

# Hungarian Spaces and Places: Patterns of Transition

*Edited by*

Györgyi Barta

Éva G.Fekete

Irén Kukorelli Szörényiné

Judit Timár

Pécs, Centre for Regional Studies  
2005

# Contents

© Centre for Regional Studies  
Hungarian Academy of Sciences

List of figures	ix
List of tables	xii
List of contributors	xiv
Politics, Society and Economy in Space: Spatial Processes in the Era of Transition in Hungary	1

*Judit Timár, Györgyi Barta, Éva G.Fekete and Irén Kukorelli Szóbrányiné*

## PART I REGIONAL POLICY AND REGIONALISATION IN A NEW HUNGARY

1 Processes of Regional Development in Post-socialist Hungary <i>György Enyedi</i>	18
2 Hungary's Changing Geopolitical Situation During the Transitional Period <i>Zoltán Hajdú</i>	28
3 Decentralization, Regionalism and the Modernization of the Regional Economy in Hungary: A European Comparison <i>Gyula Horváth</i>	50
4 Impact of Regional Innovation Strategies on Regional Development <i>Tibor Dóty</i>	64
5 The Driving Forces of Regionalism in Hungary <i>László Faragó</i>	73
6 Hungary of the Regions: Utopia or Ultimatum? <i>Ilona Kovács Pálme</i>	92
7 Balancing Between Transition and Modernity: Principles and Institutions of Regional Planning in Hungary <i>Edit Plei/ Somlyódyne</i>	106

First published in Hungary in 2005 by Centre for Regional Studies,  
Hungarian Academy of Sciences, 22. Papnövelde u., Pécs, H-7621

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval  
system or transmitted by any other means without the prior written permission of the  
copyright holder.

ISBN 963 9052 46 9

Technical editor: Márta Zöld Vámosné  
Translation revised by Darrick R. Dania, John Kowalchuk  
Translated by Edit Miskolcsey, András Szigeti  
Maps: Margit Szöke Benicskéné, Sándor Vetési  
Cover illustration: Sándor Pinczehelyi  
Printed in G & G Kft. Pécs

PART II SPATIAL PROCESSES IN THE ECONOMY IN THE ERA OF TRANSITION		
8	Changes in the Position of Hungarian Regions in the Country's Economic Field of Gravity <i>Gábor Nagy</i>	124
9	The Role of Foreign Direct Investment in the Spatial Restructuring of Hungarian Industry <i>Györgyi Barta</i>	143
10	Retail Restructuring and Emerging Spatial Patterns of Consumption: New Aspects of Development Disparities in Hungary <i>Erika Nagy</i>	161
11	The Role of Business Services in the Development of Peripheral Regions <i>Zoltán Raffay</i>	182
12	The Development and the Polarised Spatial Structure of the Hungarian Banking System in a Transforming Economy <i>Zoltán Gál</i>	197
13	Hungary in the European Transport Space <i>Ferenc Erdősi</i>	220
14	New Economy in Space: International Trends and Hungarian Characteristics <i>Boglárka Barsi, Imre Kanaias and Tibor Szarvák</i>	236
15	Restructuring Agriculture <i>Teréz Kovács</i>	259
PART III SOCIAL TRENDS IN TRANSITION		
16	Socially Excluded Groups in Hungary and a Special Re-integration Programme <i>Krisztina Jász and Zsolt Szoboszlai</i>	274
17	Increasingly Fossilised Labour Market Structures and Strategies of Livelihood: Chances of Disadvantaged Groups in the Labour Market <i>Monika Mária Váradi</i>	289
18	Gender and Spatial Inequalities in Hungary in the Transition Era <i>Judit Timar</i>	307
PART IV CHANGING PLACES AND SPACES		
19	A Sector Born? Non-profit Organisations in Hungary <i>Márta Nárai</i>	323
20	Micro-regional Co-operation as a Hungarian Example of Local Development <i>Irén Kukorelli Szőrényiné</i>	343
21	Slopes and Slides: Spatial Inequalities in Employment Opportunities at the Turn of the Millennium <i>Zsuzsanna Bihari and Katalin Kovács</i>	360
22	A Slow Response System: The Urban Network <i>Pál Beluszky and Róbert Győr</i>	378
23	Knowledge-based Innovation Potential of the Hungarian Urban Network at the Turn of the Millennium <i>János Rechnitzer, Zoltán Csizmadia and András Gross</i>	397
24	Global Economy and Local Impacts in Medium-Size and Large Cities in Hungary <i>Balázs Molnár and Ákos Szépvölgyi</i>	416
25	Global Urban Development in Budapest and the Role of Architecture <i>Viktória Szirmai and Gabriella Baráth</i>	434
26	Cultural Investments in a City in Transition: The Budapest Case <i>Krisztina Keresztély</i>	449
27	Criteria of Rurality for the Hungarian Micro-regions: Major Problems Facing Rural Areas in Hungary <i>Bálint Csatári</i>	466
28	Small Villages Undergoing Transformation <i>Éva G.Fekete</i>	483
PART V CROSS-BORDER CO-OPERATIONS		
29	Borders and Regional Co-operations <i>Tamás Hardi</i>	502
30	Hungarian–Romanian and Hungarian–Ukrainian Bilateral Cross-border Relations in the Period of Transition <i>Béla Baranyi, István Balcsók and László Dancs</i>	526

31	Hungarian and Slovakian Cross-Border Relations <i>Mezei, István</i>	544
32	Environmental Protection in Light of Changes in Hungary's Regional Policy: Possibilities Arising from and Limitations Imposed by Cross-border Location as Illustrated by the Example of the Danube–Dráva National Park Region <i>István Fodor</i>	564
33	Opportunities for Environmental Protection Developments in the South Eastern Border Regions <i>Imre Nagy</i>	579

## List of figures

2.1	Political geographical situation of Hungary in the divided Europe, 1988	34
2.2	Hungary's new neighbouring environment, 1993	40
2.3	Hungary in the territorial structure of NATO, 1999	42
2.4	Geopolitical situation of Hungary, 2004	44
3.1	The share of the four largest university centres other than the capital of all tertiary-level students, 1997	56
3.2	Share of federal and decentralized countries of the total population of Europe	60
3.3	Distribution of population in the European Union and Hungary on the basis of the population size of the regions (NUTS II), 1999	62
8.1	Regional structure of Hungary before the transition	127
8.2	Potential spatial structure of Hungary	130
8.3	Territorial administrative units in Hungary, 2001	133
8.4	Changing potential of regions, 1995-2001	135
8.5	Changing potential of counties, 1995-2001	135
9.1	Spatial development of industry in 1970 and 2000	145
10.1	Retail investments in Hungary, 1996-2002	172
10.2	Discount store networks in Hungary run by international corporations, 2002	173
10.3	Hypermarkets in Hungary run by international corporations, 2002	176
11.1	Share of tertiary employees in the total workforce of Hungarian counties (2001)	190
11.2	The share of business services employment in the total workforce in Hungarian counties in 2001	191
11.3	The growing number of services employees in Hungarian counties between 1992 and 2001	193
11.4	The growing number of business services employees in Hungarian counties between 1992 and 2001	193

Tóth, O. (2001) A családi élet és a fizetett munka harmonizálása (Alignment of Family and Paid Work). In Frey, M. (ed.) *EU-konform foglalkoztatáspolitikák*. Budapest, OFA, 489–511.

Tóth, P. (1997) A falusi cigányság és az informális szektor (Village Gypsies and the Informal Sector). *Magyar Tudomány* 6, 690–697.

Virág, T. (2004) *Települési hátrány és enicitás – a gettószülő térség a szegregáció új formája. Kutatási beszámoló az Etnai kistérségben végeztet adatfelvétel alapján* (Settlement-related Disadvantages and Ethnicity. Regions Undergoing Ghettosation: a New Form of Segregation. Research Report Based on Data Collection in the Etnai Small Region). Kézirat (Manuscript).

## Chapter 18

# Gender and Spatial Inequalities in Hungary in the Transition Era

Judit Timár

## Introduction

Space is socially produced. But what exactly is taking place in the socially produced space in a given social context, where new social agents, which – all of a sudden – become new important factors shaping the space, emerge in the new social and economic order of post-socialism and also where the relationship of such eternal social groups as men and women is undergoing a noticeable transformation?

The mere fact we can raise this question (and its perspectives) is really the product of post-socialism in Hungary. It reflects a new approach to gender relations and the acceptance of a wider range of views on the relationship between space and society, among them the above approach adopting Lefebvre's concept (1991).

The new approach to gender relations is reflected in the institutionalisation of policies that seek to secure equal gender opportunities, a sluggish social discourse on gender relations, linked in part with newly established women's organisations as advocacy groups and the growing number of gender studies mirroring the increasing affinity of social sciences towards the issue. It is true that gender studies do not usually lay much emphasis on the spatiality of society. Disciplines studying space – although they do display some affinity towards increasing regional inequalities in, say, income generation, living conditions and the quality of life in the transition era – they tend to perceive winner and loser regions and tend to see settlements as socially homogeneous spaces and places. And even when they study certain social groups, they rarely pay attention to the social relations between them. They pay even less attention to gender relations. Still in its early stages, feminist geography is a recent development. However, owing to the gender blindness of geography and the space blindness of gender studies, not much is known of the typical way spatial inequalities and gender relations are correlated in the post-socialist transition.

This paper seeks to explore some aspects of these correlations. As no studies with a similar subject matter were undertaken in the socialist era and as statistical data provision was (and actually still is) gender blind, we must confine ourselves to assessing the effects of the new economic, social and political processes of the

transition era and studying the decisions and responses — adjusted to the new circumstances — of the social agents shaped by gender. The first part of the paper maps the way gender inequalities are reproduced in the process of democratisation and the evolution of capitalism. It then goes on to present the way (and the extent to which) uneven spatial development is divided along gender lines. When performing this fundamentally structuralist analysis we focus primarily on the national, regional, urban and rural scale. Relying mainly on a qualitative analysis, the second part shows how patriarchy on a household scale (related to patriarchy on the national scale) influences adjustment to the post-socialist transition and the internalisation of the new circumstances in regions and social groups with different characteristics in the spaces of daily life.

### The Changing Geography of Gender Inequalities

Patriarchy defined as men's dominance or rule over women is often perceived, in the Modern Age at least, as a worldwide phenomenon. As Giddens (1997: 188) puts it, 'once patriarchy has evolved, it becomes an institution and is incorporated into institutions outside the sphere of reproduction. Patriarchy is embedded in subtle and less subtle networks of relations that establish connections between the material conditions of life, the mechanisms of a strong social control and various ideologies. We agree with some of the criticism levelled at the concept of patriarchy in the 1980s, which questioned its applicability, labelling it as a 'meta-theory', 'universal', 'ahistorical' and 'insensitive to cross-cultural variations' (see in Perrons and Goniás 1998; Pratt 2000). Yet what we have to say about gender relations in the post-socialist transition in Hungary sounds an exciting challenge, if we reasonably assume that the existing forms of both state socialism and capitalism can be described as patriarchal societies. Except for a few cases, quantitative analyses using regional data can only be performed on the labour market and political participation. That is, in the very spheres where, due to the disappearance of almost full employment (created out of economic necessity in the socialist era), and the abolition of a formerly artificial quota system in parliamentary elections, the status of women compared to that of men deteriorated in the 1990s. This might require a subtle explanation and urges us to tread carefully, when comparing the two eras. Yet, these are the most spectacular spaces of action for the processes of the evolution of capitalism and democracy. Hence we only intend to provide an evaluation of these two economic and social spheres along with a brief outline of some trends. Our evaluation is, for the time being, far from being comprehensive and concentrates primarily on characteristics common in the transition era. So as to identify the characteristics of the era, we make use of data that are at least comparable with the current situation in advanced capitalist countries in Europe because they are suitable for comparison with Hungary's own socialist era.

### 'Mapping' Gender Inequality in Employment

One of the most marked characteristics of transition is that before economic consolidation (i.e. the second half of the 1990s), processes in Hungary were exactly the opposite of those in advanced economies in Europe. While female employment compared to male employment grew in the EU-15 countries, they both fell sharply in Hungary. The employment rate of working age women was 81.2% of men's in 1990 (compared to 65.0% in the EU then). The corresponding figure for 1997 was 75.2% (hardly above the EU average of 72.0%). As regards their main trends, the changes after economic consolidation were identical to their Western counterparts. The employment rate of both sexes rose in a manner such that the difference between the two rates in 2003 was close to what it was in 1990 (i.e. 80.2%). However, gender inequalities decreased against the backdrop of a fundamentally low level of employment (63.5% of 15–64-year old men were in employment in 2003; the corresponding figure for women was 50.9%).<sup>3</sup> While at the beginning of the era female employment in Hungary was about the same as that in Northern Europe, now it is closer to that in Southern Europe, which is at the lower end of a scale wider than the one for men (Frey 2005).

The above figures, which can be interpreted only on the national scale, provide no insight into background processes (i.e. the economic, social, cultural, political and institutional contexts), and give little indication of the nature of gender inequalities that applied for Hungary in the transition era. The less so, for the simple reason that, as a rule, in order for such inequalities to be demonstrated, a wide range of sophisticated models are used in the Western world. Using the female-male activity rate ratio,<sup>4</sup> Perrons's (1998) regional analysis of 12 EU member states for 1994 suggests that Denmark, for instance, is a model of the so-called 'social-democratic regime' characterised by the support of gender neutral citizenship (Leibfried and Ostner 1991) and this contributes to a high female-male activity rate ratio. According to another theoretical approach, Denmark is the embodiment of the 'weak breadwinner' model, which encourages women's participation in paid work (Lewis 1992). In contrast, the UK, which also has a high female-male activity rate ratio, is an example of a 'liberal market regime', where there is a formal commitment to equal opportunity but little state provision or support to facilitate equal outcomes' (Perrons and Goniás 1998: 5). Not only is the proportion of, for instance, part-time work high in that country, but also the schemes of such part-time work and the conditions of employment are rather unfavourable (Duncan 1996). Adopting Perrons' method (1998), studies of the mid-90s (Timár 2002) identified a relatively favourable female-male activity rate ratio in Hungary, which was closer to that in the former East Germany,<sup>5</sup> which had a socialist past like Hungary's.

Spatial analyses within the individual countries also point to diversity (Perrons 1998), while at the same time supplying principles that explain why the gendered nature of the production of space persists. Our analyses of the mid-90s (Timár 2002) revealed considerable regional differences in Hungary, even though they were not as stark as in Italy or Greece. The question here is whether the higher gender ratio is associated with economically more advanced or city regions as is the case in many parts of Europe (see Perrons 1998), or is it associated with sector differences in the

economy (Schmude 1996); or is it associated with distinctive regional cultures (Sackmann and Hattisermann 1994) as the main reasons for the regional differences, as in the case of Southern and Western Germany, say. Whatever the answer to this, it remains a fact that in 1996 (during the economic transition) the geography of gender inequalities in paid work closely followed the patterns of spatial inequalities of income generation, which grew at the regional level. Women's economic activity showed greater regional differences than men's, and women's labour market opportunities depended more heavily on the region they lived in. The counties in the Eastern Great Plain and in Northern Hungary exhibited the highest gender inequalities when it came to access to paid work and were the economically most backward regions of the country, where female economic activity was the lowest. In contrast, counties near the Western border, which constituted the most developed region – the central one excluded – showed much more favourable female-male activity rate ratios along with the highest level of female employment. Women's economic activity most approached that of men's in Budapest, the most developed urban space. However, the fact whether or not women lived in villages, cities or the capital city bore relevance to the levels of inequality experienced. The degree of gender equality in all four major age groups unequivocally followed the urban hierarchy: it was the highest in Budapest and the lowest in the villages. It should also be borne in mind that the urban-rural dichotomy has long been more clear-cut in the former socialist countries than in other parts of Europe due to relatively late urbanisation (Erycz 1978). The 1990s brought no improvement to this situation at all (see, e.g. Bihari and Kovács 2005).

A somewhat higher level of employment at the turn of the century resulted in a lessening of male and female employment inequalities<sup>8</sup>, offering a more differentiated picture on a sub-national scale (Figure 18.1).

The logic underlying gender inequalities on the regional scale is no longer the same, with a series of individual paths developing. The reason why in the rural communities of Fejér County, say, a county with a high income generating potential, and where the male and female employment rate ratio is relatively low (77.7%) is that the level of male employment is outstandingly high (66.9%). In contrast, in Miskolc, the county seat of Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén County, one of the most disadvantaged counties in Hungary, the female-male employment rate ratio is extremely high (89.5%) even by urban standards. The reason for this is that a very low level of male employment (54.0%) reduces gender differences.

One thing has not changed however, and this is the urban-rural dichotomy. The fact that villages offer the fewest employment opportunities holds true for the county level in general. This hits female residents the hardest; gender inequalities in employment are always higher here than in cities/towns. This, however, does not mean that differences in the level of economic development on a regional scale leave the urban and rural scales unaffected. Women in cities and towns in Vas county in a favourable economic position along the Western border stand a better chance of finding legal employment (with the employment rate standing

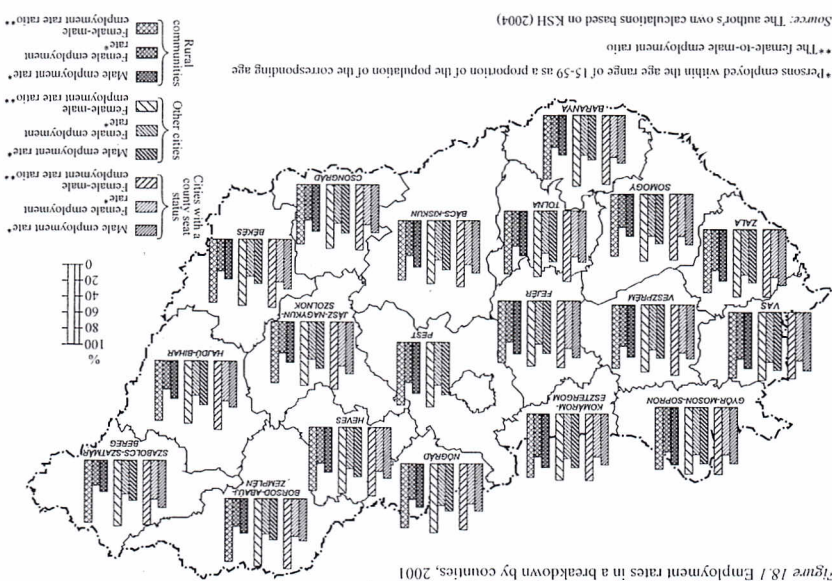


Figure 18.1 Employment rates in a breakdown by counties, 2001

\*\* The female-to-male employment rate

<sup>8</sup> Persons employed within the age range of 15-59 as a proportion of the population of the corresponding age

Source: The author's own calculations based on KSH (2004)

at 63.0%) than do working age men in Nyíregyháza, the county seat of Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg county, Hungary's most backward county, in the Northern border region (60.0% employment rate).

That said, men and women compete with each other in the labour market of their immediate neighbourhood. When decisions are made on matters involving entire families, job opportunities in the local labour market affect their decisions on undertaking a job. (For a detailed treatment of reproduced female disadvantages in the livelihood strategies in backward rural regions, see Váradi 2005).

#### Geographical Scales and Gender Inequalities in Policy-making

The most beautiful achievement of the change of regime is freedom and, as a consequence, the strengthening of civil and political rights. These changes could give women, too, a chance to work for their own interests and to get 'women's issues' and gender relations out into the arena of public debate (Ferge 1999: 24).

Ferge's use of the conditional still cannot be changed to the present perfect tense. The transition to democracy has not led to a more balanced male-female participation, at least in national and local policy-making.

While the representation of women among MPs in Western European countries increased by 4-5% during the second half of the 1980s and the beginning of the 1990s, Eastern European women lost 13-14% of their seats in *Parliament* (Tóth 1995). In Hungary, 20.7% of all MPs were women in 1985, but their presence dropped to 7.3% after the first democratic elections. In addition to the abolition of a mechanism that guaranteed artificially high female participation in politics in the socialist era, Tóth (1995) proposed the following explanatory factors for such a significant reduction:

- women's disadvantageous economic position,
- an unfavourable government policy,
- an unwillingness of the political parties to fight for the female cause,
- a disadvantageous social and cultural environment and
- female indifference (apathy) to political participation.

However, if these were the true factors leading to the "disappearance" of women after the 1990 elections, changes in them cannot have been profound enough during the first decade of the transition period to make women really visible in national politics. Although women gained new seats in Parliament during the 1994 elections when a social-liberal government came into power, they lost almost all of them again in 1998, with the inauguration of a new conservative government. (Only 8.5% of all MPs were women.) With a social-liberal government in power yet again since the 2002 elections, women acquired 9.8% of the seats in Parliament. With this Hungary ranked 97<sup>th</sup> among 170 countries in 2002. From among EU member states, only Greece ranks lower. Women are more vocal in all post-socialist countries according to the EU, except for Hungary (UNDP 2003). Not surprisingly, in her evaluation of the new arenas that opened in both politics and the economy after 1989, Adamkó (1997: 55-56) pointed out that 'the Hungarian case suggests that whether the Great White Male as a social-political actor is conservative, socialist or liberal seems to make no difference.'

The way gender and spatial inequalities are intertwined is reflected in data on membership in *local governments*. As a major result of the political transition in Hungary, in accordance with the amended Constitution and a law passed in 1990, local governments elected in democratic elections and committed to citizens could replace centrally directed councils. However, similar to parliamentary elections, local ones also left little room for manoeuvre for women in local decision-making. While 27% of all councillors were women in 1985, their participation dropped to 16% in the newly elected local governments in 1990 (Vajda 1991).

Similar to other countries, the presence of women is more noticeable at the local level in Hungary and they have been steadily increasing their presence at this level since the change of the political system (in 2002 they accounted for 25% of local council representatives: Pongrácz and Tóth 1999; Lehmann and Polonyi 2004). In this respect, international comparison is more favourable. With its female council members reaching 16%, although in line with EU and OECD averages, Hungary ranked as 27<sup>th</sup> among the 77 countries under review in 1994, still lagging far behind the 8 countries where the corresponding figure was at least 30%, considered as the 'critical mass' (UNDP 1995).

On the other hand, taking into account the fact that the ratio of women among mayors (15% in 2002) is much lower than their participation in local government and comparing these figures with those of the parliamentary elections, Jancsó's (1985) proposition for the socialist period seems to hold true for the post-socialist era as well. That is to say, the more power a political body has, the lower the representation of women on it.

This correlation is also corroborated by a spatial analysis:

- Women's access to the highest positions in the local governments of towns is rather limited. Out of 251 urban communities, only 19 have a woman mayor at present. Typically only two women – as opposed to their 19 male counterparts – are at the helm in a city with a population of over 50,000.
- The presence or absence of women mayors in rural communities also reflects the settlement hierarchy, and the 'power pyramid'. One in 6 villages with fewer than 500 inhabitants is led by a woman mayor, but only one in 9 with a population between 2,000 and 5,000 (Table 18.1).

It seems that, in addition to the inequalities detectable on the geographical scales of the division of power, the urban-rural inequalities reflected in earnings also determine the differing spatial extent of the gendered nature of political decision-making. Based on a statistical analysis we performed in 1998, we found that women were more likely to be mayors in villages in the targeted areas of the national regional development policy. As a rule, they were regions characterised by backwardness; long-term unemployment, industrial restructuring; or rural monofunctions (Timár 2000).

It seems that the form and proportion of women's participation in local politics in Hungary in the period of transition agrees with Regulska's findings (1994: 138) in Poland in the early 1990s, which was a spatial version of Jancsó's (1985) earlier argument: '...the higher the position and the more prestigious the place is, the fewer



Table 18.1 Gender of mayors by community categories, 1998, 2002

Communities by population size	1998				2002			
	Women		Men		Women		Men	
	number	%	number	%	number	%	number	%
x-499	152	14.8	874	85.2	172	17.7	802	82.3
500-999	93	13.6	593	86.4	120	17.1	583	82.9
1000-1999	79	12.0	578	88.0	92	13.8	575	86.2
2000-4999	53	10.8	438	89.2	56	11.0	455	89.0
5000-9999	8	5.9	127	94.1	12	8.8	125	91.2
10000-49999	4	3.5	111	96.5	7	5.8	114	94.2
50000-x	1	4.8	20	95.2	2	9.5	19	90.5
Total	390	12.5	2741	87.5	461	14.7	2673	85.3
Urban communities	14	6.4	204	93.6	19	7.6	232	92.4
Rural communities	376	12.9	2537	87.1	442	15.3	2441	84.7

Source: The author own compilation based on <http://www.volaszus.hu>

women are present'. The geography of this phenomenon in Hungary suggests a further correlation, namely the less prestigious the place is and the less political and economic power it possesses, the greater the probability will be of women in a position with a responsibility for addressing the issue of poverty in their communities.

### Gender and Spatial Inequalities in Daily Life

The above analysis of correlation between society and space, although aimed at helping to identify persistent inequalities in society in the era of transition, can only be considered a starting point. It is indeed the spatial inequalities investigated that draw attention to issues that require further research, including the extent to which various social groups in various regions, cities and villages internalise the advantages and disadvantages arising from the uneven development of post-socialist transition differently; the way gender inequalities are reproduced in daily life. For the purpose of our qualitative analysis, we will, for the time being, rely on the findings of three case studies.

(1) *Households* have become increasingly important factors of spatial development since the political transition. The question is whether or not the gendered nature of uneven spatial development on the sub-national scale influences gender relations on the household scale. An empirical study in which we compare

the strategies of adjustment adopted by rural households in Győr-Ménfőcsanak County, one of Hungary's most advanced counties in the North-West and in Békés County, one of the most 'backward' counties in the South-East<sup>10</sup> is an answer to the above question.

Our studies confirm that three forms of adjustment to increasingly difficult macro-economic conditions have become widespread: certain types of extra work (supplementary agricultural activity, certain consumer goods produced and services replaced by something else in the household, and so on), and a reduction in consumption and use of external aid.

The selection of household survival/livelihood strategies is heavily influenced by differing spatial opportunities. The main difference between Győr-Ménfőcsanak and Békés Counties in terms of the strategies adopted is that in Békés County employment opportunities and, hence, chances of extra work are far fewer and slimmer respectively. As to decision-making on livelihood strategies, the impact of the proximity of the state frontier is of no special importance in Békés County, except perhaps in one village, where the illegal employment of workers from Romania by hothouse owners is relatively common. By contrast, along the Western border, most households expressly count on the proximity of the state frontier in their responding to changing external circumstances. Although less emphasis was laid on the urban-rural dichotomy in our studies, it can be identified in the various types of adjustment, especially in areas that are a long way from cities. Interviewees refer to this mainly in connection with the scarcity of job opportunities and the difficulties of commuting. We can conclude that those living in disadvantaged regions face not only greater economic difficulties, but also the fact that the number of tools of adjustment at their disposal is more limited. Regional and rural-urban inequalities produced by capitalist uneven spatial development are reproduced at the household scale.

Life stories also reveal that *survival strategies* do not necessarily mean equal sacrifice on the part of household members. When they opt for a reduction in consumption, for example, many decide not to purchase electrical appliances that would otherwise save labour (involving jobs done typically by women) in the household. Moreover, occasional household appliances (e.g. automatic washing machines that use a lot of water), already purchased, are no longer used. There are a few cases which confirm that the 'economic advantages' thus gained lead to tension in gender relationships, signalling the relativity of the rationality of action and choice (see also in Wheelock and Oughton 1996). The fact that for many today childcare benefit is the only source of income, i.e. the only possible response to difficulties, has led to changes in gender roles relative to what they were prior to the transition period. It is true that there are a lot of women who are unwilling to have a baby just to be eligible for such benefit, even though they may want to have further children. Nevertheless, we cannot fail to see that, given the current social welfare system, for people in the lowest income brackets whose plans do not include sending their children to universities or colleges, having a third child may be a kind of survival strategy.<sup>11</sup> Our findings suggest that there is an increased chance that impoverished working class families living in the regions in question can only adjust

to harsh economic conditions, which are harsher in the South East than in the North West, through the resumption of traditional female roles.

(ii) Compared to them, what is happening in the segment of *private entrepreneurs*, a constituent of the middle classes, new actors (players?) of new capitalism? What lessons can be learnt from the adjustment of their families to the new socio-economic order in respect of the correlation between uneven spatial development and unequal gender relations? In order to get nearer to the answer, we did further research in the border villages in the above two regions, adopting a qualitative method.<sup>12</sup>

Unlike what Lengyel and Toth (1993) proposes, i.e. that women's propensity to start a business was more robust than men's at the time of the political transition in Hungary, the life stories of our interviewees paint a more subtle picture. It is far from being a proven fact that it is female propensity that underlies the setting-up of female businesses. It may well be the case that they turn their 'husbands' dreams' into reality. No matter with whom responsibility rests for the final decision, the relationship between female entrepreneurs and their husbands seems to affect – whether directly or indirectly – their decision on starting a business. Gender relations on the household scale are unequivocally interwoven with those on the national scale, i.e. with women's lower pay compared to men's and gender roles that are accepted at a macro-social level.

Businesses vary from one proprietor to the next, likewise from one proprietress to the next. One such difference is that, compared to North West Hungary, the number of the businesses set up out of necessity is higher, and their establishment took longer (Momsen 2000). However, for businesses both regions have one thing in common, namely that adjusted to *rural conditions*, the businesses that our interviewees run are done, in wholly or part, in the home or in the vicinity of the home. As a result of the combined effect of the rural scale and specific gender relations, an overwhelming majority of the husbands concerned perceive their wives' businesses as an opportunity of their wives staying at home and tending to traditional female duties, whether women themselves think similarly or not.

The narratives of our male and female interviewees clearly substantiate the point that the traditional *division of work* prevails in their families in both regions. This division of work is often still associated with distinct realms of the micro-space of the home, with a sharp line demarcating feminine housework 'inside' and masculine work 'outside'. This perception, the true interpretation of which is mainly possible in a rural context, was present in both regions surveyed, though in the South-Eastern border region women actively participated, sometimes even more actively than men did, in animal husbandry and horticulture, i.e. work round the house. In contrast, only a few men did housework, and very little at that. While men rarely bothered to find an excuse for their non-participation, their wives sometimes did so for them, 'I can manage inside, and there's enough for him to do outside'. Although women did not deem such division of labour as a normal course of things, they sounded as much resigned as they sounded plaintive. As one of them put it, 'I've already given up'.

In essence, the *village* seems to foster traditional gender roles. As a woman living in a village along the South Eastern border put it, 'No, offhand, I can only remember

ten men at best who have lifted this burden from their wives' shoulders. Unfortunately, this is still very much the case in the villages.' This finding of our studies is also very likely to apply to places other than the villages in our sample area. A survey (involving 1,023 persons in Hungary) conducted in 2002 revealed that women spent a national weekly average of 27.7 hours doing housework, compared to men's 11.0 hours. A full breakdown of these figures clearly reflects settlement hierarchy: women in the capital city and county seats spend a national weekly average of 23.3 and 23.2 hours respectively doing housework, while for those in other towns and villages it was 27 and 34.2 hours, respectively (Blaskó 2002). These figures show clearly that the urban and rural scale (relative to each other) makes a difference in the gender division of work at home.

(iii) Gender inequalities on the national scale – as is clear from the above – penetrate the daily lives of families. Patriarchy on the household scale in turn affects *the gendered nature of local politics*. Our third project<sup>13</sup> on female participation in local government in various types of settlements and regions found evidence of this correlation in several careers (Timár 2004).

One of the most obvious lessons that can be learned from the political careers of our interviewees is that in the struggle for power within political parties, irrespective of political affiliations and values, women lose to men. As the woman mayor of a large city put it,

'I don't think the time has come yet. A fierce battle is going on, serious material and financial interests are at stake. When this period has passed, and there is nothing left to steal, maybe there will not be so much at stake and women will have a better chance.'

In larger towns, where involvement in local politics receives a satisfactory amount of publicity and political parties recruit their MP candidates in large numbers, women have a very slim chance of getting into the top jobs. In villages, where they stand a better chance of becoming representatives, non-alignment with parties is considered to be of value. People who declare their independence may find an easier way up the political career ladder. This is why they cannot get into 'politics at the national level'.

The question is how women themselves internalise patriarchal relations and can stand up for their interest, if at all. In the era of socialism, the word 'feminism' had negative connotations and patriarchal circumstances did not come up in social and political discourse. This situation was fairly common across East-Central Europe. This also explains, to a certain extent, why the first response of women in local politics is in line with the 'lower sensitivity' of the post-socialist countries, which can be observed with the injustices and discrimination against women on the grounds of sex (Neményi 1994). These women say that they do not feel they are being discriminated against on the grounds of sex. However, when the careers of our interviewees are described, sooner or later a large number of examples are cited which demonstrate the disaffection of women politicians<sup>14</sup>. These examples are partly related to their public involvement, but most have to do with the selection

process for some positions, the analysis of their public career or their 'position of minority'. Some of the interviewees mentioned that, even outside the arena of politics, in the realm of work they saw that women had to work harder for the same amount of pay. As one of our interviewees summed it up, 'Nowadays neither society, nor male politicians recognise women as they ought to be recognised.'

### Conclusion

Production of space in Hungary's post-socialist transition is also occurring against a backdrop of unequal gender relations, which it reproduces continuously.

The *economic transition* placed both men and women in a quandary in the labour market. One of the strongest factors of differentiation (in addition to educational background; see Meusburger 2001) is the difference in the number of opportunities for access to paid work in cities and villages, which in turn further 'fine-tunes' differences between man and woman and woman and woman. Women living in villages experience aggregate disadvantages in the county labour markets, which are heavily influenced by their geographical location.

By contrast, when it comes to *local political decision-making*, due to the detailed workings of the power pyramid in a settlement hierarchy, it is women in large cities that are left with little room for manoeuvre. Extremely low female participation (even by East Central European standards) in parliamentary decision-making in turn affects gender relations on the local and even the household scale:

- The continuous reproduction of patriarchy on the household/family scale, supported by patriarchy on the national scale, contributes to the reproduction of the gendered nature of local policy-making on both the urban scale and the rural scale.
- Party politics on the national scale 'penetrates' the urban scale, where it results in unequal gender relations, and vice versa: politics on the urban scale contributes to the reproduction of gendered party politics on the national scale (Timár 2004).
- On the rural scale – although for different reasons and in different forms – the adjustment of poor families in disadvantaged regions to a transition phase and the generation of entrepreneurs (as new social agents) may in some cases strengthen the traditional gender division of labour.

### NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> The delay is likely to be social system specific. According to an international survey in the early 1990s, East Central Europe was terra incognita in feminist geography (Monk 1994).
- <sup>2</sup> Data from Frey's (2002) study formed the basis for further calculations.
- <sup>3</sup> Data from Frey's (2005) study formed the basis for further calculations.
- <sup>4</sup> The activity rate is the proportion of the population in a particular age group category who are either in employment or formally unemployed. The female-male activity rate ratio therefore expresses the female activity rate as a percentage of the male activity rate' (Perros 1998: 23).

<sup>5</sup> This similarity is also reinforced by detailed calculations made by Meusburger (2001) on changes in men's and women's age-specific employment rate in Hungary between 1980 and 1996. When compared to Duncan's (1996) analysis for 1990, they seem to reveal that Hungary satisfies the requirements of Duncan's first type, which includes countries such as the former FRG, Sweden, France, Denmark, where 'Women are in paid work over most of their working lives, with increasing rates for the youngest women as training or education ceases, and increasing rates for the elderly as retirement takes place'. The graph of women's participation rates in the paid labour force, according to age in these countries is the same as that for males in all Western European countries (Duncan 1996: 76).

<sup>6</sup> Owing in part to the characteristics of the structure of the 2001 census data published by the Central Statistical Office in 2004, we studied the proportion of those in *employment* in the 15–59 age group in the corresponding population. Those in *employment* include active wage earners and those holding a job while receiving childcare benefit, pension or social benefit. But they exclude the registered unemployed, who are, however, included in the category of the economically active population. The reason why we performed calculations for 1996 on the economically active population – as was analysed in the previous section – was to make a comparison with the international study cited. Since then this practice of allowing for those in *employment* has become more common. Furthermore, in contrast with the European average, women in Hungary are underrepresented in the unemployed relative to men, which modifies the rate mirroring gender inequalities in a direction that is the opposite of what characterises the developed economies in Europe. Analyses of the changes that have occurred in the labour market since 1996 also reveal that the number of the economically inactive women is rather high (Frey 2002). This holds true especially for backward regions with small villages (see Bihari and Kovács 2005; Váradi 2005), where – due to a very high level of male unemployment – the difference between the male and female unemployment rate is higher than average. Taking into account the differences in the methods of calculations for 1996 and 2001, we may conclude that, when making use of the employment rate, the next two sections paint a somewhat more differentiated spatial picture than if the activity rate were used. But whatever the rates we apply, the validity of correlations outlined still remain valid.

<sup>7</sup> Considered to be the highest: corresponding ratios in Latvia and Poland are 21.0% and 20.7%, respectively.

<sup>8</sup> Although the above figures, disclosed in the 1995 Human Development Report, are still considered to be the most up to date, they represent a time lag compared to the statistics trying to 'satisfy interest' in parliamentary elections.

<sup>9</sup> A project on households' survival strategies was partly sponsored by the Hungarian National Research Fund (OTKA No. T020443). The survey was carried out in cooperation with Irén Kukorelli Szabó.

<sup>10</sup> The survey included 3 villages of different size, level of development and geographical location in both countries. In 1997 we conducted a questionnaire survey including 600 randomly, but regionally selected households in the 6 villages, and asked 35 women in the course of structured in-depth interviews about their families, places of work and educational background, their spouses, division of labour in the home, survival strategies and their own

role in such strategies, how they perceived the period of transition and its effects and how they thought the geographical location of their settlement and region affected their lives.

<sup>11</sup> Younger female interviewees included a relatively large number of mothers with three children. Eligible for maternity allowance, a type of benefit that they can apply for provided that three under-age children are raised in the family in question, they were all staying at home. For their families, how as this regular income may have been, maternity allowance was an important source of income.

<sup>12</sup> Nine interviews and two focus group discussions complemented a questionnaire survey on men and women entrepreneurs in the border villages in Békés and Győr-Ménfőcsanak counties. The survey was sponsored by the National Science Foundation, USA, supervised by Janet Henshall Momsen and conducted by Iren Kukorelli Szőrényiné and the author of this paper. Lastly, life-story interviews in 2000 and 2001 were made with 10 owners of 10 businesses and the husbands of 8, thus making a total of 18 persons (Momsen *et al.* 2005).

<sup>13</sup> The project was supported by the Open Society Institute. A preliminary national questionnaire was conducted with the co-operation of the Pyma Hungary Public Opinion Research Institute and the Foundation for the Women of Hungary. In the following interview-based study 15 female and 7 male local councillors were interviewed in 4 types of settlements in regions (and districts of Budapest) with different characteristics. The interviews were conducted by the author herself and Gabriella Baráth, Mária Neményi, Gyöngyi Schwarcz, Monika Mária Váradi, Gábor Velkey and Violetta Zentai in 2001.

<sup>14</sup> This provides an answer to the question posed by Neményi (1994). She really sought to determine whether women in post-socialist countries really faced less discrimination on the grounds of sex than women in Western Europe did or whether it is only their threshold of tolerance that is higher due to the above-mentioned social characteristics and the less nature concepts they have of democracy.

## REFERENCES

- Adamik, M. (1997) How Can Hungarian Women Lose What They Have Never Had? In: Frieschmidt, M., Magyari-Vincze, E. and Zentai, V. (eds) *Women and Men in East European Transition*. Summer School, Cluj, July 23-28, 1996. Cluj-Napoca, Editura Fundatei Pentru Studii Europene, 42-61.
- Bihari, Zs. and Kovács, K. (2005) *Slopes and Slides: Spatial Inequalities in Employment Opportunities at the Turn of the Millennium*. Published in this volume.
- Blaskó, Zs. (2005) *Nők, férfiak – keresőmunka, házi munkák* (Women, Men – Paid and Home Work). Budapest, Társadalmi Nem- és Kultúrakutató Központ, Corvinus Egyetem, február 17. (lecture) <http://demografia.hu/prgs/issp2002>
- Duncan, S. (1996) *The Diverse Worlds of European Patriarchy: the Politics of Work and Daily Life*. London and New York, Routledge, 74-110.
- Eneyedi, Gy. (1978) *Kalet-Közép-Európa gazdaság-ökológia* (The Economic Geography of East Central Europe). Budapest, Közgazdasági és Jogi Könyvtárod.
- Ferge, Zs. (1999) Hogyan hatott a rendszerváltás a nők helyzetére? (How did the Change of Regime Effect the Condition of Women?). In Lévai, K., Kiss, R. and Gyulavári, T. (eds) *Vegyesváltó, pillanatképek nőkről, férfiakról*. Budapest, Egyetemi Esélyek Alapítvány, 13-29.
- Frey, M. (2002) Nők és férfiak a munkaerőpiacon (Women and Men on the Labour Market). In Nagy, I., Pogratz, T. and Tóth, I. Gy. (eds) *Szerepváltások. Jelentés a nők és férfiak helyzetéről 2001*. Budapest, TARKI-Szociális és Családügyi Minisztérium Nőképiseleti Titkársága, 9-29.
- Frey, M. (2005) *Nők munkaerőpiacon – a rugalmas foglalkoztatás iránti igények és lehetőségek* (Women on the Labour Market – Demand and Opportunities for Flexible Work). Foglalkoztatási Hivatal Kutatási Iroda. (Manuscript)
- Giddens, A. (1997) *Szociológia*. Budapest, Osiris Kiadó. (It is a Hungarian translation of Giddens, A. (1995) *Sociology*. 2/second Edition. Cambridge, Polity Press.)
- Jancar, B. W. (1985) Women in the Opposition in Poland and Czechoslovakia in the 1970s. In: Wolchik, S. L. and Meyer, A. G. (eds) *Women, State and Party in Eastern Europe*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 168-185.
- Központi Statisztikai Hivatal (2004) Népszámlálás. Foglalkoztatási adatok 2001 (Census, Employment Data). Budapest, KSH.
- Lefebvre, H. (1991) *The Production of Space*. Oxford and Cambridge, MA, Blackwell (orig. pub. in French as *La production de l'espace*, 1974).
- Leitmann, H. and Polonyi, G. (2004) Egy kérdőíves felmérés tapasztalatai (The Experience of a Survey). In Sáfány, R. (ed.) *Életpályák és mozgástervek: nők a helyi közéletben*. Budapest, MONA, 9-28.
- Leitfried, S. and Osmer, I. (1991) The Particularism of West German Capitalism: the Case of Women's Social Security. In Adler, M. and Sinfield, A. (eds) *The Sociology of Social Security*. Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 164-186.
- Lenyel, Gy. and Tóth, I. J. (1993) A vállalkozói hajlandóság terjedése. *Szociológiai Szemle* 1. 33-58.
- Lewis, J. (1992) Gender and the Development of Welfare Regimes. *Journal of European Social Policy* 2 (3), 159-73.
- Meusburger, P. (2001) Spatial and Social Disparities of Unemployment in Hungary. In Meusburger, P. and Jóns, H. (eds) *The Transformations in Hungary: Essays in Economy and Society*. Heidelberg-New York: Physica-Verlag, 173-206.
- Monk, J. (1994) Place Matters: Comparative International Perspectives on Feminist Geography. *Professional Geographer* 3, 277-288.
- Momsen, J. H. (2000) Spatial Transformations and Economic Restructuring in Post-socialist Hungary. In Horváth, Gy. (ed.) *Regions and Cities in the Global World*. Pécs: Centre for Regional Studies, 202-219.
- Momsen, J. H., Kukorelli Szőrényi, I. and Timár, J. (2005) Gender at the Border: Entrepreneurship in Rural Post-Socialist Hungary. London, Ashgate.
- Neményi, M. (1994) Miért nincs Magyarországon nőmozgalom? (Why Does Feminist Movement not Exist in Hungary?). In Hadas, M. (ed.), *Férfiutalom*. (Replika Könyvek) Budapest, REPLIKA KOR, 235-245.
- Perrons, D. and Gónis, L. (1998) Introduction: Perspectives on Gender Inequality in European Employment. *European Urban and Regional Studies* 5. 1: 5-12.

- Perrons, D. (1998) Maps of Meaning: Gender Inequality in the Regions of Western Europe. *European Urban and Regional Studies* 5 (1), 13–25.
- Pongráczné, T. and Tóth, I. Gy. (eds) (1999) *Szerepváltozások. Jelentés a nők és a férfiak helyzetéről* (Changing Roles: a Report on the Conditions of Women and Men). Budapest: TÁRKI, Szociális és Családügyi Minisztérium Nőképviselői Titkársága.
- Pruitt, G. (2000) Patriarchy. In Johnston, R. J., Gregory, D., Pratt, G. and Watts, M. (eds) *The Dictionary of Human Geography*, Fourth Edition. Oxford: Blackwell, 574–575.
- Regulska, J. (1994) Transition to Local Democracy. Do Polish Women Have a Chance? In: Rueschmeyer, M. (ed) *Women in the Politics of Postcommunist Eastern Europe*. Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe. Inc. 135–162.
- Sackmann, R. and Halüscermann, H. (1994) Do Regions Matter? Regional Differences in Female Labour-Market Participation in Germany. *Environment and Planning* 26 (9), 1377–1418.
- Schmude, J. (1996) Contrasting Developments in Female Labour Force Participation in East and West Germany since 1945. In Garcia-Ramon, M. D. and Monk, J. (eds) *Women of the European Union: the Politics of Work and Daily Life*. London and New York: Routledge, 156–85.
- Timár, J. (2002) Geographical Aspects of Changing Conditions of Women in Post-socialist Hungary. In Kovács, Z. (ed) *Hungary Towards the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: the Human Geography of Transition*. (Studies in Geography in Hungary 31.). Budapest: Geographical Research Institute HAS, 151–167.
- Timár, J. (2002) Restructuring Labour Markets on the Frontier of the European Union. Gendered Uteven Development in Hungary. In Raimie, A., Smith, A. and Swain, A. (eds) *Work, Employment and Transition: Restructuring Livelihoods in Post-communism*. London and New York: Routledge, 134–154.
- Timár, J. (2004) Gendered Urban Policy-making: the Role of Geographical Scale in Women's Participation in Hungarian Local Governments. In Cortesi, G., Cristaldi, F. and Droogheever, F. (eds) *Gendered Cities. Identities, Activities, Networks: a Life-course Approach*. Rome: Società Geografica Italiana, 227–243.
- Tóth, A. (1995) Lehet-e egy női miniszterelnök? A nők részvételének változásai az európai országok döntéshozatalában (Can a Boy Become a Prime Minister? The Changes of Women's Participation in the Decision-making of the European Countries). *INFO-Társadalomtudomány* 32 május, 47–56.
- UNDP (1995) Human Development Report. [http://www.undp.org/hdr2003/indicator/indic\\_209\\_1\\_1.html](http://hdr.undp.org/reports/global/1995/en)
- Vajda, A. (1991) Az 1990-ben megválasztott képviselők és polgármesterek (Representatives and Mayors Elected in 1990). *Statisztikai Szemle* 10, 774–788.
- Váradi, M. (2005) Increasingly Fossilised Labour Market Structures and Strategies of Livelihood Chances of Disadvantaged Groups in the Labour Market. Published in this volume.
- Wheeleck, J. and Oughton, E. (1996) The Household as a Focus of Research. *Journal of Economic Issues* 30 (1), 143–159.