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# Postmodern Values in Rural Peripheries

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## ABSTRACT

Some new values and trends based on strengthened needs for nature, culture and safety have emerged and offer favourable opportunities for the less developed rural areas. The environmental and social aspects of economies are getting to have more power as well as the information society provides assets to break off the distances and these processes lead to change the term of underdevelopment especially in rural peripheries. While the rural spaces have resources necessary to start a new way of development, they are in a dual cultural snare. On one hand, rural policy forces to follow one kind of modernization, most of the rural areas do not have resources for that. On the other hand, local societies are not ready to follow a post-modern way. Post-modern values are imported by migrants and this is accompanied by important conflicts. The main question of our research is how the pure nature, the sustainability, the cultural heritage and social participation as some of the basic values for post-modern type development are present in rural spaces. According to our hypothesis the relation of local society to post-modern values depends on economic development, the size of community and their links to the outside of the region. We have started an empirical research project in 8 groups of villages (6 in Hungary, 2 in Transylvania) in order to verify the hypothesis. About 420 local residents have been asked about their values and preferences. The paper shows some of the results of these surveys.

## 1. THEORETICAL INTRODUCTION, HYPOTHESES

One of the main questions of geography is how human beings use space in order to satisfy their different needs. Where and how do people wish to do living, working, studying, eating, travelling, shopping, having a rest and belonging to communities? Geographical examination of the basic functions of society has led to answering some of these questions. Geographical analyses and theories also highlight that the expectations of people and their groups about space are changing in time and space. Beyond the mode of production, culture, that is closely related to it, and especially the scale of values also affect the needs and the expectations about the space. *“On the satisfaction of his historically increasing and reproduced needs, mankind creates the system of basic social functions, and the nature and way of functioning of it express the culture of the given society and the ideology and motives of each social group”* [3].

*Getting to know the motive powers of regional development* is another exciting field of research in geography, besides the regional pattern of social functions. In order to be able to satisfy the needs of its inhabitants more widely than before and in the case of more people, that is, in order to have the necessary resources for (social, economic and natural) development<sup>1</sup>, a region has to possess capacities that are considered to be valuable by the outside world and the inhabitants. Moreover, it needs to have the intellectual and financial conditions for their utilization and to avoid the tightening of the living chance of others (including the future generation). In this wording, emphasis is put not only on “to be”, but also on “considering valuable”. This way, values, which are ideas of individuals or groups about desirable,

<sup>1</sup> Development is defined based on Burton (1990), starting from the satisfaction of human needs.

appropriate, good or bad, play an important role in transforming capacities into resources<sup>2</sup>. If the scales of values are different, different ways of development can take shape, even if regional potentials are similar. This way, we can talk about modern and postmodern<sup>3</sup> development at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The two ways of development are radically different.

*Modern regional development* is characterized by growth based on intensive accumulation of capital and considerable concentration built on economic needs and heavy technical and technological basis. Moreover, it is also characterized by strong top down control [8]. Regional development specialities, typical in modernization, are succeeded by new characteristics that can be considered postmodern in the globalised postmodern world.

*Postmodern regional development* is characterized by (1) multiculturalism and diversity instead of the monolithic approach of development [10]; (2) the spread and society forming effect of information technology [6]; (3) the appearance of culture as an economic development factor [11]; (4) reproduction that is becoming more important than production [9]; (5) consumer symbols and signs that are becoming more important than goods [1]; (6) self restricting and conscious consumption related to the idea of sustainability; (7) free flow of emotions instead of the domination of rationality [9]; (8) the strengthening of locality and different identities as a counterbalance of globalization [2]; (9) the simultaneous fragmentation and co-sourcing of structures [6]; (10) the transformation of the relationship between towns and villages [4]. The phenomena that appear in new guise relations seem to be known from the past before modernization. Cook states that postmodern “goes back to the future” [7].

For example new economic potential may be created to meet the increasing demands in the following areas: healthy provisions, healthy food, healthy drinking water, alternative energy, natural raw materials, apartments and health resorts, recreational services, catering, artifice products, cultural and intellectual goods, information services, logistical services, child-care and care of the old, environmental industry, recycling, landscape conservation, where demand includes the need for variety, diversity and personalisation in each case [8].

Although in Hungary there are only some cases in which the characteristics of postmodern development can be found, knowledge about postmodern features and their real and expected characteristics are of primary importance in outlining the development

alternatives of rural areas. On the one hand, this is because of the fact that potentials of rural areas – so far devaluated, but already consumed and ruined in the centre areas of modernization – are probably becoming resources in postmodern development after long centuries. On the other hand, this is because of the fact that so many values close to traditional ones and built directly on them appear in the postmodern system of values. So the questions are the following: how can our rural areas prepare for postmodern development that offers potentials for them and how can they make use of it preserving their values in the meantime? Asking the question this way is important because development strategies of Middle Eastern Europe usually focus on the modernization of the country and on following the way of the developed in modernization. It may be a paradox that in the areas that lack modernization, modernization is forced, even though other options have also appeared in other parts of the world. Moreover, energies used to realize changes through classic modernization values make it impossible to prepare for the satisfaction of postmodern needs that promise more possibilities for rural areas.

In order to be able to get connected with the postmodern way of development, it is not enough to possess material capacities necessary to meet the above mentioned demands for rural areas in Middle Eastern Europe. Relatively clean environment, drinking water basis, forests, comfortable and mankind scale environment, preserved material elements of traditional culture are necessary, but not enough conditions of joining the postmodern way of development. The holders of resources should have postmodern values.

Three typical systems of values exist abreast in current societies. There are still elements of the traditional values, while modern values are dominant. Moreover, some postmodern values have also appeared.

*Traditional values* have almost disappeared in the Western developed world. In spite of this, they still can be found, (even though to an increasingly decreasing extent) in the “slowly” value changing rural areas of Eastern European countries due to the late modernization. Thus, the idea of self-sufficiency, the affection of land, the primary role of the family, the dominance of men and the unconditional childlike respect within the family, respect for the old, forbearance of strangers, respect for nature and for traditions and the power of the community in helping each other can be found in these areas. As a result of the regional division of labour and urbanisation, however, the increased needs of the inhabitants can be met using resources from outside the region. At the same time, they contribute to satisfy the needs of people living in other regions.<sup>4</sup> Thus in the globalised world, regional

<sup>2</sup> We are not dealing with the factors and processes that contribute to the formation and development of values and the role of nature and regional capacities in this.

<sup>3</sup> We are not willing to revive debates about postmodern. We use this concept to define the period of postindustrialism that is significantly different from the previous periods of modernisation.

<sup>4</sup> We are not dealing with regional exploitation and states of subordinations explained by Wallerstein's world system theory.

development is not possible exclusively on the basis on traditional values. It may work in case of the drastic decrease of consumption and population concentration, the withdrawal from feats of engineering and the restriction of human rights (going back to history).

*Modern values* – according to the lessons of history – is definitely against rural areas. Economic modernization, that took shape from the second half of the nineteenth century in the Eastern part of Europe and strengthened again after the Second World War, was characterized by significant economic concentration in terms of industrial dominance, technical technological innovations, the pressure of economic growth and efficiency, just like in other parts of the world. At the same time, natural resources deteriorated, traditions were eliminated spectacularly and drastically, urbanization accelerated in living quarters concentrated based on manufacturing industry. Moreover, aspects of economies of scale became dominant not only in production, but also in the organization of public services and regional governance. The above mentioned processes initiated large scale migration of the population from rural areas. Disturbed demographic equilibrium resulted the postponement of the development of services and infrastructure. Moreover, it led to their withdrawal and increased the geographical isolation. The population that migrated because of the lack of employment opportunities and the unsatisfactory living conditions as well as the aging and low qualified, less innovative and initiative population that stayed in rural areas all contributed to the lack of businesses, to the low competitiveness of businesses and to the outflow of resources from these areas.

Modernization values, however, spread in rural areas, too. Moreover, with the spread of telecommunication and with the progress of economic and cultural globalisation, the assimilation of consumption behaviours of rural population to those of urban population accelerated. Order, feats of engineering became values. In the meantime, nature deteriorated, materiality overcame community spirit and reason prevailed against emotions.

*Postmodern values* include elements of the view concentrating not only on materials, but taking into account eco-social aspects as well: environmental concern, tolerance, solidarity, preference of diversity, communal attitude, cosourcing, social participation, preserving and promotion of cultural heritage, build of different identities, importance of predominance of emotions and aesthetic beauty. Revealing the presence of values affecting territorial / regional development is not an easy task at all. A bit easier is to show the values related to social functions and to the everyday life of the population and reflected in their needs habits and opinions.

This way we can get results by turning the indicator method of social geography in certain sense. It

implies that not the phenomena related to regional functions are examined using a given indicator, but the phenomenon itself becomes an indicator of a certain value. We assume that postmodern values are also present in the mentality of the Middle Eastern European population, especially in urban life. Urban population, however, appears in rural areas to an increasing extent as residents, owners of weekend houses, tourists, consumers with environmental concern and as entrepreneurs. On the one hand, rural population adapts itself to postmodern values through the urban population who are in connection with them and through the demand of urban population. It is also promoted by values mediated by the media. On the other hand, rural population starts thinking and acting in space on a new way.

## 2. AIMS AND METHODS OF RESEARCH

It is not obvious, however, how postmodern values are present in the system of values of the rural population, how they see external incomers following these values and whether they are capable of using their resources in meeting postmodern needs.

Our research is trying to answer these two questions in order to reveal the renewal chances of rural areas. In order to answer the questions, we conducted interviews and asked 1.2-1.9 percents of the population of the sample with questionnaires in 2\*4 groups of villages.

Groups of villages are selected from three significantly different areas of Hungary and Transylvania. Both a peripheral (more closed) and a more dynamic (more open) group of village was selected from each big area. Informants were selected based on their gender, age and attachment to village. The whole sample includes 420 persons. Its composition can be seen in the following table. Besides personal data, informants had to evaluate regional and territorial capacities in general and especially for their living area in the questionnaire.

Their opinion about potential ways of development of their area was also evaluated. We asked their relation to incomers and their willingness to connect to the potential ways of development. Answers to these questions were evaluated based on groups of villages, types of areas (open or closed), gender, age, qualification, sector of employment, regional attachment and world belief of the informants. We revealed the development history, the values (real and potential resources), the problems and the entrepreneurial, municipal and civil organizations of the group of village during the interviews.

Based on the interviews, documents and on the results of former research, the so-called regional pattern was created about the groups of villages focusing on resources and their use, on local scales of values and on the ways and forms of community participation.

Table 1. Characteristics of the sample of questionnaire based survey.

Area	420	Gender	420	Qualification	420	Employment sector	420	World belief*	420
"closed" Cserehát	211	female	216	8 grades or less	153	student	61	weak	206
	44	Male	204	Trade school	65	entrepreneur	34	middle strong	174
Göcsej-alja	56	Age	420	Vocational secondary school, grammar school	130	getting child benefit, maternity leave payment	13	strong	40
Sárköz	55	8-17	43	College, university	72	employee	143	Regional attachment*	420
Nyárád-mente	56	18-29	71			public employee	19	weak	62
"open"	209	30-39	65			disability pensioner	31	middle strong	173
Zemplén	44	40-49	78			old-age pensioner	76	strong	185
Őrség	55	50-59	72			unemployed	36		
Homokhátság	55	60-	91			home nurse, dependent	7		
Nyikó-mente	55								

Source: own compilation.

Table 2. Statements of the questionnaire belonging to the main types of values.

TRADITIONAL	MODERN	POSTMODERN
1. If you cannot buy new stuff, you try to produce it yourself.	1. You prefer shopping in megastores than in the local store.	1. You like buying foods produced locally.
2. You prefer traditional food even though they are not so healthy.	2. You like eating in fast food restaurants when going to town.	2. You prefer having the possibility of using internet locally.
3. Everyday work requires enough movement.	3. Price is the most important when shopping.	3. You should pay in order to be informed.
4. You prefer if your neighbour has not moved here from town.	4. Old traditions are out of date, we should exceed them.	4. You prefer buying more expensive food if it is more healthy.
5. Civil organizations are not necessary.	5. You like buying new things.	5. You buy energy saving household devices even if they are more expensive.
6. You can count only on your family	6. You prefer to try using each technical novelties.	6. You like being surrounded by nice things.
7. You try to reach stability in your relations with others.	7. You like when each cutlery is the same.	7. Lifelong learning is important.
8. You can be successful without connections.	8. You like when things are always at the same place.	8. You collect trash selectively, you recycle a part of it.
9. You like having animals around the house.	9. Beauty is the function of money.	9. You should get a move on to stay healthy.
10. You prefer living close to your children.	10. Children should attend well equipped schools where all modern equipments are available.	10. You like doing volunteer work in the community.
11. You prefer living close to your parents.	11. It is a forgivable vice to let dirty water flowing to nature.	11. You like those who take a stand for the interests of the local community strongly.
12. You do not move because you have family members, acquaintances close here.	12. They are mostly the mayor and the municipality who should care about public affairs.	12. You like being surrounded by nice people.
13. You do not like when strangers move to your village.	13. You prefer having your living surroundings ordered.	13. You like having a nice view from your apartment.
14. You do not like when strangers move to your neighborhood.	14. You do not move because you cannot afford it.	14. You do not move because you have a nice environment here.
15. Household chores are as important as wage-earning work.	15. You do not like having a Chinese neighbour.	15. You like having a job where you can create something nice.
16. It is the man who should support family.	16. You do not like having a gipsy neighbour.	16. You like having a job where you can help others.
17. It is the woman who should bring up children.	17. To make ends meet, you have to work even after working hours.	17. You like having a job where you can realize your own ideas.
18. Old traditions should be preserved.	18. You prefer having a job which makes it possible to earn a lot.	

\* The category of world belief is calculated using the results of several questions. It has been created based on the number of years spent with employment abroad, number of years for which lived in town and the number of acquaintances outside living quarters.

\* The category of regional attachment is created using the number of years for which lived in the village, the number of acquaintances in the living quarters and the number of adult children leaving the village who have at least secondary level qualification.

<p>19. you like to be surrounded by stuff which were used by your grandparents.</p> <p>20. Children should attend schools with low number of children, which makes it possible to spend more time with them.</p> <p>21. Each person should belong to some community.</p> <p>22. You like having kitchen-garden around the house.</p> <p>23. You like being on friendly terms with your neighbours.</p> <p>24. You like participating in the activities of the village.</p>	<p>19. Man should earn more than the woman within a family.</p>	<p>18. Old traditions should be preserved.</p> <p>19. You like to be surrounded by stuff which were used by your grandparents.</p> <p>20. Children should attend schools with low number of children, which makes it possible to spend more time with children.</p> <p>21. Each person should belong to some community.</p> <p>22. You like having kitchen-garden around the house.</p> <p>23. You like being on friendly terms with your neighbours.</p> <p>24. You like participating in the activities of the village.</p>
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Elaboration of the results is in progress. Hereunder we highlight only on some summary about the scale of values of rural population.

**3. SOME RESULTS OF THE RESEARCH BASED ON QUESTIONNAIRES – SCALES OF VALUES OF THE RURAL POPULATION**

In the second part of the questionnaire, statements including traditional, modern, postmodern and traditional-postmodern values were listed. Scores 1-3 expressing the acceptance of these statements were averaged based on population groups and groups of values. (Scores belonging to traditional – postmodern content are taken into account in the case of both types of value). Based on average scores, modern values are

present with the smallest weight – as contrasted with our previous expectations – while statements with postmodern values are the more accepted in the whole sample. Traditional scale of values is the strongest among the old, the women, those who are strongly attached to region and those who have weak world belief. Values of modernization are mainly accepted by men in their fifties, by those who are strongly attached to region and those who have strong world belief. Postmodern values are most common among forty-year-old men with strong attachment to region. World belief divides people belonging to this group to a smaller extent than in the case of other aspects. If we ignore statements belonging to both traditional and postmodern values, however, those having postmodern values usually have stronger world belief.

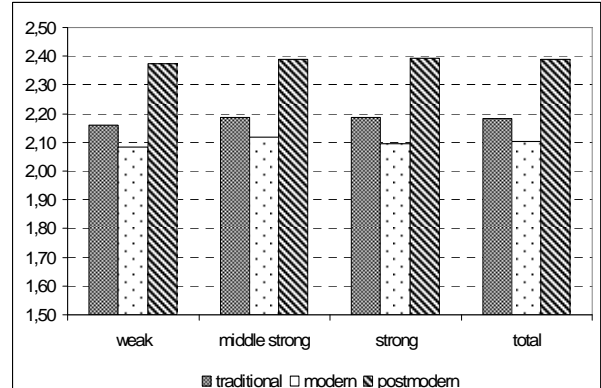
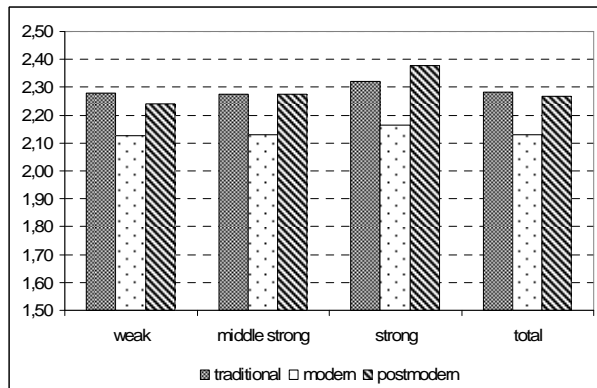
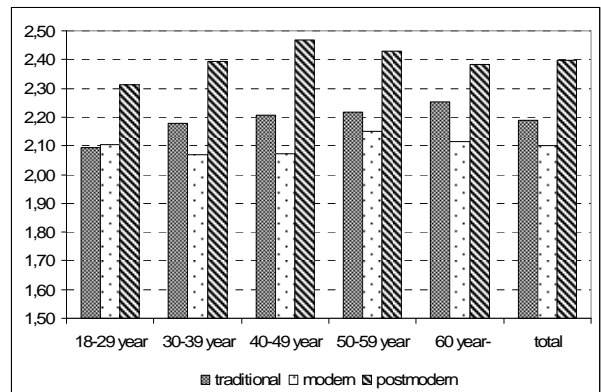
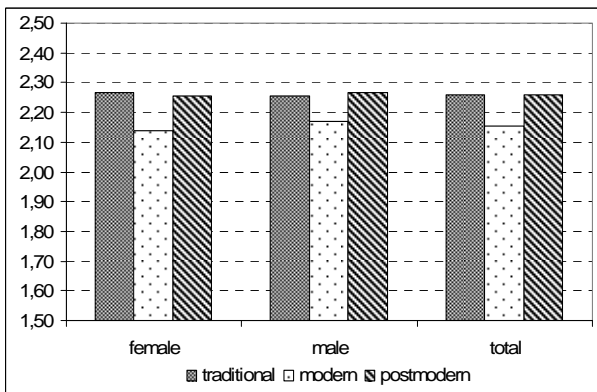


Fig. 1. Preferences of the statement belonging to each value, by groups of population: age groups, gender, attachment, world belief.

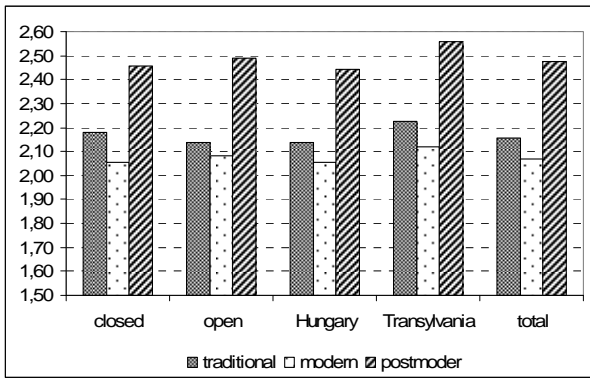


Fig. 2. Preferences of statements belonging to each value, by types of regions.

Among the visible value preferences, territorial differences can also be found. Acceptance of traditional values is typical in closed areas, while modern and Apartment:

<b>320</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>416</b>
<b>90</b>	<b>231</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>415</b>

Workplace:

<b>158</b>	<b>88</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>89</b>	<b>398</b>
<b>113</b>	<b>89</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>147</b>	<b>387</b>

Fig. 3. Places preferred by rural informants.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

Based on literature and our previous research results, we highlighted that regional development, as well as the system of social functions taking shape in the process of meeting the needs, depend on values. Postmodern view and scale of value is an element of the

postmodern values are typical of open areas. In Transylvania, each value got higher scores, especially identification with postmodern values was high. It is also true if we ignore the statements belonging to both postmodern and traditional values.

In the second part of the investigation to reveal the scale of value among rural population, photos were shown to informants.

They were then asked to choose the one out of each series with which they can identify to the larger extent. Out of the nine series of photos about apartments, workplaces, places belonging to shopping and spending spare time and photos about eating, in accordance with the results of the previous part of the questionnaire, photos related to traditional and postmodern values were the most popular.

system of conditions in the case of postmodern development that offer favourable possibilities for rural areas. In highlighting the existence of postmodern view and scale of value, the analysis of territorial phenomena and opinions related to social functions can help.

Based on the results of the empirical analysis, we can conclude that besides the presence of traditional

values, postmodern values are also spreading in the examined rural areas. These latter came partly from urban scale of values, but traditional values probably could directly turn over to them, too. Based on the scale of value, it is not impossible to start on postmodern ways of development. Population groups most susceptible to postmodern values have become identifiable. Moreover, the typical value preferences of the different types of areas have also taken shape.

This way, with the evaluation that has not taken into account each aspect of values yet, the Transylvanian areas proved to be significantly different from Hungarian areas. We also highlighted the differences between value preferences of areas which are more open due to tourism and the more closed rural peripheries.

With the analysis of the further parts of the questionnaire, we can get a more exact view of the preferred ways of development and of the willingness to participate in it.

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