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AKADÉMIAI KIADÓ

Rural Communities, Changing Habitats, Transforming Localities

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ABSTRACT

The present study proposes an analysis of the conceptual apparatus that may facilitate the description and interpretation of the changes that have taken place in Transylvanian villages and ruralities over the past quarter century. The central question is: what is left of the village after these changes? Respectively, was this change superficial or has it affected the deeper strata as well? I argue that we are talking about a structure in which some strata have been radically transformed while others have remained unaffected. This led to the production of numerous ways of life that proved to be resilient. In the changing and diversified space of ruralities, there are several mentalities and tendencies that are parallel and simultaneously different temporalities that either complement or eliminate each other. Sometimes they coexist peacefully, other times they are in constant conflict with each other.

KEYWORDS

adaptation, acculturation, decollectivization, farming strategies, tradition, modernization, peasant embourgeoisement, depeasantization, rurality, post-peasantization, re-peasantization

ETHNOGRAPHIC AND ANTHROPOLOGICAL APPROACH(ES) TO THE TRANSFORMATION OF THE VILLAGE

The issue of the transforming village can be approached by examining the relationship between the village and the peasantry, which in turn implies the question whether the disappearance of

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the peasantry also entails the disappearance of the village. But it can also be approached by examining the conceptual apparatus through which the transformation can be grasped and interpreted. In my presentation, I focus primarily on the second approach.

Starting points: the "sunken peasant continent"

Writing about the Transylvanian village as a "framework of life," Ákos Egyed makes the following observation: "before the First World War, the village was a *community of work, settlement, culture, and administration* of its inhabitants, in contrast with today's village, which is most often just a residential community" (emphasis in original – V. A.) (Egyed 1981:250). József Gagyi describes 20th-century peasant society via the metaphor of the "sunken peasant continent." It is a world that extends through time and space, and which "still endures, even though not in the same natural and social environment nor with the same people as centuries earlier, and even though it carries the imprint of the 'waves of modernization' – that setting: the village" (Gagyi ed. 1999:29). The village as context and habitat has outlived even 20th-century attempts of its destruction. However, there was a price to pay: "the village underwent a developmental and civilizing process (. . .) and has irreversibly changed" (Gagyi 2007:5). The only question is: what is left of the village after the transformation? What social structures, ways of life, and "new microcultural conditions" (cf. Gagyi 2009a:145) were produced? Sticking with the metaphor of the "sunken continent," one can say that there are smaller and larger islands (enclaves),[1] a structure in which some levels/territories were transformed while others remained unaffected. That is to say, "a multitude of variants are produced" in the course of the transformation, and "these transitional forms prove to be very persistent" (Gagyi 2009a:145).

Disintegrating horizons

The shift/disintegration of the horizon has had the consequence that tradition – hitherto seen as the organizing principle of the world – is losing its general validity (Bausinger 1995:81–83). The transformation of the traditional peasant environment and the dissolution of tradition resulted in the disappearance of the village as a social organization with an independent identity.

Herman Bausinger describes the transformation of the peasant environment as a natural habitat in terms of the conquest of space, time, and society (Bausinger 1995). The conquest of space resulted in the disintegration of the narrow horizon and has brought with it a transformation in the accessibility of goods (Bausinger 1995:61–72) and human relationships. In his opinion, "in today's society, hierarchical, patriarchal relations have become detached from cooperative ones everywhere." Vertical relationships and processes are being replaced by horizontal and individual (i.e., autonomous) ones (Bausinger 1995:89). In contrast, the conquest of time can be described by the concept of *acceleration*, which means that the accumulation of the goods of folk culture is no longer "characterized by long-term tradition, but by exchange and takeover across a wide range of areas" (Bausinger 1995:89). The conquest of society is linked to

[1]Some of these islands are quite real: the remains of small family farms, the farming village, and peasant society can still be seen within the body of the modernized/urbanized village. Others can only be identified through more careful examination. The latter category includes "microcultural determinations" (Gagyi 2009a:141) and habits left over from previous eras, such as community "bans" on the sale of land, termed by József Gagyi as the "land-bound mentality" (Gagyi 2007:6).

"the unlimited supply of tendencies pointing towards a unified culture, knowledge, and literacy, covering all groups of the population equally" (Bausinger 1995:126).

The ethnographic examination of the disintegration processes affecting the framework of traditional values and norms, economic strategies, and social structures in Transylvania/Szeklerland has been carried out by Ferenc Pozsony. In his studies, he mainly analyzed the long processes of the transformation of traditional society in the Orbaiszék/Scaunul Orbai region. According to Pozsony, the transformation of peasant society in the Hungarian-speaking area, including Szeklerland, was caused by the social processes that accompanied the liberation of serfs in 1848, which also led to significant demographic growth. This "soon became associated with the promising prospects of railway construction and industrialization that unfolded at the end of the 19th century. At the same time, from the beginning of the 20th century, the individualism, family models, and life patterns associated with the process of embourgeoisement have significantly rearranged the structure of Hungarian families living here. Then, the post-World War II communist regime and the globalization that unfolded after 1989 have led to more radical changes in the region's internal and external relations, as well as in its demographic structures and behaviors" (Pozsony 2010:535).

My research around Târgu Mureș also shows that it was the socialist transformation that first brought the outside world permanently close to the village. Basic health and cultural institutions and services became available in the rural settlements as well, all consumer goods became available in village shops, and even paid jobs appeared. The 21st century, however, brought the world so close that it has practically led to the complete disintegration of village society. Today, the village is not primarily a village community but a collection of residential houses, small glocal islands. The possibilities offered by technology not only allow individuals living in rural areas to be reached by news from distant lands at the same time as the event taking place but also to order/procure and consume the products of these distant lands without having to leave the comfort of their home. While in the past the drivers of change came from the local economic and intellectual elite, in the age of socialism they came from the nearest city – but still within the world enclosed by the horizons. In the 21st century, due to developments in information and communication technology, these patterns come from worlds that are spatially distant from the village. All this flows into the local and family space through a window (information corridors) opened by IT tools. Individual tastes and desires have transformed the world of the village. Nonetheless, while these desires have been inspired by Western patterns, they have been adapted to local frameworks and conditions. That is, they embody the collective ideas of local society.

Peasant embourgeoisement

According to László Kósa's definition, "peasant embourgeoisement is a social and cultural process through which the peasantry is freed from its feudal legal and lifestyle constraints and characteristics, becoming an autonomous, enterprising, and entrepreneurial-minded member of capitalist society, owning its own labor force and means of production. The emphasis is on the temporally and spatially widely extended *process*, consisting of complex historical formations. Peasant embourgeoisement as a process excludes permanence and presupposes uninterrupted movement and change" (Kósa 1990:57–58, 2003). In Kósa's opinion, this process of embourgeoisement takes place simultaneously on several levels, including the political, legal, economic, and cultural (civilizational) level (Kósa 1994:226). In this theoretical framework, the "bourgeois"

element refers to the transformation of economic processes and the orientation towards the market, while the "peasant" element indicates that the lifestyle and value changes have been/are delayed compared to the economic changes. Tamás Hofer has termed this way of thinking of the peasant society, unable to move forward, as the "bankruptcy of the peasant lifestyle" (Molnár 2005:194–195).

Imre Kovách only considers those individuals to be involved in the process of embourgeoisement whose small-scale agricultural production has been transformed into an enterprise. According to him, the process of embourgeoisement did not fully take place within Hungarian society – and will not fully take place in the future either – the consequence of which is that the *bourgeois peasant* condition is stabilized.

The reason for this is the fact that "the norms of strong community control prevail over individualization, while the groups involved in the process of forming the middle class become more rigid. The function of the household and the family is regenerated, all of which make it difficult for a small-scale peasant farm to transform into a business" (Molnár 2005:198).

Tradition and modernization

The process(es) of the transformation of the rural space and peasant society can be most generally described and grasped by the concept of modernization (Csepeli 2007; Fejős 1998; Hofer 2009; Hoppál 2007; Lajos 2013; Niedermüller et al. eds. 2008; Ratkó 1998; Szijártó 2007).

Veronika Lajos points out that the interpretation of the concept of modernization unfolds in the context of modernization processes in the 1940s and 1950s. Anthropological research has focused on modernization as a process and intellectual problem at that time, seen primarily as a change that destroyed or shattered traditions (Lajos 2013:44).[2]

According to Lajos, modernization appears very differently from the perspective which describes "peasant society involved in the modernization process" as an "adaptive peasant society." In her words, "this does not dispute the classical peasantry's ability to modernize and flexibly respond to macrolevel change, but rather, on the contrary, discusses the types of cultural adaptation. When examining how adaptation takes place, it becomes apparent that, at first, members of the classical peasant society generally do not want to but are indeed able to adapt to the paradigmatic challenges of modernity. Additionally, they also possess a socio-cultural toolkit with which they can alleviate and resolve the conflicts of radical cultural diversity and modernization" (Lajos 2013:45). Modernization therefore means not only the transformation of infrastructure and new instruments but also the emergence of new habits of use and production.

Modernization is then, most generally, a form of social change. In this process, the various agricultural societies were transformed into industrial and, in the late 20th century, post-industrial societies (Fejős 1998:9). Citing Wilbert E. Moore, Zoltán Fejős holds that the changes brought about by modernization can best be identified in rationalization (Fejős 1998:9). This is also György Csepeli's opinion, according to whom "modernization is the process by which 'Gemeinschaft' structures are displaced by 'Gesellschaft' structures. It is the process that liberates and transforms us. In Max Weber's words, this was a process of *disenchantment*, which has three

[2]She cites Mihály Hoppál to illustrate this point: "The problem with modernization as a social process is not that it wants to create something, but that most of the time it wants to help create the new by demolishing the old. The starting point of modernism and reform is, in many cases, the destruction of something" (Hoppál 2007:4).

components: *rationalization*, *secularization*, and *individualization*. All three break down some idea previously thought of as fixed and definitive, submitting them to analytical criticism with all its pros and cons" (emphasis in original – V. A.) (Csepeli 2007:60).

According to Anthony Giddens, modernization can be understood if we associate it with the industrialized world. According to him, the striking difference compared to the premodern world lies in the accumulation of goods, automation, the production of goods, the commodification of labor, and the strengthening of institutional power and control. All this is followed by changes in social relations and forms of social organization. The author identifies the dynamism of modern society in three elements: the separation of space and time (during which social relations are organized independently of local constraints), the discarding of constraints/embeddedness, and institutional reflexivity (which signifies the regulated and controlled use of the knowledge surrounding the situations in social life) (Fejős 1998:10).

A specific Eastern European (Transylvanian) version of modernization is *socialist modernization*, which can best be called pseudo-modernization in the sense that the quantitative results of industrialization and urbanization are overshadowed by the destructive activity that accompanies the attainment of these results (Róth 2002:7). Another feature of socialist modernization is that it was not initiated by society. "The basis of the planned economy was rationalized, predictable, standardized work, price–payment, production–consumption, training–life path" (Gagyi 2006). In fact, the everyday processes of social life were also planned and organized by the authorities.[3] This modernization has been characterized by "backwardness" and "delay" in rural areas, "the ongoing validity of a practice and a principle that may be put very briefly in this way: for most of society, the land was and remained the most important property," even if people did not possess, only cultivated the land, like the former serfs (Gagyi 2005a:80).[4]

Depeasantization and post-peasantization

In contrast, some Hungarian authors – influenced by Anglo-Saxon scientific literature (Vaddiraju 2013:9–12) – interpret the process of Hungarian peasant society's disappearance/transformation through the concept of depeasantization. This does not refer to the waning of peasant characteristics but to the disappearance of the peasantry as a social category, caused by superior and external forces (Molnár 2005:192).[5] According to Imre Kovách, who introduced this concept in Hungarian literature, the depeasantization process took place in the socialist era, involved three levels – social, structural, cultural – and resulted in the disappearance of the historical framework of the peasant way of life. This was a change that resulted in the rural population no longer producing for the development of the peasant farm but for consumption. Peasants started to modernize their houses and accumulate consumer goods, which also led to the disappearance of the peasant value system and traditions. The author argues that, as a

[3]On socialist modernization in Romania (Transylvania), see also: Gagyi 2004, 2005b, 2006, 2009a. On the relationship between state and society, see Oláh 2008.

[4]For the analysis of the collectivization process, farming cooperatives, the (re)allocation of resources, and the struggle for survival, see Oláh 2001; Bodó 2004.

[5]On the birth and interpretation of the concept, see Harcsa 2003; Kovách 2003a, 2003b.

complication of these processes, despite the disappearance of the historical peasantry, the significance of rural society remained (Kovách 2003).

In his work that summarizes the most important process of the transformation of rural society in the 20th century, Kovách states that what we now call a "rural area" is a region where there are no peasants, only the memory of the peasantry surviving in various forms and institutions (Kovách 2012).

However, the socialist transformation of the village has yet another interpretation, according to which peasant society, affected by the abolition of land ownership (collectivization) and industrialization, remained in place (as commuter workers) and sought to develop a particular way of life, as well as a particular form of land use, in which the oscillation between agricultural and industrial work became permanent. This tendency could best be termed as *post-peasantization* (Márkus 1996:117–118).[6] Talking about post-peasantization, Balázs Balogh emphasizes that the phenomena, structures, and behaviors considered economic in nature reveal underlying intentions related to the possibilities and strategies of expressing value orientations, social rank, and prestige (Balogh 2002; see also Schwarcz ed. 2014).

Decollectivization and re-peasantization

The process of decollectivization in Romania was studied by American anthropologist Katherine Verdery. In her analysis, she pointed out that, as a result of the restitution law, it is as if the land has come to life: its area has grown and shrunk, moved around, and the memory of different institutions and groups entered into a competition for its possession. The author calls this phenomenon the "flexibility of the land," or "blurred property" (Verdery 1994, 1996, 1998, 1999). Romanian sociologist Maria Fulea points out that the abolition of communal farming, the land law, and the liberalization of the economy have led to a change in the occupational structure of the rural population. The main result of this change is that the peasants involved in farming cooperatives have become private farmers (Kiss 2004:110).

The processes of decollectivization in Szeklerland were studied by József Gagyi (2007). Gagyi points out that, following decollectivization, "hunger for land" became a ubiquitous phenomenon among the peasantry, as a result of which "their relationship to the landscape and spatiality has also changed, since, following the division of the emotionally neutral land of the collective economy, they regained ownership of a series of plots" (Gagyi 2007:5). All this was accompanied by the re-stratification of rural society and the revival of the "land-bound mentality" (Gagyi 2007:6). At the same time, it also led to the development of a mass peasant society in Romania. This is why decollectivization is called *re-peasantization* in the scientific literature.[7] All this partially stopped and partially delayed the process of depeasantization (Gagyi 2007:16–19), while also starting demodernization processes in many respects. According to Vintilă Mihăilescu, the reason for this is that, instead of a *law aimed at agrarian reform*, only a *land law* was adopted, which did not provide a management model, shifting responsibility and initiative from institutions to individuals. It caused the fragmentation of the means of production and of the land but did not help in reorganizing them (Kiss 2004:102).

[6]As for the defense strategy employed solely to avoid unemployment after the regime change, the author defines it as a "secondary post-peasant way of life," or as a return to the quasi-peasant way of life (Lovas 2006:11).

[7]Following Enikő Veres, Dénes Kiss calls this *new peasantization* (Kiss 2004:112).

In this situation, the fundamental question is whether an efficient production, economic and social structure based on private property can be built. The author's answer is that a very thin layer of those who actually benefit from it has developed on top of the society orienting itself towards self-sufficiency (Gagyi 2007:14). However, the land use of the transition period can best be grasped by the notions of "crisis symptom" and "coercion" (Peti – Szabó 2006:7). This is also emphasized by József Kotics, who points out that since the 1990s, the society of rural settlements has changed dramatically, and one of the most striking features of this transformation was "the emergence of new forms of mass rural poverty." According to Kotics, most of the family farms that appeared after the regime change are *enterprises of necessity* (Kotics 2011:169).

Acculturation and/or adaptation

The transformation of the structure of the rural space, economy, and society, and the subsequent change of lifestyle and exchange of cultural patterns have been identified in the ethnographic literature primarily as an *acculturation* process. According to Vilmos Voigt's definition, it is "a cultural change that comes from outside and means an exchange of the *entire* traditional culture" (Voigt 1978:604). Acculturation therefore suggests an unbalanced cultural contact/encounter in which the asymmetric contact often results in cultural assimilation. At the same time, techniques of exclusion and segregation begin to work against individuals/groups trapped outside the assimilation process. Acculturation, therefore, means, in many cases, a cultural adoption saturated with extreme emotions, as a result of which the break with tradition is accompanied by extreme and vehement passions.

According to the general opinion – nourished by journalistic topoi – and views based on superficial observations, acculturation must be interpreted primarily as a result/complication of socialist modernization, during which not only the occupational structure of the village but also its cultural life was transformed. It was then that the socialist state propaganda and culture began to be established in rural areas and its institutional system (houses of culture) began to be built (Gagyi 2009a:111). Through these, the political power organized and regulated the cultural change (Gagyi 2009a:115). Gagyi identified the following dimensions of the cultural transformation of Romanian rural areas in the period after the Second World War: (1) the eradication of illiteracy; (2) the building of a system of socialist public cultural festivals; (3) the construction of the media as an information tool and power structure; (4) the emergence of folk scripturality and folklorism (Gagyi 2009a:106–115).

Gagyi also calls attention to the fact that, "in village societies, in rural areas, the orientation towards that which is new, the adaptation to innovation by adopting the 'beautiful' and the 'modern,' have already existed within a relationship to the city, to that which is outside of the peasant world" (Gagyi 2010:129). This "orientation towards innovation" can indeed best be interpreted as *adaptation*, i.e., as "a cultural process in which a community adopts the foreign cultural goods which it gets to know by sorting and filtering. In contrast with the previously prevailing, mechanistic perception based on *transfer and acceptance*, the application of the concept of cultural adaptation expresses the view that the reception of cultural goods is a complex phenomenon; the occurrence of acceptance is not only determined by whether or not a given cultural treasure is valuable in itself, or whether or not it is found in the culture of the community, but also by the attitude of the community towards the new phenomenon" (Sárkány 1980:347). During adaptation, despite a change in the lifestyle and life management strategies of

the recipient, this is not an invasive intervention but rather a productive modification. The new element is built in such a way that it adapts/nestles against the cultural patterns that characterize the community. That is, they come into use according to the rules imposed by the habits and routines operating in the community.

Synchronicity and nonsynchronism

Hermann Bausinger introduced the concept of the synchronicity of elements defined by different historical force factors through the term *parallel nonsynchronism*, which in fact refers to synchronicity (Bausinger 1989). This not only means that lifestyle strategies and worldviews imposing different morals and value systems that are sometimes traditional (i.e., inherited from the past) and sometimes non-traditional (i.e., nourished by the present) are simultaneously present in modern rural society. The synchronicity and nonsynchronism of microcultural patterns and attitudes nourished by the economic and social heritage of different eras can both be observed. Moreover, individual farms and social groups are in various phases of modernization and socio-economic change even within the microworld of a specific settlement. Due to these phase shifts, culture as a whole has a mosaic-like character. Some groups are characterized by rapid transformation while others by immobility. The latter tolerate, acknowledge, but exclude from their daily lives the various regime changes, major ideological, economic, and social transformations, the achievements of motorization and modernization. They do not incorporate these into their worldview, do not use them in formulating their economic strategies, and do not live according to them.

However, all of this has a generational reading as well. As Árpád Töhötöm Szabó puts it, "older people experience the fast changes that take place around them very differently. Since they are in no way able to catch up with the rapidly technicizing world, and are also being excluded from rural, traditional workspaces and places of representation due to changes in family structure, forms of ownership, and work culture, they counterbalance their frustrations by building the past in memory. (. . .) To them, the old world exists as the only livable pattern" (Szabó 2009:50).

ECONOMIC STRATEGIES

Ethnographic descriptions of rural/peasant farming have already been provided by many authors.[8] One consistent observation is that "the nature of the peasant economy and household is closely linked to the pursuit of self-sufficiency" (Paládi-Kovács 2001:202), with economic behavior not affected by the market (Lovas Kiss 2006:69). This form of behavior was noticeable in the rural environment until the late 20th century, which can be explained mainly by the economy being insufficiently equipped, as well as by the rigid adherence to traditional mentalities. These patterns of farming and knowledge related to production and instrumentation technologies are surveyed in the literature under the concept of *agricultural heritage* (Peti – Szabó 2006:8).

[8]A non-exhaustive list: Paládi-Kovács 1982, 2009; Fél – Hofer 1997; Balogh 2002; Kovács 2010; Viga 2013; for Transylvania: Biró et al. 1994; Bodó – Oláh eds. 1997; Peti – Szabó eds. 2006; Szabó 2009, 2013.

At the same time, it is not only social relations but also work that is characterized by reciprocity and the use of various *forms of cooperation*. That is why we can call rural society a *cooperative society* (Szabó 2009).

Hungarian ethnographic research distinguishes five types of traditional peasant farms: (1) privately owned agricultural holdings that regularly employ foreign labor – about 6% of farms; (2) privately owned farms that often use foreign, external labor; (3) farms based on family labor – about 20% of farms; (4) farms based on privately owned micro-holdings, where one or more family member(s) have been compelled to engage in occasional outside work and gainful employment; (5) farms owned by people who regularly seek outside work (Paládi-Kovács 2001:204).

Vintilă Mihăilescu classified the farming strategies of Romania after the 1990s into two dominant types: *diffuse/mixed* and *individual* farms. The former is reproductive, the latter productive. The former involves the extended family and relatives who have moved to the city in the production process, while the latter relies on the strength of the nuclear family (Kiss 2004:106–107).

József Gagyi describes the development of Transylvanian rural habitats based on the triple structure of actors who subvert/transform the economic structure, i.e., the *land distributors*, the local entrepreneurs (*gainers*), and the *self-sufficient* (Gagyi 2007). In his study of the rural elite, Sebastian Lăzăroiu talks about four types of entrepreneurs: the *old-new entrepreneurs* (those who were entrepreneurs even before 1989), the *network entrepreneurs* (those who have held a leadership position before 1989 and started a business based on this past), the *traders* (small-scale enterprises dealing with the purchase of goods and their local sale), and the *agricultural entrepreneurs* (Kiss 2004:113).

Árpád Töhötöm Szabó separates three levels of the cultural patterns that are characteristic of the post-socialist farming strategies of the Târnava Mică/Kis-Küküllő Valley: *self-sufficiency* (family integration), *partial market integration*, and *dominant market integration* (Szabó 2013). Antal Lovas Kiss uses a similar typology when talking about non-market-affected, market-affected, and market-oriented or market-organized economic behaviors (Lovas Kiss 2006).

Based on the analysis of the cultural patterns of Italian rural life involved in the process of urbanization, Zsuzsánna Paál classified the farming strategies of families into five groups: (1) accumulation, (2) survival, (3) subsistence, (4) the preservation of the house as residence, and (5) income generation (Paál 2003).

József Kotics argues that "the structure of Hungarian society and economy has far more long-term, continuous elements than analysts have assumed for decades. (. . .) The diversity of resources used, the often very mixed product structure of family farms, and the pluriactive income generation of rural households suggest the revival and continuity of the traditional rural activity structure" (Kotics 2011:170).

Kotics describes the current situation along the following key features: "(1) The economic function of the villages has weakened. (2) Rural society is much more dependent on public resources than urban society. (3) Instead of peasant embourgeoisement, the wage laborer mentality is spreading. (4) The old mentality of actively developing the village has disappeared. (5) The non-peasant mentality has intensified. (6) The attractiveness of belonging to a rural community has diminished. (7) The traditional village community has disintegrated. (8) The old peasant way of life, the community-organizing power of family work, and the traditional authorities have disappeared. (9) The transformation has abolished old relations but did not create

an accepted new form of life and community. No new system of prestige has been established" (Kotics 2011:170).

Even this brief overview clearly illustrates that, after joining the post-socialist and later European Union structures, the processes that took place in rural areas have resulted in extremely mixed/uncertain structures, and this uncertainty has also affected the findings of the studies and their interpretations within the social sciences. Although there is a consensus that today's processes can best be described as *transient*, the reason for this is sometimes seen in the rigid attachment to old structures, and sometimes in the uncontrolled (and therefore less than successful) adoption of foreign patterns.

Perhaps it is most expedient to evaluate changing ruralities as a combined and simultaneous outcome of these two processes.

In the settlement along the Mureş that I studied, as in the agglomeration zone of major cities or in most villages along major routes, a specific situation developed by the early 21st century. The number of people working in the agricultural sector permanently or seasonally, in full-time or part-time jobs, has fallen dramatically. Most people leased their land to a local agribusiness contractor, which resulted in the formation of large, contiguous plots. With this, the mosaic-like cultural landscape of strips of plots typical of the decades following decollectivization disappeared.

There have also been significant changes in the buildings and layouts of the farms. A significant part of the farm buildings fell out of use and underwent a change of function. The population – mainly younger families and those with above-average incomes – first abandoned raising livestock (cattle, horses), as a result of which some of the barns and granaries were demolished, while others were transformed into pigsties, summer kitchens, garages, boiler rooms, etc. In the next step, raising pigs for sale declined, followed by pig breeding for own consumption, and in the last step, farming was completely abandoned.

However, for a small part of the population, agriculture and animal husbandry remain the only source of income and livelihood. As these families do not live on farms on the outskirts of settlements but rather wedged between other plots, the odors and villagescape associated with agricultural and livestock farming settlements have to some extent (but certainly more than the proportion of those working in the agricultural sector would suggest) remained dominant.

Due to land prices, and because family plot allowance was barely 2.5 ares during the communist era, the machinery of the families making a living from agriculture is practically parked in front of the house, often stretching wider than the length of their property, and this sight certainly greatly contributes to the fact that these settlements do not resemble western suburbs or residential zones with gardens. Moreover, the by-products of farming are particularly visible in the backyard and immediate surroundings of these agricultural families: animal feces, dunghills, slurry, waste formed during the transport of fodder, hay and straw flakes, grain silos, hives, etc. The characteristic noises of agriculture are also constantly "polluting" the tranquility of the settlements. In summer, when the cows are brought in from pasture, the streets where the animals pass are regularly filled with cow dung. The coexistence of the two mentalities is therefore not conflict-free, but they do exist side-by-side. This is what makes the general picture so colorful.

Following nationalization in 1945, local public institutions and economic entities have for a long time used and continue to use the infrastructure built by the Teleki family, or the Reformed Church, or with public funds by various cooperative associations, although in the last decade

these all underwent major renovations and restructuring. Nevertheless, a specific ambivalent situation persists even at the level of public institutions. The settlements have communal and public cultural venues and infrastructure, yet hardly any functioning institutions. In terms of institutional provisions, the settlement is characterized by a duality: in the case of buildings, we can expect a continuously improving trend, which in turn is accompanied by the decline of the institutions occupying the buildings. The same can be said about the infrastructural provisions of the settlement: while the issue of gas and electricity, telephone, satellite or cable TV and internet, as well as waste collection, can be considered resolved, the drinking water and sewerage network and wastewater treatment are still in need of significant improvements.

The socio-residential attributes are largely determined by the population living here and their characteristic habits. In the case of an aging or low-mobility population, the building stock is also typically aging and declining. There are financial reasons for the buildings of the 1950s not yet having been demolished or significantly renovated in large numbers. However, the presence of a population with a higher status and more significant economic power is favorable for the development of the settlement.

In the early 20th century, a shared set of values and generally accepted moral rules still persisted in the local community, and there was a limited number of collectively accepted career models. Not only did each family live under very similar financial and housing conditions, they also had roughly the same economic and cultural aspirations. Until the middle of the 20th century, the village remained a self-sufficient agricultural settlement, where, with the exception of intellectuals and one or two civil servants, the inhabitants' primary source of income came from agriculture and animal husbandry. But even the pastor, teacher, or clerk with a fixed monthly allowance ended up farming: they raised animals and cultivated their own land. Those working in the industry or the service sector also owned land and raised animals. At the same time, this unity also gained expression in the villagescape.[9]

Today's villagescape, on the other hand, is rather mosaic: the traditional peasant farmstead (reminiscent of the '40s), the communist cube house, building types reminiscent of villas typical of the Mediterranean or alpine regions, spatial structures typical of suburbs and farming villages existing side by side and intertwined. A Transylvanian village in the 21st-century metropolitan area is therefore characterized primarily by diversity, a mixing of values and lifestyles.

Besides residential building façades and plot layouts, public buildings, infrastructure, and industrial facilities also influence the villagescape. Public buildings and their surroundings gradually deteriorated by the late 1980s. Over the past five years, however, these buildings have been progressively renovated, modernized, and expanded. Industrial and agro-industrial facilities have also declined over the last quarter of a century, some of them have been completely demolished, others have undergone a change in function: they have been transformed and "recycled." Some of the commercial units (tavern, general store) – which opened in the early 1990s – have deteriorated in the meantime, their infrastructure became outdated, the façade time-worn, while the newly established ones seek to bring the level of urban commercial units in

[9]Of course, this does not mean that local society was not fragmented internally and that this internal hierarchy was not considered in the local community. The system of Church seating based on the social hierarchy, for example, lasted until the late 1950s. I just want to point out that during this period, the expression of this internal fragmentation, with the exception of property size, was more symbolic. There were no truly significant differences in terms of living conditions, housing, or items used.

terms of image and infrastructure. The buildings of (public) health units (dental practice, pharmacy, doctor's office) have also been modernized in the last decade.

All in all, the settlement still reflects its former agrarian character in terms of morphology and structure, the erstwhile habitat of a population dependent on agricultural production, but it is gradually beginning to take on an urban appearance, and the majority of the population inhabiting these spaces already follows an urban lifestyle. Looking at today's spatial structure, an imprint of a slow transition becomes evident in which the peculiarities of the changes of the last century can be well traced.

Four major periods of these changes can be distinguished: the post-World War II transition period, the age of socialist transformation, decollectivization, and the era of transformations in the early 21st century that began with EU accession. In the mid-1940s, there was a slight decline because of World War II, mainly due to seizures by the Russian army passing through the settlement and the collateral losses suffered by the fleeing population. By the end of the decade, however, livestock had increased again. Another decline was brought on by the industrialization of the regional center, Târgu Mureş. At that time, several families abandoned animal husbandry, or at least reduced the number of their cattle and took up industrial work.

However, this decline was also short-lived, as the livestock of the settlement increased again after collectivization. By the end of the period, there were about 10,000 cattle in the settlement, of which approximately 200 were on individual farms.

In the 1990s, an increased unemployment rate due to the closure of factories caused a flight to agriculture as an alternative livelihood model. Many formerly working families started to raise animals (dairy cows and bull calves, as well as store cattle), and to cover household expenses from the sale of milk and young animals.

Another shift took place around the end of the first decade of the 21st century. At that time, not only did the cattle population decline, but there were also changes in the building stock, with roughly 25% of the former farm buildings disappearing and non-agricultural farms coming to dominate the villagescape.

The factors that triggered, accelerated, slowed down, and overturned the changes were at once external and internal impacts on the settlement. The development of pasture use and land ownership/land use was mainly influenced by Central Eastern European processes (serf liberation – collectivization – decollectivization). The quota system introduced in the mid-20th century, the liberalization of the market after 1989,[10] and the establishment of a system of land-based and other agricultural subsidies,[11] shaped, accelerated, or slowed down the transformation. At the same time, it was also affected by internal factors, the privatization of pastures, the emergence of the agricultural entrepreneur, and a generational change.[12]

[10]Fluctuations in the market price of animals have always had an impact on the growth/decline of livestock and the application of economic strategies.

[11]Subsidies also affected the choice of means of production and product types. In the first half of the 20th century, sugar beet production became dominant due to its high price, which was replaced by tobacco growing in the early 1990s. The increase and decrease and/or tightening of conditions for milk and livestock subsidies have also affected milk production and animal husbandry.

[12]Meanwhile, a new generation no longer socialized with farmwork in mind has grown up.

The development of transportation and transport infrastructure has also had an impact on the speed of change and the factors that trigger it. The evolution of transport has brought the world closer to the village.

All of this has also had an impact on the development of consumer behavior. Until the end of the 20th century, the local society of Sáromberk was characterized by a mentality defined by self-sufficiency. Even those whose financial situation would have allowed them to live off the market. By the beginning of the 21st century, however, more and more families have given up farming, abandoned raising even pigs and poultry after cows, and many have stopped cultivating their backyard gardens and producing vegetables for their own use. These households will buy pigs for fattening to cover their annual meat consumption from others in the village or from shopping centers. Food expenditures have come to account for an increasing proportion of family expenses after the regime change.

LONG AND SHORT PROCESSES

To understand the *transient* nature of today's processes, it seems most expedient to keep in mind Braudel's division of duration (Braudel 1972) in our analysis. Braudel created the concept of *courte durée* (short duration) as the opposite of *longue durée* (long duration), which he considers more important for historiography. In his interpretation, the long duration is not a measure of the length of the period but of the pace of development, and it is characterized by a certain calmness. It reveals the relationship between the landscape/natural environment and man, which has changed very slowly over the centuries. In contrast, the short duration is the "swirling surface," the time of the events characterized by speed, variability, and pulsation. The short duration deals with individuals and their experiences. It not only represents a short (time) scale but also a fragmentation of time (history/tradition), where decisions made in the heat of the moment and chance play a significant role. In our interpretation, this means that we perceive contemporary/synchronous processes as transient and contingent. At the same time, since all this takes place in a layer close to the surface, in most cases it hides from our eyes everything that is inherited in an undetected and unchanged way from the past, which is most characteristic of culture, and takes place in the deeper layer (structure).

The 21st-century Transylvanian village is characterized at once by permanence, the long-term survival of conditions typical of agricultural societies, and rapid change, with the addition that the changes take place mostly in the outside world, from where they seep into the village. There are more and more highways with ever more cars, more wires (electricity, telephone, TV, and internet) and content they transmit, more internet-based digital devices (internet of things) that open countless windows to the outside world, connecting the villagers to the people of the Internet more and more.

Fernand Braudel argues that structure changes so slowly that we perceive it as permanence, therefore the change takes place mostly at the level of economic activity (Braudel 1972). The duality of the rapid and radical changes on the surface (at the level of consumption, individual economic strategies, and lifestyle) and the permanence of the structures can also be observed in the settlement and area I studied.

In the mid-20th century, the collective farm took over the place and function of the manor in the organization of economic life. The vacuum created by its abolishment was then filled by the

agro-industrial company that settled in the area and leased thousands of hectares of arable land. The disappearance of the large estate was followed by the disappearance of the former elite, the landowner of noble origins, and the emergence of a new elite – embodied by the party secretary, the collective president, and the foreman – and after the 1989 regime change, the role was assumed by the agricultural entrepreneur.

If we look at the arc of transformation in the last more than a century from the point of view of family structure and family functions, the process that seems to emerge is that of going from a family living together and farming together, i.e., in different forms of cooperation, to a symbolic family (see Boreczki 2004).

CHANGING RURALITIES. CONCLUSION

Romania's accession to the European Union in 2007 also started new processes in the transformation of the village, from the choice of destination countries for migrant workers (migration) to the farming (e.g., land use) and lifestyle habits of those who stayed home. Even new forms of use of traditional cultural elements (cf. heritage creation and use) have evolved under the influence/pressure of EU regulations and patterns.[13] With increased room for maneuvering and greater access to resources (e.g., EU projects), a new world of objects has been built, novel relationships have been established, and fresh interpretations have been born. Not only Transylvania but also the Transylvanian village has come to be characterized by "diversity and variety," as well as by a "mosaic-like" character (Gagyi 2009b:33).

The question arises how the rapid infrastructural transformation of localities, the changes in farming and income structure and social stratification, the changed mechanical environment (farming machines, the personal motor vehicle, or, within the intimate family environment, the computer and the mobile phone), as well as the use and functions of the machines affect rural lifestyles, economic strategies, and land use, the communicative and cultural memory of the communities, biographical narratives, narrative behavior – in short, traditions in a broad sense. What does all this mean in terms of economic structure, identity, and the organization of everyday life?

According to Imre Kovách, Hungarian – and, more generally, Central and Eastern European – rural areas and societies have suffered fundamental and comprehensive changes around the turn of the millennium and in the subsequent years, which led to a complete reorganization of the rural regions and launched entirely new processes. As a result, a "new rural area" was born, where this "newness," according to Kovách, "is not a normative concept (. . .), but merely indicates that the changes are significant in all relevant dimensions of rural structures. The diversity of reproductive, economic, and power systems, actors, their interests and networks, and the various orientations of their values and actions have created a fragmented social structure, by which I mean the juxtaposition of phenomena that are not necessarily connected" (Kovách 2012:203). According to Kovách, one of the main features of this new rural area is "the hybrid nature of society and economy," where "hybridity is a structural state and not a synonym for transition"

[13] *Detraditionalization* and *heritagization* are some of the most tangible ambivalences of contemporary rural communities. (The first term refers to a kind of questioning of community authority and tradition, while the second refers to its opposite, the reinterpretation, consolidation, and survival of tradition within the community – cf. Morris 1996; Heelas et al. eds. 1996.)

(Kovách 2012:203). Based on the findings of Imre Kovách's research, József Gagyi interprets this new rural area as "a construct of specific, primarily not economic or social but cultural realities and historically developed cultural characteristics."[14]

In the space/framework of these changing and diversified ruralities, several different and, if you will, parallel mentalities and tendencies prevail simultaneously, sometimes complementing, other times eliminating each other, some of them coexisting peacefully, others remaining in constant conflict with each other.

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[14]József Gagyi has called my attention repeatedly to this key problem of my research during our discussions over the last three years, for which I would like to thank him here.

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