
ABSTRACTS

ERŐS, FERENC-MURÁNYI, ISTVÁN- PLICHTOVÁ, JANA-VARGA, RITA
THE CHANGING OF SOCIETY AND SOCIAL
REPRESENTATION OF DEMOCRACY IN FIVE COUNTRIES

In this overview we present an analysis of the statistical data obtained through the questionnaire survey applied in our research. The questionnaire was administered to 300-300 respondents in Hungary, Poland, Bulgaria, Slovakia and the Czech Republic. In each country the respondents were selected on the basis of demographic characteristics (two age group: 18-23 and 40-45 years; people with or without secondary education [matura]; men and women).

The subjects of the study were asked to write down their first verbal association on the terms mentioned above. Beside this task the subjects had to determine on a five point scale how much these terms help, in their view, to explain the meaning of "democracy". The second part of the questionnaire consists of questions about the subject's opinion of the changes of her or his personal life circumstances, of her/his view of the present social and political situation and of its changes in the course of the last three years in her or his own country. We also asked for socio-demographic data, religious and party affiliations of the respondents. In the questionnaire we adapted an attitude scale measuring individualist/collectivist orientation as well.

In the questionnaire respondents had to determine on a four point scale how much the given 32 political terms help in their view to explain the meaning of "democracy". Among the most preferred terms five are identical in each country (FREEDOM, HUMAN RIGHTS, LAW AND ORDER, CONSTITUTION, JUSTICE). This rank order suggests that, in each country the majority of respondents interpreted democracy first of all by legal elements. This is reinforced by the fact that in three subsamples (Czech, Slovak, Polish) the term MINORITY RIGHTS appears in the first quarter of the rank order. Beside strictly legal terms, FREEDOM is the most preferred term: it is the first in the rank order in Bulgaria and in Czech Republic, and is preceded only by HUMAN RIGHTS in the remaining three countries.

CSIGÓ, PÉTER

THE BOKROS PACKAGE IN POLITICAL DISCOURSE

This essay is the summary of a text analysis on the public debate about Bokros package. The discourse models and interpretative forms constructed in the political debate about Bokros package have a structuring force on political spectacle up to now. The main goal of the participants in the dispute is to force the audience to accept systems of interpretation and perception. We present these systems as coherent means for structuring the perception and expression of economic-social standing thus making pre-structured cognitive models, the „task” of which is to „ensnare” the receivers, to prevent them from considering alternative systems of interpretation, and thus from political mobilization. In the centre of the opposing perception systems we find the notion of crisis: the aim of the participants is to present and legitimate specific crisis definitions. The interpretation system presented by the governing parties defines crisis from a „macro-economic” point of view, while the opposition parties take an everyday life-point of view. The latter presents the processes of reproduction in the sphere of human resources (education, family, science, health care system, culture), while the former speaks about economy as the basis of social reproduction. The concurring perception systems appear in form of alternative structures of discursive strategies. Their „task” is to show that the opposing strategies conceal and to conceal that they show.

In the text I wish to reveal how the political actors try to generate the structure of the main experiences which make possible to conceptualize and represent the social world.

FRICZ, TAMÁS-JOHANCSIK, JÁNOS:

THE INFLUENCE OF PARTIES ON THE CITIZENS

The paper tries to find an answer to how and by what means do the parties of five West European Countries – of Britain, Austria, France, Germany and Spain – try to make themselves more attractive among the voters, and what kind of messages may be drawn from their experiences by the Hungary parties wishing to join the European Union.

The analysis is based on an empirical survey done by questionnaire among the parties of the West European countries mentioned above, asking about the strategies they use to enhance their popularity. The parties expressed their opinion on the possible forms of the voters’ political participation, on the possible strategies of attracting attention and on the interpretation of political representation.

The empirical analysis shows what factors are considered most important in the achievement of electoral success by the respondent West European parties. It is revealed that the most important components of success are the following: the general image of the party

expecting to influence the decision of the voters in the long run; the general attractiveness or unattractiveness of the party leaders, and on the third place the fact that a governing party or a party in opposition is campaigning for the electoral victory.

Finally, in the closing chapter the paper also tries to find an answer – among other issues – to the question what similarities, or differences can be identified in the relationship of the parties and their voters in Western Europe and in Hungary. It is a fundamental question whether the Hungarian parties can learn from the strategies used by the West European parties to enhance their popularity, or should they rather develop their own, special strategies.

