

Report (2020)

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)

In accordance with the contract signed by the National Research, Development and Innovation Office and ELTE, the four-year research project „The history and current practices of participatory film culture in Hungary, with special regard to the self-representation of vulnerable minority groups” started on 1 December 2019. In this report, we summarise the activities of the Minor Media/Culture Research Centre in 2020 at the Department of Media and Communication of ELTE, which provides the institutional framework for the research, focusing primarily on the aforementioned research. The background to the research can be found in the „Research Plan” section in the „About us” menu of the Minor Media website, under the „Documents” submenu, and in the resulting study (Müllner, 2020.b). From January 2020 onwards, the project team held meetings practically every two months, eight in total: 31 January, 3 April, 29 May, 1 July, 2 October, 6 November, 4 December 2020. The administrative matters of the project were discussed and handled by András Müllner and Krisztina Varga. In early 2020, the project manager met with each researcher in person to define the research topics, which are available on the researcher profiles page of the website.

In the situation caused by the coronavirus pandemic, discussions moved online, and the Minor Media Participatory Film Working Group was established in the spring and the Minor Media Theory Working Group in the autumn. The former gathered weekly for a chat on an online videoconferencing site for about three months from early April to early July 2020, while the latter developed in the same place in autumn 2020. The first semester of the research was closed with a home conference. At this conference, we summarized the past semester and outlined the next steps. In the morning session, András Müllner talked about further plans, Márton Oblath talked about the spring course he led, two excellent students, Kristóf Szentimrei and Veronika Szanyó, and Zsófia Varga (Beáta Varga and on her own behalf) talked about their portfolios, and Sári Haragonics about the workshop held by one of the most well-known participatory video organizations, InsightShare, at which she herself took part. In the afternoon session we reported on the work of the Minor Media Participatory Film Working Group, and presented the films made in the „The Way of the Mask” series, and finally talked about the three films together with the young filmmakers. This was a good opportunity for researchers not participating in the working group to get an insight into a playful filmmaking action implemented online, watch the productions and analyze them together with the filmmakers. The next home conference will be held at the end of January 2021, where the participating researchers will report on the individual researches. In autumn 2020, we discussed the studies of researchers, with the aim of making them part of the *Replika* journal special issue planned for 2021. After Sára Haragonics’ DLA thesis („The camera as a cohesive and intergroup catalyst”) prepared at the doctoral school of University of Theatre and Film, we discussed Balázs Cseke’s thesis entitled „The Hungarian adaptation of the MyStreet community video map”, which won second place at the National Student Competition in Sciences in 2019, and finally Michael Stewart’s study entitled „Mysteries reside in humblest, everyday things: collaborative anthropology in the digital age” in Anna Gács’s newly completed Hungarian translation. At these three meetings, another working group emerged, which finally was called the Minor Media Theory Working Group. The researchers gathered here are mainly

interested in the theoretical problems of participatory film, but not exclusively, as shown by the overlap with the other working group (the members of the working group are Sára Haragonics, Balázs Cseke, Anna Gács, Katalin Orbán, Veronika Hermann, Márton Oblath, András Müllner, and Márton Árva, who was connected to the project during the autumn). One of the milestones of this research will be the aforementioned participatory film special issue in *Replika* journal to be published in spring 2021. The issue will be divided into three blocks: the first will contain studies by participants active in the present research, the second a selection of texts translated into Hungarian by foreign authors (of which Michael Stewart's study was translated by Anna Gács), and the third a selection of interviews with Hungarian participatory filmmakers. The Dean of the ELTE Faculty of Humanities has signed a fixed-term (one-year) contract with Márton Oblath and Krisztina Varga, who will occupy one researcher and one non-researcher position, respectively. Márton Oblath taught a two and a half year course on „Arts-based participatory research I-II” and Krisztina Varga taught a course on „Roma Museum” in autumn 2020 and is also involved in the administration of the project. (Meanwhile, Márton has been accepted to the Doctoral Programme in Film, Media and Cultural Theory with the same title as the course he taught and will start his studies in autumn 2020, and Krisztina has passed her second year doctoral thesis in early summer 2020 and started her third year.) In addition to Krisztina's and Márton's courses, several courses have addressed and are addressing the topic of participatory film. In András Müllner's master's course in the autumn, he and his students created the material for a participatory exhibition, which will be realized both online and offline. In the same course, they prepared the spring programme of the Roma Visual Lab, which also serves as a venue for screenings related to the present research, and whose 2021 programme will largely focus on participatory topics. The main chapters of the history of participatory cinema, including the research theme, will be closely addressed in a postgraduate class taught by András Müllner in autumn 2020; student papers (including one co-authored with Márton Oblath) expected to be submitted in January 2021 will form part of the planned *Replika* issue. Likewise, in spring 2021, researchers at Minor Media/Culture Research Centre will give a series of lectures on their individual research topics as part of an undergraduate course. Finally, Sára Haragonics, who will replace Márton Oblath on a one-year fixed-term status, will give a double lecture, also in spring 2021, introducing her students to the theoretical and practical aspects of participatory video. The class is also noteworthy because it will be an inter-departmental collaboration, as the audience will be students from the Media and Film Departments (the Communication and Media Studies bachelor's degree and the Filmmaking bachelor's degree, which will start in autumn 2020). This collaboration will allow students to learn from each other as well as from the instructor through the double credit hour, as well as to learn about the genre through participatory filmmaking internships, and in good cases, to be encouraged to do their internship during a planned participatory filmmaking project. In parallel with the above, a literature review and reading of theoretical and practical work on participatory film has been and is being carried out and will be published shortly on the Minor Media/Culture Research Centre website. Furthermore, in line with the research plan, we are building a network, one of the visible results of which will be the interview block for the *Replika* issue to be published in spring 2021.

András Müllner

Budapest, 31 Jan 2021