© Laboratorium: Russian Review of Social Research. 2020. 12(3):5–25
DOI: 10.25285/2078-1938-2020-12-3-5-25

WHAT METAPHORS HIDE: PEST CONTROL AND ANTI-MIGRANT SENTIMENTS IN A HUNGARIAN VILLAGE

Tatiana Safonova

Tatiana Safonova, Department of Sociology and Social Anthropology, Central European University (Vienna, Austria). Address for correspondence: Department of Sociology and Social Anthropology, Central European University, Nádor u. 9, 1051 Budapest, Hungary tvsafonova@gmail.com.

I would like to express my gratitude for the intellectual support to my supervisor, Violetta Zentai, and my husband, István Sántha. I am also grateful to three anonymous reviewers, whose sharp remarks and critical suggestions helped me to improve this article.

In 2016 the Hungarian authorities launched an anti-migrant media campaign in reaction to the migrant crisis when thousands of refugees entered the country. Some news programs depicted migrants as dangerous masses and created visual analogies with pests. In this article I propose to view the meaning of this metaphor from the other side, that of gardens, used as models for the state. My question is: What do metaphors of pests hide and why do they become so popular in situations of crisis? Through ethnography, I show how personal gardening experiences are filled with anxiety, fear, pleasure, and pain and how the resources and positions of gardeners shape their strategies in the struggle against pests. The metaphor of migrant as pest has a painful history of being used by the Nazi regime, but despite its bad reputation, it is still in demand. My ethnographic observations lead me to a conclusion that this metaphor conceals but simultaneously redeems the idea of private property and helps to describe crisis as a danger to the established order without explicitly problematizing this order's own controversies. When citizens are invited to deliberate and express their opinion in a referendum on how to deal with migrants, who are presented as parasites, these citizen receive an unprecedented power to choose who stays and who is not welcome in their state. This populist approach transforms the "gardening state" into a "state of gardeners," in which the struggle with "weeds" and "pests" becomes an ordinary duty of every citizen rather than an authoritative task of state institutions, as it was previously described by Zygmunt Bauman, the author of the "gardening state" concept.

Keywords: Hungary; Gardens; Pests; Migrant Crisis; State; Metaphor

After the very mild winter of 2015/16 various pests attacked my garden.[1] The damage was great: I lost all tomato plants in my greenhouse; my broccoli were almost totally

---

[1] My research was based on ethnographic fieldwork conducted in a Hungarian village where I lived and had a garden for five years.

chewed; and pears and apples just fell from the trees, all ravaged by pests. Pest control became a permanent topic in my conversations with fellow villagers, as I tried to find a way to prevent such losses in the future. The other customary topic was the migrant crisis.[2] All state media were filled with advertisements for the referendum, planned for the autumn, during which voters would be asked whether they support accepting migrants from Syria and other Middle Eastern countries devastated by the struggle against ISIS and constant bombings. The complaint about migrants expressed in the pro-government mass media was permeated with allusions to parasites, although this metaphor was not expressly vocalized. Migrants, if allowed in the country, were depicted as sapping the country's juices, taking locals' jobs, and even attacking local residents.

I moved to this village with my family in 2014 after returning from the United Kingdom, where I had studied before, and enrolling in a PhD program in social anthropology in Hungary. The village is situated 70 kilometers from Budapest. This distance provided me with possibility of staying permanently in the countryside but also commuting to Budapest when I needed to take university courses. My research strategy was to start gardening and through gardening practices make contacts with other villagers. Gardening friendships evolved very fast, and this activity allowed me to establish relationships with people of all ages, genders, and economic situations. I speak Hungarian fluently and often participate in spontaneous small talks at a bus station and local shops. Active village dwellers know me personally, and I am sure that almost everybody in the village knows that I am from Russia. Because I am a wife and a mother of Hungarian nationals, I have a special status, and nobody thinks of me as a migrant. It has happened many times that people complained to me about the dangers of influx of migrants not thinking that technically I too can be identified as a migrant.

This study does not focus on the analysis of media messages, but I was struck by the similarities between my own ordinary gardening problems and the country's problems as they were formulated and discussed around me. In August 2016 I saw a report on the main TV channel about illegal migrants attacking the gardens of Hungarians living at the border with Serbia. The video clip showed emptied gardens covered with strewn clothes and crying gardeners, who were complaining that so much work had been lost: they could not have even a taste of their fruit this year, since everything had been stolen (Figure 1). Well, I could empathize with that; I too would

---

[2] The European migrant crisis, also known as the European refugee crisis, took place when a huge number of people, mainly from Syria, crossed the borders of the European Union in early 2015. In summer 2015 increasing numbers of asylum seekers tried to enter the EU through Hungary. And although the majority of them did not intend to stay in Hungary, a comparatively poor country, various bureaucratic regulations (and especially the Dublin Regulation, a European Union law that determines which EU member state is responsible for examining asylum claims and granting asylum status) led the Hungarian authorities to start a campaign against allowing these people to enter Hungary altogether. The main reason was the fear that these refugees would be sent back to Hungary because they entered the European Union through its borders. It was obvious that Hungary would not be able to cope with all of them, and the European Union's position on relocation and quotas had not yet been developed.

cry quite that hard if all my harvest disappeared. I almost cried when I found all my broccoli covered with millions small black bugs one morning. I realized that I was not just living in a "gardening state," which, according to Zygmunt Bauman (1991), strove to establish order by all means available, I was one of the gardeners of this state. I became one through the experience of this shared moment of empathy with other gardeners. My garden not only produced tomatoes, peppers, and eggplants but also reproduced the state of my residence, Hungary, re-creating the shared feelings of fear, vulnerability, and rage.

Figure 1. Screenshots from the video shown several times on news programs in August 2016, in which the owners of fruit gardens complained that migrants had eaten and destroyed their harvest. Fruits from the first picture were actually eaten by bugs[3]

[3] "A migránsok károkat okoznak a gyümölcsösökben, a gazdák elkeseredettek," Pannon RTV, posted August 6, 2016. Video, 3:09. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2C_QeU7AxSs.

Bauman's concept of the "gardening state" was best summarized by Tilman Schiel:

> It refers to a state "managed" by its government like a garden. The gardener/government applies rational methods based on scientific knowledge to create optimal conditions of growth for the "plants"/people. But not for every plant. The gardener decides what is useful and provides that only these useful plants grow well under his care. "Wild growth," "weeds," etc. are not tolerated in his "garden": "useless" plants, plants regarded as dangerous competitors of the useful ones, are either weeded out or (if a potential usefulness is seen) "domesticated" to fit into the order of the garden.... This is a *general* aspect of *every* modern state to a greater or lesser degree, as rationality, rational order and the belief in scientific solutions are the universal characteristics of modernity. (2005:83; emphasis in the original)

This concept of the state describes a post–World War II situation when the threat of communism was replaced by the threat of the internal other as a basic form of mobilization and creation of state order. In an article about "disposable strangers" Catherine Thorleifsson (2017) describes how authorities and far-right parties in Hungary transformed traditional grammar of exclusion and rechanneled fears from the Roma and Jewish communities onto incoming (or often imagined as incoming) Muslim migrants. Rogers Brubaker in his recent article argues that "populism is most fruitfully understood as a discursive and stylistic repertoire involving varying elaborations and permutations of a number of basic elements" (2020:60). And among these basic elements is the appeal to the people, who are vertically opposed to the elite (for Hungarians this elite is located in the EU headquarters in Brussels and is seen as a foreign interference that forces the country to accept incoming Muslim migrants) and horizontally set off against the said migrants. In this respect Hungarian nationalism and populism entwine. What populism adds to the nationalist paradigm here is a new stance on the locus of power, which is firmly associated with the people who should get control and power over their country back. This drive is explicit in all propaganda messages and is one of the reasons for expensive campaigns to conduct referendums and national consultations on every possible issue of domestic and foreign policies. In this respect, the "gardening state" is transformed into a populist "state of gardeners" in which all proper citizens obtain rights to decide what to do with "weeds" and "pests." My self-observation, described earlier, let me guess that this transformation happens through the use of metaphors in propaganda, when my experiences as a gardener are projected onto the field of national politics.

In this article I propose to follow this observation and see how this overlap between the everyday common experience of gardening and the metaphors deployed by propaganda is used to evoke emotions of fear and insecurity. Gardening is only one particular example of how populist discursive repertoire, following Brubaker's definition (2020), is filled. Populism is a heterogeneous phenomenon and would never stay focused on any particular frame or field of experience. The overlap between the way people do things in their private gardens and the way they participate as

“gardeners of their state” could be minimal or could encompass their entire gardening philosophy. Here for me it is not important to what extent micro and macro levels impact each other. In other words, it is beyond my questions what is first, common gardening habits or state gardening opportunities. I do not expect to learn that people use pesticides in their gardens to kill all pests because as citizens they do not want migrants in their country or, on the contrary, that they do not want migrants because they got accustomed to killing all the pests. I also do not suggest that people resist the state’s anti-migrant ideology by practicing organic gardening and banning all pesticides. What concerns me here is how metaphors proposed by the state propaganda penetrate everyday life experience and, thus, create a special atmosphere of the state’s presence in our life.

There is scholarship demonstrating how the metaphors we use limit and direct our practices and interpretations (Lakoff and Johnson 2003), so it is not surprising that political decisions were justified using metaphorical language. I was surprised to realize that these metaphorical expressions offered me very limited options. From radio and TV news programs, I learned that a wall built around the country was the sole and most efficient solution to the migrant crisis. And, at the same time, there were not many options to deal with pests in my garden. I had to spray the pests with strong chemicals, which were easily obtained in every garden center and shop and relatively cheap. It was as if there was some correlation between the limited choice of political solutions to the migrant crisis presented in the state media and the narrow choices I had as a gardener trying to prevent a pest crisis in my garden. These limited choices formed a specific experience of living in the Hungarian state. I suppose that we can perceive these parallels not because one sphere is created as an analogy of the other and not because our minds are set to transfer patterns from one sphere to understanding the relationships in others, but because we learn to make these connections as citizens and through these operations we create the phenomenon of the state and a distinct feeling of living in a particular national state. The theory of the state that I try to develop here posits that the existence of the state is based on the capacity of its citizens to understand such metaphors and through these metaphors to connect various spheres of their life and see them tuned to one meta level of experience. I will try to demonstrate how this works and how the experiences of the people living in a Hungarian village related to the migrant crisis and pest control in gardens merged and crisscrossed metaphorically.

METAPHORS AS METHODOLOGICAL TOOLS IN SOCIAL ANTHROPOLOGY

In anthropology, researchers interested in how metaphors change our everyday life developed an approach that could be compared to fractals in mathematics. Based on the writings of Marilyn Strathern, anthropologists such as Annelise Riles (2001), Bill Maurer (2005), and Hirokazu Miyazaki (2013) proposed to view micro-level interactions as homologous to macro-level institutions and, thus, to study how these recursive common patterns at various levels create the modern politico-economic system.

Riles demonstrated that although regional NGOs exist independently and there is no common code to regulate their form and strategy, people recreate a common form recognizable as an NGO-style in their booklets, meetings, and volunteer actions. The same patterns reappear in negotiations conducted at the supra level of international NGO meetings, such as global NGO conferences. Riles recognized that NGOs in Fiji used certain metaphors, such as that of the local traditional carpet, to illustrate their unity and structure and ornamented their booklets with pictures of these carpets. But she found that these were not just metaphors, because the operation of local Fijian NGOs was analogous to how carpets were woven by friends and relatives as well as how these carpets were assembled at important events. The mobilization forms used in traditional activities were transposed in civil society. What at first sight looked like a mere metaphorical expression was actually the recognition of the homological nature of separate fields.

In fractal anthropology metaphors are the starting points for research. They are treated as naturally occurring phenomena, created by people who recognize that separate fields share common patterns. Maurer (2002), for example, applied this research strategy to study Muslim banking and showed that it is based on fractal structures that reproduce the same relations between virtue and capital that exist in sharia law practice. Later, Maurer studied Chinese offshore companies and showed how offshore capital investment schemes replicated Chinese hieroglyphs, with these two spheres sharing common aesthetic patterns (Maurer and Martin 2012). Miyazaki (2013) looked at metaphors used by traders on the futures markets and showed that their strategies replicated those used throughout Japanese society at the time when it was aspiring to compete with the United Sates.

Metaphors transgress boundaries between human and nonhuman worlds. A strategy to treat metaphors seriously, not just as placeholders but as markers of commonality, helps us view human-nonhuman relations from a different perspective. This feature made fractal approach particularly important in posthumanistic anthropology devoted to the study of anthropocene multispecies relations. Katja Neves (2009) and Alex M. Nading (2014), in their studies devoted to human-plant and human-mosquito relations respectively, show that the use of metaphors created not only a better understanding of the world but also mutual feelings, such as care. In the case of an educational program held at a botanical garden, described by Neves, metaphors of unity between people, plants, and pollinating insects were used to provide ecological awareness. Nading portrayed antagonistic relation between mosquitos and *brigadistas*, volunteering women from poor quarters of a city in Nicaragua, who were trying to eradicate insects that were spreading dengue fever. Despite their initial conflict, Nading often heard jokes about mosquitos described as single mothers who need to provide for their offspring with men nowhere to be seen, just like the *brigadistas* themselves. This metaphor made insects and people look more alike, sharing same world and same ecology. These jokes helped the *brigadistas* to see the picture as a whole and live with the awareness that people from more prestigious city quarters keep judging these poor women for spreading dengue fever by living in bad

conditions. Both studies of metaphors not only help us understand why people use them but also show how the metaphors change the world and those who use them.

I share the enthusiasm for metaphors with these anthropologists, but I also see that metaphors not only uncover commonalities but also conceal many shared qualities. This means that any use of metaphors as methodological tools needs to be done with caution. The metaphor of pests applied to various fields of interaction can provoke ethically and politically incorrect comparisons between people and pests. What I intend in this article is to disrupt and examine such projects and in no way to support them. I suppose that such metaphors can offend people not because people are demoted to the status of parasitic insects but because both people and insects are demoted here to the status of unworthy creatures. Thus we should not only focus on the pragmatic impact of the metaphor as an instrument to offend somebody but also on the premises that made this metaphor effective to become offensive.

In a recent discussion of the anthropological study of gardens, Natasha Myers proposed to view gardens as worlding projects, by which she meant: "what worlds are our gardens designed to reproduce?" (2017:298). It seems that in Hungary the capacity of gardens to create worlds was recognized long before this discussion and exploited for political purposes.[4] The aforementioned video was broadcast several times in prime time on the first news channel, which is completely controlled by government and intensively used to send important political messages to supporters, opponents, and the apolitical parts of the population. This video relayed a metaphorical message, in which migrants are as destructive as pests, emptying gardens and leaving proper citizens with nothing. But this message also contained another metaphor, already described by Bauman, the analogy between the state and the garden.

As if just having read Bauman's book on the faults of modernity, the creators of the video and their patrons proposed to regard Hungary as a garden that needs order and control over whichever species are welcomed inside it. In a way, this is a particular garden, a rather formal one, based on an "ethos of detachment," with a functional value attached to every plant and insect (Battaglia 2017:271). But inadvertently, this metaphor opened new possibilities for worlding, namely imagining the state that people live in and the relations with it. For gardens are not only worlding projects; they are also solidarity projects (Myers 2017), the results of various multiple collaborations between people, plants, insects, and microorganisms. In this article I propose to look at how this offensive propaganda was accepted and simultaneously how ordinary people, my co-villagers, worked with the gardening metaphors and established their gardens differently from the state media's depiction.

[4] References to gardens in political discourse in Hungary are not new. A "garden socialism" movement existed in the 1930s, members of which proposed the creation of a new Hungarian state on the basis of gardening practice, giving people plots to establish gardens and providing education about the most advanced gardening methods (Trencsényi 2014).

THE LEGACY OF THE PARASITE METAPHOR

Why is the metaphor of the parasite so powerful and constantly referred to or used by various regimes and authorities? Its peak was in Nazi Germany, when unwanted groups were publicly called parasitic. I assume that this metaphor is popular because it is a tautology, as I will later show, yet pragmatically the metaphor performs an interesting job, creating general categories and helping aggregate otherwise different members into a new group, united and mobilized, a group of the parasite's hosts, one that is diverse but vulnerable to the same parasites.

Nowadays, the parasite metaphor is a semi-taboo for public politics in Europe (Musolff 2012) because of its disgraceful history and popularity in the Nazi era, but as we see, it constantly appears as something that is collectively thought of, rather than spoken about. Originally, the idea of the parasite existed to describe a purely social relationship: scroungers and vagabonds were called parasites, for example. When Charles Darwin proposed the term to describe a certain relation between species in nature, he was using an already existing word employed to describe a social scrounger from the social world, and he even felt a need to warn in his *On the Origin of Species* against the anthropomorphizing that this word can invite. This tautological description is also maintained today when biologists describe wandering parasitic species as "secret migrants" and informal right-wing blogs refer to migrants as parasites (Mulsoff 2012:253). So the word parasite only has a metaphorical meaning, as it does not belong to any discourse per se, neither scientific nor populist. It always referrers to relationships beyond those situatively described and simultaneously always trapped by circular logic. By using the term, one can provide an explanation of events without actually explaining them but by merely contracting recursive chains of analogies.

The accusation of being a parasite usually carries a derogatory meaning, not only because it means that somebody is living at someone else's expenses, but also because parasites as creatures are thought to be primitive, much more primitive than their hosts. For example, one thinker regarded as among the precursors of Nazism, Jakob von Uexküll, studied ecologies and devoted much attention to ticks and their limited ability to appreciate the complexity of the world they inhabit (Agamben 2004). According to Uexküll, the tick's environment is different from ours, although we meet in the same space. Ticks react to the smell of butyric acid, which is contained in the sweat of any mammal. In this respect ticks do not know differences between mammals. They do not even know the taste of blood they suck and would choose any other liquid provided that it is 37 degrees centigrade in temperature. In other words, these blind, deaf creatures with no sense of taste live in a parallel world, which they occupy and share not with various kinds of animals but with a broad category of mammals. This association between parasites and simplistic creatures very often created in science is transported into the social world, where those who are called parasites are thought to be of a more simple nature.

However, this simplicity is not the tick's essence; it is just a way to describe it. What for most observers seems pretty straightforward evidence of the tick's primitiveness may be a more complex phenomena, if the tick is seen not as an organism but

as a "living thought," in Eduardo Kohn's term (2013). For Kohn, all living beings participate in the process of semiosis, simultaneously producing meanings and their selves as relations with other beings. And in this constant flow of thoughts in the ecology of selves, ticks do an important job: they create general categories. Ticks fail to recognize the difference between dogs, people, and deer but create a special semiotic association (warm-blooded organisms) that exists only as long as creatures such as ticks exist. In the ecology of selves ticks are not just consumers of meanings provided by others; they also produce important meanings themselves, and according to this logic, they are not parasites but living thoughts.

This interpretation restores functional justice for ticks, who become useful creatures and members of the ecology. But there is also another dimension that can be useful to us here. By comparing somebody to a parasite, one not only articulates the difference between hosts and guests but also creates the category of the host, which now exists only in relation to the parasite. This explains why parasite metaphors are so useful for regimes that require fast mobilization and why it is so difficult for these regimes to get rid of such metaphors once the goal has been achieved. If they want to sustain the support of the newly created group of potential hosts, they need to keep the parasites constantly in the picture.

The parasite metaphor can become an analytical tool not despite its ambivalent and tautological status but exactly because of it (Mitchell 2002). As something that constantly creates synchrony and analogy between the natural and social worlds, this metaphor helps to overcome this false distinction. Nading's (2014) approach to waste recycling, mosquito control, and dengue epidemics in Nicaragua would be a good example of how a classic theoretical binary (patron/client) can be expanded. Ecologies of mosquitos interfere with capitalistic relations. Scavengers, often seen as parasites themselves, become the victims and hosts of capitalist patrons and the city. The rise and fall of prices on collected recyclables affect conditions for mosquito breeding and coincide with dengue epidemics. The researcher can follow the metaphor and connect the relations between species, various economic groups, and classes as nested phenomena. When the scale of the analysis changes, the positions of parasites and their hosts change as well.

The interchangeability of parasite/host positions shows that seeing somebody as parasitic sets up a concrete framework and scale for these relations. It not only consolidates a group of potential hosts but also sets up a plane of action, a certain scale of events in which this relationship is stable. When people use pesticides in their gardens to destroy or avoid particular parasitic insects, they disregard the potential interpretation that they themselves are parasites who overexploit the ecological systems of their gardens. And when migrants are inadvertently compared to garden pests, the global political and economic order, which pushed refugees to come to Hungary, is shrunk to the scale of a small vernacular garden.

But even a small garden can become a major stage, in that it can provide observation materials to understand how Hungarian people deal with the parasite metaphor in practice. Here I examine how people cope with parasites in their gardens and what moral and economic dilemmas they have to resolve. I argue that this process

shows the epistemic worlds created by the parasite metaphor. There is no difference between the way people treat migrants called parasites and the insects they call the same, because the act of naming already creates the possibility to treat human and nonhuman parasites similarly. The act of naming magically sets up the limited scale of events and interpretations and constitutes a vulnerable group of hosts that simultaneously fears parasites and the loss of their identity, which is dependent on the existence of the parasite.

PEST CONTROL IN VILLAGE GARDENS

At the center of pest prevention lies targeting, a selective application of measures that destroys representatives of one species but is harmless for others. This is a very difficult task, because living species share so much in common and suffer equally from all sorts of harmful chemical and physical impacts. I have experienced how thin the line is between pest prevention and self-damage during one of my stays at the vineyards, two kilometers away from my village.

Almost every family has their own vineyard—a stretch of land on the slope of a hill, covered with lines of vines—and very often an underground cellar used to store wine in barrels. My close friend Laci[5] mentioned that he was going to spray pesticides at his friend's vineyard, and I followed him to see what it looked like. Laci was dressed in a special suit with laboratory diagrams, indicating that this was the kind of special uniform for those who work with chemicals. When we arrived, his friend István was preparing a chemical cocktail. He dissolved white powder from three packages in water. One was against bacteria, another against fungus, and the last against small insects such as lice. This admixture was mixed with water in a huge cistern, which could be carried on one's back, like a rucksack. This job was seen as exclusively for men, because the cistern is quite heavy to carry and the carrier must simultaneously pump poisonous spray all around. There were no masks or any other forms of protection. We started our march along the vines, covered in a cloud of pesticides. Within a few minutes a strange taste filled my mouth and first tears appeared. It took us at least an hour to finish the job. It turned out that István, whose vineyards we were spraying, could not do it himself anymore because the cistern was too heavy. But if he wanted any harvest at all, he had to spray pesticides every two or three weeks depending on the weather. Laci helped him because they were friends. At the same time, Laci never managed to spray his own grapes and had a very poor harvest every year. I suspected that what was worth doing for friendship was not worth doing for his own harvest or profit. He preferred to buy cheap wine from the shop or drink *pálinka* (fruit brandy). István was selling all his wine to merchants in Budapest, and this income provided a substantial addition to his pension. That night I suffered from a terrible headache.

In our village spraying pesticides against pests was standard practice, but this did not mean it was uncritically accepted. On the contrary, while people were aware

---

[5] All personal names have been changed.

of its unhealthy consequences, they rarely used masks. At first I thought that this was just bravado, a way of ignoring the fuss about self-protection. But in time, I realized that people were fully engaged in gardening, to such an extent that they preferred to maximize all experiences and sensations while doing gardening tasks. Laci was wearing a special chemically resistant costume not to protect himself but to protect the clothes he wore underneath (Figure 2). I have never seen people wearing gloves while weeding or pruning bushes. Not wearing such things helped them perform tasks faster and more accurately. I too stopped wearing gloves and never unpacked my rubber gloves that I bought for use when preparing chemical fertilizer mixtures. In a way, this ignorance makes gardening a more physical experience, and looking at one's injured and dry hands brings some masochistic joy, as if seeing some testaments to the vocation.

Figure 2. Laci in his super resistant suit for spraying

Spraying was a violent action, not only towards the environment but also towards those performing the spraying. People either avoided it at all costs or framed it as a form of sacrifice. The fact that it was self-damaging was obvious for all parties involved. And still, I did not recognize any attempt to change the technology, plant resistant hybrids, or wear masks for protection. At the beginning of the summer I was invited to the vineyards on the other side of the village. Because they were situated on exposed hills, with a high risk of early spring frosts, many villagers had turned their vineyards here into fruit gardens, and small cellar-houses were converted into places to have parties. I recognized immediately that most of the fruit trees did not look healthy. Gábor Molnár, the owner of the orchard and vast amounts of arable land around the village, told me that he sprayed all his fruit trees heavily in the spring, but, to my mind, this did not help much. For him, the use of chemicals was the only

option. He saw himself as a professional agriculturalist with knowledge of and access to modern technologies and pest-control systems. I was surprised that he turned a blind eye to the fact that spraying did not prevent the fungal disease that covered his trees.

I too had some issues with pests, for example, the millions of white flies that occupied my greenhouse. First, I asked for help at the gardening shop in a local town. The shop was seen not only as a source of gardening products but also as a source of knowledge (Figure 3). I followed local advice and asked for help there. I was immediately presented with three packages of chemicals to choose from. They all looked very dangerous and professional. I bought one but did not use it, because the instructions said I should avoid spraying when flowers bloom, due to the danger for pollinators. I then shared my problems with the employees of the local flower nursery, where I sometimes helped out. I was assured that it is very important to apply pesticides as soon as possible, because otherwise I would not have any harvest at all. I was given additional packages, some of them restricted for professional use only and not available for purchase in an ordinary shop. My collection of pesticides was growing rapidly, and I was amused at how cheap and accessible these substances were. I still had some doubts, mainly because I was worried about using these chemicals in close proximity to my children, but I was also unsure of my spraying skills.

Figure 3. At a local garden shop one can always get advice on how to apply pesticides and how to choose the ones you need. It looks almost like a pharmacy, but here you can get strong drugs without prescriptions

Now that my interest in pesticides was growing, I started to recognize them everywhere. Communal workers were spraying the vast rose beds at least twice a month (Figure 4). Winds brought clouds with foul smells from the surrounding fields. Chemicals were so normal and ordinary that it was abstention from their use that

struck me as remarkable. The only time I encountered an explicit critique and assessment of the impact of pesticides was when I was buying honey from our local producer. He told me that he had to buy several new bee families to maintain his production, which was very expensive. Bees are growing weaker and weaker every year and are susceptible to unexplained epidemics. He said that somebody in the area was probably using too many pesticides or using them at the wrong time. He was the only person who had to pay a price for the use of pesticides. In all other cases people knew how unpleasant the procedure was and avoided doing it themselves at all costs, but still saw it as an inevitable part of agricultural production and did not connect it to any environmental changes.

Figure 4. Spraying roses in communal village gardens

There was one week during which we found four dead moles in our garden. I asked people what could have caused this strange situation. And although I suspected that somebody was using poison to get rid of these animals, my co-villagers provided me with all sorts of other explanations. One version was that moles were committing suicide in my garden. I wondered what it was that erased pesticides from the list of potential dangers in my co-villagers' minds. Without chemicals there was no harvest and no flowers, and without those there was no point in doing anything. Like soil and rain, chemicals were essential for growing things. If you wanted a garden with fruit trees, roses, and crops susceptible to bug attacks, such as tomatoes and cauliflower, chemicals were an integral part of gardening. It was not as if one had the option of applying them or not, since they were already present in the air, water, and soil. The options were to apply additional doses directly at the target or invest money in all sorts of means that compensated for the damage caused by pesticides, such as a decline of natural predators who control parasites.

Beautiful boxwood shrubs in my friend Éva's garden were ruined. Nasty-looking caterpillars in horrific numbers were eating them alive. Because I was already equipped with chemicals and pesticides for all emergency situations, I immediately offered to use items from my collection. Éva just sighed, nothing would help, these caterpillars had just arrived from China and infested almost all boxwood in Europe and, besides, if it was not caterpillars, then some unknown fungus would finish off all elegant shrubs. There was no point in even trying to save the plants. Boxwood is one of the most popular plants used for topiary and formal gardening. It looks very neat and is green year-round, with nicely aromatic leaves. Éva was very sad but did not do a thing to save her plants; she just watched them turn a feverish yellow. Then one day, she showed me that her husband had cut these bushes, and their dead branches were placed on the ground near a flowerbed. Was it cruel to just let these plants die, or would it be cruel to kill caterpillars with brand new pesticides, created especially for these striped black-and-green creatures? Éva seemed to accept her fate, and by not intervening she felt her actions were right. It would cost her a substantial sum of money to purchase new decorative plants to cover the gap in her flower bed, and she would probably buy three- or four-year-old shrubs, which was quite a costly option. But money was not a problem for Éva; her husband had worked abroad and now received a generous West European pension. If you are wealthy enough, you can afford to abstain from pest-prevention and pay for the damage.

I asked Éva what could be done to avoid pests or minimize the damage, and she suggested that I googled "companion planting technique." She was using the technique, and you could see that her kitchen garden was filled with various flowers that were supposed to attract good insects and scare off parasites. These flowers also made her vegetable garden look highly decorative as well. It turned out that companion planting was a hot, fashionable topic among gardeners all over the world. There were millions of photos of "companion planting" on the Pinterest website, as well as Facebook pages devoted to the topic in several different languages, including Hungarian. I realized that even in our garden shop in the nearby town, where I used to buy tools, seeds, and chemicals, seeds for the flowers used in companion planting were grouped together in the shop display. There was no special label, but such a category obviously existed, and there were buyers who recognized it without being prompted. Herbs such as lavender, rosemary, mint, and thyme were very important in companion planting schemes. In the Middle Ages these herbs were used as medicines against human parasites such as worms, and now they are seen as deterrents against unwanted bugs, caterpillars, and lice. The companion planting fashion helped to reintroduce old-fashioned flowers that previously were regarded as in bad taste, such as marigolds, geraniums, and nasturtiums. I was immediately reminded of Donna Haraway's book *When Species Meet* (2007).

For Haraway, different species lived with each other, affecting each other's lives through creating mutual becoming and by expanding species' limits for understanding, love, and suffering. Companion plants were supposed to do the same: nurturing each other, fighting each other's enemies, and helping to create diverse communities of plants from various categories that were not usually mixed together in a garden.

In a garden with companion plants, there was no need for a divine perspective, from which a human being was supposed to control the state of the garden. No spraying is needed if there is a harmonious combination of flowers, herbs, and vegetables. There was however one important reservation: this company of plants was assembled by a gardener right from the beginning. And this gardener was rich enough to provide sufficient space for flowers and vegetables, had enough free time to consult the newest editions of contemporary agricultural fashion magazines, and enough style to garden in a new way. My elderly neighbor would never expend so much effort, because a single spray of pesticide would do things much more efficiently and provide her with vegetables to preserve and store in her cellar to be eaten throughout the whole winter. I doubt that if Haraway maintained a companion garden, she would end up with enough vegetables to store.

My garden was much more like a hypothetical Haraway's garden, and although I had a lot of fun creating it, showing it to my visitors, and even ending up with more produce than I could process, my household did not depend on it at any point in time. I was free to arrange my companion assemblages because my fellowship let me buy vegetables in the shop, in case my alternative pest-control strategies failed. I was even free to expand the limits of gardening as a traditional complex of practices. For example, when my greenhouse was totally overtaken by white flies in such devastating numbers that it was almost impossible to breathe inside the greenhouse without accidentally inhaling them, I used my vacuum cleaner to suck these beasts out of the air. I managed to fill almost an entire vacuum cleaner bag with the flies and spent almost half a day doing this strange vacuum cleaning of my greenhouse. I had read about it in an American gardening blog. And there was a certain strangeness to the way I applied a household appliance in the garden. I was a little bit embarrassed by this, feeling that my elderly neighbor would not approve. My electricity bill for this performance was probably less than I would have spent on pesticides, but still, it was strange to use household appliances outdoors; this was luxury.

Not using pesticides was a luxury because this implied one not only avoided spraying but also compensated for the negative effects of pesticides used by others. There was a small organic farm located seven kilometers from our village. All sorts of vegetables were produced there, and it was possible to order them through a special Facebook page or buy them at the Saturday market in a big city 20 kilometers away. The organic farm had a license and was controlled by a special nongovernmental organization called Biokontroll, which audited the agricultural techniques they used. The most important thing was the avoidance of spraying pesticides. Farm workers either collected insects by hand or gave plants special growth hormones, which helped them self-cure and regenerate. These were very expensive strategies, which affected the price of vegetables. In season, their peppers were ten times more expensive than those produced at ordinary farms. Considering that buying peppers per se (and not producing your own) was seen as extravagant by my fellow villagers, buying them at the price of meat was just beyond all sense. Several years later the farm predictably went bankrupt.

WHAT DO METAPHORS HIDE?

We should come back to the video I watched on TV in the summer of 2016, the one with complaining gardeners who lost their harvest because of migrants. It is not surprising that this short reportage managed to stir my emotions and create immediate identity and solidarity with the gardeners. We shared many experiences and fears, so even if only for a short moment but I thoroughly understood their complaints. This was so reminiscent of my own current worries with all those bugs eating my plants. But this small drama was staged not only for Hungarian gardeners; it was shown on TV in prime time, when all sorts of people watched it. So why would a story about migrants who allegedly ate someone's peaches be seen as impressive enough to be used in a nationwide propaganda? Why do metaphors work so well to provoke certain emotions and create special atmosphere? My guess is that this happens because metaphors help to deliver metamessages, those that are not directly and verbally pronounced. Urban viewers as well as those with their own gardens engaged with the metaphor of migrants as pests because deployment of this metaphor sent a hidden message. And what this metaphor was hiding was not about gardening and practices of pest control, but rather about something else, something that both urban and country dwellers can understand and be worried about. Here I will try to uncover what this hidden metamessage was about.

Gregory Bateson's description of the problem of applying DDT (a synthetic organic compound used as an insecticide) illustrates how all our actions and decisions are interlocked into circuits of contingency:

> If you use DDT to kill insects, you may succeed in reducing the insect population so far that the insectivores will starve. You will then have to use more DDT than before to kill the insects, which the birds no longer eat. More probably, you will kill off the birds in the first round when they eat the poisoned insects. If the DDT kills off the dogs, you will have to have more police to keep down the burglars. The burglars will become better armed and more cunning … and so on. ([1972] 2000:146)

In this hypothetical chain reaction described by Bateson, gardening practices are shown as a potential impulse for social and maybe even political change. One is reminded of Ray Bradbury's 1952 short story about how a butterfly's death could change the results of an election (Bradbury 2016). But these lines of thought disregard the important point that both insects and burglars are connected with each other in multiple ways and in more mediated ways than just straight chains, so that the existence of each is synchronic rather than connected. What I mean is that it is not only ecology that embraces insects and burglars into one system, but that both species live in a capitalist system and in a nation-state, both of which are based on the creation of differences and boundaries, between classes and between citizens. The decision to use DDT against insects is regulated and embedded in the economy and state policy, as is the prevention of burglary. And as parts of these macrosystems, the garden and the village share common patterns, which reveals as much about these macrosystems as about the local history or culture. When these common patterns are recognized, they

are usually used as metaphors, as merely rhetorical figures. But if we take metaphors seriously and look at the way different spheres work analogically, we would be able to recognize how the global macrosystem reproduces itself on the micro level through the same patterns reappearing at various scales of interaction, between gardeners and pests, between villagers and thieves, and between politicians and migrants.

Bateson used metaphors in his work intensively. All his teachings were metaphorically presented and based on homologies as rhetorical instruments. In one of his later lectures, he examined the structure of metaphor in detail. He worked with the following summary:

> Men die
>
> Grass die
>
> Men are grass

The metaphor "men are grass" is based on a shared predicament of death, which disappears from the metaphor and remains vaguely unspoken in order for the metaphor to remain comprehensible. If we look at the strings of metaphors that appeared and circulated throughout my fieldwork and tried to unpack them in this way, we would reach the following:

> Migrants will take resources previously allocated to you
>
> Pests take your harvest, the result of your work and investment
>
> Migrants are pests

What we get in the final metaphor "migrants are pests" is the absence of such a shared predicament, the supposed intention to take your private property. The parasitic metaphor thus conceals the institution of private property at its root and the relations between pests and hosts are class relations. Pests are those with no other option than to take what is not theirs, who disregard established property relations, and whose force originates from their survival instinct.

Critics of capitalism recognized this relation between the metaphor of parasitism and the core capitalistic conflicts (Stengers 2010) and very often turned the metaphor upside down to glorify and empower the parasites. For example, Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari (2008) turned rhizomes (normally seen as parasitic weeds) into celebrities, while Michele Serres (2007) examined noise and its parasitic power in communications systems. However, through the glorification of parasites, the comparison of capitalism to the parasite loses its strength, although all such arguments depart from the point that capitalism, like any parasite, uses the human and material resources of its hosts. So rather than empowering parasites, we probably need to look first in more detail into parasite-host relations to understand what imparts these relations with such drama and self-perpetuating capacity, despite the obvious finality structurally imminent to these relations. There always comes a point when the pest destroys itself through overexploitation of its host.

Tolerance was an expensive commodity in our village. Only those who could recuperate potential losses were eager to live together with migrants and tolerate pests in their gardens. Éva's husband Tibor had a long discussion with one of our shopkeepers. The latter was scaring Tibor with migrants arriving to rape his daughter. Tibor answered that he did not believe this, and, in any case, his 17-year-old daughter lived in Switzerland where her chances of meeting migrants were much higher than in Hungary, so he had already taken this risk. He also said that he was prepared to invite a migrant family to live in his house. But Tibor had two houses in our village, one he occupied with his wife Éva, and the other was vacant and used by their frequent guests. Our shopkeeper lived in a house outside the village, and although it was pleasant there, there was no water supply, and he transported water in cisterns from his parents' house every day.

The migrant crisis provided a new way to evaluate people's incomes and status: what some people could provide, others were not able to share. All discussions about humanitarian aid and the crisis turned into mutual estimations of each other's capital. In this interactional context, tolerance became a status marker, a symbol of the material gap that exists between various classes. In the garden, even if one decided not to spray and accept the risks, there would usually still be something left. Some crops would not be touched by pests because every year is good for one sort of pest but simultaneously bad for others. It is never an all-or-nothing game. Vineyards are a form of monoculture, and this means that their owners need to spray to have harvests, but even in the history of wine production, there were years with such special weather conditions that almost no spraying was needed. The migrant problem was presented as an all-or-nothing game in which if nothing were done to prevent migrants from entering the country, everything would be lost.

We can see that the metaphor of pest control was applied in a very limited way, one that closed off all possibilities to transform the parasitic relationship into one of symbiosis. The problem with parasites is that in the long run they destroy their hosts. But if ecology changes, parasites can introduce new qualities that are useful for hosts, and the paradigm of their relations may change. But this change does not guarantee that any new formation would be one of symbiosis. In leech therapy the anticoagulant qualities of the bloodsucker's saliva are used to cure various diseases. Those qualities that helped the parasite to attack its host are now used by their hosts. Former parasites are now themselves exploited by a growing alternative medical industry. The application of the parasite metaphor prevents the resolution of the problems it describes, because changing parasites into partners requires resources. According to the analogy, parasites do not have these resources, and if hosts provide such resources, then this act replicates the parasite-host relationship itself. The host loses something on behalf of the parasite. The application of the parasite metaphor is offensive not only because it denigrates those compared to parasites per se, but because it creates an atmosphere of despair in which those recognized as parasites and those recognized as hosts both suffer from the injustice, the former because of their originally precarious situation, and the latter from the loss they experience through this relation. In ecological research huge numbers of parasites are used as markers of the vulnerability of the ecology itself.

CONCLUSION

In this article I was hopping from the level of national issues such as migrant crisis to local struggles of gardeners and back. My general conclusion is that the comparison of migrants with pests is not primarily about gardening but is about established order of private property, and I devoted most of the article to the ethnography of gardens as managed private property. What I wanted to show is how complex and multiple gardens and pest-host relations are. And if propaganda shows only one particular instance of how gardeners reacted to the loss of their harvest, in life there are all different ways of how gardeners live through such situations. Some of them buy stronger pesticides, some apply pesticides but do not protect themselves from their poisonous effects, some avoid spraying and indulge in fashionable new gardening techniques. So, through my ethnography I wanted to show that although Hungarian citizens were presented with only one way of dealing with pests (and migrants), in their everyday life they have many options and many ways of dealing with such crises.

Hungarian vernacular gardens may not all celebrate multiplicity and difference, but they are all different and changing, with different approaches to order, pest control, and efficiency. There are as many gardens as there are gardeners. And if we open Pandora's box and pursue the metaphor of "the state is a garden," then we have as many states as we have citizens. These citizens suddenly turn from passive, plant-like, productive, and neat beings who need the attention and care of the state to citizens who are gardeners themselves, who have the power to decide who stays and who leaves their gardens (states). The referendum conducted in the autumn of the same year, during which Hungarians were asked if they agreed to let migrants enter Hungary, was a logical development from the metaphor of the state being a garden, creating a new relationship between citizens and the state. In the case of our village most of those who participated in the referendum voted against accepting migrants, and the breakdown was very close to national results.[6] My ethnography has shown that people have different strategies and many options in the way they deal with parasitic insects. All this multiplicity was not expressed by the metaphor of pests when applied to describe arriving refugees. To the contrary, in case of dealing with human pests the state proposed a digital solution: a yes/no answer on the ballot.

As mentioned earlier, an important change took place in anthropology when researchers proposed the serious study of metaphor, abandoning the cynicism of the position that regards descriptions of the world as always being about something else (Archambault 2016). But it seems that taking metaphor seriously can also be cynical, opening possibilities to manipulate and shape worlds. And more alarming still is that metaphors are open to being exploited by others, not only anthropologists. The metaphor of the state as garden threatened by parasites was not the only instrument that changed

[6] Although the referendum was declared invalid because of the low turnout, if only our village had been consulted, the referendum would have been legitimate and the decision would have been against accepting new migrants. There are 967 registered voters in the village; 56.57 percent of them voted. Five hundred twenty-four people voted against admitting migrants, eight were pro-migrant, and fifteen spoiled their ballots.

Hungarian society, but it did make its small contribution. This new postreferendum state was inhabited by citizens who did not have to live with newcomers or struggle for their property rights and justice. They no longer lived in a paradigm of coexistence. These new citizens were given the right to decide, even if only occasionally, whether they wanted other groups to become citizens or not. After this "choice" was given, the hierarchy between current citizens and those who can potentially become citizens was presented as a fact. The former decided the fate of the latter. And this hierarchical relation creates potential for parasites to arrive, and not the other way around, because without the constructed category of hosts, the parasite metaphor does not work and makes no sense.

REFERENCES

Agamben, Giorgio. 2004. *The Open: Man and Animal.* Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Archambault, Julie. 2016. "Taking Love Seriously in Human-Plant Relations in Mozambique: Toward an Anthropology of Affective Encounters." *Cultural Anthropology* 31(2):244–271. doi:10.14506/ca31.2.05.

Bateson, Gregory. [1972] 2000. *Steps to an Ecology of Mind*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Battaglia, Debbora. 2017. "Aeroponic Gardens and Their Magic: Plants/Persons/Ethics in Suspension." *History and Anthropology* 28(3):263–292. doi:10.1080/02757206.2017.1289935.

Bauman, Zygmunt. 1991. *Modernity and Ambivalence*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.

Bradbury, Ray. 2016. "A Sound of Thunder." Pp. 331–342 in *Science Fiction and Philosophy*, ed. by Susan Schneider. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

Brubaker, Rogers. 2020. "Populism and Nationalism." *Nations and Nationalism* 26(1):44–66. doi:10.1111/nana.12522.

Deleuze, Gilles, and Félix Guattari. 2008. *A Thousand Plateaus Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. Trans. by Brian Massumi. London: Continuum.

Haraway, Donna J. 2007. *When Species Meet*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Kohn, Eduardo. 2013. *How Forests Think: Toward an Anthropology beyond the Human*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Lakoff, George, and Mark Johnson. 2003. *Metaphors We Live By*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Maurer, Bill. 2002. "Anthropological and Accounting Knowledge in Islamic Banking and Finance: Rethinking Critical Accounts." *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 8(4):645–667.

Maurer, Bill. 2005. *Mutual Life, Limited: Islamic Banking, Alternative Currencies, Lateral Reason*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Maurer, Bill, and Sylvia J. Martin. 2012. "Accidents of Equity and the Aesthetics of Chinese Offshore Incorporation." *American Ethnologist* 39(3):527–544. doi:10.1111/j.1548-1425.2012.01379.x.

Mitchell, Timothy. 2002. *Rule of Experts: Egypt, Techno-Politics, Modernity.* Berkeley: University of California Press.

Miyazaki, Hirokazu. 2013. *Arbitraging Japan: Dreams of Capitalism at the End of Finance*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Musolff, Andreas. 2012. "Immigrants and Parasites: The History of a Bio-Social Metaphor." Pp. 249–258 in *Migrations: Interdisciplinary Perspectives*, ed. by Michi Messer, Renee Schroeder, and Ruth Wodak. Vienna: Springer Vienna.

Myers, Natasha. 2017. "From the Anthropocene to the Planthroposcene: Designing Gardens for Plant/People Involution." *History and Anthropology* 28(3):297–301. doi:10.1080/02757206.2017.1289934.

Nading, Alex M. 2014. *Mosquito Trails: Ecology, Health, and the Politics of Entanglement*. Oakland: University of California Press.

Neves, Katja. 2009. "Urban Botanical Gardens and the Aesthetics of Ecological Learning: A Theoretical Discussion and Preliminary Insights from Montreal's Botanical Garden." *Anthropologica* 51(1):145–157.

Riles, Annelise. 2001. *The Network Inside Out*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
Serres, Michel. 2007. *The Parasite*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
Schiel, Tilman. 2005. "Modernity, Ambivalence and the Gardening State." *Thesis Eleven* 83(1):78–89.
Stengers, Isabelle. 2010. *Cosmopolitics I*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
Thorleifsson, Cathrine. 2017. "Disposable Strangers: Far-Right Securitisation of Forced Migration in Hungary." *Social Anthropology* 25(3):318–334. doi:10.1111/1469-8676.12420.
Trencsényi, Balázs. 2014. "Transcending Modernity: Agrarian Populist Visions of Collective Regeneration in Interwar East Central Europe." Pp. 119–145 in *"Regimes of Historicity" in Southeastern and Northern Europe, 1890–1945*, ed. by Diana Mishkova, Balázs Trencsényi, and Marja Jalava. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

ЧТО СКРЫВАЮТ МЕТАФОРЫ: БОРЬБА С ВРЕДИТЕЛЯМИ И АНТИМИГРАНТСКИЕ НАСТРОЕНИЯ В ВЕНГЕРСКОЙ ДЕРЕВНЕ

Татьяна Сафонова

Татьяна Сафонова, факультет социологии и социальной антропологии, Центрально-Европейский университет (Вена, Австрия). Адрес для переписки: Department of Sociology and Social Anthropology, Central European University, Nádor u. 9, 1051 Budapest, Hungary. tvsafonova@gmail.com.

В 2016 году власти Венгрии развернули в медиа антимигрантскую кампанию на волне миграционного кризиса, когда тысячи беженцев пересекли границы страны. В некоторых новостных программах мигрантов описывали как опасную группу, выстраивая визуальную аналогию с насекомыми-вредителями. В этой статье я предлагаю подойти к оптике, созданной подобной метафорой, с другой стороны: при использовании таких образов получается, что имплицитно моделями государства становятся сады. Я задаюсь вопросом о том, что скрывают подобные метафоры, почему они становятся так востребованы в критических ситуациях. Через этнографическое описание я показываю, что повседневность садоводов наполнена беспокойством, страхом, радостью и болью; рассматриваю, как ресурсы и диспозиции садоводов определяют стратегии их борьбы с вредителями. Метафора вредных насекомых связана с болезненной историей ее использования нацистами, однако, несмотря на столь негативную репутацию, все еще востребована. Мои этнографические наблюдения позволили предположить, что эта метафора одновременно скрывает и укрепляет идею частной собственности, она позволяет описывать кризис как внешнюю опасность для устоявшегося порядка, не касаясь внутренних противоречий этого порядка. Когда граждан призывают участвовать в общенациональном референдуме, дабы высказать мнение по поводу мигрантов-паразитов, то эти граждане получают беспрецедентную возможность решать, кто остается в стране, а кого здесь не хотят видеть. Этот популистский жест превращает «государство-садовода» в «государство садоводов», где обязанностью каждого обычного гражданина становится борьба с «сорняками» и «вредителями», которая прежде была авторитарной задачей государственных институтов, описанной Зигмунтом Бауманом, автором концепции «государство-садовод».

Ключевые слова: Венгрия; сады; вредители; миграционный кризис; государство; метафора