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ORIGINAL PAPER

Pushed to the Edge? Entrepreneurs with Disabilities and the Post-socialist Experience of Ableism

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Abstract
In this study, we examine the narratives of Hungarian entrepreneurs with disabilities (EWD) of the post-socialist era, using microhistory. Our research question concerns how ableism appears in the lives of EWD and how the aftermath of socialism emerges in their experience of ableism. We believe that a state-socialist past influences the lives and careers of EWD in a way that is unique in entrepreneurial and disability literature. Drawing on the accounts of 29 Hungarian entrepreneurs, we identified four mechanisms that make post-socialist ableism specific: invisibility; passivity and welfare dependency; the legitimacy of disability organisations; as well as the limitations of economic participation. Our research suggests that these effects, embedded in the current political, social, and economic environment, can only change slowly and over a long time.

Keywords Entrepreneurs with disabilities · Ableism · Post-socialism · Central and Eastern Europe

Introduction

According to the definition of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006), "*persons with disabilities include those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual, or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others*" (UNCRPD, 2006, p. 4). People with disabilities (hereinafter: PWD) represent a considerable minority group, with population estimates exceeding one billion people globally, that is, fifteen percent of the world's population (World Health Organization, 2021).

In parallel with the spread of the social model of disability (Barnes & Mercer, 2005; Oliver, 1995), there has been a growing awareness of the various forms of social and economic oppression faced by PWD: discriminative social practices and unfavourable institutional mechanisms, which continue to marginalise PWD and depict them as passive, vulnerable and dependent. Goodley et al. (2019, p. 973) emphasise that *"disability is a matter of public discourse and international disgrace, exemplified in the continued exclusion of impaired children from mainstream schools, the segregation of disabled adults from employment context, and the denial of access to basic human rights as a consequence of reducing welfare and essential services"*. Despite being a large minority group, PWD are confronted by ongoing discrimination, marginalisation, and injustice, and can only participate as second-class actors in social, economic, and political life. Addressing the social needs of PWD is a question of human rights, public policy, managerial concern (Martin & Honig, 2019), as well as an ethical issue with global resonance.

The marginalisation and exclusion of PWD in the labour market is particularly harmful, as their right to meaningful and authentic work is denied (Hästbacka et al. 2016; Meacham et al., 2019). Research indicates that, besides having lower rates of employment, they experience lower job success, which includes lower pay, fewer opportunities for advancement and a higher number of part-time jobs, as

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compared with non-disabled people (Kulkarni, 2016). They also stand a greater risk of being dismissed and remaining unemployed (Mitra & Kruse, 2016), and they face ableist expectations and stereotyping that favour able-bodied people in every respect (Jammaers et al., 2021). The concept of ableism as *"hegemonic ability preferences, which inaugurate the norm"* (Hutcheon & Wolbring, 2013) is built around the uncontested image of the "special-typical individual citizen" (Campbell, 2009), a citizen who is "ready and able to work and contribute" (Goodley, 2014). Recent studies reveal that ableism is present in the workplace, reproducing binary able-bodied/disabled classifications and justifying the stigmatisation and exclusion of PWD (Jammaers et al., 2016; Sang et al., 2016).

One of the ways in which PWD respond to their limited organisational and employment options, as well as to their ableist workplace environment, is by pursuing self-employment or starting their own enterprise (Halabisky, 2014a, 2014b; Martin & Honig, 2019; Yamamoto et al., 2012). Entrepreneurs with disabilities (hereinafter: EWD) represent a large and heterogeneous group that had been largely an "invisible" (Johnson & Kennedy, 2020; Procknow & Rocco, 2016), "forgotten minority" (Cooney, 2008) in entrepreneurship, disability, and business ethics studies. However, interest in this group has grown, and several studies have recently been conducted, focussing on barriers and supporting mechanisms (Kitching, 2014; Renko et al., 2015; Yamamoto et al., 2012), entrepreneurial motivation (Cooney, 2008; De Clercq & Honig, 2011; Dhar & Farzana, 2017), coping with stress and uncertainty (Miller & Le Breton-Miller, 2017; Saxena & Pandya, 2018), self-image, self-efficacy and self-esteem (Martin & Honig, 2019), as well as identity formulation and work (Jammaers & Zanoni, 2020). Some studies connect the entrepreneurial experiences of PWD to the experiences of other minority groups, such as women, ethnic minorities or elderly entrepreneurs (Cooney & Licciardi, 2019; Williams & Patterson, 2019). Critical scholars have suggested that members of various disadvantaged groups face similar economic and social oppression, and, moreover, that power mechanisms are even more paralysing in the case of intersecting group membership (Williams & Patterson, 2019). Although very few studies view EWD directly through the lens of ableism, one common conclusion is that entrepreneurship offers an escape route from the traps of an ableist labour market, such as negative attitudes and ignorance on the part of employers, and a lack of opportunities for career development, while leaving other ableist mechanisms and injustices unchallenged.

Goodley (2014) draws attention to the shared and mutually reinforcing logic of ableism and neoliberalism by conceptualising "neoliberal-ableism". Clearly, ableism as an ideology interacts with any political ideology and economic system surrounding it. As political ideologies change, the mechanisms and operation of ableism may also undergo a profound shift. It is, therefore, an important question to examine how the mechanisms of ableism emerge and advance in non-liberal political and economic systems, and how their transition takes place and proceeds.

In this study, we seek to examine the experiences of Hungarian EWD and their responses to the injustices generated by the ableist environment. Our research question concerns how ableism appears in the lived history of EWD, and how the aftermath of socialism emerges in the shared experience about disability rights and ableism. We believe that a past history of state socialism affects EWD in a way that is unique in entrepreneurial and disability literature, and we aim to describe this legacy after the neoliberal economic transformation that has occurred since the 1990s. As entrepreneurs are theoretically the "champions" of regime change and the neoliberal economic order, profiting from newly possible economic opportunities, the question is whether EWD perceive themselves as winners or feel that only the mechanisms of oppression have changed (if they have at all). Following the steps of the microhistorical studies (Hargadon & Wadhwani, 2022; Magnússon & Szijártó, 2013; Vaara & Lambert, 2016), we believe that using a macrotemporal and microtemporal framework in a reflexive way (Hargadon & Wadhwani, 2022) in investigating the lived history of EWD helps us understand the "bigger picture". It is also important that we give voice to the experiences of EWD in a Central and Eastern European (hereinafter: CEE) country: as Goodley et al. (2019) explains, much of the research on disability is conducted in Western Europe and North America, so it is important that voices from other social and economic contexts are also heard in global discourses on disability.

The Ideology of Ableism

The notion of ableism has its origins in the human rights movements of the USA and the UK (Campbell, 2008, 2009, 2014), and much of the related theoretical and empirical work is rooted in Disability Studies, the academic discipline that has evolved around disability as a social, cultural, economic, legal, and political phenomenon (Bogart & Dunn, 2019; Campbell, 2008; Wolbring, 2012). Ableism builds on the idea that disability is socially constructed, that is, the physical condition or impairment itself is only partially relevant (Nario-Redmond, 2020; Thomas, 2004). As a normative ideology and belief system that favours able-bodiedness over disability, ableism has also become an analytical tool and a framework with which to analyse the functioning and persistence of this oppressive mechanism and reveal the systematic exclusion of PWD (Hutcheon & Wolbring, 2013; Jammaers et al., 2021).

Ableism propagates the widespread collective belief that "*impairment is inherently negative, and should the opportunity present itself, it should be ameliorated, cured or eliminated*" (Campbell, 2008, p. 154). The concept of ableism as *"hegemonic ability preferences, which inaugurate the norm"* (Hutcheon & Wolbring, 2013) is built around the uncontested image of the "species-typical individual citizen" (Campbell, 2009), a citizen that is "ready and able to work and contribute" (Goodley, 2014). The hegemony of normalcy, otherwise called the "tyranny of ability" (Parekh, 2017), makes inequalities in social structures and arrangements logical, expected, and acceptable.

Ableism refers to a "constitutional divide" involving a separation of the notion of the normative "human" person from the "aberrant", referring to people as "subhuman" (Rieck et al., 2019). In an ableist social hierarchy and power structure, the "able body" becomes the standard against which the person with disabilities can only become "the other". At the same time, "othering", the phenomenon of differentiating between the self and the other draws attention to the material and discursive levels of disability: disability may be interpreted not only as a condition but also as a material and discursive phenomenon that repeatedly appears in social processes (Mik-Meyer, 2016). Focussing on ableism allows us to see the intricate machinery behind societal prejudice and stigma (Dosch, 2019).

Ableism is reflected in the legislation system and the enforcement of rights. Disability activists have from the very beginning eagerly sought to change existing orders and secure certain (political, social, economic) freedoms in the form of equality rights and protection against discrimination in the legal body. However, as Campbell explains, *"the very inclusiveness of liberalism's understanding of "citizenship" hinges upon governing disability according to an ethics of normalisation and minimalization*" (Campbell, 2001, p. 53). Legal protection is thus dependent on the notion of inclusion and the extent to which PWD are ready and willing to be assimilated. Issues of technological advancements correcting certain impairments and thus undermining legal eligibility or the notion of "responsibilisation" (Campbell, 2001, p. 59), that is, punishing the person not taking steps to eliminate a disability, are only two examples where an ableist dynamic of the law is reasserted.

According to ableist norms, the capitalist system has traditionally regarded PWD as less productive and less reliable. In sum, they are considered incapable of meeting the expectations of the market economy, and represent the opposite of the ideal worker who is ready to work and contribute to society and to the economy, and who creates value (Goodley, 2014). In the globalised neoliberal economy, there is a persistent negative representation that portrays PWD as difficult to employ, and which thus excludes them from the world of work or relegates them to inferior positions. In a work-based society in which work represents a moral category, those who are unwilling or unable to work, regardless of their actual abilities, become not only economically and socially but also morally inferior and reproachable (Blattner, 2020). The notion of "neoliberal ableism" introduced by Goodley (2014) seeks to draw attention to the mutually reinforcing effects of neoliberalism and ableism, both of which portray disabled people as the antithesis of responsible citizens with good work ethics and members of a desirable, productive labour force. As the entrepreneurial individual is a cornerstone of the neoliberal market economy, exploring the experience of EWD can be crucial in understanding how ableism functions. Although ableism has roots in disability history, and Campbell's interpretations are profoundly political in their understanding, little research has examined ableism and the challenges that PWD outside liberal-democratic settings have faced (Dinu, 2022). In our research, we aim to contribute to filling this gap and to identify patterns of ableism associated with the legacy of the state-socialist system in the lived experience of Hungarian EWD.

Hungary: The Situation of PWD Behind the Iron Curtain (1945–1990)

Hungary was one of the Eastern Bloc countries of Europe between 1945 and 1990, a member of the Warsaw Pact and Comecon. It was a de facto one-party system, with a socialist style planned economy and a relatively high concentration of power in the hands of law enforcement agencies. Under the socialist system, the state owned all large enterprises, and farms, prices and wages were centrally regulated, and (both theoretically and rhetorically) there was full employment. Officially, there was no social policy, as, in principle, there could be no disadvantaged groups for which the state was responsible. Thus, the majority of PWD lived their lives in healthcare institutions or in residential homes, and their care was primarily health-related (Andor, 2009).

Socialist societies, although presented as a radical alternative to capitalism, were also characterised by the ableist concept of productivism and medicalisation, defining disability as the "loss of labour capacity" (Mladenov, 2016) or "loss of usefulness" (Dinu, 2022). Rasell and Iarskaia-Smirnova (2014, p. 5) add that in order to produce a new "socialist type of man", state socialism frequently strove for the *"championing and near fetishization of bodily strength and ability",* which also manifested itself in denying the existence of PWD. Borowska-Beszta and Wasilewska-Ostrowska (2019) describe so-called "defectology" as a dominant theoretical concept and practice that was developed in the Soviet Union and imposed on the countries of the Eastern Bloc. In defectology, both science and practice focus on the defect, deficiency, or impediment of the person

(which can thus be understood as an extreme version of the medical view of disability). Defectology has contributed to the reinforcement of social prejudice, social isolation, and shame associated with PWD in this region (Phillips, 2009), and to the fact that "*they have been stigmatised, hidden from the public, and thus made seemingly invisible*" (Borowska-Beszta & Wasilewska-Ostrowska, 2019, p. 8). Kiss (2019) describes the "*caring and hiding practices"* of the Hungarian socialist system, and how PWD were not only physically hidden but also absent from any social and political discourse, making their existence and issues of participation and inclusion a taboo.

Based on the socialist logic, PWD in Hungary were either given jobs (usually in sheltered workshops, isolated from non-disabled workers) or small allowances for their inability to work, "*along the lines of segregation, confinement, and stigma*" (Mladenov & Petri, 2020, p. 18). As another manifestation of the medical-productivist approach to disability, PWD were required to attend regular medical commissions composed of physicians (medical professionals) who "assessed" their ability to work on the bases of material criteria, the results determining their eligibility for any support in cash or in kind (Mladenov, 2017).

Work was poorly paid and exploitative, leaving PWD both "*isolated from society and excluded from socially valued statuses*" (Zaviršek, 2014, p. 197). In the large, sheltered organisations PWD generally worked for low pay, with low technology resulting in low efficiency, and with no or very low levels of rehabilitation (Winter, 1990). Könczei (1990, p. 77) concluded that "*the whole field of rehabilitation and its regulation was created randomly in Hungary, it does not form a system and does not work in the least in the gear-like manner proposed by normative theory… In Hungary, almost all rehabilitation professionals are self-taught*". All these factors contributed to the development of "learned helplessness" (Borowska-Beszta & Wasilewska-Ostrowska, 2019; Dinu, 2022): the socio-political system incapacitated PWD and prevented them from developing their skills, competencies, and personality while maintaining control over their lives, which has finally resulted in generating an overall helplessness and an addiction to social support (the so-called "dependency culture", Mladenov, 2017). Since disability was treated as an individual and medical problem, scarcely any funds were invested in overcoming environmental barriers to participation: buildings and public transport remained inaccessible, education for children with disabilities was segregated, and personal assistance services as opposed to institutionalisation were extremely limited (Cseh, 2014).

State socialism suppressed not only party-political representation, but also political deliberation and contestation within wider civil society (Holland, 2008; Lane, 1996). Being a traditionally stigmatised, marginalised, and disempowered group, PWD and their civil organisations were virtually excluded from public decision-making in Hungary, and grassroots disability activism was suppressed (Keszi et al., 2014). Although large impairment-based so-called umbrella organisations existed nationwide, they were sponsored and closely controlled by the state (Phillips, 2009). Grassroots civil society emerged only after the fall of the socialist regime (Kiss, 2013) when their first notable common action was to have Parliament pass the so-called Equality Act catering for the rights and equal opportunities of PWD (Act Nr 1998/XXVI).

The Transition to a Neoliberal Market Economy and the Situation of PWD in Hungary

Since the 1990s, the post-socialist CEE countries have implemented neoliberal reforms, including privatisation, deregulation, decentralisation, fiscal austerity, and welfare state retrenchment (Ferge, 1997; Mladenov & Petri, 2020). After the change of regime in Hungary, economic and political reforms allowed the free creation and legal functioning of private enterprises. The roots of small private enterprises (the so-called "GMK"s) had already been established in the 1980s as part of the socialist "grey", or "second economy". The "second economy" (Hankiss, 2004) comprised work activities in which people earned an extra income beside their formal work by constantly testing the limits of state rules and prohibitions (for example, by doing private work using the organisation's resources, that is, GMK, or stealing from the company), which was also a symbol of the exercise of individual freedom (Csoba, 2011). The general social acceptance of the "second economy" laid the foundations for a specific system of norms that still exists today in Hungary, which promotes the virtues of incomes earned by bypassing state structures and the normalised distrust of state institutions.

In respect of the situation of PWD, large, sheltered organisations employing PWD went bankrupt and closed down, due to the economic restructuring in the early 1990s, and the social benefits of PWD were cut directly (Sharle, 2011). The disability assessment system has been reformed and made stricter, leaving PWD without any knowledge and competences that are marketable in the new market economy, without employment opportunities in the primary labour market, and sometimes even without the basic meagre benefits (Kurucz & Kemény, 2016). This has further reinforced the economic pressure on PWD: *"the stronger the pressure to sell one's labour, the less room one has to negotiate conditions of employment and the more unequal society becomes"* (Mladenov, 2017, p. 1230). In 2002, the employment rate of PWD stood at 12% in Hungary, the lowest in Europe (Sharle, 2011). Systematic cuts to public services and welfare have

increasingly been justified, not only by economic necessity but also by the neoliberal concept of the minimal state, emphasising self-reliance and the eradication of the "harmful culture of dependency". After the financial crises of 2008, welfare budgets were subjected to additional cuts: in Hungary, additional sanctions were imposed, as social assistance was tied to participation in public work programmes, and there were direct and indirect cuts to personal assistance schemes (Sharle, 2011; Sharle & Szikra, 2015).

Meanwhile, the "socialist type of man" has been replaced by the "ideal capitalist citizen", who is extremely able, flexible, mobile, and continuously expanding their capacity to produce and consume, besides being independent and self-sufficient (Mladenov, 2016). Besides the "myth of productivity", the concept of self-sufficiency also assumed great importance: in the neoliberal framework everyone is responsible for managing their own "capital" to the maximum effect and utility. The overvaluation of self-sufficiency has a negative impact on the image of those who have special needs, devaluating them and stigmatising "dependency", and those receiving care or who do not fit the image of a self-sustaining and independent citizen. The neoliberal narrative of "welfare dependency" suggests that social benefits entrap the recipients in a dependency culture, which renders PWD increasingly passive and unwilling to work (Mladenov, 2017). This ableist narrative is not challenged by popular culture and the media: in Hungary, PWD are depicted mainly in segregated programmes, as victims or super-heroes, and rarely as average citizens, professionals or decision-makers (Váróczy & Tiszai, 2021).

On the other hand, in the 1990s, the system of vocational rehabilitation began to develop, with considerable knowledge and experience being introduced, mainly from Western Europe, from the UN and from the OECD (although Kálmán & Könczei, 2002, address this development as partly "imported", and partly "homegrown"). In 1998, the state rehabilitation institutions were established and already included some aspects of complex labour market rehabilitation (Gere, 2001). In 2004, Hungary joined the EU, which provided additional resources and knowledge transfer for the social integration and inclusion of PWD (for example, EU structural funds for deinstitutionalisation, see Petri, 2023). In 2007, Hungary became the second country to ratify the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the Optional Protocol (UNCRPD) (Andor, 2009), which was received with overwhelming enthusiasm by PWD and disability NGOs. Since then, however, its significance, besides that of other rights-securing legislation, seems to have been eroded in everyday struggles against ableist social practices (Petri, 2023). While, during the 2010s, certain macro-level financial incentives were introduced to encourage large companies to employ PWD (Hidegh & Csillag, 2013), at the same time the country has failed to implement any international or national accessibility obligations, for example, those delineated in the UNCRPD, and has indeed postponed them without setting any deadline (Magyar Civil Caucus, 2010).

The change of regime of 1989/1990 allowed free enterprise, and in Hungary, the legal and economic framework was quickly outlined, and an entrepreneurial ecosystem began to emerge (Szerb, 2017; Szerb & Trumbull, 2015). However, research suggests that the elements of the supporting entrepreneurial ecosystem are still weak and incomplete (despite the fact that since EU accession, Hungary has received substantial support), and only few programmes have been developed in the last thirty years with the specific aim of supporting the entrepreneurship of disadvantaged social groups (such as women, youth, and Roma people), and there are no programmes targeting specifically PWD. (Csillag et al., 2019; OECD, 2017, 2020). There are still severe shortcomings in the education system in the systematic teaching of entrepreneurship and business start-up skills (Szerb, 2017). In reflection, services to support entrepreneurial skills and entrepreneurial development have not been developed in the vocational rehabilitation process: according to OECD statistics, in 2007, only 5% of PWD in Hungary were self-employed or entrepreneurs (Halabisky, 2014a, 2014b).

With regard to the agency of PWD, the post-socialist transition restored party pluralism and representative democracy, but as participation in policy-making requires time, energy and money, resurgent civil society, and disability advocacy remained weak (Waltz & Schippers, 2021). In Hungary, the number of NGO organisations established for and by PWD (and their families) increased rapidly after the transition, but they focussed more on reducing the direct effects of the ableist environment, with the provision of social services and other kinds of material assistance, rather than advocacy or the implementation of disability rights (Holland, 2008; Keszi et al., 2014). While the creation of quality services that are available, accessible, and affordable is of great importance, since they make social participation possible for PWD (Keszi et al., 2014), this focus has depoliticised disability organisations and reduced the opportunities for PWD to participate in public decision-making. NGOs have become key agents of decentralised service provision, services becoming more person-centred and inclusive, thus promoting alternatives to segregated services along the lines of the social model of disability and the Independent Living philosophy (Kiss, 2013). Yet without long-term financial support, a strategy and central coordination, available social provision has remained small-scale, project centred, geographically scattered, unequal and unjust (Sharle & Szikra, 2015).

Mladenov and Petri (2020) suggest that post-socialist neo-liberalisation has further hindered the political

representation of PWD by encouraging symbolic and token participation, for example, in the form of Members of Parliament with disabilities. Post-socialist governments have established national bodies to consult disability organisations regularly on disability policy (Keszi et al., 2014): in Hungary, the 1998 Act on the Rights and Equal Opportunities of Persons with Disabilities (Equality Act) established the National Disability Council (Andor, 2009). Council sessions, however, have since become formal and superficial, with proposals initiated by the administration being unanimously approved on a routine basis. Kiss (2019) concludes that in Hungary, disability issues are becoming more important and increasingly visible on the condition that those involved keep their distance from political affairs. PWD and their families can only achieve limited success if they avoid conflict with the authorities, struggles for interests, or actions that challenge the balance of social consensus. Petri (2023) describes the trap of "service provision vs. conflict seeking disability advocacy" in Hungary. This "misrepresentation" has a negative impact on PWD by denying them the opportunity to have a say in policies that concern them: it is thus a negation of the slogan "Nothing about us without us!" (Mladenov & Petri, 2020). Kolarova (2017) uses the term "cruel optimism" for the fact that while PWD were enthusiastic about the social and political transition and were hoping for progress and emancipation, the liberal individualism of market economy and establishment of a post-socialist democracy only brought new forms of oppression (Bárd, 2019) (Table 1).

EWD, Ableism, and the Legacy of Socialism

Worldwide, PWD have long been struggling with entering employment, and face various challenges, barriers, and constraints: this has been documented in Europe (Halabisky, 2014b; Hästbacka et al. 2016; Hein & Ansari, 2022; Kitching, 2014; Pagán-Rodríguez, 2012), including Ireland (Cooney, 2008) and Hungary (Csillag et al., 2019), in the USA (Renko et al., 2015), as well as globally, for example, in Iran (Bagheri & Abbariki, 2017), in Bangladesh (Dhur and Farzana, 2017), and in India (Kulkarni, 2016). The common points of these studies are that PWD indeed face sociopolitical discrimination and reduced power from ableism, and that in developing (Bagheri & Abbariki, 2017) and post-socialist countries (Csillag et al., 2019) they encounter even more serious employment difficulties. The workplace situation of PWD has also been studied from various ethical points of view: Vijayasingham et al. (2018) used the "ethics of care" perspective to understand the experiences of chronically ill people in institutions, and Meacham et al. (2019) analysed the experience of workers with intellectual

Table 1 The characteristics of state socialism and the transition to the neoliberal market economy

	State socialism (1945–1989)	Transition to the neoliberal market economy
General political and economic environment	Planned economy, state owned enterprises, no private enterprises until the late 1980s (the 'second economy') 'Caring and hiding' practices of the political system	Privatisation, deregulation, neoliberal reforms, marketisation Rationalisation of public services and social security, continuous cutting of state pensions Free enterprise, but a weak entrepreneurial ecosystem and a non-competitive system of education
Picture of disability	Disability representation, as a medically identifiable inability to work (the so-called 'medical-productivist' view) Normalisation of the so-called 'defectological' concept (Soviet Union) Denial of the existence of disability, stigmatisation, and isolation	1998: the Act on Disability (rights and complex rehabilitation) 2007: ratification of the UN CRPD Eradication of the 'harmful culture of dependency', stigmatisation of 'welfare dependency' Myths of productivity and self-sufficiency
Employment and vocal rehabilitation of people with disabilities	Full employment, low income, no development Sheltered organisations, low efficiency No rehabilitation system, low level of knowledge (a 'random' rehabilitation system) Medical commissions assess the ability to work	Drastic fall of the employment of PWD, low level of self-employment Development of a complex rehabilitation system, but not 'homegrown' reforms OECD and EU funds Stricter disability assessment system
Representation of people with disabilities	Disability organisations heavily repressed or controlled by the state Agency or resistance of PWD constrained	Rise of post-socialist civil society Service-oriented civil society, external donor-dependency, apolitical NGO organisations Activists are marginalised in official policy-making 'Cruel optimism'

disabilities in the hotel sector, building on the theory of corporate social responsibility (hereinafter: CSR). Several studies in the field of business ethics do not focus specifically on disability but on inclusive and non-discriminatory business and human resource management (HRM) practices in general, using CSR theory (Bennett, 2011), the capability approach (Fujimoto & Uddin, 2021; González-Cantón et al., 2019) or diversity (Demuijnck, 2009; Gilbert et al., 1999) as a framework.

One of the ways in which PWD have responded to their limited employment options is through the pursuit of self-employment or entrepreneurship (Halabisky, 2014a, 2014b; Martin & Honig, 2019; Pagán-Rodríguez, 2012). Although neoclassical ideology reinforces the ableist narrative by making entrepreneurship the driving force of the economy (Maroufkhani et al., 2018) and depicting the entrepreneur as an innovative, successful, strong, courageous and above all "able" person (Cooney, 2008), entrepreneurship may offer PWD the opportunity to redefine their social status (Martin & Honig, 2019), overcome social marginality (Cooney, 2008), gain independence, autonomy and job-satisfaction (Halabisky, 2014a, 2014b), and choose a more positive entrepreneurial identity than that of disability.

Becoming an entrepreneur can provide solutions to some of the challenges arising from the ableist economic and social environment, albeit solving only some of the problems, in addition to which new challenges and injustices may arise. Research suggests that push factors, such as an exclusionary and ableist labour market, and inadequate vocational rehabilitation and social care systems, may play a major role in the entrepreneurial development of PWD (Kitching, 2014). Thus, some PWD become entrepreneurs or launch their own business due to having no other alternative, on account of the injustices of the ableist economic and social environment as necessity entrepreneurs.

In many ways, CEE and Hungarian EWD face similar ableist barriers and oppressive mechanisms to those faced by their peers in other neoliberal market economies. The question, however, is how the socialist legacy of those countries, the transformation from socialism, and the partially imported neoliberal market economy are related to patterns of ableism. As ableism is fundamentally connected to human rights, to examine the patterns of its effects, we refer to the UN concepts of human rights (United Nations, 1948).

Human rights deriving from the base of the right of self-determination (UN, 1948) may be classified as "civil and political rights" (the determination of political status, UN, 1966a), and "economic, social and cultural rights" (to freely pursue one's own economic, social, and cultural development, UN, 1966b). Civil and political rights include, for example, the right to life, freedom of movement, equality before the law, freedom of thought, conscience and religion, the right of peaceful assembly, the right to freedom of association with others, the right of participation in public affairs and elections, and the protection of minority rights (United Nations, 1966a). Economic rights, which will be treated separately in our paper as they have a strong connection to entrepreneurship, provide the conditions necessary for prosperity and wellbeing and include, for example, the right to property and the right to work in just and favourable conditions. Social and cultural rights include the right to social security, to an adequate standard of living and to the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health, and the right to education, to participate in cultural life and to enjoy the benefits of scientific progress and its applications (United Nations, 1966b).

In the socialist political and economic system, based on the principles of "socialist humanism" (aiming to demonstrate its superiority to capitalist societies' alleged disrespect for the health of their workers), the state took care of all its citizens, including PWD (at a minimum material level), in the form of sheltered employment, accommodation and/or allowances (Dinu, 2022). This was a limited, "life-sustaining" care, as there were no real rehabilitation services, no personal assistance system, and only segregated schooling for children with disabilities, that is, care was not concerned with ensuring participation, access, or supporting development. The socialist "caring state" did not consider the individual needs or rights of PWD: the exercise of economic, political, or social rights was only possible in a very limited sense. At the heart of the system lay a paternalistic state, which provided some benefits and a standard of living. This "caring state" has been and is being dismantled over the course of the last thirty years, yet the idea that the state has a duty and responsibility to provide care, of which people are either recipients or passive subjects, still persists in society, in the thinking of individuals and, in some cases, in the thinking of PWD themselves. In post-socialist societies, the essentially collectivist and paternalistic view of "socialist humanism" has partly been preserved, but it has been accompanied by the individualistic characteristic of liberal market economies: in some cases, this is even simultaneously present in the thinking of individuals.

With the change of regime, the labour market has also undergone change: with the closing and privatisation of state enterprises, the state system based on (theoretical) full employment has been transformed, and it now clearly falls to individuals to "sell themselves" on the labour market. The emergence and dominance of the ableist neoliberal ideal worker also make it difficult for PWD to join and remain in the mainstream labour market since PWD have fewer marketable skills. One reason behind this lack of competence may be that the essentially segregated school system is slow to transform, and the (not organically developed, but imported) rehabilitation system cannot effectively prepare PWD for this challenge. Although PWD

have the opportunity to turn towards self-employment and entrepreneurship, due to the socialist past, few families have the relevant experience and knowledge of entrepreneurship, the entrepreneurial ecosystem and financing systems are not developed, and the vocational rehabilitation system does not prepare PWD for entrepreneurship. Although the EU and OECD support the entrepreneurial integration of disadvantaged social groups, in Hungary PWD have not been a focus of this attention in the last thirty years. In addition, in post-socialist countries, even the entrepreneur is a suspicious actor: some researchers suggest that in these "transition" economies the societal contribution of entrepreneurs is not valued, entrepreneurial failure is viewed negatively, risk associated with innovative entrepreneurship is stigmatised by local culture, and the concept of entrepreneurship may be associated with corruption (Grigore and Dragan 2020).

In the work-centred society of socialism, the "less capable" PWD lived on the periphery of society, working in sheltered organisations and/or living in residential homes, physically provided for but isolated from mainstream society. The lack of accessibility and the complete absence of media representation and media coverage further reinforced this "invisibility". With the change of regime, deliberate isolation, and state control of the media (in principle) disappeared, and the recent development of IT and social media offered further opportunities for PWD to be "visible" and exercise their social rights. However, decades of invisibility also mean that members of society have had no personal experience with PWD, companies lack knowledge of how to make organisations genuinely inclusive, and accessibility is not achieved, especially in rural areas of the country. Thus, the "invisibility" inherited from socialism, the lack of information and experience, in addition to the neoliberal (performativity-based) ableist view of people in today's organisations, also prevent PWD from being employed or accepted as business partners.

Finally, socialism fundamentally limited the advocacy opportunities of PWD, on the one hand by not allowing NGOs to practise for forty-five years, and on the other by regulating the symbolic representation of PWD in a one-party system. The change of regime removed these constraints. PWD themselves and their family members have collectively made Parliament pass and adopt disability legislation (the Equality Act, the UNCRPD and its Optional Protocol), established many types of local, regional, or national organisations (for example, FESZT—the Council of Disability Organisations), and has established numerous services for PWD (for example, group homes and disability support services). Yet in the thirty years since the political changes, mainly due to their failing resources, disability groups have struggled to maintain their united advocacy and implement legislation with day-to-day law enforcement, and as a consequence, their social, economic and political participation and representation has remained merely tokenistic.

All in all, under socialism, economic, social, and political rights were largely restricted, and while the government was striving to redistribute wealth evenly across society, finally causing market inefficiencies and the collapse of the nation's economy over time, on a personal level less entrepreneurial opportunity and competition lead to a lack of motivation and individual advocacy of individuals. Post-transition neoliberalism has brought various new rights engraved in national legislation that protects and empowers people in principle, but because of the social, political, and economic environment not being conducive to their realisation, these remain mainly on paper, without true enforcement. PWD dependent on the declining government-controlled and administered services (healthcare, education, social services) have become one of „the losers" of the system change as ongoing ableist social practices largely inhibit them from using the newly won rights to their social, political, and economic advantage.

Methodology

Our study employs a qualitative research method that is generally used for investigating complex and multifaceted social phenomena such as entrepreneurship, disability, and ableism (Cooper & Emory, 1995). Previous studies on EWD have also applied qualitative methods (Ashley & Graf, 2018; Heath & Reed, 2013; Jammaers et al., 2016, 2021).

A snowball sample selection strategy (Salamzadeh & Kawamorita Kesim, 2017; Silverman, 2008) was followed in two phases between 2018 and 2020. First, we sent the summary of the research to various stakeholders (both individuals and organisations), vocational and rehabilitation agencies, disability advocacy organisations and service providers, government representatives from disability, employment, education and small business departments, private and state-funded entrepreneurship development centres, academic faculties and networks of researchers, entrepreneurs, and social entrepreneurs. We asked them to suggest possible respondents, with details of their availability. Respondents were contacted by e-mail or telephone (based on their preference), providing general information about the research process and the interview. At the end of each interview, we asked the respondents if they could introduce other EWD to the researchers. Participants were invited if they claimed to be EWD, had experience of entrepreneurship for at least three years, and/or had at least three employees.

Despite our efforts to build a diverse sample, only eight of the twenty-nine entrepreneurs are female, and with the exception of one person with hearing loss and one with additional mental health issues, the interviewees have

either physical or vision impairments. The predominance of people with sight loss and physical disabilities among entrepreneurs has already been addressed in literature based on US and UK statistics (Ashley & Graf, 2018). While there are no available statistics for Hungarian EWD, we suppose that our sample might reflect similar tendencies in the Hungarian EWD population. The participants were located nationwide in Hungary and their fields of activity included IT services, sales, the construction industry and architecture, event management and catering, agriculture, advertising, accounting, and the clothing industry, among others (see Table 2 for details).

The interviews lasted between one and three hours. Due to the COVID pandemic, in the second phase, some of the interviews were conducted online. The first, unstructured half of the interview concerned the life story of the entrepreneur, while the second part contained open-ended questions on barriers and supporting factors of entrepreneurship, motivation, relationships with other entrepreneurs and other PWD, self-realisation, autonomy, and identity. The interviews were recorded and transcribed word for word.

During the research process, we followed three stages in the analysis of the shared historical experience of EWD regarding the changing nature of ableism in the light of the shift from socialism to capitalism. First, we used historical methods to understand the state of the rights of entrepreneurs and PWD in the two systems, which we have presented in the contextual part of the paper. In the second phase, we used microhistorical methods to analyse the interview conducted with EWD focussing upon specific incidents reflecting lived history. Microhistory as a method is based on *"the reflexive use of dual temporal frames: a microtemporal frame suited for an empirically grounded study of individuals in time and a macrotemporal frame accounting for processes of continuity and change in social structures over time"* (Hargadon & Wadhwani, 2022). Microhistory emphasises the agency of the individuals as they are regarded as active individuals and conscious actors (Magnússon & Szijártó, 2013) offering a context-rich alternative to research overly fixated on large-scale endeavours (Maclean et al., 2016, p. 623). It has been argued that the strength of microhistorical methods lies in drawing attention to previously unnoticed patterns of historical processes (Hargadon & Wadhwani, 2022) by following a process of "zooming in and out" (Vaara & Lambert, 2016) and rotating the macroscopic and microscopic views (Hargadon & Wadhwani, 2022). Thus, in the third stage, we compared and contrasted insights gained through microhistorical analysis with the results of the macrohistorical analysis and identified patterns. During stages two and three, NVivo software was applied for data structuring. The patterns and contradictions identified were discussed several times in the research group ensuring communicative validity.

Ethical considerations allow researchers to decide which research procedure is ethically legitimate and whether, in research on human subjects, ethical considerations ensure that anonymity and/or confidentiality is guaranteed, consent is informed, dignity is maintained, and both individuals and society benefit (Dhar & Farzana, 2017). It was essential to conduct the study in accordance with the ethical standards of research. All respondents were initially contacted by e-mail or telephone to ascertain their interest in participating in the study. We informed them beforehand of the nature of and reason for the research. Informed consent was collected before the interview; again, respondents were acquainted with the purpose of the study, what the data would be used for, and the potential risks of participation (Kvale, 2007). Concerning potential risks, confidential data treatment plays a crucial role; therefore, we used pseudonyms to protect participants. Intersubjective validation (Kvale, 2007) was supported through double coding.

The study is limited by the fact that our research group consists of practitioners and academics from the fields of disability studies, rehabilitation, management, and entrepreneurship, yet there were no disabled researchers among us, so our own circumstances limit our understanding of the experiences of the EWD.

In terms of our historical experiences, we were all children under socialism, all four of us lived in Hungary, and have personal, lived experiences of the ideology of socialism, the socialist school system (the ideological education and the pioneer movement, for example), and the functioning of the socialist economy and society. We lived through the regime change in Hungary and are still living here, which helps us understand the transition experiences, the "cruel optimism" and the post-change society and economy. While sharing these experiences represents a strength, it also calls for careful reflection, especially because our lived history is construed through the perspectives of able-bodied people.

In the data collection and analysis, we have sought to focus on the experiences and opinions of our interviewees, and our own lived experiences should only support the interpretation, in no way replacing it. During reflective discussions, we persistently challenged and reinterpreted the patterns that emerged through microhistorical analysis. Our different academic backgrounds and experiences supported the analysis process, allowing us to approach the experiences from different scientific and practical perspectives. What we have in common is that all four of us have been committed to supporting PWD, exploring and describing their experiences for more than ten years. In this article, besides our own academic goals, we aim to give them a voice.

Table 2 Respondents of the study

Pseudonym	Gender	Onset of the disability	Age (at the time of the interview)	Education	Type of disability	Field of business, activity	Starting year of business
Ottó	M	Consequence of accident, 2002	41	College/university	Physical (para)	Medical industry (wheelchairs)	2007
Viktor	M	Born with the impairment, gradual deterioration, in the last 15 years blind	56	Vocational	Blind	Construction industry, project management	1989
Bence	M	Consequence of accident, 2002	42	College/university	Physical (tetra)	ICT, cross-fit room, and sport event organizing	2004
Róbert	M	Consequence of accident, 2005	33	College/university	Physical (tetra)	Catering, sales	2004
Roland	M	Born with the impairment, gradual deterioration	42	College/university	Sight loss	ICT services, software development	2004
Rebeka	F	Born with the impairment	36	College/university	Blind	Sales	2008
Richárd	M	Consequence of accident, 1994	60	Vocational	Physical	Accounting services, clothing industry	1989
Antal	M	Born with the impairment	26	College/university	Blind	ICT industry	2016
Tamás	M	Consequence of accident, 2004	40	College/university	Physical	Car sales, agriculture, construction industry	2014 (2000)
Ágoston	M	Consequence of accident, 1978	70	College/university	Physical (para)	Architecture, construction, advertising	1999
Ábel	M	Acquired by illness, gradual deterioration	47	College/university	Blind	Legal services, sport instructor	1997 (2019)
Vince	M	Consequence of accident, 2007	50	College/university	Physical	Teacher, dance instructor, motivational speaker	2001
Maja	F	Born with the impairment, gradual deterioration	29	Vocational	Sight loss	Masseur	2013
Levente	M	Consequence of accident, 2006	42	Secondary school	Physical	Sales (electronic devices)	2016
Marcell	M	Consequence of accident, 2001	55	College/university	Physical	Film director	2003
Lilla	F	Born with the impairment	49	College/university	Blind	Masseur	2007
Adél	F	Acquired by illness, gradual deterioration	51	Secondary school	Physical, chronic illness	Clothing industry	2018
Bea	F	Acquired by illness, gradual deterioration	64	College/university	Blind	Teacher, language school	2001
Jakab	M	Consequence of childhood illness	64	Secondary school	Physical (para)	Cleaning industry	1987
Rita	F	Acquired by illness at the age of 16	50	College/university	Blind	OD consultant	2010
Detre	M	Born with the impairment, gradual deterioration	40	College/university	Physical (para)	Accessibility consultant	1989

Table 2 (continued)

Pseudonym	Gender	Onset of the disability	Age (at the time of the interview)	Education	Type of disability	Field of business, activity	Starting year of business
Milán	M	Born with the impairment, gradual deterioration	43	College/university	Sight loss	ICT sevices	2005
Emma	F	Acquired by illness at the age of 12	41	College/university	Blind	Blogger, trainer (awareness-raising), publishing	2010
Valter	M	Consequence of childhood illness	40	College/university	Blind	Attorney, legal services	2004
Gréta	F	Acquired by illness, gradual deterioration	50	Vocational	Physical	Medical industry (sales of wheelchairs)	2012
Vendel	M	Consequence of accident, 1993	50	College/university	Physical (tetra)	Sales, pizza restaurant, sport event organising	2002
László	M	Born with the impairment, gradual deterioration	55	Vocational	Deaf	ICT industry	2016
Miklós	M	Consequence of accident, 2007	45	Secondary school	Physical	Baker, sales (wheelchairs)	2000
Dominik	M	Consequence of medical malpractice, 2007	67	College/university	Blind	Coach	2015

Findings

In the following, we would like to present the experience of the entrepreneurs we interviewed, to underpin the specificities of post-socialist ableism by giving voice to PWD themselves.

Social Participation and Cultural Representation

Social inclusion and social solidarity were largely missing in state-party socialism due to PWD being shut and hidden away into segregated country-side institutions like nursing homes or special schools, as individuals upsetting the norm ('socialist type of man') and as the target group of state-party care. The continuing lack of PWD in everyday life activities has therefore spared mainstream society to have to put up with any accommodations like legal remedies or find cooperative ways of social behaviour like codes of conduct, moral rules, or ethical norms. Because of exclusionary social provisions, PWD developed a limited sphere of life, a so-called "world of their own". Marcell, a film director, and wheelchair user reveals*: "There are so many of them. They function as houseplants, unfortunately, a lot. You go to Marczibányi Square [residential home for people with physical disabilities], it's terrible, they live inside, have zero goals in life, and then they wander around the city. Or the outcome is when they don't even come out of the room anymore."* The internalisation of ableist norms and the lack of positive life prospects has generally led to passivity, learned helplessness, and dependency on part of many PWD that was not truly challenged by the system change and that still prevents them from participating in social life. At the same time, participating in twenty-first century business life forced EWD to step out (at least online), become distinguishable to draw in clients (for example through the launch of company web pages, marketing and PR materials or business inventories), enter networks, and even make their disabilities visible as a source of authenticity and reference when targeting fellow PWD with their services and products.

Some interviewees strived to search for socio-historical explanations for the perceived passivity of PWD both on a cultural and a structural level, drawing back to the legacy of socialism. They emphasized that PWD could not exercise their social right to access to employment as they did not learn how to sell themselves on the labour market, which is an important asset in the contemporary economic environment. As Jakab, a cleaning industry entrepreneur with physical disabilities, clarifies, *"Life is not about cherishing me. I must drift well with life. If I can't drift with life, I'll be nicely oppressed. So, I must learn to fight, and people don't know that because they haven't been taught, and it's also noticeable in the job market how our age group can't sell themselves. Today, either I know something, and I can actively work on it, or I don't know anything and if I don't*

try to learn it myself, if I'm not open to the world, then the world is not open to me". Jakab believes that the socialist heritage of passivity and welfare dependency is not compatible with the capitalist system and emphasizes the individual responsibility of PWD for being willing and able to adapt to the new cultural norms and expectations like employability, productivity, or self-sufficiency. This was one of the several accounts of EWD to urge the internalization of the rules of the game of neoliberal capitalism and to consider hard competition a natural way of operating in society. Under socialism, the imperatives of full employment and high performance were ideologically pervaded, although while PWD were usually employed in sheltered organizations for the sake of meeting state-socialist full employment expectations, the ideals of meaningful employment or high-standard production were not in fact met. EWD contrast this socialist legacy with the new cultural imperatives of capitalism, that require active agency from all citizens, and at the same time, the capability to establish a commodified self. Thus, internalizing ableist norms goes hand in hand with internalising the neoliberal work ethic.

Performing an active agency expected in neoliberal capitalism is not an easy task as the lack of access to essential social and economic goods, services, and opportunities still prevents PWD from enforcing all forms of social rights and from leading a full and meaningful life. Gréta, a saleswoman with physical disability is critical about the missing legal provisions regarding physical accessibility: *"This is not how these things are supposed to work anymore in 2020. Everything should be completely barrier-free, but the problem is that there were no sanctions built into the Equality Act, and now deadlines have also been abolished. This means that any building—and I'm not just talking about public institutions—can be built in such a way that if they don't want to, they don't have to remove obstacles. Because there are no sanctions, no deadlines, no one is going to call them on account for it and say, oh well, maybe this should have been done differently, because they just don't have to"*. The lack of accountability on part of legal decision-makers on providing access to public goods and services for PWD upkeeps the ableist notion of social segregation and is a major shortcoming of the social and cultural context. Further examples of systemic, institutional constraints or cultural and attitudinal prejudice EWD are facing, are the bureaucracy in starting a business, lack of access to financial capital, negative attitudes of the business environment, stereotypes, poor network connections, lack of social capital and social support, etc. Another feature of the post-socialist era is that while public services do not have accommodated solutions, it is not even possible to 'buy' accessibility for money due to the minority status of PWD as business clients or customers. While unavailable services keep PWD away from participating in everyday life, they also create a business niche for EWD to develop and offer special accommodations and services for fellow PWD. In this way, EWD play an important role in bridging the gap between missing or inaccessible state provisions and possible market solutions where PWD as solvent clients and consumers might also appear.

Access to (integrated) education as a social right plays an important role in the social advancement of PWD, as according to global disability reports, having low education is one of the biggest setbacks that hinder the employment and career prospects of PWD. No wonder EWD as ambitious and pioneering individuals often attended integrated educational institutions instead of special schools. This was frequently a challenging experience, since accommodations and teachers who are prepared for students with special needs used to be and are still, scarce. Antal, a blind ICT specialist, believes that fighting his way through integrated public secondary education was part of his later success at university and in business. "*I wanted to break out and went to a sighted school. Basically, it was good anyway, even if there were more difficult times"*. EWD (both attending school in socialism and after the system change) often believe their education was rather contingent: finding their vocation as blind, hard of hearing or physically disabled teenagers was not supported by career counselling programmes and they also lacked important skills at the beginning of their entrepreneurial careers (for example, foreign language skills, finances, business plan). Moreover, EWD found that the ableist practice of not having high expectations towards the educational performance of PWD was still a general trend in Hungary. Training programmes and educators tend to undervalue the skills and possible qualifications of PWD and their capability to complete trainings. Attending a special (especially secondary) school means not developing competitive and marketable skills and competencies to prepare for the challenges of a dynamically changing neoliberal labour market, and this has been and still is a major shortcoming of the since the transition quickly eroding Hungarian educational system.

As a further cultural sphere, the role of the media is also important in creating new narratives of PWD or maintaining segregation and invisibility, the legacy of socialism. Todays' television programmes still often draw a traditional, ableist image of PWD that must be combated. Marcell, a film director and a wheelchair user is critical about the media portrayal and representation of PWD. "*So, these shows, [should] … put parasport among sports programmes. Integrated. If it is a social problem, it should be included in social programmes. … Let everything appear where it belongs. I am a Hungarian citizen and I resent the term disabled. This is labelling me by the media as it is. …. So, the very, very sad thing I'm talking about is that it's the attitude, that's why they're hardly not pushing me with a stick"*. Marcel believes that confronting a negative and stereotypical picture

of disability might be best achieved through mainstreaming disability into general media programmes. As a form of combating cultural oppression, being a filmmaker, he also shot his own documentary film to show a non-biassed and more realistic picture of the lives of PWD. Focussing on the perspectives of PWD and considering the aspects and themes important to them thus gives voice to PWD and can contribute to creating an inclusive image of society. An active and agentive media representation of PWD might help to overcome old and traditional images of passivity and dependency (cultural ableism) and create a new picture of PWD as coping successfully with the challenges of post-socialist everyday life. Such new ideals and role models of PWD may also support the notion of how enforcing (cultural) disability rights might lead to getting more rewards and living life to the full potential of market economy.

Economic Environment, Economic Rights

From an economic point of view, the fact that after the system change, the liberal economic system and philosophy were superimposed on a socialist way of thinking has created special patterns. The socialist economic system, undermined by the grey (second) economy, was transformed into an (underdeveloped) capitalist entrepreneurial ecosystem.

In socialism, the grey (second) economy was a kind of market solution for the functioning of the system, since it produced goods and services for which there was a significant demand, but which the state could not or did not want to fulfil. In this regard, it was a means for achieving prosperity and wellbeing as an economic right. In the post-socialist era, these rights are generally guaranteed by the activity of enterprises, with minority entrepreneurs partly satisfying needs that do not have sufficient solvency and are not profitable in the mainstream market. Based on our interviews, some EWD—besides manifesting their own right to work—are engaged in the provision of modern assistive devices and services that directly meet the special needs of PWD and support their self-sufficiency: Detre's enterprise audits the accessibility of real estates; Ábel, a lawyer specialises in disability rights legal cases and trains blind children in Aikido; Ottó imports and sells active wheelchairs. These entrepreneurial activities beside filling important market niches allow PWD to lead active and independent lives. While creating social and economic value, EWD partly undertake state responsibility thus entrepreneurship provides an opportunity to correct the structural problems of an ableist post-social society through bottom-up solutions. This is similar to the way in which GMKs acted as a valve in socialism, satisfying emerging market needs and thus creating a second, grey or underground economy.

The second economy was a form of the evasion of state rules, so as a legacy of it, it is still considered a Hungarian virtue to use state resources for self-interest, to bend the rules, to "cheat the system". Among other things, this has effects on the mentality of PWD in connection to their attitude to state allowances and benefits. With the words of Gréta, a saleswoman with physical disability *"the problem is that this blessed communism of that time has left its mark on many, many things, and unfortunately even in today's generation there is what I call "the crip mentality": everything, for me, now, immediately, and for free"*. In fact, this passive attitude and waiting for the state to intervene and provide welfare creates a paradox together with the enforcement of market rules.

The socialist second economy was also characterised by a kind of solidarity, collegiality, helping each other against the 'common enemy', the state, and sharing resources and gains. Vince, a dance instructor, and a motivational speaker with a physical disability mentions the case of getting an active wheelchair—which is absolutely necessary for his everyday life—with the 'help' of a friend who is a doctor. This should be guaranteed by the state through vocational rehabilitation, but as the system is too bureaucratic, which is clearly a sign of the healthcare system of not having enough resources, so personal favours are needed to enforce the right to appropriate healthcare. Small favours, nepotism, sometimes bribes were reported by several EWD to manage their business operation and personal lives. Ottó, a wheelchair manufacturer, distributes wheelchairs, some of which are financed by the state on the prescription of doctors in rehabilitation. He sees the system as a legacy of socialism, partly as too bureaucratic and partly as driven by bribes. He has to deal with the rigid and in some cases corrupt medical administrative system, employing unorthodox solutions and loopholes for his customers (so while working together with a corrupt system, he also takes advantage of the opportunities for corruption). Viktor, a blind project manager mentioned the corruption of public procurement processes, Tamás, a car salesman with physical disability listed the presents he gives to bureaucrats for easing his way in managing the paperwork, and Ábel, a blind lawyer pointed to the corruption of the legal system. Corruption hinders entrepreneurial activity in general and means a special burden for EWD. Often the boundaries between corruption and kindness and consideration for others are blurred just as in the time of second economy.

The problem of corruption can be linked to the fact that the neoliberal economy has passed its 'dog eat dog laws' without adopting traditional European welfare capitalist values (like solidarity) at the same time. Some of the EWD see the transition from socialism to market economy and capitalism as a failure. Vince claims that CE history has demonstrated the pitfalls of both socialism and capitalism. Gréta points out that "foreign capitalist culture" was brought in by economic change, by "large companies" from the West,

which force people to perform to a high level, so they cannot spare any energy to help the weak and less fortunate, she believes that people have become are less tolerant and less attentive. Ottó, a wheelchair manufacturer sees the system and the situation even more desperately, if possible. *"Honour among thieves??? I think the country lost that in the sixties. So, honour is… it's gone. It's just that what is written down, so beautifully worded that half of it you don't understand, so you have to go to a lawyer to understand a paragraph… No, there are dog-eat-dog laws… There is no mercy for anyone, in my opinion."* Entrepreneurs feel that the socialist legacy and the effects of capitalism exported from the West, together create the current unfavourable and ableist landscape. The neoliberal capitalist economy has brought individualism, which is reflected in a new, complex stratification of ableism.

Hungarian EWD are exposed to live in an underdeveloped ecosystem, characterised by a lack of entrepreneurial culture and competences, coupled with insufficient capital and financing. After the regime change, Western capital flowed into the country, which for a time provided the basis for reorganising the economy in a market somewhat protected from international competition. However, the international opening, especially after EU accession, was a major challenge for Hungarian entrepreneurs. After the initial enthusiasm, Western financing had gradually decreased. State disability benefits are very small ("*it's actually pocket money, paid by the state, twenty-five thousand forints. It's really pocket money"* says Vince), other sources of capital are also insufficient, which, according to Miklós, a baker and salesman with physical disability creates a clear competitive disadvantage in the international market.

Beyond this, the lack of entrepreneurial background, education, and competences were mentioned several times: "*I grew up in communism, because I was born in '69, my parents were not entrepreneurs."* says Gréta. The socialist legacy in entrepreneurial competencies is perhaps best expressed in Milan's words*: "The truth is that—and I have read this much about entrepreneurship—in Hungary, there was a huge problem when the regime change came, and nobody learned what an enterprise is. Nobody. So, our good little communism left us vulnerable. It was good, it was not good, you can like it or not like it, but basically, it did nothing to help us to know what I, as an entrepreneur, should do if I have a potato field, produce some potatoes, and what should I do next?"* At the same time, PWD who had gained experience in the operation of GMKs in socialism could build on their existing experience to gain an advantage when starting up as entrepreneurs after the regime change. *"We had a background; we did GMK within the state company… That was the basis of my business, we even took on extra jobs after work… I learned things from my boss, the head of the GMK. My motivation was that I wanted to earn more, to live better. I saw how things were going, what type of jobs could be sold"*. That is how Viktor, a blind project manager, derives his own business from the GMK-era. In his workplace, his expertise was accepted by the co-workers, so he had the self-confidence for starting a venture as a PWD, which was not general neither in the early 1990s nor today as a symptom of the underdeveloped ecosystem.

The experience of the second economy is on the one hand positive for EWD in the capitalist system, providing entrepreneurial knowledge and experience, market, solutions for market failures, and even financial resources. On the other hand, the "crip mentality" and corruption that comes from the habit of bending the rules makes entrepreneurship very difficult, contributing to the problem of an underdeveloped ecosystem and infringing fundamental economic rights. The worsening economic situation (for example the 2008 or the present financial crisis) exacerbates the existing competition for resources between different social groups and minorities, including PWD. Entrepreneurial activity could be a solution, but its manifestation is limited by the interrelated unfavourable features of the post-socialist entrepreneurial ecosystem.

Political Rights, Political Representation

Regarding political representation and democratic decision-making, EWD have firsthand experience of influencing disability politics. It was the strong advocacy of disability NGOs that lead to the adoption of the Hungarian Equality Act (1998), which regulates disability rights in a new and holistic way. Gréta, a saleswoman with physical disability speaks about her memorable experiences from the 1990s: *"Meanwhile, in '95, I was a founding member of two associations, one of which is the Independent Living Movement in Hungary. One of the programmes we started at that time laid the foundation for the whole Equality Act, and we had an awful lot of work in it to make this law happen in Hungary at all. And we were nagging the Ministry, we organised demonstrations, so it was a civil movement. Unlike a lot of [other] disability associations, it wasn't about increasing the number of members and getting our share of the state funding, or going on vacations from the money, it was not about that, not at all. It was a struggle; it was a movement. It was a movement that I've been so proud of ever since"*. Gréta contrasts her pride and positive experiences and successes in the disability movement (achieved together with a democratically founded advocacy organisation) with other 'old-type' (state-socialist-type) disability organizations' activities, which have focussed less on real advocacy and more on increasing (virtual) membership, raising and misusing state funds. Putting themselves together and organising a public discourse on the piece of legislation meant a new style of behaviour and experience for PWD that could only be possible after the regime change. Political

agency and activism finding their voice that was also heard by politicians was a groundbreaking experience for many. In this sense, the passive conformity of old-type disability representation seemed anachronistic, although being heavily dependent on state support is still a reality today. In addition to Gréta, several others spoke about the optimism of the 1990s, the aftermath of regime change, and their work with disability organisations.

Despite the promising political accomplishments, the majority of EWD seem disillusioned and more than critical regarding present day Hungarian disability organisations or politics. Higher level party politics seems far away from everyday people in general, and they feel that advocacy organisations and disability representatives have failed to meet their expectations. Róbert, a salesman with physical disability reported demonstrating against inaccessible plans for underground reconstruction in Budapest, as long-term objectives in accessibility have not since been achieved. Róbert recalled these discussions as follows: "*We organised a demonstration on metro accessibility at the end of last year, and it was a huge success, with almost every NGO working on disability issues getting on board and participating in some way. Then we managed to get a meeting with the mayor of Budapest after much difficulty. Organisation X finally met the mayor's office for the first time and started to engage in constructive negotiations and achieved a lot. While rushing into this meeting, the mayor saw the leader of X and asked, "who is this communist b*tch? How does she think this whole deal is going to work?"* Given the socialist legacy, it was self-evident to the right-wing mayor that the head of an advocacy organisation must have a state-socialist background in trade unions, and therefore could not be trusted. Demonstrations, strikes are also recalling past experiences and connotations of socialist ideology emphasizing the arousal of (working) class consciousness which makes difficult to develop new interpretations of democratic will-formation based on solidarity, fighting against inequalities and for disability rights. This post-socialist legacy also contributed to the tendency of the depoliticization of disability organizations.

Moreover, EWD presume that existing power structures succeed in making disability issues apolitical and maintaining the status quo in several areas of life such as policy-making or public services despite changes in the economic and political environment. Marcell, a film director with physical disability explains that PWD cannot sue hotels for giving false information about accessibility: "*And the truth is, the most disgusting thing is that these lawsuits are missing, that I'm going to sue a hotel, so, man, I want the money back and all that with a penalty for f*cking me. But this can't happen because they don't have these precedent-setting lawsuits. The state itself. They don't bring cases; they don't get cases. I'm suing them, but there's no case. Think about how many lawsuits could be launched in Hungary…. There's no such lawsuit"*. Here, Marcell felt betrayed, not even by the hotel, but by the state as well, as he feels that he is without means. Altogether, EWD feel that, despite the changes in the political system, despite earning their money to pay for services, they are still 'invisible', their needs are neglected, and they have no real channels for asserting their rights. EWD even believe that the Hungarian Government has compromised long-term objectives such as accessibility with short-term achievable ones (for example, calls for proposals, committees, or research) in the so-called National Disability Programmes.

To fight partly missing regulations and the lack of disability law enforcement, EWD do not trust the system or the state, but remain involved in personal disability activism, besides running their businesses. Combatting discrimination and ableist norms, or representing their own interests is very much part of their everyday reality. Ábel, a blind lawyer speaks about his personal experiences and agency: *"And, well, in 2007, there was such a case of discrimination, but by then I had already enrolled in law school, that my guide dog and I had been barred from one of the hypermarkets, and I didn't let that go. I ended up in an out-of-court settlement with the hypermarket, and then I donated the money to a foundation for guide dogs"*. In this case, Ábel used his professional background to stand up for disability rights. EWD have reported several occasions when they had to assert their rights and defend themselves in various ways: not having to tolerate the microaggression of strangers on the street, using martial arts when attacked physically, threatening institutions or employers with lawsuits, or writing complaints to companies and requesting certain accessible services. Ábel himself was motivated to become a lawyer and an Aikido-master to be able to defend himself and stand up for disability rights. Feeling that state regulations and legislation do not support the realisation of their rights in everyday life, they rather prefer individual advocacy, using the competencies and experience from their entrepreneurial background.

At the same time, as EWD have neither strong contacts with entrepreneurial networks, nor with the disability community, achieving transformation in their life situations and asserting their rights remains a challenge. Rebeca, a blind saleswoman believes that *"the fact [is] that we can't stand up, … we can't stand up for each other. We can't say, let's come together, and that's what we want. We're pulling the plug, everyone wants something different, everyone wants it in a different way*". The lack of cohesion among PWD is considered to be part of the reason for the failure of advocacy, which may connect with the 'false' collectivism of the socialist era and the top-down initiatives for reducing social inequalities in line with the prevailing communist ideology. In fact, this so-called 'forced emancipation' was not effective neither for advocating women rights, nor for other

minority groups' rights, resulting in the lack of patterns of collective will-formation, and making minority groups and society in general more vulnerable to the negative aspects of individualism. The other side of the coin is that giving back to the community, nevertheless, is a recurring topic in the narratives of EWD. However, this mainly happens through their entrepreneurial activities or individual voluntary work. For example, Ottó organised the first wheelchair beauty contest in Hungary, and Bence organises cross-fit competitions for PWD, while Róbert is involved in participatory research focussing on employment opportunities for PWD, and Dominik takes children with disabilities to camps. They use their entrepreneurial knowledge and networks and actively shape and challenge ableist views on disability through their action, altogether they are helping PWD relinquish their vulnerable role. Because they do not see the possibilities for collective action, they fight on their own against the ableist system.

Discussion

Contributing to critical disability studies performed in post-socialist contexts (Mladenov, 2015, 2016), this study aimed to investigate empirically the legacy of socialist ideology in a post-socialist country. This legacy has left deep traces in the economic and social spheres, which have been overlaid by neoliberal ideology, capitalist structures, and a new concept of party-democracy, none of which have evolved organically, but rather have been exported from the West. Previous studies provided theoretical insights into how disability was constructed during socialism in Eastern Europe (Dinu, 2022), how state socialism and post-socialist neoliberalism affect disabled people's parity of participation (Mladenov, 2017), and examined deinstitutionalisation initiatives based on an analysis of the legislative environment (Mladenov & Petri, 2020). Our study adds to the extant literature by using microhistorical (Magnússon & Szijártó, 2013) accounts of EWD to provide empirical insights into how these superimposed influences contribute to the mechanisms of post-socialist ableism. In so doing, this study also broadens our understanding of entrepreneurship through an ableist lens (Jammaers & Zanoni, 2020), including the socio-historical context in the analysis.

EWD, who started their businesses under socialism had direct experience and thus, offered narratives and explanations for the socialist legacy of ableism they had experienced. The younger generation has no direct experience, but they have also pointed to the legacy's potential influences on social, economic, and political rights. Drawing on the microhistorical experiences of entrepreneurs, the paper's main contributions lie in identifying four mechanisms that affect disability rights through post-socialist ableism specifically: invisibility; passivity and welfare dependency; the legitimacy of disability organisations; and the limitations of economic participation.

Invisibility

Firstly, our research reflects studies on the invisibility of PWD (Goodley, 2014; Procknow & Rocco, 2016) and sheds light on how post-socialist ideological heritage, i.e. defectology, contributes to different faces of invisibility (Borowska-Beszta & Wasilewska-Ostrowska, 2019), which can in turn prevent the addressing of disability as a real-life issue with multiple faces. Adding to this literature, the study discusses four forms of invisibility—cultural, physical, economic, and political—which constrain the related rights of EWD, as well as framing entrepreneurial activity as a long-term socio-historical experience that seems to have undergone only minimal changes over recent years.

Cultural invisibility (or as Borowska-Beszta and Wasilewska-Ostrowska address it, cultural ableism) limits the rights of PWD in taking part as equal members of society. It causes a lack of media interest in PWD (except as a curiosity) and prevents the truthful representation of disability in media or other public discourses. Despite initial efforts in a newly won democracy, the injection of EU funds, and the application of international standards, physical invisibility remains a significant problem in Hungary, manifesting as a lack of accessibility (both physical and info-communicational) for venues, content, and more. The effect of political invisibility is that EWD are still unable to assert their rights effectively and participate in decision-making, even when those decisions directly concern them. Finally, economic invisibility means that PWD are not considered solvent and profitable consumers by companies looking to develop products or services, even if the profits from EDW businesses show that the opposite is true.

The entrepreneurs interviewed fight invisibility by distancing themselves from the invisible and stigmatised group of PWD, sometimes using othering (Mik-Meyer, 2016), and an entrepreneurial identity offers them an excellent opportunity to do so. In this way, post-socialist ableism based on invisibility and exclusion from daily life lives on. Invisibility is a severe social legacy: a profound change in social attitudes and coherent, complex public policies are needed to overcome the invisibility inherited from socialism.

Passivity and Dependency

Secondly, this study extends our knowledge of the ambiguities of the welfare dependency discourse (Mladenov, 2016, 2017; Sharle, 2011) by highlighting how the interpretation of dependency as a post-socialist heritage nurtures the spread of ableist norms, even among PWD. Our research

has revealed that by attributing the cultural origin of passivity and dependency culture to socialism, EWD frame it as something undesirable that should have been replaced after the regime change, since it is not commensurable with capitalism. In their analysis, EWD identify structural and cultural factors that reproduce these phenomena, as well as urging a change in attitude, not only in society but also in the community of PWD, something that they think did not happen with economic changes but would be important for creating and maintaining a capitalist entrepreneurial ecosystem. In so doing, they implicitly suggest that EWD share a work ethic that makes them successful in a capitalist environment, also by enabling them to combat ableist assumptions related to the low-productivity (Jammaers et al., 2016) passivity (Mladenov, 2016), and learned helplessness (Könczei, 1990) and that this differentiates them from PWD who have not read the sign of the times. Consequently, by internalising the ideologically laden discourse on welfare dependency, self-sufficiency, and productivism in line with a neoliberal work ethic (Mladenov, 2016), and thus devaluing non-productive, dependent forms of living and sharing widespread cultural stigmas, they also contribute to a limited cultural representation of PWD. Paradoxically, the efforts of EWD to counteract ableist assumptions by demonstrating that they are no different from the ideal type of entrepreneur (Kitching, 2014) enlarges EWD's social and economic rights, but still excludes non-entrepreneur people with disabilities. From one side, as productive and 'able' entrepreneurs, they challenge the ableist picture of PWD; but at the same time, they distance themselves from 'other' PWD (Mik-Meyer, 2016) and internalise ableism (Campbell, 2009), thus reinforcing the same stigmatising view.

A further contribution of this microhistorical study is that however, the above negative opinion of EWD towards other PWD might not, in itself, be just, and thus needs to be dismantled. As state socialism was characterised by the state caring for social issues in general, all citizens in CEE countries relied on community provision, and thus personal agency and individual efficacy were very much neglected, if not punished, in all spheres of life. Clinging to state-funded care, waiting for others to solve problems, and not developing personal initiatives or harmonising disability activism are a consequence of both state socialism (Keszi et al., 2014) and internalised ableism. In recognising that catering for their own needs would be their own concern with regard to capitalism, EWD seem to have reacted sooner than their peers. At the same time, despite having a poor opinion of PWD, their activities support the entire disability community, and by 'giving back' to them in various ways, they also demonstrate solidarity and a sense of responsibility. As a way forward, we would envision a development in attitudes among EWD, recognizing the reality and value of interdependency (Mladenov, 2016). However, this would require a change in worldview and the leaving behind of the presumption of the "need to adapt" to the constraining socio-economic environment shared by EWD as the rule of the game. This could be supported by stronger political representation and enhancing democratic will-formation, which emphasise the role of disability organizations.

Legitimacy of Disability Organisations

The third contribution of this research is highlighting the importance of the regime-change-related socio-historical experiences of EWD in shaping their attitude towards disability movements, with reference to studies on political representation of PWD (Keszi et al., 2014; Mladenov & Petri, 2020; Sharle & Szikra, 2015; Waltz & Schippers, 2021). The entrepreneurs we interviewed do not trust disability organisations, despite many of them having been involved in the revival of the advocacy movement along with the change of the regime. They had the experience of making a change in the lives of PWD, freeing themselves from ableist social arrangements, and participating in battles of the post-regime change years. However, they feel mostly disappointed and frustrated, with no capacity for exercising initiative or control, and have experienced a lack of agency in reaching a more just social order. Altogether they are tired of the efforts and believe that these organisations cannot achieve actual results in Hungary today, neither in accessibility nor in other areas relevant to the rights of PWD, namely areas that would change the obstructive legal, social, or political environment for entrepreneurs. Their perception of disability organisations follows the picture drawn by Mladenov (2017), emphasising the robust heritage of the state-controlled socialist disability organisations. It seems that Hungarian disability organisations have been unable to catch up with their Western counterparts regarding development and professionalism; they depend on the Hungarian state for resources and spend their energies on service provision, rather than political advocacy (Kiss, 2013; Petri, 2023). While our entrepreneurs see the underdevelopment of advocacy as a legacy of the state-socialist past, many also spoke of the loss of cohesion and solidarity experienced under socialism, to which they attribute the lack of cohesion among PWD. In fact, their experiences are similar to those other minority groups: 'forced emancipation' was not effective neither for advocating women's rights, nor for other minority groups' rights, resulting in the lack of patterns of collective will-formation, and making minority groups and society in general more vulnerable to the negative aspects of individualism.

Entrepreneurs, while disillusioned with collective representation, are still trying to promote their rights and support the disability community in various ways. Firstly, they seek individual advocacy, in which their entrepreneurial competence and experience can help them and make these

actions successful. However, those individual victories do not change the systemic ableist practices or the lack of accessibility. Secondly, they want to give back to the community and shape society's image of PWD. As results show, many EWD manage businesses with a specific focus on disability, or in their own businesses they make concessions, tailoring services to the special needs of PWD, thus indirectly supporting their presence in social interactions and challenging the marginalisation of the disability community. Using their skills and experiences, they also go beyond their enterprise: organising disability events, mentoring other PWD at rehabilitation centres, and volunteering in children's camps, among other activities. These contributions enable the assertion of social, economic, and political rights, and they do eventually have a transformative impact on the personal lives of PWD.

Limits of Economic Participation

Fourth, results regarding economic participation provide further evidence for the argument that post-socialist countries share similar patterns of inadequacies in the economic system and entrepreneurial environment (Belitski et al. 2024; Grigore and Dragan 2020; Ignácz 2018; Szerb & Trumbull, 2015). These results extend the literature by highlighting barriers to economic participation that EWD face (Dhar & Farzana, 2017; Renko et al., 2015) through the lens of socialist heritage. EWD spoke of severe problems, both general issues, and those that specifically affect EWD. The inadequacy of the state regulation, and market systems, the persistence of the second economy, and high levels of corruption (all of them are heritage of the socialist system) make the economic environment unpredictable. As Belitski et al. (2024) have pointed out in their research in Ukraine, the role of informal institutions is enhanced in such economic situations, where macro-level problems are thus solved from below, at the micro-level, by members of society. In line with findings from Romania (Grigore and Dragan 2020), our interviewees also reported that entrepreneurial culture is underdeveloped in Hungary, PWD have difficulty accessing non-accessible entrepreneurship training, and financial opportunities are limited. These results speak back to the study of Ignácz (2018), who also emphasized that Hungarian entrepreneurs have not undergone a genuine capitalist socialisation process that would have helped them to become entrepreneurs and acquire entrepreneurial values, which is clearly linked to the socialist legacy. Together these factors result in competitive disadvantage in the international market, alongside the impact of the crises that have occurred since. This largely explains how the euphoria and optimism after the regime change was followed by economic slowdown and a certain degree of disillusionment.

Our results add to the minority entrepreneurship literature (Jammaers & Zanoni, 2020) by highlighting that this uncertainty is a barrier to entrepreneurship, especially for disadvantaged, minority entrepreneurs, as shown by the experiences of EWD. At the same time, EWD themselves help the malfunctioning system to survive through their business activities: EWD find different ways to respond to macro-level deficiencies, with several of them specifically targeting the promotion of accessibility, mobility, and overcoming barriers for PWD (e.g. the development of software specifically to support blind people, and the importing of special hearing devices), and while these businesses support various groups of PWD in their individual lives by providing market solutions to existing problems, they inadvertently reinforce the notion that disability is an individual, medical problem, and partially preserve a corrupt and unjust state redistribution system that does not provide accessibility for all.

In sum, we concluded that the arch of lived histories of EWD provides rich details on how cruel optimism (Kolářová, 2017) was lived through by this minority group of entrepreneurs. The stories shared with us accounted on hoping that after regime change, they will become more visible actors in the society while less dependent on state support, will achieve more political representation through collective bargaining and will benefit from the economic prosperity boosted by the capitalist system. However, they all share a certain degree of disappointment, which can be hardly explained due to their individual circumstances. Our study shows that this disappointment is the result of the fact that regime change has not established a well-functioning capitalist system, but rather an underdeveloped ecosystem, where the socialist legacy is still visible in almost all domains of rights. Additionally, the detrimental consequences of the pos-tsocialist pathway are exacerbated by the potentially alienating effects of neoliberal individualism intertwined with ableism.

Conclusion, Limitations, and Further Research

In this article, we have analysed how ableism appears in the lived history of Hungarian EWD, and how the aftermath of socialism emerges in encountering ableism. Following a process of "zooming in and out" of microhistory (Vaara & Lambert, 2016), we linked the experiences of EWD "*to more general, longer-term historical processes of continuity and change*" (Hargadon & Wadhwani, 2022, p. 5). We have accepted the invitation of Goodley et al. (2019), who felt it essential to include the experiences of PWD from outside Western Europe and North America. By including ableism in the analyses of the post-socialist region of CEE, we wished to shed new light on the historical continuity

between state socialism and post-socialist neo-liberalisation by illuminating how state-socialist legacies, such as invisibility, passivity, and second economy, have interacted with welfare state retrenchment and creeping marketisation that followed 1989 with the result that, although social, economic, and political rights are in principle better enforced under capitalism, the socialist legacy is a major obstacle to their fulfilment.

Naturally, the study's findings are bound by the limited number of respondents, the limitations of accessible literature, and its complex global and national understanding and interpretation. While our research group consists of practitioners and academics from disability studies, management, and entrepreneurship, as there was no disabled researcher among us, our understanding of the experience of the entrepreneurs may also be considered restrained. Future research plans at the same time include the involvement of more female entrepreneurs and entrepreneurs with more types of disabilities, both visible and invisible in the sample. Furthermore, inviting a participatory researcher with disability would also advance a reflective and in-depth analysis.

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Declarations

Conflict of interest The authors declare that they have no financial conflicts of interest. One of the authors, Sara Csillag, is section editor of the JBE (Human Resource Management and Development in Business Ethics section).

Research Involving Human Participants and/or Animals This article does not contain any studies with animals performed by any of the authors. All procedures performed in studies involving human participants were in accordance with the ethical standards of the institutional and/or national research committee and with the 1964 Helsinki declaration and its later amendments or comparable ethical standards.

Informed Consent Informed consent was obtained from all individual participants before the interview, as the respondents were informed of the aim of the study. The anonymity of the participants was ensured by using pseudonyms.

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