

Review of bachelor's thesis of **Anastasia Chistyakov**

„The Rockefeller foundation and its support for Hungarian social scientists“

Bachelor thesis is structured into introduction, the following three chapters and the conclusion. In this framework all necessary and basic instruments of scientific scrutiny have been applied – research questions, which are to be studied (1st chapter); next the monitoring of the concepts and interpretations of the studied issues is presented (2nd and 3rd chapters), and the applied methodological design is described and justified (1st chapter).

The introduction deals with general presentation of the topic and the approach to its study – impact of Rockefeller foundation's activities on situation and changes of social sciences in Hungary. Here, also the approach (quite broad) to the study of the chosen topic is argued covering issues like the role of foundation in promotion of social sciences, position of social sciences within general framework of science. It is – with justification – expected that such broad approach will advance the interpretation of rather concrete and narrow issue. Right after this discussion the methodological design is described. It counts with application of method of historical research – prosopography – which is expected to embrace both the biographic data and the collective identity formation of the studied group of Hungarian scientists having enjoyed the support from Rockefeller foundation. The suggested methodological design is specified into five research questions – three of them are concerning situation of social sciences in general, and partly in Hungary; two of them are focused on the analysis of situation of Hungarian scientists.

The second chapter starts with general description of social science history in Europe and in the US and their interfaces to natural science. The discussion continues with a short presentation of Rockefeller Foundation, its leading personalities, role, aims and strategy of philanthropic activity, in particular that one which was oriented to promotion of scientific activities. The presentation reflects also the controversies which concern these issues. The particular sub-chapter is devoted to The Laura Spelman Rockefeller Memorial which was focused on the issues of social aid and later on support of social science projects. The strategy of the foundation in this field was concentrated on the solution of social conflicts, both in the domestic framework and the international one, and peaceful as well as wartime situation. The leading idea of its strategy is related to welfare aims and democratic peace thesis, even if some authors – as Anastasia explains – assess the role of Rockefeller foundation with ideological and class based aims. The last sub-chapter is dealing with recent events - activities of foundation in cold war era.

The third chapter is already concentrated on the activities of Rockefeller foundation in Eastern Europe. The text is focused on the situation in Czechoslovakia, Poland and Hungary. Shortly, the differences among these countries in political regimes, scientific development and position of social science are presented and the ways, how the foundation responded to such conditions by the manner of support. The sub-chapter 3.1 presents sample of Hungarian fellows (of Rockefeller foundation) which are identified by 8 indicators. The indicators make it possible to assess some general characteristic of the group (orientation to economics and law, impact of interdisciplinary orientation, post-fellow engagement). The biographies of seven (mostly successful) fellows of the foundation complement the preceding overview with better insight into diversity of conditions which were influencing life stories of the studied Hungarian scientists. The end of the chapter and final conclusions (pp. 40 – 44) finalize the aims of the thesis – assess the impact of the Rockefeller Foundation's impact on the state and changes of Hungarian social science.

The above outlined presentation of the text of the bachelor's thesis is already indicating the line of discussion and arguments which I find important for the study of the chosen topic and its research problems. As mentioned above Anastasia has applied adequate procedure in order to study and understand the formulated problem. I find some steps of the procedure to be well-argued, some of them are not so persuasive. The topic of the study and collected data about the sample of Hungarian scientists belong to a stronger part of the text. The formulation of methodological design and of

research problems, as well as their discussion, are calling up problems and critical remarks. As far as the structure of thesis is concerned I would suggest to place methodological design after the conceptual discussion about situation of social science and Eastern Europe and the mission of Rockefeller Foundation in this field. It would be better not only for reader but also for researcher to learn more about a selection of research questions after the studied topic is conceptualised and supported by diversified interpretations.

My next comment is concerning the applied concept of prosopography. Again, for a reader it would be more convenient if the concept is better explained. On page three there is rather vague formulation (study of common characteristics of group actors or collective study?). Later, it is claimed that the concept enables to study the link between individual biographies and large context (p. 33). The presented text is indicating that different levels of collectivities and their common background have been taken into consideration in the presented analysis – and the explicit identification of such levels would be advisable.

I do not dare to specify my claim about selection of research questions by concrete suggestions. But certain implication of my proposal can be followed in terms, which are used to describe crucial problem of the study: what is role of studied foundation in the field of their activity? The author is using different verbs: influence, alternation, acceleration which have, of course, different implications (pp. 3 a 4), and which term is more fitting for the studied issue?

I have already appreciated that Anastasia has applied quite wide framework to study the background which has influenced life stories of studied sample of scientists. It is quite understandable that presentation of some general topics on several pages (like history of social science, political situation in countries of Eastern Europe) could not avoid some simplifications. Some of them should be mentioned. In sub-chapter 2.1 which is dealing about situation of social sciences in different regions, the situation of European social sciences is under-estimated. Moreover, it is not correct to speak only about leading countries in the field of social science but the issue of different social epistemologies (or cognitive cultures) should be taken into consideration. The latter issue might be related to some analytical considerations in chapter 3 which are dealing with disciplinary profile of the fellows. Most of them were coming from the fields of economics, law and political science. Such pattern could not be influenced by current economic crisis and unsettled international situation only – as it is claimed; it might have been based on the tradition of social sciences in Middle Europe which opposed the nomothetic understanding of social science and stressed its idiographic foundation. That is why specific (national) historical and legal framework was stressed and economy was interpreted rather in context of legal studies and political issues (contrary to the concept of economics).

In formal terms the text is well prepared. In some sentences there are misprints but they do not prevent the reader to understand the content of the sentence. The references to the utilized publications are quite rich and presented in standard form. Only, the cited reference on page 38 does mention the source, but does not mention the page.

I agree that the bachelor thesis of Anastasia Chistyakova is presented to defence. The presented text is in a good quality to be defended.; I would prefer to give my final evaluation after having learnt responses of author to my comments during defence discussion.

Müller Karel, 26.8.2016