



**THESES OF THE DOCTORAL (PHD)
DISSERTATION**

Péter Alabán:

*Social-historical correspondences of the social disintegration in Ózd
and in its surroundings after the regime change*

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ENGLISH SUMMARY

„Falling apart, dissolution, disintegration”. The issue of disintegration is worth to be and should be examined in more steps, nevertheless the concept cannot exclusively be bound to the period after the regime change. The different forms of it could be observed also earlier in the local society, as well as in given social groups. My own thesis is that in those areas in Borsod which were examined by me, instead of reindustrialisation, deindustrialisation took place in the course of the Hungarian post-industrialisation.

What could be the meaning of the expression of reindustrialisation which especially became more frequent in Western European literature during the 1980s. For those common people living in the former centers of heavy industry, mining and iron-steel production, the problem of reindustrialisation is at least as concerning as the following questions are: what will be the fate of those regions and settlements, which were left alone by the industry? Is it possible to fill the one-time industrial buildings and establishments with a new function? Or can it happen that the vanished industrial branches and trades will resuscitate again? Can we make the former deindustrial processes reverse?

In the case of Hungary it can be stated that during the last decade of the 20th century the conversion to the market economy could not replace the ceasing traditional industrial workplaces by expanding the service sector. Compared to the socialism the level of industrial employment dramatically declined then stagnated. Within the former small region of Ózd deindustrialisation was not followed by reindustrialisation, no new industrial branch or large-scale employer came, nothing which could have increased the employment to be full. Studying the way that led to this point requires on the one hand social-historical, on the other hand sociological approaches. The social picture of former heavy-industrial areas (town and its surroundings), including international examples (such as Italy, Poland and Romania), fits closely to this range of examination, as at first, the „real losers” of regime change appeared greatly in these regions, in several cases however their breakout strategies did not lead to existentially reassuring results. This is particularly true for the world of villages where life chances, sustainability, or even hopes for subsistence completely disappeared in a couple of years. Numerous case studies are available for the comparing assessment of the industrial transition on international level. Among my highlighted examples I attempted to demonstrate both post-industrial and reindustrial processes that were quite similar to or respectively different from the industrial areas in North Borsod.

The European examples of international comparison provide a good base for drawing a parallel between the social impacts of the Central and Eastern European regime change, recognizing such processes like marginalisation, unemployment, isolation, disintegration, respectively economic and social stigmatization. All of these appear in relation to the areas that I studied and also in relation to the one-time industrial town Ózd, where in the case of the ex-industrial workpeople, who made the majority of the society earlier, we cannot speak about real continuity after the regime change, thus this social group did not have true „heirs”, while the biggest losers of the economic contest were obviously the Roma. In their case, the unschooled status, the lack of qualification, the unemployment, respectively the small-scale employment, the bad social status, the tight flats unfit for healthy life, learning and appropriate socialization, all of these have become considerable social problems by today. At the same time these negative processes can be felt more outside the town, in the backward villages in Borsod, as the sign of the continuous population exchange.

During the existence of the factory-society there had been always half-integrated or disintegrated groups, though they constituted the minority. However, after the factory had been closed, now they were those who started to form the majority, which developed new existential situations and demanded new adaptational strategies such as working under the table, half-legal work, odd jobs, thefts to make ends meet, working abroad. The special local communities who lived in colonies of the former steelworks and who once shared collective sense of identity now dissolved, and the devastation of these quarters and miner-labourer colonies started off. The closed works and worksites, the contiguous ghettoized peripheries of today's town, the neighbouring and distant villages of the industrial zone already refer to desolation and decay by appearance.

In its heyday fourteen thousand employees were engaged by The Metallurgical Works of Ózd (ÓKÜ). The shutdown, the falling apart and the partial privatisation of the establishment fundamentally shook the status of the town, which could be felt on every field of life. Besides the town, the outskirts and the land found themselves in a similar situation as well, their development ceased, new opportunities arose only in a few place. What changes did these all bring about? How did extreme poverty and deprivation crop up, how did they become prevalent, and what effects did they have on local level for the next years and for the millennium? Beyond the clarification of basic concepts and main questions I have used the works of both international and native literature, which rest on newer and more up-to-date researches. Unlike previous practices, I have also aimed to include visual sources such as

photo and film. In the case of Ózd, the former citadel of Hungarian metallurgy, with regard to both documentaries and photographs, an especially abundant source of material is available, although the conversion of it has not happened yet.

The comparing analyses can provide an overview in space as well as in time, if we apply an approach from more points of view. My objective was also to make an outline comparison with international outlook, which reviews all the important changes in North Borsod, emphasizing the similarities and the differences. With the disappearance of conventional social categories the transformation of the traditional peasantry, respectively of the industrial workpeople has gone off in front of us. To survive and to hold on – these two elements of life are considered to be the actual issues in the regions where the population is decreasing rapidly, while studying the individual careers represents the person and the community as well. The work-based normative thinking and the cultural behaviour are not essential anymore but the social conduct and those behavioural standards, which are determined by the survival and by the pressure of subsistence, have become crucial. All of these social phenomena maintain or even make the social disintegration permanent.

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