Róbert Gyökér[1]

"We fit into this landscape."

Values and Value Systems in the Postmodern Age

Abstract

The fundamental changes brought about by postmodernity have made a profound impact not only on life-style and self-expression but also on the foundations of knowledge. The status of knowledge has changed by gradually shifting from the unifying power of metanarratives to a diversity of personal interpretations. As a result, faith in objective truth has been overthrown by subjectivities and the traditional perception of culture has come under criticism. Instead of a general way of reading, the subjective approach constitutes the decisive factor in interpretation. Value systems are also affected by the changes. Value systems are no longer cast from a single mold, but rather derive from a dynamically changing framework that is shaped by the diversity of the sociocultural situation, the central role of the subject's interpretation and the positioned meaning of values. This paper will address the impact of postmodernity on values and value systems through the exploration of the inner happenings of a community garden in Budapest. While trying to analyze the components of value systems, I define so-called *correlations* in the hope of realizing a more relevant understanding of the postmodern age.

Keywords: values and value systems, postmodernity, metanarratives, representation, interpretation, self-organized communities, community gardening

1 PhD student at University of Pécs, Faculty of Humanities, Department of Ethnology and Cultural Anthropology

Róbert Gyökér

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Values and Value Systems in the Postmodern Age

One of the most important recognitions of postmodernity is that the world is not organized around a general framework of explanatory principles, but is home to a diversity of interpretations – often mutually exclusive interpretations, in which beliefs, conjectures and expectations play at least as important a role as the attributes observed during empirical investigation of a given phenomenon. In postmodernity, the hegemony and the unifying power of metanarratives is broken. Diversity and *heterogeneity* are the key words of the era, which is characterized by the peaceful coexistence of pop art and photo-realism; John Cage's music philosophy and punk music; TV series and B-category films. As Jameson (1991) notes: "the postmodernisms have, in fact, been fascinated precisely by this whole 'degraded' landscape of schlock and kitsch" (1991:1), and those post-modernists admire a world of imagination filled with *science fiction*, *fantasy novel* and horror.

In this paper, I examine the effects of the postmodern turn on the development of values and value systems through the exploration of the inner happenings of a community garden in Budapest (Grundgarden). In the first section, I try to identify the main changes brought about by postmodernity regarding the role of metanarratives and texts in power distribution, the tension between subjectivity and objectivity and the crisis of representation concerning the foundations of knowledge adding a fourth aspect which I find especially decisive: the birth of small, self-organized communities. In the second and third sections, I discuss those culture concepts and value theories that influenced me the most and attempt to outline a new culture definition and value concept which, in my view, provides a more authentic interpretation of our age. In order to support my ideas, I present some empirical data drawn from my case study that was conducted among the members of the community garden.

I. Introduction. Postmodernity and its basic tenets

Postmodernity is a kind of counterculture that draws its power from the crisis and criticism of modernity. Though the mindset of modernity is pervaded by an unbroken optimism and faith in progress, since WWII the shadow side of the era has come ever more starkly to the surface. The crisis is based on the misconception that the balanced operation of the system should be pursued along general principles which ignore the specific features of the sub-processes. Since minor processes show a markedly higher degree of diversity, conflict between the center and the peripheries arises. At the same time, the crisis itself creates an extremely diverse mixture. An inherent part of the postmodern worldview is the burdensome legacy of colonialism, the bitter experience where dominant cultures placed minorities within their own representational practices, depriving them of their own voice (Hall 1990:226). Another significant feature of the era is the emergence of the market economy and its negative consequences: the unequal position of Third World countries in the international economy, their increasing accumulation of debt and high levels of corruption (McMichael 2004:153). The legacy of modernity is also felt in the ecological sphere. The conviction that the world can be possessed, furthermore controlled, by reason, led to the objectification of nature and the profit-oriented exploitation of its resources. As a result, nature conservation policy and education related to it are articulated merely along lines of self-interest, lacking the element of sacrifice. Meanwhile the ethics of land use is governed solely by

economic interests (Leopold 1949:210–214). Postmodernity also shifts the emphasis in spatial relations. The 21th century is based on the tension between the unifying power of the market economy and the distinctive nature of popular culture. Although the two dimensions often get mingled with each other, their horizon is completely different: while one's influence is exerted at a global level, the other is primarily exercised at a local one (McMichael 2004:XXVI). The individual, exposed to global processes, turns to his immediate environment, thus creating a distinct community-life around himself. Due to growing internal contradictions, modernity's notion of progress is slowly turning against itself, giving rise to postmodernity.

Role of metanarratives and texts in power distribution

Although transition from modernity to postmodernity is very diverse, the essence of the change is confined to a single characteristic as Jean-François Lyotard points out: postmodernity is based on the recognition that "scientific knowledge is a kind of discourse" (1984:3). Since there are different interpretations of reality, meaning is constituted within the discourse of sociocultural reality and the coercive force of environmental constraints. Lyotard's point of view clearly contradicts the claim of metaphysical realism, though, according to which "most of the objects that populate the world exist independently of our thought and have their natures independently of how, if at all, we conceive of them" (Lowe 2008:9).

Postmodernity questions the status of discourse and calls for re-reading. The central role of the text in power formation is recognized. Foucault approaches the oppressive forms of power through the concept of discourse, discerning that discourse is a limited collection of assertions which gain leadership in a given historical period and in a particular linguistic area, suppressing alternative strategies of interpretation (1972:117). Discourse as an extended verbal expression is no longer dominated by the author, whose reputation is guaranteed by the institutional system behind it, but is merely a possible reading of reality, which was created under specific historical circumstances.

Postmodern authors emphasize the constructed nature of scientific descriptions, drawing attention to the historical and institutional determinants of text production. Prevailing texts are not incidental, scattered products of a historical period, but are testimonies of power formation, which, in the frame of a specific discourse and institutional structure, formulate statements about reality and enforce these statements using their power position. This is illustrated by the phenomenon of orientalism. According to Said (1994), orientalism as a special kind of discourse run by Western powers is not only a means of knowledge production or the political-social-ideological creation of the region, but also a means of oppression applied by the West against the Middle Eastern societies concerned. The pictures and allegations propagated in this way are nothing but mere representations of a reality deprived of its locality, and committed predominantly towards the West, not the East.

Texts emerging as a result of research work are coming under scrutiny, too. Clifford notes that anthropological writing has always been a determining factor during research; that it has only recently become the focus of attention "reflects the persistence of an ideology claiming transparency of representation and immediacy of experience" (1986:2). This kind of perspective, in many cases, attributed only a formal character to research reports, reducing their role to the status of well-kept "field notes". The postmodern turn reassesses the status of the text and its role in social processes. Authors emphasize the artificial and constructed nature of scientific descriptions, drawing attention to the historical determinants of the accounts, institutional expectations motivating text production, hidden agendas, and the underlying "modes of authority" (1986:2) by which a text is presented. They shed light on the simple fact that in ethnographic accounts invention, and not representation, plays the dominant role.

In postmodernity, meaning is thus *positioned*. Considering the same life situation from different epistemological perspectives often leads to different interpretations. At the same time, even staying within the

framework of a particular sociocultural perspective, we may come to different conclusions when looking at different life situations. Therefore, the act of interpretation plays the primary role in the process of knowledge production.

Subjectivity vs. objectivity

Subjective experience overrides faith in the existence of objective reality. While metaphysical realism emphasizes the existence of reality independent of human experience and representation, postmodernity is distrustful of the postulates of objectivity and the applicability of scientific methodology. This distrust is felt in many areas of the cognitive process. Postmodern criticism of ethnography attacks the idea of objectivity in the process of knowledge production. The driving power of the postmodern turn is a deep skepticism about whether the observer or field researcher is able to integrate the results of his observation into an explanation of the phenomena examined, and thus be able to produce credible socioscientific knowledge. According to Reed, this is questionable because ethnographic fieldwork involves an epistemic paradox. Since the researcher is a social being who brings his or her own knowledge and preliminary experiences – as a kind of inheritance – into the foreign sociocultural situation, the evaluation process becomes subordinated to the researcher's subjectivity, which raises doubts about the credibility of the account (2010:22–23).

Rosaldo emphasizes the power of emotions while analyzing the cultural phenomenon of "rage, born of grief" (1993:1). After realizing the organic unity of grief, rage, and headhunting in his quest for the reasons behind *Ilongot* headhunting, Rosaldo is forced to reconsider the classic principles of anthropological research. In order to understand the essence of headhunting, he introduces the concept of *positioned subject*. According to his method, the researcher, depending on the answers received during the conversations with informants, should constantly change the mode of questioning until "lessening surprises or diminishing returns indicate a stopping point" (1993:7). For Rosaldo, all interpretation is provisional, created by positioned subjects. He criticizes earlier anthropological methods that only dealt with the description of a given rite rather than analyzing the feeling itself. He believes that the functional description of rites as a set of actions deprives the event of its historical depth and the momentary tensions of human drama. Ethnographers who exclude strong emotions, therefore, distort their accounts and "remove potentially key variables from their explanations" (1993:12).

Crisis of representation

The discursive character of knowledge production has many implications; in particular, a sense of theoretical uncertainty, a doubt about the origin of knowledge. Rorty (1979) traces back the history of crisis to philosophy's central concern of becoming the foundation of knowledge. According to the overall attitude consolidated by the 17th century, knowledge is nothing other than the authentic representation of reality existing independently from the cognitive processes of the mind. Understanding the nature of knowledge is, therefore, the clarification of mental processes through which consciousness creates its representations of external reality. A contradiction inherent in the initial situation is apparent to Rorty: philosophy's quest to become a "tribunal of pure reason" (1979:4) is problematic since it was established during a specific historical period (the 17th century), and within a geographically specific region (Europe). Postmodernity questions belief in the clarity of representation which led to the naive idea that the world is fully perceptible and perfectly describable with our concepts. It holds the view that even the simplest cultural encounter is situational in nature, determined by the intentions of the participants. Due to the subjective aspects of the cognitive process, the (ethnographic) truth therefore remains only partial (Clifford 1986:7).

It is recognized that reality transmitted by representation is not a credible source of cognition, but rather a network of meanings created in an arbitrary fashion. *Epoch blending*, the simultaneous presence of

incompatible historic periods of time, only amplifies the process of crisis. In the maze of constant allusions and often arbitrary references lacking normative basis, meaning becomes uncertain. Stylistic eclecticism cuts off the last bonds of history from reality. The flow of information through media and the transnational channels of the internet plays a decisive role in shaping and strengthening this new kind of experience.

For Tyler (1986), the crisis of science is in fact the crisis of representation, resulting from the disabilities of language as a tool for describing the world. While glorifying its triumph over knowledge, science has tried to place discourse under its control. However, since the verification process science has established is within its own discourse, its ambitions have led to controversy, which makes it impossible for science to justify its claims. This determining factor did not leave postmodern ethnography untouched. In Tyler's view, the discipline has now become much closer to a kind of "evocation" (1986:123) than to scientific description.

The constructed nature of social institutions is accentuated by Derrida (1997) as well. Derrida demonstrates in his writing the historical-cultural embeddedness of our concepts through the analysis of a specifically postmodern example, the problem of testimony. In his view, the separation of the surrogate and the biological mother started the process of re-evaluation of origin and descent, which also highlighted the artificial nature of social institutions. The legal institution of the surrogate mother dissolves the former clarity of the identity of the other. A surrogate can even be the mother of the biological mother, or even of her own daughter.

Although the crisis of representation emerges primarily from the field of literary criticism, it is more appropriate to speak about a general criticism of all areas of knowledge, even at the level of visual representations. Mitchell (1984) realizes that the representation model, which postulates a similarity between imagery (intrinsically of mental origin) and the phenomena of the world, is questionable. By emphasizing the importance of the mind, he believes that no necessary connection exists between reality and the formation of mental and material images: "the world may not depend upon consciousness, but images of the world clearly do" (1984:509).

The crisis of representation probably reaches its ultimate form in Baudrillard's simulacra and simulation theory. According to Baudrillard (1988), reality has by now been completely transformed. The phenomena were finally torn away from their archetypes and in the interpretation simulation took over. This is not simply about expanding the range of interpretation, but about its complete destruction, for simulation is "the generation by models of a real without origin or reality: a hyperreal" (1988:166). Reality is no longer based on the process of representation, but rather on generated patterns, command models. "The age of simulation thus begins with a liquidation of all referentials – worse: by their artificial resurrection in systems of signs" (1988:167). As a result, separating the simulation from actual ideals becomes impossible.

Self-organized communities

Along with the weakening of metanarratives and institutionalized knowledge, peripheries move to the forefront. There is a shift towards popular culture, in the direction of secondary meanings and exotic alternatives, mostly arriving via the transnational route of the World Wide Web. The process is accelerated by the unceasing flow of different world views and meanings carried by foreign labor and rapidly growing international tourism. "Postmodernity rehabilitates the marginal, integrates the exotic, and channels many values into the social mainstream, which has no relevance for the historical and cultural traditions of the given area" (Gyökér 2016:1). A path opens for secondary meanings.

To counterbalance the negative forces of globalization, the power of the local scene is recognized. One of the most important developments of postmodernity is the growing demand for the recreation of self-organized communities. Only a self-organized community can provide an adequate space for self-expression and personality development, counterbalancing the unifying effects of the market economy and the consumer

society. Individuals in identity crisis or seeking refuge from social control turn again towards community, looking for a way out. Within a community they find a home, can re-establish their identity, and paradoxically preserve their independence.

Though nostalgia for communities seems to be a peculiarly postmodern phenomenon, its foundations can be traced back to the commitment to the countryside destroyed by modernity and to the values once held by traditional societies. According to Araghi (1995), the collapse of rural communities can be divided into two periods. From 1945 to 1973 it is characterized by the emergence of the world market and the establishment of the institutional system of the new global political-economic order, while from 1973 to the present day it is marked by the collapse of political-economic power and the reorganization of the institutional system. The development policy launched by the United Nations in the early 1950s focused mainly on industrialization of agriculture and internal growth as opposed to export-oriented agricultural production. However, since the land reform followed the American model, the consequences were controversial. In those countries where access to credit was limited, only a few family farms emerged and gained leadership. Reforms thus led to the development of a large number of unviable smallholdings that gradually became vulnerable to market forces. The years after 1973, on the other hand, have been marked by a relative decline in U.S. hegemony. The root causes of this process are the collapse of the Bretton Woods monetary system and the growing independence of international capital from national regulations. As a result, the state took on a transnational character, giving free rein to the spread of finance capital through the operation of supranational institutions. This process continues today (1995:355).

The postmodern debate surrounding development theory is a dilemma of choice between the global market and human communities: the question is whether we support the infinite growth of industrial production, or rather focus on communities so that they may find their spiritual-environmental unity, and develop a sustainable way of life once again. This latter objective seems to be more justifiable: since, according to McMichael's estimates, the beneficiaries of globalization constitute only one-fifth of the world's population, globalization can be considered more as a project designated by political considerations, rather than a necessary process of credible representation of the individual's interests (McMichael 2004:XXXVIII- IX).

II. Definitions of culture in the postmodern era

Reading of culture is transformed in postmodernity. Interpretations carried by traditional cultural definitions are hardly capable of conveying sociocultural changes in their entirety. For Geertz (1973), culture is still a "historically transmitted pattern of meanings embodied in symbols, a system of inherited conceptions expressed in symbolic forms by means of which men communicate, perpetuate, and develop their knowledge about and their attitudes toward life" (1973:89). In Geertz's definition cultural transmission plays a decisive role. Almost everything is overshadowed by the past, and it seems that innovation, temporality resulting from the diversity of communication, or randomness of sociocultural life situations, do not play any role in forging knowledge or shaping a personal life philosophy. However, in an age like postmodernity, the source of content (traditions) and the flow of knowledge (information) can hardly be controlled. Because of weakened family ties, symbols of the past may mean nothing to the next generation. At the same time, the postmodern era excels in the creations of meanings and symbols. *Pastiche,* the empty form of a referential system hiding behind the mask of historicity, which still has formative power and creates something new, is one of the general creative techniques of the era. Meaning production in the postmodern age is situational, and interpretation thickens in the moment of the encounter. Therefore, the resulting meaning is also relative, and its scope of validity rarely exceeds the boundaries of the given sociocultural situation.

Among the cultural terms defined within the sociological tradition, Inglehart's definition provides a subtle reading of the concept of culture. According to Inglehart (1997), culture is created in the cross-section of

two extreme dimensions: the constraints of external reality, and the inner world of the subject. On the one hand, culture is the "system of attitudes, values and knowledge that is widely shared within a society and is transmitted from generation to generation" (1997:15). On the other hand, it is "the subjective aspect of a society's institutions: the beliefs, values, knowledge and skills that have been internalized by the people of a given society" (1997:15). Although in Inglehart's definition of culture the subject is given a special role, external reality in its systemic nature is still the decisive factor. His theory implies values that are omnipresent, and knowledge that works in everyone. It seems as if there is a general knowledge, which would be equally accessible to all, regardless of social class or gender.

Are the same values shared by the majority of society, or are there differences depending on age, occupation, and social affiliation? Is it really an experience passed down from generation to generation, or simply the reflection of individual preferences, whose scope of validity differs even within a given life path? Where is the limit of public values and public knowledge? Can we extend the range of traditions and inherited concepts to the line of the nation state, or does the system of historically transmitted meanings end at the boundary of the individual? And what about concepts like change, criticism, innovation or choice between different possibilities emerging sometimes without any logic during the individual's lifetime?

The views of both Geertz and Inglehart seem to be basically essentialist. Their approach assumes a general meaning, whose relevance in the post-modern era is questionable. Reality has degrees in postmodernity. The same values and knowledge are not necessarily shared by the broader masses of society (if they have ever been). Furthermore, a high degree of diversity in social characteristics can be demonstrated even on a small scale. Nations are divided along political, economic, social, gender, and ethnic lines. It follows that culture itself and the social reproduction of institutions cannot be united in the course of intergenerational transmission.

In postmodernity, knowledge production is more procedural, always adapted to the expectations and conditions of the given sociocultural situation. My view is that culture is a dialogic relationship between inherited forms and acquired knowledge, which gains meaning through the interpretative act of the individual based on his or her value system. The meaning created in this way is a "momentary" meaning, since the individual's value system also changes dynamically.

III. Values and value systems – a historical overview

Changes in culture do not leave the concept of values and value systems untouched, which in postmodernity becomes transformed, and further nuanced. In my interpretation, values are the conclusion of an organic *correlation* between the individual and an external variable based on practical considerations, as it becomes manifested at a certain point of the individual's life path. Individuals define their values drawing on their own personal life, then compile their value system out of those values that gain special significance in the given life situation. Values are therefore the individual condensation of preferences related to the sociocultural environment: either value variations emerging from the reconsideration of already existing values, or newly created ones that reflect the needs of the given sociocultural milieu.

An additional feature of values is their interpretative nature reflecting one's personal relation to his or her sociocultural environment, and the resulting dynamism, that is, their positioned meaning: a lifelong unrelenting re-evaluation of the content of values one professes. Because individual life situations show a high degree of diversity depending on whether that situation is related to the workplace, family, or other group membership, a different "reading" of the same value is possible in different sociocultural environments.

Considering value system theories in general, we can observe different approaches to the topic. Many authors emphasize the integrative, unifying role of values. In these theories values are regarded as guiding

principles, deep-rooted assumptions or postulates, which ensure the unity and harmonious functioning of culture. The resulting culture forms a coherent system, whose principles are equally binding for all members of society. This type of integrative character is accentuated by Hoebel, who was among the first to carry out systematic research on the topic, when investigating the nature of law among native tribes like the Cheyenne, Kiowa or Comanche. After having taken into consideration the conception *imperative of selection* laid down by Ruth Benedict at the beginning of 1930s he found the following: "Once a culture gets under way [...] there are always some criteria of choice that govern or influence selection. These criteria are the broadly generalized propositions held by the members of a society as to the nature of things and as to what is qualitatively desirable and undesirable. We prefer to call these basic propositions 'postulates.' Philosophers and sociologists commonly call them 'values.'" (1954:13).

His views on values were echoed by many anthropologists like Francis Hsu who studied the system of Chinese clans. Hsu (1969) emphasizes the integrative power of values (postulates). In his theory, values show the focal points of the culture's integration. A limited set of behaviors are exclusive to other behaviors within a particular culture. Postulates are generally accepted by all members of society and considered to be the natural order of things. Hsu, however, points out the fact that fundamental values are not always consistent with each other. Consistency is the indicator of cultural integrity (1969:61).

For Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck (1961), the normative aspect of culture is determined by certain value orientations. In their view, value orientations are "complex but definitely patterned (rank-ordered) principles, resulting from the transactional interplay of three analytically distinguishable elements of the evaluative process" (1961:4), defined as cognitive, emotional and guiding aspects. Although the principles change from culture to culture, variability only appears in the pattern of the elements (principles), which are themselves cultural universals. The authors identify five orientations, and three degrees within each orientation. The combination of orientations defines the image of a given culture. In the theory of value orientations, transitions completely disappear. The pattern that represents a given culture seems to create a particular type of human being (good or evil, being subject to nature or living in harmony with it), whose scope of validity applies to all members of society. In the case of the orientation examining "the temporal focus of human life" (1961:13), the evolutionary program can be identified suggesting that on the basis of time-orientation, cultures could be ranked. Following the theory of Kluckhohn, a self-sufficient individual questioning the achievements of modernity may appear in a negative light, even if he lives in our time, not to mention the representatives of traditional cultures.

The characteristics of the postmodern age may perhaps only be expressed in Williams' (1979) reading alone: both the situational nature of the given sociocultural surroundings, and the interpretative act based on the subjective point of view of the individual, form an equally integral part of his theory. The author's view is that "values may be said to be complex precodings for behaviour choice – precodings that also continually change in response to current inputs" (1979:21).

Another group of authors concentrates on the transition between modernity and postmodernity and tries to understand the persistence of traditional values and the characteristics of the (post)modern personality. This conception was originally outlined by Roland Inglehart (1997), who tried to visualize cultures in a coordinated system by examining the relationship between survival versus self–expression and traditional versus secular–rational values. The difference between modernity and postmodernity is, however, an evolutionary one: the traditional value system appears as the lower level of social development, the world of social backwardness and exploitation. Negative characteristics of societies representing traditional values, or emphasizing survival, could be almost indefinitely enumerated in Inglehart and Baker's (2000) work: low tolerance of abortion, of divorce, of suicide and homosexuality, male dominance in economic and political life, religious commitment, protectionism, condemnation of individualism, nationalist sentiment. Further, secondary condi-

tions arise from these: the marginal role of individual well-being, lower health conditions, lower level of trust, intolerance of outside groups, and rejection of gender equality. In developed, industrialized countries, however, the values of freedom of expression, rationalism and individual security gain a decisive role.

Inglehart and Baker's research does not really investigate traditional societies, but rather the consequences of modernity: the life of local communities subverted by industrialization, market economy and the global rise of capital. The authors overemphasize the individual well-being brought about by economic recovery and see it as a result of straightforward development. Through the West's ethnocentric filter, they negatively denote all cultures in which globalization processes were resisted. Progress was, however, by no means unbroken. Modernization, a local process of the West with global implications, was in practice the looting of peripheries, which brought impoverishment, economic uncertainty and vulnerability to many people. "This system, developed in the US, is being exported to other countries in the name of globalization" (Ainger 2003).

Inkeles and Smith (1974) examine the causes of the appearance of the *modern man*. Starting from the contrast of the value system represented by traditional village agriculture and modern institutions, they reach the conclusion that "men become modern through the particular life experience they undergo" (1974:6), specifically through work experience gained in factories and industrial plants. The everyday life of modern man is mostly involved in an urban lifestyle and consciously takes advantage of opportunities available in the city, such as the educational system, theatre, cinema, leisure, or various recreational activities. The authors are convinced that personality traits are not necessarily formed in childhood only: changes in values may take place in adulthood as well. The individual, after having come into contact with an institution, incorporates its characteristics into his or her own personality.

At the same time, one can critique the authors' portrayal of an orientation towards modernity through the presence of certain personality traits, to which they attribute arbitrary social processes whose causes are not fully clarified. Leaving the native village is not necessarily a sign of openness, but in many cases is simply an economic necessity. The practice of preserving traditions by the rural population forced into the urban milieu is not the same as the survival of traditional societies. Likewise, similarities between individual responses to the challenges of industrial culture are not a sign of modernity but a consequence of the structural nature of modern institutions. The authors often narrow the spectrum of examination, that is the number of variables, which in many cases leads to misconceptions. When examining the individual conditions of prosperity between city and village, it is not simply the role of urban existence in preserving psychic integrity that is at stake. Other variables like environmental load, global warming, consumption pressure, degree of freedom, and dependence on large supply systems or formation of *latifundiums* entailing the depopulation of villages should also be taken into consideration (1974:12–23).

Of the features listed as the attributes of modern humanity, undoubtedly many traits can be detected in the toolbox of the people of our time; however, it would be a mistake to link these attributes- such as long-term planning, efficiency, faith in predictability, or openness to new experiences- to the era of modernity. The idea that traditional societies were exempt from planning or openness to alternative solutions, but lived their lives in obedience to the law of their traditions, irrespective of environmental change, is hardly tenable since these communities were more vulnerable to environmental constraints than their modern counterparts and thus had to plan and seek alternative solutions when disaster struck.

IV. Case study – Grundgarden 3.0

What is a garden? A piece of land inherited from generation to generation kept together by the cohesive power of a family or a temporary parcel established on a demolition area whose existence is defined by the arbitrary power of city investments? Grundgarden is one of the first community gardens in Budapest, launched in 2012 by a group of enthusiastic young people. The site was made available to the community by the Futureal real-estate development and investment group. Under their agreement, Grundgarden can use the vacant lot until its building work starts. When it's time to build on the site, Grundgarden must leave. Since its foundation in 2012, the garden has been moved twice so far. The current community garden, Grundgarden3, occupies a vacant lot on Apáthy István Street, where the gardeners will now start their third growing season.

Grundgarden is a micro-community. It is a highly heterogeneous one, as its members are from a range of social backgrounds. Their ages, cities of origin, and occupations are diverse as well. Some are university students or retired people; others are teachers or programmers. Some live in the district, some live outside of the capital. In addition to individuals, some associations also have small plots of land. These include the 'Menedék' Hungarian Association for Migrants. They joined Grundgarden in the hope that the garden will help reduce prejudice against refugees and help them integrate into Hungarian society.

Although Grundgarden is mainly a group of people which grow vegetables, the community has a presence on forums like their Facebook group with its 194 followers. However, due to location changes and changes in time commitments from members, the number of people actively cultivating allotments on the site is about 35. The size of each plot ranges from 8 to 10 square meters on average. There is uncertainty affecting the gardeners' future, and the community launched the Grundgarden Club last year. Members are in the process of turning this into an association to help decide the future of the community. As we can see in the following account:

> I trust that by now we can say that even if there is no actual physical location, our community is still viable and will survive, even if in a limited way. With the launch of the Grundgarden Club, we were able to separate ourselves from the physical location. Of course, the place is very important, as it is the basis for all the rest, but if it were not there, the fellowship would still be able to survive through the club. (G)

Since members of the community garden mainly seek answers to practical questions about environmentally conscious living, sustainability and community development, my research relied on semi-structured interviews recorded with community members in order to explore the interconnectedness of personal motivations and local needs of the community. Interviews were carried out in the Grundgarden, the neighbouring parks and the Gólya Community House between March and October 2016. During my research 10 gardeners were questioned out of those 12 to 15 members who also took an active part in community development and organization of different projects besides cultivating their own plot. Interviews were documented with a video camera, the recordings of which later served as a basis for an independent documentary film (Grundkert 3.0). Recordings were transcribed verbatim and then analysed using the method of thematic analysis. Accounts were coded to identify recurring themes and topics of the personal interviews. Based on the themes obtained from the analysis, correlations were refined and further developed.

In addition to questions about value systems and worldviews, life-history facts also formed a crucial part of the research. According to Thomas and Znaniecki, social facts exist only through the subjective filter of the individual. During various historical periods, and even in different geographical locations, different narratives come to the forefront emphasizing different aspects of social reality as supreme organizing principles. Therefore, the varying phenomena of social life should be interpreted as the result of an uninterrupted interaction between individual consciousness and social reality (Thomas and Znaniecki 1958:1-8). With the help of life-his-

tory questions, a range of individual interpretations of social facts can be found even within a relatively small community such as Grundgarden. Interviews fitting into the order of Grundgarden's discourse thus both model reality and create narratives. Accounts of life-history carry an implicit narrative structure, a story-model which renders reality comprehensible in the form of storytelling. The creation of the past also means the creation of the present. Narrative structures not only serve to organize data, but also determine what we consider to be data at all, regardless of the opportunities offered by experience (Bruner 1997).

Beside semi-structured interviews, participant observation also formed an essential part of my research. One of the indisputable advantages of the participatory method is that it dissolves the "scientific self" of the researcher, who thus appears more authentic to the members of the community studied, as Katz (2015) points out. Even if the location of the research is influenced, to a certain degree, by the presence of the researcher, the community still remains the same as it was before. During participatory observation, members of the community explore their daily lives not from the perspective of a social science but from their own (2015:138). I visited community events on a regular basis and recorded interactions and conversations not only between community members but also between members and outsiders. These were occasions like seed exchanges, garden works, community meetings, open-air parties, special occasions like the Night of Community Gardens, and a team-building event taking place in the Bérces farm.

The individual is exposed to an incessant flow of external impressions. The influencing power of social reality that surrounds us is inevitable. *Thrownness*, being immersed, being delivered into this world gives rise to a kind of vulnerability (Heidegger 1962:174), which encourages individuals to interpret the world's phenomena constantly. Values as a guideline therefore always gain their meaning in reflecting on a specific life situation, and by creating a specific "matrix" they become part of the individual's value system. Correlations play a key role in this process. There is a never-ending dialogue between the individual and the external variables of his or her own sociocultural environment. A correlation is in fact this *dialogicity* in its reflective entirety. Value systems are characterized by people's personal relationship towards correlations which are shaped by the interpretive nature of people's consciousness. In my view, individuals seeking self-fulfillment and personality development turn towards communities. Only there, immersed in the life-world of a self-organized community, will they be able to fully unfold the values they profess, and preserve at the same time their independence. During my research I distinguished twelve basic correlations, which seem to comprise a typical Grundgarden individual's value system:

1. Correlation between the community and the individual

Grundgarden is not only a means of self-expression, but also a manifestation of the human need to recreate a community. It is a place where personal commitment towards community values and the integrating power of the community spirit itself become united. Grundgarden is a kind of supreme authority that acts as a regulator in the lives of the members, and influences them in the process of individual decision-making and living their everyday life:

We have never had a garden, and indeed, it feels good cultivating a small piece of land of our own, spending our free time there, and on top of that, together with other members forming a small collective and having a good time. (AI)

It's really unusual that these people, completely voluntarily, take the time to develop this community. No one is forced to be here, they are here to have fun. They could be at home, staring at the TV, but no. They come to work in the garden and help to build a community. (BI)

Grundgarden2 was a good thing to build nice memories. I expect from our new place that it can help us to weld the community together. (Granny)

The community often appears as a counterculture, counterbalancing negative effects of the surrounding consumer society. Members of the community garden consciously strive to endorse the values they consider important, even if they have to give up some benefits of modernity:

I wouldn't say that it is against consumer society, but it is a very important addition to city life. It creates a connection with the food we eat, nature that consumer-urban existence takes away. [...] It works precisely against the fact that no one in his own small 30-40 square meters apartment, isolated from each other on the upper floors sees any green, unless on TV. Going to a place instead, being part of a community, to link, to connect again what the city separates, doing it together, sharing with one another. (G)

Many people think this is a counterculture. I don't think it's a kind of rebellion. It's more about being different. That we are not buying these products at the market. Although we also buy things there, because we cannot grow that much on 10 sq meters. (R)

Contrary to the traditional view, community in the postmodern age is "no longer defined by place but by a perception of personal connectedness". It appears to be "a particular type of social bond characterized by a sense of mutuality, care, connection, identity, awareness and obligation to others", as it is defined by Boyes-Watson (2005:362). Grundgarden is a meeting place for diversity: a wide variety of people of different ages and different professions connect with each other there, sharing ideas, broadening knowledge, and strengthening personal ties:

The garden is very diverse, with a wide variety of ideas, with a great variety of motivations. There are those who prefer gardening, then there are those who don't even care if they have a piece of land, but feel it is more important for them to be here, to take part in community building. (CZR)

Even if it neither fosters nor hinders the everyday life of the community in general, it's still a very important added value that being in such a heterogeneous environment broadens the spectrum and the sensitivity to the world of the people who are part of it. (HK)

2. Relation to spirituality

Although in the postmodern era everything is pervaded by a sense of instantaneousness and immediacy, there is still an unbroken desire in people for permanence and continuity. "The greater the ephemerality, the more pressing the need to discover or manufacture some kind of eternal truth that might lie therein", as Harvey points out (1990:292). Increases in spiritual susceptibility in postmodernity underline this basic human need, which is also reflected in people's value systems. Even if Christian religiosity appears in the Grundgarden's value system, it is its individual interpretation aligned to the garden's value system that is being emphasised. Although members of the garden do not regard themselves as religious, their mentality can still reveal some spiritual openness. A personal commitment towards transcendence is accentuated here without which a balanced relationship between man and landscape is inconceivable. As is revealed by my interviewees:

There exists perhaps some kind of animistic nature-worship. We are much honoured to receive seeds from Kishantos, also from the Krishna Valley. From the seed bank of Tápiószele we got preserved seeds native to our region. And with respect to these, many have the honour of knowing that these are the same seeds folk planted and harvested here centuries ago. (G)

The whole garden is a creation, because both community and physical things are created. Like when you build a log cabin, you figure out how to get water. You find the way and you get the things you need. The plants are growing. So, I think this is its spiritual dimension. (CZR)

3. Correlation between humankind and nature

Landscape is not only regarded as intact or wild nature, but also as a cultural landscape carrying traces of human intervention. Therefore, it incorporates everything that is associated with green thinking including ecological self-restraint, sustainability, nature conservation, non-growth economics, organic farming, and environmental awareness both at the individual and community level:

Greener - in this you can go to the extreme. At home, you can raise earthworms in a double bucket to break down organic waste. Make an earthworm compost. Garbage recycling. Take your unused items to a charity shop. [...] This is what it means to me. (BI)

I take part in selective waste collection and recycling, and things like that. [...] I'm not as environmentally conscious as many are, but I do what I can. Basically, I like to live comfortably. Obviously, I don't overdo it, though. If everybody paid just as much attention as I do, then everything would already be much better. (R)

Instead of evading nature and artificially manipulating it, the notion of guardianship becomes accentuated. According to this approach, living communities are considered to be equal to humankind. The idea is also emphasized by Thiele (1995), who argued for such a personal relationship towards nature, free of desire for possession and domination. As is so strikingly illustrated by one gardener:

The bees were here. From their perspective, we are the arbitrary settlers. We tried to decide whether they ought to go or stay. It was also a community decision that, if possible, we choose peaceful coexistence and cause no harm, since originally this was their domain. (AI)

Guardianship builds community, strengthens social cohesion. As a result, a feeling of connectedness is being created among members. They emphasise common goals and cooperation. In their effort to create such a milieu, members are trying to counterbalance the negative effects of urban life. These often lead to "the predominance of individual strategies of survival over the principles of intragroup and intergroup identity and cohesion", as Uzzell *et al.* (2002:27) describe it. The urban environment, the everyday rush, and traffic difficulties, however, often force gardeners to make concessions away from the environmentally-conscious lifestyle:

Not everyone has the opportunity to do gardening in the middle of a microdistrict. He or she must also eat something. And these people need to be served. You cannot tell everyone to move to the countryside. Right now there is a need for shopping malls and multinationals. (BI)

Distances are quite significant in Pest, our work takes a lot of time, and we cannot insist on buying something there just because it is more "bio", it's healthier. Actually, shopping depends on a matter of convenience. (CZR)

4. The role of space

Community gardens must clearly be distinguished from the built environment. They are much more like nature, providing opportunities for recreational activities and community interactions. "The 'role of place' in generating social capital" is a relevant aspect of them, as Kingsley and Townsend (2006:534) note. This multifunctional dimension, the contribution of community gardens to deepening the feeling of connectedness, is also emphasized by the members:

It's a green island for me. In terms of its function, there are several: a resting place, a recreational place, a place for the community. That's how it's complete. And we grow vegetables that we eat afterwards. Well, there must be several functions of a different kind of garden. There are huge parks, huge ornamental

gardens that are beautiful, but have no use. [...] We have already talked about whether or not we need gardens, or whether humanity is going in the direction it seems to be going in these days. Yeah, it's really going in that direction. And to counterbalance this, there must be a garden. (BI)

The garden is primarily the source of peace, tranquillity and recreation in the minds of the members. It makes it possible to offset tensions arising from their urban lifestyle, to take a momentary break from the *hustle and bustle* of the city:

On the one hand, a lot of people move to Budapest from the countryside where they live in a house with a garden or where their parents have one, which does not particularly seem important or attractive while one is young, but after a few years in this grey, high-rise, concrete jungle you are starving for some greenness. Just to feel a little of the outdoors, a little of the countryside. Even if it's just a tiny area, but it's a big break from day-to-day life. (CZR)

Grundgarden is a kind of remedy that seeks a way to bring back into the concrete jungle some opportunities ruined by consumption-based society. However, the relationship between the city and the community garden is a rudimentary one. In Budapest, the phenomenon of a community garden is still very *underground*, as opposed to other European cities such as, for example, Berlin. As a result, its status is regarded as ambiguous: although it operates in several districts, it has not yet been fully accepted by most of the capital's residents. It is considered more of a curiosity and its reason for existence has to be justified from day to day:

I think many people don't even know about it. They go by, they peek in. Kind of like a playground. I do not think it bothers anyone. I do not think it would be tolerated if it did. It's like a public park or a crack in the road. It simply exists and people accept it. (RJ)

[The Grundgarden] brings color to the overall image. At the Night of the Community Gardens we could see that people are interested in having a garden. They were curious. I think there is room for it in the city. [...] If we do a lot, and work hard for it, then it has a future. (CZR)

5. Power correlation

Power in postmodernity is manifested mostly in local contexts. Grundgarden's everyday life is primarily determined by the relationship with the Corvin project. The Corvin project is not just a development but a power factor that decisively influences the fate of the garden and the future of the community. The relationship between them is a controversial one, which often divides even the gardeners:

They [the Corvin project] support this as long as they feasibly can. But obviously they have no economic interest in letting us stay inone place. This is their lot. It's only ours until they start building. After that ... The difference is in the background. The economic interest. They are not benefiting from us using the site of a multi-million project. Even so, I'm still grateful that we can be here. We always win and are going to win as long as there is a place for us to do our gardening. (BI)

Historical perspectives of the nation state as a symbol of stability and uniformity appear very rarely on the horizon of the gardeners. Only one interviewee emphasised the integrative role of the Carpathian Basin as a cultural unit. But even in his account, the ecological unity of the region is accentuated:

It's a great feeling to discover that we somehow fit into this landscape. Not into this urban landscape, but into this Carpathian Basin, even if there are new plants now. (G)

6. Level of self-expression

Individual self-expression also plays an important part in the Grundgarden's values. In postmodernity, most people are forced to follow a way of life that is determined by predefined choices. For the members of the Grundgarden community, on the other hand, the garden embodies freedom, the fulfilment of personal ambitions and motivations:

I think the community is a very good field of self-expression. We become a community while we give each other freedom. There are very few rules in the Grundgarden. We are really trying to keep it that way. We do have a lot of quarrels when we decide how much it should be regulated, what can or cannot be done. Or how much freedom you can grant. I prefer to grant more freedom, because from freedom comes self-expression. If there is freedom a constructive dialogue will start, and that way we can learn more about each other. (G)

At the same time, freedom of self-expression must be achieved in accordance with community values. Individual initiatives cannot override the interests of the community. Grundgarden is characterized by ideals of community-building and cooperation. The members are strongly convinced that personal goals can only be realized within the framework of a well-functioning community. As expressed by one of my interviewees:

This is a very interesting situation of balance between individual freedom and community assistance. There is this wild-capitalist, absolute-individualistic viewpoint, that you can only have something if you manage to scrape it together. Self-reliance, the idea that you must do everything for yourself, is not the primary goal in Grundgarden. What is important for us is that everyone has values. And we put these values together. (G)

7. The need to identify with the cycle of life

The need to identify with the cycle of life is most likely to emerge in the intergenerational context as part of the members' children's learning process. It is a kind of confrontation with the biological order of nature, life and death, the unbroken cycle of birth and passing, usually suppressed by modernity's faith in human per-fectibility.

There were many motivations here. Families with small children were able to get allotments. Here the children saw for the first time how a plant grows from the seed, how the crop ripens, and they saw how it can be harvested. (AI)

The traditional concept of community is complemented here by the idea of the mutual relationship between humanity and landscape whose foundations were laid down by Leopold's land ethics (Leopold 1949). Prominence is given in Grundgarden to attitudes like personal commitment and deepening of ethical behavior towards natural communities:

I think most people had the idea that it's an eco-conscious community. In the middle of the city, we create a little green for ourselves, where we can go down to "peck at the ground". My son was already two years old and we could show him that vegetables do not grow in the store, but here we plant the seeds, then we take care of them, and finally we harvest the results they produced. (G)

8. The role of tradition

In postmodernity, the sense of permanence seems to collapse and be replaced by the experience of temporality, discontinuity, and fragmentation. As a result, our values are constantly being re-evaluated. Not only do the number of values found in society grow radically, but value systems also multiply. Even within a

small geographical area many value systems exist alongside one another. A value system is no longer "hereditary", nor is it determined any more by the compelling power of tradition (as it may appear to be by many during the examination of traditional societies). Rather, "it is a content mediated by the expectations of postmodernity, which are assembled by the individual using his or her own past experience. Its dimensions also shift: value systems are no longer decisive at the overall societal level, but on a much smaller scale: at the level of local communities" (Gyökér 2016:1).

For many members of the Grundgarden, tradition is not merely the influence of the past but also the need to maintain a bond between successive generations. Knowledge transfer within families and a commitment to continuing family traditions are embodied in this correlation. The notion of tradition is transformed, though. Motivations that lead to the birth of communities combine divergent life paths and interpret the legacy of the past through their own system of rules:

I always take my tomato seeds from the previous years. [...] I save a ripe one this year and plant its seeds next year. To me it's a sort of relic. It might come from my grandma's garden. But this is a personal thing, a personal piece of memory. And I look at the tomato and I remember my grandma. (R)

Now that my grandchildren are here, the fact that they care for the plants themselves and harvest them is an incredibly good thing. There is no large quantity of anything here, but whatever there is, it's a good supplement. It's more like something special. (AI)

In the postmodern era we find polyphonic life paths containing values that are different from each other (often incompatible with the past and the sociocultural traditions of a given region), or values that are just trying to redefine tradition. Someone can be an IT person, make a movie, and even cultivate an organic garden at the same time: his value system will be made up of preferences set by the horizon of his life cycle. As described by one of my interviewees:

My parents always had a vegetable garden. They had a lot of livestock, still do even nowadays. Rural life is not far from me. For me, this is how a city can be liveable. I work at a mall, and I live on the second floor, where there is a tiny balcony packed with potted plants. (BI)

9. Attitude towards visions

Regarding visions of the community members, this is not simply the future, but the connection between these different alternatives and their reality horizon. The reality horizon, the place where their vision and the future meet, is manifested at many levels of these individuals' lives. Among the alternatives we find the chance to leave the city and turn towards rural farming, as well as the need for a more conscious and reflective application of *green* thought:

More and more people are thinking more deliberately about these issues and think about either rural self-sufficiency, or even just an urban version of a sustainable, consumer-critical way of life. It would be good to disseminate this idea and I think local communities in big cities could be a good forum for this. (HK)

I would like to open my own garden centre within about 10 years and specialize in ornamentals. Since most of my friends live here in the city, I would also like to stay here nearby. (BI)

In my heart, I had a desire to adopt animals. And then it would obviously involve a level of self-sustainability. But I did not go into details because for the time being I am tied down here. Staying within what reality dictates, my present lifestyle, my family, my job does not allow it right now. It can only be a hobby. (AI)

10. Ways of acquiring knowledge

Knowledge acquisition is being transformed in postmodernity. Alternative forms of gaining knowledge are at the forefront. Resources offered by the internet are emphasised while knowledge transmitted by the traditional institutions is often pushed into the background:

I ordered linseeds through the internet from France. They cost a few hundred forints. There were some I planted which did not come out. That's fine. These cost only one or two dollars, it doesn't matter. (R)

Beside opportunities offered by the internet, traditional ways of learning still remain an essential dimension of knowledge acquisition. Tim Ingold (2000) emphasizes the importance of personal interactions in cultural learning. In his view, most learning processes "take place through trial-and-error and practice". Although beginners follow certain rules, these rules only define the framework of the learning process and are independent of the component parts of the content itself. This is because "the skilled practitioner consults the world, rather than representations (rules, propositions, beliefs) inside his or her head, for guidance on what to do next" (2000:164). As is revealed by one of my interviewees:

I tried to learn from watching others. That was mostly at the beginning. Then I and the guy working on the neighboring plot exchanged ideas. Then we exchanged seeds. Now, this is happening on a much larger scale. We go together to seed exchange events. But I try to learn in advance, or ask for advice. There is not one member among us who does this kind of work on a high level, as a profession. I'm such a small-scale gardener, but I'm happy to do everything. (AI)

11. Choosing communication modes

Beside opportunities offered by various internet sites, face-to-face communication is the preferred way for information exchange between community members:

By meeting people on a regular basis you will get into a very helpful medium, where you will get help, advice and thoughts regarding most areas of your life. Even physical help. For example, when we had our wedding, a lot of people from the garden worked very hard to get everything ready for the event. (CZR)

Face-to-face communication is, however, not only a communication mode but also the pledge of happiness that enriches one's life by deepening personal ties with others. As is emphasized by one of my interviewees:

Material goods do not necessarily bring happiness. They always inspire you to get things you don't have yet. But if you free yourself from this pressure and start to focus more on opportunities offered by our garden, such as going to the garden, talking to your friends, these opportunities will bring you much greater happiness. And this is what small communities can achieve, but urban existence cannot provide. (G)

12. Attitudes towards the culturally alien

Waldenfels (1997), exploring the experience of the *alien*, the culturally *other*, comes to the conclusion that the *alien-experience* is a relative and occasional attribute, which is shaped in the cross-section of general laws and individual facts. During the process of interpretation, the specific characteristics of sociocultural space, the temporary nature of the field and the high diversity of subjective interpretations all play a decisive role. Apart from directly realising personal goals, the influence of Grundgarden can also help overcome social prejudices and negative attitudes towards people arriving from different cultures or those who have drifted to the edge of society. This can happen via various forms of communication blossoming inside its boundaries:

I think in any community-based initiative where people make contact with each other or work together on the same mission, they find more in common with each other. Such projects, I think, will definitely

help, let's say, a refugee or a foreigner, or any other marginalised person, anyone having difficulties finding his place in the majority society, to get connected. (HK)

Fear of the unknown, fear of the culturally *alien*, is a characteristic feature of human nature. Success in overcoming this sentiment largely depends on how migrants find their place in the community, how they get involved in the everyday lives of local people. Community gardens can provide an adequate space "to make the unfamiliar familiar; re-creating the sense of belonging for migrants", as Agustina and Beilin recognized (212:447). In a community garden the spirit of community is emphasized. Since these localities are highly receptive, to belong to them can be a good opportunity for foreign refugees and other migrants to become accustomed to the habits of their newly adopted society. Thus, through shared practices between gardeners with different ethnic backgrounds, social inclusion and adaptation can be realized:

Last year there was a family, a refugee woman, who has since joined her husband and is no longer in Hungary, who took advantage of this opportunity. She regularly visited the garden and even celebrated her birthday there.

Conclusions

During my research, I sought to explore the structural relationship between the individual and his or her environment, as revealed at the level of the individual value system. My starting point was the assumption that value systems in the postmodern age are no longer cast from a single mould, but are much more of a dynamically changing framework. This framework is characterised by the dialogue between constituents of a given sociocultural situation, the distinctive role of individual interpretation, and the dynamism of values resulting from their positioned meaning. I am convinced that culture is meaning that arises as a result of individual interpretation, which is created in the overlap between tradition, knowledge and values. In examining values, therefore, I did not set out from the list of abstract ideas of freedom, happiness, or equality laid down by Rokeach (1973). Instead, I defined so-called *correlations* in which the individual's relationship towards a particular sociocultural variable is reflected. This relationship takes on a new dimension when anchored in values, though. Thus, values are the unfolding of the dialogical relationship between the individual and the external variables of the sociocultural realm, a relationship carrying the possibility of practical potential. During my research, it became apparent that neither the correlations – nor the values deduced from them – can be regarded as pure forms of absolute concepts. In a single value, the influencing power of numerous correlations can be identified, and at the same time, one distinct correlation can be present in the content components of many other values as well. The dialogue between them is always determined by the sociocultural medium in which they surface. Although correlations as core elements of value systems were examined within the limited boundaries of a community garden, conclusions drawn from the results go beyond its limits. These conclusions can serve as a general framework for future research addressing value systems within self-organized communities.

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