

Judit Acsády – Zoltán Ferencz – Anna Vári

Paper title:

"Perception and attitudes towards biotechnology in Hungary"

Abstract

The dilemmas and questions about biotechnology - with the exception of gene manipulated food production – are relatively rarely presented in the publicity in Hungary. As feminist point of views of social issues are represented by very few, we can assume that this point of view has rather weak impact on how people formulate views on biotechnology.

Our inquiry looks at how biotechnology is perceived by lay / interest groups and professionals in Hungary. We are interested in the underlying values, ethical and other considerations governing these perceptions and attitudes. On the one side the question can be raised what kind of society and what kind of human values /needs are assumed behind the promotions of these scientific developments? On the other hand it can be asked in what way people are aware of the way biotechnology interferes with their everyday life? How these are articulated in connection with gender issues? In what way gender or gender-conscious views influence the formulation and articulation of values and attitudes and how relevant civil organisations raise their voices in these questions?

The problem is connected to the broader issue of the public understanding of science and the attitude towards the perceptions of human's ability and willingness to interfere with the natural.

Earlier studies show that for most of the people the lack of information makes it difficult to formulate relevant opinions about scientific achievements in Hungary (Tamás – Ferencz - Schmidt, 2000). In the everyday practice men and women are getting aware of the issues of safe food (Vári). Data shows that the weight of civil organisations in Hungary is not enough significant (within this women's organisations are even weaker) in policy and decision making. Even though the civil sector sometimes can make certain issues visible and can initiate debates.

These observations will be completed by the analyses based on the interviews with representatives of biotechnological research and interviews with representatives of relevant civil organisations (e.g. greens, women's organisations, consumer protection groups) to see the formulation and the gendered differences of the perceptions and attitudes toward biotechnology.

Institutional affiliation Sociology Research Institute of the Hungarian Academy of Science Budapest

Judit Acsády, PhD

Sociologist

Finished studies and PhD in sociology at the ELTE University Budapest and completed courses at the University of Amsterdam (1991), Central European University in Budapest. (1995) and the EHESS in Paris (1996).

Earlier was an organiser of one of the first gender studies courses, lectures and conferences in Budapest. Founding member of the Feminist Network (functioning between 1990-1998) and co-editor of feminist publications. Giving courses at the ELTE University and the Gender and Culture Program on Corvinus University, Budapest.

Araes of research: the interpretation of emancipation after the transition, history of feminist movements and gender debates in Hungary, women in the public sphere, social movements, share of domestic responsibilities. Participated in the ENABLE-AGE (2002-3) and the GENDERWISE (2006) international projects. Most important publications and papers concern the history and the reception of feminism in Hungary.

Mother of a nine-year-old boy.