Work, values, hope in spaces of solidarity. The possibilities and limits of transformative solidarity in Hungary. NKFI K-146630

1. Background, international context and prior research leading up to this project

<u>Introduction</u>

The aim of this research is to find actors and spaces of social solidarity, to understand their ideas and practices, and their relevance to their social environments. The solidarity practices to be understood aim to support vulnerable social groups, on the one hand, and to address crisis and shortage situations in various social services, on the other. The research pays particular attention to the transformative effects of solidarity actions, which effects are examined in material-distributive, ideological-political and social-relational dimensions. All of these are examined in local contexts, where subtle webs of social relationships, power and dependency links, and political configurations can be closely observed and captured.

<u>State of the art</u>

Solidarity research extensively discusses how the human drive to assist and care becomes widespread at times of crisis leading to various collective actions. The rich literature examines and relates the solidarity interventions during and following the economic crisis in 2008, the bottom-up practices in support of the displaced people in Europe in 2015, the pandemic related activism in 2020/21 and in the current Ukrainian refugee crisis in Europe and beyond.

Modalities of solidarity: In the scholarly debates on the 'refugee crisis' in 2015-16, inspired by the critique of humanitarianism (Fassin 2010, Ticktin 2011, Brkovic 2017), leading voices argued that direct help contributed to social inequalities and the existing power structures. Others demonstrated that the very act of helping induced inspirations to voice critical positions in the public and to assign political responsibility. Rozakou (2016) questioned the taboo of gift in politically sensitive civic support for the day-to-day physical survival of migrants. The notion of 'subversive humanitarianism' captured the transformative power of solidarity assistance (Vandervoordt and Verschaegen 2019). In view of various hybrid forms of solidarity acts during the coronavirus pandemic, Schwiertz and Schwenken (2020) advocated for capturing boundary crossing activities between political and a-political standing. Most recent social movement studies (Della Porta and Steinhilper 2022) called for recognizing indirect, implicit forms of politicization that motivate ordinary and everyday acts of collective problem-solving (Jakobsson and Korolczuk 2020).

Moral economies of reciprocity, embraced by solidarity acts, rescue one from the world of surplus, exploitation, and accumulation, yet this help undermines the revolutionary spirit of the oppressed and depoliticizes it (Narotzky 2020:15-16). Muehlebach (2012) conceptualizes the moral neoliberal citizenship which encourages and exploits voluntary work by those who are excluded from labour. Scholars offering the most powerful warning for the limits of bottom-up solidarity mechanisms also acknowledge the transformative potentials of these acts by provisioning basic goods and challenging relations of dispossession and exploitation (Narotzky 2020). Moral arguments of worth which describe and endorse various economic activities may become political expressions of conflict and struggle that address social inequality. Therefore, one must analyse "entanglements and articulations of differential social values for their ability to maintain or transform possibilities for making a living and leading a life worth living" (ibid: 15-17).

Nature of solidarity work: The broader literature has mainly concerned with how powerful social structures of labour imply coercion, domination, dependency, and exploitation for most people. This

focus on power inequalities, and associated phenomena of suffering and specifically alienation resulted that another major aspect of work, that is its capacity to contribute to the production of values, and adding purpose and meaning to human existence has been largely overlooked (Laaser 2022). Against this tide, labour is also scrutinized through its potentials of becoming a site of producing values, morality and the 'good' in society by the dissolution of the dichotomy of paid-unpaid forms of work. Complex approaches analyse paid employment, wage work, voluntary work, and invisible work as different configurations of dependency on one hand, and as a dire human need for leading a purposeful life and filling it with meaningful practices and actions such as support and solidarity, on the other (Venter 2022). Renowned scholars of capitalist exploitation and inequalities, such as Graeber (2006) and Skeggs (2014) argue that people are not automized labourers reproducing material relations and the realm of care embraces spaces that denies the logic of exploitation and material accumulation. According to Graeber, human life is being attended through loving, educating, recognizing, honouring, and hoping for one another in our closest relations (2006). Skeggs (2014) proposes that care through affectivity toward one another enables people to flourish in their everyday lives within the fragile conditions of capitalism. Against this hope, the sociology of care literature also provides ample arguments on how profit driven or authoritarian operations intervene in relations of care within neoliberal and postliberal systems through enforcing paternalism and dependency (Narotzky 2016).

Civic solidarity related to elderly care has been primarily studied in the context of the undervaluation and exploitation of care in today's capitalist societies. Feminist activists and scholars have addressed the issue of care work as an essential form of reproductive labour claiming for recognition and a more equal distribution of care duties (Federici 2008). Scholarship on care crisis highlights the effects of neoliberal policies and stagnation or decline of state services for the elderly, despite the increasing care needs resulting from demographic aging (Fraser 2019, Aulenbacher et al. 2020). Care crisis folds out in a particular way in the Central-Eastern-European region, due to the care drain to Western Europe (Uhde and Ezzeddine 2020, Melegh and Katona 2020, Csányi, Gagyi and Kerékgyártó 2018, Gyarmati 2022). Various bottom-up initiatives have emerged globally tackling the growing crisis of care. Workers' formal and informal self-organisations and trade unions are important stakeholders drawing on acts of solidarity among workers within the field of elderly care (Schwenken 2016; Schilliger and Schilling 2017). Milánkovics (2020) examines the challenges of self-organisation of care workers in the elderly care sector in Hungary. Literature on solidarity economy highlights the role of the cooperative movement to address the care crisis (Gagyi 2020, Czervan, Katona and László 2020).

Solidarity in Hungary in shrinking civic spaces: Solidarity in Hungary is unpacked in the social context of a low level of public trust, especially in state institutions (e.g., lack of trust in public education Boda and Kopasz 2018), the relatively small number of volunteers, and a civil society weakened by an authoritarian political system (Takács 2018, Utasi 2013, Gerő-Kerényi 2020). Recent studies on the transformation of Hungarian civil society have also revealed the depoliticization of those directly affected by political pressure and the general decrease in capacities for political mobilization and collective action (Gerő 2020; Pirro and Della Porta 2021). The forms of contentious solidarity that emerge in the context of repressive state policies have been thoroughly studied (Janky 2016, Feischmidt-Zakarias 2019, Kende-Lantos- Belinszky-Lukács 2017, Sik 2018, Sik-Nyilas-Rácz-Szécsi-Takács-Zakariás 2020). Studies have found that the shrinking space for civil society results in the moderation of repertoires, the depoliticization of frames, as well as limited capacity for political mobilization, which is manifested in the hybridization of social-movement activism and volunteerism (Della Porta and Steinhilper 2022, Gerő-Fejős-Kerényi-Szikra 2023).

Recent research, however, has also pointed out that Hungarian society behaves differently in the face of unexpected junctures and disasters. In 2015, many people put aside their mistrust and embarked on helping those in need. The pandemic crisis in 2020 drew attention to the fact that social solidarity and mutual assistance between people had significantly increased. Sik and Zakariás (2021) found that in

Hungary the mobilizing effect of the epidemic primarily involved personal relationships (family and friends), and the previously inactive were only mobilized to a smaller extent. Researching political behaviour during the epidemic, Mikecz and Oross (2021) found a significant increase in volunteering, especially among the lower-status population, who typically relied on informal relationships rather than organizations. Studying urban activism in Central and Eastern Europe offers useful insights for the importance of uneventful protests, the formation of agency and the processes of becoming active in the public sphere in adverse contexts. Low-key, informal mobilizations around everyday issues also provide the infrastructure of more visible political actions. The case of urban social movements invites scholars to rethink the notion of politics at work as well as to challenge dichotomous views of the political versus the non-political (Jacobsson and Korolczuk, 2017)

Solidarity and transformative effects: The recent literature on different modes of solidarity contemplates how compassionate, humanitarian, and moralizing actions move to grounds where solidarity acts induce politically articulate and transformative operations. Parallel to offering a powerful critique of neoliberal civic solidarity, Muehlebach (2012) delineates the *route from ethics to politics*: ethical citizens speak back to power holders and create new grounds for political critique by articulating state accountability, strengthening the language of rights, and the duty to care. Others argue that mechanisms, journeys, and narratives of solidarity use, reuse, and build social spaces, transcend the borders of the private and public spheres, and reassess the value of different forms of work. In so doing, these practices produce new imaginaries, routinize old and new forms of cooperation, and advance knowledge and aspiration towards emancipatory social transformation (Fominaya 2020).

Solidarity acts often strive to substitute for the infrastructural commitment they expect from the state. While their strategic politics of peripheral entrenchment create *zones of temporal autonomy* from state governance, they also negotiate the terms in which essential state services are to be provided (Tremon 2021). They examine solidarity work by seeking those moments when conditions of exclusion, domination and discrimination in societies are challenged, contested, interrupted, or reformed in favour of a different alternative (Fleischmann 2020). Working with the notion of *contested solidarity*, Fleischmann argues that these instances sometimes crystallize visibly around disagreements with governmental actors, policies, or laws. Other times, these are hidden and reveal themselves when different alternatives on the ground are enacted, without directly making claims towards 'the state' (Ibid.).

The newest solidarity literature reflects upon the cross-cutting, complex, and global experiences of the Covid-19 pandemic in dialogue with the ongoing discussions on humanitarian solidarity and civic interventions during the economic (2008), the 'refugee' (2015) and climate change related crises (2020s). For some, the perception of need and the act of helping led to the recognition of political responsibilities and the public articulation of their positions, while others understood direct assistance as a means of political resistance, an act of public accountability (Feischmidt and Zakariás 2019). In this intellectual arena, critical thinking on the *commons* stepped on the stage to scrutinize social practices against enclosure of shared resources as well as the cultivation of spaces of non-hierarchical respect and mutuality. Commons are places where notions of deservingness are irrelevant because people's entitlement to the means of living are not proscribed by their comportment, social status, legal citizenship, or other factors routinely disqualifying people from the narrow circle of neoliberal care (Woodly et al. 2021). Commons are discussed in their opportunities for radical resource redistribution and deconstructing domination to produce horizontal relationships of equality, mutuality, and responsibility (Ticktin 2021).

Hope and grassroots politics: Generalized uncertainty, fear, and hopelessness with regards to the foreseeable prospects of the global future have their reverberations in social sciences (Kleist and Jansen 2016). This is perhaps the most apparent in attempts that strive to revive the emancipatory potentials of academic research work and to identify the sources of hope for finding potential alternatives to our shared

plight in the present. The need to overcome the terminology of victimhood comes from the recognition of people's striving for endurance and the realization of values, that is being and doing good (Henig, Strhan and Robbins 2022). Negotiations of the good are conducive to grassroots politics as well as practice-oriented approaches to situated judgements (Pulay 2023). Ethnographic studies of grassroots self-organization engage with ordinary people's politics, departing from everyday efforts to cultivate social relations as well as the environment. (Ringel 2018) *Hope* is one of the central categories of the relevant scholarship, both as the object and the political stake of empirical social inquiry.

Everyday engagements in care and maintenance can be the grounds for a presentist ethical-political alternative to the dominant forms of *affective politics*, attempts to exploit personalized emotions and place them in the centre of public debates. These may include pride or shame, aspiration, disgust, fear, or uncertainty, whether with regards to history or in terms of the present and future. Everyday practices of *maintenance* (instead of the pursuit of growth and expansion) can cover acts such as to save social relations that could have become abandoned amid crisis-ridden separation, isolation, and alienation between persons. At the same time, popular concepts such as 'normal lives' may foster anxieties based on the sense of incompleteness or the lack of fulfilment (Jansen 2015). Grassroots politics may take the scattered forms of criticizing power elites but that does not necessarily indicate direct participation in civil or political acts of resistance.

Relevant scholarship by the core research team

Members of the core team and its collective have pursued various research initiatives exploring civic solidarity and extensively published the original knowledge produced. Feischmidt and Zakariás conducted research on the 'refugee' crisis of 2015 zooming on politicization of solidarity (2019), Feischmidt and Neumann (2023), Zakariás and Sik (2021), Zentai (2021) and Zsigmond (2021) explored bottom-up practices during the 2020 pandemic, and the same collective has been completing an inquiry on solidarity in conjunction with the current Ukrainian war and its displaced people. Feischmidt, Durst, Pulay, Zentai have been engaged in studying supporters of the marginalized Roma, Feischmidt and Neumann have extensively explored resistance to school segregation, Katona (Katona – Melegh 2020) has developed track record in exploring elderly care practices beyond state structures. Gerő has led research on the conditions of civil society operations in Hungary and Central and Eastern Europe. These inquiries have produced trend setting knowledge on various forms of *bottom-up solidarity actions,* tensions and cooperations *in civil society spaces,* the challenges to relating to differential *social inclusion practices by central and local authorities*, the enduring *shortage and decay conditions in public services*, and the wider societal and *political framings* of the issue of *deservingness* in the distribution of resources and recognitions in different domains of life. Methods, data, and knowledge generated in these interrelated fields of studies will directly inform and feed in the proposed new research.

2. **Research outline: main research questions and research objectives**

Quantitative and qualitative sociological research in recent years has shown that in the case of unforeseen disasters (although to a varying extent), a significant part of Hungarian society responds with compassion and assistance to those in need. This diagnosis seems to contradict the picture created by national and international comparative studies on low levels of public trust in state institutions, relatively low numbers of volunteers, and on civil society weakened by an authoritarian political system. Our inquiry aims to explore this contradiction, to explore and explain the emergence and effects of solidarity from the perspective of 'meaningful work' to 'normal life', i.e., everyday values, the social constitution of hope and the integration of local societies. This is also to unpack how active solidarity may decline or stagnate due to the falling resources of civil society and the negative impact of the political environment. This research aims to reflect upon and expand previous research on solidarity conducted by the core team.

First, we aim to broaden the time horizon of the mainstream solidarity studies and to examine under what circumstances solidarity initiatives created in earlier crisis situations (two refugee crises in 2015 and 2022, and the pandemic crisis) continue, what sustainability challenges they face, and what transformation and decline trajectories they produce. We will also examine how helping practices emerge **outside of crisis periods** and operate in the longer term. This will make the scholarly understanding of solidarity more complex.

Second, we seek to enhance the scope of solidarity research by reckoning the enabling and limiting conditions of civil solidarity. Both national and international research has found dense solidarity activities in metropolitan middle-class spaces. Yet, during the recent pandemic, the less well-off, the less networked, and the ones who are also in need engaged in mutual support initiatives. We will identify and systematically explore solidarity practices in different types of municipalities (both small towns and villages) to get a detailed map of those who are engaged including the ones that a quick and macro lens can rarely see. We will seek to understand different **forms of solidarity** (from mutual aid to political solidarity) and their **spread within their localities and broader social, organizational, and spatial networks**.

Third, we aim to explore the specificities of solidarity operations according to their target groups and beneficiaries since that generates different positions in the civic and political landscapes they belong to. Our previous research has largely focused on solidarity acts for **structurally marginalized social groups**. Continuing this line of inquiry, our key question is how solidarity groups shape their activities for the inclusion and integration of Roma and refugees, how they solidarians back their struggle to survive and to embed themselves in a social and political context deeply defined by security and segregation discourses and practices. At the local level, one cannot miss to explore the dynamics that work against solidarity with the marginalised, especially in situations where embedded local groups conduct solidarity activities for the exclusion of minorities and use this mission for local civic mobilization.

Fourth, by substantially enlarging the scope of our earlier inquiries, we also extend the analysis to areas where the problematic functioning of **social services** creates **shortages and unmet needs** which impact both the professional paid workers in these services and the beneficiaries (elderly people in need of care, children in the education system, disabled people in need of special care). The main puzzle here is to understand in what circumstances civilians and self-organized groups respond to the shrinking provision by replacing services with unpaid voluntary work, and in what situations they choose to confront the system and speak out.

In the field of elderly care, we are looking at how civil society actors are responding to the declining state involvement in elderly care and the increasing difficulties faced by older people in need of care, their families and carers of extremely low wages and poor working conditions. We are looking at the question of what kind of solidarity initiatives in support of older people are emerging, and how carers and members of local communities are involved in these and how they relate to local economic and political power players. We will examine to what extent organisational forms beyond individual involvement and informal work are institutionalised, and the level and extent to which civic initiatives (individual, community) seek to bring about change, and how they seek to mobilise others to achieve their goals.

In the field of education and learning, we will uncover how student and parent groups substitute for unmet educational and learning needs, and articulate structural problems (local or national) in education, and how they stand up for teachers who are engaged in advocacy struggles. We are also curious about the critique and alternative visions against state education policies, pedagogical visions and exclusionary discourses. It is also to examine how solidarity actions articulate the public functions and transformative potentials of schools (political socialisation, democratic education, sensitisation) in the context of populist

governance, and perceive the social and pedagogical potential of solidarity actions. All this is to unravel in the limitations of solidarity mobilization in rural areas.

Fifth, we look at practices and actions in the spaces of solidarity within a complex conceptual framework of **work** in which **valuation, recognition, and meaning making** aspects are explored and connected. We will unveil how social practices deconstruct a sharp distinction between paid and unpaid work, invisible/fluid and registered/measured work, ow these forms are valued by the solidarians and outside of their spaces. All this is to grasp how actors interpret the purpose, limits and constraints of helping work, and its transformative potential in assigning value to people in society beyond wage relations in the short and long term.

Sixth, as before, we will examine solidarity not just as a helping practice but as a social conduct embedded in interpretations and inducing social effects. Previously, we dwelled on motivations inspiring specific actions and on questions of interpreting responsibilities in handling crisis affairs. In the current research, our aim is to examine the moral embeddedness of solidarity concerning issues way beyond the actual situations of crisis, vulnerability, and needs. We will link our inquiry to the body of research in sociology and social anthropology which understand solidarity action through their contribution to building and deliberating **visions of normality, goodness, and hope** in the local and broader social contexts of the solidarity spaces.

Seventh, the literature on solidarity and charity has a strong track record of examining media effects, in particular the images and news of suffering that inspire solidarity actors to translate compassion into action. In our inquiry, we will primarily focus on how the media shapes the dynamics between public discourses and solidarity actions by centring on the representations of salient public affairs in the local public sphere. We will explore the role of networked media, especially social media sites to reveal the **mediatisation of solidarity** across a spectrum ranging from information to online participatory practices. We will also examine cases and patterns through which local initiatives in the online public sphere may enhance and scale up discursive and (online) participatory practices beyond their local contexts by connecting sites, actors, and their action framings.

Eighth, we will pay particular attention to understanding the relationship of civil solidarity actors to various scales of their political environment. We are scrutinizing in what ways civil solidarity actors strive to establish or maintain links (whether cooperative or critical) with local, national and international structures of governance, and when and why they envisage to protect their autonomous spaces against these structures. We will further develop our empirical and theoretical knowledge on different forms of **being political through solidarity acts**. All this is pursued in the belief that, despite the well-known limitations, civil solidarity can form critical and socially transformative public action in **illiberal political contexts** as well. More broadly, these questions will address the widespread paradigm on fundamentally hopeless and eternally weak civil societies and civic actions in Central and Eastern Europe.

3. Research methods, implementation process, risk management

The research intends to build an **original conceptual framework** by recombining some of our earlier theoretical orientations but engaging with new ones as well. In accordance with the state of the art and the main research questions discussed above, we will rely on cross-disciplinary theorizing on social solidarity at times and beyond crisis, sociology and social movement debates an bottom-up civic actions and different modalities of their politicization and transformative capacities, cross-disciplinary inquiries on framing civic missions and actions against wider societal debates and concerns, and theoretical currents on civil society operations in neoliberal, post-neoliberal and authoritarian political regimes. The anthropological and sociological thinking on the relevance of everyday, bottom-up, invisible, and

quotidian actions in conceiving societal integration and social justice problem will also contribute to our theory building.

The empirical part of the research is planned to apply mixed methods, with a greater emphasis on qualitative methods.

The **qualitative research** will rely on interviews and ethnographic methods to explore the activities of solidarity groups in eight municipalities, their work, visions, and struggles, and their relationship with local society and the wider social and political environment. The case studies will cover the four selected solidarity targets (education, care, refugee/migrant and Roma inclusion), in each of these focusing on one small (rural) and one larger (urban) municipality. In each municipality, we start from a solidarity group conducting intensive work for one of the target groups, which seems to be the most salient (thick, visible, discussed, etc.) in that locality, yet we also look at solidarity initiatives in the three other ones. The data collection starts with the selected solidarity activity, but it extends to the key actors, formal and informal activities in the other areas and the local social environment. Failures, breaks, and voids of civic actions in certain areas and counter-movements will also be seen as valuable information. The ethnographic work will unfold in at last two consecutive years at each locality.

For each **local case study**, 8-10 semi-structured interviews and at least two focus groups per settlement are planned to be conducted, supplemented by additional unstructured interviews and ethnographic descriptions, with fieldwork taking 15-20 days in each case. In view of 8 such localities we have, this means a total of 70-80 interviews and 100-160 days of fieldwork. Including the pilot interviews and fieldwork in the first year, the total number of interviews will be around 100 and the time spent in the field will be four to five months. The fieldwork will be carried out by a new colleague recruited for a postdoctoral post for the duration of the project and by the institute staff associated with the project. We also plan to involve students in the form of a summer fieldwork camp.

Media research: in addition to the fieldwork, we will also examine media practices for each selected solidarity group, using the following methods: (1) analysis of online news media of relevant presence in the local public sphere by using media content analysis (2) analysis of social media activities related to solidarity initiatives (metadata, text, image and video content) targeting the official social media pages of individual and organisational actors active in the scene, including Facebook groups and Instagram pages related to solidarity initiatives, and social media accounts of local (regional) media and press organs. The processed data will feed in the local case studies and the thematic studies.

Case selection of the civic groups within the chosen localities will be based on desk research and preparatory field visits in the first year. In addition to the target group based orientation options (refugee, Roma, Care, and education), we will consider the local institutional landscape, the governance style of the local authorities, the ethnic composition of the population and their socio-economic situation. We will use the database of research conducted in crisis situations since 2015, the database of NGOs from Márton Gerő's research, the database of research on Roma mobility and integration at the Institute for Minority Studies, the database of research on social integration at the Institute of Sociology. Of course, all of this is done in compliance with data management rules. We will seek to establish a lasting cooperation with the solidarity actors or groups in focus and to generate knowledge that is also useful for them. Our informants will also be involved in the dissemination of research results if they show interest in that.

The qualitative and media research data will be laced in the production of eight local case studies and five thematic studies. The latter ones include thematic study on: solidarity in education, in care for elderly, on migrant/refugee solidarity; on solidarity for Roma inclusion.

The survey research, in line with our previous work on solidarity, will examine individual acts, attitudes, solidarity involvements and rationales (Sik-Zakariás 2021) embracing both the giving and receiving side of helping. Also, various types or aspects of solidarity would be covered: (1) direct aid, in the form of material and practical support and care for others often labelled as social solidarity, and (2) the political and transformative actions (political solidarity), their parallel inclusion allowing for the detailed analysis of their interrelatedness. Beyond these various types of solidary actions and practices, the second aim of the statistical analysis is to measure solidarity attitudes and to explore 'deservingness' perceptions, that is attitudes towards the moral worth of various groups orienting the desired levels and directions of distributing material resources and care. In this way everyday social imaginations of the ideal and just society could be mapped quantitatively. The survey will be conducted through a nationally representative population sample of 1000 respondents and carried out online or via personal interviews. The survey research will inform the discussion of solidarity groups' activities and their local variations in view of wider societal senses, attitudes, and positions backing and recognizing solidarity activism.

Matrix of topical and spatial case selection and academic outputs

Primary fields of solidarity	Locality type: rural	Locality type: urban	*Academic products on solidarity spaces*	*Academic products on cross-cutting issues*
Solidarity in education	**Education** + care, mig, Roma	**Education** + care, mig, Roma	Study on solidarity in education	Study on labour practices and social embedding of solidarity Study on politically relevant solidarity Study on transformative effects, politics of hope 3 studies
Care solidarity	**Care** + educ, mig, Roma	**Care** + educ, mig, Roma	Study on care solidarity	
Solidarity and migrant/refugee inclusion	**Mig/refugee** inclusion + educ, care, Roma	**Mig/refugee** inclusion + educ, care, Roma	Study on refugee and migrant solidarity	
Solidarity and Roma inclusion	**Roma** inclusion + educ, care, migrants	**Roma** inclusion + educ, care, migrants	Study on solidarity and Roma inclusion	
Qualitative analysis	8 Local case studies 1 Qualitative synthesis		4 thematic studies	
Media analysis	Online media analysis and report			
Survey analysis	Survey research and report			

Data protection, ethical issues, and risk assessment

In accordance with the Data Protection Policy of the Centre for Social Science Research, files containing personal data are stored exclusively in the TK cloud, files not containing personal data are (also) stored on the researchers' workstations or password-protected computers. The data processed will be protected after the research is completed by TK Research and Documentation Centre, where other researchers will be granted access for research and educational purposes on an anonymous basis. Interviewees will be

informed of the related personal data protection measures and will be asked for their consent to participate. In order to analyse the social media group posts, we will seek permission from the group administrator, following Facebook's policy, fully informed of the purposes and means of use of the data. The Facebook profile or name of the commenters will be anonymised as a first step in the analysis. The research has a **data management plan**, which is attached to the application. If the application is successful and the project can start, we will apply to the Centre for Social Science Research Ethics Committee for approval of the research by submitting the necessary documentation. The research does not carry any more serious risks than the average qualitative sociological research. Based on our previous experience, we are prepared to deal with risks such as non-response, the need to avoid the publicity that scientific work brings to the field. Our response in all these cases will respect the local needs and find alternative fields and data providers for whom collaboration is valuable and of no risk.

Implementation timeline

Timing	Tasks	Expected results	Milestones	Dissemination (acad and public)
2024	Conceptual development of the project Standing seminar Desk research and pilot research	4 meetings of the standing seminar secondary data analysis 7 interviews, 16 days fieldwork	Paper on conceptual and methodological grounding of the site selection	3 conference papers 1 journal manuscript on conceptual aspects of transformative solidarity 1 newspaper or blog article
2025	Fieldwork in 5 localities, 80-89 days Conceptual grounding of the survey	Fieldwork diary, ethnographic descriptions, 40 interviews, 10 focus group interviews	5 local case studies	3 conference papers 1 journal manuscript on secondary data analysis 1 newspaper or blog article
2026	Fieldwork in 3 localities, 50-60 days Media data gathering and analysis Qualitative data analysis Survey data gathering	Fieldwork diary, ethnographic descriptions, 30 interviews, 10 focus group interviews Atlasti data analysis (hpr format) Survey data (SPSS)	3 local case studies 4 thematic analyses Qualitative report Media report	3 conference papers 1 journal manuscript based on qualitative data 1 journal manuscript on based on survey data 1 newspaper or blog article
2027	Conceptual work on the data Final report writing	Survey data analysis (SPSS) Conference papers Disseminations' materials	Survey report Final report 3 crosscutting thematic	3 conference papers 1 journal manuscript based on survey data 3 journal manuscripts

		analysis	Study on labour practices Study on politically relevant solidarity Study on transformative effects, politics of hope
Final conference and academic dissemination Local dissemination with civil partners			2 newspaper or blog articles

4. Expected results

The importance of the research partly lies in its methodological (combining qualitative, quantitative and media research methods) and disciplinary complexity (combining sociology, social anthropology, and political science approaches), which extends the study of solidarity practices and interpretations to previously less studied social spaces and configurations. We substantially extend the scope of solidarity research by exploring both practices that support the structurally vulnerable social groups and the ones that address situations of crisis and deficit in public social services. The localised and longitudinal approach of the research allows us to offer composite knowledge on the construction and long-term trajectories of solidarity work. The research results will upgrade the theory on bottom-up politics through scrutinising everyday solidarities and their transformative effects. The theory will refine the understanding of modalities of politically relevant civil society formations in their local environments and wider social networks. The results will also enrich contemporary scholarship on the multifaceted potentials of solidarity actions to countervail fear and apathy in society pertinent to illiberal and authoritarian political environments by relentlessly perpetuating the discourses on the common good and hope.

The knowledge that the research produces will contribute to wider theoretical discussions and comparative investigations in the following scholarly fields:

(1) **Cross-disciplinary studies on solidarity**: the research will add to the still thin literature on forms of solidarity that have political significance, alongside the more robust literature on the apolitical, hegemony-affirming, and complicit civic solidarity.

(2) **Sociological and anthropological research on care work** through volunteering: the research will shed light on the socially relevant and boundary crossing interpretation of the value and utility of paid and unpaid work, on attempts to dismantle structural inequalities in care work in bottom-up activism, and on the possibilities and limits to extending the ethos of civic initiatives.

(3) **Cross-disciplinary studies on the relationship between civil society and politics**: the research results will help scaling up knowledge on framing, visions, social mobilisation by civil solidarity actors through responding to the fears and apathy in society.

(4) **Anthropology of everyday life and the sociology of hope**: by examining the solidarity actors' discourse framings through mapping their ideas about the common good, their meaning making fused by moral considerations and emotions that drive their collective actions.

Academic outputs: Throughout lifespan of the research, altogether 12 conference presentations (including 8 international ones), 7 English-language and 4 Hungarian-language journal publications will be produced. At least one journal article or blog post will serve a broader public dissemination each research year. A strong emphasis will be put on communicating scientific results beyond academic debates. One of the papers will present the theoretical innovations of the research. Three method-specific research reports will be produced, one analysing the relationship between media coverage and solidarity, the second on

forms of solidarity and solidarity attitudes based on a population survey. The third synthesises the results of 8 local and 4 thematic case studies into a qualitative research report. Three papers will be written from the research reports, two in leading English-language journals and one in a leading Hungarian-language journal. These are expected to be on solidarity work and the embeddedness of civil solidarity forms; the transformative effects of solidarity actions; and discourses on values and hope in solidarity spaces.

Publication plan. We will seek placing journal articles and propose special issues in the following journals: Sociology, Voluntas, European Societies, East European Societies, Politics and Culture, Social Anthropology, Intersections. East European Journal of Societies and Politics, Szociológiai Szemle, Politikatudományi Szemle, Regio.

5. Research infrastructure

Name	Short bio
Feischmidt Margit	Margit Feischmidt is research professor at Centre for Social Sciences, Hungarian Academy of Sciences Centre of Excellence where she leads the Department for Sociology and Anthropology in Minority Studies. She was founding editor in chief of Intersections. East European Journal of Society and Politics and teaches as full professor at Institute for Communication and Media Studies, University of Pécs. With a doctoral degree from Humboldt University and habilitation from her home university she works on issues of migration, nationalism, ethnicity and minorities in East-Central Europe and generally. Her first important publication was Nationalist Politics and Everyday Ethnicity in a Transylvanian Town (2006, Princeton University Press) co-authored with Rogers Brubaker, Jon Fox and Liana Grancea. After years studying mainly Roma and immigrant minorities as well as new forms of nationalism, racism and the far-right she currently works on civic forms of solidarity, her most recent edited book (coeditors Ludger Pries and Celine Cantat) in this subject is *Refugee Protection and Civil Society in Europe,* Palgrave Macmillan, 2019.
Durst Judit	Sociologist, ethnographer. Previously she was a member of Margit Feischmidt's research team on Solidarity during Covid-19. She was a principal investigator of an NKHI funded research project on education-induced social mobility and its consequences among Roma (and non-Roma) first-in-family graduates. One of the main topics of the project was inter-ethnic solidarity and educational support programs compensating social inequality. She had extensive ethnographic fieldwork experience in segregated rural settlements in North Hungary and in multi-sited ethnography with transnational migration networks in the UK and in Canada.
Gerő Márton	Márton Gerő is an Assistant Professor of Sociology at the Faculty of Social Sciences of Eötvös Loránd University and Research Fellow at the at the ELKH, Institute for Sociology of the Centre for Social Sciences. His main research interest includes civil society, social movements, and the processes of political integration. Currently, heis main research project is 'Civil society, enemy images and redistribution: The interplay between structural factors and political action in the process of de-democratization´ (NKFIH -134768).
Glózer Rita	Dr. habil Rita Glózer works for University of Pécs, Institute for Communication and Media Studies as associate professor. Her educational background includes literature and linguistics as well as communication and media studies. She teaches and does research in the field of public discourses and discourse theory, youth and media culture, media and cultural studies at the University of Pécs. She has additional teaching experience at the Babes-Bolyai University (Cluj-Napoca, Romania) and Sapientia Hungarian University in Transylvania (Targu Mures, Romania). Her last books are: Részvétel, média, kultúra (Participation, media and culture) Gondolat Kiadó 2022, and Diskurzusok a civil társadalomról (Discourses on Civil Society) L'Harmattan Kiadó, 2008; Besides being an associate professor of the UP, she is also the president of Médianegyed Egyesület (a civil association for supporting media education).
Katona	Noémi Katona completed her PhD in February 2020 at the Humboldt University Berlin, at

Noémi	the Institute for Social Sciences. Since 2017 she is Junior Research Fellow at the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, Institute for Sociology. Her primary research interests are transnational migration and the commercialization of sexuality and care work. In 2018 she started working at the Friedrich Ebert Foundation Budapest leading the Gender equality in East-Central-Europe program with primary focus on elderly care. Her co-edited book with Attila Melegh *Towards scarcity of care? Tensions and contradictions in transnational elderly care systems in central and eastern Europe* addressed transnational care arrangements in the EU by analysing what historical, demographic and socio-economic processes define the tensions in this field. The book outlined the changing role of state, market, and family in providing care, and the effects of the increasing commercialization of this sector.
Neumann Eszter	Eszter Neumann completed her PhD in 2017 at the King's College London School of Education, Communication and Society. Since 2017, she has been working at the Institute for Minority Studies of the Centre for Social Sciences, Budapest. She is a sociologist of education, her main interests lie in policy sociology and the sociological study of education policy-making, and in particular, neoconservative and populist education policy-making.
Nyirő Zsanna	Zsanna Nyirő completed her PhD in 2021 at the Corvinus University in Budapest. Since 2017, she has been working at the Institute for Minority Studies of the Centre for Social Sciences, Budapest. She is a sociologist, her main interests lie sociological study of social mobility, and in particular the mobility and social integration of the Roma.
Papp Z. Attila	Attila Papp is a sociologist graduated from the Faculty of Sociology, University of Timisoara in 1996, incepted PhD at Eötvös Loránd University, Budapest in 2006. His main research areas are analysis of different forms of institutionalization of the Hungarian minority communities in Eastern Europe (e.g. education, dual citizenship); education of Roma in Central Europe, minority education in general. He is editor in chief of REGIO journal, and at present, he is research professor and director of the Budapest-based Institute for Minority Studies, Centre for Social Sciences, Hungarian Academy of Sciences. He is also professor at Miskolc University, Institute for Applied Social Sciences.
Pulay Gergely	Gergely Pulay, currently a Research Fellow at the Institute for Minority Studies of the Centre for Social Sciences, has a PhD in Sociology and Social Anthropology from the Central European University (2017). Between 2018 and 2020, he was a postdoctoral researcher at the Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology, Halle/Salle (Visegrad Anthropologists' Network). Pulay's research lies at the intersection of economic anthropology and urban ethnography. His monograph under preparation and his most recent journal article ('Personalized Value Struggles amid Marketization: The Search for the Good among Men on the Margins of Bucharest', in *East European Politics and Societies and Cultures*) addresses issues of moral economy, hope and livelihood as value-creation and the grassroots politics of social unrest amid urban precarity in Bucharest, Romania.
Zakariás Ildikó	Ildikó Zakariás is a research fellow at the Institute for Minority Studies, Centre for Social Sciences, Budapest. Her main research areas are civil society and humanitarianism, migration, ethnicity and nationalism, and a related focus on effective governance. Her dissertation has been published as a monograph (in Hungarian) titled *Philanthropic Nation – Solidarity and Power in support of Ethnic Hungarian Minorities* (Budapest, Kalligram, 2018). Her recently published articles appeared in the journals *Sociology*, *International Journal of Immigrant and Refugee Studies, Voluntas: International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations and Intersections – East European Journal of Society and Politics*. Her ongoing research focuses on refugee and migrant services in Vienna, and on the position and perspectives of migrant workers in these organisations.
Zentai Violetta	Violetta Zentai, social anthropologist, associate professor, faculty member of the Departments of Public Policy, and Sociology and Social Anthropology, and the Democracy Institute of the Central European University (CEU), Budapest-Vienna. Her research focuses on ethnic/racial and gender in/equalities, post-socialist socio-economic transformations, European social inclusion policies, and pro-equality civil society formations. She was co-founder and director of the Center for Policy Studies of the CEU (2003-2020). She publishes on social justice movement politics, co-production of critical policy assessment knowledge, care regimes, and most recently on civic solidarity mechanisms. Most relevant publications:

	Hojsik, M., G. Munteanu, V. Zentai, eds. *From the shadow to the limelight: the value of civil society policy monitoring knowledge in Roma equality struggles* (CEU, 2022); Kóczé, Zentai, Jovanovic, Vincze, eds. *A Reflexive History of the Romani Women's Movement: Struggles and Debates in Central and Eastern Europe.* (Routledge)
Zsigmond Csilla	Csilla Zsigmond is a research fellow at the Institute for Minority Studies, Centre for Social Sciences, and has a PhD in Sociology from the Eötvös Lóránd University (2022). Her main interests lie in political sociology and identity constructions. Her research is linked to the research on forms of solidarity in support of refugees in Ukraine, which was a precursor to the research 'Solidarity as an answer to the crisis caused by the pandemic: actions and discourses'. This resulted in the Dialectics of Solidarity and Emergency: Culture and Leisure in the First Wave of the Coronavirus Pandemic (with Judit Acsády), published in *Regio* 29:2 in 2021.

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