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Unequal Exchanges and the Radicalization of  
Demographic Nationalism in Hungary

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### Abstract<sup>1</sup>

This paper analyzes the structural and discursive context in which Hungary is becoming a low fertility emigrant country during the refolding of the Hungarian society into the direct competitive mechanisms of global capitalism. These changes include the increasing demand for labor within the internally open European Union and other longer-term local developments which have uprooted and continue to uproot a large number of people in Hungarian and East European societies. Following the logic of structure versus discourse interplay in a global and local context, we first carry out a historical structural analysis of the key demographic processes. Then, policies and institutionalized norms are reviewed. Finally, we analyze the radicalization of wider and popular political discourses in order to complete a complex and dynamic analysis of Hungarian demographic nationalism and panic in the second decade of the Millennium.

*Keywords:* nationalism, demography, migration, European Union, Hungary, biopolitics, refugees, population discourses.

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## *Introduction*

In January 11, 2015, after the attacks in Paris against Charlie Hebdo, the Hungarian prime minister went public with the following statements: “*We need to talk about immigration and related cultural questions more openly, honestly and in a more straightforward manner....Economic immigration is a bad thing in Europe, it should not be seen as having any utility, because it brings trouble and danger to the European man, and thus immigration is to be stopped, this is the Hungarian standpoint....We do not want to see a substantial minority having different cultural traits and background among us, we would like to keep Hungary a Hungarian land.*”<sup>2</sup> At the first moment, this just looked like a provocative statement, but later it proved to be a successful formulation from a discursive point of view as it successfully combined and revised various major discourses on nationhood and Europe or Europeaness understood in a hierarchical space. Orbán utilized the nationalist critique of pro-Western liberal discourses: Hungary has always been European and a defender of Europe and we need no ‘Europeanization’, or liberal preaching about anti-racism.<sup>3</sup> He combined this reclaimed and conservative Europeaness with the social exclusion and social competition discourses of the previous socialist governments against immigrants, who, according to these public discourses, are supposedly taking jobs from local Hungarians. And then, with a stress on defending Hungarians within and outside Hungary, the prime minister amalgamated all the above with the topics of securitization and the dangers of the ethnic/racial/religious mixing of populations via referring to the special status of Hungary and Eastern Europe within Europe. This use and recombination of discursive traditions has led to a hegemony in which counter-discourses remain suppressed or unsuccessful (silent), a fact which can be demonstrated not only by the dominance of the above discourses, but also by the knowledge that the 2016 ‘anti-quota’ referendum and the positions of the government were counterbalanced by the silence of opponents and abstentions from voting.<sup>4</sup>

How should we understand such changes? How should we understand and very importantly interpret demographic and migratory discourses which combine selective anti-immigration discourses and regulations with straightforward selective state-sponsored pronatalism and the radicalized defense of Europeaness and nationhood? This approach we term here as radical, East European demographic

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<sup>2</sup> "A bevándorlásról és az azzal összefüggő kulturális kérdésekről az eddigieknél sokkal nyíltabban, őszintébben, teljes egyenességgel kell beszélni. (...) A gazdasági bevándorlás rossz dolog Európában, nem szabad úgy tekinteni rá, mintha annak bármi haszna is lenne, mert csak bajt és veszedelmet hoz az európai emberre, ezért a bevándorlást meg kell állítani, ez a magyar álláspont. (...) Nem akarunk tőlünk különböző kulturális tulajdonságokkal és háttérrel rendelkező jelentős kisebbséget látni magunk között, Magyarországot szeretnénk Magyarországgént megtartani." Magyar Hírlap 12-01-2015. [http://magyarhirlap.hu/cikk/14193/Orban\\_a\\_gazdasagi\\_bevandorlas\\_rossz](http://magyarhirlap.hu/cikk/14193/Orban_a_gazdasagi_bevandorlas_rossz) Accessed: 28-12-2016. (Trans. Author)

<sup>3</sup> For an analysis of these earlier types, see: Melegh and Hegyesi, 2003; Melegh, 2006.

<sup>4</sup> For a description of the event and its results, see:

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/oct/02/hungarian-vote-on-refugees-will-not-take-place-suggest-first-poll-results> Accessed: 28-12-2016.

nationalism, which is a specific form of competitive political demography aimed at controlling and developing a specific group of the 'population' who are seen as a source of economic and cultural advancement, the 'strength' of the 'nation,' as opposed to 'other' groups which represent danger in this respect.<sup>5</sup> This tradition has an intellectual history going back as far as the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, including authors like Herder.<sup>6</sup> The Hungarian case described below is one of these 'demographic' competitions, but it has some special features, which we analyze. This paper argues that within this complex dynamic there is interaction between various global and local changes (e.g. the emergence of 'new authoritarianism' from India to the United States, after a longer liberal phase) among which factors we now focus on the historical interplay between an evolving radical demographic nationalism, and the demographic and migratory structural context.

Thus we analyze the discursive traditions in a structural context in which Hungary is becoming (again) an emigrant country as a reaction to the refolding of the Hungarian society into the competitive mechanisms of global capitalism. These changes include the increasing demand for migrant within the internally open European Union and other longer-term local developments which have uprooted and continue to uproot a large number of people in Hungarian and East European societies. This process has been going on in a new economic context in which global (and within it, Western) capitalism operates using various forms of unequal exchange and path-dependencies and is replacing older methods of securing an appropriate labor force in the midst of the massive cyclical and structural problems that European economies face.<sup>7</sup>

Following the logic of structure versus discourse interplay in a global context, we first carry out a historical structural analysis of demographic processes. Then, policies and institutionalized norms are reviewed. Finally, we analyze the radicalization of wider and popular political discourses in order to complete a complex and dynamic analysis of Hungarian demographic nationalism and panic in the second decade of the Millennium.

### *Historical-structural analysis: Regional challenges and dependencies related to migration and demographic change*

Since the late 1980s, due to increasing competition in the world economy evolving EU integration, changes in the international environment, and the shifts in demographic and labor market processes, the role of migration as a source of labor and human capital has increased, in contrast to fertility rates. There has been a 45 per cent increase in the global stock of people born outside their country of residence since 1990, while the increase in the global population was a little above 30 per cent, with

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<sup>5</sup> The topic of radical nationalism has been addressed by a large number of scholars. For a shorter review of literature and possible interpretative frameworks see the Introduction in Feischmidt and Hervik, 2015. Demographic nationalism is best understood using the framework of Weiner and Teitelbaum, 2001.

<sup>6</sup> See specifically Weiner and Teitelbaum, 2001: 46.

<sup>7</sup> For one definition of dependency, see Böröcz, 2014.

the historical turning point being in the late 1970s and early 1980s.<sup>8</sup> More and more regions and people have become involved in global systems of migration, which process has also become very intensive within the European Union. On a macro level, these processes are linked to an increase in the flow of capital (the relative rise of FDI compared to GDP) and other historical-macro structural changes due to, most importantly in the long run, persistent and (in the 1990s) increasing economic inequality (Chase-Dunn, 1999; Böröcz, 1999; 2014; Fassmann, 2014; Melegh, 2011; 2013; Melegh and Sárosi, 2015).

The net rates of migration (i.e. balances between emigration and immigration) in Southeastern Europe have become increasingly diversified over the course of the past sixty years. In the 1950s the region was more or less homogeneously one of net emigration (with the exception of the countries in the south west of the Soviet Union). After changes that took place between the 1960s and 1990s, it lost this homogeneity and some regions became areas for immigration, while others became, or remained, centers of emigration. Hungary for a while followed a path towards becoming an immigrant country, but since the mid-2000s it has started to develop an emigrant pattern, a pattern which we observed in the case of Romania and Bulgaria for a longer period of time. In Hungary this increasing outflow leads to a loss of a younger, better educated and/or skilled labor force towards Austria, Germany and the United Kingdom (Blaskó and Gödri, 2014).

In terms of economic well-being, Hungary was a relatively rich country in the South-East European region in the 1950s, and increased its wealth with regard to the world average until the 1980s, when it entered a period of stagnation. This slowing of developmental dynamics is especially visible when compared to the trajectory of other, previously migrant-sending countries such as Austria and Italy, which improved their relative positions dramatically after the 1970s and became predominantly migrant-receiving countries (Melegh, 2012). Around 1980, a new cycle of globalization of the world economy began which resulted in an increase in the foreign indebtedness of Hungary and the stagnation which also characterized most East-European socialist planned economies in the region in the 1980s (Chase-Dunn, 1999; Böröcz, 2009: 134-35). The economic restructuring which took place in the late 1980s and 1990s followed neoliberal economic policies (evident, for instance, in an increase in the role of foreign direct investment) and the consequent decline in GDP (from 140% of the world average it had declined to 100% around the time of the change of the regime), job losses (more than 1 million) and most importantly, job security, the memories of which have had major long-term consequences concerning migration.<sup>9</sup> Based on mirror statistics, a growing trend towards emigration has been ongoing since the early 2000s. According to SEEMIG estimates which utilize UN migration matrices based on censuses and stock data on country of birth, Hungary has had an increasingly

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<sup>8</sup> See the following databases: United Nations, WPP 2011: World Population Prospects 2011. <http://esa.un.org/unpd/wpp/index.htm> Accessed: 16-08-2016.

United Nations, WPP 2015: World Population Prospects: The 2015 Revision. United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division. DVD Edition. See also Melegh, 2006.

<sup>9</sup> For employment figures, see: Zádor, 2010: 266 (from 4.527 million to 3.484 million). See also Melegh, 2012.

negative migration balance since 2008 (Földházi et al., 2014). This rise in emigration and the parallel economic restructuring has also led to greater dependency on remittances, a situation which may also be observed in other former socialist countries (Böröcz, 2014).

The target countries of emigrants from Hungary have not really changed during the last 60 years, which shows how important historical links are in mass migration. As the key destination countries, Hungarian emigrants have always chosen Austria, Germany, the United Kingdom, North America (USA and Canada) and, to some extent, Australia and in the 1970s, Israel (Melegh and Sárosi, 2015). Regardless of this striking resilience, we can also argue that Hungary, just as with the whole region, has become more Eurocentric in its external relationships, and has become more loosely connected to non-European emigration destinations. Even when looking at the flows of asylum seekers since 1989, when Hungary signed the Geneva convention, and especially from 1997 (when geographical limitations were lifted in accordance with the convention) until early 2015, the cyclical inflows were based on inflows of Hungarians (in the early years), Bosnians (1994-95) and Kosovars, while Afghanis, Pakistanis, and Iraqis played a smaller role.<sup>10</sup> What is more, until early 2016 only an extremely small percentage of asylum applicants obtained some kind of protection status, or remained in Hungary and completed the whole process of applying for asylum. Thus Hungary did not establish migratory links in this way. Even the massive outflow of refugees due to the dramatic crisis in Western Asia mainly produced by the USA along with some West European, and local middle-ranking powers (Turkey, Saudi-Arabia and Iran, and now also Russia) did not change the migratory picture, and almost no migrants stopped in the country. For instance, in 2015 between January and November from a total of 138 997 registered cases 135 963 applications (98%) for asylum were dropped by the Hungarian authorities due to cancellation as the applicants had left the country.<sup>11</sup>

The key feature of these patterns of immigration is that the whole region and Hungary, while sending massive flows of people using historical links to the “West,” receives migrants only from the region immediately surrounding it, while further links are rare and relatively weak (such as China, Vietnam, or other areas of the world).<sup>12</sup> Thus from the late 1980s until the early 2000s, Hungary’s accumulated relative richness increased the country’s attractiveness for prospective migrants from poorer ex-state socialist countries in the neighborhood which faced even deeper internal crises (such as Romania or the Soviet Union), leading to an increase in immigration from these countries. In this context, due to the especially strong ethnic-historical links, Transylvania in Romania became a key source of migration to Hungary during and after the collapse of state socialisms in the region, which was followed in

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<sup>10</sup> See Demográfiai Évkönyv, 2015.

<sup>11</sup> See the statistics of the immigration authorities:

[http://www.bmbah.hu/index.php?option=com\\_k2&view=item&layout=item&id=177&Itemid=1232&lang=hu](http://www.bmbah.hu/index.php?option=com_k2&view=item&layout=item&id=177&Itemid=1232&lang=hu) Accessed: 28-12-2016.

<sup>12</sup> For an actual statistical analysis of the migratory and demographic processes, see Melegh and Sárosi, 2015. Also, see the following lecture at which the relevant UN and World Bank matrices were analysed for the longer term: Melegh, 2015.

importance by neighboring areas inhabited by people of Hungarian origin (Ukraine and Serbia). Starting from an early high level, immigration stabilized at a lower rate in the 1990s with an inflow of 20-30,000 people per year. The diversification of the migration patterns of Hungarian speakers from neighboring countries (like Romania) and the previously massive outflow of Hungarians toward the kin-state Hungary led to a situation in which the main immigrant groups did not counterbalance the trend to emigration, and also did not match the 'lost population' in terms of their age composition (primarily young), better-than-local-average educational levels, and employment rates. Thus even with migration there has been and continues to be an 'emptying' process, or in other words, unequal forms of integration into global flows which create challenges for Hungary and the surrounding region within the current competitive systems. One of the potential 'remedies' for this unequal exchange would be an increase in migrant flows from outside Europe such as China, and most importantly, Vietnam, but these immigration flows have remained rather low throughout the period and their potential has not been utilized. Vietnam, for instance, is a country which sends such migrants with such characteristics to Hungary who (in a fictitious migratory 'exchange' within global capitalism) could 'compensate' for the lost population.<sup>13</sup>

Since the 1960s fertility rates in Hungary have decreased or stagnated, as they did globally, but this process started from a much lower level. During certain periods of history the trend followed strange twists (a very quick decline in the 1960s, some growth in the 1970s, and then another quick decline around the change of the regime). Nonetheless, Hungary has maintained a low level of 1.5 TFR or less for a longer period of time which has a huge impact on ageing and age composition. This is a crucial factor in the demographic problems of the country and may prove to be very important in terms of maintaining various systems of social protection.

Mortality, of course, has been seriously gendered, showing different paths and levels in the long run. The country was above the global average in terms of male and also female mortality in the 1950s and early 1960s, and maintained this advantage with regard to European levels, while improvements in male mortality rates (in particular) started stagnating and diverted from global trends later. The trend caught up with global improvements only in the early 2000s. Female mortality followed European patterns until the mid-1970s, and it was only in the mid-1990s that it started to follow global trends, which it has followed until the present day. Overall, we can say that increases in male and female life expectancy have not showed a tendency to counterbalance the decline in the population since the early 1980s, and, very importantly, that they indicate rather dramatic social inequalities (Kovács and Bálint, 2014; Meslé, 2004).<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Witness the proportion of employed people working in jobs that require higher education by country of birth in 2001 and 2010, and among migrants who arrived between 2001 and 2011 (%) in the Hungarian censuses. The figure among immigrants who arrived during the period 2001-2011 was 7%, as opposed to the local Hungarian population's 16% (see also Melegh, 2016). Such labour market tendencies have been aptly analysed by Ágnes Hárs (2012).

<sup>14</sup> For the actual data, see the UN's World Population Prospects. <https://esa.un.org/unpd/wpp/DataSources/> Accessed: 28-12-2016.

Thus the country is facing rather serious demographic and migration-related challenges. The consequence of this potential increase in more extreme forms of dependencies (outmigration can cause various losses in terms of labor, skills, social and tax payments, especially combined with the overall process of ageing) may prove to be rather serious and lead to unequal exchange, meaning dependency.<sup>15</sup> In addition, according to the SEEMIG population projections and forecasts, the demographic shift towards a pattern of emigration may lead to an even greater drop in population of as many as an extra one million people by 2060, creating an unfavorable age pyramid in terms of ageing (Földházi et al., 2014). We also need to recognize that the outflow of labor is related to counterflows of capital, which indicate the presence of structural inequality, as suggested by Sassen.<sup>16</sup>

In the next analytical step we must look at how Hungarian polity faces these challenges, examine what population and migration policies have been institutionalized, and what discourses are in operation in the light of the above-described process of demographic ‘emptying’, historically fixed migratory links and related unequal exchanges. We argue below that, following discursive traditions, social selective population policies have focused on providing financial and housing-related support for childbearing (for ‘quality groups’), while, most importantly, no overall migration policy has been developed and there has been little initiative to address the structural and relational elements of the unequal exchanges within a space open to flows of labor. This indeed may be reason for the current biopolitical panic, and the further development of a new authoritarian version of nationalism.

### *Population policies and institutionalized discursive traditions*

In order to understand the development of population policy measures and institutions we need to go back at least to the 1960s, when the Hungarian state socialist system introduced a rather developed set of social and population policy measures to counterbalance the rising costs of bringing up a child.<sup>17</sup> Thus among other benefits, during the 1960s family allowances were increased and made universal, and paid one- and later (from 1973 onwards) three-year leave for mothers was introduced, guaranteeing a fixed monthly allowance. In addition, families who were having or planning to have children were also given extra public housing privileges in a rather imbalanced housing market. These measures and the labor market’s continual over-

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<sup>15</sup> The issue of development and larger-scale outmigration has been a controversial one, but we can clearly recognize some of the key features identified by authors who work on countries and regions with high rates of outmigration: a loss of revenues, the failure of remittances to boost development, a loss of skills and local production capacity, and labour shortages - especially if there are no explicit policies to counterbalance losses (as is the case with Hungary and the region): See the analysis in Castles and Wise, 2008.

<sup>16</sup> For the theory, see Sassen, 1988; 2006. The key migratory target countries of Hungary mainly overlap with the key investor countries as seen from the average inflow of FDI based on World Bank data (WB WDI database), World Bank (2016) *World Development Indicators & Global Development Finance*, <http://databank.worldbank.org/ddp/home.do?Step=12&id=4&CNO=2> Accessed 16-08-2016. See also Meleg, 2006.

<sup>17</sup> For the literature on this development, see: Szikra, 2010; 2014; Tárkányi, 1998; Kristó, 2015.

demand for labor force together ensured that Hungarian fertility levels only slightly declined throughout the whole period (with some rise in the early 1970s).

In the 1980s, with the introduction of a special form of help for working mothers, the country set out on a path of institutionalizing inequalities and developing a new type of pro-natalism that supported 'higher quality' (i.e. better-educated and better-paid) parents, as opposed to the less educated. Thus when Hungary opened up and became trapped between the jaws of a rise in consumerism and the increasing difficulties of the Hungarian economy, it just continued down this path toward selective pro-natalism, a policy which became fully fledged under the second and third Orbán government. This path involved various twists and turns. First, there was a major shift towards reducing budget spending and removing support from higher-income families. This involved a collapse in the universal system of family allowance and restriction of the payment of a certain percentage of the mother's salary after childbearing. It was finance minister Bokros who in 1995 introduced an income-based threshold for determining various forms of support (e.g. family allowance), which move deepened the substantial decline in fertility that had started in 1992.<sup>18</sup> This preference for reducing social spending and just providing for the lower classes and the poor was reversed by the first Orbán government (1998-2002). The reintroduced universality of the key forms of family policy support reintegrated the middle and upper class into the system, and at the same time started to penalize 'undeserving' lower social groups if they, for instance, took children out of the school system. In addition, the Orbán government did not increase family allowance; a key form of income among poorer groups. At the same time, the government started providing tax allowances to families with children, which meant that those families received support who had taxable revenue. This above-described preferential support also appeared in state-sponsored housing loans which could be utilized by families who had good enough background to start such family projects. This combination of universality, middle-class preferences and utilitarian elements remained after the first Orbán government, and in certain ways was strengthened by the following governments, but the second and third Orbán government very clearly radicalized and extended the same logic. The continuity is striking, even in the case of migration policy.

In 2010, the new Orbán government was faced with dramatic economic challenges, including the indebtedness in foreign currency of hundreds of thousands of families who were burdened with rising interest and a worsening exchange rate. This pushed the ratio of foreign debt (in terms of GDP) to above 100 percent, indicating direct dependency in terms of macro finances.<sup>19</sup> The related housing loans were enabled by unregulated financial markets and the wish to provide families with financial support, and to create demand within the economy. Actually, the first Orbán

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<sup>18</sup> The process started earlier, but fertility declined dramatically in various groups (most importantly, among those staying home on some of form of paid maternity leave). See: Spéder, 2004. Also, the Total Fertility Rate (TFR) fell again in this period and later only compensation for the cessation of support was somewhat able to halt the decline in fertility - as we can see in the adjusted TFR, taking into account postponement effects (Kapitány and Spéder 2015: 43-47).

<sup>19</sup> For an analysis, see the following report Miklós, G. (2011) A magyar eladósodás és válság hatásai (The Hungarian indebtedness and its effects). *International Relations Quarterly*, 2 (7). [http://www.southeast-europe.org/pdf/07/DKE\\_07\\_M\\_V\\_Miklos-Gabor.pdf](http://www.southeast-europe.org/pdf/07/DKE_07_M_V_Miklos-Gabor.pdf) Accessed: 28-12-2016.

government initially started this process, but the socialist governments clearly supported the opening for the banking products which created a situation of financial emergency during the financial crisis of 2008. Gaining control over this situation was of great importance for the Orbán government, not only because of its financial and economic consequences, but also because of the impact on the population policies they had initiated much earlier. The middle class was under stress, and the government wanted to present itself as the ‘savior’. After ‘saving’ some of the groups burdened with the improperly regulated loans of commercial banks, the Orbán government turned back to the original idea of promoting the ‘working’ and ‘middle classes’ and propping up the housing market with substantial support from the budget. These measures include new types of housing support in the form of so-called family housing support (in Hungarian, CSOK) and very soon afterwards the so-called National Housing Communities (in Hungarian, NOK) were also approved. The family housing system with all its (not insignificant) risks is designed to provide variable free or low-interest (subsidized) money mainly for building new houses, and is differentiated according to the present (or promised) number of children in the family. NOK is simply a high-risk pooling group which may provide financial resources outside the banking system. This represents an altogether newer (and riskier) system than tried under the first Orbán government, but one with the clear aim of boosting fertility and economy on national grounds, with a focus on ‘working’ or ‘middle-class groups’ which are able to gain access to the specified resources. The bias is also clear in the system of provision of extra help for those who return to the labor market and obtain better jobs.

Major maneuvering has been also going on to exclude the ‘undeserving’ poorer groups from these measures in order to ‘disincentivize’ higher levels of fertility among them. At the same time, at least during the first phase of the initiatives, the government also tried to build in various other conservative family policy goals, such as promoting more and longer-lasting marriages. However, social reactions and the wish to avoid a backlash in public opinion meant that most (but definitely not all) of these ‘hidden’ attempts failed during the policy making process and legislative steps. It is also important to point out that some of the effects of these policies did not reach their original goals, and family support reached social groups for which it was not targeted.<sup>20</sup> However, provision of an analysis of social outcomes is outside the scope of this analysis. This situation of unintended consequences is very clear in the case of the family tax allowance, which not only changed during the rule of Orbán governments, but also became more inclusive toward groups with reduced incomes.

The social bias of the Orbán government is much clearer from the perspective of the penalization of lower status groups via changes in social policy measures, pushing them into an almost compulsory public work system and maintaining the original idea of not increasing the family allowance and linking this to the ‘proper’ behavior of the lower classes (including schooling, but also other ‘behavioral’ elements). So the key issue is not the complete exclusion of lower groups from

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<sup>20</sup> See about this the perspective of Balázs Kapitány who analyses the impact of population policy measures: <http://www.nepesedesikerekasztal.hu/files/2014nov/Kapitany%20Balazs.pdf> Accessed: 28-12-2016.

middle-class oriented policy measures, but the taking away or freezing of non-work-related income and thus the burdening of the family life of the very poor. This shows the selective pronatalism of the Hungarian government and its aim of disciplining, penalizing and selectively supporting the national population body, instead of changing the social relations which would restructure the demographic behavior of the targeted groups.<sup>21</sup> In this respect, the institutional system of population policies reflects the approach (not the concrete measures of) the regimes which existed between the two world wars (and which combined pro- and anti-natalism and also aimed at disciplining the nation in order to increase performance in terms of global competition for various resources and territories).<sup>22</sup> The current measures mainly provide support and only indirectly or very mildly penalize fertility behavior, but the overall idea is strikingly similar. As there is evidence that fertility rates are not changing due to longer-term structural factors (TFR has now been below 1.5 since 1992), even the hope of significantly raising fertility levels seems to be weak.

It should also be mentioned that longevity and mortality have not become key targets of the Orbán government, and basically only discursive support has been given for changing lifestyles and diets to reduce mortality. Additionally, the healthcare system and the working conditions in health care have deteriorated substantially to crisis levels, which conditions definitely do not improve the health of Hungarian society.

Overall, we argue that the established institutional framework has been rather stable and the process of demographic decline has been addressed via increases in social bias and exclusion and the idea of selective support and demographic nationalistic disciplining, without substantially changing the structural conditions that support underlying social stresses that arise from the existence of an open, competitive and unequal social space. But let us now turn to the institutionalized migration policies which have come to the forefront of political discussions. Here we will show that while they may be linked to some of the key structural migratory processes, they have not been part of the establishment of an integrated approach that covers all the migratory links; and what is more, following discursive traditions, such policy has established a combined historical-ethno- and a West-centric hierarchical system which bears no reflection to the relational unequal exchanges with the 'West', and with the exception of Hungarians and some special 'Eastern' groups there is only a basic idea of direct closure and control.

### *Migration policies and institutionalized demographic nationalism*

Before the fall of the socialist system in Hungary, migration policy, and most importantly, discourses, focused on the Western diaspora and the dissidents, while little attention was paid to migrants coming from the neighboring countries or the Soviet Union (Tóth, 1997, and for the analysis described below, see Melegh et al.,

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<sup>21</sup> This refers to the key debate in demography between the so-called Malthusian supply side and the Condorcet-promoted demand-side approach which has existed since the 18th century. For an excellent summary, see: Sen, 1994.

<sup>22</sup> For these, see Quine, 1996; Melegh, 2006.

2016). The first legal change was initiated to speed up the return of Hungarians living in the West who had left the country, or who may even have lost their Hungarian citizenship due to restrictive policies (Act XXXI of 1989). The Hungarian government assumed that returning migrants were ethnically Hungarian and refugees fleeing from repressive political systems. Also, Hungary received larger numbers of refugees from neighboring countries, notably Romania, who crossed the border illegally and asked for asylum in Hungary due to ethnic and political repression in the sending country. This was based on Hungary's joining the Geneva Convention in March 1989 (with geographic restrictions on non-European areas, which were lifted only later). Also, Hungary received a larger number of migrants from Eastern Germany who later obtained specific permission to go to West Germany. Legislation also had to be changed in 1993 - in one aspect - due to the effect of the war in Yugoslavia (1991 onwards) as the number of immigrants and asylum seekers radically increased, and the regulations that were in place could not manage the situation. In 1993 the Act on the Entry, Residence and Settlement of Foreigners in Hungary, or Aliens' Act (Act LXXXVI of 1993), came into force to tighten up the law of 1989. As a result, the process of becoming naturalized for a foreign citizen (the obtaining of a settlement permit) required eight years' residence in Hungary and at least three years of living and working in Hungary with a residence permit (Gödri et al., 2014; Melegh et al., 2016).

Finally, in 1997 an Act on Asylum entered into force (Act CXXXIX of 1997) which ended the geographical restriction on refugees. The first phase of legal changes thus demonstrates that Hungary (from the late 1980s onwards) started opening its migratory space, mainly within Europe, but it also started joining international legal regimes, and some global features were even integrated into policy. But from the late 1990s, a focus on the West and ethno-centrism returned.

In the next period, Hungary constructed a four-tier system of immigration congruent with relevant EU regulation with special regulations for EEA citizens and third country nationals without Hungarian ethnic-historical background, while for foreign citizens with historical-ethnic ties to Hungary it created a special system. For asylum seekers, at least until the refugee crisis, it followed EU and international legislation, which it signed up to in full extent during the process of accession to the EU, although the loyalty to this supranational system has very recently been questioned.

During the EU pre-accession period national rules and legislation on migration were adapted in harmony with EU legislations and norms. The 2001 Act on the Entry and Residence of Foreigners (Act XXXIX of 2001), which was the legal basis of the free movement of EU citizens in Hungary, divided the legal status of immigrants into EU citizens and third-country nationals. However, it preserved the requirement to obtain a settlement permit, even for EU citizens (namely, a minimum of three years working and living in Hungary with a residence permit in order to obtain a settlement permit, or immigrant status). For third country nationals this period was eight years of residence prior to naturalization. Certain ethnic privileges were also built into the system; most importantly, social and educational support for ethnic Hungarians living outside the country, and also certain forms of legal support when applying for Hungarian citizenship (Kántor et al., 2004). This already indicates

how Hungarian immigration policy and the legal framework followed the previously existing German model of selective exclusion and maintenance of ethnic privileges. In the same period, Hungary, just like other applicant countries, signed up to all the relevant EU legislation concerning refugees and human rights.

By joining the EU in 2004 both regulations and the institutional system for handling migration were transformed. Act XXXIX of 2004 established the Office of Immigration and Nationality (Bevándorlási és Állampolgársági Hivatal). Act I of 2007 on the Entry and Stay of Persons with the Right of Free Movement and Residence defined the rights of EEA citizens. Act II of 2007 on the Entry and Stay of Third Country Nationals defined the rights of third-country nationals. In addition, there were several attempts to further enhance the ethnic privileges of people of Hungarian origin, including a referendum (2004) on automatically providing them with citizenship if their ancestors had lived on the former territory of the Hungarian Kingdom.

In 2011, an amended citizenship law was established. This offers full citizenship to anyone who knows the Hungarian language, can claim historical Hungarian background, and had one ancestor who lived on the territory of historical Hungary (namely, the Hungarian Kingdom before 1920, or in Hungary between 1941 and 1945). This law does not support the immigration of ethnic Hungarians, although it does provide them with rights which enable them to move freely and to settle down – even if they come from non-EU countries. In contrast, for third country nationals without such background the process of naturalization still takes 11 (3+8) years in total. Thus ethnic rivalry is built into the Hungarian system of immigration.

In 2012 the government created a special process for immigration in the national economic interest; the so-called ‘national settlement permit’. All individuals are entitled to apply if they have held a residence permit for any purpose for at least six months prior to the submission of the application, and they provide and register security to a total nominal value of 300 000 EUR which should be invested into a special personal treasury bond issued by the Government Debt Management Agency. This new piece of legislation was introduced in order to finance government debt and to provide privileges not justified on the basis of ethnic-historical factors.

For a long time Hungary had no overall policy document concerning migration policy and the integration of migrants. There was an attempt in 2007 to produce a government document but the leaking of the document led to outrage from right-wing opposition politicians as they panicked over the potential immigration of a supposed one million Chinese (Melegh, 2007). This outrage was based on the false claim that the then-ruling socialist government was actively seeking the immigration of millions of Chinese people. In 2013 the Orbán government produced a ‘Migration Strategy’ paper, mainly to justify programs based on the various migration-related funds supplied by the European Union (Government Decree 1698/2013 (X.4.)). This paper focused only on immigration and mainly on non-Hungarians from so-called third countries (non-EU, nor Norway and Switzerland) and, very importantly, it concentrated on the security issues and adaptation requirements that apply to migrants. Thus, the increase in emigration was ignored, and, very importantly, the integration of immigrants and other policy elements were either covered very briefly

or contained in promises of further governmental action, including an Integration Strategy, which has not yet been finalized.

Concerning refugees, through accession to the EU Hungary fully implemented EU regulations. Following the arrival of a large number of asylum seekers from Kosovo, from 2014 onwards Hungary started experimenting with various symbolic and real legal changes in order to slow down and even to stop entirely the incoming flow. First, Hungary tried to change the legal status of Serbia and various other countries as safe countries.<sup>23</sup> In the summer of 2014, following the examples of Bulgaria and Calais, Hungary built a border fence<sup>24</sup> along the Hungarian-Serbian border<sup>25</sup> and restricted the number of entry points for refugees. Then Hungary started criminalizing illegal border crossing attempts which damaged the fence.<sup>26</sup> Hungary also introduced a so-called crisis situation (a 'state of exception') due to extreme migratory pressure (09-03-2016). In addition, Hungary restricted many of the rights of people who were seeking and receiving international protection.<sup>27</sup> Plus, Hungary commenced (to a large extent) a symbolic battle against the 'forced settlement' of immigrants by the EU, which ended in an inconclusive referendum and an attempt to change the constitution in 2016.

### *Hierarchies in the institutionalization of migration*

As analyzed above and as viewed as a set of institutional practices and norms, Hungarian migration policy can be understood as a hierarchical system based on various discursive traditions. The first one is that of cross-border nationalism. The Hungarian state clearly endorses migratory and other links with Hungarian minorities living in neighboring countries. In building special relationships it is not alone as many states maintain preferential treatment for individuals linked to the homeland. This preferential link can be ethnic and/or colonial and/or historical (including, for instance, groups who have previously emigrated and their offspring) and in terms of migration policy we can now see an increase in such measures as many countries are trying to establish preferred reservoirs for labor markets which might face overall or relative shortages in the future. In Europe, most Eastern, Southern and South Eastern states follow a somewhat similar strategy, but in Hungary it seems that the motivation behind such an approach is a complex attempt at nation building across borders. Hungary declares itself to be a state fully responsible for the maintenance of 'historical' Hungary in terms of ethnic composition and cultural historic legacies, even

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<sup>23</sup> Government Decree no. 191/2015 (VII. 21.) on safe countries of origin and safe third countries.

<sup>24</sup> Amended by Act CXL of 2015 on the amendment of certain acts related to the management of mass migration: criminal proceedings in connection with the border barrier

<sup>25</sup> Amended by Act CXXVII of 2015 on the temporary closure of borders and amendment of migration-related acts

<sup>26</sup> Amended by Act CXL of 2015 on the amendment of certain Acts related to the management of mass migration: criminal proceedings in connection with the border barrier

<sup>27</sup> Amendment of the Asylum Government Decree (from 1 April 2016.) including restrictions on various forms of support.

beyond its borders, and in a gradual process has built up direct, legal links with affiliated people living outside Hungary.

Before the coming to power of the 2010 Orbán government there had already been various attempts to legally prescribe privileges (e.g. the so-called status law in 2001, or Act LXII.), and a failed referendum in December 2004 to establish dual citizenship for Hungarians living outside Hungary in neighboring countries, which was severely attacked by the Socialist party who claimed to be defending local labor markets by utilizing a discourse of social exclusion (for example, calling incomers a 'black army'). In 2011 special legislation was passed with the aim of offering citizenship without the need to reside in the country itself. Now the country offers full citizenship to any individual who can provide evidence that their ancestors once lived on Hungarian territory and that he/she can speak some Hungarian. The procedure has been made very short, and since its implementation the government has received 710,000 applications, while 670,000 people have completed the process, which beyond making the immigration of these people a mere formality (they now only need to have a registered address in Hungary), also provides them with passports which allow them to enter labor markets, and in certain cases the Schengen Zone, which would not be open to them via their original citizenship.<sup>28</sup>

Beyond the ethnic-historical, nation-building process using trans-border legal and citizenship linkages, the country is supporting institutionally the free movement of people within the EU and fully respects the Schengen agreement. The maintenance of a privileged zone of 'Europeans' has been a clear priority of the government as it also allows the free movement and free labor market maneuvering of Hungarian citizens.

For the last two decades Hungary has followed a rather hard and non-supportive policy toward Third Country Nationals (TCNs) of non-Hungarian origin. In this respect, it basically followed the logic of EU legislation, which was implemented quickly. But by not establishing institutionalized integration policies and maintaining further discriminatory practices, it has increased the separation of certain pillars which has led to a rather segregated system. This also occurs in visa policy, which even in 2009 proved to be discriminatory toward various regions of Asia and Africa (Illés et al., 2010). Concerning individuals from these areas, numerous security and law enforcement screening processes are applied. Other forms of disadvantage include, for example, in the case of family reunions, the fact that (except until 2015 those who are refugees and for beneficiaries and subsidiary protection or people with tolerated stay) third-country nationals do not receive any support towards the housing or livelihoods of families (i.e. no temporary support, social housing, language courses or help with finding employment) (Tóth, 2011; 2013). Discrimination also appears in the provision of citizenship and/or long-term residence for non-Hungarian TCNCs (Kováts et al., 2011) unless applicants agree to pay huge sums of money to various private 'agent' companies contracted by the government to obtain preferential treatment in the form of national settlement permits. Thus this form of demographic nationalism handles non-Hungarian 'Easterners' mainly as a security risk; it provides

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<sup>28</sup> For statistics see: <http://www.kormany.hu/hu/a-miniszterelnok-helyettes/nemzetpolitikaert-felelos-allamtitkar/hirek/eddig-710-ezer-kulhoni-magyar-adott-be-egyszerusített-honosítási-kerelmet> Accessed: 28-12-2016.

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little legal or linguistic support; it is biased against non-European and/or lower class immigrants, and migrants with family members.<sup>29</sup>

And this is the last issue which deserves some attention with regard to the Hungarian experience. Empirical analyses have shown that in education and in various institutionalized cultural encounters, the local population and teachers are basically trying to downplay the importance of cultural diversity and especially the need to handle such problematic social relationships.<sup>30</sup>

In terms of discrimination, the most clear institutional closure relates to the case of refugees. A (sophisticated and internationally and EU-level approved) institutional system was basically utilized by Hungary in its complete entirety until 2014. But Hungary (like the whole East European region) established this system rather formally, unaccompanied by an authentic solidarity-promoting discourse. It is telling that before the crisis out of the estimated 1.5 million refugees living in Europe in 2013, Eastern European states were providing shelter for fewer than 30,000. Countries from this region, including Hungary, have always acted in a discriminatory way towards refugees, and even before 2015 the applications for asylum of refugees were increasingly rejected and they faced an increase in institutional hostility.

During the European handling of the global refugee crisis in 2015 (and somewhat following British policies at Calais) Hungary basically deconstructed its asylum system and replaced it with the building of fences, making it institutionally almost impossible to hand in an asylum application, thereby disregarding humanitarian considerations. In other words, Hungary treats almost all refugees as illegal migrants, criminals who need to be under severe control. This is a dramatic change, and shows that discursive traditions have become somewhat rearranged and that securitization is being combined with discourses of social exclusion and that of 'Europe'. This can be seen in how Hungary presents itself as the defender of 'Europe'.

Overall, even on an institutional level, this migration policy is a manifestation of radical demographic nationalism that is open only toward kin groups and 'Europeans', which sees as its most important task the building of effective walls to protect privileged European spaces and which guarantee Hungarian nation-building. Together

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<sup>29</sup> Concerning institutional integration practices as measured by MIPEX, it can be clearly stated that the country is lagging behind some other countries in the region such as Austria, the Czech Republic and Slovakia in developing an integration policy. But there are also very positive elements. Hungary scores 45 overall on the MIPEX scale, a composite index of integration in 2015. It is located in the middle of the ranking concerning labour market access, family reunion and long-term residence policies for legally-resident third-country nationals. Regarding political participation and access to nationality, there are, however, serious problems. In contrast, anti-discrimination policy stands out as a definite area of strength, which is mainly based on the number of actual complaints of discrimination, which of course can also be a sign of mistrust or repression. Hungarian authorities seem to have taken a formalistic and legalistic approach which may clearly be clearly alienating and repressive, but may also be pursued in the interests of neutrality.

<sup>30</sup> Eszter Szilassy and Zsuzsanna Árendás, in their qualitative analyses of the narrative handling of 'otherness' among teachers of refugees and the children themselves, found a large variety of ways of facing the conflicts and problems that emerge. It appears that even the idea of 'otherness' is avoided at Hungarian schools, as also occurred when Orientalist frameworks were established (Szilassy and Árendás, 2006).

with other population policies, we can clearly see that institutional inertia and institutional developments are at odds with the structural processes described above. The country is facing massive changes, and, being opposed to the idea of opening up toward the non-West and in order to achieve major demographic revitalization, the institutional framework limits its efforts to financially promoting higher fertility, creating a panic around defending these rights and disciplining lower classes and incoming 'illegals' in order to gain the support of the local middle-class and the well-integrated and non-marginalized working classes without promoting structural reform.

### *Panic, and the discursive fights over hierarchies. Concluding remarks*

Looking at the cognitive and political structures in relation to the above-described structural developments, then we see that in this increasingly competitive world economy, and within the hierarchically structured EU block, the key driver of this radical demographic nationalism that builds on a combination of discursive traditions is to show internally and externally that 'order' must be created within Hungary and Europe to strengthen them, and thus to make them more competitive via formal, population-focused interventions. The goal is to rebuild national pride and to discipline the postsocialist, postliberal 'political chaos' related to the 'jungle war' of global capitalism. Without offering large-scale structural change, it stresses the need for the defense of collective national interests in various fields via formally and directly handling some of the side-effects via direct intervention into population processes: e.g. engaging in selective pronatalism, recalling emigrants, penalizing emigrating students, and building fences against refugees. The promise is that society can escape these problems and dependencies if they follow the government in dispensing with 'liberal taboos'. In principle, this may appear to be a national emancipation discourse against hierarchies, but in reality it is purely a campaign that promotes panic, and without systematic measures of implementation simply flags up certain problems symbolically, with the aim of introducing disciplinary measures.

Concerning the pronatalist campaign, in an emblematic interview in 2015 (December 15) László Kövér, President of the Hungarian Parliament, gave an interview about the 'demographic decline' of the 'European natives': *"The world as it existed for thousands of years on the basis of traditional types of values is falling apart, and this is leading to dramatic consequences; namely, the vision of the death of the nation which inspired the literature of the reform period is actually very close. Not only in the case of Hungarians: the situation is more or less is the same for all native populations of all European member states; namely, that we are so close that we cannot stop going down the demographic slope and, practically, we will die out. (...) Now we can see that when the global population increases, thus in a certain way there is overpopulation, population decline occurs only in Europe, and sooner or later this will lead to an invasion by those who see a living space for themselves here. This decline is related to the lack of stable social support (or in a contradictory manner, the overly high level of well-being), social disorientation, especially of women and 'genderism' and the attack on our 'living space' by other civilizations. The key idea is to fight for survival, and against the proponents of death on a collective level via*

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*changing attitudes back to 'normalcy,' in which gender disciplining is one of the key tools.*"<sup>31</sup>

On a discursive level, this form of radical nationalism clearly calls for the protection of the privileges of East European emigrant workers (as opposed to 'illegals' and 'outsiders'), and of those West European states which also struggle with 'overly high' immigration. This exchange is clearly exemplified by the exchange between Britain and the Orbán-led Visegrád countries in early January, 2016 in the midst of the global refugee crisis. It is worth citing a few sentences from that exchange to show how such East-West exchanges happen among conservative and/ or radical nationalists, and in what ways the Hungarian government wants to export its ideas for the sake of a new Europe. According to the Guardian, David Cameron was told by his Hungarian counterpart, Viktor Orbán, not to treat Hungarians in the UK as migrants. Orbán said this was very important to people in his country: *"For us it is very important that we are not considered as migrants. Words matter here. (...) We would like to make it quite clear that we are not migrants into the UK. But we are the citizens of a state that belongs to the European Union who can take jobs anywhere freely within the European Union. (...) We do not want to go to the UK and take something from them. We do not want to be parasites. We want to work there, and I think that Hungarians are working well. They should get respect and they should not suffer discrimination (...). Cameron said he was still pushing his plan to stop EU migrants claiming work benefits in the UK for four years. But he stressed that he was open to alternative proposals that might reduce the immigration 'pull factor'."*<sup>32</sup>

So we learn from this exchange that migrants are 'parasites', but Hungarians (and other EU members) are not migrants, and they work, while others want to take something from the 'locals'. Hungary is thus anti-discriminative, but only in the case that other 'Europeans' are hurt. 'Mobile' East Europeans are thus competing with 'migrants,' and thus this form of nationalism seeks to identify 'relevant' (i.e. underpinned in a racist manner) claims against them. Only East Europeans should be entitled to occupy the side of labor in the capital-labor relationship in Europe, while there is a need to fight against inequality in the system of benefits among migrants and non-migrant workers in host countries. In a paradoxical way, 'migrants' therefore

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<sup>31</sup> The speech can be watched at: <http://indavideo.hu/video/InfoRadio - Arena - Kover Laszlo - Iresz 1> "De ma megfordul, és ez önmagában is mutatja azt, hogy az a világ, ami több ezer éven keresztül létezett, egy bizonyos fajta tradicionális értékrend alapján, ez a világ, ez felbomlóban van, és ennek iszonyatos következményei vannak, egész pontosan, ha valamikor, a reformkor irodalmát megtermékenyítő nemzetelál víziója, az elég közel van. Nemcsak a magyarok számára egyébként, hanem az európai tagállamok minden őslakos népe számára nagyjából úgy néz ki a helyzet, hogy belátható időbe tehető az, amikor már nem tudunk a demográfiai lejtőn megállni, hanem gyakorlatilag előbb-utóbb el fogunk fogyni. ... Most már látható, hogy miközben az emberiség lélekszáma nő, tehát bizonyos értelemben túlnépesedés van, csak Európában van népességfogyás, és ez előbb-utóbb azzal fog járni, hogy ide beözönlenek azok, akik egyébként itt életretter látnak maguk előtt." This text reminds writings by Corrado Gini, who was the key advisor to Mussolini: "The future of the white race arouses anxiety among students of vital statistics and the ever growing public interested in population problems caused by two diametrically opposite opinions...overpopulation...our race will cease to increase...danger which threatens the white race of submerged by the coloured peoples". (Corrado, 1930:3)

<sup>32</sup> The text is from this article: <http://www.theguardian.com/politics/blog/live/2016/jan/07/osborne-interest-rates-speech-cameron-eu-for-an-interest-rate-rise-politics-live> Accessed: 09-04-2016.

become common enemies within the 'European family', although the discursive angles and thus even the groups themselves are different according to the above-described hierarchical exchanges.

In sum, this demographic nationalism also attacks intra-European and interregional prestige hierarchies as it argues that Hungarian demographic and migration policies should not be formulated according to the interests of greater powers like Germany (and its large-scale capital), or to support their social welfare systems. Thus it also attacks the internal Orientalism of the EU according to which 'East Europeans' should be passive and dependent objects of Western policy making.

Overall, based on a combination of certain selective discursive traditions, this demographic nationalism has developed a set of ideas about how to make Hungary far more competitive and to eliminate its dependencies via direct disciplining without structural changes. In theory this development can be seen as an ideological formulation of some kind of nationalist developmental state, as seen in various countries in the 1970s and 1980s (South Korea, Japan, and partially in Brazil). However, in Hungary, due to ideological inclinations and the preference for political control and the hidden reallocation of resources, we do not see the development of more complex policy measures for understanding and managing complex global dependencies and inequalities. As opposed to the claimed ideals, leaders have not been able to build even the basic elements of any real developmentalism in terms of relevant organizations and adequate initiatives for managing structural problems and opportunities (see: Evans, 1996).

We may call this the trap of demographic nationalism in the semi-periphery, the inefficiency of which is counterbalanced only by a conscious demographic and/or biopolitical hysteria and panic. This hysteria can be understood as claiming to 'defend' the population against various 'enemies,' without actually formulating substantial policies to handle structural problems, or their negative consequences. Even more, the discourses have the function of just symbolically pointing at some of the problems, but they appear to be actually trying to legitimize non-action and passivity to hide the incongruences with structural reality (the actual need to counterbalance 'demographic emptying' and the related financial and social challenges of social development) and to hide the unrelated accumulation of power and the reallocation of various resources to a pool of 'national capital'. We certainly need to understand the full complexity of such mechanisms in order to see how, via the global and local interplay of various factors, the liberal phase of global capitalism is developing into the now-emerging authoritarian cycle.<sup>33</sup> Obtaining a fuller understanding of such cycles may be the real objective when analyzing such cases in a comparative way.

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<sup>33</sup> As Antonio Gramsci proposed it when he wrote about the concept of passive revolution (Forgacs, 2000: 263-66).

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