

# Body – Identity – Society:

## Concepts of the Socially Accepted Body in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century in Hungarian Rural Areas

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“Behind your thoughts and feelings, my brother, stands a mighty commander, an unknown sage – he is called Self. He lives in your body, he is your body”  
(NIETZSCHE 1961 [1883]:62).

**Abstract:** Wide-ranging research has shown that cleanliness is both a social and a historical construct, that is, a relative rather than an absolute concept. The rather complex social and psychological context and causes of cleansing change with time and space. The social change characterized by modernization and urbanization in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century had a profound effect on the mentality, way of life and social behavior of Hungarian peasantry as well, including the meaning of cleanliness and related customs. The aim of the paper is to analyze the practices and customs related to washing and bathing and their modification triggered by socio-economic and political change. The first part of the article gives a brief clarification of the terms “cleanliness” and “hygiene,” surveys Hungarian and international research on the topic, and presents a brief history of cleansing as a universal custom. In the second part, the author outlines a socio-historical model of the major stages of change in Hungarian village habits of cleanliness based on extensive field experience.

**Keywords:** Body, hygiene, cleanliness, hungarian traditional culture, urbanization, social structure

### THE SOCIAL BODY AND CONNECTION WITH IDENTITY – INTRODUCTION

Our body is the vehicle<sup>1</sup> in order to communicate with others and to carry out our everyday lives. It is impossible to separate our bodies from who we are and what we do in the social world. At all levels – individual, relational and cultural – we can see that the

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<sup>1</sup> “The body is the vehicle of being in the world,” says the phenomenological philosopher Maurice MERLEAU-PONTY (1962:82).

body is both subject and object at the same time; it is “natural”, individual and personal, as unique as a fingerprint or odor-plume, yet it is also common to all humanity. The body is both an individual creation, physically and phenomenologically, and a cultural product; it is personal, and also a “stateproperty” (SYNNOTT 1993:3–4).

The body can be analyzed only in the context of relationships, and the body (of an individual) becomes socially visible and perceptible only as a result of comparison. In this comparison the physical body is never perceived in its own immediacy; it becomes accessible always through cultural concepts and categories: the physical human body always appears as a social body (DOUGLAS 1973:93; SHILLING 2003:62–110).

What we can perceive of the body is a body image fashioned by the individual through hygiene/grooming (washing/bathing, cosmetics, exercise, and relaxation), body modification (hairdo, manicure, skin decoration), clothing, and body techniques (posture, gestures, moving in and using a space).<sup>2</sup>

This body image – according to the intentions and means of the individual, and in the eyes of those around it – is a vehicle of a certain message about its identity, about its affiliation with a social group.

The body acts as nature’s language that speaks even if we do not want to, telling things about us that we would not say about ourselves; a language that we do not speak but which says something about us. According to Bourdieu, one’s look is determined by two basic factors: the physical appearance of the body and the ways it is held. Every human body is objectified by the social gaze, that is, through other people’s gaze and speech (BOURDIEU 1978:154–156).

As Giddens says, the body becomes part of an ongoing “identity project”. It becomes the means of expressing our individuality and aspirations as well as our group affiliations (GIDDENS 1991:57–69).

In this context, the question arises whether changes in bodily signs and body schema are associated with changes of identity, and vice versa, whether inner (spiritual) transformations have any physical signs?

As Shilling summarizes Bourdieu’s perspective, “bodies are unfinished entities which are formed through their participation in social life and become imprinted with the marks of social class. Bodies develop through the interrelation between an individual’s social position, habitus and taste” (SHILLING 2003:137).

Moreover, “the body is a restricted means of expression” (DOUGLAS 1996:72). This restriction takes place in society (BOURDIEU 1971:420–425), in public (HABERMAS 1993:230–239), in social interaction (GOFFMAN 1951), all of which contain rules, norms and regulations about the use of the body and how it can be presented.

These rules do not necessarily originate in general society; as Goffman’s research shows, each community and subculture (including settings like workplace, school, nightclub or hiking spot) for all possible social situations has its own specific rules of communication and body usage associated with it (GOFFMAN 1963:3–12).

Because the ideals, meanings and identities available in a culture are (relatively) “constant”, the “free” choices are not quite as free as they may seem (SHILLING 2003:72).

<sup>2</sup> BOURDIEU 1978:152–153. See also MAUSS 2000:433–442.

This is especially true for pre-modern societies, in which cultural rootedness is quite stable and thus the individual has even less leeway when it comes to body transformations.

### *The body from a historical perspective*

In the course of history, sooner or later all societies have had to face the “civilizing process” (as defined by Elias), which entailed a change in the individuals’ attitude towards their and others’ bodies due to regulations of body use and a rising power over the body, often masked as prescribed proprieties.<sup>3</sup>

I am of the opinion that applying Elias’ theory of evolution in the case of European nations is acceptable – even despite its criticisms I share –, even though particular peoples, such as the Finno-Ugric fishing-hunting peoples of Siberia, had had an industrial, social and cultural development different from Europe, so we need an other approach to study the transformation of their cleanliness concepts. What is certain, however, is that everywhere – though in different ways and at different times – the body, which in pre-modern/folk cultures “possesses magical forces and is fertile, and which had symbolized the small, self-sufficient village communities’ viability and force,” (VEREBÉLYI 2005a:73–83) was gradually drawn under the influence of the church and/or state with the help of the bureaucracy and administration, as it can be deduced from the interpretations of Foucault, Turner and others.<sup>4</sup>

In summary, we can establish that the body is both a social and a historical construct, that is, a relative rather than an absolute concept, and the same can be said of “cleanliness,” another main topic of my study.

### *The meanings of body cleanliness as central categories of social recognition*

“The outward appearance of the body combines the three facts that people *have, are,* and *create* a body. Having a body refers to a person’s mastery of the body. Being a body means that our identity is indissolubly associated with our embodiment, and creating a body is our attempt to represent our embodied identity” (MAARTMANN 2000:76).

The notion of “cleansing” can thus be understood as a kind of rite of passage, or a body project that is not simply about the absence of physical, ritual, or symbolic pollution, but which produces a perfectly fashioned body suitable for appearance in public (BOURDIEU 1978:154).

This outward appearance indicates to the outside world (community, society) that the given individual is a full member of the community in terms of his or her tastes, morals, character and thinking.

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<sup>3</sup> Elias traces the process of bourgeoning regulations regarding natural needs and interpersonal communication – in short, behavior in the broad sense – as well as the differentiation and gradual internalization of rules of conduct from the late Middle Ages to the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, in the context of modern state formation and the increasing interconnectedness of individuals (ELIAS 1987).

<sup>4</sup> ELIAS 1987:46–47; FOUCAULT 1990; TURNER 1992;

In terms of the body, as well as in general, “cleanliness” (as opposed to disorder) represents order and orderliness. Pollution, on the other hand, is a “social fact” that disrupts the order we imagined or “dreamed” (KAPITÁNY – KAPITÁNY: 2009:46.).

Since the publication of Mary Douglas’ book *Purity and Danger* (DOUGLAS 1966), it has become almost commonplace in cultural anthropology that purity and pollution are not absolute but culturally defined categories. Hence, purity in itself cannot be defined, and even within a given culture one has to take into account various criteria before determining whether something is clean or not.

Thanks to its indirect meanings, the manifestations of bodily hygiene can symbolize spiritual (or moral, even political) cleanliness and “purity,” and in this sense further pairings might be associated with it, such as tidy/untidy, beautiful/ugly, healthy/sick, harmless/harmful, etc. Even the term “clean” and its synonyms are used in most languages with a wide variety of meanings.

The symbolism of cleanliness is intertwined in both the concrete and the abstract sense with the notions of health and the symbolism attached to it. Every act of washing, bathing or rinsing signals the intention of getting rid of something undesired, or warding off (preventing) physical dirt, moral impurity, or a magic curse. Our everyday cleansing habits combined with ritualistic, magical methods of cleansing form a well-defined, comprehensive, “holistic” system (JUHÁSZ 2002; JUHÁSZ 2006a:12–15), thus providing spiritual/physical wellbeing, harmony, and order.

Virginia Smith explains this complex interpretation of purity as a stratification of different purity dimensions representing different historical eras and marked by distinctive terms. The oldest layer designated by the terms “clean/cleanliness” marks the Neolithic attraction of our “animal” self to grooming, orderliness, and beauty. As a next level Smith uses the term “purity” to mark the concept that is also located in the deep layers of our consciousness but which is already linked to our human psyche, and which with its mystical/religious ideologies contrasts divine perfection with our animalistic, material nature that causes contamination. The third layer comes from the Greek word “hygiene,” associated with the science of achieving a healthy and long life and signaling the beginning of preventive medicine (SMITH 2007:2–3). Throughout history, these three layers were constantly present in different variations in the changing cleansing habits of different eras and social strata.

### *Bodily hygiene and social differentiation*

The symbols of cleanliness are present in all aspects of our lives. On the one hand, through these, a society, culture, group, or even an individual can separate itself from everything that is undesirable (deeming the undesirable dirty, contaminating, and, as a result, inferior). On the other hand, the symbolism of cleanliness can be used to express one’s position in the social hierarchy, as well as to express one’s rise and fall (in society).<sup>5</sup>

<sup>5</sup> KAPITÁNY–KAPITÁNY 2009:39–42. DOUGLAS describes the operation of a value system based on the clean/unclean distinction (DOUGLAS 1966). In the more complex European societies, the social value of cleanliness emerged slowly and went through multiple transitions in a particular socio-economic-cultural system (VEREBÉLYI 2009:11).

The Book of Leviticus<sup>6</sup> is the cornerstone of European Christian cultural purity laws, but there is a huge difference even between Christian and Jewish notions, both sharing the same root but having evolved in different directions. The complexity and severity of Jewish purity laws goes well beyond religion to permeate everyday actions, thus drawing limits between Jewish and non-Jewish (VINCZE 2013:72). The Roma have a similarly chiseled system, where purity standards are based on a systematic separation of the upper and lower parts of the body, and compliance with these purity laws is what fundamentally distinguishes the Roma from the non-Roma *gádzsó* (STEWART 1994:210).

Although in today's globalized European culture one can no longer speak of such a sophisticated set of rules, it can still be very clearly delineated how the concepts of "dirty" and "clean" define the fine line between particular social strata/groups/subcultures, based on how, using what method, and with what end-goal one cleanses and arranges the body. These dividing lines are immediately apparent to anyone upon first encountering someone more unkempt or better groomed than themselves.

#### *Hungarian and international purity research*

In Hungarian ethnography, personal hygiene research was initially part of costume research (FÉL 1942; FÜLEMILE–STEFÁNY 1989; GERGELY 1978; HORVÁTH 1972). Following a few descriptive ethnographic works (HERCZEG 1988; KAPCZÁR 1975; SZENTI 1985; 1991), the theoretical foundation provided by Kincső Verebélyi (VEREBÉLYI 2005a; b) at the ELTE Folklore Department gave rise to the study of everyday habits within the framework of folk customs research, including such hygiene activities as body cleansing (JUHÁSZ 1995), washing (CZINGEL 1995), dishwashing (BÁTI 2009), tidying (VINCZE 2009; DYEKISS 2009), and waste management (MURÁNYI 2009).

The dual concept of "clean/unclean" can be perceived as an elementary conceptual structure upon which a number of closely related semantic fields are based on the one hand, while on the other hand, "through symbolization and metaphorical terminology," seemingly distant social phenomena can interconnect, thus the linguistic approach seems self-evident. Kincső Verebélyi already raised the importance of linguistic analysis (VEREBÉLYI 2009:15). Anett Takács's investigation of metropolitan bourgeois hygiene culture used the semantic analysis of Hungarian terms related to cleanliness as a starting point, but her actual data could not establish an organic correlation with it, like our authors did (TAKÁCS 2014:21–42).

The first stand-alone volume dealing entirely with Hungarian folk hygiene habits was published in 2006 (JUHÁSZ 2006a), and in the same year, following a major thematic object-collection program, the Skanzen Hungarian Open Air Museum in Szentendre also mounted an exhibition about hygiene habits (JUHÁSZ 2006b). The growing interest has led to the publication of *Clean Lines*, a volume of interdisciplinary studies which, in addition to a historical overview of the concept, provides case studies within the rather broadly interpreted topic of cleanliness: from the conceptual clarification of cleanliness, through the personal hygiene habits of the upper middle class, to Udmurt bath houses (JUHÁSZ ed. 2009).

<sup>6</sup> The third book of the Greek Old Testament and the third of the five books of the Torah, with instructions for the priests from early rabbinic times.

Within the larger theme of bodily hygiene, a number of sub-topics have been researched since, some of which have been carried out in international cooperation. For example, the material culture of bodily hygiene (JUHÁSZ 2003), the hygiene culture of the socialist era (JUHÁSZ 2008; 2009), body odor (JUHÁSZ 2011a, 2012–13), changing into clean clothes (JUHÁSZ 2016), or the various aspects of bath culture (JUHÁSZ 2011b; 2014), and numerous other topics. A most recent step in the international and interdisciplinary dialogue initiated by the author of the present lines, has been the 17<sup>th</sup> Symposium: *Body – Identity – Society: Concepts of the Socially Accepted Body* within the framework of the XII International Congress of Finno-Ugric Studies (Oulu, Finland, 2015). (Selected papers are presented here as a thematic block in this issue of the *Acta Ethnographica Hungarica*.)

The theme of bodily cleanliness is of course growing in popularity in international history, sociology, ethnography, and anthropology studies too. Following a number of basic general theoretical works,<sup>7</sup> a series of studies have been published around the world, analyzing and representing the concepts of cleanliness and hygiene habits in their respective regions. There is almost no country where this type of research was not conducted, exhibiting great heterogeneity in regard to discipline as well as theoretical-methodological framework. In addition to the great canonical works, Hungarian cleanliness research was inspired primarily by Scandinavian scientific results (*FATABUREN* 1970; FRYKMAN 1981; FRYKMAN 1987; MAARTMANN 2000), while inspiration was also provided by several monographs on cleanliness, body-art and cosmetics, healing, or the history of bath culture (e.g. BROWN 2009; CORSON 1972; LOUX 1979; SMITH 2007; WRIGHT 1960).

### CLEANLINESS AS THE CHIEF ATTRIBUTE OF THE SOCIALLY ACCEPTED BODY IN THE 20<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY IN HUNGARIAN RURAL AREAS

As a result of my ethnographic research on bodily hygiene that commenced in the late 1980s, I compiled a rich empirical database, which serves as a basis for the complex analysis of cleansing habits, a cognitive system encompassing lifestyle, habits and cosmology.<sup>8</sup>

Although the sociological and anthropological literature on the history of body culture and bathing, as well as works focusing on the body and cleanliness provided an appropriate background for my research on the cleanliness habits of the Hungarian peasantry, it still fell on me to work out a detailed methodology for the actual fieldwork. From the outset, I tried to obtain data using a cognitive method, striving to arrange the collected data in a hypothetical system (to be mapped out), often asking about the “whys.”

<sup>7</sup> In addition to the already mentioned works e.g. CORBIN 1986; VIGARELLO 1982.

<sup>8</sup> The idea comes from Bausinger, who suggests this solution instead of the traditional methods of customs research. In other words, if in the course of the study of a phenomenon “the complexity of the culture, the interdependence of parts and sectors poses serious problems,” then “systematic thinking and a structuring principle that enables the ordering of interrelated phenomena into a system is indispensable to progression” (BAUSINGER 2004:11–12).

Per Bausinger,<sup>9</sup> I chose the *ethnography of cleansing* as the framework for my research, which includes everyday cleansing habits, magical, ritual cleansing performed on special occasions, the concepts of cleanliness and uncleanliness, and the associative content that can be attached to it (JUHÁSZ 2006a:11–13).

In this study, I summarize the major stages of change in rural cleansing habits, which shows the transformation of Hungarian rural society in the 20<sup>th</sup> century from a special point of view: “from below.”

### *Models of cleansing habits*

In my “hygiene research,” I outlined models of habit systems that characterized certain layers of rural society at particular times in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Through these, I tried to define the concept of the “socially accepted body” with the help of several interrelated categories and qualities (health/hygiene, aesthetic, moral). One of the central concepts was “cleanliness,” which includes all these aspects. These models correlate with the periodization/models of lifestyle discussed in the works of Hungarian ethnographers and social and cultural historians in regard to the transformation of rural society in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>10</sup>

The period from the turn of the twentieth century to the present day can be divided into five parts in terms of the changes in personal hygiene habits, recognizing the simultaneous presence of several transitional forms.<sup>11</sup>

The chronological divisions are blurred, however, and even particular hallmark cleansing patterns cannot be regarded as exclusive to any of the five periods. The five models serve only to highlight the main tendencies, illustrating the cleansing habits of the rural population (the most populous strata of the society, but also within itself stratified) in the given period.

Even within one model we can find several variations of cleansing and body arrangement, since they are formed and manifested not only as a function of social status or external expectations (power) but also in interaction with them, and even independent of these, they can be heavily influenced by the individual’s religion, nationality, age, sex, as well as personality and psychological factors.<sup>12</sup>

### *Archaic peasant hygiene (until the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century)*

The word *archaic* designates a basically late feudal, pre-industrial peasant society and culture, with an essentially self-sufficient economy, the lack of acquisition habits, the closed nature of the community, characterized by the dominance of transcendentalism,

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<sup>9</sup> Bausinger suggested the *ethnography of dress* instead of study of folk costume, on the model of the already established concept of the *ethnography of nutrition* (BAUSINGER 2004:11–12).

<sup>10</sup> HOFER 1975; HANÁK 1988; KÓSA 1990;

<sup>11</sup> The concept of parallel asynchrony was introduced by Hermann Bausinger (BAUSINGER 1989). In the context of cleanliness, Veronika Lajos (LAJOS 2009) already talks about complex asynchrony.

<sup>12</sup> CSABAI – ERDŐS 1994; cf. SHILLING 2003:113–114.

magical thinking, oral tradition and life-routes regulated by consented customs and beliefs — in other words, existence.

This least “civilized”<sup>13</sup> manner of keeping the body clean harks back to the hygiene culture before the Enlightenment. The layer of society using archaic methods has not been touched by the 19th-century breakthroughs in medicine and urban hygiene. The fear of supernatural dangers and diseases was still stronger than the fear of dirt and bacteria.



*Figure 1.* Women healing a sick child with bathing. The bath and the accompanying acts serving ritual-magical purposes. Tótkomlós, Békés County, Southern Hungary, 1962. (Photo by Vilmos Diószegi; Photographic Collection, Museum of Ethnography F161860.)

In archaic peasant culture, the concept of cleanliness only partially implies the absence of pollution in its physical sense. Washing one’s body in this system is a transitional rite which provides protection from death or the symbolic uncleanliness of the menacing afterlife, be it the morning or evening washing, or the first washing of the new-born, or the washing of the dead, or the cathartic rites connected with the birth and death of Jesus around Christmas, new year’s and Easter, or even the healing bath commonly used in case of illness.

I will cite a few examples. I have met peasant men whose parents prayed during their morning cleansing; they even said, *until you wash up, you wear the devil’s face*. We know from Gyula Illyés<sup>14</sup> that when the wash tub was brought into the house in Sárrét, in Fejér county, and when they started hauling the water in, the whole neighborhood knew that they were preparing for an *incantation* or ritual healing bath (JUHÁSZ 2006a:167).

The thorough cleansing performed on weekends – on Saturdays – also had a ritual nature, and was done in order to observe Sunday within the community framework, in

<sup>13</sup> A relational and evaluative label from the viewpoint of the elite.

<sup>14</sup> Gyula Illyés (1902–1983) was a prominent Hungarian writer of peasant origins. He established himself as an influential writer with his first novel, *Puszták népe* [People of the Puszta], in 1936. The book was a sharp, honest sociographic nonfiction masterpiece, a largely autobiographical description of the life of poor peasants working as farmhands on a great agrarian estate.



a sacred space. Thus, in this model, the everyday-holiday boundary coincides with the private-public boundary, as stated by the Swedish author Frykman in relation to Swedish peasants (FRYKMAN 1987:189–197).

The most archaic, almost nomadic shepherds did not wash themselves but smeared their hair with suet and wore a special pair of pants, the so-called oak-britches, which were impregnated with sheep's milk and wood ash.

“They sported long hair kept in several braids, dripping with grease. They soaked their new underwear in ash mixed with sheep’s milk, then polished it with bacon to make it shiny, black, water-resistant and vermin-free. Thus washing them was not necessary – but who would have washed them anyway? Washing and bathing was not their habit, but it was not even necessary. The fatty underwear made their skin shiny. By the way, some twenty times a day did they wade in water while driving their animals, so why should they take a bath too? In those days only the noblemen used to have such luxuries! Or not even them!”<sup>15</sup>



*Figure 2.* The morning wash from the wooden bowl in the kitchen. Szalánta, Baranya county, Southern Transdanubia 1952. (Photo: Mrs. Szoboszlai; Photographic Collection, Museum of Ethnography, Budapest, F 103990.)

From today’s perspective, even the hygienic requirements of villagers were minimal: free from parasites (lice, scabies), no apparent filth on visible body parts. Smells were not given special attention, as all malodors – such as stable, perspiration and any other body odor – were considered facts of life.

Their relationship to their body was characterized by considering it primarily a work equipment. A healthy body was seen as a means of ensuring survival, for which everyone was personally responsible, but this was not dependent on comfort (bed) or hygiene in the modern sense. The mode and frequency of cleansing was determined by the season.

Living conditions and archaic linen clothes – and the difficulties of washing them – did not make regular and thorough cleansing possible or even necessary, and its method and frequency was determined by the change of seasons, too. People who spent most of their winters crowded indoors in smoky, airless houses almost never had a wash. With the arrival of spring, they washed the dirt collected over the previous months from their body in the nearby river on the first warm day.

Wash-basins had no permanent place in the house and their use was quite complicated, so

<sup>15</sup> The ethnographer István Györfy’s description of 19th-century cattle herders in the Nagykunság region of the Great Hungarian Plains (GYÖRFFY 1928:21–23).



Figure 3. Shepherd shaving at camp. Hajdúböszörmény, Hajdú-Bihar County, Southern Great Plain, 1995. (Photo by Tamás Hofer; Photographic Collection, Museum of Ethnography, Budapest F200530.)

for daily cleansing, people just used a small wash-bowl, and for bathing the children, they used the trough. Larger tubs were only fetched for the big cleansing on the weekends. The towel used by the whole family was hung on a nail behind the door.

The bowls used for washing were typically made of wood. One type of such wooden tubs is the so-called *gypsy bowl*,<sup>16</sup> which was carved from a single piece of wood, and it came in several sizes, from small bowls to troughs. The other type includes cylindrical barrels and tubs made of wooden staves bound by metal hoops.

For cleansing, they used home-made soap, and for the few occasions of washing their hair, they used lye made from wood ash, and then greased it to keep away lice.

They did not brush their teeth, but in some places they chewed resin or rubbed them with charcoal, and some - mostly men - gargled with brandy in the morning. Fingernails and toenails, if they didn't break off by themselves, were trimmed with pocket knives, less commonly with scissors. (Collecting and saving one's personal body hair and nails served preventing others using it for harmful magic.) Men shaved once a week – on Saturdays – and groomed their moustache at the same time. They did not use lotions or other toiletries. Chapped skin was smeared with salt-free lard; on the face, they sometimes used milk or butter. For infant care, they used plaster scraped off the wall as dusting powder, loess, flour, or salt-free lard.

Within the archaic peasant cleansing habits, we can find special body techniques as well. Probably the most notable ones are those of washing: washing from a bowl in a way so as to let the water pour down outside the bowl, or using water from the mouth for cleansing oneself.

<sup>16</sup> Carving wooden washtubs, troughs and bowls was a specific expertise of Roma craftsmen in the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. The so-called Beas Gypsy “trough carvers” also sold their products as peddlers in the villages or at the weekly farmers' markets.

“People used to fill their mouths with water, as full as possible, from a jar or a mug. They dripped the water from their mouths into the hollow of their hands, and this was the way they washed their hands, and their face and neck as well. After this, they dried themselves with the bottom of the wide-leg trousers. Women used the bottom of their petticoat for the same purpose.”<sup>17</sup>

Value judgements and boundary-settings based on cleanliness categories are noticeable in this model as well. According to them, neither the too untidy, dirty, nor the too well-groomed body is acceptable. Obligations regarding cleanliness were mostly formulated for women, and taking care of the cleanliness<sup>18</sup> of men, children and elderly family members was clearly the responsibility of the woman (wife, lover, mother).<sup>19</sup>

Paradoxically, often even peasant girls serving as maids in the city upon her return from a few years’ service were considered immoral because of their changed cleansing habits. While the maid charged with the day-to-day tasks of maintaining the cleanliness of her place of service might have been the object of disdain as the “dirty servant” in the “clean” bourgeois family, back in her own community she suffered negative criticism because she washed herself regularly or used a scented soap. Yet it was exactly these city maids returning home who would become the “authentic sources” of civilized cultural patterns for the members of their own generation and their children.<sup>20</sup>

#### *Hygiene of the peasant-bourgeoisie*

(From the early 20<sup>th</sup> century until the 1960s–70s, occasionally even later)

It is characteristic of the peasant-bourgeois layer that oral tradition is increasingly replaced by literacy, the community opens up, decision-making is more and more rational, the economy becomes more market-oriented, and more value is placed on the accumulation of goods.<sup>21</sup> Not only the well-to-do farmers, but also the craftsmen, tradesmen, civil servants and teachers coming from a peasant background could belong to this local middle-class layer of village society that in its lifestyle approximated that

<sup>17</sup> Excerpt from a late 19th-century manuscript by Lajos Gyenizse of Kiskunhalas. Quoted by TÁLASI 1977:250–253.

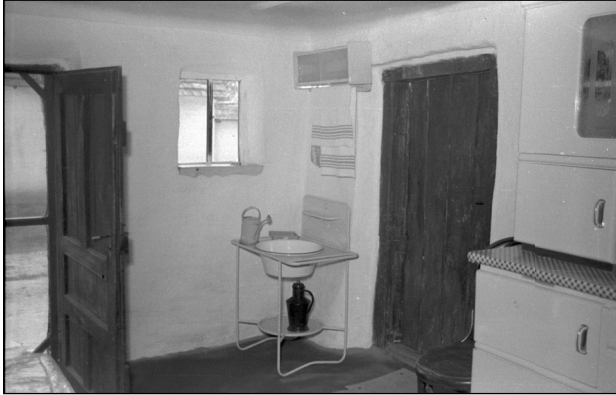
<sup>18</sup> On the other hand, it can be stated, that there was more emphasis on the neatness of the outward appearance, the costume, than that of the body. “Compliance with expected gender roles and propriety, as well as the careful attention of an individual to his or her clothes, was part of the basis for judging a person’s qualities and morality. Peasant communities respected those persons, even coming from poorer families, who spent extra effort to meet the consented community ideal, were creative in textile work and always maintained a neat appearance. Propriety connected with the idea of cleanliness meant that whenever a woman stepped out onto the street from the house she changed her apron to a clean one and fixed the kerchief on her head. (Aprons and head-kerchiefs are particularly important expressions of female propriety.” (FÜLEMILE 2010:174)

<sup>19</sup> This is clearly demonstrated by the selection of almost 100 folksong lyrics about cleanliness, the content of which I analyzed in my study (JUHÁSZ 2012).

<sup>20</sup> As Szilvia Czinger points out with great acumen about the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century situation (CZINGER 2009:102).

<sup>21</sup> László Kósa (KÓSA 1990:46–47) after Péter Hanák (HANÁK 1988:474–508) talks of an “intensive” peasant and after Károly Vörös (VÖRÖS 1980:508–547) of a “peasant experimenting” with modern production techniques.

of the urban bourgeoisie, more precisely the petty bourgeoisie, while at the same time adopting and integrating elements of the bourgeois culture into their own in a special, “peasant” kind of way.



*Figure 4.* Corner with a washstand in the kitchen between the main entrance and the door to the living room. Váncsod, Hajdú-Bihar County, Northeastern Hungary, 1964. (Photo by Balázs Molnár; Photographic Collection, Museum of Ethnography, Budapest, F188942.)

Between the two world wars and up until the mid-1960s, and in many places even into the 1970s, the majority of rural people observed the so-called ‘peasant-bourgeois hygiene customs’.

In the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, all over the country, the typical dwelling of the members of these social groups was a peasant house with two rooms, a kitchen and a pantry (ZENTAI 1997:139). In the kitchen instead of the earlier archaic solutions, industry produced cooking stoves appeared and the kitchen became multifunctional: besides cooking and eating, it also served as a living room, a washing room, and a sleeping room (FÉL – HOFER 1997:350). Here, in the kitchen, was the typical cleansing place, with a wash-stand, basin and an embroidered comb/brush holder.

The well-to-do middle peasant’s peculiar yearning for representation is indicated by the installation of a decorated towel holder with embroidered towels on the kitchen wall (while the family continued to use the home-spun towel hung on a nail), as well as a marbled washing cupboard with a ceramic or porcelain washing kit, decorated towel, store-bought soap, and a big wall mirror they put (but never used) in the street-front “clean room.”

The separation of public/private spheres can be seen in the appearance of a feeling of shame in regard to the body. Contrary to archaic peasant culture, where the sight of a naked body while taking a bath, washing, breastfeeding or relieving oneself was natural (FÉL 1942:116; SZALÁNCZY 1932:23–24), in the middle-class milieu, the carefully covered body was more typical; several “bodily” things, such as periods, the cleansing of private parts, or sexuality were practically taboo. From early adolescence, no one could see members of the other sex scantily dressed; married couples would live their entire lives without ever seeing their spouse naked (and they were proud of it, too).

When science proved the correlation between living conditions, bodily hygiene, nutrition and state of health (= labor capacity), European countries started passing legislation and taking measures to improve public health, thus extending government influence and supervision over the body of the individual from the second part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

The effect of government measures was noticeable on the hygiene habits of the peasant-bourgeoisie, primarily by means of elementary education, universal military service (TURNER 1991:157–159; 164–165), and mass media (press, cinema, radio) (FEATHERSTONE 1991:172–174). The basic rules of healthy living and hygiene, and that bodily cleanliness and health is a moral obligation, have been etched forever into the generation born in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century in the form of poems learned in elementary school (LIPTÁK 1997).

Adaptations of the more urban cleansing patterns were also influenced by the fact that more and more of those who came from the peasantry were *spending time in towns* – as maids, like mentioned before, or to learn trades, or working in the industry for a few years (GYÁNI 2004:437–438; VOIGT 1978:608–615).

A person could be considered clean if there was no discernible dirt on him or her, that is, they bore no visible traces of labor. Daily hygiene consisted of washing the face and hands in the morning, washing hands before meals and after dirty work, and a thorough cleansing in the evening, which included the washing of legs and upper body. People paid more attention to the cleanness of nails, neck and ears, especially in the case of school-age children and marriageable girls. The cleansing of the whole body was possible only on the weekends, on Saturdays or Sundays, as serious preparations were needed – the hauling and heating of water.

Cleaning the teeth was not a daily routine yet: it was done occasionally, and in several families one toothbrush was used by all family members, or they would put salt, baking soda or tooth-powder on their finger and cleaned their teeth in this way.

It was also a common practice to use one towel in a family; moreover, the members of the family bathed in the same water, one after another.

Fragrance was not yet a requirement, but they did make an effort to get rid of unpleasant body odors (JUHÁSZ 2011a:26–27). They still used home-made soap, but young women, especially on festive days even in the villages started to prefer fine scented soaps or facial cream bought from the pharmacist in the interwar period, but make-up was still condemned. (FÜLEMILE – STEFÁNY 1989:68) From the early 1960s store-bought fine soaps were favored on weekdays too (although there were only limited varieties). People washed their hair once in two or three weeks in the summertime until the 1950s, but in the wintertime the frequency decreased to one wash every several months. (Collecting and using rainwater for washing hair and vinegar to make the hair shiny was also a general practice.) From the 1950s–60s, young people used shampoo for their hair. Although rainwater was often preferred still in the 1960s and 1970s for shaving and washing hair.

Men shaved once or twice a week. Besides the old-fashioned straight-edge razors – especially after the war – more modern shaving kits with safety razor blades appeared. Before collectivization, the frugal accumulation-for-saving approach was a hindrance to the luxury needs of the peasant-bourgeoisie in terms of toiletries, too. Instead of scented soaps they used home-made ones, and they frowned upon the “revolution” of the young

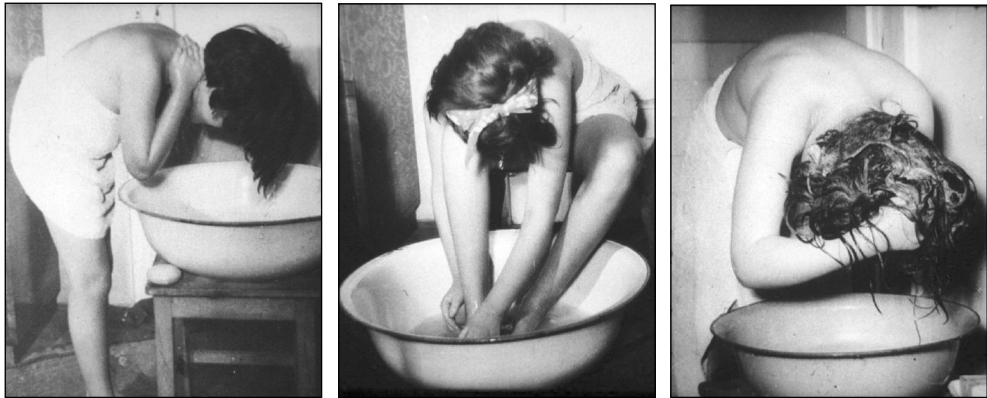


Figure 5. Slides from an instructional slide film for children on how to wash their body parts in an enameled tin basin. (*Egészséges iskolások* [Healthy Schoolkids]. Budapest: Magyar Diafilmgyártó Vállalat, 1954:34–36.)

girls who coveted beauty products and perfumes or wanted a haircut and permanent waves in the urban fashion. As a woman from Aba put it: “*it’s not like we didn’t have the means, but that bloody farm cost money*” (JUHÁSZ 2006a:70).

The subtle social differentiation based on cleanliness categories (not being prevented from stereotypization) and the pitfalls of upward mobility are exemplified in a 1932 description by sociographer Károly Szalánczy of a peasant family who had the wealth but not the lifestyle of the middle class they desired to reach. “One can feel the rigidity of the first generation that rose above its own class. They could not change their hygiene habits, they are completely inexperienced even in the most elementary things. The people of different sex get undressed without any shame in the presence of one another, they do not wash themselves according to middle-class norms, therefore they have a characteristic odor” (SZALÁNCZY 1932:23–24).

The fact that the carefully sophisticated bourgeois cleansing rules cannot be learned in school also plays a role in maintaining social differences. No matter how diligent the student of peasant origin is in school, the curtain of middle-class prudery guards the secret well (PETERDI 2009).

The era between 1945 and 1961 stymied the process of embourgeoisement. Amidst the rapid and mostly disadvantageous changes in legislation, agrarian reforms, expropriations, forced industrialization, exploitation of the rural population, compulsory delivery of goods, anti-peasant political climate, kulak laws, the peasantry did not have chance to consolidate lifestyle. After the 1956 suppressed anti-Soviet uprising the communist collectivization of 1959–1960 was a period of far-reaching social change. Villagers had to work in the cooperatives or became commuter workers in industrial estates. Housing conditions, infrastructure and incomes did not improve considerably; consequently, there was no change in lifestyle. Based on my research, it seems that even though the extensive hygiene propaganda *to improve civilization* was well underway in this period, there was no real breakthrough in rural hygiene habits. For decades, the cleanliness of the body (and partly of the clothes), despite the changed circumstances, still reflected pre-war social differentiation. The midwifery system, which was supposed

to spread hygiene culture, reached considerable results in the field of infant care and the care of grade-school children (JUHÁSZ 2008:109–111; 2009:204–235).

### *Modernizing hygiene*

(mainly 1960s–70s, but this model already appears between the two World Wars)

“From around 1963–64 a more pragmatic, milder form of economic planning was introduced. Light industry started to be developed, socialist consumerism evolved. The urban model became inviting for the youth of the countryside who worked in the urban-industrial centers and felt the divergent cultural expressions increasingly uncomfortable.” It all strengthened their desire to assimilate into the modern socialist urban environment. (FÜLEMILE 2010:176.)

The uncertainty of the definition ‘modernizing hygiene’ shows that this model is one of the “most transitional” ones, which existed from the period between the World Wars until the regime change, on the boundary of the archaic peasant and the consumerist hygiene- and body-culture found at the two ends of the period in question.

It essentially describes the turning point or short period when clothing as well as housing culture lost their rural characteristics (and peasants ceased to be peasants from a sociological point of view), but they are uncertain in their new role: – one can detect a certain dysfunctional rigidity “unsophistication” in their housing culture, lifestyle, manners, or, for example, in their body hygiene linked to new clothing types, their body arrangement or body technique.<sup>22</sup>

Of all dwelling types, three types can be associated with this model: middle-class houses with a bathroom built between the two World Wars, the old tripartite peasant houses that were modernized with the addition of a bathroom, and the square-shaped “cube” houses of the 1960s that were already built with a bathroom.

The bathroom was a dark, narrow space, often unheated; a *secondary* room reflecting various signs of transitionality and the lack of clearly defined functions and customization. Its use remained restricted and occasional for a while, due to the lack of sufficient infrastructure and internal need. The washing machine and the spin dryer, and the dirty clothes that were accumulating in or around them for a week, strengthened its function of cleaning, but they also made it into a work space. It was also common that the room was used as a storage closet, or to hatch chickens.

In this model, the socially accepted body is a version of the peasant-bourgeois cleanliness ideal, which essentially corresponds to that of the middle class: whole-body cleanness, groomed, clean nails, coiffed hair, and discreet scent and makeup are preferable for women. Reaching this desired level was encouraged by the government through the regular monitoring of personal hygiene (nails, neck, ears, lice) in public institutions, by providing comprehensive and effective hygiene education, and by socialist advertising, too (*beauty maintenance starts in the bathroom*).<sup>23</sup>

<sup>22</sup> About the logic of the process of disintegration of traditional peasant dress and the urbanization of clothing of the rural population in the context of the socio-economic changes of the 20<sup>th</sup> century see FÜLEMILE 1991.

<sup>23</sup> *Nők Lapja* [Women’s Magazine] 1961(33):22. About institutions, ways and mediums of the socialist hygiene education see Juhász 224–235.



Figure 6. One of the first socialist era informational deodorant advertisements. (*Nők Lapja* [Women's Magazine], 1963 (27):22).

The question of cleanliness was a common topic of daily conversations in various media. Hygiene and beauty advice was typically addressed exclusively to women. “It is the duty of every woman to be as beautiful as she can be, (...) the skin's beauty and health can only be maintained through proper cleansing” – as we can read in an issue of *Nők Lapja* (Women's Magazine) in 1963.<sup>24</sup>

The modernisation of hygiene habits is mostly noticeable in the frequency of cleansing and in the richness and increasing range of paraphernalia. Sharing towels becomes an outdated habit, but having to fetch water continues to restrict the use of water.

Instead of home-made products, the tendency is to use toiletries moderately. The monthly package of cleansing products – soap, hand wash and hand cream – provided to manual workers from the 1960s was used by the whole family. These regular provisions largely contributed to raising the level of the hygiene practices of the lowest layers of society to a desirable minimum. Even those who did not receive this package used Hungarian mass-produced toiletries for their daily cleansing and body care. For example, almost everybody used the *Wu-2* shampoo for their weekly or bi-weekly hair washing.

The well-to-do acquired the newest products of the Hungarian cosmetics industry – for women, *Camea* face-cream, powder, lipstick, nail polish or hair spray; for men, *Figaro* and *Barbon* shaving accessories. This same layer of society also frequented – on a weekly basis – the local beauty parlors.

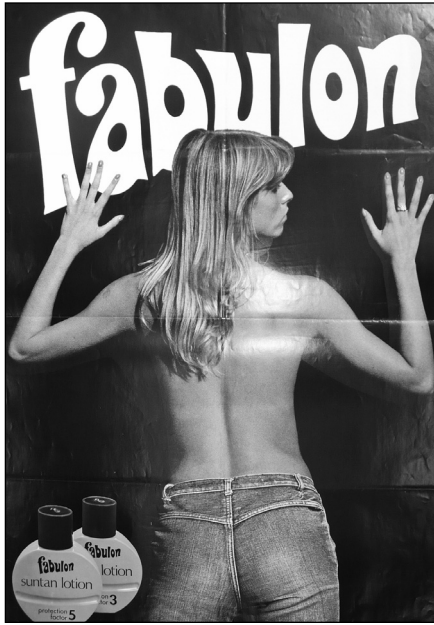
As a result of the strong health propaganda, more and more people (especially children and young adults) brushed their teeth daily, by now everyone with their own toothbrush and the Hungarian toothpaste of the era (*Ovenall*, *Amodent*). Men shaved two or three times a week, electric razors became popular in this period, but among villagers, the straight-edge razors were still in use. The use of deodorants started in the 1960s in towns, while in the countryside it gained popularity only in the mid-1970s (the next period and model).

Representation is still evident in this transitional model: having a bathroom (even if unused and not shown off) could be a status symbol. The new, brand-name beauty products purchased in city stores or acquired through other means served a similar purpose. Brand-name soaps, face creams, body care products were displayed visibly on shelves in living room cupboards as decoration and objects of prestige, and the jars and flacons were kept there even after they were emptied (JUHÁSZ 2006b:12).

<sup>24</sup> *Nők Lapja* [Women's Magazine] 1963(23):21.



*Hygiene in rural areas during “consumer socialism”*  
(From the mid-1970s to the regime change of the 1990s)



*Figure 7.* Suntan lotion advertisement with the unprecedentedly provocative photo of János Fenyő in 1977. The Hungarian *Fabulon* brand established the first real, highly successful market campaign in the country. (Poster in a private collection.)

The “new economic mechanism” introduced in Hungary in 1968 initiated a gradual shift toward a market-oriented economy that was more open to the West; meanwhile, the Kádár administration tried to raise the population’s standard of living even at the cost of state loans. This was the start of the period, more prominent from the mid-1970s, which is referred to as “consumer socialism” (VALUCH 2004. 99).

Besides constructing spectacular buildings for prestige and modernizing housing, certain social groups and individuals attempted to express their status with body care products and modes of “body arrangement.”

From the late 1970s, the infrastructure matched the pace of housing development: in the countryside, there was a boom in the number of houses with piped water. This trend can be traced through the increasingly more beautiful bathrooms of the ‘70s-80s.

To present a more aesthetic image, they covered or decorated the various household equipment, even the toilet, which they kept closed and used rarely anyway. As a result of the concurrent increase in the prestige of hygiene practices in the ‘80s, they paid more attention and more money for the decoration of

this room. By harmonising the patterned tiles, flooring and an ever wider range of colors in sanitary ware, and by placing the automatic washing machine there, the bathroom became more of an actual room. The old stand with the wash-basin found its new place outside the house, and it was used to wash off the signs of outdoor work, making the house an even cleaner place.

A new practice in the use of the bathroom (which was the toilet at the same time) was that family members did not enter when someone else was in there. The increasing need for privacy meant that from the ‘80s they tried to separate the toilet from the bathroom, even if merely with a partition wall.<sup>25</sup>

The “flacon revolution” (the expression was recorded by Kata Jávör during an interview in Zsombó) was an important phase in the great changes of cleansing habits (JÁVÖR 2009:145). An ever wider range of products of the Hungarian cosmetics industry, which was developing rapidly and reached world class levels, was also used by those

<sup>25</sup> The *Ezermester* [Handyman] magazine from 1957 and the *Lakáskultúra* magazine [Housing Culture] from 1964 regularly published practical ideas for modernizing houses.

living in the countryside. Stores offered more products imported from the West and other socialist countries, and shopping tourism was on the rise.

In the 1970s, owning a great quantity of hygiene products was synonymous with and almost a guarantee of cleanliness. People often gave such products as gifts. The choices further diversified in the 1980s along the lines of sex, age group, body parts and quality.

The use of more products brought on the sophistication of hygiene practices and body care, too. The source of new information was unquestionably the advertisements and the public media, as well as articles and programs of the popular literature on this topic. Cleanliness still goes hand in hand with health, but now it is a means of presenting a beautiful, young, fashionable and desirable body with a strong emphasis on personality. All this is a sign of the spread of consumerist culture.

While formerly the frequent cleansing of private parts was not considered important, the daily bath became available for everyone by the 1980s, which made it unnecessary to differentiate the hygiene levels of certain body parts. Due to the lack of sewers in the countryside, it was a common practice for a long time for all family members to use the same bath water: all the children up to age six together, then the husband, and then the wife. By the '80s, the sharing of towels (husband-wife, same sex children) gradually became obsolete. For the young and the middle-aged, cleansing in the evening became an internal need. Elderly women also deemed it important, but it cannot be said of their male peers. They often fell asleep in their clothes while watching TV, and they only took a bath before going to bed if their wife urged them to do so. It is also typical of this male age group – of peasant origins – that they do not cleanse thoroughly. The wife of a man from Szomód, who was from a farming peasant family in Hövej, was complaining about how the hand towel becomes all dirty after his insufficient hand washing (to which he always retorted: “I’m not a gynaecologist!”)

The everyday cleansing of the entire body meant that the holiday-everyday dichotomy of hygiene requisites decreased in importance, although body care and body arrangement before holidays was still not the same as on any other day. Despite stronger rationality and consumer attitudes, the hygiene expectations “are to some extent still characterized by the symbolic meaning that in the village was formerly assigned to cleanliness and order” (JÁVOR 2009:158).

*Bodily hygiene in the free-market period's consumer culture*  
(from the mid-1990s until today)

After the change of political system from 1990, the internal structure of rural society was rearranged, mostly based on private property (not just farmland) and income. Wealth/income dictated housing conditions and lifestyle, and the consumer approach became dominant in the countryside, too.

Today there is no difference between bathrooms in the villages or in the cities. Its symbolic importance lies in the fact that it became a place, or even a sanctuary, for body care bordering on self-indulgence, as well as for the “construction” of the “legitimate body” (BOURDIEU 1978:154). The new trend of a separate laundry room put a definite end to the “workshop” nature of the bathroom. At the same time, the physical separation of the other intimate space, that of the toilet, also took place. The separate toilet has now become an indispensable requisite.

A growing individualism can be seen in the strictly personal use of the towel, soap, shower gel, shampoo, and toothpaste. Well-to-do families had more than one bathroom, sink or toilet in their home. As a result, the individual is even more disconnected), avoiding contact with the guests or other family members through the common use of the bath tub and toilet (KAPITÁNY – KAPITÁNY 2009:38).

By the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the concept of cleanliness, neatness has become extremely complex. A daily shower is common practice, and even washing the hair on a daily basis is not a rare phenomenon. Taking a bath in the tub has become less frequent, more a rite of self-indulgence. Taking several showers a day is also frequent among young people or the older generations who work in the fields or in the garden. Cleansing during the winter shows greater variety. There are those who take a shower daily independently of the season, while some people of the older generations take a bath only two or three times a week in winter. Besides cleansing, the grooming of hair, nails and different body parts with different products, and for women depilation, beauty care and makeup are also daily and regular routines. Hygiene products became means of expressing individuality, “separatedness,” instead of objects that provided a collective sense of “we have them too.” Contrary to earlier norms, which dictated that beauty equals cleanliness, beauty care got a completely new central role.

The consumer approach had, therefore, a fundamental influence on the method of cleansing and body care as a way to preserve the youth, health, fitness and beauty of the whole body through more and more complicated, time-consuming and expensive techniques in rural areas, too (FEATHERSTONE 1997). Everyone chooses according to their means and tastes. The differences are no longer between those from the village or the city, but rather between the wealthy and the poor.

The main vehicle for the body ideal of the consumer culture is the advertisement, which puts the focus on the body as a space of consumption, assigning it a special value. At the same time, the body becomes a means of profit for the consumption-based system, and as an object of prestige, it also becomes a factor of social differentiation.

We can easily observe in the Hungary of the turn of the millennium that with the development of consumer culture, there are several categories of desired body care products and services in terms of the spending power of the general public, ranging from exclusive products available only to the elite, through well-known and advertised products that are available for the middle and upper class as well, to cheap copies that can be purchased in discount shops or at Chinese markets.

Another turning point at the end of the millennium was that while quality meant brand name labels, more recently the fashion of “*naturalness*” in regard to hygiene can be seen among the members of the higher-prestige layer of rural society, and naturally, sooner or later, this will influence the less well-to-do families as well.

### *Final thoughts*

In my essay, I tried to present a comprehensive, if motley, picture of the transformation of the body hygiene culture of the Hungarian village during the 20<sup>th</sup> century in light of ethnographic research. I differentiated customs models based on the periods of transformation and the different practices of social groups, recognizing the layered nature

of hygiene culture in terms of the social history of its structural elements, which can be best described with the concept of “parallel asynchronicity” or even “complex asynchronicity.”

The cleanliness concept objectified in the hygiene habits and rules (and the cleanliness symbolism attached to it) can tell us a lot about the world view and internal relations of the social group in question, and its changes shed light on the transformation that took place in the given society/culture (BAUDRILLARD 1998:129).

In the 20<sup>th</sup> century one of the main questions of transformation of Hungarian rural countryside is the process of *embourgeoisement*. This process started before the Enlightenment with its archaic hygiene habits, and it lasted until the middle-class individualistic-consumer values fully developed, and, similarly to the transformation of society, it went through several transitional phases characterized by the interrelation and dichotomy of traditionalism and modernity. After 1948, the forced proletarianization of the lifestyle, consumption patterns, norms of social interaction and behavior hindered this process. Especially at the beginning of the socialist era, between 1948 and 1956, “dress” (per EICHER 2000, this expression came to mean the whole apparatus of appearance, including the body) was not a means of personal differentiation but the expression of being subordinate to the collective interest. The socialist body culture was formulated by the Soviet model of forced puritan norms (simplicity, cleanliness, healthy look and natural effect) amidst a climate of international isolation and shortage economy.

At the same time, this approach was not far from – in fact, in several ways it was the same as – the norms of the middle class between the two World Wars, so the members of this class – as far as personal hygiene is concerned – could consider this concept their own, and they served as a model for those of working class and peasant origins. This is consistent with the findings of mobility analyses, in that (as stated by Rudolf Andorka), despite the sometimes drastic political interference, mostly in the first decades of socialism, the effects of politics were usually short-term and temporary (ANDORKA 1991). The majority of those who once enjoyed an advantageous social status were successful in passing on their privileged position, despite temporarily losing their status and being stigmatized. They relied mostly on their cultural capital to do so, which included the hygiene culture of the middle class and helped them keep their original (hidden) identity. The members and descendants of families that started from a disadvantageous position found it difficult to break out for the same reasons, except for the cadres who were not sufficiently knowledgeable in the matters of middle-class body care. Thus the social differentiation based on categories of cleanliness continued to work under the surface. The difference between rural and urban lifestyles and the social differentiation based on it was also present – although less and less – until the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Cleanliness in this system is a status requisite. Small elements of it give away the social position of each individual through visual and olfactory channels.

It is an important question how the middle-class cleanliness ideal is passed on to the peasantry. According to the traditional theory, the diffusion follows a top-to-bottom direction, but of course there are other channels of spreading the information.

As demonstrated above, adopting novelties could be the effect of outside influence – the government used various means (from health education through social cultural propaganda to consumer advertisement) – but it could be an internal cultural need, too, which was a consequence of the desire to improve social status; then, as it became an internalized natural desire, it served as a form of identity reinforcement.

We could also observe that the appearance of the internal need (e.g. a bathroom) was not sufficient in itself unless accompanied by external conditions (e.g. lack of piped water).

The core techniques and sophisticated rituals of body care and body arrangement (just like keeping the house tidy) cannot be learned in school, from educational literature or the mass media, only in family surroundings. Thus social groups of lower status pass on their own family patterns for a long time, even if they rise into a higher economic position.

The part of the mobilization process linked to bodily hygiene was strongly gender dependent: in a given family, the hygiene habits were usually formed, “enforced” and taught to the next generation by the mother. The knowledge and techniques of hygiene connected to the new/higher status can only be learned gradually, with a conscious dedication to change, and by collecting information. According to my data, this change takes several generations’ time. That is true even in the world of consumer culture, because bodily hygiene education is no longer part of the school curriculum. In nursery school, the rules of washing the hands and using the toilet are taught to the children thoroughly and in practice, but the techniques of taking a bath, washing the hair and body arrangement are formed according to family patterns. The effect of the subculture or social group most relevant to the individual is a decisive factor in terms of physical appearance.

In pre-modern societies, the ritual of cleansing occurred in a communal setting, and the results were subject to communal norms. During the civilization process, bodily hygiene became more individual, and the choices regarding the results increased. So the individual is free to decide where to belong, and creates his or her appearance according to the demands of the given community and what message the person communicates.

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See biography of the author at the end of the previous article: *Body – Identity – Society. Guest Editor's Remarks on the Thematic Block*, at page 282.)