

ULRICH BECK (1944–2015)

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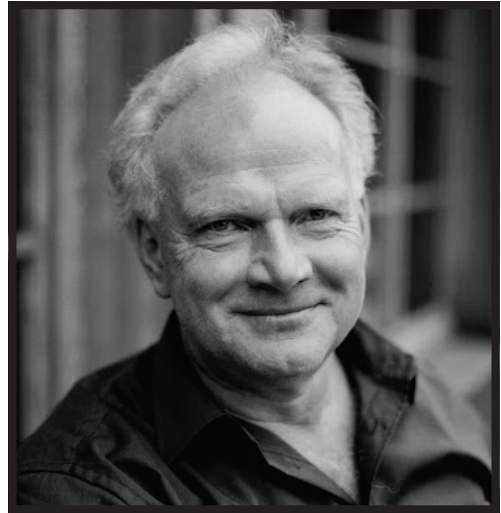
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Ulrich Beck who deceased on the 1st January 2015 at the age of 70 was one of the greatest sociologists of his generation. The questions of globalisation and social changes were at the centre of his work. In his view, we live in a new world whose boundaries and foundations have become insecure and plastic. We cannot perceive and effectively form the new social reality, the second modernity, because our institutional systems and the history of their foundations have their roots in the era of the first modernity. In an era whose leading ideas were characterised by full employment, the dominance of national state policy in connection with national economy, functioning boundaries and clear-cut territorial identities. Beck thought that these ideas cannot answer the key questions of our age. His basic notion was that the institutions of national states are challenged by the global threats that do not respect any boundaries. In the chaotic world fear becomes a constant feeling and the longing for the lost security increases. Another of his significant conclusions was that (world)risk and risk-consciousness do not only dominate the great institutions of our society, but they penetrate into the everyday life of individuals transforming it to be more reflexive, as the reference frame of individuals is life-world itself. As a consequence, alienation from customs and traditions is a typical tendency of our age, the second modernity.



As a resolute supporter of transnational Europe, Beck believed that a European social contract is necessary that would guarantee more freedom, social security and democracy all over the continent, because Europe in its present form would not be able to resist the storms of risk world. The European Union must be something more than a ‘bitter marriage’ kept together by the fear of collapse; it has to be based on something else: on the creation from beneath, in other words, on the vision of citizens’ Europe. There is no better way to revitalize Europe than encouraging Europeans to act in their own rights and find each other again.

In Hungary, Ulrich Beck’s *Risk Society: Towards a New Modernity* was published by Századvég in 2003. In 2001, we started to work on the Hungarian edition of Ulrich Beck’s *Was ist Globalisierung? Irrtümer des Globalismus – Antworten auf Globalisierung* (originally published in 1997) at the suggestion of the youth researcher Kálmán Gábor. This volume was translated by Ildikó G. Klement and published with Kálmán Gábor’s epilogue in Szeged by the Belvedere Publisher in 2005 (under the title *Mi a globalizáció? A globalizmus tévedései – válaszok a globalizációra*). Since the

first volume we have published one of Beck's further works almost every year (all of them were translated by Ildikó G. Klement and the covers were designed by Andrea Majzik): *A választás tétje* in 2006, *A kozmopolita Európa* in 2007 (originally *Cosmopolitan Europe* which he wrote with Edgar Grande), *Világkockázattársadalom. Az elveszett biztonság nyomában*. In 2008 (*World Risk Society*), *A munka szép új világa* in 2009 (*The Brave New Work of World*) and *A német Európa. Új hatalmi térségek a válság jegyében*. in 2013 (*Das deutsche Europa*). The forewords/epilogues were written first by Kálmán Gábor, and in the case of the last two volumes by Csaba Jancsák. Kálmán Gábor, the greatest populizer of Beck's work in Hungary passed away in 2009, and now we lost Ulrich Beck.

Ulrich Beck was born in Stolp, Pomerania (today Słupsk, Poland). From the middle of the 1960s he studied sociology, philosophy, physiology and political science at the University of München. He earned his doctoral degree in arts in 1927; seven years later he habilitated in sociology. He was a lecturer of the University of Münster between 1979 and 1981 and of the University of Bamberg between 1981 and 1992. Later, until his death he worked as a professor at the Ludwig Maximilian University in München and London School of Economics. During his very active research career he earned international acclaim and many prestigious awards. His research interests were modernisation/modernity, globality/globalisa-

tion, individualisation, cosmopolitanism and the issues of the European Union. He re-examined social and economic correlations with an innovative approach and enriched social sciences with the introduction of new terms, such as "risk society", "second modernity" and "reflexive modernity".

On 17 November 2014, the Sociological Workshop of Szeged organised a book debate as a part of the Festival of Hungarian Science (an event of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences) with the title *From world risk society to German Europe* where sociologists, philosophers and ecologists participated. As the host of this event, I had to realise how Ulrich Beck's work inspired generations, and how versatile, popular and influential his theories are.

Farewell, dear Professor!

CSABA JANCSAK

THE EDITOR OF THE HUNGARIAN EDITIONS OF
ULRICH BECK'S VOLUMES

"Ulrich Beck was a dedicated and conscientious scholar, with an encyclopaedic knowledge of the social sciences. For such a distinguished figure he was refreshingly down to earth and approachable, highly popular with his students everywhere. I used to tease him quite often, since he never mastered the British sense of humour, with its mixture of self-deprecation and smug superiority. More often than not though I was the one who ended up looking foolish. He had a good line in put-downs when he needed to."
(Anthony Giddens)

