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Folk Culture on the Internet: Use, Context, and Function[1]

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Abstract. What happens if folk tradition is not externalized in books and archives but is uploaded to the World Wide Web? What is the guiding intention of the user who deposits the products of folk culture and local tradition to the Internet? Is this a case of patrimonialization or mere archiving? Should we view the function of the externalization as communicative (informative), performative or depositive (safe-keeping)? Does the new medium lead to any change on the level of the habits and functions of use? In other words: is the new medium capable of radically transforming folk tradition and its use in the same way in which mass-media (primarily television) did?

This study attempts to explore these questions. It also openly assumes its experimental character. My interest does not primarily lie with the medium and technology but with the people and the society that uses them. Instead of the local culture of Internet use, I will offer here an analysis of the use of local (folk) culture through the medium of the Internet. In other words, my focus is on the way in which we use the Internet "for integrating folk culture in our present."

Keywords: folk tradition, folk culture, heritage, invented tradition, rewriting tradition, digitization, Internet usage.

According to Vilmos Keszeg, the epoch is an institution that defines the rules of the organization of everyday life, the strategies of contact between people, and the mentality of the individual, the group, and society. Every epoch has

1 The first, shorter version of this study was previously published under the title *A népi kultúra használatának módjai és kontextusai a világhálón* (Modes and Contexts of the Use of Folk Culture on the Internet) in Jakab Albert Zsolt–Kinda István (eds): *Aranykapu. Tanulmányok Pozsony Ferenc tiszteletére*. KJNT–Szentendrei Néprajzi Múzeum–Székely Nemzeti Múzeum, Kolozsvár 2015. The present text is the extended and slightly revised English version of my study entitled *Népi kultúra a világhálón. Használat, kontextus, funkció*, published in *Replika* 2015. 1–2.
When finishing this study, I received the Bolyai János Research Scholarship of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences.

its characteristic physiology, metabolism, and rhythm. Historians of literature have adopted the term "rhetoric of the epoch" for the infiltration of thematic, ideological, rhetorical, and communicational characteristics of an epoch into the texts (Keszeg, 2011: 36–37). The narrative schemes and the productive models that are characteristic for an epoch represent transformational systems (Keszeg, 2011: 38).

McLuhan and his followers have distinguished four epochs in the history of communication technologies. These are primary orality, literacy, book printing, and secondary orality, which is mainly determined by mass-media that primarily organizes itself around television (McLuhan, 1964). However, according to Zoltán Szűts, with the rapid development of the Internet and the integration of augmented reality into our communication, we are now entering a new phase, the epoch of touch, which aims at dissolving the previous epochs into itself, thereby leading to a high intensity collaboration of hearing, sight, and touch (Szűts, 2013: 203). In this new context, our ideas about information and its storage, obtaining, and transmission (or, if you like, about knowledge and its attainment) are continually changing and being reorganized. The habits and rites of recording, storage, and retrieval are also changing, which in turn changes the horizons and perspectives of local culture, the (re)production, conservation, and consumption of folk tradition, as well as of the construction and communication of local heritage and identity.

The traditional culture of a specific region (its folk culture, or cultural heritage) is found and localized increasingly often on the Internet, on the websites of regional associations and clubs, tourism agencies, local governments, cultural institutions, or research centres, on file-sharing websites, blogs, and forums. In brief, the Internet is becoming the new medium and public space of traditional culture (and cultural heritage).

This change of medium prompts the reformulation of several questions and the introduction of new hypotheses, starting points, and frameworks of interpretation and analysis. These should apply to the nature of the altered contexts and to the problems of the habits of use, creating intentions and meaning-generating mechanisms associated with the texts and representations about folk traditions which result from this process. Simultaneously, they also impose the need for the description and analysis of new types of routines, such as online searching, the tracing back of information, saving, forwarding, Facebook liking, etc.

Thus, the question essentially becomes: how will we get to be able to digitalize and thereby save our (folk) culture for the future (see Szűts, 2013: 11)? What kinds of politics for the cultivation of cultural heritage are being formed within the new media environment? How does folk culture and local heritage appear on the Internet? Why is it, in the first place, that contents associated with folk culture and folk tradition are so popular also on the Internet?

But what happens if folk tradition is not externalized in books and archives but is uploaded to the World Wide Web? What is the guiding intention of the user who deposits the products of folk culture and local tradition to the Internet? Is this a case of patrimonialization or mere archiving? Should we view the function of the externalization as communicative (informative), performative, or depositive[2] (safe-keeping)? Does the new medium lead to any change on the level of the habits and functions of use? In other words: is the new medium capable of radically transforming folk tradition and its use in the same way in which mass-media (primarily television) did?

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0. Folk Culture and (Folk) Tradition

After its birth as an academic subject, ethnography has confidently traced the limits of its field. The scientific discipline of ethnography took as its object of study *folk culture* and limited it to peasant culture.[4] This situation is made even more complicated by the fact that the demarcation of its field has prevailed not only on the social but also on the chronological level. Ethnographical researches have focused on the ancestral and on the past.[5] The contemporary phenomena of folk

2 For the interpretation of these concepts, see Assmann, 2008, p. 216.

3 The translation of the Hungarian citations in the study belongs to the author (A.V.).

4 To this day, ethnography is characterized by a degree of terminological uncertainty. Besides the terminology used above, the terms "peasant culture" and "popular culture" are also employed. The former is, according to Tamás Hofer, a "more strictly and clearly delimited version" of folk culture (Hofer, 1994: 233). By contrast, the term "popular culture" indicates a difference in perspective. On the mental map of the researchers, on the popular side, the clear demarcations are drawn between the levels of culture, and, on the side of folk cultures, between the different groups of people and the various ethnicities (Hofer, 1994: 240). However, their common element is that both concepts define "in contrast to the «high» or «learned» level of culture that which they view as «folk», «popular», «non-elite» culture" (Hofer, 1994: 134). Hofer concludes his meticulous analysis of the dichotomy between the two concepts with the statement: "the terminological flow between different scientific fields and due to translations also between languages, in many cases with lesser or larger changes of the original meanings, is increasingly accelerated". Thus, "a major portion of the domain of meaning carried by the concept of *popular culture* that has been developed within the Anglo-French tradition is somehow (...) integrated into our concepts of *peasant culture* and *folk culture* and contributes to their modernisation as if behind the scenes" (Hofer, 1994: 246–247).

5 Vilmos Voigt stated the following about this phenomenon: "The uninterrupted presence of the phantasmagorical «search for the ancestors» is also very characteristic for the Hungarian conception of tradition" (Voigt, 2007: 11).

culture have also been left outside the scope of ethnographical studies. However, from the 1960s, this paradigm started to become increasingly problematic. On the one hand, researchers started to ask the question: *who is the folk?* Already in 1965, Alen Dundes argued that "folk" can refer to "any group of people whatsoever who share at least one common factor" (Dundes, 1956: 2). That is to say, we can apply this term to many different groups (from factory workers to Internet users) which can also be included within the scope of ethnographical research. On the other hand, ethnographers have also redefined the character of the popular knowledge (*folklore*) and the tradition (*traditio*) which should constitute the objects of their studies. As early as the 1930s, Alfred Schütz focused his interest on *everyday life* (Niedermüller, 1981: 192), but ethnographical research continued to favour high days for a long time. Mihály Hoppál calls attention to the fact that, even in the 1970s, one of the most established representatives of Hungarian folkloristics, Vilmos Voigt, "although (...) emphasizing the collective character of folklore, considers its artful characteristics, the «aesthetics of folklore», to be of primary interest for research" (Hoppál, 1982: 330).

In his synthesis of the results of Hungarian ethnographical researches in Romania, Vilmos Keszeg also concludes that it "has turned folk culture into its object of study on the basis of a peculiar selection. The criteria for this selection have been that the studied object should be *ancestral* (as opposed to generally known present-day phenomena), it should have a *peasant* or *rural* character (as opposed to being urban, official), and it should be *aesthetic* (as opposed to objects barely containing any aesthetic value), *festive*, and *spectacular* (as opposed to the everyday in appearance), *oral* (as opposed to the scriptural and recorded), text- and genre-centred (as opposed to the discursive habits of everyday communication, which follow more relaxed genre norms), as well as *national* (as opposed to that which does not have ethnic characteristics)" (Keszeg, 1995: 110).[6]

Some western authors argue that nowadays the "local" is increasingly becoming the new folk culture (Storey, 2003: 116; Noyes, 2009: 245). Folk culture (or traditional culture) is local not only in the sense that it is generated locally – i.e., it has been long embedded in the everyday life of the local society – but also because it is always used locally. Thus, several cultural elements are in use today within local societies which can be qualified as borrowed within these contexts, but they are a part of local culture in the sense specified above.

We are dealing with similar difficulties when trying to specify the meaning of *tradition*, which is pervaded by contradictions both in the scientific and in the everyday use of the term. According to Dorothy Noyes, tradition can be interpreted as communication (handing over and receiving), ideology, and a form of property (Noyes, 2009: 234). In the interpretation of Edward Shils, it is *traditum*, that is to say, it represents everything that is handed over by the past to the present (Shils,

6 Emphasis by the original author.

1981: 12). According to both of these views, the primary role of tradition consists in the preservation and transmission of knowledge.

In his essay about the necessity of our habits, Odo Marquard describes tradition as the *primary presence of history*, which is nothing else than "the sum total of habits," or – in the words of Herman Lübbe – that which "is valid not because of its proven correctness, but because we are incapable of being without it" (see Marquard, 2001: 188–189). This definition refers to the totality of life, or, if you wish, to everyday life. Tradition is not only the totality of actions, gestures, objects, and texts related to high days and celebrations but also everything that is human and makes life liveable.

In December 2012, Vilmos Keszeg organized an international scientific conference in Cluj-Napoca (Romania), bearing the title "Who does tradition belong to? And what is its use? Tradition between culture, users, and traders".[7] In his invitation to the conference, he states that three paradigms have succeeded each other in 20th century Europe in the domain of the interpretation of tradition. The first paradigm approached the subject from the side of the cultural context (typology, range, morphology, structure, function, and the historical approach to tradition), the second interpreted tradition from a sociological perspective, focusing on the instruments of its application – or, in other words, on the attitudes toward tradition –, and the third paradigm, currently in the process of establishing itself, consists in the patrimonialization of culture. According to the author, each of these paradigms stresses different aspects of tradition.

The researches led by Vilmos Keszeg in Cluj-Napoca use tradition as an operative concept. They "do not relate this concept to subsisting relics of an earlier developmental epoch of culture and society but use it for the designation of objects, knowledge, practices, mentality, and attitudes received from the users of culture within our environment" (Keszeg, 2014: 10). Consequently, tradition 1. establishes a community, 2. produces memory, and 3. serves a biographical function (Keszeg, 2014: 10–12).

In one of his studies, Vilmos Voigt expresses his opinion that, just as the concept of folk culture, tradition is also strongly ethnicized. In his own words, "as for the notorious Hungarian «conceptualization of tradition», the systematic use of the concept establishes itself in our culture in the age of reform, after some preliminary interpretations (such as György Bessenyei's conception of history). The study of Ferenc Kölcsey entitled *Nemzeti hagyományok* ("National traditions") (1826) in fact maintains a still-valid approach, according to which Hungarian «folk traditions» are simultaneously the traditions of the «Hungarian nation»" (Voigt, 2007: 10).

7 "A qui appartient la tradition? A quoi sert-elle? La tradition entre culture, utilisateur et entrepreneur". 6–7 décembre 2012, Cluj-Napoca, Romania.

Attila Paládi-Kovács calls attention to the fact that in the works of the researchers devoted to the domain of folk culture "the term «tradition» (...) often appears as a synonym for the folk culture stemming from the age before the Settlement of the Magyars in Hungary, which survives according to its own laws, sometimes transforming and renewing itself within the process" (Paládi-Kovács, 2004: 4). Hermann Bausinger writes about the nature of this tradition in the following way: "according to the conception that has become widespread also among the folk during the previous century, and even reaches into the present in some residual forms, that which is historically prior is also ahistorical, and can be viewed as nature itself" (Bausinger, 1995: 102–103). In one of her studies, Aleida Assmann also points to the fact that tradition is rediscovered and interpreted in the 18th century as *nature* (Assmann, 1997: 608–625).

It is the romantic, aestheticized, and archaized definition of folk culture and tradition that has become embedded in common belief. However, which is almost even more important than this fact: local communities have begun to view certain elements of their own culture as tradition.[8] One of my recent researches on the perspective used in the chapters on folk culture of village monographs written by local authors has led to the conclusion that these handbooks, which are based on the romantic conception of folk culture, established at the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century, and on the monographic study of certain domains (popular customs, folk poetry, folk architecture, farming), often contain mere general statements instead of presenting local characteristics (Vajda, 2015a). The majority of the folk traditions represented on the Internet also reflects this same perspective.

1. Methods and Contexts of the Use of Folk Traditions

In one of his studies, Hermann Bausinger describes how, at the 75th anniversary of the establishment of the choir of a south German town, Hayingen, the local women appeared in a costume about which, although it was defined by them as traditional, they admitted that they wore it that day for the first time. It has only become clear later to the author that the elements of this costume have been ordered by them on the basis of the descriptions of a local pastor from a century ago about the then-current native costumes (Bausinger, 1983: 434). A similar work was conducted in the 1960s in Voivodeni (Vajdaszentivány), a village that lies only 20 km from the town of Târgu Mureş (Marosvásárhely), by Pál Demeter. As a result, the local dance ensemble presented the still popular local folk dances at the county and national stage of the competition *Cântarea*

8 As Hermann Bausinger puts it: "Nowadays even simple peasants view tradition in part consciously as tradition" (Bausinger, 1995: 104).

României ("Praise of Romania"), dressed in the costume designed by him.[9] In this case, too, the need for the design had arisen from necessity since the village did not have any living tradition for dressing at that date, and only some elderly people had still preserved in their wardrobe a couple of sets of native costumes for funerals. The women's costume of the local dance ensemble, which is still in use today, has been designed by Demeter on the basis of the clothes of a 96-year-old woman. In Dumbrăvioara (Sáromberke), a village that lies halfway between Târgu Mureş (Marosvásárhely) and Reghin (Szászrégen), for the occasion of celebrating the renovation and equipment upgrade of the local culture centre, eight pairs of "native costumes" have been bought for the folk dance ensemble of the elementary school. Since neither the representatives of the local government nor the company commissioned for the acquisition had any documentation at its disposal regarding the local costume, they searched for models on the Internet. The decision makers reviewed the photos of Transylvanian native costumes and folk dance ensembles found on social media and file-sharing websites, as well as the "native costume catalogues" of Transylvanian craftsmen, also accessible through the Internet. Finally, the elements of the costume have been ordered from folk craftsmen working in Odorheiu Secuiesc (Székelyudvarhely).

1.1. Folk Traditions in a New Context[10]

The above described phenomena related to the use of tradition have been termed as *folklorism*[11] within the scholarly literature. The concept was used for the first time by sociologist Peter Heinz. In his encyclopaedia article written in 1958, he designated as "folklorism" the various nativistic movements and their unrealistic and romantic character, also citing as its main example the reintroduction of forgotten, "uncomfortable costumes" of the past. According to Hans Moser, a researcher of popular customs, folklorism is a form of appearance of certain elements of folk culture, which are forced into contexts where they do not originally belong. An example of this is the use of native costumes on the stage (see Bausinger, 1983: 435). According to Vilmos Voigt, the concept also encompasses the period of the early discovery of folk culture. He identifies the earliest forms of folklorism with the French Revolution, German romanticism, and the Russian Narodnik movement, and differentiates between older and newer

9 The folk dances of Voivodeni (Vajdaszentivány) were presented on the stage also by the ensemble Maros during this period, and they can be found until today in the repertoires of many professional and amateur folk dance ensembles.

10 The title is an adaptation. For the original, see Zoltán Bíró, József Gagyi, János Péntek (eds): *Néphagyományok új környezetben. Tanulmányok a folklorizmus köréből*. Kriterion Könyvkiadó, Bucharest, 1987.

11 For the concept of folklorism, see Voigt, 1970; 1979; 1987a, Bausinger, 1983; Gusev, 1983; Karnoouh, 1983.

tendencies, introducing the concept of *neofolklorism* (Voigt, 1970; 1979; 1987b). In addition to this, Gusev distinguishes two socio-cultural types of folklorism. These are *everyday folklorism* and *ideological folklorism* (Gusev, 1983: 441). As for Bausinger, he summarizes the characteristics of folklorism in the following way: 1. The phenomena of folklorism are created artificially. They do not stem from tradition but are its outgrowths. 2. Their incentive is external, and they are also directed externally, in the form of spectacles and presentations that also take into account the expectations of the viewer. 3. These phenomena are closely associated with the agencies of the cultural industry, including show business and tourism. 4. Folklorism can be viewed as a form of applied ethnography, in the case of which we are dealing with the feedback of the results of ethnographic research (Bausinger, 1983: 435).

In 1987, in Transylvania, the Hungarian-language publishing house Kriterion issued a volume of studies (Bíró et alii, 1987) dealing with the question whether folk culture, as it enters new/changed contexts, "can still be regarded as a creation that transmits traditional meanings, or one that now produces only dubious (?) values". "How do the elements that are disseminated from the decomposing paradigm of traditional culture find their place within new sintagma?" – this was the question asked by the editors (Péntek, 1987: 5). In his study, which can be regarded as the theoretical introduction of the volume, Zoltán Bíró argues that we are dealing with folklorism when "an element or group of elements of folk culture enters a context that is alien and different from its original one (...), changes its meaning in this alien context and becomes different from what it represented within the system of folk culture" (Bíró, 1987: 31–32). Then, the author distinguishes four basic types of folklorism: scientific folklorism, representational folklorism, everyday folklorism, and aesthetic folklorism (Bíró, 1987: 33–44). According to him, scientific folklorism is the situation in which folk culture survives in the net of scholarly interpretations. "Thus, when we are speaking about saving and safe-keeping, we are in fact dealing with a process of folklorism and a meaning shift that is associated with it. (...) The scientific approach always means that we are putting the elements of folk culture into an alien context." (Bíró, 1987: 35.) At the same time, the material that is discovered and published by the researcher can come to a new life of its own and be put to many different uses, some of which lie far from the original intentions of the scientific research.[12] Bíró includes in the category of representational folklorism the book series on folk art placed on the bookshelf, the hanging of folk carpets and jugs on living room walls, the presentation of popular culture on the stage, the exhibitions of folk art, and the "houses of regional traditions". These gestures and objects all express the idea that "folk culture belongs to us" (Bíró, 1987: 36). Representational folklore doas not only have its craftsmen but also its ideologues

12 For this topic, see also Keszeg, 2005, pp. 315–339.

(scholarly specialists) who select the elements of folk culture that they place before us and teach us how to view them. This entire process can best be described as consumption (Bíró, 1987: 38).

In the case of everyday folklorism, folk culture enters into an alien context by starting to function not as a system but as an instrument that, although serves the attempts of the individual to explain himself or herself, also creates an opposition: the individual is conscious of the fact that there are others besides him or her who do not believe in this culture, or even look down upon him or her because of it (Bíró, 1987: 39–43). As for aesthetic folklorism, it is, in fact, the classic form of folklorism, in the case of which we are dealing with the "entering of folk art and poetry into «high» culture" (Bíró, 1987: 43). The primary scene for this kind of use of folk traditions is the studio of the artist and the theatrical stage, and the context of its performance is the exhibiton, the local, regional, or national festival, and the creative contest.

1.2. The Revitalization of Folk Traditions and the Invented Tradition

International scholarly literature uses the term "invented tradition," as introduced by Eric Hobsbawm, for the designation of the process of tradition creation that revitalizes or even invents "traditional" folk costumes (e.g. the Scottish kilt).[13] In Hungarian scholarly literature, "tradition creation" (*hagyományteremtés*) is also often used (see Hofer and Niedermüller, 1987; Mohay, 1997). According to its definition, the "invented tradition" is an answer to novel situations, which takes the form of a reference to past forms and situations (Hobsbawm, 1983: 2) or a process of formalization and ritualization characterized by the reference to the past (Hobsbawm, 1983: 4). The author distinguishes three types of invented traditions. Some 1. reinforce or symbolize social community, others 2. reinforce or legitimize institutions, statuses, and power relations, and 3. the third category is primarily aimed at socialization into a system of beliefs and values or into a behavioural model (Hobsbawm, 1983: 9).

In another study, Hobsbawm deals with the "mass production of traditions". His starting point is the premise according to which, although the invention of traditions can be viewed as a universal phenomenon, from the 1870s we can see an accelerated emergence of novel traditions, both in an official and an unofficial setting, a process that lasted for half a century. The officially invented novel traditions have been introduced by the state and used for its purposes as political traditions, while the unofficially invented traditions can be viewed as social institutions created by formally organized groups without any political agenda, which nonetheless needed novel instruments to assure and express their unity and to regulate their internal system of relationships (Hobsbawm, 1987: 127).

13 For its analysis, see Trevor-Roper, 1983, pp. 15–41.

Hobsbawm calls our attention to three main innovations in his analysis of the tradition-creating process of the French Third Republic: 1. it transformed education into a secular correspondent of the Church and made it into an instrument for the propagation of republican principles, 2. it invented public ceremonies, and 3. started the mass-production of memorial monuments (Hobsbawm, 1987: 137–139). Although the author himself only mentions it later, in another context, we can also include here the creation of ritual spaces (Hobsbawm, 1987: 179).

At the same time, Hobsbawm also emphasizes three further aspects of invented traditions. First, one has to distinguish between durable and transitory innovations. Second, the invented traditions are "associated with specific classes or social strata," and, although a bidirectional process in theory, their adoption is "characterized by a trickle-down effect". As invented traditions are adopted, they are also being transformed, but the "historical origin remains visible". The third aspect is the parallel existence of "invention" and "spontaneous formation" (Hobsbawm, 1987: 178–181).

The primary context of invented tradition consists in the (national) celebration and the memorial ritual (see Connerton, 1997: 7–75; Fejős, 1996: 125–142).

The revitalization of folk tradition can be viewed as a similar process. On the basis of the data available to them, the local or the central (political and/or intellectual) elites create an ideal type of folk traditions, thereby also creating the *"representative" folk traditions* of a given community (settlement, region, or nation). Thus, tradition is removed from the medium that created it and, from being local, it becomes national. Some early Hungarian examples of this are the thatched-roof inn presented at the Paris Exhibit of 1867, the northern Hungarian and Transylvanian houses shown at the Vienna Exhibit of 1873, the 15 *peasant rooms* showcased to the public at the 1885 Budapest National Exhibition, or the Hungarian village presented at the Millennium Exhibition (Sisa, 2001: 46–50). Because this process and its final result is all too similar to the story of the Scottish kilt, we must view the revitalization of folk traditions also as invented tradition. Representative/invented folk tradition often also becomes an integral part of ideological constructions and fulfils a function in the construction of national consciousness.[14] This is the reason why it is often accused, and not entirely without any justification, of nationalism.

1.3. The Rehabilitation of Folk Tradition. Heritage

As Vilmos Keszeg writes in his introductory study to the conference volume of the above-mentioned symposium, in the 1960s, a new term is introduced in Europe, that of *heritage*, which is soon extended from architectural and natural goods to

14 An example of this is the Romanian dance performed with sticks, called the *Căluş*, which was included on the list of the UNESCO in 2005. For its analysis, see Ştiucă, 2014, pp. 42–52.

cultural goods, and even introduces a new field of studies (*Heritage Studies*). But is it not merely the case – asks the author – that this term of "cultural heritage" only expresses a specifically western European cultural attitude that enacts the redistribution of cultural goods and their showcasing for strangers through patrimonialization (Keszeg, 2014: 12–13)? In another passage, he explains: "the concept of cultural heritage appeared in Europe in the 1970s. It was then that people became aware of the fact that they should attend to, secure, and musealize those elements of culture that are no longer preferred by the users for some reason. This is a turning point in the history of European mentality because there is a difference between the concept of tradition and that of heritage. Tradition refers to the values used and voluntarily transmitted through the generations, while heritage is a legal concept which emphasizes that posterity has a right to access all that has been worked out and accumulated by the predecessors, but that has been removed from everyday use. The preservation of heritage and the access to it have to be guaranteed by the law" (Keszeg, 2015). On her turn, Máiréad Nic Craith argues that the concept of heritage has enough plasticity for us to interpret it in several different ways, a fact that is also reflected by the variety of its translations into different European languages. Thus, it is difficult to imagine that we could speak of a common European heritage and a common conception of it (Craith, 2012: 11–28). Regarding the usability of the Western concept of heritage, Gábor Sonkoly comes to the conclusion that "the concept of cultural heritage differs from one level of interpretation to another. It remains a question how these different interpretations can be linked together" (Sonkoly, 2000: 62). Attila Paládi-Kovács calls attention to the fact that a conceptual duality manifests itself in France. The French use the term *patrimoine ethnologique* for designating ethnographical heritage, or patrimony, and "they have reserved the word *heritage* to refer to elite culture and to the protection of monuments" (Paládi-Kovács, 2004: 7).

Today it almost seems commonplace to talk about the "heritage boom". This alludes not only to the fact that different heritage forms and discourses have enjoyed an impenetrable proliferation but also to the existence of a process in which heritage increasingly substitutes the concept of culture (Tschofen, 2012: 29). Many authors even define heritage as a form of metaculture (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 2004: 52–65; Tauschek, 2011: 49–64) characteristic of the world of globalization. The contributors of a collective volume even speak of *regimes of heritage*, also alluding thereby to its regulatory character that expresses itself in everyday life (see Bendix, Eggert, and Peselmann, 2012).

In the interpretation of Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, heritage is: 1. the culture-creating mode of the present nourished by the past; 2. an industrial branch that produces added value; 3. it transforms the local product into an export article; 4. it sheds light on the problematic character of the relationship between its own object and its instruments; 5. the key for the understanding of heritage lies in

its virtual nature (simulacrum character), the presence or, on the contrary, the complete lack of any actual relevance (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 1995: 369).

We can identify four main directions within the vast scholarly literature. One research trend approaches the subject from the direction of use and asks about the essence of heritage and its social framework. Another approach starts from the perspective of use and studies the transnational or, on the contrary, nation-specific regulations for something to be proclaimed cultural heritage and to be preserved, transmitted, and used as such. How do these regulations influence, on their turn, cultural heritage itself, its different media, and its use? Who is (or are) the owner(s) of cultural heritage, and which institutions operate and control its use? What is the relationship between normative regulations and everyday practice (see Aronsson and Gradén, 2013; Bendix, Eggert, and Peselmann, 2012; Smith, 2004; 2006; Smith and Akagawa, 2009; Therond és Trigona, 2008). The third direction of research deals with the relationship between heritage (formation) and economy, primarily including the function fulfilled by cultural heritage within the tourism industry (Dawson, 2005; Lyth, 2006; Rowan and Baram, 2004; Thompson Hajdik, 2009). Finally, the fourth direction analyses the relationship between modern technology and the creation of cultural heritage (patrimonialization), its representation (or visualization), scientific study, and everyday use (Falser and Juneja, 2013; Ioannides and Quak, 2014).

A specific use of traditions is increasingly often referred to with the concept of *heritage* (viz. heritage creation) also in Eastern Europe, but primarily by historians and not ethnographers.[15] The appearance of the heritage paradigm in East-Central Europe can be related to the accession to the European Union. In any event, the concept has significantly gained in importance in the 1970s both within scientific and political discourses.[16] This is also related to the fact that "as major science started to become increasingly personal, and communal, in its character (...), a change of scale has also taken place with the spread of analytical categories situated on lower levels than the global or national" (Sonkoly, 2009: 199). The "small community" has become not only a legitimate research category, but these communities have also begun to work out their heritage "in their own right," complementing regulation from above with local participation (Sonkoly, 2009, 2000).

15 For this reason, the patrimonialization of folk culture is pushed into the background. When we are talking about the local heritage, we are in fact thinking of the national heritage and reflect upon it in a national context. Our heritage lists also talk about national heritage – for instance, the *Magyar Értéktár* (*Hungarian* Repository of Values) is also primarily the *Hungarikumok Gyűjteménye* (Collection of Hungarikum) –, and the frames of reference for the creation and use of local heritage are not clearly defined yet.

16 For this topic, see, among others, György, Kis, Monok, 2005; Erdősi, 2000, pp. 26–44; Fejős, 2005, pp. 41–48; Husz, 2006, pp. 61–67; Paládi-Kovács, 2004, pp. 1–11; Sonkoly, 2005, pp. 16–22; 2009, pp. 199–209; Frazon, 2010.

Today, everything that wants to remain in memory and everything that holds something in memory is somehow part of the heritage. One of the driving forces behind the continuous production of heritage is the increase of interest in the past: the local community, as it creates its past, recognizes itself in its relics. This is what makes it possible to sustain the feeling of belonging to a community, since – as Löwenthal puts it – heritage is that which keeps the community alive, and the people of today can express, keep alive, experience, and transmit abstract ideas through the language of heritage (see Husz, 2006).

If tradition is the past that is embedded in everyday life and is alive in the present, then heritage is a form of past that is also alive in the present, but separated from everyday life. Tradition is tied to a specific place (locality), but heritage transforms the local into national tradition, just as we have seen in the case of the invented tradition. At the same time as it valorizes locality and difference (Sonkoly, 2000: 60–61), heritage also creates a situation of rivalry for them (Sonkoly, 2000: 55–60).

The construction of heritage always includes a restauration process as well. The restauration of tradition means that political power, as it reinforces the original intention of the use of tradition, puts it to its own use (Hartog, 2006: 156). On the one hand, heritage can be viewed as *intentional tradition*, that is to say, the community relates to it as an inherited tradition, in a conscious way. On the other hand, it can also be interpreted as *invented tradition*, with the sole difference that in this case, along with the political and ideological objectives, economic interests are also strongly present and play a decisive role. The characteristic context for the use (and consumption) of heritage is primarily tourism.

Finally, I would like to cite an important – and thought-provoking – observation made by Vilmos Voigt: "Many fashionable arguments concerning world history have reached us lately. (...) Maybe all this also influences the way in which we interpret tradition today. Ultimately, globalization has also become such a magic word nowadays. It is generally known that «traditions» should be viewed as the opposite pole of globalization, and their «conservation» is especially recommended in order to mitigate the adverse effects of globalization. Without thoroughly reviewing this entire topic, we can only allude to the fact that this «anti-globalist» interpretation of traditions is now a worldwide phenomenon. We ourselves have imported this argumentation from abroad. Ironically, we could even add to it that it is typically a «global» phenomenon" (Voigt, 2007: 12).

1.4. The Rewriting of Folk Tradition

Vilmos Keszeg approaches the use of folk tradition and the habits of use associated with it from another direction. Relying mainly on the results of the French historians of literacy and of the anthropology of narration, the author searches for

an answer to the question whether oral tradition can be recorded and transferred from orality to scripturality. What are the consequences of the recording of traditions in writing? And what happens to tradition when it is transferred into a foreign medium and processed with the instruments of a style that is alien to it (Keszeg, 2005: 315–339; 2004: 36–467)? In his study, the author calls attention to the fact that tradition constructs itself upon 1. a collective life-world, 2. the local practices of discourse, 3. a genealogical structure (tradition is assumed by the descendants) and a local structure (the community speaks about the same thing), and 4. it has a biographical function as it regulates biographical pathways. These are all certainties that authenticate and legitimize tradition, whose function in its primary social context is to handle conflicts, strengthen identity consciousness, and continually produce and teach attitudes and habits. Tradition is simultaneously part and constructor of the life-world (see Keszeg, 2004: 437). Recorded tradition is encountered in three possible statuses. These are: 1. representation is the only form in which tradition is given, 2. representation functions as a historical form of tradition, and 3. representation does not remind us of tradition anymore, it works against tradition, and its reception and assessment happen according to the rules pertaining to literary texts (Keszeg, 2005: 316). If this tradition is removed from its original context, another kind of linguistic behaviour and attitude becomes characteristic. On the one hand, in this context, tradition loses its relation to the life-world, it does not organize the world anymore, but only speaks about it, or, in other cases, that which has been reality in the original context becomes fiction during the process of rewriting (Keszeg, 2004: 437).[17] On the other hand, the author comes to the conclusion that the rewriting of tradition produces prejudices on all the levels of society, both within the local community and in the external world; notwithstanding the fact that the causes for this differ from one social group to another (see Keszeg, 2005: 336).

1.5. Folk Traditions on the Internet?

In the above paragraphs, I have presented four characteristic modes of existence of tradition and four characteristic contexts of its use. In their case, the local is transformed into a national or even universal tradition (world heritage), and its use can take place not only locally but also in alien contexts. Thus, the question emerges: what is new in the fact that folk tradition is localized on the Internet? In my opinion, the interesting thing is not that the local tradition can spread globally through the Internet but that the folk tradition accessible through the Internet simultaneously becomes a uniformized content and part of the local

17 J. Lottman distinguishes between three types of texts: 1. myths are about the absolute truth, texts that repeat themselves and create a world; 2. history presents events in succession, but it does not create a world, it only talks about it; 3. the artistic text describes fiction (Lottman, 1994).

interpretations. Furthermore, the interesting aspect is that the previously orally recounted and/or scripturally recorded folk tradition is being represented virtually on the Internet (see Stanley, 2003).

Folklorism references the fact that folk culture becomes part of the culture of the masses, and it does not play a role anymore in the regulation of local life, but it is prepared for consumption and is represented on the theatrical stage and in television and radio programmes. Some elements of tradition fulfil an instrumental role in the process of provoking aesthetic pleasure (cf. Keszeg, 2004: 437). In the case of invented tradition, folk tradition becomes an instrument for another kind of manipulation and plays a role in the maintenance and legitimation of the ideologies of political power. Heritage is also the result of an editing process, but in this case traditions do not have to be lifted out from the twilight of the past, but its still existing elements have to be recombined in the present. New images and identities are produced through the combination of past and present, respectively their representation within the same horizon (cf. Gagyi, 2008: 16). A common element in the latter two cases is that the intention of preserving the tradition is associated with central control and strong conservativism.

The written recording of traditions and its depositing into archives and publications represents a modality of its preservation and the externalization and transmission of heritage (patrimony) (Keszeg, 2011: 60). This places the Internet that (also) presents the values of local culture into another context and shows it to be a driving force for the production of heritage. Thus, the World Wide Web becomes an active factor in the production and consumption process of heritage (see Falser and Juneja, 2013; Ioannides and Quak, 2014),[18] an instrument for the awareness of our living together with the past, but one that is not characterized by the conservativism inherent in the attitudes based on the cultivation of folk tradition (see Nyíri, 1994a: 77).

Thus, this heritage and this kind of heritage formation significantly differs from the ones we have been used to. As Zoltán Szűts also points out in his book, it is not too difficult to recognize that, "with the spread of technology, artefacts and objects do not appear anymore in contexts that barely change for centuries, as the role of museums and maps is taken over by augmented reality, and the collection is created by the community in a space in which the canons of social media are in effect. In this context, the role of the curator is fulfilled by the maker of the layer that is placed over reality" (Szűts, 2013: 202). And this *maker* is neither a scholar (ethnographer, anthropologist, etc.) nor a state official nor even a public educator or an enthusiastic amateur but the user himself (herself).

At the same time, Internet forums and blogs make it possible for anyone to publicly speak about tradition, and due to the democratic character of these

18 For the relationship between the Internet and folk culture, see the studies published in the volume edited by Trevor J. Blank (2009).

contexts specialists and laypeople can enjoy the same level of media representation (Szűts, 2013: 111–112).

The Internet as a context that carries traditional folk culture (cf. Szűts, 2013: 21) can be regarded as a new form of the cultivation and preservation of tradition in all of its aspects, in the case of which "the medium of the transmission, i.e. the digital platform itself, lacks any material substance. In the digital context, the information moves far away both from its source and its carrier. As we move away from the world of objects, the extent of unreliability, falsification, and copying also increases" (Szűts, 2013: 22.). In this medium, tradition increasingly becomes invented, or, more exactly, an *interactive fiction* (see Szűts, 2013: 97). The preservation and/or use of tradition can be characterized with the metaphor of "saving" or "saving as" (in another format) (cf. Szűts, 2013: 23). That is to say, it is an adaptive practice through which the relocation of the tradition, stemming from the offline, local space, into the digital online space produces a kind of *remix* that is largely based on the recycling of already existing composing elements. In this case, the value added by the user exhausts itself in sharing and expressing his or her opinion about the shared content (Szűts, 2013: 145).[19]

2. Theoretical Reference Points

2.1. The Consequences of the Horizon Shift

According to Hermann Bausinger, the revaluation of space and the rediscovery of locations is the result of the *shift* (or decomposition) *of the horizon*. This process has brought about the spread of the current concept of homeland and the development of symbols that have enriched this concept with content. The birth of the concept of homeland is indicative of the fact that communities have become aware of the existence of others besides themselves. The tradition that they have viewed thus far as the organizing force of the entire world loses its general validity outside the boundaries of their community. The author emphasizes that the very existence of the innumerable local anniversaries celebrated nowadays refers back to local history (Bausinger, 1995: 81–83).

Pierre Nora uses the term "realms of memory" to denote the procedures used for the anchoring of local history and traditions. He explains the development of these realms with the disappearance of the authentic contexts of memory (Nora, 2010: 13). Besides the spatial and temporal constraints of memory, Jan

19 Zoltán Szűts repeatedly calls attention to the fact that the remix is an integral part of popular culture. In this case, "the author, having in view the receiver, creates a product that is often more readily receivable, or differently receivable, than the original" (Szűts, 2013: 110). In my opinion, this kind of creating an attitude is even more characteristic of Internet users.

Assmann also calls attention to its concrete character by stating that "ideas have to assume a perceptible form in order to gain entrance into memory," and he uses the term "formations of memory" for this concreteness (Assmann, 1999: 38–39). At the same time, this also means that memories are no longer preserved and transmitted by the communities but by institutions. *Collective memory* is substituted with *cultural memory*, which is aimed at the solid points of the past and transforms the factual past (history) into memorable past, or myth. Thus, the past is dissolved into symbolic formations (Assmann, 1999: 53).

Arjun Appadurai uses the concept of *locality* for the description of the space that is delimited by horizons. According to him, "locality primarily means relations and contexts, not degrees and spatiality. It is a complex phenomenological quality that is produced by the feeling of social immediacy, the technologies of interactivity, and the series of relations between the relativized contexts" (Appadurai, 2001: 3).

The shift of the horizon also influences the view of temporality: the dread of the future and the longing for the past leads to the absolutization of the present. Thus, the orientation towards the future is substituted by *presentism*, the cult of the present that continues to preserve the relics of the past. However, this is a present that has already passed before it could happen completely. So, the faith in progress is replaced by the concern for preservation. Nevertheless, it still remains questionable what is to be preserved and by whom (see Hartog, 2006). The rapid development and spread of Internet technology has given a new impetus to the above-mentioned concepts and theories by placing them in a wider context.

The phenomenon of the narrowing of space, which is discussed by Hermann Bausinger, can also be interpreted as an answer to the accessibility of the cultural products of the folk and to the fastening pace of this accessibility. In a context in which radically different goods appear in a rapidly changing series, tradition can only be preserved if the forms become rigid and are then adopted with maximum precision (Bausinger, 1995: 111). In the case of the invented tradition and heritage, the invented/patrimonialized traditions and models have to be followed this rigorously. Bausinger invokes the example of the native costumes that, according to him, strongly resemble uniforms (Bausinger, 1995: 114). This tendency is even more pronounced nowadays. It suffices to think of the costumes of folk dance ensembles or the costume elements of master craftsmen of folk arts, also popularized on the Internet.

2.2. The Changing Function of the Archives: From Preservation to Sharing

The computer is an instrument of visual acquisition (and propagation) of knowledge. Its use resembles more closely that of the telescope and the microscope than of the printed press. That is to say, representation (or visualization) is that

which is more important in the case of the Internet and not its capacity to store data (Stanley, 2003). Nevertheless, from a certain perspective, it seems that the World Wide Web is also a huge archive, or database, for a very significant part of the users.[20] Thus, all the theoretical considerations that pertain to the nature of the archives (databases, records, libraries, etc.) are also valid, or at least worthy of consideration, in the case of the structure, functioning, and especially the use of the Internet.

In his book about the "art of forgetting," Harald Weinrich describes the archive as an "institution for the preservation of documents," in which "the written material that documents legal and state administrative procedures [...] is at disposal as a model: it serves as a reference for future objectives, including historiographical ones" (Weinrich, 2002: 297). At the same time, the author calls attention to the fact that in our present "overinformed society" the selection of information is a much more difficult and important task than its acquisition, which in the case of the archives means "the systematic destruction of documents," also called "annulment" (*Kassation*) (Weinrich, 2002: 297–298).

Similarly to the archive, the library is also a response to the theoretical question about the possibility and the method of the written word's systematization and about the possibility of controlling the ever-expanding world of books (Chartier 1994: vii). In his study about the function fulfilled by libraries within Transylvanian Hungarian culture, Zsigmond Jakó emphasizes the fact that the library can be viewed as a social construction that requires the simultaneous presence of certain social needs and conditions for its formation. Therefore, its content and composition are defined by the cultural and, we should add, economic, life of the social community that creates the library (Jakó, 1977: 284–285).

Reflecting on the current problems of archives, Tibor Takács states that the archive not only bears upon itself, but it occasionally also shakes off the *burden of history* that has been thrust upon it by political power and historiography. Exiting the archive, the archival document can function not only as a historical source but can also enter into various contexts such as the official, the personal historiographical, or even the literary context (Takács, 2009: 62–63). This is of particular importance to me, since ultimately it defines those three essential media or contexts in which the World Wide Web and the information that can be found on it fulfil their function.

The user of the archive (the ethnographical writer, the historian, the local specialist, or the private person) experiences there not only the past but also

20 In his work about the relationship between history and computerized representation, Stanley writes that historians are conservative computer users (which is also true about the representatives of the humanities and the majority of average computer users). They primarily use it as a typewriter and an archive, and written history (viz. folk tradition) transforms itself only very slowly into represented history (folk tradition) (Stanley, 2003).

solitude. Relying on Steedman's work, Tibor Takács argues that the user of the archives is motivated by the desire of knowing the past and taking it into possession since "in the past we are looking for that which we want to become" (Takács, 2009: 63). Thus, the archive is also a space of desires, "a place where people can remain alone with the past and where an entire world, a complete social regime can be imagined on the basis of a scrap of paper" (Takács, 2009: 64). Going even further, I could say that the user experiences himself (or herself) in the archive, as he or she also does on the Internet (e.g. social networking sites).

Pierre Nora, the author behind the great research project related to the places of memory, discusses in no less than two studies the archive as a "lieu de mémoire" (Nora, 2006: 4–6; 2010: 121–128). He manages to show that the extension of the concept and the debates about research rights and the maintenance (i.e. control) of the archives point to their central position within contemporary memory (Nora, 2006: 4). On the one hand, the memorial and identificatory function of the archive surpasses in importance its historical and documentary function, while, on the other hand, the increase in historical sensibility and the pluralization of history have also resulted in an increase in the modalities of access. The function of the archive as a place of memory has been extended so that it also functions as a place of regional, local, and personal (that is to say, alternative) form of memory, besides the national one (Nora, 2006: 5).

This transformation of the archives manifests itself in three domains: "in the process of decentralization, in the expansion of the circle of things that seem worth it to be remembered, and in the process of democratization that makes everybody his or her own archivist". This is the source of the *quantitative revolution* of the archives (Nora, 2006: 5). In many respects, the archive conserves the temporality of the state, the *long-term processes*, and offers the condition of possibility for its representation.

In his study entitled *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression*, Jacques Derrida writes that, on the one hand, the archive can be conceived of as a guarantor of repeatability, recordability, and of the remembrance of the origins; on the other hand, these levels of meaning are also associated with collecting, categorizing, and regulating as the tropes of control (Derrida, 2008). At the same time, the title already outlines the fact that, "according to Derrida, the technique of archiving as a political and institutional instrument, on the one hand, and the terminological considerations of Freudian psychoanalysis, on the other hand, can be placed upon a common register. In Derrida's opinion, the interpretation of the act of archiving as repression can serve as the point of intersection of the explanations of archivology, inspired by cultural science and psychoanalysis. The inseminating demand of archiving acts as a desire in the mirror of the previously incalculable an/archiving event because the trauma that is imprinted into human consciousness has to break free to the surface. For Freud, the logic of

repetition as neurotic compulsion is inseparable from the destructive propensity of the death wish. One could argue that the ancestral principle of destruction generates the excruciating desire of the archive. «The archive always works, and a priori, against itself» because it always counts with the element of that which is infinite and impossible to delimit" (Miklósvölgyi, 2008).

Michel Foucault extends the concept of the archive in his work entitled *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (Foucault 2001). He describes the archive primarily as a system that is responsible for regulating the appearance and functioning of statements. In this view, the archive is not a mere static deposit of a fixed medium but one in which information continuously fluctuates and whose functioning is also influenced by the dominant discourses of power (see Hermann, 2010; Miklósvölgyi, 2008). According to this definition, the archive can be conceived of as an interface between different bundles of information, or as their metaphor, especially as the etymology of the word "metaphor" also carries in it the element of transfer and transportation (Miklósvölgyi, 2008). According to Zsolt Miklósvölgyi, "the media archives of the present do not so much store as transmit information. In the age of digital culture, the archive has to be thought of entropically, as part of an impenetrable, open and process-centred network, in which we have to permit the maximum level of chaos. By liberating the bureaucratic archaism of the previous concept of the archive, we can make possible the free proliferation of various open-network architectures. Thus, it becomes questionable if we should call the depositing medium itself or the totality of the data contained in it the archive" (Miklósvölgyi, 2008).

Media archaeology studies, among other things, the new kinds of relationships and phenomena that are formed during the virtualization of real containing media (Miklósvölgyi, 2008). This is the direction from which the German media theoretician Wolfgang Ernst approaches the subject in his study about the cybernetics of archives (Wolfgang, 2008), *Das Rumoren der Archive* ("Archive Rumblings"), rethinking it from the perspective of technical innovations, digital technologies, and the habits of media consumption. His conclusion is that "in the 21st century, media archaeology (...) goes beyond the classic systems of archives and archiving. Its advantage can be sought in the specific character of the conveying medium: in the possibility of digital encoding and its continuity. The function fulfilled by the media archives of the present does not exhaust itself in mere transmission. This differentiation is similar to the one observed in the case of the archive and cultural memory, or the archives and their media. One of the most important contributions of the digital world consists in incompleteness or, if you wish, in unsystemacity" (Hermann, 2010).

The American art and media theoretician W. J. T. Mitchell also emphasizes this disorganization associated with the surge in intensity of the flow of information. According to him, "previously, the main objective and task of the archive consisted

in preservation and storage, which presupposed the writability of history, while today our task is precisely the deconstruction of these, and its essence consists in the adaptation of chaos" (Hermann, 2010).

At the same time, the most important characteristic of the World Wide Web archive as a form of technology and as a system of technological knowledge that operates its functioning consists in the fact that the electronic archive depends upon electricity and the Internet. In the case of a power outage, the entire system becomes paralysed. Its users are left only with the ideas, but they cannot completely access the techniques for their implementation. As opposed to the other kinds of archives, the information stored on the Internet does not have any materiality; the information is encoded not in material form but in bytes. Immateriality also contains the "unbearable lightness" of annihilation (or, if you wish, forgetting). As easy and as fast as websites and Internet interfaces offering the possibility of storage, organization, and display of vast amounts of information according to different criteria are being born, as quickly do they also disappear. And yet another important consideration: because the information is not systematically organized, search results are mostly contingent and accidental.

2.3. The Internet as a Centreless System

In his monograph on the nature of the World Wide Web, László Ropolyi analyses the Internet as technology according to its material, as communication according to its dynamic, as culture according to its form, and as an organism according to its objectives (Ropolyi, 2003). Deleuze uses the term "assemblage" for those particular multiplicities and conglomerates formed on the basis of the fitting together of different parts, which are always centreless, open in all directions and whose every element relates to all the others. These are not systems based on hierarchy and regulatory forms of memory lacking central control. They lack any central automatism and are only determined by the flow of different states. Additionally, they also lack a beginning and an end, and their countless links make it possible for the multiplicity to be governed not by a predetermined centre but to move in always new directions, to change and increase its dimensions (Deleuze and Guattari, 2002).

In his book about current society and its functioning, DeLanda uses the concept of network and that of assemblage as more or less interchangeable synonyms (DeLanda, 2006). Following his ideas, I hold that this concept can also be used to describe the nature of the Internet. This is even more so the case since the main thesis of László Ropolyi's monograph is that the sole and privileged version of knowledge characteristic of modernity comes to a crisis in the age of the Internet, and our interlinked social existence ("web-being") facilitates the appearance of a previously unimaginable multiplicity

of different versions of knowledge and alternative spheres of reality. During their postmodern individualization, people begin to relate personally also to scientific and technical knowledge (Ropolyi, 2006).

If patrimonialization, the invention of tradition, and folklorism presuppose a central controlling organ and central regulation, in the case of the Internet we do not have any of these. At the same time, since the folk tradition uploaded to the Internet can be continually updated, just as any other content (see Nyíri, 1994b: 19), the knowledge that is brought to a fixed form within theatrical performances, tourism, or the archives (and this observation is also true for invented tradition and heritage) comes to life again on the Internet and, in a certain sense, reclaims its variability.

2.4. The Internet and the *longue durée*

Sticking to the categorization of duration introduced by Braudel (see Braudel, 1972: 988–1012), one can most frequently encounter short duration, a temporality of the events that can be experienced. In order to better understand this, we have to take a step back. The author has created the concept of the short duration as the conceptual opposite of the *longue durée* that he considers more important from the perspective of the historiographer's work. In his interpretation, the long duration does not refer to the length of the period; rather, it denotes the rhythm of the development. It expresses something about the relationship between the surrounding natural landscape and man, which has only changed very slightly during the centuries. As opposed to this, short duration represents the temporality of the "tumultuous surface," the temporality of events, defined by speed, variability, and pulsation. Short duration refers to the individuals and their experiences and does not merely mean a short (time)span but also the dispersion of time (history/tradition), in which chance also plays a major role. Thus, when I affirm that the Internet can be studied from the perspective of short duration, I do not only refer to the fact that the majority of the contents uploaded to the Internet reflects the experiences and the momentary mood of the individual, but I also mean that these contents move at a very fast and random pace: they appear, gain huge popularity in short time, and become obsolete and/or are deleted just as fast. At the same time, since all this is played out on levels very close to the surface, in most cases, it also hides from us that which is inherited from the past unnoticed and unchanged and principally characterizes our culture, i.e. that which plays itself out on the deeper (structural) level.

3. Folk Traditions on the Internet. Contents, Attitudes, and Functions

The present popularity of the concept of "heritage" has been studied on the basis of the results of a survey conducted on the Google search engine on 11th February 2004. According to this survey, "heritage" appears on 277 000 websites. Within this amount, the highest rate belongs to "national heritage" (approximately 34%), while "cultural heritage" appears on nearly 68 000 websites. This finding proves that Hungarian language has adopted this concept surprisingly fast (Sonkoly & Erdősi, 2004: 7.).

On 26 December 2015, I conducted a similar survey about the popularity of the concepts of "tradition" and "folk culture" (as well as several concepts related to these, such as "folk customs," "folk music," "folk dance," "folk dance," "folk poetry," "folklore," "(folk) belief," "folk costume," "folk art," and "folk architecture") with the search engines Google and Bing. The search results are presented in the table below:

Table 1.

Concept	Google	Bing
Tradition	approximately 797 000 results (in 0.38 seconds)	309 000 results
Folk tradition	approximately 127 000 results (in 0.72 seconds)	20 000 results
Folk culture	approximately 74 100 results (in 0.51 seconds)	10 300 results
Folk customs	approximately l 309 000 results (in 0.36 seconds)	71 200 results
Folk music	approximately 699 000 results (in 0.47 seconds)	522 000 results
Folk dance	approximately 464 000 results (in 0.50 seconds)	159 000 results
Folk poetry	approximately 95 200 results (in 0.39 seconds)	33 000 results
Folklore	approximately 601 000 results (in 0.50 seconds)	230 000 results
(Folk) belief	approximately 123 000 results (in 0.34 seconds)	18 200 results
Folk costume	approximately 206 000 results (in 0.41 seconds)	30 700 results
Folk art	approximately 393 000 results (in 0.43 seconds)	85 300 results
Folk architecture	approximately 57 200 results (in 0.41 seconds)	12 500 results

The analysis of the data in the table indicates that the correlation between the two rows of data is relatively high (0.868), i.e. the same trends are manifesting themselves in both cases. In both cases, the incidence of "tradition"[21] and "folklore" is high compared to the other search terms. Furthermore, the results also hint at the fact that folk culture is primarily associated with folk music, viz. this is how it appears on the Internet.

However, if we search for the same terms on the video-sharing website YouTube, we can notice important differences. On this site, "folklore" occupies the top spot

21 It is surprising, however, that in the case of "folk tradition" the number of incidences is relatively low (approximately 16% in the case of Google and almost 6.5% in the case of Bing).

with 430 000 results,[22] followed by "folk dance" (approximately 70 700 results), "folk music" (approximately 43 600 results), and "tradition" on the fourth spot, with approximately 10 900 results. As for the other terms, the search engine had significantly less results.[23] On the Hungarian site *Startlap*, which – according to its advertisement – catalogues the links of around 9 000 lap.hu websites related to different themes, the following categories can be found: "folk architecture," "folk remedy," "folk game," "folk tale," "folk art," "folk dance," "folk costume," and, of course, "ethnography". Themes closely related to folk culture can also be found on sites such as *skanzen.lap.hu*, *tajhaz.lap.hu*, and *muzeum.lap.hu*. On *Startlap*, "cultural heritage" only appears as a subpage. Evidently, these websites do not contain all the links related to themes associated with different areas of folk culture, but they do offer us an insight into the themes and contents related to folk culture, which can be found on the Internet.

Why is folk culture (tradition) also fashionable in the Internet age and within this new medium? Is this not a contradiction? In my opinion, it is not, since the accelerating pace of change is also associated with processes of slowing down as a compensation, as globalization is compensated by processes of regionalization and individualization. The culture of innovation is associated with the culture of conservation (Marquard, 2001: 11).

Local registers have gone through a spectacular increase in importance during the 20th century (Keszeg, 2009: 124).[24] Because the instruments for the regulation of everyday life, of self-expression, and of memory (viz. commemoration) change, not only from one social group and cultural level to another but also from one epoch to the next, the development of technology has brought about significant changes also in this field since the last decade of the 20th century. The websites of local administrative units, settlements, regional associations, and societies for the cultivation of traditions, thematic blogs, and similar Internet pages now also play a major role in maintaining the awareness of local history and folk tradition and in the communication and archiving of the knowledge associated with these (not to mention the various regional and national institutions dedicated to the

22 However, the search term "*magyar folklór*" ["Hungarian folklore") has only approximately 3 420 results.

23 "Folk culture" (approximately 3 510 results), "folk art" (approximately 2 870 results), "folk customs" (approximately 2 490 results), "folk costume" (approximately 2 180 results), "folk architecture" (approximately 487 results), "folk tradition" (approximately 415 results), "folk poetry" (approximately 273 results). On the Hungarian video-sharing site *Videa*, the results are as follows: "folklore" (657), "tradition" (382), "folk dance" (351), "folk music" (178), "folk costume" (37), "folk culture" (24), "folk art" (19), "folk tradition" (17), and "folk customs" (8). As for "(folk) belief," the site did not have any relevant results and were no results at all for "folk poetry" and "folk architecture".

24 These registers function as institutions of the public sphere for narratives and narrations, and they offer the possibility of social contact, the exchange of opinions, and the storage and distributin of narratives (Keszeg, 2009: 124).

conservation and/or research of traditions). At the same time, as the result of technological development, a new generation has risen up, which does not gather its information (also) about folk traditions primarily from their parents and grandparents, nor from manuals, but from the Internet.

To whom does the folk tradition uploaded to the Internet address itself? Relying on the ideas of Vilmos Keszeg (see Keszeg, 2011: 40), I would argue that it addresses those about whom it speaks, its creator and user, the one who uploaded it to the Internet and searches for it, reads it, listens to it, watches it, and downloads it with a web browser. It is the property of a (virtual) community and an epoch. And simultaneously it is nobody's.

What kind of tradition appears on the World Wide Web and in what form? Those contents associated with traditional culture which appear on the Internet and become largely available come from four main directions. These are: scientific research, the public sphere, the entrepreneurial sphere, and the Internet users. Besides the homepages of ethnographic museums and other institutions dedicated to the research and conservation of folk traditions, such as local governments, regional associations, and touristic websites, various blogs, forums, news portals, Internet encyclopaedias, and file-sharing web pages, as well as social media websites and homepages dedicated to presenting the products of folk artists also publish contents of this kind.

In the past decade, I have searched for subjects related to folk culture with a daily frequency. I have visited several websites regularly and others occasionally or even accidentally. This research is primarily based on the results of these experiences. However, while writing this paper, I also researched more conscientiously some Hungarian and Transylvanian Hungarian webpages.

From the category of museums, I have researched the websites of those which also have an ethnographic collection: the homepage of the Ehtnographic Museum (*Néprajzi Múzeum*) (http://www.neprajz.hu), the Open-Air Ethnographic Museum (*Szabadtéri Néprajzi Múzeum*) in Szentendre (http://www.skanzen.hu), and the Village Museum in Göcsej (*Göcseji Falumúzeum*) (http://gocsejiskanzen.hu), from Hungary, and of the Szekler National Museum (*Székely Nemzeti Múzeum*) from Sfântu Gheorghe (Sepsiszentgyörgy) (http://www.sznm.ro), the Szekler Museum of Ciuc (Csík) (*Csíki Székely Múzeum*) (http://www.csikimuzeum.ro), the Haáz Rezső Museum in Odorheiu Secuiesc (Székelyudvarhely) (http://www.hrmuzeum.ro), the Tarisznyás Márton Museum in Gheorgheni (Gyergyószentmiklós) (http://www.tmmuzeum.ro), and the Molnár István Museum in Cristuru Secuiesc (Székelykeresztúr) (http://www.mimuzeum.ro), from Transylvania. As for the institutions and civil society organizations dedicated to the research and preservation of folk culture, I have studied the homepages of the House of Traditions (*Hagyományok Háza*) (http://www.hagyomanyokhaza.hu), the Hungarikum Committee (*Hungarikum Bizottság*)

(http://www.hungarikum.hu), Forster Gyula National Centre for Cultural Heritage Management (*Forster Gyula Nemzeti Örökségvédelmi és Vagyongazdálkodási Központ*) (http://www.vilagorokseg.hu), from Hungary, Kriza János Ethnographic Society (*Kriza János Néprajzi Társaság*) (http://www.kjnt.ro), the Society of Hungarian Folk Dance from Romania (*Romániai Magyar Néptánc Egyesület*) (http://www.neptanc.ro), and the Tradition Keeping Centre of Harghita County (Hargita Megyei Hagyományőrzési Forrásközpont) (http://www.hagyomany.ro), from Transylvania.

From the category of regional associations, I have studied the website of the Regional Association of Nyárádmente (Nyárádmente Kistérségi Társulás) (http://www.nyarad.ro, http://www.nyaradmente.ro) and of the local governments, the web portals of the villages from Scaunul Mureşului (Marosszék), inhabited mostly by Hungarians. As for the touristic sites, I have looked at the touristic and cultural information homepage of Scaunul Mureşului (Marosszék) (http://www.marosszek.ro), at the Mezőség website (http://mezoseg.eloerdely.ro), and the Szilágyság website (http://szilagysag.eloerdely.ro), both run by the Living Transylvania Association (http://mezoseg.eloerdely.ro), as well as the websites *Erdélyi Turizmus* (http://www.erdelyiturizmus.hu/) and *Székelyföldi Szálláskereső* (https://www.szekelyszallas.hu).

Blogs dedicated to certain thematic areas of folk culture are rare. These are primarily run by certain institutions[25] or young ethnographers working within the discipline, viz. former students of ethnography.[26] Several other blogs and forums – occasionally or regularly – also publish entries related to folk culture,[27] as do some of the news portals such as *szekelyhon.ro*.

Besides the video-sharing websites YouTube and Videa, I have studied Wikipedia and the *Adatbank* ("Database") of the web portal *Transindex*, the databases found on the homepage of the Kriza János Ethnographic Society (*Kriza János Néprajzi Társaság*) (database of folk ballads, the catalogue of ethnographic museums, and the photo archive), and a website which defines itself as the "first independent ethnographic portal of Hungarians," "primarily concerned with the ethnography of the people living in the Carpathian Basin" (http://karpatmedence.net).

So-called "folk artists," who run small enterprises based on traditional crafts, also popularize their products through the Internet and in several cases present the historical background or regional characteristics of the finished products. E.g. Ferenc Asztalos, a musical instrument maker, runs the website http://nepihangszerek.hu. The "Szekler products" (*Székely termékek*) web portal (http://

25 E.g. the blog of the *King* St. Stephen Museum at Székesfehérvár (https://szikmblog.wordpress.com/tag/neprajzi-gyujtemeny).

26 E.g. the anthropological blog "Green Sunglasses" (*Zöld napszemüveg. Antropológiai blog*) (http://znsz.blog.hu).

27 E.g. "Transylvanian Hungarians Worldwide" (*Erdélyi magyarok a világban*) (http://www.erdelyimagyarok.com).

szekelytermekek.ro) also presents numerous products which use motifs from folk culture. Several folk costume makers, Szekler portal carvers, folk potters, etc. run their own homepages, and some homepages of boarding and guest houses also publish short descriptions about the local traditions.[28]

The Internet pages of museums, research centres, and scientific societies are aimed at presenting scientific discourses and their research results within a new medium and at increasing the popularity of the institution. Besides these, digital databases and digital libraries also contribute to the fast and theoretically unlimited propagation of scientific results. However, in these cases, the controlling mechanisms elaborated in the previous epoch are still in effect, and the only innovation is in the instrument of the presentation, the new medium. At the same time, the vast majority of the users also consists of people interested in the information published on these websites due to their profession or from a scholarly perspective.

The case is different, however, with the other websites. The discourse about folk traditions fulfils a completely different function on the homepages of the various settlements, administrative units, and small regions. They answer the question of "Who are we?" not only by enumerating the local characteristics but also by employing a vast array of photographs, short films, and maps, which is ultimately also a method of self-definition and contributes to the creation of identity. Besides their mentioning of the first written records, folk traditions are also presented in a prominent manner due to the importance of demonstrating the people's "autochthony" and that of the symbolic appropriation of the past (the more distant, the better).

In the case of these homepages, it only rarely happens that a specific local custom is presented in a more detailed manner. In most cases, we can encounter descriptions in the form of bullet-point lists, or, if you wish, *lists of traditions*. Besides this, a merely imagistic representation of the folk traditions is also frequent. These pictures published on the Internet mostly show examples of traditional folk architecture, native costumes, festive events organized for the cultivation of tradition, and artisan products. In many cases, these traditions are presented under the heading of "local monuments" or "sights," as elements of culture that can play a significant role in increasing the attractiveness of the region for tourists. At the same time, it is also important to note that hyperlinks are completely lacking on these websites.

The same technique and perspective on tradition can be observed in the case of the websites that popularize touristic destinations. In this case also, folk traditions appear as "sights" and exotic elements, which strongly limits the thematic choice (or content) and the language use. These homepages limit themselves to the presentation of traditional foods, built heritage, dramatic representations of

28 See http://madarasvendeghaz.hu.

folk customs in the public space, folk festivals, local ethnographical collections (museums), and some local legends which have become known through the work of Balázs Orbán, Elek Benedek, and other authors. The main factor that determines the development of the concept of tradition consists here in economic interests. In this context, the importance is placed not upon precise, detailed, and professional description but primarily on a tone of voice and view that is reminiscent of the great 19th-century authors (e.g. Balázs Orbán) or relies on the works of the local specialists, dedicated to the conservation of traditions, characterized by the above-mentioned claims of autochthony. Although in most cases the curator of the traditions that are popularized online (the publisher of the content and the administrator of the homepage) is not someone equipped with the necessary professional knowledge (an ethnographic researcher), the publishing of the content is controlled from above. In the case of the rural settlements, townships, and small regions, the deciding factor is the local élite, and in the case of touristic homepages the marketing professional of the business decides which are the traditions that should be uploaded to the Internet and in what presentation, with a view to specific goals and user types.

However, this type of regulation is lacking in the case of blogs, Internet forums, and file-sharing websites. Since in these cases "the provider only furnishes the context" (see Szűts, 2013: 60), the chances are the same for the scholar and the mere copyist (Szűts, 2013: 55). The user skips over the traditional forms of control, and becomes simultaneously an author and a publisher from a reader (Szűts, 2013: 147). In this case, the authors of the contents do not publish these for any specific target group but for their own amusement and the Internet users also view these contents as a leisure activity. The represented contents mostly offer a "view from below" of the contemporary public discourse on folk traditions. On the one hand, these contents present the events in which the uploader has participated, considered by him or her to be traditional, while, on the other hand, they reflect the way in which the uploader has experienced them. At the same time, the preponderance of visual representations (films, photographs) over verbal descriptions is also characteristic of these websites.

Zoltán Szűts classifies Internet users into three categories on the basis of their behaviour. These are: 1. *wiki citizens*, whose objective is the creation of works; 2. *vandals*, who aim at defacing the contents uploaded by others and at provoking the users; 3. *hackers and spammers*, who try to popularize various products (see Szűts, 2013: 103). Another categorization is that of György Csepeli and Gergő Prazsák, who speak about *eternalists* (people who authenticate information), *network entrepreneurs* (who function as hubs for receiving and sending information), and *curators* (who mediate between the first two groups) (Csepeli & Prazsák, 2010: 38). On the basis of the employment of the Internet for social relation purposes, we can speak of *contactocrats*, *correspondents*, *chatters*,

and *contact proletarians* (Csepeli & Prazsák, 2010: 54). Finally, according to their activity on the Internet, the authors distinguish *recluses*, *information seekers*, *learners*, *receptors*, and *extensive users* (Csepeli & Prazsák, 2010: 79–81). The authors and users associated with the folk traditions accessible through the Internet also stem from these categories.

4. Further Considerations

The patrimonialization of folk traditions implies the necessity of the legal regulation of conservation and use. However, these rules prove themselves too weak when applied to the representations appearing within the new media. In this medium, too many people motivated by many different intentions undertake to present folk traditions, and the use of this information can also be all too varied. "The medium [...] often organizes itself according to radically different values, presenting the totality of human culture in infinitely many personal, often mutually contradictory, variations" (see Szűts, 2013: 142). Due to this reason, the poor regulation of the content that appears on the Internet (in our case, folk tradition) contains not only possibilities but also many paths that lead astray, which is also the cause of the *weightlessness* of the digitally recorded tradition (see Szűts, 2013: 143).[29]

In the case of the presentation of the folk traditions of specific settlements or regions, it is difficult to decide if it is a still living tradition or one that exists only in memory, or even only within the archives and book volumes. In many cases, it is even questionable whether we are dealing with a local tradition of the specific settlement or region, or with a mere adaptation, an "imported article," or, ultimately, an invented tradition, described by the author just because "it was handy" due to his or her lack of awareness about other traditions of the region or because his or her lack of other source materials. Besides this, we can often encounter cases in which the representations of tradition found on the Internet are not related to any place, epoch, or social group.

The media played an important role in the formation and popularization of the *representative tradition* in the past too. New media has only augmented this role and attracted new generations and social groups to its production and consumption.

Digitalized folk tradition (folk tradition appearing in digital media) is part of the cultural and not of the collective memory; it is not an organic tradition, and thus it possesses only a commemorative function and lacks the normative one. Its sole role is to aid the formation and preservation of local identity or to function as

29 This weightlessness is also due to the fact that these traditions lack a material body because of their digital existence (Szűts 2013: 153).

a pastime, but it does not regulate everyday life anymore. Through digitalization, folk traditions are not only removed from their primary context, but they can also get far removed from their primary users.

The relocation of tradition in this new medium implies the appearance of new meanings and functions. For instance, after it is uploaded to the World Wide Web, the traditional folk dance of Voivodeni (Vajdaszentivány) can be shown to and learned by almost anyone. Thus, folk tradition that has been formed in its primary context in order to resolve certain specific situations for the community becomes a form of entertainment in its new context, and its use (i.e. browsing) becomes a leisure activity. The role played by tradition as a norm that guarantees the functioning of everyday life (viz. labour) is overshadowed by its festive role and its function as an instrument for filling out our free time and as a tool of entertainment.

At the same time, due to the nature of the Internet, the subjective representations and interpretation (also) becomes part of the cultural memory. The digitalization of traditions can be viewed as a new form of the externalization of memory (Assmann), and the single Internet pages as virtual places of memory (Nora) and virtual sites of heritage formation. If in the 1960s it was a problem for the local teacher to find out how the native costume of Voivodeni (Vajdaszentivány) looked like, answering this question has now become very simple. The native costume of Voivodeni (Vajdaszentivány) is the one in which the local folk dance ensemble dresses, the one that can also be seen on many pictures on the Internet, and the one that many other folk dance ensembles from Mureş (Maros) County who have learned the folk dances of Voivodeni (Vajdaszentivány) have also commissioned for themselves on the basis of these visual representations found on the Internet. Thus, digital memory substitutes collective memory in the transmission of traditions. The one who keeps alive and transmits tradition is no more the individual, viz. the community, but a network, the machine (cf. Szűts, 2013: 50).

The relocation of folk tradition into this new medium does not only imply the formation of new meanings but also a change in the routines of use. The keywords of this new type of use are: *searching*, *saving*, *saving as* (i.e. in a different file format), *downloading*, *forwarding*, *liking*, *sharing*, and sometimes *deleting*. Thus, browsing on the Internet can be interpreted, on the one hand, as a journey[30] or a detective investigation (see Szűts, 2013: 69), while, on the other hand, as a commemorative ritual. The Internet page (homepage) as public space creates an alternative publicity, memorial place, and formation of memory. However, it is

30 Balázs Orbán has visited in person the Székely settlements in order to get to know the Székely Land, and the general outline of his presentation also follows his actual routes. The Internet user does the same thing with the aid of the hyperlinks, and deciding that he also wants to experience the locations, narratives, and traditions of which he has learned about thus in the offline world, makes this process of discovery on the basis of ready-made patterns (routes and sites). In this case, discovery and experience takes place in the online rather than in the offline world.

also true that in a digital context the joy of discovery is realized without the absorption involved in reading (Szűts, 2013: 69). Because of the integration of the computer into everyday life situations, the user becomes increasingly impatient and consumes the contents at an increasingly faster pace (Szűts, 2013: 75, 143).

The representation of folk tradition in this medium becomes shallow and confused. Real values appear in the same context as the kitsch, the junk, and the fake. Thus, the representations of folk culture transmitted through the Internet suffer from a deficit of meaning. The concepts of tradition and of the traditional lose their limits and are (or can be) applied to almost anything. All this is, for the most part, the result of the activity of current public figures and of the misunderstood form of tradition tourism (ethno-business).

The representation of folk traditions on the World Wide Web is a form of the conservation and patrimonialization of tradition. Consequently, the digitalization of folk traditions and their representation on the Internet not only has an important *informative* (communicative) and *depositive* (conservation) but also a very significant *performative* function. Digitalization and sharing itself represents an act of patrimonialization.

Similarly to the archives, the Internet also offers a site for the domestication of the past and folk tradition. However, besides these, it is also a place for their mercantilization. The context for the use, conservation, and patrimonialization of tradition within the new media consists in leisure activities and the forms of tourism characteristic for the heritage industry. However, this type of conservation of tradition comes simultaneously from many directions and also goes on in many directions. Both those who digitalize folk culture (the Internet users who transpose it into a multimedia context) and its users lack any elaborate strategies for the use of digitalized tradition. And both the representation and the search has an accidental character. The specialists of the digitalization and the representation of tradition on the World Wide Web are being formed only now. For the time being, the Internet users who digitalize folk culture exploit only partially the functions put at their disposal by the World Wide Web, such as the use of links and the various possibilities for involving their readers into the process of knowledge production (see Szűts 2013: 13). Only a small portion of those who browse on the Internet use it for searching scientific information about folk traditions, the vast majority searching for these guided by different intentions than this.

Finally, two more questions should be asked. On the one hand, who is worthy of digitalizing folk traditions and externalizing them into the online medium? On the other hand, who vouches for the authenticity of the traditions? In the case of books and archives, the ethnographic researcher is the one who, due to his or her status, knowledge, and presence (think of participatory observation), guarantees that everything that can be read in the volume or on the card of the archive is an authentic representation of peasant life. However, the authenticity of the folk

traditions represented on the Internet is rarely guaranteed in a similar way by experts. Since the identity of the authors is mostly questionable, the "reader," i.e. the user, is left unsure about the knowledge value of the contribution. Of course, "intruders" also have appeared in the case of the traditions that are "enclosed in books" (see Vajda, 2007: 9–32). They have offered naive or even pseudo-scientific explanations regarding folk traditions, but the number of these "intruders" has been relatively low, and their works have been published by publishing houses and with a typographical appearance that immediately show that these are not scholarly works. By contrast, in the democratic medium of the Internet there are no, or very few, clues for the reader for distinguishing relevant and irrelevant information, not to speak of the increase of irrelevant information.

5. Conclusions

The conservation of tradition and modern technology are not mutually exclusive. In a certain sense, online services based on technological development can even give a new impetus to the cultivation of tradition. There are several modes in which tradition is used on the Internet, associated with different user habits, and the represented traditions can also have different functions. Programmes dedicated to the preservation of traditions or presenting such events, which are transmitted by Internet or uploaded, can be categorized as the products of folklorism, similarly to websites presenting/advertising Hungarian folksy costumes, products prepared from medicinal plants, dishes, furniture or even residential houses, and other products of folk artists, considered traditional (and sometimes rustic). Images, descriptions, and audio-visual material presented on the homepages of museums can be interpreted as manifestations of scientific folklorism. The heritage industry, patrimonialization and the discourse about heritage also strongly use the possibilities of the Internet. During the process of the patrimonialization of tradition, its representation on the Internet, through a homepage, is currently almost indispensable. The Old Village of Hollókő and its surroundings, inscribed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1987, is represented not only on the homepage of the World Heritage of Hungary (*Világörökség Magyarországon*),[31] but it also has its own webpage[32] where inquirers can obtain information on the history of the settlement, local sights, gastronomy, tourist programmes, hiking options, and lodgings. However, the most illustrative Hungarian example is the funnel cake (*kürtőskalács*), widely considered a Szekler–Hungarian product, which was declared *an outstanding national value* ("kiemelkedő nemzeti érték") and has a short description on the

31 http://www.vilagorokseg.hu
32 http://www.holloko.hu

homepage of the Collection of Hungarian Values – Hungaricums (*Magyar Értéktár – Hungarikumok Gyűjteménye*).[33] Additionally, the funnel cake also has its own homepage, which presents its history in several languages (Romanian, English, and German), its preparation, and other information and promotional material which can also be downloaded.[34]

As it is in the case of its noting down (scriptural recording), the function of tradition also changes with its representation on the Internet. The (folk) tradition which can be found on the Internet: (1) produces representations; (2) provides a model for others both regarding the content and the mode of representation, i.e. it has a normative function; (3) produces identity and the past; (4) entertains.

The representation on the Internet – due to its archival character – offers the possibility of preservation and archiving, it has a depository function, and, which is even more important, allows an almost infinite number of shares (e.g. forwarding, linking) and active participation. Simultaneously, it also has presentative and performative functions.

However, the tradition that is represented on the Internet is much more fragile than that which is deposited in books and archives or which is locally preserved (heritage). Its retrieval is accidental and its storage temporary; it does not leave any trace behind if the website on which it was represented is cancelled.

After being uploaded to the Internet, folk tradition is capable of renewing itself even in the context of the new media. It is also possible to use the folk traditions represented on the Internet in a way in which the online information becomes the starting point and the source for the renewal of tradition.

The rapid changes in the medial context of social communication did not involve the decline in contents related to traditional culture. Traditional content has promptly found its way into the new media. At the same time, a major part of users relates to the new media on the basis of old patterns. In other words, old habits exert a violent influence on new technological instruments. Thus, medium changes have brought along developments on the level of representation and the routines related to it (e.g. copying, sharing, liking, commenting, etc.). On the level of habits, narrative models, and connective structures, the use of new media has only resulted in superficial changes.

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33 http://www.hungarikum.hu/ertek/721a3888f2de045f07f6a0fe87315c8714623841

34 http://www.kurtos.eu

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RESEARCH – CASE STUDIES

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Media and Information Literacy Policies in Hungary[1]

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„*When we talk about freedom of expression, media and information, we must realize that media and information literacy is a key competence in a rapidly evolving communicative society. Media and information literate citizens are a prerequisite to the vigour of inclusive knowledge societies."*
(Carlsson 2013: 8)

Abstract. This report is produced as part of the ANR Translit and COST IS0906 Transforming Audiences, Transforming Societies project hosted by the University of Sorbonne Nouvelle, Paris. The project examines media and information literacy policies and education in 29 European countries following preset dimensions. The country report about Hungary offers a short historical background of media education, looks at the legal framework of media literacy education, and presents data on the content and form of media education, on funding, and on evaluation mechanisms. It also discusses the main concepts and values guiding MIL[2] policies in Hungary and offers some recommendations for the improvement of the field.

Keywords: media literacy, policies, Europe, Hungary

1 This country report about Hungary is a shortened and revised version of the one prepared for an ANR Translit project about media and information literacy policies in 29 European countries (http://ppemi.ens-cachan.fr/doku.php).

2 There is not one universally accepted definition of Media and Information Literacy (MIL). For a collection of definitions, see Grizzle and Calvo (2013).

Historical Background

Media education has always been influenced by political, economic, and cultural conditions. Hungary is a post-socialist country – before the change of the regime in 1989–1990, media education was influenced by the socialist political and economic conditions and it focused exclusively on high culture.

Six periods of the Hungarian media education can be identified. (Five periods were identified by Imre Szíjártó (Szíjártó, 2001) and the last period was added by the authors of this report.) In the following, we will summarize Imre Szíjártó's description of the history of Hungarian media education.

We may thus divide Hungarian film, and later motion picture and media education, into six periods. The first one started in 1957 with the foundation of the first film clubs, and lasted until 1965, when the Central Curriculum decreed film to be part of required education in high schools. The second period is defined by the Curriculum of 1965, lasting until 1978, when the new Central Curriculum was issued. From 1965 till 1978, motion picture education appeared under the name of "film aesthetics" and was taught within the frame of Hungarian language and literature. Basically, media education was focused on art movies as part of high culture. No one prepared the teachers for this field of education. Soon it became clear that the education system was not prepared for that task. From the majority of schools, film aesthetics education disappeared or became formal (like offering two screenings per year). The teachers were overburdened and were not sufficiently trained.

The third period lasted from 1978 to 1980: during this time, the curriculum began to lose its legitimacy, causing film education to come to a complete halt. The fourth period lasted from the 80s until 1995, characterized by the use of alternative, local devices and experiments working parallel with the decentralization of education. During the 80s, media education became a victim of the legitimacy crisis of the socialist system: certain objectives were included in the curriculum and in the teaching materials, but in the majority of schools these provisions were not complied with. From the 80s on, film aesthetics education became optional.

The fifth period is characterized by the introduction of the national frame curriculum of public education, which gave *Motion picture and media* a place under the subject of "Arts", along with visual arts, music, and drama/dance. The public education law modified in 1996 expanded the space of those involved with schools (Szíjártó, 2002).

In 1996, after 10 years of preparation, the 'Moving Image Programme' was accepted to aid the implementation of the new subject, titled 'Culture of the Moving Image and Media Education', into the new National Curriculum. The aim of creative media pedagogy was to improve visual-language reading and

writing skills as a vehicle for understanding the media and the world of images surrounding us. Media education had already had a long history within the aesthetic and semiotic tradition and was now combined with aspects of sociology and civic education. Teacher training started in 1994 (Szíjártó, 2002).

In the 4th and 5th periods of media education in Hungary, media literacy and digital literacy (as part of computer literacy or information science) were taught separately. The link between media education and art education was strong.

The 6th period started during the era of the third conservative legislation after the change of the regime which came into power in 2010. A new educational reform was launched and with it a new National Curriculum was passed in 2013. The new curriculum is centralized, not goal- but subject-oriented; the organization of the material is characterized by building from the qualities of each subject; the material applied to every school and every student excludes individuality and differentiation. Moving picture and media education, according to the new curriculum, aims at cultivating basic media knowledge and it explains the role of the media in society and offers the basics of media literacy. The National Curriculum considers it important that children learn about the value of audiovisual works, especially of the European and Hungarian cinema, that they should be able to consciously choose media content and critically consume advertising and other commercial content. It emphasizes the importance of data security, data consciousness, knowledge about how to avoid addiction, and other hazards.

Media education is also presented as a tool to address the contemporary ethical and moral crisis. In this period, in addition to media literacy, digital literacy became the focus of media education. Basics of computer literacy are taught within the framework of an independent subject called information science.

Links with the European Union

Hungary has been a member state of the European Union since 2004. On the level of documents, there is a great emphasis given to media and digital literacy in Hungary. This is partly due to the European Union's recommendations and expectations in these areas. "Hungary is very committed to media literacy projects in school education and in research, but there are not many informal media-literacy-related programmes or initiatives outside school. Hungary is very committed to co-operating with other countries and EU-programmes, but they prefer to participate rather than initiate media literacy projects." – claims the 2007 country report about media literacy in Hungary (European Comission, 2007).

With the *SULINET-program* (School-net Programme), Hungary participates in the European school-net programme. The key reason was: "Bridging the digital gap in society and establishing a framework for ICT-based education at all levels" (Sulinet).

There are also some projects on media literacy supported by the EU in Hungary. The projects IVEN and CIVICWEB are examples of that. Hungary is part of the Idea Video Exchange Network (IVEN). IVEN's Mission Statement is: "To sustain a culture of creative and unique stories produced by youth from around the world and build on our professional relationships through meeting and making personal connections."

A second example is the project CIVICWEB: with Young People, the Internet and Civic Participation from the Centre for the Study of Children, Youth and Media, Institute of Education (LKL), University of London (IoE). IVEN7 is still on. CIVICWEB (Children, Youth and Media Centre, UK) was a 3-year project that began in September 2006, funded by the European Union under Framework 6, Priority 7 – *Citizens and Governance in a Knowledge-Based Society*. This project focused "specifically on the range of youth-oriented civic and political sites now emerging on the web and the potential of other Internet-based civic activities for youth. In Hungary, a good climate has been developed for ML research and co-operation with ML Projects from other countries has been promoted. But there is a lack of ML initiated by Hungarian institutions themselves, ML projects for minorities and family enrolment" (European Comission, 2007).

Comments and Remarks

There is a colourful history of media education in Hungary involving many changes. The new National Curriculum was launched in 2013. It is hard to evaluate the efficiency of its operation during this short period. However, there are visible intentions to centralize, homogenize media education as well as the whole education system and content, which narrows down the possibilities and colourfulness in education. We find it somewhat problematic that media education focuses again on high culture media products, European and Hungarian cinema creations, and critical consumption of other media contents. It does not take into account the real tendencies of popular culture, which are in the focus of students' interests. There is also an open question related to textbooks, as the new reform wants to homogenize not only the curricula but the textbooks too. On the other hand, the intention to narrow the gap between media literacy and digital literacy can be a very positive change, just as the recommended changes in the method of teaching media education with its emphasis on discussions and debates.

Legal Policy Framework

In Hungary, there are two major areas regulated by the force of law that have an impact on media education. The first area is public education and the second one is the media system.

Among the legal documents regulating media education, the most important one is the *National Curriculum* (Nemzeti Alaptanterv). A new version was passed by the government in 2012 (110/2012 Government Decree) (Magyar Közlöny, 2011) and was published on 4 June 2012(/66). A related document specifying in detail the objectives outlined in the National Curriculum, the so-called *Frame Curriculum* (Kerettanterv) appeared as a ministerial decree 51/2012 of the Ministry of Human Resources. It came into force on the 1st of September 2013 in years 1, 5, and 9 of the public education system. The Ministry of Human Resources is responsible for the shaping of school education from nursery to university. Within the Ministry, there are a number of specialist departments, including the Ministry of State for Education.

The *National Curriculum* provides a general guideline of the purpose and function of education. It defines a number of educational goals and a number of key competences. Among the educational goals, we can find the explicitly stated goal of educating children to become media literate. Media awareness is the actual word used. The goal, according to the document, is to make pupils responsible participants of a global and mediated public sphere, who understand the language of the old and new media. Furthermore, the document claims that media literacy education develops an interpretive and critical attitude, it is activity-centred, and thus it prepares for a participatory culture of democracy and for a conscious and value-centred life. According to the National Curriculum, pupils should become familiar with the functioning of the media, the relationship between media and society, and they should become able to differentiate between real and virtual experience, public and intimate interaction, and the legal and ethical importance of these differences.

The same document also defines a number of key competences the educational system has to develop in the pupils, in line with the EU recommendation (2006/962/EK) on key competences needed for lifelong learning. These include the key competence: digital literacy, defined as: the confident, critical, and ethical use of the content available through information and communication technology (ICT) within social relations, work, communication, and free time. It includes the skills of identifying, retracing, evaluating, storing and producing, presenting and exchanging information, digital content production as well as sharing- and communication-based co-operation on the Internet.

Some of the other key competencies outlined in the National Curriculum also require in some of their elements skills related to media, computer, information, or digital literacy. These are: communication in the mother tongue; aesthetic-artistic consciousness and expressiveness; social and civic competencies; effective, independent learning. These links are explicitly stated in the Frame Curriculum.

The second major area having an impact on media education is the media system. The most important legal documents in this area are Act CIV of 2010 on the

Freedom of the Press and the Fundamental Rules of Media Content (consolidated version effective from 1 August 2013), of which Article 10 states that:

"All persons shall have the right to receive proper information on public affairs at local, national and European level, as well as on any event bearing relevance to the citizens of Hungary and the members of the Hungarian nation. The media system as a whole shall have the task to provide authentic, rapid and accurate information on these affairs and events."[3] The second, much longer law is: Act CLXXXV of 2010 on Media Services and Mass Media (consolidated version effective from 1 August 2013), of which a number of articles address the issue of media education. These are the following:

Article 5

It states that "The right to information and the right to be informed of those living within the territory of Hungary and of the members of the Hungarian nation and, in connection with this, the development and strengthening of publicity in the democratic society are fundamental constitutional interests." It also addresses the question of the protection of children and minors by assigning the task of overseeing a programme-rating system according to age to the Media Council of the National Media and Info-communication Authority.

Article 83

It describes the objectives of Public Media Services. It includes the objective to "(2) c. promote[s] acquisition and development of knowledge and skills needed for media literacy through its programmes and through other activities outside the scope of media services."

The National Council for Communication and Information technology is a counselling and advisory body to the Government which provides opinion on:

Article 121

This concerns the programme for building an information society and strategic decisions concerning the promotion of information culture and information society. Among the responsibilities of the Media Council of the National Media and Info-communication Authority, the law lists the responsibility to:

Article 132

"k) undertake a pioneering role in developing media literacy and media awareness in Hungary and, in this context, co-ordinate the activities of other state actors in the area of media literacy, assist the Government in drafting its upcoming interim report to the European Union on the subject matter;"

Article 138

The Institute for Media Studies of the Media Council is an independent entity of the Authority, assisting the operation of the Media Council and pursuing independent scientific activity. The Institute's tasks shall be as follows:

3 The English version is available at: http://www.hunmedialaw.org.

"Support the operation of the Media Council by way of performing research and analysis; conduct social science research connected to the media."

As we could see, the law assigns a number of tasks related to media literacy education to the media regulatory body and to the public media. The Ministry of National Development is responsible for the development of info-communication in Hungary. There is an independent specialist department of info-communication led by a Minister of State for Info-communication. They are also responsible for a third important document, which is: *The Digital Renewal Action Plan* (kormany.hu).

Links with the European Union

In the *National Curriculum*, there is a reference to key competences defined by the EU; so, we can presume that digital literacy appeared in the *Curriculum* following EU guidelines describing key competences. The *Digital Renewal Action Plan* also appears in the context of EU's digital plan as being part of the *Strategic Plan of Action for the Renewal of Digital Europe 2020*.

The 2010 law on the media was severely criticized by EU bodies for its presumed restriction of the freedom of media. As a result, a number of changes have been introduced into the law, what is still strongly criticized by Hungarian opposition for allowing for a biased public media and a one-sided, pro-government regulatory body.

Comments and Remarks

There are two ministries – the Ministry of Human Resources and, within it, the Ministry of State for Education and the Ministry of National Development and, within it, the Ministry of State for Info-communication – responsible for media education in Hungary. We could not find signs of formalized co-operation between the ministries relating to the question of media education. The main responsibility for media education is carried by the Ministry of Human Resources through its regulation of the formal education in Hungary. A much smaller responsibility for media education is assigned to the public broadcasting system and to the Media Council (the media regulatory body).

The importance of media awareness, media literacy, and digital literacy is emphasized in the above described legal documents; however, the terms and their differences are not very explicitly defined. There seems to be an overlap between media and digital literacy, however, digital literacy seems to include computer and information literacy, while media literacy sometimes designates something separate and sometimes includes digital literacy. The *Digital Renewal Action Plan* basically defines digital literacy as a technical skill, and emphasizes the importance of access and user skills.

Capacity Building: Teacher Training

Teacher training in media education started in the 1990s with the introduction of the new subject "Culture of the moving image and media education" in the National Curriculum. "The first initial teacher-training course was launched within the Aesthetics Department of a major Hungarian university (ELTE, Budapest) in 1994/95. It could serve as a model for the future [of] media pedagogy training. The number of hours of courses varied between 60 and 120. Most of the courses were offered by educational institutions, some of them linked to a university or a college or further training organization operating under a higher education institution" (Szíjártó, 1998).

"Training programmes at the large number of independent, largely autonomous institutions are run without any sort of regular central outcome assessment or other control mechanism. It is doubtful whether the entire range of institutions – which are incomparably distant from each other in terms of mission, infrastructure and human resources – will be capable of offering teacher training programmes meeting the same requirements." – writes Andrea Kárpáti (2009) about the situation before 2009.

"Film literacy is included in initial teacher training as well as in-service professional training. Moving Image Culture and Media Knowledge is offered at BA and MA levels, for which limited bursaries schemes are available. There are also shorter certificated postgraduate courses. Limited funds are made available to schools towards teachers' postgraduate study." – reported László Hartai (European Commision, 2012) about film literacy teacher trainings in 2012. By that year, the shorter teacher training courses had practically died out.

By 2013, the situation has changed significantly. Presently, there are four universities offering degrees in teaching media. Since 2013, the university education of teachers in Hungary is not carried out any more within the Bologna system of BA and MA structure but is done within a 4+1-year programme at the universities. Students can choose from 50 full-time and 10 part-time courses. The number of alternative courses is basically this high because these are double major university courses. Students can only take media education together with another major, which can be: Hungarian Literature and Grammar, History, Art, Music, PE, Foreign Language and Culture, Geography or Information Science.

The 100-credit media, film, and communication teacher training is based on an 18-credit basic training, where students are given an introduction to the theories of communication, media, film, and visual culture. The introductory training contains the various fields of communication, media, and film history, genres, and methods of analysis, among others. The course includes a practical module, which prepares students for various types of media content preparation.

Since 2013, all students studying to become teachers in primary high or secondary education need to take double majors.

Capacity Building: The Curriculum

The educational content of the formal school system (K12) is regulated by the force of law in the following official documents: National Curriculum, Frame Curriculum. Based on these documents, the schools need to create their own syllabi. Individual schools can only decide on their own discretion on the content of 10 percent of the total teaching time.

National Curriculum

The National Curriculum is the most general document which provides a general guideline of the purpose and function of education. It defines a number of key areas and educational goals as well as key competences the educational system has to develop. Among the 12 areas of development, it specifies media awareness; among the 9 key competencies, it names digital literacy.

Some of the other key competencies outlined also require in some of their elements skills related to media, computer, information, or digital literacy. These are: communication in the mother tongue; aesthetic-artistic consciousness and expressiveness; social and civic competencies; effective, independent learning.

Frame Curriculum

The general guidelines of the national curriculum are translated into more specific teaching objectives in a second document called frame curriculum, which also specifies the actual content of all subjects, the number of teaching hours assigned for each topic within the subjects, as well as potential links to contents of other subjects. In the case of media education, the links lead to: mother tongue education, history, philosophy, visual education, and information science.

Throughout the first 4-year period (primary low; junior school), media education takes place within the framework of the subject visual education, traditionally called drawing. According to the curriculum, media education in this period is centred on children's own experience of media, the difference between different media texts, and some attention is paid to safe and creative Internet use as well. Media education thus starts at an early age; however, the fact that it is not done in the framework of a separate subject weakens its effectiveness.

Information science, on the other hand, is a separate subject, it appears in the 4th year of primary low, as an optional subject (schools decide whether to offer it or not).

Topics within the subject include: computer use, interaction through computers, preparing documents, basic applications for drawing, music, animation, data processing, sources of information, basic algorithms, and models, tools of info-communication, searching for information, e-book use, information society, netiquette, and library use.

In the second 4-year period (primary high; middle school), the situation remains more or less the same with information science becoming a compulsory subject, while media education continues to be taught within the framework of visual education.

The now compulsory information science subject offers competencies related to computer use (word processing, e-mail, search engines, databases, tables, presentations, creation of multimedia material, Internet safety, library use, problem solving, algorithms, and programming.)

In academic secondary education (gymnasium), in the first two years (grades 9–10), media studies (called: culture of the moving image and media education; the Hungarian name of the subject is: *Mozgóképkultúra és médiaismeret*) becomes a separate subject which has the status: "compulsory optional", meaning that schools can choose whether to offer this subject or the subject: drama/dance. In the last two years (grades 11–12), schools can choose whether to offer media studies as a separate subject from the available study hours assigned to arts education in general (including music, drama/dance, visual culture, and media studies) or include media education in the general framework of Arts in a smaller number of hours or not to teach media studies at all.

The emphasis of the subject is on visual and film literacy and, to a lesser extent, on digital literacy. It is stated that the subject should encourage an independent and critical attitude of media consumption as well as creativity and active participation.

The content of the subject includes: understanding the language of the moving image, short media history, the public sphere, the social role of the media, specificities of web-based text, and Web 2.0.

Information science is a compulsory subject in the first two years (grades 9–10). Its main aim is to improve digital literacy. Content includes: use of information science tools, software use, problem-solving with information technology, info-communication, information society, and library use.

In professional secondary education, media studies (culture of the moving image and media knowledge) as a separate subject appears for one year, in year 10, as an optional choice from the Arts subject group.

Information science is compulsory for one year: in the first year (9th grade).

For vocational training, there is neither media studies nor information science as separate subjects. Media literacy is taught within mother-tongue education. The *Curriculum* for vocational schools emphasizes the pupils' existing familiarity

with visual and web-based images and Web 2.0 applications and suggests that texts in general might be better approached through this familiar medium.

Comments and Remarks

There is an ambiguity present in the above described system of media and information education. There are very detailed syllabi of media studies for each age-group which include all important aspects of media literacy, and the concept is introduced at a very early age. This suggests that a great importance is assigned to this area. However, the fact that media studies is either taught within the framework of another subject (visual education) or offered only as an optional course taught in maximum 1 hour per week weakens the importance of the area. It is entirely possible to go through the formal education system without any explicit media education. The situation of the area is even weaker in professional and vocational secondary education.

Visual education, the host subject, has its own, more traditional and also extensive syllabus; thus we can presume that teachers under a lot of time pressure may choose the easier way of neglecting the new and perhaps less familiar content for the sake of the older, more traditional, and more familiar content. The extensive scope of the subject "Culture of the Moving Image and Media Knowledge" paired with the low number of teaching hours (and coupled with big classes and a tradition of frontal style of teaching) probably makes it difficult to encourage students' active participation, action-based learning, creative participation, and own media material production. A more passive, concept- and information-based approach is a more probable scenario in most schools.

We have no exact up-to-date data on how many of the schools opt to offer media education as a separate subject or on what is actually happening within the classrooms. A 2009 research on media literacy showed that in about 2/3 of the examined schools media education was taught as a separate subject while in the rest of the schools it was integrated within other subjects. The latter was mostly the case in primary schools where media education was taught in approximately half an hour per week, while in secondary schools media education was mostly taught as a separate subject in one hour per week on average. The same research also showed that out of the 111 teachers in the sample 37 had university degree in media education and a further 34, though had other degrees, took a further education course (120 hours) in media education. The observation of teaching showed that teachers mostly dealt with the codes of the moving image, with the history of the press, and with understanding media texts in their classes. The least attention was paid to conscious and critical media use (Herczog, Racsko, 2013).

Information science has a stronger position as it has been a compulsory subject for a couple of years both in primary and secondary education, with the important

exception of vocational training. It has a strong technical focus not designed to support critical media reception, while creative media production is supported to a limited extent.

Capacity Building: Teaching/Training Materials

As Hungarian media education (in the form of film education) started in the 60s, there is a huge tradition behind the teaching and training materials. Over the past forty years, the course content has continuously evolved. Continuous renewal was necessary because in the field of media communication more professional and pedagogical paradigm shifts took place in this period, and the content providers of the subject made great efforts to follow these changes (Szíjártó, 2008). "Three generations of high-school textbooks have been published during the Hungarian history of motion picture and media education. We are also familiar with other textbooks written for elementary school students" (Szíjártó, 2002: 68).

The first books for the four grades of high-school students (grades 9–12) were published by István Bölcs between 1966 and 1969. The title of the books are: *Film Aesthetics I–IV*. (*Filmesztétika* 1, 2, 3, 4.). The books only deal with art films from a normative perspective – says Hartai (2012).

The second book appeared in 1979, written by Pál Honffy and titled: *Filmről, televízióról középiskolásoknak* (About Film and Television for High-School Students). This book also deals with the aesthetic functions of film. It focuses on the aesthetic role of the art movies from a non-normative point of view – according to László Hartai (2012). Honffy has also published other textbooks: one for the elementary school children: *Moziban, képernyő előtt* (1991) (In the Cinema, before the Screen), one as a teachers' handbook for teaching film aesthetics: *Útmutató a 'Filmről, televízióról középiskolásoknak' című kézikönyv iskolai felhasználásához* (Guide for Teaching. About Film and Television for High-School Students) (1979), two textbooks on film analysis for high-school students, together with another author, Vera Gyürey: *A mozgó fénykép* (1984) (The Moving Image), *Chaplintől Mihalkovig* (From Chaplin to Mihalkov) (1988), and several books in the topic for the wider audience.

The third generation of books appeared after 1996. The market became colorful with several alternative books. And there is also a shift from film and aesthetics towards media as a whole, the media landscape, and the social background of media.

Books from this phase: Edit Boda: *Médiakalauz I-IV* (Media Guide I-IV) (for grades 1–10, published in 1997), József Csákvári – Judit Malinák: *Mozgóképkultúra és médiaismeret. A tömegmédia nyelve és társadalmi háttere* (Culture of the Moving Image and Media Education. The Language and Social Background of Mass Media) – published in 1998 for grades 11–12.

There are also some books which are available only online:

Gábor Gelencsér: *A város és a mozgókép* (The City and the Moving Picture) for grades 9–12 (available in Hungarian at: http://www.c3.hu/~mediaokt/gelencser-0.htm); János Horvát: *A televízió és az üzlet, televíziós műsortípusok, a televíziós személyiség* (Television and Business, Genres in Television, the Professional Communicator at Television), for grades 9–12 (available in Hungarian at: http://www.c3.hu/~mediaokt/johorvat-1.htm); György Báron: *A történetmesélés története* (The Story of Storytelling) for grades 9–12 (available in Hungarian at: http://www.c3.hu/~mediaokt/baron-0.htm). A reader edited by Gábor Gelencsér is also available in Hungarian, online at the Hungarian Electronic Library: http://mek.niif.hu/00100/00125/00125.pdf.

The textbooks for teachers are the following:

László Hartai: *Mozgóképkultúra és médiaismeret. Tanári kézikönyv a mozgóképkultúra és médiaismeret tanításához* (Teachers' Book for Culture of the Moving Image and Media Education), Korona Kiadó, 1998.

Imre Szíjártó: *A mozgóképkultúra és médiaismeret tanításának módszertana* (Methodology of Teaching Culture of the Moving Image and Media Education), Pedellus Kiadó, 2008.

"At the moment, students in high school in general use the László Hartai – Klára Muhi textbook entitled *Motion Picture Culture and Media Knowledge for Ages 12–18* (Hartai–Muhi, 1998). The textbook goes beyond the requirements of the NAT [National Curriculum] and was written for grades 7–12. It contains material to be studied in a module form" (Szíjártó, 2002).

For the 5th–8th grades of the elementary schools, another book from Pál Honffy was published in 2004. The title of the book is: *Képek, mozgóképek, hangosképek, Médiaismeret kezdőknek* (Pictures, Moving Pictures, Audio Pictures – Media Studies for Beginners).

Since 2013, there has been a clear tendency to centralize not only the education but also the textbook market. There is an effort to reduce the available textbooks to only one or maximum two textbooks per subject, which should be used by all high-school students in every high school. The choice/approval of the books is the task of the Ministry – the process is presently under way.

Capacity Building: Funding

Media education in Hungary is primarily done within the state education system. Thus, it is financed by the state from the budget available for public education. No exact data on the amount spent on media education was found. Some funding presumably comes through the Media Council (the media regulatory body) and the public media (both state-financed) as it is their legal responsibility to

participate in media education. However, their participation is very limited. For the few civil society projects, funding can come from different sources; however, their funding is usually uncertain and limited. They can also apply for funding to the National Civil Fund (Nemzeti Civil Alapprogram). The private sector does not visibly participate in media education in Hungary.

Evaluation Mechanisms (Inside and Outside School)

According to the Emedus report on Hungary, "In Hungary, there are no tools to measure media literacy competencies in general. For subjects like 'Culture of the Moving Image and Media' and 'Information Science,' pupils receive an annual grade for their performance. The evaluation platform called eLEMÉR allows schools to give self-assessment: the platform measures how ICTs are present in learning, teaching, school management and infrastructure as an indicator of the progress of schools in new technologies" (Emedus, 2014).

A 2008–2009 EU-funded research (Herczog, Racsko, 2013) including 27 countries – Hungary among them – studied the level of media literacy in the 14–18 years age group. The research employed both quantitative and qualitative methods and, besides comparing pupils who took the subject "Culture of the Moving Image and Media Education" with those who did not, it also looked at the actual practice of media education within schools by interviewing teachers and observing the educational process in class hours.

The Digital Renewal Action Plan 2010–2014 lists a number of indicators to measure the success of the implementation of the Plan. These include indicators relating to the level of digital literacy of the population. The plan aims at increasing broadband Internet penetration from 19.7% to 25% and decreasing digital illiteracy from 36% to 24% by 2014. It also aims at increasing computer/Internet availability and use at schools and the amount of digital teaching material and teacher training for increasing the digital literacy of teachers.

We can conclude that evaluation mechanisms are in place with regard to digital literacy but not in place, at least not in a developed form, with regard to media literacy. The Hungarian public was shocked by the results of the 2012 PISA report on performance in digital reading and task-oriented navigation. Hungarian high-school students are on the 29th place among the 34 countries participating in the research.[4]

4 http://www.keepeek.com/Digital-Asset-Management/oecd/education/students-computers-and-learning_9789264239555-en#page85

Main Concepts and Legitimizing Values

The public formal education system is the most important actor providing media education in Hungary. Its activity is regulated in the National Curriculum and in the Frame Curriculum.

The main paradigm of media education is that of transmission/representation. The importance of an interpretive and critical understanding of varying media texts with a special emphasis on visual images are repeatedly emphasized in these documents. On the level of documents, active, ethical participation is also emphasized, but its actual presence in classrooms is dubious due to reasons outlined before. The values legitimizing media education in these documents are (participatory) democracy, valuable and safe life, and self-expression. The skills and competencies mentioned include critical thinking, visual literacy, computer literacy, problem solving, independent learning, and civic competencies.

The improvement of digital literacy is in the focus of the Digital Renewal Action Plan. The primary legitimizing value in this document is competitiveness. Digital illiteracy is presented as a major obstacle in this respect; its decrease would lead to material gains on the personal and more importantly on the industrial, national, and European level. Within the discourse of competitiveness, the question of unequal chances regarding access and skills also appears, suggesting that disadvantaged people (communities, regions) should be given help to overcome this problem in order to increase their, and thus the country's, competitiveness. The importance of technical, operational skills as well as access to broadband and mobile Internet and software are emphasized.

Civil society initiatives seem to address a perceived lack in formal education and at state level. They emphasize the value of open communication, democracy, and participation and look at media education as a tool to improve civic competencies and democratic participation, on the one hand, and address the problem of disadvantaged people by empowering them with the help of media, on the other hand.

The discourse of prevention is also present in the official documents as well as in public debates. The previous moral panic on the issue of media violence in television seems to be giving place to the new moral panic on the dangers Internet and social media pose to children.

General Appreciation and Recommendations

On the level of documents, there is a great emphasis given to media and digital literacy in Hungary. This is partly due to the European Union's recommendations and expectations in these areas. There is an independent subject for media

education with a detailed syllabus addressing all important aspects and an independent subject for information science also including extensive material. However, in reality, media education (due to its optional status) is not strongly present in the Hungarian educational system.

Digital literacy is given more emphasis, information science, although its effectiveness is criticized, is more firmly present both in the curriculum of formal education and also outside the school system in adult education. The very detailed Digital Renewal Action Plan containing clear goals and indicators also suggests stronger state commitment in this area. Thus, access and the acquisition of technical, operational skills receive greater support, while critical understanding and creative use of old and new media, and with it active citizenship – though present in the legal documents –, might get less emphasis in actual practice due to lack of time and resources.

Civil society in general is quite weak in Hungary. Though they are present with some good initiatives regarding media education, these are limited both in scope and time. The presence of profit-oriented organizations in this area is even less visible.

The Hungarian situation in the last few years can be characterized by radical and often controversial changes taking place in many areas including the media system and the education system. New laws and regulations have drastically changed the media and educational landscape of the country and both areas have become highly politicized and stand in the centre of debate within the Hungarian public sphere. With the 2010 media law, the debate has spread to EU levels as well.

As a results of our research, we have concluded that Hungarian media and digital literacy education needs to put more emphasis on critical, active media use to improve responsible citizenship. It should teach not only critical media consumption but also creative multimedia material production. Taking into consideration pupils' real interests would be useful: social media sites and popular culture should have stronger presence within media education.

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"I Learned All by Myself": Romanian Young People's Self-Perception of Their Digital Competence[1]

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Abstract. Following the theoretical framework and analysing the empirical data of the *EU Kids Online III* (2013) project, in this study, we have followed the digital competence of Romanian children and adolescents. We have studied the online activities they undertake, their attitudes towards the Internet and the perception they have of their digital competence. Romanian children and adolescents are very present in the digital world, which they perceive as a social space distinct from that of the adults, where they can retreat and where they can meet their needs for communication, information (not just for homework but also questions of their own concern), leisure, etc. However, the situation is far from ideal. The modest implication of parents and teachers in the online life of children and adolescents has a detrimental impact on their level of digital competence.

Keywords: digital competence, online activities, attitudes towards the Internet, EU Kids Online, Romanian Youngsters

1. Introduction

In our information society, children and adolescents[2] grow up in a saturated media environment, where the presence of computers, the Internet, and other digital technologies in the home are commonplace and mediated interactions

1 The Romanian version of this study (entitled "Poveştile de dincolo de statistici: despre competenţele digitale ale copiilor şi adolesenţilor din România") was published in the *Romanian Journal of Sociology*, 5–6/2015.

2 In this study for children (9–12) and adolescents (13–16), we use the collective noun "youngsters".

are part of everyday life (Livingstone, 2002). Young people develop different lifestyles from those of their parents, with specific old and new media usage habits. In their use of new information and communication technologies (ICT), youngsters are often more efficient than adults.

At the same time, researchers have drawn attention to the second-level digital divide among young people, whether they are Romanian or from other European countries (Buckingham, 2006; Neuman–Celano, 2006; Tőkés, 2014). The first-level digital divide was defined in terms of access to ICT. In the second-level digital divide – influenced by the spread of ICT and improving access opportunities –, the focus has shifted to the inequalities found in competence and skills (Hargittai, 2001; Helsper–Galaczi, 2009). Buckingham (2008) considers that the use of new media by young people is no longer a question of access but one of social and cultural practices as digital media continually offers new forms of mediation, representation of the world and alternative channels for communication and interaction.

International analyses (e.g. surveys from *EU Kids Online* abbreviated as EUKO), which were implemented in 2010 – the collection of quantitative data by questionnaire –, and in 2013 the collection of qualitative data (through focus groups and interviews) showed that differences in children's digital competence were mainly due to individual-level differences and less due to national peculiarity. There are significant correlations between the level of digital competence, the pattern of Internet use, and the confidence in online skills (Sonck et al., 2012: 87).

In our study, we follow the level of digital competence of Romanian children and adolescents and their self-perception regarding their digital abilities. We build on the secondary analysis of qualitative empirical data from *EU Kids Online III*.[3] We strive to comprehend the self-perception of children's digital competence by analysing their specific digital skills and, more implicitly, by looking at the diversity of Internet activities they engage in (Sonck et al., 2012: 88). For a better understanding of their self-evaluations of digital competence, we also explore the Romanian youngsters' attitudes toward the Internet.

2. About the Concepts: From Digital Literacy to Digital Competence

Translating the concept of digital literacy into digital competence (in Romanian and in other languages) provides an instrumentalist denotation to the concept. We use the concept of digital competence with the same meaning of digital literacy. In English, the concept of digital literacy is protected by instrumentalism because the semantic sphere of literacy involves the printed media and automatically

3 The authors are members of the *EU Kids Online III* Romanian team.

brings into discussion the text–audience–producer interaction (Burn–Durran, 2007). As shown by some authors (Burn–Durran, 2007; Lankshear–Knobel, 2008), the instrumentalist approach is very reductionist because digital literacy is much more than a list of online skills, it is more the ability to use digital media efficiently in a given socio-cultural context.

Defining the concept of digital literacy, Fieldhouse and Nicholas (2008: 50) add to the instrumentalist approach the requirement of being "information savvy" or "information literate", specifically the ability to identify if and when information is needed, to locate it and to use it effectively. This requirement to distinguish between information, to analyse it critically, and especially to know how to look for it appears to be a vital part of digital literacy in the views of several authors.

Buckingham (2008) indicates that most discussions about digital competence are concerned with the manipulation of information, yet neglect the cultural aspect of Internet usage. Although many authors stress the importance of information evaluation ability, they still tend to consider digital literacy a technical "know-how" accumulated relatively easily. Few authors recognize the symbolic and persuasive element of digital media, which goes far beyond the aspect of informational content.

Beside technical and informational abilities, another aspect of digital literacy is the cognitive processes that occur when using electronic information. According to Glister, digital literacy is "the ability to understand and use information in multiple formats from a variety of sources when presented via computer" (Glister, 1997: 33). We could say that his vision derives from the concept of "critical media literacy" applied to the digital environment (Buckingham, 2003; Alvermann-Hagood, 2000).

Glister's famous formula "mastering ideas, not keystrokes" focuses attention on another aspect of digital literacy, namely the socio-cultural context in which the user uses the medium. Several authors have shown that literacy does not imply knowing how to read and write, but it assumes adjustment to the medium, comprehension of information in every form it is presented – taking into consideration the medium–information–audience triad (Lanham, 1995, *apud* Lankshear-Knobel, 2008).

According to Powell (2007), literacy is a set of social practices that becomes relevant in the socio-cultural context in which they are implemented. These practices are not static but dynamic and evolving; they accumulate during the use of technology, building on existing knowledge and abilities. Differences between users appear mostly in these practices because the technology is only a tool to be exploited in everyday life according to one's skills, habits, cultural values, beliefs, and attitude.

As a summary, we highlight at least three aspects of the digital literacy concept (Livingstone, 2004: 12). The functional model views literacy as a list of skills

required for functioning effectively within the information society. The socio-cultural practice model sets out the role of the socio-cultural context, in which the accumulated competence gains meaning. The intellectual empowerment model enhances the symbolic capital of literacy, permitting efficient presence in society. "Gaining literacy in the digital world is thus one means by which the individual can retain a hold on the shape of his/her life in an era of increasing uncertainty" – maintains Martin (2008: 156) in his study concerning the role of digital literacy in information society.

Instead of a conclusion, we present Martin's synthesising definition of digital literacy: "awareness, attitude and the ability of individuals to appropriately use digital tools and facilities to identify, access, manage, integrate, evaluate, analyze and synthesize digital resources, construct new knowledge, create media expressions, and communicate with others, in the context of specific life situations, in order to enable constructive social action; and to reflect upon this process" (Martin, 2008, *apud* Lankshear–Knobel, 2008: 167).

3. Measuring Digital Competence

To understand better the implication of digital competence, we have to distinguish between the conceptualization and operationalization of the concept (Bawden, 2008). Operationalization is the process of defining the variables and items (e.g. understanding the functions of the PC, knowing its components, using online applications, online searching abilities, etc.) that empirically measure digital competence. The misunderstanding of the distinction between conceptualization and operationalization – or the reduction of the concept of digital competence to a list of technical skills – only serves to deepen the second-level digital divide (Neuman–Celano, 2006; Gee, 2007).

The conceptual debate concerning the concept highlights those essential aspects of digital competence which require consideration. In order to measure digital competence, we first need to determine how it can be done.

Bowden (2008) considers that digital literacy is a frame concept that integrates four essential components. The first component is a set of technical skills. The second component is related to the world of information and knowledge about digital in general, e.g. knowledge required for a competent user. The third component sums up the specific skills such as reading and comprehension of digital and non-digital content, content creation, evaluation of information, informational skills, and media competence. The fourth component is the set of attitudes and perspectives of the users which make the connection between the old and new knowledge and skills and which allow the user to apply this cognition to their advantage (Bowden, 2008: 29).

When reseachers began using the concept of digital competence, the meaning of the term in the literature was vague. At present, in numerous studies (Media Literacy, 2007; EAVI, 2009: 117), we find the rigorous operationalization of the concept. If we consider digital competence as a form of critical media literacy and outline the operationalization of the mentioned concept, we can then identify four basic dimensions of digital competence (Bowden, 2008; Scheibe-Rogow, 2012: 25; EAVI, 2009: 34):

(1) Technical skills: the ability to use digital technologies in general. With the spread of the Internet and media convergence towards the online sphere, these technical skills are becoming more complex, thereby excluding some from successfully accessing ICT.

(2) Cognitive skills: the ability to critically understand digital messages. The critical understanding of digital content requires critical thinking and autonomy in decoding, evaluating, and interpreting digital messages. Critical thinking involves deliberately raised critical questions regarding the content being processed – the ability to answer these questions. Critical thinking requires positive attitude and a healthy skepticism concerning online messages. Because online messages are a form of multimedia, the decoding of these messages involves decoding skills relating to text, image, sound, and audiovisual content.

(3) Social skills: the ability to interact through communication and participation in the online space. Social skills involve online (formal and informal) content creation, which facilitates the interaction and which also includes the presentation of self, construction of identity, and communities online. Interactivity is a characteristic of Web 2.0; therefore, social skills – contacting other people, creating relationships and social networks, creating online identities and communities, and creating their own content – are essential skills.

(4) As a fourth specific component of digital competence, researchers list attitudes and personal perspectives. According to this approach, digital competence relates to more than a series of skills: it refers to a certain way of thinking and to the presence of positive attitudes and beliefs regarding the content and functioning of online space (Bawden, 2008: 18). All digital skills are valuable only if they are grounded in a social and cultural context and represent a new element that enriches the cultural capital of the holder (Bawden, 2008: 30).

4. The Romanian Context

Regarding the digital competence of Romanian children and adolescents, empirical data are accessible. 2010 and 2013 saw the completion of the second and third phases of the international research: *EU Kids Online.* These data collections were carried out in several European countries, including Romania.

EU Kids Online is a cross-national research network which seeks to enhance knowledge regarding European children's online opportunities, risks, and safety. It employs multiple methods to map children's and parents' changing experience of the Internet. The *EU Kids Online* II (2009–2011) project saw the participation of 25 countries, including Romania. The main focus was on a survey of children and parents, which aimed at producing original, rigorous data on their Internet use, online risk experiences, and safety mediation. A random stratified sample of 25,142 young people aged 9–16 who use the Internet plus one of the parents of each youth was interviewed in 25 European countries during spring/summer 2010. In *EU Kids Online* III (2011–2014), 33 countries participated (again including Romania). The empirical project was a cross-national qualitative study of teenagers' accounts of online risks. Qualitative data were gathered in 2013 by focus groups and semi-structured interviews. In every participating country, 6 focus groups were conducted (3 with girls and 3 with boys) and 12 individual semi-structured interviews (for methodological details and the report for the nine European countries, see Smahel–Wright, 2014: 16).

4.1. Digital Competence of Romanian Youngsters as Reflected in the Quantitative Data of EU Kids Online II

Given the complexity of the problem, "the *EU Kids Online* survey included three measures of digital literacy: (1) specific digital skills (8 skills), range of online activities (17 activities), and children's beliefs about their Internet abilities" (Livingstone et al., 2012; Sonck et al., 2012: 88).

Even though the data are quantitative, it is worth recalling the results in this study. On a scale from 1 to 10, the average of the first indicator at European level was 5.19 (for Romania: 4.26); for the second indicator, the average at European level was 4.67 (while in Romania it was 4.69); and for the third indicator the average obtained in Romania was 5.96, while the European score was 6.35. The differentiating factors seem to be the age and gender of children and the education of parents, as we can see in the table below (Livingstone et al., 2012; Sonck et al., 2011: 91).

Table 1. Self-reported digital literacy by gender, age, and parents' highest level of education

	Specific digital skills (0–10)	**Range of online activities (0–10)**	**Belief in Internet abilities (0–10)**
European average	**5.19**	**4.67**	**6.35**
Romanian average	**4.26**	**4.69**	**5.96**
Gender of child*			
Male	5.37	4.87	6.62
Female	5.02	4.48	6.08

	Specific digital skills (0–10)	Range of online activities (0–10)	Belief in Internet abilities (0–10)
Age of child*			
11–12	3.52	3.80	5.32
13–14	5.41	4.79	6.43
15–16	6.55	5.37	7.24
Highest level of education of the parents in household*			
Primary or lower	4.11	4.00	6.06
Lower secondary	4.94	4.69	6.45
Upper or post-secondary	5.36	4.74	6.41
Tertiary	5.91	4.98	6.36

Source: Sonck et al., 2011: 91

Note: the general differences in digital literacy, that is, the main effects by gender, age, and parents' education are significant at ***p<0.001, *European averages

The quantitative results show that among European youngsters the highest positive association appears between online activities and specific digital skills (r=0.55), while beliefs relating to online efficacy are less associated with the online activities conducted (r=0.36) or with the specific digital skills (r=0.43) (Sonck et al., 2011: 93). There is a difference between European and Romanian youngsters: the positive association between the conducted online activities and beliefs about the online abilities (r=0.44) is stronger among Romanian youngsters. So, among Romanian youngsters, the amount of conducted online activities have a stronger link to the positive beliefs concerning their digital competence than to the real digital skills.

The empirical data of the *EU Kids Online* II survey (2010) verified the pessimistic assumption about digital inequalities among young people, whether they are European or Romanian. It has been shown that at European level there is a strong positive relationship between specific online skills, the number of conducted online activities and confidence in their own digital abilities. Those with a higher level of specific digital skills conduct more online activities and are more self-confident regarding their specific digital skills (Sonck et al., 2012: 87).

European children generally carried out 7.2 online activities (from a total of 17), which shows the popularity of online activities. The more widespread online activities are searching for information, communication, and entertainment, while the less practised are the creative and participative online activities (Sonck et al., 2011: 2). Conceptually, specific online skills can be divided into technical or instrumental skills, cognitive or informational skills, and social skills. European

youngsters have on average 4.2 specific digital skills (from a total of 8), which mainly concern the use of ICT and information management. Regarding their self-perception of online skills, only a third of European youngsters believe they know more about the Internet than their parents and another third thinks they know a lot about the Internet.

The most frequent online activities undertaken by Romanian youngsters are those related to the consumption of content, most commonly the seeking of information to assist in homework activities. Another obvious motivation for Romanian youngsters in their use of the Internet is that of entertainment and leisure, or even escape from everyday life. They watch videoclips, play games (mostly against the computer, and not in a network situation with other players), and communicate using different applications and online platforms. If young Romanians exceed the European youngsters in practising entertaining online activities, they are held back in their use of the Internet in developing their general literacy or professional knowledge. For Romanian youngsters, the Internet offers new ways and opportunities for entertainment, without major expenses – compared to European youngsters, they download more music and movies, play more games on the computer or online with others, yet they remain behind in creative activities, participation, and content generation (Tőkes, 2014: 64).

Studying the level of digital competence at European level, we can see the higher level of attainment among boys and older children, as well as among those who come from families with higher socio-economic status (SES). Children with low SES consider themselves more knowledgeable about the Internet compared to their parents. Romanian youngsters are below the European average level regarding their specific digital skills, number of online activities, and their confidence in their online competence. Hereafter, we seek an explanation for this situation, analysing in particular the self-perception of their online competence.

4.2. The Digital Competence of Romanian Youngsters Reflected in the Qualitative Data of EU Kids Online III

For a deeper understanding of the quantitative results from *EU Kids Online II*, the third wave of the *EU Kids Online* project was planed and implemented, which was a qualitative research. The summer of 2013 saw the third phase of the *EU Kids Online* project, in which qualitative empirical data were collected in 9 European countries (Belgium, Italy, Spain, Greece, Malta, Portugal, UK, Romania, and the Czech Republic). Each country performed 6 focus groups and 12 semi-structured interviews (Smahel–Wright, 2014: 16). In Romania, the following qualitative empirical data were collected:

Table 2. Qualitative empirical data collected in Romania in the context of the EU Kids Online III

Focus groups (number of participants)		
Age	**Boys**	**Girls**
9–10 years	1 (4)	1 (4)
11–13 years	1 (5)	1 (5)
14–16 years	1 (6)	1 (5)
Total	**3 (15)**	**3 (14)**
Semi-structured interviews		
Age	**Boys**	**Girls**
9–10 years	2	1
11–13 years	1	2
14–16 years	2	3
Total	**5**	**6**

Source: *EU Kids Online III* (2013), data gathered by the Romanian research group, director of the group: Monica Barbovschi, members: Anva Velicu, Bianca Balea, Éva László, Valentia Marinescu, Gyöngyvér Tőkés.[4]

Young Romanians were selected from four schools, from public and private as well as from urban and rural schools. The children included in focus groups were different from those used for interviews (Smahel–Wright, 2014: 16).

4.2.1. Research Problem

Although the *EU Kids Online III* qualitative research focused on the perception of youngsters regarding the meaning of online risk, the gathered empirical data – focus groups and semi-structured interviews – frequently revealed associated topics concerning online activities such as motivation and consequences of digital participation, the place of an online presence in school life and within a family of youngsters, what they are able to do online, how they learn, what they know, etc.

The main research problem addressed by this study is the effective presentation of Romanian youngsters' self-perception of their digital competence based on the secondary analysis of the *EU Kids Online III* empirical data.

In public, and even in few academic discourses, the young generation is considered to be digitally competent by nature. In this study, we challenge this assumption by investigating the following subproblems:

– What are Romanian children doing online? What are the online activities and in what context do these activities occur? What is the history of these activities in children's lives?

4 For more information, see: http://www.lse.ac.uk/media@lse/research/EUKidsOnline/ParticipatingCountries/romania.aspx.

– Do Romanian children use ICT and the Internet in a 'mimetic' and/or intuitive way, or consciously due to a deeper knowledge of the opportunities offered by the Internet?

– How do Romanian children relate their digital competence and how they evaluate their digital skills compared to the competence of their parents, teachers, and friends?

– Bawden (2008: 24, 30) shows the importance of positive attitudes and social skills in using the Internet. We examine the direction and strength of attitudes of Romanian children concerning ICT and the Internet.

– We also turn our attention to the social universe in which the Internet is placed. Offline Romanian children interact daily with friends and siblings, parents and other relatives, teachers and other adults, but from their online world adults are absent (Buckingham, 2006: 4; Mesch, 2009). So, if in offline everyday life the practices of the adults influence the behaviour of young people, in online situations they lack relevant examples (Tőkés, 2014).

To answer these questions, we perform a secondary analysis of the *EU Kids Online III* qualitative empirical data: first, we select the relevant aspects of focus groups and semi-structured interviews, and then we conduct a thematic analysis and interpret the results.

5. Results of the Qualitative Research

5.1. What Do Children Do Online?

Romanian children and teenagers "have access to a wider range of devices than those they actually own or have for private use" (Mascheroni–Cuman, 2014: 6). In recent years, the use of tablets and smartphones has spread, and "smartphones are the devices that children are more likely to own or to have for private use" (Mascheroni–Cuman, 2014: 6). Mobile devices often replace laptops; however, laptops have some advantages over tablets or smartphones. The results of the qualitative research *Net Children Go Mobile* (2014) draw attention "to the ecology of devices that children inhabit, and that includes more and more personal and portable devices". Even so, children place more value on privacy and convenience than mobility (Mascheroni–Cuman, 2014: 6, 7). As an overview, at European level, a correlation was found between the use of smartphones or laptops and the socio-economic situation of the child's family. "The differences in the daily use of smartphones in relation to socio-economic status are also notable:" daily smartphone use was more often observed among children with higher SES than among children with lower SES (Mascheroni–Cuman, 2014: 8).

Quantitative analyses have shown that the level of digital competence positively correlates with the number of conducted online activities. Considering the nature of online activities as a marker of Romanian youngsters' online competence, thereinafter we present the online activities undertaken by young Romanians. Qualitative data confirms the results of the quantitative survey of the most popular online activities among Romanian youngsters. They use social networking sites and communicate online, also have fun and play games, they also use the Internet for homework and information gathering.

5.1.1. The Use of Social Networking Sites and Online Communication

The Used Platforms

Among Romanian children and adolescents, the use of Facebook is very popular, and this is true even for children under 13 (the age limit for having a Facebook account). In 2013, 78% of Romanian young people used Facebook (Mascheroni–Cuman, 2014: 16), a third of the users were under 13, and therefore below the allowed age limit (Tőkés, 2014: 96).

Facebook offers many opportunities for entertainment. Romanian youngsters – apart from the online presence, which justifies their existence in the eyes of their reference groups – play and communicate extensively through this online channel. "I'm obsessed... with Facebook" – says a 14-year old boy. Besides Facebook, Skype is also used for calls, and those who play online seldom chat on games pages.

At younger ages, many young Romanians used Yahoo Messenger for communication, but now they mostly use Facebook. During the data gathering period, some of them still had accounts with Yahoo Messenger, but these accounts are abandoned now. This transition from one online communication platform to another one is specific to young people and has been documented also in other researches. This phenomenon is called "communication trajectory," which denotes ventures between the personal development of the child and the technological development (Velicu, 2009). EUKO III data has shown that at an early age (9–10 years) children had few contacts on Yahoo Messenger and they were mostly family members and relatives. Later on (at the age of 11–12), they increased their contact list to include unknown persons, usually of their own age. Of those who communicate intensely online, the number of contacts on Facebook is higher than on Yahoo Messenger. Moving from Yahoo Messenger to Facebook is sometimes accompanied by negotiating with parents because some parents do not freely allow the creation of a Facebook account. Many children use false information to create a Facebook account, particularly regarding their age, as they do not meet the legal age requirements to open an account or because they do not know exactly what that age limit is (13 years). On Facebook, it is easy to quickly create a network of friends.

Friending on Social Networking Sites

In the first stage, children come into contact with classmates and friends from real life (offline), but among Romanian children it is quite acceptable (18% of the respondents in the NCGM, 2014) to accept the friend invitation of unknown persons of the same age (Mascheroni–Cumana, 2014; Velicu et al., 2014). They also accept the friend invitation of those from the same school or with whom they spend their free time after school.

"If they are friends, like I know somehow, so ... I accept their friend requests … I have sent friend invitations to children I know ..." (boy, 12 years, rural).

"I accept those that I know by sight" (girl, 11 years).

Among the motivations for friending on Facebook, we can see common interests and concerns. For example, a 15-year-old girl – fan of Lala Band – accepted the invitation of other fans. A 14-year-old boy says: "I like to sing folk music, on violin, you know? ... And there are other singers on Facebook, and I added them recently."

Another reason leading to online connection is common offline activities such as frequenting the same clubs, enjoying the same hobby, or participation in language courses.

Most children mention the existence of a "safety" limit, and verify the identity of those with whom they connect online. For example, they accept friend requests from those who are already friends in the real world: "well ... I look if there're mutual friends, and if there are a few ... more than one or two, I accept them" (boy, 14). Sometimes they connect with people suggested by Facebook provided they have enough mutual friends, and check whether they wish to accept the request.

Especially in the early days of Facebook, Romanian young people were eager to establish a large network of friends, which is a marker of affiliation and popularity among peers (Velicu et al., 2014). Thus – particularly among teenagers who had previously established communication via Yahoo Messenger –, friend lists were transferred to Facebook in order to quickly build large networks of friends (see also Velicu, 2009).

After a while, selectivity is adopted in accepting friend requests, and young Romanians delete initially accepted "friends" too easily.

We have often found an absence of any selection criteria in young Romanians' decisions to accept friend requests from unknown persons; sometimes they mentioned subjective criteria that they perceive to be "safe". For example, for one 14-year-old boy, it was important that his Facebook friends be Romanian: "if I see that they are Romanian, I accept them, if not, then no. Recently, there was an Arab whom I had accepted as a friend, and he began to call me on Facebook. I refused ... then I said ... I began to mock him and I said words that I knew randomly. (…) words that do not exist (laughing) ... and then he cursed me in English" (boy, 14). A good first impression also plays an important role in accepting a request from an unknown person: "They sent me a friend request and I looked at their page ... and

I saw that they are not too aggressive, so if I have trouble with them ... but, before, I check to see who they are ... noo, I don't accept the initial request" (boy, 14).

Repeated online meetings give the feeling of familiarity: "I have not met her, but I know her because we have been communicating on the net or on Facebook for a long time ..." (girl, 16).

Children at younger ages use even more vague selection criteria, separating the "good kids" and the "bad kids", the bad being the verbally aggressive ones; a 10-year-old boy (under the age limit for Facebook) said that "those who curse ... I don't add ... I have heard from those who have accepted them ... cursing so much ... so I told myself I did not want anything to do with them". Qualitative data confirms that most Romanian youngsters' contacts from their friend lists are aquaintances of their age, from their offline lives. Romanian children rarely invite friends' parents and teachers (Tőkés, 2014: 92). Their online network of friends is their own social space where they can express themselves freely.

Construction of Online Identity

We have previously mentioned that presence on Facebook for the younger generation is a form of social affirmation. On Facebook, they build their digital identity, on the one hand, by drafting their profile and, on the other hand, by building up a network of friends (boyd, 2008).

In the construction of a digital identity, an important decision is the amount and type of information posted online. Romanian youngsters are ambivalent regarding disclosure; they oscillate between safety considerations, moral judgments, and gratitudes. Most often, they realize the risks of disclosing personal information; even so, they choose the gratifying disclosure and social interaction:

"I removed the year of birth. [I revealed] only the day, so people could wish me happy birthday" (girl, 15).

Thus, we see the rejection by Romanian young people, at least declaratively, of an exaggerated exhibitionism:

Interviewer: "But you have pictures of you online, right?"

Girl (15): "Yes, but not like that. I do not post pictures of me every day like others do."

The Significance of "Like"

The number of "Likes", besides the number of friends, like a visiting card, shows the popularity of someone. "If you have many Likes, you are popular; so, that is why you accept any friend request – to receive Likes, but ... it can become addictive in that you always feel the need to get Likes, to post that ... so that everyone appreciates you," says a 15-year-old girl, explaining the mechanism which links the number of friends and their appreciation to increasing self-esteem. Sometimes, the collecting of "Likes" is an ultimate

goal, and conflicts can rise when accidents or the spite of friends provokes the "loss" of these likes:

"Boy (14 years): …. I have my own Facebook page. I had 3,000 likes, I think, or 4,000. (...) Last year in September, I ask a boy (to be my) admin; and there is an option that prevents giving 'Likes' to those people below a certain age. And he changed something there ... and I drop to 900 'Likes', when I started then I reached 10 'Likes'."

Researcher: "So, you went down?"

Boy (14 years): "Yes. I lost all the 'Likes' people had given to me, and did not have the age that my admin set."

Researcher: "And what did you say to that boy?"

Boy (14 years): "I was mad at him ... I have another friend, we both were admins, both of us got angry, and we began to cuss as children use to do."

However, the attitude is dual, because, although Romanian younsters willingly receive these "Likes," they are also critical of the "rush after Likes". They perceive this (always in others, not in themselves!) as a violation of certain rules of public morality:

Girl (12 years): "I have seen cases, girls I do not know, girls around 10, 12, or 9 years, who post pictures on Facebook about them almost naked, only to obtain 'Likes'."

Researcher: "And what do think you about this?"

Girl (12 years): "It seems to me ... I'd be ashamed, first, because there are teachers and people who see those pictures ... just for Likes and stuff like that ..."

Beyond the violation of social norms to achieve "Likes," the collecting of "Likes" is judged from the perspective of a lack of authenticity, again, especially when it comes to speaking of others: "I find it a waste of time, because "Likes" do not show what kind of person you are, these are just some 'Likes,' showing anybody who sees your profile that you have some friends" (girl, 12 years).

But the "Like" is important not only to the person receiving it but also to the person who gives it. It can potentially ruin the image of the giver as it is an indication of his/her taste and identity.

"It was a picture from a website, and I did not know how I got there or why I gave a 'Like' ... and I wiped it as fast as I could, I deleted it..." (girl, 16 years)

Beyond being gratifying – sometimes helping to increase self-esteem –, the "Like" can be an element of risk in the online environment. The friends' "Likes" expose the network automatically to that content that can be damaging:

Researcher: "What don't you like on the Internet?"

Girl (10 years): "When the math teacher gives 'Like' to a lot of junk. Well ... from cursing to weird jokes, stuff about football, naked people."

In summary, we can say that a presence on social networks, especially Facebook, is a sign of existence, conformity, and popularity in the world of youth. Facebook

is a social space where gratuities are instantaneous and taking responsibility does not seem to be a necessity. These online activities become a common part of daily routine; moreover, with the spread of mobile devices that are very individualized (Mascheroni–Olafsson, 2014), the exposure of young people on social media grows more and more.

"Young people use the Internet because it's cool. Let everyone know. Because I know that everyone uses the Internet and the news spreads quickly. It spreads that you go to the gym or that you have bought a new pair of trousers" (girl, 16 years).

5.1.2. Entertainment and Gaming

The quantitative data highlighted that the Internet is used mostly by Romanian youngsters for entertainment and leisure. This is confirmed also by the results of qualitative research, where the online game and leisure type activities are frequently mentioned.

"I play various games, go on Facebook" (girl, 10 years).

"I listen to music on YouTube ... if I find a nice film on the TV, and I would like to see it again, I watch it again on the computer" (girl, 16).

"I watch movies, music, etc. online" (boy, 14).

"I watch YouTube, listen to music of famous singers, dancers ..." (girl, 11 years).

"I post funny videos online..." (boy, 14).

Sitting in front of the computer can be fun, but at the same time it can be an escape from life and everyday problems: "sometimes I sit in front of my computer so that my mother and brothers leave me alone" (11 years old girl).

Online Gaming

When it comes to escaping, online games are at hand because they are easy to access, affordable, interesting, entertaining, offer a good feeling at the same time, and provide the possibility of social activities (Messerlian et al., 2004). Being a free entertainment, without commitment and without the need to provide a real identity, the popularity of online games is high (Tőkés, 2014: 64; Skinner et al., 2004: 266). Usually, when we discuss the problem of excessive use of the Internet, we have to mention online games too because gratuities are large (Wong–Tong So, 2014).

"He (brother) plays first, and then he lets me, and then I let him again, and in the night I always play," says a boy of age 12 from the countryside.

"I am the kind of boy who is passionate about games" (boy, 14).

"I play on the tablet ... download from Google Play, and I play" (girl, 11 years).

Gentrification of Games

The games are perceived as being more for boys than for girls. In the qualitative research discussions, children clearly differentiated the "games for boys" from the "games for girls". Moreover, even in the case of girls, the most digitally competent, with many online skills and multiple activities, generally do not admit that they play, or really do not play games "for girls", which require more social skills and less technical skills or dexterity (such as action games). Playing complex games dedicated for boys offers girls higher status and they feel more special.

Gaming and the Age Differences

We can see a differentiation by age in terms of participation in online games: the younger children play "games on websites for children" while older children prefer games on the websites aimed at networking, especially on Facebook. Facebook games are very attractive, with many children creating Facebook accounts just to have the opportunity to play.

Children perceive the risk of excessive use of online games, they often appreciate it as harmful to spend long periods of time with these activities.

These online activities – not always beneficial – are spread mostly among boys and older children (Wong–Tong So, 2014). The popularity of online games comes from the fact that they are easily accessible, comfortable, often free, anonymous, and allow an escape from the problems of everyday life. In online space, it is easier to give up inhibitions, the interaction with other playmates with similar interests and the repeated success are an incentive (Griffiths, 2003).

5.1.3. Homework and Collecting Information

Among the most common online activities carried out by Romanian youngsters, we mention the collection of information for school purposes.

"I look for stuff on Wikipedia for school" (girl, 10 years).

"When I have to do a study, I use the online dictionaries" (girl, 11 years).

"I use the dictionaries very often, especially in Romanian, English, French" (boy, 12).

Activities for school purposes include searching for information on the Internet, but these tasks are sometimes misunderstood. Without respect for ethical norms, young people appropriate the work of others and present it as their own; they are merely concerned with the accuracy of the content:

Researcher: "You just download the paper and give it to the teacher?"

Boy (12 years): "First, I look to see if it is correct."

The phenomenon of plagiarism is also highlighted in the *Net Children Go Mobile* research. Among the possible causes, it lists the lack of school rules for accessing online information and the low level of digital competence of teachers

and educators who often do not know how to check the authenticity of the texts produced by children. It is suggested that they should form new attitudes related to searching and using online information (Mascheroni–Cumana, 2014; Velicu et al., 2014).

There is a confusion in the delimitation of activities that are for homework and those considered educational. Many online entertainment activities are considered by children to be educational (possibly to make them "acceptable" in the eyes of adults – parents and researchers). For example, boys at a school in a village appreciated quiz-type games to be educational, while a girl was talking about "educational series" with adolescents.

This rather simplistic use of the Internet by Romanian youngsters draws attention to the insufficient knowledge of digital activities and to the role of schools in the development of digital competence. The way schools and teachers relate to the virtual universe or school tasks and the online solutions offered are examples for Romanian children and adolescents (given that most parents do not use the Internet for educational purposes). Children imitate parents or colleagues in conducting their online activities, but they do not have authentic models in using the Internet for personal and professional development.

5.2. Self-Assessement of Digital Competence

Taking notice of the correlation between the diversity of online activities and digital skills (Sonke et al., 2011), in the previous section, we presented a detailed view of the online activities of Romanian youngsters. We observed that, although at first sight they conduct many online activities, these activities are performed in rather passive ways – the content available for doing homework or for entertainment were being consumed passively. Rarely do Romanian youngsters involve themselves in the digital world as initiators or active participants.

An often overlooked reason of this is the language barrier. There is a false view of digital competence as a list of technical skills, which are solely responsible for the child's success in online activities. Among younger children or among youngsters from lower SES, English language knowledge is the first premise for positive experiences on the Internet. Qualitative studies emphasize that children from English-speaking countries are generally more satisfied with online content than those from other countries (Livingstone et al., 2012; Mascheroni–Olafsson, 2014; Velicu et al., 2014). As a Romanian boy (12 years) said, it is not the use of the computer that presented difficulties but the understaning of messages sent by the computer which were in the English language: "My mother helped me, especially when I was younger, with English". This situation leaves limited opportunities for interaction and communication with children from other cultural spaces, whether or not they are English-language speakers:

Researcher: "Do you speak with other players?"

Boy (10 years): "Sometime they ask me, but I do not really know how to respond because I am not so good at English."

To analyse the level of Romanian youngsters' digital competence, we have looked at how familiar they were with digital technologies; whether they can work effectively with them. As revealed by the quotes below, most Romanian young people learned to handle ICT and perform online activities on their own, through trial and error. Help from outside came from friends, siblings, or relatives having slightly higher or similar ages to them, but rarely from significant adults in their lives (e.g. parents or teachers).

Researcher: "Who taught you [how to use the ICT]?"

Boy (12): "I learned it by myself. Alone. I learned it from one from another, from my cousin; he has got a computer, and I learned it all by myself..."

"... I know what's in the computer, anything that moves, I can install, uninstall... You can download games via torrent, and before you install or download you have to scan it... on Facebook ... when you sign up ... you got to ... to be in topic and to know to what you expose yourself to ... I say this from my own experience" (boy, 14).

"I have an uncle that works as a computer specialist ... and when I have a problem I call him, he comes to me, and I tell him what programs to install for me..." (boy, 11 years).

Learning from self-experience is not always beneficial since, when at risk, children cannot always cope; so, they mystify the "dangerous" online situations:

"Girl (16 years): ... it would be better not to comment; and there are all kinds of online competitions that you give 'Like' to … and so: you get a phone…

Researcher: And you believe in these competitions?

Girl (16): No …

Researcher: But do you usually give 'Like,' to share, or to comment?

Girl (16): I give 'Like,' but I do not write comments. You have to give 'Like' and to write, to comment. Or participate and get into the competition, but I think there might be a trick in it... if you write, they require some personal data.

Researcher: So! And you don't practice this?

Girl (16): Nooo! I share only with friends because I do not like everyone to see my photos, my data, and all my stuff."

"I learned it on my own skin. They told me not to download any games ... Well, for example, if you look for a game, and something pops up instantly – except my game – I instinctively give X and get out of there..." (girl, 16).

Moreover, learning by trial and error does not suit everyone and can be quite inefficient, so the need for help is openly affirmed, especially among girls who have very modest technical skills.

"Researcher: What don't you like about the Internet?

Girl (16 years): I'm no good at software updates. I always have to ask someone to help me in updating the software."

"I made a page [Facebook], but I accidentally deleted it" (girl, 10 years).

Younger children are not aware of the need for selection of information, but with age comes an increase in the capacity to recognize relevant information: "I check several sources, and the most abundant and repeated information I consider correct" (girl, 16 years).

Social skills are an important component of digital competence and children often import these skills directly from the offline world; the adjustment to online is minimal: "When you share something about you, you can select to do it public, or just to friends or just to myself" (girl, 16 years).

To conclude this section, we observed the very low level of technical and informational skills of Romanian youngsters, and we also saw – as shown by Ehrlinger and colleagues (2008) – a significant lack of awareness regarding the low level of cognitive and social skills necessary to succeed in the online universe.

5.3. Attitudes toward the Internet

Another factor influencing the success of online activities is the positive attitude towards the digital universe. Attitudes influence what we think, how we evaluate and interact with an object; these are formed from beliefs, impressions, feelings, and experiences with an object (Smith–Mackie, 2002). Attitudes toward the Internet are influenced by interaction with the digital world and, in turn, the attitudes influence the user's online behaviour.

Romanian youngsters' attitudes towards the Internet are ambivalent, reflecting the sometimes negative attitude of parents and adults in general – whose attitudes often derive from ignorance and which in turn generate a lack of security.

"I try new things on the Internet only when I know well those who recommended it and I know that they have a good taste, or if my parents allow me to" – is the opinion of an 11-year-old girl, whose attitude seems coloured by uncertainty.

Also, another source of negative attitudes is traditional media, namely television, which often induces a sense of panic among the population concerning the potential risks of the Internet: "… because I have seen negative cases (related to Facebook) on television," said a 13-year-old girl justifying her anxiety related to becoming a victim of "grooming" (an activity undertaken by adults who hide behind fake online profiles, stating that they are children or adolescents in an attempt to lure other children or adolescents to meet later with them offline), or a girl of 10 years who did not want to create a Facebook profile, although her colleagues have done so, because she had heard bad stories about Facebook on television.

Young Romanians have also inherited from adults their fears of excessive use or reliance on computers and the Internet; in some cases, children recognize that

these risks can be real, even for themselves (not just regarding others): "I lose my time [on the Internet]" (girl, 15), or "Some find all their happiness on the Internet because they do not have anything else in their lives, they play, yet it is more important to live in the real world" (girl, 11 years), or "The Internet is something that helps spend your time very quickly. At least it seems that time passes quickly ... You cannot solve all your needs with the Internet. (...) You do not even notice, and you stay glued to the virtual world. You lose touch with reality, with your real friends ... you start to like it more in cyberspace. Because satisfaction is immediate. For example, if you play or talk with friends ..." (girl, 16).

Romanian youngsters recognize risks, but they do not have a defeatist attitude; they also provide solutions to Internet risks, one of which is the classification and consumption of media content according to age: "So, children to have access to different information depending on their age. Children of a certain age to have access to certain kinds of information, youngsters like me, other kinds of information, and the older more..." (girl, 16).

Despite these fears, Romanian youngsters love the Internet, especially because it allows them to escape from the problems of everyday life: "I like the Internet because when I play I'm a little bit elsewhere and not at home" (girl, 11 years).

They like the Internet as it is, but they still see the need for improvement. The ideal Internet would be like: "... to have everything you need for school, after doing all your homework, to have beautiful games, not those which (...) but activity games, games for intelligence .... We have to find all on the Internet" (boy, 12 years).

Research (Durnell–Haag, 2002) shows a positive correlation between positive attitudes towards Internet and high self-efficacy, or reduced anxiety in using the computer or the longer use of the Internet. Qualitative data support mostly the positive attitude towards the digital universe of Romanian youngsters, this attitude being more intensive among boys. What caught our attention is the ambivalent attitudes toward the Internet transmitted likely by adults to children and adolescents. Romanian children are protected restrictively, although loosely, without being initiated into this universe through best practices offered by parents or educators (Helsper et al., 2013; Mascheroni–Cumana, 2014; Velicu et al., 2014).

6. Conclusions

Following the theoretical framework of the *EU Kids Online* project (Livingstone et al., 2011), in this study, we have followed the digital competence of Romanian children and adolescents by analysing the online activities they undertake – more specifically, the way in which they engage in these activities, how they access them, how they perceive the benefits or risks (perceived or real) – and

also the attitudes towards the Internet and the perception they have of their digital competence. The public discourse argues that the younger generation has a high level of digital competence, although quantitative research does not seem to confirm this. Starting from the qualitative data of the international project *EU Kids Online* III (2013), in this study, we have focused on the perspective of Romanian youngsters regarding the level of their digital competence and how they perceive their online competence.

As mentioned in the introduction, the definition of digital competence is not unambiguous, covering a wide range of meanings from simple lists of digital skills to lifestyles or habitus in the sense given by Bourdieu. What is common, however, is the attempts to highlight the social and cultural side of the digital competence, the reflexive nature of it, the possibility of creative use and the application of digital technology to specific aims (Martin, 2008: 167).

Operationalization is generally done through a list of items that measure different things (understanding components and PC operation, using applications and online browsing capability) and is usually used in measuring the level of digital competence to develop stimulative public policy.

Romanian children and teenagers use the Internet mostly at home and less at school, but they use it mostly on their own devices – the digital technology and the Internet being a quasi-permanent presence in their daily lives. In recent years, mobile and convergent media (e.g. tablets, smartphones) has spread particularly among children from high SES families. Children belonging to households with more modest SES predominantly access the Internet on laptops (Velicu et al., 2014).

As shown by quantitative surveys and qualitative data, the most popular online activities are the use of social networking sites, communication through various applications, online games, entertainment and the collection of information for school.

As in other areas of learning, the digital competence of Romanian young people increases through the practice and repetition of online activities; what is significant is that Romanian youngsters are left alone in this learning process.

Parents and teachers are barely present (and mostly ineffective) in young people's online lives, thereby leaving them to learn by trial and error. For some children, this method is beneficial, while for others it can lead to negative results (e.g. lower self-esteem, lack of confidence, and withdrawal from the digital universe). This might explain the different online competences of Romanian youngsters: technical skills are more developed for boys and older children while social skills are more developed for girls and adolescents and cognitive skills are more developed in older children. From the self-reports of Romanian children, we have noticed that they are rather passive consumers and participants in the digital world, lacking the initiative to create their own online content.

Even in these conditions, Romanian children and adolescents are very present in the digital world, which they perceive as a social space distinct from that of the adults, where they can retreat and where they can meet their needs for communication, information (not just for homework but questions of their own concern), leisure, etc. The digital universe is a special space for them, where they enjoy the recognition of their friends and fellows, and where they obtain immediate gratification (the "Likes" on Facebook or victories in games), where they communicate and have fun, having a sense of belonging and legitimacy.

However, the situation is far from ideal. The modest implication of parents and teachers in the online life of children and adolescents has a detrimental impact on their level of digital competence. Also, when adults mediate, they do so in a mostly restrictive manner. Adding the fact that these adults lack a high level of digital competence and have an ambivalent attitude towards ICT, they can not really urge and motivate the development of digital competence in Romanian youngsters. On the contrary, by their ambivalent attitude, they provide justification for kids to remain in the state of incompetence, not urging them to develop ICT skills and become efficient in handling it, or they allow the youngsters to live with a false sense of their own online competence, judging themselves by comparison with the poorly-skilled adults around them.

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RESEARCH NOTES

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Adaptation Techniques in Digital Environment

Collective Brand Engagement via Camera Drone/Video-Game Design

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Abstract. Emerging technologies are testing us. Besides other elements, smart devices and innovative digital services are teaching us to live in a transit of – or illusions of – realities. Collective and personal practices are looking for adaptation techniques in comparison with offline or initial online experience. Experimental digital tools and their impact are interpreted via contexts. These interpretations produce feedbacks on possible adaptations of emerging technologies with gathering customers/users/audiences or with the lack of them. The digital environment reveals dynamic changes and temporary adaptations with associations with well-known popular cultural products and with science fiction.
The article analyses this phenomenon through a case study of a special emerging media technology, the camera drone (Stahl, 2013) in promotion context. The goal is to focus on adaptation techniques both by the market perspective and by the customers' reflections. The question is how open we are for new technologies and how we can manage mixed virtual-real contexts via digital innovation.

Keywords: camera drone, collective adaptation, creative marketing idea, game design, prosumer, running culture, transmedia storytelling

Introduction

The Internet, smart technology (Sylvain 2013) and network society (Castells 1996) rewrite previous praxis. Technology, advanced digital services (Komninos & Tsarchopoulos 2012), automatization (Manovich 2001), and online content industry add new layers to reality. The logic of hypermedia (Nelson 1965) and virtual contexts bring up more sophisticated phenomena that users have to live together with. Devices, sensors, social media platforms, and other productions are connected to digital networks such as navigation services, big data analysis, or automatized targets in marketing techniques. New digital markets increasingly

push digital complexity towards a point when science fiction may as well become real.

Digital systems write with smart data applications and draw digitally visualized patterns. Both of them have connections with earlier features and associations with popular cultural products and, also, with science fiction. Meanwhile, users are looking for their choices for fun and functionality in a rapidly changing digital environment. Virtualization trends are multiplying around them raising further questions. More sophisticated adaptive techniques are needed in order to find more special/unique solutions and ideas. The narrow life span of devices, platforms, software, and applications marks the need for renewable solutions. Marketing and PR have been among the emerging fields of creative methods for the purpose of engaging customers. Based on automatized and networked online culture and communities, they have multiple tools to reach audiences. We are heading to a detailed case study with the conclusion that innovative-creative solutions highlight various outcomes and consequences. The focus is on mixed layers of reality and virtuality. The blended context and its interpretation determine what is relevant for digital market and for customers' interest. The case study emphasizes a best practice: the adaptation techniques are working via creative ideas and digital tools.

Conceptual Framework

Adaptation is a biological term referring to 'a form of living in a different environment'. The purpose of adaptation techniques is either to make advantage or avoid the disadvantages of particular uses. Relevant and/or future-oriented reflections prepare particular opportunities for collective and personal agents for the purpose of reinterpreting digital environments increasingly further. The market goal meets with customers' demand if the concept of mixed real-virtual layers is clear.

Online entertaining and *content industry* (Oestreicher-Singer et al. 2013, Carah & Louw 2015) have answers for new challenges of digitalization. The first mission is to find a common frame of reference where the meanings and feelings are compatible with the goal of content/message creators and demand of content/message consumers.

The universal toolkit is presented by *transmedia storytelling* (Jenkins 2010, 2006). The classical form of the complex digital storytelling is based on blockbuster movies and video games. If their content is well-known and if they have numerous fans in offline/online communities, the original content is extended by further genres and stories. The added creations by professional or amateur sources generate further meanings and interpretation flow. In the case of a created story-

world, the participants have multiple connections with the original and extended narratives. Platforms, contents, and genres meet in transmedia storytelling. The result is a reflected and evaluated piece of networked culture (Hay and Couldry 2011) that provides shared stories in one frame of interpretation.

The phenomenon of transmedia storytelling assumes a *participation culture* (Jarvis 2011, Deuze 2006). The common playground is a magnet for customers and users, and also for experimental innovations such as unique marketing promotions via new digital tools. Consumers try to find their special experience in communication and (social) media noise. Participation culture facilitates the interconnectivity by platforms, contents, and users (Richards, 2015). If the participants find their own goals or demands in this process, the adaptation techniques can meet with common playground.

Simultaneous digital and non-digital presence (Feher, 2014a) or blended roles in digital–non-digital contexts (Baker, 2009) produce an *amphibian*. The ancient Greeks used for 'both life' the 'amphi' (αμφι) = both and bios (βιος) = life. Amphibian is an animal that lives in different ecosystems. The metaphor flashes the dual nature of online–offline presence via relevant adaption techniques (Feher 2014b). When two layers of storytelling are merging into a new and unique dimension, it is created with its own rules and contents.

If storytelling is open for extensions (see above) and participants meet in a framework of a specialized blended context, they transform to be prosumers. P*rosumer phenomenon* means a practice when a producer become a consumer and vice versa (Ritzer & Jurgenson, 2010; Ritzer et al., 2012; Seran & Izvercian, 2014). The contents and interpretations are moving via ongoing bottom-up and top-down movements. An event or a story is produced by market/marketing goals and also by consumer activities. Reflections are in close connection. The highlight is on the interaction between producer and consumer, where the roles are changing all the time. This phenomenon gives a chance for cultural and social self-reflections in collective thinking by digitally-supported logics.

Transmedia storytelling, participation culture, and prosumer phenomenon support to discover new and creative ideas in digital environments. Activities and events mainly by marketing goals are looking for opportunities to challenge. There is a great opportunity to select a relevant device/tool to reach the audience with social media sharing and further interactive reflections. A unique and creative idea provides a context and a relevant framework to application. The congruence and convergence of all these elements support successful and future-oriented adaptation techniques. Our case study represents a successful creative idea that provides the adaptation of a blended digital and non-digital environment for prosumers.

Case Study: 100Plus Running Race with Video-Game Design

Our case study sums up a creative idea in a promotion via camera drones in Malaysia in 2015. The background of this unique action contains phenomena with consequences that we can summarize in the following points.

(A) Emerging devices/tools can be appreciable and interesting magnet for Millennials (Howe & Strauss) and also for early adopters (Rogers, 1962) who are more involved in outdoor/activity programmes.

(B) Popular runner culture with segmented market from glow-in-the-dark to colour themes has become an emerging market with several choices for promotion and sales.

(C) "Fun run" style with a maximum of 4–6 km distance can engage a wide range of customers more deeply and a relevant theme can support to anchor brand to the mind. Unique solutions with understandable and admitted patterns provide stimulus via creativity to reach bigger mass supporting social media sharing and virus communication.

Our case study presents this digital/popular/emerging creative scope to raise questions and let them float. The following summary focuses on (1) emerging digital devices in popular culture with advantages and disadvantages, (2) the brand-building concept background, and (3) details of creative ideas as a collective adaptation.

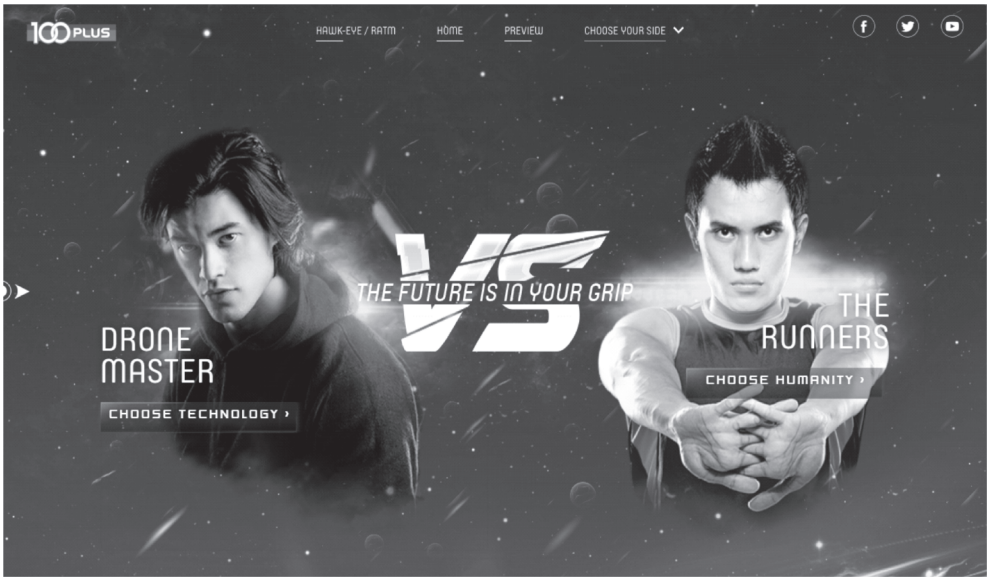

Illustration 1. Website of the running event in the registration period

First, the tools were drones. The connection is simple: runners have a speed and drones can move together with them. A drone is an unmanned/non-piloted flying object/aerial vehicle or a remote-controlled air vehicle that originates in the military industry environment and robotics. Several cases of detections, observations, and target designations have been spreading out of military applications during the time of writing this paper.

The camera drone is an emerging technology: it is actually a flying, remote-controlled drone with a built-in video recorder. Picture-flow recorded by and transmitted via a camera drone can appear in real time on users' smart phones synchronic with flying, via applications. It can be a simple toy, a special media device, or, also, a marketing tool – to mention just a few of the functions. It provides a new perspective for professionals and also for hobbyists.

Illustration 2. Camera drone

The early development of camera drones promises the wide usage of this technology in popular culture. In addition, technical questions such as battery time, maximum and lowest altitude, physical hazards such as "flying lawnmower" effect, and, also, ethical/legal issues are involved. Reasons to regulate camera drone usage is as clearly necessary as drawing attention to consequences of surveillance phenomena. This tool means a remarkable challenge where drones are available for anyone to purchase at any shopping mall or when small flying devices can reach government buildings without a splurge. In this case study, we focus on the entertaining function, assuming the responsibility of the organizers.

Secondly, the brand has connections with outdoor programmes and is also connected with speed experience. The Malaysian 100PLUS supports sports and active/healthy lifestyle. It is an absolutely popular brand in South-East Asia, and it sells isotonic drink products. The brand-building concept by 100Plus – and its integrated agency, Mitosis – was linked, via camera drones, to a running race. This provided an individual and unique character to the international running event concerned.

Third, the creative idea was labelled "Race Against the Machines". The feature was simple, understandable, and trendy for the customers of the brand "100Plus": a running race could become a game for fun where the event simulates a science fiction vision. The running distance was 6 km and the event took place at night. That, in any case, means monotony for a "fun run" category for amateur runners. In this case, promotion was designed in a special gaming style for more interesting moments.

Runners had already had to step out of the comfort zone by entering the race because it had created a hunting situation. Participants received a barcode instead of a run number for 'running tee' design. That was the tool to identify them. Drones appeared and were following runners in order to scan their barcodes during the running race. With this feature of a video game, the feeling of real-world environment was being restructured.

Participants could detect deep voice sounds familiar from blockbuster sci-fi movies around the drone areas on the road while paying attention to flying objects. Drones were armed with powerful searchlights, with high definition video cameras, and, also, with electrically-powered propellers providing a nearly 60 km/h speed.

The captured runners lost a life if their barcodes got scanned. Participants had only three lives. Symbolically, participants were running for their lives. The venue of the programme was so scenic that could as well have been an episode from a sci-fi/action movie: it was organized in the Malaysian Capital's government district, "Putrajaya", and the race started out from the Palace of Justice. From the total of 3,000 runners, only 100 did actually run over the finish line "alive".

Participants could follow a scenario by a brand event and they had adaptation techniques of their own in this projected context. Runners were taking pictures and selfies in order to share them via social networks – they had personal stories and experiences to be spread inside and outside the programme. The creative idea and the cumulative stories generated transmedia storytelling via brand communication mixed with runners' photo/story sharing online. The prosumer phenomenon spoke for itself. This adaptation technique was working. The brand reached the targeted audience and provided them with the reality of a relevant sci-fi movie/video-game context.

Illustration 3. Live video game with drones

Discussion

Digital devices and environments meet well-known popular cultural patterns such as science fiction, videogames, and action movies. Adaptation techniques arise from familiar experiences and collective memories supported by storytelling and participation culture. The case study focuses on three aspects:

(I) a collective brand adaptation technique in entertaining industry with an innovative event in the culture of participation,

(II) joint and engaged personal attitudes implying challenges of an innovative brand event, and

(III) extended social media and mass media sharing of relevant transmedia storytelling by prosumers.

Openness in B2C communication was completed for future technologies and application in a positive atmosphere. The case study represents a serious game (Steiner et al., 2015) without virtual game design by a computer. The reality is played out via live actions. The game design was an additional concept to create a unique marketing promotion.

The blended "running race" vs. "live video game" experience in reality raises a question concerning adaptation: What is the form of adaptation in a similar case without the framework of the race and that of promotion? How extreme or negative can a situation be for human nature? We let functional and moral issues

stretch as far as they may have surfaced in the event "drones against machines." The emphasis is on the phenomenon. The future devices and their applications raise further questions about adaptation techniques.

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Mothers Online. The Content Analysis of the Mothers from Csík (Ciuc) Facebook Group

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Abstract. In this paper, a closed Facebook group will be presented and analysed, which has more than 2,000 members at this moment. This is a formal community on Facebook whose members do not know each other in a lot of cases; every woman can become a member who has a child and lives in Miercurea Ciuc (Romania, Harghita County) or in its closer surroundings. Since 2009, in Miercurea Ciuc, there was created a Yahoo! Groups platform for information sharing: a communication platform to formulate questions and get answers, for discussing topics, for forming smaller groups around several topics. After more than one year, a Facebook platform as well was associated to this mailing list since Facebook provided an easier way for mothers to get involved in a discussion, to make comments, or to add an opinion. This paper's aim is to analyse this Facebook profile along some main aspects.
There will be analysed the main topics of the posts, the most frequent topics, the most popular topics (with a big number of comments, likes), the events of the group, the main opinion leaders, and there will be drawn a typology of the members as well as the Facebook group's impact on the mailing list will be discussed. We will use content analysis, but there will be interviews with the group administrator and moderator, and some users as well.

Keywords: virtual group, online community, social media user, peer support, Facebook, Internet

1. Introduction

In the last decade, Facebook – we may say the most popular social network service – has become a basic communication channel for everybody, without regard to age, educational level, residence, or income. Facebook has become a tool for social interaction and, at the same time, it is also a mirror of social interaction (Debatin et al., 2009). Facebook has deeply penetrated the everyday life and routine of its users (Debatin et al., 2009), it is reshaping communication habits, and it re-

evaluates a lot of personal and community values (Ulmanu, 2013). Its presence in our everyday life is obvious. By analysing more and more aspects of the virtual behaviour, we can better understand the opportunities and threats connected to it.

The online world and online presence creates an opportunity for connection through a new kind of behaviour, a "cyborg" one. This new way of connection ensures the anonymity – the cyborg behaviour appears as an opportunity of liberation in common social knowledge (Papacharissi, 2009). Since the virtual world has no boundaries, even in an Eastern European small, semi-rural region like Miercurea Ciuc and its surroundings, the virtual presence in a social networking site and the membership in virtual groups is very important (Gergely, 2010).

Social media's immense success can be justified by the "capability of transposing everyday life dynamics on online platforms in a very intuitive way" (Martin-Borregon et al., 2014: 1). This is a necessity that originates from the collective behaviour of the mass. People tend to organize communities because of various reasons: similarity, local proximity, common interest, common conflict, or even just the need for a definition of an identity, the need to be separated by the rest of the population (Martin-Borregon et al., 2014: 1).

Increasingly, the mothers are augmenting their media diets with content from their peers. Whether it is in person or on blogs and sites such as Facebook, mothers are big on communicating with other mothers (Miley–Mack, 2009) – and not just about parenting but about other topics as well, for example literature, politics, health, education, fashion, cooking, housekeeping, sports, etc. As somebody formulated in an interview: "I get to be all of who I am at this group. I don't have to just be a wife, I don't have to just be the mom" (Miley–Mack, 2009: 21). Online communities have become a convenient means to exchange information and, at the same time, to support with people in similar circumstances (Bender et al., 2011). And having a small kid, being on maternity leave, being a mom is definitely a "similar circumstance".

The studies show that mothers are "heavily engaged" in social media (Duggan et al., 2015: 2). Yet, there are a small number of recent studies that are beginning to shed light on mothers' social networking use (Morris, 2014: 2). Social media is considered by many people as a source of "useful information and as one parenting tool among a collection of options" (Duggan et al., 2015: 3). It is used as a parenting resource slightly more often by mothers than by fathers (Duggan et al., 2015: 3). A support via networks and the role of women is highly important in both giving and receiving it (Duggan et al., 2015: 2). Analyses show that social media is very important as informational and emotional support as well. Mainly the (Facebook) groups piqued the interest of the social science and the medical research. These are almost exclusively some kind of disease-related groups: women with PCOS syndrome (Holbrey–Coulson, 2014), women with breast cancer (Bender et al., 2011), etc.

This paper's purpose is to analyse a large Facebook group of mothers from Miercurea Ciuc, Romania, who are communicating with each other on this online platform. This group has more than two thousand mothers, who live in a smaller rural region of Transylvania, Romania. It was founded by a non-governmental, non-profit organization dedicated to mothers, which is one of the first such organizations in Romania.[1] We want to get a closer look at what happens in such an online community, in a Facebook group like this. What kind of topics appear in such groups? What about the motivations of the members to be here and to be active (to post, to like, or to comment)? Which are the popular topics? What kind of online attitudes do these mothers have? Why can such a group be useful for women who are raising one or more children? Can it be defined as a support group?

About the Group

The "Csíki Anyák" (Mothers from Ciuc) Facebook group was created in 2011. This has a short prehistory, which originates from on-line events as well. In 2011, a civil organization was founded in Miercurea Ciuc, Harghita County, named "The Association of Mothers from Csík".[2] The main goal of the Association is to gather mothers from this town (and its vicinity) or mothers who are from this region by birth but do not live here anymore – to gather these mothers in one (virtual) place and to represent their interests and well-being; to organize quality programmes for them and their families. The Association was founded thanks to an on-line initiative and community on the 18th of October 2009 as an informal group, based on the idea of a mother on maternity leave (Endes–Ábrahám, 2012).

The original idea was that there had been a need for an online platform for mothers on maternity leave since they are mostly on the edge of social life, of the cultural and social programmes and social interaction until the child turns 2 years of age.[3] In Romania, but mainly in smaller towns such as Miercurea Ciuc, there are only very few cultural programmes which can be attended together with children. So, if someone has no other possibility for baby-sitting, they cannot take part in the 90% of the cultural and social programmes (concerts, book launches, exhibitions, openings, theatre performances, etc.). Since in the majority of the restaurants and coffee shops smoking is not prohibited, mothers with small children cannot go even to cultural happenings organized in a less formal manner in such places. They are quite isolated from social events, from a lot of cultural and entertainment programmes; they can participate only in programmes

1 The first analysis of this research was published in a conference volume with the same title: Mothers Online (see: Gergely, 2015).

2 The web page of the Association: www.csikianyak.ma.

3 Since the early nineties, in Romania, childcare leave is two years and in the case of children with serious physical or mental illness is three years (Law: 61/1993).

dedicated to parents of small children, the number of which is very small in the town. Because of this, there was a real need for having a platform, a different one from the playground, where the mothers can regularly discuss common things, share their problems, have the opportunity to exchange experience, inform each other of events and happenings of common interest. Along this concept was created a mailing list on the Yahoo! Group platform for mothers from the Ciuc Basin or for mothers who are living elsewhere but are originally from this region. The Yahoo! Group mailing list seemed to fulfil this need. At first, the creator of the mailing list – who is also the administrator of it – sent out invitations to join only to friends and acquaintances, but from the initial, relatively close circle (only friends), the group has become an 800-member mailing list. After only six months, the mailing list had 230 members, after 12 months 350 mothers were participating in the common correspondence, and 24 months later there were 601 registered members. Only mothers can log in to this mailing list, nobody can get into the group automatically. Along with these correspondences and conversations, a formal association was founded as well in 2011. Since then, this association has had major community-civil activities (Endes–Ábrahám, 2012).

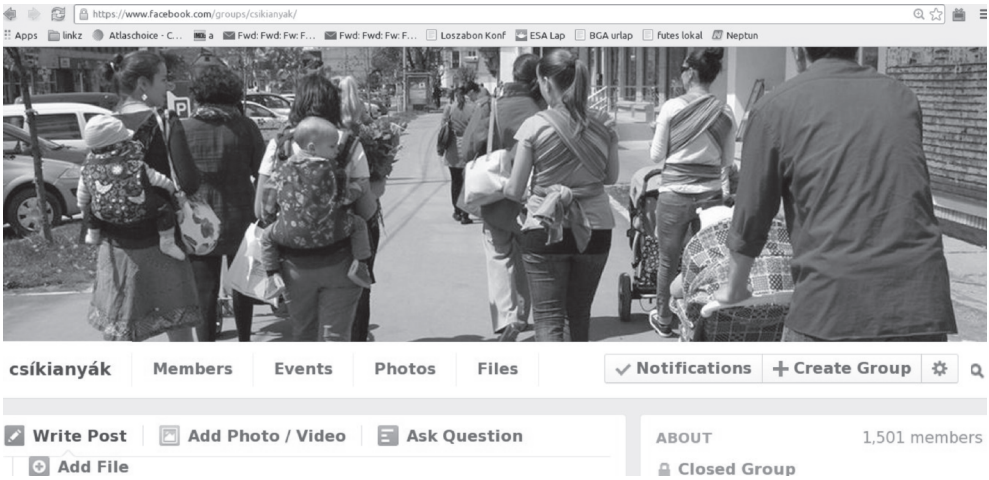


Figure 1. The cover photo of the group[4]

With the expansion of Facebook, it seemed that the Yahoo! Group mailing list was becoming less active since more and more people preferred to communicate on Facebook. As we know, groups can be more easily managed on Facebook (Ulmanu, 2013). Therefore, the Association launched a Facebook page (https://www.facebook.com/groups/csikianyak/), which was primarily picturing the

4 The current cover photo of the group in May 2015. The source of all the photos in this paper: https://www.facebook.com/groups/csikianyak/.

mailing list version of Facebook, for a faster and wider variety of posts. This paper is aimed at analysing this group's Facebook profile.

"By the virtual world's emerging, the given opportunities of the social media also increased, they have become increasingly popular in the online solutions, immediate responses. The efficiency was an important argument in opening this channel" – 37, mother of two, urban, university, creator of the mailing list, and President of the Association.[5]

The "csikianyak" Facebook group is a closed group. According to the administrator and moderator of the group, much more people would prefer to get acceptance into the group, but there is a quasi-severe moderation policy, and those who do not have children cannot enter the group. Those who repeatedly violate the rules of participation are banned from the list.

The description of the Facebook group reads as follows:

> This is the group of the ……..@yahoogroups.com e-mail list. The e-mail list is dedicated to Hungarian mothers living in the Csík (Ciuc) region and to mothers who are from this region but are living elsewhere, to those mothers who are open to public discussions, to different programmes for children and mothers, to give and accept advice, and to be informed. It is strictly forbidden to sell on this list.
>
> (short description of the group[6] – source: the Facebook group's main page)

We have to point out that this group is a heterogeneous group: the members are mothers and live or are originally from Miercurea Ciuc and its surroundings. These two are the only general characteristics; all the others can be different among the members. Different numbers of children: here are mothers with small or bigger, maybe already adult children, even pregnant women without children. Different ages of children: mothers with little children (aged under 3) but also mothers who already have teenagers or even adult kids. Different levels of education: women with medium and higher education.[7] Different labour market

5 Part of an interview with a 37-year-old mother of two children, living in urban area, with a university degree, creator of the Yahoo! Group, President of the Association. We will use this kind of formal notation for the interview parts.

6 The number of the members: more than 1,500 in May 2015. In September 2015, this number is over 2,000.

7 Unfortunatelly, we do not have exact statistical data regarding the members' educational level or other demographic data. But we can make some very close assumptions regarding the educational level of the members. According to the census in 2011, in the female Hungarian (over the age of 10) population of Romania, 10.62% have higher education degreee, 40.5 medium, and 48.88 basic. But in Harghita County: in the total population aged between 20 and 49, 15.24% have higher education level, 61.85% medium, and only 22.91 basic. In the female population of the town of Miercurea Ciuc (over the age of 10), there is an even higher proportion of the persons with university degree: 24%. The proportion of the medium educational level is 43.89 and the proportion of the basic level: 32.11 (source of the data: www.insse.ro, http://www.recensamantromania.ro/rezultate-2/). Since in this Facebook group there are mainly mothers aged between 20 and 50, we think that at least 35% have university degree and at least 62% have

positions: women who are on maternal leave or who are working in full-time or in a part-time job, women who are living in a small village and conduct a rural life style; others, who are living in the town and have an urban lifestyle but also a lot of other women who are living in villages but have a more urban lifestyle (kids are going to school in the town, the parents are working in the town, they are not involved in agriculture, they are originally not from that village or they keep very little contact with the village); and the opposite of this: those living in the town but actually living a more accentuated rural lifestyle: living together with the husband's parents (patrilocality), doing agriculture, the organization of the everyday life is very influenced by the relatives, neighbours.

In the group, there are women who are very up-to-date regarding modern child-raising trends and practices and whose child-raising practice is very strongly influenced by the parents, grandparents, and cultural mentality. There are women who have elaborated skills regarding Internet use and also practice in reading in English language, in finding and reading studies on several topics, on the one hand, and women who do not have such skills and routine, on the other hand. These make this group a very chaotic platform, where sensitivity is higher, the beliefs are strong and very often undisputed. All these make the research more justified, with a lot of questions needed to be answered. This study can only mark some paths along which this kind of group and its virtual presence can be described and interpreted.

Can we put the question: what brings together all these women? According to the founder of the group: the need to communicate among themselves, even if a big part of the group only "listen" (watch and read). The need to be among other women, to share the same problems, fears, and experiences. To learn from each other. And a lot of other things as well. This study may reveal some of them.

A significant number of the members joined the group in the first half of the year. There appear 7-8 posts daily, the monthly average being from 180 to 250. The group moderation is particularly sensitive to the fact that only women can enter the group, and only women who have children, of course.

> The condition of enrolment is the residency or place of birth in the Ciuc basin (as far as it can be verified), or at least having a bond to the place. Because of the Facebook settings, we cannot always see everything about the persons who want to join the group; so, those who cannot be easily identified are put on a waiting list while we are looking for mutual acquaintances. (...) The individual moderation is not possible (as it can be done on a mailing list. So, if someone does not behave in an appropriate way (she is trying to make business, defames, is insulting, is a panic-monger), she will get a warning

a high school or other medium level educational degree, and only a very few do not have even a high school degree (below 2-3%). So, we do not take into consideration in a more detailed way those few persons (if any!).

message in private, after which she will be removed from the list. There are two moderators: I can deal with this mostly in the evening, while the other moderator is trying to be on guard during the day – 37, mother of two, urban, university, creator of the Yahoo! Groups, President of the Association.

2. Methodology

The main purpose of the analysis was to observe and describe this virtual platform with its specific characteristics regarding its function, members, and the members' activity. Our research questions can be grouped in four categories.

1. *What is this group?* What are the characteristics of this platform? How does it function? What are the rules? What are the strengths and weaknesses of this virtual community?

2. *Who are in this group?* Who are the main actors of this group? What types of members can we identify? Can smaller groups be found inside the group? Along what demographic parameters can we describe the active members?

3. *What happens in this group?* How often does a post appear in the group? What are these posts about? What kind of topics appear in this group? What are the main issues which are important, popular, that raise interest?

4. *Why can be this group maintained?* What are the motivations of the founders and administrators? What are the motivations of the members? How can we explain the necessities of this group? Can it be defined as a support group?

Because of the complexity of the formulated questions and because it is an exploratory–descriptive research, we used several qualitative methods in the data collection.

I. First of all, we used the content analysis of the Facebook profile and timeline to be able to get a picture about the group and what happens inside the group. Since taking a sample is hard enough in a Facebook timeline, we chose a month (May 2014) and analysed all the posts from 1 May 00.01 a.m. to 31 May 23.59. p.m. We made a copy of all posts, and along these posts we created a database. Along these data, we managed to produce statistical data regarding the number of posts, likes, comments, type and topic of the post, photos and contents shared inside the group during this period. *II.* Along with the content analysis, we conducted semi-structural interviews with 13 members, who have been members of the group for at least half a year. In the selection of the interviewed mothers, a few parameters were taken into consideration: type of settlement, age, age of the child(ren), level of education, and labour market status. So, we conducted interviews with mothers[8], who:

– are living in the town (8 persons) and in villages as well;

8 We chose the mothers for the interview with the help of the Association.

– have children under 3 years (8) and mothers with children between 3 and 10 years;
– have one child (4) and more than one child;
– are in their twenties (3) as well as thirties;
– have medium (4) as well as higher education level;
– are stay-at-home[9] (5) or full-time working mothers.

There was a multiple purpose for the interviews: first, to be able to identify the main motives of being a group member; second, to be more successful in outlining a member typology, and thirdly to get a more detailed picture about the group's importance and function.

III. At the end, we have to mention participant observation too – since the author has been member of the group even before the analysis for more than one and a half year. Thanks to this "background knowledge", the examples used for emphasizing and illustrating some facts or characteristics can be richer and more varied.[10]

At the same time, this content analysis was augmented with 13 open-ended, narrative, face-to-face interviews during May 2014. Among others, an interview was taken with the founder of the mailing group and association as well. During the analysis, we will present some interview excerpts which genuinely illustrate the statements.

In the selection of the interviewed mothers, a few points of view were taken into consideration: they had to be mothers living in urban and rural settlements as well, with smaller and older children, with one or more children, mothers in their twenties and thirties as well, and mothers with a medium and a higher education level as well. The interviews with the users bring out the usefulness and functionality of the group but also some of its shortcomings.

3. Content Analysis

Over the past three years, a lot of posts, shares, comments, invitations, and programme recommendations have appeared on the group's timeline. Their number is immeasurably great; their review – as we mentioned earlier – is not easy, moreover, it is almost impossible. Thus, we aimed to analyse the posts from May 2014.

First of all, we created a database in which we recorded the date of the posts, the type of posts, the topic of the posts, how many likes or comments arrived to the posts, and were there any photos or not. As a result, we can say the following.

9 On maternity leave.

10 It is important to note that the author of this paper is also a member of the group since October 2013, and since then she has been monitoring the group also with a researcher's eyes. The analysis, however, can focus only on a shorter period of time.

3.1 Overall View

Throughout one month, 241 posts were published in the group. The daily average is 7-8 posts. On an ordinary (working day), this rate is a bit higher (8-9 times is posted something in a weekday). In the weekend, the activity is a little bit lower (throughout May, there appeared only 5-6 posts on Saturdays and Sundays).

Almost every third post had an attached photo (500 photos in total). The photos are seldom individual ones but usually posters, programme calls, article illustrations.

1,724 is the total number of likes in May and 1,081 the number of all comments. In many cases, there are only a few likes or there is none, especially in the case of questions; but, at the same time, there are posts with a lot of likes. The most popular one garnered 93 likes, and there is a post to which arrived 66 comments (see *Table 1*).

Table 1. The cumulative table of the statistics of one month

Number of posts	241
Number of likes	1,724
Number of comments	1,081
Number of shared photos	500
Monthly average	7.77
Daily average – weekday	8.68
Daily average – weekend	5.55
Minimum number of daily posts	1
Maximum number of daily posts	15
Maximum number of likes/posts	93
Maximum number of comments/posts	66

3.2 Types of the Posts

We organized post variety into eight categories: questions, promotion of a programme, photo sharing, content sharing, information sharing, attention drawing, lost/found, and other (see *Table 2*).

Table 2. The cumulative statistics of the posts' type

1.	Question	138
2.	Promotion of a programme	25
3.	Photo sharing	21
4.	Content sharing (online article, videos)	22
5.	Information sharing	17
6.	Attention drawing	8

7.	Lost/Found	3
8.	Other	7
Total		**241**

a) Questions

The most common post type you can read in the group is the question. These questions are very different, but the major part of the group members usually require information. They do not share information, they only ask and are waiting for a very fast answer with a piece of useful information. These questions are usually very concrete: they ask for a very practical piece of information. For example, where is the medical consulting room of a specialist, when is it open, what is the telephone number of a paediatrician? (see *Figure 3*).

Figure 2. Asking for a paediatrician's (Dr. Bokor's) changed programme

Very often, with the posts, the mothers would like to solve a household problem, and are looking for a telephone number of a painter, carpenter, mason, washing machine repairmen, etc. With the contact information, they want to get references as well, they would like to know about positive and/or negative experiences (see *Figure 3*).

Figure 3. Looking for an upholsterer

A smaller group of the questions refers to household duties, housewife activities: the mothers ask for information, advice, hints about cooking, stain removal, buying fresh food, etc. (see *Figure 4*).

The issue of the holiday – mainly before the summer – often pops up. Mothers are searching for cheaper, better, baby- and child-friendly holiday spots and tips. They even ask for administrative issues such as medical insurance, passports,

luggage policy in case of flights, especially in case of travelling abroad – useful information is needed (see *Figure 5*).

Figure 4. Looking for fresh trout

Figure 5. Asking for experiences about air travel with babies[11]

Simulated questions

Rarely, but there can be found questions which are not really questions – they are simulated or non-questions. In the statistical analysis, we did not separate this from the whole question group, but here we will make a quick remark. We could encounter posts in which the mother is not really waiting for an answer but for a confirmation, a validation. Since one and a half thousand mothers are reading the post, the intention of the mother who formulated the question is justifiable: she hopes to receive a confirmation on a decision she has already taken, but one she has second thoughts about or she saw a "bad" example, and she wants to be calm that she is doing the right thing. For example, a mother asks if she should go to the paediatric emergency because her child has fever. She also mentions what treatment methods she has used so far. She formulates the question, but she is not expecting a yes or no answer but a reassurance that everything is fine, no need to even see a doctor. We can call these non-questions since these questions do not need an objective information but a positive feedback.

Another example: a mother asks about seating her little baby. "Can I sit her with the help of some pillow? She is 3 months old and she wants to see more". Answers: the majority of the answers are about orthopaedic warnings: only when the baby can sit alone, only when the baby starts to crawl, to walk, etc. Before these, it is highly forbidden according to orthopaedists and physiotherapists. After a lot of comments, she writes a comment as well: "Thank you all for your

11 In English: Dear mothers! I ask those of you, who already have travelled by plane with a baby. Can I take the baby carriage onboard or I have to drop it off with the other luggage?

answers. I got a lot of private messages too, and a lot of mothers said that they had done the same and their child was healthy. We do not have to be afraid of anything and to accept everything what the doctors say."

We can conclude that the mother was not curious about the orthopaedist's warning. She already decided to sit her baby even before she put the question. She wants someone to tell her: it is all right. The real question is not to sit the baby or not, but to have somebody calm her that nothing wrong will happen. And from a group with more than 1,500 members, there will be always somebody on the same opinion.

b) Programme Recommendations, Event Promotions

We can often find posts recommending a programme, promoting events. Especially those posts are popular which publicize programmes for children or mothers. Every ninth or tenth post is like this.

Figure 6. Programme for Children' Day[12]

In this post category, the most active mothers are those who are active members of the Association; mostly they are the ones to draw general attention to a programme and to give information about an event. Most often they promote the events of the Association of Mothers from Ciuc. In May, regarding the Mothers' Week event (organized by the Association), there appeared more posts about some parts of the event. Some examples are: a photo exhibition from the pictures of the small children, the music play school, the puppet show, etc. But, at the same time, there are programme recommendations in plenty of other topics: monthly hospital visits, music programmes for small children, sports activities (gymnastics

12 It is a cover photo of an event dedicated to children for children's day. "Harvíz" is the water supply company of the region.

for pregnant women, zumba, gymnastics for one- and two-year old children, baby swimming), open day at a local institution (nursery, school, police, fire department, public services), which could be interesting for children and useful for parents. For example, in a post, a mother draws attention to a children's day-time activity at "Harvíz", the water supply company of the region (see *Figure 6*).

To this kind of posts, there is usually a photo attached, which is often the poster or the cover photo of the programme's Facebook event.

c) Photo Sharing

The most common type of sharing is photo sharing – photos with texts often in English language. These photos are nice or funny, bring irony or melt. In general, these are current photos which are circulating on Facebook, and mothers share it on the group's timeline if they think that other mothers might be interested in them. In the case of photo sharing, we can say that the idea, the purpose of it is mainly that "I smile, so I share it, so you can smile as well". In other cases, the post wants to make a statement along a value, which is important for the person posting but for the Association as well.

The Association is dedicated to attachment parenting and breast-feeding as well. These are very important concepts in organizing the Association's programmes and in the Facebook group as well. Therefore, it happens quite often that we can find a lot of nice examples for this (see *Figure 7*).

Figure 7. Photo sharing 1. "Breast-feeding"[13]

13 In English: The little Mercedes cars are suckling :)

Similarly, attachment parenting also appears as a community value, and because of this we can see many content sharings and photos with this topic (see *Figure 8*).

Figure 8. Photo sharing 2. Attachment parenting

There are several topics, such as undisturbed birth, minimal or zero medical intervention during birth, mother and baby being immediately together after birth, which cannot be fully discussed neither on the Facebook group or Yahoo group nor during the events or personal meetings. Although compared to the national level, in Miercurea-Ciuc, huge improvements have been made in terms of hospital births, the mothers still think that every mother should prepare more consciously for the process of giving birth. Articles and photos are shared on a weekly basis on this topic.

d) Content Sharing

Almost every tenth sharing wants to draw the mothers' attention to some kind of content. It is very common that the mothers want to draw attention to an article published in a local, national, or Hungarian newspaper, and they share it because they hope others will read it and learn from it. Unlike the photos, the shared texts are mostly written in Hungarian. This can be explained by the language barrier, as the short texts next to a photo can be more easily understood – even by those who do not speak a given foreign language properly – than longer and more complex texts.

Examples of article topics: articles from the domain of child psychology (ex.: Why do toddlers bite? Why do toddlers defy their parents?), articles giving health

advice: for example, infant first aid for choking, removing leeches and treating their bites, or the evergreen topic of vaccination, which reappears as a topic every now and then, creating a huge storm among the mothers.[14] Babywearing and childbirth are also topics which reappear very often.

e) Information Sharing

The mothers also feel obliged to represent interests that might be important to other mothers in a similar situation to theirs or that might be important to the community. This is why they share useful information about registration to kindergarten, administrative problems regarding childcare fees, free trainings, or when the childcare fee should to be transferred to personal accounts (see *Figure 9*).

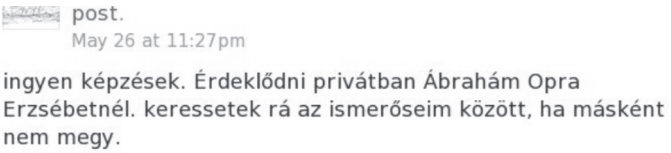


Figure 9. Information sharing[15]

f) Attention Drawing

There are posts which would like to draw attention to something immediate, such as a change of programme (child dance is cancelled), a TV or radio programme which is just on (see the example from below), a deadline for the submission of tenders, encouraging for voting online (for a local female business), or changes in the consulting hours of a given doctor. A post which could be a good example for this was written on a Wednesday, around noon, and it informs the mothers that Sándor Bálint, a well-known gynaecologist-obstetrician, an excellent representative of undisturbed birth, who has given several lectures in Miercurea-Ciuc and who is really popular among the mothers from Ciuc, is on air on the Kossuth Radio (see *Figure 10*).

Figure 10. Attention drawing[16]

14 The Association does its best to remain impartial in the issue of vaccination. Usually, the discussions degenerate into ugly personal remarks and then the moderator has to interrupt the conversation and kindly ask the participants to continue the discussion in private.

15 It is a post about free trainings aiming at the integration and reintegration of vulnerable groups on the job market, dedicated to people without a stable job or to those who would like to change profession.

16 In English: Dr Sándor Bálint on Kossuth Radio. Now!

3.3. Topics of the posts

The topics are quite varied whether we talk about questions, article sharing, or information sharing. Analysing the posts from May, we distinguished the following topic categories: (1) programmes for children, (2) useful information and contacts, (3) health problems, (4) household, (5) dress, shoes, articles for children, (6) programmes for mothers, (7) giving birth, breast-feeding, (8) health-realated conservation, prevention, (9) cosmetology, (10) administrative problems, (11) child-rearing leave administration, (12) attachment parenting, carrying, (13) the life of a mother, (14) articles for women, (15) Association of the Mothers from Csík (Ciuc), and (16) other (see *Table 3*).

Table 3. Topics of the post

1.	Programmes for children	27
2.	Useful information, contacts	27
3.	Health problems	21
4.	Household	20
5.	Dress, shoes, articles for children	20
6.	Programmes for mothers	17
7.	Giving birth, breast-feeding	16
8.	Health conservation, prevention	17
9.	Cosmetology	10
10.	Administrative problems	9
11.	Child-rearing leave administration	8
12.	Attachment parenting, carrying	7
13.	Life of a mother	7
14.	Articles for women	4
15.	Association of the mothers from Csík	3
16.	Other	28
Total		**241**

Trying to group the posts according to different topics, it has become obvious again that almost all of the topics are related to parenting. The most common topics are those concerning infant illnesses and their treatments. In the category of useful information, we listed posts which require information regarding the consulting hours of a paediatrician, hospital night duties or the consulting hours of a consultant, where children can be taken as well.

The topic of kids' shoes, clothes, or toys is present in every twelfth post (8.3%), whereas the topic of mothers' shoes and clothes is only present in four posts (1.6%).

a) Popularity

We also wanted to see which topics are the most popular, which are those topics, issues, questions which generate the most likes and comments to see which are the mainstream topics and issues for the mothers from Ciuc. In the case of content (photo or article) sharing, there are mostly likes and almost no comments; in the case of questions, however, there are more comments and less likes. There are *important topics, less important topics*, and *problematic (scandalous) topics. a.* "Less important topic" does not mean that this topic is not important for the mothers, but that this kind of topic is not so popular based on the number of likes and comments. Some examples for these kinds of topics: borrowing traditional folk costumes, IKEA-related questions, domestic or international package delivering, etc. Before major holidays, it happens that the mothers would like to borrow traditional folk costumes for their children, for themselves, or for a relative. However, only a few have traditional folk costumes, so, obviously, there are no public offerings to these requests. It might happen that they write private messages, but, obviously, we cannot see these. It seems that another less important topic is that of the IKEA. It happens quite often that mothers would like to buy small household items from the IKEA in Bucharest, and they make this wish public on the group's timeline. Even though this topic keeps reappearing on the group's timeline, these posts have never been liked, with the exception of the person posting, while those who comment also have a wish list. It also happens quite frequently that someone would like to hitch-hike online (alone or with children), or that they are looking for someone to transport a package for them (to Budapest, Cluj-Napoca, Vienna, Sfântu Gheorghe, Odorheiu Secuiesc, or Gheorgheni). There are no likes or comments in the case of these posts either.

b. In the case of the *important topics*, the number of likes or comments increases. Examples of these topics: childhood diseases, contacts, information or personal experiences regarding a certain doctor (mainly: paediatrician, gynaecologist, allergologist, ophthalmologist), asking advice regarding the health of children, buying orthopaedic shoes, household topics. We can also analyse how soon answers are given to questions concerning doctors on duty, for example. This also shows that there are *sensitive* topics which mobilize the mothers: they immediately jump in to help, to give the necessary information. It is very probable that when it comes to doctors and diseases, a lot of the mothers have already had some kind of experience, and this is why they are able to provide an answer.

c. Problematic (scandalous) topics are those ones which are very divisive and cause an agitation in this virtuality. At such remarks or questions arrive a lot of comments, but the discussions usually turn into quarrels and end without a real argumentation. Very often the administrators have to calm the spirits by moderating out some comments or deleting the whole question. In principle, homeopathic medicines, the question of vaccination, potty training, the use

of playpen, complementary feeding, and non-breast-fed infant nutrition are examples of such critical topics. In the case of one "scandalous" post, 105 comments arrived within 24 hours. A mother asked advice in potty training her 6-month-old baby. The first comments have been supportive, success stories have been told about early potty training. But after that the following thirty comments emphasized the disadvantages of the too early potty training. The discussion degenerated into malicious personal remarks because the members of the group originate from very different social backgrounds, they have different qualifications and educational levels, they are of different ages, they have different experiences with their family members and different experiences in terms of parenting. In these cases, it might happen that the person who asked the question, deletes the post, putting an end to the discussions this way, although changing experiences is one of the main aims of the group – *but lots of the members will not tolerate an opinion that is different from theirs.*

4. Behind the Numbers

Using a semi-structured questionnaire, we wanted to find answers to questions regarding the Facebook group's membership, how often mothers visit the group, how often they write a post or a comment, what kind of topic they like, whether they write comments or not (and, if yes, how often and in what topics), for how long they have been a member of the group, how often they follow the topics in the group, and what is their opinion about the group.

4.1 Facebook Group Presence

The mothers who were interviewed became members of the group during 2012–2013, all of them having been group members for at least 12 months. Three of them joined the group at the very beginning (those who were already mothers in 2011), while the others joined only later, when some questions arose or when they wanted to be informed about topics related to parenting. It is also noticeable that due to the retrogression of the mailing list the Facebook group started to be more popular.

> Since the birth of my baby, when I had the time, I constantly checked if there had been an incoming mail on the mailing list. In the beginning (*member since December 2012*), 10 to 12 letters arrived in a day; I had to delete them on a regular basis. Then, I do not know what happened, but now there are not so many letters, not in a week. So, after a while, I joined the Facebook group. I had known about it a long time ago, but I deliberately did not want to join because I'm on the Facebook all day long, even so, I'm also a member of several other Facebook groups, I did not want to deal with this too. But there

was no one to "correspond with" on the mailing list after a while... – 33, one child (2 years old), urban, university.

Since this is a very heterogeneous group, the presence of the members is not homogenous as well. It is not homogenous even regarding presence and activity. The interviews point out that there are mothers who follow the group's activity every day and there are mothers who visit the group only once in a while, once or two times monthly. Among the interviewed mothers, there is one who follows the group every day whenever she logs in to Facebook. She has even changed the settings in her Facebook profile to get notification after every post in the group. Another one enters the group only once in a week.

"I usually read the posts every 2 days, I read them always, even retroactively. And I read the post even when I get a notification that one of my friends has written a comment" (34, mother of two [3 and 1], on maternity leave, rural, university).

Others visit the group's Facebook profile when they need information or they want to write a post. There are also mothers who visit the group only when a Facebook friend has posted or commented in the group, and they get a notification about this.

"I do not really follow the group, I cannot do it, and I don't even need a lot of things from there. I follow the baby–mommy stuff group because I buy from there. But with the 'csikianyak' group is not the same. Only just when I am really interested in something, and I cannot get the information from somewhere else, such as a phone number or something else" (26, one child, on maternity leave, rural, medium).

Analysing their own case and thinking of the case of a close friend or an acquaintance, the interviewed mothers say that the most active members are those who have recently had their first children and mothers whose children are from 6 to 24 months old. The two-year-long maternity leave is considered in general to be a hard period when it comes to the social activities of the mother, who is shut off from the "world". In the virtual world, however, social interaction can be much easier and it is reachable with the help of smart phones or laptops, even during breast-feeding or walking.

> My daughter was a few months old, I could not go anywhere. We moved to the countryside in that period, too; we started to refurbish the house, I had no time, I could not go anywhere. Nowhere. I didn't have time to meet and chat with my friends, only if they decided to visit me, but they barely came by because I could never tell when we sleep, when we eat, when we might be out for a walk. So, I started to look for the company of those who have similar problems, similar questions, similar fears. Usually, I do not write comments, but I follow the events, and I learn a lot from the experience of the others" (29, one child, on maternity leave, rural, university).

In the course of the content analysis, we delimited mostly the same topics the respondents named popular and attractive. Most of the comments are written to posts dealing with controversial issues such as someone being pro or against vaccines, using and recommending homeopathy or being against the homeopathic products, evidencing the importance of breast-feeding or recommending the early complementary nutrition, etc. (see Section 3.3: Problematic Topics).

> Usually, there are a lot of comments when the topic somehow stimulates those mothers who usually read the posts, and comment at home in silence. Such topics are: Should we choose vaccination? Traditional medicine versus alternative cures. What are the suggestions and why? Breast-feeding until when? Formula milk? In these cases, much more mothers are writing than usually. Because these topics are not so innocent, and somehow every mother has an opinion about this (33, mother of two, urban, medium).

During content analysis, in the database, we did not pay attention to persons who had written the post, a comment or who had given a like. So, we did not include in the content analysis the member's personal information, only in numbers. But the interviews can help in filling this gap. Who comments and who posts?

"There are returning posters and commenters. As far as I can see, those who have been members of the group for a longer time are more active. Or there is a trustful closer group inside the group (23, one child, urban, university).

As we could see even from the interviews, the members are different, even regarding to comment writing as well. There are members in the group who write comments to a lot of topics, but there are a lot of mothers, who usually do not comment at all.

> I don't like to comment, and usually I don't do it. I do not have time for these, I read the posts very late when it is already out of date, the topic is quasi-closed. However, sometimes I feel that I must say a word. Because the opinions are coming, the commenters are amplifying each other, and the young mother, who is a beginner in such topics, gets an opinion which is not good, not proper, furthermore, it can be dangerous. And nobody tells that this is not right, this is wrong, please do not give such advice... Sometimes I feel I have the duty to make a statement. But as far as I can see, those mothers who were writing comments on a regular basis before, nowadays are very passive. So, I do not always write a comment. But I do it sometimes. A few months ago, for example, there was a post. A mother was asking what to do if her little baby has constipation. The baby was a few weeks old, he was only breastfed. The commenters began to suggest apple juice, chamomile tea, orange juice, etc. I could not believe it! Then I tried to explain politely that according to the professionals before the baby turns six months it is not advisable to give them anything but breast milk, I advised her to contact a

> nutritionist, a doctor, and told her that I would not give anything from these things to my baby at this age. But I did not always undertake this. It is easier not to waste the time, and then not to have a reason to get angry... (33, one child, urban, university).

4.2. Membership Benefits

The group's main positive effect is information. Most of the mothers state that they get a lot of good tips in the education of their children, in problem handling, or if they need some information they can get it at short notice.

"I visit the group every day since there are often new posts. Mothers often share videos and articles or they formulate a good question, and I learn a lot from these" (23, one child, urban, university).

Everybody agrees that this is a useful platform, that there is a need for this group, but the opinions and the pieces of advice are not recipes for everything, they cannot handle every problem, and they cannot substitute a specialist's expertise.

> I always cry out when I read posts, I mean questions regarding a serious health problem. We are not doctors, we are not medical assistants here. We are moms who were maybe in the same or similar situations, but it is not a substitute for a specialist's knowledge. In case of a runny nose, yes, in the case of choosing a sunscreen, yes. But with a 39.5-degree fever it is not advisable to write here but to consult a doctor immediately! And what if we, more than forty-three mothers, say that a cold compress will solve it and everything will be okay? And if it does not? Sorry, we are not doctors. So, the issues should be dealt with a little more caution. There are topics which are suitable for such group, and there are issues which not" (33, one child, urban, university).

However, some negative remarks have been expressed, without asking for them: for example, the impersonal aspect of the communication, the lack of confidence, the very short answers, the ambiguity and misspellings, the different levels of problem definition and message interpretation.

> "Facebook is a popular space, but a group of this size cannot depend on specific trust factors. Because of this, it is more superficial, more impersonal, more 'one-line sentence'. At least those posts which go public. I hope that the detailed comments which are sent in private are much more humane" (37, mother of two, urban, university).

Mothers "like" posts, share contents and comments if the topic is close to their personalities, if they agree with the statements. In terms of leaving a comment, however, they have a much poorer involvement. The interviewed mothers have an indisposition especially for posting and commenting. They usually read most

of the posts, even comments if they are interested in the topic, but they decide to write a comment only in very few special cases. These exceptional cases are of three types: a) if they know that the answer to a given question would be helpful immediately (e.g. a phone number), b) if they think they have the necessary skills in the case of specific issues, problems, and they feel competent to comment, c) if the post or the comments are going in a very wrong direction, against their strong beliefs and principles. They enter the debate only in such cases. In other cases, they think there is not much sense in writing a comment because after that leaving the discussion might be difficult.

It is often mentioned that they are only readers, they learn from the posts, comments, they choose to be a bit of outsiders, observers, as one respondent formulated. We can say that they do not contribute significantly to the content of the group. They do not influence the contents, the evolution of the group, neither with posts nor with comments.

"I comment rarely. I write a comment only in those cases when I feel very competent in the subject or if I feel that my opinion is significant regarding the subject. Otherwise, I usually prefer just to read, to be an 'external observer'"' (34, mother of two, on maternity leave, rural, university).

However, it seems that they would leave a comment more often if the group were smaller or more familiar. They do not write comments because of the number of people they have never met in person and because the written communication might be often misunderstood or it could be offensive, even without intention. A lot of people think that there are mentality barriers: even though in the group's definition the term "openness" appears, a lot of members of the group do not share this characteristic.

> It's hard to convince people about another opinion, another point of view, and perhaps it is not even a duty for anyone to educate people. Because there are people who read about issues, ask questions about certain problems, who are open. But there are those who come with the mentality that "even we grew up like this," her mother said so, she saw this, etc., and in these cases there's no one to talk to. Anyone who is not like this, can find the answers, there is no need to enlighten her here (29, one child, on maternity leave, rural, university).

4.3. "Many Mothers, All Kinds of"

4.3.1. Activity

"Usually, those mothers write comments who spend more time in front of the PC. The rule of the big numbers... Or those who have the opportunity to follow Facebook at work. They know a lot of people – this community is not so big,

and it has a well-defined nucleus. They have an opinion in everything, they have a lot of experience, and children" (34, mother of two, on maternity leave, rural, university).

Thanks to the interviews, we can say that there are two types of active group members; *regarding activity* – posting or commenting –, there is a smaller group, the *usually active mothers*. They seem to live their motherhood in a more active way in their private lives as well, they do volunteer work, they are members of the Association, and they mostly know each other personally. They often participate in various programmes, they are more confident in sharing a post, leaving a comment. And there are the *occasionally active mothers*, who follow the posts and events almost every day, but they only write a comment when they feel very affected by the topic or by the content of the comments.

"Usually, experienced mothers comment, share opinions and experiences ... The truth is that the advice of a mother with two or three children is more reliable, so those who have only one child, even if they think or feel what is the right answer, they do not want to interfere because – in their opinion – they do not have enough experience" (33, mother of two, urban, medium).

4.3.2. Motivation

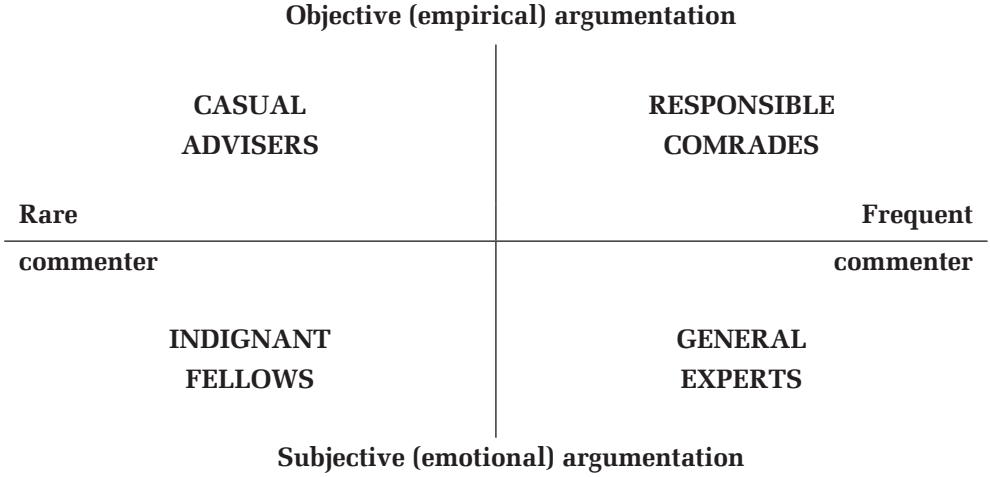
And what about the motivations? Why does this group have such a huge number of mothers? Why is this number increasing? We can outline 3 types of motivations. There are those who want to be "inside" mainly *(I.) to have a connection with the "world"*. On the basis of the interviews, we can say that in the very first months, after giving birth to their first child, a lot of women have problems with keeping contact with friends, colleagues, and other persons, except other mothers with children of the same age. So, a group like this offers a connection with the world of mothers; it is an approachable, accessible platform to gather information about programmes and events, and about new and contemporary trends in child raising (for example: mother–baby gym, folk dance, or musical activites for smaller children). For a smaller group of members, the most important motive is to pass on, *(II.) to propagate the experience.* During the first 2-3 years of child raising, the mothers have a lot of experiences in very different "domains": medical services, nutrition, education, children's programmes, shopping, organizing holidays, birthday events, and so on. Even if it is not as obvious as the first two, for a lot of women, it is an important motive to *(III.) get validation for fears, frustrations, and problems* through contents, posts, photos, comments, likes, etc. These fears and doubts are often the main articulated problems of the (fresh) mothers, but about which there is no other place and forum to discuss. ("I am not the only one with such kind of problems and questions.") The region's mentality is not open to discussing this kind of topics at the family or local community level. And thanks

to the answers, the person who formulated the question can get a "good" answer: an advice, a choice which is the closest to her opinion and belief.[17]

4.3.3. Footprint

"I think, mainly those mothers ask who are raising their first child. And those who are commenting, answering, those are the mothers with more children or who are more mature and 'expert' in the topic" (37, mother of two, urban, university).

Thanks to the narration of the interviewed mothers, we can delimit a few categories of those who are active within the group. This is a low number if we compare it to the high number of the total membership. At the most, 10 per cent can be named active according to the interviewed mothers – that means at most 150 persons. We define as active members those who comment and share information and content. Those who post a question, are not necessarily active members. So, among the commenters, it is more interesting to draw up a few dichotomous types of commenters. Regarding activity: there are *frequent* and *rare* commenters. Regarding the objectivity of the information: there are *objective (empirical)* and *subjective* commenters.



Those who comment frequently and use objective ground are the *responsible comrades*: they read a lot about that topic, have such problems with their own

17 Some examples: 1. Questions regarding the new-born's crying, sleeping: "Why does my baby cry all day long and/or often all night long? Is it ill? What can I do?" "My mother/mother-in-law/doctor/neighbour says not to feed it during the night and to let it cry. Shall I do this?"; "My baby sleeps only 20–30 minutes 3 times a day. What can I do? 2. Questions regarding medical recommendations: "The doctor recommends to feed my baby with milk powder because the baby does not grow according to the medical normative table. What shall I do?"

children, and know much more about them thanks to their job or profession. And they are convinced that they have to give help to those who are less convinced, more half-hearted, and get less help from their physical medium (family, friends, rural or urban communities). Those who comment rarely but with the same objectivity are the *casual advisers*. They write only when they are really competent in a question topic, but they do not have time and or motivation to always follow the group's timeline. For example: a doctor who links a new study about the unnecessary antipyretic treatment. But she usually does not comment to other posts, not even other posts regarding illness.

Those who comment in a more subjective way are very emotional and they cannot debate in a normal way: if someone's opinion is opposite to theirs, they get to personal remarks and unhealthy conflicts. There are *indignant fellows* and *general experts.* The *indignant fellow* does not comment very often, only when something (somebody's post or comment) upsets her. In this situation, she writes her opinion in a very emotional way.

Example from May 2015: there is some discussion in the group about local gynaecologists, known by almost everybody. The person who wrote the post asked only the telephone number and working programme of the doctor.

> Commenter X: "Please, never ever go to that doctor. He is a slaughterman."
> Commenter Z: "Please, don't write something like that. We don't know everything about a situation, it is not nice the vilification of a doctor. Write it in a private message if you want, but this is not nice."
> Commenter X.: I know what I know! I have the right to my opinion!!! I know what I know about all the doctors. I don't care if you or somebody does not like me or my opinion."

After all, the person who wrote the post, deletes it to put an end to the very long and very emotional discussion.

The *general expert* writes in the same, emotional way, but often. The administrator and the members who follow the group daily can name at least 20–30 persons who comment very often, and they do not use a suitable language and are not the most correct discussion partners.

An example from May 2015: Commenter Y.: "All of us are raising a child, we don't need to be indoctrinated. Trust me, I know this better. I don't care about your opinion or what links you put here. I read nothing what you write. I always get angry when I see your name."

4.3.4. Attitude

Regarding the attitude and type of manifestation, there can be defined 5 types of users: *(1) activist*, *(2) curious, (3)* "*natural born*" *mother*, *(4) Facebook philosopher*, and *(5) passive user*.

The activist mother's educational principles are modern, up-to-date, fashionable, and liberal. She is very confident regarding mainstream topics such as breast-feeding, child nutrition, child birth, health and education, and considers very important that she inform others about these. She has a strong critical opinion regarding the previous generations (the parents). She rejects all kinds of opinions which approve of the previous educational principles and counsels: when someone writes a comment like these, there is a storm coming: "I was not breast-fed by my mother, I had no illness in my childhood, not even afterwards." "We would also receive vaccinations, antibiotics when we were kids, but I'm healthy." "Our parents did not take us to early childhood developement, still, we were not stupid." "At 3 months old, we also ate apples, crackers, and still, no problem with my stomach". In this category, there are at most 3–5% of the members, around 50–75 persons.

The *interested mother* often tries to be informed, she is seeking for advice, for help. Even if she does not formulate a question, she follows the topics, puts a comment, or asks for more information in a comment. This is usually because of the lack of a concrete parental pattern or the rejection to accept and follow the model of her mother and/or mother-in-law. She is usually raising her first child. This type of member makes up about 20% of the group.

The *natural born mother* is very confident, experienced; she is raising her second, third, or umpteen child. She takes child-rearing skills for granted, believing they are instinctual. She often forgets that once she was inexperienced as well, with a lot of doubts, since she gives advice like "be there for your child and you will understand his/her wishes..." – sentences which cannot be interpreted for mothers with their first child. Around 5% of the members can be considered like this.

The name "Facebook philosopher" labels those mothers who have an inclination to share contents and often philosophical thoughts about the meaning of life, family, children, or health (vaccination, homeopathic healing), but for them the Internet is the (only) unquestionable expert. At least 5% of the members could come under this category.

Example 1 / topic: should orange juice be given to a 3-month-old baby for constipation?

Commenter V. "I read it on the Internet that you can give it to it! Don't you [another, previous commenter] dare saying me I am not right!!! You should read some more, I think."

Example 2. / topic: should a 6-month-old baby be put into a playpen?

Commenter W. "I saw a lot of webshops which sell playpens. If it were unhealthy, they could not sell it. And in forums they write a lot of good things about it. So?!? Feel free to use it."

The *passive member* from this group is very hard to be characterized since her attitude, opinion, and beliefs do not appear in the group's timeline, among the

comments, through the posts. But we can firmly believe that this is the biggest (around 60% of the group) and the most heterogeneous group, with at least four categories: (a) here are those mothers who have no time to follow the activity of the group, (b) those mothers who are really not the "on-line" type, or (c) those not so self-confident to manifest themselves. And here are (d) those mothers as well who wanted to be members of this Facebook group because they did not want to miss out something so important, where there are "all the mothers," but they are not so interested in this group's activity.

5. Conclusions

This paper's purpose was to analyse the closed Facebook group of the mothers from Ciuc, which had more than 1,500 members from Miercurea Ciuc and the surroundings during the research. There was conducted a long linear content analysis and a shorter one focused on the posts of May 2014. In addition to these, there were interviews done. One interview was done with the founder of the Association, who is the administrator and moderator of the group in one and the same person, with 12 other mothers, who had all been members of the group for at least one year. The paper was based on the analysis of all these quantitative indicators and qualitative observations, relating opinions and the presented categorizations.

During the analysis, we found out that within a month there appear more than two hundred posts on average on the group's timeline. The majority of the posts are questions. The most frequent topic is related to problems and questions regarding health, diseases, treatments, but the interest for programmes for children and families is also significant. The most popular posts usually involve sensitive issues, topics which divide people, such as homeopathy, vaccination, cloth diaper, potty training, etc. These kinds of posts have the most comments. But the comments do not always assure a healthy debate atmosphere within the group; debates sometimes degenerate into ugly personal remarks, the commenters' behaviour and language is sometimes inappropriate.

We can conclude that this group is a necessary communication channel and a very useful information-sharing platform. It seems, however, that this type of communication platform can by no means substitute e-mail correspondence, which is more detailed and more personal. But the most important are the personal encounters, physical group experiences, and connections. The group is a virtual platform, but it is not a virtual community. There is a smaller virtual community, but the members of this are more or less the members of a non-virtual community first of all. The majority of the members are only users of the group. The interviews revealed that this is the retaining reason for members not

being more active: a significant part of the mothers opt for a passive presence because they do not want to get in a dispute. Some people resent that the group is too big and too impersonal, and most of the members are only "consumers" who want something and want it right away, but, on the other hand, they do not "bring" to the group something from their own life, they only "take" something: information, knowledge, good practices, or useful tips.

A major strength of the group is *readiness*: *instant confirmation*, *immediate advice.* This is very important for mothers who do not really have time and possibilities to get the answers from somewhere else. The significant *empathy*, *understanding*, and *supportive attitude* is another highly remarkable characteristic of the group – or, at least, the sense of this. The confirmation of a value, of some norm is immediate as well, but it is *virtually "measurable" and has an opinion-shaping effect* as well.

A further remark: in the virtual world, it is easier and faster to "like" someone's opinion, to share someone's belief, *to have a united destiny*. And *the quasi-strangeness potentiates* the questioning and answering as well. It is easier than in the physical reality, for example on the street.

Everything what happens in the group can be observed without any engagement: even the very modern ideas, practical insights may be *without commitment*. Even within a traditional community, there are very significant transformations taking place. The child-raising "mainstream" pattern seems to change – and this is freely joinable. The "virtual" advice and experiences override the earlier generation's patterns, "rules," and expectations.

Personal *beliefs*, *experiences*, and their particular character *are highly appreciated* (within the group). Moreover: these personal statements and confessions have very substantial power – they can build social reputation and can ground one's personal social capital.

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BOOK REVIEWS

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Peep Behind the Scenes: Hanga András (ed.), *Kommunikációs terek*[1]

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Certainly a progress begins with publishing *Kommunikációs terek*, which is blissful for the science of communication and media, on the one hand, because the first volume of the future series promotes the appreciation of communication in scientific grounds by manifesting what communication research means nowadays and, on the other hand, by revealing how much communication research means nowadays. This book is like a soup: it contains several ingredients, some of them are essential and some of them are responsible only for its characteristic. But all of them are necessary in order for it to taste just right.

The editor of *Kommunikációs terek*, Hanga András, is the President of the National Association of Doctors' (NAD) Department of Communication and Media Science (DCMS) and student of the Corvinus University of Budapest's Doctoral School of Social Communication. She and 15 fellow authors keep direct or indirect contact with the NAD and the doctoral school. Judging by the coherence of the texts, it becomes clearly palpable that the authors are either former or present students of Özséb Horányi's school. And coherence manifests in a good sense, not in a dogmatic way. Unity appears not in the papers' content but in their style: the authors let their personality unfold, whether it is a study related to their research or a review. This is a kind of an inverse coherence, where plurality stemming from writers' freedom interlaces the different papers. There is one common feature, and that is the discipline of communication. Its diversity reflects in the authors' plural approaches, in the number of methods, how communication can be disserted.

Kommunikációs terek – as the title explicitly shows – stays inside the margins of communication science. As it is a multi- or even interdisciplinary science, talking about margins is perhaps irrelevant. It is better to point out the common feature which distinguishes the area of communication science: this is problem solving,

1 András, H. (ed.), 2015, *Kommunikációs terek,* Budapest-Oradea: DOSZ-PARTIUM-ÚMK, ISBN: 9786158004473. The title's translation is: *Communication Spaces*.

which creates context for each text. "This constitutive state can be searched in every little detail of human life, and experts of communication science – such as the members of NAD – are in search of the traces of this state" (András, 2015: 7).

The volume's goal – as it is explicitly stated in the editor's foreword – is to create tradition. The NAD's Department of Communication and Media Science was founded in September 2014. *Kommunikációs terek* is supposed to discuss the scientific activities of the last year; therefore, the chapter entitled *Essays* contains some of the presentations of the *Tavaszi Szél* Conference 2015. Creating a tradition can be observed in two goals; besides the editor's summary of the yearly contributions of DCMS, a mission is expressed: by this volume, the editor's aim is to legitimate and propagate the often undeservingly undervalued science of communication.

Certainly, the most efficient way of legitimation is to give a forum to the scientific contributions, to have a discourse about communication researches. Several volumes participate in this discourse, such as the recently published *Konstruált világok*[2] or the Horányi students' tracts summarizing *A kommunikatív állapot.*[3] Both of them contains well-known or acknowledged researchers' and professors' studies; however, neither of these published contributions have shown smashing changes in legitimating the discipline of communication. Of course, one, or even more similar books are not going to bring salvation for the discipline's dignity, but participating in the discussion about that means a step forward in certifying it in scientific grounds. Nevertheless, it has to be mentioned that András could not dream bigger than reaching the co-disciplines' actors. The book has a narrow target audience: researchers, collaborators of the academic and scientific fields. Therefore, it hardly has a role in opinion leading, but it is able to accomplish its goal, which is to root the profession by participating in the discussion.

The way András's volume brings something new – compared to Demeter's one or to *A kommunikatív állapot* – is that mainly young authors were published in this book. This freshness is not defined by age. It includes parts of Ph.D. theses in progress, reviews of recently published books, results of the latest empirical researches, brand new aspects, and experiments of doctoral students which could be the base of a future thesis, or even get rejected. This volume allows the reader to take a look behind the scenes, reveals what perspectives evolve if there is an opportunity for free research. The intention is keenly different from other books that comprise acknowledged experts' studies. *Kommunikációs terek* offers a new, fresh perspective for the reader.

2 Demeter, M. (ed.), 2014. *Konstruált világok – A jelenségek kommunikatív leírása,* Budapest: Typotex. The title's translation is: *Constructed Worlds – Communicative Description of the Phenomena.*

3 Bajnok, A.–Korpics, M.–Milován, A.–Pólya, T.–Szabó, L. (eds), 2012. *A kommunikatív állapot – Diszciplináris rekonstrukciók,* Budapest: Typotex. The title's translation is: *The Communicative State – Disciplinary Reconstructions.*

As for the structure, the book consists of three chapters: the first, *Workshop Discussions* contains the NAD DCMS's workshop dicsussions' presentation abstracts; the second, the most expansive, is the *Essays*, which presents the department members' researches of 2015, and the last one, *Reviews*, contains the reflections of the young researchers' professional inquiries.

Kommunikációs terek can be read both study by study or from cover to cover. The latter option is maybe more favourable because there is a conscius editorial work behind the order of the texts. However, specifically strong coherence can hardly be recognized, but an arch certainly stands out by which the studies are interlaced.

This arch begins with the examination of news preferences, then follow the conjugation of the first two chapters' three papers, each revealing an aspect of cultural communication: two are related to Transylvania and one to eastern Hungary. After that, the topic jumps to the field of marketing communication and media markets. Bonding these with social media usage, there is a text about start-ups showing the characteristic of network communication. Finally, the studies end with a semantic examination in the field of macroeconomy and an essay about physician–patient interactions. This is followed by reviews of recently published books related to communication science such as peace research, cultural memory, social changes indicated by the postmodern, a collection of media researches, technodeterminism, new media democracy, and a critical approach of new social expectations.

The content varies widely and so are the methods of approaches. Firstly, we read studies revealing phenomena by giving new context to acknowledged theories, such as István Kósa's text, who connects the social comparison theory with news selection, or Ágnes Nagy's semantic orientation research of macroeconomic terms. Furthermore, we also encounter results of empirical researches: Hanga András reveals an interesting counterpoint by examining the reception of the National Bonding Day in the Transylvanian Hungarian press; Veronika Pelle unfolds her fairly high-volume research related to media consciousness. We meet thought experiments, like Réka Szondy's paper addressing CSR marketing strategy from the aspect of the consumer and reinterpreting it from the perspective of credibility; Judit Gabriella Tóth's text about the connection between cultural memory and collectivity; or Andrea Balogh's essay about the assertive possibilities of the physician–patient communication. Lastly, there are descriptive analyses: Zoltán Vékey gives a report of the situation of paid content online press, Zsuzsanna Csorba discusses the correspondense between start-ups and network communication, and Zoltán Ilyés disserts the ritual manifestation of national identity.

If the essays on the research activity could not depict the present situation of communication and media research adequately for the inquisitive reader, then further guidance is given by reviews of works – sometimes surprisingly indirectly

– related to this discipline. The eight appraising papers differ not only in their contents but in their elaboration as well. Some of them, barely satisfying the content requirements of reviews, confine themselves to a docket, while others, being refreshing exceptions, unfold the work's disciplinary context, and evaluate its socio-philosophical, sociological, or even media historical interrelations. Also, there are critical pieces too that gently dismiss the authors for their subjective approaches or their incomplete literary references. As it has been mentioned before, *Kommunikációs terek* addresses particularly the actors of communication and media science and researchers of co-disciplines. It can be inspirational for young Ph.D. students and is highly recommended for old stagers of the field as well – for that very reason because they can meet fresh thoughts, latest results of researches, new approaches and perspectives, and studies written with youngish enthusiasm.

Kommunikációs terek is a refreshing dash of colour, even if sometimes the aspect of communication is almost entirely missing from the texts. Quite at the expense of coherence, however, a volume of studies – intentionally or not – always contains ingredients that play only an indirect role in the overall impression.

The palette which communication researchers can dip into is pretty colourful, as is the way each topic can be elaborated. In the case of some essays, style and intonation are expressly entertaining. The question emerges: is this a feature characteristic of communication science or authors of other disciplines are also equally eloquent? It is a specifically refreshing treat to read such studies with serious knowledge, professional preparedness, and fascinating style at the same time. This feature can be an asset in promoting not only communication but other sciences as well.

In a short foreword, Özséb Horányi draws attention to the importance of this effort that can be faced by reading *Kommunikációs terek.* He adds that this could be amplified by the discussion between the researchers – which can be the goal for the NAD DCMS's further editions. I agree that we should not be insatiable; however, I hope that, as the years pass, the science of communication will be richer by a series that proves to be a worthy continuation of the first volume.

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Sam Leith: "YOU TALKIN' TO ME?"[1]

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Have you ever wondered what do Plato, Adolf Hitler, Eminem, and Barack Obama have in common? You will, once you take a first glance at Sam Leith's book *YOU TALKIN' TO ME?* by Profile Books.

By speaking, we also perform an act, "practically, any speech act can be understood one way or another, as rhetorical – either in and of itself or in the context of its utterance". Reading this book, you will learn what rhetoric is, gain a better understanding of how the art of persuasion works, and "be able to appreciate its wonders and pleasures". In the meantime, one will also be able to use the gained knowledge in everyday life.

A fun and thrilling book[2] that gives us a deep insight into rhetoric – the answer to the initial question of our story. Leith published a second book on the topic in 2012, titled *Words like Loaded Pistols: Rhetoric from Aristotel to Obama*.

About the Author

Sam Leith was born in 1974 in Paddington, London. He is a former literary editor of the Daily Telegraph and contributes regularly to the *Evening Standard*, *Guardian*, *Wall Street Journal*, *Spectator*, and *Prospect*. Leith is also the author of *The Coincidence Engine (2011)* novel and three other books: *Dead Pets* (2005), *Sod's Law* (2009), and *Words Like Loaded Pistols: Rhetoric from Aristotle to Obama* (2012).

The book *You Talkin' to Me?* was inspired by a lengthy but successful newspaper article on Barack Obama's rhetoric that the author wrote as an English literature student.

1 Profile Books LTD, London, Great Britain, 2011, ISBN 978-184-668-316-9.

2 *You Talkin' to Me?* was first published in 2011 in London, Great Britain, then re-published in 2012. It is almost impossible to find this brilliant book in Romanian book shops, but you can get it easily for a fair price at Amazon and it is also available on Google Books.

At First Glance

You talkin' to me? is a small, light-weight paperback book with a bit less than 300 pages – a short overview of the subject. Not the kind that lasts forever, but it is the perfect choice for compensating those moments when waiting for someone or travelling on the bus. It is also available in Kindle edition.

The cover of the book has a creamish-coloured background with red, black, and blue letters on it. The first thing the reader comes across while checking out the front cover is the Sunday Times' review *Witty and Revealing* in small blue letters and the name of the author under it in large red capitals. The title follows in large navy blue capitals, between two red brackets. The front cover uses a centred one-word-in-a-row technique, spreading the title all over the cover page and adding pictures of public speakers that we are all familiar with, such as *Barack Obama* and *Margaret Thatcher*. The later one I found a bit of a scam since the book never actually discusses Thatcher's or any other female public speaker's techniques on the account that "the point at which women came to be not only enfranchised but welcomed into the legislatures, courtrooms and boardrooms of the modern world was near enough the point at which our long history of understanding and consciously thinking about rhetoric sank beneath the waters of Lethe". On the bottom of the cover page, in a single row, it says: "Rhetoric from Aristotle to Obama". The back cover reminded me of the front cover because it has the exact same two red brackets placed in the same spot, but this time Boris Johnson's words and a summary are between them, ending with *The Guardian*'s review.

The book has already received good ratings by several papers like *The Times*, *Telegraph*, *Spectator*, *Evening Standard*, *Financial Times*, *TLS*, *Country Life*, *Metro Books of the Year*, *Scotland on Sunday*, *The Week*, *Avanti!Magazine*, *Literary Review*, *Belfast Telegraph*, and *Salon*. The first two pages – usually blank – are filled with these reviews giving us the feeling that we are about to read something brilliant that will give us a different perspective, a better understanding of rhetoric – and though I did not expect it to really work, by the time I had got to the end, it worked indeed! I would especially recommend this book to those who are new to the subject, as it gives you an overview of rhetoric, something that will spark your interest and keep you going for more, or at least gain some basic knowledge in the field. It can become interesting for those who are familiar with the subject or have previously studied rhetoric – like I have –, or at least give you a different, new perspective to think about.

The title *You Talkin' to Me?* is a rhetorical question, and it perfectly fits the content of the book – which I found very convincing concerning the importance of understanding how persuasion works even in our everyday life. This was the key component that convinced me – a social life and politics lover PR student – to add this item to my cart on Amazon, even if at the moment this book is only available in English.

Taking a Closer Look

The content is well structured, divided into seven main sections (Introduction, The Five Parts of Rhetoric, The Three Branches of Oratory, Conclusions, Glossary and Key Concepts, Notes and Index), some split up into smaller sections. The Introduction already gives us a general understanding of the main concept: "Rhetoric is language at play; language plus. It is what persuades and cajoles, inspires and bamboozles, thrills and misdirects," what I totally agree with. By this book, the author intends "to provide a basic survey of the field: to trace how people have taught, practised and thought about rhetoric from its Attic origins to its twenty-first-century apotheosis". *The Five Parts of Rhetoric* shortly explains the divisions of public speech: Ethos, Logos, Pathos, Exordium, Narration, Division, Proof, Refutation, and Peroration. It describes the role of Memory, Decorum, Jokes, Sound Effects, and the importance of controlling stress. The book brings up examples from the speeches of Satan, Cicero, Abraham Lincoln, Adolf Hitler, and Winston Churchill. *The Three Branches of Oratory* gives us an insight into the structure of deliberative, judicial, and epideictic rhetoric while analysing one branch of speech from Martin Luther King, Barack Obama, and The Unknown Speechwriter.

The language of the book is clear and highly sophisticated, but one must master English well in order to fully understand the text. The author's style is a mix of formality and informality – I would consider it mostly informal because of the outright way of putting things as, for example: "This is one reason why the more good guys get clued into how it works, the better off we will all be" – all of this with a touch of sarcasm and a good sense of British humour. Leith's style is – I believe – the perfect choice once you are trying to entertain both academics and non-academic readers, which is exactly what he did.

The author's thesis is easy to follow since it not just details the structure of a well-built public speech but also gives readers a wide range of examples and introduces multiple points of views. Leith is a follower of Aristotle's rhetoric, as he puts it in the concluding chapter titled *Thus It Can Be Shown…*:

> Aristotle, to me, hit on something far more valuable than Plato. He saw that the world was compromised and imperfect, and that we don't live among abstract forms, but among people. He saw that human beings are not actuated by abstract knowledge but by fear and desire, and that as long as there are people they will spend their whole lives trying to talk each other round. Rather than turn away in dismay, he worked to understand that. And what he found was wonderful.

The concepts are well defined thanks to the explanations provided both in the text while reading and in the *Glossary and Key Concepts* section at the back. Footnotes are also included, which provide important information on various

subjects mentioned and elaborate on points made in the text. The *Notes* chapter enlists the sources used by the author, sorted according to chapters, which simplifies the process of looking up unknown information in detail even while reading. Even if you have never studied any of the fields such as philosophy, literature, linguistics, or rhetoric, you would still be able to understand the main concept of this book and gain awareness in the topic. The ideas included are well-researched and -developed, covering shortly and plainly the ways of understanding public speeches and the intentions behind them. The information provided is very accurate, examining the methods and techniques of both past and present. Those who studied rhetoric know that choosing the scene of the speech is very important, just like the appearance of the speakers themselves and how they perform their speech. The book fails to mention any of these in detail.

Conclusion

The summary of the book *You Talkin' to Me?* is very powerful and convincing because it is built on seemingly both logical and sentimental arguments. "Rhetoric is everywhere language is, and language is everywhere people are. To be fascinated by rhetoric is to be fascinated by people, and to understand rhetoric is in large part to understand your fellow man."

I believe Sam Leith's book makes it easy and fun to understand the goals and purposes of public speeches for everyone. Though it does not really provide information about how to build up your own rhetoric speech, it rather focuses on describing what I like to call "small tricks" like how to convince your audience of your innocence even when you have been caught red-handed. It brings together plain historical facts and good humour on the same pages, but it does not mention the differences between classical and new rhetoric, which are key components of the subject discussed here.

Throughout the few hours of reading, it provided me a new perspective on the world and the role of rhetoric in it. When I finished reading this book and closed it, I was delighted at the fun I had had while reading. But then the following day I came to realize I would never look at public speakers the same way I had done before, though there is much left to read about the subject before delivering rhetorical speeches. I would highly recommend this book especially to those who feel like they have got tired of the boring everyday life and are seeking something different than usual.

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Call for Articles: Special Issue 2016: New Media – Mobile Era

Mobile age, free and instant access to information – do these enhance better learning? Are there other, new types of knowledge emerging? Any new competences? How is everyday life influenced by the possibility of accessing information instantly, wherever one may be?

Accessibility and ease of information change results in new ways of thinking in diverse domains such as journalism, education, politics, or public relations. To reflect the importance and nature of these transformations, scholars often use the term "paradigmatic change".

User feed-back and the role of consumer participation have an increasing role in the daily activity of organizations. Public issues are becoming more transparent and accountable, even the basic action of democracy, the voting or elective system can fundamentally change. Social networks redefine the concept of intimacy and private spheres are expanding these days. Creative and innovative proposals regarding interactive communication in education with the help of mobile devices are published on a regular basis. The expansion of digital culture (digital devices, digital literacy, and digitalization as well as the presence of cultural elements on digital platforms) results in new ways of thinking. The information age can be regarded as a new age of civilization.

On what basis can we define these changes as paradigmatic? The aim of this 2016 special issue of the *Acta Universitatis Sapientiae – Communicatio* is to collect a set of contributions that focus on how mobile digital devices make online interactive communication possible in domains traditionally relying on age-long practices of one-way communication (like education or communication of government organizations). We expect scholars with various backgrounds – communication studies, mass media analysis, new media theory, game studies, media anthropology, sociology, psychology, education, politology, etc. – to contribute with theoretical or empirical researches associated with regional, country, or smaller-scale level analyses focused on the topics listed above. The contributions will complete the papers and debates of the *9th New Media – Mobile Age Conference* dedicated to the same topic, organized by the Department of Applied Social Sciences at the Sapientia – Hungarian University of Transylvania, in the University's Corunca Campus in Târgu-Mureş, between 18 and 19 March 2016.

Topics of interest – with a special focus on mobile communication aspect – include:

– New media and education;
– Communication of government organizations;
– Public relations online;
– Identities online;
– Digital literacy and multimodal practices.

Articles which have not been published before elsewhere and are not considered for review by other journals are expected by June 15, 2016.

For article submitting guidelines, please check the instructions for authors at our journal site at the following URL: http://www.acta.sapientia.ro/acta-comm/communicatio-main.htm.

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Manuscripts should conform to the following guidelines:

Articles should range from 4,000 to 10,000 words, including footnotes and references. Reviews and research notes should not exceed 4,000 words. All manuscripts should be accompanied by a 200–250 words abstract, with 3–5 key words and with authors' affiliation. Tables and graphs, if any, should be prepared in black and white, titled, numbered and integrated in the main text. References should follow the author-date system of the APA Manual of Style (https://www.citethisforme.com/guides/apa). The list of references should appear at the end of the manuscripts.

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