Conference on Flow of men, goods and ideas Different approaches of social processes and adaptations of social scientific ideas in Central Eastern Europe

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Hungarian Sociological Association

Section: Deliberative Methods in Local Society Research

Organizer: György Lengyel

This session is devoted to the experiences of a recent research in which Deliberative Poll and Citizen’s Jury methods have been applied on the problems of local society. The core issues of the Kaposvár Small Region research were the most acute problems of the area: unemployment, job creation and the missing connection of labour market with education. The organizer’s presentation will start the discussion with the title of “Deliberation, local society and trust: an introduction”. It does provide an overview of the research and addresses the question how deliberative methods influence generalized trust in local society. Afterwards participants of the research present their findings concerning methodological problems of deliberation as well as substantive issues of the survey and fieldwork. Hungarian and foreign scholars are to be invited in order to comment the results or present their own experiences

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Attitudes towards Economic Competition in the Kaposvár Small Area  

Abstract for the conference 'Flow of men, goods and ideas’ organized by the Hungarian Sociological Association, 14-15 November, 2008, Pannon University, Veszprém, Hungary

In my paper, I will deal with public opinion about economic competition in the Kaposvár Small Area, and how these feelings and attitudes are similar to or different from the opinion of the Hungarian population in general. I took part in a Deliberative Poll in Kaposvár organized by the Corvinus University Budapest, and I used the survey data collected just before the deliberative part of the research. Thus, I make statistical analyses and use quantitative method.

The population of the Kaposvár Region is very polarized about economic competition, and usually, these are the social groups with a poorer economic situation which mostly refuse the opening up of markets. Although, the majority of the population of the Kaposvár Small Area are in favour of economic competition, it does not mean that they refuse state intervention in economic affairs. According to the data of Medián Institute, this way of thinking is very typical in Hungary, so the population of Kaposvár is not different in this respect. There are some statements about the role of a strong State in the economy which gained rather high support in the Kaposvár Region.

It is also known by the researches of Medián that the Hungarian population is mostly suspicious towards several characteristics of a functioning market economy and Liberal free market. People in Kaposvár are not different from the country’s average: half of this population is against privatization. However, the relative majority would be happy if foreign investments came to the region which might be explained by the poor economic and employment opportunities in the area.

Four attitude groups was formed by multivariate statistical analysis. These results show that although, there are many people in the Kaposvár Region who are against the market and the foreigners, but the majority support economic competition more or less and opened to the other characteristics of market economy.
Ivett Szalma
Changing opinion in the deliberation groups about the role of the state in the labour market

The research is going to present the results of the deliberative polling which was held in Kaposvár in summer of 2008. The substance of the deliberative polling is that it takes effort to renew the conventional public opinion with inclusion of the possibility of citizen consultation. Hereby the participants can orientate themselves about the disputed issue in comprehensive view. The purpose of deliberating poll is to reveal the opinion of people in the case if they had opportunity to get information and think over the issue.

The goal of the present performance is to analyze how to change the opinion of the participants of the deliberation groups about the role of the state in the labour market. Lots of national studies show that people regard the paternalistic state as ideal. At the same time there is a vivid discussion about how to make competitive the economy. However the improving of the competitivness means to cut back the paternalistic state. I am going to check how the opinion of the participants changed after the deliberation in the following aspects:

- Job security,
- responsibility of the state in eliminating the unemployment and providing jobs
- responsibility of the state in eliminating illegal work
- the government should increase or decrease the taxes
- the government should prefer the active policies (encouraging job creation and getting a job) or the passive policies (social benefits) to tackle unemployment.

First I am going to check the answers of the overall, representative sample and I am going to analyze which independent variables (age, occupation, gender, income, level of education, type of residence) have the biggest influence on them. Then I will try to find out what kind of demographic differences can be found between those who came to the deliberation weekend and those who did not. I will review how the opinion of the participants of the deliberation groups changed about the role of the state in the labour market. Finally I will try to analyze two groups (in which the biggest changes happened) by qualitative method.
This paper discusses the experiences of the *Citizen’s Jury* organized by researchers of Corvinus University of Budapest conducted in Kaposvár in the summer of 2008, within the framework of the *IntUne* (Integrated and United? A Quest for Citizenship in an Ever Closer Europe) project financed by the European Union.

The method of Citizen’s Jury is one of the deliberative techniques that provides the opportunity for citizens to learn about an issue, deliberate together, develop and present well-informed, well-grounded recommendations to decision-makers. The *Citizen’s Jury* process also allows decision-makers to reveal what people really think and to take their proposals into consideration in decision-making process.

The members of *Citizen’s Jury* meet to examine an issue of public significance. In the Kaposvár Small Region, both the experts and the general public are of the opinion that the most acute local problem is unemployment. Therefore, the discussion of citizens was based on the theme ‘Connection between Education and Unemployment’.

At the first stage of the research, the citizens have been informed in detail about the most important questions concerning the labour market and the vocational education and training as part of the education system in Hungary and in Kaposvár Small Region. Therefore, I am going to examine in this paper the main characteristics of vocational education and training in Hungary and in Kaposvár Small Region, with a strong focus on its relationship with the labour market.

Secondly, controversial opinions of experts have been presented to the citizens. Therefore, I am going to review how the participants have developed their own opinions on the most important topics, how they have formulated distinct key points.

Moreover, the paper reveals opinions of citizens who had sufficient time to digest information and to make a well grounded and informed decision. The paper also outlines how recommendations of citizens relate to the Hungarian vocational education policy.
Deliberated opinions and attitudes on the EU

The general lack of information and lack of interest about the EU is often mentioned both in the public discourses and the scientific research. The concept of “rational ignorance” is particularly interesting regarding the public opinion on the EU, as - being too distant and too complex, people are less eager to make an effort to gather the necessary information and to form an elaborate opinion on it. This way the measured public opinion on it is more likely to be only a superficial one which is even more object of being unstable over time and not consistent than the public opinion on other political issues related to the domestic political arena. Thus the methodology of Deliberative Polling® provides a unique opportunity to see how opinions and attitudes change after providing people with information, experts’ insights and making them discuss the issue with other people.

In the presented paper the questions of opinion and attitude changes on the EU, their consistency and the factors affecting them are addressed through quantitative analysis of pre- and post-deliberation survey data (based on a deliberative poll held in Kaposvár and its area in May-June 2008). Whilst the level of knowledge regarding the EU increases both in an objective and a subjective way, the opinion and attitude changes are barely consistent. After the deliberation the support of the EU and the integration process became more accentuated whilst there is a rising uncertainty regarding its direct consequences on one’s life together with a decreasing symbolic attachment to it. When looking for the factors affecting these tendencies we find that demographic factors have no effect on opinion changes which are rather influenced by the small group discussions. On the other hand uncertainty is not connected to opinion changes, it can be rather explained by the fact that an initially very positive attitude became closer to the reality.
In the spring and summer of 2008, as part of the IntUne European Research Project two participative research methods were applied in the Kaposvár region: deliberative polling® and citizens’ jury. As a first step, 1514 people belonging to a representative sample in the region were asked after filling out a questionnaire to take part at a deliberative weekend, where they would discuss with others the issues of unemployment and job creation and where they would have the opportunity to ask questions from experts. They were offered financial compensation, lunch and dinner. From the original sample, in the end 111 people participated at the second step of the research: the deliberative weekend (108 took part in the deliberative polling, 3 people together with others in the citizens’ jury).

In our lecture we examine if rational choice theory provides an adequate framework to explain the choice of participation at the weekend. We formulated hypotheses about differences in attributes between those who did not come and those who took part at the event based on a sociological perspective of rational choice theory. Although the decision to participate could contain strategic elements (resembling the free rider problem), we treated it as a parametric choice situation. Our basic supposition is, that those people were more likely to attend the weekend for whom it contained less costs and more benefits. We included under benefits not only financial gains, but for example the fact that for some discoursing on this topic might be a positive experience. Amongst costs we included beyond the possible costs of travel, the factor that participants had to sacrifice their time to be there. After checking whether the data support our hypotheses we discuss the implications of our findings. We argue that our results have a wider significance, because they can be relevant for other methods not just deliberative polling. For example, focus group research is also based on inviting people to take part at an event where they can discuss a topic with others (although for a more limited amount of time).
In the Kaposvár Deliberative Polling (DP) participants filled in a questionnaire on their arrival (T2) to the event and at the end of it (T3). The focus of the exposé is to present the changes that occurred from the original (T1) to T2 and T3 (on identical questions). Therefore, the study operates with those 108 participants who have filled all three questionnaires, and treats them as the whole population (like participants of an experiment).

The study outlines how a DP effected the participants in two areas:

The first is information learning, defined as how does the level of their factual knowledge change. It is measured 9 knowledge questions, where there is always one correct answer to a question. The study of this change is a test of Fishkin's hypothesis according to which 2/3 of the studying takes place between T1 and T2 and the rest happens until T3. The Kaposvár case shows that this is not quite true and also that the knowledge gain has a repartition-pattern and it is quite weak.

The second is what sort of attitude change do participants undergo during the deliberation process about the Hungarian economical situation: the labor market and unemployment. While in T1 all listed solutions were mainly welcomed, in T2 and T3, the certainty towards all solutions welcome slowly declined. The participants' attitude changes about the solution of illegal work are significant between T1 and T2, but it seems that there was no significant change in their attitudes between T2 and T3. Moreover, the participants understood the meaning of the different solution of unemployment.
The Citizens’ Jury method and its application possibilities in Hungary

The Citizens’ Jury is one of the most frequently used deliberative techniques that aims at involving stakeholders in decision-making processes through creating a space where members of the community can debate matters, voice their opinion and form informed decisions. The method was developed and widely used in old democracies where participation and citizens’ responsibility are well established concepts. The aim of this paper is to present the theoretical base and the characteristics of the method and to discover the possibilities of its application in Hungary as a relatively new democracy.

The results presented in this paper are based on the experiences of the Citizens’ Jury organized in Kaposvár, Hungary in June, 2008 within the framework of the INTUNE (Integrated and United? A Quest for Citizenship in an Ever Closer Europe) programme. The aim of the research was to test the Citizens’ Jury method in small region of Hungary to see how citizens respond to the opportunity of getting involved in a participative process. The Citizens’ Jury focused on a relevant local topic, the relationships of education and unemployment in the region. While the process brought important findings to the surface on the policy side, the aim of this paper is to present the main methodological findings concerning the difficulties in research design and in implementation. Through sharing the experiences of our research we hope to contribute to further develop the method and promote its better use in the Hungarian political and social arena.

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The impact of personal and social resources on the perception of group behaviour and attitudes

The paper discusses the relationship between the individual’s capital (both human and social) background and the perception of group behaviour and attitudes. Within the human capital aspects of psychological coping skills are also examined.

For the evaluation of group behaviour we used the Bales Interaction Process Analysis categories to decide whether the different capital background have an influence on the individuals’ behaviour in group and on the evaluation of the group as a whole. Whether different capital background group can be attributed with a different group behaviour (emotional, instrumental, positive, negative) and group evaluation pattern.

More personal resources yield more constructive behaviour in a group and more positive attitudes and better positions regarding SWB indicators. The sample for this research were the people from the 2008 Kaposvár Deliberative Polling on Unemployment and Employment, 1521 people from the base survey and the 108 participants of the deliberative weekend. The raised issue is connected with one problem of participatory methods, namely the (semi-self) selection of participants and the equal opportunity for giving their voice.