Chapter Five

“Well-dressed and Fashionable”: Changes in Clothing Styles, Habits, and Fashion

Need and puritanism: rural and urban styles of dress in the mid-twentieth century

As the 1930s turned to the 1940s, how people dressed and the style of clothing they wore still tended to be determined by factors connected to tradition, etiquette, behavior, social status, and cultural expectations. While haute couture existed and even flourished during World War II, for everyday people apparel was strictly regulated. Shortages led to more streamlined silhouettes as clothing materials became rougher and thicker compared to what had been available in prewar years. The lack of material, the ration card system, and the increasingly severe restrictions placed on supply exerted a strong influence on fashion that in turn determined how clothes were produced. As a result, not only style and fashion, but also the customs, habits, and expectations that surrounded clothing underwent various transformations. Uniforms, for instance, grew in prestige as patriotic motifs became fashionable. Primarily in cities, apparel began to be the means for otherwise very disparate social groups to bridge class divisions, at least as far as appearance was concerned. Partly as the result of joining the workforce, women abandoned corsets and long hair. While women in cities increasingly chose to wear hats, traditional garb continued to be the norm in villages, where women covered their heads with kerchiefs and wore multiple layers of pleated skirts; riding breeches and hats were customary for rural men. Personal hygiene naturally remained important for women, but men became increasingly concerned with

1 For an overview of the history of dress during the Dual Monarchy and the Horthy era, see Katalin F. Dózsa, Letűnt idők, eltűnt divatok, 1867–1945 (Budapest: Gondolat, 1989); Gábor Gyáni, Hétköznapi élet Horthy Miklós korában (Budapest: Corvina Kiadó, 2006); Katalin F. Dózsa, Megbámulni és megbámultatni: Viselettörténeti tanulmányok (Budapest: L’Harmattan, 2015).
maintaining a neat appearance. At this time in Hungarian history, neither a public servant nor even a shop clerk could have appeared at work unshaven or wearing anything less than a full suit, necktie, and vest. Symbolic of middle-class clothing styles, a suit was not only the necessary garb for white-collar professionals but also a garment that a large segment of skilled workers could afford to purchase. Public and political ceremonies demanded that male attendees don evening tails, tuxedos, or even díszmagyar, the ceremonial attire worn by Hungarian noblemen for occasions of great pomp.²

Beginning with World War II and continuing throughout the post-war decades, apparel underwent a significant series of transformations in Hungary’s urban and rural communities.³ Regarding multiple aspects, these changes occurred in what can best be described as “waves” during a period that spanned roughly fifty years and can be divided into five larger periods or stages. Encompassing the war and the first few years that followed—a time that can be interpreted as an era of reconstruction—the initial period saw a few, insignificant

modifications in attire, but primarily continued to follow the dress norms and associated habits that had typified the interwar period. For the most part, attire continued to signify social standing as great differences in dress could still be observed among certain urban social groups or between urban and rural populations, a factor indicating the extent to which Hungarians still clung to tradition and adhered to social expectations on both the macro- and micro-level. At this time the flow of information surrounding the latest fashions continued unabated; Hungarians could likewise keep up with the latest European trends on a virtually daily basis. During this period shortages in clothing material caused the most difficulties, particularly from 1945 to 1946.

Comprising the first half of the 1950s, the second stage presented a stark contrast to the initial period. Mainly visible in cities, the dress norms demanded by “enforced puritanism,” the process of mandatory social uniformization that was reached by means of continuous political pressure exerted from above, enacted great changes in what Hungarians deemed as both suitable and safe to wear outside of the home as the nation was transformed into a communist society. The demands placed on society to follow the collective and adhere to rather prudish moral expectations were further exacerbated by the nation’s growing isolation from international influences. As the experiment to gain partial seclusion from the rest of the world went into effect, the reorientation of Hungary’s economy and the subsequent scramble to fulfill at least basic needs rendered it practically impossible to address continued shortages in clothing materials.

Beginning at the end of 1956 and the start of 1957, the third period saw a slow return—at least in the area of fashion and apparel—to previous attitudes as the habit of following fashion once more became widespread and commonplace, developing into a process of normalization that was aided by gradual improvements in supply. In 1967, János Kádár took the following stance on the issue: “A few western fashions have, to a certain extent, made their influence felt here in Hungary as well . . . one of these is a sense of cynicism and indifference toward public affairs. In the West this fashion pairs up with wearing Wild West trousers and growing long hair and neglecting to shave. . . . I have no intention of spending time on Wild West trousers and beards and hair . . . what is important here is that the Party and the Youth League are neither fashion design corporations nor hairdressing cooperatives and do not need to deal with issues
of this sort.”4 During the lengthy decade that lasted until the end of the 1960s, the institutional systems connected to fashion, attire, and clothing expanded, although (to lesser or greater degrees) shortages remained present due to the nature of the system itself. Within Hungarian society the number and percentage of those unable to satisfy basic clothing needs decreased. Due to social, economic, and lifestyle changes, this period also marked the widespread abandonment of traditional clothing as Hungary’s villages adopted urban dress styles. Once rural men and women began turning to more modern styles, traditional wardrobes became obsolete in a process that became practically irreversible, leading to what is known in Hungarian as kivetkőzés, or the “undressing” of traditional garb. Other than being propelled by the desire to achieve a change in social position, the role played by mass communication (television) and the quickened pace dictated by the spread of motorization had a strong influence on the alterations that fashion and apparel underwent in Hungary’s urban and rural communities.

From the end of the 1960s to the middle of the 1980s, the fourth stage, clothing and the customs attached to it became simple. Apparel’s symbolic function as a signifier of social status became transformed while the news regarding international fashion trends could once more be followed on a virtually daily basis. These shifts largely occurred due to the reemergence of a strong private sector during the mid-1970s. Shortages that had commonly kept buyers from attaining basic goods or current items (such as blue jeans at the beginning of the 1970s) became either temporary or more prolonged. At times shortages did not influence the availability of the type of apparel itself, but only affected access to certain sizes, styles, or colors, or resulted in a narrow selection of goods. The quality of clothing that could be purchased once more functioned as a visible indication of income: in daily life, possessing a piece of clothing that was valued as a status symbol served as the most powerful means for demonstrating social differences.

As fashionable clothes frequently became items of prestige consumerism, value systems and public opinion accordingly reflected this change. For the fifteen-year period following 1968, clothing styles

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once more became either a symbolic or actual reflection of the wearer’s personal circumstances. Based on its visibility, attire provided the perfect means for an individual to display to either his or her close surroundings or more distant environment that he or she was keeping pace with trends and thereby fulfilling a role as a consumer. The fact that being well-dressed became a sort of general social expectation and value was underscored by the National Market Research Institute’s survey conducted in 1976. According to the survey’s collected data, “even though approximately one-third of the adult population consciously conforms to fashion, apparel’s role has decreased somewhat . . . the environment has a remarkably strong influence on style of dress. Despite this, today only six to seven percent of adults stress the importance of dressing better than others, while nearly half believe that clothing should not stand out from (in either a positive or a negative way) the surrounding environment.”

No matter the individual’s financial or social position, this type of viewpoint was widespread in Hungary during the mid-1970s. Since the previous period of a mass transformation in how social status was viewed drew to a close by the mid-1970s, a new period of consolidation emerged that was marked by the process of socialization and adapting to those social norms that belonged to the individual’s new circumstances. No longer simply determined by the desire to meet the demands raised by a new environment, a sense of identity was strongly influenced by elements related to consumerism, among other factors.

From the middle of the 1980s until the twenty-first century—or even up to today—the fifth period is typified by the avid interest in and the rapid combination of fashion styles. This period is therefore related to the spread of mass consumerism, a phenomenon that subsequently gained in value. As far as attire was concerned, differences in financial circumstances became even more obvious: at one extreme of the spectrum, a growing number of buyers could afford luxury items. Those, however, who fell into financial difficulties during the economic transformations that followed the end of communism found it increasingly impossible to procure even the most basic garments. This era is therefore also characterized by a rapid rise in the number of individuals lacking sufficient clothing for their needs. The rules and customs governing dress also underwent certain modifications.

as, for example, the differences between formal and everyday attire became even less noticeable. Particularly in the first five or ten years following the fall of the Iron Curtain, perhaps the most obvious changes could be seen in the prerequisites and expectations determining the appropriate garb for certain professions.

How changes in dress and fashion reflected the sense of identity, mentality, and behavior exhibited by various social groups is a question worthy of consideration. During the 1940s apparel was still viewed as an important indicator for expressing the social class or profession to which an individual belonged. In the years following the end of World War II, public opinion underwent a series of vast and significant changes as the value system or mentality upheld by certain social strata or groups temporarily found it less important to use outer appearance to emphasize social belonging. Throughout this transformation in values and public opinion, attire had a dual role. Other than the factors of political pressure and economic necessity, it can be argued that the individual attempt to adapt to the expectations of “enforced puritanism” that characterized the early 1950s may have also been influenced by the need to hide. In other words, adopting a gray, uniform exterior might have been a survival strategy as it became obvious that safety lay in the ability to blend into the gray masses. Similarly, the termination of dress norms that had once been associated with certain social groups also signified a weakening in ties to this group, or a decreased sense of self-identification. As Hungary spiraled into poverty, how people dressed also indicated the presence of a sort of social leveling that was directed toward society’s lower rungs. During the period of consolidation that occurred under Kádár, the exact opposite process occurred: the era of total shortages was first replaced with a period when supply was merely uncertain, then slowly followed by increasingly more secure access to necessities. In the 1970s, clothing reflected the appearance of the quasi-consumerist attitude as the members of certain social groups were willing to reach far beyond their actual means for the sake of satisfying the projected or genuine demands placed on them by their social level. Mainly in the underground movements led by youth subcultures, attire also acted as an expression of a rebellion against formality. Not insignificantly, consumerism’s growing spread reflected the weakening hold socialist ideology exerted on public opinion.

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Until 1948 urban dressing styles attempted to keep abreast of the relatively rapid regeneration that European fashions were undergoing. With the restrictions placed on specific social groups, such as members of the aristocracy, certain styles of clothing or habits of dress (like diszmagyar apparel) disappeared from everyday life. Other than this, the customs, social expectations, and norms disseminated by various magazines and publications that dealt with fashion and etiquette did not change in any great way. Nor did the image of the ideal woman undergo any significant modification compared to the interwar era. At most, the only detectable change occurred in the gradual spread and acceptance of women working outside of the home. The fact that women had employment influenced both female roles and public opinions regarding the division of labor within the family. In villages, however, the role assigned to women who belonged to the historical peasant class essentially remained unchanged.

The first volume of the magazine Asszonyok (Women), published by The Democratic League of Hungarian Women (MNDSZ) in 1945, mainly addressed the difficulties in rebuilding daily life after the war. Tips were provided on how to substitute unavailable items (foodstuffs, clothing, glass panes) and otherwise solve the problems that arose in the course of everyday postwar circumstances. While issues regarding fashion or dress rarely appeared, by the autumn of 1945 readers were treated to brief descriptions of Paris trends. Not surprisingly, after wearing clothing that was dictated by wartime privation and bare necessity, the demand for new forms, colors, and materials was enormous. It is therefore understandable that no serious obstacles blocked the arrival of Dior’s New Look to Hungary, even though an article in the August 1947 issue of Asszonyok criticized the innovation by referring to the threat of class warfare:

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7 For further information on the history of dress and fashion in Hungary, see Katalin F. Dózsa, Letűnt idők, eltűnt divatok, 1867–1945; F. Dózsa, “Budapest, Divatváros,” 94. The most complete ethnographical and historical summary of village dress norms and regional types of traditional clothing can be found in Iván Balassa, ed., Magyar Néprajz, vol. 4, Életmód (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1997). For a more recent discussion, see Mária Flórián, Magyar parasztviseletek (Budapest: Planétás Kiadó, 2001).

8 Established in 1945 with the support of the Communist Party, the Democratic League of Hungarian Women (Magyar Nők Demokratikus Szövetsége) essentially acted as a political wing for the Party’s female members until it was terminated in 1956.
Paris has decided to turn us inside out of our own skins. They will remold us, reshape us into slender figures, plump figures, tender figures, all in the desperate attempt to make us resemble our great-grandmothers. . . . Long, rustling silk skirts, all beribboned and frothing with ruffles, our heads all covered in curls just like a portrait by Turner. . . . Let’s just cast all our clothes aside—after all, according to the new lines, nothing can remain of the past, from slips to jackets, let’s all buy new clothes!... These new clothes were designed for idle women. That’s the crux of it! This new fashion wants women to be slender stems of flowers. . . . This is the fashion of class warfare. Her Highness and friends are fighting for their class: for those who have no other worry beyond looking charming and bewitching their entire, livelong day. This is the most reactionary fashion ever to be invented.9

The defining personalities of Budapest’s fashion scene (Júlia Apponyi, Klára Rotschild, and József Szita) fortunately thought far more favorably of this new wave in fashion. Compared to the previous, square-like form that had determined the upper part of dresses, this new approach was characterized by the way in which the line of the garment followed the natural line of the upper body. The waist’s slimness was once more emphasized as the soft pleats and drape of the skirt belled into a wider shape that almost grazed the ankles. Fashionably wide collars and coats with hems that swung into an A-shape added to the other alterations made in dressing the upper body. One year later, in 1948, Hungary’s contemporary fashion press was already enthusiastically welcoming the way in which this new line “freed” fashion from excess.

At the end of the 1940s, in a move that reflected an adaptation to the nation’s changing political situation, a variety of interviews and articles discussed the total equality experienced by Soviet women, whose refined taste followed the latest trends in Moscow fashion, which was naturally equal to anything Paris could produce. While it is impossible to establish what influence Moscow fashion may have had on urban clothing styles in Hungary, it cannot be denied that the books, brochures, and magazines published between 1945 and 1949 essentially popularized the same customs that had existed before the war, with the exception of perhaps a few small alterations. When providing advice to younger or older women and men, housewives, or working women on how best to follow these customs, it was primarily some form of an aesthetic ideal that was emphasized: “Fashion’s

9 Asszonyok, August 1947, 8.
aim is to accentuate female beauty and enhance the effect wrought by her appearance.”\(^{10}\) According to the customs of the time, an elegant lady always dressed for the given time of day and occasion in an appropriate manner and therefore had a wardrobe containing morning or afternoon dresses in addition to evening gowns that were only to be donned after five o’clock. Since the color black was no longer used simply for mourning, it was also deemed necessary for men to own a black suit jacket and women to lay claim to their own “little black dress.” A dark blue dress or two-piece ensemble was also judged to be sufficiently elegant, depending on the occasion:

The secret to being well dressed is to choose attire according to the time and occasion. The most modest type of dress can be perfectly acceptable in either the afternoon or the evening while wearing an evening gown in the morning or before five o’clock in the afternoon is inappropriate. . . . During the warm days of summer, spring, or autumn the kind of linen dress or ensemble favored by the British is the most suitable attire for every occasion, from morning till the afternoon. . . . For those who have one, donning a mackintosh over a British-style dress or a skirt and colorful jumper will lend any wearer a well-kept appearance. In winter an English-cut winter coat with just a touch of fur or a dyed fur coat is best worn before noon. In summer, a silk ensemble or a colorful or printed silk dress with a little jacket is the right choice for late afternoons. In spring and summer, a black ensemble with either a lace or silk blouse serves the same purpose. . . . For the time being, evening dresses remain the least necessary item. As true as this may be, a cocktail dress—a short silk dress tailored according to the French style and embroidered with beads—is just the thing for a lady of society to wear to premiers, dinners, or for an evening out among company.\(^{11}\)

It was also considered important for female wardrobes to contain a gray, English-style dress suit; when paired with the right blouse, a classical piece such as this would remain fashionable for years, thereby making it a practical choice as well. Between 1945 and 1947 other publications and newspapers based their advice on the reality of the current situation and provided tips on how to make do with the one or two outfits that women actually possessed.

According to fashion experts, appropriately attired ladies did not pay attention to their outerwear alone, but also devoted sufficient

\(^{10}\) Blanka Simon, Házi mindentudó (Budapest: Atheneum, 1946), 69.

\(^{11}\) Ibid., 70.
care to their underclothing. By this time the classic corset had already disappeared and been replaced by a brassiere and full slip, or—in more rare instances—a brassiere and girdle with garter snaps or an elastic panty girdle. Colorful undergarments made in materials such as silk, rayon, nylon, pure silk, or muslin became common. Immediately after the war cotton underwear was sewn at home (even in urban families) and worn. Due to their intimate nature, it goes without saying that underclothes were meant to be invisible as the norms and proprieties surrounding this type of apparel were quite strict. It was, for example, considered inappropriate behavior for anyone to appear “in a state of undress” even in front of family members. Plunging décolletage or an overly short skirt was also seen as opposing society’s generally held views regarding the exposure of too much “skin.” The only exception to this rule was allowed in the case of bathing at public pools or baths, although it cannot be denied that bathing suits still contained quite a lot of material in the mid-1940s. Anyone who did not uphold the norms for dressing was judged an “easy” woman. Breaking either the written or unwritten laws regarding behavior and etiquette therefore drew the swift censure of both the close and broader social environment.

Throughout every walk of life, the social and behavioral expectations connected to dress norms were quite rigid and exacting during the 1940s. In secondary schools, uniforms or uniform caps had to be worn by all students. When analyzing the socialization mechanisms

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attached to attire, clothing played an important role in emphasizing and reinforcing the separate education and rearing of boys and girls, just as the type of clothing that was deemed acceptable also served to regulate relations between the sexes.

As was previously mentioned, white-collar workers, officials, and bureaucrats had no choice but to wear a suit and tie at work every day, a rule that only began to lose validity toward the end of the 1940s. Once this occurred, a certain section of the era’s politicians and public personalities took to appearing in open-necked shirts that drew even more attention to the lack of a tie. It can be supposed that the point to this trend was to suggest a sense of spontaneous informality that simultaneously reaffirmed a sense of identification with the “working masses.”

Written by the author of a guide to “household tips and management” whose opinions obviously reflected middle-class norms from the 1930s, the following passage demonstrates the attempt to interpret Hungary’s changing social circumstances within the context of the growing number of women choosing employment outside of the home. While the author did not oppose careers for women, she still emphasized the opinion that even professional women must take care to combine a neat appearance with practicality: “A working woman is to dress simply but well. It is important that her garment be made of good material because clothing made from durable and good-quality material can be altered several times. . . . Her dress’s fit must be beyond reproach. . . . She must never wear so-called ‘company attire’ at work, not even if she is going to a social event directly from work. It is far preferable for her to take her tea-gown with her to work in a valise. . . . Working women are not to dress in a dull manner. She must look after her appearance and be vain, as is the obligation of every woman.”

The number of women employed at workplaces was relatively small in the second half of the 1940s. Generally speaking, mainly unmarried women or married women who still did not have children were the only ones to work outside of the home. In contrast to this, maintaining a household and raising a family was naturally seen as one of the most important roles a woman could fulfill. It therefore comes as no surprise that publications from the time described in great detail how a woman was to dress while at home. According

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13 Ibid., 25.
to these sources, it was appropriate for a woman to cover her nightgown with a dressing gown (made of cotton shirting, silk, or flannel depending on the season) in the morning, then change this outfit for one in which housework could be suitably done. The era’s housewives were repeatedly warned not to wear clothes that still smelted of the kitchen when sitting down to eat a meal; to avoid this fate, it was instead recommended that the afternoon dress be donned for lunch.

As a sign of the changing times, the clothing worn for free-time activities changed from time to time: “A well-fitting swimsuit is necessary for swimming and should be made of colorful or flower-patterned seersucker or cotton. Other than these colorful tops, knit tops remain quite popular. Two-piece swimsuits are only recommended for women with slim figures. Women with fuller figures should wear one-piece bathing costumes.”14 Behavior and dress were connected in this respect as well: while bathing costumes were somewhat more daring compared to those worn in the interwar period, the main goal (other than providing ease of movement) was still maintaining propriety by covering the body adequately. Making its first appearance in world fashion in 1946, the “two-piece bikini that even exposes the navel . . . is spreading like wildfire among girls with good figures”15 and was quickly adopted in other parts of Europe. In Hungary, however, it took longer for the same process to occur. In fact, it was not until the end of the 1950s that this daring piece of swimwear became more commonplace. Among men, one-piece bathing suits fell out of fashion by the end of the 1940s, to be replaced by bathing trunks sporting much shorter legs.

For its first issue of 1949, Asszonyok made sure to provide readers with advice regarding how to choose clothing for winter sports that would be both fashionable and appropriate: “No longer can it be said that winter sports are a luxury. The right attire can be bought for very little money. The most comfortable garments for ice-skating are a skirt and sweater. The sweater should be made of thick yarn. The skirt should be comfortable and loose, rather than tightly fitting.”16 For skiing a simply tailored pair of ski pants and a “ski jacket” that could be made from an altered coat containing a warm lining were

14 Simon, Házai mindentudó, 62.
16 Asszonyok 5, no. 1 (January 1, 1949), 4.
also recommended. A heavy, colorful scarf and warm wool stockings additionally appeared as accessories to a practical and fashionable winter sporting outfit.

It must be emphasized that the household tips and fashion advice found in the era’s publications obviously only provided an example that could be followed by certain social groups, such as the lower-middle class or middle class. Similarly, it can be safely said that the behaviors and norms held by these groups represented a kind of ideal that could be copied by other social classes. For many, being well-dressed was merely a sort of ideal or distant goal, rather than a widespread social expectation. Those who genuinely followed and created fashion trends mainly belonged to the urban middle class.

The genre of household management or advice publications primarily addressed issues related to women’s fashion; far less attention was devoted to menswear. Estate inventories are one source for gleaning an approximate idea of the contents found in the wardrobes of men living in various social circumstances. According to an inventory made in 1950 regarding the estate of the respectably middle-class, retired head councilman for the city of Debrecen’s auditing office, A.L., his personal wardrobe contained 217 items, totaling an estimated value of 6,180 forints. Virtually every type of garment deemed necessary for any kind of everyday purpose, formal event, and sporting or leisure activity can be found in this inventory. Among other garments, A.L.’s extensive wardrobe contained five hats, two cloth caps, one summer coat, two smoking jackets, one tan leather coat, one dark gray fur coat, one grayish-black winter coat, one coat each for spring and autumn, six winter suits, one summer suit with a waistcoat, one pair of breeches, two bathing suits, eleven collarless shirts, one tuxedo, two dress shirts for formal evening wear, four sweaters, twelve pairs of underwear, twenty-four neckties, and four pairs of shoes.17

For the sake of comparison, the wardrobe (inventoried in 1945) of the former estate manager of the Catholic Church in Eger, Ferenc W., demonstrates a similar level of completeness. Ferenc W.’s wardrobe contained one pair of jodhpurs with a sports jacket, one black suit with no waistcoat, one summer suit with no waistcoat, one gray suit with a waistcoat, one linen suit, four shirts, one package of collars, one nightshirt, six pairs of socks, six pairs of underwear, two pairs

of shin guards, fifteen neckties, one “winter coat lined with one layer of dark-colored, high-quality nutria fur,” one lined work jacket, one overcoat, one urban-style fur coat, three pairs of shoes, one pair of winter boots, four pairs of boot gaiters, one straw hat, one bowler hat, two fedoras, and one bathrobe. In both cases it is quite obvious that the clothing had not only been acquired over a lengthy period of time, but also that the clothing accurately reflected the social position of the men whose estates were inventoried, even given any inadvertent errors that may have occurred when the items were recorded.

Relatively little is known, however, about what the different urban groups of Hungary’s working class wore on a daily basis. As financial constraints played a considerable role in determining the apparel choices for working women, it was unlikely that they bought fashion magazines or followed the latest trends. If possible, working class women strove to present a simple yet clean and neat appearance within the restrictions placed on them by a limited wardrobe containing one or two changes of either a simple skirt and blouse or a factory-made dress, a coat, shoes, and a few pairs of undergarments. A few individuals belonging to this social group naturally amassed wardrobes that were far more expansive compared to the average. The wife of a skilled laborer working in upholstery in Debrecen who died in the spring of 1945 at the age of thirty-five could select from one gray winter coat with a black fur collar, fifteen cotton or woolen dresses, six “special” dresses, two skirt suits, eight blouses, two pairs of trousers, one sweater, five nightgowns, three pairs of pajamas, three white and four colored camisoles, six pairs of women’s underpants, two bathing suits, three pairs each of shoes and dress shoes, and one pair of boots.

It comes as no surprise that workers in positions of higher prestige (foremen, skilled laborers, the heads of workshops) had access to apparel that was far superior to that worn by the average members of their profession. In the case of men, this meant owning at least two to three sets of suits for everyday use, one suit for special occasions, between six and seven shirts, eight to ten pairs of undergarments, one cap and one hat, a spring jacket, and a winter coat.

During the interwar period, most large companies had already begun supplying their workers with work clothing, a habit that continued

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after the war. For the most part, uniforms also retained a sense of prestige due to the fact that they represented secure employment and a steady lifestyle. It was precisely for this reason that certain professions—such as that of the postal or railway worker—remained relatively popular, not to mention the added benefit of being able to reduce clothing costs thanks to the uniform that was provided or the clothing stipend that was issued.

In contrast to the gradual shifts occurring in adult wardrobes, children's wear and styles of dress did not change substantially. As a fashion history summary notes about the 1940s, “dresses for little girls were cinched at the waist and the skirt was gathered or pleated with a ruffled apron to cover it. Hair was brushed into a crest above the forehead and decorated with a large hairbow. Boys wore shorts with suspenders in summer and trousers in winter, with plaid shirts on weekdays and white shirts for formal events. The style for their coats and blazers was the same as that used for adult clothing. Although children were still required to be careful of their clothing, garments were more comfortable and allowed for greater freedom of movement. . .”

For little girls, formal clothing continued to be a sailor’s dress or dark skirt and sailor’s blouse while boys had to wear a suit jacket and tie.

Throughout World War II, while it was not unheard of for members of the middle-aged generation of Hungary’s peasant class to exchange their traditional clothing for store-bought apparel, this practice was still not widespread. It is undoubtedly true that (particularly in the case of women) the inhabitants of Hungary’s villages mostly clung to their traditional attire, garments, and customs, as well as the values that surrounded how these garments were worn

20 F. Dózsa, Letűnt idők, eltűnt divatok, 262.
21 In the middle of the twentieth century, the peasantry was still a definitive social group in Hungarian society. In 1949, 53.8 percent of all active workers (totaling 2.2 million people) were employed in agriculture. The amount of land or size of farm owned by a family or individual determined the separate levels of Hungary’s peasant class and were used to describe these social groups. In 1949, 15 percent of all registered agricultural workers did not possess any land while 55 percent had anywhere from 0.6 to 5.8 hectares; this group also performed day labor and they were known as a smallholder/small landowner peasant farmers. Twenty-four percent farmed and owned 5.8 to 14.4 hectares and were known as mid-level peasant farmers; a large majority of this group also employed farm laborers. Six percent owned more than 14.4 hectares of farmland and therefore composed the group referred to as the high-income, wealthy peasant or peasant elite.
in a way that transcended any regional factors that may have otherwise influenced dress norms. In the village of Atkár, located in Heves County, almost every member of the community’s middle-aged generation still wore traditional dress throughout the 1940s; the number of women, however, between the ages of eighteen and thirty who had turned to modern apparel had risen somewhat, even if their clothing choices were actually a unique amalgamation of traditional and urban styles that clearly marked them as rural in the eyes of outsiders.\(^{22}\) One such continued custom was the habit of wearing certain colors that were used in traditional wardrobes to indicate age (such as red for young or newly married women and dark colors for older women) or the habit of covering their heads with a kerchief. In other words, their appearance combined what they conceived as urban with pieces or aspects of traditional peasant clothing. In the northern Hungarian community of Varsány, “before 1948, the village’s entire female population wore traditional peasant clothing; the only exception to this were the family members of craftsmen or servants who had come from elsewhere and naturally dressed differently.”\(^{23}\) Compared to women, it was more common for younger members of Hungary’s rural male population—particularly among those who lived in more industrialized areas or near larger cities—to abandon traditional garb.

At this time, clothing still provided a fairly accurate expression of a villager’s local ties, specific age group, marital status, and actual or only coveted financial situation. In many cases garments even indicated the wearer’s religious affiliation and the given occasion or event for which a certain choice of apparel had been donned. Until the end of the 1950s, clothing still had a major function as a “sign designating the wearer’s role in the local community.”\(^{24}\) It therefore follows that different kinds of apparel were donned for holidays or work as opposed to everyday functions. In many cases, garments also acted as


a means of preserving value since procuring the right materials and then making a richly decorated set of clothing deemed fit for the most significant occasions demanded an enormous amount of time, effort, and money. As a result, valuable pieces such as these were naturally treated with great care.

The women who still maintained tradition wore an undershirt or chemise, petticoat(s), a blouse with either ruffled or plain sleeves, a bodice, an overskirt, a vest, an apron, a headkerchief, and a shawl. Instead of boots, in most regions women wore a type of buckled shoe. A headkerchief and apron were essential elements in most regional apparel for women; many thought that a woman would be “naked” without them. The other variation of traditional dress that was generally prevalent at the time, though perhaps less strict regarding custom, merely signified the wearer’s regional origin and did not possess any significance as a representation of value. In these communities, individuals exhibited a lower degree of attachment to tradition compared to the average and were more open to innovation; their dress subsequently showed fewer indications of social position or function: at most, a difference between daily apparel and formal wear was made.

For those who belonged to the lower echelon of the peasant class, the clothing listed in estate inventories was generally valued at anywhere from twenty to thirty forints and—in the event that actual garments were listed—it can be seen that owning more than ten to fifteen pieces of clothing was rare. Estate inventories, however, show that members of the wealthier peasant class had far larger and more valuable wardrobes, as was the case for the mid-level peasant housewife, Mrs. István B., who died at the age of twenty-two in December 1944 in the village of Érsekvadkert in Nógrád County. Her wardrobe contained 146 garments estimated to be worth over 40,000 pengős on July 9, 1945, the day when the estate was valued. Even when taking the rising rate of inflation that Hungary’s economy was experiencing at the time into consideration, this wardrobe represented quite a respectable sum. Among the many pieces it contained, Mrs. István B.’s wardrobe had no less than seventeen skirts, twelve blouses and

an equal number of chemises, seven long-sleeved, lace-edged, fitted jackets, three embroidered vests, twenty-five headkerchiefs, two large shawls, two handwoven, decorated aprons, five cloth aprons, one pair of high-laced shoes, and one pair of dress shoes. The color combinations used in the clothing found in this particular wardrobe reflected the wearer’s age and therefore contained many relatively brightly colored and patterned garments. The skirts for example were mainly black, maroon, green, and brown, while the headkerchiefs were red, blue, orange, purple, and black. Materials such as chambray, silk, broadcloth, and cambric predominated throughout the selection of garments.

The traditional garments worn by rural men were typically far simpler compared to those worn by women. By the middle of the twentieth century, the more traditional type of linen trousers made of (usually handwoven) white linen was replaced by jodhpur-like trousers that were baggy around the seat and hips and narrowed into tight-fitting legs that enabled the wearer to fit a pair of boots over the trouser legs. Everyday or more formal shirts sewn of heavy white canvas or linen that was carefully pleated around the neck and decorated with tucks down the front and perhaps embroidery were made by the women of the family. A black vest was usually worn over the shirt; in some regions, a long apron, a fitted jacket, or—for colder weather—a heavier jacket completed the outfit for men. Pantaloons also appeared by the middle of the twentieth century among the clothing items worn by wealthier peasant farmers. For the most part, men wore black boots; rural men only began wearing dress shoes in the 1940s. Another essential element of a rural man’s wardrobe was his hat, an item that virtually came to symbolize manliness and masculinity within Hungarian culture. A black broadcloth suit was the most important garment worn by men on formal occasions.

As rural men increasingly sought employment in Hungary’s cities, by the latter half of the 1940s trousers made of store-bought, finely woven material became far more prevalent, just as boots were exchanged for dress shoes or work boots. In villages, apparel’s powerful ability to represent social position still held firm, similarly to the micro-level norms that placed certain types of garments within categories judged as appropriate for designated age-groups, sexes, or occasions. The only exception was made in the case of young women who were either preparing to be wed or had recently done so: at this
time of life, more well-to-do peasant families spent less on dressing their eligible daughter while poorer families went to great lengths to supply their daughters with a suitable number of garments. A traditional rural wedding dress included—to list just a few of the clothing items—four to five pleated skirts worn over four to five starched petticoats, a lace-edged blouse, an undervest made of silk, an overskirt of white silk that was edged with lace, white stockings, black shoes, a neckerchief, a shawl made of white lace, and the bridal wreath that was the prerequisite headpiece for all brides. Once the bride had danced the “bridal dance,” a tradition that marked her final dance as a girl before she was formally dressed in the attire and hairstyle of a married woman, she donned a new set of clothing that was usually bright red in color and highly decorated, which served the function of displaying her status as a newly-married woman. It should also be mentioned that great importance was placed on how many sets of clothing a person owned, or how many of one type of more expensive garments (such as overskirts) could be found in an individual’s wardrobe. In Varsány, for example, it was not unheard of for a peasant wife to own a total of eighty skirts, including both everyday skirts and ones for more formal occasions.

Village dwellers emphasized the importance of looking neat, trim, and clean while wearing clothing that lent a tasteful appearance. The culture surrounding traditional peasant styles naturally changed too as new innovations made an either short-lived or more lasting appearance in hairstyles, certain pieces of outer clothing, or in the kind of materials used to make these garments. Once an innovation became widely accepted, it speedily became a part of village tradition and thereby remained a constant element among the clothing that was worn. Compared to Hungary’s other social groups, however, it must be said that traditional styles of dress were far more consistent and less given to change.

As far as nightclothes were concerned, in most villages women slept in a blouse and petticoat that were considered too shabby for daytime wear; nightgowns only became more common in the post-war years. Men simply removed their outer layers and went to bed in the shirt and undergarments they had worn all day. In the village of Átány in Heves County, “the women do not have a separate set of nightclothes; they sleep in the same clothes they worked in throughout the day. Older women hardly remove any of their clothes at
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night: some only take off their shoes and apron while others also remove their outer, long-sleeved jacket. Younger women in their forties generally remove their outer clothes and sleep in a blouse, petticoat, or long chemise.”27 In the 1940s panties still counted as a novelty for rural women and were therefore far from common.28 This period also marked a reduction in the number of people going barefoot; it comes as no surprise that this was also when women started wearing shoes with cotton stockings instead of boots.

Nice clothing naturally formed an important part of presenting a good appearance and therefore meant wearing garments that were well-maintained and clean even on weekdays. The unique way in which village women walked—tiny quick steps were taken as the upper body was held in a straight, upright position while the head remained erect, the hips swung rhythmically, and the arms were allowed to hang or swing at the sides—was not only the result of the clothing they were wearing, but also added to the overall effect of maintaining a good appearance. In most communities, general opinion held that “dressing nicely, stepping neatly best befits bachelor men and eligible girls.”29

While the time that newborn infants were kept in swaddling varied from region to region and extended anywhere from six to nine months, once they passed this stage all children were dressed in a baby shirt and skirt or a long shirt and jacket, a long-sleeved pleated dress that closed in the back. From the time they were three or four years old, little girls wore blouses and skirts until they reached school age, from which time they basically wore the same types of clothes that older girls did. Once they began going to school, boys wore white shirts and narrow-legged trousers that were essentially the same kinds of garments worn by young bachelors. Small children went barefoot until they began attending school. Both boys and girls usually received their first, truly special set of clothing when they took their first communion or had their confirmation.

As was previously mentioned, colors played a significant role in the clothing worn by rural women as they expressed the woman’s age

27 Edit Fél and Tamás Hofer, Arányok és mértékek a paraszti gazdálkodásban (Budapest: Balassi Kiadó, 1997), 326.
29 Fél and Hofer, Arányok és mértékek a paraszti gazdálkodásban, 317.
and marital status, and the nature of the occasion. Red, other kinds of bright colors, and patterned cloth dominated the wardrobe worn by newlywed women and was deemed acceptable until the birth of her first child. From this time on, the color of a woman’s clothing became progressively darker. Black and brown, for example, dominated the garments worn by older women. Religious customs and traditions also influenced what colors were worn for certain holidays; in Catholic villages, women dressed in black when they went to church during Lent and on the days leading up to Easter. On the first Sunday after Easter, women attended mass dressed in white from head to toe.\(^\text{30}\)

Little money was spent on replacing garments that had become worn from use. On the one hand, this was because individuals took great care in preserving what clothing they had. On the other hand, the majority of peasant families only spent money on items they absolutely had to have for necessity’s sake. The custom of providing girls with a trousseau that also functioned as part of her dowry was still common in the 1940s. In Varsány

a girl’s dowry usually contained the following garments: one wardrobe’s worth of skirts totaling forty to fifty, or in some cases sixty, pieces; another wardrobe of blouses, thirty to thirty-five pieces . . . ; underskirts: four starched and seven pleated; twenty-five petticoats; nine aprons; eight headpieces, seven richly decorated for holidays, one for mourning; between fifty and sixty kerchiefs, twenty-five with tassels and twelve without; twelve undervests, two of silk and ten knitted; two large tasseled shawls for wearing around the neck; one outer vest (half coat); one pair of boots, a pair of buckled shoes, a pair of high-laced shoes, and a pair of sandals.\(^\text{31}\)

It is therefore apparent that (within the limitations imposed by their financial circumstances) families supplied their daughters with all the basic clothing they would need for the rest of their lives as they prepared to enter marriage.

\(^{30}\) See Gergely, “Változások Varsány népviseletében”; Ágnes Fülemile and Judit Stefany, A kazári női viselet változása a XIX–XX. században (Budapest: ELTE, 1989); Flórián, Magyar parasztviseletek, 118.

\(^{31}\) Gergely, “Változások Varsány népviseletében,” 245. The trousseau collected for girls preparing for marriage was similarly opulent in Átány. See Fél and Hofer, Arányok és mértékek a paraszti gazdálkodásban, 331–32.
Fashion and dressing habits during the state socialist period: changes in norms for everyday and formal occasions

The transformation that occurred in the norms and habits surrounding dress became increasingly apparent toward the end of the 1940s and the beginning of the 1950s. The brochure for a fashion show held by the Union for Hungarian Fashion Designer Artists at the end of 1947 already displayed a shift in attitude toward the role played by clothing:

A working woman naturally needs different types of garments for her daily lifestyle compared to a “decorative woman.” It is not the task of modern designing artists to come up with phantasmagoric clothes—the likes of which have yet to be seen—for the sake of a few fashion divas: it is their job to design pretty and practical clothes for the sake of millions and millions of women, the likes of which can be put to good use and satisfy the needs of millions and millions of working women living in real life situations, whether at home, at work, pursuing sports, or celebrating special events.32

In the name of gender equality, the February 1948 issue of Asszonyok urged the development and production of ready-made clothing for women: “If male workers can get ready-made suits and shirts, then the working woman also needs a ready-made woman’s suit and ready-made dress.”33 One-and-a-half years later this shift in attitude had reached its apex; in the same women’s magazine an entire page bearing the title of “How the Soviet Person Dresses: Bolder, More Vividly, More Intriguingly” was already making it very plain to its readers that the Soviet-style clothing included in its compilation was the correct example for them to follow. After Asszonyok was taken over by its successor Nők Lapja in 1949, the first issues of the new magazine already included practical tips on how to alter “obsolete,” middle-class garments while simultaneously emphasizing that “for today’s woman apparel is practical, healthy, and pretty. Nowadays the large department stores serve the interests of working women rather than the senseless whims of fashion queens.”34

When it came to satisfying the needs of “the working woman,” after 1949 neither fashion salons, individuality, nor beauty played any part in the process. Following trends was no longer the most im-

33 Asszonyok, no. 4 (February 1948), 6.
34 Nők Lapja 1, no. 2 (1949), 6.
portant issue at hand; focus was instead turned to acquiring the bare minimum of garments necessary for fulfilling basic needs. As far as dress was concerned, the era of (more-or-less) standardized clothing was ushered in for the purpose of exalting the puritan nature of the worker’s ethic by banishing any aspect of apparel that was deemed unnecessary or antithetic to simplicity, practicality, and the serviceability needed to meet workplace demands. Fashion magazines of the time no longer promoted individual taste, but rather praised the products being churned out by state-owned clothing manufactories.
in quantities that ran to tens of thousands of the same type of clothing. As Asszonyok reported on a fashion show held in the spring of 1949: “The clothes are excellent; in style, cut, and taste it must be said that they are in no way subordinate to the products sold by the big French tailoring industry — unless, of course, their value is somehow reduced by the fact that the working women of the state’s clothing manufactory are making them by the thousands or tens of thousands to be worn by many thousands or hundreds of thousands of our nation’s working women.”35 The customers, however, were not overly enthusiastic for standardized garments “because these models were made of low-grade materials and were tailored incorrectly due to the low technical quality exhibited by the clothing manufactory, not to mention how extremely boring and conservative they were since copying the ‘capitalist fashion’ of the West was considered an ideological error.”36 The way in which clothing and dress “turned gray” is obvious in the cinema news reports or films made at the time.

The direction which clothing trends took unequivocally demonstrated the emergence of a contrived propaganda campaign declaring a state of emancipation. Underlying this campaign was the aim of achieving certain economic and political goals via the rapid inclusion of women in the workplace.37 This goal was stressed by a 1954 report by the Democratic Union of Hungarian Women:

The most telling proof of female equality is the fact that female factory workers stand shoulder to shoulder with men in the battle to attain the [state economic] plans. As if it were our own personal victory, we are all pleased that one-fourth of our Stakhanovites are women. We are proud of the two-time Stakhanovite, Mrs. Sándor Tóth, the shoe stitcher at the Fashion Shoe Factory who was awarded the Work Order of Honor for continuously fulfilling her goal by 180 to 200 percent. The same is true of Mrs. Gyula Spelleg, the Canned Foods Manufactory’s Stakhanovite worker whose average achievement is 160 percent.38

35 Asszonyok, March 1949, 4.
37 For further background history regarding this question, see Mária Schadt, “Feltörekvő dolgozó nő”: Nők az ötvenes években (Pécs: Pro Pannónia, 2003); Gyöngyi Gyarmati, “Nők, játékfilmek hatalom,” in Az 1950-es évek Magyarországa játékfilmeken, ed. József Vonyó et al. (Pécs: Asoka Bt., 2004), 41–68.
38 Az MNDSZ elnökének beszámolója (Budapest: MNDSZ, 1954), 15. The Soviet term
Within this political context, “only” those women who were employed (preferably in factories, mines, or manufactories, or as workers or tractor drivers on collective farms) counted as productive members of society. This image was quite the opposite of the still widely accepted, family-centered role women had traditionally maintained, along with the household tasks and accompanying values this implied. As a household advice booklet published after the war expressed it, “Can there be any more exalted duty for a woman than to ensure her husband’s well-being, peace, and ordered lifestyle and to raise children?” At the time, only one answer was conceivable to this question, particularly among the middle-class. Among urban working-class families, however, the model of a family supported by a double paycheck was generally accepted more quickly due to the necessities brought about by survival; the same process occurred much more gradually and with far greater difficulty in white-collar families. In villages agricultural labor’s cyclical nature had already laid out an established order in which “masculine-dominated custom” obstructed this type of change. It must also be mentioned that peasant families had already evolved a system regarding the division of labor that rather finely coordinated tasks in a way that was not only compulsory but was also firmly based on the physical abilities of each gender.

The enforced emancipation of women spread to virtually every aspect of life in Hungary. The press devoted a remarkable amount of attention and space to the topic itself: “The female ideal has fortunately changed. It is no longer mandatory to float about the world as slender as a reed, as ephemeral as a will-o’-the-wisp. Modernism’s concave chest and serpentine posture is not liked by anyone these days. We are pleased to see buxom young wives leaning over baby carriages and well-built, ‘sturdy’ women operating building cranes: it is no longer a problem for the SZIT girl to be bursting with health.”

Even as fashion shows became an increasingly rare event at the end

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39 Simon, Házi mindentudó, 74.
40 For further details, see Fél and Hofer, Arányok és mértékek a paraszti gazdálkodásban, 146–49.
41 Nők Lapja, no. 17 (1950), 9. The acronym SZIT refers to the Szakszervezeti Ifjúmunkás és Tanoncmozgalom (The Union Movement of Young Workers and Apprentices).
of the 1940s and the 1950s, female workers were pointedly placed on the catwalk in place of professional models: “Instead of whittled down and dried up mannequin misses bred for this sole purpose, the dresses were worn by young girls, women, and working women with a healthy amount of flesh on their bones.”

While fashion became progressively removed from public view, the news regarding international or national fashion events first became shorter, then much harder to find in the press. Despite this trend, most issues of Nők Lapja published during the 1950s dedicated the magazine’s back cover to the latest fashion while additionally providing tips on what to wear or how to make clothes. Throughout the month of March 1950, this publication even offered ideas on dressing fashionably during the approaching spring season: “On the street a sprightly, light wool dress provides a wonderfully refreshing splash of color in the bright, spring sunshine. It is especially appropriate for a young woman to wear a dress in light red, blue, pink, or green in a hue that isn’t overly bright or conspicuous, but more muted, like the kind of shade called ‘pastel’ . . . Gingham is highly fashionable, from tiny checks all the way to big, bold patterns.”

References to the custom of dressing according to the time of day (morning/afternoon/evening dresses) sometimes appeared among the tips and advice provided for readers, but it was far more common for this section to contain dress patterns for making clothes at home or suggestions on how to alter garments.

An enthusiastic recommendation published in January 1950 informed readers of the fact that flannel was the latest fashion: “[T]he shop windows are just jammed pack with it. How very tasteful, how very refined all the plaid flannel blouses are! A soft, warm, youthful material that veritably embodies our growing standard of living—not to mention that one meter is only 15.70 forints.” Compared to the average wage earned by physical laborers (500 to 600 forints) this price was far from cheap, particularly given the fact that buying enough fabric for one blouse cost 40 forints. In the double 1950/1951 issue of the new fashion magazine Ez a divat, the editor of the column “Fashion News” felt that simplicity represented the most current trend in fashion and should therefore define which material was selected, the

43 Nők Lapja, no. 10 (1950), 8.
44 Nők Lapja, no. 1 (1950), 9.
cut and colors used in the garment, and whatever embellishments were to be added. This fact was also demonstrated by the biggest fashion hit of that winter, the jumper dress. A style that allowed for some variability, the jumper dress could be adapted to older pieces, yet always looked brand-new when paired with a blouse or pull-over. In 1951, articles discussing fashion or apparel were quite rare in Nők Lapja while photos exclusively pictured women (or men in a few rare instances) clothed in work clothes and heroically fighting on the “work front” as Stakhanovites.

During the 1950s in Hungary, the enforced way in which dress was uniformized represented a demonstration of how much society had changed. It became a political and ideological requirement for the outer appearance of individuals to express a break with the old, bourgeois world. It was believed that—once significant social groups had adopted the exemplified, puritan dress of the “worker”—social equality would naturally follow since “everyone” was wearing overalls, work clothes, loden coats, or simple garments made of cotton. As masses of people dressed nearly the same way, it became virtually impossible to categorize anyone based simply on his or her appearance; clothing, it seemed, no longer acted as a signifier of social position. This change represented an enormous split from the interwar period and its customs. Oddly enough, the drive toward uniformization also opposed the dress norms held by various groups among the working class: according to Katalin F. Dózsa’s detailed analysis, during the 1940s many of the garments worn by better-paid, skilled workers were used to emphasize the wearer’s elite position within his or her own social class. Many, for example, felt that exchanging their favorite fedora and simple suit for a cloth cap and work coveralls was a loss in prestige, especially when individuals were urged to wear the latter in public as well as at the workplace. Those who strove to remain well-dressed during the 1950s primarily relied on clothing reserves accumulated before the war; more importantly, by doing so their behavior did not conform to the political system’s expectations.

45 Ez a Divat, Winter 1950/51, 2.
46 F. Dózsa, Letűnt idők, eltűnt divatok, 1867–1945, 321. In the case of elite, highly skilled workers, “their outdoor clothing was a black suit with a white shirt, a starched collar, tie, watch chain, and either a bowler hat or a black fedora. Footwear was a pair of high, laced shoes.” Outerwear for semi-skilled workers was “a black suit that resembled the kind worn by peasant men, a white shirt with a soft collar, no tie, and a fedora.”
As egalitarianism was increasingly taken to the extreme, by 1950 the system was no longer satisfied with merely judging “self-serving fads,” but also condemned patent leather shoes, hats, and ties as “unacceptable exhibitions of bourgeois habits.” Regarding women’s apparel, ruffles, a slightly plunging neckline, genuine or costume jewelry, lipstick, makeup, and nail polish were also rejected. In other words, all outer elements that opposed the norms upheld by the period’s enforced sense of egalitarianism or emphasized individuality as opposed to a sense of communality were looked at with deep suspicion. This view therefore explains why the majority of women in leadership roles usually wore a white blouse under a simple, brown, skirt suit that was tailored in the English style. Men usually attended to their “highly responsible” leadership tasks in dark gray or black suits that were made of rather low-quality material. For this class of society, the need to expand their wardrobes to accommodate sudden rises in the political echelon frequently led to difficulties

Throughout this period, the apparel worn by working women and men represented the ideal. When choosing garments, price and availability became the most important aspects. Clothing choices were much narrower at the beginning of the 1950s: for urban men, a gray or dark green loden coat and a cloth cap or beret became typical. Most women wore shirtwaist dresses, skirts, and plaid flannel blouses. The appearance of the *jampec* style, consisting of a colored shirt, patterned necktie, drainpipe trousers, thick-soled shoes, and narrow skirts, aimed to break the overwhelming monotony imposed by the “enforced puritanism” of coveralls and loden coats but was not entirely successful in reaching this goal.47 Particularly during the first half of the 1950s, the *jampec* subculture was an instinctive rejection of the era’s politics. Sándor Horváth summarized the characteristics of this subculture in his historical analysis of everyday life in Sztálinváros:

Based on numerous descriptions it can be said that the “*jampec*” were primarily characterized by their appearance. *Jampec* wore black or colored shirts, patterned ties or red, polka-dotted neck kerchiefs, baggy suit jackets with shoulders that sloped, drainpipe trousers, striped socks, rubber-soled colored shoes, and cowboy hats. *Jampec* girls wore narrow skirts and blocky, square-

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47 *Jampec* were youngsters who tried to follow the newest (Western) fashion—similarly to the *stilyagi* in the Soviet Union or the Teddy Boys subculture in the United Kingdom—by dressing in a way that would distinguish them from the rest of society.
shaped coats with their hair either in a ponytail or in a “permanent.” Later they were the first to wear the garment that erased all differences between gender and class: jeans. Donning just one of these pieces of clothing could automatically turn someone into a follower of the jampec rage: wearing the full range of possible items in the complete outfit was not necessary. . . . For those young people who managed to obtain this type of apparel on the black market, jampec clothes represented urbanity, the experience of belonging to a certain group, and the feeling that they were following western values. . . . By changing their hair and dress, anyone who saw them walking down the street knew that this particular group of young people was on its way to have fun, meaning that they had removed themselves from the workplace and were therefore not under Party supervision.48

The rules regarding etiquette and morality were reinforced via fashion and clothing during this period. These were also frequently covered in the contemporary press: “In a heatwave, we can still remain well-dressed even if only wearing one layer, provided that our light summer dress remains within the boundaries of good taste and we don’t use the hot weather as an excuse to permit ourselves to wear necklines that drop to the waist and offend the eye.”49 As to the question of whether “a working woman should paint her face and smoke,” the answer was that matters such as these are private until they overstep the boundaries dictated by common taste.50 Skirt length, women sporting trousers, and the jampec style were issues that frequently sparked sharp debates: “When working in winter trousers are acceptable. Whether they should be worn in summer is a matter of taste and fashion. One thing is for certain: appearing in trousers at the theatre or places of entertainment is ridiculous and tawdry.”51 A review of what clothing styles were deemed acceptable at the time therefore demonstrates that the essentially conservative views promoted by journalists attempting to influence public opinion was not far from the rather prudish behavior norms that the contemporary state socialist system was trying to enforce throughout Hungarian society.

49Nők Lapja, no. 26 (1950), 7.
50Nők Lapja, no. 1 (1952), 9.
51Nők Lapja, no. 5 (1955), 8.
Despite the dramatic way in which clothing was simplified, fashion shows continued to be held throughout the 1950s; after all, the fashion industry’s products still had to be sold.

The Company of Garment Manufactory Design is showing working women its fashion collections at industrial works and centers. Other than Budapest’s factories, fashion shows were recently organized in the cities of Dorog, Sztálinváros, Miskolc, Özd, Diósgyőr, Pápa, Győr, and Pécs.... The Company of Garment Manufactory Design is holding a survey of public opinion after the fashion shows for the purpose of attaining indispensable criticism. Based on this, its mistakes can be corrected and work can continue unabated as the Company maintains its close connection to the masses of working women whom it not only dresses, but also instructs in purposeful, tasteful clothing habits.\(^{52}\)

As amusing as it may seem, portraits of Rákosi, Lenin, and Stalin frequently hung above the catwalk. For those who decided to purchase the items featured in the fashion show, the lack of selection and poor quality was far more disturbing. Given the difficulty in procuring apparel items, the fact that there was simply not anything to buy was a more serious issue. In reality, the relative uniformization of clothing that Hungarian society experienced during the 1950s was only partially due to political will and ideological expectations: the lack of goods, low incomes, and the resulting drastic decrease in consumption played just as much of a role.\(^{53}\)

In contrast to urban dressing habits, most Hungarian villages saw fewer changes in the first half of the 1950s. Clothing and behavioral norms had not yet begun to undergo any kind of noticeable change in the nation’s rural regions, even if certain garments were exchanged for others, such as knitted vests or cardigans. Just as knitted apparel appeared with greater frequency in traditional Hungarian dress, gray trench coats—available in sizes for children as well as adults—were a recent addition to rural wardrobes.\(^{54}\)

\(^{52}\) Ez a Divat, Winter 1952, 8.

\(^{53}\) Barely amounting to two-thirds of the real income earned per person in 1949, the income earned by peasant farmers underwent in 1952 a drastic deterioration: “The real income for workers and employees gradually fell in 1952 and was 82 percent of that earned in 1949.” See Zsuzsa Ferge, Fejezetek a magyar szegénypolitika történetéből (Budapest: Magvető, 1986), 48–49.

\(^{54}\) Outside of Transylvania, knitting was not commonly done in Hungarian peasant communities and knitted garments therefore did not appear in traditional Hungarian
worked in gumboots instead of traditional leather boots. In contrast to urban women, the issue of women wearing trousers hardly surfaced in the more isolated surroundings of a rural community, where breaking customs or village norms generated automatic gossip and opprobrium.

As roughly one-quarter of a million active laborers abandoned agriculture and the countryside for employment in the cities, the compulsory mobilization of Hungary’s peasant class that occurred between 1948 and 1955 understandably added further impetus to the modernization of rural dress. Those who took up steady labor at an urban or industrial workplace or belonged to the younger generation consequently exchanged their traditional garments for the type of apparel worn by everyone else. Despite this, individuals continued to cling to cultural traditions and respect local customs, a circumstance that explains why rural communities were never standardized to the extent that cities were, even though village dwellers possessed a heightened interest toward urban dress. The highly ineffective methods used to disseminate propaganda are partly responsible for the fact that socialist campaigns lambasting the peasant class for its backwardness hardly reached Hungary’s villages. The political enmity directed toward village life and peasant farmers, however, did much to embitter daily life in rural communities.

The lack of goods also made it much harder to maintain or replace items of traditional clothing. In October 1953, a report regarding the extent to which rural populations had access to provisions concluded that the greatest shortages were found in the supply of clothing. The situation was further worsened by the fact that rural consumers displayed a growing demand for virtually every type of garment. In village agricultural-collective shops, ready-made clothes for both men and women, shoes, undergarments, cotton, and wool dress goods were scarce. Even in the mid-fifties, peasant communities continued to strive toward self-sufficiency and were characteristically reluctant to make new purchases of any sort. To be more specific, rural consumers either only bought the products that they could not make themselves or restricted purchases to the most essential items because farming

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55 dress until roughly the 1940s. When knitted vests, socks, etc., were included, they were made to match the style, color, and shape of the garment they had replaced.

expenditures took precedence over every other type of cost. The shortages and lack of supply that typified this era in Hungarian history only deepened this traditional attitude and survival mechanism.

As 1956 turned to 1957, the ideological constraints binding fashion loosened somewhat as puritanism gradually lost its position among the compulsory ideals determining apparel at the time. The issues of femininity and expressions of individuality subsequently began to fade from political discourse. The following sentiments were stressed in the introduction to a new column entitled “Lessons in What to Wear” that regularly appeared in Nők Lapja as of January 1957: “[W]e don’t dress for our female colleagues or girlfriends, but most definitely for ourselves and especially for men. We dress for our own selves so we can catch a joyful glimpse of ourselves in the mirror before heading off each morning to tend to our daily tasks. We dress for men so it will be far easier to find and keep that one, Mr. Wonderful. . . . We don’t chase after the latest, odd fads or extravagances at any price, nor do we abandon femininity for the sake of fashion. Let’s all dress like women!”

Compared to the beginning of the decade, women’s magazines showed that the attitude toward following fashion had undergone a complete change as advice regarding even the following issue was aired in print:

To what extent should we remain undressed when dressed, you ask? Those who are not so very young will recall a certain trend that took over Europe a few years ago. Women wore two-piece summer dresses with a top that barely reached to below the breasts, revealing a handbreadth of bare skin above the skirt. We can ease the palpitating hearts of those in shock: this trend hardly found any followers here in Budapest. We can remain confident that Budapest’s taste and sense of restraint shall hold as firm as any other ancient virtue. After all, here in Hungary it truly is rare for a very young girl or older woman to appear in public in a low-cut dress. And if they should: doing so is utterly tasteless in the case of adolescents while the sight of décolletage in older women can cause exactly the opposite reaction from what they intended.

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56 Following the defeat of the 1956 Revolution, the government headed by János Kádár consolidated its power by resorting to dictatorial methods and widespread reprisals. Despite this, a few small compromises were made in areas related to daily life. Wages were raised and issues that were less important from an ideological standpoint—such as dress and fashion—were not handled the same way as they had been before the revolution.

57 Nők Lapja, no. 1 (1957), 7.

58 Nők Lapja, no. 15 (1957), 9.
As a sign of how much the attitudes connected to dress had changed, in 1957 women’s magazines and fashion publications raced to report on the latest trends in spring fashions. According to these sources, Hungary’s fashion “industrial units” were “humming with activity” and would therefore be sure to satisfy the choicest demands regarding spring styles. The number of copies of the magazine Ez a Divat was raised to twice what its previous print run had been; as of February 1957, 100,000 copies were being published. At the beginning of 1957 the weekly paper published by the newly organized Communist Youth Union of Hungary, Magyar Ifjúság (Hungarian Youth), also devoted a column to fashion. Other than providing useful tips on—to mention just one example—how to turn a loden coat into a fashionable garment, readers could regularly follow events in the fashion world on both the national and international level.

Beginning in the summer of 1956, detailed coverage was once again made of London and Paris fashion shows, including descriptions of Christian Dior’s latest collection and its public reception. In August 1958, Klára Rotschild reported on her two-week field tour of Paris in Ez a Divat. Based on her observations, Hungarian women had nothing to be embarrassed about since “they can hold their own in any international contest of beauty or elegance.”

The fact that the National Counsel of Hungarian Women organized a discussion about fashion, modern and tasteful apparel, “the models from large Parisian fashion houses,” and the burning question of whether Paris had prettier women than Budapest in September 1957 is a further indication that the winds of change were blowing. The participants eventually solved the final, knotty issue by concluding that Parisian women are not only more careful of their figures, they are also much stricter in matters of taste: “Of course women here

59 “Even a loden coat worn for years, an old-fashioned skirt suit, or ready-made clothes that you’ve grown bored of are worth altering. The old loden coat can be shortened while the material that was cut off can be turned into pockets and cuffs to replace those that were worn through.” Magyar Ifjúság, no. 11 (1957), 6.

60 See among others: Stefi Sándor, “Párizsi divatbeszámoló,” Ez a Divat, Summer 1956, 12–13; Péterné Nagy, “Londoni divatlevél,” Ez a Divat, no. 4 (1956), 13. It must be mentioned that in the spring of 1957 both Nők Lapja and Ez a Divat underwent significant changes regarding form and content. Not only did fashion photos replace the drawings and sketches that had previously characterized these publications, but socialist production reports and emancipation propaganda were gradually phased out in favor of articles focused on socializing.

would have a much easier time of it if ready-made models weren’t lagging two to three years behind fashion and if those responsible for industry and trade would be far more daring in choosing from designers’ modern and good ideas.”

Those who managed to gain access to aid shipments sent to Hungary during the 1956 Revolution or had relatives living abroad managed to follow the latest trends more easily.

In contrast to the practice of earlier years, the custom of holding fashion shows in factories became rarer toward the second half of the 1950s; instead, these events were staged in the town’s most representative building. In 1958, for example, when the latest designs in fashion were shown in Sztálinváros, the runway was placed in the Arany Csillag (The Golden Star), the most elegant hotel in town, rather than at the Ironworks. According to the local report, “each and every garment was the absolute standard of classic elegance. The models emerged to soft, sweet strains of melody played by the Arany Csillag’s orchestra before taking their places at the podium, all while the audience gazed upon them with great interest. The most modern of cocktail dresses clicked past in stiletto heels, followed by elegant skirt suits in wool and export-quality, dark gray double-breasted suits. The audience burst into rhythmic, enthusiastic clapping when it saw that tuxedos made of pure wool—perfect for balls, the theater, or weddings—had come back in fashion.” Since events of this type were no longer held at workplaces, instead of the “working women” who attended fashion shows in the early 1950s, this time members of the local elite sat in the audience and enjoyed the spectacle of the latest trends.

Although the political and ideological views attached to attire gradually faded into the background, they still cropped up from time to time in connection to weekday and formal apparel during the 1960s. Similarly, advertisements and promotions appeared with increasing regularity. Meanwhile, various publications followed the international fashion trends set by famous designers (Givenchy, Nina

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62 Nők Lapja, no. 35 (1957), 5.
64 Other than apparel and cosmetics, the 1962 issue of Pesti Divat (Budapest Fashion) contained advertisements popularizing durable consumer goods, such as Lehel-brand refrigerators and floor-polishing machines.
WELL-DRESSED AND FASHIONABLE

Ricci) in reports that described the latest models while usually including photo illustrations.

Beginning in the 1960s, opponents of fashion trends did not primarily originate from political circles, but rather spoke out from society’s more conservatively-minded groups. It must be mentioned, however, that their opinions were sometimes colored by political and ideological overtones as they stepped forward in defense of socialist values in the face of the young generation’s “scandalous” clothes and hairstyles: “We must convince . . . young people to dress and choose their garments in an appropriate manner and to keep the size of their clothes in proportion so they can avoid reminding us of a bunch of hooligans. This time and age accepts what young people are wearing today—just think of their dances and hairstyles. If they continue to go down this path, what will we do when we can no longer tell boys from girls?”

Opinions regarding the undesirable behavior and appearance of Hungary’s youth were naturally aired in the daily and weekly press of the time as well as in publications intended for young readers. Critics emphasized that opposing tradition, social custom, and “the norms of the socialist community” was also a sign of moral decay: “There are jampec whose dress and behavior is very conspicuous as they stroll around in trousers that are far too tight and skirts that are far too close-fitting. They want to draw attention to themselves at all costs.” There were some, however, who were more patient regarding how Hungary’s youth were using their outer appearance to stand out from everyone else: “Young people who dress in the jampec, hooligan style haven’t committed the type of crime that warrants the police’s attention. The fact that we leave the police to deal with them is not right; they haven’t stolen anything and do not break any important laws. Since they say they want to work, let’s give them the chance to work. A better option would be for the KISZ Committee to invite these young people to a pinpong [sic] or any other type of match or hold a dance and devote some attention to them.”

67 “Nyíregyháza Városi Tanács Végrehajtó Bizottságának ülése: Jelentés a nők és az ifjúság helyzetéről,” MNL SzSzBML, XXIII. 502, August 2, 1960. The acronym KISZ refers to the Kommunista Ifjúsági Szervezet (Young Communist League).
In reality, however, these issues were usually resolved according to far more brutal methods. In contrast to the approach suggested by the article quoted above, it was not uncommon for police officers to “supervise” haircuts for young men whose hair was long. Beginning in the mid-sixties, the new fashions and dressing habits that went hand-in-hand with the Beat movement and rock n’ roll (long hair for men, jeans, and the hippie look) first caused political consternation and then led to bitter intergenerational conflicts.

In the middle of the 1960s, Hungary’s clothing industry and fashion institutions were already registering the consummation of fashion’s influence on society and the increased expansion of the means used to relay and follow the latest trends. This change in attitude was summarized in a professional document issued in 1965 as a description of the social background that underpins the role played by attire: “In issues of dress, conforming to fashion has become the standard; changes in the circumstances surrounding property, class, and income have steadily eroded the class distinctions represented by dress in previous times. The opportunity to purchase as many kinds of apparel as possible has also created a demand for more fashionable styles. . . . The difference between what members of the professional class vs. the working class wear has become increasingly blurred as differences in income have also faded.”

This period also entailed the emergence of a new type of behavior as the selection found in stores not only expanded, but also strove to meet the growing expectations raised by their consumers. In direct contrast to the 1950s, being able to dress well was a fundamental element of this new attitude. Naturally, the fact that the means used to relay fashion trends were more developed also contributed to this changed perspective. In addition to the definitive centers of fashion such as Paris or London, various publications regularly featured fashion trends from Eastern European countries. In January 1969, for example, the ministry of internal trade’s magazine Kirakat (Showcase) reported on the fact that...

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The fashion show organized in Budapest provided a faithful reflection of Soviet designers’ ingenuity, artistic creativity, and the high level of craftsmanship used to make their garments. Soviet models—each one lovelier than the next—walked one resplendent design after the other down the runway. Not only the garments’ form and cut, but also their material created quite a splash, thereby reaping a roaring success in Hungary’s capital.69

Given what we know about the circumstances of the time, it can be safely judged that the members of Hungary’s fashion-oriented public were far more interested in trends from Paris or Vienna and did not direct much attention to Moscow, in spite of what the article quoted above states.

Together with a growing sense of freedom in the area of fashion and dress, the image of the ideal woman also underwent a few slight changes in the state propaganda disseminated throughout the 1960s.70 Women were urged to participate actively at workplaces and jobs—an element that naturally indicated their ability to realize their potential—in a somewhat overly insistent political and ideological campaign that stressed women’s equal rights. Contrary to earlier views, slightly more attention was devoted to presenting women’s roles in the family and the household. Lofty writings exemplifying “the double shift” women do as they fulfill roles both at work and at home consequently appeared in the press and other contemporary publications, a change from previous opinions that merely pictured women at the workplace. According to this view, the ideal woman could hold her place at work while applying the methodical system learned there to running a household, raising children, taking care of her husband, protecting her family, preserving the calm of her home, and refraining from the kind of “frivolous pursuits” that opposed socialist morals. Women could thus render themselves useful members of a Hungarian society intent on “building socialism.”

Under influences such as these, it comes as no surprise that women began to view themselves quite differently. As far as outer appearance was concerned, in the second half of the 1960s age became indistinct: “More and more women want to stay young as long as possible regarding

70 For a discussion of the image of women and how the lives of working-class women were interpreted at the end of the 1960s and the beginning of the 1970s in Hungary, see Eszter Zsófia Tóth, Kádár leányai: Nők a szocialista időszakban (Budapest: Nyitott Könyvműhely, 2010).
their apparel. . . . These days nobody is surprised that a fifty-year-old woman takes care of her skin or dyes her hair.”71 Changes such as these naturally did not happen from one day to the next: at the time it was still not widely accepted for a woman over the age of forty to wear bright colors. In a decade marked by the appearance of various fashion phenomena (such as the mini, the midi, the maxi, or jeans) the attitudes, norms, and customs connected to attire underwent significant change. Eventually, the garments that had once shocked society by waving the battle flag of rebellion and anti-tradition became so widespread that they lost their original content.

Hemlines rose far higher in the second half of the 1960s; barely grazing mid-thigh, mini-skirts became all the rage during this period and earned as many followers as they did detractors. According to a contemporary book on modern fashion, “This mini fad has even changed how women move. There is nothing feminine about it at all: fashion photos showed a masculine pose with thighs spread daringly wide. Some women thought a mini would change them back into teenagers just like that. . . . The mini-skirt has proven to be yet another exaggeration, from the point of view of both fashion and health.”72

Bell bottoms appeared at the end of the 1960s and the beginning of the 1970s. In contrast to earlier fashions, this type of trouser increasingly widened from the hip down and was paired with heavy-soled shoes by members of both sexes. In Hungary, this period additionally marks the time when jeans became the rage.73 Not surprisingly given

73 Ferenc Hammer, “...nem kellett őlt vasalni a farmerbe”: Mindennapi élet a szocializmusban; Tanulmányok (Budapest: Néprajzi Múzeum, 2013).
the extreme difficulty required in obtaining a pair of jeans—in the beginning they could only be found on the black market or abroad—this particular garment remained a sign of prestige for a long time, even though it was picked up by young rural people later and somewhat more slowly than was typical of young urban generations. Tailored to be more form-fitting, shirts, blouses, and jackets were made of increasingly colorful materials. Femininity, a sense of chicness, or—in the case of men—an elegant appearance at formal occasions, the general desire to be well-dressed even on weekdays, and the expression of enjoying leisure time or athletics spread with relative speed. After all, as a contemporary study on lifestyle noted,

attire is the most visible, outer sign of keeping up with the latest trend, the standard of living, and modernity. Adjusting to this norm plays an enormous role everywhere where this level is expected or needs to be proven. . . . Today it essentially represents a norm of urbanization; cities set the pace and style while village dwellers can then use this to show that they aren’t so different from urbanites since a city’s fashion styles are still easier to attain than its streets, water system, or public transportation. . . . As regards those living in small towns or villages, fashion is the one area in which they are the least backward compared to Budapest.74

Together with the radical transformation of women’s clothing, the unusual emphasis placed on femininity eventually won acceptance. For young people of marriageable age, the custom of collecting a trousseau was no longer a general expectation among every social group. Despite this, parents generally encouraged young people (especially girls) to spend part of their earnings on developing their wardrobes. The following items were viewed as the most essential part of a woman’s trousseau: three sets of bedsheets, one or two tablecloths, half a dozen dishcloths and towels, two or three nightgowns and pajamas, three to four camisoles, six to eight pairs of women’s trousers, four to five pairs of stockings and socks, two to three shirtwaist or cotton dresses, five to six blouses, three to four skirts, one winter and one spring coat, and two to three pairs of shoes. In the case of young men, three to four changes of outerwear (including a shirt, trousers, and a jacket or sweater), a winter and a spring coat, one to two pairs of shoes, and a week’s worth of undergarments (underwear, undershirt, socks) was considered as the minimum requirement for setting up life as a married man.

74 Losonczi, Az életmód az időben, 486.
At the end of the 1950s, skirt suits and the less formal blazer became definitive additions to women’s wardrobes while hemlines that only reached to the knees—or maybe even slightly above—were no longer greeted with raised eyebrows. Already characteristic of menswear, suits became even more popular, together with more colorful neckties, short-brimmed hats, and checked overcoats. According to one of the era’s most popular publications at the end of the 1950s, “knowing how to dress is an art . . . wearing just the right kind of garment is no easy task since so very few women possess a sense of self-criticism. Dress requires a sense of flair, but this is something that can be learned. The ones who make the biggest wardrobe mistakes are the women who ignore the fact that they are too heavy or too bony and want to look younger at any cost, or follow whatever fad, craze, or rage fashion has come up with, no matter that it doesn’t suit them in the least.”

A household advice book published in 1961 clearly breaks away from the norms related to the movement in “uniformization” and “enforced puritanism” that was so typical of the previous decade by emphasizing that choosing the right attire for either inside or outside of the home is equally important for both men and women. The most essential detail to remember was that the garments be comfortable, neat, fashionable, tasteful, and appropriate for the given occasion. “In the past only a few hundred thousand women and girls had to worry about what to wear for certain occasions: today this is a question occupying millions of women. If we have the money and the opportunity to go out and have fun, then it is only right that we choose our outfit based on the occasion and form of entertainment.” In a return to the norms that had once typified the thirties and forties, a definite difference was made between morning, afternoon, and evening apparel.

At work and at home the tried and true solution is a skirt and blouse or a skirt and sweater. . . . On the way to work in spring or autumn, the two seasons that make up most of the year, a skirt suit or other two-piece outfit is the most appropriate choice. . . . For those who frequently go out for entertainment in the evenings, purchasing an evening gown or having one made is recommended. Dark blue or black is always elegant, no matter what age or

75 Ilona Faragó, A főzőkanáltól az estélyi ruháig (Budapest: Móra Kiadó, 1958), 41.
76 Mária Pataki, Zsuzsa Kelemen, and Anna Molnár, Korszerű háztartás, kellemes otthon (Budapest: Minerva, 1961), 68–69.
size the wearer may be; nor does it turn so quickly into “last year’s look” the way other dresses do, even if otherwise very lovely. For years now, a skirt suit or two-piece ensemble consisting of a skirt and a blazer has not been beaten when it comes to style.\(^{77}\)

The same household advice book also insisted that any type of simple and comfortable garment may be worn at home—such as a short or long housecoat, with an apron added to it for daytime wear—as long as any impression of slovenliness was avoided. A neat and smart outfit was expected at home, too, and not just on the part of the housewife: every member of the family was urged to tend to his or her appearance. “Regarding the issue of what to wear at home, a few words must be said about sweat suits. While it’s true that sweat suits are not attractive, they are comfortable. Let’s not forget that they are easy to wash and keep clean, especially if we wear an apron over it, an option that not only makes it look better, but also makes a woman look slimmer. While a sweat suit is advisable when doing housework, cleaning, sweeping the yard, or performing any other type of outdoor work, it must still be removed the minute we are done!”\(^{78}\) After the housework was done, women were advised to don a coat-like dressing gown that reached to the middle of the calves, a fashionable and comfortable garment that could be made of corduroy or some kind of fleecy material in winter and lighter cotton in summer. The important thing was for the garment to be in harmony with the place, occasion, and activity: “It is always much easier to dress up a simple outfit rather than tone down an overly fancy one.”\(^{79}\)

Other than maintaining all the written or unwritten rules regarding dress and behavior, various publications also emphasized the need to introduce members of the younger generation to the basics of how to dress tastefully while keeping an eye on both fashion and economics: “The young girl who learns to dress by supplementing the basic items of her wardrobe . . . will always stay within the boundaries of good taste. . . . Let’s begin by stating that girls should go to school in skirts, not in trousers. Trousers are only to be worn while on class trips or doing sports. Girls must only wear flat-soled boaters or loafers. . . . We want to raise our children to be tastefully dressed

\(^{77}\) Ibid., 69.
\(^{78}\) Ibid., 68.
\(^{79}\) Ibid., 152.
women and not fashion dolls; other than the girls, it is also important to teach boys every aspect connected to developing a sense of good taste.”

The general consensus was that younger generations undoubtedly had different taste, but this change tended to overstep the general social boundaries and expectations of the time.

During the first half of the 1960s, the issue of how to dress and what to wear was simpler for men as following fashion or the latest trends was less of an issue. In 1961, dark brown, dark gray, or various shades of these two colors were the most common for men’s daytime wear. According to fashion experts, a well-tailored garment was slightly loose and single-breasted suit jackets were the most popular style. Donning a tie continued to be a sign of everyday elegance. Both the “drainpipe” style of trouser popularized by the jampec style and bell-bottoms were replaced by straight-legged trousers that had no cuff at the bottom. Overcoats decorated with fur became extremely popular for winter. All over the world menswear is characterized by the athletic look. . . . Wide-shouldered coats emphasized even more by a pair of tight trousers, a sweater—a garment originally intended for sportswear—a tanned face and the lack of a hat all serve to present the image of being an athletic and strong man. . . . In this case, Hungarian fashion complies with the general European trends.”

It is impossible, however, to judge how common it was for men to follow fashion trends in Hungary.

An individual’s closer or more distant social surrounding, the time of day, the “occasion,” and fashion all influenced what was worn. According to a contemporary household advice book, which also gave tips on fashion,

Dressing for the occasion is a prerequisite to being well-dressed and displaying good taste. No matter how modest the financial means were when a garment was made, its wearer automatically appears well-dressed if his or her apparel suits the occasion. Anyone who puts on an afternoon dress to go to a place where simple street clothes are required or dons a morning dress for the theater has violated the rules governing good taste and dress. . . . We should only wear sportswear at sporting events: shorts are only for the pool or beach while trousers are for trips. Wearing trousers has become quite

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82 Jenő Markovits, A divat és meghatározó tényezői (Budapest: Belkereskedelmi Kutató Intézet, 1963), 34.
WELL-DRESSED AND FASHIONABLE widespread during the past few years. It is far more tasteful not to wear them all the time. The one exception is when it is -10°C outside: even the strictest of etiquette teachers cannot object to trousers in this case.83

Weekday apparel for women continued to consist of shirtwaist or cotton dresses while men were advised to wear cotton suits with sweaters. Other than the workplace, this was deemed acceptable for going to the movies or “club afternoons at the collective farm or KISZ.” Silk or velvet dresses were recommended for women when attending the theater or going to a dance; in winter, this could be accessorized with a stole that would additionally provide some protection against catching a cold. A dark suit was naturally the proper choice for men to wear at formal events. During the 1960s, boys between the ages of fourteen and eighteen also wore suits and ties to formal occasions as the habit of dressing boys in a suit jacket with short pants had basically gone out of style by then. Depending on the event, girls wore a white blouse with a black skirt, or a fancier dress made of nicer material. School uniforms were still quite commonly required, even if wearing them was increasingly only made compulsory at official school events or celebrations. For girls this uniform usually consisted of a sailor blouse and dark blue or black skirt that reached mid-calf while boys wore the same type of suits all in the same color. The level and quality of clothing an individual had access to largely depended on the financial circumstances of the family. In households possessing an average income, a man’s entire wardrobe consisted of forty to forty-five garments while women owned fifty to sixty pieces of clothing. In the estate inventory made in 1964 of a forty-two-year-old woman from Debrecen who made her living as a laboratory assistant, her personal clothing totaled sixty-six items valued at 3,095 forints.84 The most important garments found in the wardrobe of this divorced (formerly married to a doctor) lady living in a one-room, full-comfort apartment included one winter coat, one mackintosh, three purses, two skirt suits, four blouses, two skirts, two summer dresses, two shirtwaist dresses, two nylon nightgowns, four pairs of women’s trousers, five camisoles, four brassieres, four pairs of nylon stockings, two slips, one bathing suit, one dressing gown, two pairs of flat-soled sandals, two pairs of shoes, one pair of slippers,

one hat, one cap, and one wristwatch. This selection did not differ much from what any average, professional woman would have worn at this time in Debrecen. During the same period, the wardrobe of a retired man in his sixties (previously employed as a purchasing agent) contained 110 pieces of garments and was valued at 9,370 forints. Among other items, his wardrobe consisted of five suits, twenty cotton and three nylon shirts, two knitted wool sweaters, a set of undergarments containing fourteen items, twelve pairs of socks, two winter and one spring coat, a mackintosh, an expensive sheepskin coat estimated to be worth 2,500 forints, one pair of deerskin gloves, two pairs of black wingtip shoes, one pair of sandals, and one pair of rubber-soled shoes. Compared to this estate, the wardrobe of a head accountant in his fifties who lived in Nyíregyháza was rather modest. Based on personal estates and surveys made regarding clothing and household statistics, it appears the deficiencies that had characterized individuals’ access to clothing throughout the previous decade had significantly lessened by the mid-sixties.

Beginning in the second half of the 1960s, the expectations and habits surrounding undergarments changed dramatically. In this case as well, the heightened demand for a higher level of fastidiousness or refinement predominated: “Due to the dynamic development seen in products such as brassieres, corsets, and garter belts during this period . . . the sale of goods that only satisfy a lower level of quality (garments made in satin or chiffon) has entirely stopped. Customers are seeking products that are trimmed in lace and made of stretchy material cut in a more refined manner that accentuates the natural line of the body. This increased demand for quality also manifests itself in the way in which consumers cling to certain familiar, tried-and-true brands, such as Triumph.”

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86 Assessed in 1970, this wardrobe was valued at 3,110 forints and consisted of six pairs of underwear, seven undershirts, four nightshirts, one pair of pajamas, three suits, one mackintosh, one spring coat, one winter coat, and five pairs of shoes. This amount either indicates a below-average amount of clothing or an imprecise inventory. “T. Ferenc hagyatéka,” Kjő. I. 293/1970. sz. Nyíregyházi Városi Bíróság Közjegyzői irattára.
Spending time poolside or at a beach steadily filled a larger role in free-time activities. For women, two-piece bikinis were sweeping one-piece swimsuits off the fashion scene. This era was also the beginning of the age of bathing suits made of synthetic material that dried quickly and kept its shape. For young men the triangular, lightweight cotton speedo (with a vertical strip down its middle) was popular.

The first decade of the Kádár era brought basic changes to the dressing habits of those living in Hungary’s villages. This trend was particularly true in the years after collectivization came to an end, when traditional clothing was abandoned on a mass scale. The speed with which this process occurred was most likely largely due to the political campaigns waged against peasant farmers during the 1950s. Removing all outward indications of identifying with the traditional peasantry was one way for individuals from this class to defend themselves against this type of atmosphere. Similarly, the materials required for making traditional clothes had vanished from the market at a time when textiles were woven less and less often at home. The next wave of exchanging traditional attire for ready-made clothes emerged at the end of the 1950s and then sped up after collectivization wound to a close. Virtually without exception, members of generations twenty-five years and younger wore ready-made clothes while girls—in a break with the custom of never cutting their hair—had their hair styled according to the newest fads. The majority of middle-aged women and a smaller percentage of older women soon followed their example. The task of preserving either all or at least some of the garments that belonged to traditional Hungarian folk dress fell to older generations, particularly women who had been born during World War I. In the village of Patak in Nógrád County, men had switched to wearing ready-made clothes by the end of the 1950s, after spending a lengthy amount of time working in Budapest.

This same process came to an end among Patak’s women at the end of the 1960s and in accordance with the generational differences discussed above. It must be mentioned that this process took place quite differently in Hungary’s various regions. Inhabitants of the village of Kecel in Bács-Kiskun County began abandoning traditional garb in larger numbers toward the end of the 1950s: “At first they

only wore city clothes on weekdays and around the house; they still went to Sunday mass in traditional clothes. When they even went to church in tight clothes, that meant they had given up wearing traditional attire. . . . Women who have made this switch only dress their daughters in tight, city clothes; in some cases, they do not even bother to have a traditional set of clothes made for them.”

Urban fashion trends generally appeared in rural women’s wardrobes somewhat later. In the countryside, for example, women only began wearing trousers at the end of the sixties and the beginning of the seventies. The number of women covering their heads with kerchiefs also decreased given that “the tendency clearly indicated that rural populations began integrating into urban populations to larger or lesser degrees beginning at the end of the 1950s. The first phase of this process occurred within the village itself, as members still wearing traditional garb began integrating among those who had already adopted urban attire. During the second phase the village began to integrate itself into [the rest of] Hungarian society.”

Throughout its stages, this process of adaptation and unification was influenced by various phases occurring in actual fashion trends. Great divergences can be found in how different sexes or generations replaced their traditional clothing with more modern attire; each case reveals differences in the amount of time the process lasted, who initiated it, in what order the garments that the outer world had labeled as “peasant” were abandoned, and how urban styles were adopted in the dress culture of rural communities. Primarily speaking, the highly differentiated system of symbols that rural communities had used to signal age, sex, social status, and religious affiliation lost its previous significance. Perhaps it is not an exaggeration to state that the relatively quick spread of urban apparel and dress norms was the outer embodiment of the (fictional) social mobility that the era propounded. Many must have felt that dressing like a city dweller would allow them to avoid or decrease the disadvantages of originating from the peasant class. After all, if a poor peasant farmer could dress his children the same way the wealthy peasant farmer did, the gap between the two social levels must have seemed smaller.

Traditional garb had disappeared almost completely from Hungary’s villages by the end of the 1960s and the beginning of the 1970s.

90 Szuhay, “Az életmód változása a magyarországi falvakban,” 714.
At this time the main reasons for this phenomenon were seen to lie in changing lifestyles and the large-scale employment of women: “The disintegration of peasant culture was unstoppable by then. During the 1960s, not only did rural communities long to rid themselves of the outer trappings of their peasant identity, but masses of people were also choosing a life outside of peasant farming in droves, together with all the consequences social mobilization brought with it.”91 Quite frequently, the ones who initiated the change from traditional to modern attire numbered among the poorest in the village, those who were forced to look for work outside of the village. In their new surroundings not only did they discover different habits, they also proved susceptible to the experience.

Adopting modern clothing often meant adopting a new posture, way of walking, and style of movement.92 In the village of Varsány, for example, it was already rare to see an eighth-grade girl wearing traditional clothing at the beginning of the 1950s. “During the 1960s the wave of switching to urban clothing grew in strength until anyone wearing traditional garb was seen as old-fashioned and uncultured. City clothes had become the fashion; many young women and girls did not choose to stop wearing traditional clothes out of their own sense of taste or style, but rather because they were afraid of being left behind by the rest. In other words, they wanted to conform to the newly emerging norms of their community.”93 Although the generational differences that had previously manifested themselves in certain garments or elements of apparel disappeared, these indications remained to a certain extent, even if only partially. Among younger people, adopting urban clothes happened at a faster pace due to issues related to comfort: to them, modern clothes seemed easier to put on and more practical to wear. As a part of their socialization, they frequently did not learn how to wear traditional clothes or the significance behind some of its aspects; even if they did learn this information, their decision was final once they adopted modern dress. As their wardrobes changed accordingly, off-the-rack products pushed traditional garments into obscurity. While middle-aged women were

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92 See among others Fél and Hofer, Arányok és mértékek a paraszti gazdálkodásban, 114; Edit Fél, “Újabb szempontok a viselet kutatásához,” in Régi falusi társadalom, ed. Tamás Hofer (Pozsony: Kalligram, 2001), 316–22.
still likely to don traditional clothing for holidays or special occasions, urban attire was their natural choice for weekdays. The majority of older women, however, only felt comfortable in traditional clothing. As far as they were concerned, what the outside world thought about them was essentially meaningless, together with the pejorative redefinition of the term “peasant” as an adjective designating backwardness.

When teamed with the aggressive reorganization of Hungary’s agricultural system into the form of collective farming, the exaggerated emphasis placed on industrialization rendered it impossible for the more traditionally minded, mid-level peasant farmer class to survive. Once this social group lost its role as the “watchdog” of community traditions, rural communities lost their sense of cohesion. Splintered apart, communities found it impossible to judge which elements of the new products they were being flooded with should be built into their culture or simply rejected. While abandoning traditional garb sped up the massive flux of people leaving the countryside, those who continued living in villages also felt that their isolation had been broken: after enduring many bitter attempts to restart their lives during the 1950s, many reached the conclusion that it would be better to raise their children for another kind of life not connected to farming. Education provided the most expedient means for accomplishing this aim. Rural teenagers who attended urban schools during the 1960s in turn returned home bearing new norms, types of behavior, and styles.

Out of those publications printed at the beginning of the 1960s, most of the authors who analyzed the issue of rural dress were of the opinion that museums were the proper place for traditional garments. Given the changes that lifestyles and working conditions had undergone, “all those skirts and additional accessories are not only far too heavy and uncomfortable, but also expensive.” The task, in this case, was “to familiarize the rural girls and women who have abandoned traditional clothing with the benefits of wearing tasteful, modern apparel.” Some elements of the value system held by Hungary’s historical peasant class changed far more slowly; in many places, for instance, parents remained in charge of deciding what their children would wear and which pieces of new clothing would be purchased in urban shops and stores even though modern habits were otherwise being followed on the surface.

95 Blanka Simon and Piroska Szemes, Házi mindentudó (Budapest: Gondolat, 1962), 34.
Instruments of mass communication also spurred changes in lifestyle. As advertisements became increasingly common beginning at the end of the 1960s, viewers were exposed to completely untraditional examples. While the latest fads could primarily be seen in the windows of shops located in nearby cities, newspapers and television also played a role in forming and developing the taste of rural women and girls. According to an ethnographic study analyzing the issue, “Starting in the 1970s and at a rate that naturally differed by region, intensified contact with the outside world and the new, urban standards transmitted via television progressively led to the adoption of modern consumer habits, a process in which the desire to leave the traditional, peasant lifestyle behind also gained expression.”

In villages, young women who opted to switch to modern attire often only began following fashion a few years afterward. Nylon knit jerseys, for example, a fabric which inundated urban wardrobes during the 1960s, only became a favorite material for rural consumers two or three years later. Those, however, who increasingly distanced themselves from peasant traditions as they worked in urban centers were careful to follow the latest trend. As their ties to local customs steadily loosened, this social group grew more open to new fads and were frequently the first “trendsetters” who risked appearing in a more daring outfit, such as a mini or maxi dress, or in a garment with an unusual color scheme. These innovators often provoked their family and neighbors’ scorn: ever ready to wag, “the village tongue” disparaged those who were the first to wear a miniskirt or bell bottoms, a piece described as “neither skirt nor trousers, here in the village clothes like that are just for mopping up the mud.”

In some places the overly quick pace of change brought about a peculiar sort of “fashion overload” that resulted in the disharmonious combination of odd elements and strange colors. Many additionally found it difficult to get used to the different way of walking and moving that urban clothes demanded. Used to the straight posture and swaying walk necessary for wearing traditional clothing, middle-aged or older generations could not teach younger generations how

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97 Stefany, “Paraszti öltözködés,” 34.
to stand, sit, walk, or appear in their new clothing. Young people consequently gave the impression of being clumsy and ungainly even when they were wearing elegant and well-tailored garments.

Once traditional garb had been cast aside, the typical garments worn by village women consisted of sweatpants, a knit blouse, a sleeveless housecoat known as the *otthonka* (See Figure 53), and a pair of comfortable shoes. As far as underclothes were concerned, petticoats were exchanged for slips and undervests. In Patak the custom of wearing nylon or charmeuse slips and cotton undervests began to spread during the 1960s. The cut and decoration were not important; pale colors were preferred, such as white, pink, or light blue. The undervest was a sleeveless undershirt made of heavier material. “Nowadays [1972–1974] wearing underpants has become more common among younger women. Adult women usually choose heavier materials; charmeuse is preferred as they do not like the fact that nylon is ‘see-through.’ Girls and younger women have no aversion to different kinds of synthetic materials, nor to wearing nylon underpants under a circle skirt.” The habit of sleeping in a nightgown also spread during this time. At the beginning of the 1970s, the trousseau for girls from Varsány generally contained five to seven nightgowns sewn according to the latest fashion. Fancier nightgowns, silk dressing

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gowns or quilted bathrobes also made an appearance in the wardrobes of older women; these garments, however, were usually only donned when they had to stay in a hospital or were staying elsewhere overnight.

In many villages, women continued the habit of covering their heads, a custom that had nothing to do with the weather or whether their hair was in a traditional bun or had been styled by a hairdresser. Another garment that “crossed over” was the apron, in all of its various forms. Women’s pantyhose, however, was a new addition. Originally made of cotton and only replaced by light-colored nylon stockings in the second half of the 1960s, this innovation was added along with short- or long-sleeved knitted sweaters or cardigans. Shoes only began to replace boots at the start of the 1950s; by the end of the sixties, a canvas gym shoe known as the *dorcó* in some parts of Hungary became a popular element in everyday wear.\(^\text{100}\) Even after exchanging their traditional garb for modern clothing, older women continued to prefer dark-toned attire.

Shabby, blue work clothes—too worn for the workplace—became a favored element of the weekday and at home clothing worn by men. Underneath the jacket men donned inexpensive shirts made of some type of soft material while older men often added a traditional element, the work apron, as well. Khaki-colored military fatigues also enjoyed a growing popularity. For holiday occasions younger men wore light-colored or patterned suits while older men chose one-colored suits; these garments were usually ready-made. Outer clothing consisted of a coat filled with cotton batting or (in rarer instances) a leather or fake leather coat. Pointy-toed shoes with slightly higher heels also came into fashion. By the end of the 1960s, baggy-legged trousers, patterned shirts, and colorful sweaters made of synthetic yarn became the characteristic outfit for members of the youngest generation. For a long time, polyester stretch tops or turtlenecks were a favorite option compared to dress shirts when it came to attending Sunday religious ceremonies or other significant events. The appearance of the leather coat, the mackintosh, clothes made of fake fur, the sleeveless polyester *otthonka* worn by women, and the leisurewear item known as the *mackó* (sweatsuit) in Hungarian are all garments that can be used to mark the “periodization” of different waves in rural fashion as it tried to keep up with urban styles.

\(^{100}\) In its classic form, this was a factory-made, laced shoe made of a black, felt upper part and leather soles. In many places the same name—*dorkó*—was used to refer to laced, canvas gym shoes.
Different kinds of work—whether carried out in a factory, office, or out in the fields—naturally demanded different types of clothing. According to an advice booklet published at the beginning of the 1960s, for rural women a light cotton dress is the most ideal option for hoeing or harvesting. We should only wear a skirt and a blouse when doing work that does not require bending over…. These days young women are working in a pair of short cotton or polyester trousers and a blouse that is knotted above the waist, with a straw hat to protect their heads from the strong sun. I’ve even seen girls hoeing in swimsuits, a thing I hold as entirely inappropriate—not because it is improper, but because it is bad for the health. It’s not good if a large amount of our skin is exposed to the sun for lengthy amounts of time as we work. The reason why men wear white shirts at harvesttime is because white deflects the sun. Nowadays it isn’t rare at all to see a woman or girl working in long trousers or a tracksuit. I have even seen older ladies in sweat suits. In cold weather a sweat suit is much better than a skirt—after all, stockings alone aren’t enough to keep out the sharp, cold wind.101

101 Simon and Szemes, Házi mindentudó, 151.
For home wear or while doing housework, the booklet recommends that rural women wear a brightly patterned cotton dress that buttoned all the way down the front; it also suggests that an apron made of heavy cotton or some sort of synthetic material be included in order to protect the dress from dirt.

Village dwellers had many means and methods for procuring and making clothing. Since fewer and fewer people were producing their own textiles for making traditional garments, most were making do with factory-made products. Footwear, for example, was one item that was generally bought. Preparing clothes and dresses was primarily a wintertime activity since this was the time of the year when the cycle of agricultural work allowed time for sewing. Other than making garments themselves, most villagers could turn to “village seamstresses” who helped with more technically difficult tasks or made special pieces of clothing. These seamstresses also helped spread the technique of machine sewing in rural areas.

The best means of demonstrating the changes in dress that occurred in Hungary’s rural communities is to compare clothing lists that were prepared of a traditional vs. a modern wardrobe. At the end of the 1960s and the beginning of the 1970s, the wardrobe of a young woman who continued to wear traditional garb in the village of Varsány contained seven headdresses, twenty-four silk and eleven cashmere shawls, twelve petticoats, four camisoles, four heavy undershirts, six underskirts, eighteen embroidered blouses, ten black and thirty patterned overskirts, seven colored vests, eight woven aprons, sixteen bib aprons, six knitted sweaters, two blouses, seven pairs of stockings, two outer coats, two pairs of laced shoes, one pair of shoes, one pair of boots, one pair of sandals, one pair of slippers, and one pair of track shoes. A young woman who wore city clothing, however, had three polyester skirt suits, ten polyester skirts, two pairs of trousers made of jersey and/or suiting fabric, six single-piece dresses, four summer dresses, two cardigans, five short-sleeved tops, three blouses made of fine lightweight material, three warm-up or tracksuits, city-style undergarments, nylon stockings, silk, nylon, and cashmere shawls for going out or staying home, a mackintosh jacket, a fake fur coat, a cloth coat, one pair of boots, three pairs of shoes, one pair of sandals, one pair of track shoes, and one pair of slippers.  

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Urban-style clothing was usually sewn by order. According to a contemporary ethnographic study, in many places it was customary “for women and girls who had switched to modern clothing to have every type of clothing—other than the overcoat that was purchased off-the-rack in stores—made by a seamstress. . . . These women and girls rarely had any idea of their own, they simply took the purchased material to the seamstress—whom someone . . . had generally recommended to them—and trusted her with choosing the right style. The result was a very uniform type and style of dress that took nothing into account regarding the customer’s personal, physical characteristics or what color would look best.” The way in which villages adopted a relatively uniform style of urban attire was definitely influenced by the desire to imitate others and match what was considered modern on the local level.

According to those who make ethnographical or sociological observations, once families had adopted modern clothing no significant difference was noticeable among family members; urban styles brought a homogenized type of style with them. In the case of women, the main differences could be found in whether they had maintained or rejected traditional garb, or to what extent they followed urban fashion trends. What profession they pursued was the primary factor in differentiating how men dressed. Yet it was also typical for no major differences to be detectable (based on dress) within certain social levels.

While the rejection of traditional clothing and the subsequent transformation of dress norms was a general phenomenon, in villages located along the Galga River (Galgamácsa, Galgahévíz, Kartal, Püspökhatvan) near Budapest, it was also possible to find women wearing the type of “new folk dress” that flourished in the decades following World War II. As Mária Flórián notes in her work on the history of peasant costumes,

Like all other villages enjoying similar circumstances, the people of Bag spent a relatively large amount of money on clothing. . . . Even though they eventually started using the synthetic materials that were available at the time, the clothes they sewed still conformed to traditional dress in Bag, particularly from the point of view of what colors were selected. Thanks to this, the traditional order and symbolism of colors was still intact at the beginning

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of the 1960s—although primarily in the clothing worn by young women preparing for marriage or young newlywed wives. . . . Most individuals still followed the “peasant” style of choosing colors, meaning that they preferred the vibrancy of contrasting colors; to them, colors that “pop” were still the most pleasing. . . . While Bag’s traditional peasant taste still predominated during the 1960s, the view that separate garments should be made of materials in the same color was also gaining ground.104

In this case the following of urban trends was definitive, but not exclusive: most Hungarian villagers dressed according to the new fashion, yet still accommodated local norms and customs, at least during this period.

Within the history of clothing and dress norms in Hungary, the end of the sixties and the beginning of the seventies can also be viewed as the closure of an era from many points of view. The rapid spread of television, the mass emergence of tourism,105 the steady erosion of Hungary’s secluded condition and the increased selection of goods available for purchase were all factors in bringing gradual changes to the public opinions and social expectations surrounding dress and clothing. The issue of what to wear essentially became a matter of private opinion: any debates connected to clothing were usually due to generational differences connected to how customs and traditions should be interpreted. As far as this sphere of life was concerned, certain individuals increasingly felt that they had the right to decide what apparel was appropriate for them to wear; at most, they took the social expectations of their surrounding environment into consideration. More importantly, this perspective met with fewer obstacles.

Compared to previous eras, the 1970s marked the period when fashion evolved into an independent branch of industry in Hungary. Predicting trends, assessing what products would be in demand, and defining fashion continued to remain within the scope of the Hungarian

105 In 1957 217,000 Hungarians traveled abroad. In 1960 this number was 299,000 and rose to 893,000 in 1965. The one million mark was reached in 1970; in 1980 5.2 million Hungarians traveled outside of Hungary. In 1957 the number of foreigners visiting Hungary was 213,000 and did not even climb to 250,000 by 1960. In 1970, however, more than 3.5 million tourists entered Hungary; this number reached nearly 9.5 million by 1980. *Magyar Statisztikai Évkönyv, 1970* (Budapest: KSH, 1971), 375; *Magyar Statisztikai Évkönyv, 1980* (Budapest: KSH, 1981), 343. These numbers are remarkably high even given the fact that they include multiple entry into or out of the country.
Fashion Institute. The connection between the market’s orientation and the region’s industry and trade network grew progressively stronger as producers and traders together strove to establish and circulate “brands” that would allow Hungarian products to compete with goods from Western Europe. The success that these aims enjoyed is indirectly demonstrated by the fact that numerous Hungarian products gained serious value as barter items in the “pocket import” market that emerged as a result of the burgeoning phenomenon of consumer tourism that evolved as citizens of Soviet bloc countries began to travel in greater numbers throughout Eastern and Central Europe. Another sign of the industry’s increased attempt to satisfy consumer demand was the establishment of Trapper Jeans, a brand that ushered in the manufacturing of jeans in Hungary during the second half of the 1970s. A ministerial report stressed that “As a result of much effort, the supply of jeans and denim apparel has particularly improved. In 1976, roughly one million pieces (200,000 of which were import goods) were sold. In 1977, this number climbed to 2.5 million garments (1.3 million of which were imported). Despite this, the demand for the most popular brands in jeans has not been completely satisfied.” At this time, the price for a popular brand hovered between 900 and 1,100 forints. In 1978, 3.5 million denim  

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106 The Hungarian Fashion Institute was the most important organization of fashion design and fashion life in the state socialist era.

107 Although the right to travel remained restricted after the 1956 Revolution, as of the beginning of the 1960s individuals could travel to other state socialist countries in Central and Eastern Europe without having to apply for an official permit. The Soviet Union could only be visited as part of an organized tourist group or by letter of invitation. Visiting Yugoslavia required a special travel permit placed within the red passport that allowed its owner to enter state socialist countries. While Yugoslavia was a socialist nation, it had not followed the Soviet example in all areas; due to the separate path it took, the supply and selection of products available in Yugoslavia increased earlier and at a faster rate compared to Hungary. By the end of the sixties, Hungarians who were eager to visit other countries for the purpose of buying certain items quickly chose Yugoslavia as their destination. With a blue passport that had to be specially applied for, Hungarians could visit Western Europe once every three years on private trips, or once a year as part of a tourist group. This opportunity could be repeated several times a year beginning in the 1970s. Political police supervised the issuing of blue passports and could either revoke or refuse to issue one without providing any reason. By the second half of the 1980s the restrictions limiting travel were completely removed.

garments—mostly jeans—could be found on the market, although somewhat more than half of this number was imported. The greater level of supply and procurement, however, still could not meet the demand for leading brands such as Levi’s, Lee Cooper, Wrangler, and Super Rifle. Instead, sale campaigns were launched to popularize national brands. A significant player in initiating new methods and forms for spreading trade, the collective department store chain Skála-Coop held “Trapper Weeks” between March 14–28, 1980. According to an article in a fashion magazine that publicized the event, “after Levi’s, Wrangler, and Lee no introduction is needed for the Trapper brand. Even though hardly a year has passed since its debut, Trapper has already accomplished quite a career. . . . Trapper jeans are in no way worse than the more well-known competition; in fact, they are stronger and less costly—and at what savings! Not a bad word can be said about its leather emblem, which is tasteful, modern, and great fun, just as befits this type of garment. The ‘blueness’ of the material is excellent, meaning that it fades wonderfully.” Throughout that year more than quarter of a million pairs of Trapper denim products—including jeans, skirts, and dresses—were sold.

During the 1960s and 1970s the percentage of customers who relied on custom-made clothing produced by seamstresses or tailors remained relatively high (particularly among women), even as ready-made garments slowly crept to

Figure 54. Advertisement for the Hungarian blue jeans “Trapper” in the seventies and eighties (Fortepan)

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110 Czeglédy Katalin, “Magyar farmer,” Ez a Divat, no. 3 (1980), 11.
the forefront. Many had a reliable seamstress who could be counted on to sew fashionable garments based on the patterns printed in various fashion magazines; for others, it was still quite common to sew clothing at home. In 1975, the percentage of certain garments that were custom-sewn surpassed the amount of ready-made clothing bought in stores. In women’s apparel, 52–53 percent of dresses, 17–18 percent of coats, 17 percent of tops, and 22–24 percent of cardigans and vests were prepared by hand. On average, 26 percent of suits, 21 percent of trousers, and 12 percent of suit jackets were made to order for men. Analyses of this trend primarily point to the public’s growing interest in more varied forms of attire as an explanation of this phenomenon. It cannot be forgotten that one-fifth to one-sixth of the population’s clothing supply was sewn at home between 1975 and 1976, a circumstance that was likely due to reasons of frugality. Yet another characteristic feature of the era is the definitive role played by “the amateurs” who prepared clothing to order without applying for an official business license: “77 percent of women’s knitted outerwear that was made to order, 70 percent of men’s suits, 75 percent of men’s trousers, and 65 percent of men’s suit jackets were made ‘privately.’” In other words, Hungary’s “gray” economy had a significant role in influencing clothing and dress during this period, a circumstance that was largely due to the lack of selection and poor quality found in state-run shops.

The increasingly important role played by consumption exerted an equally strong influence on dress culture, fashion, and the transformation of the norms, habits, and expectations related to clothing; not only did this factor alter how younger generations dressed, it also affected wider swathes of various social groups and classes and thereby brought about a higher level of acceptance toward new trends and innovations. “Clothing habits have irrevocably changed: instead of traditional, matching sets of clothes, outfits containing pieces that can be either easily combined or worn separately in accordance with today’s lifestyle and taste are preferred. Buyers naturally seek out the more valuable items among these goods.” This period was also marked

112 Ibid., 8.
by the reappearance of one of apparel’s functions, in that social status and differences were once more displayed via the quality, cut, style, color, and fashionableness of an individual’s attire.

In both cities and villages, the custom of assembling baby clothes during the weeks and months preceding a child’s birth remained widespread. Unlike western cultures, the habit of holding a baby shower was never common in Hungary; instead, the new mother prepared or gathered essential clothing items before giving birth, while friends and family members generally brought gifts of clothing or diapers when visiting the newborn for the first time. In families with average or low incomes it was still quite common to pass down items from older to younger children. Exchanging children’s clothes among close or more distant friends and acquaintances was also a common method for reducing the costs for clothing.

To summarize what changes occurred in clothing and dress habits after the sixties were overtaken by the seventies, the first iconic garments that deserve mention are miniskirts and jeans. While both garnered a vehement response from public opinion at the time, their general acceptance happened relatively quickly. As it made waves throughout the second half of the 1960s, the miniskirt was first donned by members of the youngest generation, then spread in ever-widening circles, encompassing women who were anywhere from middle-aged to even older. As an accessory, it should not be forgotten that pantyhose also established itself as a wardrobe necessity at this time. For young women who wanted to appear at the height of fashion, it was a must to complete their miniskirt look with a beehive hairdo. At the beginning of the 1970s, the miniskirt fad was followed by the briefly scandalous emergence of hot pants, or short shorts, a pair of very short knit shorts. Both garments overturned the traditions and norms governing what aspects of a female body could be revealed in public. Within a few years, an opposite trend took place as maxi or midi fashions were added to the miniskirt craze.

During the 1970s in Hungary fashion and apparel were characterized by a simultaneous medley of varied trends and colorful looks: women’s wardrobes were just as likely to contain a two-piece skirt suit by Chanel as they were miniskirts, midi dresses, or jeans. While garments that displayed elements of traditional folk dress were growing in popularity, it also became increasingly important to be able to wear an item from a well-known brand.
As regards menswear, the cut and length of suit jackets practically changed year-by-year: “This period marks for example the complete disappearance of the ‘traditional’ trench coat as the mackintosh first took the spotlight and then became a ‘must have’ item before slowly, irrevocably fading into extinction only to make way for the reappearance of the trench coat, albeit of vastly different material and style compared to the original version.”\textsuperscript{114} To indicate the extent to which dress and fashion had grown more important, the Youth Fashion Committee was formed in June 1970 with the goal of promoting “modern, practical, and cultured dress for young people.” An analysis prepared by the Fashion Design Company in the summer of 1971 underscored the fact that “creating practical and tasteful forms of dress that express the socialist perspective and lifestyle is a new, intellectual, and creative field that bears great responsibility since product designers can only accomplish these aims if in full possession of a uniform basic concept. The process demands a high degree of circumspection, not to mention the complete participation of the entire clothing industry.”\textsuperscript{115}

In practice, these measures only produced moderate results throughout the 1970s as the refined, well-made garments that earned great success in national and international fashion shows and industrial arts exhibits were either entirely missing from Hungarian shops or only rarely available. The actual selection continued to feature mass-made, less stylish, off-the-rack clothing. At this time fashion shows were regularly held in the capital city’s most elegant hotels, starting with the internationally renowned Gellért Hotel, then followed by the Nagyszálló on Margit Island, the Duna Intercontinental, the Hilton or—beginning in the 1980s—the Forum or Atrium Hyatt. “These shows represented social events. A separate viewing was held for those whose names were on the protocol list, such as members of the Party and government, leaders of foreign trade enterprises and textile manufactories, the MTI, representatives of television and the press, and their accompanying female relatives. It was at this time that they chose which garments they liked the most and had them quickly


preparing in their size.” Fashion shows were then shown to the general public in rural hotels, community centers, or department stores.

At the beginning of the seventies the attire for young people who were not connected to some type of subculture group also changed, if only to a certain extent. According to the magazine *Éz a Divat*, “it is interesting that the mini has disappeared from dress hangers. Even though they wear maxi or midi dresses, teens won’t say no to minis, especially in summer. Most teens are not unwilling to wear ruffles, lace, or ribbons.” In a peculiar twist, the public’s longing for a pair of jeans did not noticeably make its way into fashion or youth publications, even though this was the era’s second iconic garment to transform dress norms, albeit after something of a delay compared to Western Europe.

In Hungary the “jeans phenomenon” unfolded at the end of the 1960s and the start of the 1970s as a rejection of “freely chosen” uniformity and the “suit-and-tie” tradition while additionally indicating the emergence of a striking difference in how older and younger generations viewed the world as it progressively turned toward a consumption-driven orientation. In the beginning it was exceedingly difficult to satisfy the needs of those who wanted to buy jeans, a factor that not only added to the value of certain pieces, but also increased the wearer’s prestige in the eyes of his or her social environment. By the end of the seventies and the beginning of the eighties, denim clothing had started to lose its uniqueness and appeared as a general fashion element in the wardrobes of virtually all generations, not just younger people.


117 *Éz a Divat*, no. 4 (1971), 14.

118 Published since the mid-sixties, the *Ifjúsági Magazin* addressed fashion issues with a fair amount of regularity and included fashion tips illustrated with drawings in an attempt to influence the orientation of young people’s dress habits. These tips differed from those offered to adults in that the clothes were more athletic, displayed brighter colors, and—in the case of clothing for young men—a sweater or jacket replaced the more conservative suit jacket. Among the iconic garments of the time, only miniskirts and minidresses appeared among the fashion tips published at the end of the 1960s and the beginning of the 1970s.

119 For a detailed look at the history of jeans in Hungary, see Hammer, “...nem kellett élt vasalni a farmerbe,” 28.
When it came to following fashion and choosing apparel, the difference between generations became markedly noticeable during the seventies, a phenomenon to which the press and various advice booklets dedicated more and more space and energy. Members of younger generations often found themselves in conflict with their parents, school, or older people in general as their clothing and behavior came under fire for their quick adoption of whatever trend happened to be the latest, blatant disregard for tradition and distinct expression of individualism. “Parents who dress conservatively are not overly happy at the sight of their ‘shabby’ son or daughter.”¹²⁰ These generational differences only grew sharper as the decade progressed; while it would have been forbidden to enter the youth center Budai Ifjúsági

¹²⁰ Ilona Faragó, Az öltözködés ábécéje (Budapest: Minerva, 1977), 9.
WELL-DRESSED AND FASHIONABLE

Figure 56. Young people at Buda Youth Park in 1976 (photo by Tamás Urbán, Fortepan, 125536)

Park (Buda Youth Park) in sporting jeans and long hair in 1971, five or ten years later anyone who dared to attend a rock concert in a suit and tie instead of jeans and a T-shirt would have been a source of great amusement.\(^{121}\)

Attaining public acceptance for the fashion statements that went hand-in-hand with the spread of beat and rock music—such as jeans or long hair—took a longer amount of time. It must, however, be said that the political and social atmosphere became more tolerant of expressing individual difference (either by the means mentioned above or any other) throughout the 1970s. This circumstance was just as much due to communist ideology’s slackening grip over society as it was to the transformation of values and opinion that was taking

\(^{121}\) Opened on April 20, 1961, the Buda Youth Park soon became a popular concert venue. However, the clothing and type of behavior allowed in the Park were regulated with a fair amount of strictness for quite a long time. “The two stone lion statues stationed at the bottom of the ramp are very gentle beasts and do not even growl or flick a tail at the sight of a more striking or individual outfit. Just a few meters higher up watchful eyes examine those wanting to gain entrance from head to toe. No quarter is given: trainers, Bermuda shorts, jeans or long hair is treated with the same mercilessness as anyone wearing clothes that ‘don’t belong here’ is forced to stay outside.” Klára Brassnyai, “Zene száll a függőkertből,” Ifjúsági Magazin, no. 8 (1970), 4.
place as part of the emerging influence formed by the consumerist mentality and the expression of consumer demands. While utter scandal broke out over the hippie trend at the end of the 1960s, one decade later Budapest’s streets had been overtaken by the highly groomed digó ("gigolos") who went to extremes in presenting a polished appearance, the "bums" (csővesek) in their narrow-legged, ragged jeans, and the underdressed “punks” sporting their characteristic mohawk hairstyle.

Many of the experts who dealt in fashion and style at the turn of the 1960s to the 1970s thought that “these days inspirational style elements are not arriving from fashion salons, but rather from the more peripheral reaches of dress and subcultural youth movements. Today fashion draws from pop festivals, sports clubs, and musicals while also featuring garments from exotic regions, military uniforms stripped of their rank insignias, and the most varied types of work clothes.” Particular clothing elements became the iconic emblems of a certain period, such as the extremely tight-legged jeans worn at the end of the 1970s and the beginning of the 1980s, the red-and-white, polka-dotted kerchief (baboskendő), or the “sniff bag” (szimatszatyor) the khaki backpack issued by the Hungarian People’s Army for storing gas masks which became an accessory much coveted by Hungarian teens. The way some young people dressed signaled their allegiance to certain groups, or quite often symbolized the generational perspective epitomized by a rock band, such as the ragged jeans and red-and-white, polka-dotted neck kerchief worn by fans of the band, Beatrice. It was partly thanks to rock music that folk fashion and military-issue garments—or their characteristic, khaki color—influenced dress styles.

Meanwhile the question of what to wear or the more traditional concept of fashion continued to belong to the realm of “women’s issues” in everyday life; the era’s fashion publications devoted far less attention to menswear. According to a study made on the topic, “fashion is a kind of coherency, it is not a garment, a pair of shoes, or a hat, but all of these elements coming together to form an individual’s appearance. A fashionable appearance includes everything from shoes to hair; every element must harmonize in reflection of fashion’s current spirit.” Magazines and various publications attempted to

122 Margit Szilvitzky, A farmertől az ünneplőig (Budapest: Corvina Kiadó, 1979), 15.
123 “Az új divatvonalak terjedési ideje, a divatváltozások közgazdasági hatása: A Divat-tervező Vállalat által készített tanulmány,” Budapest, MNL OL, Belkereskedelmi
provide readers with either general or detailed assistance in orienting themselves among the latest trends that changed with bewildering speed. More tellingly, these suggestions no longer targeted “working women” alone (even though this category did continue to pop up), but also addressed women who were older, younger, middle-aged, tall, short, thin, or plump. For young people, practically every type of garment or style was allowed, “within the limits of good taste,” of course. Middle-aged women were primarily encouraged to wear simpler, more conservative apparel that was still fashionable. Virtually every publication that discussed dress and fashion emphasized the need to strike a harmonious balance between fashionable and “wholesome” clothing.

How women were viewed by society also changed; in contrast to the politically and ideologically enforced “equal rights” that had typified previous decades, a certain kind of organic process of emancipation was unfolding while some features of traditional gender roles still remained current. From the point of view of politics, the predefined, “mandatory” female ideal appeared more rarely even though the issue of how to influence women’s taste remained within the realm of the era’s centrally directed treatment of “women’s politics.” Lectures designed to influence taste were regularly held at workplaces where women were employed and were also featured among the programs organized for socialist brigades. The ideological and mythologized image of the working woman gradually faded away as it gradually became more natural for the female role to be more and more closely attached to that of a wage earner. From time to time, the need to keep the state socialist economic system supplied with a workforce pushed the efforts to exalt the principles of equality into the background. According to the official position touted at the time, dress was an issue in which the role of trade was defined as one that helped women gain access to practical and fashionable apparel in as widespread and convenient a manner as possible.

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124 During the state socialist system, work competitions or other noneconomic methods were used to spur workers on to greater efficiency. Before 1956, the Stakhano-vite movement was one form of this effort, which essentially pitted individuals’ production results against one another in a kind of competition. After 1956, the socialist brigade emerged as another method that required 30–40 people all working in the same department at the same manufactory to establish socialist brigades. In some instances, these brigades were the basis for genuine workplace communities.
The principles of practicality paired with “simple elegance” also influenced the thinking of fashion designers, some of whom believed at the time that their work was subordinate to serving the demands of practicality. The importance of attaining an appearance that was rendered harmonious by donning whatever garments were deemed appropriate for a certain age group or body type was emphasized: “It is far from being certain that the piece we see on a mannequin suits us or shows us in an advantageous way. . . . The sight of a conservatively dressed man with a frivolously gaudy woman on his arm is not exactly laudable. The opposite is just as true and refers to young people as well.” Another equally significant viewpoint reflected the idea that each garment selected for wear must conform—in its cut and color—to the wearer’s personality:

With our dress we sometimes tend to neglect our personality when we automatically and unthinkingly adopt some new fad. To give one example: for an American girl there is nothing more natural than sewing the symbol of her nation on her pullover. . . . For a Hungarian girl to sew the very same American flag to her blouse as a decoration is more than repulsive. We know very well that she is not rejecting her allegiance to our socialist nation: she is simply copying what others do in a game of “monkey-see-monkey-do.” Luckily for us, this type of slavish imitation of foreign fads is not typical of our general taste. For the most part, our designers provide us with lovely designs that help beautify our outer appearance.

Most fashion experts felt that possessing a realistic sense of self-estimation and a sufficient amount of sensibility would go a long way toward protecting certain individuals from fashion excesses since “no matter what the fashion is, excess is always bad. Let’s think back—with all objectivity—to the miniskirt. There were definitely some who followed that crazy trend even when neither her age nor her weight could be considered ‘mini.’ For years caricaturists had a laugh and made others laugh with cartoons lampooning the mini craze. Let us therefore guard ourselves from excess.”

During the second half of the 1970s the skirt suit continued to maintain its position as the most important and practical piece in a woman’s wardrobe. As such, it was considered to be the kind

125 Faragó, Az öltözködés ábécéje, 8.
127 Faragó, Az öltözködés ábécéje, 9.
WELL-DRESSED AND FASHIONABLE

of garment that could be put to adequate use, was always elegant, tolerated changes in fashion trends well, and depended less on the wearer’s age and physical attributes. The materials used for skirt suits could include anything from tweed or jersey knit to silk, velvet, shantung, or cotton. Another indication of the changing times lay in the addition of slacks to this outfit, rather than the traditional pairing of a skirt and blazer. Button-down shirt dresses quickly became a widespread trend in the mid-seventies mainly due to the fact that—with the right tailoring—it was a style that could be made fashionable for teenage girls or older women alike.

Most Hungarian women are well dressed. They apply quite a lot of inventiveness to tailoring the material and their clothes are colorful, cheerful, and—for the most part—modest yet still elegantly refined. We ask the leaders of fashion to pay greater attention to the fact that seventy percent of women of employment age are working. . . . Fashion designers must think of the daily conditions experienced by women pursuing various professions and what clothes they can wear at work, at home, or at different events and places of entertainment. To avoid any type of misunderstanding: God forbid that

Figure 57. People walking along the Danube in Budapest, 1986 (Fortepan, 213028, Zoltán Szalay)
they design a different kind of dress for the poultry keeper compared to the shift operator when either attends the theater! We are justly proud of the fact that no outward difference can be detected among concertgoers, whether one is a teacher or the other is a shop clerk. We would like to increase this phenomenon.128

Except for a few professions that traditionally included the wearing of a uniform, the differences between various professional branches or groups genuinely decreased during this period. Similarly, the prestige represented by a uniform also lessened significantly. The style of dress and quality of clothing, however, continued to signal the wearer’s social and financial position.

In the 1970s and 1980s, the spread of sportswear was evident in the wardrobes of both men and women: “In its many variations…the appearance of the overall reflects the comfort and protective qualities it provides even in its name, ‘over all.’ These types of garments that have sprung out of work clothes and different kinds of denim apparel aptly express the functional freedom that results from the relationship between today’s lifestyle and clothing and subsequently allow wearers to dress without feeling any sense of tense artificialness. The fad in wearing used clothing can also be placed in this category since it has already made a place for itself in the fashion world.”129 Relatively few changes occurred in men’s fashions during the 1970s. For the younger generations weekday wear consisted of jeans, a shirt and a vest, or jeans and a sweater. Older men were still advised to wear different types of suits, including one of the era’s fashionable pieces: the classic suit with a waistcoat. In this period the silk turtle-neck or knit pullover made its debut and was quickly paired with an unbuttoned corduroy shirt. High-necked sweaters were also trendy while men’s shirts increasingly included plaid or striped patterns other than the more traditional shirts in solid colors. In contrast, the custom of wearing a hat was consistently decreasing in popularity and remained an essential accessory worn mainly by middle-aged and older men.

At the beginning of the 1980s women’s clothing tended to pair deep shades of color with contrasting colors, especially white and black. Comfort and informality was emphasized in cut and style with

129 Szilvitzky, A farmertől az ünneplőig, 15.
more emphasis placed on the shoulders, followed by a straight line that flowed downward in a loose, easy synchrony with the body’s shape. Skirt lengths grew longer: “The palette used in women’s clothing is so colorful that the sheer variety seen now has perhaps never been available before. Four or five or often even more styles exist at the same time and the number of variations is countless.”130 For fashion-minded men, classical, solidly elegant forms and garments became the rage. Instead of the previously fashionable “coats filled with cotton batting or sportswear, a well-dressed, well-groomed appearance is key. Striped blazers or sports coats made of heavy tweed or twill are truly trendy. Fashion designers suggest men’s sportswear—jackets, vests, and the full range of sweaters—be set aside for sports and other leisure activities.”131

According to a fashion magazine, young people’s fashion habits underwent another transformation at the beginning of the 1980s:

There is something in the air that leads one to draw the conclusion that a well-groomed, tasteful appearance will once more be more and more fashionable. Wrinkled, patched odds and ends or raggedy bits of garments and an unkempt appearance are beginning to go out of style. A few years back there were times when it was necessary to apply tactful yet tenacious pressure in convincing a confirmed hippie follower to wash his or her hair and make more liberal use of soap—who meanwhile swore up and down that this outfit was only “perfect” when the dirt-stiffened jeans stood on their own legs next to the bed, ready for the wearer to dive right into them with both feet when morning came! This was true whether the wearer was a girl or a boy. After all, irritating their elders also meant making it impossible to differentiate between the two, at least from behind, that is. Different winds are blowing today. The girls have noticed that flowery skirts and light blouses can be far more advantageous compared to heavy sweaters that stretch to the knee. The boys’ tastes are also changing. More and more young men understand that knotting a tie around their necks is not absolutely necessary when loose, sporty garments can be worn that—gracious me!—have even been cleaned and ironed.132

As far as daily life was concerned, these much-anticipated changes only occurred gradually.

130 Ez a Divat, no. 2 (1985), 2.
131 Ez a Divat, no. 9 (1985), 15.
132 Ez a Divat, no. 2 (1980), 2.
As the eighties were ushered in, men’s fashions regarding suits abandoned the slim-look styles that had ruled previous decades in favor of emphasizing a more masculine build. “Fashion . . . means wide shoulders and all those who do not possess significant muscles and deltoids of their own can only realize the form of a prize-winning wrestler by relying on shoulder pads or other kinds of padding to create the optical illusion of wide shoulders. . . . Even so, accessories adapt to the garment’s style. Fashionable shirts are narrow-necked while fashionable ties are also narrow.” Among the materials used for trousers and shirts at the end of the 1970s and the beginning of the 1980s, corduroy became common. Young people were happy to pair colorful corduroy shirts as a kind of “substitute jacket” with their jeans and a cotton T-shirt.

Among women the narrow silhouette that signaled physical slenderness became the dominant characteristic of beauty. Essentially typified by a feeling of nostalgia, this type of fashion mainly drew upon styles from the forties and fifties. The characteristic features of a trend that closely followed the line of the body included, according to the yearbook of *Ez a Divat*, the following:

from the little hat perched on the top of the head to the straight shoulders made wider with padding, a loose, slightly wider top flows to a waist accentuated by a narrow or wide belt. Skirts are straight with refined detailing and either graze the knee or extend a few centimeters beyond. Trousers are narrow, with a bit more room around the hips. Shoes are exceedingly high with narrow heels, or elegant flats for more sporty outfits. . . . Among the materials being used for spring fashions, fine suiting triumphs, while cotton, linen, batiste, muslin, poplin, satin, and cotton crepe dominate summer fashions. . . . More avantgarde looks contain more extreme versions of this new fashion together with all of its excesses, such as over-emphasized shoulders, contrasting color additions, and daring skirt slits.

Adaptability to multiple wardrobe variations continued to be one of the most important requirements for clothing worn at the beginning of the 1980s. This demand led to the spread of garments that could be “mixed and matched,” or worn for more than one purpose, a factor that made it much easier to replace or add new items to a wardrobe. Another characteristic feature of this period was the spread of fitness

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133 *Ez a Divat*, no. 3 (1980), 48.
wear. Following the “sweat suit period” that occurred during the sixties and seventies, better quality sports clothing increasingly entered the market. Among the manufactories that specialized in this branch of apparel, the Senior brand of sports outfits produced by the Váci Stretch Knits Factory tried to compete against world-renowned sports and leisurewear companies.

When it came to dressing children, practicality continued to determine children’s wear throughout the seventies and eighties, meaning that comfort, style, durability, and ease in washing were held as the most important factors in choosing clothes for children. A fashionable appearance was primarily important among teenagers, even though what this exactly meant changed according to the given age group. In the mid-seventies it was recommended for teenage boys to wear trousers or jeans with a shirt and sweater, while fashion designers suggested a combination of culottes and a blouse or a jumper and a blouse for girls. Most teens, however, found it far preferable to wear jeans, flannel or corduroy shirts, and jean jackets, while girls opted for jeans or denim skirts with cotton tops for everyday wear. Other than the growing influence of the latest styles in sportswear, ties to a subculture youth group or the aim of differentiating themselves from other generations played a larger role in how young people dressed.

According to the Hungarian Fashion Institute’s research regarding children’s clothing, the average supply of garments that was available at the time fulfilled the basic needs of children.\(^{135}\) To differing proportions, anywhere from fifty to eighty percent of children owned a coat; most children had two jackets. Hand-me-downs had a significant role in maintaining supply levels as one-third of these coats and jackets had been passed down from another source. Among boys under the age of fourteen, wearing a suit was rare, while one suit was generally found in the wardrobes of boys over fifteen years old. (It cannot be forgotten that—even today—secondary school graduation traditions in Hungary demand that boys wear suits not only at their graduation, but also for most of the events and exams preceding this occasion. This custom likely influenced the appearance of suits in the wardrobes of older teenage boys.) Until the age of fourteen, dresses determined the wardrobes of girls, who owned three to four dresses on average. Older girls usually exchanged dresses for skirts or slacks

\(^{135}\) A Magyar Divat Intézet Piackutatási Stúdiójának 1988-as felmérése a gyermekruházati ellátottságról és a gyermekruha-vásárlási szokásokról. A Magyar Divat Intézet Irattára, 143.
Figure 58. Children’s fashion, 1980 (Fortepan, 27158, József Drimbe)
and blouses. For both girls and boys, trousers were the garment of choice; regardless of gender, the average wardrobe contained three to five trousers and regularly included one pair of jeans that most teens—whether in Budapest or the countryside—bought yearly. In the case of girls, four to five skirts represented essential elements of their wardrobe. On average boys owned four to five shirts while girls had anywhere from four to six blouses. Sweaters or pullovers were also favored items; both boys and girls owned an average of five to six of these garments. As sportswear spread, tracksuits became more popular and many were happy to add the top of these leisurewear items to a pair of jeans. Tracksuits were slightly more popular among children in Budapest compared to rural children since the average supply (two tracksuits per child) was nearly twice that found outside of the capital city. In the 1980s T-shirts played a defining role in the clothing worn by children and teens; boys and girls owned seven to eight T-shirts a piece. Despite improvements in supply and selection, being able to wear a brand-name item of clothing still heralded a significant increase in status and prestige.

The custom of wearing a smock to school was quite common at the time; more than half of all boys and four-fifths of all girls had two smocks in their wardrobes. As children grew older, differences in the underwear worn by the two sexes became more pronounced as girls tended to accrue larger supplies. Boys averaged six pairs of underwear, six undershirts, three sets of pajamas and ten pairs of socks. Girls usually had ten pairs of panties, five undervests, three to four pairs of pajamas or nightgowns, ten pairs of socks, and five pairs of stockings or pantyhose. These numbers meant that both boys and girls had access to a clean set of underclothing every day. At the end of the 1980s, the average children’s wardrobe also included a bathrobe, one to two swimsuits, two to three caps, two pairs of dress shoes, one pair of trainers, one pair of boots, and one pair of sandals. These survey results demonstrate that a relative balance existed between urban and rural children as far as their clothing was concerned while additionally reinforcing the fact that attention to fashion and dress grew significantly among teens who were over fifteen years of age, a fact that remained true regardless of residence. For teenagers growing up in quasi-consumerist circumstances, appearing in fashionable and sporty apparel was just as important as gaining recognition—based on their available opportunities—for owning “brand-name stuff.”
In cities, how people dressed for holidays or special occasions underwent relatively little change. It could not be denied, however, that members of younger generations felt that the norms and rules governing traditional dress codes bore less relevance to them compared to those who were middle aged or older. As a result, social expectations also changed. Two elements were and remain an aspect of formal dress habits: the first is to signal the individual and community’s connection to a celebratory occasion and the second is to ensure that the related content be recognized as socially acceptable. What apparel is worn for special occasions arises out of customs and the social “compromises” that stem from an event’s unique character. During the 1970s and 1980s in Hungary, the rules that represented a respect for tradition changed in that their previous, mandatory nature gentled to recommended behavior or relaxed expectations.

As to what events demanded expression via outward appearance, occasions such as Sunday family dinners held with a broader array of relatives, holidays (Christmas, Easter, birthdays), family or friendly gatherings, visits to the theater or opera, weddings, graduations, workplace events, receptions, and balls all counted as times when donning more formal clothing was necessary. According to the general expectation, wearing appropriate apparel was the way to mark the significance behind each occasion. In the case of formal attire, a significant requirement was that the material, style, and color be appropriate for the given event:

A little black dress is suitable for many occasions; thanks to the air of festivity it brings to virtually any event, it can be worn anywhere. Its somber tone can be brightened with the help of accessories... When awaiting guests at home, clothing should not be overly elegant because it is impolite to “outdress” our guests. Nor is it acceptable to greet guests in a sloppy outfit we’ve just thrown on, or a tracksuit since this is a sign of disrespect... Evening dresses are the right choice for occasions or events taking place late in the evening or for New Year’s Eve, a visit to the opera, or other forms of evening entertainment. A daring slit or a bare back, however, is not for everyone, no matter how fashionable it is right now. Older ladies or—based on their type—middle-aged women must be wary of baring their upper arms. An exceedingly low décolletage is not advantageous at this age either as it draws attention to skin that is no longer at its tautest.\textsuperscript{136}

\textsuperscript{136} Uresch, \textit{Korszerű divat}, 118–19.
For men dark-colored suits remained the recommended garb for formal events, although sports blazers in lighter colors were acceptable for family occasions.

The habits and customs attached to life’s pivotal points changed relatively little since participants strove to emphasize the importance of these events via their outer appearance:

The wedding ceremony demands the wearing of distinctive garments. . . . Numerous symbolic objects and signs contribute to the marital rites, such as the bridal wreath, the engagement kerchief,137 engagement gifts, rings, or the decorations which embellish the bride or the groom’s wedding clothes and appearance. To this very day [1982] wedding garments have preserved their emblematic character, which in turn distinguishes them from all other types of clothes. Donning them signals the approach of a significant event; when the groom in his dark suit stands beside the bride in her white dress, this ceremonial symbol of their unification represents the fact that they belong to one another.138

In the case of young couples entering marriage, it can be said that the “prerequisites” demanded by tradition were slightly more forgiving as previous customs changed and thereby made room for fashion trends to have more of an influence. Men, for example, found it increasingly more acceptable to attend “important events” in suits that were not just the usual dark colors of black, dark blue, or dark gray. Although lighter shades progressively enjoyed greater acceptance and suit jackets were tailored in sportier styles, dressing in a manner that was suitably elegant for the given occasion remained important. In practice the bride in her white gown that swept the floor generally walked to her groom wearing a dark suit or—in much rarer instances—a tuxedo. Most young brides also clung to tradition and continued to wear a bridal veil with a full-length white dress: “The first rule of a bridal dress is that it be ‘proper.’ This means it must have sleeves, not expose the upper body and—no matter what the fashion is—it should

137 Among the customs that preceded weddings, other than exchanging engagement rings (the main rite of an engagement) it was traditional to exchange additional small symbolic objects. The engagement kerchief was one of these objects and consisted of a small square-shaped piece of textile that was frequently highly decorated or embroidered. It was the bride’s role to give an engagement kerchief to the groom.

138 Szilvitzky, A farmertől az ünneplőig, 21.
never be too short, either. As fashions change, so does the wedding dress’s color. Other than the traditional white, sky blue, light green, and powder pink are also common.” In contrast to previous customs, pant suits also became an accepted outfit for brides. Fashion advisers recommended older brides or women marrying for a second or third time select an elegant skirt suit instead of the usual white gown.

Wearing garments that were considered appropriate for the given occasion naturally remained an unwritten rule for all those present. The representational role possessed by weddings grew even more important during the 1970s and 1980s. Other than celebrating the nuptials of a bride and groom, for family, relatives, friends, and acquaintances a wedding presented a rather unique opportunity for demonstrating social and financial status. This factor was made obvious via clothing as virtually every guest made sure to appear at the wedding ceremony in apparel that had been specially purchased for the event.

The dress habits connected to mourning underwent only slight alterations. It was generally expected that participants in the funeral rites appear in black or dark-colored attire. Small discrepancies occurred in the length of the mourning period that was held afterward, based on whether the involved individuals lived in the city or countryside. Wearing black as a sign of mourning for a longer period of time—one year when a close relative died—was typical among village dwellers while this same custom became shorter and shorter in cities. The custom of marking one’s everyday clothes with a mourning band also became rare.

Questions related to formal events and occasions appeared in newspaper columns from time to time, particularly within the context of behavioral issues. In the beginning of 1975, a journalist at the fashion magazine Ez a Divat indignantly recollected the memory of attending a theater premiere at which two young men had appeared in their everyday clothing, to the shock of the entire audience: “Their hair and beards were crying out for soap, similar to their ragged trousers . . . everyone can wear what he wants at home, where dress is a private matter. A theater, however, is called a public building because it belongs to the public and is where people go to gain a feeling of culture. Nobody has the right to ruin another person’s experience by appearing with an unkempt appearance, thereby forcing the others to observe his unwashed body odor rather than the beauty

139 Faragó, Az öltözködés ábécéje, 19.
of Shakespeare’s language.” A household management guide published at the end of the 1970s issued the opinion that “all types and styles of dresses can be worn to the theater, but we should not go in jeans and a sweater. A decent afternoon dress is appropriate for any theatrical production, as long as its length is not passé.” The fact cannot be denied that young people were far more likely to view the dress code for visiting the theater as more of an optional decision rather than a mandatory requirement, which is how other generations viewed this question. This fact regularly sparked debate and conflicts of opinion:

A fashion movement that opposes good dress sense has reared its ugly head in our society as well. In their jeans and shirtsleeves, or preferably a plaid shirt or blouse, its representatives take their seats in the theater. It’s a trumped-up fashion movement. We are no longer living in those days when not everyone could afford clothes that are at least somewhat formal. Nor are we at the point that it’s time to battle the ho-hum, boring existence of affluence by deliberately appearing ragged in public. It’s not as if a lovely evening at the theater, a concert, or a dance is an everyday event in our lives; let’s therefore not be ashamed to use our formal clothes to express that fact that the event is indeed formal! Let’s dress so that our clothing actually expresses some aspect of our mood.

Many of the members of older generations felt that no separation could be made between the occasion and the clothes that were worn while attending the event. In fact, contemporary opinion generally accepted the idea that there are certain times of the year that can be made even more unforgettable by donning formal wear. All kinds of balls have become something of a tradition; it’s at events like these that a person is right in “going all out” by choosing an evening dress, which is appropriate. We admit in advance that there’s no law stating that evening formal wear has to cost a bundle! Anyone good at sewing can even make one for herself. . . . It is, however, useful to have a pretty dress or two made of fine material or angora jersey (like the cowl-necked ones that are so popular now) in our basic wardrobe. A well-tailored little skirt suit with padded shoulders, or today’s version of that eternal darling, the shirtwaist dress, can also solve our problem at the blink of an eye. Any of

141 Uresch, Korszerű divat, 118–19.
these outfits are perfectly suitable for the theater, different celebrations, and events, as well as for hosting guests or paying visits as guests.  

Out of all the various celebratory occasions, the significance of secondary school graduations rose to represent—it can be said with only a little exaggeration—a festive induction into adulthood. This content was naturally expressed outwardly via the quality of clothing worn or the number of guests invited to the event. As was referred to previously, suits of the same cut and color were prepared out of good-quality material for the boys while new clothes (the type of which was chosen based on school traditions) were also sewn for the girls. For young ladies, formal clothes for graduation usually meant a dark-colored long skirt, a white blouse emblazoned with the school’s crest, a sailor’s blouse, or an elegantly tailored skirt suit. This illustrious event frequently evolved into a competition to see who could find better material and thereby ensure a more elegant appearance for the graduating class. The author of a fashion magazine from the spring of 1980 warned readers against falling into excess: “It is hard to decide when and where the desire to display a unified splendor at the graduation ceremony or reception that is so fashionable these days actually began. It cannot be denied that certain schools in the capital city are genuinely vying against one another. . . . This alone is not enough to make it necessary for the clothes to be made of the most expensive, western materials and sewn up by the most exclusive tailor in downtown Budapest.” The custom of having new clothes prepared and then worn became an inseparable part of the graduation ceremony. In essence this was the occasion when the aim of presenting a traditional and elegant—according to the generally accepted meaning of the word—appearance did not cause the young people involved to raise objections or resist. By the second half of the seventies wearing the mandatory skirt and school blouse or suit was not at all the obvious choice for every graduation.

Among young people weekend entertainment essentially did not require any customary style of dress; everyone put on the clothes that he or she thought were more fashionable, elegant, or simply different from weekday outfits. “How interesting that younger generations

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143 Ez a Divat, no. 12 (1980), 2.
144 Ez a Divat, no. 4 (1980), 2.
can find the right clothes to wear to their favorite entertainment without having to ask for advice. One glance at the crowd at a disco is enough to see that shiny overalls, fake leather pants, strapless tops or tops with only spaghetti straps, and tight skirts with slits are virtually a uniform of sorts for them, just like the stretched out sweaters and jeans at beat music concerts. Let’s not even mention the red-and-white polka-dotted kerchief.”

At the end of the seventies, fewer and fewer rules or expectations were held regarding what should be worn at home. Noticeable change, naturally, did not occur in differentiating between the garments worn in public or at work and those put on at home. Regardless of their generation or profession, for men tracksuits completely swept aside the dressing gown or smoking jacket, garments that had been common just a few decades earlier. In the case of women, aprons were still recommended for various household tasks, along with a pretty dress or otthonka. What was worn at home depended on the individual’s place of residence and the nature of the work being done at home:

These days the attitude that any kind of worn out cast-off is perfectly fine for home—where only a few people will see it—is no longer modern. The one to see it is “only” a family member and at most we will just quickly change into something else if we need to run to the store for anything. . . . The important thing is for family members not to look slovenly or unkempt in front of one another. If a guest unexpectedly appears, we shouldn’t have to rush to throw on a better skirt or pair of trousers. Even if the person ringing the bell is only the usual postman or bill collector, the last thing we should do is to open the door with tousled hair or wearing disheveled, rumpled clothing! Nor is it right to spend the entire day lounging around home in a dressing gown; by no means at all should the same be attempted in a bathrobe!

The main thing was for the clothing worn at home to be simple and comfortable. Aprons, sleeveless smocks that buttoned down the front, and a kerchief were recommended for women. The era’s fashionable piece, the otthonka, which was available in many colors and styles and generally made of polyester fabric, was also among the suggested garments:

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145 Ez a Divat, no. 12 (1980), 2.
146 Uresch, Korszerű divat, 76–77.
While there are all kinds of apparel for home, the attire we wear should always be suitable for either work or rest within the home. It can be a dressing gown, housecoat, apron, jumper, or an overall, it can be the combination of shorts and a top or pants and a top, or even a tracksuit. The important thing to remember is that it be neither worn nor dirty!... To tell the truth, our appearance at home contains a deep, inner message: is it important to us, or not, that family members find each other good-looking and show that they still want the other to find them attractive throughout the long years?¹⁴⁷

Most household management and fashion guides from the mid-seventies suggested that the clothing worn at home be changed according to the actual activity being conducted. By the seventies house shoes or felt slippers had been clearly exchanged for different styles of mules or slippers.

As far as undergarments were concerned, the kind of underwear that had been fashionable in the 1960s—mainly made of nylon or other synthetic materials and therefore not suitable for either ventilation or absorption—was gradually replaced by garments made of cotton stretch knit that only contained a small percentage of polyester. This change fulfilled the population’s growing demands regarding hygiene and health needs to a far better extent. According to a technical volume published at the end of the 1970s that provided an overview of all the issues related to modern dress, the primary concern was for undergarments to be both comfortable and discrete since having an undergarment show through a woman’s outer apparel would be less than aesthetic. Other than (or together with) the camisole, wearing a cotton undervest became more common. For health purposes, slips were also considered practical, particularly if the type of outer garment being worn required one. The four-fifths of women who regularly wore brassieres primarily emphasized the garment’s aid in shaping the figure and providing an aesthetic shape. Garters and girdles were referred to as old-fashioned garments that were rarely used. By the end of the seventies, the cotton undervest had completely replaced camisoles in the wardrobes of younger women, pantyhose was preferred over stockings, and slips were usually only worn under formal wear.

According to a market survey prepared at the end of the seventies and the beginning of the eighties, women held much higher expecta-

tions regarding the quality of underwear: “The easier—and lighter—pieces of women’s undergarments are panties, camisoles, and slips. These days most of these are made of stretch knit. . . . We have long moved past the tyrannical dominance of white, pink, and light blue. Today an undergarment in black or red is not even conspicuous. A wide variety of colorful undergarments, in all kinds of patterns, is available. The selection of sizes for panties is not only geared toward the hip measurement. Size variations also designate variations in style: from the long-legged garments essential for those susceptible to catching a chill to bikini styles, everything can be found.”\textsuperscript{148} As the 1970s turned to the 1980s, the latter style became widespread among young women.

When choosing a nightgown or a pair of pajamas, comfort and health-related issues predominated. As a result, in summer a full- or half-length nightgown was recommended, to be replaced by cotton pajamas for women during the winter. In reference to the era’s popular nightie, the baby doll, the comment was made that—no matter how aesthetic it may be—a baby doll was only worth wearing in a well-heated home. “Among dressing gowns and robes, the most practical ones are those that can be worn in front of strangers for a brief amount of time at least. We mustn’t wear them outside of the home and strongly urge women not to pop over to the store in them, not even if the store happens to be next door and we are only going to pick up just one little thing.”\textsuperscript{149} They also emphasized the fact that modern and fashionable dress meant a cultured appearance that fit both the place and the situation as regarded both outer and under wear.

Among the fashionable bathing styles worn by women during the 1970s and 1980s, it was increasingly more acceptable for women to expose more of their bodies. “The latest innovations of the 1980s were the thong [\textit{tanga}], a triangle of material in front and a strap or two in back, or the one-piece bathing suit made of extremely thin material that young girls rolled down as far as possible so the sun would tan as much of their skin as possible.”\textsuperscript{150} Among female bathers frequenting Hungarian beaches or bathing spots, the topless monokini was relatively rare due to public scorn. The establishment of the first nud-

\textsuperscript{148} Pataki, \textit{A család ruhatára}, 57.
\textsuperscript{149} Uresch, \textit{Korszerű divat}, 26.
\textsuperscript{150} F. Dózsa, “A fürdőöltönytől a tangáig: Női-férfi divat a vízparton,” 38–39.
ist bathing camps understandably caused quite a large stir in the first half of the 1980s. While the material and style found in men’s bathing fashions changed, this issue was not nearly important enough to warrant much attention. As of the 1980s, the old style of bathing trunks that resembled men’s boxers became increasingly popular.

Men’s undergarments changed relatively little; as opposed to the more commonly used linen or cotton black gym shorts, cotton undergarments with high-cut legs were produced. The colors of black, white, or dark blue lost their previous dominance as men’s underwear became more colorful and even patterned prints became acceptable. Compared to women’s, men’s sleepwear was far less dependent on fashion as men usually wore pajamas made of cotton or linen that was either patterned or a solid color. Nightshirts were characteristically worn by members of older generations or only made an appearance in the form of an aged, “institutional issue” nightshirt unearthed from the back of the wardrobe when hospital care was unavoidable.

By this time working women were not under pressure to present a puritan appearance, but rather encouraged to adopt clothing that would be both practical and fashionable: “At her workplace everyone should look as smart as her abilities allow—but not with green or silver eyeshadow smeared on her eyelids. Be fashionable without looking like a mannequin in a shop window. A neat and well-dressed appearance lends a feeling of good health. But . . . and this is the most important of all: there is no need to wear a different outfit every day. Our surroundings are also important, so let’s devote some attention to what others are wearing. After all, a workplace is not a fashion show.”\(^{151}\) In connection to dressing for work, practicality triumphed over fashion, which was therefore more restricted in comparison: “Trousers with overly baggy legs, a loose skirt or sleeves can cause an accident, which is why sleeves should be rolled up or buttoned at the wrists. Trouser legs should be cinched. . . . Generally speaking, the most ideal solution is for us to change clothes from head to toe—including our undergarments—so as to preserve our health and well-being.”\(^{152}\) As a means of preventing accidents, close-fitting clothing was recommended for those working next to or with machinery.

For agricultural workers the solution to toiling outside under the sun was to dress in layers. At least two full changes of the suggested

\(^{151}\) Faragó, Az öltözködés őbéceje, 42.

\(^{152}\) Uresch, Korszerű divat, 82–85.
amount of work clothes (containing the prerequisite garments) were seen as being sufficient. Larger companies usually provided work clothes for their workers, even if the quality of these garments generally left much to be desired. Since smaller manufactories or cooperative workshops were usually unable to provide this additional benefit, their workers frequently wore shabbier clothes brought from home. For office workers or those pursuing white-collar professions, there was usually no difference between what they wore at work as opposed to in public. Depending on the workplace and type of job being done, some professions (ranging from medical staff to teachers, engineers, or even warehouse workers) expected their workers to don smocks or white lab coats. As an additional work benefit, the employees in a fairly wide array of professions could count on differing sums of money issued as a clothing stipend. By the end of the 1980s, workplaces rarely had any type of mandatory dress code as the unwritten rules of custom generally regulated what people wore far more effectively. It was appropriate for male government employees to wear a suit and tie to work while women were expected to be in some combination of a skirt and blouse or a conservatively elegant dress.

At the end of the 1970s and the beginning of the 1980s, most students in both primary and secondary schools were required to wear smocks that were usually blue in color. “The fact that boys must also wear a school smock in many places is something that can only be encouraged as doing so decreases competition among students. It is far better for the need to follow fashion to be satisfied in private, on the street, or among company.” The compulsory school smock completely lost all function at the end of the 1980s. The same was true of the uniforms issued by the KISZ (Young Communist League) or the Magyar Úttörő Szövetség (Hungarian Pioneers’ Association) for different levels of involvement, such as the drummer, the pioneer, or the young guardsman. For children and young people, it was mandatory to wear these “uniforms” at celebrations until the end of the 1980s, when they went out of fashion.

By the beginning of the 1970s, the process of exchanging traditional folk dress for modern apparel had essentially been concluded in

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154 A wing of the KISZ, the Ifjú Gárda (Young Guard) was an association charged with the task of providing organizers for KISZ events while simultaneously reinforcing the education of its members in national defense. The Young Guardsmen operated under the complete political control of KISZ.
Hungary’s villages. Those who remained in traditional clothes after this decade usually continued to wear the basic garments belonging to their regional tradition until the end of their lives. In the village of Patak located in Nógrád County, in 1985 virtually all women above the age of sixty-five were still wearing traditional clothes. While a significant proportion of women over the age of fifty also followed their example, it was far rarer for younger women to be in traditional garb. Women under the age of forty-three, for example, only wore urban-style clothing.\(^{155}\) In the mid-eighties the wardrobe for a middle-aged woman of average means who still followed tradition contained the following items: five camisoles, two cotton undershirts, nine knit jackets used as sleepwear, ten pairs of underwear, four pairs of winter trousers, eight pairs of stockings, one pair of garters, eighteen underskirts and overskirts each, three aprons, one long-sleeved and four short-sleeved outer blouses, fourteen short- and long-sleeved sweaters, thirteen cardigans, seven vests, one large shawl, forty-nine head kerchiefs, four pairs of sandals, one pair of leather slippers, one pair of leather shoes, two pairs of boots, two pairs of gloves, and one scarf. Altogether, this wardrobe comprised 187 items that belonged to traditional dress customs. The accessories added to her outfits included one umbrella and one handbag; a wedding ring, a pair of earrings, and a wristwatch served as her jewelry. The primary colors of her wardrobe were black, dark or medium blue, brown, dark green and maroon.\(^{156}\) Two-thirds of the garments were ready-made items purchased from a store while only one-third was either homemade or had been prepared by a seamstress.

When it came to traditional apparel, different materials were used to make these garments. According to Anikó Péterbencze’s research, conducted in the village of Zsámbok in Pest County, jersey fabric was mainly used for making skirts, while nylon also became a popular choice and appeared in the form of weekday skirts, shirts, and blouses.\(^{157}\) Rarely worn garments made of high-quality materials continued to appear at special occasions and events. The traditional style and cut of skirts, aprons, and shirts worn by Zsámbok’s women, however, did not display much change; the traditional headdress, for example,

\(^{155}\) Kapros, “‘Jönni, menni’ viselet a Nógrád megyei Patak községben 1985-ben,” 207.

\(^{156}\) Ibid., 208–12.

remained an essential part of these women’s clothing. Other than the wool shawl that was traditionally worn as outerwear, hand-knitted cardigans and vests also grew common. The more noticeable change to occur in traditional clothing was the addition of colors that were brighter compared to that previously found in certain regions. According to the demands placed on individuals by prestige consumerism, special celebrations (such as weddings or village festivals) required new clothing and shoes be purchased or made. For the most part, providing additional or better clothing for girls of marriageable age remained a relatively common custom, regardless of the family’s financial situation. Most parents felt it their duty to make sure their daughter had a “dowry worthy of the family name” when they married. As such, the family did not primarily purchase clothing items that were necessary for everyday needs, but instead bought the more expensive garments that represented either their genuine or desired financial status, such as a fur coat or boots. Garments continued to play an essential role in the dowries or wedding gifts bestowed upon young people—particularly women—who were getting married.

Satisfying the need for prestige based on the given society’s genuine or only projected requirements was expressed not only via the clothing worn to special occasions, but also in everyday situations, and primarily played a role in how children were clothed. According to Kata Jávor’s observations regarding Varsány and Zsombó, village women were overwhelmingly proud of the fact that they “dressed their children well.” During the 1970s and 1980s a unique form of competitive consumerism emerged in these and other villages, the underlying goal of which was to demonstrate the level of financial status the family had reached. For many, how their children were dressed presented the perfect opportunity for keeping up with their neighbors in a level of “well-dressedness” that could not fall behind that achieved by other families. “Families in Zsombó go out of their way to dress their children in the very best. There are even parents who refrain from taking their children to preschool because they cannot provide them with clothes that are as nice as the others.’ It must be said that the majority of Zsombó’s inhabitants judge those who fall below a certain level rather than acknowledge the excesses.”

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Other than providing a means for prestige consumerism, how children were dressed was heavily influenced by the models found in the socialization of gender roles. In general, parents took great care in differentiating, developing, and consciously reaffirming the outward differences between girls and boys. As a result, newborn boys were already dressed in light blue while newborn girls naturally appeared in pink. Once children became old enough for preschool or school, clothing once again became important since they had to appear in public, where the tracksuits, etc. worn at home were generally judged as insufficient. At celebrations girls were customarily dressed in a combination of a skirt and blouse. For children of primary school age, what girls or boys wore was mainly determined by the goal of being well-dressed; as gender roles increasingly came to the forefront during the teenage years, differentiating between the sexes became even more emphatic. “During the 1970s in Varsány,” notes Kata Jávor in her study on gender roles and clothing,

girls’ clothing reflected the polar opposites of weekday versus holiday apparel. Holidays included wedding receptions and attending mass, with Christmas and Easter mass representing the most significant occasions. Other than these events, girls put on slightly better clothes (compared to what they wore at home) when they stepped out to buy something at the store or appear in public. . . . At the time, an older girl owned an average of ten to twelve circle skirts and thirty blouses. These were worn in order, then she began wearing them from the beginning again. This indicates the fact that in many places dressing an older girl “correctly” was mainly a question of quantity. Formal wear exclusively meant donning traditional garb.159

Later on, a dark-colored skirt suit was also deemed acceptable apparel for every type of celebratory event.

Throughout the eighties and the nineties, girls’ wardrobes in Varsány showed a greater level of differentiation based on the kind of events they attended. The less formal, shabbier leisure wear they had previously only worn at home was exchanged for a pair of jeans when appearing in public. ‘For dates—even when conducted within village boundaries—a special ‘seductive,’ ‘not proper for church’

outfit is worn, such as dresses with straps, lower necklines, or short hemlines, depending on the season. The most formal pieces of clothing in a girl’s wardrobe are the ones she wears to church.” Another significant change regarding quality could be observed in the way the clothes worn at wedding receptions came to serve the purpose of drawing attention while also presenting a fashionable appearance. Today “rather than the outfit she wears to church, the most valuable item in an older girl’s wardrobe has become the formal dress she wore to a wedding reception.”160

According to ethnographers, clothing for village boys and young men remained a less important issue. The fashion for tracksuits and leisurewear that developed throughout the 1970s was replaced by jeans in the 1980s. Formal wear for younger men consisted of a suit that included a dark (usually black) pair of trousers and a suit jacket that was maroon or green in color. For adults, work clothes predominated as far as weekday clothes worn at home were concerned, while a dark or perhaps lighter-colored suit was reserved for formal events. In contrast to the previous widespread custom, by the 1980s young people had far more freedom in choosing their clothing as parental supervision gradually became restricted to demanding the maintenance of a few basic norms.

Based on observations made in Varsány between 1972 and 1974, even though individuals were progressively exchanging traditional garb for urban styles and most women above thirty years of age still clung to custom, those who were in their twenties or thirties not only wore a somewhat motley combination of peasant and urban clothing but also switched between the two at times. While girls below twenty did not wear any kind of traditional garb on weekdays, for them as well as for younger children formal events meant donning traditional clothes. Parallel to the general, widespread abandonment of Hungary’s traditional peasant garb, some cases also pointed to a reversion to custom, meaning that some items characteristic to peasant dress re-emerged in everyday clothing styles. In other instances, the entire traditional outfit was donned for certain important occasions. At the end of the 1970s and the beginning of the 1980s, many of the clothing items that signaled this trend in reverting back to custom were prepared by grandparents for their grandchildren to wear. Young people,

160 Ibid., 169.
however, usually only wore these pieces or outfits on weekends or holidays; during the week, they dressed according to urban styles. In regions where local traditional clothing had already been heavily influenced by urban middle-class styles before the process of switching from traditional to modern dress occurred, the change in styles was naturally far less noticeable than it was in regions where tradition had been more closely preserved. As far as the apparel for rural individuals imitating urban styles was concerned, the slight delay in following the latest fashion that usually occurred between urban and rural locations gradually decreased during the 1970s and 1980s, yet still remained a factor. It can generally be said that the regional differences in the clothing supply also decreased at this time.

As of the 1970s, the skirts worn by rural women grew progressively shorter, a trend that occurred regardless of whether traditional or urban customs were being followed. A decade earlier, during the final wave of adopting modern dress, any rural girl or woman whose hemline had not covered her knees would have been considered immoral; in the 1970s a shorter hem was hardly a cause for consternation. While it is undoubtedly true that the morals attached to behavioral norms and the system of expectations exacted on the micro-level of the local community changed at a much slower rate than in Hungary’s cities, most village dwellers attempted to fulfill community demands regarding what was viewed as proper and appropriate dress, even as these concerns were raised by a dwindling number of people.

As of the beginning of the seventies, the traditional bridal garb found in peasant traditions was supplanted by the tighter, urban wedding dress which most brides had sewn for them. While only one-fifth of brides in Varsány in 1970 did not wear the traditional bridal outfit, by 1973 nobody said her wedding vows in traditional clothing. A difference, however, continued to be accentuated between weekday and formal dress, regardless of whether individuals were wearing traditional or modern attire. In an attempt to keep up with the latest trends, many turned to buying local fashion magazines; in the 1980s, international fashion publications had also become more common. Girls and women who regularly commuted to work were able to follow fashion more frequently and with greater speed.

Following the switch from traditional to modern garb, most rural women preferred clothes that were either made at home or sewn by a seamstress compared to ready-made models. This also meant that the
local seamstress’s level of knowledge, taste, and skill defined what fashions could be followed. It was consequently somewhat rare for individual taste or ideas to gain expression as most villages came to display a kind of newly-emerging homogeneity for a shorter or longer period. This factor was further reinforced by the desire to copy, for example, a certain piece that spread like wildfire throughout the community upon its debut or maintain local dress norms. Furthermore, the one- or two-years’ delay that could be expected in gaining access to actual fashion trends remained typical; to mention one such garment, it not only took longer for rural teens to start wearing jeans, this trend also spread at a slower rate compared to the city. Other than this, local dress norms and taste played an additional role in influencing rural fashions. Generational differences also emerged when it came to what innovations were either accepted or rejected; middle-aged or older women who typically remained faithful to custom were far more likely to object to any new fashion that opposed local traditions or habits.

Middle-aged or younger members who had already exchanged peasant garb for modern attire were, however, more willing to follow their own example and support the latest fashion trends being popularized by the village youth. According to research by Katalin Gergely, at the beginning of the 1970s in Varsány a young, twenty-five-year-old woman who wore urban clothing had a wardrobe containing the following items:

outer clothing including three skirt suits made of polyester suiting, ten polyester skirts, two pairs of trousers, one made of jersey and the other of suiting with baggy legs; six dresses made of suiting or jersey, four summer dresses, five sweater sets, two cardigans, five short-sleeve pullovers, three blouses made of lightweight, fine fabric; coats including a wool coat, a padded coat, a fake fur coat, a raincoat; three sweat suits or tracksuits; footwear including one pair of boots, three pairs of shoes, one pair of sandals, slippers, trainers; undergarments including camisoles, brassieres, panties, nightgowns (of nylon or other synthetic material), garters, nylon pantyhose; accessories including silk, nylon, or cashmere kerchiefs for going out (she always covered her head when outdoors); traditional peasant garb including seven pleated skirts, four petticoats, three blouses, two knitted outer jackets, two woven, decorated aprons, five tasseled, silk shawls, two headdresses.161

The wardrobe of a seventeen-year-old girl who also lived in Varsány only differed in that all of her clothing was modern and contained nary a piece of traditional apparel.

Young and middle-aged rural men continued to prefer blue work clothes—including a shirt made of soft material or heavyweight cotton—as their weekday attire for home or within the village. At special events they usually wore dark ready-made suits with pullovers made of some type of synthetic material. It was much rarer for them to appear in a shirt and necktie. In autumn and winter men wore lined or unlined padded coats while shoes with higher heels and pointed toes remained fashionable. Young unmarried men generally went to school or work in baggy pants and colorful synthetic pullovers and/or patterned shirts; it was rare for them to wear suits, but this period also marked the growing popularity of fake leather jackets, in addition to the usual padded jacket. The colors of these new, “citified” clothing items (pullovers, cardigans, and turtlenecks) were usually light-colored and included shades such as pink, light blue, and light green.

At the turn of the seventies to the eighties, traditional garb came to be viewed quite differently as public opinion gradually began to change. As preserving tradition became a growing concern, items of peasant attire were increasingly treasured as valuable heirlooms from the past. Local communities gained renewed appreciation for traditional customs and went to greater effort in passing them down to younger generations.
Up-to-date fashion and the re-differentiation of apparel at the end of the century

As of the end of the 1970s, both men and women’s clothing was comparable to international trends in that styles displayed the emergence of various groups following different examples, a circumstance that resulted from increased selection and expanded ease in tracking global fashions. Once merely following general fashion trends no longer proved enough for gaining entrance into a given “elite” group, copying the style of a popstar or celebrity, or the type of clothing related to a given free-time or leisure activity became the method for forming a new group, a habit that was particularly common among younger people.

Beginning in the second half of the 1980s, women’s clothing displayed the presence of three style movements that were common at the time. The “classic look” adhered to clean lines, elegantly matched colors, and fine materials. The athletic or folk look emphasized comfort via baggy skirts, warm sweaters, and a wide variety of combinations that drew upon athletic and leisure wear. The third trend was the avant-garde look, which relied on shockingly daring innovations in form...
and the usage of bright colors; this latter trend quickly became the favorite style of young people.

Based on research done in 1988, the fashion attitudes of Hungarian women could be grouped according to the following categories: fashion influencers, who followed either an avantgarde style, or dressed in a more sporty manner; early fashion followers (with subcategories of sporty, elegant, or feminine styles); later fashion followers (who dressed in an elegantly feminine fashion, but with an eye toward cost); and those who dressed independently of fashion trends, i.e., conservative women or women who were neutral regarding fashion. This difference is clearly shown by the fact that five to eight percent of Hungary’s female population remained impassive to fashion compared to the three or four percent of women who dressed in the avantgarde style. Those who dressed according to the avantgarde look took great care in creating an appearance that reflected a continuously innovative influence. The members of this group were mainly young urban women (especially from Budapest) under the age of thirty who earned above-average salaries at full-time positions or as employees in the service sector. “The avantgarde woman . . . is bold, modern, and not concerned in the least to be considered eccentric or conspicuous. When necessary, she is refined and never has a bad day; even though she is familiar with every style of clothing, she still wears them all in a unique way.”

Thanks to the above-average financial position these women enjoyed, they were not concerned with price and could afford to shop in specialized boutiques, downtown businesses, and salons. As could be expected, their clothing supply was also better than average; the survey results revealed that members of this particular social group had eighty-nine pieces of outerwear in their wardrobes. Among other items, this included twelve skirts, six trousers, six dresses, eleven blouses, fourteen pullovers, eleven polo shirts, two each of a set of leisurewear and an otthonka, six pairs of shoes, four pairs of sandals, and three pairs of boots. Obviously, the undergarments that completed this type of wardrobe numbered a minimum of between fifty to sixty items, bringing the entire supply to total roughly 140 to 150 pieces of apparel.

In contrast to the above, the women who remained indifferent to dressing in a fashionable way reduced the quality of their attire

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to the level of merely fulfilling their minimal needs. For this group, cleanliness, neatness, and protection from the elements were the most important aspects dress was meant to reflect. The women in this group were over forty-five years in age, generally lived in small rural communities, performed physical labor in industry or agriculture and were either unemployed or earned incomes that were lower than average. As dress was not important to them, their wardrobes were renewed erratically and based on necessity. Whatever items had become worn out, for example, were usually replaced with items that were similar in both style and color. Due to their poor financial situation, members of this group only purchased new clothing if it was absolutely essential; when shopping, they continued to frequent tried-and-true sources of mainly inexpensive items. Their clothing supply was subsequently below-average and made up of roughly fifty-two pieces of outwear including five skirts, four trousers, six blouses, dresses, and pullovers, three ott-honka, one each of a coat and a blazer, four pairs of shoes, and two pairs of boots.\textsuperscript{163} Their supply of undergarments was naturally more modest as well and contained anywhere between 20 and 30 items, bringing their wardrobes to a total of 70 to 80 items.

\textsuperscript{163} Ibid., 12.

\textit{Figure 61}. Since the late sixties, jeans have become an iconic item of youth clothing in Hungary too. Those who do not have them covet them, those who do, wear them proudly! Jeans have blurred the distinction between the two sexes and, to a certain extent, uniformized the wearer (private collection of Ildikó Simonovics, 600.5)
The question can naturally be raised whether this survey data accurately reflects the trends in dress found during this period. It can similarly be supposed that the group following the avantgarde style comprised a fairly narrow section of society since relatively few could afford to indulge in this type of “trendsetting.” At the end of the 1980s, most well-to-do, fashionable women strove to own at least one clothing item per season that had been prepared according to the latest style. It must not be forgotten that the women who did not follow fashion on a daily basis also found it important to present an attractive and elegant appearance via the clothing that they had made for this purpose. Although they rejected overly fashionable apparel, they still sought out good quality, reliable items that would also be appropriate for more formal events.

Fashion trends played a less significant role in determining men’s wear. In 1985, five major groups among men can be categorized according to their style of dress and fashion habits. The first group can best be described as those conservative dressers who clung to wearing suits and were therefore only comfortable in well-tailored suit jackets, ties, and polished shoes. The second group dressed in a sporty way, meaning that they characteristically preferred jeans worn with a plaid shirt, pullover, jacket, anorak, or brand-name sportswear. The third group was the “silk scarf, slightly feminine type, who loves and willingly wears a gold chain, bracelet, and signet ring. He adores tight-fitting suits and wears his shirts unbuttoned to the waist.”

The fourth group was reserved for fashion “deviants” who “belonged to an endless variety of groups (hobo, punk, rocker, gigolo, rockabilly) whose shocking, unusual clothing style was designed to ignite confrontations with older generations and infuriate society’s more conservative members. No matter the style, they all share the characteristic of willingly calling attention to their appearance for the purpose of causing a scandal. Before it used to be shoulder-length hair, today a shaved neck or an entirely bald head, one pierced ear, and the most excessive display of the latest fad is what they follow.”

According to

165 Éva Bedecs, “Férfi, egyéniség, divat,” Ez a Divat, no. 8 (1985), 28–31. Essentially the same opinions can be read in the research overviews compiled by the Magyar Divat Intézet (Hungarian Fashion Institute) that presented the situation in various segments of the market at this time. See Gáborné, “Piac-szegmentáció a férfiruházatban,” 21.
the survey, the fifth group contained men who were not well dressed, remained indifferent to fashion, thought that clothing was only “for women” and therefore put on whatever clothing was within hand’s-reach in the mornings, and consequently preferred clothes that were inexpensive and long-lasting as opposed to fashionable.

Together with the social and economic changes that Hungary was undergoing, at the end of the 1980s apparel’s social significance changed dramatically. As inequalities grew, clothing made these differences obvious, even though this was most visible in the appearance of a wealthy individual as opposed to an impoverished one. Similarly, the social importance placed on dress and style decreased as it became increasingly impossible to speak of general social expectations or dress norms that public opinion judged as important at the beginning of the nineties. Together with the social transformation that was occurring, the quick pace with which fashions changed also influenced these changes. Perhaps the only exception was found in workplace attire; as Hungary’s economic system was altering its form, a growing number of workplaces introduced dress codes. While many places made uniforms mandatory, those that did not had to remain satisfied with offering suggestions and passing dress codes determining the expected attire for employees.

Following communism’s fall, new behavioral norms also emerged. As a consequence of the yawning gap in financial circumstances that grew increasingly wide at this time, one layer of society experienced little trouble in purchasing exclusive apparel items, which were in turn used to express their social status. Members of this particular group therefore placed great emphasis on dressing according to the latest fashion and assembling a wardrobe containing the most expensive items possible. This “nouveau riche” style took on some rather strange forms of expression, particularly during the transformational period Hungary underwent as it shifted from communism to democracy. One symbol that came to represent this social stratum was the “business entrepreneur” who appeared in a jogging suit (made of material that made a swishing sound with every movement) and loafers at any time of the day as well as during working hours. For some members of this emerging class of business contractors, their (generally unexpected and usually far too speedy) change in social standing engendered a kind of confusion in values and orientation. Many strove to make their wealth visible by constantly wearing items
that had previously been unavailable in Hungary or acted as impor-
tant social indicators within the context of prestige consumer-
ism. A growth in wealth, however, did not automatically mean an
increase in cultural awareness or the adaptation of the norms and
behaviors attached to a cultured appearance. It took time before people
understood that in the circumstances created by a private economy,
one should adopt the custom of donning a suit and tie instead of jeans
or leisurewear when conducting a business negotiation and that pre-
senting the right appearance also acts as a demonstration of depend-
able, stable conditions.

Following Hungary’s shift to a democratic system, it can therefore
be said that the emergence of social inequality was not only apparent
in an individual’s attire, but also became strikingly noticeable in the
difference between how a well-to-do individual dressed compared to
someone who was falling into deeper poverty as a result of (to men-
tion just one example) the sudden privatization of previously state-
run manufactories. At the same time, it became obvious that the social
role played by dress and fashion fell in significance as the public had
less and less to say regarding dress norms or expectations during the
1990s and 2000s.

As the new millennium emerged, any social expectations raised
regarding dress continued to weaken. Special occasion and formal
wear continued to change. Various clothing brand names rose in value,
based on their temporary attachment to some sort of status-symboliz-
ing role. Owning and wearing brand-name items came to express the
individual’s ability to keep up with social expectations or demonstrate
his or her actual (or only desired) social position. The significance
possessed by these garments can be clearly followed among members
of the upper or middle classes during the decades that followed the
fall of communism: “As we stroll through downtown Budapest, it is
not hard to notice that young people dress just as well as those in
Paris or London do. Other than their clothes, make-up is trendy and
various kinds of jewelry can be seen everywhere. Body piercings are
quite popular among young people. Perhaps only patterns and sym-
ols tattooed to different parts of the body are even more popular . . .
the dress habits indicating a variety of subcultures . . . have expanded.
Jeans, a colorful T-shirt declaring some type of a saying, and a pair of
trainers are extremely popular streetwear here in the city.” 166 As the

166 Antal Csipes, A divatról komolyan (Budapest: Balassi Kiadó, 2011), 128.
clothing selection expanded, following the generally accepted norms related to presenting a well-dressed appearance was not much of a challenge for those whose financial situation allowed for this type of luxury. For those living in deep poverty, however, the need to fulfill their own basic requirements defines their dressing habits. Living in highly impoverished circumstances frequently means that even the most basic elements of clothing cannot be attained. The inhabitants of Hungary’s slums, ghettos, and poor quarters face the daily challenge of not possessing the clothing that is adequate for their needs.