

## Book review

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Mainly due to his popular *The Defeat of Solidarity*, David Ost is very well known to the Polish audience. His analysis related to industrial relations developments in the context of the class notion have been widely discussed. In the Special Issue: 'Class After Communism' of the *East European Politics and Societies and Cultures* however, David Ost is taking us for a fascinating journey with an aim to discover a historical dimension of the concept of class (or rather the social structure analysis) not in Poland only, but also in the other postsocialist east European countries. In this sense, David Ost has gathered 12 different essays of the research and critique cases of the class concept in Bulgaria, Croatia, Estonia, Czechia, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Russia, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia and Ukraine. All focus on the concept's analysis under the state socialism and during the transition period.

The main role of sociology in those countries after Stalin's death in 1953 was to analyze society through the officially-decreed categories and to serve as a legitimating principle of the system. In this sense, the socialist society consisted of workers and peasants (two non-antagonistic classes) and a 'stratum' of white-collar workers and intelligentsia. The operational problem with this model was that the sociologists could use the term of 'working class' (as included to the official legitimating ideology) but not to use a critical class theory. It was obvious however that the social structure of the socialist society wasn't so simple and has its differences. They could be described by the term of (occupational) stratification to avoid the problematic question of class understood as a relation of power and therefore the concept of exploitation. The

stratification studies bypassed this problem by putting the social groups individually without posting any relations between them. It is one of the explanation of the triumph of the survey research and opinion polls so popular for example in socialist Poland, with its visible continuity in the contemporary polling fetishism. All these made both east and west sociology more similar to each other, as the latter introduced the concept of stratification as a denial of or conquer a critic class sociology. Those who tried to use the concept of class which includes the relations of unequal distribution power, like Kuroń and Modzelewski in 'working class based' Poland, were punished. At the same time some western sociologists were interested in class analysis in the state socialist societies more rather focused on identifying a dominant class (state as a general regulator, ruling party and/or 'nomenklatura'), including the conflicts between the state and subordinated society than a class dynamics in the society as a whole.

All mentioned above developments have been replicating during the transition period, when the classes arose, the conflicts between them became visible giving finally an opportunity to their critical research. Instead, the stratification paradigm has still been in force and if anyone incorporated the class concept it has been done only in the reference to the middle-class and its role in building the 'normality' of evolving civic society. The functionalist direction of seeing the class differences as natural and beneficial became a trap with a lack of useful notions for new social structures, conflicts and power relations in the capitalist society. Moreover, the concept of class became *passé* for east European sociologists, who put it hand in hand with the old regime, being conscious at the same time that the explanation of the structure of the state socialist society definitely was more complex.

The analysed countries can be generalised into broader categories with regard to the role of sociology in social structure research under the state socialism regimes, after the Stalinist period. Thus, Estonia, Ukraine and Russia, as a part of the USSR, should be recognised by this legacy (with some exceptions to Estonia from 1970s). In Czech and Slovakia (as Czechoslovakia), similar to the Soviet cases, the sociology was marginalised and finally prohibited (after 1968) as a 'bourgeois pseudo-science'. Romania could be also added to this pattern. The opposite situation was in Hungary, Bulgaria and in particular in Poland (mainly due to the legacy of Bronisław Malinowski and Florian Znaniecki), where sociology has had its strong position with involvements in professional international associations as well as conducting international exchange and research with social scientist from the west. The another group consists of the republics being the part of Yugoslavia (Slovenia, Croatia and Serbia) with its alternative, non-Soviet path to the socialism, with – important in

the social structure analysis – devotion to workers autonomy and participation (especially in 1970s).

From the 1970s Estonian sociologists analysed the social structure aside to the official explanations of non-conflictual two classes with the 'stratum' of intelligentsia. After the independence in 1990s the class concept has been recognised in Estonia as a category of the old regime, marginalised in the public discourse and inequalities have been considered as 'embarrassing' in the line of so called 'transition culture'. The 'important' divisions refer to the ethnic (national) lines between Estonians and Russians introduced by elites instead of class. The main challenge for the Estonian research of the society is to overcome these ethnic inequalities (also as a consequence of the divisions in industry in the USSR) towards 'integrated class analysis' with incorporation concepts of power, exploitation and domination regardless national resentments.

After 1990, anything what could be connected with socialism in the Czech public discourse was delegitimated, including the concept of class, prevailed by the socio-economic status. Instead, the prominent role, also as a 'rallying cry' was given to the middle class, with its power associated with social cohesion, political stability and economic growth. The sociologists in Czechia however did not displace the concept of class from its vocabulary, as it was in the public discourse, but rather have a tendency to use a vertical phrase of the social differentiation. The change appeared in the 2000s when the class became more prominent within the sociologist discourse but with a functionalist interpretation of inequalities.

In the case of Slovakia, before the Velvet Revolution the class terminology was embedded in all aspects of society, as a legacy of state socialism. After 1989 the appearance of a new breed of inequalities has been recognised, connected with the PM Vladimir Mečiar's rule and the role of politically connected managers in 1990s (similar to Russian oligarchs). The new social structure however has been discussed in gradational terms than relational with 'class' replaced by 'stratum'. Both by sociologists and in the public discourse inequalities were presented as 'normal' in 'normal' market economy. If class was applied then only in the Goldthorpe's so called EGP model. Many has been changed after Fico's SMER victory in 2000s based on a turn to previously marginalised and excluded majority (also during the neoliberal Mikloš's reforms). It meant also the return of class into politics. The new wave of Slovak social scientists include the term of class to their explanations and criticise the cult of a free market.

From 1949 to 1963 the sociology in Hungary was a part of a 'bourgeois pseudo-science'. The social structure was based on two non-antagonistic classes and a stratum

of intelligentsia. After 1963 a critique model was introduced with presentation of inequalities within socialist society and the stratification explanatory model replaced the 'friendly' classes. In early 1970s, according to the revisionist Marxist critical class model principles, Konrád and Szelényi argued that the new class of technocratic intellectuals emerged as a dominant class being in conflict (relationist instead of functionalist explanation) in the class of those involved in direct production. After 1989, the notion of class was disgraced as a part of Stalinist Marxism. The case of Hungary should be analysed by the reference to the idea of 'doubling' or 'double structure' of Hungarian society. During the socialism, it referred to two (official and unofficial, based on quasi-market mechanisms and limited market accumulation of capital) social systems. It should be also related with the Hungarian situation after 1989 with the split into liberals and nationalists.

Poland's present sociology is stuck in the past (by thinking about stratification widely used by Polish sociology before 1989 but without a notion of power) and in the future (by imagining and believing that after 1989 automatically and immediately new institutions and actors will come) at the same moment. Polish sociology before 1989 followed the western social science mainstream with its dependence on functionalism and positivism (opinion polls, statistics, etc.). Class became a taboo after 1989 with a sudden domination of 'normality' supported by a cult (similar to the Czech) of 'not-yet-existing middle class'. Inequality and poverty, previously recognised and criticised by the pre-1989 sociology and understood as systemic (of course by using the stratification terminology rather than class), in the new reality after 1989 were presented as 'normal' and an individual pathology. Therefore, Polish sociology was unprepared to critically assess the present with new class formation and power. However, after 2002, mainly due to the role of *Krytyka Polityczna*, the academic discourse changed a lot. Moreover, two critical books of David Ost and Elizabeth Dunn were published in Polish, what can be recognised as a beginning of transformation of thinking about the social structure. What is also important, the new generation of critical young sociologists appeared.

In Bulgaria, more sceptical sociologists to the official non-antagonistic classes approach were visible from 1970s. Bulgaria, partly to avoid class analysis, was unique with its application of unifying category of 'united socialist nation' which had consequences in compulsory Turkish names rename process in 1984-85. In general, Bulgarian sociologists before 1989 they followed the same path as in other state socialist states: social structure analysis were based rather on stratification paradigm with a gradational version of a western class model. The popular discourse in late 1980s focused on divisions between nomenklatura and the ordinary people what

continues until today with discursive clashes between politicians (corrupt elites) and the people. After 1989, low public budgets made sociologists not to be independent but to follow the ideas promoted by the state, in which inequalities were usually at the end. Thus, three main trajectories in analysis of post-socialist social structure in Bulgaria should be recognised: (1) from class-based to status-based stratification (evident however in 1970s), (2) from one-dimensional to multidimensional stratification, (3) from a Marxist model to a social model. The common for all of above paths was lack of analysis and look for specific relations between group.

The chapter on Romanian case is the most promising and inspiring for critical researches and activists above all presented in the book. Before 1989 the Herderian concept of the Nation, linked with national-Stalinist legacy and Marxist-Leninist orthodoxy, was in the centre of class analysis, replaced after 1989 by a narrow but strong form of anticommunism. Any class as associated with Marxism was rejected and relegated to the margins of intellectual activity, replaced by libertarian, neoliberal and neoconservative ideas. After 2nd half of 2000s new/old ideas re-entered again to the public debate. The intellectual influence of academics from sociology faculty of the Babeş-Bolyai University of Cluj played the main role in this process. The critical class analysis became a mainstay of teaching and research there and started to shape the thinking (after 2010 in particular) of a new generation of journalists, civic activists, community organisers, literati and highly educated intellectual precariat. Thus, with social protests of 2012 and 2013, the new discourse was introduced, more sensitive to inequalities and critical of the adoptions of neoliberalism. The special role should be given to the online platform *CriticAtac*. Some pessimists say their numbers are too small and they don't go beyond Cluj's academia as well as young leftist intellectuals from large cities and some journalists. Nevertheless, the taboo of not using the term of class has been definitely broken in Romania.

When analysing post-Yugoslav cases (Slovenia, Croatia and Serbia) it should be recognised that before 1989 in Yugoslavia the orthodox Marxist theory was never the only foundation for discussions on social structure and about classes as such. In Slovenia the western influence on non-Marxist empirical sociology was evident since late 1950s. In the 1990s, the class-centred language disappeared from both public and academic discourse, replaced by a softened Weberian notion of a market-driven stratification and Slovenia still tends to avoid a question of class as a public issue. Four different contemporary approaches can be identified in class thinking in Slovenia: (1) macro structuralist theorizing at the University of Ljubljana (inspired by Marx, Gramsci and the world-system theory), (2) the symbolic discourse school focused on semiotics and Bourdieu (at the University of Primorska), (3) empirical

research of stratification and (4) class discussed from a perspective of labour process and 'varieties of capitalism'.

During the socialism in Croatia the working class was celebrated but frank discussion of class divisions were muted. The presence of the self-management concept (unique for Yugoslavia) presupposed absence of class conflict, but the academic research slowly began to accept the social conflict and unequal distribution of power in 'self-managing' companies. During the transition, academic research on classes switched its focus to economic elites and class disappeared from public debates. As a major concept the 'nation' was introduced, as war required homogenisation. In 1990s, those who raised concerns of class distributive justice or inequality like trade unions or oppositional parties, were often labelled as traitors of the nation. The state socialist and nationalist ideology were therefore similar, to see society homogeneously, in which the conflict is absent. After 2000, after the war and on the way to the EU, neoliberal ideas and practices still dominated in public discourse. In recent years, class has been reintroduced to Croatian public and academic discourse and social practice (students' protests 2009–2011) by a new left but without any connection to Yugoslav experiences with self-management. Nevertheless, the mainstream discourse remains nationalist and/or neoliberal.

A reformed socialist agenda in the late of 1980s (with Slobodan Milošević presence) in Serbia was based on class and workers mobilisation. For instance, in 1988 the blue-collar Serbian workers (supported by the official trade union confederation) were used by Milošević to condemn Albanian workers strike, and joined to blame 'idle' Albanians. It remained during the 1990s decade even though a formal democratisation and rise of nationalism. What is interesting, the anti-Milošević intellectuals also used the concept of class but at the same time accused Milošević of manipulations of a class-based identities in the nationalism's service. at the same time however, there was a continuity of academic research of class in 1990s, in contrast to most other post-socialist states. Some similarities remained, as the surveys were the main method of class analysis between 1990 and 2005 with a stratification principle incorporated. After the fall of Milošević in 2000, the neoliberal discourse took place with downplaying the class, but new young scholars took up issues of class in new, more critical ways.

The case of Ukraine seems to be the most different to presented above patterns. Despite the claims about the 'death of class' (by Giddens and Beck) and irrelevance of class analysis, class remained one of the key research areas for Ukrainian sociologists. And despite the terms of 'working class' and 'bourgeois' seems ideologically associated with the Soviet regime, the class analysis has remained an important field

of study. Although the class is not dead in today's Ukraine it is definitely reduced to occupational categories with gradational model. It means that the Soviet tradition of research of differences within the society, excluding the class relations, is continuing in current researches, based on adoption of neo-Weberian EGP classification scheme. Thus, contemporary Ukrainian class analysis tends to reduce class to professional categories or economic inequalities without their relational nature. But at the same time the Ukrainian sociology still uses the Marxist terminology and categories (class, petit-bourgeois, etc.), but excluding the class relations that shape their development and focuses rather on statistical findings with a general absence of qualitative studies. Despite that, class is not *passé* in the academic discourse. It is unique for the entire region that Ukraine preserved the legacy of industrial sociology at the company level (also crucial in Poland before 1989) with researchers focused on motivation, satisfaction and OHS. Recently, some new initiatives appeared in Ukraine. A group of scholars, journalists, artists and union activists decided to focus more on developments of workers in Ukraine. They do it in line with Burrawoy's public sociology principles, by producing a reflexive knowledge also for non-academic audiences. It has been done by younger generation of academics, educated in western universities, resulting with creation of a journal of social critique *Спільне/Spilne*.

The class become a taboo topic in Russia precisely when it was needed most. The Russian society suffered from a dramatic social transformation in 1990s with very rare critical (class) explanations of ongoing developments. The academia applied the social stratification model with fascination of 'middle-class' (similar to the Polish and Czech cases) as a myth of a dominant class in the future. Some changes are recognised recently in Russia. The labour protests are more offensive reflecting a new 'class consciousness' and including new generation of unions' members. The special role of the popular culture (films in particular) should be taken into account.

The last chapter of the book is different than the other parts. It focuses on the role of cultural capital in social structure. According to Tomasz Zarycki, historically in Poland, the intelligentsia had a status group and it should be recognised as an element of the rank order in the classic Weber model. Thus, Poland should be analysed as a dual-stratification model, with the economic logic of class clashing continually with the logic of rank defined in terms of cultural capital. Therefore, for Zarycki, the narrow, one-dimensional class analysis is not sufficient for any social structures studies of Poland. His proposal of duality is central to any successful attempts to apply class analysis to Poland. As Zarycki proves, above order produces two competing perspectives of Polish social structure; two rival social logics produce competing and interacting identities.

Summing up, all essays show some same patterns. Firstly, in all countries the complicated relationship with the concept of class the sociologists during the period of state socialism had been recognised, replaced by stratification. Secondly, due to the fact that most (but not all) of social scientists supported building new capitalist reality, they were not very interested in thinking critically on the developments of the social environment in their countries with general aversion to class discussion. How this classless description is far from the real processes Thirdly, the essays show that in the past decade the new generation of social scientists, shaped by the capitalism rather than state socialism, trained in the west, appeared in all countries becoming more open to critical use of the class concept in their analysis. Finally, all papers are extremely interesting introduction to the history and complexity of institutional sociology and social science in state socialist regimes after the World War II.

My final reflection relates to the 'communism' and 'communist' expressions used in the title and in some chapters (in particular the Ost's Introduction and the case of Poland). The 'communism' as a socio-economic formation presupposes lack of class divisions which in fact all existed in above mentioned cases of state socialist states before 1989. Therefore, I prefer and recommend to use the 'state socialism' expression (fortunately widely used by most of the authors) as more accurate which keeps its autonomy from any kind of ideological orthodoxy and labelling.

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