

MY TRIBUTE TO ZSUZSA FERGE: A REFLECTION ON THE INDIVIDUALISATION OF THE SOCIAL

<https://doi.org/10.18030/socio.hu.2025.3.209>

I have good and warm memories of Zsuzsa Ferge. I had the honour of meeting her in person, at her home, on two occasions. One was in 1999 when she hosted a European research network conference on *Monitoring Poverty and the Influence of Past and Current Government Policies*. The second time was in 2010, when the Annual Conference of ESPAnet, The Network for European Social Policy Analysis, took place in Budapest, organized by Dorottya Szikra.

Being invited by such a respected scholar to her home, and each time being treated with nice food and friendly conversation, was indeed a great honour for the young scholar that I was at the time. I respected Zsuzsa as a sociologist and social policy expert already before we met, because earlier I had been inspired very much by her work, notably by her 1997 article on *The Changed Welfare Paradigm - The Individualization of the Social*, published in *Social Policy and Administration*.

In this article she compares what she called the *old*, solidaristic and collective oriented welfare state paradigm, with the *new*, neo-liberal and individualistic paradigm. Back in the 1990s, traditional welfare states all over Europe started shifting their old style models of welfare provision to the new style. It was a slow and incremental process, which needed the deep insight and sociological sensitivity of an intellectual like Zsuzsa Ferge to recognise, analyse and clearly describe the essentials of the trend in an early stage. What struck me most in the article was her discussion of the difference in the fundamental values underlying both paradigms: social justice vs individual freedom, collective solidarity vs individualistic competition. At the time I was developing an academic interest in the relationships between social values and social policies, and Zsuzsa's discussion of the fundamental values of the paradigms inspired me greatly. Specifically, her views on social justice and solidarity guided me in developing the so-called CARIN theory of the criteria that people and policymakers apply in their views on which groups of needy people deserve to be helped with social benefits and services, and which groups do not, or to a lesser extent. And later, when more and more empirical data about deservingness attitudes became available (e.g. from the Welfare Attitudes modules of the European Social Survey), I recognized that the 'individualization of the social' manifested itself in a pre-occupation with the criteria of 'reciprocity' and 'control'. The trend from old to new style social welfare coincided empirically with an attitudinal shift in which the right to benefits and services was increasingly seen as depending on one's personal contributions, and one's own responsibilities- exactly as had been described by Zsuzsa at a more theoretical and conceptual level in her 1997 article.

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