

Halle Studies in the Anthropology of Eurasia

Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology

Trust, Property and Social Change in a Southern Slovakian Village

Davide Torsello





LIT



Halle Studies in the Anthropology of Eurasia

General Editors:

Chris Hann, Thomas Hauschild, Richard Rottenburg, Burkhard Schnepel

Volume 3

LIT

Davide Torsello

Trust, Property and Social Change in a Southern Slovakian Village

LIT

https://doi.org/10.52038/978-38258-6962-8

Made available under a CC BY-NC-ND 4. license.

Cover Photo: Harvest Festival Parade, circa 1963 (Photo: József Papp), and Corpus Christi Procession, 2001 (Photo: Davide Torsello).

Gedruckt auf alterungsbeständigem Werkdruckpapier entsprechend ANSI Z3948 DIN ISO 9706

This work was submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy at the Faculty of Philosophy of the Martin Luther University, Halle-Wittenberg.

Bibliographic information published by the Deutsche Nationalbibliothek
The Deutsche Nationalbibliothek lists this publication in the Deutsche Nationalbibliografie; detailed bibliographic data are available in the Internet at http://dnb.d-nb.de.

ISBN 3-8258-6962-8
Zugl.: Halle-Wittenberg, Univ., Diss., 2003

© LIT VERLAG Münster 2003

Grevener Str./Fresnostr. 2 48159 Münster
Tel. 0251-23 50 91 Fax 0251-23 19 72
e-Mail: lit@lit-verlag.de http://www.lit-verlag.de

Contents

	List of Maps	ix
	List of Tables	ix
	List of Pictures	x
	List of Charts	x
Preface		
	Chris Hann	xi
	Acknowledgements	xv
1	**Introduction**	**1**
1.1	Methodology	3
1.2	Theoretical Background	4
1.2.1	*The Postsocialist Question*	*5*
1.2.2	*Changing Property Relations in Postsocialist Europe*	*8*
1.2.3	*Trust and Social Change*	*10*
1.3	Strategies in Time and Space	15
1.4	Slovakia: General Background	17
1.5	The Region: Geographical Background	19
1.6	Historical Background	21
1.7	Local Ethnographies	25
1.8	Content and Structure of the Work	29
2	**Temporal Constructions of Property: From Feudalism to the End of the First Czechoslovak Republic (1769-1938)**	**33**
2.1	Introduction	33
2.2	The Village: Origins	34
2.3	Demography and Class Structure	35
2.4	The Feudal Land Tenure System	38
2.5	Power Relations	42
2.6	Legitimation of Power	47
2.7	From the End of Feudalism to the First Czechoslovak	

	Republic	50
2.8	Conclusion	55
3	**From the Second World War to the End of State Socialism (1939-1989)**	**57**
3.1	Introduction	57
3.2	The Hungarian Occupation and World War II (1938-1945)	58
3.3	From the Foundation of the Communist Party to the Second Czechoslovak Republic (1921-1948)	64
3.4	Socialist Collectivisation	66
3.4.1	*Initial Phase (1949-1959)*	*67*
3.4.2	*Second Phase (1959-1972)*	*68*
3.4.3	*Third Phase (1973-1991)*	*76*
3.5	Modernisation and Change	79
3.6	Conclusion	82
4	**Postsocialist Decollectivisation: The New Economic Order (1992-2001)**	**85**
4.1	Introduction	85
4.2	Decollectivisation in Central Eastern Europe	86
4.3	Decollectivisation in Slovakia	87
4.4	Transformation of the Cooperative	91
4.5	Land Restitution in the Village	94
4.6	The Use of Land: Between Subsistence and Market Economy	101
4.7	Discontinuity: The Role of the Old *Gazdák*	105
4.8	Conclusion	106
5	**Household Economy: Work, Production, Consumption and the Hidden Bases of Trust**	**109**
5.1	Introduction	109
5.2	Household Structure and Employment	110
5.3	Household Production	113
5.4	The Relation of Consumption to Production	121
5.5	Work: Between Ideology and Practice	126
5.6	The Social Use of Land	130
5.7	Conclusion	137

6	**When People Face Institutions: Informality, Emotions and Trust in Historical Perspective**	**139**
6.1	Introduction	139
6.2	Trust in the Socialist Cooperative	140
6.3	Trust and Mistrust in the Postsocialist Cooperative	148
6.4	The Local Administration during Socialism	153
6.5	The Present Relationship between Villagers and the Local Administration	156
6.6	Conclusion	163
7	**Values as Moral Foundations: Trust, Prestige and Social Roles in Change**	**165**
7.1	Introduction	165
7.2	Value Orientations in Central Eastern European Peasantries	166
7.2.1	*Social Change and Values*	*169*
7.3	Changing Values in Királyfa	171
7.4	Prestige and Social Evaluation	173
7.4.1	*Male Values: Sociability, Public Action*	*174*
7.4.2	*Female Values: Resourcefulness, Thriftiness, Religiosity*	*179*
7.5	Human Actions and Qualities	183
7.5.1	*A Quantitative Approach to Value Analysis*	*186*
7.6	Conclusion	190
8	**Managing Instability: Trust, Social Relations and the Strategic Use of Ideas and Practices**	**193**
8.1	Introduction	193
8.2	Trust in Social Institutions: A Quantitative View	194
8.3	Between Mistrust and Expectations: Patterns of Kin Interaction	199
8.4	Family and Village Relations	204
8.5	Community Action	208
8.6	The State and Interethnic Trust	212
8.7	Conclusion	218
9	**Conclusion**	**221**
	Bibliography	227

Appendix: two inheritance case studies 239

Index 243

List of Maps

Map 1:	Slovakia	19
Map 2:	Nitra Region	20

List of Tables

Table 1:	Types of farms in the Nitra region (2001)	21
Table 2:	Királyfa: Population	36
Table 3:	Social position in the village during feudalism	39
Table 4:	Land tenure during feudalism	40
Table 5:	Cadastral area and ownership in the village (1867, 1893)	41
Table 6:	Average size of (arable) land plots	42
Table 7:	The 1920 Land Reform in Slovakia	53
Table 8:	Ownership in the hands of large and middle landholders (1940)	60
Table 9:	*Gazda* and arable land property in 1940 and 1955	61
Table 10:	Economic development of the Királyfa socialist agricultural cooperative (1950-1972)	69
Table 11:	Production and husbandry in the Királyfa socialist agricultural cooperative (1950-1972)	70
Table 12:	Work and production in the unified cooperative (1973-1989)	78
Table 13:	Transformation of agricultural productive organisations in Slovakia (1989-1998)	90
Table 14:	Work and production in the Šal'a cooperative (2001)	93
Table 15:	Agricultural land use in Királyfa. Results of a random survey of 100 households	102
Table 16:	Population, employment and occupation in Királyfa (2001)	111
Table 17:	Household and working structure, Királyfa (2001) Sample of 100 households	112
Table 18:	Prices and average income in the Šal'a district (2001)	114
Table 19:	Gardening in the village (2001)	118
Table 20:	Relation between consumption and production in household economy	123

List of Pictures (all taken by the author, except for numbers 1 and 2, by József Papp)

Picture 1:	Cooperative women's brigade (1961).	71
Picture 2:	The tobacco business (1958).	73
Picture 3:	Land cultivated privately in long, narrow strips.	95
Picture 4:	A cooperative-farmed wheatfield.	101
Picture 5:	Street selling along the Šal'a-Galanta road.	104
Picture 6:	The anthropologists's landlady in her pantry.	110
Picture 7:	The house garden.	117
Picture 8:	Communal help during the pig sticking.	135
Picture 9:	Pig sticking.	136
Picture 10:	The peasant was a 'man of a thousand skills'.	173
Picture 11:	The *nyári konyha* (summer kitchen).	178
Picture 12:	Corpus Christi procession.	212
Picture 13:	One of the four altars.	213

List of Charts

Chart 1:	Worst Quality	187
Chart 2:	Worst Action	187
Chart 3:	Worst Quality, gender differences	188
Chart 4:	Worst Action, gender differences	189
Chart 5:	Trust Level	197

Chapter 1
Introduction

This volume examines historical continuity and change in a village community in the fertile plain of southwestern Slovakia. The notions of trust and property constitute the theoretical frame of the work. I consider the historical background of the late feudal, early modern and socialist periods, but focus on the dynamics of change since the end of state socialism in 1989 and after the peaceful split between the Czech and Slovak Republics (1993). People make sense of their present situation through various strategies of adaptation to changing living conditions. The importance of this social dynamic can be recognised only through historical analysis, which is a key part of this volume. Trust and property constitute two important fields in which these strategies are constructed and unfold in the everyday interaction between actors and in their relation to material objects.

Král'ová nad Váhom (Vágkirályfa in Hungarian, here afterwards referred to as Királyfa) has undergone profound and often sweeping political, economic and social changes over the past one hundred years. The region where Királyfa lies belonged to the Hungarian part of the Habsburg Monarchy until 1918; then it was incorporated into the newly-founded Czechoslovak Republic, of which it was part until 1938. In that year, the aggressive rightist Hungary invaded the southern Czechoslovakian lands and re-annexed a part of this territory, including the village, to its state. This status lasted until the end of World War II, when Királyfa again became part of the second Czechoslovak Republic, and soon after, of the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic. History slowed down (in terms of political changes) until the dramatic events that followed the fall of the Berlin Wall. Today the village is part of Slovakia, but it enjoys a unique position on the country's political map as it is located on the northern-most border of the Hungarian-minority inhabited regions. This makes the village somewhat atypical for Slovakia, especially when one considers Slovakia as a country dominated by upland communities and small ex-mining towns which turned into fervent industrial centres after the first half of the 20th century. Nonetheless, Királyfa is very typical for central Eastern Europe.

This work attempts to point out that what may appear as a 'standard village' possesses a degree of peculiarity and originality that makes it a case worthy of anthropological investigation. Királyfa could be considered unusual because it lies at the border region with the ethnic Hungarian belt. Conversely, it could be an interesting subject of research because it presents a number of similarities with other rural communities in Hungary as well as dissimilarities with other, less distant, Slovak communities. Also, it could be interesting to understand why it has remained, up to the present, prevalently Hungarian, when the nearby urban centre, situated 4 km from the village, has undergone a steady process of ethnic assimilation since the socialist period. Although attention will be paid to some of these arguments, they do not constitute the main focus of the work. The reasons are various, both personal and methodological. First, my personal link to the Hungarian minority in Slovakia and deeper knowledge of Hungarian rather than the Slovak language led me to choose this village as a field site. Second, since in Királyfa the Hungarian minority constitutes the majority of the population (over 80 percent) I judged it unfair to focus this study on the ethnic issue, not only because my views would be influenced by my personal connection with the Hungarian point of view, but eventually because Királyfa *per se* cannot constitute a yardstick for understanding interethnic issues. The option would have been to consider the region more in detail, undertaking a regional rather than a village study. This approach, however, would have its drawbacks in subtracting time and depth of analysis from a classic community study.

The ways in which Királyfa's inhabitants have internalised processes of historical change and have made use of this knowledge to adapt to new, and often adverse, conditions, can provide valuable theoretical insights into the problem of social change. The presence of history in people's present lives, the close relationships between space and time seen in the marks left by each historical period on the community and villagers' strategies aimed at controlling the flow of time are all important aspects of the village today. In highlighting the particularities of Királyfa, it is difficult to ascertain whether villagers' present patterns of behaviour and thinking can be explained by the historical course of the region, whether it would make more sense to attempt a comparison – of factors and outcomes – with other communities on the European continent, or if one needs to undertake both investigations.

The transformation of rural societies is a classic theme in anthropology and not only in the European context. Királyfa, after surviving over forty years of state socialism, is in the course of surviving the postsocialist transformation. The way in which Királyfa entered and exited socialism and the way in which its history has permeated everyday social practices provide an interesting case for analysis. This work attempts to

demonstrate that through historical analysis of the specificity of single cases, more general paradigms, such as that of social change, can be constructively applied and tested.

1.1 Methodology

The fieldwork on which this research is based was undertaken in the period between May 15, 2000 and September 12, 2001. I had the advantage of having some of my affines living in the region and this proved extremely helpful for gaining everyday insights into the social and economic life of the country. My affinal ties also influenced my choice of a field site, since Királyfa is my mother-in-law's natal community. In the early stage of my fieldwork (May-July 2000), I paid some brief visits to Prague and Bratislava, where I enjoyed the valuable help of some local anthropologists (especially Dr. Petr Skalník) who gave me advice and references on Czech and Slovak ethnographic work. During this time, I was residing in the urban centre close to the village due to my wife's pregnancy and the difficulty of finding accommodation in the community. Even though there are a number of empty houses in Királyfa, I came to realise that, in spite of my personal network, it was not an easy task for a foreigner to rent a living space. After the birth of my son, the situation adjusted and I was extremely lucky to rent a room in Anna's house, which had become available since the former occupant left the village. This proved a much better choice than living on my own, since I was continuously exposed to the happenings and the monotony of everyday family life.

I resided the whole remaining period in the village, spending time participating in the everyday life of villagers, helping them, to the limits of my skills, in their agricultural work, taking part in village social and cultural events and religious festivals. I also tried to follow villagers in their everyday visits to the town, to buy and sell products or seek services not available in the village. All this provided a rich experience which will be never forgotten and which, because of its emotional implications, sometimes risks hampering the theoretical lucidity of the author. I wish to express my deepest gratitude to all those who patiently contributed to the realisation of this work.

My fieldwork included scheduled interviews with village personalities, local authorities, village and town officials, cooperative members and managers. I also benefited from the assistance of some local ethnographers and researchers who helped me collect ethnographic and historical material on the region as well as gather tips and gossip about the present features of the local society. I paid several visits to the local (district) and national archives as well as to the Cadastral Office, which provided me,

thanks to the kind availability of researchers and employees, with the historical material that allowed the compilation of Chapter Two about the feudal and pre-socialist period and Chapter Three about socialism.

Furthermore, as a data collection method, I undertook a survey questionnaire based on a random sample of one hundred village households. The survey was divided into three sections: in the first I gathered general data about household composition, residence, occupation, schooling, language and religion. The second section concerned agriculture and focused on ownership of land and animals, the use of land, farming objects and the relationship to the agricultural cooperative. The third part dealt with social relations in the village, the frequency of encounters and interaction with kin and non-kin members, the level of trust in villagers, local and external institutions as well as opinions about the postsocialist transformation and personal hopes for the future. In this volume I make use of some of these data for demographic purposes (Chapters Four, Five) and for mapping the relations of trust among people and between people and institutions (Chapter Eight).

The idea for the survey came about in the course of my pre-fieldwork research session at the Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology in Halle. After receiving some basic but highly informative training on quantitative and qualitative data collection, many of my colleagues and I became persuaded of the importance and utility of undertaking a survey in our field sites. The survey experience, during which I benefited from the generous help of one research assistant, a village school teacher, proved extremely valuable for two reasons. First, it enabled me to fill the gap on support data (such as demographic, household economy and those concerning ownership) which were not available or could not be provided by local officials for privacy reasons. Secondly, and more significantly, the survey furnished an important opportunity for me to briefly penetrate into villagers' domestic spaces. Often this visit became a fruitful occasion for the exchange of general views and opinions on the topics treated in the questionnaire.

However, the most important set of data collected during fieldwork was obtained in the course of my presence in the community and of my stay with one village family. This offered extremely valuable occasions for chats and daily encounters and thus provided me with glimpses into the vicissitudes that make up villagers' daily private and public life.

1.2 Theoretical Background

This book makes significant contributions in three theoretical areas. The first is the existing literature on postsocialist Europe and in particular the

discourse about changing property relations in Eastern European countries. The second thread concerns the usefulness and applicability of the notion of 'trust' to changing societies. The third, at a midpoint between ethnographic and theoretical discourse, is the rich body of ethnographic literature about Eastern European rural communities in historical transformation. The following sections will treat these three topics separately.

1.2.1 The Postsocialist Question

Thirteen years after the fall of the Berlin Wall, a voluminous amount of research has successfully established the claim that 'postsocialism' constitutes an independent field of study (see Hann 2000, 2002b for a comprehensive survey of the literature). The very fact that this research, in all disciplines of the social sciences, all deals with the outcomes of the 'transition' that has affected one half of the European continent and a number of countries on other continents, reveals that there is a sort of uniformity in these apparently extremely heterogeneous works. The claim that these countries are 'postsocialist' is the *trait-d'union* of these works, notwithstanding their different theoretical approaches to the transition from socialism to capitalism. Even the claim recently made by some anthropologists that the word 'postsocialism' should be avoided because it does not make sense anymore, especially for those who are experiencing the transformation (Humphrey 2002; Verdery 2002), does not seem to convincingly inform the analytical nature of investigations in central Eastern Europe.

The strong and weak point of anthropology has always been its focus on comparatively remote, isolated and 'exotic' social and cultural settings about which the researcher had to provide his own details of analytical observation. When the subjects of such observation were the remote Trobrianders or Nuer, the early fieldworker did not run the risk of being accused of untruthfully depicting the reality of their experience. He was there, after all, and he could claim expertise on what was described in his ethnography. This strength, of the 'one who saw with his own eyes', turned, however, into one of the main weaknesses of the anthropological method as ideas about 'ethnocentrism' and the imposition of 'western-centred' models on local realities became severely questioned (see Rapport 2001). Even in the case of the (relatively closer) regions of central Eastern Europe, as in the classic ethnographies of African or more distant regions, there is always the risk of distorting reality through a particular lens. As Hann rightly points out, the imposition of western ideas, such as those based on the classic dichotomy between private and collective property, brought many researchers (and policy makers) to 'overlook institutional contexts and the

strong threads of continuity that mark even the most dramatic of social ruptures' (Hann 2002b: 5). The assumption is that the reality on the ground is usually much more complex than the western researcher, with his own knowledge of the western world, is able to perceive.

One may question whether an anthropologist should use the term 'postsocialist' at all. Humphrey emphasises that because the heritage of actually existing socialism is still unclear, since postsocialism provides a field of analytical comparison, and since changes in these countries are not simple and unidirectional, it does not make sense to imagine a single block of regions that are following the same path (Humphrey 2002: 12-13). To these reasons one perhaps needs to add, or stress further, the historical dimension. Postsocialism may be an analytically valid setting if one considers the processes through which actors in these countries today are 'reversing their history' (Róna-Tas 1998; Giordano and Kostová 2002), i.e. how they make use of knowledge and experiences accumulated in the past to build their present. Thus, engaging with postsocialism as a framework makes sense if the idea of time receives sufficient attention within the analysis of ground-level strategies of adaptation to social change. In this direction, what followed 1989 is considered one step in the overall historical development of these countries, just like what followed the abolition of the manorial estates in Hungary in 1848. In other words, postsocialism should be regarded as an analytical category constructed on the observation of local practices and ideas, rather than the sum of the social and economic conditions of these countries in the process of their following the development of their 'more prosperous' western neighbours.

If history is paid adequate attention, one of the main problems arising from the application of the 'transition paradigm' can be solved. This is expressed in the debate between the followers of the transition theory and those who advocate the use of the term 'transformation' in lieu of 'transition' (Smith 1998: 4-9). Contesting of the idea of 'transition' came mainly from anthropologists and sociologists, who maintained that claiming that these countries are facing change through a unidirectional, development process which ends in the successful embracing of market capitalism would underestimate the local potentials of adaptation to change. The simple equation at the base of this discourse was that the dissolution of the socialist structures and the implementation of neoliberal policies and reforms would bring in a market economy, democracy and 'civil society'. After half a decade of transition, however, fewer and fewer of those who advocated this theoretical position were able to maintain it. The complexity, many-sidedness, ambiguity and contradiction of the outcomes that what economists euphemistically called the 'shock therapy' brought about in

Eastern Europe, are themselves demonstrations that the 'transition' is far from being complete (Szelényi 1998; Burawoy and Verdery 1999).

The use of neo-institutional economic models has helped to complement the transition and transformation models. The idea that institutional change is 'path-dependent', i.e. it reflects the weight of what some authors call the 'legacies of the past' in the present scope of transformation has been central to much research on the field (Blanchard et al. 1993; Gorzelak 1995; Wolz et al. 1998; Hudecková and Lošťák 1998). Grabher and Stark, in their influential contribution *Restructuring Networks in Post-socialism. Legacies, Linkages and Localities* (1997), are among those who formulated more aptly the applicability of neo-institutional models to the postsocialist case. They argue that postsocialist societies are following paths which lead to differentiation and an ambiguity of outcomes. The authors draw on a biological and neo-evolutionary paradigm which maintains that it is not a unidirectional form of evolution that brings species to adapt to changing external conditions, but it is through the differentiation of responses and through a combination of success and failure that a species seeks adaptation and survival. It is not, in Darwinian terms, simply the fittest who survives in new conditions, but the one who is the most ready to diversify its strategies of adaptation. Failure is considered a part of the process of adaptation and it is eventually the species with the highest rate of variability that succeeds in proving adaptability in the long run (Grabher and Stark 1997: 3-4). Therefore, according to the authors, it is the '*organisation of diversity* that is relevant for the recombination of organisational forms in Eastern Europe' (Grabher and Stark 1997: 7, italics in the text).

The organisation of diversity follows three main lines of action. First, local actors seek to re-combine their resources within the general institutional transformation by strengthening their networks, or linkages. The strengthening of networks as a strategic choice is one of the most widely-emphasised features of the postsocialist transformation (Torsello and Pappová 2003). There are several ways of tackling the problem of phenomena such as the rise of informality, clientelism and the overwhelming importance of connections (what Russians define as *blat*) in the postsocialist world and the treatment of these is far beyond the scope of this introduction (see Böröcz 2000 for a comprehensive overview of the literature). The main point that Grabher and Stark make about the reorganisation of networks, which are in many cases a heritage of the socialist period, is that these become efficient in the new situation in so far as they are able to provide what they define as a 'loose coupling', i.e. 'weak ties' (Granovetter 1973). These ties would bind people together and at the same time provide space for variability and adaptation to changed conditions (Grabher and Stark 1997:

10-11). In their view, whereas dense horizontal ('strong') ties can provide strong responses towards social cohesion, they tend to hinder the ability of one social group to adapt and to innovate. On the other hand, what Henderson et al. (1995) identify as the 'chaos' resulting from the multiplicity and ambiguity of orientations and perceptions, conventionally seen as major obstacles to future-oriented economic action, can instead be considered an asset for managing the uncertainty of the present time (Grabher and Stark 1997: 11-12).

The second point that Grabher and Stark make concerns the idea that regional differences (localities) and their interdependence become crucial features for incorporating various patterns of economic and social action (1997: 18-19). The socialist regime had a forceful impact on the economic geography of these countries mainly through two policies: nationalisation of industries and the clustering of new, interrelated factories in the countryside centres. The outcome was that communities became increasingly isolated because of the number of these factories, but also highly dependent on them for labour and provision of services. Today there are many decentralised economic actors who try to find positions and contacts with the state, without the benefits of the planned economy. Therefore, the authors suggest, the potential of these scattered factories (or those which survived the transformation) can be enhanced only if they can be tightly linked to each other and these linkages can function as 'buffers retarding selection and reducing the liability of newness' (Grabher and Stark 1997: 19). In other words, localities become strategic too as they are able to interrelate and manage the diversity of regionally-organised responses to the transformation.

The last point is that postsocialist societies, in order to adapt to the ongoing transformation, make use of what the authors define as 'legacies' of their socialist past. Practices, ideas and forms of socio-economic interaction that developed throughout socialism are not simply discarded in light of major institutional changes. It is important that Eastern European countries learn how to make 'fruitful use' of these legacies, without falling into the other extreme of over-emphasising their importance. This, in the eyes of Grabher and Stark, is what leads to the difficulty in establishing the bases of institutional trust.

1.2.2 Changing Property Relations in Postsocialist Europe

Understanding the changes in property relations in countries facing postsocialism can provide one helpful framework for testing the applicability of the above-mentioned model (Kideckel 1992, 1993; Répássy and Symes 1993; Verdery 1994, 1996, 1997; Hann 1993a, 1993b, 1998, 2000, 2001;

Eidson 2001). The restitution of assets and use rights which had been nationalised and collectivised during the socialist regime has constituted one of the most dramatic steps of the transformation. Informed by the western paradigm that posits private property as the basis of social and economic order, all of the postsocialist governments have dealt with the problem of the restoration of private property. One outcome of implementing shock-therapy measures (such as the restitution of property assets and the dissolution of the socialist agricultural cooperatives) has been that the private sector has found it hard to develop profitable strategies of production in an often unfavourable economic and political environment (see Chapter Four). On the other hand, community members who became used to the idea that the cooperative fulfilled all the social, economic and, in part, cultural functions of their everyday life were faced with the sudden disintegration of this institution, leaving no substitute (Hann 2001).

Property relations and ownership rights are at best described as 'fuzzy' in the postsocialist countries (Verdery 1999). Hann argues that the imposition of western liberal ideas about property has created ambiguity in the process of re-establishing ownership and it is still very naïve to expect that this form of institutional transformation will bring about the desired outcome, i.e. the full reestablishment of private farming (Hann 1998: 2). Within this context, the model of 'organised diversity' may be usefully applied to explain the different outcomes of the decollectivisation process in central Eastern Europe. I would like to highlight two premises on which to build my argument.

First, the present features of the localities facing transformation in central Eastern European countries can be highlighted through attention to historical changes in ownership. At least since the time of the Romans, who built walls and fortresses to protect the fertile Danubian Plain, these countries, including Slovakia, were at the centre of major geopolitical transformations taking place on the continent. It is of little surprise if today they are characterised by high degrees of regional differentiation. The different historical courses followed by each country and within them by single regions which belonged at different times to different political systems, account for their responses to the overarching transformation of the last sixty years. Therefore, when considering the complexity and fuzziness of the institutional transformation that followed the restoration of property rights we should recognise that this is by no means a result of the postsocialist change alone, but it has roots in the feudal and early modern features of the local ownership systems.

The second point is that the analysis of changing property relations provides a useful theoretical framework for understanding the impact of state

and international policies and the ways in which local actors strategically respond to institutional transformations.

Since property relations are relations between people with regard to assets (in this particular case land, animals, machines or buildings), it makes sense to try to investigate the convergence (or divergence) between the policies implementing the transformation of relations and rights to ownership and their present outcomes. If, for instance, one considers the role of the socialist agricultural cooperatives in the village communities, then the resistance of these (transformed) institutions and the relationship that links owners to their assets gain relevance within the present strategies of adaptation to mutating conditions. Villagers build today on the remains of what was imposed on them (collectivisation) and afterwards dissolved (privatisation). Therefore, villagers' organisation of diverse forms and uses of ownership (see Chapters Four and Five) and the complex relations underpinning them are all part of the common set of strategies followed to increase, as Grabher and Stark suggest, adaptability in the long run by making use of the experience accumulated in the course of their past.

1.2.3 Trust and Social Change

This section introduces the notion of trust as a theoretical framework. Being of Italian nationality and of southern origin, I grew up in a social environment in which the problem of trust (and mistrust[1]) is, both at the interpersonal level and vis-à-vis institutions and formal bodies of governance, an intimate part of the everyday life of individuals. The linkage between trust, actions and ideas is a sort of invisible thread that ties all spheres which individuals encounter in their public actions. However, in spite of the everyday recourse to the idea of trust in shaping interpersonal relations in Italy, I was not aware of the importance of the notion until I started spending time in Slovakia. In the course of my first visits to this country I realised that here, as in southern Italy, trust matters enormously in the course of everyday life. A longer stay in the village taught me, however, that trust between people is an extremely delicate matter which cannot be dealt with simply through the interpretation of people's ideas about trust. I was struck several times by some of the villagers' reactions to unforeseen situations, news or to daily encounters for the simple reason that much of

[1] I prefer this to distrust, following Isaacs, Alexander and Haggard's (1963: 463) distinction between distrust and mistrust. In their words, distrust is 'an absence of assurance and reliance, with the special quality of a certainty of the absence of trustworthiness in the other person'. By mistrust they mean: 'a doubtful, skeptical, uncertain, wariness about trusting another person; that is a tendency towards distrust'. In other terms, mistrust contains the idea of trust and underlines the 'suspicion' between the two parties.

their behaviour seemed to openly contradict their opinions and ideas about the social and economic life in the village. On the other hand, I was most surprised that, however contradictory some of this behaviour might seem, I found little difficulty in accepting it and adapting to it, because it reminded me of many situations experienced in my home country.

This constitutes the personal motivation which led me to adopt the notion of trust as one of the theoretical backgrounds of this work. However, I am aware that trust has become one of the hottest key words of the last two decades. The temptation to adopt this as a key concept to explain patterns of social and economic interaction is strong, as the number of social scientific studies bearing this notion in the title suggest. On the other hand, trust is also an extremely thorny concept which can be used for a virtually unlimited number of case studies (trust will always be here as long as there are societies of human beings), but that, because of this wide applicability, can easily be reduced to nothing more than a 'black box' or blanket term. This is proved by the tendency of certain authors who question the very utility of the notion, stating that it is not always the alternative solution to mistrust (Levi 2000) or that it is too much invested of instrumental connotations to be analytically useful for examining all kinds of social relations (Williamson 1993). Before describing the way in which I want to apply the notion in this work, I will introduce some general sociological descriptions of what trust is and how it functions in society.

The role of trust in interpersonal relations is a long-recognised feature of human society. Classical philosophical accounts tracing back to the Sophist school and Plato culminate in what later came to be known as the 'contract theory'. The origin of society is identified in the natural convention (contract), based upon the social nature of man, which creates the presupposition for the establishment of the law of the state and assures human justice (Popper 1966). This theory later influenced other philosophers, who located the origin of the state in this contract, with its roots either in domination, violence and exploitation (Hobbes, Hume and Nietzsche) or in human solidarity (Rousseau).

Trust is a relatively new notion in the social sciences. Durkheim early postulated the existence of a 'moral unity' which works towards the integration of social actors in the type of 'organic solidarity' described by him as a prerequisite for modern society (Durkheim 1964). However, it was only after seminal sociological works on social order (see for instance Parsons 1969; Luhmann 1979; Coleman 1990) that trust became a major theoretical argument in the study of social groups. Since then a vast literature has developed that explores the various functions, aspects and roles of trust in society. Luhmann related the phenomenon of trust to the growing

complexity, uncertainty and risk in contemporary society (Luhmann 1979, 1988). Barber (1983) introduced the notion of 'fiduciary trust'; Eisenstadt and Roniger (1984) treated trust as a dominant ingredient of patron-client sets of relations. Gambetta (1988) provided an accurate analysis of how trust functions in closed, exclusive communities such as Mafia groups, whereas Coleman (1990) and Hardin (1991) reduced trust to an outcome of rational choice. Fukuyama (1995) was one of the first scholars to test the applicability of the notion, providing a categorisation of different state economic systems on the basis of their 'high' or 'low' trust cultures. Seligman (1997) argued that trust is a specifically modern phenomenon linked with the division of labour in contemporary society, the differentiation and pluralisation of roles and the indeterminacy of roles and their expectations. Finally, Sztompka (1999) provided a relatively more culturalistic approach to trust, which he saw as a resource necessary for the viable functioning of a social system.

In order to sum up the basic presuppositions on which the notion of trust is founded I will sketch out some general points summarising the functions of trust in society.
These are some definitions of trust:

1. [Trust is the] worthiness of being relied on
2. confidence in the truth of anything
3. a resting on the integrity, friendship… of another
4. anything felt to impose moral obligations
5. an arrangement by which property is handed to or vested in a person, to use and dispose of it for the benefit of another
6. an arrangement for the control of several companies under one direction, to cheapen expenses, regulate production, beat down competition and so obtain a maximum return

(Wordsworth Reference English Dictionary, Wordsworth Reference 1994, "trust")

On the basis of these definitions and of the above mentioned theoretical approaches one can assume that:

- Trust always has an object and a domain. This means that trust needs at least two parties who interact in relation to an aim or goal.
- Trust is variable in time. Although there can be continuity in patterns and features of generalised trust over time, trust, confidence and reliability tend to assume different shapes and values with the changing external conditions within which interaction takes place.

- Trust entails expectations and obligations. Whenever an interpersonal relation is constructed upon trust there is emphasis on expectations (on the trustor side) and obligations (on the trustee). Even if the trustee decides not to fulfil expectations, he is obliged to comply with the act of trusting in order to maintain the relation.
- Trust is constructed on both subjective and objective levels. Because of its psychological and emotional nature, the action of trusting takes place not only on a social but also on an individual level.
- Trust can be directed towards persons ('dyadic') and abstract entities such as institutions, organisations and the state ('embedded') (Sztompka 2001).
- Trust works in different ways according to the prevalence of emotional or instrumental features. Consequently, social distance and the degree of interaction between persons can account for the different degrees and roles of trust.
- Trust involves a judgement of risk in conditions of uncertainty. As Luhmann (1988: 95-97) points out, when there is no uncertainty (and no risk is taken) then it becomes a matter of confidence, not of trust.
- Trust can provide achievements in terms of identity or status. Individuals or groups can enhance their status in relation to their trustworthiness.[2]
- An excessive presence of trust may be detrimental as much as an excessive absence. This leads to the idea that trusting can have an active as well as a passive connotation. Blind trust can express a dominance of passivity, whereas generalised mistrust can foster a certain kind of social order.

Trust is an important aspect of people's everyday lives today, manifest for example in the frequent verbal use of the word 'trust'.[3] One informant pointed out that trusting somebody was always at stake, during socialism and before, but 'today it is more difficult to trust and more important to be

---

[2] An important distinction needs to be made between trust and trustworthiness. Jones (2001: 15919) underlines that 'if trust is to bring about the goods of cooperation it must be met with trustworthiness'. Whereas being trusting may not always be a virtue (like in the case of misplaced trust borne out by others more vulnerable than the truster), trustworthiness 'is almost always something it is valuable to increase'.

[3] In Hungarian the word 'trust' is translated as *bizalom*. The verbal expression, *megbízni*, or its derivations *megbízható* ('trustworthy', 'reliable') and *megbízhatatlan* ('untrustworthy', 'unreliable') are, however, more often used in everyday language than the abstract notion formulated by the word *bizalom*.

trusted' (Lőrinc, b. 1947[4]). Considering this and the assumptions described above, the idea of trust is therefore a useful tool for understanding the ongoing process of change in Királyfa.

Analysis of the historical reality that has characterised the village in the past one hundred years can provide an important analytical framework for the idea of trust. The practical reason for doing this is that a number of recent studies tend to apply models originally used to explain differences and disparities within single countries (for instance Italy), to Eastern European societies (see Chapters Six and Eight). Some superficial and culturalist[5] approaches, such as those making use of the famous paradigm of 'amoral familism' (Banfield 1958; Putnam 1993) describe the allegedly widespread lack of trust in institutions as well as the weakness of 'civil society' as outcomes of the postsocialist transformation (Sztompka 1999; Misztal 1998; Rose-Ackermann 2001). This suggests that still too little of the research on these countries is deeply rooted in knowledge of local realities.

My theoretical argument is threefold. First, I maintain that in order to constitute a useful analytical tool, trust needs to be contextualised between ideas and practice. Trust is constructed at three levels: it has a rational (instrumental) scope, a moral and an emotional one.

Second, the concomitance of these three factors can be grasped only if one concentrates on the observation of practices, thus complementing the interpretation of ideas and ideologies that underpin social action. Thus, it may be of help to integrate findings obtained in the course of participant-observation based fieldwork with quantitative (survey) data.

Third, trust must be seen as a dynamic notion, which changes in the way people perceive its utility and relevance for their everyday lives. It is of course difficult and often problematic to deal with trust following historical methodology; the very fact that most sociological theory confines trust to a phenomenon of the contemporary period is testimony to this obstacle. However, if one wants to go beyond approaches that explain a lack of trust and civic action as a 'cultural feature' of certain societies, then one must begin with a similar theoretical position. History constitutes the starting point of the 'backwardness paradigm' proposed by Banfield (1958) and later developed by Putnam (1993) dealing with southern Italy, and history should

---

[4] Informants are here afterwards indicated with fictitious personal names and their date of birth. In the case of informants mentioned several times their birth dates are not repeated. Moreover, when no personal details are added it is because informants expressily wished to remain anonymous.

[5] By 'culturalistic approach' I mean every kind of attempt to make generalisations about a social context on the basis of its allegedly 'cultural features' or, in the case of trust, those descriptions of a 'trust culture' which are based on a certain cultural group's attitude towards trust (see Sztompka 2001).

be the ground on which these ideas need to be questioned. Therefore, in order to understand to what extent the notion of trust is applicable (and useful) to describe ongoing processes of social change, one needs to analyse how trust developed in a society in the course of its historical transformation and how it came to be an important issue in the present.

1.3 Strategies in Time and Space

The changes that followed 1989 have been characterised as contradictory, complex and many-sided in a rich body of social science literature on the problem. This work proposes to follow the way paved by much ethnographic research on postsocialist Eastern Europe and attempts to understand the direction in which these countries have been moving since the end of the socialist regime and the creation of democracy and market economy. In order to be able to foresee any potential outcomes, however, one needs to start from assumptions, i.e. from the factors accounting for the present situation in the region. These can be summarised as follows.

First, the restitution of property rights that followed the general process of decollectivisation in central and eastern Europe has produced different outcomes between regions and within single states. It has become clear that there is no such thing as a single, unidirectional postsocialist decollectivisation. In some countries and regions the restitution of ownership assets and the 'bundle of rights' tying them to people has brought about the rapid restoration and development of private farming. In many other regions, however, this has not been the case. The persistence of collective farming and the transformation of socialist cooperatives into market enterprises are characteristic of a large part of the postsocialist world, Slovakia included.

Second, restitution of property has meant more than the simple regaining of capital and assets. Owners facing the new reality of being physically in possession of their land, machines and animals were confronted also with the (equally new) problem of using them. Not only did it prove difficult for many to engage in private farming because of the shortage of capital, labour and skills, but this was also revealed as non-strategic. The dissolution of the agricultural cooperative meant the loss of a local provider of services, as well as of social benefits together with jobs. This explains why the collective sector is still strong in many postsocialist countries. People are simply aware of the drudgeries of taking their land back, as much as they are of the losses they can face after dissolution of the cooperatives.

Third, the postsocialist transformation, encompassing overall change, has strongly highlighted the dichotomy between novelty and tradition (or continuity). The opening of new markets, capital investment and the aggressive invasion of western European and transnational companies have

provided enormous benefits to local societies in terms of work opportunities, and improvement of infrastructures and of national economies. However, wide sectors of the local population, unable to cope with the transformation, are excluded from these benefits. What is worse, they have been particularly hit by the side effects of capitalist shock-therapy. Poverty, the dissolution of kinship and community ties, migration and interethnic turbulence are only some outcomes of the post-1989 era. It is of no surprise if people resort to strategies and decisions that are strongly reminiscent of their close past, but adapted to the changed reality.

Fourth, one of the most salient features of the postsocialist world is described as the widespread lack of trust in formal (state and other) institutions and the absence of civic ties. This feature, which has leaded an increasing number of works to stress the difficulty of the transformation, is allegedly rooted in the permanence of the already mentioned 'legacies of the past'. The neat separation between private and public spheres, and between official and informal patterns of behaviour that distinguished the former regime are seen as accounting for some present practices and phenomena.

These are only some of the premises which are necessary for understanding the postsocialist paths of Eastern Europe. They are the most significant for the scope of this volume. The main argument of this work is that people today develop strategies aimed at keeping control of the present by incorporating past with present ideas and patterns of action. I maintain that there are two main strategies that prove particularly useful: investment in social and personal networks and the ambivalence between ideas and actions. These constitute two strategic lines of conduct in the sense that they are intentional choices and patterns of behaviour aimed at a specific goal, that of adapting to the transformation.

These social and economic strategies are directed towards diversifying and rendering extremely flexible the range of responses to uncertain situations and instability. From an external perspective, there is a strong degree of ambiguity between people's opinions, ideas and their practices (cf. Austin 1976). What is said or expressed as a personal view can be contradicted by action without signifying unreliability or being judged as morally improper. My argument is that this is a strategic line used by villagers to facilitate their adaptation to the uncertainty of the present and eventually to pursue personal interest out of this difficult situation. Furthermore, by creating ambiguity between ideas and practices, villagers are able to leave open options to diversified behaviour and to create a margin of choice for the future.

The idea introduced by Grabher and Stark (1997) that postsocialist actors restructure their social ties and linkages by creating diversity and

variability provides a useful theoretical background to the scope of this work (see above). However, whereas the authors apply the idea of the 'organisation of diversity' to the present restructuring of social ties and networks, I would like to move a step further and attempt to explain why a gap between ideas and practices can be interpreted as a strategy to face social change.

In order to understand the scope of action of these strategies it is necessary to consider the temporal and spatial framework within which these practices take place. Time is a crucial element in this work, in the sense that present directions can be understood with reference to the manner in which people make use of past experiences and the knowledge accumulated through them. Time is here intended not simply as the historical flow, nor as the cyclical occurrence of events. History is the concurrence of events and of the responses that local people invent to face them. The dialectical process of confrontation with history characterises people's attitude towards it; therefore it makes sense to deal with history only in so far as people's interpretation and translation of history in their everyday practices and ideas are concerned.

Space is an important dimension too and is intimately linked to time. The position of the village in the heart of continental Europe is sufficient alone to explain what geopolitical changes have meant for its inhabitants. These changes have directly affected the physical space of the village in the sense of the relationship between actors and their space. The end of the feudal period and the abolition of the large manorial estates freed peasants from the heavy obligations and their semi-servile status, but it did not bring to them a new concept of place. They kept on cultivating the same land in the same village. The only difference was that this land became their property. After 1949, land became gradually collectivised and private property remained only a formality. Peasants had to become incorporated into the village cooperative which again defined the changing relations between them and the space of the village: land was always farmed, but collectively. Even though in the course of the postsocialist restitution owners did not receive the same land their ancestors owned, the place, the community, still remained the same. Time and space are inextricably linked to one another in the sense that what people choose to do is determined by the range of possibilities (resources) available, as well as by the knowledge that people have of these resources and of the institutions regulating access to them.

1.4 Slovakia: General Background

This section provides geographical, historical and political background about Slovakia, starting with the region in which Királyfa is situated. Slovakia has an area of 49,036 km² with a population of 5,379,455 inhabitants (Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic 2001). It belongs to the central European countries since it shares its western borders with Austria (91 km) and the Czech Republic (215 km). It borders Poland to the north (444 km), Ukraine to the east (90 km) and Hungary to the south (515 km).

Geographically, a substantial part of the country is covered with mountains belonging to the Western Carpathian Bow. These mountains create several parallel strips of land divided by valleys where rivers (the Váh[6] and the Hron) run. The outer strip is created by lower mountains covered with forests: Biele Karpaty, Javorníky and Nízke Beskydy. The inner part is created by the lower Malé Karpaty, Strážovské vrchy, Veľká Fatra, Malá Fatra and higher parts of the Tatra mountains. Three areas of lowlands are located in the southern part of the country: Záhorská nížina and Podunaj-ská nížina in the west and Východoslovenská nížina in the east. The southwestern border of the country is formed by the Danube River.[7]

The capital, Bratislava, has a population of 441,500, and it is followed in size by Košice in the east (235,000), Nitra in the west (90,000), Prešov (88,000) and Banská Bistrica (85,000) in the north. The country's population is 85.8 percent Slovak (4,614,854 inhabitants), 9.7 percent Hungarian (520,528), 1.7 percent Romany (89,920), 0.8 percent Czech (44,620), 0.5 percent Ruthenian (24,201) and 0.2 percent Ukrainian (10,814) (Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic 2001).

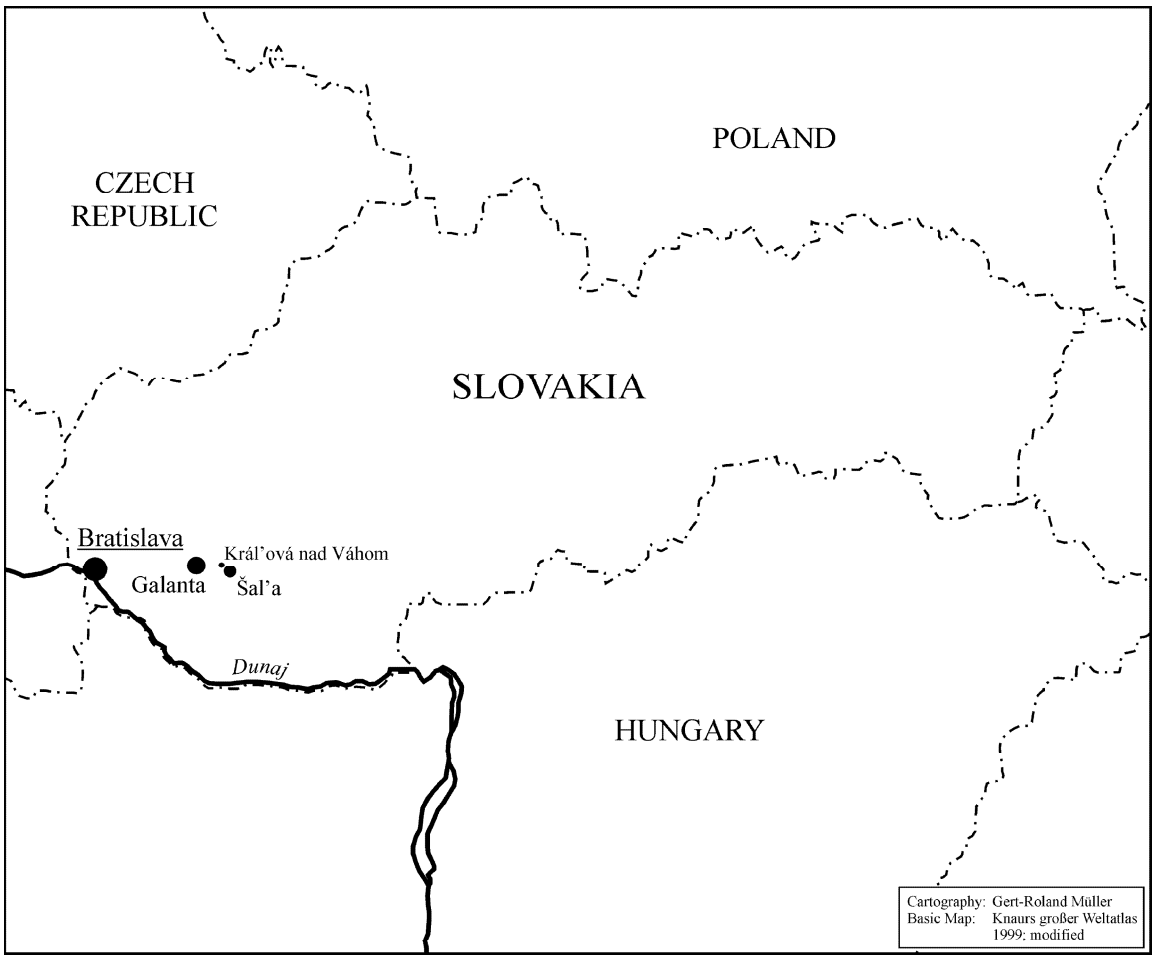
Slovakia in 2001 has an unemployment rate of 19.7 percent. Its employment structure is 6.6 percent agricultural, 30 percent industrial, 8.1 percent in construction, 47.7 percent in services and 15.9 percent in transport and communication (Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic 2001). The GDP is composed of agriculture (4 percent), industry (32 percent) and services (64 percent).

---

[6] I provide the Hungarian and Slovak reading of toponyms in the case where both ethnic groups are today present. Historical toponyms related to the pre-1918 period are mainly in Hungarian.

[7] For further geographical details see http://www.Slovakia.eunet.sk.

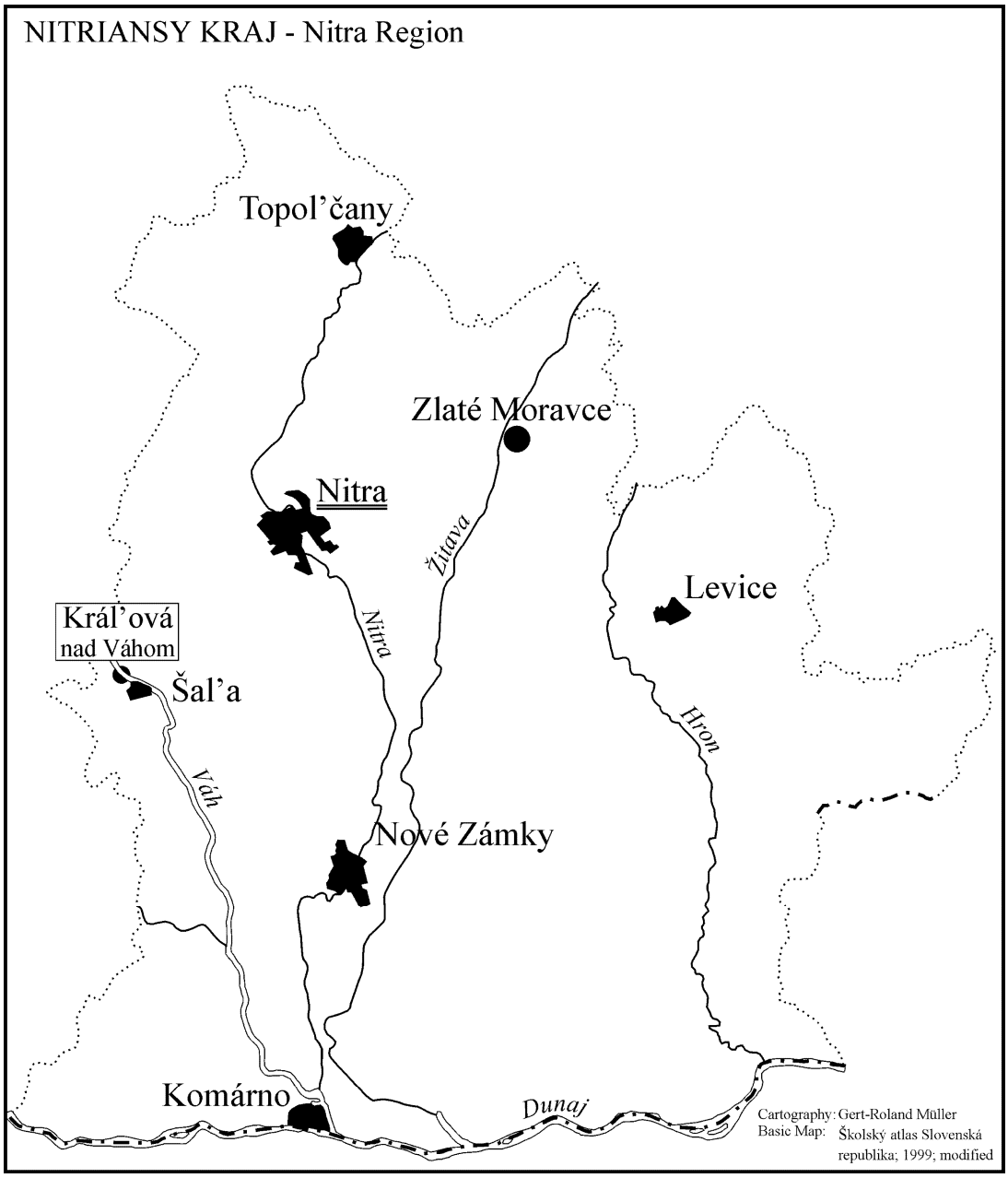
Map 1: Slovakia



1.5 The Region: Geographical Background

The village of Királyfa is situated in the geographical lowland of the Podunajská pahorkatina which belongs to the southwestern lowland known as Podunajská nížina. It is administratively part of the district of Šal'a (54,000 inhabitants, 25,000 of which live in the town) and Nitra county. The region's economy is relatively evenly split between the different sectors, with industry employing 42.7 percent, the services and the tertiary sector 41.7 percent and agriculture 15.6 percent. The rate of unemployment in 1999 was 21.5 percent. The principal productive sectors are chemicals and pharmaceuticals, timber, machine production, electronics, construction materials and food processing (Nitra Region 2001).

Map 2: Nitra Region



In spite of the low level of employment in agriculture, which can be ascribed to the developments of the second half of the socialist period (see Chapter Three), the region has the largest number of farms in the country employing the largest workforce (Table 1). Private enterprises account for 83 percent of

productive farms, followed by limited companies (8.3 percent) and agricultural cooperatives (6.7 percent).

The region is extremely active in the commercialisation of the primary sector and in agricultural research. Nitra is the seat of the Slovak University of Agriculture and of the Academy of Science Department for Agriculture. Moreover, the city hosts the annual International Agricultural and Food Fair (Agrokomplex), established in 1973 and since then the biggest of such events in the country. In recent years it has gained a high international reputation due to the participation of western and eastern European countries. The region's main objects of production are cereals, tree fruits, vegetables, dairy products, beef, pork and poultry.

Table 1: Types of farms in the Nitra region (2001)

	No. of farms	**Private Enterprises**	**Public Trade Companies**	**Limited Company**	**Joint Stock Companies**	**Cooperatives**	**Other**
Slovakia	7 189	5 681	2	639	115	703	49
Nitra	1 681	1 394	1	140	24	112	10

Unit: enterprises
Source: Štatistický Úrad Slovenskej Republiky 2001.

1.6 Historical Background

Settlement in the region started at least in the last inter-glacial period, when the Danube's fish and wildlife would have attracted the early inhabitants. Later, advanced Neolithic structures developed during the Upper Neolithic, marking the shift to established forms of farming and pastoralism.

The area was early inhabited by Celtic tribes, the Boii, around 500 BC. They built military settlements of different sizes, said to have their own economic and cultural activity (Kirschbaum 1995: 16). These tribes were challenged and chased away by German tribes moving southwards and by Roman legions advancing northwards and erecting border fortresses in Videbona (Vienna) and Carnuntum (between Vienna and Bratislava).

The origin of the Slavic tribes which settled throughout Eastern Europe is not known. During the 6th century, the Avars took over the role of

the German tribes in the southwest of Slovakia. They constructed fortified military camps and invited Slavic tribes to settle and enforce their domains. Hence the origin of the semi-legendary state of Samo (around 623-658 AD), a Frankish merchant believed to have created the first 'Slavic state' unifying the Slavic tribes against the Avars.

The creation of the Moravian state (830-96), also referred to as the Great Moravian Empire, centred on two principalities, Nitra (western Slovakia) and Morava (southern Moravia). The Moravian kingdom remained a vassal state of the Franks and reached its major expansion during Ratislav's reign (846-61), acquiring further territories to the east, around Košice, and bordering the Bulgarian kingdom. As an attempt to curtail Frankish missionary activities, Ratislav turned to Rome for the creation of an independent ecclesiastical province and to bring in teachers familiar with the Slavic tongue. The demand was left unanswered until a new request reached Byzantium in 862 and two Greek brothers, Cyril (Constantine) and Methodius arrived in the Moravian state in 863. The two missionaries established an orthography for the Slavic languages, now commonly referred to as Cyrillic. An important outcome of this orthography was the official religious recognition of the Slavic groups of Moravia vis-à-vis the Frankish Roman Catholic populations.

The prosperity of the Moravian kingdom was brought to an end by the arrival of the Magyars, a nomadic tribe of central Asian origin who had settled in an area near the Dniestr River. They reached and settled in the eastern Danube Plain in 896 and from there moved continuous war campaigns westwards until their defeat by the Germans in 955. In 907, after the last Moravian king was defeated, the Magyars extended their dominion over the Danube Plain (Pannonia), including Nitra and the Moravian territories in the northwest. Since this time, the history of this region and of all Slovakia became an inextricable part of the Hungarian Kingdom, and later the Austro-Hungarian Empire.

The first king of Hungary, István I (970?-1038) organised the kingdom on the basis of counties (*megyék*) headed by an administrator (*ispán*), who 'received the dues in kind and the taxes, was in charge of fairs and collected the tolls and customs from traders' (Fügedi 1986: 18). The creation of large royal estates, which constituted eighty percent of Slovakia, as well as the conferring of vast land donations, including entire villages, to the church are practices believed to have commenced during István's reign. Although the power of the Árpád monarchy (of which István was the first king) reached its peak under Béla III (1173-1196), the power and political influence of the landed nobility became evident in 1215, when, as a result of dynastic challenges, András II (1205-1235) was compelled to sign the

'Golden Bull', a document seriously limiting royal power by granting the landed nobility the right to resist (*jus resistendi*) royal decisions.

The beginning of the Mongols' destructive campaigns in 1240 had disastrous effects on the local economic and social life (entire villages were sacked, burned and many ceased to exist), but also served to further strengthen oligarchic power. Béla IV (1235-1270), besieged by fear of the Mongol invasions, 'invited' a significant number of settlers (mainly Saxons from the Rhineland, but also Serbs and Poles) to inhabit the border regions of the kingdom in order to create buffer zones to resist invaders' attacks. These and later similar measures helped create an ethnically diversified population stratum within the kingdom that assisted in the development of economic activities, such as mining and agriculture, thanks to the import of local knowledge via (mainly German) settlers.

On the other hand, the need to fortify the vulnerable Danube Plain brought the monarchy to erect castles and town fortifications which became solid nuclei of local political life. In the case of the Slovak territory, the first counties to be established were in the south, while counties in the northern and central part of the country were established only in the early fourteenth century. During the reign of Mátyás Corvinus (1458-1490), the counties' autonomy was strengthened by the stipulation according to which the *ispán* was expected to appoint his deputy (*alispán*) from the local nobility and not from his own retainers (Kirschbaum 1995: 52).[8]

Towards the second half of the 15th century, the Ottoman Empire's increasing power and campaigns of conquest came to destabilise the already precarious political balance of the kingdom. In 1526, Ferdinand I of Habsburg acceded to the throne including Bohemia. This year constitutes the most ominous date in Hungarian history: the Mohács' defeat by the Ottomans marked the beginning of a new age for the Magyar kingdom. The state was divided into three spheres of political influence: the Hungarian Plain, under Turkish domination, to which Királyfa belonged; Transylvania, which enjoyed a certain independence as a Turkish protectorate; and the territories under the name of Royal Hungary (a part of Hungary, northern

[8] The early feudal structure of the Hungarian monarchy comprised the warrior nobility, the local nobility, and the peasants. At the top of the ladder was the warrior nobility (with the addition of bishops and abbots), initially descended from the Árpád dynasty. Their position differed according to their function at court and the extent of landholding. The local nobility followed, constituting what Bak defines as a 'corporate polity' (Bak 1994: 66) in which the local deputy (*alispán*) ran the county's affairs in spite of its subordinate position in rapport with the court-elected *ispán*. Next in the hierarchy came the peasants, whose rank differed in relation to the property of cultivable land, the extent of such possession, the right of free migration and the weight of feudal obligations in the form of corvees (*robot*) and taxes.

Slovakia, Bohemia, Croatia and a part of Ruthenia). The capital of the kingdom was transferred to Pozsony (Bratislava), marking the increased geopolitical importance of Slovakia.

The Turks were finally defeated and left Hungary following the Peace of Karlowitz in 1699.

The Habsburg economic reforms in the 18th century brought about important innovations in the condition of the peasantry. In 1767, the Urbarial Law defined the normative size of a peasant landholding, forbade conversion from peasant to demesne land and codified the exact nature of peasants' obligations (Kirschbaum 1995: 81). Moreover, children of peasants were free to choose their education and profession without obtaining the lord's permission. These 'concessions' to the peasantry did not please the landed nobility, which encountered considerable difficulties in affirming its privileges also under the reign of the enlightened Joseph II (1780-1790). In 1785, he introduced the Peasant Patent, which gave peasants the liberty to leave their holdings upon due payment and forbade the lords' expropriation of their land without adequate compensation.

The Habsburg reforms had several effects on the royal territories. First, the number of Hungarian nobles bearing hereditary titles noticeably decreased: 108 families at the end of the 18th century, who owned approximately one third of the Hungarian land (Macartney 1969: 110). Second, the end of the Turkish domination required the new settlement of the southern lands of the empire, which was realised through the employment of German peasants. Third, the Habsburg Enlightenment allowed for important innovations in culture and education. Mining schools and a mining academy (*Bergakademie*) were founded in the central Slovak lands with Slovak instructors, and textbooks and grammars were published in the languages of the main ethnic groups (Wandycz 1992: 122).

After the fall of the Habsburg Empire, the region was incorporated in the newly-founded Czechoslovak Republic (1918-1938). Instruction in the Slovak language became mandatory in all communities even where, as in the case of the Nitra region which until 1918 had belonged to Pozsony county, the majority of population remained Hungarian. In 1938, under the name of *Felvidék Visszacsatolása* (Re-incorporation of the Felvidék[9]) Hungarian fascist troops invaded the southern Slovakian regions and part of the region, including the territory where Királyfa lies, was re-incorporated in the Hungarian Republic (1938-1945).

---

[9] The term Felvidék is historically used to indicate Upper Hungary, therefore including the whole territory of Slovakia. Slovak sources, however, are reluctant to accept such a definition and tend to identify with the term only the southern-most (Hungarian) regions of Slovakia and the present northern Hungarian territory.

At the end of World War Two, the three years before the creation of the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic (1948-1989) were marked by the still-contentious minority decrees named after the president of the second Czechoslovak Republic, the Beneš Decrees.[10] These brought about the sentencing of war traitors (Germans and Hungarians), confiscation of property, the deportation of Sudeten Germans and Hungarians and population exchanges between Hungary and Czechoslovakia. Because of its high percentage of Hungarian population, the region around Királyfa was particularly interested in the decrees, even though the village was not severely affected by them (see Chapter Three). In February 1948 the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic was founded.

The events that characterised the socialist transformation, the end of socialism and the peaceful split between Slovakia and Czech Republic in light of their significance for the development of the community are dealt with in Chapters Two and Three.

1.7 Local Ethnographies

This section describes the property relations dominant in the region in the period following the late 19th century to World War Two. Some data from local ethnographic studies in two of the region's communities, one ethnic Slovak and the other Hungarian, are introduced to provide an ethnographic background to the village studied in this work. The treatment of this historical period for Királyfa is contained in full detail in the following chapter.

Királyfa lies within the region which is known in Hungarian ethnography as Mátyusföld (Land of Matthias).[11] This includes the territories between the Váh River to Trenčín in the north and Komárno in the south and westwards to the east side of the Hron River, corresponding to the counties of Bratislava, Nitra, and the upper half of Komárno and the district of Štúrovo (Liszka 2003). The region is extremely fertile – but with a high risk of floods – as it is delimited by three rivers (the Váh, the Hron and the Small Danube). Mátyusföld borders the Csallóköz (Žitný Ostrov, or 'Corn Island'),

---

[10] The decrees confiscated land and decided on the deportation of over 2 million (Sudeten) Germans and over 40,000 Hungarians in the period between 1945 and 1947. The decrees recently became an extremely contentious matter since the Czech and Slovak Republics refused to take a clear position concerning the abrogation of these measures, as they had been asked by Germany, Austria and Hungary.

[11] The etymology of Mátyusföld is unclear. The most probable origin of the word is from Máté Csák, a petty noble who was born in Trencsén (Trenčín) in the late 14th century. The name of Mátyusföld is more frequent in Hungarian than in Slovak ethnography (Liszka 2003).

Slovakia's most fertile region, constituted by an island between the Small and the Big Danube. Agriculture and animal husbandry have been extensively practised in both regions since the time of the early Slavic settlements.

The first community introduced here is Horvátsky Grob, a small village 60 km southeast of Bratislava, studied by Václavík in the 1920s (Václavík 1925). In 1921 the village had a population of 1199 inhabitants, the majority of whom were Slovaks, but who spoke a peculiar language made up of a mixture of Croatian, Slovak and Hungarian. The village's cadastral area was 2,182 *holds* (1 *hold* is equivalent to 0.414 ha), including four small manorial estates (1036 *holds* of arable land) established in 1872 by some local Hungarian officials and later purchased by the Czechoslovak Ministry of Education. The overall village land was divided into 1900 plots. In 1921, most land was arable (1659 *holds*), followed by meadows (206 *holds*), pastures (201 *holds*), forests (61 *holds*), vineyards (40 *holds*) and gardens (15 *holds*). The village also had one water mill which formerly had belonged to the lord of the neighbouring village of Csekeléz.

The economic organisation of the village depended upon the production of cereals and animal husbandry. In the 1920s there was a sudden increase in the number of cattle and sheep, with a contraction of grain production.[12] On the other hand, diversification of production and the vicinity of the large vineyards of Bratislava as well as of the manorial estate of Šamorín offered the poor peasantry opportunities to commute as daily workers. Unlike in many other northern Slovakian villages, where migration abroad (mainly to North America) was one of the most frequented escape routes from poverty in the first half of the 20th century, Václavík observes that after the end of World War One only eight villagers migrated to the US, five of whom returned in 1921 (1925: 209).

Villagers from Horvátsky Grob were pictured by the neighbouring communities as 'stubborn', 'attached to money', and 'coming from nowhere' and they apparently made wide use of curses and scurrile language in their everyday life.[13] Endogamous marriages were the preferred form of union in the village and were reported as taking place between close relatives. In the case of exogamy, the percentage of marriages within the village by far outnumbered that of marriages outside. This was a result of villagers' constant preoccupation with keeping their property intact since, as Václavík indicates, daughters received land as dowry (Václavík 1925: 97). The tendency was to avoid fragmentation of the household land by maintaining

[12] The number of cows in the village increased from 436 head to 1300 in 1922, and pigs from 190 to 416 (Václavík 1925: 187).

[13] They were nicknamed as 'beings fallen from the crow's wing' (Václavík 1925: 104).

the paternal property intact until the household head would reach old age. A son who was not selected as the successor to the farmstead was allowed to live in the paternal house with his family and work on the father's land. He received food and lodging from his father and he could benefit from the cash revenue from the share of land destined to him at the time of transmission. This money was usually saved to constitute a basis for future economic independence (Václavík 1925: 98).

The sons who left the paternal house (and did not farm the land) received compensation for their share of property in the form of household furniture and clothing, whereas daughters, especially in the case of rich peasants, also received cattle. However, as a general rule, parents tended to keep the holdings in their hands until retirement age. The author underlines that this was an expression of 'mistrust' in the heir's future commitment to maintain his parents (1925: 99).

The second community I would like to introduce is Gúta (Kolárovo), which was the subject of research by Fehérváry (1988, 1992). A predominantly Hungarian village, Gúta is situated near the Váh River and the Small Danube, about 20 km from Királyfa. It was inhabited by 7700 people in 1900 and the population had increased to 11,000 by 1983. Two-thirds of its cadastral land belonged to the region of Mátyusföld and one third to Csallóköz. The overall land surface was 20,402 *holds*, comprising 7492 *holds* of common land, 6901 *holds* of privately-owned land, 3908 *holds* of church land, 2007 *holds* of common pastures and 94 *holds* of other land (Fehérváry 1992: 21). In 1895, up to half of all the land was pastures and meadows, whereas only 18 percent of the land was arable, mainly situated in the higher areas. After improvements made to the river courses at the turn of the 20th century, the frequent floods steadily decreased and the result was a sudden expansion of the arable portion of land (to 39 percent in 1938), which was all in private ownership of villagers. Because in 1938 the majority of the population made a living from agriculture (only 11 percent were craftsmen) and the village had exceptionally high birth rates, land became a scarce resource. The outcome was the creation of scattered settlements in the fields (*tanyásodás*), with more than 30 percent of villagers living in isolated houses in the fields by 1938. This made the village a unique case in the whole region (Fehérváry 1992: 17).

Grain production and extensive animal husbandry were the main economic resources of the community, with the addition of commerce in fruits, and the sale of hay. The village's communal land, which included mainly pastures and meadows but also some plots of arable land, was rented out to villagers and used for the annual sale of hay. In 1938 a Society for the Meadows (*Legelő Társulat*) existed; all landowners could become members

and receive the service of a herdsman who took care of their cattle. Fehérváry underlines that this constituted one of the strongest forms of discrimination against the landless peasants, who often had animals but could not benefit from the service (1992: 25).

Peasants were ranked according to the size of their holdings, which strictly regulated their position in the community. At the top were the 'real big *gazda*'[14] (*igazi nagy gazda*) with more than 60 *holds* of land, followed by the big *gazda* (40-60 *holds*), the middle *gazda* (or 'real *gazda*') with 20-35 *holds* and the small *gazda* (2-15 *holds*). In order to be defined as *gazda*, all peasants had to own, apart from land, animals and the technical means for farming and husbandry. In 1938, 69 percent of village owners had from 0 to 5 *holds*, 26 percent held between 5 and 20 *holds*, and the remainder owned between 30 and 100 *holds.*[15]

The strong fragmentation of village plots (there were over 33,000 parcels in 1930) called for different strategies aimed at maintaining a minimal basis for the survival of the household. Fehérváry emphasises that Gúta dwellers were known for being extremely stubborn, especially in regard to property. In spite of several attempts by the Czechoslovak state to promote unification and rationalisation of farms, villagers fiercely opposed any measure that would change the ownership map of the community. In many cases, middle-size owners had to farm 10 *holds* of land divided into 20 plots which could be more than 10 km apart. On the other hand, the fragmentation of plots and the diversification of products served to buffer resources and procure a basic subsistence level, especially for landless peasants who, in many cases, owned animals and orchard plots (Fehérváry 1992: 27). It was, in fact, common practice for daughters to inherit orchard plots, but not other types of land.

The *gazda* group was constantly preoccupied with the perpetuation of its social and economic position in the community. Very often the official law that prescribed multigeniture in land transmission was not respected on equal terms for all offspring. Even though virtually no son was excluded from an inheritance, the share of the main heir (usually the eldest son) was much larger than that of the other male heirs (see Chapter Two). These sons received schooling or training in crafts and their father considered their education expenses an integral part of (to be subtracted from) their

---

[14] The term *gazda* has three different meanings: smallholder, owner or master. In the village I studied the term was used to designate those peasants who owned relatively large holdings, in contrast to the landless or the small (2-8 *holds*), landed, peasants who in the feudal documents are generally referred to as *jobbágy* (Chapter Two).

[15] In this year village peasants owned only 58.17 percent of all arable land in the village. The remainder was owned by craftsmen and inhabitants from the neighbouring communities (Fehérváry 1992: 23-24).

inheritance. As in Horvátsky Grob, parents tended to retire late and the division of the farmstead was avoided while the household head was still able to work on his land. Even after, he maintained a small plot and some animals which, sometimes, provided him with higher revenues than the land transmitted through inheritance. Also widows usually had the right to keep land until their death.

Female and male labour division followed strict economic lines. Whereas men worked in the fields and took care of the cattle, women cared for the pigs and chickens. They were in charge of selling these at the market and the money they received was used to purchase food and necessary items for the household as well as to make up the dowry. Unlike in Horvátsky Grob, in Gúta there was a lower degree of endogamous marriage, but most of the unions were contracted with neighbouring villages and, in the case of *gazdák*[16] strictly with social equivalents to their status.

The vast number of ethnographic works on this region makes it impossible and beyond the scope of this volume to examine the important traits and comparative features of rural society during the early modern and pre-socialist period. The outline of these two ethnographies is meant to furnish a local ethnographic background for the historical discussion of Királyfa. The literature on socialist and postsocialist central Eastern Europe will be discussed in later chapters (Chapters Three and Four). As described below, Királyfa is not unique compared to the two communities introduced here. However, analysis of the system of land tenure and the relations of property through their historical development from the late feudal period to socialist collectivisation provides the first step for understanding the present features of these villages. The particularities of and the similarities between these two communities suggest that it makes sense to treat them as separate, although not isolated, microcosms which incorporate the reality of the dramatic and frequent social and political changes. Rather than examining the region as a whole, in order to make generalisations I propose to extrapolate from the case study those characteristics relevant to the theoretical argument.

1.8 Content and Structure of the Work

Chapter Two outlines the feudal land tenure system and shows that relations of power in the village were based on land ownership. A small number of relatively large landowners succeeded, in the course of the transition to the

[16] Following the Hungarian spelling, the plural of nouns will be indicated with the suffix ‘k’. The only exception is the word (cadastral) *hold*, which is conventionally indicated in plural as *holds*.

modern era, in gaining power and legitimating their position. The subject of this chapter is the strategies through which this group achieved and maintained power as they interacted economically with the other social groups.

Chapter Three analyses the socialist transformation, including the process of collectivisation and other economic and social changes in the region. This is one of the most dynamic periods in the village history, characterised above all by the demise of private property as the main marker of power in society. Although some members of the previously dominant class were able to maintain their position during the early years of socialism, the changes that followed the merger of the village cooperative with those of neighbouring settlements and the establishment of a new management board in the adjacent town brought their influence to an end. The second half of the socialist period introduced a new element in the social and economic map of the village: individuals were increasingly obliged to interact with external institutions.

Chapter Four looks closely to the decollectivisation process after 1989. Slovakia's pace of privatisation was slow due to a series of factors ranging from unfavourable state policies to structures of ownership that are difficult to unravel. The village reacted to decollectivisation by retaining the cooperative in a prominent role. Today it farms about sixty percent of village land renting it from its owners. Few private farmers in the village are those who were successful in managing two kinds of assets: economic (land and machinery) and social (networks and connection to the local institutions).

Chapter Five analyses the sphere of work, household production and consumption. Work in the private sector gained strong ideological importance in the second half of the socialist period as an expression of dissatisfaction with the system and of the divide between private and public life. In postsocialist times, strategies of household production, patterns of consumption, mutual aid and prestations all serve to manage social networks in the community and to keep open multiple channels of social reproduction.

Chapter Six considers the political level by focussing on changing relations between villagers and key institutions. The agricultural cooperative and the local administration centre (municipal office) are the two basic institutions to which villagers relate in everyday life. Trust is built temporally and its function is mediated by the political role of personalities who link ordinary villagers to these institutions. The outspoken mistrust of many villagers towards these institutions is an outcome of their past experience with collectivisation and socialist politics and does not inhibit them from interacting with them.

Chapter Seven introduces the problem of the values underpinning trust in social relations. The chapter attempts a comparative approach to value orientations and their historical evolution in central European (Hungarian and Slovakian) peasantries. Values are seen as dynamic codes of behaviour which constitute the moral bases on which reputation, reliability and trust are built and used by villagers. In their everyday encounters villagers evaluate each other on the basis of their personal qualities, family descent and past activities at the community level.

Chapter Eight expands the idea of trust and its applicability to different social layers. Family, village and interethnic relations are the principal spaces in which trust is constructed. Villagers indicate that the postsocialist transformation has seen increased mistrust towards other villagers and institutions. However, mistrust is not to be considered simply as detrimental social action. It is through mistrust that villagers are able to build obligations and reciprocity with others. In the absence of a stable, predictable context for everyday action, every account of pristine generalised trust is out of place and even noxious. On the other hand, externalisations of interethnic mistrust do not correspond to reality, since interaction between ethnic Hungarians and Slovaks is peaceful. Hungarian villagers, who make up the majority of the community, are aware of the ongoing process of ethnic assimilation and they may be severe in judging those (Hungarian) villagers who choose Slovak as the educational language for their children. Interethnic mistrust is not expressed in people's actions vis-à-vis Slovaks, but it is a weapon deployed to manifest dissatisfaction with the policies of the Slovak state.

Chapter Nine concludes the argument. The three main theoretical contributions (trust, property and social change) are analysed and their interrelation is given emphasis in light of the data provided.

Chapter 2

Temporal Constructions of Property: From Feudalism to the End of the First Czechoslovak Republic (1769-1938)

2.1 Introduction

Analysis of the web of social relations that characterised the feudal system of land tenure in central Eastern Europe presents a valid approach for understanding the ongoing social and economic differences in countries facing postsocialism (see for example Gunst 1989). Inequality and exclusion from economic resources are understood as the basis for structures of domination. This chapter introduces a historical analysis of some features of the property relations in the village in the period spanning from late feudalism to the foundation of the first Czechoslovak Republic (1918-1938). The relations of power between different social groups in the village, strategies of land acquisition, inheritance and inter-household relations are the topics of the first section. The last part concentrates on the formation of the Czechoslovak state and the impact of land reforms in the region and the village.

Assertion of certain social groups' authority over others is a process that finds justification in the better position of individuals and their ability to maintain and/or acquire entitlements, land, houses or other forms of property. The patron-client type of relation is one of the ways in which power finds legitimation and justification in a social context. Eisenstadt and Roniger indicate that patron-client relations generate four main modalities of interaction: a degree of mutual intimacy, a set of moral and emotional obligations (trust and empathy), shared common values, and a certain degree of equality between the protector and the protected (Eisenstadt and Roniger 1984: 2). Strains inherent in the social groups, tensions between groups and categories, conflicting claims and the lack of a concrete, institutional definition of mutual relations are among the conditions that the authors see

as giving rise to patron-client relations (Eisenstadt and Roniger 1984: 8). Furthermore, they indicate that certain moral obligations, classified as trust (or solidarity), as well as the sharing of values and meanings among different social groups are the most basic premises on which dyadic relations of power are constructed.

This chapter analyses the three social categories that defined the village's population in the historical period from the second half of the 18th century to the early 20th century: the medium and large landowners, the small landowners and the landless peasants. The nature of the feudal system of social and economic relations in the village made possible the consolidation of a small group of medium and large landholders who maintained control of economic resources. I focus here on the way in which this category strove to maintain power, and on the dynamics through which domination became validated thanks to the strategies and choices adopted by the three groups.

2.2 The Village: Origins

The history of Királyfa is intimately linked to the Vág River (Váh in Slovak) which defines the village's eastern boundary. The Váh's serpentine course and tendency to overflow, gave the river its Latin name, *Vagus*, 'indefinite'. Indeed, the history of the village is full of calamitous events[17] during which houses and animals were carried away by the flowing water or, as the local chronicle relates, 'the whole wine production of the lord was turned into vinegar' (*Vágkirályfa Községi Krónika* 1987: 37, hereafter Krónika[18]). In spite of the scarcity of archaeological evidence, documents refer to an originally different course of the river that presented a fork near Deáki (Diakovce), creating the island of Vágsellye (the Hungarian name of the town of Šal'a) in the middle of which the village would have been founded.

As the name *Vágkirályfalu* ('Vág royal village') suggests, the settlement was founded within the royal estate belonging to one of the most fertile areas of southern Slovakia. The first written Hungarian evidence of

---

[17] The first half of the 19th century witnessed repeated calamitous events, related to the overflowing of the Váh, which happened eight times between 1813 and 1844, and the spread of cholera in 1831, which took 112 victims.

[18] The village Chronicle was compiled in the 1980s by decision of the village's municipal office and the parish. The task was entrusted to a town school teacher, who had already worked on similar projects in other villages. One of the documentation sources for the compilation of the socialist Krónika was the old village parish chronicle, dating back to the late 19th century. This, unfortunately, has disappeared under unknown circumstances in the 1990s. Villagers speculate that some community member might have had an interest in stealing the old chronicle in order to conceal some particular details that it contained.

the estate, dated 1002 and uncovered in the adjacent church of Deáki, refers to the foundation of the Terra Wag by King István I. The fief was later donated to the monastery of the Benedictine Order. According to the early sources, during the 11th century the Terra Wag was disputed over by the church and the royal party which, in the person of the local *főispán* (chief bailiff) eventually acquired the village's property and conceded Deáki to the church.

The first historical record of the existence of the village is found in the religious document *Ecclesia in Honorem Beatae Elisabeth* (1237), which conferred Wagkirályfalva as the ecclesiastic, and only name of the village until the 14th century. During the Tartar occupation, the Terra Wag was repeatedly invaded and the village probably ceased to exist in 1242. After the re-settlement ordered by Béla IV in 1251, the village estate became part of the monastery of Thurunc (Trnovec nad Váhom). In 1548 the monastery ceased to exist and the church estate was regained by King Ferdinand who donated it to the bishop of Eger, and hence to the Jesuit Order. In 1560, as a result of Turkish incursions, the region between Nitra and the Váh-Danube confluence underwent repeated destruction and looting. After a short-lived attempt to regain the town of Vágsellye and the adjacent communities by a local uprising, the region was set under the Turkish administration based at Érsekújvár (Nové Zámky), to which it belonged until the end of the 17th century.

In 1710 the plague severely struck the village, decimating a number of households. Towards the mid-18th century different waves of settlers from the more southern territories of Slovakia as well as from regions of the Habsburg Empire (Serbia and Bohemia) re-inhabited the area. In 1715 there were three functioning water mills in the village, which remained the property of the feudal authority and could be used after payment of a tax in cash on the annual revenue.

The village fief maintained its status of Jesuit property until 1773, the year in which the Habsburg monarchy dissolved the Order. The land was reacquired by the crown under the Pest University Foundation, to which taxes were paid. Afterwards the village changed feudal landlords several times, but remained under the University administration until 1918. At this point, the creation of the Czechoslovak Republic marked the transfer of the estate to the Czechoslovak University Fund.[19]

---

[19] In 1938, as the village was reincorporated into the Hungarian territory after the invasion of southern Slovakia, minor remains of the dissolved feudal estates were registered back under the Pest Foundation. It was only in 1946 that a decision by the Bratislava National Court sanctioned the illegality of the 1938 transfer.

2.3 Demography and Class Structure

Királyfa's population in the pre-modern period showed a rapid growth in the second half of the 19th century (Table 2). The number of inhabitants increased from 668 in 1732 (the first year in which data are available) to 1150 in 1880. In the following decade (1880-1890) this number showed the same degree of growth (364 persons) as it had in the half century between 1787 and 1828!

Table 2: Population in Királyfa

	Houses	Persons	Average per household
1732	101	668	6.61
1787	118	658	5.58
1828	145	1011	6.97
1880	197	1150	5.84
1890	232	1514	6.53
1900	245	1674	6.83
1910	250	1650	6.60
1921	273	1669	6.11
1930	339	1722	5.08
1940	397	1648	4.15
1950	387	1611	4.16
1961	468	2018	4.31
1970	507	2007	3.96
1980	496	1759	3.55
1991	486	1552	3.19
2001	491	1531	3.11

Source: Obecný úrad Král'ová nad Váhom, Demographic Statistics 2002.

This growth was accompanied by an increase in the number of households, which reached 232 in 1890, more than double the number in 1732. It can be seen from the number of inhabitants that throughout the pre-modern and early modern period (from the first statistical data to the first two decades of the 20th century) household families were relatively large. In 1828 about seven persons made up the household, whereas in 1880 this number contracted, due to the abolition of feudalism, allowing for the creation of a number of independent households. It grew again two decades later.

The social structure of the feudal Hungarian village centred upon the traditional hierarchy of nobility and serfs (Fél and Hofer 1969: 27). The serfs were polarised between landed (*telkes jobbágyok*) and landless peasants (*zsellérek*).[20] Although in many cases the difference between the two categories was so subtle as to be regarded as mainly formal, the basic prerequisite of social status was the use right to land. The *jobbágy*, which was already defined in the 16th century as *örökös* ('inheriting'), was a peasant who controlled usufruct and was able to transmit it through inheritance (Krónika 1987: 16). The standard unit of land allocated to serfs was counted in *teleks* (*mansio*, *sessio* or *fundus*). The *telek* was defined as 'one plot of intrazonal[21] land of the size calculated to produce 2 vats (*köböl*) of grain, the house including the pantry, garden, courtyard and stable, and 20 *holds* [1 *hold* is the equivalent of 0.414 ha] of extrazonal land including arable, grazing land, pasture and wood' (Krónika 1987: 23).

Unlike other Hungarian rural communities studied by ethnographers (Fél and Hofer 1969; Vasary 1987; Szent-Györgyi 1993) in Királyfa there was an absence of nobles or petty nobles who lived off the income generated by their land, and had the privilege of building their prestige along descent lines (Szent-Györgyi 1993: 527). Social status was based entirely on land and animal ownership; much like the case of Gúta (Fehérváry 1988, 1992), the size of land holdings and the technical means to cultivate them created social difference (see Chapter One).

According to informants, there were mainly four groups that made up the village peasantry in the pre-modern and early modern periods. The larger peasants (*nagy gazdák*) were those who owned at least 20 *holds* of arable land, had animals and, in the early 20th century, some machinery. The *kis gazdák*, or middle peasants, followed with 10-20 *holds* of land, animals and only rarely some machinery. The largest group was made up of the small peasants, who are referred to by villagers as *jobbágy,*[22] as opposed to the term *gazda*. At the bottom were the landless peasants (*zsellérek*), who owned no land, but, as in the Gúta case (Fehérváry 1988), could have some animals

---

[20] *Zsellérek* included all serfs who did not own land, or use rights to it, but who potentially could gain such rights. In a settlement of the second half of the 18th century, this category contained all villagers under the jurisdiction of one landlord who lacked any land or owned less than a *telek* (Fél and Hofer 1969: 24).

[21] The distinction between 'intrazonal' (*beltelek*) and 'extrazonal' (*kültelek*) land is still used today in cadastral documents to define land included within the village territory or outside it (namely the arable land, pastures and woods).

[22] Among the *jobbágy* distinctions of status were drawn as bases for taxation. The standard unit of land (*telek*) was counted as whole (*egész*), one quarter (*negyed*), one eighth (*nyolcad*), five eighths or seventeen thirty-seconds. The distinction implied that a peasant with a plot of less than one eighth was automatically considered a *zsellér* (Krónika 1987: 23).

(usually goats, rabbits and chickens). The landless peasants included those who were housed (*házas*) and those without houses (*házatlan*), living in conditions of extreme poverty occupying one-room shanty houses, in the luckiest of the cases, with a tiny piece of land as a courtyard. The class of craftsmen (*mesteremberek*) concluded the hierarchy. These were mainly sons of middle peasants who had learned a skill and had been therefore excluded by inheritance, but who often lived in better conditions than the peasants.

Apart from the mandatory labour prestations, all peasants (landed and landless) and craftsmen were subject to payment of taxes on crops (one tenth) in kind, a cash tax for the houses, the use of the mills, forest, and river products as well as for keeping shops and producing wine. Moreover, customary annual gifts to the lord included two chickens, two geese, a lamb, a dozen eggs, a piece of butter and a piece of linen per family (Krónika 1987: 24).

2.4 The Feudal Land Tenure System

Early records indicate that in 1587 there were 21 *jobbágy telkek,* in the village, accounting for 400 *holds* (166 ha) of arable land, 1600 *holds* (663 ha) of dominal land and 24 *zsellérek* (Krónika 1987: 22). The number of landed peasants did not show signs of increase during the Turkish domination, as in 1664 there were 22 tax-paying peasants and a miller (Krónika 1987: 25). Taxes were paid in the form of cereals, husbandry products and honey.

It is only in 1769 that the first *Urbarium*[23] was compiled in the village. In this period the overall farming area of the village comprised about 1700 *holds* (705 ha), of which 1333 *holds* (553 ha) constituted the lord's (church) property and 367 *holds* (152 ha) were allotted to the *jobbágyok*. According to this document, there were 44 *jobbágyok*, 23 *házas zsellérek* and 5 *gazda* families (Table 3).

[23] In 1767 the Urbarial Law was passed. This defined the normative size of a peasant landholding, forbade appropriation of peasant land and codified the exact nature of peasants' obligations. In order to provide statistical evidence needed to implement the law, all municipalities were expected to compile *Urbaria*, i.e. fiscal accounts of the villages' population, size and quality of land, animals, products and taxes on them.

Table 3: Social position in the village during feudalism

	1587	1769	1828	1864	1893
Gazda	n.a.	5	10	7	7
Jobbágy	21	44	85	n.a.	197
Zsellér*	24	23	52	62	40
Craftsmen	0	6	26	n.a.	n.a.

Unit: household
*Indicates peasant families without arable land plots
n.a.: not available
Sources: *Urbarium* 1769, *Conscriptio Possessionum* 1828, *Vágkirályfa Kisközség Telekkönyv* 1893.

The average size of a *jobbágy* holding was around 10 *holds* (4 ha) of arable land (*szántó föld*) and 4.7 *holds* (1.9 ha) of meadow (*rét*). Three families owned plots twice as big as the average (the biggest plot was 9 ha), and 12 families had holdings far below the average size (*Urbarium* 1769). Each household had to provide a number of days of labour prestations (manual or with animals) according to its ownership status. The average (calculated per 10 *holds* of land) was set at 26 working days per year with animals or 52 days of manual work.

Fél and Hofer point out that the adjustment of land following the Habsburg reforms had the effect of distributing more land to the serfs, even though this did not mean that the land allotted was of good quality (1969: 32). In Királyfa this was not the case, as the increasing population of small peasants did not allow for an expansion of the peasant estate.

The next written record to give a picture of the village's development in land tenure is the *Conscriptio Possessionum*, compiled in 1828. The main change from the previous documents concerns demographic growth: the number of landed peasants increased to 85, *zsellérek* to 52 and the presence of 26 craftsmen (20 of them millers) is registered. Because of the population pressure, the average land plot shrank to 7.9 *holds* (3.3 ha), with only 3 households with plots more than double the average and 28 below average (*Conscriptio Possessionum* 1828). Table 4 illustrates the changes in the tenure system. The overall land belonging to the *jobbágyok* in 1828 is here calculated as 379 *holds* (157 ha), showing only a slight increase from 1769.

Table 4: Land tenure during feudalism

	Landed Peasant	Landless Peasant	Lord
1587	400	--	1 600
1769	367	--	1 333
1828	379	--	n.a.
1864	1 121	62	220

Unit: *holds*
Source: Krónika 1987.

The dissolution of feudal estates proclaimed in Hungary in 1848 brought about significant changes in the village's property map.[24] A document dated 1864 records the main measures taken to abolish the Urbarial system: re-classification of plots, distribution of parts of the feudal estate, ownership entitlements to the *zsellérek*, use rights to forests, meadows and rivers, abolition of corvees and labour prestations and new taxation procedures. Among the most significant changes in the village were the distribution of land and provision of use rights. An additional overall 742 *holds* (308 ha) were allotted to *jobbágyok* and approximately 62 *holds* (26 ha) of meadows to *zsellérek*. The feudal authority, which maintained 220 *holds* (91 ha) in property, abandoned privileges to forest land; peasants became free to cut wood for their needs as well as to extract river products without being subject to any levy.

In 1893, the overall land owned by villagers reached 1809 *holds* (750 ha), whereas the portion of land owned by the University Foundation and the church (the main feudal authorities in the community) amounted to approximately 200 *holds* (83 ha) (Table 5). This number, however, must be read with caution and in relation to the above-mentioned demographic increase that took place in the late 19th century.

[24] The year indicates only a conventional date in line with the European modernisation movement. The Francis Joseph Patent for the abolition of feudal estates was passed in 1853, whereas in the village the document sanctioning the abolition of the estates was dated July 2, 1869.

Table 5: Cadastral area and ownership in the village (1867, 1893)

	1867	**1893**
Peasants' common property	41.02	52.2
Community property	5.81	15.4
University of Pest Foundation	172.01	129.54
Roman Catholic Church	10.68	25.03
Austro-Hungarian National Railway	--	5.11
Parish	11.30	8.22
Clerk	4.29	3.33
Deáki Roman Catholic Church	--	22.23
Private property (peasants)	1613.97	1809.02
Non taxable*	250.08	250.08
Total	**2109.16**	**2320.34**

*Includes river and roads
Unit: *holds*
Source: Krónika 1987.

If the abolition of the feudal manorial estates had the outcome of freeing the peasantry of the heavy weight of social and economic obligations, that, as Bloch (1994) reminds us, constituted the backbone of the feudal system, conditions for the village peasants as a whole did not improve. Fél and Hofer rightly underline that the feudal land tenure system had a permanent influence on the social structure of Hungarian villages, and this influence was to be felt throughout the transition to modern times (1969: 33). I maintain that in Királyfa the type of social relations that the feudal system constructed became effective in consolidating a durable social order founded on obligations, different levels of ownership, kinship and power relations. The solidity of this order, given the absence of the feudal authority in the village, depended on an equilibrium among social groups in relation to their control of economic resources.

2.5 Power Relations

During the second half of the 18th century, the thin stratum of medium and large holders (*gazdák*) comprised 5 households, each farming an average of 13 *holds* (5.4 ha) of arable land (Table 6). Although in 1828 the number of holders increased to 10 families, this trend was followed by a decrease in the size of holdings from 13 to 8 *holds* (3.3 ha). In 1893, the relationship between the number of owners and size of holdings was inverted: 7 households were registered as owning 21 *holds* (8.7 ha) each. These data summarise the development of the *gazda* group's economic power from the late 18th century to the abolition of the feudal estates.

Table 6: Average size of (arable) land plots

	1769	**1828**	**1893**
***Gazda* families**	5	10	7
Average size	13.1	7.9	21.0
Jobbágy	44	85	197
Average size	10.2	4.3	8.1

Unit: *holds*
Sources: *Urbarium* 1769, *Conscriptio Possessionum* 1828, *Vágkirályfa Kisközség Telekkönyve* 1893.

Land ownership has been traditionally conceived as having a symbiotic relationship with the household's social status (Fél and Hofer 1969: 49). Informants' recollections of the pre-war times convey that 'one was nobody without land. All moments of a person's social life were determined according to his ownership of land. From marriage to funerals, all stages of life were sanctioned by one's type and quantity of land owned' (Antal, b. 1927). Moreover, the social position of individuals within the community and their participation in official tasks were, indeed, a function of their being landed or landless. Mihály, a descendant of the one of the big landholding kin groups in the village, told the following story:

> My father came from a big family; there were seven brothers and sisters. He used to work as a land manager for the German baron of

> Diószeg. It is only 20 km from here, but he rarely could manage a visit to his children in the village. He worked hard every day and at night he did not even have the strength to take a pen and write to his family. After the death of my grandfather, he left Diószeg and came to look after the land here: he had inherited some 31 *holds*. Soon he became famous in the village for his deep knowledge of farming; he had learned everything from the baron who owned machines and used modern farming technology. After a while everybody in the village could recognise his strips of land from those of the others They were healthier and more fertile. He was twice elected village mayor; this demonstrates the sort of respect people had towards him. He eventually was very popular because he supported the introduction of a small unemployment subsidy. This was 10 crowns a month, not a big sum, but you could buy some flour, sugar and salt with it!
>
> (Mihály, b. 1925)

The most important prerequisite for maintaining the social status of the *gazdák* was the preservation of landholdings (Sárkány 1975; Fehérváry 1988; Szent-Györgyi 1993). The kin group usually sought to ensure its status through a series of strategies relating primarily to two spheres: marriage and inheritance. These are by no means separate issues, since analysis of the choices related to marriage needs to be supplemented with analysis of inheritance patterns followed by kin groups (Goody 1976). Mihály also recalled how difficult it was for him to marry his wife, in spite of his family's wealth.

> At that time there were two families who owned more land and animals than we did. I was in love with the daughter of one of these, but her father would not concede her to me. She had been promised to the other rich family, even though she kept on refusing the other suitor. The biggest difference between him and myself was that he was the only son, and we were four brothers. This meant that under no conditions would her father have agreed to our marriage. And what's more, when he was young, his father also used to court another girl, but he was refused– they preferred a richer one. It is like he wanted to take revenge for this on me.
>
> (Mihály)

Another informant, addressing the problem of marriage within the village during pre-socialist times, confirmed the view that the choice of brides was a delicate question that could affect the future status of any landowning peasant.

> Once the world was different. As a girl you were not allowed to marry whomever you wanted to. Family interests came first and the girl's decisional power was limited. Even though the family had some land with which it could survive, this could become almost nothing after division among sons. That is why finding a wife who could bring in some more land was vital. The problem was even more serious for those who had more land. They married among themselves; nobody would have wanted a woman from a family with less land.
>
> (Anna, b. 1932)

The importance of directing marriage strategies in ways that it could help maintain the family property and social status is further emphasised if we also consider the issue of inheritance. Below are two case histories of property belonging to *gazda* families. The sequence described appears in cadastral documents (*birtok lap*, 'estate sheet') that were first compiled in 1890. Unfortunately, these documents do not provide information on the reasons why certain kin members might have been excluded from transmission of property, but they are a valuable source of data for several reasons.[25] First, they record land transactions with detailed precision. Second, they also contain specific information about the economic situation of the owners since mortgages, loans and pawns on property are included. Third, their historical span, covering the period from 1880 to the 1960s,[26] is helpful for understanding the genealogical process of transmission within and/or outside the kin group.

The first (**Case A**) is the case of a small *gazda* family who, at the end of the 19th century, owned 11 estates (the sum of plots registered in one 'estate sheet') of an overall size of about 12 *holds* (5.2 ha). The estate examined here constitutes a rather complex situation in which 18 plots, including both arable and forest land, were registered in one document (see

---

[25] More information can, however, be gathered in the course of interviews. I recorded evidence of exclusion from inheritance as a result of illness, mental handicap, open refusal to undertake farming, elopement and quarrel with the household head.

[26] The compilation of these documents was abandoned in the second half of the 1960s. Adjustments and updating by the Cadastral Office are still part of an ongoing process that is expected to bring some results in the future.

Appendix). According to the first historical record, dated 1897, the farmstead was divided unequally among siblings. The only son received 5/8 of the whole based on the fact that he was the actual holder (and probably worker) of land. The two sisters received the remainder of the estate. However, there was inequality also between them, since Franciska received double that of Lucia in the form of gift (and not merely inheritance). Franciska would later marry another *gazda* and set up house in the village, whereas Lucia married a man from a neighbouring community. Later transfers of plots and parts of them indicate that all of the property eventually became concentrated in the hands of the male heir, László.

In 1931 a second order of transfers was registered, following two directions. First, three small plots were transferred to Julius and his wife, a non-related couple. Second, two substantially bigger plots were acquired by two of László's male sons. The following inheritance, in 1940, confirms the division of the estate under László's name among his offspring, this time in equal parts. However, inequality is here again confirmed by the fact that the two male heirs (Alajos and Zoltán) had already benefited from a previous transfer. Interestingly enough, from the 1931 transaction it appears clear that the third male heir, Vilmos, had been, for some reason, not considered in the partition. These reasons could possibly include his unwillingness to take over land (presumably because of his health, considering his death in 1941).

Case B deals with the family of Péter, who in 1893 was one of the seven largest *gazdák* in Királyfa. He owned 21 estates of land (including arable land, forest and meadows) totalling 21 *holds* (8.6 ha). The estate was made up of 19 plots composed as follows: 12 of arable land, 4 of forest, one meadow, a garden and a house plot (Appendix). Péter was registered as the only owner of all the plots, which he partly inherited and partly purchased (house and garden) by 1881. After one fourth of the garden plot was purchased by B. Lajos, a non-related neighbour, in 1915 the transmission process started (Péter died in 1914). Seven offspring (four sons and three daughters, two of whom were adults) received their shares of the inheritance at different times, when they became of age (1915-1918), and in unequal parts. As in Case A, property was maintained almost intact in the hands of one male heir, Lajos. All offspring (including Lajos) received a portion of the house, garden and one plot of arable land. In 1926 the situation with the house and garden plot was settled, as Péter (junior) purchased the other siblings' shares and gained full ownership. Finally, the property maintained under Lajos was divided in 1929 between him and two of his children, Lajos (junior) and Mária. The document does not provide further information about the estate. According to informants, Mária married another *gazda* in

the village and Lajos (junior) inherited all of the plots from his parents in the late 1930s.

How can the analysis of these two cases help us understand the sphere of social and power relations within and among kin groups? The first point to consider is that, in spite of the Hungarian traditional system of multigeniture, there was an evident degree of inequality among heirs. This trend is confirmed by other studies in the field (Szabó 1940; Fehérváry 1988) and it is considered to have been characteristic of large landowners, who thus prevented the estate from breaking down into minor plots. The idea of inequality finds strategic justification in the need to recombine, at a certain historical point, the family estate. Fehérváry observes that in pre-socialist times fragmentation of the family estate usually took place within two generational changes. Therefore, in order to slow down this process, land was not divided until the death of the household head (Fehérváry 1988: 114). Depending on the capacity of the male children, *gazda* families strategically selected one as the main heir (usually not the eldest son, so as to allow land to remain in the hands of the household head for as long as possible) and compensated the other sons with minor portions or by investing in their education. Multiple sons were potential obstacles to the maintenance of the family estate, and it was necessary to find employment for them outside of agriculture in order to avoid the possibility of plural inheritance claims. János, the son of a large landowning family, described his family's situation:

> I did not use to work my father's land. I had my studies and then I sought work outside of the village. There were a number of 'helpers' working under my father's strict supervision. He didn't need me anyway. I worked in the railway police, and my elder brother was a district officer; we did not need to become peasants. Only our younger brother had been chosen to take up farming.
>
> (János, b. 1924)

Second, the type of imbalance that inheritance created among potential receivers of land can be read in the different social roles that male and female family members could play. The process of avoiding fragmentation of the estate had to follow two strategic lines dictated by the need to provide a living to female and male offspring. Daughters had to be prepared for marriage, i.e. provided with a dowry. Although informants described the custom of bringing a dowry to marriage as a 'modern one' which can be ascribed to the turn of the 20th century, in the case of *gazda* families this

custom did exist before. Daughters had to be accompanied by some land at the time of their marriage, especially, as in the case of Franciska (A), if the tie was to be built with a family of the same or higher social level. In Királyfa, unlike in the case described by Fehérváry (1988), this land was usually arable terrain and not only orchards (vineyards or plum trees) and the quantity of received land increased according to the rank of the groom's family.

Third, the division of the house and the garden was a process different from that of the transmission of other plots. As Case B shows, the house and garden were divided equally among offspring and a system of (cash) compensation was adopted at the time of deciding who would inhabit it. Because daughters usually left the household after marriage, male heirs contended for the paternal house, and often it was not the primary heir who gained it as compensation for his loss of land.

The two examples suggest that power holders in the village needed to adopt a series of internal strategies aimed at consolidating their social and economic status. This adds another perspective to Eisenstadt and Roniger's (1984) vision of patron-client relations and assertion of power. It is only through consideration of these internal strategies that the conditions which strengthened the role of the *gazda* families in the village become more understandable. The following sections concentrate on the manner in which power was legitimised among the different social categories of ownership.

2.6 Legitimation of Power

How did medium and large owners attain justification and legitimation of their exercise of power in the community in the eyes of other groups? This section seeks to answer in two ways. The first regards the relationship between landless peasantry and *gazdák*; the second refers to the role of the small peasants in legitimating the existing power relations.

The existence of a large stratum of landless households (*zsellérek*) provided the community with an important base for constructing social, economic and political dominance. Large landholders were traditionally seen in the village as crucial personalities, because they held public offices and they were potential labour force seekers. The character of Királyfa's economic system in pre-modern times (the absence of the feudal authority, the complex system of duties and corvees and the fragmentation of land plots), by giving strategic importance to the role of the landless peasantry as a constant provider of labour helped maintain the power relations within the community. On the one hand, forms of 'inner patronage' developed in response to the economically leading role of the few groups with large holdings (see Fél and Hofer 1973). Poorer social strata knew that they could

count on the availability of agricultural work in the peak season. Here, because the small number of *gazda* families could not cover the employment needs of the large population of micro and non-owners, the existence of interpersonal relations between the two groups was crucial. Informants stressed the idea that, whereas occasional labour could be performed by any person in search of some wheat, maize or potatoes, seasonally scheduled farming operations were entrusted only to the most trustworthy households.

The custom of hiring landless peasants as seasonal workers is well documented in ethnographic materials concerning Hungary (Fél and Hofer 1969; Turnock 1989). This practice must be considered as a strategic choice both from the perspective of landless peasants and that of the landowners. The former could find work in their village without resorting to migration or long-distance commuting. On the other hand, large landowners could prefer occasional or contract labour in order not to divide the estate by having it farmed by their offspring's families.

Until the 1950s, peasants from the local villages were employed seasonally in local manorial estates that in some cases could be situated several kilometres away.[27] Most of this labour force derived from landless villagers, while the portion of landed peasant women was significant.[28] Although this practice was fairly diffuse in the area, Királyfa is often remembered by local informants as a village where 'men were not keen to work outside' (Antal). Two explanations were given for this preference. First, finding employment in the village was preferred because men could maintain better control over family matters. One informant regarded the custom of travelling daily to a work site as 'disruptive' both for one's personal health and for the life of the family nucleus (Nándor, b.1929).

The second answer concerns the opportunities that long-term working relations with *gazda* families in the village could offer to landless peasants. Case A is exemplary, where the landowner, László, presented one of his helping families, E. Július and his wife – of *zsellér* origin – with some plots of land. This case, for which further evidence can be found in other cadastral

[27] Informants remember that the closest manorial estate to which poor peasants commuted to work was Óny, situated 5 km northeast of the village. However, work on bigger estates, such as the Müller (11 km), Tornóc (Trnovec nad Váhom, 17 km), Diószeg (Sládkovičovo, 23 km) and even more distant estates, was more common.

[28] Peasant women traditionally worked outside of the village in early modern times. It was considered an important task for women from small landowning families to contribute through their paid labour to the household economy. Many of them also worked as domestic helpers in middle-class families in Bratislava and Budapest.

documents,[29] demonstrates that patron-client types of relations could provide effective economic strategies in societies where the development of capitalist forms of agriculture have been relatively slow and difficult.[30]

However, the small peasants (*jobbágyok*) played an important role in maintaining the balance among the three social groups. Making up the majority of the landed serfs, the *jobbágyok* were, because of their lack of resources, incapable of challenging the economic and social status of the *gazda* families. As Fél and Hofer confirm, social mobility was not an option in the course of the absolutist Habsburg rule, and the static character of the feudal economic system is confirmed by the few actual changes that the dissolution of the manorial estates brought about towards the end of the 19th century (Fél and Hofer 1969: 55). The *jobbágy* group could achieve recognition and maintenance of their 'privileged' status as a landed peasantry vis-à-vis the large number of landless families. This recognition required the acknowledgement of the three groups, and particularly of the *gazdák*.

Recognition of the social, political and economic role of power holders within the community also found expression in the way small holders viewed the large peasants. This view is constructed on two levels: the 'ideological' or cognitive and the social level. At the cognitive level, villagers recognised in the presence of medium to large landowning families an important feature of the community's history. The absence of feudal authority in the community was counterbalanced by the leading economic and political role of those peasants who were visibly better off. The 'ideological' benefits that their presence entailed for the community as a whole is stressed today[31] as people still maintain that those were the families who had always been the most highly esteemed in the community. As Eisenstadt and Roniger (1984) suggest, the degree of solidarity and trust that villagers had in the *gazda* families is one expression of the legitimation of their power. Being on good terms with them was considered an important

---

29 The value of this practice must not be overestimated, as it involved only minor gifts of land and could not, as a whole, compensate for the existence of social and economic inequalities.

30 A parallel could be drawn here with cases from Mediterranean Europe, and in particular southern Italy (Banfield 1958; Levi C. 1946; Putnam 1993), where the economic features of the feudal system that crystallised under the Bourbons' domination are believed to have accounted for the rise of certain social phenomena such as mistrust in institutions, corruption, clientelism and lack of civic sense. See Chapter Eight for a critical application of Banfield's model to Királyfa.

31 The interesting dimension of this memory is that it seems to have crossed generations. Regardless of respondents' own social status or ownership of land, middle-aged and even younger informants demonstrated knowledge of the past *gazda* families.

prerequisite not only for obtaining help and protection in case of need, but also for gaining social prestige.

The 'ideological' accent on the social status and history of these families' kin groups is continuously reconstructed in everyday discourses on the past. To quote an example, the most respectful expressions used today for describing the reputation of a family are *nagy gazda család* ('big *gazda* family') or *módos paraszt család* ('well-to-do peasant family'). The descendants of these families are remembered by the majority of villagers today with respect to their ancestors' descent and occupation. The frequent use of these expressions indicates that respect towards them has crossed generations (see Chapter Seven). This historical memory of social status aided those in power to establishing patron-client relations over other villagers.

Furthermore, from the small peasants' perspective, the large owners provided justification to the economic system, constituting a model of 'embourgeoised peasantry' (see Szelényi 1988). As in the cases described by Szent-Györgyi, many *gazda* families in Királyfa also invested considerably in the schooling of their children and hence they were able to claim a degree of distinctiveness from other peasant families (Szent-Györgyi 1993: 525). This was done in order to gain and consolidate prestige within the community, but also, as mentioned above, to avoid fragmenting the farmstead through partible inheritance. It is of no surprise if these families came to be considered as the 'actually existing authority' as juxtaposed to the absentee feudal entity.

2.7 From the End of Feudalism to the First Czechoslovak Republic

Historians stress that modernisation of agriculture and the abolishment of the feudal system of property and obligations proceeded at a slow pace in the Hungarian part of the Habsburg monarchy (Turnock 1989). The comparatively lower degree of industrialisation, the lack of an efficient inner market system for the circulation of agrarian products, the dependence of Hungarian agriculture on cereals, as well as the permanence of large manorial estates are among the factors to which the resistance of feudalism is attributed (Gunst 1989). Modernisation of agriculture and capital accumulation remained a prerogative of the well-to-do peasants, who were able to profit from their land resources by purchasing machinery and embracing technical innovation. In many cases, after the dissolution of the feudal estate, land was acquired at cheaper prices and re-sold through mortgages in order to obtain cash, which was then invested in improving the large peasants' holdings (Fél and Hofer 1969: 255). However, the process of

'capitalisation' of agriculture, confined to the small stratum of *gazda,* did not improve the situation of the majority of peasants.

In Királyfa, the dissolution of the feudal system had two main outcomes. First, the power of the *gazda* families was consolidated as they kept control of economic resources and acquired most of the shares of the land freed from the feudal authority. This trend, already described by Fél and Hofer (1969: 270), occurred in 1890-1910. From the last decade of the 19th century, the land market increased opportunities for the commercialisation of this asset. Groups possessing the capital to invest were the quicker to benefit from the situation. However, since there was little or no cash available to purchase land, it was ownership of the means of production, i.e. again land, that determined the manner in which the 'de-feudalisation' process was to take place. Large landowners turned to mortgages[32] in order to obtain cash, which was then converted into plots. These were purchased either from the state or from peasants who, themselves in debt, could not afford large-scale farming.

Second, due to the demographic growth in the village during the first half of the 20th century, the stratum of landless and poor peasants was further enlarged. Despite the implementation of the Czechoslovak Land Reform, introduced in 1919 and amended in 1920, the allocation, through sale, of portions of the feudal estate did not improve the economic conditions of the small peasantry.

The 1920 Land Reform by the new state was intended as a step towards modernisation of agriculture. It aimed to eliminate the remainder of the large feudal estates[33] and the division of them among the middle and smaller peasants.[34] In 1919 the basic principles of the Reform were set and estates were grouped in sizes not exceeding 150 ha for arable and 250 ha for other land. The next step was the foundation of the State Land Fund (Štátny Pozemkový Úrad), an institution that nominated deputies from its base in Trenčín, who were in charge of deciding on the process of evaluation and distribution of land.

---

[32] To return to the two cases illustrated above, in Case A Lucia and László mortgaged portions of their property in 1898, then László did so again in 1901 and 1927. In 1940 and 1942 it was Vilmos' turn. In Case B, Péter resorted to mortgage in several instances, in 1881, 1884, 1887 and 1897.

[33] In 1895, 50 percent of the overall agricultural land in the Slovak regions was made up of plots larger than 50 ha. The estates of over 570 ha constituted 36 percent of all land; these were in the property of a group of owners making up less than 1 percent of the country's landowners.

[34] In reality it was only the middle-size peasants who benefited from the reform. Small and micro-size peasants were in many cases excluded from redistribution due to their foreseen 'incapacity' to cultivate because of the scarcity of technical means and capital.

In spite of the urgent measures adopted in order to speed up the process of land redistribution, the Reform was completed in the Slovak lands only in 1929 (in the Czech territory in 1925). Several factors hampered the implementation of the Reform, among which the general economic crisis and the drought that afflicted Europe towards the second half of the 1920s contributed to the diminishing interest in agriculture and, in most of Slovakia, to the increase of emigration abroad. Moreover, in comparison with the Czech lands, in Slovakia feudal estates were larger in size, but also more fragmented (Turnock 1989). The late feudal custom of leasing out some portions of the estates to small peasants made evaluation and redistribution of the whole farmstead a particularly long and complicated process. Because of these impediments, the Slovak Land Reform took a completely different direction than in the Czech regions. In lieu of following the complex procedure of land assessment and redistribution via the Land Fund, in Slovakia the common practice was to purchase land directly from the landowners. The informality of this process *de facto* dimmed the significance of the Reform and gave owners both the power of decision and the possibility of gaining conspicuous amounts of cash.[35] On the other hand, purchasers found themselves often indebted and many of them, especially during the 1920s crisis, were eventually forced to sell the land back or to leave it to the credit institutions that mushroomed in this period.

The Land Reform divided all allotted land into three categories: plots of up to 30 ha, the so-called 'residual estates' (large remainders of manorial estates) and the large plots. Whereas the third group comprised mainly pastures, forest and other land in hilly and mountainous areas, the first and second group occupied the fertile regions of southern Slovakia. It was prevalently within the framework of the 'residual estates' that large estates in the hands of Hungarian nobles were to be broken down into smaller compounds and assigned to local owners.

Table 7 provides some insight into the implementation process of the Reform in Slovakia. Here a conspicuous portion of arable land (1,350,173 acres, 55.3 percent of which was in the fertile Hungarian regions), amounting to 19.1 percent of the overall national arable land, (7,064,513 acres) was the target of expropriation. However, as the figure for redistributed arable land (413,856 acres) shows, this constituted a mere 20.5 percent of the overall of expropriated land. Therefore, not much was done in the country to achieve a real division of estates, which in most cases remained well above 100 ha.

---

[35] Although the price of land was set by the state, this was never respected and sellers could ask for a higher price based on the quality of land.

Table 7: The 1920 Land Reform in Slovakia

	Land in Slovakia	Land Expropriated	Land Re-distributed
Total Land	15,127,508	4,046,418	831,473
Arable Land	7,064,513	1,350,173	413,856
Ratio of Arable	46.7%	33.4%	49.8%

Unit: acres
Source: Wojatjek (1981)

The portion of land to be allotted to small and middle peasants was, theoretically, designed to improve the economic conditions of the poor peasantry. In 1922, the government introduced measures to assign land for housing (the so-called 'Action S'), but this step did little to change the situation. As the proportion of allotted land to the number of receivers demonstrates, landless or small peasants received only small plots (1.55 ha on average). Moreover, even the allocation of these small portions of land was not a 'clear process'. It was often the group of middle peasants that maintained a grip on this land and benefited from the more convenient bits, often grouped in plots of 6 to 10 ha.[36]

Towards the turn of the 20th century there were three residual entities of the feudal latifundia in Királyfa: the Királyfa Church estate (25 *holds*, 10 ha), the Church of Deáki estate (22 *holds*, 9 ha) and the former University of Pest Foundation's estate (129 *holds*, 53 ha). The historical process of each of the three needs to be considered separately.

Expropriation of the church estates was a contentious and delicate issue in Slovakia. Redistribution of ecclesiastic land proceeded at a relatively slower pace than in the case of noble estates due to the moral brake imposed by the local religious authority preoccupied with warning villagers against the 'evil' of touching sacred property.

In the 1920s, portions of the village's church property were allotted to villagers as land for building sites. One informant told me the story, as he heard it from his father, of the day when the village mayor informed the priest of this decision by the county administration. The mayor told the priest: 'They say that the proletarians need some land to build their homes

[36] The Agrarian Party, which was the promoter of the 1920 Reform was, in Slovakia, mostly made up of large landowners.

on.' The priest's answer was prompt: 'Tell them to build their homes on wheels then. They will have to move from here one day– no hand can touch the Church's land!' (András, b. 1930)

Indeed, the favourable position of the church estate, situated in the intrazonal section of the village, and the quality of its land accounted for the desire to maintain it intact in spite of the state legal provisions. Moreover, one portion of the estate (7 *holds*, 2.9 ha) was traditionally a vineyard, used to grow the wine for religious celebrations (although people ironically commented on the size of the vineyard, which would be more than enough for the mass wine only). This was the only vineyard in the village until the interwar period.

The situation was even more complicated with the plots belonging to the Church of Deáki. This land could not be the object of any redistribution due to its being administered by the Abbey of Pannonhalma (actually located in northern Hungary), which has remained reluctant to give up its property to the village until recently.

The main achievement of the Land Reform in the village was the partition of portions of the former fief estate. According to informants, this measure was possible thanks to the intercession of a 'clever peasant', a small landowner who personally knew Hodža, the minister of agriculture at that time. In the early 1920s a plot of 110 *holds* (46 ha) belonging to the Galanta fief was distributed among the poorest families of the villages of Pallóc, Nyárasd (Topoľnica) and Királyfa. Each household received approximately one half hectare, which 'was not much, but could provide something to eat' (Antal).

In 1893 the University Foundation's fief still held 129 *holds* (53 ha) of land (mostly arable) in the village. In 1926 a portion of this, accounting for 36 ha, was expropriated and redistributed in equal parts among 20 families, to be used mainly for house construction. One year later, another 13 ha of land were allocated to 11 villagers (1.7 ha each). Moreover, in a previous measure dating 1922, 14 households had received a total of 18.49 acres of land, also for building houses. These figures indicate that the Land Reform did very little to subvert the village's social structure. The conclusion that can be drawn is that the abolition of the feudal system produced in the village a process referred to by informants as the 'proletarianisation of the peasantry'. The increased number of small plots did not alter the social and economic conditions of the poor villagers. In addition, the Reform reinforced the power of *gazda* families by commercialising more land and giving them power and opportunities to enlarge their holdings and reduce the risk of competition from small holders.

2.8 Conclusion

The weight of obligations and the coexistence of different regimes and levels of property were the driving forces behind feudal village relations. Although the feudal authority, absent from the community's territorial boundary, did not develop a strong, vertical tie to the villagers, the structure of its domination depended on and was eventually reinforced by the unequal distribution of entitlements to economic resources in the village. Patronage between the landed and landless peasantry was successfully established by the few large peasants thanks to their economic and political role in the village, as well as to the shared values and meanings inherent in their status.

Eisenstadt and Roniger (1984) pay inadequate attention to the set of internal strategies that the power holders had to develop in order to maintain and legitimate their position. Under the significant demographic pressures of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the inter-generational process of property transmission became crucial for avoiding fragmentation and dispersion of plots. Only those groups who were able to preserve their estates through appropriate strategies could resist change and eventually take advantage of the shift to 'modernity'. These strategies included on the one hand processes of exclusion of all but one of the male heirs from inheritance and attempts to recombine property under one single male heir. On the other hand, female heirs were provided with small land plots in order to allow them to marry up in the social and economic hierarchy. The thick stratum of small-landowners and landless peasants not only did not benefit from the end of feudalism in terms of better access to land, but eventually found itself trapped in the consolidation of the social *status quo* that the historical transformation brought about.

The utility of considering the interval between the late 18th and the early 20th centuries appears evident as soon as one considers the temporal framework in which social and economic relations developed. Not only does it make sense to begin with an analysis of the community's pre-socialist property structure, distribution of resources and access to them in order to understand present paths and trajectories, but it is in the temporal nature of these patterns of social interaction that wider schemes of 'change' can be framed. The following chapter will continue in this line, considering the transformation that accompanied socialism and the process of collectivisation.

Chapter 3
From the Second World War to the End of State Socialism (1939-1989)

3.1 Introduction

From the Second World War to the end of the socialist period. Because of the wide range of historical episodes relevant to villagers' lives, namely the re-incorporation of the region into the Hungarian fascist state, the Second World War, the foundation of the second Czechoslovak Republic and the socialist regime, this chapter considers only some important stages of the period. The focus is on the manner in which major institutional changes influenced and shaped the relations of power that had become dominant in the village during late feudalism. Whereas in the first half of the 20th century the group holding power was able to adapt to the process of modernisation, after consolidation of the socialist regime powerful institutional transformations took place which contributed to the disintegration of the large-size landholders' power. Collectivisation and local industrial development dramatically influenced village-level social and economic relations by introducing new institutions which people had to confront in the course of their everyday lives.

As demonstrated by ethnographic accounts of rural villages focusing on the period (Hann 1980; Pine 1987; Lampland 1995), socialism needs to be considered as a dynamic part of those villages' history. I reject the idea that Czechoslovakia entered a period of economic hibernation during the forty years preceding 1989 (Swain 1999); I follow these ethnographic studies to point out that under socialism a number of important changes took place in the country's social and economic environment. The aim of this chapter is to identify the forces underpinning these changes and to put them in context in order to perceive people's responses and adaptations to them.

The process of 'domesticating revolution' as described by Creed (1998) constitutes a useful analytical tool for understanding socialism's impact on the village. In his study of a Bulgarian rural community, Creed

points out that socialism became an acceptable system to villagers because their everyday strategies for coping with the totalitarian regime had domesticated the system and eventually positively influenced its institutional functioning (1998: 214-5). He argues that the socialist system itself made this 'domestication' possible by amplifying both compliance and resistance to the regime (1998: 3).

On the one hand, the various strategies that villagers developed during their daily life helped to perpetuate the *status quo*, helping to 'paint' socialism, as Burawoy and Lukács describe it (1992).

On the other hand, according to Creed the socialist state was forced to accept and incorporate people's strategies of survival in order to perpetuate its totalitarian, paternalistic attitude, even when these were in conflict with the system (1998: 5).

Creed's approach is illuminating because it constructs a framework within which people's interaction with socialist institutions can be analysed in a temporal perspective. In this chapter I argue that socialism and its institutions became accepted by local actors because they were ready, in spite of the violence with which collectivisation was undertaken, to adapt the institutional transformation to the social and economic features that had characterised the community *before* the 1948 Revolution. Incorporation of villagers' strategies into the socialist system was not merely a necessity in order to maintain the 'paternalistic' character of socialism, as Creed maintains. It is rather because socialism built on the very structures of power predominant in feudalism and pre-socialist times, and later introduced rapid social and economic mobility, that it gained acceptance and legitimation at the ground level.

3.2 The Hungarian Occupation and World War II (1938-1945)

In 1938, under the name of *Felvidék Visszacsatolása* ('Re-incorporation of the Felvidék'), Hungarian fascist troops occupied the southern territories of Slovakia, which in 1939 split from Bohemia, creating what some historians define as the first Slovak Republic under Tiso's fascist rule (Kirschbaum 1995).

Many of the villagers' economic conditions did not improve during the seven years of Hungarian occupation. The devaluation of the Czechoslovak crown and the forced re-introduction of the Hungarian florin depreciated the purchasing power of the local people and rendered the prices extremely accessible for incoming Hungarians. 'There was nothing left in the shops after Hungarians came. They could buy a pair of boots for 30 crowns, the amount of three days of labour for them, whereas for us it has always been more than a month of work' (András). Moreover, agricultural

activities in the vicinity came to stagnate because of the war and the result was general impoverishment, social immobility and discontent. One elderly villager, who served in the voluntary youth corps of the Hungarian army at the time of the occupation, described the period in these terms:

> There was very little to do for the village at that time. Fascists had taken the able bodies to the war; the Hungarian officials were the worst. I respect the Germans who were able to keep order in those days, but Hungarian soldiers kept on insulting us as *Felvidéki kommunisták* ('communists of Felvidék') or *büdös Csehek* ('dirty Czechs').
>
> (András)

Other villagers recall how the opportunity to be reintegrated into the Hungarian state soon resulted in general and deep disappointment. People felt that their expectations of change moved by pro-Hungarian feelings had been profoundly disillusioned as the new regime demonstrated it had no other interest but to 'exploit the Slovak lands' (Krónika 1987: 86).

This situation influenced the manner in which power relations and control of economic resources continued to be shaped in the village. As illustrated in the previous chapter, the 1920s Czechoslovak Land Reform did very little to improve the economic conditions of the poor peasantry because the land which was gradually divided among the landless was only sufficient to provide them with basic subsistence means ('a plot for growing some potatoes', observed Antal). On the other hand, those who had the capital to purchase land and invest in agriculture were able to make a profit out of the developing land market and to take advantage of the dynamic markets of the region (Fehérváry 1992).

In 1940 the landed property belonging to all the village *gazdák* (small and large) amounted to 123.7 ha. This made up 15.1 percent of the village's agricultural land and 16 percent of the arable land (Table 8). This number alone, however, does not reveal the significance of this group in the economic panorama of the village. One needs to consider that the portion of land owned by other villagers (621.7 ha) was divided among 452 owners (27.4 percent of the whole population), thus making the *gazda* group a mere 4.4 percent of all owners.

Table 8: Ownership in the hands of large and middle landholders: 1940

	Arable Land	Garden	Forest	Meadows	Total
***Gazda* Group**	116.6	1.9	5.0	0.2	**123.7**
Other Owners	563.8	15.9	41.4	0.6	**621.7**
Urbarial Land*	46.8	0.5	23.8	3.6	**74.7**
Total	727.2	18.3	70.2	4.4	**820.1**

*Urbarial Land includes: the village's common land, church land, the University Foundation's estate and property belonging to the Society for the Control of River Resources
Unit: ha
Source: *Vágkirályfa Telekkönyv* 1940.

Among the *gazdák* the distinction between small (*kis*) and large (*nagy*) was still significantly drawn on the basis of ownership. In 1940, twenty families were classified as *gazda* and seven of them held more than 5 ha of arable land. Among the large holders there was a strong degree of continuity with the late feudal period since these families constituted the same small group of *gazdák* who had succeeded in perpetuating their control of economic resources since the mid 19th century.

Even after the end of the Second World War, the economic role of this group showed no signs of clear decline. Table 9 shows that of the seven families that were descendants of *gazdák*, five of them increased their property in the period from 1940 to 1955.[37] The two families to show a contraction of their land were subjected to heavy taxation and confiscation

[37] This was possible in spite of further confiscations. As of October 1947, 25 landowners were the object of confiscations in the village, for an overall 867,225 ha of arable land. Among them, each large landowner had an average of 5 hectares of land confiscated. These measures were part of the legal body accompanying the postwar Czechoslovak Land Reform.

during the years 1950-1955 and they eventually contributed, before the others, part of their land to the socialist cooperative.

Table 9: *Gazda* and arable land property in 1940 and 1955

Name	**1940**	**1955**
Lajos S.	7.40	8.80
Lajos Sz.	6.41	8.60
Flórián M.	6.20	7.81
József O.	9.53	n.a.
Péter V.	8.42	5.28
Lajos Z.	7.04	5.09
Mihály W.	5.39	5.21

Unit: ha
Source: Vágkirályfa Telekkönyv 1940.
n.a.: data not available

Families who maintained their power did so by means of a series of strategies for preserving wealth and the control of the means of production. These included the manipulation of intra- and extra-village social relations. Mihály, one *nagy gadza*, acted as village mayor from 1938 to 1945, continuing the tradition which until then had always seen wealthy landowners occupying this office. He presented the village's Craftsmen's Society (*Iparos Kör*) with a building.[38] The gesture was interpreted by villagers as a 'generous contribution' from the hands of a *módos* (wealthy) *gazda*, who in this way counterbalanced his unluckiness in producing offspring to continue his family. Interestingly, the village chronicle, compiled in socialist times, remembers him in idealistic terms as the only mayor to come from the working class, and whose election was possible thanks to the support of the village's Communist Party.

[38] This building was later appropriated by the village Party and used as a warehouse. During the 1960s some rooms where refurbished and served as a grocery shop; later an ice-cream shop was integrated. Today it belongs to the municipal office and it is used as a base for workers' groups, recruited from the village's unemployed.

Beyond the village, the *gazda* group was able to consolidate its social and economic position by managing access to the local market and to the chain of Consumption Cooperatives (*Fogyasztási Szövetkezet*) that started developing in the late 1920s. As in many Eastern European countries, cooperative movements had already taken place in Slovakia since the turn of the 20th century.[39] Within the territory of the Hungarian Monarchy, the cooperatives were set under the central organism of the Hangya. This grew steadily from 476 units in 1904 to 2277 in 1918. The Hangya opened shops in virtually all of the Hungarian villages in Slovakia, intending to coordinate the productive with the distributive sector as well as improve the social and cultural life of villages. The idea was that village cooperatives could be linked to local centres of exchange of agricultural production and serve as providers of credit and retail services at state controlled prices (Pukkai 1994: 71).

The Hangya had already started activities in Hungary in 1845 and a new cooperative network, the Hanza, developed in parallel to it during the early 1900s. The Hanza was eventually able, in the Hungarian ethnic regions of Slovakia, to survive the change that followed the 1918 Trianon Treaty (Pukkai 1994: 18). The foundation of the Hanza Goods Center (*Áruközpont*) and the agricultural cooperative chain in Galanta (Galánta) marked the apex of the pre-socialist cooperative movement in southern Slovakia.[40] This was conceived as a node into which merchandise from the fertile regions of the Galanta, Šal'a, Dunajská Streda and Nové Zámky territories could be conveyed and shipped to external markets, thus creating an important link between agricultural producers in the villages and the local market.[41]

In Királyfa the Hangya was established by the middle landowners, who joined a web of cooperation that originated in the bigger and more prosperous villages of the area (Taksony, Farkasd, Tallós and Felsö Szeli). Its activity was short-lived as the outbreak of the First World War severely

---

[39] In 1845 the first agricultural cooperative was founded in Slovakia at Ószombat (Sobotište) under the name of the Farmers' Union (*Gazda Egyesület*). This example was followed by Nagyrőc (Revúc) in 1871.

[40] The Hanza agricultural cooperative was divided into four sectors: the retail section, in charge of the sale of products such as cereals, poultry, eggs, quills, game and other animals; the husbandry section, for raising pigs and horned cattle; the material procurement section; and the machinery and seeds section. The cooperative had 783 members in 1940, which increased to 961 in 1941, and it is said to have processed an extensive flow of goods, particularly during the first half of the 1940s when 'entire trains of animals went to feed the Italian and German soldiers' (Pukkai 1994: 73).

[41] In 1938, in the seventeen districts of western Slovakia there were 211 municipal branches of the Hanza Consumption Cooperative. Dunaszerdahely (Dunajská Streda) had the highest number of branches, 37, followed by Galanta with 29 and Somorja (Šamorín) with 21. Vágsellye (Šal'a) had 14 branches.

undermined both cooperation among villagers and agricultural production. In 1925 the Hanza Consumption Cooperative, founded by the village's parish cantor and the school teachers, took over the role of the Hangya. In the course of its operations, which lasted until 1950, 80 families, including all the *gazdák* and several small peasants, joined the institution and benefited from its services. These included the purchase of agricultural products, issuance of loans, and the sale of groceries and farming utensils. During the 1930s, the Hanza also had plans to create an agricultural production cooperative in the village, but was afterwards interrupted by the war. The Hanza Consumption Cooperative was very active in the village, also thanks to the presence of the Galanta Goods Center, situated only 17 km from the community. Through payment of an annual fee, members had the right to purchase merchandise at fixed, low prices. At the end of the year the cooperative calculated the final output and issued, for the same amount, a number of bonus coupons (*jutalék jegy*) that were redistributed to its members.

According to local understanding, the Hanza was established to 'juxtapose its activity to that of the Jewish dealers', who traditionally had a solid position in the retail sector.[42] However, its main achievement was the creation of a retail chain that allowed producers (mainly the *gazda* families) to sell their products at controlled prices, bypassing the town market in which village farmers had less control. Moreover, thanks to the network of producers, wealthy peasants were able to establish valuable contacts with local retailers and warehouses and hence became more solidly linked to the local market. The small peasants could also benefit from the retail service and in some more isolated cases, were able to receive loans for the improvement of farming structures.[43]

The introduction of the Hanza cooperative system did not change the power relations in the village. In the first half of the 20th century there was a slow but decisive shift from the feudal system of obligations, control of land and labour resources to regional-scale market-oriented production. The strong degree of continuity with the past, however, was proved by the resiliency of the dominant economic role of the *gazda* group.

---

42 However, the power of the latter could barely be challenged by the cooperative as 'they had the most powerful network' that linked them to banks in the towns, private moneylenders, big landowners and shops in the villages (Nándor).

43 Antal remembers that his father, owner of 3 hectares, was granted a loan for the construction of a stable in cooperation with his neighbour. The project was abandoned in 1939 after the start of the war.

3.3 From the Foundation of the Communist Party to the Second Czechoslovak Republic (1921-1948)

The Communist Party was established in Királyfa in May, 1921. Its early years are remembered in the local chronicle as 'a period in which political parties flourished; there were some 21 in the country'. However, the Krónika continues: 'every party simply kept on drawing water to its own mill. There was a sense of diffuse mistrust in these parties that were promising so much, but achieving so little' (Krónika 1987: 64). This is why the foundation of the Communist Party, the most promising in terms of improvement of social and economic conditions (together with the Agrarian Party), did not seem to be initially welcomed by the village with enthusiasm.

The Party met with serious difficulties in its first months. Although it openly professed its struggle to improve the living conditions of the poor, it faced many obstacles. The first battle in the village was for the establishment of a public canteen, to which permission was denied by the town police authority. Demonstrations followed in Šal'a, often organised in line with Party branches in other villages, but these were always stopped by the police. Eventually, demonstrators brought their families with them during protests, children being a good means for concealing the purpose of those visits to the town.

The first action that gave some credibility to the Party's programme was the free provision of milk to school[44] children (for 80 percent of all pupils), achieved thanks to the cooperation of the village's Consumption Cooperative. Afterwards, a small monetary aid system was introduced for the unemployed. This was a monthly coupon worth 15 Czechoslovak crowns (enough to buy a kilogram of flour, a packet of sugar and some tea) issued by the cooperative and valid in all its shops.

The 1930s are remembered as among the gloomiest years in the village's history for the difficult economic conditions endured by a large portion of the population. Whereas the creation of the national railway had provided an important safety valve during the last period of the monarchy, in the 1930s the opportunities for employment were extremely reduced. In 1931 there were 144 unemployed in the village, the majority of whom were men. Women could more easily find their way to Bratislava and Budapest where they worked as servants in middle-class families. For men, the only option was to commute daily to work on local large manorial estates, thus

[44] The first historical mention of the village school is dated 1779, when the Catholic school was founded. In 1790 Hungarian became the school language (before, education was in German and Latin) and by 1891 Királyfa had three classes. In the same year the parish was established, gaining 20 *holds* (8.9 ha) of land. In 1923 the Slovak language was made mandatory in the village.

continuing practices that had been common in the village since the late feudal period. Unlike in many other villages in Slovakia (Skalník 1993; Podoba 1999; Škovierová 1988), in Királyfa emigration abroad was almost unknown, except to Hungary, which remained mainly a female phenomenon and only rarely entailed abandonment of the village.

The activity of the Communist Party always remained on the border between legality and illegality and in the last years of the 1920s two policemen were sent permanently to the village to maintain public order. In a petition dated February 20, 1931, addressed to the county office, villagers asked for unemployment aid amounting to 70,000 crowns, as well as for the repeal of an unjust measure that had forbidden them to meet or make assembly in public places (Krónika 1987: 65).

In 1938, the activity of the Party was suddenly truncated due to the Hungarian occupation and the outbreak of World War II. Later, in 1941, martial law was proclaimed in the village, with the institution of a German and a Hungarian military post. In the village there was no strong adhesion to the Fascist movement and as a result communist activists did not face prosecution or ostracism from the community. Their efforts to improve the village's social conditions in the 1930s are recognised by people today, even by those who are unwilling to speak positively about the Party's achievements during state socialism.

After the end of the war, one of the most contested economic measures issued by the second Czechoslovak Republic (1945-1948) was the confiscation of property from 'enemies and state traitors', known under the name of the Beneš Decrees (see Chapter One). The deportation measures hit Királyfa with far less violence than the richer neighbouring villages. Between January and February 1947, 52 families (219 individuals) were deported to Bohemia and 9 families (33 persons) resettled in Hungary. They belonged mainly to the local group of intelligentsia (school teachers, clergymen and sons of large landowners). This flux followed two waves: first male members of the families were sent to work in industrial plants, construction sites or even to private farming estates in the Czech lands. Afterwards, the women followed. The final phase of the programme was the arrival of Slovak families in the place of the deported ones.

The small extent to which the deportations affected Királyfa was due not only to the absence of big *kuláks*[45] in the community, but more significantly to the ability of some *gazda* families to make use of personal networks with local authorities. For example, Lajos, one of the largest village landowners, succeeded in bribing local functionaries with the

[45] The term comes from Russian to designate rich peasants. In Királyfa, where the richest *gazda* did not own more than 20 ha of land, the word was rarely used.

equivalent of 20,000 Czechoslovak crowns in order to avoid deportation. This was possible thanks to his acquaintance with the district functionary who was responsible for compiling the 'white list' (*fehér lap*) containing the names of the deported *kuláks*.[46]

The incoming settlers reached the village later in the year; they were from Hlohovec, a town in mid-western Slovakia. Villagers remember them as poor, reserved people carrying very few belongings with them. They were instructed to occupy houses of people that had 'spontaneously migrated' out of the village and to use their land, animals and tools. They were understandably surprised to find fully furnished houses and cultivated land. However, the situation did not last long. The original owners came back after the first communist parliament terminated the decrees in 1949. After 1952 all of the Slovak families who had settled in Királyfa left, except for two women who married in the village.

3.4 Socialist Collectivisation

The foundation of the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic in 1948 represented the second major change, after the abolition of the feudal system, in the village's history. As in 1848, the first decade of state socialism was characterised by a mixture of continuity and innovation in the process of villagers' adaptations to changes. In spite of the violence with which collectivisation was undertaken throughout the 1950s, the *gazda* group successfully maintained its economic and social status in the village.

In other neighbouring communities, the population exchanges between Slovaks from Hungary and local Hungarians had fostered the collectivisation process.[47] Many Slovaks, who received the land of the former (Hungarian) large *gazdák*, were in favour of collectivisation because they saw in it a means of achieving legal security for their economic assets (*Naše*…1986). However, in Királyfa this was not the case as the resettlement of Slovaks did not take place.

Socialist collectivisation proceeded in Királyfa in three phases, which I call the initial phase (1949-1959), the village phase (1959-1972) and the town phase (1973-1991). Because collectivisation was a progressive process, each period was marked by different social and economic achievements of the institution within the village and by varied degrees of interaction between the community and local officials.

---

[46] Other villagers were also able to avoid deportations thanks to the priest who, having learned of some of the names on the 'white list', informed their families one or two days before the scheduled deportation. At least four household heads escaped the measure by hiding themselves for several weeks.

[47] See Árendás (2003) for an ethnographic case study of the Galanta region.

3.4.1 Initial Phase (1949-1959)

Following national trends (see Salzmann 1983), in Királyfa the first socialist agricultural cooperative (JRD) was established in 1949 through a slow and thorny process. In August 1949, Communist Party members of the village met and proposed the establishment of such a cooperative. Land acquired included the village's common property, the church estate and some plots contributed by its founders, for a total of 43 ha.[48] Due to the initial unpopularity of the institution, and the peasants' reluctance to contribute their land, the cooperative was eventually dissolved at the end of the year.

In March 1950 a village meeting was held to re-propose the future of the organisation. Its founders asked the landowning peasants to contribute their land to form the cooperative and join it as members. Again their response was, negative. The minutes of the meeting quote: 'Some of the peasants stood up and asked loudly if they would be permitted to maintain their names registered in the Land Book, even after obtaining membership. Since no answer came to this question, the peasants all stood up and, protesting loudly, left the room' (Minutes of the 1950 JRD Meeting).

Today, informants express their understanding of initial opposition to the cooperative in terms of doubt that collective action could work. As Antal recalls, 'The very word "collective" inspired terror in the peasant. Land and work, and even meals together! How could we accept such a change!' Another informant pointed out that: 'It was not the idea of giving away one's land, but rather in becoming dependent workers not free to make personal choices that opposition found its ground' (Anna). Moreover, collectivisation also meant separation from the economic assets traditionally associated with survival and reproduction of the kin group through the household economy, as Nándor underlined, 'Why should I have given them my land, the land my ancestors had worked with their sweat everyday and that was still keeping my family united in work? I do not think that without devious means they would have been able to establish their cooperative, everybody shared my feelings'.

Despite the outspoken opposition of farming families in the village, the small JRD, which had been re-established in June 1950, continued to function and slowly expanded. By December 1950 the number of members and workers had reached 32 and land holdings had reached 134 ha, of which 15 ha belonged to founding members. The remaining 119 ha had been acquired from non-members of the cooperative through expropriation or forcible persuasion. The early 1950s are remembered as a dark period in the

---

[48] Machines included a tractor, 2 irrigation systems and 3 threshers; livestock included 4 horses.

village's history, one in which extreme measures were adopted in order to induce peasants to join collectivisation. Among the numerous ways in which informants recall these dramatic years of the village's history, the most recurrent memories concern physical violence and psychological terror. Peasants reluctant to transfer their land were in some cases beaten and punished severely until their signature had been added to the cooperative property book. There were at least four cases of severe physical and psychological injuries suffered by peasants who were not willing to sign up collectivisation. In the most dramatic case, a man committed suicide;[49] another attempted to do so but was rescued at the last moment, to bear lifelong signs of psychic distress. Two more peasants lost the use of their hands or were crippled as a result of physical punishment.[50]

However, the most fruitful strategy for accomplishing collectivisation was undoubtedly the imposition of a compulsory tax on agricultural products, a tax known as *kontingens*. Although oriented to the long term, the power of this measure was clear as peasants became increasingly choked under the heavy burden of taxation.

> I had to provide 300 litres of milk, some 300 eggs, butter, pig fat and some chickens. I can say I was lucky when I think that the *gazdák* were forced to give up to 500 litres of milk, one pig and a quantity of flour. They were choking us in this way; no wonder that people finally joined the cooperative!
>
> (Nándor)

3.4.2 Second Phase (1959-1972)

The collectivisation process was completed in 1959, following a state decree requiring that all private land and machines had to be transferred in use to the cooperative by the end of the year. Formally, farmers maintained ownership of their assets. As it enlarged the scale of farming through the use of more land and machinery belonging to villagers, the cooperative began to

---

[49] One informant explained: 'He was a small peasant. He had worked hard all his life to buy 5 ha of land. Then they came and confiscated it. He was not able to stand this and killed himself' (András).

[50] Concerning less direct, but nonetheless violent manners of persuasion, some people recollect most vividly the use of a 'black car' in which opponents were invited or forced for a ride. The car, provided with special windows, was driven for a time enough to complete a journey up to Bratislava, to the town jail, which was announced only later in the course of the journey as the final destination. After the terrorised peasant had agreed to sign up, he was released from the car, surprised to find himself in the proximity of the village.

demonstrate significant results in the second half of the 1950s, and private farmers' opposition began to dim.

Tables 10 and 11 summarise the historical development of Királyfa's cooperative (1950-1972). In May 1951, the cooperative had only 85 members and 212 hectares under its management. Afterwards, the picture started to change. In 1955 the Evaluation Report on Cooperative Performance shows that whereas the number of members (and workers) did not change significantly (from 85 persons in 1951 to 78 persons in 1955), land area had reached 305 ha (96 ha of which was members' land) (*Zpráva*…1955). As the report underlines, in 1955 the JRD experienced severe problems, mainly due to the lack of trained workforce apart from the members of the management board (see below). 'The county attempted to institute preparation courses on agro-technical matters, but people's interest was minimal', laments the author of the report.

Table 10: Economic development of the Királyfa socialist agricultural cooperative (1950-1972)

	1951	**1955**	**1962**	**1972**
Number of members	85	78	130	135
Land cultivated in hectares	212	305	796	796
Value of working unit (Kčs)	6	8	16	16
Average monthly salary	n.a.	(1153)*	1190	1650

*First available data from 1961
Source: Krónika.

Table 11: Production and husbandry in the Királyfa socialist agricultural cooperative (1950-1972)

	1951	**1955***	**1972**
Grains	83.5	119.0	n.a.
Fodder	98.0	29.0	n.a.
Vegetables	18.5	26.0	n.a.
Tobacco	10.0	--	n.a.
Other	2.0	24.0	n.a.
Total land	**212.0**	**198.0**	**796.0**
Poultry	120	760	n.a.
Pigs	16	222	700
Cows	32	133	397
Sheep	--	--	172
Milk (litres)	--	26,547	n.a.

Units: ha, head
* spring data only
n.a.: not available
Source: Krónika.

The slow progress of the JRD in the 1950s can be explained by a number of factors. First, from a macro-perspective, Slovakia did not undergo a process of steady industrialisation until the early 1960s. This meant that villagers could not yet see, as in the case illustrated by Creed (1998: 65), any opportunities in non-agricultural jobs. Therefore they were less ready to give up their land, seen as their main economic resource. When in Czechoslovakia collectivisation became mandatory (1959, three years later than in Bulgaria) there were few possibilities for employment beyond agriculture in the region. Many poor villagers, led also by the ethnic discrimination that had followed the post-1945 period, left for Bohemia to work in factories or sought seasonal employment, just as a century before, in local large estates.

Second, as in the case described by Vasary, the management structure of the early cooperative could not overcome class distinctions and

deliberation problems among its members (1987: 64). The author describes that in the second socialist cooperative in the Hungarian village of Pécsely, the *gazdák* did not like to be given orders and directives for action. On the other hand, in the first cooperative, where the number of landless peasants were the majority, it was difficult for the *gazda* members to gain acceptance (Vasary 1987: 64).[51] In Királyfa the *gazda* farmers had resisted joining the first cooperative, 'founded by "proletarians"' (Mihály). Furthermore, the poor results demonstrated in the first five years of collectivisation convinced a number of peasants to drop their membership until the economic situation improved with better management in the second half of the 1950s.



1. Cooperative women's brigade during grape pressing, 1961.

The Királyfa JRD had four chairmen. The first, Imre (1949-1952) was, according to Antal, 'a real communist and not a descendant of a rich peasant'. This would explain why, in the informant's view, Imre was unable to convince people of the positive aspects of the collective enterprise. He

[51] Vasary (1987) describes the foundation of two socialist cooperatives: the Új Élet and the Verseny. The first was founded mainly by landless peasants and, despite generous state support, it encountered serious difficulties in taking off. The second was, instead, mainly made up of small land owners (*gazda*), who were already familiar with informal collective efforts and therefore were in a better position to undertake viable farming.

lacked the skills needed to manage the land, and everyone was aware of this. The second chairman, Gyula, was a son of a *gazda* family with more than 8 hectares of land. Although his chairmanship, starting in 1952, was stained by violence and oppressive means to achieving collectivisation, he was not personally held responsible for these acts, which had damaged his own family too. Gyula was believed to be a good leader, who did his best to improve the precarious initial conditions of the cooperative. A similar consideration applies to Vendel, the third chairman (1957-1962), also a descendent of a large landowning family, who had joined the institution voluntarily, on the strength of 'progressive' views on the importance of collectivisation. The fact that the JRD chairmanship was occupied by two descendants of *gazda* families indicates that the institution was beginning to gain acceptance even among the large landowners. The second, and mainly the third chairman, played important roles in making the transition to collective farming a less dramatic option. They did so by gaining consent through the introduction of diversified systems of cultivation and a system of private household plots, which allowed for a symbiotic relation between private and collective property (Hann 1993b). Data on production and wage levels illustrate the rapid progress of the JRD in the late 1950s and 1960s. In 1952 the work-unit value[52] was 8 Czechoslovak crowns (Kčs) (Table 10). This value eventually increased and stabilised at 16 Kčs in 1962. Levels of production per hectare in 1951 indicated 26.5 q of wheat and 17 q of barley. In 1963, however, the level of production per hectare surpassed 50 q, whereas salaries became more competitive with the other sectors, reaching 1190 Kčs (a month) in 1962 and increasing steadily afterwards to 1650 Kčs in 1972.

The cooperative was, in this period, an organism far from the large mechanised socialist collectives of the industrial age (1970s onwards). It cultivated mainly on a village basis with techniques and relations of production very close to those of the pre-socialist era. It is therefore not surprising that its leaders played a crucial role in making the collective project acceptable and even desirable to villagers. Under the second and third chairmen, both of *gazda* origin, the JRD started to perform better thanks to three innovations: the cultivation of tobacco, vegetable farming and the membership plot system.[53]

---

[52] The work unit system was a characteristic of socialist cooperative work. Each type of work had its own unit value which specified the amount of activity to be completed in one day, and also included calculations of physical difficulty and skill (Lampland 1995: 219).

[53] It must be noted that in 1955 the cooperative was set under the direct supervision of the municipal administration, dependent on the county administration office. However, due to the difficulty encountered in coordinating these three organisms (Krónika 1987), the

The second half of the 1950s saw a high level of diversification of production, which resulted in positive outputs only in the 1960s (Table 11). While the proportion of staple production (grains) was reduced, greater attention was paid to animal husbandry and dairy farming, thanks to convenient retail channels that linked the cooperative and the Galanta-based Milex, one of the largest milk and dairy producing factories in western Slovakia. Tobacco came to play an important role too, as contracts were stipulated with a Moravian cigarette company that found the southern Slovak climate perfectly suited to tobacco production. In 1952 a tobacco drying plant had been built thanks to pressure from Gyula, the second chairman to be appointed in that year. This plant operated at a profit for nearly two decades, until competition with another Slovak company dimmed interest in this product. The tobacco project is remembered with pride by villagers as a moment of collective work, especially for women, who worked in shifts in numbers exceeding 30 throughout the harvest period. In spite of the initial reluctance to work 'collectively', the idea of bringing together female workers and providing sources for extra income lured villagers, who today emphasise the hard work necessary for tobacco cultivation and processing by comparing it with pre-socialist agriculture:



chairmen enjoyed in this period a certain degree of decisional freedom dependent on their local personal networks.

2. The tobacco business (1958). In the mid-1950s the cooperative developed a new tobacco section, including the construction of a drying plant. Most of the labourers were female cooperative members, working under male supervision.

> The tobacco cultivation was hard work and not for everybody. Apart from the fact that no machine could help you, you had to do everything by hand, your hands and body were white and sticky at the end of the day. This is why not every man would go for it. It was like harvest work in the times when there was no combine and only your hands could do the job. Like then, only the skilful and hardworking person could serve a purpose.
>
> (Nándor)

In the same period the JRD introduced the system of the 'membership plot'[54] (*tag föld*), according to which every member had the right to a small plot for domestic use and to some animals, generally 2 pigs, one goat, 5-6 rabbits and 8 chickens. The average plot size was a half hectare, but there were cases in which where personal position within the cooperative could get one a larger portion of land. Antal, who worked as an accountant in the JRD remembers raising 8 pigs in his courtyard in the 1960s. He received grain from the cooperative as payment in kind (*naturália*) and he managed to put together some plots and have them worked using the JRD's machines and chemical fertilizers. At the end of the year, he could easily sell the meat to local butchers and gain cash that he later invested in building a new house.

Those who were not cooperative members did not enjoy the same privileges, but they could still access the cooperative's retail services. In the same period a cooperative shop was opened in the village which sold grain and dairy products at slightly cheaper prices for JRD workers and members. The shop became particularly convenient when it also began to stock vegetables, until then almost unknown in the village market.

Gardening was introduced as part of the JRD productive strategies in the first half of the 1960s. Because there was no tradition of vegetable production in Királyfa , outside expertise was needed.[55] In the late 1950s, under the initiative of the third chairman, the cooperative developed the gardening section in partnership with the State Agricultural School situated

---

[54] As in Czechoslovakia, in Hungary the practice of allotting household plots (*háztáji*) to cooperative members was an important feature of collectivisation. It permitted the often harmonic co-existence of a private and a collective farming sector (Hann 1980; Vasary 1987).

[55] In this instance the village differed from the larger communities of Pered (Tešedíkovo), Zsigárd (Žiharec) and Negyed (Neded) nearby, where in pre-socialist times vegetable farming was practiced on a larger scale (Danterová 2003).

on the road between the village and Šal'a. The School, which had been established in the 1890s, was traditionally led by local rich peasants and it served as an important centre for the introduction of technical innovations in western Slovakia.

In the second half of the 1950s its director, a *gazda* from Šal'a, founded the vegetable farming section under the leadership of a Bulgarian agronomist who had been living in Slovakia for some years. In the form of brigades, some villagers (mainly women) took charge of learning the skills of vegetable gardening and eventually imported these skills to their villages.

In 1962 the JRD allotted 18 ha of village land to vegetable farming. This land was situated along the river, in a location that previously had been considered unsuitable for any type of cultivation due to its location and its sandy soil. However, villagers learned that sandy soils were suitable for other products, such as peppers, cucumbers and tomatoes, and the possibility of undertaking new cultivation techniques soon attracted local inhabitants. Meanwhile, the cooperative enlarged its productive sphere and reached highly satisfactory economic levels. In 1966, among the 36 cooperatives of the Galanta district, the Királyfa JRD was rated fourth in economic performance and plan fulfilment. This result was interpreted by many as proof that the institution had achieved a 'village face' (see Chapter Six) and had been accepted by the community in spite of the dark memories of its first phase.

During this phase the JRD served as a channel through which novelty and knowledge could be transmitted to villagers. The membership land system and the practice of gardening proved some of the most successful measures of the JRD in improving its performance and in winning the villagers over. Creed, in his study of a Bulgarian rural community, underlines how the cooperative work came to be accepted by villagers there as soon as they realised that working together offered advantages and, conversely, that not joining it would lead to isolation (Creed 1998). In Királyfa the process of 'familiarisation' with the JRD was slower because of several factors including the resistance of large landholders to collectivisation, the villagers' strong attachment to land, the solid nexus between property and social status, the type and structure of farming (see Chapter Five) and, not least, the tragic personal experiences that collectivisation had entailed.[56]

[56] This factor is evident in everyday narratives about the collectivisation period. People stress that, although the cooperative did serve the community's public good, they will never forget how their property was, both physically and morally, expropriated from them.

In 1963 a social programme was introduced for all cooperatives by the Czechoslovak state. This included replacing the work unit payment system with a standardised wage and introducing pensions, social benefits for workers, a shop for members and a canteen facility. The cooperative's village-level cultural and leisure role was also enhanced by sponsoring of public events such as balls, sport activities, festivals and theatre performances.

The fourth chairman, Csaba, elected in 1963, was the first from outside the village. His appointment was interpreted as a political measure to strengthen local political control over the JRD. Csaba is a rather problematic figure; he was never esteemed for his agricultural expertise,[57] but he promoted the development of the JRD through his extensive business networks in the region. He epitomised the historical change from the power of the village *gazdák* to domination by the socialist cadres' elite.

As seen above, since the 1960s the cooperative succeeded in gaining consensus as a village institution. However, this was neither a mechanical process that followed the general economic and political trends in the country, nor an outcome of the economic and social improvements that these years brought about to the community. Whether or not it makes sense to detect a degree of continuity with the pre-socialist situation, the success of the JRD and its acceptance in the village during the second phase is to be explained in two ways. The expansion of the cooperative's economic and social role after the completion of collectivisation, the diversification of the productive sphere and the adoption of the social security programme made the institution a more familiar entity for villagers. In addition, development of the JRD was tightly linked to the presence of leading figures in its management structure. These were people who in the past had also been in significant positions in the community or who shared blood relations with the pre-socialist power holders. By softening the impact of collectivisation through the personal roles of *gazda* descendants, who became advocates of innovation, the JRD succeeded in overcoming the hostility of the first phase.

3.4.3 Third Phase (1973-1991)

Following the general trend in all socialist countries to form larger and more centralised units (Swain 2000: 4), the reorganisation of Királyfa's JRD was decided with an act issued by the Bratislava Municipal Jury in January 1973. The village cooperative was incorporated under the Šal'a cooperative (Šal'a Družba), which now included the JRD-s of Veča, Šal'a, and Dlhá nad

[57] As in the case of his modernisation of the stable facilities by cementing the floors. One week later several cows had fallen down and broken their legs.

Váhom. The four units brought together a total of over 3,900 ha of cultivable land and 960 members and workers.

The idea of creating this 'mammoth cooperative' was explained in terms of 'adjusting the existing productive structure to the new demands for rationalisation of production and increased use of machinery and technological innovation' (Krónika 1987: 95). It was conceived as a necessary measure in order to cope with social and economic change, to follow closely the latest technological progress, and, in the form it assumed, a step towards the resolution of existing economic problems within the local cooperatives. A member of the management board for the unification recalls:

> I do not think we needed such a giant JRD, at least in our village we were scoring quite well, but in other places situations were different. The upper entities were asked to level the JRDs' performances and unfortunately the strategy was to adapt the stronger to the weaker. By this I do not mean that we became weaker after the consolidation, only that decision-making processes and social measures became external to the village. We had less to say in several matters, this is what really changed, but production did not diminish. It was in this period that we reached our highest levels.
>
> (Albert, b.1931)

Other, less cautious comments by villagers stressed the political implications that unification had for the cooperative leadership, maintaining that 'the decision to reorganise was also the fruit of political games taking place at higher levels', and that 'it was necessary to have a better grip on village-level institutions by controlling them through central administrative systems' (András).

After 1973, the members of the Királyfa JRD were transferred automatically to the new institution, and the structures remaining in the village were meant to give employment to a number of workers ranging from 30 to 50 people.[58] No village employees, except for few skilled workers such as tractor drivers, were required to work on the other villages' land, since each ex-JRD had more or less maintained its workforce.

Table 12 summarises the agricultural activity of the new JRD during its two decades of history. Although the number of workers remained more or less stable throughout the period, the number of members dropped from 135 in 1973 to 116 in 1988 (the only two years for which data are available).

[58] These structures today include two pen complexes for pigs, one for cows, a storage facility for fodder, a machinery park and an office.

This is likely due to the industrialisation process that weakened the primary sector in the region during the 1970s (see below).

Table 12: Work and production in the unified cooperative (1973-1989)

	1973	1978	1983	1988
Workers	699	762	742	767
Members*	135	n.a.	n.a.	116
Land Total	3010	3337	3608	3674
Grains	427	1206	1243	1295
Fodder	1240	1599	1727	2050
Vegetables	380	98	433	336
Fruit	27	29	58	93
Pastures	62	61	--	--
Other	60	50	82	100
Poultry	2670	10231	1112	820
Pigs	6391	12910	12113	8675
Cows	n.a.	865	2119	1670

* Members from Királyfa only
Units: persons, ha, head
n.a.: not available
Source: Šal'a JRD Accountancy Yearly Statistics.

More significantly, the objects of cultivation and husbandry were subject to changes dictated by the specific time conditions. For example, chickens and hens, after booming during the second half of the 1970s, were abandoned in favour of cows and pigs in the 1980s. Some informants pointed out that there was increasingly less demand for chicken as the country experienced overproduction in those years, whereas pork consumption reached high levels in the same period. Similarly cattle production gained importance in the 1980s, not only because of local and national demand, but also since large quantities of beef were shipped to western European, Arab and even Asian countries.

The process of social and economic interaction between villagers and the cooperative and the changing trust in the institution during this stage are treated in detail in Chapter Six. Here it is important to emphasise that the accomplishment of collectivisation and the unification of the cooperatives

marked in the village the definitive transition from 'early modern' to modern times. This transition was by no means smooth and it entailed a multifaceted process of change in power relations dominating the village. As Creed points out, collectivisation was successfully accomplished at the point in which local and national actions converged and helped to break down peasants' resistance (Creed 1998: 65). Unlike in his case study, however, villagers' participation in the collective project was not only induced by the advantages of collectivisation or by the presence of personal networks which brought members into the cooperative. Nor, as in the Romanian case described by Kideckel (1993), did collectivisation mean a disruption of these ties and atomisation of individuals, who were set against one another by the dual system of property (collective and private). In Királyfa, together with the role of the state, the role played by members of the pre-socialist leading class must be underlined in order to understand how the socialist cooperative could gain acceptance at the local level.

3.5 Modernisation and Change

As indicated in most of the ethnographic works on socialism, the 1960s-1970s were in rural central Eastern Europe a period of modernisation and high-speed industrialisation (Hann 1980; Skalník 1993; Podoba 1999). In Czechoslovakia the secondary sector developed in parallel to the consolidation of collective agriculture (Haller et al. 1990: 160). This meant that the reorganisation of the socialist cooperatives undertaken towards the end of the 1960s was intended as a decisive step towards the 'de-peasantrisation' of rural society. This is true in particular for Slovakia, where industrialisation had a more dramatic impact than in Bohemia, which had a solid tradition of pre-socialist industry. Substantial changes took place within the structure of Slovak society, among them the creation of a number of industrial towns, massive internal migration from the poorest mountain and hilly regions of central and northern Slovakia to the industrial poles, transformation of the ethnic boundary with the Hungarian-speaking regions, a transformation from the 'peasant' to the 'peasant-worker' mode of production and a reshuffling of the local class structure (Haller et al 1990).

Two main industrial complexes rapidly changed the face of the region: the DUSLO chemical plant and the Hydrostav company for construction and water management. DUSLO was founded in Šal'a in 1954 and began operating in 1962. Its production concentrated on nitrates and chemical fertilizers, of which it is said to have met almost 40 percent of the national demand, constituting the first producer in Slovakia. It also exported considerable quantities to the Soviet Union, Italy, Germany and Austria throughout the 1970-1980s (Rausa and Porhajaš 1978). In 1966 DUSLO

employed 3300 workers; this number increased steadily to reach 5669 workers in 1976, which is considered the peak period of the industry's performance. Along with the plant, the industry constructed ten apartment blocks for its workers, a kindergarten for 650 children, and a theatre and sponsored a long list of social and cultural activities.

The Hydrostav company belonged to a national chain providing construction, canalisation and management of water resources. The Šal'a branch, which employed over 1000 workers in 1970, was responsible for the construction of the Kaskády power plant in 1972. Villagers attribute the environmental and climatic changes that have affected the region in the last fifteen years to the power plant, which is situated on Királyfa's river bank.[59]

As a consequence of the development of these two industrial plants, the population of Šal'a boomed, rising from 4533 inhabitants in 1950 to 12,974 in 1970 and 19,170 in 1980 (Šal'a 1982). There were two main sources of this demographic boom: 1) the population of young villagers who took employment in industry and therefore left their communities to settle in the more comfortable apartments that their companies provided them; 2) the migrants, covering different age structures, coming in from the northern Slovak districts.[60]

Village infrastructures also developed more rapidly. In 1947 the village had received electricity and in 1946 it had its first public telephone installed. In 1949 the community had an orphanage; the school was re-opened in 1946 and by 1950 it had two sections, Hungarian (with 110 pupils) and Slovak (96 pupils). In 1964 pavement of the pedestrian zone was begun, thanks to a state subsidy of about 2 million Kčs, to which all villagers contributed through their labour; the project was accomplished in 1977. A public park was completed in 1965, and the Cultural House in 1971. In the mid-1970s the football stadium was moved from its old location, along the river, to former church land on the main village road.

The village Chronicle describes the decade between 1970 and1980 as the most flourishing period for the community. 'With the completion of the settlement and the industrialisation process in the town, the village is also undergoing change: a Slovak kindergarten was established in 1980 with 25 children […]. It is a matter of pride that a village as small as Királyfa has two schools with two classes each and 72 pupils, in spite of the outflow of

---

[59] Indeed, in the last three years there was repeated damage to crops due to consecutive droughts, heavy rains and frost in spring.

[60] One immediate result was that the town's population changed from an ethnic composition of over 50 percent Hungarians, 30 percent Slovaks and 20 percent Jews, Germans and others in the first half of the 20th century to 60 percent Slovaks and 40 percent Hungarians and Romanies in 1980 (Krónika 1987).

young people to the town because of better working, living and social conditions' (Krónika 1987: 86, 88).

The changes brought about by industrialisation were felt on different levels of the village's social and economic structure. Industrialisation of the region brought about the expansion of work opportunities for the rural villages and this was particularly true for Királyfa, situated only four kilometres from the DUSLO plant. A large number of people found employment in the local factories between 1970 and 1980.[61] Employment opportunities at DUSLO or in other local plants were indeed supported by this plant's close relation to the Šal'a cooperative.[62] As one JRD member pointed out:

> It was easy enough in that period. You either needed membership in the cooperative or some very close person working there. The cooperative managers were the ones who went to drink with the factory managers and directors. It was enough to be on good terms with one of them, then you could easily find a place in the factory.
>
> (Antal)

Not all villagers, however, opted for the local factories. Gábor (b.1952), who had no personal connection to the JRD, noticed:

> It was not difficult to find a connection to have a job. I could have always found a friend or relative somewhere; we are all relatives here in one way or another. I didn't want to work at DUSLO because it paid less than other factories, so I ended up in Bratislava. Anyway, it was a bad working environment and I regret that. Here [in Šal'a] people were like a family, everybody knew each other.

Gábor's decision to work in Bratislava demonstrates another important feature of the social development of socialist industrial Czechoslovakia. As in other socialist countries, in Czechoslovakia there was a strong preference among workers for daily commuting rather than migrating towards the town (Szelényi 1988; Creed 1998). People like Gábor were far from rare in

---

61 Although I do not have precise data on this point, today there are still 60 DUSLO workers in the village and informants recall that their number was three time larger under socialism.

62 Some informants pointed out that DUSLO generously provided its products to the cooperative thanks to the intermediary role of the 1970s cooperative chairman who had strong personal ties to the factory directors (see Chapter Six).

socialist Királyfa, and their choice was an expression of the increased possibilities of social and economic mobility brought about by socialism in the 1970s-1980s (Haller et al. 1990).

3.6 Conclusion

In this chapter I have analysed the most relevant points for understanding the nature of socialism as it was lived by villagers. It is rather difficult to concentrate in one single chapter on the main features of socialism and its significance for the social and economic development of the community. This is mainly for two reasons. First, as ethnographies on central eastern European societies brilliantly demonstrate, socialism was never the static system that external observers are used to perceiving it as. This was a period of profound and rapid change, when people had to find their way in adapting to novelty, make use of their past backgrounds and draw the best they could from the present.

Second, socialist experiences and practices are still vivid in people's memories and everyday actions. In virtually every aspect of their daily lives, people still refer to socialism as a constant metaphor. This is of little surprise when one considers the sweeping changes brought about by the post-1989 transformation. As the experiences of the collectivisation process suggest, in order to understand the features of the village's present one needs to look to the historical developments of the community. Thus, modernisation of the village is a process that must be analysed on two separate levels.

The first level, as Creed (1998) demonstrates, concerns the interaction between the socialist system and local actors who, according to their needs and aims, were able to adapt to the 1948 transformation. The feudal ties that had outlasted the transition to modern times and the 'capitalism' of the early 19th century were gradually dissolved with the collectivisation of land. In the village, the agricultural cooperative came to replace the role of large landowners in relation to both control of means of production and allocation of labour.

On another level, collectivisation was successfully implemented when a balanced combination of novelty and tradition were incorporated in (local and national) strategies of institutional change. Although some of the former *gazdák* did not resist the transformation and left the scene as early as 1959 (when collectivisation became mandatory), others were able to 'ride the right horse'. Thanks to the leadership of a few of them, the cooperative was able to expand its productive sphere and achieve more positive results than those which had characterised its early stage. This was also possible thanks to the introduction of the social security scheme in 1963 and the state's strong commitment to developing the collective sector. Afterwards, unification of

the cooperative and the industrialisation process definitively marked the shift to a new social and economic order in which there was no place left for the former power holders.

Analysis of historical processes is crucial for understanding how continuity and change are constructed and intertwined in everyday reality. The missing thread in Creed's analysis is what links the temporal process of acceptance of collectivisation to the power relations dominant before 1948. Modernisation achieved during the socialist transformation, thus, becomes a historical process of change and continuity which is mediated from below, on all levels of the village society.

Chapter 4
Postsocialist Decollectivisation: The New Economic Order (1992-2001)

4.1 Introduction

The diverse and sometimes controversial paths followed by the postsocialist countries (and by regions within single countries) demonstrate that the institutional transformation of this period has not brought about the expected outcome, i.e. the full restoration and development of the private agricultural sector (Hudecková and Lošťák 1998; Kovács 1998; Szelényi 1998). It is rather in the strengthening of 'symbiotic relations' between the private and the collective sector, the dramatic abandonment of farming and the resilience of collective farming that local actors expressed their strategies to cope with the ongoing transformation (Hann 1993a, 1993b; Blaas 1995; Kostová and Giordano 1995; Kaneff 1996; Swain 1999, 2000; Wolz et al. 1998).

This chapter examines the steps that marked the process of decollectivisation after the end of the socialist regime. In Slovakia, decollectivisation was a lengthy and problematic process, due to a series of causes on the micro- and macro- levels. First, important historical and geographic differences within the country hampered the homogeneity of outcomes of the decollectivisation process. Secondly, because of the nature of socialist collectivisation, the restoration of private property regimes could not have the anticipated outcome of bringing people back to the land. Village peasants had undergone a dramatic process of 'de-peasantrisation' in the course of the first wave of collectivisation (1950s) and the creation of 'mammoth-cooperatives' in the 1970s definitively 'alienated' them, in Gramscian terms, from the means of production (Gramsci 1991). Therefore, it was foreseeable that when confronted with the two options of receiving land back and farming it or leasing land out to the cooperative, many postsocialist villagers would choose the latter.

Following many of the ethnographic accounts of postsocialist transformations of property, I maintain that, on the one hand, it is wrong to

interpret the permanence of collective forms of agricultural production as a sign of 'devolution' or a mere residual of the socialist past. The role of the restructured village cooperatives must be analysed within a perspective of historical change from the second half of the socialist period to the present, through attention to the economic structure of the village and the use that people make of their land ownership.

In order to highlight patterns of continuity or discontinuity with the pre-socialist and socialist past, this chapter focuses on the way in which decollectivisation has affected economic relations in the village. Some authors have stressed that after 1989 those who held power before socialism were at an advantage to reconstruct their position in the village (Namerová 1997; Róna-Tas 1998; Thelen 2002). Thelen, in a study of a small Hungarian community, argues that the successful combination of economic capital, social networks accumulated throughout the socialist period and the nature of Hungarian collectivisation has made possible what local people define as 'the return of the *kuláks*' (2002). In Királyfa this has not been the case because of a number of external and internal (to the strategies of the former *gazda* group) factors. Conversely, the postsocialist transformation has consolidated the role of the transformed cooperative and dictated clear guidelines through which the relations and use of property have to be structured to be able to gain profit. These guidelines include the successful management of personal networks and a degree of trust towards the cooperative and its representatives in the village.

The chapter is divided into three sections. The first section provides some insights into the decollectivisation process in central Eastern Europe and in Slovakia. The second part deals with the restitution of land and the transformation of the cooperative in Királyfa. The final section considers the economic use of land in present times and the role of the former *gazdák*.

4.2 Decollectivisation in Central Eastern Europe

The paths of decollectivisation followed by the countries formerly belonging to the Soviet bloc are heterogeneous and complex. The abundant literature in the social sciences on the problem eloquently points out that a generalisation of the process of land restitution is risky and often reductive (Giordano 1997; Swain 1999, 2000; Szelényi 1998; Turnock 1998). This can be explained by different factors. First, there was no such thing as a common and unidirectional agrarian socialist policy in these countries. Whereas in Poland and in Yugoslavia, the peasantry remained virtually untouched by forced collectivisation, in other countries this assumed dominant tones (especially in Czechoslovakia, Eastern Germany, Bulgaria, Romania and Russia) for these countries' economic and social systems (Abrahams 1996;

Burawoy and Verdery 1999; Creed 1998; Kideckel 1993). The second factor is that even within single countries the degree of regional variation, due to geographic, economic and even ethnic considerations, played a key role in determining the directions of the land restitution process (Smith 1998; Swain 1999). The regionalism of the process, however, can be said to have accounted for another important factor, the degree of resistance to change of socialist forms of agricultural entrepreneurship.

The persistence of agricultural cooperatives is well documented in the central and Eastern European countryside (Hann 1993b; Kaneff 1998; Verdery 1999). Most of the studies dealing with these institutions point out that their reorganisation from socialist times and the foundation of new institutions have been achieved mainly as 'spontaneous processes' arising from the landowners' strategies of adaptation to the institutional transformation. As Wolz et al. (1998: 58-64) point out, in 1990s Slovakia the inability of new farmers to cope with the instability of the agricultural market, the lack of protective policies and state subsidies that would allow agriculture to shorten the gap with western European standards, the complex and often unclear legislative framework of restitution and the scarcity of economic means on the side of the farmers explain the resiliency of cooperative forms of production. Moreover, the weight of social factors must not be underestimated. The socialist cooperative, in addition to being an economic institution, was also a social and cultural institution that provided the most basic infrastructures needed for the life of the communities. It is evident that the vacuum created by the dissolution of this institution after 1989 was felt with particular intensity by the villagers and that the desire to re-establish similar systems for provision of social services is not completely anachronistic.

4.3 Decollectivisation in Slovakia

The decollectivisation process in the former Czechoslovakia has been treated in detail by several authors (Blaas 1995; Namerová and Swain 1999; Wolz et al 1998). Most of the legal framework for privatisation in Slovakia was issued under the Czechoslovak Federal Republic (1990-1992).

The essential steps of decollectivisation were the transformation of the production sector, restitution and privatisation. Transformation refers to the process through which the socialist agricultural cooperatives were to be turned into corporate or legal structures not based on collective property. This process also involved the confirmation of property rights to assets that were never formally expropriated by the state, but that nonetheless had been transferred *in use* to the cooperatives.

In 1990, Law No. 114 (Digest) and Law No. 229/1991 (Corpus Juris on Amendment of Land and other Agricultural Property) defined the basic steps[63] for restitution under the prescription that all landowners could claim their land back and withdraw this from the agricultural cooperatives (Wolz et al.1998: 47). The basic features of the Czechoslovak restitution process can be summarised in four points. First, restitution was given in kind, i.e. the entire asset that had been taken in use by the state was to be returned to its legal owner(s). Second, restitution was granted only to physical persons. Third, a system of compensation had to be introduced in case the state was unable to give back the claimed asset. In this case a limit of 10,000 Czechoslovak crowns was set as the maximum payment in cash and the compensation process was undertaken by the Czech and Slovak Land Fund.[64] Fourth, the limit for restituted land was set at 150 ha for arable land and 250 for other land; forest land was not restituted.

In spite of the complex implementation of these measures, it soon became evident that decollectivisation was not bound to meet those enthusiastically positive expectations that foresaw a straightforward return to private farming. In Slovakia, owners were formally allowed seven years to decide whether or not to take their assets and start private farming (Namerová and Swain 1998: 208). This measure can be interpreted as a cautious approach to the privatisation wave that, as policy makers probably recognised, proceeded rather slowly. By December 1991 the overall amount of agricultural land restituted in Slovakia was 3020 ha. This number increased to 7700 ha in 1995, although the portion of land definitively given back in full ownership remained constantly one fifth of the temporarily assigned land because of the long registration process (Števlik 1996: 13).

The slowness of the restitution process can be attributed to a number of political and economic factors. Unlike in the Czech lands, where the first postsocialist cabinet guided by Klaus (1993-1998) firmly embraced large-scale privatisation as one of the most significant steps in economic restructuring, in Slovakia the Mečiar government (1993-1998) did very little to fully implement the early federal steps (Dobek 1997). In favour of a 'gradual' transition to capitalism, the Slovak government slowed down and

---

63 The other important steps included two restitution acts (nos. 403/1990 and 87/1991, both Digest), the Large Scale Privatisation Law (92/1991 Digest), the law on Adjustment of Title to Land and other Agricultural Property (229/1992), the 'Act on Landed Property Consolidation, on Land Authority and on Landed Property Associations' (330/1991 Digest) and the act on 'Landed Property Registration' (282/1993 Digest), plus a series of later amendments in the two countries (Wolz et al. 1998: 50).

64 The power of the Land Fund became increasingly crucial as soon as it became clear how long the restitution project was going to take and large portions of land remained unclaimed.

eventually halted the second wave of privatisation after the split of the two republics.[65] This move had important consequences for the development of the national economy and, in the case of agriculture, it fostered the permanence of the cooperative system of production by slowing down the establishment of private farms.

Indeed, the creation of private holdings was not an easy task considering the situation of land ownership in Slovakia. The high degree of fragmentation made it difficult set up viable farms. In 1995, there were over 2 million landowners holding some 7 million plots. Thus, land reforms in the country encountered significant difficulty in overcoming this obstacle.

The restitution process was intended to cover two phases: land registration and consolidation. The first refers to the registration of all privately owned land in the whole territory of the republic. This was due to be completed in 1998 but it eventually lasted until December 1999. The second step, through which full restitution of land and/or compensation would be achieved, was still in progress at the time of my fieldwork.[66]

Transformation of the agricultural enterprises was undertaken on the basis of Act no. 42/1992 'Law on Adjustment of Property Relations and Settlement of Property Claims in Cooperatives'. This required a mandatory change of the cooperatives into institutions based on voluntary membership or other business entities in the form of either limited liability or joint stock companies (Wolz et al. 1998: 52). The legal entities entitled to join the new cooperatives were defined as those who had been members up to November 1991, the owners of land and/or other assets of a minimum value of 30,000 Czechoslovak crowns and those who had claimed assets but had not yet received a final ruling. The laws provided that those who did not wish to join the cooperative could either withdraw their land and start farming privately or claim their shares within seven years.

The first phase of the land reforms was met in the villages with a high degree of instability: in most cases this meant the division of the large unified cooperatives created in the 1970s into a number of new cooperatives. The leading idea was that every village could benefit from its own cooperative, which in many cases proved flawed because of the country's economic weakness, overproduction of the cooperatives and the burden of their debts from the socialist period. The situation began to adjust during the

---

[65] In Slovakia, direct sale was preferred to the voucher system that had been introduced by the Czechoslovak government and that was pushed further in the Czech Republic. One of the most criticised outcomes of Mečiar's cautious transformation was that it gave way to corruption and protectionism since enterprises were allegedly sold to members of the same political faction or to clients.

[66] In Királyfa this process started in March 2000 and, as far as the portion of arable land is concerned, ended in November 2001.

second half of the 1990s. As Table 13 indicates, at the end of 1992 in Slovakia 952 transformed cooperatives had been created out of the 630 units extant in 1989, along with 12 joint stock companies and 9 limited liability companies. In 1998, the number of cooperatives dropped to 831, whereas commercial enterprises (joint stock companies, limited liability companies and general commercial partnership) suddenly increased to 529 units. Moreover, the number of private entrepreneurs, calculated to have been only around 1,000 in 1989, by 1998 increased to 16,909.

Table 13: Transformation of agricultural productive organisations in Slovakia (1989-1998)

	1989	**1992**	**1998**
Production Cooperatives	630	952	831
Joint Stock Companies	--	12	71
Limited Liability Companies	--	9	451
General Commercial Partnerships	--	--	7
Private Farmers	1 000	8 727	16 909

Unit: legal entities
Sources: *Report on Agriculture and Food Sector in the Slovak Republic 1999.* Ministry of Agriculture of the Slovak Republic; Wolz et al. (1998).

A final consideration is due to the structure of the transformed cooperatives. As Namerová and Swain point out, the transformation laws significantly enlarged the cooperatives' membership sphere by favouring the role of 'outsiders', i.e. persons who were granted shares (as members) on the basis

of the number of years they were employed, though not owning assets (1998: 209). Indeed, the three categories present in the postsocialist organisations (members providing land and labour, those providing land only, and labour-only providers) represented a rather heterogeneous whole. A survey in 1993 indicated that 6 percent of all cooperative members belonged to the first group, 32 percent to the second, and 63 percent had worked for but did not own land within the cooperative (Blaas 1995). These members were later allowed to receive small plots, usually 1.5 ha. Thus, the survival of a significant number of transformed cooperatives remained in the hands of members who did not own land within the institutions.

To summarise, in Slovakia, the interplay of a number of economic and political factors created difficulty in accomplishing the restitution process and in establishing large-scale private farming. The weakness of the private farming sector is seen in the country as affected by structural factors (the scarcity of state subsidies and loans, the obsolete and insufficient productive structures and the slow development of local markets). If one adds to these other social (the important role that cooperatives played in the villages during socialism) and political factors (the slow progress of liberalisation policies) it becomes clear why in Slovakia the shift from collective to private farming was by no means a smooth and unproblematic process.

4.4 Transformation of the Cooperative

In 1992, the Šal'a cooperative underwent thorough reorganisation, becoming a cooperative based on 'voluntary membership'. Restructuring of the cooperative followed a complicated process that can be mapped in four main steps: consolidation of property rights, restitution and/or compensation, issue of bonds and reorganisation of membership. The first step concerned the assertion of claims to land as proved by cadastral evidence. Owners were asked to provide valid documents of their properties owned in the 1950s or produce two witnesses able to confirm their claim. This stage was characterised by confusion due to the lack of information on the claiming procedure and, more importantly, the difficulty in providing proof of ownership.

The same year, a general assembly was called in the town stadium, where more than 1,100 claimants were instructed on the formalities of restitution. Restitution was immediately undertaken in the form of cash compensation for those who had suffered confiscation of animals and machinery. In the case of land, however, the situation was far more complicated. Because of the difficulty in physically restituting the same plots of land that owners claimed, the cooperative found itself in the position of having to mediate between the need to find realistic modes of compensation

for original plots and to avoid fragmenting its farming area. The result was that plots which were not restituted because no legal owners could be found and those which the owners returned (leased) to the cooperative are still in use by the cooperative and make up about 60% of the village's arable land (approximately 10% of this 60% has no legal owner). From this land, the cooperative rents out plots to private farmers. The position of these plots in the village changes every two years according to the institution's needs (see below). The land which the cooperative restituted and which today is privately farmed, is generally concentrated in one block, in order to form a compact whole and to avoid alternating private plots and cooperative land.

In the third step, shares were finally issued not only to cooperative members, but to all owners of assets – land, animals, machines and buildings – which had been transferred in use to the cooperative under socialism. The number of shares received depended on the size of the land owned and/or on the number of years that one worked in the institution.[67] Shares are tradable and since 1993 they became subject to the economic performance of the cooperative, which regulates their market value. Presently, some of the shareholders reside neither in the village nor in the town – for example, offspring of local families who left for Bratislava or other destinations. Thus, they are not directly interested in the performance of the cooperative today, especially considering the low value of the shares on the financial market. This is, of course, not the case of many local people who are more directly concerned about the future of the cooperative. Recently, the cooperative management board attempted to get hold of as many shares as possible by convincing shareholders to sell. They mainly targeted those shareholders who live far from the cooperative, since several local people were not willing to sell and thus lose their ties to the institution. However, the value of the shares could rise in the future. One informant commented: 'The cooperative is slowly but gradually improving its performance, thus the values of its shares might be rising. Obviously there are people who want to wait for the most propitious moment to gain something from the sale' (Nándor).

Concerning the restructuring of the institution, in January 1990 the long-term socialist chairman (see Chapter Six), was dismissed. He was replaced by Vince, a descendant of a Šal'a *gazda* family, who during socialism was trained as an agronomist but never entered any cooperative.

---

[67] The value of the shares was fixed at one SK. This is the nominal, administrative value only, which refers to all of the cooperative assets divided by the number of shareholders. The market value instead is calculated on the basis of the cooperative's performance. To quote an example, one member who worked in the cooperative for about 15 years, without providing land, received 12,000 SK (about 300 Euro) in shares.

With his non-socialist background he appeared an ideal candidate considering the mood of the time. Since then he has been reconfirmed twice and he is still in office. In 1992, a general assembly was held and it was decided to maintain the cooperative's unified structure. At the meeting, where all members participated, the voting system adopted was that of one member, one vote, which had been common during socialism. The steps planned for the institution's transformation were explained to the public.

In December 2001 the cooperative had 492 members, 79 of them from Királyfa, and 163 workers, 23 of them from Királyfa (Table 14). It cultivated 3288 ha of land divided in terms of ownership as follows: 1193 ha (36 percent) from the Land Fund[68], 2069 ha (63 percent) rented from private owners, and only 26 ha (1 percent) owned by the cooperative. Animal husbandry, dairy farming and cultivation of grains were the main areas of production and the cooperative was planning to expand its dairy sector (it already owned a milk-production plant situated in the town) and increase its number of cows through by obtaining state and EU subsidies.

Table 14: Work and production in the Šal'a cooperative (2001)

Workers	163
Members	492
Land Total	***3186***
Grains	1326
Fodder	810
Fruit	60
Sugar beets	400
Corn	350
Sunflowers	150
Other	97
Poultry	245
Pigs	4350

[68] The Land Fund was instituted in postsocialist Czechoslovakia in 1991 to incorporate all land that was on the 'waiting list' to be restituted after legal claims were presented. In the case of the Šal'a cooperative, in 1992 the great availability of land in the Fund allowed for a certain relaxation in the rent system, but now the cooperative is required to pay annually 1 percent of the price of land it rents from the Land Fund, whereas the rent to private owners is 1.5 percent.

Cows	2491

Units: person, ha, head
Source: Šal'a Cooperative Accountancy Office Yearly Statistics.

The section of the cooperative still active in Királyfa provides work for 28 villagers, 60 percent of whom are female. In 2000, 69.9 percent (594.6 ha) of Királyfa's arable land was cultivated by the cooperative; this number contracted slightly to 59.2 percent (503.2 ha) by the end of the restitution process in 2001. The section in the village includes pig breeding (about one third of the cooperative's pigs), cattle (about 300 head), a fodder storage facility and some light machinery (tractors and irrigation systems).

The most dramatic outcome of the postsocialist transformation has been the cooperative's reduction of workforce (Chapter Three) explained by its managers as 'a necessary measure in order to cope with modernisation of the cooperative structures' (Lőrinc). However, considering the present proportion of village land farmed by the cooperative, it becomes clear that the presence of the cooperative is still very strong in the community.

4.5 Land Restitution in the Village

Visiting the land belonging to Királyfa, a newcomer takes in a picture rather common in the southern Slovakian rural landscape. One large portion of the cultivated land is undivided and spreads in large patches over the flat, fertile Danubian Lowland. Upon close observation, however, a number of small plots become evident. These privately farmed bits of land have their individual identity, visible due to the different crops cultivated there, as opposed to the almost invisible wooden poles meant to delimit property. The plots extend eastwards, where they become indistinguishable from the inhabited area. Westwards, the main road linking two towns suddenly cuts the village land in two definite portions: the private and the cooperative land. One informant, himself a farmer of a plot of land smaller than 1 ha, accompanying me along the twisted field paths was proud to show me the village's cultivated fields. He pointed out to me the land that had belonged to their 'ancestors' (*ősi föld*) and that had given *kenyér és munka* ('bread and work') to generations of villagers. *Pallóci Dűlő*, *Zsellér Birtok*, *Kutya* – he could name every single part of the fields (*határ*) with the old Hungarian toponyms which I thought had been forgotten by today's inhabitants. However, to my repetitive questions as to who farms the largest plots, he replied: 'It is the cooperative' (Gábor).

The strong economic presence of the cooperative is, paradoxically, one of the main features of the decollectivisation period in Királyfa. Every

year the cooperative allots a portion of village land which is 'measured out' (*kimérve*) of its farmed area to villagers wishing to farm privately, as compensation for their original plots which cannot be physically restituted. This portion amounted to 97 ha in 1992, 110 ha in 1999 and 47 ha in 2001. The dramatic decrease in the last four years demonstrates the number of problems facing small private farmers. First, the land which has been restituted does not constitute, physically, the same land which belonged historically to the families, thus hampering the possibility of a renewed 'emotional attachment' to the plots (Giordano 1997). Socialism has profoundly modified the natural and economic landscape of the village. Villagers express their resistance to the changes by insisting on using the pre-1948 toponyms even though these do not exist on cadastral maps any longer. These names are in most cases the only threads linking them to past relations of ownership.



3. Land cultivated privately usually takes the form of long, narrow strips.

The second order of problems concerns the high costs of private farming. The case of Bence (b.1950) is illustrative. He owns 3 ha of land on which he grows mainly potatoes and vegetables. He comes from a small *gazda* family, who owned, before collectivisation, approximately 5 ha of arable land and 2 ha of forest. The land was inherited in equal parts by Bence and his brother after the death of their father in 1963, but at that time it was included in the

cooperative's land. Bence became a school teacher in the town and his brother worked in the local factory. After 1991, the two brothers successfully claimed their family land back, divided into four plots. Bence's brother insisted on getting back those two plots which originally belonged to the family, but this was not possible because the cooperative had dug a canal which occupied a third of one of the plots. Therefore, he received an additional plot in compensation for the reduced one. However, this meant extra labour since the plot received was situated more than one km away from the other two.

Bence was luckier since he obtained two plots closer together, separated by only one plot in the middle belonging to his neighbour. However, as he stressed on several occasions, neither he nor his brother was 'extremely positive about farming'.

> You know what it means to farm today? Work and money to get almost nothing. You're lucky if you don't lose money. After 1989 my brother and I felt an obligation to have our land back and, once we got it, we had to do something with it, but it wasn't easy. First, it was not the same piece of land our father owned, but it lay scattered around the village. Second, the harder we worked, the less we got out of it. This country is still selling vegetables and grain at the same prices as fifteen years ago, but ask how much seeds and fertilizers cost today: they cost much more! No wonder my brother decided to lease the land to the cooperative!
>
> (Bence)

The amount of land that made a large *gazda* wealthy in the 1930s-1940s is of almost no economic benefit today because of two main factors: the above-mentioned fragmentation of plots and the small returns from farming. Not only it is improbable for claimants to receive back land in its original location, but the changes in the landscape (digging of canals, installation of irrigation systems, construction of cooperative buildings and deforestation) brought about by collectivisation have further fragmented plots and make it impossible to farm all of the land one owns. In addition, farming costs have grown steadily since the start of decollectivisation, as workforce, machinery, fertilizers and seeds have become more costly and less available than they were sixty years ago. The widespread use of chemical fertilizers has left the land 'tired' and sterile, requiring continuous, abundant use of them. Finally, with the unification of the cooperative in the 1970s, the village's *gazdák*,

who had until then maintained their control over market channels, had abandoned agriculture.

Before entering into a discussion of the economic use that villagers make of their restituted land, it is important to spell out two of the above-mentioned factors which have rendered private farming a non-viable option: the composition of landholdings and the access channels to the local market. The plots that the cooperative gives out (leases or allots) to private farmers are constantly changing. This depends on the need to balance the cooperative's and the farmers' interests. As the portion of land to be 'measured out' varies every year (since the number of people wishing to farm their land as well as the amount of land they wish to farm differs every year), the cooperative is forced to work on an area that is always fluctuating in size, quality and positioning.[69] The outcome of this fluctuation (unlike the 'elasticity' indicated by Verdery, 1994) is that, in order to be able to farm land and gain access to loans or subsidies, private farmers have to be able to fruitfully manage social relations on different levels. These range from within the village, to the cooperative, the cadastral office, the Land Fund and the county administration. These practices retain a strong degree of continuity with the socialist period (see previous chapter), particularly with the practice of distributing membership plots. The recourse to informal ties in order to approach formal institutions and gain benefits (such as loans, subsidies or simply the allocation of land in favourable locations) is a well-established feature of Slovak agriculture (Namerová 1997). In Királyfa, because local *gazdák* definitively lost their privileged position after the 1973 unification, these ties had to be structured outside the community, with local party cadres and officials. The outcome is quite dissimilar to what Thelen describes for one Hungarian community (2002). Today the descendants of the rich peasants do not have the capital to farm profitably and, what is more important, they lack the social networks and necessary links to local markets and political authorities (the Land Office, Land Fund, the district and county administrations). As a result, even those who did not practice agriculture before socialism and hence do not have a *gazda* background may be successful in managing social networks and in farming on a relatively large scale. This is the case of the two large farmers in the village today.

---

[69] Villagers often complain about the quality of land that the cooperative assigns to them. One farmer told me that the land which was assigned to him was sandy and far from his garden, where most of his farming activities took place. Another farmer declared that he would never be able to have a satisfactory income from that land because of the cooperative's heavy use of chemical fertilizers in the past. This, in the long run, has significantly lowered productivity.

Two out of the six registered private farmers in the village work on over 20 hectares. These two farmers share three similar features: they have no farming history in their families, they have no education or formal training in agricultural practices and they enjoy the help of rather large kin networks residing in the village.

Márton (b.1948) is a good example. He farms about 24 ha of land, producing mainly vegetables and watermelons. His fields are easy to distinguish from those of the other small farmers, as well as those of the cooperative: there are always a large number of people working manually in his fields. These workers are mainly co-villagers, tied to him through 'mutual respect' and 'trust', as he himself stresses.

Márton was not a farmer before; his father worked on the railway and his mother was one of the two village midwives. He has no formal training in agriculture: he worked in a factory providing machine services in the nearby town and soon became the chief, responsible for the machine park. However, after 1989 the factory's economic situation worsened. Wages showed no signs of increase and responsibilities grew, as Márton recalled: 'They offered me a salary of 4500 Slovak crowns (about 110 Euro) to watch a parking station where only what was cemented down could not be stolen. That was too much for me. It was then that I decided to start farming'. In the socialist period the factory was in partnership with the agricultural cooperative, thus, Márton gained more than simple work experience during these times. He got to know people from the cooperative, and these relationships turned out to be extremely valuable connections after 1992.

He learned farming by helping his father-in-law, a small farmer who, during the last decade of socialism, earned some money selling peppers grown on his small private plot. Márton learned from him to 'respect the land' and to get the best from it. After his wife inherited the paternal land he decided to try a new life. He acquired land by renting from the cooperative and from relatives, obtaining an almost compact block of 26 ha, as he explained:

> It was important for me to think of the position of the plots. I could not farm with plots scattered here and there; that is why eventually it was more convenient to resort to the cooperative. First I tried asking some villagers to sell or rent land to me, but it was very hard. It could have taken me six months to have some ten hectares of land. Then I decided to go to the cooperative. They really helped me! Even though people continue offering me their land, I have to refuse. How could I farm that land scattered all over the village?'

He eventually registered as a private farmer and started contracting with large retail companies for direct seasonal sales of his products.

> I needed to overcome the poor conditions of direct sales. Now I have agreements with retailers from all over the country. We know each other and that is what counts. They punctually provide me with a contract, those pieces of paper with which my granddaughter plays in the afternoon. They are worth nothing – what really counts is that we know and trust each other. However, you know that we have to receive these papers: it is the only way I can secure some kind of state assistance.

Márton believes in his work and seems optimistic about the future of farming, even. However:

> The problems will come when we enter the EU; western countries are ages ahead of us and we will recognise that our faming, with all the manual techniques that we use, can just collapse when faced with that of western countries. You can see it: someone organises seasonal training courses for private farmers in Slovakia; experts come from the west and nobody is there to listen to them. There are more people to help the experts with their stay here than participants, how embarrassing!

He respects the work of the cooperative, stating that there is no real difference between what the private sector and the cooperative does.

> Once it was different – they were the protected. Now things are reversing; it is hard for the cooperatives and a lot of them have dissolved. But I respect their work here, we are on good terms and I can't complain since they have provided me with land and machines whenever I need some more.

Márton's relatively optimistic attitude is confirmed by his ability to manage relations with the cooperative and to obtain the land he wanted as well as, until recently, to hire the machinery he needed (presently he is self-sufficient in terms of machinery).

Similar considerations apply to the second success story. Zoltán (b. 1946) also comes from a landless family. Unlike his rival, his father had farming experience since he worked as a *zsellér* on local estates. During socialism his father left for Bohemia, where he worked in a brick factory and

later in a state cooperative for seven years. He came back in the late 1950s and found employment in a factory in Bratislava. Zoltán too worked in the local (town) factory, yet in 1992 he decided to purchase (4 ha) and rent some land from relatives and the cooperative, acquiring a total of about 24 ha. Unlike Márton, he does not hire any workers on his land, because he can count on an extensive kin network (he has two brothers and two sisters in the village) providing him with a relatively inexpensive labour force. In the eyes of other villagers, Zoltán is doing well and every year some are ready to bet on the outcome of the two farmers' crops, judging on the basis of their material wealth.[70]

Zoltán and Márton's cases are, however, not representative of the community as a whole. After the end of the first wave of restitution (1993-1997), there was widespread optimism for farming as a potentially profitable enterprise. This is the story of one villager, a descendant of a small peasant family and owner of 2 ha, as it was told to me by his cousin.

> Soon after 1989 there was a wave of enthusiasm everywhere. My cousin had received back some few hectares of land and, renting some other bits, he started thinking that farming could be a good idea. He had in mind that money would come flowing under his garden gate. So they started working the land, with his wife and parents. Things got so hard. One year a drought, another – heavy rains, and prices went down and down. Then his parents became too old to work with him. That was the point when he came to me and asked: Jancsi, how much money do I need to put into these 3 hectares of land to have some profit? I helped him. It was not a matter of experience, I explained, you can learn it and he seemed quite quick. So we had his land analysed and calculated what kind and how much fertilizer he needed. He did everything following my instructions and at the end of the season he had a loss of some hundred crowns. That was a good result for the beginning, I told him. He was furious. He promised he would go and give the land back to the cooperative, and so he did.
>
> (János, b.1954)

[70] For instance, in 2000 Márton had a good income thanks to the cultivation of cabbage and lettuce. This, however, was not repeated in 2001, when Zoltán seemed to be better off in terms of the final crop. Even though Márton is believed to have greater capital and means (machinery and land) available, Zoltán has an apparently wealthier lifestyle and, followed by one of his brothers, has built a new two-story house in the village.

The features of socialist collectivisation have made private farming a difficult and risky undertaking. The approach of many of the landowners to land would confirm the general picture of disillusionment that followed the initial optimism of the early 1990s. Other authors have argued that land tends to be considered more as a 'liability' than a precious asset today (Verdery 2001); in Királyfa this seems to hold true only with regard to the inability of the former large holders to return to the scene. The two cases of large-scale farming demonstrate that some opportunities to gain profit through farming do exist. These opportunities depend significantly on the use of (kin or extra-kin) networks which allow investment in social rather than economic assets in order to gain access to local and national services.

4.6 The Use of Land: Between Subsistence and Market Economy

The next question that needs to be addressed concerns the use to which restituted land is put. The first is of an economic nature. One informant commented: 'Land is everything for us, even if people seem not to recognise it. Land is what people hate but at the same time it is what makes us survive' (Gábor). The results collected from a questionnaire survey of a random sample of 100 households provide some insights into the problem of private farming in the village (Table 15). Answers to questions 1-2 indicate that 50 percent of the surveyed households own agricultural land and 41 percent farm land. The percentage of households renting out land (question 3) is 16; 7 percent both rent out and farm their land. Only three families rent land from the cooperative and two of these also rent from other villagers.[71] In addition, the answers to the question: 'To whom do you rent out your land?' (question 4) demonstrate a certain balance between the cooperative (8 cases), friends (6 cases), other private farmers in the village (6 cases) and both to friends and private farmers (2 cases).

[71] The three households who rent land are the two large farmers and another villager who stated that he owned 0.3 ha and rented 0.7 ha.



4. “The granary of the country”: a cooperative-farmed wheatfield.

Table 15: Agricultural land use in Királyfa. Results of a random survey of 100 households

Q1. Do you farm land other than garden plots?			
YES: 41		NO: 59	
Q2. Do you own arable land?			
YES: 50		NO: 50	
Q3. Do you rent out land (a), work on your land (b), or both (c)?			
(a): 16	(b): 39	(c): 5	
Q4. To whom do you rent your land?			
(a) friends, relatives: 6	(b) cooperative: 8	(c) other farmers in the village: 4	(d) a+c: 2
Q5. Do you rent land?			
YES: 3		NO: 97	
Q6. From whom do you rent your land?			
(a) friends, relatives: 0	(b) cooperative: 3	(c) other farmers in the village:2	(d) a+c: 2
Q7. What is the area of the arable land you cultivate?			
(a) < 1 ha: 27	(b) 1-3 ha: 10	(c) 4-6 ha: 2	(d) >20 ha: 2
Q8. Do you sell your products or part of them?			
YES: 36		NO: 5	

Source: questionnaire survey.
Unit: households

Concerning the size of land plots (question 7), the questionnaire identified only two cases of large-scale farming (more than 20 ha); the majority of landowners are farming relatively small plots. In 27 cases (66 percent) out of 41 farming households the farm size is smaller than 1 ha. Ten households (24 percent) have plots ranging from 1 to 3 ha. There are two households who farm plots from 4 to 6 ha. Question 8 addressed the use of agricultural products: 36 households sell the products of their farming through various channels. This constitutes 88 percent of all those who cultivate land. The retail channels include (as answered in the questionnaire): small retailers, the town market, contract sale and friends.

The above data suggest that, first, owners tend not to farm all of their holdings, but to keep an optimal size, which is usually from 0.5 to 2 ha (see next chapter). Second, in spite of the size of plots, land is not only used for domestic consumption, as could be expected, but a portion of the products grown sold. Third, the channels through which products are sold depend significantly on the personal networks and connections that villagers have in the local retail sector. The following example may clarify the situation.

Szilveszter, 61-years old, owns and cultivates 1.6 ha of land and a garden of approximately 12 are (1 are corresponds to 100 m²). He cultivates his household plot[72] with the help of his wife and two of his adult children who reside in the village. The usual crops are grains (barley, wheat and oats), potatoes and onions which he mainly uses as feed for his animals (pigs, chickens and ducks). He grows fruit, vegetables and red peppers for paprika in his garden. Because the household plot and the garden are sufficiently large to allow him a small degree of experimentation for commercial purposes, last year Szilveszter decided to plant some herbs. Thanks to his personal knowledge of a small town retailer, he obtained a contract for herb production and the significant income was used by the family for household repairs. Furthermore, Szilveszter also produces surplus quantities of paprika powder (both sweet and hot) which he sells to villagers and town relatives. He insists that for him selling on the market is not worthwhile, because he feels that 'it is always safer to know personally to whom to sell'.

As in the case of large farmers, personal knowledge of local retailers and markets is what drives people to make their economic choices in regards to agriculture. Szilveszter's case is common in the village. Even if the size of family landholdings is not sufficient to engage in full-time farming, a portion of the family's income often derives from the sale of products grown on household plots and gardens. This tendency further illustrated by the use that middle farmers make of their assets.

Middle farmers, usually cultivating an area from 2 to 6 ha, use their assets (including garden plots) to produce vegetables (peppers, tomato, onions, carrots and potatoes), fruit (watermelons, melons and apples) and paprika powder for sale. The sale of products can be conducted in different manners. One possibility is direct sale in small, improvised kiosks on the main road connecting the village with the two district centres (Šal'a and Galanta). These sale points are open throughout the summer season and the number of cars and trucks stopping on their way to the towns suggests that

[72] I define as a household plot that land which is situated outside the village (extrazonal section), whereas garden plots are within the village (intrazonal section) and are usually attached to the owners' houses.

they make significant profits.[73] One woman, busy weighing melons for town customers, said: 'We are here because people travelling on this road know that they can expect to buy our products here every summer' (Mónika, b.1956).



5. Street selling along the Šal'a-Galanta road.

The combination of intensive (mainly vegetables and fruits) with extensive farming products (grains and corn) provides space for balancing subsistence farming and market sales. Household plots are mainly used for growing grains (usually two thirds of the crop is used as feed for household animals), corn, potatoes and some vegetables. On the other hand, almost all villagers own gardens.[74] Their size ranges from 2 a to up to 16 a, usually depending on the family's past social and economic position (see next chapter). Villagers usually grow vegetables, fruit and flowers in them. As seen above, products from the garden and other land are commonly used by villagers for purposes that transcend the mere subsistence sphere.

---

[73] It was difficult to obtain precise data on this topic due to their unclear fiscal position. It is here sufficient to note that the number of these sales points have increased from six to over ten during the last two years.

[74] Only one interviewee out of one hundred did not possess a garden. He lives in one of the two apartment blocks built in the village in the 1970s and inhabited by 12 families; most of them do not own gardens.

4.7 Discontinuity: The Role of the Old *Gazdák*

The role of the old *gazdák,* who (see Chapters Two and Three) succeeded in maintaining their power in the community until the mid 1960s, gradually diminished afterwards. This was due to a series of factors ranging from the generational change to the effects of the unification of the socialist cooperative. One feature that makes Királyfa in the 1990s unusual among other postsocialist rural communities (see also Namerová 1997) is that the former *gazda* families did not play an active part in the de-collectivisation process. Only one of the seven large *gazda* families living in Királyfa during the second half of the 20th century presently farms a small plot of land (1.5 ha), whereas the others have all abandoned the option of returning to farming. One of them, Mihály (see Chapter Two), a 77 year-old retired railway policeman, said that in the beginning of the 1990s he claimed back his family land and tried to attract his eldest son who lives in the town to come back:

> We managed to have restituted two thirds of our land. It makes 14 ha, including my wife's property. I asked my son János to come and help me; he said he would but he never did. The restitution procedures took longer than expected and working on the land also didn't attract János. Finally, I was very disappointed with him and didn't know what to do with the land. I had my daughter-in-law come and work parts of it for two years. I rented the remainder to other villagers. Then, after two years my daughter-in-law was also fed up with the land. 'Mom', she said, 'this land is too much. I feel I am wasting all my energy on it and I don't want it! Tell Mihály bácsi that we give up. He has to understand that it's not like in the old days. Now land doesn't pay'. What could I do then? I leased the land back to the cooperative and partly to other villagers. Nowadays, I can be glad to have this option open.

The unwillingness of the *gazda* descendants to take up farming, in spite of the fact that they are the only group who would be able to benefit from comparatively large portions of land under their ownership, needs to be explained by looking at different factors. On the one hand, there are external causes such as those mentioned above, i.e. the scarce personal networks on the local level due to the *gazdák* absence from the agricultural scene during socialism. On the other hand, there are a number of factors which are linked to the changing social features of the former *gazda* group.

One is the ageing of this group, since there are today only two middle-aged male descendants living in Királyfa, (both work in the town), whereas

three other descendants (sons) are all well above retirement age. The present absence of *gazda* descendants is due to the nature of the very strategies that this group had used in the pre-socialist past to manage and perpetuate control of economic resources (see Chapter Two). The custom of late retirement from the position of household head, the preference for only one male heir and the high investment in the education of other sons, all aimed at maintaining the farmstead intact through generations, severely reduced the possibility that other heirs would take up farming after restitution. Since most of the descendants of *gazda* families do not live in the village today, these families' tie to their land has dramatically weakened. The comparatively higher education level of the children of the *gazdák* led them to seek better careers outside community.[75]

Today, what has remained of the *gazda* group is their prestige in the community and some of the values that underpinned their relationship to the community in pre-socialist times (see Chapter Seven).

4.8 Conclusion

Postsocialist decollectivisation has been a slow and complex process in Királyfa. Here the successor to the unified socialist cooperative has proved not only resistant to change, but has even strengthened its economic role. This is an outcome of several causes, which range from the 'mild' state policies of decollectivisation in the early 1990s to the unwillingness of many village owners to take up large-scale private farming.

The most significant points for understanding decollectivisation in Királyfa are two: the inability of the pre-socialist *gazdák* to revitalise their economic position and the crucial importance of re-structured networks both within and outside the community. Concerning the first point, Királyfa differs from the cases described by Thelen (2002) and other authors (Namerová 1997): in Királyfa former large landowners have been prevented from re-configuring their power after 1989 because of the features of socialist collectivisation, the time and nature of postsocialist decollectivisation as well as the consequences of their own pre-socialist economic strategies. It became clear that only those who were in possession of solid personal networks with the cooperative and the other centres of political authority would be able to successfully manage the transformation. This has not been the case for the descendants of *gazdák*, alienated from their land and distant from the local market.

---

[75] The children of *gazdák* were usually not discriminated against (e.g. in the field of higher education) to the same degree as those from large *kulák* families.

Conversely, the two cases of large-scale farmers in the village seem to demonstrate that we are witnessing today the consolidation of a new economic order. This would apparently suggest that the picture of continuity with the past has been radically altered by the postsocialist events. However, as the previous chapter illustrated, the socialist period is not to be considered a uniform temporal framework, since it was characterised by different strategies and processes of adaptations to the major institutional transformations. In light of this perspective, it makes sense to envision a degree of continuity with late socialism, from the final stage of collectivisation (1973) onwards, when the old constellations of power holders ceased to directly determine the historical development of the village. The strong role of the cooperative today is part of this process of continuity, even though villagers' relationship with the institution has profoundly changed after the restitution of ownership rights. Here as in previous chapters, property constitutes the main thread through which historical change, continuity and discontinuity are traced in everyday practices and ideas. The next chapter will move to the social sphere, analysing how changing patterns of ownership affect the manner in which people build and maintain their social ties.

Chapter 5
Household Economy: Work, Production, Consumption and the Hidden Bases of Trust

5.1 Introduction

The previous three chapters provided historical analysis of the village's main transformations in the course of modernisation and post-collectivisation. In order to understand the importance of the past as a framework for villagers' present strategies of adaptation to postsocialist changes, one needs to pay attention to the ways in which continuity and/or innovation are established.

This chapter analyses the dynamics of household production and the exchange of labour in the community. I explore how two economic resources, land and labour, are converted by villagers into investments that strengthen social relations between kin members and beyond the family. I maintain that the use of these resources follows lines that are defined by rules of behaviour, relatedness and social trust. Trust is grounded on moral values and principles, such as reciprocity, obligations and exchange that underpin villagers' informal relations of production and consumption and dictate the logic of their profitability. The emphasis on trust as the leading factor for undertaking economic transactions or for requesting cooperation, help and labour is itself a product of postsocialism, though it has its roots in much older practices. In this and following chapters, trust is highlighted as a key analytical tool for understanding villagers' everyday actions.

My theoretical framework is based on the long-established discourse on the domestic mode of production and the household economy paradigm which draws on the economic insights of Chayanov (Thorner et al. 1966; Sahlins 1972; Donham 1981). I do not propose to apply Chayanov's model to the village's domestic production sphere; rather I intend to isolate the Chayanovian components (work, consumption and the use of assets) that make up the process of household production and to relate them to patterns of social interaction. The main argument of this chapter is that household economic practices transcend the mere economic sphere of profit-seeking

and are oriented towards the creation and maintenance of a web of ties that link, with different degrees of equality, members of the community. These ties are constructed by recourse to a series of duties and obligations that, especially among kin members, generate and perpetuate interpersonal trust.

The first section of the chapter investigates the economic basis of the household in present times. I analyse some features of the village's occupational structure and attempt to provide insights into the strategies that characterise household production and the use of gardens and small household plots. The second section deals with consumption patterns and their changes in the postsocialist period, relating these to the production sphere. Finally, I analyse the manner in which work, particularly in the context of the household, is provided, idealised and transacted among people.

5.2 Household Structure and Employment

The household is defined here as a group of family members who live under the same roof, share meals together and have common grounds of production and consumption. This is the classic anthropological vision of the family as a unit of consumption, production and social reproduction (Hart 1992), and it does not depend on the different occupational sectors of its members. Today the village is composed of 491 households with 1531 inhabitants, with an average household size of 3.11 persons per family. Table 16 outlines the village's occupational structure.

6. The anthropologists's landlady in her paprika-dominated pantry.



Table 16: Population, employment and occupation in Királyfa, 2001

Total inhabitants	**1 531**	**%**
Male	737	48.1
Female	794	51.9
Adults	1 232	80.5
Retired	439	28.7
Economically active	**723**	**47.2**
Male	390	25.4
Female	333	21.8
Gainfully employed, total	562	36.7
Unemployed	140	9.1
Agriculture	44	
Private entrepreneurs in agriculture	4	
Industry	166	
Services and shops	161	
Intellectual work	131	
Private entrepreneurs	56	

Unit: persons, percentage
Source: Obecný úrad Král'ová nad Váhom, Census 2001.

Two immediate considerations arise from this table: the first is that 28.7 percent of the village's inhabitants (and more than one third of its adult population) are retired people. The second point is that persons officially employed in agriculture are the least numerous of the categories, with only 48 individuals, four of whom are registered as private entrepreneurs. On the other hand, industry employs, in spite of its regional crisis, the largest number of villagers (166 individuals). Services and shops and intellectual work follow at 161 and 131 persons respectively. Table 17 explains household-level gender variations in relation to occupation.

Table 17: Household and working structure, Királyfa 2001. Sample of 100 households

Occupation	**Male**	**Female**	**Total**
Agriculture	5	0	5
Private entrepreneur*	12	5	17
Industry	27	18	45
Services	10	9	19
Intellectual work	13	27	40
Craftsmen	3	0	3
Housewife	0	1	1
Other	7	9	16
Total employed	**77**	**69**	**146**
Retired	11	28	39
Unemployed	21	12	33
Minor age	38	29	67
Total inactive	**70**	**69**	**139**
Total sampled	**147**	**138**	**285**

unit: persons
source: questionnaire survey.

There are some interesting data that can be extrapolated from this table. From a total 285 household members who provided information on their economic activity, 146 described themselves as income receivers[76] (51 percent) and 139 as economically inactive (including minors, retirees and unemployed). The overall number of those retired and unemployed is roughly equivalent. More significantly, the rate of unemployment for men is twice as high as for women. On the other hand, in the retired population female members outnumber males by more than two to one. This is probably to be explained by the higher life expectancy of women.

Regarding occupation, women exceed men in intellectual work (27 to 13), whereas men are more numerous than women in industry (27 to 18),

[76] By income receivers I mean those villagers who regularly receive income on the basis of their work throughout the year; therefore seasonal or occasional occupations are excluded.

private enterprises (12 to 5) and crafts (3 to 0). There are no women in the agricultural sector. Moreover, only one woman of working age identified herself as a housewife, thus confirming the socialist trend towards female waged employment (Haller et al. 1990). The last point is that the number of people receiving social assistance is fairly high. In contrast to 146 working individuals, 72 receive some kind of social benefit (in 33 cases this is unemployment assistance or some other kind of subsidy).[77] This demonstrates that state benefits often form an important part of a household's monthly income.

To sum up, the basic demographic data described above present a picture common to many central Eastern European villages. Some of the most common social problems are aging, unemployment and the small size of families due to the reduced number of children. There seems to be no great difference in the number of employed men and women, apart from the gender connotations of certain occupations. However, the most striking particular is that, in both tables, the number of gainfully active villagers is about half that of the active adult population. This suggests that many villagers – including those receiving social benefits which, as seen above, are often not enough to meet subsistence levels – have to seek the means for their livelihood elsewhere.

5.3 Household Production

In order to see behind the data provided above into the real nature of people's strategies for coping with the everyday, one must also consider patterns of household production and consumption. The following table (18) compares prices with the average income in the region in 2001:

[77] The average retirement premium in Slovakia in September 2000 was 4000 SK a month; disability pensions ranged from 2500 to over 5000 SK, depending on the degree of disability. Unemployment and social assistance are given only for short periods and in the case of the former, proof that employment was undertaken in the last two years is required; the monthly sum ranges from 2000 to 3000 SK (one Euro, as of April 12, 2002 corresponded to 41.47 SK).

Table 18: Prices and average income in the Šal'a district, 2001

Food	
Bread (1 kg)	15
Milk (1 l)	12
Rice (1 kg)	27
Wine (1 l)	50
Eggs (6)	30
Pork (1 kg)	140
Oil (1 l)	50
Monthly House Expenses	
Water	160
Electricity	120
Gas	150-250
Telephone	150
Garbage	80
Gasoline	700
Average monthly salary (after tax)*:	7000

Unit: Slovak crowns
*Average monthly salary refers to paid labour in the services and intellectual sector; in other sectors it tends to be much less. There are also gender-related differences.
Source: own observation and data collection.

The above table, constructed on the basis of personal observation in one village household, refers to ideal conditions of consumption in the village in a family of two adults and one child and does not include extra costs such as medical treatment, clothes, leisure activities, household repairs, books, taxes or other incidentals. Within this framework, it seems evident that a family is not able to cope with the cost of living without other sources of domestic income. Two other factors must be mentioned which support this view: a large number of male household heads do not receive a fixed income[78] and

[78] Caution is again needed since, mainly for taxation purposes or in order to be entitled to receive state benefits, there are people who do not register as workers. I met at least five officially unemployed villagers who performed seasonal labour in western countries such as Austria, Italy and Germany and who turned out, in the end, to own expensive cars and to have elegantly decorated and furnished new houses.

only a small percentage of children residing in the household are either of the age or have the possibility to find employment (Table 17). How then can a family manage its household finances?

The shortest answer to this question is through production on family plots and gardening.[79] The more complete answer, to which evidence will be given below, is that careful use of gardens and household plots, combined with strategies of balancing consumption to production and paid labour, constitute the basis on which inter-household relations (as well as relations with local institutions) are constructed. These relations are underpinned by a set of values and ideas commonly shared at the village level. The following two sections consider the problem of production and the relation of consumption to production as they are structured in daily economic action.

The notion of a 'second economy' is one of the key arguments in the treatment of Eastern European societies in transformation. A large number of works have analysed the manner in which secondary economic practices – mainly petty commodity production, gardening and animal farming – already sustained village economies during socialism and eventually projected them into quasi-market orientations (Szelényi 1988; Hann 1990; Sik 1992; Swain 1992 and Lampland 1995, to quote only those dealing with Hungary). The Hungarian economist Gábor (1979) defined the second economy as the group of activities and transactions that did not fall under the state socialist sector. He described three dimensions in the classification of these practices: legality, integration and source of income. Secondary economic practices are defined as legal, versus illegal practices, and were integrated within the socialist system, i.e. they were not performed outside of it. Furthermore, what distinguishes these practices is that the source of income could be labour, position in the first and secondary economic sectors and networks achieved through this, wealth or productive assets. Sik develops this argument further by pointing out that the transformation of the postsocialist economy has been achieved in the framework already provided by the second economy (Sik 1992: 2). He maintains that, although due to the changes taking place in the social and political systems of these countries, the distinction between the first and second economy has become blurred, the 'spirit and the practice of the second economy haunts the new Hungarian market economy and shapes the institutional conditions and the behaviour of those who want to enter the formal economy' (Sik 1992: 29).

In Királyfa, secondary economic practices had solid ground in the last two decades of the socialist period. According to the village Chronicle, in

[79] I decided to split the two categories since I found that people refer in two different manners to their garden plots (*kert* and *kiskert*) and to their small land plots (*családi föld*), even when the difference in size among the two is not so striking.

the period 1979-1982 there were repeated calls to avoid fiscal evasion linked to secondary economic practices. In 1979 the Chronicle denounced the high number of craftsmen who used their after-work hours to provide paid labour to other villagers and town dwellers (Krónika 1987: 87). These practices, commonly known as *fusi*, became so widespread in the community that in 1982 the village authorities decided to institute a central office coordinating for all skilled labour in the village. This measure had two purposes: first, to grant village craftsmen employment at a time, when, as the Chronicle observed, 'there were plenty of construction operations taking place' (see Chapter Six); and second, to create a source of accountability for and central control of secondary economic practices (Krónika 1987: 88).

These practices extended also to work in gardens and small household plots. As with the craftsmen, the Chronicle was also concerned with cultivation in private greenhouses:

> Those who make use of their gardens to build big greenhouses to grow vegetables (such as cucumbers and tomatoes) are damaging to the whole community. They are able to sell these products at very high prices and their incomes become much more differentiated from those of other villagers. A list of all greenhouses in the village is needed in order to register them as taxable entities.
>
> (Krónika 1987: 87)

The interesting paradox is that, one page below in the same document, the following can be read: 'The village kindergarten and both schools have purchased fruit for the children from private farmers in the village. This allowed the schools to buy at cheaper prices than in the shops' (Krónika 1987: 88). As can be seen, secondary economic practices were widespread in the community and although the dominant political ideology officially condemned them, the cases dictated by necessity could lead even public authorities to benefit from the products of these practices.

Villagers made careful use of their gardens and small parcels of land to produce vegetables and grains to raise pigs, chickens, ducks, turkeys and goats and this practice occupied a regular portion of their everyday life. Hann and Swain share the idea that in Hungary the collective agricultural sector worked in a 'symbiotic' relationship with private farming practices that allowed for diversification of production and increased the scope of villagers' survival strategies (Hann 1980; Swain 1985). Lampland has pointed out how such practices acquire value when considered in relation to the spatial context of their implementation, i.e. the domestic sphere

(Lampland 1995). Ethnographers of Eastern European communities have described the distinction between public and private spheres as a pervasive feature of socialism which structured people's contexts of action (see Swain 1985; Répássy and Symes 1993; Skalník 1993). The second economy was successful where the formal economic sector failed: it linked actors to the means of production and eventually situated them in a spatial context which was neither dichotomous nor distant from the family.

One village informant, pointing out why he planted vegetables in his garden of only 12 a, said:

> Before [under socialism] we didn't lack anything. There was enough food and it was possible to live a decent life, but I needed to work in my garden to have a sense of achievement through my own work. Today I plant the same seeds and seedlings as before, but the reason to do so has changed. I need to do it to provide enough food for my family. I don't regret this work, but now unfortunately I must do it.
>
> (Viktor, b. 1956)

As these words eloquently state, villagers are still compelled to resort to secondary economic practices, but with a different degree of necessity. Table 19 provides some insights into the custom of keeping gardens (for data on household plots refer to Chapter Four) and use of them as supplementary sources of income and food production:



7. The house garden is utilised intensively for the cultivation of vegetables and fruits

Table 19: Gardening in the village, 2001

Q1. Do you own a garden?					
YES: 99			NO: 1		
Q2. What is the size of your garden?					
1 a-7 a: 48	8 a-15 a: 42		16 a-23 a: 5	24 a or more: 5	
Q3. What do you cultivate in your garden?					
Vegetables :96	Fruits: 79	Fodder: 12	Paprika for powder: 18	Flowers for sale: 9	Other: 4
Q4. Do you raise animals (pets excluded)?					
YES: 64			NO: 36		
Q5. What percentage of your annual meat consumption is covered by animals you raise?					
100 percent: 0	75 percent:14	50 percent: 16	25 percent: 14	less than 25 percent: 42	
Q6. What kind of animals do you raise?					
Chickens:52	Pigs:28	Ducks:9	Turkeys:5	Rabbits:17	Others:2	None:40

Unit: household
Source: questionnaire survey.

All of the villagers interviewed, except for one, own garden plots in addition to their household plots. Most garden owners can be divided into two categories according to the size of their gardens: owners with up to 7 a and those with plots from 7 to 16 a. The common pattern of cultivation on garden plots is to grow vegetables, to have some fruit trees (mainly cherries, plums, apricots, peaches and walnuts) and, where land is available, to grow animal fodder (corn and peas) as well. Household plots are commonly used to cultivate first of all grains (wheat, barley, oat, millet and spelt), beets (sugar beets and other beets used as fodder), potatoes and lastly vegetables.

Along with vegetables (onions, cabbage, tomatoes, cucumbers, lettuce) there are two items that are mainly produced for sale, both in gardens and household plots: peppers (*paprika*) and flowers. Peppers, which sell very well in Europe, are produced in Slovakia only in the southern regions. Unlike in Hungary, however, Slovak farmers and household producers do not have the degree of technical expertise and materials that would allow them to compete directly on the western European market, so

they remain confined to sales in Slovakia and the Czech Republic.[80] Peppers are an important item of production also because of the dry variant (paprika), largely used for seasoning food throughout Slovakia. The paprika powder, in its two versions, sweet and hot, is highly valued on local markets and constitutes an important exchange good between relatives and friends. One woman, who lives in the town and still has her parents in the village commented: 'we don't need to buy paprika, we always get it from our relatives in the village' (Viktória, b. 1961).

The case of flowers is somewhat similar. In the socialist period some families already grew flowers for merely economic purposes in greenhouses built in their gardens. The end of socialism did not bring about the expansion of this practice, as it did for many other secondary activities which became main entrepreneurial occupations. Today, there are village families who supplement their income(s) by selling flowers and/or seeds and seedlings under commission. Apart from the commercial side, growing flowers is characterised by strong symbolic and social connotations. On the one hand, flowers are considered very important to the image of a properly kept house. Access to all village houses is marked by small flowerbeds covered with grass, flowers and usually some trees.[81] This little space, not larger than six square metres, is meticulously cared for. Apart from this space, however, portions of the courtyard and of the garden are often utilised to plant flowers which are not only used for decoration but are also sold. Flowers are also used as items that attract town relatives to the village, especially on important ritual occasions such as Women's Day, All Saints' Day, Corpus Christi Day (see Chapter Eight) and the Pentecost, when flowers are collected by children from their grandparents' or uncles' gardens and brought to their mothers, to the church or put on graves. This is what makes flower growing worthwhile, beyond household needs. It is extremely rare that town dwellers with village relatives would go to a flower shop and purchase there what they could get from their families during these festivities. In other words, growing flowers is part of the set of obligations

---

80 Local experts indicated the absence of storage rooms and refrigeration as the main weak point of Slovak fruit and vegetable production. They stressed that in Slovakia the market for off-season fruits and vegetables is still weak. This makes investment in storage facilities scarcely profitable.

81 The custom of keeping some fruit trees in front of the house was widely followed until recently. Even though this land does not belong to the house, use of the fruits was strictly confined to the house's inhabitants. However, nowadays there are more and more who prefer other sorts of trees. As informants sadly pointed out, today people prefer flowers and other trees, thus tending to neglect this tradition which distinguished Hungarian villages from others.

(see below) that tie relatives and bring separated relatives closer on several occasions of the year.

Returning to the issue of cultivation in greenhouses, during the 1980s this technique of production was widespread in the entire region and it was undertaken with fervent activity and entrepreneurial spirit. Villagers today still evaluate inhabitants of some neighbouring villages in terms of their knowledge of greenhouse cultivation. Success in this activity is often interpreted as a matter of 'knowing the market', rather than having the know-how. As it was during socialism, only those who have some personal connection to local retailers, shops or who set up their own tables in the town market are believed 'skilled' enough to do this kind of work and gain some profit from it. The importance of this practice is detectable in everyday expressions such as *fóliázik* (a nominal verb indicating 'cultivating in glass or vinyl house') or *nagyban dolgozik* ('working on a large scale'), used prevalently to refer to those who make great use of their greenhouses. Such terms seem to be bivalent: they possess both a positive connotation, expressing the mastery of techniques, and a slightly negative one, which refers to the alleged existence of networks through which sale of the products is made possible. However, because this activity needs capital investments in seeds, fertilizers, time and work force, not all villagers are able to perform it. Usually, young couples take up most of the burden and expenses (even though seeds may be provided by their parents) for greenhouses, whereas the care of animals is the responsibility of the older parents.

The last issue for understanding the household production sphere concerns animal husbandry. During socialism, cooperative members who gained household plots were also allowed to keep a number of animals, which they could feed using fodder from the cooperative. On the other hand, controls were stricter in the case of those who remained more or less external to the cooperative. Nándor, who had never worked for the JRD, remembers that for him the only way to have some animals was to raise goats and rabbits which, as he said 'the communists did not consider animals'.

The data presented in Table 19 illustrate the general trend towards raising mainly pigs, chickens, rabbits and, to a smaller extent, ducks and turkeys. The choice of animals has much to do with their profitability in terms of the costs of raising/fattening them and income from the meat or other products provided. Although most villagers agreed that 'the pig is the wealth of the peasant', not all of them were willing to raise this animal, mainly because of the high cost in fodder and the hard manual work that it requires. This is the case mainly for households composed of elderly living alone or young couples working in distant urban centres. A part of the yearly

meat production is usually provided to the young couples by their village relatives who are in charge of raising pigs (see below). Chickens and rabbits are more commonly raised, even in families where workforce and time are scarce, since chickens additionally provide eggs, and rabbits produce a comparatively cheaper (in fodder) but not less delicious kind of meat.[82]

Table 19 shows that 64 percent of the households surveyed raise animals. This number does not correspond to the total of those indicating some percentage of meat provision covered by their own production (85 percent). The same applies to question 6, where 40 percent of the respondents (in comparison with 36 percent in question 4) answered that they did not raise any animals. How are we to interpret these incongruencies? In the course of my survey I found that among the most delicate questions were those concerning the size of household plots[83] and the number of animals raised. Echoes of the dark days in which chickens and ducks had to be concealed in the attics to avoid confiscation seemed to be still present when, sitting in the garden of my interviewee, while breathing the unmistakable smell of pigs, I heard such answers as: 'Do I have animals? If you mean birds in the trees and cats, then I can answer yes!'

5.4 The Relation of Consumption to Production

The previous section has pointed out that a wide range of activities exist today in the village which belong to the household production sphere. These activities are, in many cases, a continuation of secondary economic practices that were, legally or illegally, common during socialist times. This section introduces the problem of consumption and how this relates to production.

One way to test the productivity of a household is to consider production, and the labour needed to achieve it, in relation to consumption patterns and the number of household members. This method constitutes the yardstick through which Chayanov's theory proposed to investigate the domain of the Russian peasant household economy (Thorner et al. 1966). His basic assumption was that peasant production is distinct from other capitalist forms of production because of the absence of the category of

---

82 The custom of raising rabbits seems to have its roots in pre-socialist times. Villagers refer to the introduction of the rabbit as one of the novelties brought in by some 'enlightened' *gazda* in the beginning of the 20th century. The knowledge spread to other peasants. I calculated that rabbits, whose meat is indeed less rich in protein than poultry, need about one third less fodder than chickens, and due to their high rate of reproduction, raising five of them a year would allow a household to kill one rabbit every month.

83 On the other hand, nobody showed any hesitation in revealing the exact size of their gardens. These are positioned so that they are seen as extensions of the house rather than distinct land units.

wage among the others of interest (capital), rent (land) and profit (enterprise). Because of this basic difference, Chayanov argued that the peasant economy could be neither classified nor analysed in the same fashion as other economic enterprises. Peasants were seen as willing to invest more in labour, that is to exploit more their own labour, in order to increase productivity in times of hardship. However, Chayanov warned, there is a certain point beyond which the tendency towards self-exploitation does not go because peasants would judge that the 'drudgery of labour' would exceed the return in their quest for a standard level of well-being (Thorner et al. 1966: xvii). This point, commonly known as the 'Chayanov slope', constitutes the central part of his argument.

Among other works (Sahlins 1972; Durrenberger 1984; Pospíšil 1995), Donham's critique of Chayanov's model convincingly points out the main shortcomings, and also the strength, of this approach to the 'domestic mode of production'. In his study of the Malle in southwest Ethiopia, the author discovers an inverted relationship between labour and the ratio of consumer to producers ('dependency ratio'). Unlike in the Chayanov slope, in his account of the Malle domestic economy as the dependency ratio increases, the quantity of labour decreases (Donham 1981: 524). His explanation of the phenomenon is that neither Chayanov, nor Sahlins (1972), who expanded the model arguing that there are a number of social, political and religious values that may modify Chayanov's purely economic analysis, took into account the variations in the provision of labour and the relations of power underpinning the process of production. Thus, Chayanov's approach to the Russian peasant economy, which Donham interprets as an example of a neoclassical economic model, is helpful only insofar as three factors are taken into account: history, power and ideology (Donham 1981: 536).

The relationship between consumption patterns and production can be seen as influencing decisions and strategies at household levels. For this purpose, it can be useful to consider the three Chayanovian categories – labour, consumption and production – for several reasons. First, these are the three variables that tell people what to do and how to do it: villagers decide to leave their gardens uncultivated or, conversely, to invest more time and work in them according to their needs for consumption, but also depending on the availability of other assets (seeds, seedlings, but mainly time and labour). Second (and this will be the topic of the second part of this chapter), the kind and degree of labour invested in household production are to be seen in close relation with the existing and potential social assets that the household can gain from its productive chain. In other words, I argue that the Chayanov slope ignores the importance of trust relationships and other social

assets in the dynamics of household production. Household labour is supplemented through conversion of economic assets into social ones by the careful use of networks and trustworthy relationships.

Table 20 outlines the relation of consumers (C) to producers (P) among the 39 surveyed households who cultivate land outside of gardens. One third of these (13) stated that they sell their products; the remaining two thirds (26) use these for domestic consumption only. Among those who sell products, only two households resort to external labour (C< P). Among villagers who do not produce for sale, only 4 out of 26 cases require extra labour, confirming the tendency in the village to avoid reliance on external labour. These numbers acquire further relevance in relation to the size of household plots. In the 2 cases where producers outnumber consumers in households that sell products, the size of landholdings is comparatively large (20 and 4 ha), whereas all those belonging to the group of non-sellers hold plots smaller than 1 ha.

Table 20: Relation between consumption and production in household economy

	Selling products	**Not selling products**	**Total**
C = P	6	4	10
C< P	2	4	6
C> P	5	18	23
C members, mean	3.7	3.8	
P members, mean	3.6	2.9	
Plot size, mean (ha)	4.2	0.9	

C: number of consumers
P: number of producers
Units: households, persons
Source: survey questionnaire.

The conclusion that can be drawn is that, in the case of households who produce for subsistence purposes only, consumers typically outnumber producers. This is dependent on the small size of land plots, requiring employment of fewer labourers, as the mean for producers indicates. More

significantly, the ratio of mean consumers to mean producers is above zero even in the case of those families who sell their products. This is not explained by the larger mean number of consumers in selling households. Rather, this result indicates that, producers for the market may benefit from the labour of persons (relatives or not) who do not reside in the same household. In order to clarify this point I will introduce three cases which are representative of the types of household economy described above.

Vilmos owns 5 ha of land, of which he cultivates only 1 ha and the remainder he leases partly to the cooperative and partly to his neighbour. He is aged 63 and lives with his wife (60), his daughter (35), her husband (40), one grandson (15) and one granddaughter (12). Vilmos and his wife worked in the JRD in the past and they both receive a pension today, whereas his daughter works in the village in the service sector and his son-in-law is a school teacher in the town. The land is farmed only by Vilmos, and the two grandchildren who are enrolled in the high school do not seem willing to help with agricultural work. Vilmos stressed that he is the only one to work the land, even though I realised that he often resorts to some family members for help. He produces wheat, barley, corn, vegetables, beans, beets and potatoes, a part of which (mainly vegetables, beans and potatoes) he sells at the town market. He also has a garden of 10 a, in which he grows fruit, vegetables, peppers for paprika, spice herbs and tea herbs, which again he is able to sell through personal acquaintances with a local retailer. He also has animals (rabbits, pigs and chickens), the care of which is the task mainly of his wife and daughter. Because of the number of incomes their family is relatively well-off and they claim to be rather satisfied with the household's present economic situation. Because of this Vilmos maintained that for him working on the land is something that gives him personal fulfilment rather than an economic necessity.

Rudolf is 45 and works at the DUSLO plant in Šal'a. His wife (44) works as a secretary in the same town, where his son (23) also works in the service sector. His daughter (18) is about to finish her school degree. Rudolf owns a small household plot which he indicates as measuring from 50 to 70 a. He works the land with the help of his wife and son, and occasionally his brother and Rudolf's sister-in-law who live in the neighbourhood. In spite of the small size of the plot, he grows all kind of products characteristic for the village, including watermelons, which he does not sell, but usually distributes among his relatives and brothers. Rudolf also has a garden of about 10 a in which he keeps typical garden crops (fruit, vegetables, corn and beans) and some animals (mainly chickens, rabbits and ducks). He does not raise any pigs, stating that he considers poultry meat healthier and less burdensome to produce than pork. Even so, he is able to cover up to 50

percent of his family's annual meat requirement. Another portion is covered at the time of his brother's pig slaughter, in which he takes part and contributes grain and corn for the feed. 'The pig is for the young people', he says, referring to his children. In spite of having three stable incomes, Rudolf is not satisfied with his family's economic situation.

Ferenc is perhaps the most interesting of the three cases. He is 50, married to Jana (44) and they have one son, Ferenc junior (16), who attends high school. Ferenc and Jana are both unemployed, and have received social benefits for three years on the basis of their previous employment in the local factory. They own a small plot of land, less than 1 ha, on which they grow mainly grains and fodder. They also have a garden of 7 a, used to cover the family's consumption of vegetables, fruit and beans.

Ferenc works his land with the help of the whole family and one sister-in-law. Both he and his wife take care of the plots since they both have enough time. Moreover, Ferenc also helps his brother and one sister. He often works on their land and helps to sell watermelons that they grow on their bigger plots. In late spring he often tends the kiosk which his brother and sister build temporarily on the road, because they both work and thus are not free in the morning. Ferenc and Jana also have pigs and chickens, and this keeps them busy all year long. They need to purchase only small amounts of meat in the shops. Even though they are unemployed, Ferenc and Jana did not seem willing to complain excessively about their family situation, underlining that it is more important to have somebody to lean on in cases of need and enough land to 'eat on'. For them, land is what allows them to make ends meet. Moreover, by sharing productive tasks the siblings are able to constantly renew relations of mutuality.

The cases above illustrate that the decision to invest labour in farming the family plots and gardens can be influenced by subsistence aims, personal fulfilment or a combination of both. The important point is that there is no necessarily close correlation between the number of producers, consumers and the size of plots. This seems to prove the findings illustrated in the tables above (20-21) since it demonstrates the strategic use that people make of their land – for instance, to keep the level of social interaction among kin members high, as in the cases of János and Ferenc. The number of people working on the land can be too high relative to the area of land (János' case). However, János makes use of the opportunities for shared work to consolidate his family network, and to present them with his products. Vilmos is the opposite case; for him working his land is a matter of personal fulfilment. This can be explained considering his past: he was the son of a small *gazda* who had 4 ha of arable land. In the mid-1960s he entered the cooperative together with his wife, at his father's suggestion. In this way

Vilmos maintained his personal attachment to the land even though, in spite of owning the largest plot of all the three cases, he was unable to involve his children in farming. Finally, in Ferenc's case the household economy is also used to tie relatives together through mutual help and reciprocity.

Villagers make their decisions on the basis of their returns, both in terms of economic and social capital, and this process follows lines that may go beyond simple considerations of the household's occupational structure, as well as of the relative number of consumers to producers. The social role of gardens and household plots is confirmed in villagers' daily practices (see below). In order to analyse this social role, it is necessary to consider the sphere of labour as it is perceived by those involved in the production process and as this is used to maintain and build social networks as well as to establish the bases for interpersonal trust.

5.5 Work: Between Ideology and Practice

The importance of work has become central in the social and economic reality of the village in the last decade. Working hard or working properly has traditionally been considered one of the hallmark values of the Hungarian and Slovak peasantry (Salzmann 1970; Szent-Györgyi 1983; Bell 1983, 1984; Švecová 1991; Lampland 1995). Not only was work valued as the most distinctive quality of male village members, but this eventually constituted the standard measure for evaluating the honour, reputation and trustworthiness of the individual. Hence, in the past *gazda* families decided to hire landless peasants only in relation to their trustworthiness, i.e. their ability to work hard and loyally.

The socialist experience further consolidated the importance of work and industriousness by imposing a neat separation between public and private work activity (Lampland 1995: 273). Villagers emphasise that work done in public often brought little sense of self-achievement and was often frustrating because of the heavy ideology that socialism attached to it. In contrast, the very possibility to 'do something on one's own', such as in the case of the secondary economy, apart from bringing extra sources of income, gave the individual a stronger feeling of self-realisation. Even though the strong values attached to work remain, today excessive time spent working tends to be seen as something that subtracts time and space from the social life of individuals. Here are two opinions on the issue.

> People do not do much these days. They are closed up in their houses and work from day to night. Luckily there is the bad season, so you can still find some time to visit people. But then the television comes

> in and people find another way to become busy. You don't even dare disturb them.[84]
>
> (Anna)
>
> Our people work and work – this is their talent and their life's goal. There is nothing you can do to stop them from doing that. If at least there were some more time to meet and talk as it was in the past! Their gardens keep them busy and enslave them at the same time; this is the end of the social life of a person.
>
> (Júlia, b. 1936)

The idea that work increases distance between persons stands antithetically to the one that being a good worker means achieving a good reputation in the village. This vision arises and draws from the idea expressed above that today a family needs diversified sources of income and production to survive or maintain a standard of well-being, and the garden is one of these sources. Therefore, people seem to attribute to the garden both a beneficial and a vicious effect, which is reflected in their actual practices beyond their words.

One particular episode clearly demonstrated this attitude for me. One day a relative came to see my host family with no particular purpose other than to chat. I had been listening several times to comments on the increased distance between villagers and even relatives due to the 'stagnating calmness' (*itt vagyunk mint az álló víz*, 'here we are like still water') dominating in the village, so I was prepared to observe a case of warm hospitality and long conversations. Instead, the guest entered the kitchen, where all family guests are usually received. It was not the ideal time for the family to indulge in a cheerful conversation. They were busy assessing the reserves of seeds and seedlings of vegetables to be planted in the garden in the following days. Nevertheless, they stopped their work and calculations to serve the guest some wine and biscuits. I took charge of the serving, which was usually my hostess's task. This took me out of the room for a few minutes. Upon returning, I realised that the conversation was languishing. The family had taken the first opportunity to let the guest feel that it was not

---

[84] This is not an exaggeration. During the 1990s television consumption increased dramatically in the village, and I am not aware of a household that does not own a TV. When scheduling visits to elderly informants' houses I had to consider their garden commitments as well as be aware of the daily schedule of television dramas. Sometimes, it was unthinkable for me to ring a doorbell on a weekday afternoon between 16:00 and 18:00.

the right time for visits. The guest finally finished his glass of wine and left. After a while my landlady had this comment:

> People should understand that a certain time is good for visiting and others not. We are busy and we can't waste time chatting with people here. If I don't plant these seedlings by this week then we won't be able to get anything out of them. This is village life. In the town you can just stop in for a coffee, sit and not care about the time. Here this is not possible – we have to work for our next day!

As this comment underlines, the guest's visit was judged inopportune at that particular time. Anna was waiting for the opportunity to continue her activity. She only felt that it would be rude to leave the guest without a glass of wine.

Stories like this occur often during the course of daily life in the village and they emphasise the same point: work is seen as socially elevating and limiting at the same time, and this depends very much on the nature of the relationships and their engagement with domestic activities. I would like to offer two concrete examples of how work on domestic plots and gardens can help maintain family relations and determine their temporal unfolding.

The first is the case of Nándor's family. They own one 70 a plot, used to grow grains, corn and potatoes, which go to feed the animals. Apart from this plot, Nándor also owns a small garden plot (*kiskert*) of about 3 a situated in near the river, on land that was once communal pasture.[85] The family uses these two assets scrupulously, as they constitute their main source of food, together with the small garden in the back of Nándor's house, measuring 4 a, but which is less suited to vegetable growing because of the number of fruit trees.[86]

Nándor is retired and ill and as a result the work is completely in the hands of his younger son, Gábor (who receives disability benefits) and Nándor's wife (also retired). At the beginning of my fieldwork, the family shared the house with Gábor's partner (Eszter) and her two daughters, aged 9 and 6. Although Gábor himself is not in good physical condition, he managed to farm the land with some help from Eszter and his mother, as well as from the two little girls during harvest. He planted 11 rows of corn and the remainder (40 to 60 percent of the plot) was occupied by wheat and barley. Until that year, with these products he had succeeded in feeding two

---

85 See Chapter Six for a more detailed history of these gardens.

86 Even so, Nándor's family wisely makes use of every single bit of land in the garden without leaving any empty space.

pigs, one dozen chickens, seven rabbits and three ducks.[87] Work was hard, but he never complained because the family had always managed to make ends meet.

However, that was not a lucky year for the family. Eszter started showing increased lack of interest in the land. She complained about the difficulty of the work, avoiding involvement in farming and indulged in alcohol. Gábor became frustrated by her behaviour and for the first time felt that he could not trust her to maintain the household. His parents urged him to re-direct Eszter on the right way or make her leave the house. In spite of his attempts, there was no way he could convince her to go back to work; even her mother's appeals to express gratitude to the family who had done so much for her and her daughters and to prove she was a 'serious worker' failed. Eszter was asked to leave the house with her daughters. At this point Gábor went on farming the land alone, in spite of his sickness, and received sporadic help from his mother. I asked him several times why he did not seek the help of a friend or relative. His answers were ambiguous: 'they don't have time', or 'I can't rely on anyone else other than who is living close to me, and even those, you see, they betray you'. In spite of this, work went on and the family was eventually able to harvest the crop that, despite the damage due to heavy rains and frost in May, he considered: 'good enough for the next year, then we will see if we really need to have another pig'.

The following year Gábor decided to lease the land to a village friend. They did not sign any contract but made an informal agreement according to which Gábor would get 4 q of wheat and 2 q of corn at the end of the season, for three years. This gave him relative peace of mind and time enough to concentrate on the gardens, which before had been mainly worked by his mother. In the spring, the family had a long discussion on what to plant in the two gardens, so that 'no centimetre of land would remain empty, because it is miserable'. They finally opted for a combination of vegetables, beans, some corn and potatoes, which would fully utilise the soil in both gardens.[88] Their decision was based upon the rationale that the house garden should serve as a 'safety zone' in case the outer garden brought a loss.

Work is deemed both an economic asset and a social marker by many villagers. However, it should be underlined that work on the land acquires

---

87 He indicated to me that a pig may need up to 10 q of wheat to be fattened to 150 kg, which is the optimal weight for slaughtering. six chickens, however, consume less than 2 q of fodder per year, the cost of which can be repaid by the sale of three months' worth of their eggs.

88 For example, in the outside garden there were 8 rows of potatoes, 5 rows of carrots and other roots, 7 rows of green peas, 3 rows of corn, 2 rows of lettuce, 3 rows of beans and another 4 rows of mixed vegetables.

strong moral connotations when it is linked to the survival strategies of the household. In the hobby gardening described by Czegledy (2001), Hungarian town dwellers make use of their micro-garden plots to grow their own vegetables and make wine. Afterwards they share this with important guests, enhancing their prestige and strengthening their networks. In contrast, gardens in Királyfa, however small, serve as important supplements to the household's livelihood. This explains why so much emphasis is put on the idea of 'working' properly and following the right timing.

The perpetuation of secondary economic practices displays a degree of continuity with the socialist past. The main difference is that today for the domestic sector work has a dual effect: reducing the time dedicated to the (extra-family) social life of individuals, and encouraging sharing and mutual help within the family. The idea of a 'retreat to the household' as a feature of the postsocialist transformation (see Pine 1996, 2002) acquires significance mainly if one considers that, with busier and longer working hours than under socialism, people have less time available for their relationships with friends. On the other hand, ties and relations of trust between relatives (and friends living in the same community) have benefited from the historical change, since the importance of household economic practices calls for full dedication to these relationships.

5.6 The Social Use of Land

In a rather spatially and temporally distant, setting, Malinowski provided one of the most excellent accounts of how garden farming enclosed a number of goals and rules which transcended any attempt to apply western economic paradigms (Malinowski 1965). In *Coral Gardens and Their Magic*, the anthropologist thoroughly described the different social, legal and religious uses that the Trobrianders made of their garden plots. In his own words:

> To the European reader the whole arrangement of harvesting must appear absurd. Economically it is cumbersome. A great deal of time and labour has to be wasted on transport and on display, on cleaning and on other aesthetic trappings […] It is only when we understand how much personal pride as well as moral duty is involved in a man's producing a generous share for his sister's household; how much a gardener identifies himself with his crops […], that we can realise why a simple commercial exchange is not possible here, though it obtains in so many other transactions.
>
> (Malinowski 1965: 198)

In Leach's words, Malinowski's analysis of the Trobrianders' garden system 'demonstrate[s] the intricate functional interconnections within a set of related institutions' (Leach 1965: xii).

There are different and often complementary ways in which villagers translate their use of property resources into the acquisition and management of social assets. The first concerns their relationship with the cooperative, which will be the subject of next chapter. The second social sphere in which the relationship between people and property is constructed refers to kin and village-level interaction. The cultivation of household and garden plots and the raising of animals create occasions for mutual help, task sharing and reciprocity, building the foundations of interpersonal trust. The rules of this interaction are dictated by the various necessities that determine each household's strategies and economic choices. In other words, gardens and small family plots can be important assets from which families draw their means of subsistence, but this is rarely the only use people make of their land. Following practices well established during the former regime, domestic products are destined for the whole family, including offspring who reside outside the village. One informant, a woman working and living in the town, when asked to indicate her average monthly food expenditures, seemed unable to answer. She observed that she buys meat in the shop only very rarely, since her mother in the village still provides her with all the meat she needs.

A part of the products grown in gardens and on other types of family land is also traded or sold in the community. This is mainly the case of elderly couples who receive pensions and have sufficient time and capital to invest in their gardens and household plots. Their surplus becomes the object of transactions, following strict rules of conduct which reflect the individual's personal relationship with the trading or purchasing partner. For example, Júlia has one dozen hens, the same amount of rabbits and two pigs. She has enough spare resources to exchange or sell in the village. Thus it is common to hear people knocking at her door, asking her to sell them some eggs, rabbit meat and even lard. Before giving her assent to the transaction, Júlia leaves for the pantry where she ritually checks the availability of her supplies. She then returns to the kitchen and brings with her some eggs or a package of frozen meat. Only rarely does she refuse to sell and this happens mainly when the purchaser does not belong to her circle of acquaintances and relatives (indeed, very few are not covered by these two categories).

The exchange of labour prestations follows much more complicated patterns of behaviour, which depend not only on the degree of affinity between the families but also on the nature of the work. Many of the villagers who own large gardens or household plots do not necessarily have

large kin networks, thus they often resort to the help of village friends or neighbours to work their land. This is often the most preferred option since village acquaintances are easily manageable (it is easy to contact them and one is often aware of their availability even before asking) and are comparatively less 'costly' than, for instance, distant relatives living outside the community. Here, the same reciprocation rule applies: when labour prestations are requested, the labour giver is in the position to expect a counter-favour and can therefore summon the receiver on a similar occasion. Even when this occasion does not occur, the receiver gives him something (products, wine or even some cash) as a token of gratitude. This token, however, is never a real compensation in the literal sense of the word. Its value is much inferior to the labour that has been offered. Much as in the case of the *kula* ring, this is because a relation of 'mutuality' has been established: the receiver can in turn expect to render assistance in the near or more distant future. Because a part of the compensation is intrinsically present in the future expectation of reciprocity, he does not need to give too much for the favour obtained. This mutuality helps consolidate trust among villagers because it creates strong expectations which cannot be betrayed because of the personal obligations entailed. However, this relationship does not exist between a villager and a non-village relative, therefore the option of resorting to them is usually avoided (except for some cases of prolonged labour such as building a house) because it entails an immediate and expensive recompense.

Unlike the Trobrianders' case, where the exchange of gifts constitutes the fabric of the social structure, in Királyfa it is the exchange of labour prestations that determine the degree of one's involvement in the interrelations between community members and their households. Personal commitment arising from participation in work on the land brings about a series of obligations and moral norms that to an external observer may seem superfluous and irrational. These norms are not so much time-specific (there were also similar patterns of interpersonal behaviour during socialism) but they are strongly space-specific, i.e. they reflect the relationship existing between giver and receiver. There are two points that need to be stressed for understanding the mechanisms of social interaction underpinning the use of landed property and animals in the village. The first is that family-level moral expectations about work on the land determine the commitment of individuals to gardening, the care of animals and the cultivation of household plots. Because these are considered family resources, in the sense that the whole family group can benefit from their products, all close

relatives[89] are expected to contribute their labour, even when this is not strictly necessary. The second point is that the share of products obtained from the use of these assets follows precise lines of redistribution which are influenced not by the amount of work provided, but by the individual's social position within the family. This point clashes with Chayanov's view, but it is confirmed by Donham's experience (1981). Two examples will further illustrate these premises.

Nóra (b. 1970), a village school teacher, is married to Dániel (b. 1968) and has a small daughter (4 years old). She becomes one of the busiest people in the village during summertime. I barely succeeded in meeting with her during those months because of her continued commitments. She comes from a rather distant village, but her family had moved to Királyfa some years before. Her husband owns a big garden plot and helps his parents in their garden as well as on 1.5 ha of arable land. Needless to say, Nóra too works on their land. Once she complained to me: 'I hate these gardens. People venerate them as gods, they can't live without working them, even if they have the means to do so!' I asked her why she needs to work so much for her parents-in-law when they have their own daughter. She answered: 'You know how they say here? "*A lány, az mindig a lány, de a feleség, az csak feleség*" ('the daughter is always the daughter, but the wife is *only* a wife'). If I don't work there they will never trust me anymore. They will start gossiping that I am lazy and that I pay no respect to them. This is the worst thing that can happen to a woman here'.

Furthermore, Dániel commented that: 'Kinship (*rokonság*) is a double-edged weapon. When you have it there are many benefits, but the weight and the expenses you have to face are often much higher. We are not making a real profit out of the garden, but work needs to be done together'.

This example illustrates that, in contrast to Gábor's situation, working in the garden may not necessarily be motivated by the need to make ends meet. Nóra works without any apparent economic motivation on the plot belonging to her parents-in-law.[90] She does so only because of the weight of expectations and obligations that hold together the kinship system in the village. Social roles are carefully defined through the involvement of people in the household's work. The next example explores this issue further.

András, aged 72, is a former active member of the agricultural cooperative, in which he worked since the very early times of its existence. He is on good terms with many in the village, especially thanks to his

---

89 This category customarily includes offspring, siblings, children of siblings and siblings-in-law. I have no evidence of people turning to cousins for help on their land.

90 She has a big garden plot too and her family also contributes yearly with garden products. This makes work on her relatives' land redundant with respect to her economic needs.

previous occupation, and even though he is retired people still come to him for advice in dealing with the cooperative. The following is an extract from my fieldnotes:



8. Pig sticking (the anthropologist is second from right).

November 22nd 2000. That day the ritual pig slaughter started early, about a half hour before dawn. I reached the site around 7:00 and the two huge animals[91] had already been killed, their bodies laid on the humid surface of the courtyard. Only two little holes remained testimony of the violence. There were ten persons participating: András, his wife, his son Donát and his family (wife and one daughter), his daughter and her family (her husband, Lajos, and two boys), two old ladies (András's sister and her neighbour) and the butcher. The men were busy holding the heavy animals and rubbing off their coat that had been burned with the oxyhydrogen flame. Women and children were also busy preparing the tables for the meat, sweeping the floor and lighting the fire for cooking the rice, the fat and the blood. The atmosphere seemed quite relaxed, everyone seemed to joke around the central figure of the butcher, one of the three who professionally perform this activity in the village and who become the busiest persons in the period from November to March.

[91] András bought the animals, sharing the expenses with his son and daughter. However, he and his wife took all the responsibility for the care of the animals, whereas their offspring only sporadically came to bring some fodder for them.

The division of labour and tasks appeared evident as soon as the butchering commenced. The meat was carefully cut under the zealous supervision of András and his wife, who kept a constant eye to watch that no mistake would be made in dividing the meat. The two men (András's son and his son-in-law) showed a strikingly different degree of involvement in the work. Donát would not do any real work, apart from spicing the meat for the sausages or cleaning up and he spent most of the time serving plum brandy (*pálinka*) to the adult participants.[92] Lajos was perhaps the one who worked the hardest and he was constantly the object of the others' as well as his own irony: 'I am the son-in-law and I have to do all the work, but then you will see how much I will receive – the smallest portion is mine'. The



9. Communal work and help during the pig sticking.

[92] Drinking is ritually linked to the whole process. During the day, five bottles of *pálinka* were consumed and no wine was ever opened, in contrast to regular farming practices, where wine is constantly served at each break. They explained to me that *pálinka* is only for special occasions, whereas wine is confined to the everyday working sphere, even though I have never seen villagers drinking wine alone or only within their families. Since the quantity of alcohol consumed on this occasion is often rather high, and the butcher seems, paradoxically, to be the one who is obliged to drink the most, at the end of the day he is seldom in full conscience. The situation worsens if the butcher (as ours did) runs to another house for another slaughter and then comes back again. As I discovered later, he was able to perform three pig slaughters in one day, which made him exhausted and, predictably, significantly decreased the quality of his work.

children were also very active; they seemed to compete in demonstrating their ability to do the weightiest tasks, such as collecting the blood flowing out of the slaughtered animal, or bringing innards to the old women who cooked them. The old women were constantly tending the fire; they were the real depositories of knowledge when it came to making the sausages filled with rice and blood (*hurka*), the *véres kása* (a delicious gruel of blood, rice and spices) and the fat. Even though they knew perfectly the steps needed to proceed in the cooking, out of respect they asked the butcher and András about the proper way to do it.

The work proceeded quickly; everyone concentrated on his own task and only the alcohol increased the jokes and laughing. The butcher, who had finished the hardest part of his job, went about coordinating the preparation of the sausages. The spicing (paprika, salt, garlic, pepper and marjoram) and salting of the meat required his constant attention and he was assisted by the two young women, who did everything to follow his swift orders.

András was the least busy of the group: he hilariously commented that he was sad and scornful about that, because this meant that he had grown too old to do all the work, as he used to do with his father and uncle. However, his presence was felt by everyone and there was more than one comment on the attentiveness with which he supervised the division of the meat.

After one generous lunch break, in which the first meat was baked and consumed with potatoes and pickles, the work continued until late afternoon, when the workers got ready to receive their portions and leave. András's wife thanked the butcher, the first to leave, and paid his fee (400 SK) plus a bottle of *pálinka*. Then it was the two old women's turn, who received the usual portion of 'tasting' (*kóstoló*) consisting of one dish of blood gruel and two rice sausages, with the addition of one jar of fat and some sausages (*kolbász*) that they would get at the end of the smoking process (usually from three days to a week). Then it was Donát's turn to leave, visibly unable to walk on his own legs. As the elder son, he got the largest portion of meat.[93] His sister received visibly less because, as they explained to me later, her husband would get a better share at the slaughter at his own parents' house. András kept as much as his eldest son, with some difference in the portion of sausages and smoked ham, arguing that he preferred the latter to the former.

Apart from their economic use, land and animals are used as resources for keeping channels of social interaction open among relatives who otherwise would find it difficult, or would not care to undertake such practices on their own. The basic idea underpinning these examples is that

[93] The portions had been made visible from the beginning of the slaughter, with one table, one ladder on which the bleeding meat needed to be hung and two vats. The table marked the meat assigned to Lajos' family, whereas the two vats were for András and Donát.

land and animals are treated as common (household or kin) assets whose utilisation and access is regulated by social roles and tasks within the family. Because these roles are neatly defined by the position of individuals within the kinship system, inequalities may arise (Nóra in the first and Lajos in the second case are not consanguineously related to the families controlling these assets, hence they have to perform at their best). I want to suggest that inequality and relatedness are not always mutually exclusive notions. Uneven distribution of the benefits of work does not necessarily mean exclusion from access to resources or products. Inequality and imbalance rather operate to maintain roles and tasks intact without losing confidence or trust among persons. As Lajos explained to me, 'There is nothing wrong in the portion of meat I received. That is what we could expect. When my father slaughter's a pig I will be the privileged one!'

Nóra's husband's comment on the superfluity of their gardening also suggests that it is not always the economic, rational consideration of seeking profit which motivates domestic production. Using garden plots and keeping animals provide occasions to join in family work and create experiences of mutual interaction. This constitutes the hidden basis of trust which is constructed among kinsmen on the basis of their response to expectations and rules of conduct dictated by their family position. In other terms, the use of work and the sharing of resources strategically consolidate the ties between kin members and create, through trust, expectations for future cooperation and sharing.

5.7 Conclusion

The chapter has considered patterns of household production and distribution in today's village economy and put them in relation to the consumption sphere, labour and interaction between villagers with regard to family land. The main aim was to understand the degree to which the economic practices that unfold from the individual to the household level are translated into more complex processes of social interaction. I have tried to demonstrate that in order to give adequate weight to the choices and strategies that people make in their everyday actions, it is necessary to frame these within a wider context that takes into account both people's ideas about their everyday reality and their practices.

The kind of choices that people follow are dictated by considerations that go beyond the mere search for profit or a standard of well-being, as Chayanov put it (Thorner et al. 1966). It is in the ongoing tension between the social and economic dimension of these choices that the meaning of 'household economy' must be sought. Anthropological accounts of peasant economies and their attempts to categorise household practices that

otherwise cannot be accounted for by classic economic parameters provide important insights into the family as a basic unit of production, consumption and reproduction. In the case of postsocialist societies these approaches fit very well due to the widespread diffusion of secondary economic activities originating in the late socialist period.

In the village, secondary economic practices based on farming household plots and gardens can be traced back to the 1960s. These allowed people to cope with difficult political restrictions that limited their control of economic assets and resources. During socialism the importance of managing these plots lay not simply in the villagers' desire to complement their household incomes, but it constituted a matter of social status in the village. Farming their own gardens meant for villagers gaining a sense of self-achievement in their work but also maintaining social contact with the village and the outer sphere. However, after socialism this picture has changed slightly. Household farming has remained a crucial economic activity for villagers, but with an increased accent on its economic necessity. Food produced in gardens and through raising animals is consumed within the family and provides important reserves through the whole year. Furthermore, there are families who do sell part of their products grown in small family plots and in gardens. This clearly goes beyond the spirit of a 'subsistence economy' as defined by classic anthropological accounts of household economies almost everywhere in the world.

As in cases where gardening and farming on household plots provide important supplements to the family's economy, the management of land, resources and work are conveyed into social strategies even in households where the need for additional sources of domestic provision is not desperately felt. These strategies are aimed at strengthening social ties within the family group. These ties are dictated by precise considerations of the tasks and roles of family members which operate to construct rules of behaviour, obligations and expectations. At this point trust becomes the factor underpinning people's relatedness and the reliability of family members. The social use of land and the sharing of work are two of the several adaptation strategies that people have adopted in order to cope with the changing reality. Following this line, the next chapter analyses processes of everyday interaction and the use of trust between villagers and local institutions.

Chapter 6
When People Face Institutions: Informality, Emotions and Trust in Historical Perspective

6.1 Introduction

This chapter uses the concept of trust to analyse the interaction between villagers and two local institutions, the cooperative and the municipal administration, within a historical framework moving from socialism to the present. So far the thrust of the work has been to define the main features which have historically determined the development of the village and which brought about the creation of strategies to face postsocialism. The chapters that follow provide contribution to the issue of trust and its applicability to the transformation process of the community.

The dominance of informal patterns of interaction between people and institutions is recognised as one of the key features of the postsocialist transformation (see Böröcz 2000). The leading assumption is that postsocialist countries are caught in a dilemma. On the one hand, they must build the formal institutions paving the way for the establishment of a market economy and democracy. On the other hand, they need to 'dump' those products that have (allegedly) characterised the previous regime, such as informal ties, clientelistic patterns of behaviour and secondary economic practices. Among other scholars, Sztompka makes this argument clear, underlining that the main challenge for the central and Eastern European countries in transition is to overcome the strong presence of past (socialist) legacies in order to fruitfully establish both interpersonal and institutional trust (Sztompka 1999). Following Rose, who argued that 'distrust is a pervasive legacy of communist rule' (Rose 1994: 18), Sztompka, dealing with postsocialist Poland, emphasises that:

> trust appears to be the rarest of social resources. The 'culture of distrust' seems to be deeply embedded. And once the decay of trust reaches this cultural level, distrust becomes contagious and self-

> enhancing. From now on it is a 'normal', accepted reaction to be distrustful, and all displays of trust are considered as signs of credulity, naivety, and simple-mindedness, and meet with ridicule, mockery, and other negative sanctions. Sadly and paradoxically, cynicism has been raised to virtue.
>
> (Sztompka 1999: 174)

Rose-Ackermann (2001) extends this argument to the distinction between trust in formal institutions and interpersonal trust. In her view, there are two conflicting stories about the development of trust in postsocialist societies. The first is that the market economy has broken up the 'sense of community leading to a loss of trust and an increase in opportunism'. The second story is that 'the new democratic governments inherited a citizenry with low levels of trust in public institutions and with their habit of relying on interpersonal relations, not public institutions and laws' (Rose-Ackermann 2001: 415). Therefore, the point is to ascertain whether it would be better to develop interpersonal trust to foster institutional trust or vice versa.

In this chapter I maintain that these two views, largely shared by many social scientists as almost 'fashionable paradigms', are flawed in three ways. First, as other studies have demonstrated (Gambetta 1988; Williamson 1993; Levi 2000), mistrust does not necessarily hamper the functioning of institutions or foster the breakdown of social relations. Second, before deciding that the socialist legacies negatively affect the democratic development of these countries, one needs to explore their historical development under socialism. As argued above (Chapter Three), socialism cannot be taken as a 'compact and static block' of historical events. In order to understand the impact it had on local society it is necessary to consider its different political and economic stages. Third, as Rose-Ackermann recognises (2001: 436), the question whether institutional or interpersonal trust should be given priority for reaching satisfactory levels of democracy is both of empirical and theoretical difficulty. I maintain that the two levels are not mutually exclusive and that trust between persons may help consolidate the functional role of institutions.

6.2 Trust in the Socialist Cooperative

The main limitation of an analysis that looks at the temporal construction of trust in the relation between individuals and institutions is that data provided belong to the time in which the fieldworker has conducted research and thus are strictly dependent on the informants' views of the past. These views are necessarily influenced by two features: the role of the informants' past

experience in shaping their life trajectories and the external conditions that characterise their present lives. The degree of subjectivity that is contained in each statement and expression of people's ideas thus makes it difficult to analyse the past. Although there may be different and sophisticated methods to deal with such subjectivity, it is beyond the scope of this work to do so. What makes more sense is to explain the historical process of interaction between villagers and two local institutions by carefully considering one dimension of their formulation of ideas: the emotions (cf. Svašek 2003).

Since emotions 'envelope' every aspect of individual actions, present formulations of trust vis-à-vis the socialist cooperatives and the local administration acquire different degrees of analytical significance even when they, sometimes, cannot be tested against the reality of facts. Thus, I suggest that the utility of considering trust as a retrospective process lies also in the possibility of underlining how different people think about socialism today and what emotionally loaded factors may lead them to make their judgments.

As seen in Chapter Three, the establishment of the 1950 socialist cooperative was a tragic experience for most villagers. For the pre-socialist power holders it was a matter of losing their social and economic status, which centred upon the exclusive privileges that ownership granted them. It is easily understandable that many descendants of the *gazdák* judge collectivisation on the basis of the sense of loss that this implied for their families. The situation, however, is more complicated in the case of small landholders and landless peasants. Although many villagers in the long-run benefited from the consolidation and economic progress of the village JRD, very few are willing to positively evaluate the early steps of collectivisation. One villager, from a small peasant family, who under socialism worked in a factory in Bratislava and whose wife worked for the cooperative in the 1950-60s, emphasised:

> I had to give my land and my animals to the cooperative. That was all we had, how could we possibly have survived? I think for the *gazda* families it was different. They could always find something to hide, something more than a chicken or two, as we poor peasants did. They were the ones to have the money; you know, money can always be used for different purposes. [94]
>
> (Nándor)

These words underline that, for those who had only small amounts of land to live on, collectivisation meant, at the time of its beginnings, the deprival of

[94] Some informants alleged that *gazda* members bribed party officers to avoid taxation.

scarce means of production and precipitation into the status of 'landless'. Nándor's words contrast the situation of small to that of large owners, who were, in his view, able to endure confiscations and taxation because they had more resources.

Another descendant of a small peasant family who, unlike Nándor, became a member of the cooperative, said:

> Do you know when the cooperative started convincing villagers? Only when differences between owners had disappeared. There was no way it could be accepted, except with violence, by villagers. Collectivisation did not mean anything when the poor lost those few square metres they had and the rich only one or two of their cows. The situation started changing when some *gazdák* also entered the cooperative. People wondered what was going on and some had the idea that a serious change was taking place.
>
> (Antal)

In slightly different terms than the previous comment, Antal's words confirm the idea that social inequality was at the basis of villagers' fear and mistrust since villagers experienced collectivisation in different ways depending on their social class.

For the landless peasants, who made up the largest social stratum in pre-socialist Királyfa (see Chapter Two), the creation of the socialist cooperative was a different event. Not only did it become possible for some of them to have more say in the village's economic affairs, but also the strength of the socialist ideology gave their claims open legitimation. On this latter point, many informants recall the 1950s as a period in which community Party members (mostly coming out of the poorest strata), led agitations as a means of propaganda of the collective project. Nándor, who never entered the cooperative, told this account of those events:

> That was the period when you had to be careful before going out and, especially, when speaking with somebody. Socialism made people worse, because it brought out all the bad qualities that had been suppressed for ages. Those who never had any voice in the village became the loudest to advocate collectivisation. Of course, they had nothing to lose, but only to gain from it! You couldn't go to the pub without witnessing skirmishes. I remember that one day, coming back from work, I heard a noise in the street. A group of villagers were shouting at some closed doors: 'The proletarians will have your land!

> Just wait!' Nobody dared answer the agitators in those times, but years later some of them had their repayment. Somebody was beaten and others publicly apologised. This is what it meant to make the cooperative!
>
> (Nándor)

András, the son of a landless peasant family, commented in different terms on the early period of collectivisation.

> Of course it's not easy to be positive about the socialist cooperative in these days. If I only mention it many start accusing me of being a 'Stalinist'. But one needs to understand that many poor people were able to start a new life in the 1950s. The cooperative gave them the means to survive without having to migrate somewhere, like in many villages of northern Slovakia. I can't say that the cooperative was founded in a 'clean' way. Many were wronged, this is the reality. However, what many don't say today is that there were also those who gained a lot from the cooperative. This was my case. My family didn't have more than a handkerchief of a garden to grow some potatoes!
>
> (András)

The two viewpoints from which these comments derive, that of a small peasant and a landless peasant, illuminate an important aspect of the collectivisation process. The foundation of the socialist cooperative was disruptive because, apart from its violence, it fostered social conflict and inequality in the village. The disorder mentioned by Nándor had already taken place in the late 1920s (Chapter Three), when a part of the poor strata called for improvement in their living standards, but their efforts were largely ignored. In the 1950s the climate was completely different and many of the landless families gradually started feeling the benefits of collectivisation. This however did not mean, as András underlines, that the landless were the only ones who gained. As the election of two *gazda* cooperative chairmen (1952-1962) suggests, some of those who were in power before socialism succeeded in maintaining their positions. Collectivisation, thus, in its early stage did not bring about complete equality and equitable control of resources. Therefore, the determined opposition and mistrust towards the early cooperative voiced in comments today are emotionally constructed, incorporating both memories of the violence of collectivisation and the social disharmony that characterised the period.

The instability of the 1950s gave way to a different mood after 1962, when the social programme for the agricultural cooperatives was established. The cooperative gradually started to play a greater role in the economic, social and cultural life of the community. In 1963 the first big cultural event in Királyfa organised by the agricultural cooperative, the wine festival, took place. The festival included a procession displaying traditional peasant costumes, tools, and the first tractors and cooperative machines. This was followed by a ball, free distribution of wine and a barbecue. The event was attended by a relatively large number of villagers and afterwards it became customary to hold an annual wine festival ball, an autumn ball and Christmas celebrations. More events included theatre performances, creation of a village chorus and the sponsoring of two football teams. All this was done through cooperative support.

The cooperative began to assume a more 'human' face, coming to represent the interests of the community as a whole. Memories of fear, violence and conflict relative to the 1950s seem to dim when people talk about the cooperative in the 1960s. Surely the reason for the greater trust in this institution is that it succeeded in 'convincing villagers', as Antal said, by levelling social differences within the community. On another level, however, it must be stressed that the higher degree of state intervention (filtered through the district and municipal administration) that characterised socialist collectivisation from the 1960s onwards deeply influenced the way in which villagers conceived of the institution. The outcome was that the cooperative came to be identified with the village's modernisation efforts in a period when other employment options were still scarce.

> Of course I can't forget what the JRD did to our people in the first years. But if I think back, during the 1960s it became part of our lives. Almost all of the village became involved in one or another way in its activity. There was always something to do and we had to create our brigades to help. The outcomes were for all the community, not only for the rich, as it was in the past. I think that in that period the cooperative took over the role of the manorial estates in our region.
>
> (Anna)

Anna is of small peasant origin. She has memories of family members who, until the end of the 1950s, commuted to large local estates working as daily or seasonal labourers (Chapter Two). The main point that arises from this comment is that the strong mistrust towards the early period of collectivisation is, after the 1960s, counterbalanced by the acknowledgement

that the cooperative became a 'public good'. The parallel with the manorial estate confirms two features of the cooperative in those years. First, like the large feudal and early modern estates which introduced innovation in agricultural techniques in the region, the cooperative brought about the development of the village by providing work and stable incomes and by enlarging the productive sphere of agriculture (Chapter Three). Second, in the way manorial estates had been a source of wage labour external to the village and not dependent on the community's power relations, the cooperative had become an economic entity that provided services to all members. As it is remembered by villagers today, the 1960s' cooperative succeeded in achieving many of those tasks that the socialists had advocated as goals of collectivisation. The cooperative became a public institution by providing social security, freeing its members from tax payments, establishing a shop, organising public events such as balls and festivals and enlarging the productive sphere of the village's agricultural system. This was achieved thanks to generous state support which is no longer realistic. It is little wonder if villagers look at that period as a sort of 'golden age', contrasted with the gloomy memories of the early collectivisation period, and with the instability of the present.

The third phase of collectivisation started in 1973, following the decision to incorporate the village cooperative's buildings, members, land and animals into the unified cooperative in Šal'a. This moment meant for the villagers the loss of their 'institution', with which they had slowly come to identify. Just when the sad memories of the collectivisation process had been covered up by the performance of the 1960's cooperative, the unification and transfer of the institution to the town marked a second dramatic change. In villager' minds, the unified cooperative became a relatively more abstract entity for the community. As one informant commented on the shift: 'It was of course a matter of political games. The decision had come from the top and there was so little we could do. The cooperative had become definitively important for the village economy. Things started changing just when villagers were finally all getting the benefits of collectivisation' (Antal).

Another underlined that:

> They unified our cooperative with others that were doing badly. The principle was not to follow the best and correct the performance of the worst, but rather to adjust the good to the bad.[95] They wanted to

[95] There were of course important political choices behind this step. The village mayor had been pushed to agree to the dissolution of the village cooperative. The cooperative chairman had made promises to help him advance his career in exchange for his support, but these were never fulfilled.

> emulate the mammoth complexes that they said had been successful in Russia. I never trusted their words when they spoke about Russia.
>
> (Gábor)

Villagers' criticism towards the unification of the cooperative mainly follows two directions. On the one hand, the shift deprived the institution of its strong social and cultural presence in the community. The number of cultural events that had characterised the previous phase suddenly decreased. The sports club and the theatre group remained but no public events were sponsored in Királyfa anymore. The town became the centre for these initiatives which were thus de-personalised and reduced to mere celebratory events for a restricted circle of members. One cooperative member, who kept on attending the yearly wine festival, said: 'After 1972 it was no longer worth participating. The festival served as a time for networking and disseminating party ideology. It lost any connotation of an event for the workers; no wonder participation declined steadily. In the end there were only party officials and JRD members from the management board who attended' (András).

On the other hand, the changing relations between members and workers with the new managing board of the cooperative were also a function of the lesser personal trust that villagers felt towards the town cooperative. Igor, the new chairman of the unified JRD, remained in office until the end of socialism. He arrived in Šal'a in 1970 from a middle-Slovakian industrial town. He was an active party member and his appointment as the cooperative chairman was interpreted by villagers as a manoeuvre towards gaining firmer control of the institution by the party. Being Slovak and with no knowledge of the Hungarian language, Igor was viewed sceptically by local villagers and many pointed out that he had 'two different eyes', one for Slovaks and another for Hungarians.

> Igor was a very good businessman, but a chauvinist. He was a Slovak, the first of our directors who could not, or pretended not to, speak a word of Hungarian. I was on good terms with him and I respect him for his work, but can you imagine an old lady from the village who could barely speak Slovak going to ask him a favour? Obviously not everyone liked him in the village.
>
> (András)

Igor backed the decision to concentrate the husbandry section in the town, depriving the villages of most of their own cattle, in spite of the communities' strong opposition. As mentioned earlier, his steps towards rationalisation of the collective included elimination of the vegetable gardening sector as well as of the tobacco plant, reduction of the pasture plots and concentration of production on grains, dairy products and pigs. Even though clearly dictated by the attempt to modernise the cooperative structure, these steps are all interpreted today as attempts to curtail the productive capacity of the villages and to concentrate it in the town. Moreover, some villagers feel that he was able to remain in office so long only thanks to his connections with the county's Party leaders:

> He was the column of the JRD. Like the big old communist leaders, nobody could challenge him, since his ideological position was more than solid. For the village this meant an important change: the time had come when one needed to go through channels beyond the village to obtain what he wanted. Igor just showed people how things had to be done.
>
> (Antal)

This comment underscores that the 1972 shift is seen by villagers as the definitive end of an age in which village-level power relations determined the manner in which one could get access to resources and services. The public functions of the village cooperative were transferred to the town and Igor's extended chairmanship assumed the criterion through which socialism implemented its control over people, by separating the domestic from the public sphere and by setting informal rules to permeate both spheres. Those who were able to establish networks and personal trust in the cooperative's leading members were clearly advantaged. Because of the cooperative's good links to the local industries, it was often possible to get a job through personal knowledge of members of the management board (see Chapter Three). Furthermore, there were some who enjoyed close relationships with the cooperative and hence were able to gain access to its resources with favourable conditions (see Chapter Four).

In considering the degree of trust in the socialist cooperative and its historical changes, one must not overlook the complex interplay of factors and outcomes that characterised collectivisation. The three phases of collectivisation are today considered in different ways: in the first, the cooperative was founded through violence and disorder that brought about social disharmony and maintained inequality among villagers. In the second

phase the slow consolidation of the cooperative and greater state intervention convinced people of the role of the institution by raising this to a public good. Finally, the unification after 1972 re-opened the gap between villagers and the cooperative, increasing mistrust in it and its management board. Villagers were forced to spread their networks to the outer sphere in order to pursue their goals.

The next section deals with the manner in which villagers nowadays interact with the cooperative, considering both ideas and practices.

6.3 Trust and Mistrust in the Postsocialist Cooperative

Walking through the streets of Királyfa one takes in the impression, common to most Slovakian and Eastern European villages, that historical changes have profoundly shaped present relations between persons and local institutions. The village is no longer what it used to be several decades ago, when the agricultural cooperative and the local factory employed up to seventy per cent of its inhabitants. In those days people woke up early to crowd the bus stop in the direction of Šal'a or Bratislava, whereas many could reach the cooperative's premises by an easy bicycle ride. Before eight in the morning the village was almost deserted of working-age people. Today the situation differs visibly. The cooperative employs less than thirty villagers and, as mentioned above (Chapter Three), the number of factory workers has sharply declined since the early 1990s. Morning rituals and the daily exodus of workers from Királyfa are much less evident than before. On typical working days some (pensioners and factory workers) wake up and leave their homes early (around seven), whereas many others (such as entrepreneurs and white collar workers) do not leave the village until the school children have entered their classrooms, a schedule unthinkable twenty years ago. The cooperative does not welcome the orderly bicycle queues of the past and it falls outside the daily working routes of most villagers.

As in most postsocialist villages, however, Királyfa too maintains the flavour of what life used to be under the previous regime. The large tracts of collectively farmed land (see Chapter Four) and the building of the former cooperative dominate the 'external face' of the village, the border land between the community and the surrounding fields. Although it is difficult to judge the relationship of villagers to their transformed cooperative from the impression that its buildings and land give to the observer, it is clear, as is shown in detail below, that this relation is far from being unimportant. Most of the machinery (tractors, combines and watering plants) which can be found in the village today is owned by the cooperative, the drivers or operators are cooperative employees, the land rented by the few private farmers is assigned by the cooperative and, during the busy agricultural

seasons villagers pay regular and frequent visits to the institutions: all this suggests that the cooperative plays a crucial role in Királyfa's social and economic life.

As mentioned above, the postsocialist cooperative underwent full restructuring in 1992 (Chapter Four). Vince, of *gazda* origin from the town, replaced the old socialist chairman. Villagers reacted differently to this development. Some today comment that this change was a continuation of the 1989 enthusiasm for reform. In the new institution there would have been no place for the 'old faces', who, if left there 'would have kept on doing business the old way' (Antal). This entailed that Igor, the long-lasting socialist chairman, was identified with the former system and hence his candidature[96] to the post-1989 chairmanship was interpreted as a reactionary manoeuvre. Other villagers, however, were less enthusiastic about the new chairman, as one commented:

> I think they made a big mistake. Igor, during his almost thirty years of office, had accumulated a lot of connections with the local administration and the political circuit. These connections are of vital importance today, as they were under socialism. Nobody was more qualified than him to keep things going smoothly with bureaucracy and politics. The new guy is ok, but he is too weak to manage in the political world. He lacks the networks, this is the problem.
>
> (Péter, b. 1946)

This comment comes from a former cooperative member who worked there for fifteen years.

Another villager, a present cooperative member, stressed that 'the times demanded the change in chairmanship, but this doesn't mean it was beneficial' (András). This confirms the above position, i.e. that the importance of having networks with the local political environment is a well-recognised feature that should characterise a successful institution (Namerová 1997). However, there is also another side to this story. Presently, some villagers fear that the managing board may be attempting to strengthen its power by concentrating the decision-making process and the ownership of shares in the town, thus leaving the villages that have land in the cooperative in a peripheral position. One of the steps through which Vince, the present chairman, is allegedly gaining control of the institution is

[96] Igor was invited as a candidate in the 1990 election in spite of the fact that he had been, one year earlier, appointed chairman of the Union of the Agricultural Cooperatives (ZDR).

the above-mentioned purchase of shares from holders who are not interested in the future of the cooperative. Another factor is represented by Vince's prolonged chairmanship (12 years), which makes him, in some informants' view, 'emulating Igor'. The story told to me by one, non-village, informant is that Vince, at the end of his office (4 years) manipulated the management board by fixing the election date on late Friday afternoons (this happened twice). Many members did not take part in the election procedures because it is customary to leave work early on Friday afternoon in Slovakia; therefore, not all members wish to attend the elections. The outcome is that Vince, so far, has succeeded in being re-elected twice with an extremely low number of votes.[97]

After asking several people about their views of today's cooperative and the level of trust they attribute to it, I found that, apart from those who once occupied a management position within the institution, almost no one had a positive comment regarding its present activity. Not even its workers seemed ready to affirm that, despite its economic difficulties, the cooperative is still going as one of the few left in the region. All I could hear from them was a plain 'It is my employer and I cannot run it down. It would be against my interests, after all' (Gyula, b. 1948). Another cooperative employee, seemingly surprised by my interest in the JRD, noted 'There is nothing to see today, all we have here is just a small remainder of what once was. We used to be a good cooperative; people were all proud of our results' (Pál, b. 1954).

On the other hand, some shared the idea that:

> It was the cooperative that destroyed our economy. First they took away our land and animals, then they built this mammoth farming style that could do nothing but spoil the soil and contaminate the water. Once they were proud of reaching 70-80 quintals per hectare, now they are lucky to reach 40 q!
>
> (Bence)

This comment suggests that the way in which people relate to the cooperative is often marked by strong emotional connotations that originate in past experiences and practices. Interestingly, one of the present cooperative's managers seemed well aware of villagers' overt mistrust of the institution and was ready to ascribe this to the postsocialist transformation:

---

[97] The cooperative regulations state that if the number of voters is insufficient even after one hour, the elections may take place with the present number of attendants.

> I see that a lack of trust in society was a characteristic of before [the socialist period]; however now it is more important for us to be trusted by people, even though it is indeed more difficult than before. Look at the other cooperatives around: they made a fuss about their new programmes and ideas and then what happened? Somebody just used them to make tunnel[98] and that's it! No job and nobody to work the land. At least we are doing our best to continue production and not leave the land to the weeds. I know that people complain, but this is their nature, there is nothing you can do about this.
>
> (Lőrinc)

These words summarise the cooperative's present situation. The cooperative is caught between the need to maintain viability of production in a rapidly changing economic environment without the generous protection it enjoyed some decades ago, and the need to maintain its reputation among villagers. Therefore, it is not surprising that most people generally do not trust the cooperative especially since most of the social functions of its socialist predecessor have been transferred from the cooperative to the state, which is in many cases unable to perform them. People also criticise the cooperative for its poor level of performance or inability to pay rents. Lőrinc seems to indicate that although the issue of mistrust is a problem rooted in the socialist past, it is now felt more seriously by the cooperative because after the transformation trust has re-gained importance in the village's economic life.

Despite the mistrust they harbour towards the cooperative, villagers have not abandoned their relations with it or denied the importance of its services. Villagers recognise that the existence of the cooperative is an important requirement for their future relationship with land and farming and therefore they build their strategies in order to be able to deal with it profitably.

For instance, a large portion of the village's families, including those who do not own agricultural land apart from their garden plots, purchase pigs from the cooperative. This choice is not forced by circumstances, as at least three private pig breeders operate in the village. 'I used to buy pigs from a small company operating in the village. Last year two of the three animals I bought became sick and died. I gave up and now I only buy from the cooperative. They have better controls and they can follow your animals'

---

[98] A practice indicated with by Slovak word *tunelovat'*, 'digging a tunnel', a metaphor for digging out the profitable portions of an enterprise and then leaving the remaining external body plagued with debt.

health if you know whom to ask', observed Gábor. As another informant confirmed, 'It was cheaper for me to go to the cooperative. I have some relatives there and they can tell me when prices are going down, so that I can buy more conveniently there than in other places' (Antal).

Another case of farmer-cooperative relations regards the need to hire tractors, combines and other heavy agricultural machinery. Although the two large-size farmers own their own machines, due to time constrictions and the volume of work they are not able to lend or rent their services to other farmers (except for close relatives).[99]

László (b. 1944) owns 2.5 ha of land on which he grows vegetables, potatoes and grains. At the time of the grain harvest he was in trouble because forthcoming heavy rains could have spoiled his crop. The only chance he had was to harvest it at once, but it was Saturday. He asked in the village for a combine to do the job, but all the private owners refused to lend him theirs because they were busy too. In one case he even got the answer: 'Tomorrow is Sunday, who do you think will come to help you for some hundred crowns?' He finally decided to turn to András, a relative who is a retired cooperative member, to ask for mediation in hiring a cooperative machine. András was reluctant to accept, knowing that in that period of the year it is almost impossible to find a combine driver available, but he finally gave his word that he would do his best. Finally, on Sunday early morning the two men met in the field and a combine from the cooperative harvested the plot. After László had paid the driver, the three men stopped in the pub for a drink on him.

The presence of family, neighbourhood and friendship ties with the cooperative motivates people to turn to it for harvesting, fertilizing and even manuring their plots. In these situations a key role is played by present or former cooperative members who are seen as intermediaries with the institution, and therefore it is important to be on good terms with them in order to gain access to the cooperative's services, as seen in the following example extracted from my field notes.

One spring morning Gábor consulted his parents about the need to procure fresh fodder for their animals. He indicated that there were two options: to consistently look for fresh grass along the river or to rent a small plot of alfalfa from the cooperative. The first choice was the less costly in terms of immediate expenditures, but it could become increasingly expensive in terms of the labour involved to find always new and fresh grass. 'Do you think that your neighbours will leave that grass for you?' his

[99] Some farmers refused to utilise to the cooperative's technical means: 'I don't trust their work. Their tractor drivers are not so skilled as they once were, and it is rather problematic for them to work on small plots. They are not used to it after all' (Bence).

mother said. 'Don't you remember how it was last year? We found grass for three weeks and then the hunt started. Everyone woke up early to scythe it and before midday there was not a single spot where you could find grass, a real desert', warned his father. 'So what the hell should I do?' – shouted Gábor – 'Do I have to go and beg the cooperative for a plot? It may even be too late to find one, and you know that they give the land to everyone who drinks with them'. 'Yes', said his mother, 'go there now and ask for Laci [a relative who is a cooperative worker], you can talk with him, he will help you'. Gábor looked for the man, but he was not there. He returned back home determined not to undertake anything without a personal contact in the cooperative. At last, later in the day he succeeded in contacting Laci, and rented a half hectare of alfalfa. He was surprised to find that even though he was given the thirty-eighth plot, there was still plenty of land available for rent.

The practice of dividing a part of the cooperative's fodder plots and renting these out to villagers[100] was already prevalent during the last years of socialism. People made extensive use of the cooperative for feeding their own animals since the natural resources that historically provided fodder and pastures to the villages had been dramatically altered by collectivisation.[101] These practices continue up to present with an increased emphasis on personal rapport with the cooperative's leading members. In spite of his parent's urging, Gábor did not feel confident turning to the cooperative without any personal contact. His comment that 'they give the land to everyone who drinks with them' emphasises his distance from the institution, and hence his hesitation to resort to it as a 'regular outsider'. However, after he overcame this hesitation, Gábor was surprised to find that the service of renting fodder plots was indeed available to all.

The mistrust in the postsocialist cooperative expressed by villagers is not confirmed by their practices. Villagers resort to personal networks and relatives to maintain a link to the cooperative and this suggests that their mistrust does not lead them to interrupt all contacts with the institution. Uttered mistrust has certainly profound emotional roots in the village's past

---

[100] At the time of my fieldwork the price for 25 a of alfalfa was 500 SK (12.5 euro). This price referred to the unlimited use and harvesting of the plot throughout the farming season (April to November). After that time the land is returned to the cooperative, which is in charge of the seeding, fertilizing and manuring. The renters do not usually receive the same plots, because the cooperative rotates the use of land.

[101] People today fiercely insist on the damage socialist collectivisation did to the environment. Particular attention is paid to the forest, which surrounded Királyfa until the 1950s: 'Do you see all this land here? It was all forest. All of it is gone now; no tree is left apart from a few that don't even count as trees. There are no birds or animals who can find shelter among them. This is not nature anymore' (Mária).

events. However, the present need to keep personal relations going with this institution is felt by villagers in light of their potential dependence on the cooperative's services and resources. This happens even though these services are not necessarily open only to those who have networks with the institution. People make use of their personal networks because they choose the 'safe-option', personal trust, for approaching institutions towards which they generally express mistrust.

6.4 The Local Administration during Socialism

The local administration presents another case where the interrelation between people and institutions can be investigated. In socialist times, the village's municipal office, along with the cooperative and the Communist party, constituted the fundamental connections to central authority. Villagers were well aware that all their requests had to be directed through one of these three channels and virtually no independent action was conceivable. In the cases in which it was not convenient or impossible to rely on one of the three authorities, the villager could seek the help of the other two even though, as a general rule, the three were never separate entities.[102]

One of the most contested policies of the socialist years concerned housing and building licences. Villagers today maintain that the aging of the population (Chapter Five) has its source in past housing policies. As one village woman emphasised: 'There was no way for young couples to build houses in the village: the municipal office did not grant permissions. No wonder they all fled to the town and today there are only old people here. This village will die out!' (Terézia, b. 1949)

Another villager pointed out that local authorities' unwillingness to grant building licences to meet the village's growing demand, particularly during the 1970s, can be attributed to strategies aimed at breaking down the Hungarian majority in the region's villages: 'It is clear why they preferred that our young people go and live in the town. There they would mix and assimilate more easily. The problem was not in our mayor; we always succeeded in maintaining a Hungarian mayor in the village, in contrast to many other villages in the area. He had to accept orders from above' (Gábor).

---

[102] For example, all of the socialist mayors who held offices in the village from the 1970s were linked to the town cooperative through personal work experience, membership or connections to its management board. As for the party, I have little data because a number of documents were destroyed, but it is worth of mentioning that only those who were active party members could aspire to leading positions either in the cooperative or in the village.

On the other hand, the official village chronicle described the matter differently in 1984:

> For a village of the size of Királyfa there is a sufficiently high number of new houses built per year, 3-4 family houses [out of 1700 inhabitants]. Unfortunately there are still people who build without a licence, in spite of the repeated public announcements and private warnings. We decided that every municipal officer will have the task to watch for and report such cases in the area of his residence.
>
> (Krónika 1987: 100).

One year later the Chronicle reported:

> This year there were 19 people who submitted applications for building permits. Three were granted, eight more will be met in the near future. The municipal office wishes to grant licences to all applicants, to avoid further dispersion of young villagers. However, villagers use their licences to build up farming plots and work in the second economy [*fusiban dolgozni*]. This explains why their construction work proceeds very slowly.
>
> (Krónika 1987:114).

Indeed, Királyfa had a slower rate of house construction during socialist times than, for example, its neighbour Hosszúfalu (Dlhá nad Váhom). One reason for this is that Királyfa was not classified as a 'developing village' (*rozvojová obec*, in Slovak) a category that allowed for generous state subsidies. However, the interesting side of the story is that villagers seem unwilling to blame their municipal office for the political choices behind the problem. On the contrary, two village mayors, in office from 1964 to 1976 and from 1977 to 1991, respectively, are even praised for their contributions to the village's social and economic life. One informant described the first mayor in a positive light:

> Vilmos, our mayor in the years 1964-1976, was a 'peasant boy'. After the death of his father he inherited some land. During the war he escaped the army and joined the partisans. After the war he got his education in Bratislava and received a reward for being a partisan. He was elected mayor for the first time in 1949. Communists loved partisans in that period. He was not a bad person, even though many

> have never forgiven him for his political orientation. He had a firm hand on the village and could achieve whatever he planned even by giving commands to people. I think he did good things for us and he deserves esteem.
>
> (Anna)

Another informant, referring to the socialist mayors, commented:

> They could have done more to make Királyfa a desirable place for young people too. I understand that in those days it was not easy to do politics, but it never is. My son and daughter left for Šal'a as soon as they found a job. What could I do for them? I was not the only one to ask for a housing plot in the village!
>
> (Júlia)

Most of the mistrust expressed towards authorities on the issue of building licences is directed towards external political institutions (mainly the Communist party and district officers), whereas the role of village officers, although seen with criticism, is at times justified. People recognise that some of the community's present problems have their roots in 'dirty political games'. Because local politics were indissolubly intertwined with the state ideology during socialism, it was easier for people to blame the party or the state for any miscarriages at the local level. This led villagers to counterbalance their mistrust in institutions with a less negative attitude towards representatives of the local authority.

6.5 The Present Relationship between Villagers and the Local Administration

The first part of this section analyses the changes in the village's political structure after 1989. The second part illustrates some villagers' attitudes to the municipal office in the context of several episodes of village politics in the 1990s.

The municipal office (*obecný úrad*) is composed of the mayor, the vice-mayor and three accountants. Whereas the three accountants are all chosen by the mayor, the position of the vice-mayor is more complex. He is partly employed by the municipal office and partly as a public worker from

the village budget.[103] Until 2001 these four offices were the only full-time dependants of the municipality. However, a new law in force since June 2002 provides that all educational bodies (schools and kindergartens) become dependants of the municipal office, thus raising the number of municipal employees to 23 persons (including teachers).

As it did also during socialism, a deputy committee of 14 members, 9 of whom are elected and 5 appointed by the mayor, operates together with the municipal office. This committee decides on the most important matters for the community. During socialism, however, the committee had no actual power as the decisions came mostly from above (the district level). Today, a majority of the committee's members are proposed by political parties. At the time of the most recent administrative election in December 2002, nine out of 14 candidates were put forward by the Hungarian Coalition Party (see Chapter Eight). The remaining members of the committee were independent candidates who had to collect at least 100 signatures to be eligible for the election.

At the district level, the municipal office has no seat, whereas the county administration (see Chapter One) includes four representatives from the municipalities, but none of them are from Királyfa. The main difference in the functioning of the municipal office from the socialist period is that, according to the new legal system for local administrations implemented in 1993, the municipalities have gained more autonomy and power in making decisions, reducing the influence of the districts.[104]

In 1991 the first postsocialist elections were held in the village. Márk (b. 1947), an independent candidate, won the election. Villagers emphasised that among the candidates he was the only one not to have a clear relationship to the Communist party. Márk is an agrarian engineer who was born in Királyfa but worked for many years in a state experimental agricultural plant situated near Diószeg. After 1980, he came back to Šal'a, where he entered the poultry section attached to, but not part of, the cooperative. During his career he acquired many personal connections with the cooperative and local (county) officers, but he was never an openly active communist. Although he was elected mayor he did not come back to reside in the village. Even so, he eventually had his natal village house renovated, thanks in part to the help of the village's public workers and unemployed. Márk remained in office for three terms (four years each), until

[103] This explains why his main task is to lead the group of public workers (16 persons in 2001) who are every year chosen from among the village's unemployed.

[104] A new law (2003) proposes to eliminate the district system, but no changes have yet been introduced.

the recent elections held in December 2002 in which he was defeated by a younger candidate.[105]

Márk is an emblematic figure of the postsocialist transformation in the village. Unlike the new cooperative chairman, he has a number of valuable networks with the county and district administration which he has been able to manage fruitfully. However, the degree of trust that villagers express towards him has varied in the course of his career as mayor.

Márk's office has been often viewed in good terms by the village's elderly and retired population, particularly because of his efforts to renovate the church and cemetery (see below). However, he was criticised by the younger inhabitants for paying too much attention to religious activities and not enough to the needs of the young population. As one young villager commented: 'He does not care about our needs. He thinks that the holy [religion] is the most important thing in life. He may be good for thinking about the afterlife, but not about this one. If we want to organise a concert, do you think he will ever listen to our requests? No way, he can really be deaf sometimes!' (Nóra)

Márk's involvement in village politics during his office had varied degrees of success, as two examples will demonstrate. In 1997 the mayor undertook the complete reconstruction of the village's church thanks to a grant obtained from foreign funding bodies which covered two thirds of the overall expenses (estimated at about 5 million crowns, or 800,000 Euro). Although at the municipal office's request villagers decided to contribute 2000 to 3000 crowns (50-60 Euro) per family, it was clear that the community alone would have never been able to shoulder the whole expense. It was after one year of long and secret negotiations that the mayor announced that work was to begin. He succeeded in securing sufficient funds thanks to a grant from a German foundation and other minor bodies. One elderly villager commented: 'It was only thanks to the careful work of our mayor that we were able to find the money for the reconstruction. I don't know how he was able to do that, but he has to have some good connections somewhere. I am happy that we have him as our mayor' (Anna).

The results were extremely positive judging from the elegant appearance of the church today and villagers can be rightly proud of the building, especially if one considers that in the neighbouring communities, even those much bigger than Királyfa, there have been few similar cases of renovation. Furthermore, what impressed villagers the most was the rapidity

[105] The new mayor had already worked for a long time in the district office in Šal'a and was extremely active in the village's cultural clubs and within the Hungarian Cultural Association CSEMADOK (see Chapter Eight). Even so, he did not campaign as a member of the Hungarian Coalition Party, but independently.

with which the work was accomplished. A team of village public workers, chosen from among the unemployed, and a few experts from outside completed the structural work in less than two seasons.[106]

The mayor's efforts regarding a project to connect the village to a gas line were perceived in a different light. Despite being one of his priorities at the time of Márk's first re-election, work on the project began later than in most of the neighbouring villages. The mayor responded to villagers' complaints by assuring them that operations would start soon and that they would be completed more quickly than in other villages. Finally, he kept his promise and a year and a half the whole community was equipped with a gas heating system. Unlike the church reconstruction, however, the heating project was not met with the same degree of satisfaction. First, the mayor was criticised for not having employed villagers and not having given the contract to a village enterprise (at the time there were two who could have done the work). Second, informants proved that the household expenses for the installment of the gas plant were about thirty percent higher than those in neighbouring villages. This criticism served to widen the divide between those who supported the mayor and his office for being 'punctual and rapid' in meeting villagers' demands and those who accused him of corruption.[107]

These examples suggest two points. First, unlike under socialism, the municipal office functions today as the only important link between individuals and the state. This explains why villagers are more ready to evaluate negatively the conduct of their mayor than they were that of the socialist-era mayors. Villagers see the mayors' activity under socialism as more openly the result of political pressures operating from the regional level. Second, informal ties are constructed between single actors, but they function to perform tasks that often go beyond personal goals. People have supported the mayor in spite of his doubtful conduct on several occasions because they acknowledge the importance their decision may have for the community as a whole, since he 'knows the right people in the right places'.

However, in spite of his crucial role in the political arena, the mayor is not the only source of authority through which people attempt to resolve their problems. There can also be other ways of dealing with institutional problems, i.e. by turning to secondary types of associations. The issue of ownership of small garden plots situated along the river bank constitutes an interesting starting point for contextualising temporal dynamics of the

---

[106] More time was then required for the decoration of the ceiling and the chapel, because there are no painters active in the village anymore.

[107] Some villagers alleged that the reasons for contracting an external and comparatively more expensive company were to be found in the mayor's desire to maintain his personal networks.

relation between local officers and villagers. The portion of territory that extends along the Váh River has been historically composed of meadows, wood and orchards. This was one of the most important parts of the village's land as in feudal times it was under 'common ownership'. Here, until the second half of the 19th century, only landed peasants had use rights and thus they were able to build upon this privilege. After the dissolution of the feudal estates, this land was not divided among the owners, who continued to retain their rights to it, partly due to the small size of the parcels, and partly because villagers decided to maintain a shared use, at least of the meadow portion. This remained a precious resource for animal grazing and hay production. Its use was watched by the village herdsman (*pásztor*), who took care of the cattle while the peasants' worked. After the early 1900s, however, private holdings of woodlands became increasingly the object of transactions and historical records show they became more valuable, with prices comparable to that of arable land.

As mentioned earlier, a large part of the village's forests were converted into arable land during socialism. The meadow portion remained along the river bank remained almost intact since there was a high risk of flooding in this zone, but also the extremely sandy soil was unsuitable for grain cultivation.[108] Ownership of this land remained mostly in the hands of the village administration, as it was already at the end of the 19th century, and only a few changes were made by the cutting down of some fruit trees and the construction of the first football stadium during the 1960s.

After the construction of the Kaskády power station (three kilometres from the village, in the direction of Galanta), a cycling path was created along what had been the new river embankments.[109] This pathway connected the two towns of Šal'a and Galanta passing through Királyfa, and created a pleasant natural oasis for Sunday and holiday excursions thanks to the abundant trees spreading from Šal'a to the power station. As part of a project named 'Improvement of recreational opportunities for the town of Šal'a' (1981), a number of small garden plots were created along the river. One fourth of the territory belonged to the town, and the remainder was in the village's cadastre. These plots were granted mainly to town dwellers, with the initial regulation that only those villagers who had gardens smaller than 4 a were eligible for allotment.

---

[108] But the sandy soil is suitable for vegetable gardening. This land was the site of the first village-level experiment of this technique, undertaken by the cooperative during the late 1950s.

[109] Due to the frequent floods the river's course was modified in 1887. After the First World War, the embankments were moved towards the village to leave a wider margin for flood waters.

From the first half of the 1980s the village's municipal office was put under pressure to concede portions of this land to parcellisation. The cooperative agreed to parcel this land to create gardens and small sheds (13 square meters was the size limit). The process of parcellisation increased in scope after 1985, following stronger demand from people in the town and even more distant urban centres such as Trnava and allowing greater flexibility in the size of buildings permitted. By 1989 almost the entire strip of land separating the village from the river had been converted into gardens and throughout the 1990s an increasing number of garden users built their weekend houses there, where they spend almost all of their holidays and summer weekends.

After 1989, the increased weekend traffic in the village to reach the gardens (the only paved way to them crosses the village) led people to protest against the town dwellers' abuses. Villagers complained that cars were crossing the community at high speeds even on those days when quietness was due. The number of 'strangers' (*idegenek*) strolling in the village until late in summer did not please local inhabitants.[110] The village mayor reacted by sending a petition to the district office, but in vain. As the director of the town Land Office explained, there is very little that can be done to regulate ownership of these plots. They are a matter of dispute throughout the country since in most cases there are two or more claimants to a single plot, especially in cases where the plot was sold after its first parcellisation during socialism.[111] The director of the Town Cadastral Office commented on the issue in the following way:

> The problem is that in many cases it is almost impossible to prove who owned that land before collectivisation. Királyfa is more or less a clear case since the land seems to be municipal property. However, from the number of complaints I hear from villagers, I have to judge that things are not at all settled yet. I wonder if they will ever be.
>
> (Petra, b.1965)

[110] I asked if it could not be seen as a positive factor for the village's economy that townspeople would spend time in the village's pubs or shops. The answer I received was: 'A few crowns for a beer can't compensate for the annoyance they give us' (Gyula). Indeed, most of the guests purchase their drinks and food in the town before the weekend starts; only a few stop in the village pubs for drinks during the day.

[111] In addition, a law prescribes that if two thirds of the 'new owners' of one complex of these gardens submit demands for legal ownership, and no formal agreement with the former owners exists, they have the right to take full possession.

The village mayor became exasperated by the villagers' pressure to solve matters and he eventually backed a proposal to obstruct the road to the gardens with cement blocks. These remained for some weeks and eventually reduced the car traffic in the village, at least until the local authorities ordered them removed. The event had a strong emotional impact in the community; some villagers were ready to take the mayor's side for having proved his commitment to the interests of the community with this courageous gesture.

> I understand the mayor's feelings; he interpreted our disappointment. We are in a democracy, but as you see all of the abuses of the past still remain with us. That land is ours, it belongs to the village. I really can't bear all these strangers coming to plant tomatoes on our soil. I really wonder what could be done to set things right!
>
> (Gábor)

Other villagers, however, criticised the mayor by suggesting that the episode was nothing more than a chance for him to show off and that anyhow, he was not doing his best for Királyfa.

> I don't understand the mayor. He thinks we are still in the middle ages or what? What did he want to achieve with this stupid idea? I think he has a lot of responsibility in not being able to settle the matter at higher political levels. If then he wants to show us that he is willing to do everything for us, I think it is too late.
>
> (Nándor)

The creation of a Garden Holders' Association in 1996 has allowed the problem of ownership to be tackled in a more constructive way. The association emerged out of the Garden Holders' Cooperative already established in 1986, but included more villagers to whom a small portion of land had been allotted in the decade since. The association is led by three representatives elected in turn every three years. It holds regularly scheduled meetings at least twice a year in the town, where most of the members reside. There are 22 villagers in the association but not all of them regularly attend the meetings; usually those taking part report to the others on the results of the meeting.

In one recent meeting, over a hundred members registered their status as users of the garden plots awaiting a final decision on ownership. This step

confirms the willingness of some villagers to proceed with a legal battle, even though their efforts may not be backed by the whole community.[112] The creation of the garden association was a step towards the establishment of an intermediary institution between villagers and village authorities. When plots first became available to villagers, it was crucial to go through personal networks to obtain a share. One informant maintained that even though he had a documented forest plot on the land where the garden plots had been created, he could not have succeeded in his claim were it not for the mayor. The mayor put him on the list of village applicants for small plots, and thanks to him those on the list have successfully gained one small plot in the garden complex. In this way, the mayor's efforts towards building credibility among villagers in followed two lines. Legally, he granted some villagers small shares of land, illegally excluding others who did not want to insist on their claims or who, for some other reason did not exert sufficient pressure on the local administration.[113] The 'cement incident' has had a distinct impact on public opinion, affirming that the village authorities are not completely insensitive to villagers' needs and complaints.

Although the assignment of some garden plots has been settled, claimants have recognised that only by proceeding in their legal battle can they hope to reach their goals, i.e. the settlement of ownership. The garden association works towards this end as a secondary organisation founded and promoted by claimants with no link to local officers. The village mayor plays no role in the association and it is doubtful whether he will be able to influence the final assignment of ownership.

6.6 Conclusion

History plays an active role in shaping actors' present attitudes, choices and practices in relation to local institutions. However, history should not be characterised as an organic body of happenings that impact people's everyday lives from above, imposing the burden of 'past legacies'. History needs to be treated in relation to people's interpretations of it on the basis of two factors. First, time flows through a series of events that may reflect continuity, discontinuity or both. The low level of trust that people have in the agricultural cooperative is undoubtedly rooted in their emotional reaction to collectivisation. Although the early years of collectivisation are seen as a painful moment in the village's history, the establishment and the slow

[112] Most villagers are not interested in obtaining a plot; some have even sold their gardens and others do not believe it is even possible to obtain ownership rights to one.

[113] About ten applications were refused with the explanation that they came too late. However, in the portion allotted to villagers so far there are three or so plots which are today left uncultivated.

social and economic development of the village cooperative during the 1960-1970s attenuated the impact of forced action and confiscation. However, the changes during the late 1970s again rendered the institution a distant and external entity. The situation became more complex with the end of socialism and the re-establishment of property rights, requiring villagers to seek everyday contact with the cooperative more often than they had done in late socialism. Thus, the fact that even a single historical period, socialism, often characterised as one of 'stagnation' and 'immobility', is today described with different and contrasting emotional discourses suggests that time becomes fractured in the multitude of events and people's responses to them.

Second, history is constantly mediated by actors who seek adaptation to changes and incorporate them into their life strategies. Past experiences become an integral part of the bundle of knowledge that informs people's choices and teaches them how to deal with changes. This is evident in villagers' relationship with the local administration. Under socialism the strong political link of the municipal office to the district and county administration determined the way in which decisions were made in the community. After 1989, however, the municipal office has remained the main bridge to state institutions and today villagers are more severe in their judgement of the mayor's political conduct in the community. Since his position has been strengthened by the postsocialist transformation, villagers recognise that they need to deal 'fruitfully' with him in order to pursue personal goals. This raises the importance of personal trust and informality. However, there also may be cases in which different strategies are needed, such as the garden association, an organised form of civic action that bypasses the importance of personal connections to the local administration.

The simplistic paradigm proposed by Sztompka (1999) and other authors who see in the embeddedness of the 'culture of distrust' the main obstacle to a democratic transformation of central Eastern Europe is a self-defeating argument. Past experiences are strategically reinterpreted by actors in their present lives and these experiences do not simply 'fall on them' as heavy legacies from which the individual cannot disentangle himself. If history is not taken into account in this manner, it makes little sense to question whether a higher degree of interpersonal trust is needed to foster the development of systemic trust or vice versa. The 'culture of distrust' will always weigh on these countries' future development. It is rather in the idea that trust and mistrust are built strategically because they draw on emotional rather than instrumental discourses that a possible answer may be found to the question of why mistrust is part of these social realities.

Chapter 7
Values as Moral Foundations: Trust, Prestige and Social Roles in Change

7.1 Introduction

The previous chapter analysed two contexts in which people make use of trust and mistrust as notions characterised by strong emotional and inherently instrumental connotations. This chapter goes a step further to explore the cognitive processes that underpin ideas, decisions and choices about the social world. The focus is on values as general features of people's social interaction and as attributes upon which individual evaluations are constructed. The self, the kin group and the village constitute the main framework within which these values will be identified and analysed.

In the classic sociological approach, values are defined as: 'conception[s…] of the desirable which influence the selection from available modes, means and ends of action' (Parsons and Shils 1951: 395). In other words, values determine behaviour by definition. Values are important for three reasons. First, they express the expectations, the representations and the meanings that people attribute to particular social roles, functions, processes or phenomena (Kluckhohn 1951). Therefore, values are shaped by the features of the individuals or groups sharing them. In other words, they are 'socially specific', i.e. they reflect the actors who use them, which is why there is no such thing as a single value system within a social context (see Campbell 1964). Secondly, values undergo change in a different manner than, for example, practices and institutions do. Certain values, especially those expressing general life views, may need more time to change, whereas others may adapt comparatively quickly to mutated external conditions. Third, because values are constructed on two cognitive levels, the individual and the social group, they contain a tension between these two levels of action. Therefore, dealing with values and exploring the manner in which these justify (or are contradicted by) action is another way of relating the individual to the collective sphere of analysis.

Barth underlines that the study of values can be pursued following two orientations (1993: 37). The first is to construct general cultural premises that can be tested through the comparative application of values to different 'cultural contexts'. The second approach is to see values as immersed in social action, since they are used to justify action. Barth's position bridges the two approaches, calling for the importance of observing values through embedded 'data in contexts of concept and practices within which the actors are positioned' (1993: 44), hence as features 'embedded in culture'. However, he recognises an inherent difficulty in dealing with values because, once one starts analysing them one 'finds a surfeit of them', i.e. there are too many and sometimes they are used in contradictory ways by individuals (1993: 36).

In this chapter I follow Barth by maintaining that values underpin social action and hence their analysis, within a dynamic perspective of change, may aid in understanding people's choices and ideas about the social world. However, I propose that rather than seeing values as 'embedded in culture' it can be more helpful to consider the manner in which actors make use of values in order to maintain control of the historical changes that may undermine the stability of social interaction. My argument is that by shedding light onto the cognitive process through which people make their evaluations of other people, the 'moral dimension' underpinning social relations can become visible. Because values are constructed on the basis of personal experiences of the social world, they constitute important reference points to which individuals may resort in their everyday choices and decisions. Thus, the issue of how trust works to tie (or untie) individuals together is also closely related to the manner in which this moral dimension influences people's public behaviour. There would be no trust in persons if there were no grounds on which their social evaluation is built. Thus, understanding these grounds provides a complementary approach to the analysis of trust as a process influenced by emotional and instrumental features.

This chapter deals with the values that underpin three social domains: power and prestige, gender roles and human qualities. Following approaches proposed by other works on central Eastern Europe (Bell 1983, 1984; Jávor 1983; Skalník 1975, 1986, 1993), these domains are separately analysed within the historical framework of social change.

7.2 Value Orientations in Central Eastern European Peasantries

One of the dangers in treating values as elements for constructing generalisations about a specific social group is that values can become elements used to describe so-called 'cultural features'. This approach has

been adopted by a branch of anthropological literature to produce 'national character' accounts (see for instance Benedict 1947 and Mead 2001). One interesting example of this kind of holistic representation of values is to be found in Salzmann's work on comparative value orientations between Czechs and Slovaks (1970).

Based on a questionnaire which combined demographic data with application of the Kluckhohn-Strodtbeck repertory of five basic common value orientations,[114] Salzmann's work distinguished some basic differences in Czechs' and Slovaks' value orientations. In summary, according to Salzmann the first point is that young Czechs seemed ready in decision-making processes to balance deference to older kin members with the pursuit of personal interest. On the other hand, young Slovaks considered criticism from older members more attentively. Second, Czechs as a whole showed a propensity to think of nature 'both as a partner and a force to be conquered' (1970: 74). In contrast, Slovaks as a whole appeared more concerned about the dangers of controlling nature, demonstrating a more 'fatalistic' approach. Third, Salzmann judged that Czechs as a whole showed a stronger orientation towards doing rather than being, which was not similarly evident in the case of Slovak respondents (1970: 75).

These findings provide an attempt to classify people's orientation and cognitive processes within general schemes of analysis. However, as Talleyrand rather cynically stated: 'God gave us the faculty to speak in order to conceal what we think' (Peackock 2001); it must be recognised that categorising and analysing values are not easy tasks.

Nonetheless, I think that the analysis of values and their change over time can constitute a useful approach for understanding the transformation of central Eastern European societies. Jávor's account of changing values in the Hungarian peasantry in the period between 1930 and 1970 provides a pioneering attempt in this direction (1983). The author maps the value system of the village of Varsány, beginning with a definition of values as 'all the socially defined goals, material or psychological, the realisation of which is attempted by members of a given community' (1983: 275). Her analysis is grounded on two distinct levels. On the one hand, she ranks concepts which refer mainly to community level social relations; these include material success, behaviour vis-à-vis the family, and behaviour vis-à-vis the village. On the other hand, there are more general moral judgements which appear to be context-specific and different if applied to men or female community members.

---

[114] These concern: human nature, man vis-à-vis nature, time, activity and man vis-à-vis other men. This repertoire is still considered one of the most basic theoretical constructions for value analysis, see for instance Schwarz 1992.

Jávor (1983) identifies a 'two-fold value and cognitive orientation' in the village before 1945 and after the socialist transformation which she designates as a 'peasant orientation' - with a strong degree of continuity to pre-socialist times - and a 'transitional orientation between peasant and worker' - more open to the changes brought about by socialism. Her approach is extremely close to that proposed by Bell with regard to another Hungarian village (1983, 1984). Bell indicates two spheres within which values are constructed and mutate: prestige-authority and personal attribution. Within both spheres Bell notices that particular values have a tendency to evolve towards others, whereas others prove rather resistant to change. The following are some features of these values as proposed by the two authors.

1) Prestige. Power, which in Hungarian villages traditionally pivoted around one dimension, i.e. land ownership, acquired diversified bases with socialist collectivisation. Increased work mobility and changes in the social hierarchy of villages produced important innovations that modified the traditional bases upon which social status was constructed.[115] Men built their prestige in pre-socialist times mainly through work, respect and leadership (as in the case of cooperative brigades). On the other hand, women's prestige seemed to be still based on their husbands' position (Bell 1983: 156). Jávor points out that the 'peasant' and the 'transitional' approach to work provide two different sets of cognitive orientations towards social prestige. Whereas peasants are characterised as self-sufficient, cautious and fearful of novelty, peasant-workers are increasingly dependent on wage labour and hence emphasise a many-sided, many-skilled working adaptability. Since peasant-workers typically own no land, they tend to be evaluated by others on the basis of their skills and work, as well as their innate qualities.
2) Human qualities and gender. Bell points out that with the diminishing importance of land as the social marker *par excellence,* human qualities acquired increased importance. However, as he himself stresses, many of these qualities did not seem to diverge from the traditional value system (see also Fél and Hofer 1969). In

[115] Szent-Györgyi argues that in the Hungarian villages she examined, expressions of rank are differently linked to pre-socialist social status (land ownership) and legal status as affected by the socialist change. In the village where there was a stronger status differentiation due to the presence of large landowners and nobles, ranking categories are distributed in plural and relatively more complex models. On the other hand, the village which presented a smaller degree of stratification was more unified in adopting ranking categories based on economic status (1983: 181-210; 1993).

the case of men, laziness was strongly criticised whereas industriousness was conceived as the most valuable human quality. Women were expected to be thrifty since they controlled the household's cash, and to avoid talking 'a great deal or loudly'. Men were also liked when they had a sociable character (which was not expected from women), but there was a tendency, as in the past, to prefer quiet to gossipy figures. Moreover, concerning general evaluations of human qualities, since men have spent longer periods working in collective conditions than women, they tend to evaluate others on the basis of their innate characteristics rather than on family positions, as women would do (Jávor 1983: 283).

3) Gender roles. This is the field in which Bell recorded the most significant changes from pre-socialist times to the post-1948 transformation. On the one hand, the differentiation in status and rank increased villagers' sensibility towards the behaviour of leaders, who in many cases came from poor families. Therefore, 'intellectual sophistication' came to be considered a valuable personal feature, especially if coupled with a good degree of sociability. On the other hand, women's important social role in cementing relations between families, an already underlined characteristic in the past, was further strengthened. Due to increased employment opportunities, female family members had more occasion to interact with other women and hence to spread their webs of personal relations. In addition, Jávor underlines that during socialism, when the unity of the family as a unit of work diminished, women were often left alone with their own problems (1983: 291). Whereas in the case of the 'peasant value orientation,' female family members tended to stay at home while their husbands worked in the agricultural cooperative, in the 'transitional orientation' men were employed in non-agricultural occupations and women in the cooperative. This latter form was particularly burdensome for women, because the work on land and duties left them very little time to spend with their children.

7.2.1 Social Change and Values

Accounts of social change and its implications for value systems in rural communities in Slovakia provided somewhat similar, but not identical findings to those described for rural Hungary. In Slovakia, the strong degree of regional differences in the modernisation process accounted for the variability of outcomes. In the northern, agriculturally poor Tatra and sub-Tatra regions, industrialisation took place as early as the mid-1930s,

bringing about the classic dilemmas that the introduction of urban life styles and the 'de-peasantrisation' of villages produced all over the European continent (Wolf 1966). Therefore, much as in southern Italy, between 1880 and 1940 in these regions out-migration (mainly to North America) was one of the most frequented escape-routes from poverty. Only after 1945, with socialist modernisation, did the increased opportunities for employment in industry and in the tourist sector bring about a gradual but steady process of development and social change in northern Slovakia. Changes introduced by the collectivisation of land, which in many cases belonged to absentee Hungarian or Slovak nobles, industrialisation and the creation of a few urban centres affected in different ways the communities which sought to adapt or to resist these innovations. In some cases it was the accurate balancing of tradition and innovation that proved the winning formula for modernisation of these communities (Kandert 1988; Podoba 1999). In other cases, because of the permanence of traditional features such as an attachment to land, prevailing orientations towards self-sufficiency, the comparatively higher degree of social stratification and labour division and a concern for family above collective interests, socialist modernisation proceeded at a much slower pace (Skalník 1986; 1993).

One of the theoretical approaches present in Czechoslovakian anthropology considers values and their transformation in Slovakian villages as factors hampering rather than favouring modernisation. One reason for this is that the Marxist modernisation paradigm that informs much of the ethnographic work in these areas emphasises a dichotomous vision between values/tradition and modernisation on the one hand, and peasant versus an industrial mode of production on the other. Seen within this perspective, the shift from private to collective property and from prestige based on land ownership to the social recognition of individual qualities and skills appears to be nothing more than the simple product of the 'de-feudalisation' of these regions. As in the Hungarian villages mentioned above, the role of individuals in catching up with the innovations brought about by modernity and in balancing private with collective goals is seen as crucial for the progress of these communities. The outcome is that some sets of values proved more resistant to change than others. In the northern Slovakian regions, the rapid debasement of agriculture in the economic life of the communities and the growing influence of tourism did not dramatically affect values such as the importance of the family, the difference between gender roles and tasks and the emphasis on communal efforts and aid (Škovierová 1988).

Modernisation processes brought about comparatively dissimilar outcomes in the historically more fertile and predominantly agricultural

regions of southern and western Slovakia. In the beginning of the 20th century, modernisation had already begun as 'process from below', driven by the accumulation of capital and investment by local farmers in agriculture (and agriculture-related industries). However, the industrialisation of these regions was achieved mainly during socialism, and the few locally based industries that, thanks to the entrepreneurial activity of Jews, Germans or Hungarians, had been established before socialism did not survive the post-war transformation. On the other hand, the Hungarian villages of the south were traditionally wealthier (thanks to the fertility of the land) than those in the northern part of Slovakia and presented many more similarities to the communities described by Jávor (1983) and Szent-Györgyi (1983, 1993). This explains why the dramatic and painful changes introduced by collectivisation had more profound impacts here than in the northern Slovakian regions.

Danglová (1995, 1999), who also conducted research in the region where Királyfa is situated, points out that the collectivisation process marked for many of these communities a step back towards modernisation, as villagers were to learn that it was mainly through the careful use of networks, personal and family ties that social and economic advancement had to be pursued rather than through market competition. [116] As I have argued above, this was not the case for Királyfa, where the 1960s' cooperative slowly but successfully developed agriculture and improved the social conditions of the whole community. It was mainly in the 1970s, with the loss of the village's cooperative, that the importance of personal networks spanning beyond the village became crucial for tying local people to cooperative leaders, factory directors and district officers. The definitive transition from the 'peasant' economic structure that dominated the village until the late 1960s (cf. Sárkány 1975, 1983) to the new social and economic order brought about by industrialisation (cf. Jávor 1983) and the loss of the village cooperative can be ascribed to this period. Thus, as Skalník underlines (1993), values became increasingly polarised between private and collective, emotional and instrumental, formal and informal. The degree and kind of variations that these categories acquired became a strict function of the communities' pace of modernisation and within them of actors' skills and moral orientations.

[116] It must be underlined that Danglová's work is set in the postsocialist period, whereas both the above-mentioned references on Hungary (Bell 1983; Jávor 1983) date back to the socialist period. Thus, the authors' positions may well express different critical accounts of social change because of the two different historical moments in which the three works were written.

7.3 Changing Values in Királyfa

Királyfa exemplifies the way in which early modern value orientations intertwined with the socialist ones and converged to shape villagers' cognitive approach to the postsocialist transformation. The village was never characterised by the presence of a large stratum of rich landed peasantry, nonetheless, its geopolitical conditions and proximity to local and international market channels favoured the development of a *gazda* identification among the few large-size landholders. This resulted in the consolidation of strong inter-family ties within the large landowning group and of quasi-patronage ties between this and other social groups (Chapter Two).

The socialist transformation severely affected social relations in the village, wiping away the power of the large size peasants and introducing forced collectivisation. After one decade of slow and dramatic process, all land was collectivised and the village cooperative's subsequent good performance successfully lessened the contrast between private and collective life experiences. Unlike in Varsány (Jávor 1983) and in the older of the two villages described by Skalník (1986, 1993), however, the full collectivisation of agriculture in the 1960s and the industrialisation of the local towns in the 1970s left no space for the permanence of 'peasant' value orientations.[117] Villagers behaved more or less as in the cases presented by Podoba (1999) and Danglová (1999), seeking to build networks with authority holders to obtain material advantages for themselves and their families.

As seen above (Chapter Four), the re-establishment of property rights after 1989 did not cause a 'return of the *gazda*' in the village. Therefore it is difficult to speak about values which are today class-related or an expression of specific social groups. It is less problematic, however, to relate the importance of certain values to the historical periods that brought about their development and transformation. In many instances, villagers demonstrated reluctance to adapt to the changes. The strong role of the cooperative, the dependence on secondary economic practices, and the primary role of networks and personal connections indicate the permanence of behaviours and values from the socialist (and partly pre-socialist) period. In other cases, emphasis on village-group action, the revival and increased importance of

[117] Skalník describes the different modernisation process of two villages in the Tatra mountain area of northern Slovakia. His two communities, one historically older than the other, had different strategies of adaptation to change. The younger community was more open to change and adapted more quickly to socialism because of its comparatively greater economic disadvantages. The older village proved more resistant to change due to the power of local wealthy peasant families who resisted collectivisation.

community rituals and public events and the frequent use of the past life histories and experiences of individuals can be judged as fruits of the transformation (see Chapter Eight). Villagers have amalgamated values underpinning human qualities, gender roles, intra-village and extra-village relations from the pre-socialist and the socialist past, thus creating a new set of orientations.



10. The peasant was first of all a 'man of a thousand skills' (*ezermester*).

7.4 Prestige and Social Evaluation

The profound social and economic transformations that have influenced the historical course of the community since the end of feudalism significantly shaped the manner in which social status and prestige were considered in the village. In the pre-socialist past, it was commonly assumed that one was nothing without land and animals, and frequent narratives about the rich *gazda* families today confirm this was a central part of villagers' values. The importance attributed to the ownership of land is exemplified by the differentiation of *gazda-jobbágy-zsellér* (see Chapter Two). Not only were relations of power constructed upon the size of the farmstead, ownership of animals and of machines, but the ideology of ownership created a fundamental distinction between landed and landless. This explains why, as in the case of Kispalád described by Szent-Györgyi (1983, 1993), coming

from a 'peasant family' (*paraszt família* or *család*) was regarded as a matter of pride. This attribute has proved to be resistant to change as today some villagers still use the term 'peasant' (*paraszt*), or 'son of peasants' (*paraszt gyerek*) to refer to those with a respected past, i.e. those whose ancestors owned land and worked hard on it. One of the outcomes of socialist collectivisation is that today some villagers tend to distinguish between families of 'peasant' descent, considered as a positive attribute, and families who were 'proletarian' (*proletár*). This does not mean that socialism made all people 'proletarians', rather that those families who did not have land in pre-socialist times are designated with an epithet which originates from the socialist period.

The insistence on building social evaluation by contrasting peasants and proletarians finds its most eloquent expression in some villagers' characterisation of the socialist period. One metaphor that I heard to describe the socialist transformation in the village was that of 'dirty water'. One informant said:

> Do you know what happens if you have a bucket full of dirty water? If the bucket is immobile, then the dirt deposits on the bottom. It is there, you can't do anything with it; all you need to do is to keep it there and it won't come to the top. But once you shake the water, all the dirt comes up and the water is just turbid. This is what happened after the end of the war.
>
> (László b. 1951).

In his words, the 'dirt' represented the lowest group in the village (*a falu alja*) and the water shaking signified the socialist revolution. In other words, the socialist change brought to the top all the negative aspects of society which before were at the bottom.

7.4.1 Male Values: Sociability, Public Action

This section explores the relation between values and gender tasks in society. Social prestige is today constructed on two levels. One level expresses the collective features of one kind of lifestyle or mode of production (for example peasantry). Another level is featured through individualistic qualities, skills, deeds and attributions of the person.[118] This

[118] Of course, even when the general tendency is to judge one person, or family, on the basis of his/her position in the past, this evaluation can be easily contradicted by reference to actions or qualities of other kin or family members. Therefore the picture is extremely

section considers two value orientations used to judge single male personalities within the community: sociability and the degree of involvement in public action. Jávor points out (1983: 282-3) that in Varsány the individual features became markers of social status and prestige and qualities such as a positive attitude toward work, sociability, thrift and reliability in providing help became the most desirable human qualities. On the other hand, the author stressed that the gendered differentiation on which prestige was built remained more or less unchanged from the pre-socialist period.

What follows is a description of values determining male and female social evaluation in present-day Királyfa. First, I compare three elderly men and the manner in which they are portrayed in the village today.

1. Mihály

Mihály is the youngest son of one of the former wealthiest *gazdák* in the village (see Chapter Two). He is 75 years old and, apart from one sister who lives alone, he is the only descendant of his family to reside in the village. His family is remembered by people as one of the most prominent *gazda* families, not only for their wealth ('he had so many animals in the courtyard that it was impossible to sleep in his neighbourhood for the noise') but also for the quality of his father's farming work ('his land was always the greenest and the most well-kept in the village'). Moreover, Mihály married one of the daughters of another rich village peasant, one who owned all the houses of an entire village road, which is still remembered with his name. This further elevated his social status, particularly because he married for love and not by family agreement, as was common among *gazda* families (see Chapter Two). In villagers' views today, Mihály's social status was enhanced because in 1954 his father was forced to sign up with the cooperative and become factory worker, even though 'he never became a proletarian'. Mihály himself worked on the railway and was never particularly active in the cooperative or in other official village functions during socialism. After 1989, he claimed back a portion of land, but after some years he was forced to rent it to the cooperative for lack of workforce (see Chapter Four) and now he peacefully enjoys the work in his big garden which he farms with his wife's help.

Mihály lives in a house distinctly bigger than his neighbours'. He is known for possessing nineteenth century farming tools in his courtyard as well as for collecting old village documents which date back to the eighteenth century, compiled by village officials who were his ancestors. In

---

complex and it is perhaps safer to consider how individual and family traits are combined by people when weaving the fabrics of others' personalities.

spite of his family's solid reputation, however, none of his personal qualities seem to contribute to his personal reputation. Mihály is of a rather bashful nature, with little propensity to talk and his social life is literally managed by his wife who enjoys company and is extremely talkative.

2. András

András is also a retired villager, 72 years old. He comes from a landless peasant family; his father worked at a railway crossing and his mother was a seamstress. He made a quick and brilliant career during socialism thanks to his firm political ideology, which he has not yet abandoned, and became one of the cooperative's accountants in 1959. Since then, he has taken an active part in all of the cooperative meetings, social and cultural events, as he is proud of showing in the many pictures portraying him side by side with district and town party leaders. András was also responsible for legal disputes within the unified cooperative and this, as he pointed out 'made some people's ideas about him grow bitter'.

Unlike Mihály, he has two children and four grandchildren living in the village and their families often help out in his garden (see Chapter Five). Apart from his relatives, he seems to be tied mainly to people in the village who once occupied leading positions within the cooperative (two retired men). He also maintains very active contacts with other cooperative members who live in the town and who are still working in the cooperative. Because of his openly socialist ideology, András is not beloved by a number of villagers, who see in his views the shadow of past practices and abuses.

András's wife is still very active in the village, since she works part-time in the noodle factory and she has an extensive network of female acquaintances, in part a legacy of her family, as they were one of several miller families who lived in the village until the 1930s. The proposition that the female part of social networking is dedicated to the village or inter-household sphere and the male to the external (town and cooperative) finds confirmation to a certain extent in András's case. His reputation is not built through his (past) family status, but rather on his work during socialism. His networks with the cooperative and with the town still move his relatives to seek his help in solving practical matters. András is not disrespected; rather he is kept at distance by those who today judge the previous regime from openly negative positions. Many have a distant respect for him, perceiving him as one of the key actors in the collectivisation period and as a close friend of the old local and district cadres. András is a sociable person and he is esteemed for having an excellent memory and a vast knowledge of European history. However, he is viewed ambivalently in the village, as a figure combining personal talent with the 'mistakes' of the past. Some of

villagers feel uneasy around him, stressing that his pedantic knowledge often hampers any possibilities of a good and enjoyable chat.

3. Antal

Antal is 76 and comes from a small peasant family. He also worked for the cooperative in the 1960s-70s and afterwards as an accountant in the municipal office of the village. He is married to a village woman who during socialism worked in a town factory. They have three children, of whom only one still lives with them. Antal belongs to the old generation of those who have done much to improve the village's living conditions. He was very active in the cooperative and he appeared less as a 'career-seeker', as András was, than a community member. He played active roles in many campaigns for the improvement of village infrastructures (the creation of the sidewalk, the park and the football stadium), and he still takes part in some of the events sponsored by local clubs such as the sports organisation, the Hungarian cultural association and the Hunters Club. He is a rather jovial man and he likes drinking in company.

Antal's prestige in the village is based not only on his personal character and achievements for the sake of the community, but also on his family's reputation. His family was, as others, hit by collectivisation. Although his father did not enter the cooperative, he divided the land among his sons and let Antal join the institution. Antal was trained as an accountant and this proved a valuable asset when, in the early 1960s, the village cooperative was in urgent need of educated and skilled personnel. However, when the cooperative was unified Antal lost his privileged position there and accepted an offer at the village municipal office. In this way, other than being involved in the cooperative, he actively participated in the development of the village. Because of his life trajectory, Antal is today considered one of the most respected old village members and his still-active relationship with the cooperative is regarded by many as an incentive for keeping up with him (see Chapter Six). Moreover, being a descendant of a small peasant family, people still refer to Antal with the epithet *paraszt gyerek* ('son of peasants'), used with a mixture of affection and respect.

If one had to judge who among these three enjoys the highest esteem in the village today, the task would prove extremely hard. On the basis of values that represented prestige and power in the pre-socialist period (family origin, land and status) Mihály would be undoubtedly the winner. However, he is not a very sociable person and many would argue that he does not posses any particular quality that would make him a respected person apart from his family background. Antal is surely the winner in terms of innate qualities and his past (and present) commitment to community activities.

Moreover, the kind of values that define his position in the community today go beyond his involvement in public life and his personal qualities: Antal is a son of peasants, even though not a *gazda*. András is probably the most problematic figure. He is respected for values such as scholarship, diligence in work and his extensive social network outside the village. However, because of his family origin (he is a 'proletarian', as he himself is proud to point out) and past work experience, he is not loved by some villagers. András represents some of the most despised sides of socialism (collectivisation, the networking activity of party members and local officers) and in terms of values that relate to his position vis-à-vis the community he is probably the loser.

Today people base their judgements and values that determine the social positions of individuals on the sum of their descent, human qualities and their actions directed towards collective goals. These evaluations are adapted to each personality in ways that reveal the weight of the rapid transformations that characterised the last century. However, as the three cases above suggest, there is no such thing as a common set of values that originated in or characterised one of the historical periods under consideration. The moral dimension that shapes villagers' interaction and interpersonal trust encompasses consideration of people's personal qualities, life achievements, social behaviour and personal networks with the extra-village sphere. Each of these features is given a specific place within the evaluation of single personalities and thus they influence the way in which personal trust is built and dealt with.



11. The *nyári konyha* (summer kitchen) still represents the most important social space in the house. During the warm season the family uses this space intensively and this is the place where ordinary guests are received.

7.4.2 Female Values: Resourcefulness, Thriftiness, Religiosity

Moving to the female sphere, Jávor underlined a number of values upon which social evaluation and prestige of women were constructed in rural communities. Among others, the author identifies two: thrift and religiosity, to which I add resourcefulness (Jávor 1983: 279).

In Királyfa male and family prestige historically drew significantly on the social role of female members. Unlike in Mediterranean societies, where women incorporated the concept of honour which was translated into the economic, social and political sphere through the behaviour of their husbands (Peristiany and Pitt-Rivers 1999), in the central Eastern European peasantry the role of the woman has been characterised individually by two main functions: the economic and the social. As in Mediterranean societies, women actively contributed to the household economy and their labour was of particular value in situations of scarcity. In the Hungarian and Slovakian peasant villages, however, female members played a far more openly social role in tying households together and spreading the web of village-level networks than in Mediterranean societies. Women were extremely active in the public sphere. Fehérváry (1992) underlines that, in the well-to-do peasant

families women, who did not work on the land, had the responsibility to earn the money for the expenditures of the household (see Chapter One). This was done by selling animal products and meat. Since the selling process was part of their economic duties, women had to seek access to the market or sell within the community. Moreover, in marriage the shortage of prestige on the male side could be balanced or enhanced by the bride's social position and her dowry.

Királyfa had high rates of female employment from early modern times. Throughout the end of the 19th and the first three decades of the 20th century, women and younger sons from landless or small peasant families often commuted daily to local large estates or to factories (the sugar and conserve factory in Diószeg was the most frequent example). They were able to complement the meagre income that the family land or crafts brought. Resourcefulness was a fundamental attribute of female family members, who often built important links not only within the community, but also to the outside, extra-village world. One elderly informant, who preferred not to be named, remembers how her mother used to wake up at four in the morning, give water and food to the animals, prepare the breakfast and a snack for her daughter and leave around five to reach, on foot, the Óny estate situated 11 km from the village. She came back every evening after dark and did this throughout the farming season. After her mother found this employment, thanks to the recommendation of a cousin who worked as a servant on that estate, she was also able to find work for her younger sister. She eventually could not bear the hard work and fled to Budapest to become a domestic helper in a middle-class family. This happened in the 1910s.

Jávor points out that, following socialist collectivisation, in Varsány many women became increasingly detached from their family life because of the new employment opportunities that added burden to the care of the house (Jávor 1983: 292). This was also the case in Királyfa, where, except for the *gazda* families, village women became accustomed to working outside the home and built important personal relations (see Chapter Two). Socialism did not however mean a dramatic change in existing gender roles, but strengthened the idea that both men and women were to contribute equally to the household economy. Virtually no village woman could allow herself to stay at home and take care of the house alone. This was not only part of the socialist ideology, but also a matter of family necessity.[119] In some cases

[119] The only exception of which I am aware is the wife of Dr. Kálmán. He is one of the few intellectuals to live in the village and, by profession, a medical doctor. Kálmán's grandfather was the first village priest when the community gained a parish in the 1831. His family was severely affected by collectivisation when all ecclesiastic land and also portions of their privately-owned garden and vineyard were confiscated. Even after

both husband and wife were fortunate enough to find employment in the local factories (Galanta or Šal'a), but in other instances they were separated by large distances. Anna, for example, worked in Šal'a whereas Nándor had to commute everyday to Bratislava. He usually had morning shifts, whereas she sometimes worked until late at night and thus their children spent much of their time with the neighbours.

In the early 1990s, after the restructuring and closure of some local industries, many village women lost their jobs and had few opportunities to replace them in the rapidly developing commercial and industrial centres of the capital, which preferred a young, educated, and skilled workforce.[120] In the first instance the majority of women turned to household work and to the care of gardens and family plots. After the second half of the 1990s, new employment opportunities increased due to the improved economic situation of the country and the general optimism in its new government. Today the majority of employed women work as clerks, in small factories, in the service sector or as school teachers. Their economic contribution is extremely important for the household economy, not only in terms of income but also in the labour they contribute in gardens and family plots. Therefore, gender-related values have an important function when considering the re-emergent economic significance of women in the community after the years immediately following the transformation.

The recent economic improvements have brought about two orders of changes. First, families try to invest more in education.[121] Second, women's roles in creating ties both to the community and to outside institutions have been strengthened. I have insufficient data to consider how the higher educational level of female villagers may help modify the value system in the community. The point that I find significant to stress is that greater investment in education brings children to seek employment in the capital or abroad (Hungary or to a lesser extent Bohemia). So far, most young people choose to maintain residence in the village and commute to Bratislava or other Slovak towns to study and work. This entails that the family remains the stronghold of social life for young members, at least while their

---

several cases of prosecution (Kálmán was in prison twice) due to his intellectual activity, he kept on publishing in literary journals. During the 1950s Kálmán was not allowed to practice in the village (he did in another town), but he continued to visit ill villagers via their backdoor. In spite of his difficult economic conditions his wives (he married twice) were never employed. Kálmán published three volumes on the history of the Hungarian minority in postwar Czechoslovakia. Unfortunately, he died recently in 2003.

120 See Chapter Five for demographic trends and the problem of work within household production.

121 Sixty percent of the sampled young household members expect to obtain high school and university degrees. Fifteen percent of them attend university.

economic dependence on it persists. Such an option is presently well received both by parents and the youth – many stress that they like the village and that, without their families, they could never afford to study or live in the capital.[122] This points out that also as young villagers balance social expectations with personal needs, the tension between 'traditional' values (the importance of the family) and the opportunities brought about by higher education is strongly felt.

Social evaluation of women based on resourcefulness shows a strong degree of continuity with earlier attitudes and this is certainly a product of the historical course of the village. Because a large number of women worked in the town factories during socialism, whereas many men commuted to Bratislava, the role of networks built by women is often more important. In this sense, not only do village women rely on knowledge accumulated during the late socialist period for private purposes, but through this they also enforce their reputation and their social role within the community. This is more frequently the case for elderly women who were very active during the 1980s or before, whereas younger women often depend on these elder members to become involved in the working circuit. Viola, who is 68 years old, worked for several years first in a clothes factory and then in the town state bakery. During her first job she was able to provide employment to one of her sisters-in-law; through her second job, she introduced her daughter-in-law to one of her old employers (the bakery was privatised only in 1997). After some months her daughter-in-law was hired in the retail sector. Viola owes part of her reputation in the village to her ability to manage personal knowledge of the bakery's former directors for the sake of her kin, but also to her willingness to provide information about the factory. Only one day a week and at a special time the bakery sells part of its unsold bread from the week at one fifth of its price when fresh. This bread is an important supplement for feeding animals, especially for those families who do not own enough land to produce their own fodder. Moreover, as this is the only large bakery in the district, the old bread quickly sells out. Viola still knows when the bread is available (the scheduled days are seldom followed) and she is not reluctant to communicate this to interested villagers.

Everyday practices provide strong evidence that thrift and dedication to the preservation of the household economy are still important values attached to women in Királyfa. Anna, 73 years old, probably best exemplifies these values. She comes from a rather poor village family. Her

[122] To one survey question asking where parents would like their children to live, 62 percent indicated 'close to the family in the village', 14 percent in the nearby town, 5 percent abroad, 14 percent anywhere and 3 percent gave no answer.

father had some land but could not easily make a living from the farm, so her mother, who at marriage brought with her a garden and an orchard plot, was forced to commute daily to one of the manorial estates in the vicinity. Anna had three sisters and two brothers, but both brothers died young. The very first thing that she learned, was, as she stresses, that 'women have to work hard'. This she learned from her mother, whom she was only rarely able to see during the day. However, being the youngest daughter, Anna did not have to take care of the household and at the age of 17 she was sent to Budapest to work as a domestic assistant. Her experience with this family, and later with another in Bratislava, was extremely instructive both in terms of the emotional attachment to its members (Anna still corresponds with them) and the skills the young Anna was to learn. As she pointed out, her mother had not taught her anything about the household, how could she possibly get married without knowing how to cook? All this she learned from her host family.

After the war Anna came back to the village, married and had two children. During socialism she did more or less as her mother. She worked at the Agricultural School in the town and then in two different town factories. As she says, they had to force her to retire when she was 67. Her passion for work is dictated by her careful balancing of the household budget. Anna reflects the ideal village woman of a century ago. She knows what to spend and when to open her wallet, as her 50-year-old son commented: 'I'd never dare to waste money in front of her'. In addition to her knowledge of an almost unlimited range of recipes, she knows how to cook without overspending and this is, unfortunately, a talent that she cannot transmit to her family, since she has no daughters and her only daughter-in-law lives in the US.

Thrift is today considered as one of the most valuable female qualities. Women are in charge of the domestic budget and in most cases male members do not make decisions concerning financial matters without consulting their wives or mothers. It is a common practice that the salary earned by the household head is still kept by his wife.

Religiosity also strongly characterises village women nowadays. As in the case of thrift, women's involvement in regularly scheduled religious rituals (evening service, Sunday mass, festivities and religious clubs) determines their social evaluation. However, unlike thrift, religiosity was more a 'hidden' value in socialist times and after 1989 it has re-acquired openly strong significance.[123] Today women, mainly elderly, are expected to

[123] This is not to say that women did not go to church during socialism, but festivities and religious events were much less frequent than today (see Chapter Eight) and hence religious activity within the community was more reduced.

show a strong degree of religiosity. This means that their behaviour in regards to the sacred is part of their daily practices. Each retired village woman visits the cemetery daily and this is clearly reflected by the splendid care with which the cemetery is kept and the displays of flowers which are constantly renewed on the graves. The other side of this activity is that since women always need to have fresh flowers, which they do not wish to buy from the shop, they have to grow them in their gardens or exchange (and purchase) them from neighbours or relatives. One of the most common late afternoon scenes in the village is that of two or three women with bicycles stopping in the street and chatting with female neighbours or relatives about flowers. After a while the company leaves for the evening mass and the visit to the cemetery.

7.5 Human Actions and Qualities

Analysis of the patterns of action and of the human qualities that are considered the most disruptive in the community life of an individual can provide insights into the problem of how people construct values to judge interpersonal relations. Since the content of these actions and qualities can be detrimental to the individual, to his or her family or to the community as a whole, different levels of observation need to be taken into account. This section focuses on the manner in which social behaviour is considered to influence a person's reputation and how this consideration has changed through time.

In pre-socialist times careless management of one's resources was one of the most damaging behaviours for a man's reputation. Some villagers still remember stories of family capital being destroyed through economic misconduct, reckless speculation or alcoholism. Alcoholism in particular was judged a pitiful behaviour because it exposed the individual to public criticism more than, for example, the careless use of resources could. However, heavy drinking habits could weaken an individual's social prestige only if these entailed repeated improper behaviour vis-à-vis private and public issues. This explains why a number of village families with no direct affinity share today extremely similar nicknames which relate to the 'glass' or the 'bottle' (*csobolló*). Villagers will explain that this or that ancestor simply 'liked the glass' (*szeretett a pohár aljára nézni*), but this does not necessarily imply that social misbehaviour was at play; it was simply a one characteristic among others. What is more significant, although some community members committed socially blameful acts in the past and left a heavy burden on their families, these acts have not been transmitted to the present in the form of particular nicknames or epithets. There is, in other words, a tendency to individualise the effects of this behaviour, ascribing

them to the sphere of the individual and excluding, when possible, the families from the bad consequences that such actions might have.

One example can clarify the problem. Gergely was one of the village *gazdák*; he had some 20 *holds* (8.8 ha) of land which he was supposed to transmit to his only son, Alajos. However, Alajos had no love for the peasant lifestyle and he showed no interest in his father's land. His father was at his wits' end. One day, his problem with Alajos was solved. Alajos, who was active in the village's theatre group, was assigned the main role in a play. On the day of the play, many spectators attended the performance even from neighbouring villages and the income from ticket sales was exceptionally high. During one part of the play, in a farewell scene, Alajos left the stage singing: 'Farewell, I leave'. Villagers, accustomed to his strangeness, waited a long time for him to come back, but he never showed up again, on the stage or in the village. He had run away with the money from the ticket sales. It is said that the money was destined for the improvement of the village cultural centre, but the goal was not reached. Gergely was forced to pay a part of the stolen money himself; he decided to disinherit his son and eventually let his daughter take over the land. This episode had an extremely negative impact on Gergely's life. Out of shame, he avoided the pub and other public spaces for a while and his health slowly deteriorated. He is said to have never seen his son again. Today, Gergely's family is nicknamed in his memory as 'Gergő', but this has no negative connotations.

Forms of socially detrimental behaviour which have had a long-lasting impact on collective memories are frequently recalled from the socialist era. Many stories highlight the violence with which the socialist transformation was undertaken in the village, both in terms of the use of physical force and as an expression of the dramatic and rapid change to which the community was subject. Moreover, the Czechoslovak government's punishment measures against minorities judged guilty of the war and the echo of deportations of Hungarians and confiscation of their property in the neighbouring villages left an enduring trace on people.[124]

One of the most reproachable individual actions of the past regime was the use of violence towards others in the name of political ideals. Because of the temporal proximity of socialism people tend to express strong criticism of people who gained prestige during socialism at the expense of other villagers. It is particularly shameful to have been responsible not only for the forced collectivisation, but also for strongly defending socialist

[124] Even though young village members tend not to be interested much in politics, stories such as the deportation and interethnic exchange of families in the villages are told in private and sometimes in public. Many young ethnic Hungarians are aware of these as well as other such events related to the war period.

ideologies in public. 'Those who shouted their slogans in the pub have died alone', sadly commented one informant. Even before the days of the socialist normalisation it was still considered improper to overtly campaign for the regime in the community, as it was seen as disrespectful to those families who were the losers in collectivisation. In this sense, 'violence' acquired a highly stigmatised significance; it became an expression of not only what people *did* to others, but also of how they *behaved* in public in defence of communist ideals and political choices.[125]

However, a bad reputation acquired through public action did not necessarily extend to the whole family of those judged guilty of this behaviour. First, there is no mention in the village today of married women who were active supporters of the socialist ideology and who actively helped their husbands during their careers. Second, even in those cases in which socialism was clearly used to achieve personal goals (as in the case of a landless peasant becoming one of the early cooperative leaders) family reputations were not spoiled by these actions. Those who were the lowest class became the first, say villagers today, but they never refer to 'their families' becoming powerful. Socialism was an achievement of individuals, not of kin groups, even though many of the late socialist practices point in the direction that personal networks and affinity played strategic roles for social and economic advancement.

7.5.1 A Quantitative Approach to Value Analysis

Past practices and the communication of personal and family reputations through shared norms and values serve to influence people's opinions today about what is proper and morally correct. However, as already mentioned, because there is a large divide between what people say (and think) and what they actually do, these values need to be seen in relation to the practices that they underpin. This constitutes the scope of the next chapter.

One way to analyse the significance of negative patterns of behaviour and displeasing human qualities is to try to quantify their validity for local actors. I undertook a survey of 100 household heads (64 men and 36 women), asking people to choose the three worst human qualities and actions among a list of seven items each. The choice of these actions and qualities followed two criteria. First, I made a list of those values related to human qualities and behaviour which I had more frequently encountered in

[125] Of course, as some informants underlined, this critical attitude towards those active during socialism can also be interpreted as a form of envy between those who were able to gain profit from the political transformation and those who, for different reasons, did not want (or were not able) to do so.

the course of my fieldwork. Second, I sought to include, according to the relevance of such values in villagers' everyday social life, those qualities and forms of behaviour that refer to the sphere of social relations and some of those expressing qualities of an individual. The outcome was that, among qualities, there are five dealing with social relations (*envy*, *taking advantage* of someone, *stinginess*, *wastefulness* and *untrustworthiness*) and two about human nature (*showing off* and *laziness*). The actions included again five expressions of human relations (*theft*, *deceit*, *breaking of promises*, *violence* and *betrayal*) and two more generally dealing with human action (*gossip, drunkenness*). As demonstrated below, the imbalanced choice between values expressing social relations and human qualities is due to the stronger significance of the former for village dwellers.

The overall results (Charts 1-2) show that *untrustworthiness* is considered by far the worst quality (74 percent of respondents), followed by *envy* (70 percent) and *taking advantage* of people (66 percent). On the contrary, *wastefulness* is considered the least harmful of qualities (11 percent). This is to say that good will and good faith are considered the most important human qualities or, the bases upon which social interaction can fruitfully and safely take place.

In the case of actions, *violence* is considered the absolutely worst action (73 percent), followed by *theft* (60 percent). These two precede the *breaking of promises* (47 percent) and *betrayal* (39 percent). *Gossip* (19 percent) is the least noxious among bad actions.

Chart 1. Source: questionnaire survey

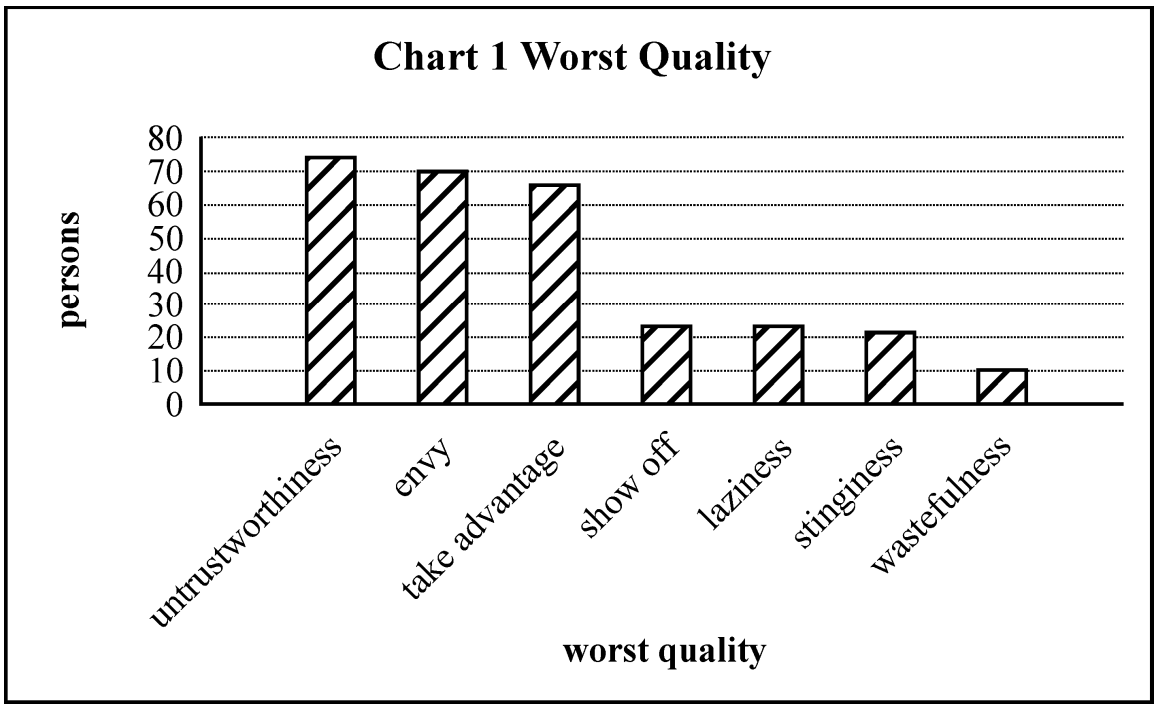
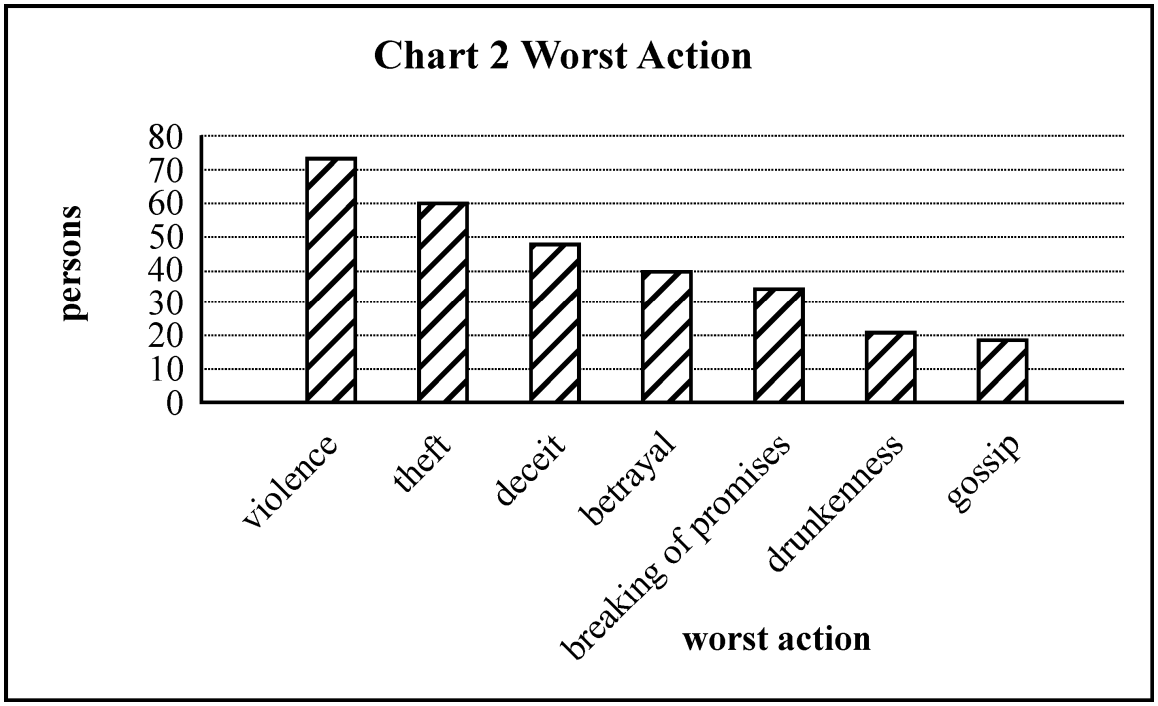


Chart 2. Source: questionnaire survey



Are there any gendered differences between these values? The data about gender specificity (Chart 3-4) seems to disprove the idea of major differences. In the case of qualities, both men and women rank the worst three entries as *untrustworthiness*, *envy* and *taking advantage*. Some slight gender connotations can be detected in the difference between single categories. Women consider *laziness* worse than *stinginess* (31 percent to 22 percent), and *showing off* follows closely at 19 percent. On the other hand, men invert the hierarchy of values, ranking *showing off* (25 percent) and *stinginess* (23 percent) and lastly *laziness* (20 percent).

In the case of actions, female respondents rank (in decreasing order of gravity): *theft* and *violence* (69 percent each); *deceit* and *betrayal* (42 percent each); *gossip* and *breaking of promises* (36 and 25 percent). Men, instead, rank *theft* and *deceit* (55 and 50 percent); *breaking of promises* and *betrayal* (39 and 38 percent) and *drunkenness* (23 percent). Unlike women, men consider *drunkenness* worse than *gossip* (14 percent). However, generally speaking, both in the case of actions and qualities male and female respondents do not seem to provide strikingly different opinions.

Chart 3. Source: questionnaire survey

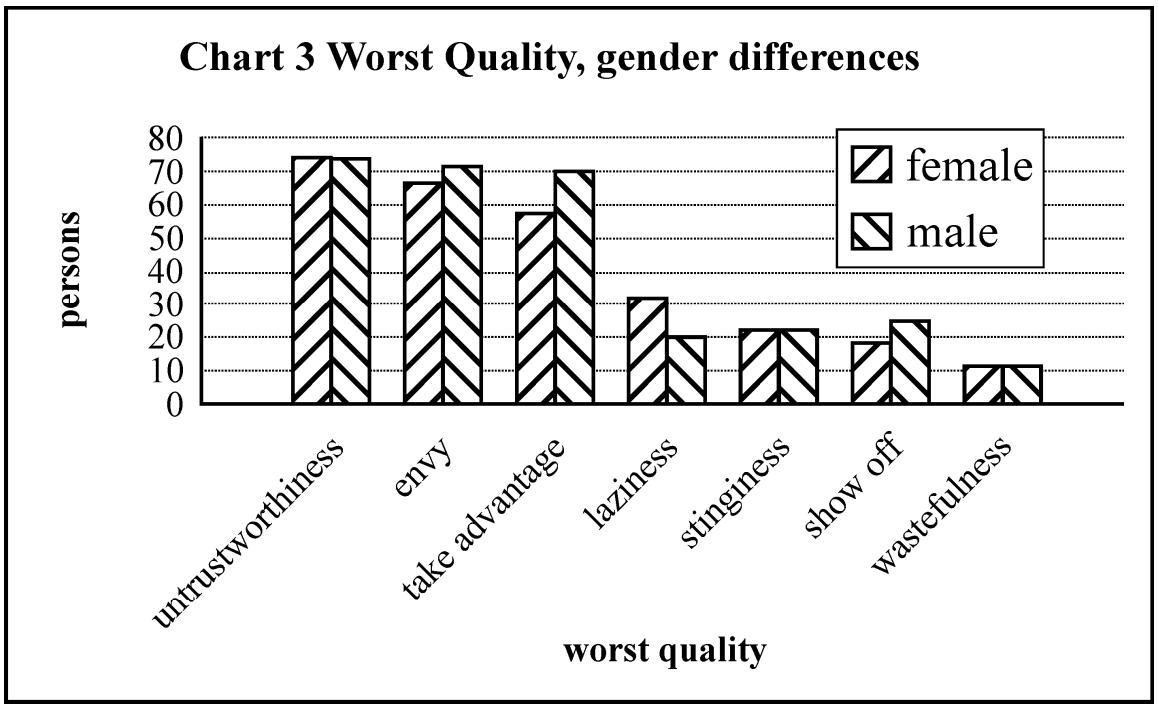
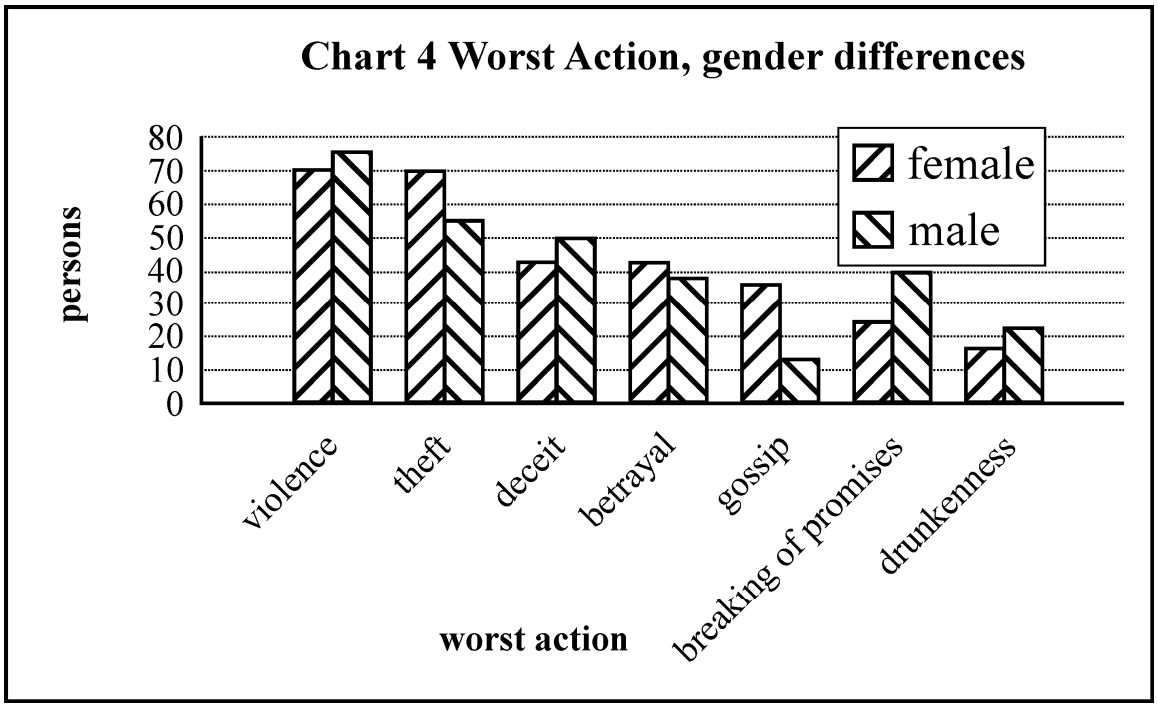


Chart 4. Source: questionnaire survey



Although it is difficult to generalise from these data, there are some important suggestions that can be drawn. One is that, as anticipated above, qualities and forms of action that underpin relations between individuals are evaluated more negatively than those that simply reflect states of being. The predominance of *untrustworthiness* and *violence* as the most negative items in the two ranking scales demonstrates that it is in values relating to interpersonal relations that respondents see the main threat to their social harmony. On the other hand, categories such as *gossip*, *drunkenness* and *laziness* are conceived as less detrimental to the everyday life of individuals. This confirms the idea that moral judgments are considered the bases on which relations of interpersonal trust take shape in the community.

The second point is that female and male value orientations do not diverge significantly. This finding seems to contradict Jávor's work (1983). The author points out that during socialism men, who worked much longer under collective conditions, learned to evaluate their fellows on the basis of their human characteristics. On the other hand, women seemed more conservative and continued to evaluate others on the basis of family background. Thus women would show a stronger orientation towards 'materialistic ways of thinking' than men (Jávor 1983: 283). The above data

indicate that all values focusing on interpersonal relationships are deemed important by both female and male respondents. The following story further illustrates this point.

Béla, a 38-years-old policeman, had a long-time relationship with Terézia, a divorced village woman with one daughter. The two had long planned to build a house and live together in the village and, after a while, to marry. However, when the house about ready Béla sadly found that their relationship was deteriorating. Terézia after some months left him and went back to live with her parents. While I was listening to this unhappy story told by Béla, Gertrúd (his mother) had respectfully remained silent. However, at the end of the story she could not resist commenting: 'Do you see? This is what a man can get from a woman who had been previously engaged with no success. I had warned you, many times!' Béla did not seem to react and said: 'It's not that I could expect it– how can you know such things? The worst thing is that she encouraged me to build that big house. I invested so much money there and then she flew away!' Gertrúd insisted: 'You needn't worry about the house. Think of what people will say about you. You have been deceived, that's the truth! Who cares about the money after all! We will find a solution. Now you have to come back home!' One month later I learned that Béla had gone back to live with his mother and they were planning to sell the house after receiving due compensation from Terézia's family for the building expenses, which Béla had backed almost entirely.

Although anecdotal, the story shows that there can be differences in value orientation between men and women and hence that it is difficult to generally categorise 'materialism' as a female value. Béla, the main loser in the story, could not think of Terézia's betrayal in terms of the social implications that 'being deceived' would bring in the eyes of the village. He was rather concerned with the material damage he had incurred, the huge expense of building a house. Gertrúd, however, paid less attention to her son's material loss and more to the gravity of having him back home. This would elicit (and indeed did) a critical judgement from the community and imply a loss of reputation not only for her son but also for her, as she said, 'they all talk about us' (*mindenki rólunk beszél*).

7.6 Conclusion

The consideration of values that refer to an individual's social position in the community requires diachronic observation of the processes through which prestige is constructed and maintained. Because of the pervasive nature of the changes that characterised the transition to modernity, the socialist and recently the postsocialist period, these three phases cannot be considered alone and separately. The case of Királyfa suggests that it is only through the

comparison of time-specific features that these values gain analytical significance. In particular, the present way in which villagers judge the social position of individuals and their different gender roles are reminiscent of ideas and practices that marked the early modern period and the previous regime. There are basic differences between the pre-socialist and socialist period due to their temporal distance from everyday reality. However, from the manner in which people construct social evaluation in and outside the community it can be argued that discourse about the present is deeply imbued with the experiences and knowledge of past events.

What the analysis of changing values can suggest is that there is always a moral dimension attached to the manner in which people interact and this dimension changes over time. People structure their actions and preferences on the basis of a morality that comes out of two sources. First, personal experiences gained through interaction between villagers teach people how to judge others and how to relate to them. Because people are evaluated based upon the complexity of their personality, achievements and aims, values justifying social interaction spring out of the sum of these features as they are perceived by actors.

Second, changing social roles generate new and different ways in which social interaction takes place. Thus the moral dimension dictating the rule of interpersonal behaviour needs to be adapted to changing conditions. This is done by making use of old values and adopting new ones which replace and complement them. Therefore, Barth's (1993) call for a balance of the 'cultural' and 'social' dimensions of values can be justified only if these two dimensions are seen in constant transformation and they do not lead to generalisations which prevent the observer from delving into the complexity and variability of human choices.

Chapter 8

Managing Instability: Trust, Social Relations and the Strategic Use of Ideas and Practices

8.1 Introduction

This chapter expands the discussion about the rift between what villagers think, and say, and what they do in practice when facing their everyday social reality. The main argument is that in their decisions people attempt to control the uncertainty of the present time by creating and managing instability. Instability means that they manipulate ideas and acts in a way that to an external observer demonstrate high degrees of inconsistency and ambivalence. What is said is often not replicated or even contradicted in practice and what is done does not always correspond to moral or ethic principles referred to by actors as underpinning social action. The ambiguity inherent in social practices relates to the strategic use that villagers make of trust and mistrust in their interaction with individuals and with institutions. Trust creates relations of reciprocity and obligations in the trustee. On the other hand, mistrust imposes constant checks upon the second party which balance the pursuit of personal goals with emotionally and morally grounded patterns of social behaviour.

The notion of 'amoral familism' introduced by Banfield to describe a mountain community of southern Italy in the post-war period (Banfield 1958), and recently adopted by a number of scholars to describe the postsocialist realities (see Chapter Six), constitutes the theoretical framework of this chapter. In his famous account of the village of Montegrano, Banfield describes a reality dominated by 'backwardness', economic stagnation, lack of political and civic action and deep mistrust. The author bases his argument on what he calls 'amoral familism', according to which individuals are unable to reach levels of collective action because they are concerned merely for their personal and family interests. In his words, Montegrano's inhabitants act to 'maximise the material, short-run advantage of the nuclear family, assuming that others will do the same' (1958: 85).

A number of factors underly Banfield's amoral familistic ethos: 1) amoral familism makes it difficult to achieve collective action and organisation; 2) social and economic conditions characterised by amoral familism will favour a 'regime which will maintain order with a strong hand'; 3) there is no connection between abstract political principles and concrete behaviour in everyday life; 4) because leadership is refused and distrusted, no one will take the initiative to outline a course of action or persuade others to do so; 5) collective gains are desirable only if one is likely to share them; 6) whatever group is in power is self-serving and corrupt (1958: 85-104).

These points raise several questions about the validity[126] of Banfield's approach and its applicability to the postocialist context (Sztompka 1999; Misztal 2001). This chapter will provide possible answers to several questions: how can history account for the present attitudes of people towards trust? How does trust operate to achieve goals in the long run? If 'amoral familism' is dominant, how can collective action successfully be stimulated by democracy and implementation of institutional reforms? Does interpersonal mistrust not leave any space for the smooth functioning of institutions? If the state is mistrusted, who is to initiate innovation and development?

The chapter is structured in two parts. The fist part examines the issue of how people assign trust to certain institutions and social clusters in and outside the village sphere. A general view of trust is outlined with reference to quantitative data. The second part deals with the observation of practices. The family, village and the state constitute the three spheres in which social relations are articulated in the everyday world. Finally, the chapter analyses the problem of interethnic relations within the context of confrontation between individuals and the state.

8.2 Trust in Social Institutions: A Quantitative View

After more than a year of living in Királyfa, intrigued by the fact that people's actions often did not follow the cognitive criteria which shaped these, I recalled an Italian proverb: *Tra il dire e il fare c'è di mezzo il mare* ('Between the saying and doing there is the sea'). This suggested to me that understanding the social features of a community may be a process which

[126] Banfield's work has attracted criticism from many directions. Many Italian and foreign scholars have pointed out the inadequacy of his empirical data (Meloni 1997). Others have questioned his theoretical approach itself, which constructs generalisations on the basis of an ethic approach (Silverman 1965; Miller 1974). In spite of these well-founded criticisms, the book has not lost influence and its hypotheses still inspire some of the political science literature on southern Italy (Putnam 1993).

goes much further than simply listening to people's stories and opinions about their living reality everyday lives.

For example, as it has been seen above, people's open mistrust of the agricultural cooperative is not matched by their interactions with it (see Chapter Six). People resort to the cooperative in their everyday life, even when other solutions are possible. They choose to do so according to a series of motives which eventually lead them to recognise that the cooperative is necessary for their everyday life. This, however, does not prevent them, unequivocally, from running the cooperative down when they talk about it. What does this attitude conceal? Is it merely a sign of the uncertainty of the present, of profound discontent with the postsocialist change or simply a legacy of the socialist past?

One of the possible answers to these questions is that ambiguity and inconsistency are generated by actors in response to the uncertainty of times. Following a neo-evolutionary paradigm, Grabher and Stark maintained that the organism which proves the fittest to survive circumstances of profound social change is not the 'strongest', in mere Darwinian terms, but the one able to diversify at best its adaptability (1997: 20). The neo-institutional approach perceives, then, the importance for an organisation of applying the trial-error methodology to maintain flexibility of form and foster adaptability. This makes the organisation able to endure change. Chaos is not to be rejected as antonymic to order, but it may be one ingredient of successful adaptation and variation of strategies in the sense of 'predisposition to transformation'. In this way, ambiguity generated by villagers' inconsistent behaviour and opinions can be read as one of the products of their several strategies aimed to deal with present.

Villagers maintain that the postsocialist transformation has meant that it is increasingly difficult to trust people. Even those who criticise what life was like under the former regime are often willing to admit that today it is harder to rely on people than it was before. As one informant observed,

> After socialism people started turning against each other. They were afraid, I think, of what was going to change. But this doesn't explain why they've become like wolves to each other. One reason can be that people are busier making money and trying to be successful now, whereas before nobody cared. I'm not saying things were better before, but people were more human and you can note this every day. Do you know how many times things get stolen here in the village? Anything that isn't chained can be lost. This is new; it wasn't like this in socialist times. Now do you wonder that nobody is ready to trust even their family members?

(Gábor)

The pessimism of these words seems to be confirmed by a finding of the survey. To the question: 'Do you think that after 1989 it is possible to 1) trust people more; 2) trust people in the same way; 3) trust people less than before', out of a total of 100 respondents only two chose the first option, 22 the second and 76 maintained that people are less trustworthy than before 1989.

One possible explanation for the open mistrust may be the villagers' worsened economic conditions. Indeed, some of the villagers recognise that their economic situation has worsened after 1989, but many of them also say that things have improved and are optimistic about the future. Data gathered in the household survey reflect people's views of their personal economic condition and the degree of satisfaction with their present family economic situation. The first question was: 'Do you think that after 1989 your economic condition has improved or worsened?' Only 10 percent indicated they saw signs of slight improvement, whereas 22 percent said it worsened a little, 40 percent that it worsened a lot and 27 percent that it did not change. On the other hand, the second question asked: 'Are you satisfied with your present family economic situation?' The answers were divided between 55 percent satisfied (4 percent very much, 51 percent more or less satisfied) and 43 percent not satisfied (32 percent not satisfied, 11 percent very unsatisfied).

These data do not clearly indicate why people show inconsistency in their practices and ideas, but they suggest that, generally speaking, worsened economic conditions are not the main source of generalised mistrust because most people are relatively satisfied with their family's economic situation. The difference between the two sets of answers indicates that what in principle is seen as a pessimistic view of the transformation may turn into a realistically less negative picture when considering the overall family situation. Some informants commented on the two questions, saying: 'Well, we should not complain too much, after all we are free today and there is always a future to come, which depends more or less on our choices'. Even among those who attribute the present uncertainty and economic distress to the fall of socialism, there were no indications that postsocialism has not brought anything good at all for them. All of them were ready to accept the idea that personal freedom and the very possibility to 'work for the future' (*a jövőért dolgozni*) were, nonetheless, the best achievements of the transformation.

In spite of these veins of optimism for the future, however, mistrust and suspicion still dominate public life and this fact becomes manifest as

soon as one starts living in the community. Before examining the problem of how mistrust influences everyday social relations within and outside the community, I would like to provide some more quantitative evidence on the use of trust in defining people's interaction with social institutions.

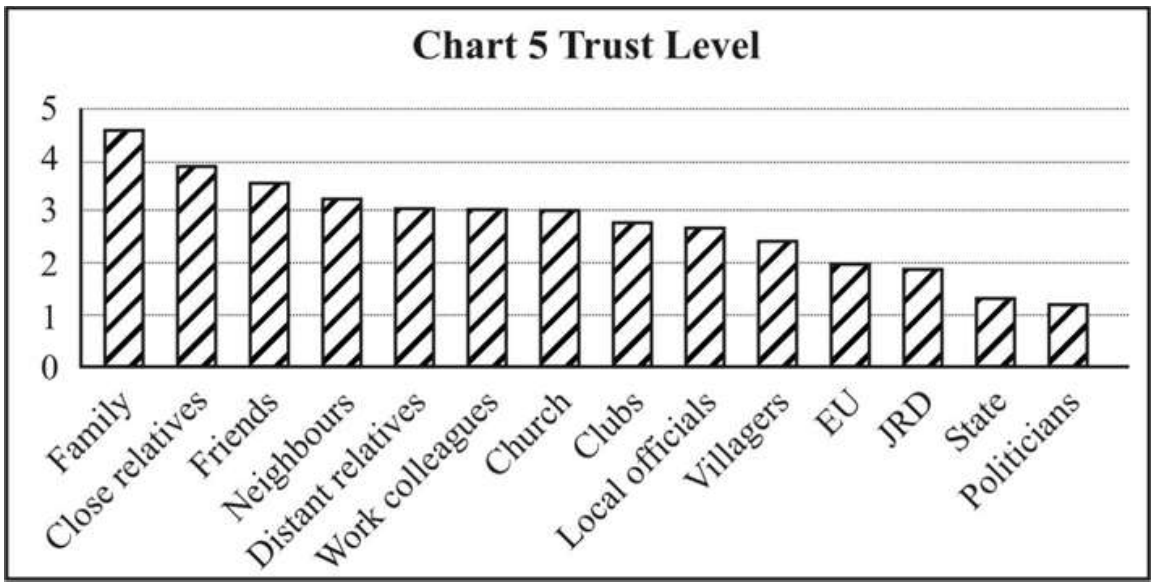
In order to test the different degrees of trust towards formal institutions and informal clusters in villagers' everyday social life (such as neighbours, close and distant relatives, work colleagues and friends), a scale of trust from 0 (the lowest value) to 5 (the highest value) was chosen to evaluate their position towards these categories.

Chart 5 gives a picture of the average level of trust that one hundred randomly-chosen villagers (64 male and 36 female) formulated in relation to 14 different categories. These include: family, close relatives, distant relatives, neighbours, friends, villagers, work colleagues, the church, local officials,[127] politicians, the agricultural cooperative, village social and cultural clubs, the state and the EU. The highest mean level of trust was obtained by the *family*[128] with 4.56, followed by the category *close relatives* (3.86) and *friends* (3.54). The *cooperative* (JRD) (1.87), the *state* (1.35) and finally *politicians* (1.19) occupied the lower end of the spectrum. Mid-range positions were occupied by *work colleagues* (2.98) and *social and cultural clubs* (2.79). On the other hand, *villagers* scored rather poorly with 2.42. Finally, the trust level for *local officials* reached 2.7, much greater than that of the *cooperative*.

Chart 5. Source: questionnaire survey

[127] These include the village mayor, the vice-mayor, the two accountants and the two clerks who all work in the municipal office.

[128] This is intended here as the complex of people residing in one household and their offspring who do not reside in the household.



Two conclusions can be drawn from these data. First, opinions about trust depend on the degree of interaction between people and institutions: as a general rule, the more frequent the interaction the higher the trust. People distinguish three distinct clusters of trustworthiness. The first cluster, composed of family, relatives, friends, neighbours and distant relatives (all average levels above 3), is the closest to people, the one to which trust relations can be ascribed as vital components of the everyday social life. People have enduring experiences of interaction with members of these categories, therefore trust is continuously re-vitalised by everyday encounters. The second group relates to more or less 'neutral' items (trust level between 2 and 3) which includes villagers and local officials but excludes the cooperative. People have fewer occasions for everyday interaction with local officers, producing less positive levels of trust. The category of 'villagers' is more problematic. One informant commented: 'If I have to judge them as a whole, without giving people names and faces, I'd say that I don't trust them' (Antal). There is a relatively low degree of trust towards 'villagers' when this group is taken as not containing relatives and friends. The last group (politicians, the state and the EU), is the most distant and abstract for villagers. The lowest scores in term of generalised trust suggest that villagers feel that abstract entities with which they have very little interaction are far less trustworthy. The state is the most indicative of this trend since respondents seemingly expressed a negative vision of its governing bodies (political parties and legal institutions).[129]

[129] However, people seem to emphasise the importance of their relation to the state even though they do not identify this with specific personalities as they did during socialism. The state has become an increasingly abstract entity. To the question 'In your opinion, who do you think could help improve your economic situation?' 74 percent of respondents indicated the state. However, when I asked them who could help the village

The second point is that, as the question about trustworthiness after 1989 suggests, there is a general tendency towards low rather than high levels of trust. This is also supported by the fact that, if value 3 is taken as the middle level between 0 and 5, 9 categories out of 14 had trust levels falling below average. This number, however, should not lead to hasty conclusions, since analysis of these figures shows that mid-range levels (2-3) are dominant in 8 categories out of 14.

Thirdly, among institutions people share higher degrees of trust towards those with which the village has a stronger identification. The comparison between the levels for the cooperative and local officials on the one hand, and the church and social and cultural clubs on the other gives an idea of this distinction. Villagers do not express high levels of trust vis-à-vis the former two institutions because the cooperative has ceased to be a village institution and the local officers are often criticised for their political choices. In contrast, the church and local cultural and social clubs (see below, this chapter) enhance the collective life of the community and foster a stronger sense of identification.

The remaining question is on what grounds is generalised mistrust in individuals and vis-à-vis particular institutions constructed. The following section considers interpersonal relations among family members.

8.3 Between Mistrust and Expectations: Patterns of Kin Interaction

The survey results describe a situation in which generalised trust towards institutions (except the Catholic Church) is comparatively low. In addition, there is a remarkably low level of trust in other villagers as a whole. The situation is inverted in the case of family members, close relatives and friends, the three categories with the highest trust scores. From these quantitative findings one could suggest that Banfield's amoral familism informs village level social relations, though with a less 'radical' character. The core of Banfield's argument is that the origin of amoral familism lies in the social structure of Montegrano. Village families are mainly nuclear, and scattered in a semi-urban pattern of settlement typical for the southern Italian agro-town (see Blok 2001). This implies that neighbours are often non-relatives and thus the degree of door-to-door daily kin interaction is strongly influenced by the spatial distance of households.

---

to improve its present conditions, there was little indication that politicians or local officials could do anything at all. Mistrust pervades the sphere of individual-institution interactions and it appears that this tendency is particularly strong when it is not possible to personalise institutions.

In Királyfa, neighbours are often relatives and this can be demonstrated by the small difference in trust level between these two groups (3.86 and 3.25, respectively). However, village families are nuclear too, and as in Banfield's case, apart from the circle of family and friends, there are low levels of trust in the community as a whole and in institutions.

Analysts of postsocialist societies tend to maintain that, as the quantitative findings presented suggest, there is a low degree of trust in institutions, counterbalanced by the tendency to privilege close circles and intimate relations (family, kin and friends) (Sztompka 1999; Misztal 2001). This is seen as a form of continuity with socialist practices that emphasised the gap between public and private spheres, reducing individual action to a kind of 'performative act' taking place at two opposing levels: the public level, characterised by often false and deceitful behaviour, and the private one, where people behaved genuinely. Because of this, expectations and obligations among family members and friends can become extremely burdensome on social actors, simply because there are no or few other ways to convey such trust elsewhere.

Villagers' accounts of trust during socialism are often contradictory since they seemingly vary depending on which part of the socialist period they refer to. As seen in Chapter Six, the start of the collectivisation process in 1950 was accompanied by social disharmony and ideological conflicts between the landless and those who did not wish to enter the cooperative. This period is often described by informants as one in which suspicion, fear of denouncements and a complete retreat from the public sphere dominated interpersonal behaviour. The situation changed significantly in the 1960s, when consolidation of the village cooperative provided avenues for collective life and increased opportunities for people to share tasks (Chapter Three). Not only did the quality of life in the community significantly improve, but the pre-socialist hierarchies and power relations gradually lost their value. This trend reached its climax in the 1970s, when industrialisation and modernisation of village infrastructure helped achieve the socialist goals: development of the rural areas and the levelling of social differences. However, this does not mean that issues such as family status and values attached to prestige and personality (Chapter Seven) ceased to have meaning. A new order of judgment partly replaced the old one based on descent and economic power. Emphasis was now placed on individuals' access to networks and connections with the outer sphere (town, cooperative, factories and administration centres). These temporal steps in the village's development marked different ways in which people constructed trust among one another. The common hypothesis put forward by many social scientists that under socialism citizens behaved in two different ways - one in public

and one in private - according to their relationship to the political ideology is presumably true for the more anonymous urban contexts. In the case of rural communities, however, boundaries constructed around kin networks were sufficiently strong to reduce the need for a deceiving 'public performance' (Sztompka 1999). Comments by an elderly informant support this view:

> Everyone knew very well who was a communist and who wasn't in the village. This didn't mean that you could shout your ideas in public. It meant that you knew to whom you could speak freely and to whom not. The problem came at work or in other places outside of the village. There, there was no way you could guess who was a spy.
>
> (Anna)

Another aspect of this problem concerns the role of families and kin groups in people's interpersonal relations. Today, villagers' practices and ideas (see also Chapters Five, Seven) emphasise that a person's social existence and his public role are strongly influenced by his kin circle. This is not a novelty; it is a feature rooted in pre-socialist ideas about power and status and it did not significantly change in socialist times. Under socialism, it was extremely rare, even in the case of individuals who were active party members, for all of a family's members to demonstrate the same degree of ideological involvement. Árpád (b. 1939) was a staunch party member who in 1959 joined the cooperative. He came from a small peasant family that, after the death of his father, fragmented its property among four heirs. Árpád worked seven years in the cooperative and later found employment in the town factory. He has a brother and a sister living in the village and his father-in-law lives in his neighbourhood. None of his village relatives were enthusiastically active in the Communist party, but nobody blamed Árpád for his ideas. Unlike other villagers who remained relatively isolated after 1989 due to their political ideology, Árpád is today a trusted village personality who takes an active part in the community's social and cultural events. One elderly village woman described him in the following way:

> He was a big communist, as a number of people were in the village. There was no way you could talk to him against socialism at that time. However, he was the only one in his family. Those against socialism knew that it was enough not to mention political matters in his presence. He would never do any harm to other people, anyway. His family would have left him alone in that case.

(Anna)

This example suggests that during socialism the tension between public and private sphere in the village was attenuated by the presence of the family and kin groups which created a 'safety net' allowing individual public behaviour to be to be counterbalanced by the position of his/her family within the community. This did not simply mean, as some scientists argue (Sztompka 1999; Misztal 2001; Rose-Ackermann 2001), that the family remained the only trustworthy unit because behaviour displayed in public was often false. It rather indicates that, thanks to the presence of family networks, the social environment of the village was less characterised by the suspicion and double-sidedness that are believed to have hampered public action under socialism.

The relevance of political ideology for interpersonal relations and the degree to which trust determined public behaviour is today underlined by the continuity in families' status and trustworthiness in the community. Trust has assumed specific historical connotations in the case of families whose reputation in the community has not changed, improved or deteriorated after socialism. Neutral positions are held today by families who did not have significant involvement in the communist ideology and did not manifest their political ideas so as to interfere with other villagers' choices. More trusted today are those community members (and their families) like Antal (see Chapter Seven) who, although active in socialism, operated for the sake of the community and were able to maintain their involvement in public life also afterwards. Less trust is ascribed to those (such as András, Chapter Seven) who, being in the past and present ideologically close to socialism, held offices which made them close to the political centre, but distant from the village's public life. This point is important because it helps trace continuities with present conditions in two manners: first, the way in which village personalities are evaluated (see Chapter Seven); secondly, the strong function of families and kin groups in the acts of trusting and mistrusting.

The quantitative data above and the cases presented in previous chapters confirm the position of the family and kinship as the ultimate repository of personal trust in present times. Since the state has lost the overall encompassing role that distinguished the socialist regime, village members stress the importance of the family as the 'sole source' of help, reliability and security. However, because of the crucial social role of the family in creating and maintaining trustworthiness, being a member of a large kin group may also have its drawbacks. One informant described the role of kinship in these terms:

> The family is a double-edged weapon: when it's large there are so many advantages. You can count on people when you need help and you'll get it. They've got your same blood after all. But then there is so much weight in the obligations, which at times are even bigger than the advantages themselves. You are never sure of what this or that other relative may think; all you can do is guess that you acted or spoke in the most appropriate way.
>
> (Dániel)

Dániel (see also Chapter Five) comes from a well-reputed village family and has one married sister living in the village and one brother in the town. His wife's family also resides in the village. At the time of this remark, Dániel invited me for a drink with some of his male friends. We were on the second floor of the Culture House, where a December meeting and party organised by the Hungarian Cultural Association was being held (see below). In the main hall the atmosphere seemed one of celebration, even though not much noise and laughter was coming from the tables. Dániel explained to me that he often felt embarrassed at these events, because etiquette expected him to be with his relatives. This is why a quick escape with friends for a toast was a good opportunity to talk in a more relaxed atmosphere. I asked him if the excessive formality in family relations was not just a matter of the event and of being in the eyes of the whole community. 'You know', he said, 'it is always like this. You have to behave properly in public and at home. Do you think that I can go to my uncle and tell him openly what I think of him? No way! No matter where you are, things are the same. It is the family and you have to respect it'.

Rigidity of etiquette in kinship relations may be a function of two factors. There is the fear of gossip, which shapes interpersonal relations and forms of behaviour properly defining what is 'adequate' and what not for the community's standards. On the other hand, obligations between family members and expectations of behaviour are structured both emotionally and instrumentally.[130] Relatives are potential helpers, therefore one needs to be on good terms with them. This constitutes one of the most basic considerations on which trust is built among affine. However, personal emotions count too. It is hard to imagine someone relying on another relative

[130] Colby (1967) states that distrust is one of the reasons for the proliferation of complex etiquette in Mesoamerican Indian cultures. He maintains that etiquette brings in a certain amount of social control in situations where trust must be established. Etiquette reduces anxiety because it structures behaviour in a predictable way for the purpose of establishing what he defines as social exchange.

with whom there is a feud lasting for decades, not only because interaction has been broken, but also because there is the constant fear of retaliation, which makes the act of trusting useless, unless a second kind of relationship (usually friendship) mediates the distance between relatives. The following extract from my field notes serves to illustrate this kind of mediation:

11/08/2001. Gábor goes to see Mária [the wife of his cousin Vincent, the vice-mayor, whose garden lies just behind his own]. Mária is at home but her husband isn't. Did Gábor know he was not there? [Gábor and Vincent never talk to each other because of a long-lasting family feud over the division of a garden plot]. He needs a favour from Vincent: a friend of his would like to be hired as a temporary worker in a village project for street repairs, and Vincent is responsible for the project. They seem to prefer Romanies to other villagers, but he is not a Roma. Mária is very kind with him but she does not let us in the kitchen. They talk for a while. Mária promises her help. Then Vincent comes home. No mention of the business. Gábor leaves, saying only 'Bye'. Vincent replies and goes into the house.

Gábor would never go to his cousin to ask a favour, but this time he was forced to because one of his friends was in real need of some cash. He decides to present the problem to Vincent's wife, of whom he is a friend (the two attended the same school in the town). The existence of their friendship tie helps Gábor overcome the hesitation driven by lack of trust in his cousin. Gábor is not sure of the outcome of his request, but he risks trusting that his cousin will not disappoint him because that would be a bad act towards his wife and an open offence towards his relative, Gábor.[131] In this sense the expectation that Gábor constructs of his cousin's action is filtered through Mária's intercession. On the other hand, the obligation that Vincent feels is dictated not only by his kinship ties to Gábor, but by his faithfulness and wish to comply with Mária's request. Moreover, one may argue that Gábor had little to risk because he was not the direct beneficiary of the request. However, as he pointed out: 'We have to help each other among friends. If not, what is the meaning of friendship?' Therefore, even though Gábor himself was not directly affected by Vincent's decision, his own reputation was at stake.

Trust shapes interpersonal relations between kin members on the basis of several factors. These can include the frequency of encounters between members, their spatial distance, the existence or absence of disagreements among them, the power relations dominating the group and the social and economic roles of the individuals. Because of the variety of these factors,

[131] His friend was hired along with four other villagers, all Romanies.

and the constant effort to strike a balance between interest-oriented and emotional patterns of behaviour, trust is not necessarily absolute in relationships between kin members.

8.4 Family and Village Relations

Apart from everyday encounters, there are a number of special occasions in which villagers meet and share common experiences. The cultural and social clubs provide one venue for such occasions.

Today, a number of clubs are active in the village (see Chapter Three). Among them, the Csemadok (Hungarian Cultural Association of Czechoslovakia) most frequently promotes public events such as festivals, concerts, theatre performances and lectures on themes related to Hungarian culture. The Csemadok was founded in Czechoslovakia in 1950 and it enjoyed a relative freedom throughout the socialist period with sometimes generous state funding. Under socialism, this institution sponsored numerous public events in the community including theatre performances, balls, Hungarian cultural festivals and Children's Day (1st of June). Villagers recall those days with nostalgia, stating that Királyfa was known in the region for its intense cultural activity and on more than one occasion the Culture House was so full that the police had to intervene to avoid problems.

Immediately after 1989 the Csemadok's activities temporarily diminished due to the policies of the first Mečiar cabinet, which were unfriendly towards the minorities. However, soon after 1998 the organisation enjoyed a new efflorescence under the increased political weight of the Hungarian coalition.

Annual events which mark the seasonal calendar of the village are of great importance to the whole community. The celebration of St. Stephen is a newly established event that is already in its fourth year. The Csemadok, with the help of the municipal office and three other village clubs (the Pensioners' Club, the Hunters' Club and the Fishermen's Club) sponsors the evening event. The programme combines the formal assembly of the Csemadok with activities such as a banquet, a lottery, a concert, a theatre performance and the final discotheque. The first part of the event is reserved for members, even though the security guards would not object to anyone who wanted to enter. The second part is open to anyone who purchases a ticket (300 SK in 2001). Here is an extract from my field notes:

27/12/2000. The atmosphere is warm and vivacious outside the Culture House. Cars and bikes are parked everywhere; it is chilly but there are so many young people around that one wonders where they come from. Laci says there are no people from other villages, they would not let them in.

A band made up by high school students has come from Galanta to play and sing. There are three boys and five girls. They are all dressed quite elegantly. They are cheaper then a professional band, says Laci, and they are quite good. The hall is adorned with great care, with Christmas tree branches and coloured balls on the walls, coloured lamps and candles on the tables, even nice tablecloths! Everyone is elegantly dressed.

Most of the attendants are young people, but there is a certain rigidity at the tables. They also admit it. Laci is busy with his large family table and he has no time for me. Gábor arrives only later with his girlfriend. They have no family table and they sit with me: 'the table of the lonelies', one jokes. Two friends of Erika are invited from the village of Diakovce. They swear they have never seen such a big event. [Diakovce is three times as big as Királyfa]. After the formal opening speech by the old Csemadok president, the new one is appointed. He is thirty years old, 'your age', jokes Gábor. He pronounces a speech, then other speeches follow. The last is an old man. I don't quite understand him, as he quotes classical Hungarian poems. 'You see that guy', says Gábor, 'many people from other villages will be ready to shoot him. He used to go around with a gun in his raincoat and convince peasants to join the cooperative in the 1950s. He never dared to do that in Királyfa, otherwise he wouldn't be here, alive'. Tension rises after the old man's speech. It was quite full of nationalistic remarks and some of the few non-Hungarians in the hall (3 or 4?) may have understood it. Fortunately there is the election of the young Csemadok members to come, they all go to the stage and receive a small membership card. They seem happy; this marks their coming of adult age. A simple cold meal (peppers, bread, ham and sausage) follows. Then the lottery. Everybody seems more relaxed now that the alcohol has started circulating. I have to leave the table and join the other men for a drink. 'This is where the real fun starts', they say.

On the second floor there is a small kiosk. They all drink rum or *pálinka*. 'Wine is for the family time'. They seem more relaxed and ready to joke. 'You will see', says Laci, 'the real *buli* [party] starts now'. When I go back downstairs, the school girls are still singing Hungarian pop songs. Some of them are good, but some have terrible voices. I point at a few, asking who they are. 'Don't say that she sings badly. She is the daughter of the clerk'. 10.30 pm: the performance starts. A village group called *Féktelenek* ('breakless') performs a series of humoristic sketches. Some of them I know from a popular Hungarian TV cabaret programme. They all play with double-senses, misunderstandings and often very heavy sexual jokes. People laugh a lot. Some of them know these jokes already and they anticipate them at their own tables. Some people are drunk, but they behave well. No shouting or other forms of noise.

The rigid family tables are finally starting to dissolve. Young people go outside for smokes, upstairs for drinks or to joke around. The music starts (12 am); the old people leave. We all dance and sing.

The atmosphere on St Stephen's night is dominated by two concurrent elements: the organised participation and grouping according to family and kin membership, and the gathering of friends and acquaintances. The latter is more spontaneous than the former, but the two are hardly extricable. Many young villagers took part in the evening together with their families and in this case they were clearly divided between remaining seated in an orderly manner at their tables and going outside or upstairs to join their friends. During the formal part of the event and the banquet all participants were seated at their tables. This was the most 'tense' moment, when the speeches reminded the attendants of the formalities of the evening and when being with one's own family meant behaving in a proper way. Afterwards, the music and the first effects of the alcohol marked the beginning of the second part, when less formal behaviour was allowed. The most interesting aspect of the celebration was the way in which fun and proper behaviour intermingled and became disentangled throughout the event. All participants seemed concerned about their behaviour as they were required to perform on an open stage, before the eyes of the village. The large family tables constituted extremely close and intimate clusters and the fact that very few moved from these tables to join or chat with others during the formal part of the event demonstrates that there was little space for socialisation outside the kin sphere. This was a time when proper behaviour and family cohesion had to be manifest.

Villagers commented positively on the success of the event and the very news that I had participated reinforced my position in the village. Trying to provoke some comment on the families who attended the evening, I asked Anna why certain families were so compact at the celebration and others not, or were even absent. She replied:

> You know, not all like to show themselves at such occasions. I'm too old for it, but we used to go there in the past. Now it's only the big families who go there, those who give their support to the association. It's not money; I'm also a member and pay the fees. They're those who need to be on the front stage. They've nothing to hide in their past. They're all very respected families.

Intrigued by the idea of what she meant by 'respected families', I asked further. She explained:

> These are all village families who once had or now have a good position. They are not richer than you and me. They are simply trusted and respected because people know who they are or who they were in the village before. One of them was a *gazda*, another is the clerk, and another owns the noodle factory. People trust them because they have done something for the village.

Generalised trust may be constructed in different ways when the sphere of social interaction enlarges beyond the family. As seen in the last chapter, social reputation, status and the family's economic condition are factors which, being subject to historical change, determine social evaluation of individual personalities. The concomitance of these factors (or values) leads villagers to trust certain people more than others, especially when they are seen as contributing to the public good of the community (such as the noodle factory owner). This creates the split between the two positions at the festival, the village members with large kin networks and the 'lonely'. Like trust among family members, the act of trusting (and respecting) these personalities brings about a number of expectations and obligations. Those sitting at the large tables had to behave properly; they would not talk loudly even when drunk and would not leave the table before the music started. These forms of behaviour constituted part of their obligations towards the public. On the other hand, those from the 'lonely table' were not surprised by this behaviour. It is in a way expected. This explains why some avoid participation, especially in the formal part of the evening. However, many do not have this choice since it would be bad behaviour for them not to join their families. Belonging to these tables entails a set of duties that goes beyond the position of the individual, but which defines his/her social evaluation in light of his/her kinship sphere. In this sense, trust acquires the shape of a bilateral action which needs to be implemented by particular rituals (such as respecting the family etiquette) sanctioning the position of the individual within the family and of the family within the village.

8.5 Community Action

After the local social and cultural clubs, the second institution to which people attribute comparatively high levels of trust is the church. Although it is undeniable that when asked about the trust they have in the church they thought about the Roman Catholic Church as a formal institution (the village is 98 percent Catholic), respondents had in mind the local representatives of these institutions.

Religious practices have seen a renaissance in the village since 1989. Even during the late socialist period (1980s) there was a certain *lassaiz-faire* attitude towards religious practices in Slovakia, especially in rural areas. Local priests have always played important (and often contradictory) roles in these communities and their position was often determined by two concomitant factors: their relationship to the party and the state ideology, on the one hand, and their relation to the ethnic problem on the other. Villagers' stories vividly portray those priests who gave all their human efforts for the sake of the community and who were eventually chased by the state. One priest in particular, Tamás, was active during the early 1960s. He was a young priest who came to Királyfa from a neighbouring parish. He did not remain in service for long, but he is remembered affectionately by most villagers.

> Tamás was a good guy. He was one of us. He never tried to build any distance– he was seen in the pub to drink with the workers and then he helped those who had problems. Unfortunately he was inconvenient to somebody else. He could not last long; he was too active in the village and he knew it. But he did not care. This is why the whole village had faith in him. Then one day the town police came and took him away. There was a crowd in the village main square to bid him farewell. He just said: 'Don't be sad. Someone better than me will come'. But this didn't happen.

The old woman who, unwilling to reveal her name, told me this story had to pause to dry her tears. She confessed to me that, with the help of two other village women, she had gone more than once to visit Tamás in the monastery where he remained until his death. This happened during socialism.

The present priest is also extremely active in spite of his 81 years. Because of the lack of Hungarian priests, he administers the service in two parishes, Királyfa and the neighbouring village of Hosszúfalu, which does not have its own priest. In Királyfa masses are said only in Hungarian. The figure of the priest is highly respected and trusted in the community, especially for his personal involvement in social clubs (mainly the scouts), public events and religious festivals such as the village festival[132] (19th of

[132] The village festival (*búcsú*), a semi-religious event common to all the communities of the region is held on the 19th of November. It is still one of the most important collective events in the community. Held on the day of St. Elisabeth, the patron saint of the village, this custom was never abandoned, even under socialism. The day, marked by a morning religious function, provides an occasion for non-village relatives to visit Királyfa. Village families prepare special food (duck meat and different sorts of cakes) in quantities that can be shared by guests and even taken home upon their return. Families and their

November) and the Corpus Christi Day (May) procession. This latter event is described here in more detail.

The ceremony starts in the morning; the church is already crowded a half an hour before the start.[133] Different social groups play distinctive roles in the celebration: the priest, the altar boys, elderly men, young girls and elderly women. The first ritual takes place outside, in front of the entrance. Here the priest, surrounded by the altar boys and the elderly men, passes the cross around a large white and red candle. This will be put on the altar and used intermittently for the year to come. The blessing of the candle follows and then the purification with incense. The altar boys and the elderly men pray in a chorus, while the priest sticks four golden needles, in a transverse fashion (first the head, then the lower arm, the left and finally the right arm), into the red crucifix painted on the candle. The young girls throw rose petals around the place of the ritual. The priest enters the church and the mass starts. It lasts approximately one hour with an abundance of singing and only a short sermon.

After the mass the procession (*körmenet*) starts. The young girls in white dresses go ahead, covering the road with colourful rose petals, followed by the priest and his altar boys. They hold a green and golden canopy, under which the priest stands with the golden crucifix in his hands. After him the group of elderly men follow, bearing the three paraphernalia which portray the symbol of the village, the image of St. Elisabeth (the patron saint) and the symbols of the crafts. The scouts follow with their own flags, one of which is the Hungarian flag, the village crest and their association symbol. The group of elderly women have no symbols; they sing and pray accompanying the remainder of the procession. The first attendants are the mayor (who joined the procession but not the mass), the clerk and members of the Pensioners' Club. As a rule elderly villagers go before the younger ones in the row, but this order is not strictly followed.

The procession first circles the church, then it crosses the village according to a pre-determined pattern. The procession makes four stops at four point where altars have been erected, symbolising the four cardinal points. The altar frame is covered in cellophane, and each point contains a sacred image of Christ and the Madonna, with a red carpet leading to the inside where four big candles stand. There are white flowers (lilies and

---

relatives remain together all day and the village organises entertainment for children (a fun-fair) and adults as well as an evening cultural show.

[133] During socialism this event was forbidden. However, the popular priest Tamás re-introduced it in the early 1960s. Villagers simply made their procession around the church, within its perimeter and along the church road, thus avoiding crossing the village. People emphasise that in spite of the prohibition to perform this event in public, the church was always full on this occasion.

roses), white handkerchiefs and green branches both inside and outside the altars. Because the position of the altars is not fixed – they can be moved some hundred meters but they mainly stay on the same roads each year – the care dedicated to building and decorating them is shared by villagers in turn. Men from the Pensioners' Club and some from the village unemployed, led by the vice-mayor, build the altars and women decorate them. The house which is situated behind the altar provides flowers and the sacred picture; candles and external decorations are provided by neighbours in the row of houses near the altar. As the altars are moved each year along the same street, responsibility for the flowers and picture inside is taken in turn by different houses.

The procession stops at each altar where the priest, bearing the crucifix in his hands, enters the small construction, lights the candles, kneels down and then goes out. Here he reads a prayer, blesses the place in the direction of the procession and then the crowd starts singing, meaning that the procession, in the same order, moves to the next altar. The same process is repeated four times, until the procession withdraws into the church. There is a final chorus which accompanies the deposition of the crucifix in the ostiary and the celebration is over.

At the time of this ceremony (2001) approximately two hundred people participated in the mass and many more joined the procession or watched it from their houses. However, those family members whose houses were close to the altars did not dare peep out of their gates. They were watching from behind the window and waited for the procession to move back out into the street. Also, four persons, dressed in suits and neckties, stood at the village's two entrances to prevent any car from getting onto the main road.

The social meaning of the procession is demonstrated by two factors: the degree of social interaction and the process of identification. Long and careful preparations are made by the groups who take part in the ceremony. From the scouts to the elderly women, all of them meet before the event to plan and then undertake preparations. The erection of the altars is a long process that takes the two days preceding the procession. It requires the joint work of the women from the neighbourhood and the men responsible for building them, as well as procuring the tree branches. In this way, the event is an important occasion for interaction among villagers, as well as delegation of and compliance with tasks and mutual help.

The event also provides a means of identification for the whole community. Villagers proudly emphasise that, in spite of the many historical changes, the village has always succeeded in reproducing its own 'collective face'. One informant put it in these terms:

I know, people say a lot of bad things about village relations today. It is partly our fault, partly the fault of history. I can't deny that there have been many negative episodes within the community after which some people still avoid each other. But when it comes to organising something together, gathering collective efforts, people get together and cooperate. I'm proud of this. It's sufficient if you come to one of the many events that the Csemadok sponsors or to one religious festival in the village to see how many people are there. There are always occasions in which old grudges are put aside.

(András)



12. Corpus Christi procession.

The Corpus Christi event creates for the community an occasion in which collectively concerted action is conceived as the most significant expression of Királyfa's self-identification. As Banfield postulates, no occasion of public action such as this religious festival should exist if villagers are dominated by a widespread sense of reciprocal mistrust. All the

careful preparations and efforts put into it make the event a worthy collective asset to show off to its participants (there are no outsiders who come to assist). The festival, apart from its religious implications and the real belief that drives people to act collectively, is a moment of community identity, which is less constructed in the process of confrontation between 'insiders' and 'outsiders' than among villagers themselves. The difference between this and the civil event on St. Stephen's Day is that in the former there is no clear sign of family 'corporate' behaviour, i.e. people do not take part or organise the event within the close circle of their families. Their actions are rather spontaneous and coordinated through their membership in the village's social clubs and age groups. The restraint dictated by the status of families is annulled in an event that, having a religious basis, serves to strengthen collective patterns of behaviour and prove to villagers that such patterns are factual and real despite difficult times.



13. One of the four altars erected at the cardinal points of the village.

8.6 The State and Interethnic Trust

This section considers the relation of villagers to the state with respect to the ethnic issue. My reasons for dedicating so little space to the treatment of interethnic relations and their role in building trust among community inhabitants are explained in the introductory chapter. Here it is important to re-emphasise that this work does not aim to underplay the ethnic issue. This was and still is an important problem in the whole region, which is inhabited

by a mixed ethnic population. However, as far as Királyfa is concerned, the historical development of the community did not put similar emphasis on interethnic problems as it did in other neighbouring villages. The fifteen percent that constitute the Slovak portion of the village's population do not feel threatened or isolated in the community today. The reasons for this are various: on the one hand many persons of Slovak nationality are able to communicate in Hungarian because they come from ethnically mixed families (there was no real exchange of population to/from other villages, see Chapter Two). On the other hand, Hungarians never make use of their language as a means of ethnic exclusion in public; they are ready to switch to Slovak as soon as a non-Hungarian speaker is in their company.[134]

This does not mean that the ethnic problem is not felt in the community. Stories of deportations in the neighbouring villages and the hard fate of the Hungarian minority in post-war Czechoslovakia have shaped the way in which Királyfa's people construct their ethnic identity. This process of identity construction, however, is not an exclusion-inclusion mechanism. It is rather an expression of villagers' relationship towards governing bodies and state policies. Interethnic mistrust, if this exists, must be ascribed to interaction between individuals and the state, rather than to the relationship between villagers. This is of course an outcome of the historical events which conferred a high variability to the position of the minority in the country in light of the past and present political situations.[135]

On the other hand, it is in part up to the individual to decide on how interethnic relations should be conducted and which moral principles should underpin behaviour. There is little external or community pressure to take up rigid ethnic positions. Therefore, it is once again useful to consider the difference between people's expression of ideas about ethnic relations and their actual practices.

As in the case of trust among villagers, there is an evident discrepancy between people's ideas about interethnic relations and the practices underpinning these. People lament that because of historical developments Hungarians suffered quite a harsh fate after the end of World War II. Hungarians were not only deported and forced to resettle, but those who

---

[134] There are only a few people in the village who are unable to communicate in Slovak. Some members of the older generation who received their schooling during the first Czechoslovak republic possess a rather poor knowledge of Slovak. However, the experiences of work in the cooperative, labour migration to Bohemia and work in the factories during the socialist period did much to eliminate differences.

[135] For instance there is now remarkably greater optimism than some years ago due to the increased political weight of the Hungarian coalitions and the state's willingness to consider the minority issue more seriously in order to be considered for membership in the EU.

remained in their villages had to succumb to a steady process of assimilation. Early in the 1950s, it became necessary to renounce one's Hungarian nationality in order to find proper employment. Afterwards, the relatively greater concern of the Czechoslovak socialist state for the minority issue improved their situation. However, during the first postsocialist Slovak governments (1993-1998) a complete stagnation of government sensitivity (and in many Hungarians' view, an open hostility) towards this problem developed. Even after the fall of Mečiar's cabinet, however, it became clear that the 'natural' process of assimilation was, in many instances, unavoidable.[136]

Hungarian villagers deal today with the problem of ethnic assimilation by taking a critical position either vis-à-vis the Slovak state or those (Hungarian) villagers who prove unwilling to choose Hungarian for their children's education. In southern Slovakia a number of Hungarian parents prefer to send their children to Slovak language schools because of the presumably better perspectives this provides for future careers. The outcome is that, in many rural communities, Hungarian schools are able to remain operative only thanks to the number of Roma children who declare themselves as Hungarians. The situation is still balanced in Királyfa, where the opening of a Slovak primary school and kindergarten (1981) was considered by many informants a matter of shame for the village, which is more than eighty-three percent Hungarian. However, the fact that in this predominantly Hungarian community the proportion of children going to both schools is almost equivalent (56 percent to the Hungarian and 44 percent to the Slovak school) shows the actual ongoing process of linguistic assimilation.[137]

Very few school children are unable to speak Hungarian. However, the choice of language in their everyday life is also indicative of the ambiguity of the processes of ethnic identification in the community. A number of studies (Németh 2001; Szarka 2003) have proved that one of the most relevant features of the Hungarian minority in Slovakia is their frequency of code-switching. Hungarian villagers are often unable to carry on a conversation without using any Slovak words[138] and the frequency with which this code-switching takes place depends both on the age and

---

[136] The overall Hungarian population of Slovakia shrank from 567,296 persons in 1991 to 520,528 in 2001 (Statistical Office of the Czechoslovak Federal Republic 1991; Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic 2001).

[137] For details on processes of ethnic assimilation in southern Slovakia see the research conducted by the Fórum Institute (www.foruminst.sk).

[138] These are often technical, bureaucratic terms as well as terms for some local agricultural products which, by means of common use, have lost their Hungarian counterparts.

profession of the speaker.[139] Within this context, those villagers who are able to speak a *Hungarian* Hungarian (*magyaros magyar*) are usually highly respected and considered educated or fine people. On the other hand, the too frequent intermixing of Slovak and Hungarian is often considered cacophonous and an index of a lack of 'sensibility' towards Hungarian culture. Villagers may negatively evaluate someone who is obviously uncomfortable in communicating in Hungarian for the mere fact that for them 'being from Királyfa' still means 'being Hungarian'.

Ideological expressions of the need to maintain a Hungarian identity are strong in the everyday social interaction among villagers and even family members. I observed two cases where parents were led to 'cool' their relationship with their son and daughter-in-law because of the latter's insistence on sending their children to the Slovak school. Moreover, one elderly woman confessed that she would never forgive her eldest son for having married a Slovak and hence, for having to educate their children in the other language.[140]

These attitudes, however, predominantly refer to intra-village relations, i.e. among Hungarian families, but they very rarely entail negative behaviour towards local Slovaks. Henrik (48 years old) is one of Gábor's best friends. He lives alone in the parental house after the death of his mother and father. He works in a factory in the town and often takes the evening shift. He is never openly critical of the ethnic problems and emphasises that Hungarians and Slovaks should live in peace as much as the state allows them to. On the other hand, Gábor is often strongly negative in judging both Slovaks as a nation and the Slovak state, of which he openly declares he 'is not a citizen' (*nem vagyok polgár Tótországban)*. He knows several stories about young bands of Hungarians fighting with Slovaks and of riots against the local police, especially during the 1980s, and the moral of these episodes often relates to a vaguely 'racist' idea of Hungarian intellectual superiority over the Slovaks. Like Henrik, Gábor is still single (51 years old). One day I met Henrik who treated me to a beer. He had to tell me something, in confidence. He revealed that his friend Gábor had again flirted with a town woman, a divorced Slovak woman with one daughter. 'You know how it goes with him. He is ready, as many others, to fill his

---

[139] It is usually older people who are able to speak more cleanly in Hungarian than younger ones (except for school teachers and those few young people with a Hungarian high school education). Those who work in the blue-collar sector are comparatively less likely to use a pure Hungarian than white-collar workers.

[140] This seems to be a recent tendency, probably reflecting the idea that schooling in Slovak offers better career prospects. Tóth (2003) observes that until the 1980s it was still customary in ethnic Hungarian villages that Slovak brides or grooms coming to live in the villages were expected to learn Hungarian. This has become increasingly rare.

mouth with insults against Slovaks, but then you see that most of his girlfriends [two of the three about which I am aware] are not Hungarian. What language do you think he speaks with them?' (Henrik b. 1949)

Other villagers, who in private conversations revealed their mistrust of Slovaks, whom they described as 'always looking at us with suspicion', in their public behaviour seemed to deny their radical positions on the ethnic issue. During the celebrations on Hunters and Fishermen's Day,[141] some of these villagers were sitting at the same tables with Slovak entrepreneurs from the town and enjoyed their company. The town guests are themselves members of the Hunters' Club or Fishermen's Club, and since they are colleagues and friends of some village members, they are regularly invited to join events when held in the village. One villager commented: 'They are good fellows. They are mainly local people who have relatives in northern Slovakia where the woods and rivers are richer [in game] than here. It's always nice to have somebody with whom you can share a hobby' (Lajos). Considerations of mutual interests, friendship and love are often able to overcome the ideological sphere of interethnic mistrust that villagers construct in their everyday expressions and quest for community identification.

Interethnic mistrust is less ambiguously manifested in the relation between individuals and the state. Even though it can be rather problematic to see how much people's patterns of behaviour are determined by ideas and knowledge of the interethnic issue, it is safe to underline that villagers respond to the historical conditions of the Hungarian minority in Slovakia by constructing their own vision of state responsibility and its position vis-à-vis the ethnic problem. Opinions about the Slovak government often reflect suspicion, a sense of unreliability and pessimism. Many villagers stressed the belief that 'there is nothing good they could expect for them since they are Hungarian and the state is Slovak'. The historical connotation of the relationship between these two nations is loaded with emotion, both for Slovaks, who, considering their past domination and assimilation under the Austro-Hungarian monarchy, feel disquieted by the existence of a large Hungarian minority, and for Hungarians, who experienced the Treaty of Trianon (1918) and the sad effects of the Beneš Decrees in 1947-1948. This tension between the two nations is present in the everyday political life of the country and even the strong role of the Hungarian coalition in the government has not completely eliminated it. As a villager said: 'The Slovak politicians have to accept the Hungarian Party. They can't do without it.

[141] These events are organised yearly by the Fishermen's Club and the Hunters' Club, which have been active in the village since 1990. Other activities include hunting games, fishing competitions and participation in other events sponsored by the Csemadok.

Even so, both Hungarians and Slovaks [politicians] know that there is little or nothing about the other's intentions and good will to be confident of' (Lajos).

Although it can be difficult to test in practice how far the behaviour of the government and of politicians affects the attitudes of local people, recent trends in electoral behaviour and vis-à-vis the Hungarian programme of the 'Status Law' can provide some indications. In the latest elections (September 2002), Királyfa had the highest rate of voters[142] (62 percent) among neighbouring villages. Here the Hungarian Coalition Party (SMK) received 87.2 percent of the votes (more than the official percentage of ethnic Hungarians in the village) and the Movement for Democratic Slovakia only 2.1 percent.[143] This tendency expresses the low level of trust towards Slovak political parties.[144]

A number of villagers followed with concern the Status Law passed by the Orbán government in Hungary (2001). It intended to introduce a 'legal status' (*státusz törvény*) for Hungarian minorities abroad. Applications to obtain a minority certificate were distributed in all the countries where Hungarians live (Serbia, Croatia, Slovenia, Slovakia, Ukraine and Romania) and obtaining such a certificate would offer applicants some benefits such as a six-month work permit in Hungary, certain social benefits and the opportunity to participate in cultural and social initiatives in Hungary. The Slovak government was unhappy about the content of this legislation, and still has not agreed to its validity. However, it could not block implementation of the law because of the urgent need to comply with Brussels' guidelines on minority policies. Hungarians in Slovakia were not all enthusiastic about the status law. Some pointed out that the real benefits which could be obtained by this measure were too few compared to the potential drawbacks. As one informant commented: 'Hungary does not seem to care too much for its Hungarians abroad, after all. It was only a political measure' (Rudolf). Others stressed that obtaining a certificate abroad could prove a risky choice because it would expose applicants to state monitoring, both on the Hungarian and the Slovak side. Nevertheless, a number of villagers joined forces to go on with the application and eventually managed

---

142 Average voting levels in the Šal'a district were below 60 percent.

143 These results reinforce those obtained in the previous elections (1998), when the Hungarian Coalition Party received 78 percent and the Slovak Democratic Coalition (SDK), the party led by Dzurinda, the present prime minister, 13 percent of the votes.

144 One anonymous informant, asked to express his level of trust towards the politicians, remarked: 'Which politicians do you think I should trust? If you are talking about the Slovak politicians there is no sense in even asking the question. They don't represent me, so they are not my politicians. If you mean the Hungarian Party, then the situation changes'.

to receive their minority status certificates in spite of the bureaucratic hassle.[145] One explanation that a villager provided for his choice was: 'If we don't have any guarantee of protection by the Slovak state, this is what I would do. I would go to Hungary as soon as the situation gets worse here. I am not a Slovak after all'.

The issue of the interethnic relations is far from being unproblematic in this region of the country. Hungarians feel that their culture and language are threatened by powerful external processes of assimilation. The most important concern for Királyfa's villagers is that their village may end up like most of the neighbouring communities, where the shrinking presence of children in Hungarian schools and the statistical evidence of ethnic composition point to general trends in the country. However, because Királyfa did not experience many of the dramatic moments of ethnic violence that heavily marked other villages in the past, the coexistence of ethnic Slovaks and Hungarians is relatively peaceful. A source of interethnic mistrust is, instead, the position of the Slovak government on the minority issue. Villagers feel that their mistrust of the state (and politicians) is also a function of the uncertainties linked to being a minority.

8.7 Conclusion

Trust and mistrust are particularly useful tools for describing how people structure their actions and share their ideas about the social world. The nature of trust, which creates a tie of dependency between two parties sharing some common aim, entails both an accent on interest and instrumentality and produces a set of mutual expectations and obligations for the two sides. These are defined on the basis of collective principles and norms of behaviour within the community. In this point resides the strength of Banfield's (1958) approach that allowed his work to remain influential in spite of its shortcomings. The ethos that allegedly leads Montegrano's people in their daily struggle to survive and make the best of their 'backwardness' is grounded in the crucial importance, recognised by actors, of dealing with patterns of social interaction. Widespread mistrust in persons and institutions is one of the responses that villagers create in the course of their everyday existence in conditions of 'poverty' and economic distress. Trust is at stake in everyday aspects of the social life of individuals because the scarcity of economic means leads them to stick to social interaction as the main channel through which the survival of the family can be assured. There is, in this situation, no space for 'blind' and absolute trust, because its

[145] Application forms had to be obtained from the local Csemadok branch and then returned *in persona* to the closest Hungarian district office.

(social and economic) benefits are absent from the life of individuals.[146] On the other hand, mistrust operates to build obligations between actors, not as a form of apathy or inactivity, but as an active way of dealing with uncertainty and general conditions of scarcity. This attitude is exemplified in Királyfa's case on two different levels. On one level, people say and do different things. Ambiguity is created and reproduced in the course of everyday practices and permeates all spheres of social action (from the family to the state). Following the paradigm proposed by Grabher and Stark (1997), it can be maintained that ambiguity is intentional and strategic, because it helps diversify the scope and aims of action. Maintaining variable approaches to social relations helps villagers pursuing their goals without destroying the bases of social trust. In absence of solid, enforcing formal institutions mistrust plays an important role in defining when and how a particular form of transaction (or interaction) may take place. Similarly, by saying and doing different things people are able to vary the range of their strategies and to safeguard their choices against the breakdown of personal relations.

On a second level, in contrast to what Banfield (1958) postulates, outspoken mistrust does not necessarily entail the absence of patterns of collective action and the creation of intermediary forms of associations. The case of Királyfa illustrates that, even though people seem to indicate mistrust as one of the most tangible problems and features of the postsocialist transformation, the kind and degree of their involvement in (civil and religious) collective life and the ambiguity of their choices suggest that there is no such thing as a 'creeping' amoral familism. As in the case of Montegrano, but in different tones, the instability that came as a product of the historical (postsocialist) transformation has deeply affected the manner in which villagers build their social confrontation. On the one hand, the pace of the overall changes instils in people a strong concern for how social relations are shaped in the village. This depends on the fact that interpersonal relations and social ties are seen as vital assets both in the village and outside. As a result, villagers seem rather cautious in the process of daily interaction and, even in the case of family and kinship relations, unconditional trust seems to be lacking. On the other hand, people's ideas may not coincide with their practices simply because they deliberately choose to do so in order to keep open venues of choices (such as the case of mistrust in the ethnic policies of the Slovak state) and to create reciprocal expectations and obligations. This brings villagers to the point at which patterns of behaviour need to be strictly regulated by norms of reciprocity in order to avoid the worst outcome, i.e.

[146] A Sicilian saying goes: *li signuri cagnanu, ma li cafuni sunu sempri uguali a ciciri o a favi che s'accattano e si vinnino* ('masters change, but folks stay the same as the beans and peas that one buys and sells') (Camilleri 2001: 327).

the elimination of any social relation. Mistrust therefore provides scope for these obligations because it is not accompanied by practices in which no relation takes place among individuals. In this sense, mistrust becomes strategic, just like the fact of doing one thing and saying something different.

Chapter 9
Conclusion

This work has dealt with the historical processes of social transformation of a rural Slovakian village in the period between the end of the 18th century and 2001. The large temporal scope of this investigation may appear unrealistic, especially considering the number of major political changes that Slovakia encountered in this period. Furthermore, it may seem problematic to deal with over two centuries of history from an anthropological perspective because of the nature of anthropological observation, i.e. its focus on the observed present. In this work I have shown that historical and anthropological approaches can be fruitfully integrated and provide answers to questions dealing with present problems, for a number of reasons. First, by considering a social reality framed within the context of historical change, it becomes possible to define the link between the overall strategies and responses that people build to face their present conditions and their past experiences. Second, detecting continuity and/or discontinuity with the past represents a powerful means for analysing a diversity of outcomes between geographical contexts and within a micro-scale social group. Third, by comparing and complementing the observation of present practices with the knowledge of the past that derives from archival records and people's memories, it is possible to build a dynamic reconstruction of history which includes actors' ideas and practices.

People develop a number of strategies to adapt to unfavourable external conditions and eventually find their best life solutions. In Királyfa these external conditions include specific elements such as the democratisation process following the end of state socialism, the reconstruction of Slovakia's major institutional forces, and full re-establishment of ownership rights. More general conditions include the uncertainty of the present, frequent and dramatic historical changes, fear of global capitalism, changing value systems and personal hopes for the future. It is of course impossible to deal exhaustively with all of these conditions and the impact they have on the present social life of individuals. However, I

have attempted to demonstrate that it is within the framework of generalised worries about the present uncertainty that people's ideas and choices find shape. These ideas and choices are first constructed on the guidelines dictated by people's knowledge of the past and later, when put in practice, they are mediated in the everyday arena of social action and interaction.

Among many, I defined two strategic ways in which villagers face social transformation. The first is by investing in social assets (family and kin ties, personal networks and connections to the outside sphere) in order to build secure avenues of choice and to leave open strategic options to deal with unfavourable external conditions. In Királyfa, this does not constitute a new strategy, since it has its roots in pre-socialist and socialist practices of social interaction.

Chapter Two illustrated that from the late feudal period (end of the 18th century) to socialism, the nature of the feudal land tenure system in the village determined the way in which power was structured. Because of the absence of noble families in the village, land ownership was the main marker of economic and social status. The large landowners (*gazdák*) were able to perpetuate their power through a series of strategies aimed at avoiding the fragmentation of estates after inheritance. On the other hand, the social structure of the village, characterised by the existence of a large stratum of small landed and landless peasants, granted those in power the possibility to build patron-client relationships with the poor villagers and hence legitimate their domination. The situation remained unchanged even after the 1948 socialist revolution and until all village land became collectivised in 1959.

Chapter Three showed that the 1960s-1970s marked in the village a watershed between the end of the pre-socialist power relations and the socialist transformation. The new social order was introduced after consolidation of the role that the agricultural cooperative played for the social and economic life of the community (1962-1972). Following the unification of the cooperative and the establishment of its management board in the town (1973), however, villagers' strategies had to take a different direction. In this period, urbanisation and the region's rapid industrial development made Királyfa lose its 'peasant' character and profoundly subverted the structures of power that had proved so resistant in the first half of the 20th century. Villagers 'familiarised' the socialist transformation by gradually weaving the thread of their social ties to local (town and regional) institutions: the unified cooperative, factories, town and district administrative centres.

Chapter Four concluded the historical analysis by bringing the present into the discussion, from the fall of the Berlin Wall to the process of decollectivisation. The last fourteen years constitute a crucial period for the

village because, in the words of villagers, changes have taken place at a more rapid pace than ever before. Restitution of ownership rights has meant an important transformation in the economic structure of the village. Following the initial optimism and euphoria of the early 1990s, individuals have realised that capitalism is not as rosy as imagined. Taking over and farming land, in the conditions in which decollectivisation has been implemented in Slovakia (fragmentation of land, long bureaucratic processes and lack of capital) and in the unfavourable agricultural market, has not been the most favoured option for many. The outcome is that the restructured cooperative has been able to consolidate its economic and social role in the village, providing important services (renting and leasing land, hiring machinery, selling animals and fodder) to the community and making it necessary for people to maintain social networks and personal ties with it (Chapter Six). These networks, continuing the tradition already established in the late socialist period, are used by villagers to create safe options of reliability in a general environment where the weakness (and immaturity) of formal legal and institutional structures require reliance on informality and interpersonal trust. However, postsocialist decollectivisation did not mean simply that villagers conceived of the restituted land as a 'liability', as Verdery (2001) argues, but that there are different uses that people can make of their land. Chapter Five dealt with the social use that villagers make of small household plots and gardens. Building on the well-established discussion on household production, which has its roots in economic anthropology in the application of Chayanov's model of a peasant economy (Thorner et al. 1966), the chapter demonstrates two points. First, that family land is used in a way that creates and maintains solid ties between kin members by imposing mutuality, reciprocity, task sharing and by defining their roles within the family. Second, it is misleading to consider the household as the basic unit of consumption and production. Analysis of patterns of villagers' interaction reveals that household plots are used both for domestic consumption and market purposes.

After investment in social relations, the second strategic line that villagers adopt to cope with the present conditions of uncertainty is through what I have defined as the 'management of ambiguity'. Following Grabher and Stark's (1997) insights on the 'organisation of diversity', a neo-evolutionary approach to considering adaptation to changing institutional structures in postsocialist countries (Chapter One), this work has developed the idea that actors respond to instability and uncertainty by (strategically) generating ambiguity between their ideas and deeds. This in part has roots in past practices. In late socialism people's practices already showed high degrees of inconsistency between what was done or shown in public and

what was said in private. Although social scientists tend to ascribe this phenomenon to the large divide between public and private life in socialism, there may be good reasons to see that this inconsistency was an intentional and strategic process. This has been the case of the development of secondary economic practices that became 'symbiotic' and eventually fostered the primary economy in socialist Hungary (Hann 1980; Szelényi 1988).

Chapter Six contextualised one field in which ambiguity is expressed by villagers' practices and ideas: interaction with the cooperative and the municipal office. I described some features of the temporal development of this interaction to demonstrate that there is a degree of ambiguity between what people say and do. This depends on the need to balance collective (community) and personal interests, but there is also a strong degree of emotional involvement in people's expressions of mistrust towards institutions. Interpersonal trust provides, as it did during socialism, space for dealing with local institutions through interaction with individuals who represent them. However, this does not prevent villagers from vehemently expressing their discontent with the historical process of collectivisation or with the political conduct of the mayor.

Chapter Seven introduced a different element in the treatment of how trust shapes interpersonal relations and their change over time: the moral dimension. Value orientations are examined as bases which provide justification and contextualise the scope of social action. Rejecting the approach that analyses values as cultural constructions of certain social (or cultural) groups distinct from others, I analyse values as temporally constructed and socially specific moral entities. People refer to certain sets of values in their social interaction with others. These values are configured on the basis of different factors: a person's social evaluation, family descent, his/her deeds and commitment to the community life and personal qualities. Since each of these features is subject to change, the outcome is that there may be ambiguity in the way that individuals are evaluated and esteemed in the community. This is because when trusting persons, the individual chooses from among a range of features which make social confrontation desirable and fruitful. Thus, trusting becomes an action with profound moral as well as instrumental implications, which leads people to decide the optimal solution and avoid the risk of disappointment.

Ambiguity as a strategic discourse is explored further in Chapter Eight by concentrating on two levels of analysis: the relation between trust, mistrust and collective action and the gap between ideas and practices. On the first level, villagers indicate that one of the products of the postsocialist transformation has been increased mistrust of villagers and institutions.

However, mistrust is not to be considered simply as a detrimental social action. Villagers are able to build obligations and reciprocity with others because they mistrust each other. This happens in the absence of a stable, foreseeable everyday context of action, where generalised trust cannot be easily established. Moreover, contrary to Banfield's (1958) hypothesis, generalised mistrust does not generate a lack of collective action or apathy towards political and civic issues. Királyfa is characterised by a strong degree of public involvement in collective events, festivals, and social and cultural clubs.

On the second level, externalisations of interethnic mistrust often do not correspond to the reality of facts. Hungarian villagers, who make up the majority of the community, are aware of the ongoing process of ethnic assimilation which they denounce harshly. However, observation of the everyday reality suggests that interethnic mistrust is not conveyed in people's actions and decisions against the ethnic Slovaks, but it is used by them to manifest their dissatisfaction with the policies of the Slovak state.

The attempt to construct explanatory models that deal with social change in micro-scale social realities is one of the classic tasks of anthropology. There are several ways to perform this task and this volume has proposed the use of history in the way it permeates the everyday practices and ideas of individuals. Recourse to two major theoretical problems – trust and property – constituted the analytical framework for this research. Trust and property are two fundamental social notions which delineate processes of interaction between persons and in relation to material objects. The changing meaning and the use that people make of these ideas are part of the overall process of historical transformation. However, since trust and property are two pervasive notions that encompass all spheres of the social life of individuals, caution is needed to avoid treating them as empty black boxes into which human actions and ideas can be stored. As the first part of the work (Chapters One to Five) demonstrated, property acquires analytical significance only if its use is empirically defined and the historical changes of this use are treated in detail. The importance of ownership of economic assets for villagers becomes, thus, a problem of villagers' relation to historical events and of their ways of dealing with the social relations inherent in ownership. Along similar lines, the importance of trust (Chapters Five to Eight) must be understood as the result of what people do and say when dealing with other individuals and institutions. Trust is not an analytical element imposed by the observer, nor a panacea to problems of social order, as Williamson (1993) argues. Trust is the ground-level construction of rational acts, morals and emotions which dictate the way in which people deal with other people. As such, trust is subject to change and

is continuously questioned by people in the everyday use they make of it. Thus, only in the context of their application to local strategies can trust and property become useful notions for understanding processes of social change.

The strength of anthropology, i.e. the capacity to collect data 'from below' by penetrating into actors' everyday lives, finds concrete expression when these data are applied to test scientific hypotheses. Notions of trust and property, in light of the crucial importance that they have acquired after the demise of the socialist regime and, more generally, within a global panorama of instability and uncertainty, can become stable points to which actors adhere in order to maintain control of the present. These notions are far from being unproblematic. To understand the complexity of everyday lives, it is necessary to portray this complexity as faithfully as possible, i.e. as it is experienced and conceived by the actors themselves. The historical perspective adopted in this volume shows that trust and property have been salient social issues through times of great social and political transformations. With the admission of Slovakia and other Eastern European countries to the European Union, trust will remain an important concept for understanding everyday lives in the context of ongoing transformation.

Bibliography

Abrahams, R. (ed.). 1996. *After Socialism. Land Reform and Social Change in Eastern Europe*. Oxford: Berghahn Books.

Árendás, Z. 2003. Identities in Change: Integration Strategies of Resettled Hungarians from Czechoslovakia to Hird (Southwestern Hungary). In D. Torsello and M. Pappová (eds.), *Social Networks in Movement. Time, Interaction and Interethnic Spaces*, pp. 43-66. Dunajská Streda, Slovakia: Lilium Aurum.

Austin, J. L. 1976 [1962]. *How to Do Things with Words*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Bak, J. 1994. *Nobility in Central and Eastern Europe: Kinship, Property and Privilege*. Budapest: Hajnal István Alapítvány.

Banfield, E. C. 1958. *The Moral Basis of a Backward Society*. Glencoe, Ill.: Free Press.

Barber, B. 1983. *The Logic and Limits of Trust*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.

Barth, F. 1993. Are Values Real? The Enigma of Naturalism in the Anthropological Imputation of Values. In M. Hechter, L. Nadel and R. E. Michod (eds.), *The Origin of Values*, pp. 31-46. New York: de Gruyter.

Bell, P. 1983. Social Perception in a Contemporary Hungarian Rural Community. In M. Hollós and B. Máday (eds.), *New Hungarian Peasants: An East-Central European Experience with Collectivization*, pp. 145-80. Brooklyn: Brooklyn College Press.

———. 1984. *Peasants in Socialist Transition: Life in a Collectivized Hungarian Village*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Benedict, R. 1947. *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword: Patterns of Japanese Culture*. London: Secker & Warburg.

Blaas, G. 1995. Privatization of the Rural Sector in Slovakia. *Eastern European Countryside*, 1(95): 91-98.

Blanchard, O. J., K. A. Froot, and J.D. Sachs. 1993. The *Transition in Eastern Europe*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Bloch, M. 1994. *La Société Féudale*. Paris: Albin Michel.

Blok, A. 2001. Expaining South Italian Agro Towns. In A. Blok (ed.), *Honour and Violence*, pp. 136-154. Malden, Mass.: Polity.

Böröcz, J. 2000. Informality Rules. *East European Politics and Societies*, 14 (2): 348-380.

Burawoy, M., and, J. Lukács. 1992. *The Radiant Past: Ideology and Reality in Hungary's Road to Capitalism*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Burawoy, M., and K. Verdery (eds.). 1999. *Uncertain Transition. Ethnographies of Change in the Postsocialist World.* Boston: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.

Camilleri, A. 2001. *Il Re di Girgenti*. Palermo: Sellerio.

Campbell, J. K. 1964. *Honour, Family, Patronage: A Study of Institutions and Moral Values in a Greek Mountain Community*. Ithaca: Ithaca University Press.

Colby, B. N. 1967. Psychological Orientations. In R. Wauchope (ed.), *Handbook of Middle American Indians*, Vol. 6, pp. 416-431. Austin: University of Texas Press.

Coleman, J. C. 1990. *Foundations of Social Theory*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.

Creed, G. W. 1998. *Domesticating Revolution. From Socialist Reform to Ambivalent Transition in a Bulgarian Village*. The Pennsylvania State University Press.

Czegledy, A. 2001. Urban Peasants in a Post-Socialist World: Small-Scale Agriculturalists in Hungary. In P. Leonard and D. Kaneff (eds.), *Postsocialist Peasant? Rural and Urban Constructions of Identity in Eastern Europe, East Asia and the Former Soviet Union*, pp. 200-220. London: Palgrave.

Danglová, O. 1995. Rural Communities in the Process of Socio-Economic Changes. *Collegium Anthropologicum Zagreb* Vol. 19 (1): 129-144.

–––––. 1999. Rural Community in the Process of Socio-Economic Change. Paper presented at the Conference in Rural Development in Central and Eastern Europe. Podbanské (Slovakia).

Danterová, I. 2003. Traditional Economy in the Northern Kisalföld Region. In D. Torsello and M. Pappová (eds.), *Social Networks in Movement. Time, Interaction and Interethnic Spaces*, pp. 89-96. Dunajská Streda, Slovakia: Lilium Aurum.

Dobek, M. M. 1997. Property Rights and Institutional Change in the Czech and Slovak Republics. In D. L. Weiner (ed.), *The Political Economy of Property Rights*, pp. 182-204. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Donham, D. L. 1981. Beyond the Domestic Mode of Production. *Man,* 16 (4): 515-541.

Durkheim, E. 1964. *The Rules of Sociological Method.* Collier Macmillan: Free Press.

Durrenberger, E. P. (ed.). 1984. *Chayanov, Peasants and Economic Anthropology*. Orlando: Academic Press.

Eidson, J. 2001. *Collectivization, Privatization, Dispossession: Changing Property Relations in an East German Village (1945-2000). Working Paper* 27. Halle/Saale: Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology.

Eisenstadt, S. N., and L. Roniger. 1984. *Patrons, Clients and Friends*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Fehérváry, M. 1988. *Parasztgazdaság a XX Század Első Felében*. A Gútai Példa. Budapest: MTA Néprajzi Kutatócsoport.

———. 1992. Társadalmi viszonyok. In M. Fehérváry (ed.) *Gúta. Hagyományos Gazdálkodása*, pp. 1-30. Komárom: Csehszlovákiai Magyar Néprajzi Társaság.

Fél, E. and, T. Hofer. 1969. *Proper Peasants. Traditional Life in a Hungarian Village*. Chicago: Aldine.

———. 1973. *Tanyakert*-s, Patron-Client Relations and Political Factions in Átány'. *American Anthropologist*, 75: 787-801.

Fukuyama, F. 1995. *Trust. The Social Virtues and the Creation of Prosperity*. New York: Free Press.

Fügedi, E. 1986. *Castles and Society in Medieval Hungary (1000-1437)*. Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó.

Gábor, I. 1979. The Second (Secondary) Economy. *Acta Oeconomica* 22(4): 91-311.

Gambetta, D. (ed.). 1988. *Trust: Making and Breaking Cooperative Relations*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.

Giddens, A. 1990. *The Consequences of Modernity*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Giordano, C. 1997. Sentiers de la ruralité perdue. Réflexions sur le post-socialisme. *Etudes Rurales*, 12-33.

Giordano, C., and D. Kostova. 2002. The Social Production of Mistrust. In C. M. Hann (ed.), *Postsocialism. Ideals, Ideologies and Practices in Eurasia*, pp. 74-92. London: Routledge.

Goody, J. 1976. *Production and Reproduction: A Comparative Study of the Domestic Domain*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Gorzelak, G. 1995. *The Regional Dimension of Transformation in Central Europe*. London: Jessica Kingsley.

Grabher, G., and D. Stark (eds.). 1997. *Restructuring Networks in Post-Socialism: Legacies, Linkages and Localities*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Gramsci, A. 1991. *Selections from Prison Notebooks*. London: Lawrence and Wishart.

Granovetter, M. 1973. The Strength of Weak Ties. *American Journal of Sociology*, 78 (6): 1360-1380.

Gunst, P. 1989. Agrarian Systems of Central and Eastern Europe. In A. Chirot (ed.), *The Origins of Backwardness in Eastern Europe*, pp. 53-91. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Haller, M., T. Kolosi, and P. Róbert. 1990. Social Mobility in Austria, Czechoslovakia and Hungary. An Investigation of the Effects of Industrialization, Socialist Revolution and National Uniqueness. In M. Haller (ed.), *Class Structure in Europe: New Findings from East-West. Comparisons of Social Structure and Mobility*, pp. 153-197. New York: M.E. Sharpe.

Hann, C. M. 1980. *Tázlár: A Village in Hungary*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

——. 1990. Second Economy and Civil Society. In C. M. Hann (ed.), *Market Economy and Civil Society in Hungary*, London: Frank Cass.

——. 1993a. Property Relations in the New Eastern Europe: The Case of Specialist Cooperatives in Hungary. In D. De Soto and G. D. Anderson (eds.), *The Curtain Rises. Rethinking Culture, Ideology and the State in Eastern Europe, pp.* 99-119. Atlantic Highlands: Humanities Print International.

——. 1993b. From Production to Property: Decollectivization and the Family-Land Relationship in Contemporary Hungary. *Man*, 28 (3): 299-320.

——. (ed.). 1998. *Property Relations: Renewing the Anthropological Tradition.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

——. 2000. *The Tragedy of the Privates? Postsocialist Property Relations in Anthropological Perspective. Working Paper* 2. Halle/Saale: Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology.

——. 2001. 'Not the Horse We Wanted!' The Demise of Cooperative Property in Tázlár. *Working Paper* 26. Halle/Saale: Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology.

——. (ed.). 2002a. *Postsocialism. Ideals, Ideologies and Practices in Eurasia*. London: Routledge.

——. 2002b. Farewell to the Socialist "Other". In C. M. Hann (ed.), *Postsocialism. Ideals, Ideologies and Practices in Eurasia*, pp. 1-11. London: Routledge.

Hardin, R. 1991. Trusting Persons, Trusting Institutions. In R. J. Zeckhauser (ed.), *Strategy and Choice*, pp. 185-209. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press.

Hart, G. 1992. Imagined Unities: Construction of 'the Household' in Economic Theory. In S. Ortiz, and S. Lees (eds.), *Understanding Economic Process*, pp. 111-129. Lanham: University of America Press.

Henderson, J., R.Whitley, G. Lengyel, and L. Csaban. 1995. Contention and Confusion in Industrial Transformation: Dilemmas of State Economic Management. In E. Dittrich, G. Schmitt, and R. Whitley (eds.), *Industrial Transformation in Europe*, pp. 79-108. London: Sage.

Hudecková, H., and M. Lošťák. 1998. Attitudes to Privatization in Czechoslovak Agriculture. *Sociologia Ruralis* (32): 287-304.

Humphrey, C. 2002. Does the Category 'Postsocialist' Still Make Sense? In C. M. Hann (ed.), *Postsocialism. Ideals, Ideologies and Practices in Eurasia*, pp. 12-15. London: Routledge.

Isaacs, K. S., J. Alexander, and A. Haggard. 1963. Faith, Trust and Gullibility. *The International Journal of Psycho-Analysis* (44): 461-469.

Jávor, K. 1983. Continuity and Change in the Social and Value System of a Northern Hungarian Village. In M. Hollós, and B. Máday (eds.), *New Hungarian Peasants: An East-Central European Experience with Collectivization*, pp. 273-300. Brooklyn: Brooklyn College Press.

Jones, K. 2001. Trust: Philosophical Aspects. In N. J. Smelser, and P. B. Bates (eds.), *International Encyclopedia of the Social and Behavioral Sciences*, pp. 15917-15922. Amsterdam: Elsevier.

Kandert, J. 1988. Spoločenské vzťahy. In J. Botík (ed.), *Hont. Tradície Ľudovej Kultúry, pp.* 426-467. Banská Bystrica: Osveta.

Kaneff, D. 1996. Responses to 'democratic' Land Reforms in a Bulgarian Village. In F. Pine, and S. Bridger (eds.), *Surviving Postsocialism: Local Strategies and Regional Responses in Eastern Europe and the Former Soviet Union*, pp. 85-114. London: Routledge.

——. 1998. Private Cooperatives and Local Property Relations in Rural Bulgaria. *Replika*, special issue: Central European Hysteria, (3): 161-171.

Kideckel, D. 1992. Once Again, the Land: Decollectivization and Social Conflict in Rural Romania. In D. Anderson, and H. De Soto (eds.), *The Curtain Rises: Rethinking Culture, Ideology, and the State in Eastern Europe*, pp. 88-105. Atlantic Highlands, N.J.: Humanities Press.

——. 1993. *The Solitude of Collectivism: Romanian Villagers to the Revolution and Beyond.* Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

Kirschbaum, S. J. 1995. *A History of Slovakia. The Struggle for Survival.* New York: St.Martin's Griffin.

Kluckhohn, C. 1951. Values and Value Orientation in the Theory of Action: An Exploration in Definition and Classification. In T. Parsons, and E.A. Shils (eds.), *Toward a General Theory of Action.* New York: Harper.

Kostová, D., and C. Giordano. 1995. Reprivatization without Peasants. The Unexpected Effects of the Agrarian Reform Laws and the Reproduction of Rural Elites in Bulgaria: A Preliminary Report. *Eastern European Countryside*, 1: 99-111.

Kovács, K. 1998. Introduction. *Replika*, Special Issue 1998, (3): 139-143.

Lampland, M. 1995. *The Object of Labor. Commodification in Socialist Hungary*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

Leach, E. 1965. Introduction. In B. Malinowski, *Coral Gardens and their Magic*, 2 vols, pp. vii-xvii. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Levi, C. 1946. *Cristo si é fermato ad Eboli*. Torino: Einaudi.

Levi, M. 2000. When Good Defenses Make Good Neighbors. In C. Menard (ed.), *Institutions, Contracts and Organisations: Perspectives from New Institutional Economics, pp.* 137-57. Northampton, MA: Edward Elgar.

Liszka, J. 2003. Where Does Mátyusföld Region Lie? Additions to a Historical-Ethnographic Circumscription of a Region. In D. Torsello, and M. Pappová (eds.), *Social Networks in Movement. Time, Interaction and Interethnic Spaces*, pp. 149-158. Dunajská Streda, Slovakia: Lilium Aurum.

Luhmann, N. 1979. *Trust and Power: Two Works by Niklas Luhmann*. Chichester: John Wiley and Sons.

——. 1988. Familiarity, Confidence, Trust: Problems and Alternatives. In D. Gambetta (ed.), *Trust: Making and Breaking Cooperative Relations*, pp. 94-108. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.

Macartney, C. A. 1969. *Maria Theresa and the House of Austria*. London: The English Universities Press.

Malinowski, B. 1965. *Coral Gardens and their Magic*. 2 vols. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Mead, M. 2001. Russian Culture. In W. O. Beeman (ed.), *The Study of Contemporary Western Cultures*, vol. 3. New York: Berghahn.

Meloni, B. (ed.). 1997. *Famiglia Meridionale senza Familismo. Strategie Economiche, Reti di Relazione e Parentela*. Catanzaro: La Meridiana.

Miller, R. 1974. Are all Familists Amoral? A Test of Banfield's Amoral Familism Hypothesis on a South Italian Village. *American Ethnologist* 1 (3): 515-535.

Ministry of Agriculture of the Slovak Republic. 1999. *Report on Agriculture and the Food Sector in the Slovak Republic*. Bratislava: Ministry of Agriculture.

Misztal, B. 1998. *Trust in Modern Societies. The Search for the Bases of Social Order*. Cambridge, US: Polity Press.

——. 2001. *Informality: Social Theory and Contemporary Practice*. London: Routledge.

Muršič, R. 2003. Destinies of the Post-War Colonists in the Village of Trate: Unintended Phenomena in the Appropriation of Public Spaces. In D. Torsello, and M. Pappová (eds.), *Social Networks in Movement. Time, Interaction and Interethnic Spaces*, pp. 97-110. Dunajská Streda, Slovakia: Lilium Aurum.

Namerová, I. 1997. *Private Farmers in Slovakia: Social Backgrounds and Conflicts over Resources. Working Paper* 45. Liverpool: *Centre for Central and Eastern European Studies.* The University of Liverpool.

——. and N. Swain. 1998. Co-operative Transformation and Co-operative Survival in Slovakia. *Replika*, Special Issue 1998 (3): 207-221.

Naše pol'nohospodárstvo v období dobudovávania základov socializmu, 1986. Bratislava: Ústav marxizmu-leninizmu KSS.

Németh, A. 2001. A kódváltás pragmatikai kérdései egy kétnyelvű közösségben. *Fórum Társadalomtudományi Szemle*, (3): 87:114.

Nitra Region 2001. Economic and Statistic Information Center: Nitra.

Parsons, T., and E. A. Shils (eds.). 1951. *Toward a General Theory of Action*. New York: Harper.

Parsons, T. 1969. *Politics and Social Structure*. Glencoe, Ill.: Free Press.

Peackock, J. 2001. Anthropology of Values. In N. J. Smelser, and P. B. Bates (eds.), *International Encyclopedia of the Social and Behavioral Sciences*, pp. 16145-48. Amsterdam: Elsevier.

Peristiany, J. G., and J. A. Pitt-Rivers (eds.). 1999. *Honor and Grace in Anthropology*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Pine, F. 1987. Kinship, Marriage and Social Change in a Polish Highland Village. PhD thesis, The University of London.

——. 1996. Re-defining Women's Work in Rural Poland. In R. Abrahams (ed.), *After Socialism. Land Reform and Social Change in Eastern Europe*, pp. 133-155. Oxford: Berghahn Books.

——. 2002. Retreat to the Household? Gendered Domain in Postsocialist Poland. In C. M. Hann (ed.), *Postsocialism. Ideals, Ideologies and Practices in Eurasia*, pp. 95-113. London: Routledge.

Podoba, J. 1999. 'They Have Always Known to Knock on the Right Door'. Continuity, Modernization and Transformation in one Sub-Tatras Community. *Geographia Slovenica* (31): 201-7.

Popper, K. R. 1966 [1945]. *The Open Society and its Enemies*. London: Routledge.

Pospíšil, L. 1995. *Obernberg: A Quantitative Analysis of a Tirolean Peasant Economy*. New Haven: Connecticut Academy of Arts and Science.

Pukkai, L. 1994. *A Hanza Szövetkezeti Áruközpont Galántán*. Bratislava: Madách Posonium.

Putnam, R. D. 1993. *Making Democracy Work. Civic Traditions in Modern Italy*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Rausa, P., and A. Porhajaš. 1978. *DUSLO a l'udia*. Bratislava: Obzor.

Rapport, N. J. 2001. The Anthropology of Personhood. In N. J. Smelser, and P. B. Bates (eds.), *International Encyclopedia of the Social and Behavioral Sciences*, pp. 11339-11343. Amsterdam: Elsevier.

Répássy, H., and D. Symes. 1993. Perspectives on agrarian reform in East-Central Europe. *Sociologia Ruralis* vol.XXXIII (1): 81-91.

Róna-Tas, A. 1998. Path-Dependence and Capital Theory: Sociology of the Post-Communist Economic Transformation. *East European Politics and Societies*, 12 (1): 107-31.

Rose, R. 1994. Postcommunism and the Problem of Trust. *Journal of Democracy*, (July): 18-30.

Rose-Ackerman, S. 2001. Trust and Honesty in Post-Socialist Societies. *Kyklos*, 54: 415-44.

Sahlins, M. 1972. *Stone Age Economics*. New York: Gruyter.

Šal'a 1982. Mestský Národný Výbor Šal'a.

Salzmann, Z. 1970. *A Contribution to the Study of Value Orientations Among the Czechs and Slovaks*. Research Report 4. Amherst: Department of Anthropology, University of Massachusetts.

———. 1983. *Three Contributions to the Study of Socialist Czechoslovakia*. Research Report 22. Amherst: Department of Anthropology, University of Massachusetts.

Sárkány, M. 1975. Transformation of Peasant Economy: A Hungarian Example. In B. Berdichewski (ed.), *Anthropology and Social Change in Rural Areas*, pp. 245-252. The Hague: Mouton.

———. 1983. Economic Change in a Northern Hungarian Village. In M. Hollos, and B. C. Maday (eds.), *New Hungarian Peasants: An Eastern European Experience with Collectivization*, pp. 25-56. New York: Columbia University Press.

Schwarz, S. 1992. Universals in the Content and Structure of Values: Theoretical Advances and Empirical Tests in 20 Countries. In M. Zanna (ed.), *Experimental Social Psychology*, pp. 1-65. Orlando, Fl.: Academic Press.

Seligman, A. 1997. *The Problem of Trust*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Sik, E. 1992. *From the Second Economy to the Informal Economy*. Studies in Public Policy 207. Glasgow: Centre for the Study of Public Policy, University of Strathclyde.

Silverman, S. F. 1996. 'Agricultural organization, social structure, and values in Italy: amoral familism reconsidered'. *American Anthropologist*, 70 (1): 1-20.

Skalník, P. 1975. Modernization of Slovak Peasantry. Two Carpathian Highland Communities. In B. Berdichewski (ed.), *Anthropology and Social Change in Rural Areas*, pp. 253-261. The Hague: Mouton.

——. 1986. Uneven Development in European Mountain Community. *Dialectical Anthropology* (10): 215-228.

——. 1993. Socialism is Dead and Very Much Alive in Slovakia: Political Inertia in a Tatra Village. In C. M. Hann (ed.), *Socialism: Ideal, Ideology and Social Practice*, pp. 218-226. London: Routledge.

Škovierová, Z. 1988. Contemporary Neighbourly Relations and Their Traditional Expression in Slovakia. *Ethnologia Slavica* XX: 49-61.

Smith, A. 1998. *Reconstructing the Regional Economy. Industrial Transformation and Regional Development in Slovakia*. Cheltenham UK: Edward Elgar Publishing.

Štatistický Úrad Slovenskej Republiky 2001. *Štrukturálny Cenzus Fariem 2001*. Bratislava: Štatistický Úrad Slovenskej Republiky.

Statistical Office of the Czechoslovak Federal Republic. *Census 1991. Population and Housing Census of the Czechoslovak Federal Republic*. Praha: Statistical Office of the Czechoslovak Federal Republic.

Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic. *Census 2001. Population and Housing Census*. Bratislava: Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic.

Ševlik, T. 1996. *Some Aspects of Land Policy with Regard to Land Consolidation in Slovak Republic*. Paper presented at the 69th Regular Session on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development. Taoyuan (China): The Land Reform Training Institute.

Svašek, M. 2003. Property, Power, and Emotions. Social Dynamics in a Bohemian Village. In D. Torsello, and M. Pappová (eds.), *Social Networks in Movement. Time, Interaction and Interethnic Spaces*, pp. 223-248. Dunajská Streda, Slovakia: Lilium Aurum.

Švecová, S. 1991. A szlovák és a cseh parasztcsalád. *Ethnographia* (102): 89-119.

Swain, N. 1985. *Collective Farms which Work?* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

——. 1992. *Hungary: The Rise and Fall of Feasible Socialism*. London: Verso.

——. 1996. Getting Land in Central Europe. In R. Abrahams (ed.), *After Socialism. Land Reform and Social Change in Eastern Europe*, pp. 193-215. Oxford: Berghahn Books.

———. 1999. Small-scale Farming in the Post-socialist Rural Transition'. *Eastern European Countryside*, (5): 27-42.

———. 2000. *The Rural Transition in Post-socialist Central Europe and the Balkans. Working Paper* 9. Halle/Saale: Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology.

Szabó, I. 1940. *A Magyar Parasztság Története*. Budapest: A Magyar Szemle Társaság.

Szarka, L. 2003. Border Region or Contact Zone: Ethnic, Ethno-social Processes in Regions between the Hungarian-Slovak Language and State Border. In D. Torsello, and M. Pappová (eds.), *Social Networks in Movement. Time, Interaction and Interethnic Spaces*, pp. 137-148. Dunajská Streda, Slovakia: Lilium Aurum.

Szelényi, I. 1988. *Socialist Entrepreneurs: Embourgeoisement in Rural Hungary*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

———. (ed.). 1998. *Privatizing the Land: Rural Political Economy in Post-Communist Societies*. London: Routledge Studies of Societies in Transition.

Szent-Györgyi, K. 1983. Ranking Categories and Models in Two Villages of Northeastern Hungary. In M. Hollos, and B. Maday (eds.), *New Hungarian Peasants: An East-Central European Experience with Collectivization*, pp. 273-300. Brooklyn: Brooklyn College Press.

———. 1993. Embourgeoisement and the 'Cultural Capital' Variable: Rural Enterprise and Concepts of Prestige in Northeastern Hungary. *Man*: 515-32.

Sztompka, P. 1999. *Trust: A Sociological Theory*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

———. 2001. Trust: Cultural Concerns. In N. J. Smelser, and P. B. Bates (eds.), *International Encyclopedia of the Social and Behavioral Sciences*, pp. 15913-15917. Amsterdam: Elsevier.

Thelen, T. 2002. *Winners and Losers in Post-socialist Agriculture: Property and (dis-) Continuity of Social Relations in Mesterszállás (Hungary) and Kisiratos (Romania)*. PhD thesis: Freie Universität Berlin.

Thorner, D., B. Kerblay, and R. E. F. Smith. 1966. *A. V. Chayanov. The Theory of Peasant Economy*. Homewood: American Economic Association.

Torsello, D., and M. Pappová (eds.). 2003. *Social Networks in Movement. Time, Interaction and Interethnic Spaces*. Dunajská Streda, Slovakia: Lilium Aurum.

Tóth, K. 2003. Dlhá nad Váhom: A Village in the Ethnic Periphery. In D. Torsello, and M. Pappová (eds.), *Social Networks in Movement. Time,*

Interaction and Interethnic Spaces, pp. 113-136. Dunajská Streda, Slovakia: Lilium Aurum.

Turnock, D. 1989. *The Human Geography of Eastern Europe*. London: Routledge.

——. 1998. *Privatization in Rural Eastern Europe: The Process of Restitution and Restructuring*. Cheltenham: Elgar.

Václavík, A. 1925. *Podunajská Dedina v Československu*. Bratislava: Nákladom Vydavatelského Družstva.

Vasary, I. 1987. *Beyond the Plan: Social Change in a Hungarian Village*. Boulder and London: Westview Press.

Verdery, K. 1994. The Elasticity of Land: Problems of Property Restitution in Transylvania. *Slavic Review*, 53 (4): 1071-1109.

——. (ed.). 1996. *What Was Socialism and What Comes Next*? Princeton: Princeton University Press.

——. 1997. Political Identities and Property Restitution in Transylvania, Romania. *Political and Legal Anthropological Review*, (20): 120-141.

——. 1999. Fuzzy Property: Rights, Power and Identity in Transylvania's Decollectivization. In M. Burawoy, and K. Verdery (eds.), U*ncertain Transition. Ethnographies of Change in the Postsocialist World*, pp. 53-82. Boston: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.

——. 2001. *The Obligations of Ownership: Restoring Rights to Land in Postsocialist Eastern Europe*. Paper presented to the Wenner-Gren Foundation International Symposium 128 'Changing Property Relations at the Turn of the Millenium'. Ronda, Spain.

——. 2002. Wither Postsocialism? In C. M. Hann (ed.), *Postsocialism: Ideals, Ideologies and Practices in Eurasia*, pp. 15-28. London: Routledge.

Wandycz, P. 1992. *The Price of Freedom: A History of East Central Europe from the Middle Ages to the Present*. London: Routledge.

Williamson, O. E. 1993. Calculativeness, Trust and Economic Organization. *Journal of Law and Economics* (36): 453-86.

Wojatjek C. 1981. *From Trianon to the First Vienna Arbitral Award*. M. Kolbe Editions: Sherbrooke, Quebec.

Wolf, E. R. 1966. *Peasants*. Englewood Cliffs, Ill.: Prentice-Hall.

Wolz, A., G. Blaas, I. Namerová, and S. Buchta. 1998. *Agricultural Transformation in Slovakia: The Change of Institutions and Organizations*. Heidelberg Studies in Applied Economics and Rural Institutions 29. Saarbrücken: Verlag für Entwicklungspolitik.

Archival references

Conscriptio Possessionum Vágkirályfalu 1828. Vágsellye.
Minutes of the 1950 JRD Meeting. Vágkirályfa.
Obecný úrad Král'ová nad Váhom. Census 2001.
Šal'a JRD Yearly Accountancy Statistics.
Urbarium 1769. Vágkirályfalva Urbarium Összeírása. Vágsellye.
Vágkirályfa A Vizi Molnárok Faluja 1998. Komárno (Slovakia): KT Kiadó Kft.
Vágkirályfa Kisközség Telekkönyve 1893. Nagyszombat.
Vágkirályfa Telekkönyv 1940. Pozsony.
Vágkirályfa Községi Krónika 1987. Vágkirályfa.
Zoznam pol'nohospodárskych závodov s výmerom obhospodárovanej pôdy do 2 ha na rok 1955. Galanta District: Šal'a.
Zpráva o vyhodnotení hospodárenia JRD na I. pol. rok 1955 v jednotom rol'níckom družstve Král'ovej n/Váhom 1955 Šal'a.

Appendix: two inheritance case studies (Chapter Two)

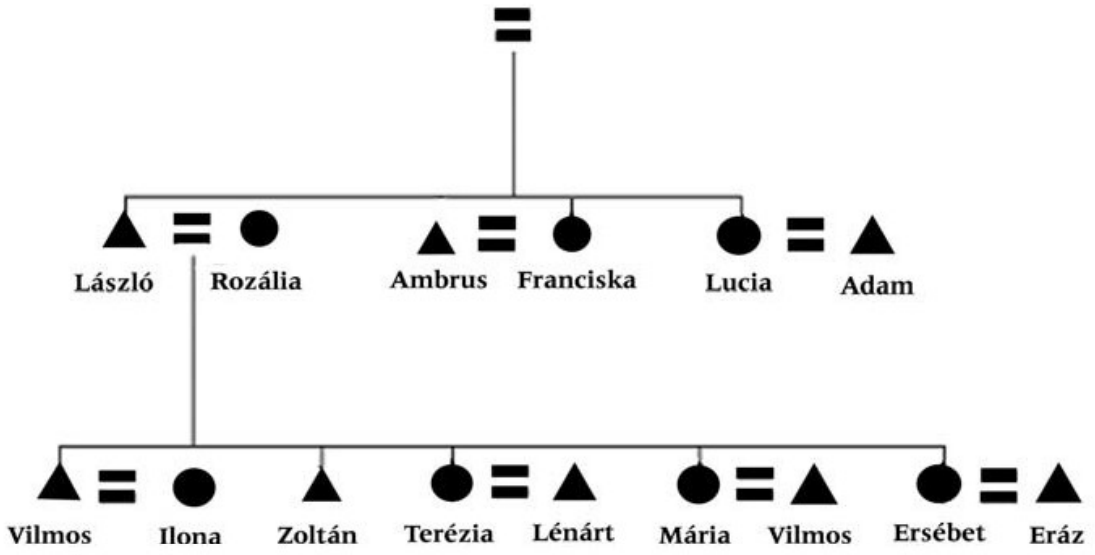
Case A

Type of estate: peasant estate (*úrbéri birtok*)
Type of plot(s):extrazonal, arable land (I, IV-VI, IX-XIV, XVII-XVIII); extrazonal, forest (II, III, VII, IX, XVI); extrazonal, pathway (XV)
Size: (I) 881 m², (II) 332 m², (III) 1108 m², (IV) 1463 m², (V) 529 m², (VI) 435 m², (VII) 47 m², (VIII) 5877 m², (IX) 2019 m², (X) 807 m², (XI) 2826, (XII) 19062 m², (XIII) 5187 m², (XIV) 4822 m², (XV) 0, (XVI) 1095 m², (XVII) 318 m², (XVIII) 9531 m²
First written evidence: 1897
Last written evidence: 1941

Historical sequence of property:

1) 1897 K László registered as owner of 5/8 of property (I-XVIII): divided into 4/5 as actual holding and 1/5 as inherited land
2) KO Franciska (sister, wife of K Ambrus) registered as owner of 2/8 of property (I-XVIII) that she received as gift
3) K Lucia (sister) registered as owner of 1/8 of property that she received as inheritance
4) 1899 SZ Ferenc purchases the 2/8 of KO Franciska's property
5) 1900 Transfer of XIII to another document (no.553), owner K László
6) Transfer of XI. XII, XI to another document (no.624), owner K László
7) Transfer of one half of respectively of IX, X, XII to document no. 624 owner K László
8) Remaining plots are all registered under K László
9) 1931 Transfer of I, II to E Július and his wife (A Mária)
10) Transfer of V to E Július and wife
11) Transfer of III, IV to K Alajos and K Zoltán (sons of K László)
12) 1940 Inheritance following death of K László: VIII, XIV-XVIII inherited in equal parts by offspring: K Vilmos, K Alajos, K Zoltán, K Terézia (wife of T Lénárt), K Mária (wife of V Vilmos), K Erzsébet (wife of CS Éráz)
13) 1941 Inheritance: Death of K Vilmos, inheritance in equal parts by offspring: K Alajos, K Zoltán, K Terézia, K Mária, K Erzsébet
14) Widow lifelong use-right to B Ilona (widow of K Vilmos).

Case A



Case B

Type of estate: peasant estate (*úrbéri birtok*)
Type of plots: intrazonal, garden and house (I, II); extrazonal, meadow (XIII); forest (VII, IX, XV, XVI) and arable (III-VI, VIII, X-XII, XIV, XVII-XIX).
Size: I (1342 m²), II (849 m²), III (3377 m²), IV (241 m²), V (29 m²), VI (1075 m²), VII (1899 m²), VIII (568 m²), IX (647 m²), X (3118 m²), XI (8026 m²), XII (4827 m²), XIII (2367 m²), XIV (6447 m²), XV (230 m²), XVI (421 m²), XVII (1327 m²), XVIII (3834 m²), XIX (1611 m²).
First written evidence: 1878
Last written evidence: 1930

Historical sequence of property:

1878 R Péter (married to V Mária) inherited III-XIV, XIX
1881 R Péter purchases I-II, XV- XVIII
1910 B Lajos purchases 360 m² of I
1915 Inheritance in equal parts of I-III by Péter's offspring: R Ambrus (ma), R József (*ma), R Péter (jr.), R Lajos

1915 Plots (IV-XIX) are transferred under R Lajos' ownership under siblings agreement
1918 Inheritance of the share (on I-III) owned by R Ambrus in equal parts by his siblings: R Lajos, R Franciska (*ma), R Péter, R Mária (*ma), R József (*ma), R Ilona (*ma)
1926 Purchase by R Péter of the shares (on I-III) of R Lajos, R Franciska, R Mária (*ma), R József, R Ilona (*ma)
1929 One third of all plots of R Lajos are transferred in equal parts to his offspring: R Lajos (jr.) and R Mária.

*ma: property received during minor age

Case B

