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ANTAL LOVAS KISS

The impacts of
the European Union
accession to the situation
and the economic, social
structure of several
settlements of the Region
of Bihar

2011

Antal Lovas Kiss

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TO THE SITUATION AND THE ECONOMIC, SOCIAL STRUCTURE
OF SEVERAL SETTLEMENTS OF THE REGION OF BIHAR



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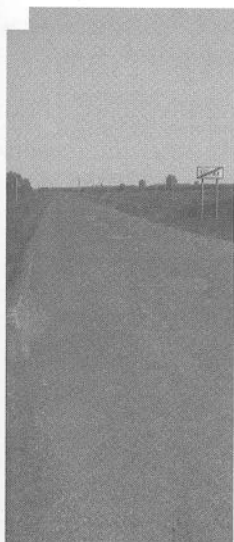
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Introduction

THE LIVES OF LOCAL COMMUNITIES changed significantly after the political changes of 1989 and also after the joining of the European Union.¹ The essays of the book are based on long-term fieldwork carried out in the region, and focus on the changing economic practices and attitudes of some settlements. By documenting and analyzing these economic practices and attitudes the book wishes to define the reasons for transformation characteristic of the region. One of the essays also focuses on the regional position and the question of being situated next to the country border.

The area of research is situated in the *Berettyó-Körös region*, including most of the *Bihar-Plain* and the northern part of *Kis-Sárrét*. From the south, the northern part of Békés county, from the east, the Romanian-Hungarian border and from the west the river Berettyó enclose the area. The region is situated in the Hungarian part of the former Bihar comitat, close to the southern borders of Hajdú-Bihar and also the country border. The essays of the book focus on the transmigration processes and economic features of six settlements: Bedő, Biharkeresztes, Körösszakál, Komádi, Újiráz

¹ The research was carried out with the support of the following programs: OTKA PD 73403 and K78207, TÁMOP 4.2.1./B-09/1/KONV-2010-0007.

and Csökmő. They also reflect on other settlements in the region (Berekböszörmény, Körösszegapáti, Magyarhomorog, Kóróssziget, and Vekerd). (Map 1.)

We carried out longitudinal research in the settlements. In Újiráz a census was held in 2003 and 2010, during which each household was surveyed. At other settlements (excluding Komádi) a 5% stratified sampling method was used to choose our interviewees. We applied the same structured and semi-structured interviews at each of the settlements. In case of Biharkeresztes and Bedő questions about living near the country border and also about new settlers were included. Thanks to the intensive fieldwork carried out after the political changes of 1989 and after the joining of the EU most of my data comes from empiria. At the same time I have tried to balance the amount of quantitative and qualitative data.

In some terms the researched area is unique. Its peripheral situation creates certain specific distresses. But the area is also typical of Hungary, for all the disadvantages arising from the transformation processes of the economy and society characterizing the last two decades can be observed here. Outward migration, aging villages, and increasing unemployment rate—all are typical in Hungary.

The essays do not follow a chronological order. In my approach the regional network of relationships, the transformation processes of the economy and their effects on the structure of the local society are put into focus.

In this term the situation created by the Trianon decision was and still is absolutely determining. The joining of the European Union has also brought significant changes that are reflected on in the essays.

The mobility described in the first essay could not have evolved without both Hungary and Romania joining the European Union. The process of opening up of borders brought new tendencies, the end of which cannot be seen yet. It is obvious, though, that these tendencies will bring considerable changes in the economic and social features of the society. The analysis of the phenomenon is especially important because the trans-national space evolving around the traffic route of the Ártánd checkpoint largely alter the situation and status of the region, and changes Central European notions of citizenship and border as well.

The second essay focuses on one of the most important factors of the political changes of 1989, on the agricultural privatization. In my understanding the privatization of lands is of outstanding importance. The local specificities, results and also mistakes



Map 1. Settlements involved in the survey

1. Bedő, 2. Biharkeresztes, 3. Berekböszörmény, 4. Körösszegapáti, 5. Körösszakál, 6. Magyarhomorog,
7. Komádi, 8. Újiráz, 9. Csökmő, 10. Kóróssziget, 11. Vekerd, 12. Ártánd, 13. Bors [Borş],
14. Nagyvárad [Oradea], 15. Berettyóújfalu, 16. Szeghalom, 17. Debrecen, 18. Püspökladány

of privatization have had long-term effects on the value of the land, on ownership and also on local farming structures.

By describing the transformation processes of a single settlement the third essay shows the difficulties and specificities brought about by the changes in ownership. It also gives a detailed description of local conflicts arising after the changes of 1989.

Collective farming was very important under the socialism in Hungary. There is no doubt that these collective farms were forced into existence. From the '70s though, their

local and economic situation gradually changed. Farms did not shut down because of market reasons but because of legal circumstances. Nowadays we can see that the end of collective farms had several serious consequences. The fourth essay describes two alternatives of newly formed agricultural associations. In spite of the currently existing economic trend of individualization they both tried to establish a new form of cooperative farming.

The transforming economy affected all segments of society. It opened up new perspectives also in terms of the division of labor within the family. The fifth essay focuses on the new gender roles and especially on women roles within the newly formed family entrepreneurships.

The last essay gives a summary of the conflicts between the traditional economic strategies of local society and the new expectations evolving after 1989 and after the joining of the European Union. In my essay I emphasize that although farming is carried out in rural areas the entrepreneurships do not integrate into the local community.

Data on which the essays draw were gathered through ethnographic and anthropological fieldwork. My aim was to describe and analyze the unique perspectives and not to carry out representative research. The research on unique, individualistic perspectives creates an opportunity to draw attention to attitudes and motivations characteristic of the post-1989 strategies of the local society.





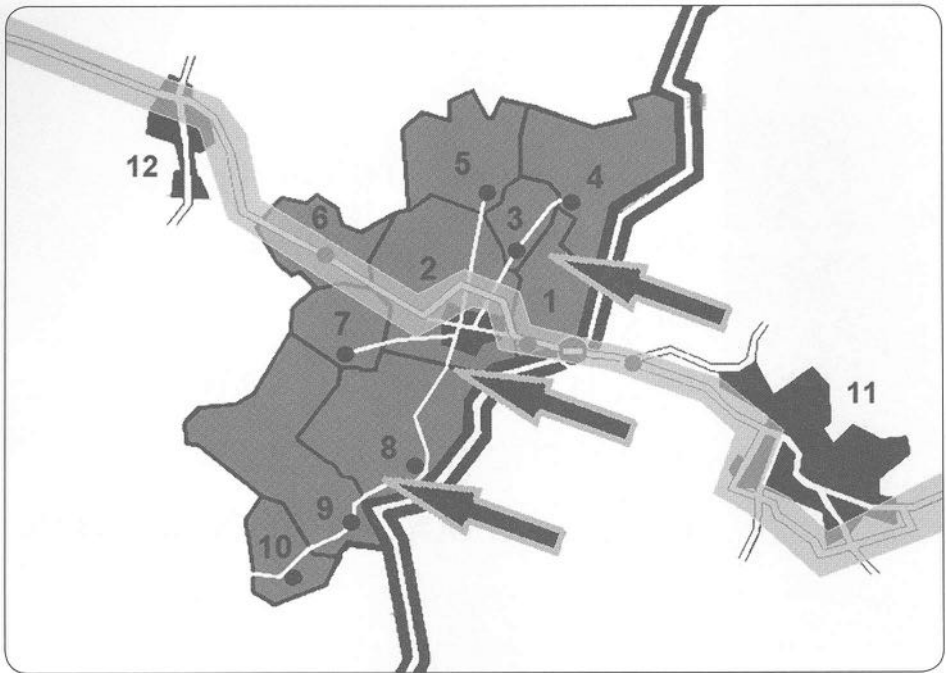


Cross-border mobility as the starting point of the emergence of a transnational space along the traffic route of Ártánd border crossing point

INTRODUCTION

AFTER HUNGARY AND ROMANIA JOINED THE EUROPEAN UNION the notion of “living along the border” was re-defined and the dividing and/or uniting role of country/political borders started to change. As the nature and frequency of cross-border relations change the situation of the region, economic strategies of the inhabitants and social network change as well. Also the traditional notions of nation state and citizenship are re-thought. One of the first and also most significant sign of change was that after Romania joined the EU the inhabitants of Nagyvárad [Oradea] started buying up properties in Hungary along the traffic route of the Ártánd checkpoint. Ártánd, Bedő, Nagykereki, Bojt, Mezőpeterd, Biharkeresztes, Told, Berekböszörmény, Körösszegapáti, Körösszakál were the primary targets of purchase.¹ (Map 2.) Some of the buyers looked at the property acquisition as investment. Others wanted to secure a place for themselves for the period after retirement. And also, some buyers bought houses for their children. There are people who moved to Hungary but continue working in Romania. According to my understanding the phenomenon is very important in terms of the future of the

1 Sparsely they bought houses also in more distant settlements.



Map 2.: Target area of land purchase along the traffic route of the Ártánd checkpoint

1. Ártánd, 2. Biharkeresztes, 3. Bedő, 4. Nagykerek, 5. Bojt, 6. Mezőpeterd, 7. Told, 8. Berekbőszörmény, 9. Körösszegapáti, 10. Körösszakál 11. Nagyvárad [Oradea], 12. Püspökladány

region and is the starting point of a suburbanization. Therefore I believe it is relevant to focus not only on historical backgrounds and regional effects but also on tendencies and motivations of migration.

When choosing the settlements in focus the regional status, the size of the settlement, its geographical situation, size and constitution of population were taken into account. The research focused on two settlements along the Hungarian side of the Hungarian-Romanian border. One of them is the regional center, Biharkeresztes, and the other one is a Romanian ethnic village, Bedő. In order to gain some understanding on the processes arising after joining the EU I also chose two settlements situated near the border but further away from the checkpoint. The chosen settlements were Komádi and Csökmő. All these settlements are situated in the township of Berettyóújfalu and Biharkeresztes of the former Bihar Comitatus. It is a common characteristic of the settlements that they became largely distressed after losing their regional center Nagyvárad [Oradea] due

to the Trianon decision in 1920. The settlements remained in a "marginalized position on the periphery" even during the communism and the regime change of 1989.

Fieldwork was carried out between 2008 and 2010 by doing observations and taping interviews. In Biharkeresztes also a questionnaire with opened questions were given out in order to have a significant amount of data available on the attitudes toward new settlers. Also the mayors of Bedő, Biharkeresztes, Komádi, Újiráz and Csökmő were interviewed in order to have a more complex understanding on the situation of settlements along the border.

Migrations in the border zone accelerated because of the European integration. After the Schengen treaty was signed and customs control vanished, free move across borders came into reality. From 2004 not only freedom of movement but also residence became easier.² In terms of the Romanian-Hungarian border, "cross-border mobility" was only made possible after Romania also joined the European Union in 2007. By that date there were researches focusing on the issue in several member states (JAGODIČ, Devan 2010: 28).

Many think that the enthusiasm experienced at the beginning shall fade away and property purchases will be limited to ethnic Romanian villages in the future. Others believe that the current patterns of migration are part of a longer-lasting tendency. Some argue that by becoming the agglomeration zone of Nagyvárad [Oradea] again, after a hundred years of being on the periphery, the settlements of Bihar will experience an improvement in their economic situation. The later arguments are supported by similar (but more dynamic) tendencies observed along the Slovakian-Hungarian border. The agglomeration zone of Pozsony [Bratislava] now stretches to Hungary and the process of suburbanization is believed to strengthen further.

² In accordance with DIRECTIVE 2004/38/EC OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL Union citizens should have the right of residence in the host Member State for a period not exceeding three months without being subject to any conditions or any formalities other than the requirement to hold a valid identity card or passport. For periods of residence of longer than three months, Member States should have the possibility to require Union citizens to register with the competent authorities in the place of residence, attested by a registration certificate issued to that effect. Persons exercising their right of residence should not, however, become an unreasonable burden on the social assistance system of the host Member State during an initial period of residence. Union citizens and their family members who have resided legally for a continuous period of five years in the host Member State shall have the right of permanent residence there. (2004/38/EC).

Recently several studies were published on cross-border migration in Western Europe focusing on Dutch-German (STRÜVER, Anke 2005), Dutch-Belgian (VAN HOUTUM, Henk GIELIS, Ruben 2006), German-French (TERLOUW Kees 2008), Spanish-Portuguese (SIDAWAY, James Derrick 2001), and Slovakian-Hungarian (HARDI Tamás 2009) migration processes.³

In analyzing and interpreting cross-border mobility researches emphasize different aspects. According to some moderate views, in spite of the harmonization processes in member states, there are significant differences in wages and taxation procedures that foster migration. Processes though work toward creating a more balanced situation. Differences between the member states are the most visible in the border-zones in which the different levels of development blend. Nowadays, we can easily see that short term transnational migration at the border of Central European member states is due to the utilization of asymmetries created by the long existence of borders. In terms of Hungary and its neighboring member states the difference in property prices brings profit for those living in the border-zone.

Henk VAN HOUTUM and Ruben GIELIS (2006) describe the phenomenon as a result of two contrary powers and introduce us the notion of "flexible migration". According to their views, one of the powers act outward (centrifugal) and fosters residence in the neighboring country. The other power (centripetal) is created by the country of original residence in the form of family, friends and workplace. The central point of the "flexible" life of immigrants is in the country of origin, they do not seek for integration in the country of residence (STÜRVER, Anke 2005).

Another perspective describes cross-border migration as a process of invasion⁴, a form of suburbanization⁵. Because of cross-border mobility rural settlements of the neighboring country gradually become residential districts, suburban regions. The cause of the process is understood to be the high demand for properties. The solution lies in buying cheaper, more spacious apartments and houses on the other side of the border.

3 In his study of five European examples Devan Jagodič (2010: 40–41) gives a description of the main approaches taken.

4 I use this expression as a sociological notion, that is to say that the population of a given settlement is replaced by another population.

5 A tendency in which the cores of cities loose inhabitants but suburban districts and settlements experience a boost in their populations.

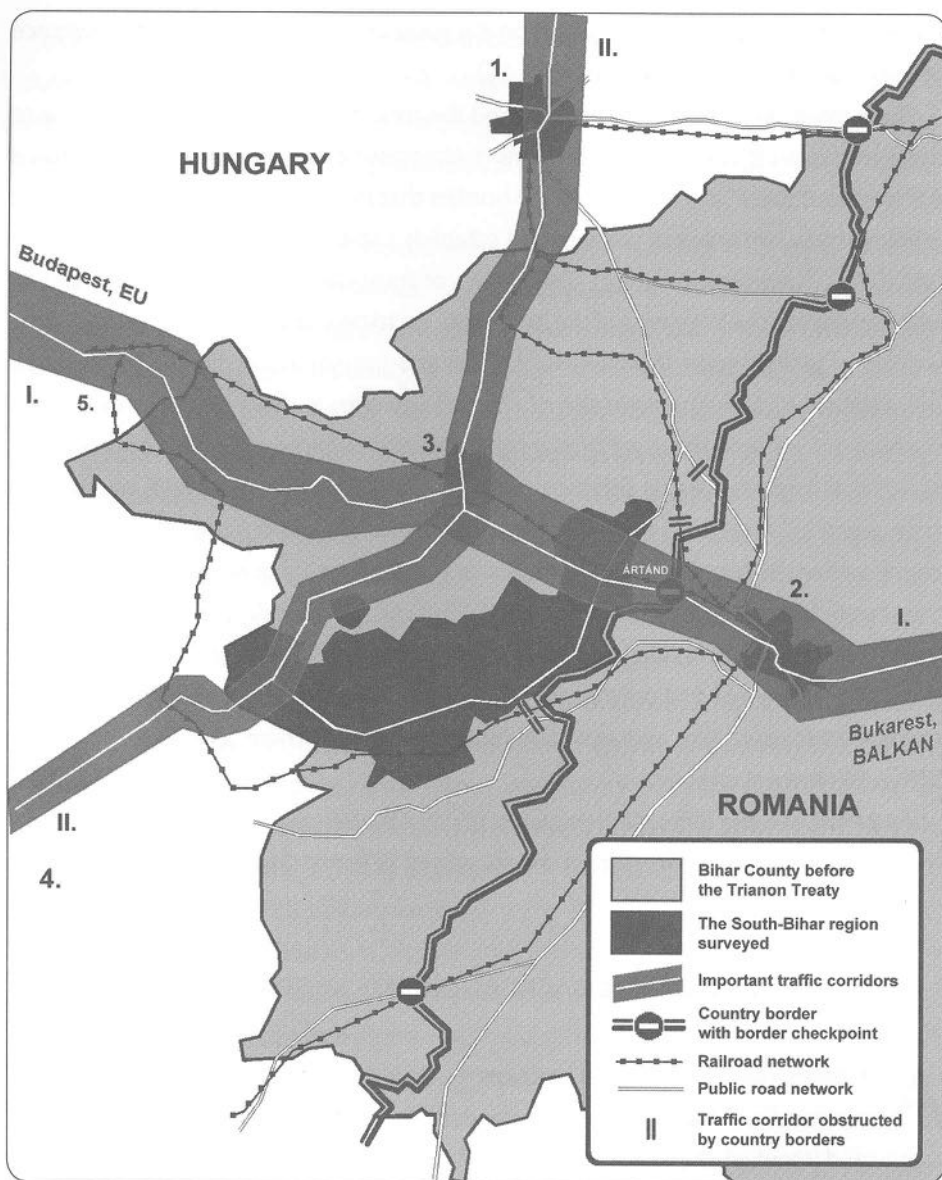
A precondition of cross-border migration is a good infrastructure, that is the existence of good routes (JAGODIČ, Devan 2010: 33.).

There are other approaches going beyond the concept of nation states. According to these migration is characterized by bottom-up cross-border integration. As a result a "transnational space" is created along the borders that provides opportunity for different ethnic groups and cultures to meet and establish a special "transnational" form of life (JAGODIČ, Devan 2010: 34–35.). The notion of trans-nationalism evolved in cultural anthropology at the beginning of the '90s in relation to new forms of migration and some aspects of globalization (NIEDERMÜLLER Péter 2005: 52). According to my research the most important characteristic of trans-nationalism is the everyday cross-border connection between the place of origin and the place of residence. In this context it is of utmost importance that the social network connecting the countries is operated by "transmigrants". They keep up with their social, economic and cultural relations in their country of origin but also build up new ones in their country of residence. By doing so they create "cross-border social networks" (SCHILLER, Nina Glick et al. 1992: 1). Migrants live in the country of residence, have contacts with their neighbors, sometimes even become members of civil organizations but work in their country of origin, send their children to school there and also have family and friends there (GIELIS, Ruben 2009; STRÜVER, Anke 2005).

As we can see, the different approaches to cross-border migration are not conflicting. They only analyze the process from the aspects of different disciplines.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF MIGRATION

AS A RESULT OF THE TRIANON DECISION IN 1920 the territory of Hungary changed dramatically. Bihar county was divided too. By getting the regional center, Nagyvárad [Oradea], the Romanian part of Bihar county was able to function effectively. The remaining Hungarian part though did not have any cities left. Without having any center of organization the cohesion of the Hungarian part of Bihar lessened and marginalization became inevitable. The inefficient road network further intensified difficulties. The road network and rail road was centered on Nagyvárad [Oradea]. The



Map 3. Divided road and railroad network on the Hungarian side of Bihar
 1. Debrecen, 2. Nagyvárad [Oradea], 3. Berettyóújfalu, 4. Békéscsaba, 5. Püspökladány

- I. Budapest–Püspökladány–Berettyóújfalu–Nagyvárad [Oradea]–Bukarest
 II. Debrecen–Derecske–Berettyóújfalu–Szeghalom–Békéscsaba–Szeged

new border divided the roads, ceasing direct connections⁶. The place of the former west-east Püspökladány-Berettyóújfalú-Nagyvárad line was taken by the Debrecen–Derecske–Berettyóújfalú–Szeghalom–Békéscsaba line stretching from north to the east (Map 3.).

The government had faith in revision, therefore the remaining part of Bihar was not re-organized only kept alive. Although some steps, like the building of a hospital and new administrative offices, were taken to make Berettyóújfalú the new center of Bihar⁷ there were no real investments in the region. Even with Berettyóújfalú (and later Biharkeresztes) obtaining city status the region remained a mainly rural territory. After the Second World War it became pressing to settle the situation of Bihar and to substitute Nagyvárad [Oradea] with another settlement. The remaining territories were divided between Hajdú and Békés county and Nagyvárad [Oradea] was replaced by Debrecen and Békéscsaba. The government's decision further deepened the gap between Bihar and the rest of the country, putting the region on the periphery.⁸ Due to the fact that the territories given to Hajdú county were far from the regional center the utilization of them was without success. (Map 4.)

During the communism centralized concepts of development brought decline for the Bihar region. Outdated forms of settlement were "sentenced" to be downgraded via administration. The best method of achieving the goal was extended regionalization. Although the driving force was said to be economic rationalization, in reality the conditions have been worsened to an extent that outward migration became inevitable. As a result the region experienced decline in population, especially in the most depressed villages.⁹

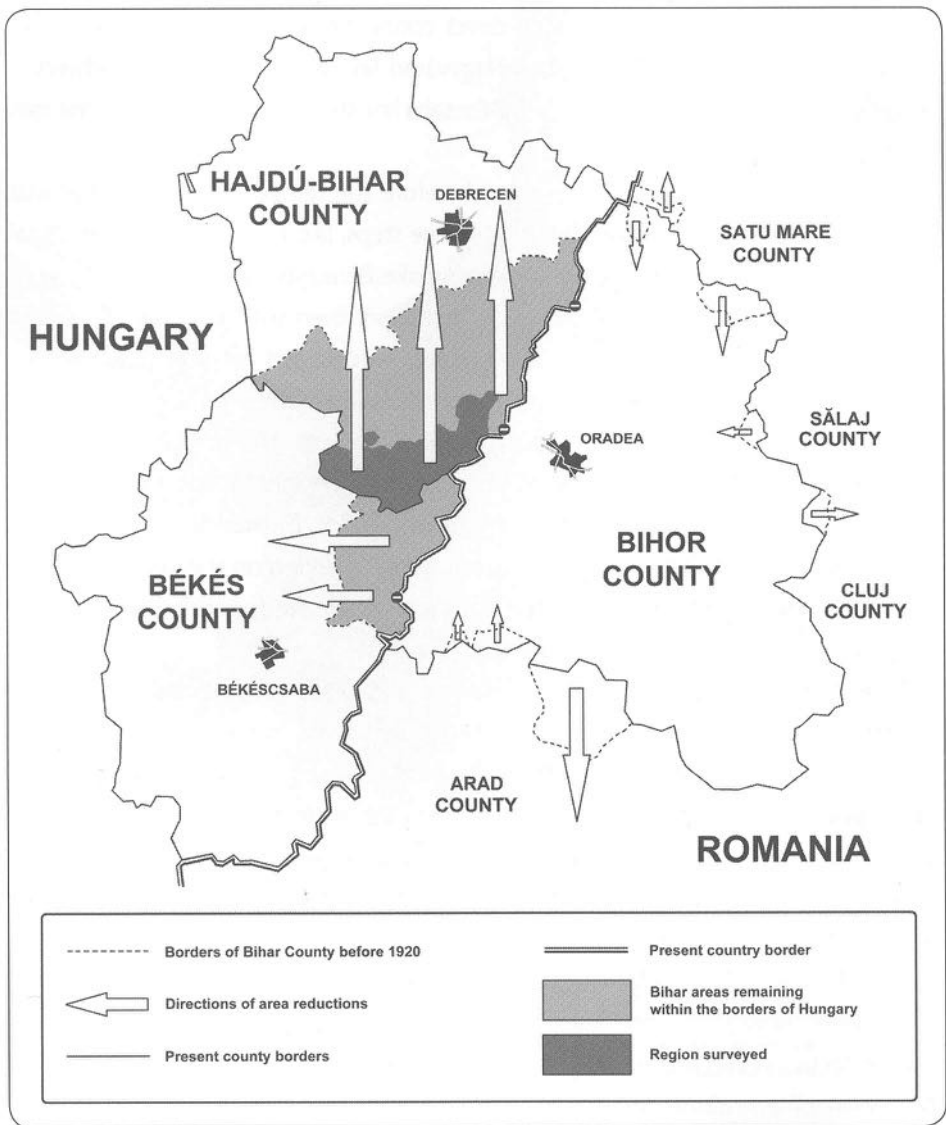
After the political changes of 1989 and the emergence of market economy Bihar had to face even more problems. Due to its unfavorable geographic situation the market did not focus on the region and agriculture started to decline. (Map 5.) Because of the decline of agriculture demographic erosion peaked. The inhabitants did not find employment in the region but, because of the falling property prices, often could not

6 Béres Csaba–Süli-Zakar István. 1990. 46.

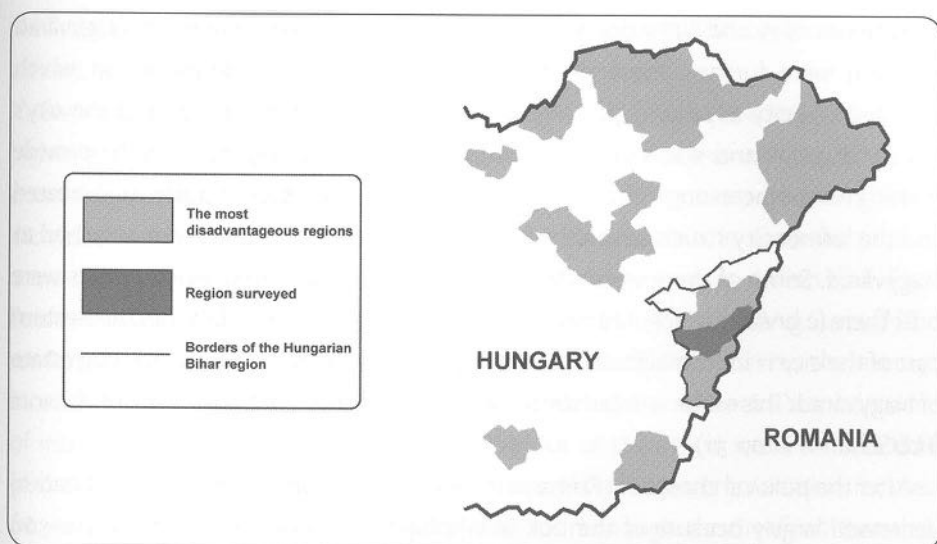
7 The Minister of Interior Affairs named Iván Balázsházy from Berettyóújfalú, as the new county head. (Dankó Imre 2001. 130.)

8 Béres Csaba–Süli-Zakar István. 1990. 46.

9 Béres Csaba–Süli-Zakar István. 1990. 12.



Map 4: Division of the Hungarian part of Bihar between Hajdú and Békés counties



Map 5. The Hungarian part of Bihar became a distressed region

move either. By the '90s it was unreasonable to build new houses because the costs of construction was actually higher than the value of the finished house (according to a survey of 1994 only three families planned to invest into renovating their houses in Bedő).

MOTIVATING FORCES OF MIGRATION IN NAGYVÁRAD

WITH A PROSPERITY unbroken since 1892 Nagyvárad [Oradea] was the fourth most developed city of Hungary by the time it became the part of Romania in April 1919.¹⁰ After the Trianon decision the regional center started to decline and soon was regarded only as the center of the county.¹¹ Due to the new border cutting through the Püspökladány-Berettyóújfalú-Nagyvárad road network, the city, and also Transylvania, lost its connection to Budapest and to Europe. (See Map 3.)

¹⁰ Nagyvárad [Oradea] was appointed to be a municipal town in 1892.

¹¹ Nagyvárad had all chances to become an interregional center in a few decades. Such centers, such as Genoa, Bologna, Dortmund or Stuttgart, are characteristic in Italy and Germany. (Fleisz János 2007: 36)

Between 1945 and 1989 the regional and structural disadvantages of Nagyvárad [Oradea] were further deepened by the Romanian public administration which regarded the city as second class. Meanwhile the population tripled¹² and the city's ethnic, religious and social constitution changed dramatically. In order to provide housing for the increasing number of settlers new districts of block houses were created and the former city structure vanished. The neighboring settlements were attached to Nagyvárad. Some of these were completely demolished and new block of flats were built there (e.g. Váradszőlős). Others were abandoned (e.g. Biharpüspöki). In the western part of the city 12 industrial facilities were built together with the largest housing estate of Nagyvárad. This estate is called district Rogériusz and has 70 thousand of inhabitants (FLEISZ János 2007: 37).

After the political changes in Romania in 1990 the population of Nagyvárad [Oradea] decreased largely because of the lack of employment (SZŰCS István 2003: 555–561). In the post-socialist era the economic and social situation changed and only EU membership was able to put an end to the decline. Because Nagyvárad [Oradea] is the most influential settlement in the Bihar region Western European investors started to take an interest in the city and its agglomeration even before Romania has joined the European Union. Instead of brownfield developments focusing on the revitalization of the industrial district of the western part of the city investors choose the village of Bors situated near the border.

By 2010 Nagyvárad [Oradea] became a complex, developed county seat with multiple roles and some regional functions. Due to the dynamic economy, evolving foreign capital and arrival of multinational companies the city prospers. With Romania joining the European Union the artificially constructed system of breaks vanished. This had benefits on commerce but the chances of accumulation of capital were to scarce due to the small spending power and profit.

Just like in case of the industry, the regime did not invest into housing during the socialism. The industrial zone surrounding Nagyvárad [Oradea] does not allow expansion, e.g. the construction of new housing estates. However, in the industrial-service transition zone, which is the second zone surrounding the city core, expensive estates were built. In the past there were vineyards on the hills encircling the city.

12 From 82, 000 to 230,000 between 1948 and 1990.

Nowadays cottages are built on these hills providing accommodation for the richest citizens of Nagyvárad [Oradea].

Even during the socialism the property prices in Nagyvárad [Oradea] were much higher than property prices in the eastern or central part of the country. After the economic boom this tendency was further strengthened. Property prices and rents increased by 200–300% in the period between 2004 and 2007. In 2007 the price of a 100 m² flat in the downtown was 100,000 Euros, which equals 25 million HUF. Even flats in blockhouses were sold for a high price, reaching 50–60 thousand Euros.¹³ The rent of an average flat reached 400 Euros/month.¹⁴ At the same time, the average income in Romania was 200–300 Euros/month, meaning that without a second source of income many people were forced to move out of the city in order to take care of their accommodation needs.¹⁵ At first, those seeking for accommodation focused on settlements near Nagyvárad [Oradea], but soon enough they realized that they can get better deals in Hungary. As an answer for the demand Hungarian property advertisements started to appear in the newspaper, Nagyvárad *Napló*. Even in 2003–2004 Romanian real estate agencies have experienced a demand for Hungarian properties, but it was in 2006 when the demand intensified. Between 2003 and 2005 four or five Romanian families moved to Biharkeresztes. In 2006 twenty-eight families bought houses there. The purchasers were counting on Romania joining the European Union at the realization of which they moved to Hungary but kept their jobs in Romania.

After joining the European Union the economic and social circumstances changed significantly along the western traffic routes and bigger cities in Romania. Meanwhile, the Hungarian settlements along the border experienced economic crises. Wages in the regional center Nagyvárad [Oradea] were increasing and property prices in Eastern Hungary dropped. After the restrictive role of the border ceased, the citizens of Nagyvárad [Oradea] were able to make use of this urbanization vacuum. The agglomeration zone of Nagyvárad [Oradea] was extended to Hungary and the status

13 Circa 12–15 million HUF at the currency rate of the time.

14 100,000 HUF at the currency rate of the time

15 It is not unique for city dwellers to move out. The sociologist, Ray Pahl, (1966: 299–327) described the model of dispersed city characteristic of Western Europe in the end of the '60s. He called attention to the changing patterns of migration, in the process of which the populations of cities move to neighboring settlements.

of settlements along the border changed. The territory formerly regarded as peripheral was now close to the center. We have to note that this was not a newly formed relation. Practically, by the vanishing of the border, the pre-Trianon situation was re-created (NEMES NAGY József 2009: 211–214.).

By the decision of 1920 the border ran right along Nagyvárad [Oradea]. It is easy to see that politics actually interfered with the natural development of the city toward the west. After Romania became a member state of the European Union the stretching of the agglomeration zone of Nagyvárad [Oradea] toward the west amplified. According to the theory of phases of development, demographic increase and decrease define the life cycles of cities. The theory argues that migration trends are the results of economic cycles and urban transformations (VAN DEN BERG, Leo 1981). In this term, the opening up of the border resulted in a specific form of suburbanization, i.e. the expansion to the territory of a different country. However, transnational relations are not only regarded as opportunities but also as necessities. On the 1st of January 2007¹⁶ the structure dividing Romania into regions took effect. In this system Nagyvárad [Oradea] is assigned to the North-west region with Kolozsvár [Cluj] as center. The division neglects already existing regional specificities. Due to the decision Nagyvárad [Oradea] is in an inferior position at least until 2013 and does not have any other chances than emphasizing regionalism. Its geographical location, i.e. being situated near the border, may serve as the basis of development. Territories and regions along the border have a significant role in the integration policy of the EU. According to the national territorial development plan of Romania, setting the course of development until 2025 Nagyvárad [Oradea] is classified as a city only with local significance¹⁷. Therefore development can only be sought for in the integrated European space (FLEISZ János 2007: 41–42). The decreasing influence of nation states and the freedom of movement create certain advantages

16 On the date of Romania joining the EU

17 The plan names Bukarest, Temesvár [Timisoara] and Konstanca as cities to receive development funds and gain the status of European metropolises. Cities with transnational and national significance also receive development funds in order to create a policentric regional network of metropolises. Kolozsvár [Cluj], Jászvásár [Iasi], Brassó [Brasov] and Krajova [Craiova] are named as such cities. Cities with regional or local significance fall into the third category. Besides Nagyvárad [Oradea], settlements such as Arad, Szatmárnémeti [Satu Mare], Marosvásárhely [Targu Mures], Zilah [Zalau], Csíkszereda [Miercurea Ciuc] and Sepsiszentgyörgy [Sfantu Gheorghe] are classified as such cities. (Romania 2025. Conceptul National de dezvoltare spatiala. Romania 2025. National Territorial Development Concept)

for Nagyvárad [Oradea]. Former tethers are now realized in a *transnational* (EU) level and goods, services, capital and people may freely move across borders. At the same time, certain regulations are realized on *subnational* levels, meaning that regions and municipalities are given more freedom (PERKMANN, Marcus-SUM, Ngai-Ling 2002).

Our area of interest, the Bihar region, faces with significant changes on the long-term. In these changes Nagyvárad [Oradea] plays an important role. Its regional status and the process of suburbanization create opportunity to cultures and ethnic groups to meet in a transnational space. We can easily predict that "transnational space" will create also a "transnational form of life" in the territories stretching along the borders.

IMPACTS OF MIGRATION ON THE HUNGARIAN SIDE OF THE BORDER

MIGRATION OF ROMANIANS TO HUNGARY cannot be regarded as a new process. During the socialist and post-socialist era mobility related to employment and shopping were observed. After both countries have joined the European Union the traditional forms of mobility were extended and new patterns of migration arose.

Those with sufficient financial sources and extended social network started to buy properties in Hungary even years before the vanishing of the border. However, before both countries became members of the EU, migration meant significant changes in one's life. The migrants had to settle in Hungary and cut back some of their social relation in Romania. Migrants arriving in Hungary after the political changes in 1989 often regarded the region near the border as a transit zone. They settled there only temporarily in order to keep up with their former relations for a little while. As soon as they had a chance to move westward in Hungary or in Europe, they took it.

After the Schengen Agreement a process of suburbanization started in the form of Romanians buying properties in Hungarian settlements along the border. Demand met supply and properties were sold for Romanians along the traffic route of the Ártánd checkpoint. Due to the lack of employment many of the inhabitants of Hungarian settlements along the border decided to move and sell their houses. The only problem

was that property prices were so low that the sale price could not provide enough money for the sellers to buy another house somewhere else.¹⁸

The demand for Hungarian properties was the most intense between 2004, Hungary joining the EU, and 2007, Romania joining the EU. The process slowed down after the crises of 2008 hit Europe. The fact that, even with prices doubled or tripled in some years, Romanians were eager to buy more valuable properties reflects their spending power. Houses which were sold for 13–14 million HUF in 2004–2005 were sold for 20 million in 2007. The most expensive houses were sold for 50 million, traditional two-bedrooms houses were advertised for 13–18 million HUF and even small adobe-brick houses had a retail price of 7–8 million Hungarian Forints. Property prices in Körösszegapáti tripled, while in Ártánd quintupled. The prices were similar to those of the county seat. For families selling their houses it provided an opportunity to move and find accommodation in Debrecen, Budapest or on the Western side of the Danube.

Although the increasing property prices were good for those who wanted to move, it also had disadvantages for those who wished to remain. For the younger generation it became almost impossible to find accommodation for a reasonable price. Similar tendencies were observed in several settlements across the European Union. In her study of the Dutch community in Kranenburg, Anke STRÜVER (2005) describes a similar tendency in changing of property-values. The only difference between Kranenburg and Ártánd is the property prices in Kranenburg exceeded the average German prices, while the property prices in Ártánd only reached the average Hungarian property prices.

It is a characteristic of transnational migration processes that the population and industry of the more developed country flow into the territory of the less developed one. In Ártánd the process was reversed. There are two reasons of this. One is that the European multinational companies operating in Nagyvárad [Oradea] were able to provide their employees with wages higher than those in other parts of Romania. The other one lies in the peripheral position of the Bihar region in Hungary. After the political changes of 1989 employment decreased gradually in the region together with the standards of life. Therefore, in terms of real estates, the original inhabitants did not mean competition for Romanian settlers. More so, they encouraged Romanians to buy

¹⁸ As I have already pointed out the turning point was when Romania became a candidate of the EU. The situation of Bihar was worsened and the wages in Romania increased. This created a balance in supply and demand.

properties because they wanted to move out from the region. It is possible though, that later on the economic situation of the region will be strengthened by regional connections and the attitude toward Romanian settlers will change. A similar tendency was observed at the French-German border (TERLOUW, Kees 2008).

In 2010 the process of property acquisition slowed down due to several reasons. One is the economic crisis hitting Europe in 2008. Less favorable mortgage conditions and increasing gasoline prices resulted in a cutback of demand and made it more expensive to commute. Also, supply became scarce. Most of the properties were already sold and the new owners do not want to sell their houses. Another reason is that the increasing property prices cut down demand. I would argue though, that this does not mean the end of the process only a slowing down as a result of the above mentioned reasons. Of course, we are aware that the process of suburbanization, just like any other processes of urban development, may be reversed.

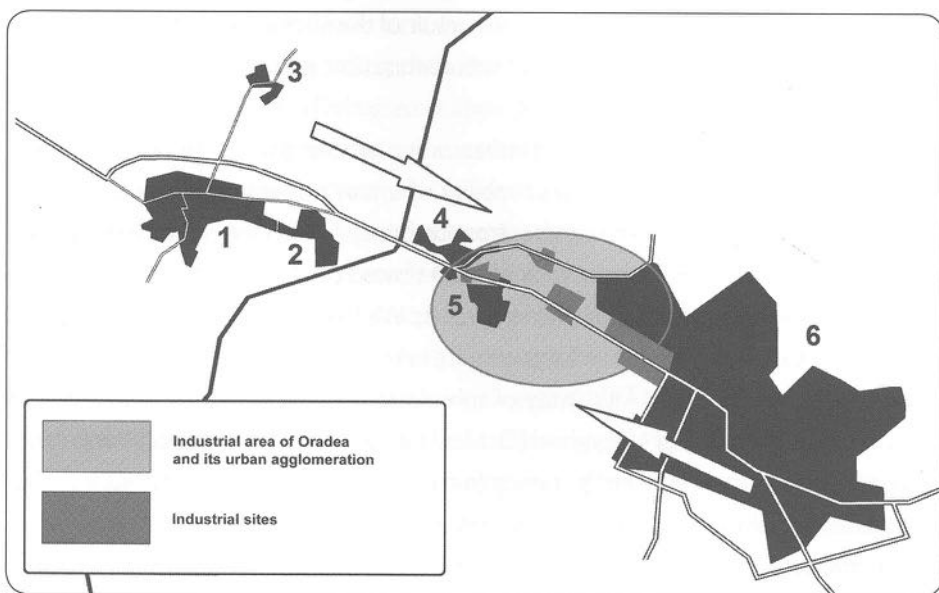
Migration is the first stage of the suburbanization process that started with Romania joining the European Union. Besides mobility of urban citizens suburbanization also means the flight of industry and services from the cities. In our case the process did not reach that point yet. The financial crisis of 2008 slowed down the process that started with Romania joining the European Union in 2007. We have to note, however, that there are significant differences between settlements in this regard.

Drawing upon Judit TÍMÁR's study of suburbanization (1999) we can say that the suburbanization process of Nagyvárad [Oradea] has only begun. Hungarian inhabitants are replaced by Romanians mostly coming from the region of Nagyvárad [Oradea]. The new settlers usually do not build new houses, they rather renovate them.

In some settlements the first signs of the second phase can also be seen. For example in Bedő, being the village most largely affected by suburbanization, there is a designated industrial area now together with a plan for creating a housing estate. Also, an investor from Constanta expressed his interest in the village. Biharkeresztes is also prepared for the second phase of the suburbanization process. The industrial area is designated waiting for the arrival of companies from Nagyvárad [Oradea].

If we take a look on the suburbanization process of Nagyvárad [Oradea] as a whole we can easily see that only the first phase of the process has been finished by now. The population of the Hungarian settlements along the border increased in the last couple years. On the Romanian side of the border there are industrial facilities and premises (Bors), but they did not cross the border yet. Several of the migrants living in Hungary

now work in the industrial facilities of Bors (that is part of the agglomeration zone of Nagyvárad [Oradea]). For them the access to their place of work is much easier from Biharkeresztes or Bedő than from Nagyvárad [Oradea]. (Map 6.) To sum up the argument we can say that the suburbanization of Nagyvárad [Oradea] only partially eases the problems the settlements of Bihar have to face. By the arrival of migrants only the accommodative functions strengthen, new workplaces are not created. Industrial facilities did show up along the border but, because of the unfavorable taxation in Hungary, it is unlikely to have them move to the other side of the border. In terms of the inhabitants we see that they do not leave their Romanian job behind.



Map 6.: The industrial facilities of Nagyvárad [Oradea] are more easy to reach from some of the Hungarian settlements than from the city)

1. Biharkeresztes, 2. Ártánd, 3. Bedő, 4. Bors [Borș],
5. Biharszentjános [Sântion], 6. Nagyvárad [Oradea]

THE EFFECTS OF CROSS-BORDER MIGRATION ON THE SETTLEMENTS

BELIEVE THAT THE SPONTANEOUS EVOLUTION OF SUBURBS is amplified by the fact that communities do not have a self-preserving power preventing the arrival of new settlers. These settlements gradually become parts of an urban zone and lose their former rural attitudes. An important signifier of the integration is that the local community is not hostile toward new settlers. The effects of cross-border migration were studied in two settlements. One of them is Bedő. Bedő is an ethnic Romanian village with 300 inhabitants. The other settlement in focus is Biharkeresztes. Biharkeresztes is the regional center, however a rural one, with a population of 4000 people. None of the settlements fall into the category of Tönnies being closed, communal. The European tendency of individualization and modernization reached the settlements.

BEDŐ

Bedő has an aging population. The number of inhabitants decreased to 300 in the last decades. In the second half of the 20th century the younger generation moved away from the village. As a result, cultural adaptation was not continuous anymore and the local peasant culture, characteristic of the 19th–20th century, changed. Without the younger generation the settlement lost its cohesion and its ability to adapt to changes (KUNT Ernő 1987:13–16). Changing community relations and local societies provide a good opportunity to greet new settlers.

During post-socialist times ethnic villages were prioritized. For Bedő the survival was secured by the position of an ethnic Romanian village, strongly emphasized by local leaders. Both the Romanian minority government established in 1994 and the minority education in the village serve this purpose. The Romanian identity of Bedő creates an opportunity to consider Romanian settlers as natural substitutes in the population. The regional position of Bedő has changed significantly after the opening up of Romanian-Hungarian border. Because of its ethnic Romanian population, rural nature and geographical position the Romanians target Bedő as a place of migration. Bedő, together with Körösszegapáti and Körösszakáll, also plays an important role in re-structuring the network of villages with ethnic Romanina populations in Hungary.

Bedő is a village with good infrastructures and facilities. Sewerage, gas pipelines and phone lines are in the village. The percentage of concrete roads is 90. Nagyvárad [Oradea] is 12 kilometers from Bedő and the quality of the road leading there is very good. Even the most careful studies of regional migration patterns argue that Bedő is the primary target of migrants. On the long-term this village may receive as many migrants from Nagyvárad [Oradea] that it becomes a suburb of it.

By both Romania and Hungary joining the European Union the "old-new" regional center Nagyvárad [Oradea] was accessible again. For the inhabitants of Bedő it means that the old economic and social ties cut by the Trianon decision may be secured again.

At the early 20th century Bedő supplied Nagyvárad [Oradea] with agricultural products. In order to strengthen the regional position of the village the local government decided to establish a bio-farm. It was necessary because of the changes in demands for agricultural productions. The so called pro-market production means that producers adapt to market demands and are able to quickly switch from one product to an other. The fact that Nagyvárad [Oradea] is so close creates a relatively secure market for the products. To maximize profit they also try to process the products themselves (with direct co-operation of farmers). By eliminating wholesalers from the production chain the profit can be maximized.

There are 140 houses in the village. Many of them were empty for years, but the year 2006 brought changes. In 2006 thirty houses were bought and by the beginning of 2007 all empty houses were sold. The local government of Bedő took part in utilizing the opportunities of property market and created favorable conditions for investors. An industrial-agricultural zone was designated by the local government at the part of the village facing Nagykerek and 26 acres of land is available for creating a housing estate at the northern side of the village. 86 properties were created on the 26 acres of land and most of them already have access to public utilities. Because of the financial crisis of 2008 the construction could not begin. The plans, however, are ready to build a housing estate with 81 flats at a 12,5 acres land in Bedő. The crises only caused temporary slowdown. In 2010 an investor from Constața moved his premise to Bedő, creating new workplaces in the village.

In terms of the agglomeration zone of Nagyvárad [Oradea] in Bedő is suburbanization is the most advanced. The arrival of big investors and also the plans for creating housing estates indicate that Bedő reached the edges of the second phase of suburbanization. It is expected that after the ease of financial crisis more new settlers will arrive to

the village and the process of urbanization begins. Likely it also will affect the aim of migration. Currently the "myth" of suburban life, i.e. the quiet, idyllic family surrounding attracts newcomers. Bedő is the place of living, while Nagyvárad [Oradea] is the place of work (TÍMÁR Judit 1999). The opportunity to gain ownership right over properties, especially with knowing that the property prices in Nagyvárad [Oradea] are too high for most of the people, is much more important than the mythical closeness to nature. But, as the population of Bedő increases, it will become more and more obvious that families move out from the city primarily because of economic reasons.

BIHARKERESZTES

Those, who expressively wish to find an urban alternative to Nagyvárad [Oradea] found accommodation in Biharkeresztes. These families tried to re-settle in a socio-cultural surrounding similar to that of Nagyvárad [Oradea]. They did so because they did not want to undergo the process of constant balancing between two notably different system of cultural knowledge and meaning (urban and rural).

The regional processes of the last century had effects on Biharkeresztes. Due to the Trianon decision the town was detached from its regional cultural and economic center. This created severe disadvantages. In 1952 Biharkeresztes became a border crossing point. Due to administrative reasons the township of Biharkeresztes ceased in 1970 and the development of the settlement was slowed down. Biharkeresztes is the nearest large settlement to the Ártánd border crossing point. The town, with 4000 inhabitants, is also a regional center providing administrative services to Ártánd, Bedő, Bojt and Told. Although Biharkeresztes is also a seat for the Határmenti Bihari Települések Területfejlesztési Társulása [Association for the Regional and Spatial Development of the Borderline Settlements of Bihar] it is characterized by disadvantages and continuous loss of positions. The economy of Biharkeresztes did not profit from the political changes of 1989. The industrial facilities, such as the timber and rubber industry, were closed down. Also, after the bypass of road 42 was built, the transit traffic decreased significantly. Due to the less traffic several small businesses had to shut down in the town. After Romania became a member of the European Union border patrol was no longer needed. This left the local government as the largest employer of the town. Inhabitants had to face increasing unemployment. Although the town of Biharkeresztes was an administrative center, the economic potential of the settlement was lost. Therefore its regional position had to be re-constructed.

Between 2004 and 2009 the decreasing number of workplaces encouraged outward migration. Debrecen and Budapest were the primary targets but some families even moved to the western part of Hungary. These families were replaced by settlers coming from Nagyvárad [Oradea]. The newcomers had different expectations than those of the original inhabitants. For them the primary motivators were the relatively low property prices, good utilities and infrastructure. Commuting plays an important role in the life of the newcomers. They continue working in Nagyvárad [Oradea]. They do not care about the number of available workplaces in Biharkeresztes. On the long term it is also important that the migration in Biharkeresztes actually changes the ethnic structure of the town. Hungarians are migrating from and Romanians are migrating to Biharkeresztes.¹⁹ If the process continues the ethnic proportion of the region will change significantly. Currently the Romanians do not live in large numbers in Biharkeresztes (only 100 houses out of 1700 are owned by them). Because of its somewhat limited extent we cannot state that migration actually solves all problems of Biharkeresztes. But without doubt social tensions are eased by the fact that families who wish to move out find buyers for their houses.

From the 1960s Biharkeresztes had a border patrol station and even today an office of control is operated. The officers moved in and out of the settlement. Therefore the inhabitants of Biharkeresztes are used to greeting newcomers. Despite its rural characteristics Biharkeresztes is an urban settlement with developed infrastructure and welcoming attitude toward newcomers.

Processes following the opening up of borders required the local elite to reassess the regional status of Biharkeresztes. Even during my research change was easy to observe. In 2008 the mayor of Biharkeresztes defined the town's industrial park as an alternative to that of Nagyvárad [Oradea]. However, the truck companies and logistic centers chose the other side of the border because of more favorable taxation in Romania. Later the local government of Biharkeresztes realized that integration to the agglomeration zone of Nagyvárad [Oradea] is a more feasible alternative. The council still thinks that after the industrial park of Nagyvárad [Oradea] reaches its full capacity the investors will turn to Biharkeresztes. In order to facilitate this, the establishment of an industrial park is included in the development plan of the town. Nobody can doubt that the

¹⁹ Emigrants (those who move out) and immigrants (those who move in) are the subjects of migration (Lampf Zsuzsanna 2010: 77)

migration of Romanian inhabitants to Biharkeresztes is advantageous for the town, but all agree that the second phase of suburbanization, i.e. the arrival of industrial facilities from Nagyvárad [Oradea], would help the most. The industrial park of Biharkeresztes is currently not utilized effectively. This implicates that the third phase of suburbanization, called edge city by Garreau, has not arrived yet (GARREAU, Joel 1991). However, we have to note that the regional structure allows it on the long term. The suburbanization processes in Hungary differ from American and Western European ones. In Hungary processes happen simultaneously (TÍMÁR Judit-VÁRADI Mária Mónika 2000). It is therefore possible that industrial activities providing employment will also arrive in Hungary from Nagyvárad [Oradea]. This is delayed though, due to the financial crisis of 2008.

Visions of development often assume a mutual relationship between Biharkeresztes and Nagyvárad [Oradea] as equal partners. These visions do not take the center-agglomeration zone kind of relationship formed as a result of regional structure. In reality Nagyvárad [Oradea] includes/integrates Hungarian settlements in its agglomeration zone. The newly formed zone, however, is not totally similar to that of the one before the Trianon decision. Settlements of South Bihar, such as Csökmőő, Újiráz and Komádi, cannot join the circle.

SUBJECTIVE NOTIONS ON TRANSNATIONAL RELATIONS

TRANSNATIONAL RELATIONS, their importance and forms became the parts of scientific discourse after Hungary has joined the European Union (BARANYI Béla 2007: 125–187; BODÓ Barna 2008: 84–96; SÜLI-ZAKAR I. 2000: 71–85; 2002: 194–209; SZABÓ Gyula 2005: 83–96; FARAGÓ László 2004).²⁰ The central geopolitical situation of Hungary was widely emphasized even before becoming a member state of the European Union. According to the expectations the peripheral borderline settlements were to experience a development and flourish in transnational relations. An important condition of such change is to foster transnational relations. It was expected to be the

20 In my study I focus on individual dimensions of transnationalism. Therefore I do not give a detailed description of the scientific discourse, only draw on my empiric data and provide a subjective account of the phenomenon.

task of local leaders and power elites; even if for many mayors it was not and still is not clear what to do in order to join programs initiated by the European Union. In our area of focus even mayors of relatively big settlements express their disappointment and rejection.

"The Bihar-Bihor program is a humbug, nothing. It has neither economic nor cultural advantage in terms of our village. But I can say the same in relation to Keresztes (Biharkeresztes) as well. It is necessary only because this way we can emphasize our greatness in European Union grants, saying that we are able to do such things too. No actual result is expected. I usually go to the meetings but, to tell you the truth, nothing has happened in the last five years."

"...it makes no sense. A lot of money is spent for nothing." "...EU requires us to have such organizations, but why?"

The economic and cultural co-operation between borderline settlements near the Romanian-Hungarian border was not intense at the turning of the millennia (BARANYI Béla 1999:42). Change in this was slow in the last decade. Economic analyses of the region noted that without the injection of state capital the region will not be able to recover.

Even today the cultural, kinship and friendship ties dominate the situation. The interviewees emphasized that cultural relations are organized from up to the bottom, but have only small impacts (When asked to provide examples of Romanian-Hungarian relations, most of my interviewees mentioned events like going to theatre to in Nagyvárad [Oradea] in a group). As a counterpoint to central propaganda emphasizing the importance of transnational relations, individuals did make overtures to strengthen relations even before Romania became a member state. The reason of making these steps was strictly economic. Although the property purchases of Romanians in Hungary were indeed due to more favorable conditions they also had impacts on transnationalism. Politics made it possible to cross the border and the land acquisition made it possible to cross borders in the social sense too. Processes generated by migration had more impact on transnationalism than arrangements and measures of regional politics (such as the plan to construct a cross-border hiking trail). The freedom of movement means that the regional structure has to be reconsidered. Cross-border migration tightens the micro-economic and cultural relations of the two regions.

NATIONALIST EXPECTATIONS AND MEDIA CRAVING FOR SENSATION

BECAUSE OF THE FREE CROSSING OF BORDERS between member states of the European Union many people expected that by Romanian joining the EU the injured Hungarian national identity, fuelled mostly by the constant mourning for the territories lost on the basis of the Trianon decision, will be recovered. According to these assumptions the presence of Hungarians from Hungary would have been intensified. It seems now, that these assumptions overestimated the current cultural and economic strength of Hungary. There were companies and firms that moved their premises to Romania, but such moves were motivated by economic reasons rather than by nationalist ones. According to my interviewees the migration from Hungary to Romania is restricted by the lack of knowledge in Romanian language. The demand for skilled workers in companies and firms on the Romanian side of the border is high. Many times the knowledge of some more international language, such as English, is required. However, Hungarian workers usually do not have such skills and therefore cannot apply for jobs offered.

According to my empirical data employment in Nagyvárad [Oradea] mostly means black market employment. Therefore people do not like to talk about it in public. Individuals and companies alike seek for employment, establishment of premises and operation of companies in Romania because taxation is much easier there than in Hungary. Romanian companies and entrepreneurs are often connected to the black market in one way or another. Therefore it is hard to carry out research there.

Migration processes in Bihar are mostly pointing one way. Because of their better spending powers Romanians bought properties in Hungary. The Romanian newcomers did frighten some. One approach toward the migration is well represented by the Hungarian minority media in Romania, regarding suburbanization as the invasion of Romanians.

*"The borderline settlements of Eastern Hungary experience a mass migration. The invasions target Püspökladány and Debrecen as well. Wealthy Romanian entrepreneurs and intellectuals bought properties, formerly unmarketable, in several settlements of Hajdú-Bihar. According to the news Romanians recently showed up even in the more centered settlement alongside the river Tisza."*²¹

²¹ Frigyes Varjú: *Honfoglalás telekvásárlással*. in (chief editor: Ferenc Zsidó) *Polgári Élet A székelyföldi Polgárok hetilapja Székelyudvarhely 19 October 2007.*

According to the newspaper chauvinist Romanian newspapers from the Partium published Hungarian advertisements.²² The author also presumes that one third of Bedő is now Romanian.²³ Media coverage of the property purchases expressed strong opinions trying to focus on unexpected sensations. They used expressions such as mass property purchase and Romanian invasion when writing about cross-border mobility. After the intensity of the process lessened they tended to communicate this as a sensation too. The role of media in transnational relations is beyond dispute and also well documented (HORGA, Ioan 2004:19–24). The example presented here cannot be generalized but, in terms of our current inquiry, could not be overlooked.

DEFINITION OF TRANSNATIONAL SPACE

THE INTERPRETATION OF NEW MIGRATION PATTERNS in the European Union raises several questions. Should we talk about migration of Romanians to Hungary or about the commuting of former Romanian inhabitants of Nagyvárád [Oradea] now living in Hungary? Which aspect shall be given priority when analyzing migration? Should we take the place of living or the cultural ties as aspects of belonging somewhere? Along what lines is identity defined? By ethnicity, by citizenship or by country of residence? These are questions created by Romania joining the European Union in 2007. They call our attention to the fact that the relations of Romania and Hungary to borders have changed significantly. Globalization and transnationalism of culture and economy question the role of nation states.

Earlier, in the case of cross-border migration, individuals and groups had to leave their cultures behind and adapt to that of the receiver society. Even multicultural societies constitute as a mosaic of different cultures (NIEDERMÜLLER Péter 2005:56–57). In the globalizing world, however, new forms of mobility arise different from those created by earlier tendencies of migration. These new forms are characterized by cross-border integration organized on the level of individuals, from the bottom up. They are also

22 The local governments of Körösszegapáti and Bojt advertised properties for sale in newspapers and magazines in Nagyvárád.

23 Bedő is a traditional ethnic Romanian village. 55 per cent of the population claimed to be Romanian in the survey of 2001.

characterized by constant moves and by multiple places of belonging (APPADURAI, Arjun 1996a). Cross-border residual mobility demonstrates the possibility of living one place but also being present at another. Such pattern creates transnational places. Transnationalism does not end localities or ties to a certain place. It creates a new logic of creating local identities in which people are allowed to choose their cultural belonging as they wish (APPADURAI, Arjun 1995).

Cross-border residual mobility is not restricted to certain countries. Therefore we can argue that this global form of mobility actually weakens the cultural and political role and significance of rigid nation states that tend to overlook regional ties. The phenomenon is only new to Central Europe. From the end of the 1980s the notion of nation states based on territorial, cultural and group relations has changed significantly in other parts of the world. Modernity, the modern social order had inevitable effects on social processes. These impacts could only be analyzed in interpreted outside the notion of nation states.

DEMOGRAPHICAL CHARACTERISTICS OF MIGRANTS AND THE AIMS OF MIGRATION

THE MOST IMPORTANT "FACTORS" OF TRANSNATIONALISM are those "transmigrants" who participate in the everyday action of mobility between their place of origin and their place of residence. By doing so, they build up a special social network connecting the countries in concern.

The network of transmigrants is two folded. On the one hand they preserve their social, economic and cultural ties in their place of origin. On the other hand they create new relations at their place of residence. Although the proportion and nature of contacts is not the same, these relations are still able to serve as basis of transnational social cooperation (SCHILLER, Nina Glick et al. 1992:1). In terms of migrants arriving after Romania has joined the EU we can state that they do not have motivations and aims to permanently change earlier relations. Moreover, these relations often do not change at all. They are not forced to adapt to the majority, do not have to deal with pressure by the foreign culture (BODÓ Barna 2009:229). It is up to them to create and deepen relations in their place of residence.

Migrants analyzed in this study are not homogenous. Even in this early stage of research we can differentiate them in terms of age, ethnicity, wealth and social status. These factors influence the aims of property purchase and also the utilization of the property.

The upper idle class participates in the process to a lesser degree. Mostly they buy properties in bigger cities (Debrecen, Budapest) and use them only occasionally. Among those who buy houses along the border we find young couples coming from middle class families with steady but not high income. The migration of marginalized, low income city dwellers is not characteristic (ANDORKA Rudolf 2006:209–210).

In terms of the purchasers' ambition we can state that it is similar to that of the urban citizens moving to suburbs. The personal ambition to own a property is typical for people coming from urban areas of high population density. For many people the only way to live in better circumstances is cross-border mobility. Only with the lower prices in Hungary do they have the chance to own a house with a garden. Better circumstances mean higher social status. This is why many Romanians choose to buy properties in Hungary. The typical tendencies of suburbanization can be observed in our case too. Mostly pensioners and families with young children move to suburbs. The claims of newcomers to their place of residence change in the course of time. Early migrants liked the rural, natural and non-stressful nature of their new place of residence. They practically oppose the process of suburbanization. Later on, the arrival of investors might cause conflicts. as for now, however, there are no conflicts in the area of our focus.

Beside all advantages of migration there are people choosing migration out of necessity. Many of my interviewees moved to Hungary because of financial reasons. Their financial situation would not have allowed the purchase of an apartment in Nagyvárad [Oradea]. Meanwhile, in Hungary they were able to buy a nice house with garden from the same amount of money. Many of the migrants moved to Hungary because of this. If they could they would have bought property in Nagyvárad [Oradea].²⁴

From those who moved to Hungary in 2007 mainly the younger ones were saying that they did not think long before moving. They have heard that property prices are much better in Hungary and immediately decided to move on. Most of them did not have any realtions in their new place of residence.

24 transnationalism from below (APPADURAI, Arjun 1996b)

The situation is different with the pensioners. They were easy to reach in the research so there is a lot of empirical data on them. Most of them are of Hungarian origin. For them the Hungarian identity was the motivating force to move to Hungary.²⁵ By being able to obtain a "Hungarian certificate" most of my interviewees considered a long wish fulfilled. They were able to live in Hungary as Hungarians. Their motivation to live in Hungary is connected to their claim for being equal (A GERGELY András 1993:20). For them, moving required a lot of preparation. Many of them arrived before migration was intensified and became a part of suburbanization. These pensioners often keep intensive relations with Nagyvárad [Oradea] and are careful not to lose their kinship and friendship ties there. On the other hand they are not required to regularly go back to Romania. As a result they are also determined to build new relations in the place of their residence. For the middle aged and elderly migrants Hungary is also a place of well-being. During the socialism Romania was economically much worse off than Hungary. Those who experienced it firsthand still have an understanding like that.

LANGUAGE AND ROMANIAN IDENTITY

SOCIAL SCIENTIFIC STUDIES from the end of the '90s focusing on the Bihar region concluded that only a few settlements had Romanian inhabitants. 55 percent of Bedő, 7 percent of Körösszegapáti and 1 percent of Körösszakál and Létavértes was Romanian (BARANYI Béla 1999:26).²⁶ In our studies prior to the opening up of the border, however, we did not find inhabitants actively using Romanian language in their everyday lives. Even more, in 2003 in Bedő only a part of the older generation told us to be able to speak Romanian. This is even more interesting if we take into account that the local primary school did have a Romanian language program at that time. The representative survey of Ágnes Tóth concluded that a quarter of the inhabitants of Bedő spoke Romanian in that time²⁷ (TÓTH Ágnes 2003: 320). The data show that the number of people with Romanian ethnic identity was higher than that of the people speaking Romanian. In

25 They regard it as a personal insult when Hungarians call them Romanians.

26 The data is supported by the survey of 2002 in which 52% of the inhabitants of Bedő claimed himself/herself to be Romanian.

27 In 1980 66; in 1990 62; in 2001 56 persons claimed to speak Romanian

my research in 2009 the power and cultural elite of Bedő declared that they are living in a multiethnic and multilingual settlement. According to these interviews Romanian language is actively used, or at least understood, in both sides of the border. One of the reasons of intensive migration after the Schengen Treaty in 2007 was the knowledge of Romanian in Bedő. In this time many Romanian families who did not speak Hungarian settled in Bedő. The public opinion on inhabitants moving from Nagyvárad to Hungary supports this claim. Most people say that Romanians tend to settle in villages where they do not have to face difficulties in language. My research though, also supported by theory of Imre Lengyel and János Reichnitzer (2004), shows that the quality of the house, infrastructure, price and distance from the border are more important for Romanian purchasers than the language spoken in the given settlement. Language does not have primer importance in migration.

Rather we can say that the importance of Romanian language increases due to the cross-border migration. This is also supported by my research findings. For migrants not the number of people speaking Romanian is the factor that counts but the usage of Romanian and the connotation in which Romanian is regarded. Even as early in the process as we are now it is easy to see that Romanian language is much more than just the tool of communication. It is a form of showing one's cultural ties to Romania, to declare it every day. By the settlement of Romanians the original inhabitants reconsider their ethnic identity and change it to a certain extent. We can see the first signs of the process in education. Foreign citizens have the right to study in Hungarian public schools. Schools receive the same amount of state support after these children as they receive after Hungarian ones. Therefore local governments seek for including migrant children to schools. They believe these children can secure the operation and subsistence of schools (TEPERICS Károly 2004:24). In order to achieve this the educational institutions in the region include Romanian in their curriculum or teach certain subjects in Romanian. The local governments of Körösszakál, Bedő and Körösnagyharsány established a primary school and a kindergarten with minority program. The same was done by Körösszegapáti, Mezősas and Mezőpeterd in 2008. Romanian culture and language became an important part of the curriculum in the school. In all three settlements there is a Romanian daycare and, besides the elementary school, in Körösszegapáti there is also a Romanian Cultural and Methodological Center. Currently it is not characteristic of migrant children to attend local schools. Most of the

commuting families have their children attend school and kindergarten in Nagyvárad [Oradea]. Intellectuals prefer urban schools for their better curriculum too.

WHY ARE ROMANIAN SETTLERS BETTER THAN GYPSY ONES?

WE HAVE SEEN that the inhabitants of Bedő welcome Romanian newcomers. Is it the same in Biharkeresztes? According to my research newcomers are not judged on their ethnic origin but on their ability to adapt. Many interviewees noted though that Romanians are at least not Gypsies. Some informants from Biharkeresztes expressively told me that he/she is much happier with Romanians arriving to the town than he/she would be with the arrival of Gypsies. Several people noted that higher property prices are advantageous because they prevent the moving in of Gypsy families with a lot of children. Gypsies are the negative reference group in the narratives of the inhabitants of Biharkeresztes. It still should not be regarded as a sign of racism. Inhabitants reject the "typical lifestyle of Gypsies". There are a lot of Roma living in the region. Therefore one could argue that the attitudes of locals toward Gypsies are not results of stereotypes but of everyday encounters. Transnational relations are born from local contexts and not from nations or national cultures (NIEDERMÜLLER Péter 2005:60–62). There is differentiation between newcomers and original inhabitants but it is not based on ethnic origin. Therefore it would be more appropriate to talk about trans-local relations than about transnational ones. It is common for individuals to feel a sense of community on the basis on local similarities rather than on ethnicity. Such local similarities may be based on social or kinship relations (MA, Eric Kit-wai 2002; MANDAVILLE, Peter 2000). On the practical level of living together being Romanian, Hungarian or Gypsy has far less importance than the ability to accept and to adapt to local norms and values.

Roma living in the settlement or in the region fail to adapt to local norms and values. Therefore they have to face exclusion. For locals difference in spoken language is more acceptable than difference in lifestyle.

Before the interest of Romanians in buying houses in Biharkeresztes there was a possibility of unemployed people of lower social status taking the place of those moving away for the hope of finding better employment. The inhabitants of Biharkeresztes were

worried about segregation. The fears were realistic for the same thing happened in the neighboring village of Told. Because of outward migration of the actives and inward migration of inactive and unemployed people Told became more and more segregated. On the administrative level Told belongs to Biharkeresztes. Therefore the inhabitants of the town had several channels through which they were able to get information regarding the situation of Told.

COMMUNICATION BETWEEN THE LOCALS AND THE NEWCOMERS, VIEWS ON NEWCOMERS

SPATIAL SEPARATION OF MIGRANTS participating in migration processes in the area of Ártánd border crossing point is uncharacteristic. Many of the buyers of properties noted though that they do not have any relations to the locals. At best they know some of their neighbors. It is common among the temporary/seasonal residents that their only connection to the locals is their neighbors. Those who do not live in Biharkeresztes usually give their phone number to one of the neighbors asking them to check on the house and send a notification in case of an emergency.

Locals do not really know the newcomers because they operate their social network at their place of origin, in the urban space of Nagyvárad [Oradea]. Therefore views on migrants are shaped by the interpretation of their presence. Locals have a positive view of newcomers. They believe that newcomers are spirited and have a good sense of business. These views are based on the fact that the newcomers were able to realize the advantages of buying properties in Hungary. As a result of globalization and transnationalism locals and migrants draw upon similar cultural meanings, expectations and visual signs. By renovating the houses, making them more comfortable and adding global prestige elements to them the migrants visually declare that they have transnational cultural values (KAPITÁNY Ágnes–KAPITÁNY Gábor 2000). All these lead to feelings of urbanization, prosperity and development for the locals. By taking care of their properties and accumulating wealth the newcomers show their value systems to locals. The renovation of houses and taking good care of the gardens are values appreciated by the local community. When migrants engage themselves in such activities they show their willingness to accept and carry on local values. In these terms Romanian newcomers do not have any disadvantage arising from the different language.

Cultural knowledge and acceptance of local values are more important than knowing the language. Even without speaking Hungarian they can show that local behavior and values are understood and accepted (NIEDERMÜLLER Péter 2005:59–60). Locals also have an important role in the act of acceptance. They value positive changes and approve certain modifications done by migrants, even if it means that the whole image of the settlement changes. In terms of attitudes and acceptance of behavior locals relate to newcomers with an accepting-emotional attitude (BINDORFFER Györgyi 2006:199).

The relationship between migrants and locals is largely influenced by the number and unity of the latter. Other European examples show us that cross-border mobility leads to tensions if migrants separate themselves from locals and do not show any interest in integration to the local society. Also, their unity, their level of organization is of utmost importance (SCHÜTZ, Alfred–LUCKMANN, Tomas 1984:272–273; HUSSERL, Edmund 1984). In most cases locals do not reject migrants until they are not act as an organized group.

Migration along the traffic route of the Ártánd border crossing point was only intensive for a short period of time. It did not result significant changes in the population of the target settlements. The process stopped because of the financial crises. The housing estate in Bedő providing more apartments for migrants was not realized. Therefore the newcomers did not have a chance to form a separate community within the settlements. The migrants do not act as an organized group. They try to build connections on the individual level. Because of the relatively low proportion of migrants in the population the lives of the settlements did not changed a lot. These factors all mean that locals do not feel any threat coming from the newcomers. In the last couple years, however, migrants started to organize themselves into groups. There are significant differences in this process at every settlement. In 2010 in Biharkeresztes some migrant intellectuals organized a meeting. For the locals it is easier to accept such initiations from migrants speaking both Hungarian and Romanian. As a general rule we can say that migrants speaking only Romanian do not aim to build strong ties in the local community.

There are some negative views expressed by locals. The reasons for forming such views are usually of less importance serving only as basis of creating distance. These show that acceptance does not mean integration.

Most of the migrants commute, which means they are away for most of the day. The community therefore cannot monitor their behavior and cannot control their norms.

Most of the criticism toward migrants is a result of this. Migrants hire Romanian workers for renovation, migrants do not communicate with the locals, migrants do not seek for relations with locals—to name just of few criticism.

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE MIGRANT WAY OF LIFE —THE LOCALS' EXPECTATIONS

MIGRANTS BUILD TRANSNATIONAL NETWORKS OF RELATIONS. They live in the host country, have relations with their neighbors and take part in local civic organizations but work in the country of origin, have their children attend school there and keep regular contact with their relatives and friends (GIELIS, Ruben 2009; STRÜVER, Anke 2005). Traveling and commuting are important parts of their lives. Since 2009 the local government of Biharkeresztes has been trying to find a solution for providing public transport between the town and Nagyvárad [Oradea]. Currently, as all attempts to public transport failed so far, traveling by car is the easiest way to reach Romania. Due to the financial situation of migrant families most of them own only one car. The process of suburbanization is expected to raise traffic in the area. Fortunately the Ártánd border crossing point is situated along the E-60 international road leading the traffic of the Berlin-Vienna-Budapest route toward Bucharest-Istanbul. Therefore the increasing traffic should not cause any problems. Biharkeresztes is directly linked to this road. The other borderline settlements do not have such advantages. After the Trianon decision the road network centered on Nagyvárad [Oradea] became useless. Former service roads were turned into roads connecting settlements. Therefore the road network of Berekböszörmény, Körösszegapáti and Körösszakál cannot bear the burden of increased traffic (MUJACSICS Levente 2004:244–248). Settlements with good quality of roads leading toward Nagyvárad [Oradea] have a huge advantage. Although in 2007 the road network of Hungary was a lot more developed than that of Romania, the situation changed by now. Beside the quality of roads the price of petrol is also an important factor. These outline the area from which it is economic to commute. The fact that in Romania gas prices are lower than in Hungary makes it more reasonable for commuters to buy gas there.

Locals think that investors and industrial facilities will also move to the borderline Hungarian settlements. In reality though, the migrants did not even increase significantly

the commercial incomes of the settlement. Further inquiries in consumer behavior are necessary to draw more elaborated conclusions, but we can state that "cross-border behavior" described by Kees Terlouw (2008) can be found in the area of Ártánd. Migrants utilize the asymmetries of the regional structure of the Euroregion resulting in price-differences. Research data show that most of the migrants draw on services offered in Nagyvárad [Oradea] and buy goods in the hypermarkets of Berettyóújfalu. Only everyday needs and occasional services are requested from local suppliers.

As the research concluded, traveling by car minimizes the chances of building up connections with locals. Interactions are scarce therefore differences and similarities of locals and newcomers are not experienced. This fact increases the isolation of migrants.

ECONOMIC FACTORS WORKING AGAINST TRANSMIGRATION

INTENSITY OF SUBURBANIZATION depends on the supply and demand of properties. The development of Romania together with the expansion of property market and the availability of mortgages encouraged suburbanization. The financial crises of 2008 hit at the time of the research. Therefore the changes in relation between suburbanization and property market could not be observed (NAGY Bálint Zsolt 2008: 704–716).

The economic situation of migrants influences migration tendencies. Many of the migrants did not have enough money to buy properties. Therefore they turned to loans and mortgages. In his study of Slovakian-Hungarian migration Tamás Hardi points out (2010:24–25) that this process is a "trap of suburbanization". He argues that favorable market conditions and credit lead to a situation in which the migrants do not consider the difficulties and additional costs of commuting every day. Also the financial crisis of 2008 could not have been taken account before.

Because of the relatively low costs of traveling (low gasoline prices) at the time, many people bought properties situated 30–40 kilometers from Nagyvárad [Oradea]. In migrant families traveling by car is the only possibility to reach the workplace and the schools. For them the crisis of 2008 had even been worse.

Cross-border residual mobility was decreased by several factors. The most important among them was the economic and financial crisis hitting Europe in 2008. It is no doubt that also the development of Romanian villages along the border and near Nagyvárad [Oradea] had an impact on the demand for Hungarian properties.

SETTLEMENTS OUTSIDE THE ZONE OF TRANSMIGRATION

WESTERN-EUROPEAN STUDIES OF MIGRATION processes show that borders in the European Union gradually change from rigid ones to more shifting in the Parkerian sense. More and more citizens consider borders as opportunities rather than restrictions (SPIERINGS, Bas-VAN DER VELDE, Martin 2008). In the Hungarian part of Bihar relations toward Nagyvárad [Oradea] do not shift back to the pre-Trianon situation automatically. During my research I studied the opinions of leaders on the advantages and disadvantages arising from the closeness of the border in Bedő, Biharkeresztes, Komádi and Csökmő. According to my data there are significant differences in expectations as we move further and further from Nagyvárad [Oradea].

KOMÁDI

As I have already pointed out, after the Trianon decision the administration artificially created towns to serve as a substitute of the regional center Nagyvárad [Oradea]. Besides Biharkeresztes, Komádi also became such a settlement. While Biharkeresztes was able to utilize the opportunities created by the border, Komádi was not. The example of Komádi is not unique. It shows all the problems the region had to face after the collapse of socialism.

From the '80s Komádi served as an organizational center of the Bihar region. Several industrial facilities operated in the town, together with a collective farm providing employment for the inhabitants.

The largest facility in Komádi was the Hemp Processing and Weaving Company the operation of which had significant impact on agricultural production in the area. Until the beginning of the 1990s hemp was produced on 30–40,000 acres in Biharkeresztes, Berekböszörmény, Körösszakál, Körösszegapáti, Magyarhomorog, Told, Körösszakál, Zsádány and several other villages. The hemp was processed in Komádi. The company was a subsidiary of the Fiber Company of Szeged, employing 3000 people. Employees were taken to the factory by bus and production was going in in three shifts.

The factory was closed down in the beginning of the 1990s creating an economic vacuum. Komádi had to face economic decline. Formerly sufficient production structures ceased and gradually all other workplaces had to shut down, including the Construction and Service Co-operative and the Flour Factory. New, small-scale

businesses utilized the buildings and facilities, but they only employed a fraction of the people and did not operate long. In the building of the former cultural center and mill a Italian sewing factory was established. In the pools of the former hemp factory the Propa-Gen Ltd. started breeding sturgeon in 1994. While the hemp factory employed 650 people the fishery had only work for 25–30. After the company went bankrupt a Russian entrepreneurship bought the facilities.

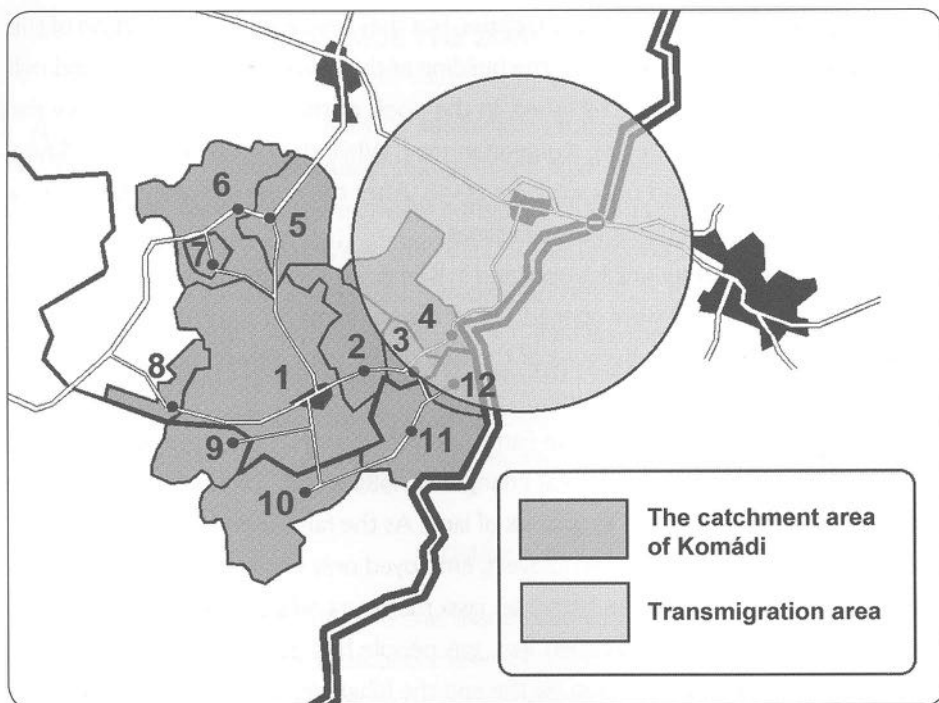
Several small entrepreneurships operated in Komádi at the turning of the millennium. Restaurants, hotels, stores were opened. Locals tried to focus on commerce and services to secure their subsistence. Because of the lack of spending power, however, most of these businesses had to close down.

in 1982 the Bihar Népe Collective Farm operated on 9700 acres and was thought to be unshakable. After the political changes of 1989 it lost some of its significance, but still, in 1994 the farm had 8955 acres of land. As the farm tried to adapt to market conditions many of the former employees, employed only because of the force of the regime, were fired. In 1982 the farm had 1250 members, while in 1994 only 897. The number of active workers was even less. 396 people had employment contract the other 501 people received pension. By the end the Bihar Népe Collective Farm did not cease because of the market, but because of legal reasons. According to the legislation collective farms could not own land. Therefore the otherwise profitable collective farm had to be dissolved. 8500 acres of plough-land and 2000 acres of pasture were divided.

By the time Hungary joined the European Union only 11–12 profitable agricultural farm with more than 100 acres of land operated in Komádi. Most of the land is utilized by two companies. In addition to them six individuals are engaged in agriculture, farming on 200–400 acres lands.

As I have already pointed out the facilities providing employment ceased after the political changes of 1989 and substitution was not available. All the resources of the former factories were sold or divided. By 1995 the legal successors of the former companies employed only 2 percent of the inhabitants.

The government tried to ease the situation by creating regional centers and agglomeration zones. Komádi became the center of a microregion in South Bihar. In terms of administration, tourism, culture and economy Komádi is the center of several settlements of Hajdú-Bihar and Békés counties including Magyarhomorog, Körösszakál, Körösszegapáti, Újiráz, Furta, Zsáka Körösújfalú, Zsadány, Biharugra and Körösnagyharsány. (Map 7.) Komádi was named a town in 2001. It was the time when



Map 7. The microregion of Komádi

1. Komádi, 2. Magyarhomorog, 3. Körösszakál, 4. Körösszegapáti, 5. Furta, 6. Zsáka, 7. Vekerd,
8. Újiráz, 9. Körösújfalú, 10. Zsadány, 11. Biharugra, 12. Körösnagyharsány

its regional role decreased, when the town could not offer employment even for its own citizens. In other words Komádi became a center when, in all other means than administrative, it failed to be a center.

In theory, the joining of the European Union in 2004 provided an opportunity for development. In reality, however, it soon became obvious that because of the low potentials and lack of resources the town will not be able to make use of the tenders and grants offered by the EU. The extent of successful tenders resulting employment do not meet previous expectations.

Since Komádi became a town the population is decreasing. In 2007 there were 6088 inhabitants, while in 2010 less than 6000. Aging and migration changes the social structure of the town. Skilled and qualified families move out, while the number of unskilled and unqualified (mainly Gypsy) people requiring social aid increases. 59,2 % of the inhabitants of Komádi in active age (15–59 years) do not have regular jobs. Only an

employee hiring a large number of people with no or low qualification could provide some kind of solution to the problem. In the last ten years though, no potential investors expressed interest in the town. Commuting is impossible too. Vésztő, Szeghalom and Berettyóújfalú are 1.5–2 hours from Komádi.

The region has problems similar to those of Komádi. Csökmő, Újiráz, Magyarhomorog, Zsáka, Furta, Köröszakál and Körösszegapáti face similar difficulties. Tourism is not an alternative either. According to the local views only those remain in these settlements who can secure their subsistence from agriculture. Mechanized agriculture, however, does not require a large number of unskilled workers.

As described above, the economic situation of Komádi did not improve by Hungary joining the European Union. Local governments received some supports for investments, they created new public spaces, schools, kindergartens and also a bicycle road. As a result a nicer, more functional habitat is created, while the settlements become more and more disfunctional. Currently these settlements are characterized by constant search for opportunities and permanent disadvantages.

Only a part of the inhabitants believe that the closeness of the border might give them advantages. According to a survey in 2009 only 5 percent of the inhabitants of Komádi regarded the geographical situation of Komádi as an advantage. The same number of people considered that being a town is beneficial for Komádi.²⁸ Most of the informants had no expectations regarding EU membership and the ceasing of borders. They said that Komádi is too far from the border to be influenced by it. In terms of development of the road network Komádi prefers to connect itself to the rest of Hungary. In 2010 the road leading to Furta was rebuilt. Locals do not believe that a border should or could be opened in Komádi. Local leaders argue that the village across the border to Komádi is completely Romanian. In contrary to Biharkeresztes and Bedő Komádi only believes in vital cross-border relations between Hungarians and Hungarians. Although the citizens of Komádi do not believe in advantages created by the border, it seems that some Romanians have a different point of view. There are a few Romanian families commuting from Komádi to Nagyvárad [Oradea]. Migration was stopped though, mainly because of increasing gasoline prices and the insufficient road network.

28 Based on the data provided by MEGAKOM Stratégiai Tanácsadó Iroda, 2010.

Before Trianon the region had a direct railway connection to Nagyvárad [Oradea]. Komádi, Vésztő, Újiráz, (at Kótpusztá) Körösújfalu, Körösszakál and Körösnagyharsány were linked to the regional center via railroad. After the Trianon decision the railroad was demolished and currently only the roads give access to Nagyvárad [Oradea]. (See Map 3.) Migration is present in settlements that are situated along the traffic route of Ártánd border crossing point, e.g. only settlements with easy access are targeted by cross-border residual migration.

CSÖKMŐ

AFTER A FEW YEARS OF EU MEMBERSHIP it seems that earlier hopes of development of peripheral, borderline settlement vanished. In all researched settlements specific approaches to survival can be found. They try to “stay alive” by choosing different alternatives.

“EU membership did not bring development. Local governments receive some money, but it only means trouble. the administrative burdens caused by it can last for months, even for years.”

Csökmő also has a decreasing population. In 2009 the unemployment was 14–16 percent. By 2009 the number of inhabitants was less than 2000.²⁹ The settlement does not have any industrial tradition and tourism cannot be regarded as an alternative either. The largest employer is the local government with 35 employees and 80 public workers. The Bihari Táj Termelő és Szolgáltató Ltd. [Bihar Landscape Agricultural Production and Service Ltd.] has 29 members and some employees. Beside them only an Italian sewing factory employs 8–10 persons and an agricultural entrepreneur another 3–4. Road 47 and the 32 buses going every day provide good access to the inhabitants to Szeged, Budapest, Debrecen and Nyíregyháza. Many of the inhabitants work in neighboring cities, some as far as Békéscsaba. Most of them, however, work in Szeghalom.

While a large number of people move from Csökmő, there are also some who choose to settle there. Mainly families from Szeghalom with a lower income decide to move to Csökmő because of the low property prices (a 100 m² house costs 2 million HUF in Csökmő, while in Szeghalom the price reaches 8 million). Kóróssziget, a suburban area of

29 1885 people as of 01 January 2009. (WAFFENSCHMIDT Jánosné ed. 2009: 56)

Csökmő, has mainly turned into an area of leisure for Hungarians, but also a Romanian dentist bought a weekend house there.

Neither the main road nor the neighboring settlement provide enough access to work for the inhabitants in Csökmő. Therefore the local government is constantly maneuvering, weighing options. In contrast to Komádi, Csökmő tries to draw on the closeness of the border and Nagyvárad [Oradea]. It is interesting to note that the reconstruction of the railways was brought up by Csökmő and not by the regional center, Komádi. The local elite of Csökmő believe that on the long-term the future of the Bihar region (including Csökmő) lies in the easy access to Nagyvárad [Oradea]. The locals remember that a few generations ago the livestock was sold in Nagyvárad [Oradea] and machinery was bought there. The railway connection to Nagyvárad [Oradea] was accessible through Kótpuszta. The railway and the station was shut down in the 1920s, but remained largely intact. Only 150 meters of tracks are missing. Locals believe that by the reopening of the station the region would be able to reintegrate itself into the macro-region of Nagyvárad [Oradea]. The only problem was the lack of financial resources. Locals were trying to persuade an investor to invest into the reopening of the station and they did so. In Kótpuszta a waste management factory is going to be opened. The factory will be operated under Slovakian licence and promised to re-open the railway station. According to the plans, the factory will hire people from Csökmő. The investment is currently in the planning phase but the concept itself shows that Csökmő indeed relies on its connection to Nagyvárad [Oradea]. The local power elite considers the geographical situation as an advantage. The Schengen Treaty secured freedom of movements and Csökmő has several alternative plans to utilize it. They believe that investments in Nagyvárad [Oradea] will provide workplaces for construction workers, but also plans on producing sugar beet for Romanian sugar factories were elaborated (These examples show the approaches of Csökmő toward utilizing the opportunities provided by the border).

SUMMARY

THE JOINING OF THE EUROPEAN UNION IN 2004 brought significant changes in the lives of borderline settlement in Hungary. These were strengthened by Romania joining of the EU in 2007. From that time the relationship of the regions at the Romanian and

Hungarian sides of the border was largely influenced by opportunities opening up with the borders.

The root causes of cross-border residual mobility were the political and market processes allowing Nagyvárad [Oradea] to include Hungarian settlement with favorable geographical setting to its agglomeration zone. The process happened on the level of individuals who, by realizing that they can get properties in Hungary by a far less price than in Nagyvárad [Oradea], were quick to utilize opportunities created by the opening up of borders. The inhabitants of Nagyvárad [Oradea] not being able to afford houses in the city were encouraged to move to the other side of the border. Although the process took place on the individual level it was also part of a more complex regional change. Nagyvárad [Oradea], the natural center of the region, broadens its relations and includes Hungarian settlements earlier closed by the borders.

The agglomeration zone of Nagyvárad [Oradea] reaching Hungary provides an opportunity to create two types of ethnic relations. On the one hand ethnic Romanian settlements in Hungary (Bedő, Körösszakál, Körösszegapáti) were able to tighten their relations to Romania via the Romanian newcomers. In this case the identity of Romanians is strengthened and enriched with new elements. On the other hand the Hungarians living in Romania have a chance to move to Hungary. Even more they can become Hungarian citizens. Especially for the older generation this has a strong emotional connotation.

The borderline region becomes a transnational place due to the position of Hungarians coming from Romania. They are familiar with both sides of the borders and consider both of them home. They are citizens with all citizen's right in both countries. The process has not finished yet. On the long term it is easy to see that, due to the migration, borderline zones will become transnational places providing equal opportunities for different groups, cultures and forms of life to meet. In this way a "transnational" way of life may be brought into existence.

However, the process is not smooth. Cross-border migration emerged because of economic prosperity experienced in the given period of time. Families regarded their situation as prosperous. Because of the rising property prices, less opportunities to get loans and mortgages and by increasing gasoline prices the Hungarian settlements became less favorable. The post-2008 happenings show us that, due to their suburban way of life and the necessity of commuting, migrant families more easily end up in financially difficult situations. We cannot say, however, that transmigration had stooped

permanently. It has only slowed down, due to the economic crisis. If we take a look at the history of the Bihar region we see that all alternatives coming from up failed to help the region overcome its disadvantages. Transmigration was organized on the level of individuals and families. Migrants utilized the differences in the market structure of the two countries. By doing so they eliminated asymmetry.

The process is characterized by being periodic and limited to a certain territory. Currently only those of the settlements formerly being in the agglomeration of Nagyvárad [Oradea] may join the process that have an easy access to the city. Settlements in which the connection to Nagyvárad [Oradea] was provided via railway are not as eager to recreate ties. When regarded as suburbanization the phenomenon can be broken down to phases. Residual and industrial suburbanization does not go hand in hand. Meanwhile several families chose Hungary instead of Romanian villages with underdeveloped infrastructure, companies did not follow them. The Romanian side of the border cannot take more industries. Nevertheless companies have not moved to Hungary yet.

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The effects of land privatization in the Bihar region following the political changes of 1989

WITH THE POLITICAL CHANGES OF 1989 a substantial transformation begun in the Hungarian agricultural sector inducing changes affecting the life of local societies even in the present days. This paper is based on field work carried out in five increasingly disadvantaged settlements close to the border of the former Bihar County (today: Hajdú-Bihar County): Kórósziget, Csökmő, Újiráz, Komádi and Magyarhomorog. Based on data collected through interviews, it documents and interprets the main features of the changes caused by land privatization during the first decade following the change of the Hungarian regime. From an ethnographic and socio-ethnographic point of view, it traces how the national decisions (appearing as external, upper elements) (WOLF, Eric 1966: 1–20) realize in the local system of values and norms and how they effect the ways of production and forms of behavior (SILVERMAN, Sydel 1983: 89–105).

PRIVATIZATION AND COMPENSATION

PRIVATIZATION WAS ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT ISSUES of the political changes of 1989. The altered political conditions allowed the re-shaping of ownership structure. With the end of central planned economy, the goal of the new democratic government

was to eliminate the dominance of state ownership and agricultural cooperatives thus creating a national market economy based on the private property of individual and joint ventures. (CSÁKI György–MACHER Ákos 1998: 7)

The legal foundations of privatization had been laid even before the official political transition with the amendment of the constitution in 1989. It declared that the Republic of Hungary shall guarantee the right to property, and recognize and support the right to enterprise. The Constitution introduced a market economy and declared equal rights among forms of ownership: this meant that the preference previously given to public ownership was ended, and that thereafter public and private forms of ownership enjoyed equal protection.

In Hungary, the massive form of institutional privatization began in 1990 with the foundation of the State Property Agency. The Antall-government published the Government's *Ownership and Privatization Strategy* in 1992 which became the basis of the "privatization laws".

The legislators had to choose between two methods: the *redistributive* and the *market-based* privatization. Hungary's first post-communist government opted for *market-based* privatization.¹ However, as far as compensation and giving property to communes were concerned, the *redistributive* privatization strategy was applied in the Hungarian legal order.² As a consequence of this, in the 1990's, there was a peculiar situation: while foreign investors were encouraged to buy Hungarian state-owned enterprises and sites³ in the industrial and service sectors, the government banned foreigners' purchasing Hungarian land. (CSÁKI György–MACHER 1998: 7) Burgerné Gimes Anna explains the application of different privatization strategies with ideological reasons. According to her opinion, the banning of foreigners from land-ownership became the leading principle of the first democratically elected (center-

1 In *market-based privatisation* the state retreats from the entrepreneurial sector. State assets are sold and become private property. The disadvantage of this privatisation process is that foreign investors (having more money and capital) are in more advantageous position so it does not help the formation of a national class of proprietors. (CSÁKI György – MACHER Ákos 1998: 5)

2 As for *redistributive privatisation*, the claimants receive notes convertible into property which, in fact, represents their right to have a certain portion of the national assets. this method of privatisation is faster and transforms the former national assets into the hands of the citizens. (CSÁKI György – MACHER Ákos 1998: 7)

3 The bigger the capital import, the more successful a country's economy is considered.

right) government of 1990-94. According to this government's opinion, "real patriots" cannot allow "Hungarian lands wandering into the hands of foreigners". The following socialist governments, for fear of being considered not patriotic enough, agreed with the protection of land from foreigners. (BURGERNÉ GIMES Anna 2003:)

The private ownership of land and the elimination of the land monopoly of large-scale farms (cooperatives) created market economy conditions and opened a new chapter in land cultivation for the different forms of property and different sizes of farms were present on the market palette at the same time. (LACZKÓ András 2005:) As a consequence of the change of the economic system during the privatization process, new actors with different roles joined the life of the settlements. (ROMÁNY Pál 1992:)

There couldn't be a full-scale re-privatization (the complete return of properties owned before 1949 by former owners or their descendants). The Antall-government decided that, instead of direct re-privatization, it will try to ensure economic reasonability and the harmonization of often confronting individual interests by introducing compensation coupons and land auctions. (WUNDERLICH, Gerhard 1995; MINAMIZUKA 1996; SWINNEN, Johan, 1997ab; CSÁKI Csaba-LERMAN, Zvi 1997: 428-452; HANN, Chris 2005: 28)

Within the compensation process, the transformation of land-ownership was regulated in four stages:

- Act XXV of 1991, On Partial Compensation for Damages Unlawfully Caused by the State to Properties Owned by Citizens in the Interest of Settling Ownership Relations (First Compensation Law). The law regulates compensation for most property nationalized since June 8, 1949.
- Act XXIV of 1992, To Regulate Property Ownership, On the Partial Compensation for the State's Confiscation of Citizens' Property Pursuant to The Enforcement of Laws Passed Between May 1, 1939 and June 8, 1949 (Second Compensation Law).
- Act XXXII of 1992, On Compensation for Citizens Who Had Unlawfully Lost Their Life or Liberty for Political Reasons Between March 11, 1939 and October 23, 1989 (Third Political Compensation Law).
- Act II of 1992 contained rules according to which claimants who wanted to start agricultural activities had priority over claimants. Rules on land assignment and rules of priority of distribution were set forth (Fourth Compensation Law).

The first and second compensation law defined which lands could be reclaimed as a compensation by former owners or their descendants after the political changes of

1989. Compensation could be received by those who issued a claim. The act limited the compensation of landowners and their descendants in 1000 AK.⁴ Eligible claimants received vouchers known as compensation coupons (often mentioned as compensation vouchers or compensation notes as well). The value of the compensation vouchers was determined on the basis of the AK value of the lost lands. The owners could either use these "quasi securities" during the privatization of the state assets and the agricultural privatization or to buy lands.⁵

There were two kinds of land reserves in the boundary of the villages in January 1993 waiting for the new owners: the "proportionate share land" and the "compensational land reserves".

DIVISION OF COOPERATIVE PROPERTY AND THE LANDOWNERSHIP OF COOPERATIVE MEMBERS

The division of cooperative property was based on the length of employment by the cooperative, the accumulated personal income and the committed assets. Sometimes, things got out of control even during the calculation of proportionate shares. According to the act, before the division of cooperative property the ownership stake of the members had to be calculated in each cooperative. The method of the calculation was determined by the general meeting. Depending on the ratio of the *time spent in the cooperative*, the *committed assets* and the current *salary*, the interest of either the active employees or that of the pensioners could prevail. In Magyarhomorog, the confronting interests led the cooperatives into a crisis. Out of the total 152 members, there were less than 70 active employees. The pensioners could throw out the proposals representing the interests of active employees any time. Therefore, during the division of business shares a decision favoring the pensioners was made: the salary was taken into account in 40 per-cent while the years spent as active employee were taken into account in 60 per-

4 aranykorona (AK) is a traditional Hungarian unit of land value. This unit is an index which expresses the quality of the land, and today should be seen as an approximation, especially in view of the differing branches of cultivation. /the translator/

5 The following data represent the degree and importance of social changes: according to the first and second compensation laws, compensation coupons in a total value of 62.5 billion Forints were issued for 896495 claimants. Until the end of 1993, more than 14000 land auctions were held where 340227 individuals acquired ownership of land in a total value of 275 million golden crowns. (Kovács 1994a)

cent.⁶ The goal of the active employees was to preserve their workplaces by keeping the cooperative intact while those pensioners whose children were not living in the village were motivated by getting cash.⁷ They wanted to sell their land shares (in a value of 10–20–50 thousand Forints) and many of them wanted to sell their shares in assets, too.

“No, he doesn’t want to milk those 10 cows. He just sends ‘em to the slaughterhouse and that’s all: good bye and he gets the money, some 80 thousand Forints for one F1 cow.⁸ It’s the money he needs. An active employee, however, needs the workplace.”⁹

With this, most of the pensioners wishing to save their shares and assets wanted to help their children living elsewhere – thus pumping the capital out of the village and leading the cooperative into a crisis.

The land or the agricultural property – as the most secure asset and a means of improving the economic potential of the family – was a base suitable for the existence of the family. That’s why the agric land always appeared in the specialist literature of ethnography as the only secure base that partially preserved its importance (as market garden) even during the socialist era for land cultivators living in local societies. In the years following the political transition, however, the devaluation of the role and importance of land-ownership during the decades of socialism made itself felt. In families where the younger generation had a different (mostly urban) way of life, the parents regarded the converting of land into money as the only way of securing the future of their children. With the younger generation quitting the rural way of life, land-ownership devalued and these families tried to sell their lands, shares and compensation coupons as soon as possible, often below the real price.

6 In Tázlár, the situation was the contrary: the salary played a more important role here. But the locals were not satisfied either because during the distribution of the cooperative’s assets between the shareholders, the leaders of the cooperative became the major stakeholders. (Hann 2005: 24–25)

7 Not only in Magyarhomorog were the older generation and the active employees in conflict. In Derecske, the leaders of the Petőfi Cooperative attempted to convert the large-scale farm into a joint venture in 1998, but the pensioners of the membership who preferred continuity over market success could delay the conversion of the cooperative into a limited company for a long time. (Rácz Kata 2005: 94)

8 The F1 cow is a hybrid of Holstein Fríz and Hungarian tarka cattle, suitable for the needs of Hungarian large-scale milk production.

9 Information provided by a former cooperative leader, 1999. Magyarhomorog

In the ethnographic literature of the 19th and 20th century, the peasants' love of land appears as a basic value. Apparently, the 19th century's system of values had changed considerably by today, but what remains raises the question: is the peasants' often mentioned love of land is just a romantic image created by the early ethnographic interpretations? Without external explanations, the land is only a means that can secure the existence of the coming generations. The emphasis is not on the land itself but on securing the existence of the coming generations.

The selling of shares was not the only problem that could lead to the disintegration of the cooperatives. The taking out of the shares as assets often meant the end of large-scale farming, even in those cases when the new proprietors didn't want to sell these assets. The large-scale farms in themselves were not dividable and the shareholders were unable to operate them on large-scale level.

"...coz the milking-machine will never ever be taken out by anyone. It's a big machine designed for the needs of large-scale animal husbandry, it cannot be divided and does only function as a whole, not in parts. So you may take your own 10 cows out and the other guy may take the other 10 cows out, but the milking house will be left for decay."¹⁰

However, there were also examples in the area for trying to preserve the operability of the shares. That time the president of the agricultural cooperative of Csökmő, along with a couple of members, had taken out the fishing pond of the cooperative as a share and leased it out later.

The distribution of proportional share land

The state did not take part in the organization of the allocation of proportional land, it was entrusted to the local communities. According to Act II of 1992, a Land Allocation Committee (LAC) was elected in each village. The way of the election of committee members was regulated by the act. A general meeting of the cooperative was called in each settlement wherein only members could take part. The meeting elected a committee consisting of at least seven members entrusted with the task of allocating the areas in the boundary of the village that will later be defined as shares.

¹⁰ Information provided by a former cooperative leader, 1999. Magyarhomorog

The meetings tried to ensure that there are younger as well as older people with high social prestige among the members of the committees. In spite of a representative of the National Bureau of Compensation and Re-compensation supervising their work, a considerable part of the LACs did not function properly due to the lack of experts.

"Well, it was the local knowledge that counted, 'coz the president [of the cooperative] was an electrician himself. But these were all just farmer's sons – there was no one with a university degree. Fortunately, there was someone from the village's Council, a secretary who helped in everything if we didn't understand something. Because there were so many different papers that no matter how much time you spent on reading them quite often it occurred that you couldn't understand what they are about. Then we called the secretary and he came to explain it to us all."¹¹

The allocation of the land took place in the early spring of 1993. The LAC determined the land mass equaling the golden crown value¹² of the members' property. The committee then published which parcels of land form the proportional land shares and conscripted the claims (who would like to have which land). The golden crown¹³ value of each land was known, and members could put in their shares until reaching the gold crown limit of the allocated land. In case there were more claims than land, the claimants were chosen by drawing lots.

"...here is a land, 51 hectares, the best land of Kóróssziget. Three hundred people claimed it. I claimed it, too. But when it turned out that, they are drawing lots, I quit. Lots had to be drawn, for you can't allocate 300 hectares from a 51 hectare land."¹⁴

When a certain area was allocated, another one was selected. The practice of land division varied from settlement to settlement, too. In Csökmő, claimants could chose

11 Information provided by a former LAC member, 1999. Kóróssziget

12 The value of the land was determined via the method of aranykorona (golden crown) calculation applied in Austria-Hungary. The method of golden crown valuation was introduced in 1870 and allowed the calculation of the net income produced by 1 cadastral acre taking both ecological and economic factors into account. In the calculation of cadastral net profitability, factors such as farming methods, forage crop prices and expenses played a role, too. The change of political borders and economic features, as well as the technological advance require the correction of the method; however, it has not happened since the 1910's. Then again – lacking a better method – this land valuation system is still in use.

13 Hereinafter: AK.

14 Information provided by a pensioner (former cooperative leader), 2001. Kóróssziget

lands from every allocated land, not only from just the parcel of land being currently divided.

After the LAC registered the location of the lands of the individual landowners, the land became undivided joint property. Thus the new landowners were supposed to hire a lawyer who cancels the joint ownership and a geometer who surveys the individual parcels. This would have been costly, so the new owners did it themselves, surveying the land with their own, often inaccurate methods thus creating a problem that is still unsolved for, even though the land is cultivated, nobody knows exactly where the limits of his/her land parcels are and whether he/she cultivates his/her own land or that of someone else. This "cheap" solution made the selling of the land more complicated. Officially, the proportionate share can be sold but the land surveyed by "do-it-yourself" methods can only be sold if the other owners agree.

Some of the owners had died in the meantime, some live abroad and their current address is unknown, so the selling of these lands is very difficult. During the allocation process, it became another source of problem that many claimants knew where the old land (the land parcel the family owned before the nationalization, etc.) was but the limits after the survey were not always matching the expectations of the villagers. Often, this method of land allocation proved dysfunctional due to the lack of money and expertise. There was a settlement where the state had to intervene in the end, and the allocation was carried out by the Office of the Ministry of Agriculture.¹⁵

"...We had allocated the land, but then the geometer came and allocated it otherwise. We allocated it this way and he did it in a contrary way. I mean, we allocated it from here to there and he did it from there to here. But they were working according to the maps."¹⁶

Only a part of the proportional land property was distributed. The majority of the members took out only a part of their land leasing out the rest to the cooperative, and there were many who leased out their entire land. Since not only the land allocation but also the distribution was characterized by the lack of expertise, it was a sheer luck that a considerable part of the members did not take out their land.

15 I have experienced in my surveys in Csongrád County that certain parcels of land became inaccessible for the dirt roads leading to them were allocated by the LAC members, too. So it could happen that the new owner built a foil greenhouse in the middle of the road from one day to another.

16 Information provided by a former LAC member, 1999. Kőrössziget

The effects of privatization on the ownership structure

Among the population living in the country, there were many who – due to the lack of expertise, capital, equipment and workforce – didn't even try to establish a private farm. Having pondered the amount of necessary investment, they judged the establishing and profitable operation of a farm hopeless, because, lacking base capital, they would have needed to borrow money and with the high interest rates the redeeming of the debt seemed impossible. (SZILÁGYI Miklós 2002: 13)

There were other ways to utilize the lands. For some, the most self-evident was to lease out the equities wholly to the cooperative. Others, however, quickly sold their equities for fear of the cooperative going bankrupt and losing their share.¹⁷

There were people who sold only a smaller part of their land (1–3 hectares), but leased out the rest to the cooperative. Others didn't even expect compensation bigger than a few hectares.¹⁸ Of course, this small size of land was unsuitable for starting a new type of agricultural enterprise, these people just wanted to continue the model of self-sufficient "market garden farming" characteristic for the socialist era. (NEMES Gusztáv–HEILIG Balázs 1996: 149–181) Agricultural production served to satisfy the needs of the household and such small-sized farms were owned and cultivated by various layers of the local society: old-age pensioners, unemployed people as well as industrial workers. As a consequence of the differences in the motivation of individual farmers and the self-sufficient nature of the farms, there were differences in the scale of production. A considerable part of the farmers cultivating only a few hectares of land (market garden) produced food to amend the food-supply of the family. (BURGERNÉ GIMES Anna–KESZTHELYINÉ RÉDEI Mária–SALAMIN Pálné 1990: 2)

Private farms (with a land area of 10–20 hectares) were organized according to the pattern of the traditional middle-peasantry. The self-sufficient peasant farm is based on the balance of crop production and animal husbandry. In other farms animal husbandry is emphasized. The production-oriented peasant farm is characterized by the emphasis on crop-production. This group was characterized by the need for security, the risk-minimizing attitude and an ambition for sustaining the mentality and

¹⁷ As we could later see in the case of some pensioners in Magyarhomorog.

¹⁸ In Újiráz those who settled in 1912 received 4.5 cadastral acre, however, during the inter-war period this size of land fragmented into smaller pieces.

economic structure of the pre-collectivization era. The attention of those who had mostly "inherited material capital" (considerable re-compensation land) was focused on seizing the opportunities and protecting themselves from the effects of the changes. (BORSOS Endre – GYÖRGY István 1999: 76–78) These farms lacked the capital and the information related to the market conditions. (KEMÉNY Márton 2005: 180) In many cases, the goal was not the profitable but just the secure production. However, risk avoidance limited the amount of possible profit, too. (NEMES Gusztáv – HEILIG Balázs 1996: 149–181) They kept up with the product for the production of which they were predestined by their expertise. If that failed, they shifted within the current repertoire of production.

Most of the labor was done by the proprietor and his/her family. The farms were under-mechanized and proprietors lacked the capital for development. Therefore, the farmers had to spend a lot of money on hiring workers. In the area, most of the newly established farms were based on animal husbandry, breeding pigs, cattle or sheep. With the dairy production and pig farming becoming unprofitable, many tried raising store cattle. Their lands were big enough to produce more than the necessary amount of forage crops and the farmer could sell the product surplus. Due to the altered market-conditions, the marketing of non-calculated animal growth became increasingly difficult. The most problematic part of the production was the marketing of products. Small farmers had no professional representation of interests and they were highly exposed. Under the deteriorating economic conditions, the farmers became less inclined to produce because the traditional frameworks did not allow a profitable production. They did not have the necessary means for transforming their farms, could not provide the required capital and could not borrow money. The majority of the 10–20 hectare farms was unprofitable from the very beginning and gradually fell out from market-oriented production.

Farms between 50 and 70 acres are characterized by modernization and mechanization and intensive production. Their owners are often the former middle and upper leaders of the cooperative with high-level economic expertise. (KOTICS József 2001: 145) From the interviews it can be seen which moral and material values they put emphasis on and what they see the major elements of successful farming in. Their moral basis was different from that of the cooperative employees. Their system of values was characterized by regarding the type of "self-made man" as a role model. The entrepreneur who left the community of the village and planned his career path as an

individual embodied the individualization itself and the changes in mentality related to it. (BENDA Gyula 1991: 172) When speaking about the history of their enterprises, they put the emphasis on diligence, working more and harder than average employees and the external factors. An important element of the memoirs was that in the first half of the 1990's farmers started to work "from nothing" only by mobilizing their own reserves. According to the self-employed (constrained entrepreneurs) of those times, their situation is peculiar because it was much easier to start a new enterprise right after the political transition and those who started their business later, under more strict economic conditions, find it hard to keep up the pace with them. However, even at the turning point of the millennium, we could see the consequences of local societies rejecting new ways of market production. During the research we realized that after the change of the regime, only those could become successful entrepreneur who accumulated enough economic and symbolic capital before 1989 and could invest it in the market economy. (TÓTH István György 1998) The individual's place in the socio-economic hierarchy depends on his/her share in the various forms of capital (inherited, power, relationship, human and authority capital). The farmers who intensively take risks had mostly "power capital"¹⁹ being in positions that helped them to acquire material advantages. (BORSOS Endre – GYÖRGY István 1999: 76–78)

They are market-oriented and their goal is to make profit. The production is preceded by calculation (which involves the calculation of their own labour). The finances are booked, the expectable incomes and expenses are regularly planned. (KOVÁCH Imre 1988: 91–93) This kind of farming requires the constant search for opportunities, and if found, their immediate seizing in order to fully mobilise the energies, experience and contacts one has. It requires a certain over-securing and forces the individual to concentrate the reserves. (BIRÓ A. Zoltán–GAGYI József–OLÁH Sándor 1994: 29)

COMPENSATION AND LAND AUCTION

The agricultural lands of the pre-socialist era – called eternal material capital by Bourdieu (1997: 156–177) – could be reclaimed by the former owners or their descendants

19 The most concentrated type of capital, only owned by the economic and political elite. A position that helps in acquiring material advantages. (Borsos–György 1999. 76–78)

as re-compensation after the political changes of 1989 on the basis of Act XXV of 1991, and Acts XXIV, XXXII and XLIX of 1992.

In the socialist era, the land of those who were not members of the collective farms was redeemed. Those who had such redeemed land and weren't employed in the agricultural sector could claim re-compensation and received compensation coupons. Cooperative members, however, couldn't receive compensation coupons for their lands that were cultivated by the cooperative and they had propriety shares according to the committed lands. So, if a member of the cooperative committed his/her land to the cooperative in the 1950's, after his/her death the land was inherited by his/her heirs. If the heir was employed by the cooperative, he/she retained a share, if the heir worked elsewhere then the equity was redeemed. So within a family the one of two brothers who was a member of the cooperative got the land and the other could claim compensation vouchers. The division of cooperative property was granted only for the members of the cooperative and the land had to be given back to all of them.

In the 1990's the cooperative joint ownership was cancelled so each land had to be allocated and it had to be determined who gets what portion of land. Proprietors received land according to the time spent in the cooperative and the committed land. It happened that someone who had moved from the village in the meantime didn't know that he got a parcel of land because his address was unknown and he could not be notified. Their parcels did not lay waste either, they were usually cultivated by the owner of the neighboring parcels.

Land auctions started in 1993 when people already had their compensation coupons. Cooperatives were obliged by the laws to establish a compensation land fund and a land fund for proportional land proprietors. Those who had compensation coupons could purchase the land they wanted from the compensation land funds in land auctions. In the first round, only local farmers and the descendants of menials living in the settlement could take part. In the last two rounds – as long as there was land remaining – anyone else could take part who wanted to purchase land.

In the first round, outbidding was not customary: the participants agreed among themselves in advance and one AK was sold for 500 Forints. According to §22 (1) of the Act XXV of 1991, auction participants could bid for the Forint value of one AK. If there was no bid on or above the starting price, it could be gradually lowered to a minimum of 500 HUF/AK. (NAGY Ferenc 1991: 67).

"People are not stupid, they agreed in advance. Knowing who wants to buy what, there was not much quarrelling. If there was a debate, the problem was solved before the auction, so during the auction there was no problem."²⁰

It is a characteristic feature of the Hungarian land-privatization that it favored the more wealthy actors who had capital, for the division of land happened via indirect means (compensation coupons). (BORSOS Endre, CSITE András, HELLA Ferenc, KOVÁCS Róbert, LETENYEI László 1999: 26) Due to the collapse of the socialist economy, the majority of people living in deprived, disadvantaged areas had already lost their workplace by the time the compensation came. The families depleted their reserves and had no capital to buy land, and to make things worse, the land prices started to rise and the lands were auctioned at 1000–3000 Forints/AK. When the auctions became free for everyone, people who collected a large quantity of compensation coupons and considered the purchasing of land a good investment came from other parts of the country, too. Most of the locals had no chance against them. All in all, the remaining land area was not too big for after the claims of the local farmers there was not too much left in the compensation reserve of the villages. 90 per-cent of the land was auctioned during the first two rounds (for e.g., only a few dozen hectares remained in Újiráz). The lands remaining to be auctioned in the last round were either too remote or of poor quality.

Due to the insufficient information, there were many who didn't realize the opportunities for purchasing land. The compensation-coupons were sold and non-local owners often took the compensation-lands during the sales and auctions. Among these "foreigners" were people who had collected a considerable amount of compensation coupons and did not care about the location or quality of lands they wanted to purchase.

"There were 40 hectares of land remaining in Körösújfalu in the last round of auction. Then came an unknown guy with a big briefcase and it turned out that he is a trustee of Count Almásy and he wants to buy some land. So let's make a deal, he said, he buys half of the 40 hectares and the people may buy the rest if they want. First, he was beaten up for he said that he wants that 20 hectare land and if people won't agree, he'll just buy the whole 40, whatever it costs. So an agreement had to be made because his briefcase was full of compensation coupons, several millions in

20 Information provided by an agriculture expert, 2002. Újiráz

total, and the locals wouldn't have any chance against him during the auction: he could have outbid anyone else. Then the guy bought half of the land and the people bought the rest and everyone made a good business: people got their own land and the guy bought his 20 hectares for a price of 500 [thousand?] Forints.”²¹

In the area I surveyed four factors played important roles in the emerging of conflicts related to the compensation: the lack of land-ownership traditions, a careful “wait-and-see” behavior, insufficient information and the shortcomings of the compensation laws.

Lack of land-ownership traditions

By the end of the 20th century, the way of life of the villagers, their system of values and norms were different in many respect from those of the peasants of the pre-socialist era. The proliferation of industrial, urban life-form transformed also the people living in local societies and as a consequence of this, the farming mentality was altered, too. Though some degree of continuity between the former and current way of thinking, norms and attitude can be detected, farming was not an attractive career among some social groups and especially the younger generation. Return to farming was often only an alternative or the only remaining choice (MOLNÁR Ágnes 2005: 127–138) and in the majority of cases played no significant role in the making an income. During the forty years of socialism we witnessed the loss of prestige of country life and agricultural work. It's not just that the young people who attended the secondary school in nearby towns could not take part in the socialization and could not learn the farming methods of the earlier generations.²² The socialist propaganda also did its best to make the traditional life form and farming less prestigious.²³

21 Information provided by a farmer, 1999. Magyarhomorog

22 The farming strategies of the adult generation changed during the years of socialism.

23 Even though the workers' power seemingly was allied with the peasantry, in an oblique way it degraded their way of life. Those in power questioned especially the viability of small-scale farming in order to stress the importance of large-scale cooperatives. The communist propaganda preferred to rank the production methods and the opposite the labourer working in a modern large-scale industrial firm was the farmer cultivating his own small parcel of land in the past. (In the education system of the socialist era, it can be detected that the opposite of modern, urban, beautiful and clean was the small, rural, dark and worn, even in the textbooks for elementary school children.)

In 1989, a considerable part of the peasants had no knowledge related to land-ownership. During the organization of cooperatives, the *kulaks* (the skilled middle- and large-scale farmers of the pre-socialist era) were subjected to the most serious atrocities. As a defensive reaction, they left the villages and, having moved into the towns, had no contact with agriculture any longer.

Labor became specialized during the years of collective farming. At the time of the political transition, a considerable part of the people working in the agricultural sector had only certain tasks and they had no concept about the whole process of production and did not know enough to start their own business.

*"...the biggest problem here is that people are specialized. The tractor driver is perfect in his own profession but does not know the necessary amount of grain."*²⁴

As for taking up individual farming there are significant differences between the regions of the country. Even within relatively small distances we can observe different strategies. Since we cannot talk about secluded communities (TÖNNIES, Ferdinand 1983: 7–35) completely different attitudes can be found even within the local society of the same settlement, and the different social groups experienced the privatization in different ways.²⁵

In the area of Bihar I surveyed, there are no significant traditions of individual farming. Even though Magyarhomorog was a settlement of lower nobility (gentry) and there were many landowners in Komádi before WW II, leasing out of the land dominated until the early years of the 20th century. (MOLNÁR Balázs 1952: 370–386) As for the land structure of the region, it is characteristic that the majority of the land was possessed by a few squatters. (DANKÓ Imre 2001) The detection of land-ownership traditions is even harder when it comes to settler villages. The settlers in these villages were former roustabouts who earned their living as hired workers and got only a few cadastral acres of land from the chapter. They knew how to cultivate the land but had no experience in land-ownership. There were many who got their land back after

24 Information provided by a farmer, 2000. Komádi

25 As a result of his researches carried out in Tiszadob, Péter Porkoláb (2005: 123–124) emphasises that in the agrarian system established after the change of the regime it was exactly those farmers seemed to survive who were descendants of the families that were farmers before 1945. These families has a household farm of their own so they remained in contact with a certain post-peasantry farming model during the socialist era.

the change of the regime, but in this region these were usually smaller parcels of land that did not allow individual farming. In Újiráz, the chapter provided small ploughlands (4.5 cadastral acres) and even the clever and successful farmers were unable to have more than 10 or 11 cadastral acres until WW II. In Kóróssziget, only a couple of settlers who had big families possessed 25 cadastral acres. (LOVAS KISS Antal 2007: 255) According to the compensation law, they received only smaller amounts of money for the nationalized land was small. Prisoners of war could receive more money as re-compensation according to the second compensation law. Local inhabitants collected their entrepreneurial experience while operating market gardens, however, this form of farming proved to be not viable without the support of cooperatives in the 1990's.

Careful, "wait-and-see" behavior

There was a careful, risk-minimizing economic strategy behind the "wait-and-see" behavior of many. They did not react to the external force to change until the profit and the positive effect of the transformation was visible and measurable. Even though most people had experienced that the usual economic strategies were not viable after the political transition, instead of changing/evolving they tried to adapt to the new situation by waiting and putting a check on production. People compensated for lost profit due to this careful, risk-avoiding economic behavior by consuming less and living more frugally. As a result they gradually went through their reserves. (BIRÓ A. Zoltán–GAGYI József–OLÁH Sándor 1994: 29) However, they eventually found themselves in a position more disadvantageous than that of those social groups who took the risk and/or were able to see through the situation.

In Újiráz, the best possible strategy in the uncertain situation – even on the collective level – seemed waiting and delaying the decision until the maneuvering allowed to measure the direction and effects of change. (KISS Antal 2002: 101)

"...Then came this something called political transition and we became pretty much careful not to do anything wrong. The cooperative might remain, things will get better."

However, the wait-and-see behavior proved to be a failure of adaptation. The decision making could be delayed but in the meantime, the cooperative of Újiráz became bankrupt.

Insufficient information

A considerable part of people living in rural areas could only follow the changes that came with the political transition only with the "help" of rumors. A general problem was the lack of information related to the privatization. Initially, the members employed by the cooperative left their shares in cooperative holding for fear of being fired due to "breach of faith". A rumor was circulating among the older people that those who claimed back their lands would lose their pensions, and this refrained them from claiming their rights.

Not even the younger, skilled and educated members realized the opportunity at hand, for the new situation was too different from their own pattern of socialization.

"I could have had a chance here as a young manager in the cooperative to buy land for just pennies. But I didn't realize that this would be a good investment on the long run. Our generation grew up with things like cooperative and large-scale farming in mind and after the political transition I could not see how it would end."²⁶

Insufficient information may have been the reason why certain layers of the local societies in the area I surveyed could not understand (and, in many cases could not accept) the market economy that followed the era of planned economy, and there were only a few who knew what privatization is about.

"People didn't really believe that the lands will be given back to the members of the cooperative and then will be divided and the political transition will indeed take place. In the everyday life this wasn't so clear that this will happen and the thing called socialism is over."²⁷

Often, people couldn't clearly see the background of the things. In Újiráz, many thought that the people from Komádi bought the lands of Újiráz. But what really happened was that the people of Komádi had a priority to bid for the lands of the "Arany Láp" cooperative of Újiráz situated in the boundary of Komádi, so the area in question just returned to the original settlement. Many people from Újiráz thought that they were defrauded for they supposed that those lands belonged to Újiráz.

²⁶ Information provided by an agriculture expert (former cooperative leader), 1997. Újiráz

²⁷ Information provided by a farmer, 1997. Újiráz

"Everything was taken away here and we simply didn't know about it. People from Komádi said: here is one more land, and here is another, too. And they bought it for only some hundreds of Forints. Even our road was bought on an auction by someone from Komádi. There was no one who could make it clear that these lands will be auctioned so keep an eye on it, or someone who could arrange a meeting between the mayors. All this caused for much annoyance."²⁸

The deficiencies of the compensation laws

The artificial agricultural reform organized from above and its continuously amending requirements inhibited the reshaping process of land owning, subsequently the restructuring of tenures following the political change became a source of conflicts dividing the agricultural society.

The Act II of 1992 aimed to allow the members to emerge, together with their holdings and to commence their own business. The act resolution was to evaluate the agricultural cooperative properties. Several informants assumed that the real aim of this act was to dissolve the cooperatives. Many of the interviewees talked about "conscious" breaking up of the collective farms.

„The collective farm is gone. Everything was broken up. We were not just forced into the coop. The folks at the countryside didn't wanna move, they just wanted to stay here. It was a job of ours, and it just perfectly suited us. No matter what the wisemen say!"²⁹

Looking back, the reason for the biggest issue was that the dominance of state crafts and collective farms was dissolved as a consequence of legislation and not of competition. According to the Act of Collective Farms the lands were divided among the members. As there could be no land in the ownership of the cooperatives, they had to lease them, which seriously weakened their business opportunities. In spite of this many of them underwent a conversion and still operated for a certain time. Following the political transition, the legislative closing down of the factory farms, managed from above, often provoked resistance, as it contradicted the interests of the members. Many

28 Information provided by a farmer, 1997. Újiráz

29 Information provided by cooperative pensionary, 2000. Komádi

members did not take their lands out following the transition and had the cooperative cultivate their lands and selling the crop. Only 6.7% of the collective farms' property was privatized until 1993. This low proportion indicates that the members trusted this type of management to be effective and resumable. (HARCSA István-KOVÁCH Imre-SZELÉNYI Iván 1994: 34)

We were able to note during the data collection that the memory of collective agriculture became more pleasant as time passed, due to the uncertain circumstances. In the area of the survey, a myth emerged around the cooperative and the household farming, about a calm and balanced life. Not only the people having no luck in the new frames of life thought back to the cooperatives with nostalgia, as they were provided with jobs and material security, but the entrepreneurs deemed the former cooperative economy to be an example of accurate management and high level of technology. The informants in their narratives thought back to the eighties, mentioning the popular myths' "wellbeing of the cooperative" and "world famous Hungarian agriculture".

The assumption of the decision makers that the descendant of the former proprietors could be the farmers of the future proved to be mistaken. The fact that most of the descendants became city dwellers was not taken into consideration, and that they would have deemed it as loss of prestige. They did not have the know-how, and they did not wish to cultivate land, unless unemployment forced them to do so.³⁰ Consequently the agricultural land was not divided between the dwellers of the area, but among proprietors living elsewhere (often in cities) who did not deal with agriculture, rather rented their lands to local farmers. The new owners deemed their lands to be an investment, often postponed selling them, expecting higher future prices.

„This allotment of the land is a thumper, foolish of the politicians. It gives allowance to the folks coming home from town, but the blokes living around they don't. The income was withdrawn from the village, as the land-exhibition and stuff was not going together.”³¹

Others landowners may have worked in agriculture and lived at the countryside, but they didn't have any capital, or due to their age, they could not cultivate their lands.

30 People forced to peasantry (Borsos – Csité – Hella – Kovács – Letenyei 1999: 43)

31 Agricultural entrepreneur, 2002. Komádi

Tardy and limited was the dedication of securities enabling land acquisition, thus the rates of the compensation securities fell significantly, unsettling the often unapprised local proprietors. Many "got rid of" the compensation securities under their value.

Although the Act of Privatization set the requirement to provide suitable pecuniary background against compensation securities, the state in reality failed to offer a wide selection of supply for the multi-purpose use of compensation securities, getting the security owners interested in land acquisition. Consequently the privatization was subdued to the compensation. The partial remedy of the peasant property threats was placed under procedure with re-compensations of other propriety issues of the citizens. (LACZKÓ András 2005)

In the area we surveyed, part of the people objected to several clauses of the Compensation Act. As a base, 1949 was taken into consideration – so, as to the opinion of the local – compensation was also given to those who had been granted land by the Soviets. As the compensation of the war prisoners was resolved from the lands of the village – according to their opinion – they were compensated by the village, not the state.

Locals of the region wanted their own property back, not wanting ownership on other people's lands, hence the Compensation Act did not allow re-privatization.³²

Dwellers of small villages of a few hundred people know each other's history well and they knew exactly if somebody had made false allegation. This had a bad impact on the moral, and profiteering facilitated by the Compensation Act caused disillusionment in the members of the local society. In Újiráz for example, one man claimed the milk plant of the Hangya Cooperative (*a type of pre-war productional and sales cooperative, the translator*) as his own property. (He was a guard at the plant at that time, so could he acquire the papers proving his ownership.) Although the locals were aware of the truth, they only isolated him, but did not initiate any sort of legal procedure against the fraud to protect the interest of the community.

32 In Romania re-privatization was carried out. On the symbolic meaning of getting back the property see Lehel Peti. (2006: 31)

Compensation created luridly crumbled relations in the proprietorship. The land acquired during the auctions was enough to avoid penury for some of the locals, but not enough to give basis for a reasonable civic citizenship through production.³³

The proportion-delivery started in 1993 but it had not been finished even in 2010. The procedure took so much time because the execution of proportion-delivery is rather out of sight of the government. Until the ownership issues of certain areas remain unresolved, the general re-parceling necessary for the establishment of viable family farms is also restrained.

Property area (ha)	Land owning households	Land area
	Proportion (%)	
0–0.2	57.0	3.4
0.2–1	22.4	7.5
1–10	18.3	41.2
10–50	2.1	29.4
50–	0.3	18.5
Total	100.0	100.0

Proportions of land owning households and the land area, according to property sizes.

According to data taken on 31 May 1996³⁴

PECULIARITIES OF PROPRIETORSHIP

WITH THE WAIVER OF THE BASIC FEATURES OF PRODUCTION (the soil and the means of production) into private property since the 1989 transition, fundamental amendments took place within the Hungarian agriculture. With the execution of the compensation acts the former production structure was dispersed and a new structure of ownership evolved. (SCHNEIDER, Thomas 2000) An overwhelming rate of a generally 4500 hectare factory farming was typical for the agricultural production until the transition came. In addition, around 1.4 million household and ancillary farms

33 At the end of the 1990s in Hajdú-Bihar county an old farmer stood up and said the followings: „it is easy to sum up the happenings of the last few decades. I got my land back but lost my income.”

34 Tények és adatok a mezőgazdaságról és a falusi életkörülményekről. KSH, 1997. 7.

with an average 0.8 hectare land was doing agricultural production. During the land privatization around 2.5 million new owners acquired propriety.

As the land of the collective farms were waived into private property according to the legislation in force, the corporations had to rent an around 155,000 acres of privately owned land. The area of individual farms was around 5,150,000 acres. (A large portion of the remaining area is state owned, with a high proportion of forests, fields and meadows.) (LACZKÓ András 2005: 13)

According to the "General Agricultural Constriction" (MGÖ) data collected in 1995, 32% of all land properties of the citizens were acquired long ago, thus were originally in the ownership of households. 27 % is members' proportion.³⁵ 28% of the land was acquired by compensation (auctions), and 13% of the privately owned lands were transferred through property division to the cooperative members and employees.

Source of propriety	Size of area (thousand ha)	Area structure (percent)	Number of owners of the area (thousand)
Former propriety, or land owned by way of former sales contract	683	22	1535
Members proportion	590	27	201
Land acquired by compensation	607	28	108
Lands transferred through property division	289	13	144
Total property	2169	100	1542

Privately owned area according to the sources and their structure 1995³⁶

In 1996, 86% of the lands used by households were their own property, rented lands were 14%. The proportional growth of self-owned lands enlarged by 300%, rented land proportion grew by 150% between 1991 and 1996.

Significant changes happened in the land relations of the domestic economy within a couple of years after the data issued in 1995. In 1994 the use of land funds were

35 Areas returned to members or their heirs

36 Processed by András Laczkó, based on statistical data of KSH (Central Statistic Office) and the Chief Departement of Economy at the Ministry of Agriculture

2/3–1/3, in favors of the factory farms, in 1997 this proportion changed to 55%–45%. Main feature of the land structure is subdivision, 80% of new owners still own one hectare or smaller, sometimes even in dispersed plots. More than 1.3 million people owned a land of 0.3–5 hectare, when the total area was merely 2 million hectares. Meanwhile, the total of privately owned lands was 6600–6700 thousand hectares. These small-size farms, regarding their organization and production strategies intended to follow the customs of the old household-farms, but at the same time the factory-farm background providing profitability disappeared.

SALES OF FIELDS

Following the land reform of the '90s, the land supply should have been potentially wide, as many obtained agricultural lands that they did not want to cultivate, but selling some was postponed, because the owner was waiting for higher prices. These higher prices could have been induced by buoyant demands. Consequently Hungarian agriculture stagnated in the decade following the political change. There was no chance for profitable investment in agricultural production; in addition, there was a risk for the existing farming units (especially in husbandry) to fall apart. This unfavorable economic milieu could be very well seen in the offsets of land value. There were differences from region to region. In Western Hungary land prices were higher and continuously increasing compared to other parts of the country, as the Austrian tenants were also present as potential buyers. (ERB, Karl-Hencz 2003: 247–259) Even though the law imposed a ban on land ownership for foreigners, often illegal contracts were signed for land waiver purposes. In the area we surveyed in Bihar County, where the so called golden crown value is also low, there were no sign of land purchase intentions. Cultivation seemed to be a bad investment, there were no remunerative demand so prices remained low. In the 2nd half of the 1990s land prices were around 50–100,000 forints per hectare of Bihar soil.

Following 14 years of recession, the revival of land sales in 2003 happened by the information spread about increasing subsidies of land cultivation following the European Union accession. Among the state subsidies for small farmers the best known was the *area payment*. Following the political transition land owners could apply for 2000 forints of subsidy per hectare. Later, the value and the form of subsidies varied each year, and with every government change. In 2002 the sum of the subsidy (8000–12 000 Ft)

was higher than in 2003, but the limit of application was a maximum of 300 hectares. The area payment in 2003 was for a minimum of 1 hectare. With the commitment of *family farming*, 16 000 Forint could also be granted. Taking these into consideration, with the European Union accession in 2004 a severely increased 35 000–40 000 Ft per hectare area payment meant serious advantage. Farmers recognized that with this amount land purchase and cultivation is worthwhile enterprise, as it provides a secure management.

At my survey area the average income per hectare in 2003 was around 100 000 Ft. With the area payment the farmer received 40%, thus their chances of profitable production increased.

The change was indicated by the figures of 2003: sales were between 170 and 200 000 Ft at the beginning of the year. Large farms (with lands larger than 250 acres) spent significant amounts of money on land purchasing from 2003 on. As owners of large farms were able to mobilize greater amounts of money, their lands grew only gradually. The large subsidies were not yet introduced, further conflicts were already visible. The land area of a region is limited, thus the commencement of struggle for the compact, of hundreds of hectares in size lands between well-funded proprietors of large farms was foreseeable. From 2003 on farmers of the region clearly became competitors of one another: Competing with each other to get rental lands, or buy smaller areas from those who were unable to continue farming activities (due to bankruptcy or ageing). One method of acquisition was to shift the prices of machine aided cultivation. Small farmers were in exposed situation; with the increased prices of contracted machine cultivation they could be forced to sell or lease out their lands.

As land acquisition became desirable for the large farms, chances of growth for the small farms became even harder, and getting into the circle of farmers was also more difficult. Following the European Union accession of Hungary, Bihar farmers had to possess at least 50ha land and a certain amount of capital to be able to expand machinery, to purchase current assets and to increase productivity of their farms.

Today, local farmers try to take advantage of the land acquisition moratorium. Its temporary period of land acquisition limitation for citizens of the EU without residence in Hungary, and also for legal persons was extended to 2010. As a result of the process, land concentration has grown, smaller number of, but larger areas are in the hand of proprietors. Consequently a growing number of farmer elite are doing business in the Bihar region.

LAND RENTALS

Stability of the operations of a farming unit is significantly determined by the permanence of ownership relations. Farmers owning their own lands are more secure, as they are not obliged to maintain their business in the frames of land-lease contracts. At the same time, between 1994 and 2010, it was perceivable at our survey area, that the land-concentration happened through rentals rather than purchasing. According to nationwide data concentration was more typical for large area farms. Thus, the larger the farm, the larger the rented land. (BURGERNÉ GIMES Anna 2006: 207–225)

Farm area (Ha)	Rented land (%)
> 1	19.4
1–5	23.9
6–10	39.2
11–20	48.3
51–100	77.2
100 <	73.7
Total	37.8

Land rented by private farms³⁷

For land concentration the preference of renting is a strategy opportunity. Leaseholders are often cooperatives or companies separated from same, form which the law does not allow land owning. At the same time the major part of their activities is dominated by farming on rented lands, and contracted cultivation. These farmers concentrate on the development of machinery, and regarding their business perspectives target maximization of actual profit. This farming mentality is a tool to defend the weaknesses of the land market. Following the millennium, the application of this strategy is a defense option against insecurity of agricultural production, low remuneration and multi-level limitations. These enterprises are mobile and flexible, capable of quickly reacting to the amendments of market circumstances. In the 2010s they take advantage of the fact that several land owner are awaiting the release of the land moratorium. On the lender side, individual cultivation of the self owned lands is restrained by the lack of capital and equipment. Formerly lending was the tool of forced use, today it is an opportunity for

³⁷ Burgerné Gimes Anna 2006: 207–225

the owners to avoid loss of the optional profit belonging to their lands, until they are waiting for most favorable positions.

In local societies, three type of land owner may be classified based on their motivations in lending their properties:

1. We can assume lack of active business mentality, when the lender is willing to avoid agricultural or physical work, or the lender is lacking professional skills and thus renounces the cultivation of his/her lands. This mentality does not turn to the small farm production possibilities, even under better economic circumstances. This is typical for the Romani without cultivation and social traditions, and the low social prestige population, often unemployed. Furthermore, city dwellers also belong here, who own their lands through heritage, but do not have the necessary skills for cultivation, or not interested in farming.

2. Significant was the number of acquisitions during the privatization. The purchasers, with their knowledge of farming, must have assumed that with the lack of capital and equipment, or due to their age they are unable for land cultivation. Those, lacking circulating capital mostly leased their lands. Before the introduction of the area payment system of the European Union, rental prices were around 3000–7000 forints. This is deemed very low, but the profitability of the rented lands were also low, so little was the solvent demand.

In 1991, still 168 thousand households were engaged in household farming or allotted land cultivation (around 120 thousand hectares), and above these, 423 thousand household (with around 290 thousand hectare) owned so called "intangible household or allotted land", redeemed with products or money.³⁸ The Compensation Act deleted these legal titles, and replaced them with transfer of 30 or 20 golden crown lands to private property. On its own, privatization of 410 thousand hectares of land did not bring operable assets for all land owners. Many, mainly pensioners and annuitants were unable to cultivate their lands on their own, could not pay the high (15–20 thousand Ft/ha) service fee for contractual cultivation, following liquidation if the institution of household and annuity farms, abandoned farming and leased out part or all of their soils, to cooperatives or individual farmers, gaining though regular income of their lands. The significance of this strategy can be seen, for example, from the fact that in 1996, 41% of the private lands were lent to factory farms.

38 ÁMÖ 1991.

3. The third group of lenders took advantage of the area payments that increased with the European Union accession, they deemed it as a source of subsistence. This strategy that appeared after the millennium assumes lending of waste, multiple hundreds of hectares of land.

The alterations following the European Union accession effected significant amendments within the land use practices developed after the political transition. Hearing about the increasing subsidies from January 2004 on, already in 2003, the market was vitalised, rental prices doubled; the price of 30–40 kg of wheat was the remuneration against a golden crown, in place of the former 15–20 kg. Traditionally, 10% of the land value is the rental price,³⁹ but the tenants were eager to pay even higher, trusting that the subsidies will further increase in the future, and meanwhile the rental fees agreed in contracts will remain the same, and this would bring significant profit for them.⁴⁰ The increasing prices indicated that many more saw further perspectives in agricultural production. With the altered circumstances land leasing became a significant source of subsistence.

For land rentals, significant was the role of the machinery capacity of the tenant. Often above 50oha, the entrepreneurs possessed such equipment, that they were capable to cultivate lands above the size of 30oha, in place of the contracted cultivations, thus land rental was their best interest.

SUMMARY

AS TO THE SETTLEMENT SURVEY it seems that nobody is contented with the result of privatization. Certain groups of society suffered existential and material disadvantages during the privatization, but out of those who acquired lands, few were

39 According to that the rental fee of a land of the value of 1.5 million forints is 150 000 Ft.

40 Offering 20kg wheat for a hectare of 20 gc. valued land, the rental fee will be as follows: the offered rental fee (20kg) multiplied by the buying rate of wheat (depending on the quality, in 2002, the mill Nr. 1 type is 2500 Ft, the mill Nr. 2 type is 2300 Ft) equals the price of the quantity offered (20×2300 = 46 000 Ft). As the 20kg is paid by golden crown, the golden crown value shall be divided with 20, and that shall be multiplied with the per hectare value of the rental fee. (20×2300 = 46000×0,2 = 9200) Thus the rental fee of a land of 20 golden crown value is 9200 Ft.

able to develop independent farming units, and since the millennium, even fewer are those who are capable to produce profit. At the surveyed area the interviewed people in their narrations often think back of the "coop times" with nostalgia.

During the transition process the decision makers failed to consider the traditionally coded economic strategies and alternatives of the people living in local societies. The "undermining" of cooperatives was not favorable on all means, even for the people acquiring assets. A large majority of the interviewees assumed that decisions were made "above their heads", they had no vote in the transformation process of their own local surroundings. With the consolidating agricultural circumstances in the seventies the village dwellers gradually found their positions, but the land privatization fully tumbled the frames of their lives. The Compensation was complicated and "undercommunicated" for many people, thus those groups with connections and capital could take advantage. Those who missed out on the distribution of values had to live up their reserves, consequently they could neither take part in acquisitions, nor operate their former economic strategies.

In fact, not only the unprofitable, but also the well operating cooperatives were led to bankruptcy by the agriculture policy decisions made during the privatization. Settlements where the single employment opportunity was the cooperative lost the most. Following their liquidation, the small farms created were non-viable, unable to survive on long terms. Due to the agricultural reform the land properties were winded up, and some parts of the land remained unused. By 1996, 79.4% of the households owned small lands unable for market production, with an area of less than one hectare. 57% of the households had a land less than 0.2 acres. Nearly 80% of the 1.8 million land proprietors acquired land not larger than their former household and allotted land utilization areas. (LACZKÓ András 2005: 15) A large number of them had business losses, and gradually stayed out of market production. In the long terms these predicted a new restructuration of the land property structures.

Successor organizations of the cooperatives provided farming on lands leased from their members or other proprietors. Buildings and watering facilities built with high cost in the past gradually fell into ruined without maintenance.

Due to the effects of compensation and the abolition of socialist type economic networks the gross production of the agricultural sector between 1988 and 1993 shrank by nearly 30–40 percent. (KOVÁCH Imre 1994b). As land owning and land use were

separated, the country partially lost the competitive advantage on the international markets coming from the former land concentration.

As the secondary compensation was delayed, the agricultural producers could not acquire interests in the food industry and commerce. Proprietors became fund deficient and isolated, the producers became exposed with their business relations. (DANCS László 1999: 291) Market opportunities were random and occasional. Trading of the products became more and more difficult, prices were unpredictable varying. Uncertainty was typical for the members of the agricultural sector. (MÁRTON János 1999: 278–279) The restructuring of proprietries following the political change became a source of conflicts, and it divides the agricultural society even today.

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Farming attitudes in transition

AS THE PRIMARY MOTIVATOR OF THE TRANSFORMATION PROCESS, the political changes of 1989 do not function on the basis of identical motivations in an urban and in rural environment. For the village farming has a determining role. The reason is the land-centered thinking of the peasantry that has been revived because of the political transition.¹

The liquidation and transformation of the collective farms and the privatization caused changes in the peasants' work-system. The past, the value-system, structure, hierarchy and the prospects of local society determine the direction of change, offering several alternatives from traditional strategies of production to modern farming. The new social groups emerging in village societies may become confronted with the accepted norms, especially when giving positive answers to external influences that differ from the model of change preferred by the local society (e.g.: private entrepreneurs).

On the other hand lands taken into cultivation by families strengthen the role of the family as a work-organization. The determining factors of the evolving farming strategies are the size of the land and the farming trend. New working teams and team-works come into being the frameworks of which are about to be established.

¹ Szabó, L. 1993: 148–150.

The essay aims to present some results of a revealing, descriptive research in progress investigating the influences of the 1989 on farming attitudes. The location of the research is some increasingly disadvantageous small villages of the Bihar region. In the followings I present the farming characteristics of the village Újiráz.

The aims of the essay are:

1. to map the impacts of the changes following the events of 1989 on farming.
2. to show the farming attitudes of the present.
3. to analyze the interrelatedness of the different strategies of life.

I attempt to grab that change through the conflicts between the habits and mentalities creating different strategies of farming. In other words, I investigate the difference between the representatives of the "traditional value-system" and that of private entrepreneurs. This approach may lead to significant consequences because the way of coping with problems may indicate the changing trend of peasant farming. Újiráz, our village of focus, calls our attention to the fact that during the research it is not enough to concentrate on the internal changes of the settlements concerned, but the determining external events should also be considered. It means that, because of the adaptation of particular strategies of the region's, settlements can only be compared while being fully aware of the forms of joining to macro-systems.²

Those family and peasant farms are considered to be traditional in which the farming activity is motivated by deeply rooted local customs and production is not market-oriented.

The primarily market-oriented farming attitudes are considered to belong to private entrepreneurs. For them, in terms of organization of work, schedule and use of money, market demands play a more important role than traditional or other social interests.

The essay is based on data collected by in-depth interviewing during the summer of 1998. When choosing the informants with the help of local assistants I attempted to accumulate information from informants representing all types of farming in the sample. I wish to describe and analyze the processes of the village on the basis of the collected material and the written sources.

The initial hypothesis was that the increasingly disadvantageous villages lying farthest away from the regional center and having the smallest population are the remotest points of the urbanization process. Traditional elements of culture and forms of farming

2 Lammel, A. 1984.

live the longest in small, peripheral settlements. Changes have hardly affected this region and even the most archaic forms of the post-1989 transformations can be observed here.³

However, my research, so far, has shown that the scale of adjustment is primarily determined by the villages' economic potential (where spatial and settlement conditions also come into play). That is why economic deprivation makes these small settlements incapable of living. Their social structure disintegrates and they become less capable of preserving their local culture than larger villages capable of integrating changes on the local level.⁴ We cannot talk about corporal-like communities in the small settlements anymore. Individual strategies of adjustment come afore. This way the integration of the peasant society into the social and cultural whole is less to happen through the structure of the community.⁵

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE EXTERNAL RELATIONSHIPS INFLUENCING FARMING

REGIONAL, AREAL CHARACTERISTICS

THE CHAPTER OF VÁRAD founded Újiráz in 1912. The 100 settler-families coming from Békés were landless people working on the lands of the chapter as wage laborers. The chapter provided plough-lands, inlands and pastures of 4 and half acres in total for each families.⁶

Before World War I this land was the lowland part of Békés County, the agricultural products of which were to provide for the East-Bihar region. The regional centre was Nagyvárad. After the Trianon treaty and the changing of borders, the village was cut off from its natural markets and lost all cities and towns, in the agglomeration zone of which it belonged to. As a result, its cultural and economic relations have changed as well. The separation of the region was enhanced by the county-system created in 1949–

3 Andrásfalvy, B. 1980:55.

4 Kunt, E. 1987:13–15.

5 Steward, J. 1955.

6 Szekerczés, P. 1992:4.

50 and the outcome has been that the southern part of Hajdú-Bihar County now does not belong to the attraction-area of any cities.⁷ That also caused the pushing of Újiráz to the periphery of the county.⁸ The moving of villagers capable of working to cities and towns started simultaneously. A gradual tendency of ageing became characteristic of the village by today.⁹

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE EXTERNAL SOCIO-ECONOMIC ENVIRONMENT

The unskilled villagers are undesired investing agents for the capital investors who require competence. On the other hand young, trained inhabitants leave the society of Újiráz, because the opportunities of the settlement do not meet their expectations formed during their training years, or because there are no suitable works for them in the village. Hence these generations cannot help the local society's continuous adjustment to the changing conditions that would ensure the continuity of the village population's relationship with the macro-society. It is not only the village of Újiráz that the skilled people leave. They often leave the "peasant existence" itself, only to become urban citizens. That weakens the remaining "peasant population", since, by providing financial support for the younger generations leaving the villages, parents pump the remaining economic potential out of the village.¹⁰

The lack of adaptation is clearly presented in the relationship between the private enterprise and the market. The production technologies applied in the village today are not related to the modern methods keeping the market processes and environmentalism in view. At the present, farmers consider those intensive methods desirable that have environmental drawbacks but are characterized by the increased exploitation of the ground's fertility and by increased chemicalization. During the

7 Keményfi, R. 1994:84–87.

8 The chief town of the county is 80 kilometres away, while the nearest town lies 40 kilometres far. The chief town of Békés County is 50 kilometres far and the larger settlements are closer in Békés, too. Since public transport is organized county-wise, the villagers cannot go to the towns of Békés directly. This enhances isolation and makes commuting more difficult.

9 Süli-Zakar, I. 1996:11–29.

10 A striking example of this general phenomenon can be seen in the neighboring Magyarhomoróg, where the milking cows taken out from the collective are sold by the elder members to be butchered only to supply their children in the cities with money.

production of animal products they use obsolete technologies while observing low-level hygienic standards. This way they are unable to join macro-economy, since they cannot meet the expectations of the market.

THE INFLUENCE OF THE POLITICAL CHANGE OF 1989 ON LOCAL FARMING

COMPENSATION

AFTER THE POLITICAL TRANSITION and during the process of privatization, the village has lost a significant amount of lands. Compensation notes were sold and non-local owners often took the compensation-lands during the sales and auctions.

"A person from Budapest bid on something like 200 acres of land"

Parts of the former chapter-estate were taken by the neighboring settlements of Csökmő and Komádi. There are four factors that played very important roles in losing those lands.

Insufficient information

The lack of information concerning privatization was a general problem. Rumor spread among elder people that those who claimed back their lands would lose their pensions, and that this refrained them from claiming their rights.

"Everything was taken from us. We didn't even know about it. People from Komádi came and claimed land here and there. For a couple hundred Forints they bought everything. Even our service land was taken away by somebody in an auction. Nobody told us that these lands should remain intact. Nobody give any information. Nor to us but neither to the mayors. It was really annoying."

"People didn't really believe that lands are to be given back to the members of collective farms. They could not believe that privatization was on its way. In the everyday life it was as easy to believe that political changes are going to happen and that the regime did indeed fall."

The lack of land-owning traditions

There are no traditions of private farming in the village. During the settlement day-laborers arrived here who had worked as wage earners before and were only given small lands of a few acres to own. They were trained in cultivating the land but they had no experience in owning it.

The deficiencies of the compensation-laws

It is characteristic of the "peasant" mentality, with a strong sense of ethics, is that they do not claim other people's lands. They wanted to get back their own former possessions, but re-privatization was not supported by the compensation-laws.

The cautious attitude originated in historical precedents

Újiráz is a Catholic island in a Calvinist environment. Even at the time of its foundation the neighboring villages (Csökmő, Komádi) protested against the village that would limit their claims to the land. That is why there has not been a harmonious relationship with the neighboring settlements ever since. There has been several attempts to liquidate and restrain Újiráz. In 1947 they tried to deport the population claiming they were Slovaks, and from 1947 the common local government of Újiráz and Csökmő increased the marginalization of the village. These conditions made the villagers more cautious about external urges and a practice aiming to minimize risk was formed in them as well.

THE COLLECTIVE FARM

The inhabitants of the village have never had an estate larger than a few acres, and by World War II only a few families could extend the 4 acres distributed at the start to 10–11 acres. Formerly they worked on the estate of the chapter. Later on the collective farm provided working opportunities for the inhabitants. The collective farm provided the continuity of organized farming practice for the people of Újiráz having been accustomed to communal production. As a consequence, it is not the general archaic peasant mentality or attachment to the land that prevails here.

After the political changes of 1989 the formerly mentioned delaying attitude prevailed in relation to the liquidation of the collective farm.

"This thing called political transition came. We were very cautious not to rush into anything. We thought that the collective farm should remain intact. Later on, we thought, we will see."

Unlike in most of the neighboring settlements, here the survival of the collective farm was obvious. Yet, because of going through significant changes, it could not preserve the dominant role it played in the village's farming activity.

"It was an important moment in the keeping up with the collective farm when people realized that they aren't going to be able to live on their 3 acres of lands."

"...Large-scale farms cannot be divided without losing their sustainability."

According to the laws on collective farms, lands that remained in the possession of the collective farm were to be distributed among the members. 14.67 aranykorona¹¹ was the share of each member. Most of them left their lands in, and the collective farm cultivates it and sells the produced crops. The 1000-hectares land of the pre-1990 era became 200 hectares smaller, but that is leased.

"It is a tendency that those who have land, especially bigger than 10 acres, tend to lease it for 5–10 years rather than sell it. They expect property prices to rise. By this way the capital remains in the hands of the family and children can inherit it."

The present form is a temporary one, since the owner-structure is not adequate. The decision that states that the collective farms cannot possess lands cuts off the possibility of living and makes it impossible for them to survive.

"There are no farmers willing to create new collective farms. By shooting down the currently existing ones we will end up with having a lots of unemployed people."

By their closing down the most important source of living of the village would cease. The number of people working in the collective farm has decreased significantly by now. Only 10% of the inhabitants regard it to be the possibility and guarantee of a regular wage earning. (compared to the former 120 people only 78 work here now)

¹¹ aranykorona (AK) is a traditional Hungarian unit of land value. This unit is an index which expresses the quality of the land, and today should be seen as an approximate, especially in view of the differing branches of cultivation. /the translator/

MARKET GARDENING

Right after its foundation a special "system of double working" was developed in Újiráz. Its essence is that farming on the land received from the chapter provided the living of the family, while the work on the estate provided monetary funds (such a method of production become general only in the '60s by the formation of market gardens in the neighboring villages). This resulted in the increased importance of market gardening that is, compared to the neighboring villages, typical of Újiráz. It was mainly characterized by selling live-stocks to the market. As a peculiarity: almost all the families raised animals.

"Zsáka has 2000 inhabitants. Even so they did not have as much animal in private ownership as we do in Újiráz."

During the socialism such form of farming have proven suitable to be followed using traditional instruments with the help of family resources and have proven to be suitable to carry on with "money-earning", pension-guaranteeing forms of activities which could be done in official workplaces.

The transformed market conditions after 1990 were not favorable for the operation of marker gardens.

"There were years before the political transition, in which nearly 3000 pigs were sold on the market"

"Market gardens tend to cease. 5-6 years ago 200 cattle were raised here. Today only 30. There are no alternatives to provide income. Seasonal agricultural work maybe, but nothing else."

The decrease of profitability has sorely affected farmers, since lower incomes do not make the acquisition of the desired prestige-goods possible.

"Those who raised cattle in the past could by a new car or a lot of clothes by selling three of them. Today, a cow sells for 130-150 000 Forints."

"...Market is shaky. Earlier if someone bought pigs it was sure that he could sell them for 45 Forints per kilogram. Nowadays prices change constantly, sometimes the purchasers do not pay and you have to turn to the court. The price of crops increase, sale prices are changing. Sometimes even your costs are not returned."

New forms of farming could not replace Market gardening, becoming more and more insecure. Market gardeners responded to the uncertain situation of the transitional era

by the use of traditional techniques, waiting for calculable conditions that also meant the retaining of production and consumption.¹²

FARM TYPES IN ÚJIRÁZ

THE SCHOLARLY LITERATURE investigating the present-day agricultural production of small farms carries out analyses from different aspects. Leaning on József Kotics's summary I would like to present some characteristic approaches only to show the contemporary tendencies of investigation.¹³

Tibor Tóth divides the Hungarian counties into 2 groups according to the nature of the small scale farm production. He defines groups on the basis of the size of agricultural land per agricultural wage earner and the size of tilled land per agricultural resident.¹⁴

Imre Kovách bases his categorization on types of farms. Although he constructed his typology of market gardening in the 80s, his grouping is still applicable to the present conditions. He distinguishes between the following forms of small-scale agricultural small-scale farms: traditional self-sufficient small-farm; productive peasant farm and the farming entrepreneurship.¹⁵

According to Magdolna Fehérváryné Nagy, the changes of peasant economic attitude can be outlined more exactly with the help of economy-specific investigations. On the basis of her researches in Gúta, she distinguishes between three types: the self-sufficient peasant farm based on the balance of agriculture and animal husbandry; farms with animal husbandry and the productive peasant farm characterized by the emphasis on crop-production.¹⁶

In their categorization Anna Gimes, Mária Rédei and Mrs. Salamin took the relationship of agricultural small farms and the market into consideration. They found

12 Bíró – Gagyi – Oláh 1994. I/33.

13 Kotics, J. 2001.113–126.

14 Tóth, T. 1988:54.

15 Kovách, I. 1988.

16 Fehérváryné Nagy, M. 1990:43–65.

four types: household or hobby farming; the self-sufficient, the seasonally producing and the regularly producing farms.¹⁷

According to the structure of products and the structure of branches, István Harcsa distinguishes between mono-cultural—building on the predominance of one branch—and mixed farms.¹⁸

On the basis of their relationship to the market, Zsolt Spéder distinguishes between market-oriented farms, farms producing for the market as well, and self-supplying farms.¹⁹

To group farming strategies of Újiráz, I took the categories of Imre Kovách concerning farming attitudes and farm-types, and the analysis of József Kotics as the bases of my classification.²⁰ As the refusal of the new entrepreneur-attitude positions conflict-situations into the center, I distinguish between forms corresponding with the "traditional" farming habitude and forms differing from that. This way I divide farming strategies of Újiráz into two groups. The 2–2 sub-groups in the types accepted and non-preferred by the local community cover local attitudes.

FARMING STRATEGIES ACCEPTED BY THE LOCAL COMMUNITY

Farming attitude unaffected by the market

Those self-supplying small-scale farms belong here which function as part of the household working according to the traditional conduct. Their aim is to produce missing food-products. Farming based on experience is determined by the conduct and order of production laid in the traditions. Partially disabled elderly people and those giving up market gardening belong here.

Farming strategies affected by the market

According Pál Juhász, members of farms set for the permanent duality of first and second economy behave as wage laborers in the first economy and as entrepreneurs in

17 Burgerné – Keszthelyiné – Salaminé 1990:2.

18 Harcsa, I. 1994:24.

19 Spéder, Zs. 1997:11.

20 Kovách, I. 1988:91–93.; Kotics, J. 2001. 116.

the second.²¹ Such practice never goes beyond the traditional framework: besides the job ensuring a safe income and a living. There is an aim to acquire material and goods strengthening social status. Income from the second economy serves to ensure the family prestige and its position in the village society. On the other hand, the demands for security of „standing on more feet”, the minimizing of risk are also typical of this group producing for the market in a traditional framework. In the background of this farming attitude there is such a form of farming organized for market production, which strives for self-sufficiency concerning some of the food-products – similarly to traditional peasant farming. They stick to the traditionally functioning techniques of production and products that they are able to produce with the help of their traditional expertise. The owner and his family do most of the physical work. However, in time of need they can ask for the help of their relatives, the members of the collective farm or can hire wage laborers.

Beside their full-time jobs, some of the young people use traditional instruments to cultivate lands of 1–2 acres. They buy 1 or 2 horses and use them for the smaller work-phases (to plough the spaces during the hoeing, to deliver the products to the house). But those part-operations more difficult to carry out (e.g.: plough) are done almost exclusively by rented machines.

There are some who have their lands cultivated by the collective farm or by an agricultural entrepreneur. They produce the fodder-plants necessary for market gardening this way. The market-affected farming attitude is not sale-oriented to the extent that it is willing to change the economic strategy and attitude. Their market-oriented nature is very much diverse, some of them sell only the product-surplus produced during market gardening, while for others the aim is to produce for the market in order to acquire goods elevating standards of living. The deteriorating economic conditions lessen the willingness to produce. People are less and less likely to be occupied with swine raising, milk-production and raising store cattle. Commuters and members of the collective farm belong to the gradually diminishing group of market gardeners. Since such a farming attitude is only profitable together with other sources of income. In comparison with earlier conditions, the decrease of official working opportunities meant the diminishing significance of that attitude in Újiráz compared to earlier conditions.

21 Juhász, P. 1976.

"In Újiráz all families have cattle or pigs. Some families raise ducks. But it can only be counted on as secondary source of income."

FARMING STRATEGIES NOT PREFERRED BY THE LOCAL COMMUNITY

Market-oriented farming attitude

This farming attitude is chiefly based on the earlier small-scale producing attitude. It is peculiar because of the searching-for-the-right-way attitude during its development, so the change is preceded by an era of endeavouring inside the given traditional framework. It is very often because of the failures inside the traditional framework that the individual is forced to change.

The duality of the market-oriented entrepreneur attitude and traditional conduct is an important characteristic of the full-time farming activity here. They decide according to market prospects, but their mentality also affects their economic conduct. They have agricultural skills, because this farming attitude is mostly characteristic of entrepreneurs formerly working as mid-directors of the collective farms. Because of the historical precedents, the family estate serving as the basis of the farm is rather small in this village (9–10 hectares). That should force entrepreneurs to co-operate, but at the present that only works on the level of relatives. The owner and the family attempt to do most of the physical work by themselves. In time of need though they can count on the help of the relatives or they can hire wageworkers.

"One must rely on the family to operate a private entrepreneurship. But agriculture is seasonal, therefore in times of need, hired workers can provide help. I pay day-laborers sometimes."

They are not familiar with the whole process of production. Yet their production is dependent on profitability. If market conditions desire, they are willing to change the products or the breeds. They do not stick to the crop-producing traditions of the region unconditionally. They are aware that they cannot have an insight in the macro-economic processes, they cannot affect the market, but they do not defend themselves with delaying. Instead, they try to adapt.

"Currently we grow pumpkin and make oil of it. This sells more or less nicely. There were times when we also had grain. But there was no need for wheat. Also, we raise pigs, but you can't imagine what kinds of things happen here..."

Market-centered entrepreneur attitude

József Kotics argues²² that the modernization, mechanized farming and intensive commodity production chiefly characterize the enterprises of agricultural specialists. This statement is true in the case of Újiráz as well. The market-centered entrepreneur attitude is represented by a single proprietor, the former president of the collective farm. The farmer, who considers himself a "forced entrepreneur", cultivates a land of 70 hectares. He started private farming with the help of the family. He attempts to develop the enterprise by applying for loans. Since he already had certain capitals to draw on at the beginning (e.g.: the equipment), he was able to get credit. That helped him through the difficult times. He has always been attempting to modernize the farm. He is well aware of the fact that for a sustainable farm he has to invest, and that can only be done by repayable accommodations. His use of money is completely characteristic of that of entrepreneurs. He has a perfect insight into the whole of the processes of production and marketing. Among the present economic conditions other entrepreneurs cannot follow him.

"When I started my own farm I did it with using up my savings. I only applied for credit now, when I needed to get machinery. There are no other ways around. You have to invest, so you can take care of your own needs. This farm was started as a family entrepreneurship..."

Private farming requires a basically different approach to farming: the continuous search for the emerging opportunities and their immediate seizing, maximally mobilizing the available energies, experiences, and relationships. A certain amount of over-insurance is also required. The individual is forced to make reserves. It also assumes a moral different from that of the employees of the collective farms.²³

22 Kotics, József 2001. 145.

23 Bíró, A. Z. – Gagyí, J. – Oláh, S. 1994. I./29.

PRESENTING AND ANALYZING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE DIFFERENT LIFE-STRATEGIES.

REASONS AND MANIFESTATIONS OF REJECTING NEW FARMING STRATEGIES

FOR THE PEASANT FAMILY FARM taken as social unit, it is not the production process but the local relation-system that is important.²⁴ That explains the emphasized role of the household in the value-system of the village society. The official workplace is often remote, giving no chance for the local community to keep the individual under control. On the other hand market gardening is carried out in the space of the village inside the frameworks of the family providing the public an opportunity to judge the individual. Private entrepreneurs also work in the space of the settlement, forcing the public opinion of the village to increasingly face their farming mentality divergent from the accepted norms. The local population experiences it every day that the aim of these entrepreneurs is not to cover the needs of the family or the acquisition of the desirable goods of prestige, but to make profit. In order to do that, having a different approach toward farming, they take material risks toward working. This opposes the general peasant mentality. While trying to adapt to market requirements, they cannot escape confrontation with traditional value-system. It is Pierre Bourdieu who shows the reasons of indisposition towards entrepreneurs. The traditional way prevails as long as it is considered not the best possible but the only possible way to follow.²⁵

Naturally, representatives of the traditional value-system also experience the unsustainability of the common farming strategies. It becomes apparent during times of troubles the collective farms and market gardens experience. Yet they do not try to adapt, but are delaying. This tactic is manifested in the reservation of production. The income loss related to the cautious, risk-evading economic activity is compensated by reducing consumption and by an economical life-style.²⁶

Of course, when investigating reactions we can only talk about versions accepted by the majority, because the village society is not homogeneous. It seems obvious that local opinion supports such attitudes requiring the least change.

24 A. Gergely A. – Cséfalvay Z. – Lichtenstein J. 1990.

25 Bourdieu, P. 1978: 333.

26 Biró A. Z. – Gagyi J. – Oláh S. 1994. I./29.

The rejection of the different attitudes is manifested in activities and speech situations as well. The depreciation of entrepreneurs' private property is presented in symbolic attitudes too.

"The attitude toward private entrepreneurs is really hostile. I have 6 acres of land next to the co-operative. Two times they used my land as service road. They were harvesting sugar beet and it was easier to carry it through my land. Also, during fertilizing the machines made their turns on my land."

In verbal communication the people of Újiráz react with the under-evaluation of the expertise necessary for enterprising, while they emphasize the importance of hard, physical work. Many of them declare that in an uncertain economic situation only those individuals are able to succeed who employ profiteering, dishonest means and this way they become dishonest themselves.²⁷

The purpose of such behavior is to withhold local people from the uncertain attitude, diverging from traditional ways of behavior.²⁸

ENTREPRENEURS RELATION TO TRADITIONAL FARMING

The private entrepreneurs' opinion can be grasped on the basis of their self-image and by their relationships with the most important groups in the life of the village.

According to their judgment even among the hard-working inhabitants with family resources only those could become successful entrepreneurs who started it in the right moment, after the political change. Many emphasize exigency and the uncertain nature of the new kind of form of farming as the evocators of the change. Accentuating pressure indicates that entrepreneurs feel it to be important to justify their attitude diverging from traditional life-strategies. They attempt to give an explanation to the opposing public opinion about the necessity of their decision. On the other hand, they consider their survival a success in the new situation and that provides a moral ground

27 Communal sanctioning is also manifested in that general view according to which the former president of the co-operative, who is also the owner of the biggest agrarian enterprise, could only reach results through damaging the community. Many people believed that as the head of the co-operative he used his power and influence to carry out his own aims. His expertise as the explanation for his efficient production is not accepted.

28 Bíró A. Z. – Gagy J. – Oláh S. 1994. I./33.

for them to criticize communal life-strategies that became unsustainable or difficult to follow among the new conditions.

They regard their role in the village as important from the aspect of raising the economic potential of the local community. This aspect emphasizes the importance of the predominance of the individual in the relationship of the individual and the community, which is beneficial for the local population.

"When the individual is strong the community strengthens too. There is no such thing as a rich village with poor people and vice versa. When people prosper so does the village."

Since political decisions following the regime change have put entrepreneurs into farming they expect economic (favorable decisions of credit-politics) and moral support from the government. These are necessary to their subsistence and development. On the level of the settlement they expect the local government to provide the background, since that is gate to the national politics functioning as "external, upper element".²⁹ Private entrepreneurs regard the lack of local government supports (loans) as rejections. For them, political change would become realized only with a change of approach in the daily routine, since that would legitimate their different conduct.

"Political changes weren't carried through at this settlement. The local government operates but we did not experience any changes in views. They don't support entrepreneurship. Moreover, they make our life miserable if they can."

"Political transition? There wasn't any transition! Nothing has happened!"

They explain the villagers' rejection with envy and with the fact that in Újiráz there have never been families with significant land properties. The people of the village are afraid that some of them would emerge from them by becoming richer than the others.

According to my experiences, the entrepreneurs compare their farming strategies to collective farming. While wording their opinions they do not criticize persons, but the deficiencies of collective farming and the unexplored opportunities of that are opposed to the advantages of private enterprises they represent. Since collective farming has traditions in the settlement, a fair amount of the inhabitants are interested in co-operative farming in some way. That is why conflict is manifested in the different

29 Wolf, Eric 1966.

approaches of the members of the co-operative and those of the private farmers. Entrepreneurs consider the members' personal approaches to work as the main problem of co-operative farming. They believe that the reasons of facile working morals and work-intensity are rooted in the fact that most of the workers of the collective farm were socialized for employee mentality from childhood.

"Most of the people were raised along this line: I work and on the 10th of the month I get paid. They are not used to not having money for two month. Last time I had to manage like that."

They collect their information about co-operative farming during their everyday activities in the village space. During farming they can watch the production of the co-operative as easily as the co-operative workers could watch their farming. On the other hand, many of the entrepreneurs had leading positions in the collective farm. As they had the opportunity to influence processes of collective farming (probably that is why they watch it that much), they can see the differences. They know both kinds of farming. In their opinion the present leadership of the co-operative could do something for the appreciation of the private property of entrepreneurs, since it is the leader's task to shape the view of the members.

"The leader of the co-op is not co-operative. He did not warn people to pay attention to the property of others, to observe the borders."

In the relationship of the collective farm and the entrepreneurs it is peculiar that several entrepreneurs have invested in the collective farm. Despite all conflicts, for some entrepreneurs difficulties of the co-op mean opportunity. That phenomenon indicates that their relationship is more motivated by economic interests than by emotions or passion.

"I am going to have some free capacities and the collective farm needs plough machines. They should ask me to help. Private entrepreneurs and the collective farm should co-operate."

According to the owner of the biggest enterprise of Újiráz, the co-operative has an essential role in the village, because the inhabitants cannot live on their 3-hectare lands separately. He believes that the future of the settlement is not the strategy, the private enterprise he represents, but such a working-organization unit functioning in a co-operative structure that could provide work for 2–3 members of each of the families in Újiráz.

The group of private entrepreneurs is not homogeneous, conflicts occur among them as well. Co-operation, solidarity characterizes entrepreneurs linked with ties of kinship.

SUMMARY

Since its foundation in 1912 a peculiar form of farming based on the collective farm and the household has been developing in Újiráz. The historical background of the village defined its nature. The settlement starting to develop dynamically first lost its "key-settlement", Nagyvárad, then it was pushed to the periphery of the region.³⁰

By the political change the two economic pillars, the collective farm and market gardening, were impaired. At the same time a new form of farming appeared that had had no precedent. By applying strategies differing from the norms of the village the private farmers had to face the rejection of the community. Market gardeners who depend a lot on the external markets perform a traditionally peasant way of defensive behavior against the unfavorable external influences. They follow the strategy of cutting back production and reducing consumption, and pushing those reacting positively to the external influences to the periphery. Rejection is often manifested not openly but in symbolic forms. The changes of living standards also determine the relationships of the inhabitants of the settlement, because in graver economic situations conflicts are always sharper. The closed, unfeasible state of the ageing settlement also makes the adaptation to the transformed market conditions more difficult. The migration of the lively, young generations impedes the possibility of a gradual transition and that makes the community to react with disintegration, not with adaptation to the new situation.

On the basis of the research I believe that private enterprise is not the offspring of the market gardening becoming not viable. Indeed, it is basically a different form of farming, the development conditions of which have been created by the present. The market gardening will not necessarily disappear, only it has to go through some kind of a transition to become capable of perpetuating.

30 Süli-Zakar, I. 1996:22.

Through the economic transitions of Újiráz one phase of the process can be seen. Its actors are not bad or good, positive or negative, only their attitudes are motivated by different life-strategies.

My research only scratches the surface, showing main directions and interactions between individuals. The exploration of deeper motivations is a task for further investigations, where I intend to pay attention to a network of relations determined by kinship, religion, origin, sex and age unexpressed during everyday speech-acts and remaining mostly invisible for external observers.

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South-Bihar farming associations re-forming after the regime change

AGRICULTURE IN LOCAL SOCIETIES not only means the production of goods but also has significant social aspects. In this article, by taking the example of two associations of Bihar, I will examine some aspects of the changes in economic and social relations in the period between the regime change and today.

Our first example reveals some aspects of the economic and social role the Bihari Táj Mezőgazdasági Termelő és Szolgáltató Kft. [Bihar Landscape Agricultural Production and Service Ltd.] plays in the local community and also the place it occupies. The Bihari Táj Mezőgazdasági Termelő és Szolgáltató Kft. is the successor of the former collective farm and it successfully adapted to the new economic circumstances. The other example is a case study of organizing a farming association on the basis of agricultural strategies that have stood the test of time and extending it to the region.

These examples demonstrate the unique nature of processes following the political changes of 1989. The regime change does not have a fixed starting and ending point. An important part of the transformation is the experimentation during which the economic actors try to adapt to a system of relations that is two-folded. They try to adjust the local possibilities to the conditions set up from up and outside¹ by the political

1 WOLF, Eric 1966, 1–20.

power operating mostly through laws. All local communities adapt their operational mechanisms to these expectations defined from the outside. The differences are not consequences of accidental distortions but are the effects of processes that have been reshaped and determined in accordance with local relations. Therefore we cannot talk about economic and/or social strategies being operable or suitable per se.² Recent studies in economic sociology note that globalization does not dissolve the specificities characterizing certain geographical regions. Indeed, local knowledge, local culture and characteristic features of the economic activities are emphasized by it.³ Accordingly, the case studies presented here cannot be taken as typical form even if there are very similar agricultural patterns to be found in the country.

My research focused on settlements located in the southern part of Hajdú-Bihar county, near the border. The settlements (Kóróssziget, Csökmő, Újiráz, Komádi, Magyarhomorog, Berekböszörmény, Körösszegapáti, Körösszakál) are of different size and different regional status but similar in their geographical setting and traditions. All of these researched localities are disadvantaged due to the Trianon decision according to which they lost their regional center Nagyvárad and ended up in a peripheral position. The introduction of the county system in the 1950s deepened their disadvantageous situation, causing an economic and social vacuum. The communist spatial development policies could not get this region to fall into line with more developed regions of Hungary.⁴

The collective farms operating in the 1980s did not provide a sufficient base for the development of the region. Eight of the 27 collective farms characterized with unfavorable site conditions in Bihar were situated in the researched area. Half of the deficient collective farms of Hajdú-Bihar county operated in the area of our focus.

The market gardens of Bihar were characterized by multiple complementary production, of which animal husbandry played a leading role. The market gardens operated primarily for self-sufficiency and the provision of complementary income was only secondary.⁵

2 GRABHER, Gernot - STARK, David 1996, 745-769.

3 GRABHER, Gernot - STARK, David 1996, 759-760.

4 BÉRES Csaba-SÜLI-ZAKAR István, 1990, 13.

5 BÉRES Csaba-SÜLI-ZAKAR István, 1990, 80-87.

The multiply disadvantaged region of Bihar was further aggrieved by the political changes of 1989. Agriculture was a leading feature of the region. Due to the unfavorable effects on agriculture and agrarianism the area became extremely distressed. Underdeveloped infrastructure and the following low economic potential and the farmers' difficulties in adaptation resulted in economic unfeasibility that intensified outward migration.

By now farming associations have almost completely disappeared from the region. The two examples presented in this paper barely have any role in influencing the market. The activity and the existence of these two farming associations should be considered an exception rather than characteristic of the region.

FAMILY ENTREPRENEURSHIPS

PRESUMABLY WORKING IN A COMMUNITY is safer and more effective, even if the nature and intensity of co-operational relationship changed greatly after the fall of the regime and the local societies became more and more individualized. Shifting ownership rearranged the inner relations of the local communities. In the process of capitalization the role of money and employment was revaluated.⁶ Lease-work came to the front overshadowing former relationships based on mutual help.⁷ The uncertainty and instability of conditions caused a serious cut back in barter and economic relations based on mutual trust. At the same time family relationship and kinship became more and more important.⁸

Although the local life strategies of the end of the 20th century and beginning of the 21st century are not easily classified, my research in the region shows that kinship plays an important role in the operation of farms with 20–300 acres land. Preservation of the land was important for those who started farming after the political changes of 1989. Therefore it was a reasonable strategy to take all (potential) heirs into the farming activity. The heirs inheriting land tended to rely on their immediate families when it came to entrepreneurship. Close economic integration is commonly considered

6 MACFARLANE, Alan 1993. 47.

7 PALÁDI-KOVÁCS Attila 1977. 104.

8 KUCZI Tibor – MAKÓ Csaba 1996, 176–189.

as part of the family's success.⁹ Usually these family entrepreneurship „employ“ direct successors (spouse, children, parents and siblings). Family members may have leading roles but also may carry out certain tasks or work as seasonal workers. They play all kinds of roles within the structure, from being leaders, carrying out certain tasks to seasonal agricultural works.¹⁰

COLLECTIVE FARMS

THE POLITICAL ELITE COMING INTO POWER after the political changes wanted to end the era of collective farming in an indirect way. On the one hand, by dividing the assets of the collective farms the elite eliminated the base of production. On the other hand, by changing the legislation, it narrowed the opportunities of operation. By restricting ownership rights on land and assets the economic potential of farming associations was seriously damaged.¹¹ The regulations created market distortion and non-competitive market behavior. Due to their ineffectiveness most of the collective farms failed to adapt to the rules of market economy.¹²

Their situation was further worsened by the fact that, despite the democratization, all governments tried to influence the market conditions by creating laws or financial packages and preferred certain types of farms and means of production in accordance with the best political interest. As a result, 20 years after 1989, only 500–600 out of the thousands of formerly operating Hungarian collective farms have still existed. Even more, in most of the cases the previous production structure was replaced by a mere property management role.

The gap left by the cessation of collective farms during the '90s was tried to be filled in differently by the localities. We hardly find any kind of agricultural production and even less any type of collective agriculture among the different strategies.

9 KUCZI Tibor 2000. 67–68.

10 LOVAS KISS Antal 2007. 193–204.

11 BURGERNÉ GIMES Anna 2006. 207–225.

12 FARKASNÉ FEKETE Mária 1999. 128–130.

FARMING ASSOCIATIONS

BEFORE THE POLITICAL CHANGES agricultural production had two pillars: farms and market gardens. Collective farms were in an in-between position, organizing market gardens into some sort of structure. Market gardening was helped by the collective farms which provided seeds, breeding animals, feed and professional consultation and ensured buying up. At the same time the system had certain disadvantages. On ideological grounds the communist regime prevented market gardens from developing. It restricted their operation to market segments in which they could not be competitors to state-owned farms.

Farming associations are the successors of collective farms. Nowadays such associations are significant forms of agricultural cooperation.¹³ This form also has its disadvantages. Currently these associations lack the financial capital that allowed collective farms to act as creditors. This could be a reason for the lack of such farming associations in the distressed region of South Bihar.

Farming associations serve as a framework for organized private farming. The advantage of corporate sale and purchase is that the otherwise isolated producers (in my area of focus mainly family entrepreneurships) can reduce the costs of production and strengthen their market position. Farm products that are sold in a significant amount collectively can integrate small producers into the competing market. Farm associations may be formed on the basis of the producing and selling of any sort of similar products.¹⁴

THE BIHARI TÁJ TERMELŐ ÉS SZOLGÁLTATÓ KFT. [BIHAR LANDSCAPE AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION AND SERVICE LIMITED] IN CSÖKMŐ

A family owned Ltd without ownership right on land

After the joining of the European Union farmers followed two different strategies: some of them focused on buying land, others chose to farm on leased lands. The two forms favor different models of operation.

¹³ In case of growing vegetables and fruit the farms were called TЭСZ

¹⁴ LACZKÓ András 2005. 25.

High quality land or land sold for a favorable price is mostly irresistible for the farmer. Letting the chance go by is understood as loss. Meanwhile farm owners with 50–100 acres of land do not usually have the necessary surplus capital to buy more lands. For purchasing land they have to use the income of the currently existing farm. It is common that they risk their resources or completely use up their development funds.

„...I know that I should mechanize but it doesn't feel right to spend so much money on it. It always comes to my mind that the money could also be spent on buying more land.”¹⁵

Those who farm on leased land secure their income from the production. Therefore they invest a lot in mechanization. In order to lessen their loss arising from the amortization of the machines services also play an important role in their business. We have to note, though, that leasing land is not always an alternative to choose but can also be a necessity. The Bihari Táj Termelő és Szolgáltató Kft. in Csökmő grows crops (wheat, sunflower) on leased land and provides mechanized agricultural services. Its predecessor was the Dózsa collective farm in Csökmő. A law passed in 1994 brought significant changes to the operational structure. In accordance with regulations collective farms were not allowed to own land and they had to turn into business associations. So far the farming association in question has adapted successfully to the conditions of the new economy and operates profitably on leased lands.¹⁶ As part of the adaptation process, in order to overcome the disadvantages brought by the regulations concerning farming associations, the farm changed its company structure and became a limited partnership in 2006. (Farms with more than 300 acres land were not entitled to government support)

The Bihari Táj Kft. has 30 employees and capital of 62 million HUF. The company's ownership structure is unique. Former workers of the collective farm became owners, meaning that all of the employees are also owners of the limited partnership. This ownership structure was initiated by the head of the collective farms. His decision was not influenced exclusively by business considerations. The existing ownership structure cannot be considered as practical. Due to the lack of a majority stake owner decisions are made upon the approval of the assembly. (It is difficult for the managing board to conciliate different interests and opinions.) At the same time the ownership structure

¹⁵ Farmer 2009. Komádi

¹⁶ For a detailed description of the transition process see: LOVAS KISS Antal 2006. 135–148.

reflects a coordination mechanism existing above the target-oriented economic thinking. The leader of the collective farm decided to initiate this structure by considering local networks and solidarity.¹⁷ The employers are from the same age group.

„...We were kids together, we grew up together. Everybody knows each other. I simply couldn't screw up with them. I could easily get majority ownership. No trouble. But I couldn't get myself to do it: I couldn't just tell my childhood friend [indicating a push with his hands]: You are dismissed”¹⁸

Leasing of farm land

After the division of property the association leased lands that were not to be cultivated by their new owners. Although all of the fields around Csökmő have some parts cultivated by market gardeners a significant amount of land remained undivided. These lands are cultivated by the Bihari Táj Kft. as leased lands. The company leases 1570 acres of land and has lease agreement with more than 1100 landowners. The otherwise unfortunate situation that many people received compensation in the form of land who do not wish to farm or do not live in the area creates favorable conditions for leasing.

In terms of the limited partnership's operation the most important factors are the moratorium on land and the trend of local agricultural entrepreneurs toward expansion.

„...currently we can give 28 kg of wheat for each aranykorona. 19 For foreigners it's nothing. They give 50 kilograms and then everyone is willing to lease the land. For foreigners it is still cheaper than buying or leasing land at home. They don't come here to cultivate, only take the profit out of the country.”

Even so, the biggest concern of the company is not the ending of the moratorium on land and the related possibility of foreigners acquiring ownership over land. The lands around Csökmő are worth only 17 aranykorona. According to the company foreigners may find much better lands near the Western borders of Hungary. In terms of the feasibility of the company the expansion of big local farms is a much bigger threat. The

17 BRUSZT László – STARK, David 1996. 183–203.

18 Sándor Tóth leader of Bihari Táj Kft. 2010.

19 aranykorona (AK) is a traditional Hungarian unit of land value. This unit is an index which expresses the quality of the land, and today should be seen as an approximation, especially in view of the differing branches of cultivation. /the translator/

company is rightfully concerned that the ongoing hereditary division of land creates favorable conditions for market-leading entrepreneurs to buy land of a discounted price.

In order to secure lands for cultivation the company tries to enter into long-term lease agreements. In the mid '90s a lease agreement was in force for three years. Nowadays the term is extended to 5–10 years. The newly concluded agreements specify that change in ownership does not terminate the agreements. Recently the land acquisition of the neighboring farmers from Újiráz was slowed down by this condition.

„...we experienced a huge craze for land acquisition early fall, late summer of 2010. They came and bought everything. Then they realized that there is a 5 or 10 year lease agreement on certain land. So, by the end, they looked elsewhere for land free of any lease.”²⁰

Land acquisition is not only sought for by private entrepreneurs, also nearby companies have such needs. Actually the land is not acquired by the companies themselves but by the owners having majority ownership in the given companies.

This was the strategy the Bihari Táj Kft. had in mind at the time of its establishment. The company encouraged owners to acquire land, but they failed to do so. Although the employees of the company are also shareholders, as individuals they are not characterized by entrepreneurial behavior. Beside their activities within the company they do not seek for other opportunities and they do not like taking risks. In spite of the favorable conditions provided by the company, the members did not engage themselves in extended land acquisition. All efforts of the leaders failed.

„...They said they are short of money. I told them that the company could give the money in advance and then they can pay it back without any interest on it. Anything to keep the land (so the land remains in the ownership of someone local). They could get the land from money credited by the company, lease it to the company and keep ownership right.”²¹

The company could have had its lease secured, but the members did not want to buy land. Meanwhile we have to note that the Bihari Táj Kft. is considered a trustworthy employer, and its employees do not feel the necessity of securing their position by acquiring more land.

20 Leader of Bihari Táj Kft 2011. Csökmő

21 Leader of Bihari Táj Kft 2011. Csökmő

*Production and services from the viewpoint
of traditions in collective farming*

The subsistence and profitability of the formerly unprofitable collective farm in Csökmő is due to its flexible adaptation to changing circumstances. In practice farming was characterized by leaving traditions behind and rapidly turning toward market orient strategies. The change in corporate structure was followed by a change in activities. At the establishment of the Bihari Táj in 1992 the animal husbandry ended. The unprofitable sheep herd (5000 sheep) was sold, although the region has a long tradition of sheep raising. For a long time in the past raising sheep and cattle was the most profitable activity in the area.

Crop production was limited to certain crops; on most of the land they grew sunflower and grain (wheat, barley). Experimenting is part of the company's strategy, but risks are taken only after great consideration.

„We tried to change things, adapt to the market needs. We introduced rapeseed that has not been grown in Csökmő for decades. With 1,5 ton of yield it was not profitable, so we decided to go back to crops traditionally grown...”²²

Important sources of income are the services provided. The management intends to keep up with the traditional role of collective farms and help market gardeners with certain services. Services are provided at cost price for members.

„Corn can be considered as nostalgia. Back in the collective farm's time corn was grown for feeding the animals. The old members insist on growing it.”²³

The company coordinates sheep raising, the animals being owned by individuals. Herding and sheds are provided by the company.²⁴ It also integrates the small farms of Csökmő, provides crops and, upon request, organizes sales.²⁵ From plant to harvest the company offers mechanized agricultural services and also does hired drying. The

22 By traditional crops the interviewee means crops grown during the '90s.

23 Leader of the Bihari Táj Kft. 2011. Csökmő

24 *„...That's how we help farmers. (they are not real farmers, they raise animals as a hobby).”* Leader of the Bihari Táj Kft. 2010. Csökmő

25 Sale agreements concluded by the company have better terms. A couple of hundred quintal wheat or sunflower do not have as a good price as larger quantities. The company sells the products of individuals at the same price as its own products.

agricultural dryer and its 300 wagon storage capacity²⁶ serve the needs of several settlements of the region. The form and extent of the services are largely defined by the corporate size of the client.²⁷

The income from services is still important for the company, but has recently been cut back. Some clients turn to other farming associations. Along with farmers with 200 acres of land and fully mechanized farms with lots of spare capacity young (under 35) entrepreneurs entered the scene who established their entrepreneurship using supports available for young farmers.

Many times the Bihari Táj Kft. falls behind in competition because of its size. A farm with the size of the given company is too big to compete with smaller companies more easily turning to the methods of the black market. Independent of their economic effectiveness, the size of smaller companies provides an opportunity for them to disclaim some of their income and offer cheaper services.²⁸ The leader of the company understands those who do work without issuing an invoice.

„...we have to issue it (invoice). But for the individuals it indeed matters if I harvest his wheat for 14 thousand plus VAT per acre, which means 17 thousand. Others do it for 14 thousand or even a thousand less.”²⁹

The intent to avoid competition is because of the informal relationship existing in local communities. Trust lessens the risks of economic transactions. In local business relationship the stronger party is less likely to capitalize on the opportunities arising from the vulnerability of smaller parties.³⁰

Adapting to regulations and market opportunities

The Bihari Táj Kft. is forced to follow laws regulating its operation. At the same time the company is very creative and efficient when it comes to employment. Without breaching the law it adapts creatively to the circumstances. The company cannot

26 The BE 15 agricultural dryer was built in 1983.

27 For example farmers with mechanized agriculture farming on 80 acres usually ask for the company's help in the harvest because they lack combine harvesters.

28 GÁBOR R. István 1994. 716.

29 Leader of Bihari Táj Kft. 2011. Csökmő

30 KUCZI Tibor–MAKÓ Csaba 1996. 176–189.

profiteer from wages. Night shifts and Sundays are paid as regulated. Meanwhile, during the winter months, when agricultural work is not available the company fires the employees. The employers are on holiday in November and December and receive unemployment aid in January and February. Maintenance work is not going on during the winter, so there is no need to pay for heating in the workshop. After planting in May and June there is plenty of time to do all the maintenance necessary for harvest. The employers do not go on short, for unemployment aid is 75% of the highest wage, which means, they receive more money than they would get if they spend the winter with maintenance work.

The company presents itself in the market as a seller. Therefore sales are an important part of the production cycle. It pays attention to its purchasers. When deciding on product mix precautions are taken and the network of members is used.³¹ Beside the inherited network of the former collective farm, the company also profits from its relations formed after the political changes.

„Up till then (up to the political changes) we had to live up to the expectations of KITE or Hajdú Gabona. Then smaller partners and purchasers entered the market. We were able to negotiate the conditions with them.”³²

Successful operation relies on the leader's network through which more profitable supplies and sales are concluded. Trust is an important part in all these transactions. Quantity, quality and price are negotiated via phone, the purchaser pays in advance and the wheat is only delivered later.

„...the buyer never actually sees the product. My words are enough. I tell the quality and quantity and that's it. I never mislead them.”³³

The clients regard the company as a trustworthy, stable partner. Therefore it is extremely important to preserve creditability. In order to do so the company only enters into business that is easy to control and tries to have savings.

„...we do not have any debts or loans. Not a penny. And this is even more if you realize how bad a year we had.”³⁴

31 CSITE András 1999. 151–172.

32 Leader of the Bihari Táj Kft. 2011. Csökmő

33 Leader of the Bihari Táj Kft. 2011. Csökmő

34 Leader of the Bihari Táj Kft. 2011. Csökmő

The leader is a very important person in the company. He had a particularly significant role in turning the formerly unprofitable collective farm into a profitable and feasible farming association. In the post communist transition process he was able to utilize his experiences in management.³⁵ He was continuously in a leading position during the transition. His professional and practical skills made him able to transform his capital and keep his managerial position after the changes.³⁶

Social role and reputation

The unemployment rate in Csökmő was 14–16% in 2009. The constant decrease in population is related to the lack of available employment opportunities. By 2009 the population did not even reach 2000 persons. In spite of the massive cutback in the number of employees³⁷ the Bihari Táj Kft. remained the second biggest employer of the village. (the local government is the biggest one). Beside the company an Italian sewing factory employing 8–10 persons and an agricultural entrepreneurship employing 3–4 persons provide work opportunities for the villagers. More opportunities are available in the surrounding bigger settlements.

In terms of the company's reputation the ambivalences toward the former collective farm are noticeable. Many people in Csökmő think that the leaders of the company circumvent the existence and operation of the company is due to the unlawful behavior of its leaders. It means that they used regulations after the regime change and were able to use their former relationships and contacts to help the company keep running.

.... Still today, the company has enemies. People identify us as the successor of the collective farm. Our roots are there, we are the successors. That's true. People call me president, just as in the old days the leader of the collective farms was called.”³⁸

At the same time nostalgia is also to be found in the villagers of Csökmő.

35 RÓNA-TAS Ákos 1994. 65.

36 BOURDIEU, Pierre 1986. 241–258.; SZELÉNYI Szonja – SZELÉNYI Iván – KOVÁCH Imre 1995.

37 When the obligation of employment ceased in 1993, the collective farms still standing refused to carry on with the social roles forced on them by the regime of the former era. (HARCSA István – SZELÉNYI Iván – KOVÁCH Imre 1994. 34.) In Csökmő the number of employees was cut back to 34 from the former 300.

38 Leader of the Bihari Táj Kft. 2011. Csökmő

„Everyone in our generation was a member of the collective farm, an employee of it. That was my first workplace, and it's the same for many of us. Many people who were my classmates work here. We started our carrier from this place; from here we went to secondary school.”³⁹

We have to note, though, that this nostalgia differs significantly from that of the reminiscences taped at the turning of the century. In those the past served as a point from which the present is questionable, the interviewees defined themselves as „losers” of the changes.⁴⁰ On the contrary the villagers in Csökmő do not consider the „era of the collective farm”⁴¹ as the golden age. Independent of the value judgments formed, the association serves as the reference point of change and has an ongoing effect on the economic structure of the village.

DAIRY FARMERS' CO-OP OF KÖRÖSSZAKÁL

Antecedents: the trap set by quality

Market relations after the political changes acted against small producers. In order to protect themselves from the crisis caused by the overproduction of milk big companies of the processing industry drastically cut back the purchase price of milk and applied strict quality measures. They tried to supplant small producers and make room for dairy products produced by big (frequently foreign) companies. The biggest purchaser of the region, Hajdútej Tejipari Részvénytársaság [Hajdútej Dairy Product Joint Stock Company], introduced a complex quality measurement system in 1997.⁴² There are significant differences in prices of different quality classes. Production cost was only covered in case of first class extra milk. The price of lower quality milk was so low that it did not cover production cost. Quality criteria and price did not go together

³⁹ Leader of the Bihari Táj Kft. 2011. Csökmő

⁴⁰ Thousands of people lost their secure incomes, employment, point of reference. Losers in this context means those who, because of their age or profession, were not able to integrate into the market economy and relied on social aid or premature pension.

⁴¹ ASSMANN, Jan 1999. 83–84.

⁴² The classification is made in accordance with Section 743 (4) of Decree no. 41/1997 (V. 28.) FM on Veterinary Regulations

consequently. As the chart shows, in 1998 the price of unclassified milk grew at a greater rate than the price of extra quality.

Quality	Price, HUF/l	
	1997	1998
Extra	47	55
I. class	45	52
II. class	36	45
III. class	34	43
Unclassified	31	41

The complex analysis is of high cost. Therefore it was carried out by using large quantities of milk, meaning that all the milk produced in a given settlement was analyzed as a whole. The individual producers did not have a chance to get their product and only their product analyzed. As a result, because of the indecisive quality even the farms producing good quality milk lost profit. By the end all dairy farms of the region (for example: Újiráz, Csökmő, Magyarhomorog) were shut down. Because of the strict conditions the situation of small producers worsened and many of them stopped producing dairy products and raising cattle.

Regional role, integration by the local government

The loss of this source of income might have effected one quarter of the families in Kőrösszakál. 60 families owning 150 cattle lived on producing milk. Liquidation of the facility could further worsen the already disadvantaged situation of the village and the unemployment rate exceeding the national average could have increased. For the small-scale producers lacking resources the only solution was to cooperate. The local network loosened by the political changes of 1989 and could not provide a valid alternative. Grass root initiatives did not exist in the settlement.

The local government provided a way out, by integrating local farms producing milk. By helping small-scale family businesses the primary aim of the village leaders was to strengthen the position of Kőrösszakál in terms of preventing outward migration.

In order to unite milk producers the local government established an association. By securing financial needs and coordinating production the local government wanted to ensure quality and serve the small producers' interests. In the long term, by keeping

the dairy production and animal husbandry alive, the government wanted to provide further working opportunities for the villagers.

Changing technologies, building up the association

In order to ensure competitiveness stricter prerequisites of hygienic milking, of cooling of milk and of storage had to be secured. For this the organization needed improvement in technology. Modernizing the milk production meant that a new milking facility had to be built, together with a cooling system, and also quality breeding stock had to be raised. The producers, though, did not have the professional skills or the money to do so. In order to develop the new production structure of the settlement the local government had to utilize its economic, relational and political capital.⁴³ Cooling kettles (plate chillers) were installed in the farms; the producers participated in courses focusing on operating the machinery and also on hygiene issues. Despite the fact that hygienic milk production is more easily achieved by using milking machines some of the producers used traditional methods at this time.

The local government was responsible for treating the milk, but it required the producers to produce extra or first class milk. The government built a new facility and, with the help of the Agricultural University of Debrecen, modern treating technology was installed.⁴⁴ They also acted as integrators.

The program was extended when the Regional Center for Unemployment initiated its self-employment program. Most of the participants bought animals with its support. This was considered a great opportunity for farmers who had their own land and were able to grow the forage for the animals.

On the 12th of January 1999 the „Körös-Körül” *Összefogás Szövetkezet* [„Körös-Körül” Farmers’ Co-operation] was established with 86 founding members in Körösszakál. mayor Gyula Samók was named the head of the managing board and the milk producers were its members. Basically, the local government wanted to provide local farms with an opportunity, but soon enough producers from neighboring settlements joined the organization. One hundred and twenty four additional producers joined the farmers’ co-op from Körösnagyharsány, Magyarhomorog, Körösszegapát and Bedő. They were

43 CSITE András 1999.

44 Dairy Cool cooling kettle and a 5000 liter capacity ZD 6-019 cooling system was purchased

welcomed, for even with their joining only one third of the capacity of the newly built cooling system was utilized.

The economic model created in Körösszakál quickly spread across the country. By 1998 158 producers with 1664 cows in 61 settlements were part of similar organizations.⁴⁵

Cooperation as political program

„At the beginning there was much a bigger fuss around the „Körös-Körül“.⁴⁶

The program received significant press coverage and many people considered the Körösszakál model as sustainable farmers' co-operation and this strategy that could help small-scale farms to find a way out of the chaos caused by the political changes of 1989. This model of farming suited the ideology of the Független Kisgazda Párt (FKGP) [Independent Smallholders Party] which was a new member of the political elite. The Party had a vision of the future for the Hungarian agrarium based on small-scale farms. According to the Party the example of Körösszakál proved that *„...the Hungarian peasantry is able to produce modern, EU conforming dairy products“*.⁴⁷ At the same time the managing structure of the Körösszakál co-op offered a new alternative. It broadened the role of the local government by adding the expansion of the economy to it. Economic management and integration became part of the competence of the local political elite.

Elimination of market dependency was an important aim of the co-operation. Over the long-term they wanted to establish a milk processing facility in which locally produced milk could have been turned into bio dairy products. According to the plans they would have organized a direct sale and so, by by-passing wholesalers, they could have achieved much higher profits. The managing board also wanted to establish a center in which bio-forage could have been dried and supplied to producers. This could have served as the basis of bio-farming.⁴⁸

The members of the co-op paid membership fee. The prerequisite of membership was the purchase of a share at the value of 6000 HUF. In addition to it 3–4 HUF was

45 Data driven from the database of ÁT Kft. as of 28 July 1998.

46 Milk producer 2011. Körösszakál

47 Attila Bánk parliamentary group leader of the FKGP (NAGY Ottó ed. 1999: 5)

48 NAGY Ottó (ed.) 1999. 54.

deducted from each liter of milk passed in by the members. The number of shares owned by a single member was limited to 30. Several interviewees emphasized that everyone focused on the decisions of the leaders but no one actually mentioned the co-operation of the members.

„...everyone made great sacrifices. Those 70 producers took it upon themselves to pay four HUF per liter in order to have the facility built here.”⁴⁹

Adaptation or tacking about

Production had boosted by the end of the '90s and it was not for long before the capacity of the 5000 liter cooler was entirely utilized. This ambitious start was not followed with steady growth. The co-op tried to capitalize on competitions and tenders. A part of the income was turned into machinery. At this time the state gave financial support for creating workplaces.⁵⁰ The co-op seized the opportunity and employed 13 workers (inseminator, tractor strivers, potters, etc.). Later this decision was turned out not to have been well thought out.

„we did need the money, no doubt. I can't say the same about the 13 employees though”⁵¹

In a little while difficulties arose. As a *modus vivendi* a new co-operation was founded under the name *Körösi Gazdálkodók Tejszövetkezet* [Milk Production Association of Producers from the Körös Region] in 2002. Milk production was moved to this new organization. After the transformation a new call for applications was published and the producers decided to give it a try. According to the plan the winning of the support would have made it possible to build a processing factory and buy trucks that could have transported milk to the factory from the whole Bihar region. In order to realize this regional project the farmers' co-op had to be transformed. The *Bihar Térsége Tejszövetkezet* [Milk Production Co-operation of Bihar Region] was founded in 2003. This organization united producers on a regional level. The transportation and

49 Milk producer 2011. Körösszakál

50 One million HUF was paid after each new employment.

51 Agricultural professional from Körösszakál 2010.

the forage dryer came into realization, but one of the most important elements, the processing factory, did not.

The organization still exists but is experiencing a gradual decrease. At the beginning of 2011 only 20 producers were its members and the daily milk production did not exceed 900 liters.

Causes of decline and unsuccessfulness

It is without doubt that the establishment of the milk producing co-op had advantages in terms of the local community. Unemployment was eased by the support of traditional production forms. It provided producers with a regular monthly income, so that those who were used to getting monthly wages did not have to change their strategy of budgeting. By uniting producers, it also helped co-operation among settlements.

Locals have different answers to the question of the reasons leading to a decline. Many of my interviewees think that the failure of original plans can be blamed for lack of success. They believe that only those long-term aims could have secured the position of the organization.

„The end of co-op came with the fall of the original plans. For the last five years we are just stuck in this situation.”⁵²

Motivation lies in profitability. Producers decide production in accordance with the sale price of the milk. To raise milking cows is a large and long-term investment, therefore producers may only choose to cut back their live-stock in the utmost need.

„... it was really hard work. Those who wanted to continue business had to change their stock constantly. Structural changes were also necessary, and the genome too. That was the only key to success.”⁵³

They had to live through long periods in which the wholesale price of milk was less than the production cost. At the end of 2010 76 HUF was paid for extra quality milk. After the deduction of transportation and operational costs the members of the Körösszakál co-op received only 64 HUF/l. Meanwhile at this time the production costs

52 Agricultural professional from Körösszakál 2010.

53 Milk producer 2011. Körösszakál

could not be further reduced than 70 HUF/l, even with the strictest economization. Also by that time it was obvious that the significantly growing price of the corn (6000 HUF/quintal) would have a price increasing effect on milk. Uneconomic production could have been balanced for awhile by applying well-known methods of traditional farming: self-exploitation and non-calculation of work. Merging of the production sector and the household could also offer a solution for a limited amount of time.⁵⁴

Milk production is not popular with the younger generation. The income is not attractive if one considers the loss of free time and the necessary labor into consideration. It becomes increasingly obvious that milk production supplies income only for subsistence and not for growth.

„...you have to work night and day. In the old days people did not complain. It was natural for them. The peasants did not consider it a burden to get up early in the morning. But nowadays it is different. People change and it becomes a burden to sacrifice all your weekends and holidays. No New Year's Eve, no Christmas. ...”⁵⁵

Some of the interviewees blame consumer society for the decline of the milk production co-op. They say that the patterns of consumption changed and the income secured from milk production was not enough to cover the increasing demand of the consumers.

„...people demanded more. They wanted to replace their Trabant with a Suzuki.”⁵⁶

To tell the truth, even during the communism, milk production was only profitable as a second source of income. In consumer society it is absolutely not suitable for being the primary source of income.

Because the income is not commensurate with the work many people stopped producing milk.

„These people worked a lot, and still, they aren't rich.”⁵⁷

First the self-employed producers of the co-op experienced what was mentioned above. Because of the legal circumstances they could not be employed in any other form at anywhere for five years. Therefore a significant number of producers aimed to

54 GÁBOR R. István 1994. 709–719.

55 Farmer 2010. Magyarhomorog

56 Agricultural professional 2011. Körösszakál

57 Agricultural professional 2011. Körösszakál

leave the co-op after the termination of the contract period. Many of them remained in agriculture but switched to branches requiring less work and generating more income. Some of them switched to raising cattle for the meat industry. There were farmers who decided to make use of the low land prices characteristic of the period before Hungary joined the EU. They sold their live-stock and bought agricultural land. The daily average production of 5000 l between 2006 and 2008 decreased to 2500 l and mostly members having other sources of income remained in the co-operation.

Beside market reasons other factors affected the winding up of farms. In entrepreneurship with family members as employees the size of the family and the individual life strategies also played important roles. The intensity of production is largely defined by the number of family members, their stamina and their willingness of participation. Most of the producers investing in their farms at the end of the '90s changed their farming structure and production intensity. By now, balance is more easily achieved even with less intensive labor.⁵⁸

One of my interviewees handed in daily 130 liters of milk up to 2008. By doing so he was classified as a „upper intermediate” producer. He continuously had other sources of income. He produced most of the forage on his own 30 acres land, half of which was plough-land. The income received from milk production was invested into the education of his daughters, for he did not want them to apply for student credit. After the graduation of the girls he cut back production. Even with a strong motivation toward raising animals he decided to stop intensive milk production.

The profitability of milk production is largely defined by the place the activity occupies in the income structure of the family. There are examples of farms being unprofitable within the co-op but profitable when entering the black market.

One of my interviewees tried to secure his living from milk production for years. Because of the low profitability he decided to get a job in 2010. He was employed by a company with 80 employees as a security guard in a nearby town. At the same time, he did not sell his cows but only cut back the number of the stock. He produces cheese and curd selling it to his fellow workers. By doing so his profit reaches 130 HUF per liter.

Actually, by choosing employment instead of farming he not only secured his income but also got direct access to a large number of customers. Earlier milk production barely provided him enough money to live on. Nowadays, he earns a steady secondary income

58 CHAYANOV, Alexander V. 1966. 53–55.

from it. As an independent milk producer he would not have the opportunity to build up a network of regular customers. By applying the traditional model of peasants, that is securing income from several sources, he is able to continue milk production.

SUMMARY

AFTER THE POLITICAL CHANGES OF 1989 most of the formerly existing collective farms closed down. Only a fraction of them were transformed into some kind of farming associations. Also the number of newly formed co-operations or organizations is few. At the beginning of the 21st century Hungarian agriculture is characterized by the large number of individual or family entrepreneurship. The individual character of agriculture is many times hidden behind the veil of different forms of organizations. No matter what kind of forms these associations take it is extremely important to analyze the level of their integration into the local society. Without doubt, the associations with local members have better ability to enforce local interests and also play an important role in strengthening local identity.

In my area of focus, South Bihar, there are only a few associations that are able or willing to fill in the cohesional gap left behind by former collective farms. Actors decide according to their business interest. Supporting the local community is not their concern. Also they lack sources in terms of social and power structures.

The activity of the Bihari Táj Kft. in Csökmő is ambivalent. On the one hand the company keeps up with the tradition of its predecessor the Dózsa Collective Farm and supports local small-scale farms. On the other hand it follows modern market oriented strategies and tries to be cautious and flexible at the same time. Despite the fact that regulations continuously create disadvantages⁵⁹ the leaders of the company were able to profit from privatization. They realized that the compensation law gave land to many people not willing to use it for farming and that these lands are available for lease. In the company's relationship toward agriculture the local identity of its leaders is expressed both in the integration of land and of small-scale farms.

59 During the transformation period the hegemony of large-scale farming was ceased due to legal and not market conditions.

By establishing the Bihar Térsége Tejszövetkezet, the local government of Körösszakál attempted to take on the role of local economic integrator otherwise missing from the village. As a regional organizer it tried to utilize political social and economic capital, helping to strengthen local cohesion. The gradual deterioration of the Bihar Térsége Tejszövetkezet shows, though, that viability is not absolute and unchanging. The circumstances define viability. In order to remain profitable the economic actor must be able to adapt and to control the ever-changing social and economic environment. The feasibility of a company or an organizational form can only be analyzed in the complex economic, political, and cultural setting within which the given organization operates.⁶⁰

It is without doubt that the collective farms established during socialism did not meet the requirements of market economy. On the other hand, for a long time, these co operations adapted to the local circumstances. The former farms ceased because of the privatization, and market economic tendencies and new models from the European Union took their place. These models still need years to adapt to local circumstances. The utilization and adaptation of available sources in and to local circumstances are not choices but necessities.

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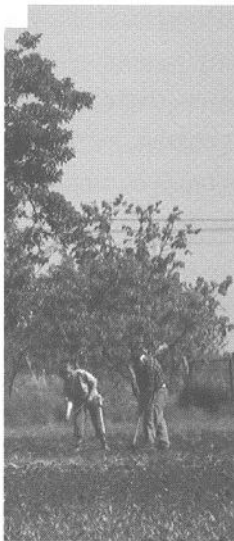
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“It’s not about male and female roles anymore, it’s about money.”

Unique female roles that evolved following the political changes of 1989: the female wage earner and the wife of the entrepreneur

AFTER THE POLITICAL CHANGES OF 1989 the altered economic circumstances transformed the economic and social structures of local communities. This transformation significantly affected the interpersonal relationships, the roles of individuals as well as the traditional roles of men and women in economic and in social settings of a local society. The newly developed conditions shaped the life of individuals in a unique way which can be observed in the transformation of gender roles.

The scope of my study is to demonstrate the political changes of 1989 by examining how traditional roles of women have been transformed in a local society. The subjects of my analysis are the two female roles that started to evolve right after 1989: *the female wage earner and the wife of an entrepreneur*.

As it is necessary to introduce target groups as active members of the local society, examining the social and historical context of that society is essential for the interpretation of its inner structures.

The data I use is a segment of an earlier research of mine on changes in the economy and agriculture of a local society after 1989, with particular focus on the transformation of social structures and lifestyle. While examining female roles we conducted structured and semi-structured interviews with female members of each family. Information on

earlier research concerning economics and time-space relations was used in our analysis as well.¹

The subjects of the research focusing on wives of entrepreneurs were chosen in 2003 on the basis of a census at the settlement. Each of the six families chosen owns more than 50 hectares of land and they form the elite of the community.² Such large land ensures independence for the farmers and provides opportunities for them to have considerable impact on the economic life of the settlement.

However, these farmers are unable to cultivate over 50 hectares without help from their families or help from outside.

It is relevant to emphasize the role of men and women during the process of economic and social transformation because, according to fieldwork data, entrepreneurs with new economic mentality tend to reconstruct the previously existing division between these roles. Applying the gender roles they learned during the socialist era in the new economic and social circumstances is a distinctive feature of entrepreneur wives.³

GENDER BASED DIVISION OF LABOUR

ACKNOWLEDGE THE OPINION OF A FEW EARLIER AUTHORS of influential ethnographic studies⁴ and the results of feminist analysis⁵; however, I think that the issue of the hierarchy of genders is overemphasized. I think that by the 1980s the purpose of existence in local societies was not determined by gender based hierarchy anymore. Dividing labour based on gender was (is) carried out following rational economic decisions to help maximize profits. The role of the hierarchy of the genders is only secondary. In my

1 I'd like to thank to my students, namely to Krisztina Gajda, a habitant, who helped me surveying local social networks, and to Gabriella Ozvald, who helped me by handing over her research materials local identity.

2 Not to violate personality of my informants, I do not intend to reveal the name of that agricultural settlement in the Southern-Bihar region with a decreasing population of 300 citizens where I did my research.

3 Not to violate legislation concerning personality I do not mention the name of the settlement in Hajdú-Bihar county, and my informants.

4 O. Nagy 1989. 42-47; J. Morvay 1981. 9.

5 Asztalos-Morell I. 1997.

opinion, division of labour on the basis of a mutual agreement between the genders has to be promoted. The wife becomes a partner and is not a subordinate to the husband. Social and gender roles can be better understood using a labour based approach than as a patriarchal structure or hierarchical system.⁶ Work activities have traditionally higher importance than other tasks and they are also an organizing and defining element of the life of rural societies.⁷ Therefore, I will discuss *division* of labour as opposed to gender based *segregation* of labour.

THE ROLE OF A WOMAN'S WORK IN THE LIFE OF THE LOCAL SOCIETY

Alice H. Eagly states in her theory about social roles that gender stereotypes develop from the actual social roles of men and women. We differentiate between three different types of work: wage earning, secondary agriculture (market gardening) and household chores. In the 19th and 20th centuries women characteristically were responsible for reproducing manpower (i.e. give birth to and raise children) and for providing a home for the family. Men performed productive, wage earning activities, representative of their social roles, and they were involved in market gardening to help reduce the family's expenses. In other words, women maintained family relations and took care of the household and men were the link to external social relations.⁸ When the man was called away by the social network the woman automatically took over the jobs around the house. Transformation of gender roles are always determined by historical and economic circumstances. In case the man was forced to completely leave the local society, his spouse took over his role, if there were no other men available to help out. In case of an emergency, female roles may have extended not only to agricultural activities but also to managing the entire homestead. However, this only happened under extreme circumstances. As soon as the man returned, the original order was restored.

6 E. Belinszki 1997. 147–149.

7 László Szabó 1997.

8 Eagly, A. H. 1987.

ROLES DEFINED BY THE STATE—CHANGES DURING SOCIALISM

What led to the transformation of traditional female roles was the disappearance of peasantry and the introduction of employment for both genders. Due to the growing agricultural parity the socialist government drew away significant financial capital from the agricultural sector which resulted in very low incomes and made it necessary for women to find employment. The introduction of the dual income family model became necessary due to the major decrease of salaries. The earnings of the head of the family were no longer sufficient to secure the welfare of the family.

The need for women to find employment was easily accepted in local societies as women sustained the social and moral norms of their community. At the same time, the practice of taking over jobs from the men remained in use, especially in secondary agriculture that started booming in the second half of the 1960s. Providing financial security for the family remained a male task but men could only carry out their domestic responsibilities during the breaks of their wage earning activities, dead seasons in farming, on weekends and during holidays. Wives started performing domestic tasks traditionally performed by men (raising pigs, cattle) when their husbands were temporarily away. This only happened strictly when the men were away from home. This flexibility was still subordinated to traditional male roles during socialism.⁹

At the same time, the new regime endeavoured to regulate women's employment by means of decree. Women were prohibited to work in places where hazardous technologies were in use.¹⁰

Not only driving tractors, combines, ploughing and using pesticides was prohibited for pregnant women but, from the fourth month of pregnancy, any activities they were allowed to do earlier right up to the time of birth (swath-laying, grain-binding, fruit picking).¹¹ Traditionally male jobs and tasks (shoeing, well digging, and navvy) were also forbidden to be performed by women. The list of prohibited tasks for women was later modified several times.¹² The aim of making such laws regarding the employment of

9 E. Fél-Hofer T. 1967. 8–9.; Hanák P. 1988. 270–271.

10 The 30 and 31/1951. (I. 30–31) nr decrees. The Council ensured providing a gag list by means of decree

11 The 53/1953. (XI. 28.) sz. and 1004/1953. (II.8) nr. decrees.

12 1966 (4/1966. (X. 21.) MűM decree) és 1982 (6/1982. (VI. 12.) EüM decree.

women during socialism was to ensure that their employment did not interfere with their social and reproductive roles.¹³

In order to execute central decisions most women were employed by the local collective farm (TSZ) of the surveyed settlement. They worked mainly in sectors with lower prestige and less wages where they did not need any qualification. To ensure that everyone had a job, directors of these workplaces were often obliged on social grounds to employ unskilled workers, even if this meant financial deficit for the workplace. While employing women meant cheap and easily available labour for seasonal work during certain periods of the year, having to keep them employed for the rest of the time caused major difficulties for the local TSZ.¹⁴ Women took part in seasonal activities that required physical work as well as in dairy plant work that required professional skills.

Demand for labour started to decrease with the beginning of agricultural modernization and mass production in the late 60s. Men evidently had better prospects of being hired as their earlier roles were greatly connected with maintaining and using machines. Men in the surveyed settlements worked mainly at the local machine plants and at the surrounding settlements.¹⁵ Unskilled labourers were at a disadvantage because traditional peasant work became unskilled physical work due to the modernization.¹⁶ At the same time female tasks were transferred to the secondary sector and from the 1970s increased sideline ancillary production started in the region. Hemp processing and lamp and clothes manufacturing plants primarily attracted semi-skilled female workers.

Wage work in the socialist era did not become the sole source of income for members of rural societies. Furthermore, market gardening at the studied settlements became an important financial source¹⁷ for the rest of the people after its integration¹⁸ in the 1970s into the collective cells of the socialist economic system.

13 Inspiration played the most important role in Hungary while eg. the Romanian government tried to enforce women to sustain their biological reproductive rule by illegalizing abortion until the political change. (McIntyre, R.J. 1985. 270–285.)

14 Asztalos-Morell I. 1997.

15 It still needs to be emphasized, that according to research material of the settlement it cannot be announced that mechanization was the mean of pushing women into the background as some feminist researchers interpret the phenomenon (Asztalos-Morell I. 1997. 7.; Boserup, E. 1970.).

16 Asztalos-Morell I. 1997. 5.

17 István Kemény 1972. 36–48.; Iván Szelényi 1992.

18 For more in „integrated domestic farming” see: Imre Kovách 1988.

At the beginning, market gardening was performed to gain extra income and mainly women worked there while there was a significant growing tendency in men's wage earning activities. This changed in the 1980s during the era of "market socialism": the income from market gardening constituted a significant portion of the total household income and this reversed the division of labour between the genders. Men started to spend more time in this domestic economy than women. The strengthening tendency of male roles under changing economic circumstances from the late 1980s indicates the growing significance of market gardening. It became more and more profitable and as a result, it became one of the tasks that the men as "breadwinners" were responsible for.

TRANSFORMING FEMALE ROLES DUE TO THE POLITICAL CHANGES OF 1989

Unskilled women were the first workers to be let go from the local TSZ of the surveyed settlement due to the new market conditions that emerged after the political changes of 1989. These unemployed women returned to market gardening which was still functional at the time.

"My wife doesn't work, she is at home." This statement is the fragment of an interview and refers to women who fulfill traditional roles: they take care of household chores and everyday family needs and work in the market gardens. The quote above represents a peasant mentality that still exists today. According to it, value and effort put into domestic activities do not have market value and cannot be calculated in numbers. This kind of mentality can still be observed among farmers with land between 1–10 hectares who do not produce for the market.¹⁹ Regular income and savings to provide for the future of the family was produced by the male member of the family outside the market garden. Earning an income became important because it secured the welfare of the family during less fortunate times and it enabled them to purchase material essentials to demonstrate the social position of the family within the local society. However, produce from the market garden that is regularly consumed does not constitute actual financial capital. In fact, it does not serve family representation.

In the second half of the 1990s unemployment became universal, the TSZ went bankrupt and conditions for market gardening became unstable. Light industrial plants,

¹⁹ Imre Kovách 1988. 91–92.

often with foreign interests, appeared in growing numbers in the region and they hired mainly women who counted as cheap labour.²⁰ The husbands of many of these women were unemployed. The fact that the husband stayed at home and the wife had a job threw traditional norms of families out of balance and caused conflicts concerning gender roles.

The unemployment that appeared after the political changes of 1989 created a new strategy for assuming roles. More and more women in the local society were able to, if it was necessary, take on roles that traditionally belonged to men. Many times, if the husband became permanently unemployed, the woman became the wage earner in the family while she carried on with traditional roles as well. Modernization may cause transformation in family structures and in the network of social relations but this transformation is based on traditional family models.²¹ Therefore, the task of producing manpower and taking care of the family still belongs to women. The harmony, morals, atmosphere and ideology of a family are established and sustained by women.²² It is them who maintain personal and wider social relationships of the family.²³ It is easier for them to take over male roles than for men to do female tasks. Gender roles are more understandable for women. At the beginning of the 21st century, there is an unresolved conflict of gender roles and values: men are unable to fulfil the role of the wage earner due to being constantly unemployed while the local community's control does not let them take over traditional female roles. While a few young men do cook sometimes, the interviewed couples (both husbands and their wives), would consider men taking over tasks such as washing and cleaning as a major damage to their social prestige. In other words men do not take over the reproductive female tasks. It is also interesting that even educated young women of the local society would not like a husband to do the housework (according to the interviews) because they consider it an activity that casts doubts on the manliness of their partner. Some interviewed women attributed domesticity to urban men because "*they have nothing to do*" while "*the men in the*

20 Forthcoming to the political change many clothes factory of Italian interest were established in the region. However these were able to resolve problems of employment as they slowly start to settle over to cheaper eastern countries like Ukraine and Romania as the EU starts expanding.

21 Antal Vörös 1966. 162–186.

22 Tamás Faragó 2001. 410.

23 Kata Jávor 1989. 141–173.

village have the market garden". Maintaining the household and doing housework is not a task for both genders because the men are not willing to take them over and the women do not want to see their husbands in such roles. Therefore, gender stereotypes remain strong within the community.

Raising children is woman's work as well; husbands only occasionally take their children to the kindergarten. Grandparents are often involved in the care of children especially in the families of wage earning women.

It is primarily the wife's mother who helps out. According to the interviewed people, wives are not rebuked if they send their children to nursery school at a very young age or if their parents help out. At the same time, the community does not approve of women who stay home with their children and do not work for three years while the family is having financial difficulties. The expectations and needs of women have changed and they are keen to be employed not only for financial reasons. Some women mentioned that *"they don't know what to do with themselves"*. In the 1960s workplaces providing full time employment were established. Depending on where she found employment a woman could have coworkers from the local society with similar qualifications. This promoted the flow of communication within the community. Many women had to travel to work to neighbouring settlements which helped strengthen the networking between communities. It became a need for women to maintain social relations. Most wage earning young women today have much deeper relationships with their colleagues than with their neighbours.

Based on inquiries about how they spend their time it can be determined that unemployed or only occasionally employed women are the ones who work in the market gardens and take care of the household. Employment takes women away from their domestic tasks and they are trying to balance this out by increasing the time spent on the entire range of their duties.

Interestingly, men do not spend more time in the household even if they are unemployed. Their duties are constituted by taking care of the yard and doing other maintenance work that requires technical skills. The time spent on obtaining and preparing fuel (coal, wood and other combustibles) for heating is decreasing because of the modern heating systems.

I mentioned the garden marketing connection with gender based division of labour several times in my study. However, we can't talk about market gardening after the political changes of 1989 because the previously flourishing market gardens completely

collapsed shortly thereafter due to the new market economy. Their roles and the efforts put into maintaining them differed greatly during this period but it is still clear that after the millennium they could not become the primary source of income for the families anymore.

The traditional norms of labour division would lead us to assume that after market gardening lost its significance it would have become a female task again. But things happened slightly differently in families where the men were permanently unemployed and the women were the only ones able to perform wage earning productive activities.

The role of the wage earning woman

The wives were often the only wage earning member of a family at the settlement at the millennium. A peculiar situation can develop when the husband is unemployed and the wife is the only one with an income.²⁴

Analysing this phenomenon according to Alice H. Eagly's social role theory, it is clear that male's role as the link to the external social network ceases due to his unemployment. As we saw above, he cannot participate in household duties; he can only perform male tasks around the house. The roles of men who cannot find employment are taken over by their wives. In most cases this is not a conscious decision. Only women from dual income families can find jobs in the region. It still differs from earlier stereotypes of gender roles since such social networks are open for women because of their employment anyways. Another difference compared to previous situations is that the men's incapacitation does not result in spatial detachment. The husband can participate in supervising the consumption of his family as he stays in the circle of the family and the local society. He remains the head of the family even though his wife is the only one earning wages. This can be considered a crisis situation as long as the husband shows intentions to regain his role as the "bread winner". The wife's wage earning status and her role in the external social network are only temporary and they cease to exist when her partner gets a job.

²⁴ It needs to be emphasized this type is only one of the many other strategies for living. It cannot be applied for a family in which the woman is the only wage-earner. (E.g. there are several forms of black economy that would not be introduced by informants due to their interest)

Women usually do not declare their wage earning status as it does not mean increased prestige for them. According to the local norms, women's interest lies in maintaining the traditional family hierarchy and the partnership with the younger generations. The interviewed people explain this hierarchy by saying that when a woman marries a man she makes a lifelong decision. If a marriage fails, locals consider it a direct result of their own wrong decision. A woman is recognized in the local society if she has a successful family.

The functioning of the family becomes rather uncertain when only one of the members is a wage earner under dual income based social and economic conditions. An uncertain situation like this can be maintained in the long run only with difficulty. However, it usually lasts only until spouses lose faith in each other. Of course, several forms and connections of social networks are present simultaneously in a complex local society. Most of these can be surveyed by the scientist only in the extreme case. Perhaps the most public and perceptible example of spouses losing faith is when the husband abuses alcohol and the wife interprets this as his unwillingness to cooperate with her. As a consequence, the wife has authority over the income she makes which means that the husband loses his social position. Men usually have difficulties with this, many start drinking even harder which places them into further difficulties and their social status in the community gradually becomes marginalized. The wife decides what her husband can spend money on; she tries to limit his spending and to restrain her husband from wasting more money on alcohol consumption. It is accepted by the norm system of the local community to exclude alcohol addicts from the allocation of family income. As a result, in this situation constantly unemployed men often try to produce their own income by accepting casual labour of the lowest prestige. The methods of income distribution are based on surviving peasant traditions that override gender roles within the family. According to László Szabó's theory of activity based interpretation of culture, on the basis of the traditionally accepted value system of peasants the status of a member in the family is determined by the quality and quantity of the tasks he/she performs.²⁵

Those who are not productive become dependents and have no say in the handling of the family income. Income earners have the right to distribute it and even to restrict the spouse from the consumption of goods in the household. What's new is that

25 László Szabó 1993. 81–150.; László Szabó 1997.

previously women were not involved in income distribution. It was a male task and only the head of the household could do it. The wife was only allowed to handle the smaller finances of the household, namely the kitchen expenses. Mutual sharing is characteristic of dual income families. In this situation however, the wife handles the family income. The wage earning woman not only has economic authority but she has moral appreciation as well, because the local community disapproves of men who are unable to secure the welfare of the family. According to widely accepted social norms it is the role of a man to support the family. If he is unable to fulfil these expectations the wife becomes the decision maker.

This does not happen very often. The last phase of this process is when the community learns about the role changes within the family. The changes present themselves to the locals in symbolic ways. Taking care of their husbands is expected of the wives and when it does not happen anymore the community interprets it as a sign of estrangement. Buying and keeping clothes clean for their husbands is a significant communicatory method between the woman and the locals. A man wearing badly arranged and dirty clothes presumably has a wife who does not take care of him. Termination of care is a rare practice among women as it is a serious act and declares estrangement to the community.

Female roles of individualization, wives of entrepreneurs

As an impact of individualization various female roles can exist simultaneously in a local community without violating the local norms. Age, social position, education and family status determine the range of roles of female entrepreneurs. In addition, the size of the farm, special work organizational characteristics, profile of production, age of the workers, number of family members who participate in the production are also influential elements.

The order of labour distribution based on gender and age is still present; however, neither the entrepreneurs nor their wives behave according to them in the production process. They often take risks in hopes for market profit. Several new tasks were added to the list of activities women can perform as a result of differentiation between work forms and work processes. A significant proportion of these are new and previously unknown tasks that were introduced by social transformation and modernization.

The range of roles of entrepreneur wives is defined primarily by the size of their land. Agricultural enterprises that appeared after the political changes of 1989 had strong ties with the entrepreneurs and their families. Other family members, mainly adult children of entrepreneurs got involved in the production as well. The size of the enterprise is significant in determining what kind of role the members undertake. Usually, the owner and his family do most of the work on 30–50 hectare lands. Small enterprises avoid taking the risk of hiring unknown workers and use family resources instead, thus securing the loyalty of their workers.

On lands over 50 hectares physical work is performed by family members only in situations when they cannot or, because of financial reasons, do not want to hire workers from the outside. The activities that fall into this category do not require much time commitment or professional skills (transporting workers).

Women play an important role in book keeping in establishments over 100 hectares. Some of the wives at the surrounding settlements are in charge of a particular division but the preparatory paperwork and book keeping of the entire enterprise remains to them as well.

Age is an important issue in the analysis of female roles in enterprises. Agricultural strategies applied by 20–30 and 50–60 year olds are significantly different. This difference originates from diverse socialization as well as from the diversity of studied patterns and available perspectives. What type of roles the entrepreneurs play changes according to the size of the enterprise but also according to what stage of life they are in. The model of Csajanov reminds us that despite performing similar economic activities entrepreneurs from different generations are in different stages of their lives.²⁶ It presents a difficulty that the periods of developing the enterprise, starting a family, maintaining an independent household, and raising children all happen at the same time. A new enterprise requires far more effort at the beginning when the principal goal is to create the necessary financial conditions. Women often take over male roles: in case the husband is involved in other activities, women run the enterprise, participate in task organization (purchasing seeds, transporting workers) and sometimes even do physical work (cutting the grass, driving a tractor). They do the book keeping and secretary work. They take care of the chores around the house and look after the children. They maintain the social relations of the family. In addition to their traditional female roles

26 Csajanov, Alekszej 1921.

they participate in running the enterprise (they conduct business negotiations and sometimes have to collect debts). Their activities are characterized by experimenting with finding different roles rather than trying to avoid risks. Once the enterprise starts growing, they return to their traditional female roles. Employees start to take over tasks in the enterprise and with the passing of time the children become more and more independent and do not need direct care. As a result, when entrepreneur wives get old they can return to traditional female tasks like doing household chores or other domestic activities while enterprise related work is taken over by the adult children or their wives.²⁷

Some entrepreneurs tried to involve their daughters in the enterprise. None of them succeeded at the surveyed settlement. The daughters did not stay in the family enterprise while a lot of the sons did, and some even made conscious decisions to continue working there. In their postsecondary studies their main goal is to obtain the necessary knowledge. This indicates that women rarely work in the enterprise today, only under special or extreme circumstances.

The tasks of entrepreneur wives are not limited to only certain things. When the husband cannot carry out a task because of time constraints the wife may take over his role. It was apparent in the interviews that it is always the "easier" tasks that are left for women. However, it is difficult to define what an "easy" task is in a local community. It depends on the person's age, the nature of the work and the professional skill of the woman. Two aspects are important according to the norms of the local society. Tasks that require greater physical power or more professional skill are not traditionally left for women. But this definition is extremely relative. It is the men who take care of horses and cows because this task is considered difficult and dangerous for women (other than milking). On the other hand, hoeing has always been a female task (it is much easier for women because they are more flexible) and does not qualify as a difficult activity. Similar anomalies can be found while analysing the tasks of entrepreneur wives. Joining a trailer to a tractor is considered easy under certain conditions while

27 The wives in multigenerational family enterprise can participate higher education by her mother in law frees her from the duties of the household and child raising. At the same time this act equals to leaving the enterprise because she shall work outside if it. Aside from the part time job she still raises children, do administrative tasks for the enterprise, does the cooking if the mother in law has another sort of engagement.

feeding animals from a ten kilo capacity bucket comes across as difficult for some of the interviewed people. Entrepreneur wives are not expected to have great physical power or agricultural and mechanical skills because these are not characteristic of female roles. Some of the entrepreneur wives consider dealing with money collectors an "easy" task for the "flexible" woman, just like hoeing. They say that it is because they do not use aggressive male attitudes during collection: *"I lie I whine that we don't have money and stuff like this."* Instead of authority she uses widely accepted female strategies during the negotiation.

New non-traditional roles like book keeping and administration appeared with the formation of private enterprise. Most entrepreneur wives had other types of jobs earlier and they took care of the administration of the enterprise on a part-time basis. These wives left their jobs either because the workplace was liquidated or the growing needs of the administration of the enterprise made it necessary for them to take over the task full time. They issue invoices and do the book keeping. Only larger enterprises hire professionals.

Entrepreneurs try to exempt female members of the family from physical work. If it is financially possible they hire day labourers to do jobs like hoeing.

Entrepreneur wives often carry out traditional female tasks (making coffee, providing meals) for employees as well. Personality and character (*"how bossy they are"*) are significant in the process of supervising employees. Day labourers usually take orders from the entrepreneur wife because *"it's not about male or female roles anymore, it's about money"*. In return, entrepreneur wives are careful not to get labourers into awkward positions and not to humiliate them in their manly pride or underestimate them as employees. Labourers know that they must not complain if they want a job.

Sometimes spouses make decisions about the enterprise together but in most cases these are made by the entrepreneur. In case he has an adult son or a male relative involved in the enterprise his wife does not have to take over management in case the husband is prevented from work for some reason. However, agricultural interests have greater significance in some situations than conforming to gender role based behaviour.

Analysing roles is warranted because the reaction of the newly evolved group of entrepreneurs to external influences often differs from the preferred model of transformation by the local society. Entrepreneurs see their role in the life of the village in the enhancement of its economic potential. In the relationship of the community and the individual the individual's predominance must be emphasized because his success means advantages not only for himself but for the community as well. This is why some

of these individuals get involved in the activities of the association of entrepreneurs at the settlement. The entrepreneur wife controls the flow of capital freely but in cooperation with her husband in order to create social capital or to gain power and to be able to use these for social or family purposes.²⁸ She has potential capital and is able to present her independent ideas to the local community. Her position is accepted by the community not only because of her financial background or the prestige and status of her husband in the local society but also on the basis of her own personality.²⁹

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Economic aspects of disorientation of values in local societies, that is why should the neighbor's cow die as well?

THE INTERVIEWS TAPED DURING MY RESEARCH in the Bihar region often reflect the disappointment of the locals.¹ Many of them think that they were underprivileged and misled both after the political changes in 1989 and the joining of the European Union. They are disappointed with politics, with local leaders and also with actors of the economy. In their views those with social and financial capital live their lives along different rules than those they expect others to follow. Cheating is more common, social solidarity decreased. In the same local societies also the economic and political elite talks about the devaluation of values and norms. In their experiences the relationship of the individual to the community worsened, people became mistrustful and introverted. The researched local societies, just like the present Hungarian society as a whole, struggle with value disorientation. The emergence and survival of such disorientation is due to

1 There is a joke about three peasants of different nationalities. They all lose one of their cows. A fairy comes and offers them to fulfill one wish as compensation. The English peasant asks the fairy to resurrect his cow. The German asks for another cow. The Hungarian, however, asks the fairy to kill the neighbor's cow as well. This is a very old joke. It shows us that the symptoms described in this study are not new. They are just new forms of value disorientation that has been present in the Hungarian society for a long time.

the history of Hungary. Perplexity and insecurity are in a way the inheritance of the socialist era. They characterize and define the values and thought of today's society.

In this study I focus on the impacts of the political changes of 1889 and of the joining of the European Union in 2004 on increasing the disorientation of values. More precisely, I would like to show this in relation to the farmers of some local societies in the Bihar region. The value and norm system of local societies are mainly influenced by external circumstances (mainly political decisions and their consequences) and by internal relations. These two serve as structural basis of my analysis. We have to note though, that these two are tightly connected to each other and we can only separate them in order to make their analysis easier.

EXTERNAL CIRCUMSTANCES

IN HIS ARTICLE ERIC WOLF draws our attention to the fact that politics has an impact on the operation of local societies. Even more, from time to time guidelines and expectations coming from upward restructure local processes. These *external, upward* power decisions are there during the whole history of local societies creating an aura of mistrustfulness toward external decisions (WOLF, Eric 1996:1–20). Basically, the political power decides the kind of protective strategies passing from generation to generation and used for ignoring and circumventing external expectations and norms. During the second half of the 20th century in Hungary basic values, such as the right to material wealth or the freedom of choosing religion, were questioned. Therefore the emergence of protective and/or preventive strategies was inevitable. However, in the interviews with members of local societies it is revealed that the trust in political and economic elite was lost again short after the post-1989 democratization has started.

The members of local societies are not unified in their views on changes happening after the political transition. Most local societies have fault lines by which the community is divided. There are also some relations along which the locals unite against an external entity. Although closed communities described by Tönnies vanished by the beginning of the 21st century, moreover local societies cannot be regarded as classic communities at all, the differentiation between *locals and outsiders* still serve as a basis of local identity. In most of the interviews this distinction of “us” and “them” is expressed. The place of residence also serves as a basis of differentiation. Earlier the notions of *villagers*

and city dwellers did not only mean places of residence but also different ways of life. In today's globalized Europe, however, this distinction usually refers only to the place of residence. The two categories can be regarded as basic differentiators within which certain subcategories (such as *"people from Budapest"*) exist. A third way of distinction is made on the basis of power relations. Societies are divided to decision makers and voters. This latter distinction also works along stereotypes. It generalizes and polarizes real and imagined everyday experiences and conflicts. Surprisingly enough, this is often done without regards to actual politics. The rejection toward politics, power and estranged state and the unconcern in public issues are often represented in such differentiation. The words with which the informants address the power elite represent their approaches (*"communists", "the wise guys", "the loafers", "the greatest ones of our nation"*). The *"upper ones"* are characterized by making decisions and having powers. Most of my interviewees associate themselves with the position of *"lower ones"*.² From the perspective of *"the small ones", "the ones excluded from making decisions", "the ones left alone with their problems"* it cannot be considered unethical to circumvent central decisions.

"The external power does not take our norms, traditions and ideas into account.

Neither do we take the expectations of the power into consideration."

After Hungary became a member of the European Union and strict measures were taken to stop black market several activities embedded to local traditions became illegal, including *kaláka*³ (Examples of *kaláka*: help given during the building of a house or during harvest that is compensated later in the form of similar help; barter – the farmer who has a sowing-machine helps another farmer who has a reaper and receives similar help from him during harvest) (SZILÁGYI Miklós 2002:14). In rural local societies such activities have never been marketed. They were present in the local system of values as activities strengthening internal cohesion. The ignorance of the law prohibiting such activities is not understood as breach of it. Also failing to issue an invoice does not have any consequences in the local society. Moreover the issuance of an invoice or the request of an invoice may be regarded as offenses against established local relations.

2 I did not make an interview with anyone from the national power elite

3 *Kaláka* is a term used in rural Hungary for working together. The translator.

One shall use every means against external and unfair expectations. To circumvent unfavorable regulations is part of the defense, often the only mean of it. After the political changes of 1989 former employees of collective farms were fired en masse. Formerly, their economic strategy included wages received from the collective farm and the incomes provided by market gardening. In many places the collective farms were the only employers. Therefore, after collective farms shut down, there were no other legal alternatives to have a steady income. After the political changes of 1989 the proportion of person receiving disability pension increased. For many people getting disability pension was a specific strategy against. They decided to invest the necessary amount of money⁴ one time and receive regular pension from that on. With the pension as steady and market gardening as supplementary income they were able to support themselves and their families (BORSOS Endre–CSITE András–HELLA Ferenc–KOVÁCS Róbert–LETENYEI László 1999: 26). Practically this phenomenon is similar to the former strategy these people followed, only this time the state is damaged. Its point is not to cheat but to keep up with a form of subsistence. No doubt that the popular opinion that it is not a sin to take money from the state was born during the socialism. Most people who chose this alternative did it out of necessity. Their age, qualification or family background did not allow them to compete on the labor market.

The agricultural policy of the last two decades also played an important role in the disorientation of values and norms in local societies. The reformation of agriculture and of rural Hungary was led by politics. Economic rationalization had only secondary role. The agricultural policies of all consecutive governments focused on short-term aims valid only during the campaigns. State intervention distorted the market, restricted competition and was ineffective. As a result the distortion of values was inevitable, especially in Eastern and North Hungary (FARKASNÉ Dr. FEKETE Mária 1999).

It was obvious even in 1989, at the beginning of the political changes, that rural farmers cannot return to their lives and technologies left behind in the 1940s. However, many farmers did not realize it. For them (especially for the older generation) it seemed absolutely realistic to start production with two horses, a plough and a cultivator on their regained lands. This illusion was strengthened by the agricultural party being in the coalition after the first free election. In order to gain popularity this party envisioned a return to the pre-world war production, to the small-scale individual farming. On

4 They paid the doctors for the [false] documents proving that they are entitled to disability pension

the suggestion of the Független Kisgazda Párt [Independent Small Holders Party] privatization mainly took form in giving back the lands to the previous owners or their heirs partly against compensation notes. Neither in the present nor in the past was the image of the countryside presented by the Party true. The Party constructed an idyllic and romanticized peasant culture that has never existed. The real local societies existing at the time were not taken into consideration. When elaborating land policy the decision makers ignored that there were no peasants in societies at the end of the 20th century. With the peasant also their norms and value system, in which land was something they held on by all means, ceased. The "hunger for land" experienced during compensation was driven by economic reasons rather than by emotions. Most of the 2 million new landowners immediately leased their lands.

In the reminiscences it is often mentioned as insulting that huge properties were bought for a little money by "*lawyers from Budapest*". These lands are cultivated by local farmers as leased lands, while the owners of the properties profit from the increasing land prices. In the time of the privatization the rural inhabitants did not have enough capital to buy land. Neither did they have information on the basis of which they could have realized the long-term profit of privatization. Therefore many of them feel that they were robbed out of their rights and decisions were made behind their backs. They were not allowed to have information giving based on which they could have made reasonable decisions. Many complain that the "*insiders*", i.e. the members of the power elite and those with extended social networks, did not give advices to "*the people*". As a consequence most of my interviewees decided not to believe anything that comes from "*those up there*". They think that urban intellectuals only care about their own interests, even if it means to "*mislead*" the locals

The post-1989 Hungarian agricultural reform supposed that the heirs of former landowners are the potential agricultural producers of the future. The politicians failed to take into account that most of the former landowners established themselves as urban citizens and would have regarded the return to farming as a loss of prestige. They did not have agricultural skills and did not wish to learn them. Therefore a part of the agricultural lands ended up in the hands of owners who rather leased their properties. Hoping for better land prices most of the new owners did not sell their lands. Because of the agricultural reform lands were frittered away, some of the lands lay waste. It was unfortunate that the agricultural reform included artificially constructed, ever-changing regulations incapacitating the creation of large farms. Meanwhile no sustainable

alternatives were offered. Therefore the changes in ownership structure inevitably led to conflicts, breaking up the formerly homogenous agricultural society. Politics tried to keep the chaos within the borders of local societies, regarding it as a conflict between small- and large-scale farmers (see the next subsection).

After Hungary joined the European Union new expectations and value systems evolved. Important values that survived even the socialism have been questioned. This further increased the disorientation of values already being present.

The joining of the EU forced farmers to change their traditional ways of production. In relation to the EU membership a regularly repeated guiding principle was the necessity to change the views of agricultural producers (MUCSI Imre 1999:283–290). According to the EU the traditional strategies of peasant economy cannot be sustainable under the changing circumstances. In the European Union it is considered as outdated and unwanted to follow the traditional peasant mentality based on cheap supply and savings secured by a cut back in quantity or quality. The most significant difference, and also the source of conflict, between the expectations of the European Union and the strategies of producers drawing on “traditional peasant” values was the lack of planning and quality assurance. Traditional peasant economies draw on seizing the opportunity and maximizing it. Therefore production is adapted to the given circumstances. The EU regulations aim to eliminate economic but unsteady production and encourage the introduction of more expensive but steady methods providing quality products. In the European Union production is more expensive because of the unified quality criteria. In return the quality of the products is high and steady. Quality assurance assumes that there is a significant amount of available financial resource. Small-scale producers did and do not have that. Therefore traditional farming strategies were further weakened.

INTERNAL RELATIONS

THE AGRICULTURAL POLICY OF POST-1989 questioned the grounds of large-scale farming. This alone led to disorientation of values. During the socialism all and every people, from the engineers to the farm workers, involved in agricultural production were told that the future lies in large-scale farming. Based on their experiences many people believed it so. Even today, opinions on collective farms are ambivalent. It is a fact that they were created by force and many of them could only keep going by constant

donation from the state. But also they were able to provide employment for everyone in rural societies, even for those who did not have qualifications. None of the governments were able to do that, or do something even close to this, since the political transition. Also, no doubt, that collective farms did not shot down because of market reasons but because of changing regulations.

The closing down of collective farms created a lot of insecurity and local conflicts. It became obvious that the decision of locals may be influenced by largely different values and norms. Most of those living in rural areas (especially the middle aged ones) regarded the results of collective farming as values. In many small settlements locals realized that the collective farm is the only way of providing employment. Therefore they wanted to keep them running. Not everyone wanted to farm on his own, the small-scale production was not the only alternative of the time. Meanwhile members of the collective farms who were also employed by it wanted to secure their workplaces by keeping the farms together, other members (mostly the pensioners) wanted money. These pensioners sold their shares. They gave the money to their children, usually living in cities. By doing so they actually took away the money from the local society. This created a hopeless situation for those who wanted to continue on living from the earnings received at the collective farms. This is only one example of eating up the wealth, but it also raises questions related to the use of lands. In the ethnographic literature land is always regarded as the only secure material capital for agricultural producers. As a capital strengthening the economic potential of the family it was able to serve as a basis for organizing the life of the family. By knowing what happened after the privatization a question should be raised. Is the land really valued and was it ever really valued? In the years that passed by after the political transition it became obvious that the devaluation of land was due to the privatization. During this a lot of land went for sale in a short period of time, which decreased prices. By today we see that the value of the land increased gradually and this will be further strengthened by the liberalization. Most of the producers currently owning a significant amount of land bought them during the time of the privatization. They established their farms right after the political changes of 1989. Several interviewees pointed out that for someone who wishes to establish a farm right now, it would cost a lot of money or would easily mean bankruptcy in a short period of time. All the entrepreneurs buying lands at the early phase of privatization say that for them the land is a means of production. In contrast to those who, by selling the land received as compensation, ate up their

wealth these entrepreneurs regard land as a capital through which their subsistence is secured. Besides recognizing land as a valuable capital these entrepreneurs have one more common characteristic. They are willing to take risks. This market behavior is in contrast with the traditional norms of peasant economy.

After the political transition, due to changing structures of wealth, local societies became divided. Social gaps opened up. Even in very small communities with no more than 100 inhabitants extreme wealth and poverty may exist. This change in itself shook the socialist model emphasizing equality. We all know that the principle of equality was not true since at least the '80s. The accumulation of wealth started around that time, but the wealthy few still wanted to blend, to integrate. Despite their wealth these people adapted to the norms and values of the majority. After the political transition the situation changed dramatically. On the one hand financial differences grew. On the other hand the wealthy elite did not want to adapt to majority norms and values of the local society anymore. The entrepreneurs do not breach all norms and values of the local society; only in some terms do they wish to neglect local expectations. They do not depend on the locals but neither can they provide employment.

Politics tried to keep the chaos within the borders of local societies, regarding it as a conflict between small- and large-scale farmers. By doing so it actually extended the loss of trust, already present in the society toward politics, to the elite of local societies. The narratives of entrepreneurs and of other inhabitants show that stereotypes are formed along differences in values. Entrepreneurs complain that there are no reliable workforce available, workers steal, are not used to hard work and do not take good care of the expensive machinery. They have troubles with the easiest tasks and as soon as they get some money they spend it on alcohol. Other locals complain that the entrepreneurs are pompous and jealous. They do not have skills, are not co-operative. They do not socialize with others and got wealthy by cheating.

The internal norms and values of the local societies were undermined also because during the political changes not only people respected by the local society gained wealth.

The collapsing local society is not able to mediate between the individual and the macro society. The individual is left alone, although it would be more effective and secure to work in a community. Nevertheless, when the nature and intensity of co-operation changed in the post-1989 era, the local societies stepped on the way of individualization. The fact that the Bihar region is suitable for mechanized grain production was an

important factor of this. Technological development allows individualization also in terms of economy.

The accumulation of wealth restructured internal relations in local societies. During the capitalization process the role of money became more important (MACFARLANE, Alan 1993: 47). Mutual economic relations based on trust and barter were underplayed (PALÁDI-KOVÁCS Attila 1977: 104). The ever-changing, shifting circumstances require farmers to draw upon the help of family members (KUCZI Tibor–MAKÓ Csaba 1996: 176–189). Although the tendencies of the end of the 20th and the beginning of the 21st centuries make any categorization of local life strategies meaningless I shall still say that my research in the Bihar region shows that kinship relations serve as operational basis of farms with 20–300 acres of lands.

In order to ease the situation created by the privatization producers are now trying to keep their lands together and form bigger farms by drawing in more and more heirs. The generation acquiring land tries to call in immediate family members. Close economic integration is commonly considered as part of the family's success (KUCZI Tibor 2000: 67–68). Usually these family entrepreneurs „employ” direct successors (spouse, children, parents and siblings). Family members may have leading roles but may also carry out certain tasks or work as seasonal workers (LOVAS KISS Antal 2007: 193–204).

SUMMARY

IN HIS STUDY OF PROCESSES OF SECULARIZATION János Szántó points out that, because it is done through socialization, it takes a lot of time to change the norms and values of society (SZÁNTÓ János 1998: 26–30). The post-1989 political and economic transitions came a way before changes in norms and values of society could have had them followed. The actual transition of norms and values will only be finished with generations born after the socialism. This generation will only have an image of the past learnt from their parents (It is obviously problematic because of the ambivalent relation to the past. Nowadays the socialism is regarded differently by different social groups)

In the local societies of the 21st century the mixing of old and new values and norms is easy to be observed. In terms of landowners those who did not immediately recognize the opportunities lying in land ownership and, by following the traditional peasant

strategy, waited for things to develop, are clearly in disadvantage. However, those who invested in land but applied a modern market oriented behavior and adapted to the conditions made it into the local elite by now.

Governments and political elites cannot resist the temptation to define the "ideal" size of farms. The turn in agricultural policy happening in every four year tumbled the agriculture and caused significant disintegration of values. Agricultural experts, however, emphasize that effective production does not necessarily depends on the size of farms.

According to Margaret Mead the American society, although consisting several different norms and ways of socialization unites along its orientation toward the future and success (MEAD, Margaret 2003: 206–223). Maybe our disoriented values in Hungary could be reoriented if we would be able to create a future that unites currently tumbled local societies.

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