is unlikely that political players will return to the discussion of the contents of political questions, and give up their main weapon, questioning the trustworthiness of their opponent. Consequently, the vision of the government and the opposition working for the public good together, shoulder to shoulder, is no more than a feeble populist notion.

Nonetheless, politics can actually do something to regain the trust of people. First of all, politicians should be really careful to make it obvious that

although their position provides a number of privileges for them, what they do is still above all a public service. It is in the interest of the political elite not to let anyone to join its ranks who expects society to offer privileges in return for making decisions in the name of citizens. Sometimes political competition licences acts which would be scorned in the course of everyday life. However, people in everyday life can afford to be ‘crafty’ – they can use legal loopholes, they can discreetly use patronage; of course, as long as it all remains within the boundaries of legality. Not so for politicians – they should always observe the rule that such craftiness is a forbidden territory for them.

The personalised practice of politics, one which ties political issues to the personalities of political leaders, cannot be abolished anymore from the public sphere. The person of a political leader embodies the topics, directions and possibilities of politics; represents the nation or history; and with the weakening of the traditional ties to political parties, also offers an opportunity for citizens to identify with a certain cause (Corner 2000). For this reason, what is desirable is not the elimination of personalised politics, but rather that the political contestants should develop their skills and make politics truly interesting and gripping in the course of open debates. The ‘scientific’, administrative practice of politics with a focus on the programs of political parties is no closer to real politics than the personalised politics which is made alive by relevant stories, conflicts and debates. The task is therefore simple: the political elite should behave in the way politicians ought to.

Politicians shouldn't pretend that exercising political power is a burden or a necessity; they shouldn't expect veneration just because their job is to make people trust them; and they should never think that there aren't at least ten people who could do their job just as well as they can.

Media

The advice that politicians behave as politicians ought to, is – *mutatis mutandis* – even more valid in the world of the media. The majority of the present problems of the media could be solved by more and better work. The occasional vulnerability of journalists is more often a consequence of their professional inadequacy, than a result of the plotting of some institutional or political magnate. Most of the problems in media ethics are an outcome of individual decisions and actions by certain journalists or editors. The prestige and position of every journalist would improve if it ceased to be possible to base a radio program on old internet hoaxes; if objective reporting did not count as one opinion among many; and if so-called 'work' did not consist simply in lifting articles from the international press.

A journalist with a sound professional background, one who enters into solidarity with his or her similarly professional colleagues, would presumably have a secure position in the hierarchy of the media, and also an easier relation with politics. In the long run, professional expertise – including the dispositions of ethical behaviour – is the best convertible capital in the media. Many of the present problems of the media would find a solution if the commercial TV channels entered the news contest. It would also be a great development if the first political investigative

TV program of the dual media system were born. The independent media should not only be cheeky, but also innovative and clever. Innovation would be required first of all in political analysis: so that we could step beyond the state where the critique and analysis of politics – lead by the otherwise understandable motive of trying to be popular – provides material again and again for the reproduction of the culture vulnerability and cynicism. Just as it would be great if humorous editorials could finally give up hassling bus conductors, it would also be great if media criticism didn't pretend that everything the government or the opposition does aims only to mislead people. The crisis of the public media is presumably not primarily the responsibility of its actual leadership; however, their task would be to try to preserve as much as they can until the dawn of better days. The media as the broker of culture could genuinely profit from an innovative management of the various topics in the sub-politics of society – say consumer protection or the risks engendered by twenty first century civilisation (Sharan, 2002). And of course the democratic role of the tabloid press should not be neglected either; democratic, since it takes politics to people who would not otherwise be interested in such issues (Creeber, 2004).

The society of citizens

The reader will perhaps ask: in this division of labour, what would be the role of everyday people? The goal is a political culture which is formed by the norms of dignity, responsibility and solidarity – and to achieve this goal, society itself has to do something. True, Hungarians

dislike few things more than someone telling them what they do wrong or without sufficient enthusiasm. Still, one of the main deficiencies of the new Hungarian democracy is the fact that politics – lead by the worry over the immature state of society – has so far avoided straight talk about the fair sharing of responsibilities.

In everyday life, everyone has a chance to form a clear conception about the responsibilities of citizens in the new democracy. First of all, the best way to do something for the society is to do something for ourselves and for our loved ones. Hungarians have already invested an enormous amount of effort into their survival in the last fifteen years. What is missing is rather the coordination of these efforts. Even though the rampant capitalism of the period right after the transition could easily create the appearance that the best way to better oneself is to neglect the interests and values of others, it would be very important to make people realise that this is actually a misconception. In a civil society, betterment in the long run is seldom achieved without cooperation with others. We don't necessarily have mass movements in mind; but simply something like accepting a favour without fear and suspicion, a little bit of teamwork to clean a section of our street, the discussion of school business with other parents on a weekend afternoon.

If the service state is capable of providing opportunities for its citizens to do something for their own future; if political competition tries to win people's sympathy through inspiring and attractive dialogues; if a media with more content, reliability and professional authority creates a public discussion that can accommodate the notion of trust – if all this comes true, then the society will not need political pamphlets to tell them how they should strive to achieve a better life.

NOTES

1 „If the elections took place this weekend, 39% of the interviewed 4000 young people felt certain they would go to vote, and 13% was certain that they would definitely not vote. (...) As for preferences for parties, one third of the interviewed subjects could not or would not name a single organization. (...) In 2000, the notion of being member of a party or a political organization was virtually inapplicable, since among the 8000 subjects of the survey, only 32 indicated any connections of this sort. In this respect, the situation in 2004 was not significantly different. 38 subjects reported membership in a party or youth political organisation, and an additional 22 said they were members of a ‘polgári kör’ (grassroots civil organisation, encouraged by and losely connected to the biggest conservative party).

2 Trust in institutions is not significantly different in the whole population or in the younger segments. (Ullram, 2003: 53; Tárki: 2002: 24.)

1998: On a scale 1–7 (1 = doesn’t trust, 7 = trusts very much) the percentage of those giving 5–6–7.

The question asked by Tárki in 2001-2002: How much do you trust X to represent your interests?

	1998	TÁRKI 2001. okt.	TÁRKI 2002. júl.
President of the republic	53	4,46	4,59
Television and radio (TÁRKI: TV)	45	3,78	3,49
Papers, printed press	42	3,47	
Army	40	4,08	4,32
Courts	39	3,96	4,24
The churches	37	3,29	3,40
Police	35	3,66	4,04
Prime minister	33	3,84	4,31
Authorities, public institutions	32	–	–
Government	25	–	–
Parliament (TÁRKI: MPs)	25	2,99	3,53
Trade unions	15	3,10	2,88
Parties	11	2,99	3,57

3 As Gábor Tóka points out, if we put aside those countries where voting is compulsory, the only country in political cultures similar to ours where participation at elections is consistently high is Malta. Tóka explains this fact by the highly polarised character of the political system. (Tóka 2002)

4 Let us remember what Oscar Wild said the main problem was with socialism: that it takes up too much free time.

5 Even though the majority of the Hungarian society is unsatisfied with the problem-solving ability of the democracy, there is no fundamental refusal of the idea of democracy (Mishler & Rose, 1997). Recent research by Ullram (2003: 55) suggests a similar conclusion:

OPTIMISTIC DEMOCRAT: Committed to the idea of democracy and trusts that democracy is capable of solving the problem of his or her country

WORRYING DEMOCRAT: Supports the idea of democracy but is worried about the problem-solving abilities of democracy,

ALIENATED: Not interested in the form of government

AUTHORITARIAN: Holds that in certain circumstances dictatorship is preferable to democracy

	OPTIMISTIC DEMOCRAT	WORRYING DEMOCRAT	ALIENATED	AUTHORITARIAN
Austria	74	18	3	6
Hungary	47	25	16	13
Czech Republic	47	18	22	14
Poland	48	14	27	10
Romania	59	8	14	20
Russia	17	17	27	39
Argentina (1995)	55	28	28	11

6 Mészáros (2005) summarizes the possible conclusions from a game-theoretical approach of the structural conflicts between the interest of citizens and the nature of public goods. He suggests that dissolving the contradictions between the individual aspirations and the structure of public goods – tensions that lead to frustration and material losses – can be hopped primarily from a reform of our institutions.

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