Acta Univ. Sapientiae, Social Analysis, **5**, 1 (2015) 43–62

‘We Should Give It Some Time.’
Case Study on the Time Horizon of an Ecological Lifestyle-Community

Judit FARKAS
University of Pécs, Hungary
farkasjudit1@yahoo.com

Abstract. The eco-village dwellers’ aim is to establish human settlements that fit into the natural environment and cause the least possible harm: to do so, they apply such technologies, social, economic, and community-organizing methods that allow them to form a long-term viable and sustainable human community which can use natural resources efficiently. The people living here are trying to use less and less non-renewable energy, and so households have less technological equipment. ‘One-button’ operating elements of the modern household conveniences, such as hot water, heat, clean clothes, or food, quickly made require more energy and mainly more time in these homes. The same is true for typical eco-village farming, where the work done with human and animal power is also much more time-consuming than if it were done with modern machinery. However, this is not the life of people who live in socio-economic marginality and endure all this out of necessity, but a consciously chosen way of life which is rooted in the eco-villagers’ ecologically-oriented worldview. These people fit into the range of initiatives which relate to time differently than does the mainstream society; they choose and acknowledge the value of the slowness of a natural and traditional way of life over the demand for speed in the modern world. In this study, I analyse the use of time in the eco-village way of life, the ideological roots of a slow-paced, time-consuming lifestyle, and I show what practice this world view generates and how it affects everyday life.

Keywords: eco-villages, voluntary simplicity, slow-paced and time-consuming lifestyle

Introduction

A few years ago I had breakfast with my host in an eco-community examined by me at that time. We had a leisurely breakfast in the cool kitchen, planning the day and talking. My host was talking about the methodology of ecological

forest management, and somehow we went on to the community's way of life and its evolution. After a while, the two narratives, shaping the forest and the community's lifestyle, converged. 'We should give it some time,' he said, meaning that the natural process of forestation and the organic development of a community are slow, but so much better than forced tree planting/community development.

The eco-village dwellers' aim is to establish human settlements that fit into the natural environment and cause the least possible harm: to do so, they apply such technologies, social, economic, and community-organizing methods that allow them to form a long-term, viable, and sustainable human community which can use natural resources efficiently.

I myself, as a cultural anthropologist, have been researching eco-villages since 2008, putting an emphasis on their socio-cultural dimensions, which is mainly due to my scientific orientation. My analyses are based on empirical material, which has been made up of interviews, the participant observation common in cultural anthropology, and the continuous collection of written primary sources. In this study, I analyse the use of time in the eco-village way of life, the ideological roots of a slow-paced, time-consuming lifestyle, and I show what practice this world view generates and how it affects everyday life.

Eco-villages, field of research

To understand the rest of this study, I find it necessary to provide a short presentation of the concept and history of eco-villages (Farkas 2015a). The overall objective of the eco-village dwellers is to create a settlement that fits into its natural environment in the most efficient way without the least possible damage. To achieve this, they engage in chemical-free farming, trying to apply environmentally friendly technologies and using renewable energy sources in construction, waste management, and wastewater treatment. Their aim is to maintain a local livelihood, trade, and recreation, to achieve greater autonomy and self-sufficiency, and to establish a community based on close relationships and co-operation. Most eco-villages are known as intentional communities, that is, village communities created through conscious effort by smaller or larger groups.[1]

The use of the eco-village concept became commonplace in the 1990s, but the first eco-village initiatives had already appeared in the 1970s in Western

1 See Gilman and Gilman (1991), Taylor (2000), Svensson (2002). The international movement's own definition can be read on the following website: http://gen.ecovillage.org/ecovillages/whatisanecovillage.html. For the summary of definitions of Hungarian eco-villages, see: Béla Borsos's dissertation (Borsos 2007, 22–26). Most of the definitions are not the syntheses of existing eco-villages, but objectives and directions – the definition-makers themselves call attention to this.

Europe and the United States. In 1994, the Global Ecovillage Network (GEN), an international network, was established (Farkas 2015a).

The Hungarian eco-village movement started in the early 1990s, but by then their founders had already been well aware of the foreign models. People who move to eco-villages in Hungary are primarily middle-class, urban intellectuals, who do not move for economic reasons but to lead a better life in the moral, cultural, or ideological sense. When characterizing them, we can say that they have a longing for another place, they are critical about urban life, and they form a kind of counter-world. Looking at their motivation, they can be distinguished from other types of migration to villages by their need to create a lifestyle different from the mainstream based on an ecological commitment, and this need is not only manifested in their relationship to the environment, but it also permeates individual and community life in all aspects. In terms of their goals, they are different from other phenomena of moving to a village in undertaking a role model: many of them aiming not only at achieving a socio-economically and environmentally sustainable way of life but to transfer the experience and the model (Farkas 2015a).

The Hungarian eco-village movement is kept together by the *Magyar Élőfalu Hálózat* (MÉH – Hungarian Living Village Network), the members of which in 2014 were as follows:[2] Galgahévíz eco-village, Gömörszőlős, Gyűrűfű, Krishna Valley (Somogyvámos), MAGfalva (Monor), Máriahalom Biovillage, Nagyszékelyi KÖRTE, Ormánság Foundation (Drávafok-Markóc), Szeri Ökotanyák Association (SZÖSZ, Ópusztaszer and its vicinity), Natural Lifestyle Foundation (TEA, Agostyán), and Visnyeszéplak. About 500 people live in villages that belong to the Hungarian movement.

Due to the diversity of the Hungarian eco-village-range, it is very difficult to formulate generalizations about them. For this reason, I have chosen to present only one eco-community through which to show the eco-village's time management and possible ways to interpret it.

The community presented here does not form an individual eco-village: its members moved to Nagyszékely, a cul-de-sac village in Tolna County, where they have occupied one of the streets. This process of moving in began in 2003, and the moving in and out is still going on. The community gave itself the name KÖRTE, which is a Hungarian acronym meaning conscious co-operation tuned to community self-sufficiency. According to their definition, 'It's our common dream to create a natural way of life in a well-functioning, friendly village and take steps towards community self-sufficiency.'[3] In the main period of the study, the group analysis consisted of 8 households, their adult members being in their thirties, and the children between a few months and 14 years old. The composition of

2 According to their website, see: www.elofaluhalozat.hu.

3 http://elofaluhalozat.hu/nagyszekely.php.

the community has undergone considerable change in the last two years: since the early period of my research, several of the families I examined have moved from here (3 households) or are about to move (1 household). This article starts from the examination of the group at a stable period; it describes the time when I could study a relatively well-defined group's life in detail: they are those who are involved in the eco-village discourse and who organized themselves as a community along the lines of permaculture (see below). The study thus focuses on them in the 'golden age' (2009–2012) as well as in the present, when only part of the initial group lives in the village.

The group is one of the bases of the Hungarian permaculture movement: they stand out from the rest of the domestic permaculture initiatives by living together in a close-knit community in one village. The word permaculture is derived from the combination of the English words *permanent agriculture*; its inventor is the Australian Bill Mollison, who defined the principles of this organic farming method in the 1970s (Mollison and Holgrem 1978). As there is no room here for a detailed description of the history of the movement,[4] I list only the outstanding elements necessary in order to understand the life of this group. These are the following: imitating natural ecological processes in the human habitat and in the process of satisfying their needs; drastically reducing consumption; energy-saving and recycling; creating systems for self-sufficiency (garden, food, energy, community, etc.); covering their own needs with their own resources as much as possible; all components of the system performing many roles and all important functions being supported by several elements; preferring and strengthening mutually beneficial relations and symbiotic relationships; diversity; a focus not on one's own welfare but on the well-being of all living things, where the land is looked at as a whole (Baji 2011; Gosztonyi 2013; Pasztor 2013). Their notion is that these aforementioned principles generate such practice that serves as preparation for a future with ecological sustainability. These principles are decisive for the whole way of life, as a young woman put it: 'permaculture is *not just scratching in the garden*, but much more than that: it is a lifestyle, a worldview which requires the existence of the community' (KE, 2009).[5]

The life of the community members is greatly affected and diversified when we look at their marital status. Among them, we find a single young man who lives in extremely austere conditions in a wine-press building without any infrastructure; a single mother with her school-age children; families with small children and a young childless couple. Some of the school-age children study at

4 See the website of the Hungarian Permaculture Movement: http://www.permakultura.hu/index.php (last retrieval: 2015.01.22.). There are several articles of social science on permaculture; see, for example: Veteto and Locker 2008.

5 At the end of the quotes from my conversation partners, I indicate the initials and the date of the interview or conversation.

the local school, in lower primary classes, while the upper primary students and high school students go to a nearby settlement. The way of life of the families living here is also affected by the income of the family members, by their tastes, and 'ideological rigour'; that is, how much they stick to ecological principles and to the principle of self-sufficiency.

Households that form this community are diverse not only in terms of structure, but also in their ways of making a living. In line with ecological principles, the members of the group try to have jobs which do not require commuting. Among those who are successful in this intention we can find an IT specialist working from home, and an employee of the local authorities: a young woman worked at the local government office before her children were born, now the benefit she receives after her children is part of the family's income. This woman's husband, while working in the public works programme, makes extra money by doing odd jobs. Previously, they had supplemented their income by selling their products, but this is not so significant any more. Another man also takes odd jobs in the village (from agricultural work to building a tile-stove), which provides the main income for his family: additional revenue comes from selling their co-produced products (honey, fruit, and vegetables). The single man also has some income from odd jobs, but he is very active in work exchange relations, such as working for meals. There is also a family where the main income is child support, and there is another household which, in addition to maternity leave, lives on their savings. Others have been unable to realize the idea of working within the village; they (two of them) spend part of the week away from the village. The members of the group typically live on low incomes, which can be achieved by producing a significant part of their consumption by themselves: vegetables, fruits, and cereals, in some families also milk and eggs (mostly the three families who have lived here the longest). An inherent part of their livelihood is the cut in consumption, which comes from the principle of so-called voluntary simplicity, which means being satisfied with modest circumstances – they try to buy fewer things that are considered unnecessary.

All the community members have their own vegetable garden and fruit trees, most of them have land for cereals, and some of them have a small piece of woodland as well. The gardens around the houses are separately cultivated by each family, but – due to the structure of the street – there are garden areas in the street belonging to the plots where they sometimes work together. Cereals (wheat, barley, millet, oats, and triticale) have also been produced co-operatively. Working together, however, does not mean they are a land-community: the lands are privately owned, and those who agreed on joint production grew wheat on one member's land, millet on another's land, and barley on the third one's land. The arrangement as to working together in a given year was based on needs, joint discussions – and, of course, previous experience. Only a few members are

involved in animal husbandry: three families keep or used to keep poultry, two families had goats, and one family has cattle at the time of writing.

Since they believe that modern technology has a damaging effect on the environment and health, in addition to which they anticipate that related devices will become redundant due to the anticipated energy crisis, most of the households use far fewer advanced technological tools than would an average Hungarian household. The organic farming method, the permaculture preferred by the community, basically means working with a few tools, most of which are mechanical, and instead of motorized equipment (mower, mechanical hoe) they use hoes, scythes, hand watering and other hand tools. Cereal fields are exceptions to this. The community asks a local farmer to plough the land with his tractor. They used to try to plough with a horse, but it took so much energy and time that it exceeded their capacity. The same is true for harvesting and threshing: threshing with a mechanical threshing machine was carried out once, but abandoned after a single attempt. It is mostly sowing that is done manually, as well as mowing and the cultivation of vegetable gardens and orchards.

Eco-villages try to develop their own infrastructures, energy and resource systems (water, electricity, heating, architecture) for their natural way of life and autonomy. This is most feasible where the settlement has been created by the residents (Gyűrűfű, Krishna Valley, Galgahévíz eco-village). In Nagyszékely, the infrastructure was given, the village has running water, electricity as well as gas (although this last is not used by everyone; none of the members of the community use gas for heating, and some people do not even use it for cooking). The houses were not built by them either; they bought old, long farmhouses made from earth and transformed them according to their needs and opportunities (e.g.: they removed the lino flooring and the concrete base underneath, replaced the flush toilet with a compost toilet, built a stove and oven, etc.). Households also try to use as little non-renewable energy as possible, and practise the principle of recycling as much as they can. For instance, they water the garden with the bath water or the water for washing up, which is used very carefully and heated on a wood-burning stove. Worn-out garments will serve as work clothes and then cloths, and finally string to tie the tomatoes with, and so on. Water is much treasured, so it is treated very carefully (instead of flush toilets, they have compost toilets; instead of a bathtub, they have a shower or a washbasin) and recycled, for example for watering. The houses have electricity and electric appliances are used, but generally less than an average Hungarian household would. The water is heated with wood (in the summer, they use outdoor showers), which also provides heating. As a rule, a broom is used to clean the house rather than a vacuum cleaner, although occasionally a vacuum cleaner is used. People here have tried washing clothes by hand, but it required too much time and energy, especially when the clothes were used in the garden, so the idea was given up.

Freezers are not used at all as they are seen to waste energy, and only half of the households have a fridge, other forms of storage being chosen instead (cellar, stacking, drying, jam-making, etc.). There are no TV sets, films are occasionally watched on a computer, but the preference is for reading, board games, and other similar activities. Computers and mobile phones are used, as these people are not seeking to achieve an absolute pre-modern way of life, but in the spirit of voluntary simplicity and recycling they do not have the newest, trendiest phones, computers, and clothes, and try to use everything for as long as they can. Some households have experimented with a hand-operated grain mill, others use electrical grain mills, but occasionally they buy flour from a nearby producer or in a shop. Meal oil is also purchased from a nearby oil mill, on which occasions one person collects orders from the rest and then goes and gets the whole amount. A significant part of their food intake is ensured through their own harvests, but shop products can be found in the households as well. Every process of food production is carried out by the households (Farkas 2015b). Chemicals are not used for farming at all; in the household, some are used here and there, but organic agents are used instead, which are either produced by the households themselves or bought in stores selling organic products on behalf of the whole community. Two households have a car; having rather poor public transport, they make good use of the cars together: if a person is travelling somewhere, he/she will offer a lift or will run errands (for instance, do the shopping) for the others. Members of the group have this transport connection not only within their community, but also – by using a mailing list – they can join the carpool network operated in the village.

These items can be listed at great length, but due to the size limitations of this study I will now start elaborating on the question of time use.

It can be said of the workflows listed above (agriculture, housework) that they take up more time and effort than if they were performed by machines. In the houses, heating is not operated by a switch but through hard work (felling trees) and planning (starting heating in time); the water must be heated for a bath, for lunch the raw materials should be collected from the farm, etc. Work would take up less time if the garden were dug with a cultivator, the lawn mowed by a lawn mower, weeds treated with weed-killers, and pests sprayed with a motorized sprayer. A food-mixer would be also much faster, processing store-bought, clean vegetables rather than going out into the garden, and then washing and cutting the carrots by hand. Or it would be much easier to buy breakfast at the shop than getting up early in the morning, making and baking dough, or perhaps before all this grinding the home-grown wheat with a hand grain mill (cocoa and sugar, in this case, are from a shop). The reason that the people here lead a time- and energy-consuming lifestyle can be found in their world-view and their image of the future.

Crisis and risk

One of the motivations behind the organization of eco-villages is the interpretation of the world's current processes as self-destructive and unsustainable, and consequently a vision of a complex, ecological, social, economic, and moral/spiritual fall. This vision is closely related to changes in present-day risk-perception, which is, briefly, that while modernity was characterized by the trust in science and technology and technological optimism, and the key values of the welfare society were based on this security, a significant turnaround took place when issues such as nuclear energy, chemicals, and ecology-related hazards began to appear. Postmodernity brought new kinds of risks, and – among other things – it is mainly science and technology that cause these new risks: the lack of transparent risks, the consequences of new kind of technologies, and also the innovation dynamics of science that has become chaotic and out of control (Szijártó 2008, 37–38; Castells 2006, 227–228). These processes, hand in hand with the global capitalist economic system, will eventually lead the world to a fall, by destroying the natural environment and resources and by unequal distribution and social injustice (e.g. Hajnal 2006; Kiss 2006; Takács-Sánta 2009; Beck 2003; Douglas 1992; Douglas and Wildavsky 1982; Szijártó 2000, 2008). In autumn 2008, the recession only confirmed the predictions of a crisis and radically increased the interest in eco-villages in Hungary.

The response of the eco-villages to these uncertainties and risk perception is a radically new kind of life experiment, an alternative risk management with the eco-village concept and its lifestyle elements and idea of community. The key element of their way of life is the pursuit of self-sufficiency, reasons for which are many, all of them closely linked to the issue of safety and risk. Taking the example of nutrition, according to the eco-villagers, manually produced food, on the one hand, makes them independent from industrial agriculture, from the food industry and mercantile trade of which possible collapse would leave people without food supply, while, on the other hand, their own production is considered medically safe and 'clean,' and it provides a risk-free food (see Farkas 2015b.).[6]

Their response to the crisis image defines itself against the current discourse of power and the majority population.[7] Thus, among other things, they criticize

6 Eco-village life therefore partly means preparation for this projected crisis. I am quick to emphasize that this does not mean that eco-village dwellers are constantly afraid of the future! The love and preservation of nature, the desire to live in harmony with nature, rural life, and living in the community are equally important motivations for them. But they regard their lives as an attempt to consider how to become as independent as possible, how to be independent of the infrastructure and other networks. At the same time, they themselves are aware that their current way of life cannot be considered self-sufficient, so it is more accurate to say that an experimentation on self-sufficiency is going on.

7 Barbara Kisdi in her research on home birth in Hungary had similar results regarding the relations of the actors of urban lifestyle movements to current discourses of power and the majority population (Kisdi 2013).

and reject the attitude of modern consumer societies, and the 'here and now and immediately' perception of time. They believe that these things are largely responsible for the exploitation of resources, ecological disaster, and also for what they see to be a social crisis. The development of modern technology and the very devices that help us in our daily lives are also important actors in these processes, but the free time gained with them and the increased consumption during that free time enhances this effect even further. The picture of this fast world in this context – as opposed to the development of modernist pictures – symbolizes an accelerating decline where the present eats up not only the past but the future as well. The eco-village dwellers, and by extension the members of the community under examination here, are consciously turning to a different use of time in which slow processes are given the main roles.

Permaculture is specifically a system of slow processes because it tries to copy natural processes, thereby attaining the rhythms of nature. The general idea of permaculture is that 'nature knows better,' and if we allow it to work we do not interfere with natural processes, as added to which people's lives can also take on a more natural and slower rhythm. A significant part of permaculture farming is observing and understanding these processes, which is quite a slow process itself. And since the core of this way of life is farming, individuals absorb this slower pace into their lifestyle. Although it is slower, it does not involve fewer activities; on the contrary, the use of mechanical implements, as we have seen earlier, makes part of a longer and more arduous workflow. This means that members of this community are always active, especially from spring to autumn, the most important time period for agricultural and horticultural work.

This is also the case because activities are not confined to producing food for the day and maintaining their own lives: they think highly of education as well. As they are active participants in the Hungarian eco-village movement, of permaculture, vegetable gene bank and landrace fruit cultivation, and hold trainings, seminars and open days, publishing, and hosting volunteers, they are almost always busy with something.

The rhythm of life is greatly influenced by the rhythm of nature, the active period in agriculture from spring to autumn is followed by a calmer period; the schedule of the days depends on the urgency of the work to be done, the children's school attendance or even the heat or a combination of many more factors. Winter is more suitable for indoor jobs, such as working on the computer (publication, replying to letters of enquiry, explaining a forum topic). Nevertheless, we cannot state that the community operates within the time concept of either rural or urban, industrial or agricultural societies. This is because, on the one hand, these separations can hardly be considered valid in today's urbanized world. On the other hand, all the residents here have moved from urban environments, and alongside this rural lifestyle they have maintained their urban, intellectual way of life and cannot and

do not want to get rid of that. Thus, they simultaneously follow the task-oriented time concept typical of agrarian societies and the 'urban' time concept which is adapted to industrial work (see Thompson, 1990). As one of the couples put it:

P.: Getting up very early absolutely goes against city life, especially the intellectual lifestyle. This requires finishing at nine o'clock in the evening. There is no TV, no phone, no letter writing, no reading, but snoozing, and when the cock crows, you can go mowing. This is a different type of rhythm. K.: I, too, feel that the close engagement with the soil, to see how the crops grow, what processes there are, and being closer to the Earth is a sort of a 'round' life, so life is more complete. But if I do only this, it does not give me this sense of completeness. I also have to do other things that are different, intellectual (H. P. and H. K. 2014).

And because in the village social life is fairly active, some of the residents get together regularly to play cards, chess, and play music; so, 'in no time we got busier here in the village than in Budapest' (H. P. 2014). The latter statement refers to the fact that more time is devoted to entertainment and building social relationships, leading to a busier timetable with activities over and above to daily work.

'We also exchange time'

When presenting the crisis picture, I mentioned that in the response of the eco-villagers not only their attempts to reform their lifestyle but also the way in which they regard the community is of great importance. I have already presented the concept and operation of the eco-village community and the given group in my previous studies (see Farkas 2012, 2014); so, here I will only point out and interpret the time factors of this concept.

The fact that members of the group are not living in different parts of the country, have not remained in their own environment, or continued that way of life (there are a number of examples of this around the country), but have chosen to live in proximity to each other indicates that they really value co-operation and community. Community life, in their case, is expressed through agricultural work carried out jointly, co-operation in everyday life, and community gatherings (holidays, shared leisure-time activities and dinners, etc.). All these require scheduling, adaptation, and harmonizing one's timetable with those of the others. The joint cultivation of cereal fields, pitting cherries together, the order in which wells are cleaned, attending to the community orchard, making and delivering the *komatál* (Hungarian word for a selection of food) for mothers who have just had a baby, or even organizing celebrations and entertainments all require close co-operation and time planning.[8] For organizing all of these, the continuous

8 The potential problems helped in learning conflict management, which was considered specifically important for the operation of the group.

interaction of the group members is needed.[9] There are some activities that offer relatively few alternatives, so the harmonizing of time schedules can only be a short process (the picked cherries, for example, must be processed quickly before they go bad, the crop must be harvested in time), and there are some that offer longer consultation (a dinner together). In monitoring these balancing processes, the researcher is provided with a number of opportunities for valuable observations.[10] Take, for example, joint voluntary work. There are work processes which could be carried out either by one person or a family, but they try to turn them into community activities as they are considered to be important for community building. Joint voluntary work is more than working together: it is also giving one's time for the community. The obstacle against this joint work is often the fact that when balancing between community work and one's own tasks the latter is usually chosen. Cherries can be pitted alone, but if you want to turn it into a communal task you must give up some freedom: you will not be doing the work when you have time but when everyone is available; it requires organization and the crop must be transferred to a specific location, all of which are time-consuming tasks.

The individual also has a role in deciding which argument is ultimately stronger (participating in common work rather than undertaking something else), but during my long fieldwork I have been able to observe changing dynamics in community activities and time use. There have been periods when the members of the group met weekly, held meetings, or had dinner together and played music, etc. In other periods, community occasions that involved everybody disappeared completely, while encounters and the number of joint activities were reduced to the individual level.

The group examined in this study is very active, not only in joint voluntary work but also in exchange relationships. The subjects of the exchange can equally be crops, tools, and workforce. We know from the ethnographic literature that exchange in peasant culture had unwritten but very strict rules which evolved

9 One exception, of course, is if someone does not want to participate in something – because not all members of the group are involved in each activity. It depends on how much importance, time, and capacity are attached to the event. The community in this sense is not homogeneous and does not act collectively: at one time, two families enjoyed making music together, while others loved playing board games.

10 Rau and Edmondson's study from 2014 has a key message: in studying sustainability and time use, a methodological renewal is necessary, and ethnography may have an important role in this: 'A major advantage of using ethnographic methods in sustainability studies – at least in principle – is that these techniques are intended to trace attitudes and habits which may be too profoundly taken for granted to be easily verbalised by the people who hold them' (Rau and Edmondson 2013, 11). They believe that long-term monitoring is also useful because it can help in observing the change instead of having only a snapshot, which, according to them, is the disadvantage of quantitative research. Thus, in addition to the already established quantitative methods, qualitative methods are considered to be important as well, something with which, as a cultural anthropologist, I agree.

over generations and were passed on in the process of passing down a tradition within and between generations as well (see Fél and Hofer 2000; Szabó 1979; Szilágyi 2000). For intentional communities, there is no such ready-made, standard system available; they need to create one for themselves. Elsewhere (Farkas 2015b), I have already mentioned the example when one of the members tried to figure out the exchange value of home-made muesli. In this calculation process, the emphasis was on the time that was 'put into' the muesli. As another young woman also said: 'We also exchange time' (P. G. 2014). That is, time works as a base for exchange and acquires its value through lengthy deliberation, weighing time factors and circumstances.[11] It is also possible that as a result of this calculation something else is given up: in the aforementioned example, after some attempts, it turned out that when cultivating the land together with animal and human power (horse-drawn plough, hand-threshing) the invested time and energy was not recoverable and it put by far too heavy a burden on the other processes of farming as well as on the tolerance of the community, so they gave up the idea. Another favourite example of mine is a mother who experimented with washing clothes by hand and involved her two children in the work by giving them the task of trampling on the clothes in the tub. However, the initial fascination lost its magic after a while, and the young woman concluded that it was more important for her to have some free time and recreation than rigorously putting principles into practice. I recount these two stories because both are excellent examples of showing that the community does not follow principles at all costs. It has experienced the destructive effects of following principles fanatically, and so judges that it is especially important to lead a pleasant way of life with which they can be satisfied.[12]

'Future tense'

Opting for energy- and time-consuming work processes and strategies seems to reflect the rethinking of perception of convenience. As Vannini and Taggart put it in their own research: 'Off-gridders' practices present us with a somewhat counter-hegemonic idea of convenience which emphasizes the importance of

11 Taking this example: the exchange-value of 1 kilogram home-made muesli to courgettes is affected by the production difficulties of the two things (seed flaking with hand flake-making machine, fruit drying), the availability of the raw materials (there was a courgette-dumping in the gardens at that time), and many other factors.

12 Vannini and Taggart report a similar attitude in their own field: 'Time and effort are critical factors too. While localization and sustainability are important, so is the enjoyment of life's simple pleasures—which explains why the typical mood at the Prairie Crocus Farm is more filled with easy-go-lucky contentment than tireless industriousness or hardline environmental ideology' (Vannini and Taggart 2014, 7).

food that is local, self-produced, sustainably-cooked and sustainably disposed of' (Vannini and Taggart 2014, 319).

Looking at the main characteristics of modernization and globalization, we can say that the way of life I examine here is extremely alien to the modern world. In the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, more and more infrastructures are created in order to provide consumers with energy and speed; user-friendly technologies become more sophisticated and increasingly facilitate communication and mobility; comfort and cleanliness are of central importance today. In contrast to this, the Nagyszékely eco-community life can be called at least strange. The symbol of the consumer society's comfort is the frozen ready-made meal, as it is always available (in your own freezer or in the shop that is always open), its packaging is convenient (not dirty, not muddy, you do not have to work with it), and it can be prepared extremely quickly thanks to the microwave oven or the deep-fat fryer. It is convenient and time-efficient. In comparison, this community (and other similar groups) are questioning the mainstream interpretation of convenience and saying that – to remain with the diet example – locally-grown food and self-harvested energy are possible solutions to much larger problems such as the question of sustainability. Moreover, small-scale, diversified, localized production is also a way of reintroducing a level of humanness into the cycle of food growth. We can agree with Vannini and Taggart on that: 'Off-grid food production and consumption reclaim sense of place by reinventing convenience as suitability, simplicity, unhurriedness, harmoniousness and proximity' (Vannini and Taggart 2014, 7).

It can therefore be said that two key factors seem to be emerging in the community's relations with time: the special relationship with comfort and future-orientation.

'While the term "sustainability" remains highly contested with regard to its definition and meanings, commentators would probably agree that *time* forms one of its central dimensions' (Rau and Edmondson 2013, 1). The authors cited here show in their study that the majority of sustainability definitions include the need to look far ahead, for the long-term thinking of the corresponding actions. That is, time and attitude to time are essential elements of sustainability discourses (as well). Associated socio-ecological research examines issues such as the discrepancy between natural and social processes and its impact on society; consumption, time use, and sustainability (Rau 2015; Vannini and Taggart 2014); energy consumption and society, a subject in which – according to experience – an analysis of the relation between transport, time, and sustainability is very popular (see Peters 2005; Osbaldiston 2013; Mattioli, Shove, and Torrita, 2014). And numerous studies (e.g. Edmondson and Rau 2008) explore the way in which different cultures relate to time, and how this relation affects attitudes and behaviours regarding the environment. Among them, many studies have shown that people's interest in the social and ecological behaviour of the past, like their

engagement towards the region's cultural heritage, can formulate future-oriented, sustainability-promoting behaviours (Rau and Edmondson 2013, 1–2).

The authors – in agreement with other writers – believe that sustainability requires a fundamental shift in time culture (Rau and Edmondson 2014, 2), which is not really compatible with the current mainstream use of time, where speed and the increasing consumption of the latest products as soon as possible is a natural thing. At the same time, there are numerous movements that lay their ideological foundation and practice on the alternative use of time. These include the slow-movements (slow food, slow city), and I believe alternative lifestyle movements also belong here.

Manuel Castells, in one of his works on environmental movements (Castells 2006, 213–240), believes that in the networked society control over time (in addition to space) is at stake, and in response to this a new kind of temporality is emerging. Castells distinguishes three kinds of time: horological time, timeless time, and glacial time. According to him, environmental movements are characterized by their enforcement of the glacial time perspective into our perception of time. Glacial time means that the relationship between man and nature covers a long period of time, it involves the remote past and the indefinite future, and because – according to ecological thinking – there are interactions between all forms of matter, so the fundamental disruption of the balance can upset the delicate ecological balance and can lead to a disaster. A realization comes about that our world's units are not the individuals and not even the historical existence of human communities, which is why we need to change our way of thinking, or, more precisely, we need to change our concepts about time and we have to adapt to this extended time concept (Castells 2006, 229–231). Our lives, therefore, are designed not only for ourselves, but also for our descendants and many future generations coming after us. Castells calls this old-fashioned concern for our descendants, and indeed it is the basis of the sustainable-development time approach. He adds that the need to preserve nature and the respect for indigenous cultures (and, I think, peasant cultures) extends this concern backwards as well (Castells 2006, 231). As we could see earlier, the eco-village dwellers, and so the members of the community examined by me here, are consciously turning to a different use of time in which their concern for the future and for preserving the legacy of the past has an important role (see also Irvine 2014).

In this use of time, slow processes are given the main role. However, the eco-village movement cannot be called a slow-living movement: rather it falls into the initiatives of so-called simple life/simple living or voluntary simplicity, because beside many similarities the two types of movements show several differences. Parkins and Craig emphasize in their comparative work that followers of the simple life appreciate hard work, thrift, and anti-modernity, and they prefer a rural to an urban life. In slow movements, we cannot find this kind of thriftiness and ascetic

trait: for example, material pleasures are in the focus of the slow-food movement, and the slow city in particular welcomes the joy of urban living. The joy of everyday life here and now is the centre of all slow-movements. They do not really look into an idyllic, nostalgic past, and unlike simple living, which distances itself from contemporary culture, they do not seek a golden age. Slow-living – according to Parkins and Craig – remains in the present: 'So without wanting to overstate differences which may interrelate closely in some people's daily life, the adjective "slow" rather than "simple" to qualify "living" may signal a greater degree of imbrication in contemporary everyday life, given that slowness can only be judged in relation to speed, while simple living may signal a greater disengagement from, even an outright rejection of, contemporary culture' (Parkins and Craig 2006, 3).[13]

Conclusion

In simple living movements, time is also of central importance, but I believe that the future occupies the major role in their time orientation. This statement is certainly true of the eco-village lifestyle: they have a special vision of the future, which motivates them to move out of the city and reform their way of life, and this vision determines their present behaviour and their life today. This vision, however, turns them partly towards the past, which means learning certain pre-modern techniques, cultivating and breeding old landrace plants and livestock, and so on.[14] Local culture and cultural heritage, values of the past hold a real value for them, and they discover, learn, and use these.

13 It should be noted, however, that such separation is, on the one hand, only a generalization (as typologies naturally are) and not valid for every movement. On the other hand, since 2006, when the book was published, a number of changes have taken place in the slow-movements as well. Valeria Siniscalchi, in her study from 2013, presented the changes in the subject and method of slow-food by showing the changes of the emphasis of the important values of the movement, of the so-called *Good–Clean–Fair* triad. At the beginning, the movement concentrated on leisurely consumption of quality food, i.e. primarily on the interest of consumers (*Good*), and then the environmental context came to the foreground, that is the concern about the production of the food raw materials that are 'clean' in an environment-conscious sense, and the circumstances of preparation and transportation of the food (*Clean*), and finally more and more attention was paid to the producers and makers, their working conditions and livelihoods, and social justice (*Fair*). So, today, the Slow Food is not just about enjoying nice food and drinks here and now but also about having the kind of future-orientation which is the key element of the sustainability discourse.
The Slow Food Movement – being the best known and perhaps the largest of such movements – now has a significant body of scientific literature; among the latest ones, we can find Siniscalchi's (2013) and Grasseni's (2014) excellent works.

14 However, the kind of strong and unconditional mythical-nostalgic looking into the past, which is reflected in a significant proportion of the Hungarian traditionalist groups, is not typical of this group under examination. To have just one small example: it is important for them to try to grow drought-tolerant plants that are unknown in Hungary, while the most radical traditionalists dislike such 'non-authentic' plants.

Forward-looking orientation has an important role in current decision-making and social actions. Sociological research has shown that there is a positive relationship between the vision of the future and the ability to postpone the meeting of present needs (e.g. Bergmann 1990, 123); giving up things in the present is in fact an important step for the future (for economic and social progress, advancement). In the eco-village context, voluntary simplicity is realized in a similar way; it stems from the vision of the future and is carried out for the future. This future orientation is different in that it not only focuses on individuals and their offspring, but also – as is the case with social reformers in general – considers the broader horizon. On the one hand, it acts on behalf of the local community (see the eco-village definitions: their target is long-term sustainability for the community) and, on the other hand, for the survival of the Earth, nature, and humanity.[15] This is the central component of the time orientation of the members; it is the centre of their social value system to which individuals adapt their own time orientation (Bergmann 1990, 132).

For sociological researchers of time, the fact is not unknown that within the society there may be groups whose objectives are not shared by other groups of society. These groups 'hold on to their value-codex, so the time-image governing them can significantly differ from the dominant culture' (Bergman 1990, 134). The radically different vision of future and horizon is a feature of social reform. An alternative vision of the future which differs from the mainstream idea is the drive of social change provided that this vision (at some point in the future) is viable. For this, it must survive even if this change is delayed or meets with resistance (Bergmann 1990, 168). According to Richard Noyes, who deals with the relationship between social reformers and time, social reformers have broader horizons than their peers, and so what he calls *temporal discalibration* occurs, which is the major obstacle to the realization of their plans. Utopian proposals reaching out to the far future remain 'unrealistic' until they become part of the narrower time horizon of society as time goes by, and only then, in the midst of changed conditions will they seem 'feasible' (Noyes 1980, 67 – qtd by Bergmann 1990, 168).

I think, eco-village dwellers can be regarded as some kind of reformers who are envisioning a critical future not accepted by the majority of society, who may not even be aware of such (although this is hardly imaginable given the development of the communication channels), by broadening the present and development-oriented time horizon of modernity. The eco-villages are preparing for this crisis-future, and this is why the majority population regards them as whimsical, fugitives from society, etc. The problem raised by Henrike Rau and Ricca Edmondson is

15 This way of thinking leads to a special, expanded community perception, which includes not just human beings but other creatures living in that ecosystem, and even the entire flora and fauna of the Earth when thinking globally, in principles with ecological foundation, for the concept of the extended community (e.g. Kasper 2008).

also relevant for the group in our study: they put the question in connection with extensibility of time-perception needed for sustainable implementation: 'Can people be expected to adopt time-use patterns that almost immediately consign them to the margins of most developed societies?' (Rau and Edmondson 2013, 5). The eco-village way of life is such an alternative lifestyle experiment for it is attractive to a relatively few people and sets its followers in a kind of marginality.[16] The number of those who can accomplish this lifestyle (instead of just having the intention) is even smaller.[17] Their influence cannot be measured; at most, I can give my impressions: some of the 'mobile' elements of this way of life, elements that can be learnt and performed elsewhere, take root in other places, be it a permaculture farm near Kecskemét or an urban community garden in Budapest.

In their recent research, a couple named Kapitány list a number of key components on alternative life strategies found in Hungary that are also characteristic of the people living here: criticism of modernization, re-interpretation of human relations, work and community, a vision of the collapse of civilization, searching for correlations, taking responsibility, etc. (Kapitány and Kapitány 2014a, 2014b). The research also indicates that it is about the value system and vision of the future not only of a narrow circle, a handful of eco-village dwellers, but about the fact that they regard a radical life change as an appropriate answer to these questions.

References

Baji, Béla. 2011. *Permakultúra és önellátó biogazdálkodás*. Budapest: Első Lánchíd Bt.

Beck, Ulrich. 2003. *A kockázat-társadalom. Út egy másik modernitásba*. Budapest: Századvég.

Bergmann, Werner. 1990. Az idő a szociológiában. Szakirodalmi áttekintés az „időszociológiai" elmélet és kutatás helyzetéről. In: Gelléríné, L. M. (ed.) *Időben élni. Történeti szociológiai tanulmányok*. 117–194. Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó.

Borsos, Béla. 2007. *Az ökofalu koncepciója és helye a fenntartható település- és vidékfejlesztésben*. PhD Thesis. Pécs: PTE Természettudományi Kar, Földtudományok Doktori Iskola.

16 Think of the fact that public thinking identifies the mud house and the outdoor toilets specifically with backwardness and poverty.

17 It has many possible obstacles: they can not buy a house (because they are young people with no sufficient savings or because they can not sell their existing house or flat); family reasons (they do not want to move far away from their parents/children, relatives; talking about couples, this way of life is appealing to only one of them); they can not find a way to make a living in the eco-village; no suitable schools nearby for the kids, etc.

Castells, Manuel. 2006. *Az identitás hatalma.* Budapest: Gondolat Kiadó.

Douglas, Mary. 1966. *Purity and Danger. An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo*. London: Allen & Unwin.

Douglas, Mary, Wildavsky, Aaron. 1982. *Risk and Culture. An Essay on the Selection of Technological and Environmental Dangers.* Berkeley: University of California Press.

Edmondson, Ricca, Rau, Henrike (eds). 2008. *Environmental Argument and Cultural Difference: Locations, Fractures and Deliberations.* Oxford: Peter Lang.

Farkas, Judit. 2012. „Családok élnek itt, akik közösségben próbálnak élni." A magyar ökofalvak család-képe és annak megvalósulása egy közösségben. In: Örsi, J. (ed.) *Középpontban a család.* I: 67–80. Túrkeve–Szolnok: Jász-Nagykun-Szolnok Megyei Tudományos Egyesület.

2014. *„Egy tál frissen sült fánk." A közösség „mítosza" a magyar ökofalvakban.* AntroPort Lapozó. tavasz-nyár (http://www.antroport.hu/lapozo.php?akt_cim=386).

2015a. „Kicsi kis hősök." Az ökofalu-mozgalom története és gyökerei. *Kovász,* XVIII. 2014. 1–4: 43–66.

2015b. „Nincsenek receptek." A magyar ökofalvak táplálkozásantropológiai vizsgálata (in press).

Fél, Edit, Hofer Tamás. 1997. *Arányok és mértékek a paraszti gazdálkodásban*. Budapest: Balassi Kiadó.

Gosztonyi, Bence. 2013. *A mindennapok eszkatológiája. Jövőképek egy ökofaluban.* Thesis. Budapest: ELTE TÁTK.

Grasseni, Cristina. 2014. Seeds of Trust. Italy's Gruppi di Acquisto Solidale (Solidarity Purchase Groups). *Journal of Political Ecology* 21: 178–192.

Hajnal, Klára. 2006. „Rethink." A fenntartható fejlődés lényegi kérdései. In: Kiss, T.–Somogyvári, M. (eds.) *Fenntartható fejlődés a gyakorlatban.* 9–22. Pécs: Interregionális Megújuló Energiaklaszter Egyesület.

Irvine, Richard D. G. 2014. Deep Time: An Anthropological Problem. *Social Anthropology* 22: 157–172.

Jackson, Hildur, Svensson, Karen (eds.). 2002. *Ecovillage Living. Restoring the Earth and Her People*. Dartington: Green Books and Naerum: Gaia Trust.

Kapitány, Ágnes, Kapitány, Gábor. 2014a. *Alternatív életstratégiák*. Budapest: Typotext.

2014b. Alternatív életstratégiák kulcselemei. *Magyar Lettre* 95: 65–71.

Kasper, Debbie Van Schyndel. 2008. Redefining Community in the Ecovillage. *Human Ecology Review* 15: 12–24.

Kisdi, Barbara. 2013. *Mint a földbe hullott mag. Otthon szülés Magyarországon – egy antropológiai vizsgálat tanulságai*. Budapest: L'Harmattan.

Kiss, Tibor. 2006. Fenntarthatóság a gyakorlatban. In: Kiss, T., Somogyvári, M. (eds.) *Fenntartható fejlődés a gyakorlatban.* 6–8. Pécs: Interregionális Megújuló Energiaklaszter Egyesület.

Mattioli, Giulio, Shove, Elizabeth, Torriti, Jacopo. 2014. *The Timing and Societal Synchronisation of Energy Demand.* Presentation given to the Department of Energy and Climate Change on 10th December 2013. http://eprints.whiterose.ac.uk/81642/ (last visit on 24 June 2015).

Mollison, Bill, Holmgren, David. 1978. *Permaculture One: A Perennial Agriculture for Human Settlements*. New York: Transworld Publishers.

Noyes, Richard. 1980. The Time Horizon of Planned Social Change: I. Why Utopian Movements Always Promise Amelioration in the Future. *American Journal of Economics and Sociology* 39: 65–77.

Parkins, Wendy, Craig, Geoffrey. 2006. *Slow Living*. Oxford: Berg.

Pásztor, Krisztina. 2013. *A permakultúra magyarországi tapasztalatai.* Thesis. Gödöllő: Szent István Egyetem Mezőgazdaság- és Környezettudományi Kar.

Peters, Frank Peter. 2005. Exchanging Travel Speed: Time Politics in Mobility Practices. *Configurations* 13: 395–419.

Rau, Henrike, Edmondson, Ricca. 2013. Time and Sustainability. In: Fahy, F., Rau, H. (eds.) *Methods of Sustainability Research in the Social Sciences*. 173–190. London: Sage.

Rau, Henrike. 2015. Time Use and Resource Consumption. In: Fischer-Kowalski, M.–Rau, H.–Zimmerer, K. (eds.) *International Encyclopedia of the Social and Behavioural Sciences*, *Area 9/1e – Ecological and Environmental Sciences.* Oxford: Elsevier (in press).

Siniscalchi, Valeria. 2013. Environment, Regulation and the Moral Economy of Food in the Slow Food Movement. *Journal of Political Ecology* 20: 295–305.

Szabó, László. 1979. Kaláka. In: Ortutay, Gy. (ed.) *Magyar Néprajzi Lexikon*. vol 2., 713. Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó.

Szijártó, Zsolt. 2000. *Kockázat, társadalom, átmenet*. Pozsony: Kalligram Könyvek.

2008. Kockázat, kultúra, konfliktus. In: Szijártó, Zs. (ed.) *A hely hatalma: lokális szcénák – globális folyamatok*. 33–61. Budapest: Gondolat Kiadó.

Szilágyi, Miklós. 2000. Munkatársulatok, akcióközösségek. In: Paládi-Kovács, A. (ed.) *Magyar néprajz nyolc kötetben. VIII. Társadalom*: 569–575. Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó.

Takács-Sánta, András. 2009. Kiútlehetőségek a környezeti válságból – Vázlat a közlegelők tragédiája elkerülésének lehetőségeiről. *Kovász*, XIII: 3–12.

Taylor, Nigel. 2000. Eco-Villages: Dream and Reality. In: Barton, H. (ed.) *Sustainable Communities. The Potential of Eco-Neighbourhoods.* 19–28. London: Earthscan.

Thompson, Edward P. 1990. Az idő, a munkafegyelem és az ipari kapitalizmus. In: *Időben élni*. 60–117. Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó.

Vannini, Phillip, Taggart, Jonathan. 2014. Growing, Cooking, Eating, Shitting Off-Grid Organic Food. Deconcession, Convenience and Taste of Place. *Food Culture and Society. An International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research* 17: 319–338.

Veteto, James R., Lockyer, Joshua. 2008. Environmental Anthropology Engaging Permaculture: Moving Theory and Practice toward Sustainability. *Culture & Agriculture* 30: 47–58.

Electronic resources

http://www.elofaluhalozat.hu/ (last visit on June 24, 2015).
http://elofaluhalozat.hu/nagyszekely.php (last visit on June 24, 2015).
www.gen.ecovillage.org (last visit on June 24, 2015).
http://www.permakultura.hu/index.php (last visit on June 24, 2015).