

Report on the activities of the Minor Media/Culture Research Centre in 2019

In 2019, the Research Centre continued to host a diverse range of professional activities, including international study trips, a film programme, application and winning grants, as well as continuing older research and launching new ones.

International collaboration

The three members of the research centre, Krisztina Varga, Balázs Cseke and András Müllner, went on a study trip to Prague with the NaFILM (Czech National Film Museum), in an international cooperation started in 2018, and extended to the present. The professional programme included a visit to the rearranged exhibition of the NaFILM and a consultation. As a result of this cooperation, an exhibition on the activities of the Roma Visual Lab was planned. The exhibition is to be installed in the ELTE Media Gallery, with a grant from the Visegrad Cooperation (around 1000 euros).

Application

One of the most important of the activities underway at the Research Centre is the National Scientific Research Fund call for proposals we submitted in May. A lot of work went into the preparation of the proposal, and in November 2019 we received the news of the positive award (see below for details).

Actual research

1. Digital archiving the Daróczi-Bársony Collection (2019-2020)

In two courses in the Spring 2019 semester (The Politics of Representation), students digitised 60 VHS tapes and processed them for further research. The main theme of the materials is the Roma Holocaust (Porrajimos), which is presented mainly in the form of interviews with survivors recorded on VHS tapes. The processing will continue in the second semester of the 2019-2020 academic year.

2. Roma Visual Lab. Film program and critical film interpretations (2011-)

One of the research projects of the Minor Media/Culture Research Centre, founded at the Department of Media and Communication at ELTE, is to map the history and current situation of participatory video production in Hungary and abroad, and more broadly of minority, participatory and art-based image-making (minor media), and to build a network based on the map. The term “minor media” in the name of the research centre refers to the role of participatory image-making in the self-representation of minority communities, and in particular, the alternative image-making that can serve as a counterweight to dominant images (circulating in public and commercial media). Our historical predecessor is, on the one hand, private film and its artistic appropriations (Gábor Bódy, Péter Tímár, Péter Forgács), on the other hand, the movements of self- and community representation existing in the overlap between private and public (Mass Observation, MyStreet, participatory media anthropologies), and, thirdly, the activities of civil video labs in Hungary (e.g. media schools, media workshops).

The Minor Media/Culture Research Centre, established at the Department of Media and Communication at ELTE, grew out of the Roma Visual Lab open film programme, and the activities of the research centre. The film programme and the activities in research centre are coordinated as much as possible. In the six-part film programme of the Roma Visual Lab 2019 season, we have delved into the exploration of the aforementioned theme of participatory filmmaking. The programme, which is open to all interested parties, is run by students attending the Roma Visual Lab university course. The programme: 1. Introductory workshop: workshops on participatory filmmaking in Hungary; 2. MyStreet, the short film movement, guests: anthropologist Michael Stewart (Central European University - University College London) and Hunor Csörgits (Green Spider Foundation); 3. Second looks. The history of artistic adaptations of private films. Guests: Péter Forgács video artist, Andrea Pócsik cultural researcher (PPKE), Hedvig Turai art historian; 4. MyStreet in education, guests: Bódis Kriszta (Van Helyed Alapítvány), Zrinyi Gál Vince (KOMA), XVID résztvevők; 5. Wapikoni (participatory video in Canada) and Gusztáv Nemes' participatory action research, guests: Zsuzsanna Kozák media educator (Visual World Foundation), Gusztáv Nemes sociologist (Hungarian Scientific Academy); International Day of Roma Culture -

screening of the film *Gypsy Side* in three cities of the country (Grand Café, Szeged, Apolló Cinema, Pécs, Lumen Café, Budapest); 6. Civil Journalism, guests László Siroki film teacher, Judit Barta media researcher, Róbert Bordás cameraman; 7. Photo voice, guests: Gabriella Csozó photographer, teacher, activist (Freedoc), Márton Oblath (Platform Art).

3. The history and current practices of Hungarian participatory film culture, with an emphasis on the selfrepresentation of vulnerable minority groups (funded by the National Research, Development and Innovation Office, 2019-2023, ID: 131868)

The Minor Media/Culture Research Centre's research in the next four years will be funded by NRDIO. The aim of the research is to develop in-depth knowledge and understanding of the history and current diverse practices of participatory/community film culture in Hungary. A further aim is to group, classify and analyse examples of the phenomenon in question within a cultural theoretical framework. For our research group, participatory filmmaking is of particular interest in the form in which disadvantaged minority communities, in alliance with privileged majority experts, set themselves the goal of creating a visual representation of their world. The right to create one's own image is thus part of the democratic social process whereby disadvantaged groups claim recognition as equals and (also) use visual (in this case cinematic) self-representation in parallel with the struggle for political representation. No systematic research has yet been carried out on this topic in Hungary, and there is a lack of research in this area in this country, while abroad the topic has increasingly come to the fore in the last 2-3 decades. An analytical approach to participatory film initiatives in Hungary is of interest to experts in autoethnography, visual and media anthropology, and the study of everyday life, both at home and abroad. Moreover, research into good practices in participatory filmmaking in Hungary and the dissemination of knowledge about them could have positive implications for media literacy pedagogies.

4. Festival research (2018-)

The double seminar continued the cooperation started in 2018 with the Verzio International Human Rights Documentary. In the course of this, film reviews,

essays, synopses and critiques were produced, and some of them were published on the Verzió blog (<http://www.verzio.org/blog>). With the 100,000 HUF grant from the Student Self-Government (ELTE Faculty of Humanities), we were present at the festival with the students and reported on its events. Two further field trips to two film festivals, the 2018 Jihlava International Documentary Film Festival (Balázs Cseke and András Müllner) and the La Guarimba International Short Film Festival (András Müllner), are part of this branch of research. Finally, part of our NRDIO research is to explore the history of Roma film festivals in Hungary.

5. Roma Heroes (2017-)

In spring 2017, the Roma Visual Lab community at the ELTE Media Department joined the Roma Heroes theatre project. Members attended performances of Roma Heroes at the Studio K Theatre in Budapest and then the festivals organized in 2018 and 2019. In the autumn semester 2017, a course with Roma Heroes as central topic has already been implemented at ELTE Media. In this course, the students explored the historical, social, media, cultural and artistic contexts of the performances of Roma heroes, thus linking different disciplines. They examined the press reception of the Roma heroes (in the Hungarian context), their literary background (e.g. Mariella Mehr's novel *Stone Age*), its sociological-cultural-historical aspects (Scottish travellers, Romani Roma, Yenis in Switzerland), its methodological-genre background (through the genre and examples of storytelling and its use in a dramatic framework), and its postcolonial context. The students of the course participated in two suitable workshops led by experts from the Independent Theatre, which focused, among other things, on the role of storytelling as a genre in sensitisation in situations of disadvantaged communities.

6. MyStreet participatory and community film movement (2018-)

In 2019, Balázs Cseke was awarded second place at the 2019 Hungarian Scientific Student Competition with his essay on MyStreet, and he also participated in the conference organised by the Hungarian Society for Communication Studies and moderated the 2019 opening programme of the Roma Visual Lab in the intercultural community space of MiraDoor (Artemisszió).

7. Roma museum (2018-)

Krisztina Varga is a second year student of the Doctoral Programme of Film, Media and Cultural Studies at the Doctoral School of Philosophy, Faculty of Humanities, ELTE. In parallel to her research on the history of Roma cultural institutions in Hungary, she is investigating especially history of aspirations to establish a Roma museum in Hungary, and the exhibition practices of European Roma museums, cultural institutions and museums for minorities.

Budget

Visegrad Fund (NaFILM, 1000 EUR): Roma Visual Lab

National Research Fund (500.000 HUF): website development, film translation and subtitling, and the creation of a search interface for the Roma Visual Lab

National Research, Development and Innovation Office: 47.800.000 HUF

Activities of the members of the Research Centre

Balázs Cseke: He graduated with a Master's degree, at the same time he was awarded second place at the Hungarian Scientific Student Competition for his paper on the participatory community filmmaking movement MyStreet, and gave a joint conference presentation with András Müllner at Budapest Metropolitan University.

Krisztina Varga: She participated in a CEU Summer University course and a two-day workshop on Critical Roma Studies.

András Müllner: 2 Erasmus-scholarships (research mobility to La Guarimba Film Festival https://filmvilag.hu/xista_frame.php?cikk_id=14275, and educational mobility to Primorska University, Slovenia). Writing and preparation for publication of three conference papers and two peer-reviewed papers: the history and current state of participatory film in Hungary. A sketch of a research project at the Minor Media/Culture Research Centre (Jel-Kép),

and “Otherness of Ourselves. Private History as the Hungarian version of the Mass Observation movement” (Media Researcher)

Conference

The origins and current status of the MyStreet movement in Hungary. Outline of a participatory action research. Joint presentation with Balázs Cseke at the conference “Public Spheres. Participation, Access, Social Divisions” (26 January 2019, Budapest, Metropolitan University).

http://communicatio.hu/mktt/dokumentumok/konferenciak/2019/mktt/mktt2019_program.htm

Meanings of the street in the international MyStreet movement - Drama, Participation, Video. Paper presented at the conference entitled Media Research in the Digital Age, in honour of Lajos Császi, organised by the Media Quarter Association, the Department of Communication and Media Studies of the University of Pécs and the Language and Communication Doctoral Programme (22-23 March 2019, University of Pécs, Department of Communication and Media). Photos of the conference “Media research in the digital age”: <http://medianegyed.hu/?p=338>

Roma Heroes at the ELTE Media Department. Performance of Roma Heroes organised by the Independent Theatre. Symposium on Roma Drama and Theatre (Goethe Institute, 27 March 2019)

https://www.goethe.de/ins/hu/hu/ver.cfm?fuseaction=events.detail&event_id=21484269

Social Sensitisation - Applied / Critical Film Education (Roundtable discussion organised by the Methodological Working Group on Film Education)

Moderated by Andrea Pócsik (PPKE), with contributions by Eszter Lázár (MKE), Hajnal Király (SZTE), András Müllner (ELTE). 1st Conference of the Hungarian Society of Film Studies, PPKE, 8-9 November 2019.

We organised a workshop on “The origins and current situation of minor images in Hungary” (Balázs Cseke, Krisztina Varga, András Müllner), which was a preparatory workshop for the research on participatory video. The

keywords of the workshop were: MyStreet, minority image/minor media, participatory video, citizen journalism, private film. Our primary goal was to get in touch with film workshop organizers and participatory community-based film educators, introduce ourselves, analyse still and moving images together, exchange methodologies and experiences, and brainstorm possible future plans. The workshop will take place at the Trafó House of Contemporary Arts - Trafóklub (1094 Budapest, Liliom utca 41.), 9 February 2019, 10:00-16:00.

András Müllner,

Head of the Minor Media/Culture Research
Centre

Budapest, 15 Jan, 2020