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The Transformation of Activity Structure and Consumption in the Hungarian Villages after Collectivization[1]

ABSTRACT

After the Communist takeover the lifestyle, patterns of consumption, social relations and norms of behavior became homogenized in a *"negative way"* as a result of the process of proletarianization and downward leveling. From the late sixties, under changing circumstances, in accordance with the norms of a quasi-consumption society, the difference in lifestyle were reproduced at a higher average level. The history of the rural way of life in Hungary after 1944 can be divided into two periods. The first lasted until the second half of the 1960s and was dominated by the survival of traditions, modernization at a moderate pace, and a decisive degree of self-sufficiency. The second, which began towards the end of the 1960s, was marked by departure from traditions, a declining role for self-sufficiency, and an increasing orientation towards consumption. This study looks at the historical features of the first period of change, primarily in the household and activity structures, through an examination of housing, furnishings, dress and nutrition.

KEYWORDS

rural way of life, consumption, peasant households after collectivization, Hungarian social history

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I. INTRODUCTION

The history of the rural way of life in Hungary after 1944 can be divided into two periods. The first lasted until the second half of the 1960s and was dominated by the survival of traditions, modernization at a moderate pace, and a decisive degree of self-sufficiency. The second, which began towards the end of the 1960s, was marked by departure from traditions, a declining role for self-sufficiency, and an increasing orientation towards consumption. This study looks at the historical features of the first period of change, primarily in the household and activity structures, through an examination of housing, furnishings, dress and nutrition. The characteristics of the traditional peasant way of life were already changing before collectivization, but the completion of the collectivization process accelerated the pace of change.

II. CHANGES IN THE RURAL WAY OF LIFE AND ACTIVITY STRUCTURE

The structure of everyday activities in the villages changed cyclically for most people living in the villages, especially those employed in agriculture. During periods of less importance for agricultural production, family members who were not members of the agricultural cooperative spent a daily average of 2.8 hours on paid activity in the first half of the 1960s. With the housewives of agricultural-cooperative families, it was two hours. This relative freedom practically ceased in the spring and summer work rushes. Average daily working hours for cooperative members was more than eight hours–ten hours of communally executed work for men and five hours for women. The same increase in the work burden was observed among non-earning family members, who spent an average of three–four hours a day on agricultural work. (An average of three hours of this was taken with tasks associated with the family's private *'household plot'*.) Villagers working outside agriculture supplemented an average of 8.6 hours paid activity with 0.8 hours spent working on the family plot, irrespective of whether they were commuters or locally employed.

'Of course, the character of work and the conditions under which it is performed (e.g. the direct role of production and influences of the weather) differ in agriculture from those in other fields, and the consequences of this are reflected relatively less in the daily use of time. This daily employment of time is expressed mainly in three aspects of agricultural work. One is that the family work organization has remained, although it may have lessened in extent, so that there is not so sharp a division between earners and non-earners among the agricultural population as there is in non-agricultural sectors. The second factor fundamental to the daily use of time is the cyclical nature of agricultural production, producing an alternation of strenuous and less strenuous work rates and life rhythms. The third and final factor of importance is that although the agricultural and the rural population do not quite coincide, it remains true that most of the agricultural population lives under rural conditions – place of residence still decides way of life in many respects. (Of the earning cooperative members questioned, 90 per cent live in villages.)'[2]

As the number of villagers not engaged in agriculture increased, the cyclical nature of the daily activity structure eased. Most employees worked fixed hours, and their lives became adjusted to these, not to the round of agricultural tasks.

For the agricultural population, the hour or hour-and-a-half of *'spare time'* that usually remained after the daily work of 10–12 hours was not usually spent on entertainment or recreation in the strict sense, but passed in sitting about and talking, or perhaps listening to the radio. The working day obviously began earlier in the agricultural season, usually at four or five in the morning. Despite the cyclical organization of work, it can be seen that the time spent on production work by men engaged in agriculture in the first half of the 1960s exceeded that of both manual workers and white-collar employees not employed in agriculture. The spread of female employment in the villages was somewhat slower than in the towns, the average time spent by women on earning activity in the 1960s was somewhat less than that spent by urban female workers or white-collar employees.

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[2] *A nap 24 órája. 12000 ember napi időbeosztása.* (1965)

Adjusting to the new system of work on agricultural cooperatives meant that the daily employment of time by members also changed. The paid activity had a quite different significance for female cooperative members than for male members. Almost 70 per cent of the latter also worked collectively in the winter, while only half the women worked for the cooperative even in the summer. Behind this lay the fact that the vast majority of those filling the jobs offering continuous paid work all the year round (such as stockbreeding) and those in supervisory and managerial positions were men.

Use of time among those employed in agriculture varied with the weather and the cycle of agricultural work. In winter, earning cooperative members spent an average of 5.9 hours a day on the collective farm and another 1.5 hours on their household plot, so that the total time spent on production was an hour less than the average for urban workers. The time freed was usually spent on housework, while some would be added to the time spent on sleeping and relaxing. During this period of less agricultural importance, family members would also undertake substantially less productive work and associated responsibilities – an average of two hours a day. The time freed would be spent on tasks in and around the home.

The data from the various surveys show that 40 per cent of the time spent on agricultural production activity in the years after collectivization went on private work on the household plot. Here village women played a very significant part, due to the traditional family and social division of labour, irrespective of whether they were cooperative members or not, which also meant that no sharp dividing line could be drawn in the first half of the 1970s between earning and non-earning rural women. For those cultivating the family plot were also helping to generate and increase family income, although they were registered statistically as housewives or dependents.

'There were no working hours or performance requirements written down in the agricultural cooperative (and naturally, still less for those working independently). The amount of work contributed to the collective and the family farm depended primarily on how much each person was willing or able to do. In the agricultural cooperatives, the performance of women especially was influenced not only by personal inclinations, but by whether there was work to be done. Due to the characteristics of agricultural work and the absence of auxiliary production, work could not be ensured continually for everyone. This relative freedom (voluntary or involuntary) meant that female cooperative members to some extent subordinated their collective work to their household commitments, spending much more time on housework than women in manual or white-collar employment. (This was due partly to the absence of servicing and childcare institutions.) In winter, they hardly worked for the collective at all, and even in summer, they spent less time working for the collective than their counterparts in employment did.'[4]

The structure of daily activity, especially the use of time by women, was strongly influenced by the fact that the level of service provision for households in the early 1960s was much lower in the villages than in the towns (mains water, gas, accessibility of service companies etc.) So the time spent on activities round the home was greater. Throughout the 1960s, Sunday was still only the single day of rest in most cases.

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[3] Ibid. 11.

III. FAMILY, HOUSEHOLD AND CONSUMPTION

Big differences between country and town families and among social groups remained in the post-war decades in terms of household structure and the organization of family activities. The size and structure of families and households also changed significantly.[3] In both towns and villages, there was a fall in the number of households in which two or more family nuclei cohabited. The model of a multi-generation, permanently cohabiting family gave way in the villages to one of that of the nuclear family whose members started a career of their own. It gradually became common and accepted for the young couple to start life independently of the parents, in their own house. There was also an increasing tendency in Hungarian villages in the 1950s and 1960s towards heterogamy, with couples marrying despite strongly different social situations, so that the proportion of socially mixed families and households increased. In the mid-1970s, such socially mixed households accounted for almost half of those containing more than one earner.

The high proportion of time spent earning income showed a clear change in family strategies. By the mid-1960s, most families were engaged in side-activities earning them extra income. The other impetus behind household plots and auxiliary farming came from shortage. The country's commercial network remained undeveloped in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s and the low standard of service left people in villages reliant on their household plots for much of their daily food requirement. The extra income earned from the small surpluses produced played an important role in securing people's livelihoods and ensuring that the family prospered. Such earnings were usually translated into extra individual consumption.

An important difference between villages and towns could be seen in the transformation of the standards and norms for running a household. For the two-earner model became general somewhat faster and earlier in urban families than in rural ones. Income relations in the first half of the 1960s were uncertain, but they gradually stabilized in the second half of the decade. Income other than wages assumed increasing importance in the incomes of rural families, especially in the form of pension rights held by cooperative members. About half the family income increment in the second half of the 1970s came from rising wages, a third from the family gaining more than one earner, and a fifth from increases in social benefits and similar income other than wages.

Of course, the expenditure as well as the earnings in both groups increased, in a like proportion. The extra income of urban and rural households in 1965 went on different things. Worker and employee families spent almost half the extra on food, a third on manufactures and clothing, and a quarter on services. Hardly a third of the extra income of peasant and double-income families in villages went on food, almost half on manufactures (including building materials), and less than a fifth on services.[5]

Significant territorial differences in spending structure are also apparent. Villagers in the 1950s and 1960s spent much less on services and public transport than urban households did, while expenditure on private transport was greater.[6] A rural place of residence generally meant a lower level of equipment than an urban one. One factor behind this was the attention that rural households paid to obtaining the implements needed for their smallholding, rather than to domestic appliances. Only slowly and to a small extent did rural families in the 1960s and

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[4] TOMKA 2000.

[5] *Háztartásstatisztika* 1967.

[6] VÁGI 1993.

1970s reduce their consumption of home-produced food and to the same degree increase their purchases of food and consumption of foods outside the home.

The consumption and stocks held of various goods show a strong correlation with occupation and changes in occupation. In the period of private farming, the decisive majority of rural families constituted a production unit, so that their consumption preferences differed from those of cooperative members who had become wage-earners, officials, clerical employees or urban workers. In the operation of a family farm, *'stocks and reserves for personal and operational needs played a very big role in consumption... The central question in the economy of peasant households was to ensure adequate stocks until the next harvest.'*[7]

The income level of peasant society was generally lower than the average for other social strata. Within that, there were strong differences between the various groups, of course. This was reflected in consumption, for *'peasant families in the lowest income group cover a higher proportion of their consumption from their own production'*[8] than those in higher income groups. The proportion of income in kind from the agricultural cooperatives was generally highest in households where total per capita income was lowest. However, the families selling the most from their production were the once whose per capita income was highest and where the proportion of total income represented by produce in kind was lowest.

Self-sufficiency was at once a tradition and a necessity. The norms of earlier periods were still strongly present in peasant thinking and organization of life – the pantry should be full when the New Year begins – but this was reinforced by the backwardness of rural trade provision and the consequent need to be self-sufficient. *'Supplies of several basic foodstuffs to the villages was relegated into the background for a long period, up to the mid-1950s.'*[9]

Understandably, the proportion of self-produced goods in the consumption of peasant households at the end of the 1950s and beginning of the 1960s was still very high. This was the source of three-quarters of the peasantry's food consumption and half of its total consumption. The latter proportion in Hungarian society as a whole was 30 per cent. This obviously tied in with the uneven temporal distribution of peasant incomes. Most of the earnings came in the harvest period, which meant it was concentrated over a period of two or three months in the year, furthermore in a similar period to the one when production-related outlays were greatest. Not for a long time after the completion of collectivization did the period of regular monthly money payments arrive.

The changes in the consumption structure were strongly influenced also by the various socio-political changes. After the completion of collectivization, the proportion of farming-related acquisitions within the peasantry's demand for manufactures understandably decreased significantly, while after an interval, the consumption of goods related to personal needs began to climb quite fast. The priorities had clearly changed by the second half of the 1960s. Earlier, articles serving to further production had relegated those for personal consumption, but after collectivization, the latter became dominant. It seemed after the transformation that most peasant families had lost much of their farming role, tasks and character. Only later did it become apparent that this very complex transformation, which now seems to have demanded unnecessary sacrificese, had altered the system of farming by rural families and changed their agricultural role and tasks, but it had not caused that role to cease. Land ownership gave way to intensive utilization of labour. Under conditions of restrictions on property acquisition, income was understandably diverted to consumption and improving living conditions. The stock of consumer durables increased, as did spending on housebuilding and housing modernization, all of which confirm this shift. There remained strong rural-urban differences in household structures and household activities in the decades after the Second World War, and differences between social groups. One common characteristic that remained was the approach to the roles and tasks of women. Irrespective of social position or settlement type, running the household remained a basically female activity.

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[7] MOLNÁR 1962.

[8] Ibid. 9.

[9] Ibid. 11.

IV. Clothing and dress[10]

The first decade of the Kádár period brought radical changes in the dress habits of people living in villages, especially in the period after collectivization was completed, when people began to forsake traditional dress on a mass scale. Dress was the area in which the changes in lifestyle and living habits were most conspicuous. According to a domestic-trade survey of rural dress habits compiled in 1962, *'Significant ground has been gained in the last few years by urban dress. Ready-made clothing, knitwear and garments of synthetic materials have increased their share of the turnover. Thereby, fashion as a force shaping demand has steadily spread to the rural population as well.'* It was also established that *'the clothing supply to the peasantry... is some 20–25 per cent lower than that of wage and salary-earners. The level of supply of bed linen is conspicuously low (150 sheets, 210 pillowcases, 150 quilt and eiderdown covers per 100 inhabitants, i.e. below the level required for a simple change of linen. The situation proved to be even worse in Szabolcs County.) The supply of outer garments is better, but not yet satisfactory. For every 100 men in all the families, there are on average 160 overcoats, 220 outer garments and 320 pairs of shoes (ankle boots, long boots). For women, the indices per 100 women were 180 overcoats, 660 dresses and 350 pairs of shoes. Families in Győr County are some 10–15 per cent better supplied than those in Szabolcs County.'*[11] The wardrobe changed more slowly than with worker families and especially compared with those in clerical or professional occupations – the peasantry were renewing their clothes only once in five to seven years.

One factor behind the acceleration in the shedding[12] of traditional costume was probably the anti-peasant policy pursued in the early 1950s. One defence by the peasantry was to try to change rapidly the outward appearance of peasant life. At the same time, the materials used for making traditional costume disappeared from the shops and domestic production of fabrics fell back. A further wave of shedding developed in the late 1950s and speeded up in the years after the completion of collectivization. Almost without exception, people under the age of 25 dressed in ready-made clothes and the girls had their hair done in ways that broke with custom. The example of the younger ones was soon followed by most of the middle-aged and some of the elderly. The traditional costume was retain fully or partly only by the elderly who had been born before the First World War. At the turn of the 1960s and 1970s, it became acceptable in villages for women to wear trousers, and the number still wearing a kerchief declined.

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[10] The question is explored in more detail in Valuch 2002.

[11] Molnár 1962.

[12] *'Shedding'* is a widely used term in this context, although some recent works on society and ethnography prefer to call it *'changing dress'*. Márta Flórián, for instance, argues expressly for this. Essentially, this period marks the stage in the continual change in clothing in response to fashion at which villagers forsake the clothing, garments and dress habits that reflect a specific community or social group and follow urban dress patterns instead. Most ethnographers see the process itself, the transformation of dress habits and modernization of the wardrobe, as an inevitable consequence of the economic and social changes of the 20th century. For detail, see Flórián 2001. 11–15., 14–19.

The fashions in urban wear were followed after an interval in the dress of village women as well. *'The tendency was clearly, from the end of the 1950s, for the dress of the village population to integrate continually and by degrees with that of the urban population. During the first half of the process, there was integration among villages, as the inhabitants of* »costume« *villages shed. Then in the second stage, the people of the villages began to integrate into society as a whole.'*[13] Various phases can also be discerned in this process of adjustment and standardization, influenced by the succeeding fashions. There were significant differences in the abandonment of costume according to districts, sexes and age groups as well. The process of abandonment and changing of garments seen as peasant like by the outside world and the implantation of urban patterns would be protracted or differently initiated. The first thing to lose its validity was the subtle system of symbols conveyed by clothes, suggesting allegiance to age group, sex, social group and religious denomination. Perhaps it is not an exaggeration to add that the relatively rapid spread of town clothes and forms of dress was an outward manifestation of social mobility (or a semblance of it). Many people may have felt that if they dressed like townsfolk, any disadvantages attaching to a peasant background would ease, or if a poor peasant dressed his child as his old landlord did, the social difference between them would be reduced.

Everyday use of traditional folk costume had practically ceased by the final third of the 20th century, and ready-made clothing took over from home-made. Among the reasons were the changes in living and working conditions and the ambivalent policy towards the peasantry in that period. By the late 1960s and early 1970s, folk costume was almost wholly abandoned, above all because women were going out to work in large numbers. *'By that time, the disintegration of peasant culture could not be halted. It did not simply become desirable in the 1960s for the rural population to abandon the trappings of their peasant status. Masses of them deserted the peasantry altogether, accepting all the consequences of mobilization.'*[14] Forcible collectivization and forced industrialization made it impossible for the middle stratum of the peasantry, with its respect for tradition, to persist, and the traditional village community broke up, having lost its controlling function. It became incapable of assessing the innovations that were pouring down upon it and accepting or rejecting them accordingly.[15] The *'shedding'* was accelerated by the mass exodus from the villages, but for those who remained, the earlier isolation ceased, for the conclusion people increasingly drew from the failure of their bitter attempts at a new beginning in the 1950s was that they should not let their children become peasants. The obvious way to avoid this was education. Teenagers travelling in to urban secondary schools in the 1960s introduced new norms of behaviour and dress into the villages in many respects.

Typical items of female clothing in the villages after the *'shedding'* included tracksuit bottoms, a knitted blouse, a sleeveless housecoat and comfortable footwear. In many places, women retained the habit of covering their heads, regardless of the weather or of whether they had a traditional hairstyle or a modern cut by a hairdresser. One article retained was an apron. New, on the other hand, wear stockings, initially of cotton, which began to be replaced in the latter half of the 1960s by stockings made of a light synthetic material. Shoes only began to oust boots in the early 1950s. At the end of the 1960s, gymshoes (known as dorcó) became very popular everyday wear at home.

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[13] SZUHAY 1996. 714.

[14] FÜLEMILE 1991.

[15] STEFANY 1986.

After traditional costume had been shed, elderly women continued to wear dark colours. New customs adopted included the use of make-up and lipstick, having one's hair done and going to a beautician for urban beauty treatment.[16]

With men, the new weekday apparel for home came to be worn blue overalls, no longer worn to work, with a cheap, soft shirt underneath, and among older men, often an apron as well. It became general to wear a suit on feast days, usually ready-made. Lighter or patterned materials were fashionable for younger men and plain colours for older ones. As an outer garment, they might wear a coat lined with foam or more rarely a leather or imitation leather overcoat. Shoes with pointed toes and a slight heel became fashionable. Typical wear for the younger generation consisted of flared trousers, a patterned shirt, and a coloured pullover in synthetic fibres. One garment popular for a long time was the shirt-pullover in synthetic fibres, usually for Sundary or festive wear, with a high polo neck instead of a shirt collar. Among the determining garments in different periods were leather coats, waterproof coats, clothes made of synthetic fibres, sleeveless women's dresses, usually of synthetic materials, housecoats and training suits.

Following the urban pattern became the predominant course, but not the exclusive one. Most people living in Hungarian villages dressed in the new style, but at that time, they still sought to adjust it to local norms and customs.

V. DIET AND EATING HABITS

The differences in income relations were more or less maintained in differences of eating habits. Those with lower incomes obviously spent less on food, and cheaper, high-calorie foods obtainable in large quantities were dominant in their diet. Higher-income households showed a greater propensity for innovation. However, almost irrespective of social status, the weekday diet in the 1940s and 1950s, and a decade or two later, typically consisted of Hungarian dishes that could be considered traditional. Rationality rather than variety prevailed, with the consistency and timing of daily and weekly meals strongly adjusted to the time of work done by the head of the family and to the seasons. This could be discerned most clearly in peasant families. The changes in lifestyle and eating habits were accelerated by the social changes and the way women were increasingly taking jobs. That reduced the time they could spend on housework, so that laborious and time-consuming household activities tended to be relegated. According to an analysis in the 1960s, *'the families still baking their own bread were almost exclusively those that received allowances of flour or grain in kind.'*[17] The cooking and eating habits of village families were still strongly marked by adherence to tradition. Regular cooking of a midday meal was most prevalent among them and the proportion of those preparing hot dishes at both main meals was high compared with urban households.[18]

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[16] The spread and acceptance of new customs were described in a 1962 report in the women's weekly *Nők Lapja*: *'She has on clothes in the new fashion, a buffon hairstyle and shoes with stiletto heels. She stops in the gateway for a moment, putting her head out nervously and then pulling it rapidly back in. She takes a handkerchief from her handbag and wipes the lipstick off the mouth, for there is an acquaintance coming down the other side of the street. All this happens in the large village of Kistelek, with over 10,000 inhabitants, before the house of the beautician Eszter Kiss. It is Friday, the weekly market day, when there are many acquaintances about and they tell you off for using cosmetics. Yet plenty of people come here, there's a row of bicycles in the courtyard'* (no. 8. 1962. 9–).

[17] MAKAY 1962.

[18] For more detail, see MAKAY: op. cit.

It was still common at the turn of the 1950s and 1960s for one dish to be eaten at each meal, but in ample quantities. A sizeable increase in the number of dishes prepared and consumed ensued at the end of the 1960s. As active religious observance declined and life became secularized, the dietary rules of various denominations lost importance, for instance the rules for fast days, although the erosion was slower in village peasant families than in the towns. Social and geographical differences in food consumption lessened, so that eating habits among urban and rural households became the same in many respects. One major change in the villages was the disappearance of the pre-war eating-habit distinctions between social strata. However, generation differences remained, with older people sticking to their traditional diet. The food served at family celebrations (largely irrespective of social situation) retained particular importance. Celebratory meals reflected the difference from other days, while among those with the lowest incomes, they generally served a prestige function. There were substantial changes in the menu at various festive occasions, especially weddings. Dishes previously reserved for weekends or celebrations began to appear in the weekday diet and appreciation of flavours came to the fore. The midday meal lost some of its importance as the main meal of the day, giving way to some extent to supper, when freshly cooked or previously prepared dishes would be served. The eating habits of village households were also changed gradually by the appearance of public kitchens, especially in larger communities.

VI. HOUSING CONDITIONS AND USAGE OF LIVING SPACE

Most of the rural housing stock, unlike the urban, was privately owned and remained so in the 1950s and 1960s. In 1949, 80 per cent of the country's dwellings were owner-occupied. The proportion increased to 82.2 per cent in 1960 and 87.7 per cent in 1970. The remaining fifth or sixth of the housing stock consisted of tenancies, co-tenancies or *'service'* dwellings (tied housing).

Year	1 room	2 rooms	3 or moore rooms	All
1949	73.1	24.2	2.7	100.0
1960	63.6	33.5	2.9	100.0
1970	44.5	47.4	8.1	100.0

TABLE 1 *Dwelling-size structure in villages, 1949–70, %* (Source: OROS 1994. 67.)

Table 1 shows clearly a strong increase in the number of rooms in village housing over the 1950s and 1960s. This was achieved partly by altering and extending existing dwellings, and partly because most new dwellings were built with two or more rooms. In terms of dwelling size, the change was faster in the villages than in the towns, despite the fact that the state housing programme in the period concentrated in the latter, where construction of large housing estates began in the 1970s.

The architectural appearance of most settlements also change considerably over the period. Village housing construction up to the mid-1960s followed the traditions developed in earlier decades and centuries. Village houses generally had an oblong plan and were set at right-angles to the street. They divided into three parts: room, kitchen and second room or store. Changes in the first half of the century meant that a kitchen with an open chimney was no longer characteristic after the Second World War. Houses were designed and built so that further rooms, stores or farm buildings could be added. Districts had their own building characteristics, although the internal structure in Hungarian villages was practically the same everywhere. Traditional building methods became rarer in the second half of the 20th century and the materials used changed fundamentally. Walls of pounded clay or adobe blocks gave way to brick and rye or reed-thatched roofs to tiles. Up to the completion of collectivization, villages became dominated by rows of houses of different forms and in different styles. Then came a steadily increasing uniformity.

In 1961, the year collectivization was completed, 37,454 village dwellings were built. This number went steadily down to 24,461 in 1965. Then in the second half of the 1960s, it began to climb again slowly, so that by 1972, it had exceeded the 1961 level, with 38,263 new dwellings being built in the villages. More than nine-tenths of the new housing was built for owner-occupation.

However, the level of facilities in village houses changed relatively slowly in this period. In 1960, 3.1 per cent of rural dwellings had running water, 2.4 per cent a water closet, and 6 per cent a bathroom or shower. By 1970, 8.8 per cent of dwellings had running water, 5.5 per cent a water closet, and every tenth dwelling a public or local sewage-disposal system, while the proportion of dwellings with a bathroom had risen to 14 per cent.

The appearance of the village altered significantly in the 1960s. The earlier differences of landscape and architecture had been practically eliminated by the efforts to obtain architectural uniformity. Guided by the fashion for square houses with pavilion roofs (hipped equally on all four sides), people added a room beside the street end of the house and erected a pavilion roof over both. The other characteristic solution was to demolish the old house and replace it with a new, square house built with modern materials, using a standard design. Initially, these were built without farm buildings attached, but as the household plot and small-scale agricultural production became more important again, stores, barns and sheds for equipment and livestock would be added at the back. That steadily turned the square shape into an L. In the 1970s, the square houses were often built with the main rooms at a height of 10–12 steps and a sunken semi-basement below, where other rooms could be placed, for instance a pantry, workshop and kitchen. Very often there were lower (summer) and upper (winter) kitchens, in line with earlier patterns. These houses would have a floor area amounting to 150–170 square metres, of which 75–90 square metres would be the two or three rooms on the main residential floor. During the 1970s, multi-level building methods developed, bringing Alpine roofs and two-storey houses to Hungarian villages. (There were scarcely any examples of two-storey dwelling houses in Hungarian villages before the Second World War.)

While the outward appearance and ground plan of village houses were altering, the furniture, equipment and interior design were changing radically as well. Development of new customs often took a long time. *'The bathroom was often an untouched spectacle (for instance, because it could not be heated in winter). Next to the kitchen recess being built is the new dining area, but life goes on in the old kitchen or perhaps on the veranda. That is where they take guests or the children do their studying, or the sewing machine for the young outworker women is placed. The articles placed in the house would often be used for something other than their intended purpose, or be sold because of prestige consumption. So the new row of cupboards and the new living-room suite stand untouched.'*[19]

The kitchen equipment and furniture in today's sense became general in village households in the decades after the Second World War. While there was no separate bathroom, ablutions also went on in the kitchen, and this also affected the way it was equipped. Up to the turn of the 1950s and 1960s, the most important item in the home of a well-to-do peasant was a set of furniture consisting of two cupboards, two night tables, a dressing table with mirror, two beds, chairs and a table, usually made by hand, arranged symmetrically or centrally. If the arrangement was symmetrical, the beds would be along the far walls, with the cupboards at the end of them and the table and chairs in the middle. In a central arrangement, the beds were placed side by side in the middle of the room, with the table and chairs at the end and the cupboards along the walls. At the beginning of the period, there was a third arrangement commonly found, known as the corner interior. This meant that the table and a corner bench were placed in the corner opposite the street side, opposite the fireplace or stove. Behind this was the cupboard, while the beds were lined along the opposite wall.

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[19] Ibid. 335.

The change in housing usage was encouraged by efforts at modernization and by the fact that multi-generation households were becoming less frequent.

VII. INSTEAD OF A SUMMARY

After the Communist takeover the lifestyle, patterns of consumption, social relations and norms of behavior became homogenized in a *“negative way”* as a result of the process of proletarianization and downward leveling (to use the expression of András Kovács). From the late sixties, under changing circumstances, in accordance with the norms of a quasi consumption society, the difference in lifestyle were reproduced at a higher average level.

The question becomes unavoidable: how do the lifestyle and culture of the village and urban societies compare? Were they becoming more similar? Undoubtedly, as one result of the changes in social structure, tendencies to uniformity become observable yet, even at the end of the twentieth century, we cannot deny that differences remain. The tendency to innovation is greater in the city; one feature of village life remains the tendency to follow the example and to cling to its own traditions. *“In the life of the two types of settlements we observe innumerable similarities and a time lag. Because of its ecology, village lifestyle – deriving from its structure – i.e. the house, the plot of land, the courtyard and the garden – and because of close oversight by the community, continues to be different in more ways than it is similar to the city. It follows that village culture has not ceased to exist.”*[20]

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