

THE FOUNDER OF THE HUNGARIAN SCHOOL OF REGIONAL SCIENCE

**GYÖRGY ENYEDI
(1930–2012)**



Hungarian social science has suffered a great loss with the demise of György Enyedi on the 10th of September, 2012, Full Member of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, former vice-president of the Academy and International Geographical Union, an outstanding figure among the scientists shaping international social science and the domestic founder of the new scientific discipline of the 20th century, regional science.

He was born on August 25 in 1930 in Budapest. He conducted his university studies at the University of Economics of Budapest where he began his scientific career. His research in economic geography focussed on the development of world agriculture and its regional problems. His first publications, summarising studies and edited volumes were published in this period of one-and-a-half decades. He was a professor of agricultural geography at the University of Economic Sciences and the University of Agriculture of Gödöllő.

He was employed by the Geographical Research Institute of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences at the beginning of the 1960s and became its deputy director in 1962 at a very young age. His research took new directions. The factors shaping the organisation of rural areas became the centre of his scientific interest. His agrarian and village typology centred research drove attention to the unfavourable consequences of the transformation of the Hungarian system of settlements and the social and economic inequalities of rural areas. As a sign of the recognition of his work in this area, he became the leader of the world-wide comparative analysis of the development of rural areas in the framework of the International Geographical Union between 1972–1984. He was editor of over 24 volumes of the Akadémiai Kiadó's Geography of World Agriculture series. He was vice-president of the International Geographical Union between 1984–1992.

New challenges emerged in the 1980s for György Enyedi. He integrated the fragmented research activities of various workshops into one institution (Centre for Regional Studies), his scientific activity took a new direction, he became interested in regional inequalities and the spatial development of urbanisation. The regional and settlement policy ideology of state socialism in Eastern Europe and its objectives imposed a severe limit to the development of scientific disciplines dealing with spatial processes. Nevertheless, the ideology of a homogeneous society conquered scientific thought in a differentiated manner in the various countries. Hungarian social sciences boasted with significant

research results at a relatively early stage due largely to the intensive relations of György Enyedi with western science in the areas of unequal spatial development, the anomalies present in the evolution of the system of settlements, and they questioned „expressis verbis” the efficiency of central planned economy and economic policy which neglected local and regional assets.

Spatial development policy had to pursue a peculiar path distinct from the basic categories of market economy. This path-seeking was rendered even more difficult by the natural phenomenon that notions used in state socialism were exceedingly unpopular. Initially it was Marxist social theory which rejected regional policy and degraded it to the level of a simple instrument fulfilling the needs of the planned economy. Later on, during the period of the intensification of socio-economic reforms, weak and isolated initiatives promoting the development of decentralisation were regarded with suspicion, on several occasions these experiments were characterised by bearing the dubious mark of provincialism. György Enyedi developed coherent concepts about the need for an innovation-oriented spatial development policy, yet due to the anti-modernisation attitude of the economy and politics, there was no demand for their in-depth elaboration.

It was a characteristic feature of international science in the 1980s that the modernisation of traditional disciplines went hand in hand with the rapid development of spatial science. The conditions of the evolution of regional science into an independent scientific discipline emerged during this period in Hungary as well. György Enyedi was the programmatic figure. He was the founder of the leading institute of Hungarian regional science, the Centre for Regional Studies of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences whose seat was in Pécs, of which he was director-general between 1984–1991. He organised the Regional Scientific Committee of HAS in 1986, of which he was president between 1986–1990. He founded the journal „Tér és Társadalom” in 1987. The volumes of the journal published during 25 years contain over 500 scientific publications. The president of the editorial board of the journal was professor Enyedi. The „Spatial and Settlement Research” monograph series contains 40 summarising works, the 104 published volumes of Discussion Papers served the international popularisation of Hungarian regional research. In 1989, a spatial and settlement development department was founded at the Faculty of Business and Economics of the University of Pécs. Currently there are eight universities offering masters degrees in regional and agricultural economics, and the University of Pécs, the Szent István University and the Széchenyi István University operate doctoral schools for regional sciences. György Enyedi was also the main promoter of the evolution of regional science into a university discipline, becoming a professor of the University of Montpellier at the age of 42, he spent seven years in foreign universities as guest professor and held lectures at home at the universities of Debrecen, Pécs and Budapest.

The theoretical knowledge of György Enyedi based on international experiences, his balanced vision of society, his problem-sensitiveness rich in inspiration and always ready for renewal and his kind personality attracted all those involved in regional science. His figure became an important reference point for the increasing number of young researchers who began to examine spatial processes at the second half of the 1970s, and who, with the accumulation of results, started to proclaim their faith in regional science in the first years of the 1980s. The figure of Enyedi was very significant for generations of regionalists: his large theoretical knowledge, his language skills, friendliness, outstanding humour, his fine gentlemanly character. For many of us he represented the emblematic intellectual type. He was our role model. His management methods were permeated by an attentiveness to cooperation. This was one of the keys of his successful leadership.

His rich and efficient life path, with 45 books and 400 scientific publications was highly recognized. He is a honorary member of seven foreign geographical societies. The Hungarian Academy of Sciences elected him corresponding member in 1982 and full member in 1990, and he fulfilled the role of vice-president of the Social Sciences Section at the HAS between 1999–2002. He was member of the Academia Europaea in London and of editorial boards of several international scientific journals. He was deputy president of the Intergovernmental Council of Social Sciences of UNESCO, and the president of

the Hungarian UNESCO Committee. This office permitted him to promote the inclusion of the Early Christian burial chapel and grave in Pécs among the World's Cultural Heritage Sights.

Among his several awards and prizes we are going to list only the Széchenyi Prize, the Lauréat d'Honneur (Award of the International Geographical Union), the Order of Merit of the Republic of Hungary, the Grand Prize of the Pro Renovanda Cultura Hungariae Foundation and the Hild Prize. Several international scientific associations elected him honorary member. The University of Pécs granted him „Doctor Honoris Causa" title in 2002.

The publication activity of György Enyedi remained exemplary until the end of his life. Since the biography of his works was published in 2005, he has published eighty scientific publications, review articles, recensions and edited domestic and edited volumes summarising the results of international research programmes. His summarising work titled „Urban world" was published in July, 2012 by Akadémiai Kiadó. This book provides a synthesis of the research of the last decade, it is one of the most significant volumes of the Enyedi-life achievement.

He followed the activities of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences with great attention, as academic official, member of the presidency and vice-president he made proposals for comprehensive changes on several occasions. He had a coherent idea about the modernising role of social sciences and the organisational system of the Academy. He considered the decentralisation of science, the increasing autonomy of science outside the capital and networking to be among the main forces of development of R&D.

Thanks to the conscious construction of regional science initiated by professor Enyedi, currently Hungary disposes of the institutional and intellectual conditions guaranteeing the development of regional science – which synthesises the common basic notions, theories and methods of social sciences dealing with space and by this means investigates socio-economic phenomena and processes – as an autonomous scientific discipline in the 21st century contributing to the European competitiveness of Hungarian science. Several institutes, research units, university departments and practical policy workshops are led by students of Enyedi.

The demise of György Enyedi – the scientist, the organiser of science, the professor and the school founder – is an enormous loss. We, members of the Enyedi-school are aware of our duties, to enrich regional science with new results, to encourage our young research colleagues to venture into exploratory research, to urge practicing professionals to its application and to promote debate among stakeholders of regional development. This is the main message of the scientific credo of György Enyedi.

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