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# Patterns of integration

## A new model of social stratification



Kovács Imre (2017) (ed.):

*Társadalmi integráció. Az egyenlőtlenségek, az együttműködés,  
az újraelosztás és a hatalom szerkezete a magyar társadalomban*  
[Social integration – The structure of the inequalities, the cooperation,  
the redistribution and the power in the Hungarian society]

Budapest – Szeged, MTA Társadalomtudományi Kutatóközpont Szociológiai Intézet –  
Belvedere Meridionale Kiadó. 378 p.



DOI 10.14232/belv.2018.4.15

<https://doi.org/10.14232/belv.2018.4.15>

Cikkre való hivatkozás / How to cite this article: Balogh, Péter (2018): Patterns of integration.  
A new model of social stratification. *Belvedere Meridionale* vol. 30. no. 4. 216–221. pp.

ISSN 1419-0222 (print)

ISSN 2064-5929 (online, pdf)

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The assumption that the capacity of the traditional stratification models to explain social dynamics and differences, investigate individual and group activities, explore the motives and choices of norms and values – even in the Hungarian society – has led to the claim to find a different perspective. Accordingly – as Imre Kovács, the editor and one of the several authors<sup>1</sup> of the book *Social*

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<sup>1</sup> The thirteen articles of the edition have been authored and co-authored by the following nineteen researchers and scholars: Fruzsina Albert, Ildikó Barna, Adrienne Csizmady, Bernadett Csurgó, Ibolya Czibere, Beáta Dávid, Márton Gerő, Gábor Hajdú, Ákos Huszár, Éva Huszti, Júlia Koltai, Imre Kovács, Luca Kristóf, Boldizsár Megyesi, Dóra Nemes, Ágnes Lukács, Endre Sik, Bori Simonovits, Andrea Szabó.

*integration – The structure of the inequalities, the cooperation, the redistribution and the power in the Hungarian society* (2017) argues – it became necessary to change the former paradigm. The research team offers the new – or rather newly discovered – concept of *integration* as the key element of this distinctive paradigm. They assume that the various mechanisms responsible for and facilitating integration and disintegration make it possible to elaborate a multidimensional conceptual scheme with the potential to exceed the approach based on the classical labour force positions. The editor introduces in the first article of the book some essential conceptual remarks about the notions and approaches applied in their far-reaching investigation. We can get familiar – besides other issues – with the interpretation and operationalization of the concept and mechanisms of integration,<sup>2</sup> and the framework expected to be employable in empirical investigation.

The methodological background of the empirical research and the integration model itself is introduced in the second paper by Kovách, Hajdu, Gerő, Kristóf and Szabó. The data analysis is based on a representative survey (N = 2687) carried out in the spring of 2015 by TÁRKI SRI.<sup>3</sup> Besides the proper and detailed description of the research methodology and the process of fieldwork the authors outline certain further specialities of the survey. Namely the main questionnaire has been supplemented with two – rather noteworthy – innovative techniques. On the one hand smaller, random segments of the overall sample have been requested to fill in an extra questionnaire. This specific method of *factorial survey* enabled the researchers to appropriately study the attitudes towards breaking the norms and the opinions about the intentions to help in different situations. On the other hand – again on a smaller random sub-sample – there has been applied a novel form of personal network research method; *contact diary*. As the respondents themselves answered the regarding questions, they described and unfolded their everyday social relations enabling the researchers to better study the role of social resources in various fields.

The integration model – which might truly be considered the key element of the investigation as dominantly (although not exclusively) the following research papers of the book use or further investigate this basic scheme – distinguishes three different levels of the individuals' integration and – from a methodological perspective – there are different variables or groups of variables assigned to these integration levels. The researchers investigated the (1) *system level of integration* with political participation, institutional trust and the acknowledgement of and adherence to the norms. Social dimension has been raised as a separate level of integration. This (2) *social level integration* has been measured with data about the labour market position of the respondents and the patterns of voluntary civil participation. Finally the researchers quantified the (3) *individual* aspects of integration with the number of both the strong and the weak ties, furthermore an index of subjective assessment of exclusion has also been developed. Applying the statistical method of latent class analysis on the eight variables and indices attached to the distinct levels of integration enabled the scholars to explore, recognize and interpret seven different clusters; integration groups in the Hungarian society. The authors then systematically characterize the particular clusters – the groups of the *connection-rich politically active* (“kapsolatgazdag politikailag aktívak”; 15,5%),

<sup>2</sup> The primary theoretical papers investigating and elaborating the concept of integration and disintegration have not been included in the book. Those who wish to have a more detailed outline of this conceptual framing process might review Kovách – Dupcsik 2012 and Dupcsik – Szabari 2015.

<sup>3</sup> The research project *Integrációs és dezintegrációs folyamatok a magyar társadalomban* – as well as the publication of the book – was financed by the OTKA/NKFIH program.

the *locally integrated* (“lokálisan integráltak”; 9,2%), the *labour market integrated* (“munkaerőpiacon integráltak”; 23,2%), the *system-level integrated* (“rendszerszinten integráltak”; 17,4%), the *weakly integrated* (“gyengén integráltak”; 16,1%), the *norm-following disintegrated* (“normakövető dezintegráltak”; 12,9%) and the *excluded disintegrated* (“dezintegrált kirekesztettek”; 5,6%) – and describe the share of the group types in the society.

A further remarkable novelty of the paper is that the researchers undertake to reconstruct other former models of stratification on the same empirical database which leads to a unique possibility that enables them to explore the similarities and differences of the schemes. The outcomes of the comparison between the newly elaborated integration model and the Ferge-, Kolosi- and latent class (BBC-) models reveal a more remarkable polarization between the upper and lowest segments of the Hungarian society and facilitate a more sophisticated and more appropriate understanding of the position of the disadvantaged social groups. According to the research results it could also be noted that the integration model proves to have the potential to better comprehend the different integrative and disintegrative mechanisms behind the upper and lower groups of the society. In this sense the authors argue that the integration model seems to be able to grasp and empirically perceive the real patterns and mechanisms of social stratification in the Hungarian society.

After outlining the conceptual and empirical background of the integration model, the volume continues to introduce particular research results based either on the integration model itself and/or on the complex database of the research. The articles are edited into five different thematic chapters reflecting the distinct areas or dimensions of the essential integration scheme.

The first chapter focuses on the *integration mechanisms* and contains four research papers which investigate the issue in different fields of societal life. Czibere, Gerő and Kovách (*Redistribution and integration*) argue that distinct forms of redistribution play an essential role in the integration of the society. Besides giving a profound empirical overview about the forms of redistribution the authors highlight that contrary to the *welfare-* and *project-based* types, *recombinant* redistribution proves to be fruitful exclusively to gain and to keep political and economic power and – consequently – has tremendous effect on these sectors. The paper describes this rather complex phenomenon from various perspectives, denotes the tendency that recombinant integration might become a part of the structural system, and reflects on its specific connections with welfare- and project-based redistribution.

Redistribution – especially its recombinant form – and the political sphere are more or less connected fields, and the second analysis of the chapter by Gerő and Szabó investigates this latter segment from the perspective of integration (*Political integration of the society*). The authors build on the three-level interpretation of integration outlined in the general conceptual frame of the research project and carry out a brief analysis based on the dataset where they study political preferences and related attitudes along the structure of the integration model, however they also rely on the data of a further, more detailed thematic survey. In this – major – part of the article the authors explore and thoroughly describe five different clusters of the society based on their opinions regarding the political system and the personal orientations. According to the results of the data analysis group-affiliation proves to have remarkable potential to understand political beliefs and opinions.

The paper by Hajdu and Megyesi (*Social capital, social structure and social integration*) focuses on the role of social capital in integration processes. The researchers investigate whether there can be measured different levels of social capital in the case of the different groups of the society and they compare the results of the integration model and the other stratification and structural models using the dataset of the research project. In order to give a proper measure of social capital they introduce and construct a complex index of social capital. This three-component index incorporates relational capital, trust and participation as separate sub-indices and is employed to illustrate the differences and inequalities of social resources in the hierarchies reflected in the Ferge-Andorka-, the normative-functionalist-, the Kolosi-, the latent class- and the integration models. The outcomes of the analysis corroborate that social capital can be regarded an essential factor of structural differentiation and the results also imply that there is a positive relationship between the extent of social capital and other further dimensions – e.g. subjective exclusion and importance – of integration.

The chapter finishes with an article about the relationship between territoriality and social integration (*Territoriality and social integration*) written by Csizmady, Csurgó, Kovách and Megyesi who investigate the characteristics of the integration model clusters and the integration mechanisms from the perspective of urban-rural dichotomy. In the course of data analysis however they also elaborate a further, more sophisticated – five-categorical – measure of the territorial dimension and utilise it to explore the differences of both the groups and the integration mechanisms. The locally integrated group is also examined separately and the results imply that this cluster directly illustrates the role of territoriality in social differentiation.

Kovách, Kristóf and Szabó open the next chapter (*Stratification and integration*) with their analysis about the integration model (*Social integration and social stratification*). However they do not investigate only the original classification model but also attempt to take a further step and integrate the normative-functionalist and integration models. The authors conclude that both the initial integration model and the combined – integration normative-functionalist (INF) – model exhibit clear structural hierarchies along certain dimensions: development level of locality and education level. Furthermore the models enable the researchers to reproduce the knowledge gained formerly from the classical stratification schemes – if the dimension of social capital is investigated – and to reconstruct the processes of stratification and integration in the Hungarian society.

The other article (*Stratification, segmentation, precariat*) of the second chapter (Huszár, Sik) thoroughly examines the failure and shortcomings of the classical occupation-based stratification models to express the objective structural conditions of the social sphere and yet offers a possible conceptual frame to explore the main structural features of the Hungarian labour market. The scholars argue – and also empirically illustrate – that the approach of labour market segments can be applied to appropriately investigate the specific positions and processes of the Hungarian labour market. The theory of precariat is the other perspective the authors apply to interpret the characteristics of the labour market and – in this case again – they draw on empirical results during their argument as the uniquely complex variable sets available in the database of the integration research program enable them to operationalize and analyse this specific position of uncertainty.

The next thematic unit of the volume contains articles focusing on norms and values and the authors (Kristóf, Szabó) of first paper (*Social integration and consumption*) investigate

the topic from the perspective of consumption. The researchers construct and empirically measure three distinct dimensions of consumption and utilize these indices to statistically describe and characterise the groups of the integration model and the INF-model. According to the results several clusters of the integration model can be considered consumption groups as well since they reflect distinctive and particularistic patterns of consumption.

Koltai, Kristóf and Simonovits employ the specific method of factorial survey in their research paper (*Norms, values, integration*). They introduce the method in general and profoundly describe the way it has been applied in the basic empirical investigation of the integration research program. In the course of data analysis they illustrate the advantages and perspectives of factorial surveys – actually the explaining factors of the attitudes about giving help in everyday-life situations is concerned in their work. The outcomes of the analytical models imply that there can be found a robust and rather general norm of helping in the Hungarian society; in more serious situations the respondents do not seem to hesitate to help regardless of the characteristics (e.g. ethnic group) of the ones in need, however the role of some individual attributions and the perception about the cost of giving a hand has also been implied.

The topic of *relationships* is covered by the final chapter. In their paper (*Network typology and social integration*) Albert, Dávid, Gerő and Hajdu introduce a novel typology of interpersonal relationships based on the data of the integration research project. They considered six different variables that reflect distinct aspects of individual social networks and applied the method of latent class analysis to explore a four-group structure. The interpretation of the clusters leads to the identification of specific groups characterized by the danger of relational poverty, loneliness, the role of the family and general social life. The network typology is also described along some basic demographic features and subjective measures of different integration aspects. Furthermore the authors compare their network structure and the clusters of the general integration model and conclude that the personal and the other dimensions of integration prove to be connected.

It is the paper by Dávid, Lukács, Huszti and Barna (*Contact diary – plus and minus*) that expounds the other novel methodological technique applied in the survey of the integration research program. The authors profoundly present the background and approach of *contact diary* – a recent method in the research of ego networks that relies on the systematic registration of contact persons – alters – of the individual's network. The data gathered this way explores the list of the ego's actual relationships, and in the empirical sections of the article some main characteristics – size, composition, interactions – about the network of the respondents included in the additional investigation (N = 345) are revealed. The results of the analyses corroborate that certain socio-demographic factors – age, marital status, education level – notably affect personal network structure which proves to be rather homophile. The authors emphasize also the remarkable speciality of the method that it enables the researchers to explore the structure of connections based on concrete interactions instead of the perception of the respondents – as the comparison between the data of the contact diaries and the responses about the number of friends illustrates.

Koltai and Nemes, the authors of the final article (*The impact of locality on social relations*) of both the chapter and the book investigate the role of the territorial characteristics in social connections. In order to measure the size of the social networks they quantify strong and weak ties separately and ascertain three different levels of territoriality – the direct neighbourhood

of the locality, settlement type and regional affiliation. The complex model estimates imply that territoriality has noticeable impact on the number of ties – particularly in the case of the weak ties –, furthermore the researchers illustrate that social integration is also related to the features of the locality as there could be measured significant differences between the clusters of the integration model and the territorial characteristics.

The book outlines the patterns of differences and inequalities in current Hungarian society from various perspectives and the authors of the compiled papers present an extensive empirical illustration of the diverse mechanisms. The concept of integration seems to be adequate and fruitful for the scholars who strive to make explicit efforts to exceed the classical stratification and structural models. Accordingly the volume offers – on the one hand – helpful insights for the professionals of several fields of social science about the actual processes of the current Hungarian society and some novel methodological techniques to investigate them more appropriately. However – on the other hand – the articles may raise the attention of those from the wider public who are interested in and wish to better understand the directions of changes and the prevailing social conditions around them.

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