TIME

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Designing Authenticity in Virtual Museum Tours

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Abstract

The paper focuses on the virtual tours that major institutions feature as part of their sites. As these tours often promise an authentic experience, the question of what means here arises. Since such programs do not simply serve to show digital images of museum objects but also convey a quasi-presence, the paper proposes to examine the authenticity of the experience of the virtual tour in comparison to the physical one. On the other hand, it also looks at the possible authenticity of museum exhibits in the virtual space. To do this, not only the notion of authenticity needs to be clarified, but also that of the virtual. Following Walter Benjamin's approach, the paper examines what conception of time can constitute authenticity. Upon the concept of authenticity remaining the same in the case of the virtual, the paper opposes two positions: one is the historian's view, and the other is that of the postmodern cultural critic. A comparison of their possible arguments aims to show that whatever we bring up against the virtual can also be played off—at least partly—against the traditional museum. In conclusion, it argues that these two museum forms are still part of the same museum paradigm.

Keywords: virtual museum tour, authenticity, originality, actual vs. virtual, materiality

Introduction

As the time of the pandemic has turned our attention much more to the digital world, the number of people visiting museums and galleries online has increased dramatically, and more and more people are experiencing the different ways in which collections are represented online.[1] These include virtual museum tours, which not only allow visitors to view digital images of individual museum objects but also give guests a chance to "walk around" the museum galleries and see how objects are exhibited. It is not a new

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phenomenon, 3D virtual technology is 28 years old, and it was the museum environment that gave birth to the genre of "virtual tours." Its first use was made possible by an English developer in 1994 in England for the commission of Dudley Castle.[2] As the phenomenon is by no means new, there has been plenty of scholarly research on the subject, and much more on the digital and "postdigital" condition of museum practices (Parry, 2013).[3] Museum professionals have long been describing and conceptualizing what the digitization of collections and archives means for their profession in general, leading to international efforts coalescing around the term "digital heritage," which has already become a professional commonplace (Parry, 2005). Even the International Council of Museums (ICOM) has set up special committees to look at how to make digitized, networked, and searchable collections more useful to the museum profession. There are also those within the profession who see digitization as more than just a new and more far-reaching tool for preservation and archiving, so they experiment with innovations for new perspectives of the profession (cf. Dewdney, 2013, pp. 167–188). Philosophers and media theorists have also been asking what technological virtualization means for our traditional cultural practices. We already understand that the computer has transformed the image, and we also know that it suggests that it is possible to enter it. Now we are witnessing virtual reality becoming the central medium of an emerging society. The analysis of recent virtual museum tours may not be only interesting for museum theory because it provides a model of what will perhaps soon become our shared experience; the distance of representation, of mimesis, connecting with the experience of a quasi-presence.[4]

The Virtuality of the Museum Tour—Insufficient Definitions Using Referentiality

Surfing through some major museums and galleries, we often meet the promise on the museum sites that the VR tour offers an authentic museum visit. We now understand that these interfaces promise not only to transmit images of the museum objects

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[2] I will not distinguish between the concepts of virtual tour and 3DVT—I could not do that beyond the surface level due to the complexity of the technique. Generally speaking, 3DVT uses 3D models, video footage, and 2D panoramic images.

[3] Postdigital refers to the stage of development when it no longer makes sense to separate the digital from the traditional divisions of museums, and embeddedness in the digital network has become full (Parry, 2013).

[4] Zoom meetings have become quite common in the last two years, guarantee simultaneity but do not attempt to simulate the abolition of distance. The local situatedness of the participants is not concealed. However, the conversation itself has no locality; it occurs "somewhere" in between, without a stable point of location. VR tours do not necessarily show the state of the museum where the user is taking the tour—sometimes, one can read warnings about the VR tour no longer showing the actual exhibition arrangement. Therefore, by diminishing the experience of distance, the tour creates a sense of here and now—the time layers are always different though.

but provide a quasi-presence too. We might question the validity of our conceptions of the authenticity of museum visits and ask whether our expectations move along other qualities or whether we construct a different kind of authenticity from the experience.

To answer these questions, we have to investigate what virtuality means in this context. We need to look at what we mean by authenticity in general and how we attribute this quality to objects and museum walks in real and virtual space. To decide whether to assess the virtual presentation as authentic, I oppose two possible standpoints: one is that of the historian—the devil's advocate—when faced with the new phenomenon, and the other is the voice of—let us call it—the postmodern critic of culture. Undertaking this comparison already means that I would rather be careful identifying VR simply as the latest in a line of imaging technologies devised to copy and distribute collections and, as such, dismiss virtual museum tours as simple marketing tools. Of course, they are, but I would not support the other side either, which claims that VR is not an add-on technology but a profound change that transforms everything. For example, in Darren Peacock's (2007) succinct formulation, "virtualization, networking, syndication and user-created content have shaken the sector's foundational constructs of authenticity, ownership, authority, and audience."[5]

In what lies the novelty offered by the experience of a virtual tour? Besides appreciating public access and the democratic distribution of culture, the usual answer to what makes virtual reality so fascinating compared to other forms of copies is the simulation of presence. Though the psychological mechanism by which a virtual site leads to presence is unclear, according to research, motion and depth play the definitive role (Sundar, 2015). Since users are not simply exposed to images of the exhibits but are able to navigate through the museum halls, let us first see how museum space functions in the real and in the VR museum.

Moving around with the help of navigability features is clearly a simulation, we could say, as virtual visitors do not enter the real space of the Rijksmuseum. At the same time, it is not *fooling* someone with what is only imaginary. Exactly this double feature, not being real and not being fictitious, is what characterizes the virtual, as Anthony Bryant and Griselda Pollock (2010) define the term:

> Virtual suggests something that is effective, operating in parallel to, but at a distance from the concrete, actual, material, or lived reality. There is similarity with the actual thing;

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[5] As we can see, Peacock lists the key components that form the basis of a cultural collection. He is right, of course, in that there are museums to which the traditional interpretation of these concepts does not apply. However, for most of our museums, that is not the case.

but it is not the thing itself. It is not the real; yet it is not false. It displays, none the less, similar enough traits for our interactions with the virtual to function as if they were indeed real. This is not only at an imaginative or fictional level. (p. 14)

This description uses a restricted notion of referentiality, as it distinguishes between virtual and simulation based on which one has a "concrete, actual, material" referent in the present.

One often meets this, or similar, distinction between the virtual and the simulation, which builds on the different referential modes. One problem with this approach, as Seregi writes (2019), is that by the same logic, "we might as well take not only the digital images but all paintings or sculptures depicting something as virtual. But we do not" (p. 116). On the other hand, all pictures without "concrete, actual, material, or lived" referent—not only abstract but, for instance, allegorical or mythological scenes—would be deemed to be simulations.

Kris Paulsen (2013) partly adopts the approach of Bryant and Pollock but translates it into semiotic terms, which leads to a more precise distinction. He emphasizes that the common understanding of the virtual as "not really existing" should be supplemented by indexicality; that is, the virtual behaves, on the one hand, as the icon since it is similar enough, and on the other hand, it functions like the index, since "it has existential relation to its referent" (p. 100). Along this line of defining the virtual, we return to the old definition of photography. In the case of analog photography, indexicality was the term that described the direct influence of the physical relationship between the object; more photographed and the resulting image, the ability of photography to capture reality through a chemical process. Precisely, the photographic image can be explained as a trace that, although not simultaneous, is physically causally related to its subject. If we were to adopt this distinction between simulated and virtual, we would conclude that VR is indeed the correct name for museum tour applications. No matter how sophisticated techniques they use to simulate presence, they are virtual, not because they have a referent existing in the physical world but because digital images can be interpreted as traces. This reading is possible not only because we could enter the galleries of the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam but because a photographer must have been there taking pictures of the artifacts, and it does not make a difference that his camera was digital. Here, all that differentiates analog photography from VR is that, in the latter case, computer modeling enables a person to interact with the artificial three-dimensional visual (or other sensory) environment.

These definitions do not address the question of digital technology's ability to fake this indexicality. In other words, it would be possible to create a virtual-looking museum that would be purely a simulation—it would have no material collection of artifacts

but a website from which a virtual museum tour could be launched. Nowadays, one can create images without a camera that look identical to photographs—in the absence of the causal link, these images become pure iconicity, and one need not trust what one sees. This image production is minimally involved in VR museums where pre-existing images are digitized with a scanning process. However, even in this case, there is much room for flexibility because it exceeds its exact causal link to the scanned original. Crowther (2008) calls this relation to the reality of the digital "transcausal" rather than causal (p. 167). Both Mitchell (1992, p. 225) and Manovich (2001, p. 295) talked about the death of the index concerning the digital image. They see an ontological difference between the two modes of image-making because the "immateriality" of the digital image degrades the existential link of analog photography. That is, the pre-existent material entity and its direct influence on the sign as a defining condition of the virtual is a matter of trust. In addition to this, for those like Manovich, who regard the digital icon as the forgery of the index, the indeterminate, always-dubious status of photography now seems nostalgically secure. Friedberg (2009) in her definition emphasizes that "virtual" can be simulacra and mimetic, and both

> imply a separate ontological register, an immaterial form that is functional but not effectively material. … the term 'virtual' serves to distinguish between any representation or appearance (whether optically, technologically, artisanally produced) that appears 'functionally or effectively *but not formally*' of the same materiality as what it represents. Virtual images have a materiality and a reality but of a different kind, a second-order materiality, liminally immaterial. (pp. 9 and 11)

Space as a Source of Authenticity—Simulation

Even if we accept this distinction and rely on our prior knowledge, we trust the tour as virtual and not pure simulation—the question remains whether this "similar enough" is enough for an authentic experience. Now, let us ask our two critics: the historian—whose main interest is the artwork, the tangible experience with the physical artifact—would probably answer that no matter how big the attraction of the museum building is, the museum should try to be a neutral space subordinating itself to the objects and act as a pedestal. Contemporary museums are not so modest, perhaps they have never been. We will return to this later. Historians would object that virtual museum space cannot act as a neutral backdrop since VR technology has to apply strong elements that invoke spatial order to create the illusion of it (Hillis, 1999). To achieve this illusion the visual emphasis is sometimes placed on insignificant items like info signs, sometimes on characteristic and orienteering architectural elements—like huge windows and vaulted ceilings as in the case of the Louvre's VR tour—to produce the reality effect (McTavish, 2005).

It should need a historian of architecture to appreciate the presentation of the building, while the art historian would assert that this overemphasis of spatial movement directs attention away from the art objects, thus definitely thwarts the experience of an authentic tour. In short, the virtual spatial movement is overemphasized to make an authentic experience of the walk in the building itself, but precisely focusing on that which we pay just a small part of our attention prevents real authenticity.

However, the postmodern critic would react and claim that we have been aware, at least from the 1960s, that museums are far from being revered containers fading into the background, letting viewers have an immediate experience of the artworks. The physical museum space also mediates experience in many ways, from reframing artworks to making objects visible, accessible, and understandable through the very concept of art in which they are positioned. The original environment and context of the objects are exchanged for something else in the museum space, saturated with the cultural meanings of the present. As the identity of any cultural object relies on cultural concepts and classifications to be recognized as such, the spaces we create for our artifacts—either real or virtual—always reflect the spatial, taxonomic imagination of the present that creates sites of proximity and distance, of being side-by-side and dispersed at the same time.[6] He would probably refer to Foucault (1984/1986) saying that museums are heterotopias since they are real places but, at the same time, products of the imagination. In short, during a virtual walk, attention is diverted by technological means, whereas during a physical walk, it is controlled by space. If we now balance the two positions, we can summarize that, in both cases, space plays an active role. In one case, it directs us conceptually and, in the other, technologically. The physical museum seeks to make this endeavor imperceptible by showing the artworks as genuinely fitting into the natural experience of space, thus reinforcing the authenticity of the artifacts and the whole museum. Whereas virtual space must draw attention to itself so that the movement itself appears authentic, then this authenticity is projected onto the artworks and their arrangement. In other words, the authenticity of the museum experience is created as a derivative of the authenticity of the spatial movement. What is important here is that the conceptual framework provided by the museum space, together with several other factors, is represented but not altered by VR technology. The "only" difference is that while the physical museum space is a given for our perception and movement, in the virtual tour, it is the simulation created by the interface that makes the percepts feel real by creating immersion.

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[6] For example, how the ideal museum should reflect in its layout both historical references and the cultural connections defining art itself is described in a very exciting way in the mid-19th century by Gottfried Semper (1852/2007).

In other words, the VR tour belongs to the series of optical representations that have endeavored to break down the sense of the boundary between representation and physical reality, as have tried to do so many forms of immersive images since the 19th century, like Baker's panorama in London (1801) or the ballooning pictures. The "simulation" techniques of representation require distinctions of historical and media specificity (cf. Vidler, 2000, pp. 7–8).

It is a simulacrum, and as Seregi writes (2019), "tries to conceal its own frame, which is always there in one form or another, and tries to bring the percept (and not the reality) as close to the beholder as possible" (p. 121).[7] Thus, we can conclude that the VR museum tour can be considered as virtual only if a limited definition of virtuality is applied, and the desirable authenticity of the tour derives from it being a simulacrum. We can conclude here that the everyday vocabulary, which mostly follows computer discourse, and which was also helped by popular publications,[8] conflates "virtual" with "computer generated" and links the virtual with the effects of a constructed simulacrum, be it mimetic or unhinged from a referent in the real.

The Other Definition of Virtuality—Virtual vs. Actual

We have found that the experience of space induced by the technological process, described as the main depository of authentic experience, does not actually change the essential function of the museum space to interpret the works of art placed in it in a particular way. The VR tour of the Rijksmuseum can be called virtual in the sense that its digitized collection is dissociated from the definition of particular space and time.

The time and location of digital images cannot be precisely anchored, they have an unassignable space, and they are not "here" or "there." We do not know whether they exist in the same form as when they were born digital, so their temporality cannot be determined either. However, this does not make them any less real or imaginary. In other words, their mode of existence changes, and, strictly speaking, it is not real existence that they do not have, but actual existence. A Bergsonian approach differs from the concept of virtual as a technical simulation since there the virtual is not modeled based on the real or its simulation but on the possible. Deleuze promotes this idea based on Bergson's discussion of the problem of the possible and the real in *The Creative Mind* (1934)

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[7] It is the frame itself that marks a separation—an "ontological cut"—between the material reality, like the wall surface, and the image contained within its aperture (cf. Stoichita, 1997).

[8] For example, one like that was Howard Rheingold's book *The Revolutionary Technology of Computer-Generated Artificial Worlds and How It Promises to Transform Society.* New York: Simon and Schuster, 1992.

and the virtual and actual in *Matter and Memory* (1907).[9] Deleuze (1969/1994) changes the terminology from possible to virtual as part of a broader conceptual shift and writes:

> The possible is opposed to the real; the process undergone by the possible is therefore a 'realization.' By contrast, the virtual is not opposed to the real; it possesses a full reality in itself. The process it undergoes is that of actualization. (p. 211)

Virtual images are not completely independent of referential space–time, not in the sense that they are the virtualizations of some physical objects or pictures, but in the sense that they must bond to some physical substrate, a computer or a screen, to become actualized. Virtualization of artifacts through digitization means that their actual constraints—their existence at a given time, in a given museum, in a given room—become contingent variables. As Pierre Lévy (1998) says, "deterritorialization, the escape from the 'here' and 'now' is the royal road to virtualization" (p. 31). He appeals to a model of evolution, the arrow of direction pointing from the actual toward the virtual. If we do not mistake the virtual as the opposite of the real, and as in Lévy's words (1998), take it as a powerful mode of being that expands the process of creation, opens up the future, injects a core of meaning beneath the platitude of immediate physical presence (p. 16), then the identity of the objects should change from their actualities—that is, as part of a given collection, displayed in a given way based on this and that concepts of art and museum—to something that bears all these problematic. The virtualization of a company, as described by Lévy, can equally refer to the museum: "The virtualization consists primarily in transforming the spatiotemporal coordinates into a continuously renewed problem rather than a stable solution" (2019, p. 16). As Friedberg (2009) claims: "The terms 'original' and 'copy' will not apply here, because the virtuality of the image does not imply direct mimesis, but a transfer—more like metaphor—from one plane of meaning and appearance to another" (p. 11).

Identity formation of museum objects has long been one of the most dominant areas of museum theory. Museum experts have already realized that when they allocate a certain, fixed location in the museum space for an artifact, what they do with their collection could be called actualization through interpretation. Actualization here is not the type–token problem but identification. Virtualization could be a reciprocal process, and through the interactive capacities of the interface, we could project new plasticity into the concept of the museum. Interactivity in a limited scope will not make it, that is,

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[9] Only to give a short hint, according to Bergson, memory is by definition virtual, it necessarily turns into something else, namely into an image in the widest sense of the term, in the process of its actualization. "Virtual, this memory can only become actual by means of the perception which attracts it. Powerless, it borrows life and strength from the present situation in which it is materialized" (Bergson, 1890/1990, p. 127).

consider the growing number of interactive platforms of the physical museum spaces. Most of the times, they offer visitors free choices and routes, from the digital storage, to display some of the potential visual and textual information so that they create their own "virtual museum" conforming to their interests. Here the dichotomy between the real and the potential can be used to describe the process. The museum visitor is presented with a predetermined, finite set of possible information in a freely composed combination. However numerous the potential variations can be, they are, by definition, predetermined in number and logically closed. Giving museum visitors control over the flow of information is undeniably customization, which can contribute to a higher sense of agency. However, this is not a new actualization of the virtual but a new realization of the potential.

The Authenticity of the Artwork—Time and Age

If we acknowledge that museums represent a complex reality of space in which physical and cultural reality interact, mutually forming each other, then we can ask whether one can have an authentic experience of artworks without the tangible experience of authentic, original, physical artifacts. You usually come across a version of this question, and it is not surprising that there is huge interest in what is authentic and original in the age of VR and perfect copies. The historian would rather have a materialist approach arguing that there is a basis for authenticity that largely rests on an object's material substance. Besides that, it is the intrinsic qualities of the object, its cultural biography, and life throughout history linked to its materiality that gives it the special status of being authentic. He would probably cite Walter Benjamin's famous lines: "The authenticity of a thing is the quintessence of all that is transmissible in it from its origin on, ranging from its physical duration to the historical testimony relating to it" (1936/2006, p. 103).

Authenticity is then a span of time gathered into the instant of an aesthetically perceptible present. The time of the authentic work of art is, on the one hand, immersed in the linear, successive order of time. On the other hand, its time is free from the order of time, situated outside of it, where past and present are in a virtual co-existence; the past being real without being actual, ideal without being abstract. However, as we know, this formation of time splits in two directions, and, according to Deleuze, though concealed by normal, empirical time, it is not the quality of the artwork alone but, let us say, the transcendental form of time which makes the passing of time possible. To make it more understandable, he invents the crystal image:

> since the past is constituted not after the present that it was, but at the same time, time has to split itself in two at each moment as present and past, which differ from

each other in nature, or what amounts to the same thing, it has to split the present in two heterogeneous directions, one of which is launched towards the future while the other falls into the past (1985/1989, p. 108–109).

If we find the authenticity of the work in its temporal structure and then recognize that this structure is fundamentally a characteristic of time itself, not just of the work of art, then it is impossible to distinguish between the real and the VR museum experience.

However, this apprehension of the special time experience that a work of art offers may not give the real age of the object its due. Because pastness, as the pledge of authenticity, is more directly related to the materiality of the artwork. This quality of being from the past, that is obvious from the traces of decay and disintegration, is what Alois Riegl called the age-value. He says it has universal validity and claims mass appeal because the sensory perceptions on which it relies are "not restricted to the educated, but also touches the masses independent of their education. It manifests immediately through visual perception and appeals directly to our emotions" (1903/1982, p. 33).

The visible traces of destruction and degradation of the object's material can be interpreted as a manifestation of age, transience, and, thus, authenticity. Then again, the postmodern critic would come up with a constructivist point of view, from which authenticity can be wrapped around any object, irrespective of its history and materiality. Pastness is the result of a particular perception or experience, and as such, it is firmly situated in a given cultural context. A building may acquire pastness because its architectural style matches what we expect of a Baroque building, irrespective of when it was built. The emotional reactions can be prompted by objects that are not as old as they appear. Georg Simmel (1911/1959) knew this when writing about ruins and acknowledged that the ruins would strike us "no matter if we are deceived in an individual case" (p. 265). Thus again, the drastic dividing line between the real museum and VR tour diminishes if we consider pastness an aesthetic quality, which lies more in the imagination than in the chronological system.

Authenticity and Matter

Should we altogether forget about materiality? Far from it. Though materiality as a concept has been relegated to the dark fringes of art history since the 1960s with the "dematerialization of art," perhaps partly as a reaction to digitization, it is bouncing back. Do we take materiality as seriously as possible in the real museum? Sure, art historians have a vocabulary with words like instant brushstroke, facture, and impasto, which are the embodied marks in a painting that become disembodied on a computer screen.

The attention of critics often does not focus too much on the material presence of art-works, instead gives way to production of meaning. The dividing line does not need to be the representational materiality of the artwork since, on the one hand, we are already used to the many art forms that do have a medium and are without corporeality, for example, some conceptual art or performance art. On the other hand, we are also used to turning to high-density copies to observe "closely"—zoom in—the material qualities of artwork, like the many shades of the Night Watch, which are not visible to the naked eye. The dematerialization of the art object has just been one side of the tendency that conceptualism entails. The other side was the materialization of the art experience. In theory, it meant the emphasis on embodied, corporeal perception; in practice, it meant the spread of installations, performances, and participatory art. Now, perhaps the "material," bodily presence of the observer is more important than that of the art object. No wonder this is exactly what VR wants to simulate the most with immersion technology.

Looking at the internet's *materiality*, and its quality as a medium, the historian would say, that, unlike many traditional media of art, the digital homogenizes differences. First, let us take the broader context of the whole museum, where we encounter objects, pictures, texts, and graphics in space; these, despite their relatedness, occupy different communicative frames. In the online museum, it is always an array of media that jostle synchronously in one space, though these media are already semi-homogenized by their digitality. In conventional media, differences are "flattened" in the (meta-)medium, or, as Kholeif calls it, trans-media of the online digital (2014, p. 85). The digital images on the screens are physically flatter than conventional media. It is exactly this flatness that makes them capable to project three-dimensional content in a very illusionistic way, as physical flatness has no overtones of material or autographic presence. The hyper-precision, extreme clarity, and complexity of the digital image, to some degree, express the characteristic visual style of the present age. The historian would say that the danger lies in the supporting technology because the medium is becoming so familiar that they are unnoticed. We are not aware of the (semi-)artificial origin of the digital museum—semi-artificial, since the information is derived from the scanned source of already existing images that have been converted to computer-ready data—thus, all historical differences are dissolved in the high-tech visuality of the digital present. On the other side, the debater could emphasize here that we did not have to wait for the use of digital technology and VR in museums to see that reproductions always reveal the age of their creation; in the case of forgeries, this is one of the sources of their detection.

Moreover, restoration works always bend the qualities of the work towards the taste of the restorer's time.[10] Art history itself not just restores but also constantly recreates artworks according to the taste and imaging routines of the day, and ours is no exception. Perhaps the order has already begun to reverse and—as our eyes become more accustomed to the quality of digital images, which they perceive as authentic—museums are putting more and more effort into lighting their spaces so that the pictures shine as if they were backlit, that is, illuminated through a screen.

How to Be the Servant of Two Masters

After this short debate between these two people, the historian and the postmodern critic, I would say that actual and virtual museums can be seen as different entities residing on the same continuum of culture and not in opposite corners in the construction of realities. One can justifiably hold the view that VR museum tours are sophisticated replications. Their main functions are precise documentation through digital duplication, closer access to the objects—like looking at them from all angles—creating a system of interconnections among different museum collections, adding scholarly information, literature for using the sites for teaching purposes. We can summarize it as putting more history into the project now with the help of new imaging devices. This view means that the personal experience of artworks in real space cannot be replicated no matter how sophisticated images and spaces we can create for virtual presence. A valid direction that follows from this is that of the historian who sees the real and the virtual as congruent, where the latter serves the earlier.

However, as the virtual museum deals with art history, history is just one of the aspects that one can emphasize. The other one is art, of course. From this perspective, we can ask, must VR serve art? I would rather say that it should provoke art. This other approach would not use technology merely as something to be added to existing practices. Not to talk badly about those forms of internet museums that are not linked with either a specific location or collection and establish new "relational" forms of the museum, where the content is partly user-generated or with cutting-edge technology they create mixed reality exhibition with new content. For example, the Nibelungen Museum in Worms, or the MUVI project—Virtual Museum of the Collective Memory of Lombardia (cf. Giaccardi, 2006)—which is much more interesting than VR gallery tours.

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[10] Let us recall the debate over the restoration of the frescos of the Sistine Chapel. There were art historians who said that the age of the paint was taken away, and thus, we can add, the whole color scheme of the work miraculously perfectly fit into our present taste.

What does provocation within the confines of VR museum tours mean? An analogy is the debates of the '90s between new architecture and the museum—with the lesson drawn from it. Like architecture did then, now VR should dispel its own definition as service oriented. However, unlike then, art and VR should not become rivals in the fight for visual attractiveness and popularity. The new technology should serve as a critique of the museum practice—and let me add that I do not consider the possibility that visitors can follow their own paths instead of the one preset by the curator—should reconsider the relationship of the exhibits, should open new possibilities of construing the meaning of art. For this, the internet should be taken more seriously as an artistic and cognitive medium. VR tours should not intensify voyeurism, the reduction of the work of art to a simple sensual form of experience but used to invent new methods of producing meaning. If more emphasis is put on the experiment than on the metaphysics of presence, it may easily cause a conflict with the rights of the exhibited. But I am sure it is worth it. This risk is more evident in the case of AR—augmented reality—when real and virtual elements blend into a seamless composite scene. In the real museum space, the newly formed sites may be called heterotopias (Rousseaux & Thouvenin, 2009, p. 186). Like when the MoMAR guerrilla takeover of the Jackson Pollock Gallery of the MoMA, where a group of artists, with the help of their own AR app, freely downloadable to smartphones, showcased their own works by remixing or replacing Pollock's paintings.[11] Phenomena like this, "virtual trespassing" raise a host of new questions for the art world. I am convinced that after the sensational period of virtual, mixed, and immersive realities, both valid paths for the VR museum—the historical and the artistic experimental—will both find their own ways, neither of which is the bridging of the gap between art and entertainment industry.

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Beautiful Past Awaits Us: Time and Individual Memory in Contemporary Art

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Abstract

Grasping the concept of transience or time has been a basic theme in art; hence it is no surprise that Proust also tried to search for the lost time. However, many people try the impossible: to capture the ephemeral. In any case, transience is a fundamental theme of art, although its representability is always questionable. As Jauss (1952/1996) writes, "time has a special relationship with narrative art" (p. 5). However, the notion of time is inherently difficult to define. As St. Augustine's saying goes—which now has become a catchphrase—"What then is time? If no one asks me, I know; if I want to explain it to a questioner, I do not know" (Augustine, 2006, p. 242). According to Henri Bergson (1889) time is the central question of metaphysics. If this puzzle were solved, everything would be solved. Time is perceived only in its transience. Borges wrote "time is the substance I am made of" (1956–1960/1964, p. 234). The static nature of visual art—prevalent until videos and video installations emerged—makes it particularly problematic to show a phenomenon that can only be perceived in its transience. The great challenge for art is how to depict this elusiveness. The eternal question is how we can be the same and yet different. What remains is memory. Memories are partly individual, and it is largely memories that constitute us. Thus, the topic of my paper is the representation of time, more precisely that of the passing of time, and of memories in contemporary art and the possible attitudes of the artists to stop the past, since remembering is also a rewriting and reinterpretation of the past.

Keywords: time, transience, memory, rewriting, contemporary art

Very deep is the well of the past Should we not call it bottomless. Bottomless indeed, if—and perhaps only if—the past we mean is the past merely of the life of mankind, that riddling essence of which our own normally unsatisfied and quite abnormally wretched existences form a part, whose mystery, of course, includes our own and is the alpha

and omega of all our questions, lending burning immediacy to all we say, and significance to all our striving For the deeper we sound, the further down into the lower world of the past we probe and press, the more do we find that the earliest foundations of humanity, its history and culture, reveal themselves unfathomable.

—Thomas Mann, *Joseph and His Brothers* (1933–1943/1959, p. 3)

Introduction

Plotinus says there are three times (Bene, 2011; Plótinos, 2010), and all three are present times:

1. The actual present, the moment in which I spoke, and which moment is the past.

2. The present of the past, which we call memory.

3. And the present of the future, that is, what our hope or fear imagines.

Perhaps the most significant, but certainly the most quoted author on the subject of remembrance is Jan Assmann, who builds on the work of his predecessors. His studies deal with the triad of memory (i.e., the relation to the past), identity, and cultural continuity (i.e., the creation of tradition). Assmann distinguishes different types of memory: cultural memory, which forges individuals into "we." It relies on shared rules and values, on the one hand, and, on the other, the memory of a shared past (Assmann, 1992/2013). The next is mimetic memory, where memory is created and realized through action. Assmann also distinguishes between the memory of objects, communicative memory (speech and communication), and cultural memory (the transmission of the meaning). Overall, the culture of remembrance is about what we must not forget.

In contemporary art, many artists are interested in collective memory, especially in relation to the socialist system. However, I am more interested in personal memory precisely due to its total subjectivity.

> I've always liked novels, films, etc., where we can see the same event from the point of view of several characters. The ones that capture the complex relationship of each person to history, to their past, to their present, and to other people. Those that can show the tragic–comic, the exciting–boring, the particularistic–voluptuous, the lifelike, the realistic side of this tangled 'reality.' Those that—without the danger of total relativism, without the lack of values—can give legitimacy to the diversity that exists side by side, after the other. (Bordács, 2011)

"No man ever steps in the same river twice, for it's not the same river and he's not the same man," Heraclitus famously said (Graham, 2021). The question "why not" arises. Not only because the water of the river flows on, but because we—ourselves—change, just as Borges famously says "Time is the substance I am made of. Time is a river that sweeps me along, but I am the river" (Borges, 1956–1960/1964, p. 234). Events of the past have multiple readings at the moment they happen, so in retrospect, family stories are always rewritten. In addition, the perception of time also involves subjective time, which we have read about from St. Augustine before Bergson, which is the alternative interpretation of time. St. Augustine was the first to raise the subjective nature of the perception of the past, present, and future. The creative perception of time is also common in the works of the artists under study: for the viewer, the certainty of a predictable succession of events disappears, and the time planes merge.

One of the strong strands of contemporary art that deals with personal memory is mostly "time travel," in which the artist confronts his childhood memories with his present-day adult personality. The big question is how to visualise memory. Mostly this is done by merging images of the past and present.

Although this theme appears in international art in a very diverse way, in the current study, I narrowed down these examples and illustrated them through works of contemporary Hungarian artists. In addition—with the exception of Miklós Erdély (Erdély, n.d., 1978/1984; Erdély, Miklós: *Memory-Model*, n.d.), the starting point and origin of these themes—I narrowed down the illustrative examples to the works of artists who lived through the regime change in 1989. Perhaps it is no coincidence that personal memory takes such a dominant role in the work of this generation.

I examine the topic according to 3 main aspects:

1. How does the past affect the present, the continuing impact of transgenerational themes and experiences?

2. How can time be stopped? The fixation of impermanence;

3. Although the article deals with personal memory, in certain historical situations and in the case of certain people, personal memory is closely intertwined with collective memory.

Moreover, I elaborate on the works that showcase this specific theme and the bibliographies of artists in detail.

Miklós Erdély[1] and Time-travel

The starting point for all this is Miklós Erdély's series of photographs entitled *Time Lock* (1976) and *Time Travel* (1976), in which he applies his adult photograph to his childhood pictures. This way, with adult intelligence, he relives his childhood experiences and meets his father, who is already dead. Memory, thus, becomes active. Moreover, since he is older than his father in the photo, is included in the story as an all-knowing character. Erdély, even before this, addresses the return of time to itself in his writing entitled *Time-Mobius*.

1. What will be and will be able to react is there.

2. What reacts to oneself defines oneself as a cause.

3. Only one who turns around and acts as a cause can shape himself.

4. He who acts as a cause for himself is already what he wants to transform himself into.

5. However, it could not have been what it would have been if it had not transformed itself into what it was, even though it had transformed itself into what it had become.

6. The more advanced reaches back to be more advanced.

7. Thus, it mutually defines itself (back and forth).

8. Thus, freedom is a double determination in time.

9. If you live in the knowledge that you can return to every moment, you are enclosed by your own salvation.

10. Man is, therefore, subject to someone who knows him best: himself.

11. Fear yourself.

12. You are done.[2] (my translation)

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[1] A short biography of the artists discussed in the paper is presented in Appendix.

[2]   1. Ami lesz és visszahatni képes, az van.
    2. Ami önmagára visszahat, az önmagát okként határozza meg.
    3. Csak az képes magát alakítani, aki visszafordul és magára okként hat.
    4. Aki magára okként hat, az már olyan, amilyenné magát alakítani kívánja.
    5. Azonban mégsem lehetett volna olyan amilyen, ha nem alakította volna olyanná amilyen, jóllehet azzal a magával alakította magát olyanná amilyen, amilyenné alakult.
    6. A fejlettebb visszanyúl, hogy fejlettebb legyen.
    7. Így önmagát (oda-vissza) kölcsönösen meghatározza.
    8. Ekként a szabadság kétszeres meghatározottság az időben.
    9. Ha annak tudatában élsz, hogy minden pillanatodhoz vissza (meg)térhetsz, saját megváltá-sodtól vagy bekerített.
    10. Az ember tehát alávetett valakinek, aki legjobban ismeri: önmagának.
    11. Tarts önmagadtól.
    12. Kész van, ami készül. (Erdély, 1983, p. 61)

Time and memory were also theoretical concerns of Miklós Erdély, as is evident from his study entitled *The Memory Model* (Erdély, n.d., 1978/1984; Erdély, Miklós: *Memory-Model*, n.d.). Memory, according to him, is made possible by the spiral structure of "private" time, where the

> In the mind the distance of temporal points is not determined lineally, but they are copied on each other and on the totality of future time by the memory. And everything what will happen in the future appears like new layers on the 'happened.' Moving 'forwards' in time, the image of an event becomes less and less clear and strong what makes possible to register always new images without the disturbing effect of their equal value.

> A quantity of lineal events like one week of performances can be an ideal model to examine the action of remembering. When I proposed to make a special documentation of the actions, I intended to show the process, how the events write themselves in the mind of participants one after the other, how they cover, disturb, rhythm each other (Erdély, Miklós: *Memory-Model*, n.d.).

Later on, when artists travel through time, they prefer to use the device of transparency, which seems to be the most appropriate way to blend past and present. However, this can also make it very easy to become tiresome. I will examine the revival and reworking of the past through the works of Mariann Imre, Ágnes Uray-Szépfalvi, Marianne Csáky, Zsolt Asztalos, Karina Horitz, Luca Gőbölyös, and Marcell Esterházy.

Past in the Present

There are many ways in which different moments from the past can be evoked. For example, different memories may be recalled at the same time. This is difficult to do visually, but one excellent way is through the *Lenticular* images of Luca Gőbölyös (2007). The series of works explore, among other things, how the same situation is interpreted by factual history and, for example, by children's memory.

The reconstruction of the personal past is mainly concerned with family history, so Ágnes Szépfalvi rewrote her own personal history based on the diary of her grandmother, which she found and was so important to her that she even changed her name to Agnes von Uray. Her name today is Ágnes Uray-Szépfalvi.

After the death of her grandparents, Karina Horitz received the little-known grandparents' photos from her separated father. In her Hybrid Memory project, she tried to connect with them afterwards by placing herself in their enlarged photos, replicating their postures

and thus connecting with them. This is particularly important because kinetic memory is the deepest and most persistent in Proustian involuntary memory. By projecting old family photos onto herself, the artist became part of the stories herself, reinterpreting the narrative of the old photographs.

Marianne Csáky also focuses on family, in addition to the passage of time. Marianne Csáky deals with her own past in a very special way in her *Time Leap* series (2008). She has superimposed negatives of her adult photographs on negatives of her childhood pictures. The resulting works are unique in their colors and their interpretation of the past. Even more thought-provoking are the artist's larger images, in which she has superimposed silhouettes of her past onto nude photographs of herself. She has embroidered present-day figures onto family photographs that can be drawn on certain art historical types (e.g., images of the Madonna). The uncertain identity and out-of-context placement of the faceless shadows create serious tension in the room. At the same time, Csáky is interested in time and space in general, and her recent multi-layered works on paper cut-outs reflect this approach to reconstructing the phases of time and space.

In another series by Mariann Csáky, *Time Tunnel* (2016), the works are born from the basic experience that the place where something important happened to her preserves these events, and their imprint remains even if the people and the situation are no longer there. The subjective changes of space also refer to the flow of time.

Image 1
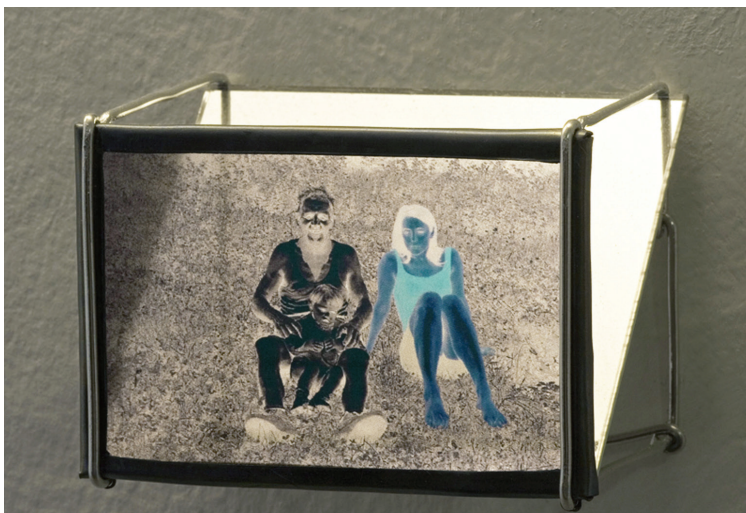Marianne Csáky, *Time Leap Summer Series*, Lightbox (2007)

Image 2
Marianne Csáky,
Time Tunnel (2016)

The physical realization of this experience, by the way, was exactly the same as with all her other works, simply that one morning she saw the image in front of her with the phases of movement layered on top of each other. She then took countless photos of herself with a self-timer, from which she selected the three images that made up the three pictures in the series. Following this, she used a video camera to take countless small videos of her moving around in space. She drew the layers of the collage that suggest movement based on the frames of the videos. The space, the studio kitchen, is the everyday site of her life—but that is not the only reason it became an important place. Every morning, and every afternoon, she is amazed by the light effects produced by its position, its relationship to the reflecting fire walls and the sun.

Luca Gőbölyös is also recurrently preoccupied with transience. On the one hand, family past appears in her pictures of *Lenticular* (2007); on the other hand, she is also pre-occupied with time as "decay." In this, the female aspect prevails, as in the traditional interpretation the essence of a woman is a young attractive body and fertility. However, time does not spare the human body. This experience, which is particularly distressing for women in most cases, is captured in her exhibition at the Társaskör Gallery in Óbuda, Budapest. It was here, that she first exhibited her Plexiglas works, in which an attrac-tive body was suddenly affected by aging. These works have since been exhibited on their own, but at the time, in 2000, they were part of a large installation where the elderly female body was a central theme (Bordács, 2000).

p'arts, Papers in Arts
hum' and Humanities

Image 3
Gőbölyös Luca, *Lenticular Images* (2007)

Zsolt Asztalos went even further in capturing subjective time. In his *Mirror Portraits* (2006), the piece is actually created when the viewer's own face merges with the photograph on the reflective surface. The static portraits and the ever-changing reflections create an exciting interplay of impermanence and transience. Seeing the mirror portraits of Zsolt Asztalos, or more precisely, meeting ourselves in them, merging with the faces looking at us from behind the mirrors, can naturally give us a sense of *déjà vu* in terms of content and genre (Asztalos, 2006).

Closely related to this is that our present identity is influenced by the unravelling of family history (Karina Horitz, Marianne Csáky). Our ancestors, even if unknown to us, influence our lives; they are not just a moment in the here and now, but we carry the experiences, values and mistakes of our ancestors. Indeed, some moments in history are experienced subjectively in a different way than the way they occur objectively and factually. However, it is not only the various experiences and interpretations that take place at the same time that alter. We ourselves are born and constantly change within the web of our past, our ancestors, the experiences that have affected us. Each individual, no matter how individualistic the reality we live in is, carries the influence of many, many other individuals unconsciously.

Mariann Imre and *The Fixation Transitoire*

Mariann Imre's main art project revolves around the traces of memory (Bordács, 2014; Nagy, 2014). In practice, she wants to stop time. The traces usually erased are instead captured, embroidered—thus recording transience. In the meantime, of course, she does not stop the sun from transitioning in the sky, nor does she get carried away by the intoxication of transience (Khajjám, ca. 1120/1979, 1997).

In the visual arts, this is a particularly challenging task—it is the photograph that has become capable of capturing the fleeting moment, and it is this vision that Impressionism has embraced. In that case, however, it was an attempt to capture and record the change of landscape and natural conditions, rather than to confront the finite nature of life, experience, and memory.

The title *The Fixation Transitoire* is itself an oxymoron—as is the artist's previous exhibition title, Silent Sounds—and so is the special technique employed, embroidered concrete. The weight and drama of life is precisely that of passing, of death, and Mariann Imre makes us aware of this tragedy with incredible sensitivity and subtlety.

For her, the past is also embodied in the most ordinary things: the hand and footprints left behind, the fallen pine needles and flower petals, the pollen that covers the table. In fact, her gentle yet tenacious confrontation with time had already begun in her earlier works, and concrete embroidery can be interpreted from this perspective as the hard concrete yields to the thread while protecting the fragile embroidery. Her work *Vegetation*, made for the 1999 Venice Biennale and embedded in the entrance to the Hungarian Pavilion, was doomed to destruction by the spectators' walking over it, its destruction being part of the work. Just as she became an important representative of domestic women's art in the late 1990s through her relationship to the world as expressed in embroidery, she has retained her female sites, problematics and solutions to this day.

The Fixation Transitoire project was an attempt to capture transience in the mystical church space of the Kiscelli Museum. The site is a communal, public space—an exhibition space that cannot be separated from its original sacral function. At the same time, however, the artist has set herself the goal of literally creating a personal space in this medium. She has evoked a 1:1 scale replica of her room, stripped down to the bare bones. Thus, one views a personal space without personal objects but with only traces of its occupant(s): dirt, the remains of cat's feet and tapestries, inscriptions on the wall.

The recording of small things is both playful and melancholic because with these "sweet little nothings," the all-encompassing passing of time can perhaps be captured even better. She does not stop time but catches it in the act of passing. For, in order to enter into any relationship with the past,

> the latter must become conscious of it as such. There are two conditions for this. First, the Past cannot disappear without a trace, there must be evidence of it. Secondly, the evidence must show a distinctive difference from the Present. (Assmann, 1992/2013, p. 32)

The exhibition focuses on the range from the macro world to the micro one. The room—as the site of personal living space—dominates the place with its traces. Apparently, it is empty, or more accurately, devoid of objects, with only fragments of objects and memories. In another, a smaller part of the space, a table, the place of communal meals, tells a story through the fallen petals and pollen, or rather their embroidered imitation. We see traces, dirt, what we throw away, clean up, and paint, which disturb the order, but which make our environment personal, homely, and signs of life, but at the same time, they are what we remove in the name of tidying up.

In the even smaller, almost unnoticeable space of the exhibition,[3] on an smaller table, or more precisely on a reading table, her diary and diary drawings can be read like a codex, which, unlike the codex, is as personal as possible. While the room and the table are not only the space of the self, but also of us, the diary is exclusively a document of the self, and this intimate location makes this even more apparent.

Marianne Imre is not fundamentally interested in memory at the level of cultural memory but only at the level of personal history. Her attachment to the past is limited to the recent past and only to the narrow family circle, the micro-environment—at least in the exhibition space.

In fact, however, the artist presents us with a deceptive situation since it is not only personal space that is shown, although that would be enough. Marianne Imre's studio in Dráva Street is in itself a space of remembrance, and cultural remembrance at that, as it was once home to Ödön Márffy, later Vilmos Perlott-Csaba and subsequently Tibor Csernus. Of course, it is an open question to what extent this latter fact, which is only a footnote to the exhibition, actually influences the work and its reception. In any case, it seems that in Marianne Imre's oeuvre memory appears as resistance. Not a strident, radical, but certainly a consistent resistance to transience.

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[3] She had previously exhibited her piece, *The Lungs* in this part of the Kiscelli Museum

Image 4
Imre Mariann,
Recording the Transience (2014)

Karina Horitz and the Means of Remembering

Karina Horitz's work is equally concerned with memory, the past, identity and forgetting, absence, shadow, and the present-not-being. The oscillation between opposites is the "field" of her work. These are not contradictory, as Borges' "The Library of Babel" says: "forgetting is a form of memory, a spacious cellar, the other, secret side of the coin" (Borges, as cited in Weinrich, 1997/2004, p. 211).

Karina Horitz's piece, *Hybrid Memories* should be placed low, at eye level, at a human scale, so that the spectator can enter into a direct, almost personal relationship with the characters in the images. The location is always a decisive factor in the installation of the work, which could be seen at Somorja prior to the exhibition *A Beautiful Past Awaits Us* at the Csikász Gallery in Veszprém. The exhibition space of the At Home Gallery at Somorja, the Synagogue Square, is evocative of the past, both historically and aesthetically: on the one hand, due to the history of the Jewish community of Somorja; on the other hand, due to the beauty of decay on the walls of the synagogue, which is a defining feature. The mystical atmosphere of the place made a journey into the past seem like an obvious theme. The only question was whom this journey affected. As the descendants of the Jews who once lived here have largely dispersed the most certain and already constant theme

remained: the journey into one's own past (*The Self of Memory*, 2000; *Visible Distance*, 2006) and into a white spot of it, the episode of the spiritual encounter with the almost unknown paternal grandparents.

As she delves into, not only her own past, but that of her grandparents, she takes an almost Dantean journey into the realm of the dead. And as Dante (1308–1320/1867) uses a mnemotechnical device to avert the threat to memory: he calls upon the muses, the nine daughters of Mnémosyne, the goddess of memory.

In recent years, contemporary art has produced a large number of works in search of identity, although many of these deal with gender, race and social and historical issues. Particularly exciting are those works where this is a question of one's own family affiliation and personal history. Such works are mainly by artists from areas where the ancestors were forced by history to migrate or were subjected to voluntary emigration, for example, a common theme among artists from Central Europe. At the same time, the subjective processing of the past is also frequent in the work of Sophie Calle and Tracey Moffat. Although, on reflection, the ancestors in almost everyone's family have different origins, and accounts of the past are also subject to constant and changing re-telling and re-writing, in which facts are beneficially mixed with subjective memory, creating different variations of the past.

In practice, Karina Horitz also uses Clio, Thalia and Melpomene (how grotesque that the visual arts have no muse!) to try to bring back memories, or rather, since there are none, to reconstruct them. Projecting old family photos onto her own body, she tries to become one character or another. Through the projected images, she not only merges with the chosen characters, but also identifies with them through posture and facial expressions.

Contrary to the common belief that our facial features reflect our inner state of mind, social psychologists believe that the opposite is also true, that is, that facial expression, movement and posture of facial muscles, also affects our mood. This is the basis of empathy: when we look at another person, we involuntarily adopt their facial expressions and thus their state of mind (Zajonc et al., 1989). According to the great master of memory, Marcel Proust, volitional memory (*mémoire volontaire*) is the memory of the intellect and as such is of no interest to art, unlike unconscious memory (*mémoire involontaire*), since our senses (especially in reverse order to their canonical hierarchy) are better able to serve memory. For Proust, smell, taste, touch, even kinetic memory, and bodily movement, are the true guardians of the past (Proust, 1913–1927/1999).

Karina Horitz effectively reverses Proustian memory theory and applies it in reverse. It is not today's movement and posture that recalls the experience of something from years ago, but rather the imitation of posture that is intended to create and recall the old experience, thus, creating memories of the non-existent. Karina photographs the life-size images projected onto her body, then prints the whole thing onto a large translucent canvas so that the figures in the work are life-size. In addition to the ten life-size canvases, a video film and two portraits are also part of the project, in the same spirit. Just as the "Horitzian physics" on the canvas creates a meeting of two layers of time, the slow-motion image on the video shows that the time of the work is not the present or the past, but a time of remembrance.

The narrative storyline is drawn through the frozen moments, but the transparent medium is also a means of not only being present but also of disappearing, of being-not-present. On the vast, translucent canvas, life-size figures from the depths of the past are literally brought to life, providing even more of an opportunity for momentary identification. It is not only the artist's identification but now also the viewer's, who peers into the lives of others as a third actor, almost as a voyeur. As the 10th daughter of Mnémosyne, Karina Horitz uses visuality and the visual arts as a means of remembering.

Image 5
Karina Horitz,
Hybrid Memory (2008)

Ágnes Uray-Szépfalvy and Restart

Ágnes Uray-Szépfalvi was also inspired by one of her grandparents' memories, more precisely, her grandmother's diary, to create a special project: "I write, she writes, we write." (Muladi, 2011) The question of the I's identity arises due to Agnes von Uray, the artist recently known as Ágnes Uray-Szépfalvi. However, that is just a name, or rather a name change, which is perhaps no coincidence. There are practical reasons, of course, but also psychological ones. However, it still does not answer the question, and she might as well say: "I know death whence can no man fly;/ All things except myself I know" (Villon, 15th century/1906).

The exhibition of this project also opened the week of her birthday, more precisely, the week of her rebirth as Agnes Uray-Szépfalvi. It is partly a retrospective exhibition anyway, so it is the best time to ask the question again since the middle period of human life is often a time of introspection.

> Midway upon the journey of our life
> I found myself within a forest dark,
> For the straightforward pathway had been lost.
> Ah me! how hard a thing it is to say
> What was this forest savage, rough, and stern,
> Which in the very thought renews the fear. (Dante, 1308–1320/1867, p. 1)

This is the time, halfway through a person's life, when they have a rich past full of experiences and failures, and a future full of opportunities, new goals, and new pitfalls.

The lady in question is her great-grandmother, Frau Wilhelm Uray, or Memci, as she appears in these diaries. She documented the events surrounding Agnes from her birth until the age of 14, a period in which objective descriptions alternate with subjective impressions. This diary did not come out of the blue since it was known to exist, but it is perhaps no coincidence that the moment in Ágnes's life when she began to study it more closely came at this time. Moreover, it is no surprise that the name change is also linked to Memci.

Diaries may confuse a reader. Reading them makes one feel awkward and voyeuristic. However, with this project, we are confronted with a different kind of diary, not so much personal and confessional but more descriptive and contemplative. Although there are no intimate details, it is strange to see Agnes von Uray from the point of view of both a critic and a great-grandmother. As a child, the latter had been in a lot of fights, had been beaten up, hit by a motorbike, or ran away from kindergarten.

While time is more of an ally of forgetting, the diary is a bastion of remembrance. The successful preservation of memories depends, therefore, mainly on the strength of those memories. Looking back and taking stocktaking is a way of redefining identity, accepting that certain possibilities have diminished but also being aware of the challenges that still lie ahead. One then creates, in Levinson's (1978) terminology, new structures of life.

The new structures are the artist and her great-grandmother—more broadly, her great-grandmother's direct, present-day impressions, both objective and subjective—the personal memory of the artist, who was prompted by the diary to delve a little deeper into her past and to relive or reinterpret it. As in the exhibition space, the handwritten text of the diary can be seen, with the red transcriptions functioning as both proofreading and highlighting of meaning.

The drawings accompanying the text are not illustrations but rather images inspired by the diary. In contrast to the soft charcoal drawings and pen-and-ink works of the past, these are pen drawings that scratch, almost engrave, the memories onto the paper. A pen is a tool for writing rather than drawing. What we see here may be sculpture. In the drawings, as in the text, details are highlighted in red. In this way, the relationship of content is made visually apparent. We write, or more precisely, they both write with pens, but one writes words, the other pictures, thus rewriting the past together. In any case, in Ágnes von Uray's work, the interplay of image and text plays an important role, as her storyboards show. One sees the creation of a work of art that is a shared work, interwoven through the experiences of several people.

However, perhaps more importantly, the transcription of the writing evokes the movement that created the writing itself, and this creates the possibility of identification with the great-grandmother. Just as Karina Horitz's posture serves to remember, Agnes von Uray's somatic memory is manifested in handwriting—similarly to the way we carry our memories on our shoulders and arms, as we often cannot recall a pin code but our hands still instinctively remember it, or as people with amnesia often retain the ability to sign. Individual memory is not always specific to the individual in question, but is shaped by many components of social memory, such as family, place of origin, occupation, religion. In addition, generational change is always accompanied by a crisis of memory and offers the possibility of forgetting.

This whole exhibition was about rewriting the personal past, and even more so, the present. The scratchiness of the pen-and-ink drawings of the past is contrasted with colourful paintings of her daughters, whose idealised world hovers like a wishful dream above the facts of reality. Her own past is a tissue of facts and multiple subjective memories, but what she wants to offer her children is again a subjective image, or rather a hope.

Not only do the different experiences and interpretations take place at the same time, but we ourselves are born and change in the web of our past, our ancestors, and the experiences that have affected us. Our ancestors, even if unknown, influence our lives, which are not just a moment in the here and now, but we carry within us the experiences, values, and mistakes of our ancestors. These thoughts are reflected in the poem "By the Danube":

> One moment, and fulfilled all time appears
> In a hundred thousand forbears' eyes and mine…
> We know each other as sorrow and delight.
> I, in the past, they in the present live. (József, 1936/1966)

Image 6
Ágnes Uray-Szépfalvi, *I write, She Writes, We Write* (2010)

Mária Chilf and Marcell Esterházy—Personal and Collective Memory
A very particular mixture of personal and collective history is revealed in the work of Mária Chilf and Marcell Esterházy. In Mária Chilf's art, personal experiences and personal memories often appear. On the one hand, family photographs are the basis of her *Family Album* series, and on the other hand, in her *Díszmagyar* (Hungarian traditional clothing) project.

Chilf, while tracing her family's history, links the stories of World War II with the events of today, finding parallels between the past and the present, between personal stories and history. The methodology of memory, collective and individual memory, their inter-

connections and divergences, the differences between their forms of expression and propaganda speech. Mária Chilf was approached by an art historian about depositing a Hungarian costume in the Hungarian National Museum, which belonged to Mrs Miklós Chilf from Târgu Mureș in the 1940s and of which she is now the heir. From a photograph, Chilf learned that it was her grandmother's ceremonial dress, thought to be missing. Other items in the photograph have also been found in recent times, including the tapestry in the photo—which was passed down to her from her grandfather's second family after his death—and the Turkish ring with glasses, which was passed down to her by her step-grandfather. The objects in the photo are now assembled and in their places.

In Marcell Esterházy's work, collective and personal memory intertwine too. The Esterházy family is an influential figure in Hungarian history, but for Marcell Esterházy, it is also part of his personal history and identity. This state of affairs triggers the question of what an artist can do if he has famous ancestry. As a first reaction, distancing himself from the burden of family fame, his main motivation may be to become successful and famous by virtue of his own talent and strength. However, once this is in place, it is confidently possible, even obligatory, to deal with this baggage. Both attitudes are also a question of identity—of distancing, independence, and confrontation (Bordács, 2013).

In the last decade, Marcell Esterházy has come to reflect not only on the stories of his own family, but the entire Esterházy family. These stories are not just the stories of any family but of one that played an important role in Hungarian history, events that are, thus, placed in an even wider context. Interestingly, however, it was not through his own family that he came to these family stories, but through photographs he had found and started collecting on the streets of Paris. The photographs of other families eventually inspired him to research his own past, aided by a collection of nearly 600 family photographs from the first half of the 20th century of the family's life in Majk and Csákvár, some of which he sometimes uses as found objects in his work.

He started processing the past as early as 2005 with a video of his maternal grandfather. The family past presented to the viewer is not a document but a series of stories rewritten by the artist from real stories or read from a different perspective. The most typical example being the video loop *On the Same Day*, in which the parallel fates of his grandfather's sister, Mónika Esterházy, and a Roma woman, a woman living at two extremes of society, are interwoven.

In the process of constructing and processing the past, "personal identity is both a consciousness of oneself and a consciousness of the expectations of others, of the expec-

tations of others towards us and the responsibility that this entails" (Assmann, 1992/ 2013, p. 134). Perhaps one of his most striking pieces is a photograph of his relative, who incidentally also goes by the name of Marcell Esterházy (1920–1945)—although we know that Proust was a greater inspiration than the family thread in the artist's name. In addition to the ancestor evoked, this work also visually expresses Marcell Esterházy's creative attitude by riding the horse the other way round, that is, showing the back of things with a kind of sloppy elegance. This impression is also due to the fact that the photographic enlargement ultimately involves a change of medium, as it appears to us as a lightbox (Esterházy, 2013).

The enlarged drawing of Péter Esterházy, his father, is lit up like a neon portrait. This work, too, evokes two figures—father and grandfather at the same time—but without nostalgia, because it is an amateur caricature that can be turned off if one would like to. The father and grandfather also appear before us through their typewriters in the pictures of *Hermes and Erika*. Peter Esterházy wrote his novels by hand, but his feuilletons were written on Erika, while Hermes was used to write translations and reports for the State Security Department of the Ministry of Interior for the grandfather. A different, and even bizarre, way of looking at the past and the name is presented in the video *Four movements for five M*, where he recalls the name of his brother Miklós.

The portraits of pomp-loving Miklós Esterházy—who was also a patron of Haydn and the Kismarton orchestra—are echoed on Miklós's drum kit, showing that the two Miklós share not only their names but also their love of music. The fact that this family history is not only about the distant past is indicated by the circular work *The circle is not round* (2012), in which he has collected and scanned objects from the past ten years, thus preserving the spatial and temporal. The objects (milk tooth, railway sign, wedding ring, etc.) come from the most diverse situations in life. There is also a sense of reckoning here since these objects are relics of a closed past while they also point to the future through children's toys.

The object entitled *We will not take back the Land!*, which became a catchphrase from Péter Esterházy around the time of the regime change, in connection with reparations, is related to the family past in a different way. Nationalization also affected the properties taken from the Esterházy family. It rhymes with the left-wing phrase "We will not give back the land" of 1946. The object itself is exhibited in a space that functions as a kind of conservatory, and despite the inscription, the box contains the very land taken back from the Majki estate, with a few plants that, according to the instructions, not only have to be tended but no new ones can be planted. This increases the responsibility

for the piece of land and the plants on it since the plants cannot be replaced by people—so the responsibility is on the people living on this piece of land, who cannot be replaced. Marcell Esterházy, in his 2013 exhibition at the acb Gallery, foreshadows with the title *Vesd össze* (*Take it together*) that the works are public footnotes, bearers of family histories, and art historical connections. They are constructed imprints of his micro and macro environment, his past and present, filtered through his personal identity.

Image 7
Marcell Esterházy,
Directions (2013)
Duratrans, Lightbox,
100 x 60 cm

Conclusion

Typically, these artists illustrate the relationship between personal and objective history, past and present, and the continuous interaction of people in the present. At the same time, the visual realization of this train of thought is often achieved in a variety of ways, although the phenomenon of transitions and transparency is common to all of them.

Through these works, artists reinterpret, reconstruct their past, the past with their present consciousness, but obviously this new reconstruction is, in fact, just as much a construction. Furthermore, due to the personal involvement, they are both closer and farther from the truth. However, it is questionable whether there is any truth at all without subjective experiences.

Memories and our past are an integral part of our identity. Therefore we cannot imagine how terrible it must be when we find out that our memories are false memories, like *Blade Runner* Rachele's experience when she realises that all her childhood memories are part of an agenda (Scott, 1982).

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Appendix

Short Biography of Artists

Zsolt ASZTALOS: (Budapest, 1974). His works cover two main topics: the position of ordinary people in consumer society and the relationship with the past, memory. His works, organized around the issues of history, past, memory, and forgetting, bear witness to the experience of history and past arising from postmodern thinking and approach, which emphasizes the relativity of the historical narrative. In 2013, he represented Hungary at the Venice Biennale of Fine Arts with his work *Kilőttek, de nem robbant fel* [Fired but Unexploded]. Munkácsy Award winner, artist of the Kisterem Gallery.

Mária CHILF (Târgu Mureș, 1966). Her works can be outlined in the genres of drawing, graphics, painting, installation, and media art. She creates both watercolors and installations, using practically the same method and style. Her drawings and watercolors have a meticulous, detailed illustrative nature, but they are only apparently narrative, there is no logical or easily verbalized connection between their components. Its sometimes alphabetic, sometimes mechanical or biological motifs reminiscent of illustrations in anatomy or natural history books allow us to associate it with guts and wires, while they are supplemented with details referring to internal landscapes. In one of her most exciting works, she unravels the complicated threads of her own family history in connection with an unexpectedly found female Hungarian dress. Munkácsy award winner, artist of the Inda Gallery.

Marianne CSÁKY: (Budapest, 1959, lives in Brussels) is a Hungarian writer and sculptor. Trained in arts as well as ethnography and philosophy, she started to exhibit her work in Budapest in 1989. Since the very start of her career, Csáky has been known for her non-mainstream forms of expression and her unconventional and provocative images. Marianne Csáky works with various media: photography, painting, sculpture, embroidery, video, and installation. In her juvenile works, she exclusively used leather for her sculptures and 3D objects. In her early works— sculptures made out of pieces of waste wood and plaster—language, desire, subjectivity, and the androgynous nature of soul and mind were the focus of her interest. In 2000, her interest turned toward personal and small community history. These series of works (*My Skins*, 2005; *Time Leap*, 2007−8) are the appropriation of her family's past, an experiment with the nature of memory, and post memory work. Artist of the Inda Gallery.

Miklós ERDÉLY: (Budapest, 1928−Budapest, 1986) architect, writer, poet, visual artist, film director, theorist. He took a job at Budapesti Építőanyagipari Vállalat, and developed the technique of photo mosaics, which from then on ensured his livelihood through his

small business called MURUS. In addition to traditional fine art genres, he is a significant representative of action art, environment and concept art. As a theoretically oriented avant-garde artist, film director and writer, he dealt with the new possibilities of expression of these different art forms, as well as the artistic activity itself and its analysis. In 1977, he started the FAFEJ (Imagination Development Exercises) course, and in 1978 the INDIGO (Interdisciplinary Thinking) course, where Eastern philosophy and contemporary art were emphasized. A new generation of artists emerged from these groups.

Marcell ESTERHÁZY (Budapest, 1977). He graduated from the Department of Intermedia at the University of Fine Arts in 2003. He started working in photography in Paris as a student of Lucien Hervé, then lived and worked in France for more than a decade. In his photographs, installations, and video works, Esterházy directs attention to the personal and universal, often contradictory nature of our relationship to history by placing found objects and typical pictorial representations in a new context. Artist of acb Gallery.

Luca GŐBÖLYÖS: (Budapest, 1969–) photographer, a university lecturer.

> In 1994, her series of portraits of the actors of the domestic homosexual subculture, going beyond the distanced approach of the sociophoto, portrays the life of a marginalized minority with deep empathy and brings into the artistic theme a social and aesthetic phenomenon that was previously treated as a taboo. From then on, in her works, she is primarily concerned with the problems of the relationship with sexual identity, the social representation of the body, and the pictorial stereotypes of gender roles. (Bencsik, n.d.).

She almost also made a series of another marginalized group, overweight people. Over time, she became preoccupied with questions about her body, relationship, and personal past. She is mostly concerned with the image of women in the media, the taboo of an old female body, and social expectations regarding women. Balogh Rudolf Prize winner.

Karina HORITZ: (London, 1969). Today she lives and works in Budapest. She deals with the recycling of pictures and works partly from family pictures. She is interested in the contemporary life of old pictures. The main topics she deals with are our constantly evolving cultural identity from the exploration of the family, national or global narrative. She presents these through the challenges of 21st-century life, driven by radical technological advances, our relationship with the environment, climate change, and how these topics affect our future, mental health, and lifestyle.

Mariann IMRE: (Medgyesegyháza, 1968). In her works, she works on classical themes (landscapes, saints) with an unusual range of tools and materials, with a lot of invention and sensitivity: she created the image created by the light-sensitive emulsion applied to the wall and the combination of wood and concrete elements. Her installations and works consist of embroidered concrete forms. She merges concrete with organic materials (textiles, thread, grass) and colorful, often flower-shaped embroidered motifs appearing on the gray surface. Space and light also play a major role in her concrete embroideries: her works create a subtle, organic, and spiritual aura around them through the thread threads leading from the concrete forms into the space, forming a transparent structure (St. Cecília, 1997). The theme of memory also plays a major role in her work. In 1999, she was one of the exhibitors of the Hungarian pavilion at the Venice Biennale. Munkácsy Award winner, artist of the Horizont Gallery.

Ágnes URAY-SZÉPFALVI: (Budapest, 1965) The source of her works is the media: she selects her motifs from advertisements, films and magazines centered on one or more female figures. Maintaining the stereotypes characteristic of the media's imagery, she transfers the iconographic types of the male–female relationship and the femme fatale into the painting. In addition to relationship themes, family relationships also regularly appear in her works. She sometimes animates her pictures, and in addition to paintings, she also creates animations and artistic gifs. Artist of the Inda Gallery.

The Use of Time Reorder as a Literary Plot Device

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Abstract

The concept of time is deeply rooted within the field of literature; not only does it present itself in literary works in the form of theme or symbol. It can also be viewed in the reflection of the time in which the piece was written; but, most importantly in the context of this paper, it plays an essential and indispensable role as a plot device when constructing the narration. The modification of these expressions of time varies in accordance with the author's views and purposes for their literary work. Thus, instances of toying with the base structure of time flow occur. This paper aims to display the employment of time reordering as a plot device in order to conclude whether this manner of writing was beneficial to the works in which it is depicted. This analysis will take into consideration a variety of advantages that time reordering could provide, from adding a sense of mystery, chaos, or irony, to much more intricate plot, structure or even subtext benefits. To be able to encounter all of the mentioned benefits, this paper will discuss a selected number of fictional literary works from the Gothic-like historical novel *Hawksmoor* by Peter Ackroyd to the contemporary novel *The Stone Gods* by Jeanette Winterson. The term of time reordering within this paper will refer to the abandonment of a linear plot line and the approach of multiple timelines or a hazardous presentation of events.

Keywords: time reordering, timeline, literary device, chronology, history

Introduction

Time and temporality dictate over fiction much more than one would assume, for it provides the narration, the sequence of events that form the plot line. From the moment the construction of the narrative plot starts, temporality needs to be taken into consideration, since "there are different degrees of temporal organization" (Ricoeur, 1980, p. 170) which an author could utilize within their work. This paper will focus on a specific temporal organization pattern, that of time reordering; however, before delving into this idea, a difference between linear plot line and chronology must be established.

While time reordering denies the idea of a linear narration structure, the plot is still highly dependent on chronology. The term of 'linear plotline' refers, as the name itself suggests, to the narration that arranges the events in the same order as their happening; thus, presenting one single action thread that the reader must follow. This singular thread offers all of the information needed along the way at the exact time of their emergence. On the other hand, chronology does not entail this rigid arrangement of events within the narration. Even if the sequence of action is presented in an alternative manner, when piecing all of the events together a chronology is still achieved in order for the narration to gain a logical sense. This is due to the fact that chronology can and should be associated with the idea of cause-and-effect which dictates the coherence and intelligibility of the plot.

Despite the fact that authors might choose to separate and present the two, cause and effect, in a disorderly manner in hopes of achieving a sense of mystery or confusion, with the unveiling of the entirety of the plot the reader is able to rearrange the events in a linear manner and observe that the order of causality was followed all along. Sternberg (1990) defines a plot being chronological in the following manner: "the sequence of events is followable, intelligible, memorable, indeed chrono-logical" (p. 903).

Schism of Time in Ackroyd's *Hawksmoor*

Moving on to the body of the paper, the first section of the article will be constructed on Ackroyd's novel *Hawksmoor*. In the context of this literary work, time will be addressed as a focal theme, as an essential plot device, as well as the element according to which the novel is divided into chapters. The second section of the paper will discuss time and its importance within Jeanette Winterson's novel *The Stone Gods*. These novels have been selected due to the fact that not only does time represent a shaping element of the plot, but also because the arrangement of time plays an essential role when analysing the structural integrity of the novel. Thus, both novels perfectly encapsulate the idea conveyed by Sternberg (1990) in the following quote "For narrative must tell about the workings of time (events, developments, changes of state) in some time-medium […] but not perforce in their original order of time" (p. 902).

As mentioned above, the first novel to be discussed within this paper is Ackroyd's historical work *Hawksmoor*, which might appear at first glance as a typical detective novel; however, when analysed in depth it emerges as an intricate and multi-layered novel. This becoming even more obvious when the theme of time is tackled, for time appears in the form of history rewriting and distortion. In the context of this particular novel

Ricoeur's (1980) understanding of time as "historicality" will offer a theoretical starting point, for Ackroyd in his novel employs this form of temporality proposed by Ricoeur (1980) that "springs forth in the plural unity of future, past, and present" (p. 171).

In addition to this, it would also be beneficial to include three theoretical ideas: the process of emplotment; the practical past as seen from Hayden White's theories of writing history; and the historiographic metafiction as composed and presented in Hutcheon's work with the same title.

White's theory of emplotment will be the first of the theoretical concepts to be approached in the context of Ackroyd's *Hawksmoor*. White discusses and proposes the idea of emplotment in his work *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (1975). Within this work White presents a brief context, namely that historians of the time wished to distance themselves from rhetoric and fiction, and preferred to view history as a pseudo-science, as an objective, truthful and factual field of study. The purpose of White's work is to present his view on the relation between fiction and history. However, before presenting his own beliefs, he summarizes the conclusions of many other thinkers such as Heidegger or Foucault, who "have cast serious doubts on the value of a specifically historical consciousness, stressed the fictive character of historical reconstruction and challenged history's claims to a place among the sciences" (White, 1975, pp. 1–2). Starting from this, White goes on to explain his perspective according to which historical work is "a verbal structure in the form of a narrative prose discourse" (1975, p. 2). Thus, it can be stated that White perceives history as "finding, identifying or uncovering the stories that lie buried" (White, 1975, p. 6). Similarly, Hutcheon also defines history writing as "narrativization (rather than representation) of the past" (1989, p. 8).

White depicts historians as writers that explain the past; hence going against the wishes of historians and rather supporting history's fictive character. This train of thoughts leads him to his emplotment theory, according to which each historian organizes sequences of events in their own manner, they construct their 'story plot' according to their own understanding of the events—he emphasizes that the same historic event can be recounted in different manners by different historians—thus, history as a whole, gains a subjective quality. White proposes four modes of emplotment: Romance—"drama of the triumph of good over evil" (1975, p. 9), Tragedy—"the fall of the protagonist and the shaking of the world he inhabits" (1975, p. 9), Comedy—"reconciliations of the forces at play in the social and natural world" (1975, p. 9), and Satire—"a drama dominated by the apprehension that man is ultimately a captive of the world" (1975, p. 9).

White continues to discuss the relationship between history and fiction in his work *The Practical Past* (2014), in which he goes as far as to separate the past into two distinct categories: the historical past, and the practical past. According to White the notion of 'historical past' is "a highly selective version of the past" (2014, p. xiii) that nobody truly experienced or lived due to the fact that it only ever exists within "the books and articles published by professional historians" (2014, p. 9). On the other hand, the 'practical past' deals with "memory, dream, fantasy, experience, and imagination" (White, 2014, p. 10). Thus, this practical past is "a past which, unlike that of historians, has been lived by all of us" (2014, p. 14). White presents this separation between the two in order to connect in a seamless way history with the historical novel, for he claims that it is the practical past that is used within these novels, because as mentioned previously the historical past exists only in history books. The practical past allows for the freedom of the writer's creativity, presenting them with the possibility to alter or distort historical information according to their experiences, memories, and imagination.

Continuing on from the idea of historical fiction, Hutcheon (1989) goes a step beyond in her work "Historiographic Metafiction Parody and the Intertextuality of History" in order to present her take on the relationship between history and fiction. "The postmodern relationship between fiction and history is an even more complex one of interaction and mutual implication. Historiographic metafiction works to situate itself within historical discourse without surrendering its autonomy as fiction" (Hutcheon, 1989, p. 4). From this quote the connection between historiographic metafiction, emplotment and the practical past is apparent; all of them tackle the employment of history in novels, as well as the idea of subjectivity within history itself and its writings. "The Writer of historiographic metafiction finds that not only literature and the external world, but also history, so far considered the most objective human creation, are similarly subjective" (Jaén, 1991, p. 31).

Hutcheon goes as far as to say that history's "loss" of objectivity should not be viewed as a negative but as a positive; for it summons critical thinking, challenging the reader to discern between factual truths, and the personal truths of various historians portrayed in their writings. This forces the reader into a state of awareness that objectivity and transparency are unattainable.

> If the discipline of history has lost its privileged status as the purveyor of truth, then so much the better, according to this kind of modern historiographic theory: the loss of the illusion of transparency in historical writing is a step toward intellectual self-awareness that is matched by metafiction's challenges to the presumed

transparency of the language of realist texts. […] This does not in any way deny the value of history-writing; it merely redefines the conditions of value in somewhat less imperialistic terms. (Hutcheon, 1989, p. 10–11)

Now that these theoretical aspects of the paper have been explained in such a manner that they will aid the analysis of *Hawksmoor*, the focus of the paper will shift to Ackroyd's novel. Having in mind the abovementioned theories, it becomes apparent that Ackroyd employs veridic, factual, accurate historical information within his novel—the character of Christopher Wren, the Plague, the event of the Great London Fire that subsequently led to the building of churches—"The odd chapters are historically accurate in that they refer to specific times, places, events and even characters that really existed at the time." (Jaén, 1991, p. 32) Employed as well are distorted historical facts—the historical figure of Nicholas Hawksmoor underwent a number of modifications, the addition of the fictional 7th church and many other. Thus, it can be stated that *Hawksmoor* can be defined using Jaén's (1991) understanding of a historiographic metafiction, for "Historiographic metafiction [novels] do not seek historical accuracy and realistic verisimilitude, on the contrary, evince a longing for the return to the relish in story telling" (Jaén, 1991, p. 31).

Even more so, Ackroyd's inclusion of historical figures and events, leads to the creation of his own version of the past, therefore achieving an alternative or distorted history. This alternative form of history is the perfect example, thus accentuating White's idea that there are as many histories as there are historians. This is best seen through the character of Nicholas Dyer, who is meant to encompass the historical figure of Nicholas Hawksmoor to a certain degree. Ackroyd changes the surname to Dyer, he alters the birth and death dates of the character—Hawksmoor the architect lived between the years of 1661–1736; while the fictional character lived between 1654–1715—as well as the place of birth; Dyer in the novel was born and grew up in London "I was born in this Nest of Death and Contagion" (Ackroyd, 1993, p. 48). This distortion of historical information with addition of imagination is exactly what White defined as the practical past utilized within novels.

Ackroyd goes even further with his alterations to the point that he 'splits' the architect Nicholas Hawksmoor into two characters belonging to two distinctive time periods. Nicholas Dyer encompasses the historical figure through his career as an architect, through his connection as an apprentice of Christopher Wren, and through his work of building the Churches as well as the time period in which he exists; in this respect, the two—the character and the real human being—appear to have many similarities. On the other hand, at first glance, detective Nicholas Hawksmoor seems to only share the name with the historical figure—his career is that of detective, not architect; he lives in the twentieth century

rather than the eighteenth. However, upon a complete read of the novel and an in-depth understanding of its ending it becomes apparent that the two fictional characters are one and the same entity, simply different reincarnations; thus "through the several different accounts of Nicolas Dyer´s life that are presented in different chapters, Ackroyd emphasizes the interpretative quality of history" (Hutcheon qtd in Nedvědová, 2018, p. 51).

This final epiphany that the two are the same, which the reader can only fully grasp at the end of the novel, is a metatextual way through which Ackroyd presents this idea of reconstruction of chronology or piecing back together events given in an unorderly manner in order to form a whole. "For it is only when the sequence has been delimited by art, to whatever effect, that its initial and terminal points lend themselves to lifelike, chrono-logical bridging from early to late and from cause to result" (Sternberg, p. 933).

Due to this 'split' of the historical figure into the two main characters, the novel has a unique narration style, for it is divided in two time periods, each being characterized by a narration that is suitable, preferred, and typical for its timeline. All of the odd chapters—which take place in and present the eighteenth-century timeline—are narrated in first person from the perspective of Dyer as he writes the course of his life within a journal. This narration adheres to the eighteenth-century narration techniques and language, for Ackroyd employed in his writing the talking manner and spelling of that time period which can be seen from the very beginning of the novel "And so let us beginne; and, as the Fabrick takes its Shape in front of you, alwaies keep the Structure intirely in Mind as you inscribe it" (Ackroyd, 1993, p. 7).

In an interview, Ackroyd addressed this specific type of writing present in the odd chapters and stated that "With Hawksmoor, for example, when I was imitating early eighteenth-century speech, I found it was the one sure way in which I entered the period fully, it came alive" (Ackroyd and Wolfreys, 1999, p. 110).

By contrast, the even chapters, which construct the twentieth century timeline, are narrated from a third perspective of an omniscient narrator and utilize conventional language for the time. The second chapter itself starts with a 'modern' idea—that of a tour guide leading a group through London—"Their guide had stopped in front of its steps and was calling out, 'Come on! Come on!'" (Ackroyd, 1993, p. 27).

Before going further to talk about each of the timelines in detail, an important aspect to mention is the manner in which these two timelines add an ironical sense of mystery as well as incipient confusion to the novel. When starting the novel, the split in timeline and alteration between the two periods presented come abruptly and without any warning.

The effect Ackroyd most likely wished to achieve is confusing the reader, creating a sense of unease that will prevail throughout the novel. The split in timelines makes the reader question the novel itself, as well as the integrity of any of the information depicted within it; all of this adding to the idea of history being unreliable, which is one of the main themes of the novel.

Additionally, in the instance of this novel, the reader has more information than the characters. The reader is aware of who the murderer is, unlike in normal detective novels in which the reader and the characters discover information at the same pace. Due to this it could be argued that there is no detective or mysterious aspect from this perspective; precisely because the detective lacks this information and the split in timelines will never allow him to fully comprehend the situation; thus, leading to an irony of the 'failed' detective.

As mentioned previously, the eighteenth-century timeline is narrated by the main character, Dyer, in his journal, and it encompasses history through the prism of his experience, which can be understood, according to White's theory, as the use of practical past. Hence, it can be stated that Ackroyd does not utilize the practical past only when composing the novel as a whole, by including veridic information and changing them so that they fit the story he wishes to convey, but he employs it even in the universe of the story. Dyer too uses the practical past, his narration is also divergent from 'what actually' happened within the novel, since his recollection is that of his own experience and memory of past events. Dyer's use of practical past combines fact with memory, while Ackroyd's combines fact with imagination—the two distinct uses being easily differentiable.

Two main events through which Dyer's practical past can be seen are the detailed recounts of the 1665 Plague and the Great Fire of London from 1666, both of these are depicted from the memory of the teenager Dyer. "There was a Band of little Vagabonds who met by moon-light in the Moorfields, and for a time I wandred with them; most of them had been left as Orphans in the Plague" (Ackroyd, 1993, p. 49). It could be argued that through the journal and through Dyer's subjective narration Ackroyd wishes to highlight the unreliability of history. In this respect, he seems to be agreeing with Hutcheon's claim that history cannot be referred to as an objective science; as well as with White's theory about emplotment, since each historian recounts the events according to their own perspective. The reader is left with no other choice of gaining insight into Dyer's character but to believe a—possibly unreliable—version of his life (Sağlam, 2011). By taking this approach Ackroyd exemplifies the view that writers of historiographic metafiction have on history, namely that "history, so far considered the most objective human creation, [is] similarly subjective" (Jaén, 1991, p. 31).

In regard to the twentieth century timeline the themes that this paper will discuss are that of reincarnation, cyclicity, and time. Due to this cyclic movement that takes place within London's borders, the practical past can also be found within this timeline, and it could be understood in this context as memory—in this case the world and humanity's memory. Humanity appears to repeat itself endlessly, as seen through the similarities between the two time-lines: all of the victims—the ones sacrificed for the building of the Churches in the eighteenth century and the murder victims from the twentieth century—have similar if not identical names. Ackroyd employs alike images, structures, and even sentences seem to be repeated from one century to the other in order to "emphasise the circularity of life in London" (Nedvědová, 2018, p. 56). However, the biggest similarity between the two comes in the form of the main character of each timeline.

> The twentieth-century detective, Nicholas Hawksmoor appears both the opposite and the complementary mirror image of the eighteenth-century architect, Nicholas Dyer: both lead solitary lives, have terrifying dreams, are aloof and reluctant to communicate and are interested in puzzles, both are dark haired and tall, both wear glasses which they accidentally break; both are betrayed by their assistants, and both have visions of themselves separate from their own bodies. (Jaén, 1991, p. 33)

Thus, London could be seen as a space stuck in a time loop, destined to witness the same characters, repeat the same actions, stating that history has a tendency to repeat itself. In the context of reincarnation Ackroyd decided to add some interesting similarities between the main character of Dyer and even some of the victims. For example, the first victim, Thomas Hill from the twentieth century timeline, shares similar interests with Dyer in regard to books. As a child Dyer's favourite read was *Dr. Faust* while Thomas enjoyed *Dr. Faust and Queen Elizabeth*. Due to this choice of connecting not only Dyer with Hawksmoor but Thomas Hill—especially since Hawksmoor only appears in the novel after the death of Thomas from the twentieth century; thus, no two reincarnations seem to coexist at the same time—the depth and complex build of the theme of reincarnation emerges once more. "Dyer, then, has undergone a series of reincarnations, experiencing all kinds of lives as a murderer and as the murdered man, as a criminal and as a detective" (Jaén, 1991, p. 41).

Even the idea of passage of time itself is denied, for Ackroyd characterizes the space of the seventh Church as one outside of time. Dyer's character died in 1715 in that Church, but two centuries later, when Hawksmoor enters the church, Dyer as an entity is still there, proving that the Church was frozen in time. The novel ends with the meeting and unification of the two characters—Dyer and Hawksmoor—to prove that they are one

and the same and with their unification the cycle will restart. "And then in my dream I looked down at myself and saw in what rags I stood; and I am a child again, begging on the threshold of eternity" (Ackroyd, 1993, p. 208). Thus, this ending quote of the novel does not only emphasizes these themes of reincarnation and time, but it could be also interpreted as the perfect ending of the 'Satire' mode of emplotment proposed by White, for it displays how the world controls the characters, how they are mere victims of this time loop. "In the novel, nothing progresses in time, the same events repeat themselves endlessly, and the same people live and die only in order to be born and live the same events again and again" (Jaén, 1991, p. 33).

Ciclicity of Time in Winterson's *The Stone Gods*

The next section of the paper will focus on Winterson's work *The Stone Gods*, which similarly to *Hawksmoor* is a literary piece split into different timelines in accordance with its chapter structure. *The Stone Gods* is comprised of three different timelines, one timeline corresponding to each of the first two chapters, while chapter three and four compose the third and last timeline. In the context of this novel this paper will focus on the topic of circular time, or repetition. "Repetition thus tends to become the main issue in narratives in which the quest itself duplicates a travel in space that assumes the shape of a return to the origin" (Ricoeur, 1980, p. 185).

Within her science-fiction novel *The Stone Gods* Winterson plays with the idea of time on multiple layers in order to present the idea of cyclicity as seen through Captain Handsome's theory of "A repeating world—same old story" (Winterson, 2008, p. 40). This theory has the purpose of connecting the incipient chapter with the following three; hence, Captain Handsome and the idea of repetition are crucial elements for the novel's coherency.

The novel presents three distinct planets in its incipient chapter: Orbus—on which humanity resides at the time; Planet Blue—which is an untouched and abundant planet towards which humanity wishes to move; and lastly, Planet White—which can be understood as the planet on which humanity resided in the past and that much like Orbus was slowly killed by humans and ultimately abandoned in favour of a new and virgin planet. Captain Handsome theorises that this cyclic movement of destroying a planet—moving onto another one; promising to do better and not repeat the same mistakes; only to destroy that new planet, and start all over again—represents human nature. It is a movement bound to repeat itself, one that humanity is unable to put an end to, for it happened way before them, even before Planet White, and a movement that will happen after Planet Blue just the same. "In these stories, repetition is constitutive of the temporal form itself" (Ricoeur, 1980, p. 186).

Another way through which this cyclicity could be understood is the arrangement of the distinctive timelines of the novel: the chapters are presented in chronological order; however, if they were to be rearranged in accordance with technological advancement, the first chapter would be at the end for it presents the most advanced society—thus the order would be chapter two, followed by chapter three and chapter four, and finally chapter one. This possibility of rearranging the chapters presents just how malleable time really is. Additionally, through the placement of chapter one at the end, it conveys the fact that the story may and will start all over again.

Due to the futuristic world building of the first chapter, which entails the most ancient time presented in the novel, Winterson manages to create a sense of confusion for the reader. The changes from one timeline to another are not as abrupt as those in *Hawksmoor*, initially due to the fact that Winterson does not alternate between the timelines every couple of pages, but rather 'completes' one timeline before jumping to the other. The completion of each timeline is done through the death of the main set of characters, only for them to be reborn into the next timeline.

All three timelines are connected as seen from the existence of Captain Cook's journal in the first chapter, the appearance of the story 'Stone Gods' in the last chapter, as well as the motif of the signal that Spike from Orbus left behind, which Spike from Earth hears, sixty-five million years in the future. Winterson plays and alters with the idea of linear timeline within this novel, even further implying that the chapters can be read any another order. "'Past and future are not separate as far as the brain is concerned' […] We split time into three parts. The brain, it seems, splits it twice only: now, and not now" (Winterson, 2008, p. 129–147).

This above mentioned quote from Winterson's novel depicts an issue with which many great thinkers have dealt with, namely

> Does time exist? […] Aristotle, Augustin and Henri Bergson, hesitated before answering that question. Their hesitation stemmed from the idea that the three elements of time, namely past, prese and future, are fleeting. They realized the past no longer exists, the future is not yet here, and the present is slipping by so quickly that it is impossible to grasp. (Jense, 2015, p. 1)

This view of time is one seen in Winterson's novel in the form of an uncertain future, the instability of the present—their need to abandon their planet for another one—and the irreversibility of the past—humanity cannot go back to a time prior to the slow destruction of their planet.

Captain Cook's journal, which represents the story of the timeline presented within the second chapter, exists within all three timelines; therefore, proving Spike's theory that memory transcends the human life. The journal not only survived and reached the future, namely the third narrative timeline happening on Earth, but it managed to go beyond time and reach into the past as well, for the journal appears on the Ship in the first timeline when the main cast of characters leave Orbus. The presence of Captain Cook's journal within the first timeline also provides the context for Captain Handsome's above mentioned theory according to which the universe and humanity are fated to repeat themselves endlessly. Due to this repetitive and cyclic movement it could also be stated that time itself is not linear but rather a circle, which would explain to a certain degree the journal's existence in the past.

Perhaps another perspective from which the time organization within Winterson's novel should be seen is that presented by Jense in which he "states that time is a 'stretched now' that is heterogeneous, discontinuous, and ambiguous" (Jense, 2015, p. 17). In this instance, the time seen in the fourth chapter would not be split, but rather taken as a "discontinuous, and ambiguous" (Jense, 2015, p. 17) whole, that represents the 'present.'

Conclusion

Similarly to the manner in which the end of *Hawksmoor* was interpreted earlier on in the paper, the last sentence of *The Stone Gods* "Everything is imprinted for ever with what it once was" (Winterson, 2008, p. 149) could also be seen as a perfect ending of the 'Satire' mode of emplotment proposed by White. Actually, it displays how the world controls the characters, how they are mere victims of this time loop, thus reinforcing the idea of a circular time existence, or maybe better said that of repetition.

In conclusion, time is an essential plot device for its causality dictates the coherence of the plot; however, due to its pliability it also offers authors the opportunity to arrange the events into a hazardous manner without losing the integrity of the narration. Rather this rearrangement adds a sense of confusion and unease, creating the specific mood sought after by the author. By utilizing time in this manner writers are able to add another layer to their narration, a layer that needs to be deciphered; therefore, inviting the reader to be part of the narrative plot itself and to put together piece by piece all of the information they are given.

> To be sure, nobody who has thought about narrative structure and interpretation is likely to deny that for narrative to make sense as narrative, it must make chronological sense. For if the events composing it do not fall into some line of world-time, however problematic their alignment and however appealing their alternative arrangement, then narrativity itself disappears. (Sternberg, 1990, p. 903)

By analysing the two novels that tackled this idea of time rearrangement it becomes apparent that even within this type of temporal organization there are a number of manners in which the writers can toy with the timelines. Time seen in *Hawksmoor* essentially conveys the idea that the past and the present coexist, the events happen simultaneously, and the two timelines often intertwine. On the other hand, in *The Stone Gods* time is presented as a circle, a constant repetition of the same events, and exactly due to this reason the three timelines presented could be arranged in any manner for the plot to be intelligible.

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Versions of Sacred Time in Germanic Mythology

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Abstract

Germanic mythology offers one of the most ambiguous representations of the universe. Time has a special connotation as the mortality of the gods conditions their response to the challenges set by destiny before them. Much of their existence depends on the way they accomplish their quest to find the ultimate answer. In the Germanic myths time can be cosmic corresponding to the creation of the world or eschatological as the end of the universe is inevitable and certain. In between these two moments the gods need to discover the answer to the meaning of their lives and their place in the universe.

Keywords: cosmogony, eschatological time, initiation, profane duration, ritual, sacred time

Germanic mythology has one of the most intriguing and mysterious representations of the universe. It provides a vision based on the mortality of the gods and the finite nature of the world. In Germanic mythology fate is an overwhelming power as it governs and controls the existence of humans and gods alike. Both of them are subject to destiny which shapes all existence. Given the fatality of this world, the deeds of the gods only help to improve the life which is given to them. A concept which is closely associated with destiny is the one of time. It plays an essential role in the attempts of the gods to find out about their future and the means to avoid death. Time can be cosmic or eschatological since it corresponds to the beginning and the end of the universe.

In his book *The Sacred and the Profane* Mircea Eliade analyses the concept of time in the light of the spiritual meaning which is ascribed to it. He divides time in two categories, depending on the way they manifest in the world. Sacred time is represented by short moments in which the divine nature of the universe becomes accessible to man.

"...by its nature sacred time is reversible, in the sense that, properly speaking, it is a primordial mythical time made present" (Eliade, 1957/1987, p. 68). As in the case of sacred space, sacred time is not homogeneous, there are intervals in which it can be reached. A means by which sacred time appears in the world is through rituals. By performing appropriate gestures, man can live in the presence of the gods. Profane time is the second category used by Eliade. It differs from sacred time in the sense that it is compact, covering all manifestations of being. In order to escape profane duration man must discover his religious nature. Sacred time is the salvation from the destructive effects of profane living. A way in which sacredness can be found is by returning to the *illo tempore*, the time of the beginnings in which harmony and beauty characterized the world. Time regenerates as it both symbolically dies and is reborn in a new and fresh form. The repetition of the universal cycles through rituals allows man to annihilate the profane duration and to re-enact a sacred existence. Profane time can be defeated by living life on a religious model.

In Germanic mythology there are several versions of sacred time. They correspond to the essential moments in the evolution and fall of the Germanic gods. They also stand for rituals of initiation in the mysteries of the world. The Germanic gods are not all knowing and they are permanently in search of wisdom. A first version of sacred time is cosmic time or the time of the cosmogony. According to the Germanic myths, the universe was created by accomplishing the primordial murder. The three gods, Odin, Vili and Ve, kill the giant Ymir and from his body they form the cosmos. Giants are chtonic deities, they belong to a world which was not yet given a definite shape. It is a world which stands at the threshold between uncertainty and certainty and in which the primordial elements are not yet separated. In his book about anthropological structures Gilbert Durand analyses the symbol of the giant (1977). According to Durand, giants are amplified images which stand for the fascination about inaccessible forms of life. They frighten and captivate at the same time, being the representation of the divine cult of a high form of existence. Giants symbolize the aspirations to reach the heavens and have a panoramic view of the world. In Germanic mythology Ymir stands for the power which the three cosmic gods want to have for themselves. By killing him they take over his position and transform Ymir into the substance of the new universe.

The primordial murder is necessary for chaos to become cosmos. The three founding gods destroy an archaic pattern of the world and reshape it in the new divine order. Killing Ymir is an act of creation, bringing light in the newly born world. The flesh becomes the land, the blood turns into oceans, rivers and lakes, the bones change into stones, the brain into clouds and the skull into the sky. Durand considers that cosmic mutilation

should be linked to the lunar symbolism. Initiating ceremonies are "liturgies of the temporal sacred drama and of Time controlled by the rhythm of repetition, are isotopic with the dramatic cyclical myth of the Son" (Durand, 1969/1999, p. 295). He also believes that such a ceremony implying the idea of partial or complete sacrifice is a double negation of death."It is the 'death of death,' the fertilising power of death, death's potential for life" (Durand, 1969/1999, p. 298). Death is symbolically killed in order for life to prevail. In the same way time is vanquished, as cosmic rebirth means that the temporal rhythms are replaced by universal eternity.

Before the cosmic murder there was only chaos and darkness. After it light pervades the universe. The primordial murder equals to a cosmogony during which creation replaces the emptiness preceding it. Yet, cosmogony implies killing and, though it stands for regeneration, it also brings death in the newly created world. Inevitable ending will characterize the destiny of the Germanic gods as the retribution for their deed awaits them.

The sacred time of the cosmogony is the time of purity when the evil of the previous ages was cleaned and changed in a new beautiful form. Killing Ymir equals to the performing of a ritual of transcendence as the gods leave behind their limited existence and assume the role of the rulers of the universe. It is a double transformation, that of the universe from chaos to cosmos, and that of the gods from simple inhabitants of the world to the masters of their creation. Their future evolution depends on the way they deal with the power they acquire. According to Eliade,

> it is for this same reason that cosmogonic time serves as the model for all sacred times; for if sacred time is that in which the gods manifested themselves and created, obviously the most complete divine manifestation and the most gigantic creation is the creation of the world. (Eliade, 1957/1987, p. 81)

Sacred time becomes a time of creation containing in it the promise of a luminous future. It is also an instance during which profane duration is abolished.

Fatality characterizes Germanic mythology and it brings a gloomy atmosphere which corresponds to a feeling of doom. An episode in which sacred time acquires a new value is the one when Odin decides to hang from Yggdrasil, the sacred tree of the gods. Sacred time is suspended as for nine days and nine nights the god will no longer be part of the world. The purpose of this ritual is to obtain wisdom and to learn about the future of the gods. The burden of the primordial murder affects all of them, not only the three who performed the deed. The cosmic curse must be expiated by all.

As their leader Odin sacrifices himself and endures the ritual. Due to his deed profane duration is also abolished because time itself disappears in the immobility of the interval.

The ritual implies another concept which is the one of initiation. By accomplishing the deed, the god is given insight in the mysteries beyond. Initiation is obtained only after the participant proves that he deserves to receive it. He is admitted to the sacred space and while being there he must follow its rules, otherwise he will be denied any sacred vision. No mistakes are allowed in the sacred space governed by sacred time. When Odin accepts to endure the ordeal, he becomes part of a ritual which presupposes abandoning all familiar aspects of existence and plunging into the unknown.

It is a rite of passage which the god undergoes whose ultimate goal is a renewal of his inner self. In his book *Rites of Passage* Arnold Van Gennep explains the meaning of these stages of initiation (1960). They involve crossing the threshold which puts to test one's spiritual values. The rites include three levels, namely separation, transition and re-incorporation. The separation stage is the moment when one withdraws from the current status and prepares to move towards the next stage. The transition level is found between stages during which one leaves the former status, but has not yet reached the next moment of transformation. At this level one is on the threshold of experiences when balancing between stages is dangerous. The third stage is the one of reincorporation, a stage during which the passage is consummated by the ritual subject. After completing the last stage one can return to the community.

In the Germanic myth Odin remains nine nights and nine days hanging from the cosmic tree, living in his own sacred time. It is a personal version of sacredness since he isolates himself from the others and accomplishes the ritual. Sacred space and time include other elements as well. Yggdrasil is the cosmic tree growing in the middle of Walhalla, the hall of Odin and the place from where the defence of the universe will start on the last days. Sacred time depends on its existence as the moment when the cosmic tree falls, harmony and order disappear. The sacred dimension is maintained due to the presence of symbols characterizing it. The cosmic tree has an exemplary value as it stands for a primordial time when the cosmos was not threatened by the forces of evil. It is a reminder of the *illo tempore* in which divine works were possible. In the book dedicated to the sacred and the profane, Eliade considers that the cosmic tree implies the concept of initiation in the sacredness of the universe (Eliade, 1957/1987).

Initiation can be of two types: on the horizontal and on the vertical line. When it assumes a horizontal form, initiation does not really take place as it does not presuppose any exis-

tential change. It is simply a passage during which the performer of the ritual contemplates the world around without learning anything from it. It is an immobile state of being in which no significant changes occur. When the initiation happens on the vertical line, the concept of ascension is implied. The one living it has access to the secrets of the universe, he can see beyond the veil of common events and is deeply changed by the vision he has. After such an initiation is accomplished the one benefiting from it receives a moral lesson which will help him in the future challenges and encounters. He chooses to live in the realm of the sacred time where profane duration is abolished. Initiation on the vertical line is also a reward for an act of moral courage as it is not easy to confront yourself with your limits and weaknesses.

Durand considers that any ascension is an act of reaching immortality as it represents a way of defeating time and death (1977). Ascension is a journey inside one's own self, the attempt to achieve a state of pure verticality during which one can escape in a heavenly space. The wish to accomplish the ascension implies not only a nostalgia for older times in which the universe opened to the protagonist of the initiation, but also the faith that such an achievement is possible. Such a process is the means by which one learns about his capacity to fulfil his ideals and dreams. It is an exploration of one's inner self.

When choosing to perform the rites of passage, Odin makes the sacrifice of giving one of his eyes to the Norns who are living at the roots of the cosmic tree. They are three goddesses of destiny governing the lives of the gods and shaping the fate of the universe. They are blind, thus symbolically standing for the unpredictability of destiny. Germanic myths talk about the guilt of the gods which brings their final fall. Profane duration replaces sacred time causing lack of harmony and cosmic disequilibrium. The Norns receive the eye as payment for allowing the god to enter the sacred realm of Yggdrasil. This self-blindness is an act of humility by which Odin abandons his position as father of the gods and adopts the status of a commoner subjected to punishments. Durand notices that "the unconscious is always represented in a dark and blind way" (1977, p. 114). He analyses the very episode of Odin's blindness and considers that it is an instance of solar and beneficial images. "Odin loses one eye as if he wanted to unveil a mysterious, unclear and frightening past" (1977, p. 115). Blindness identifies with the unconscious double of the soul. Once physical vision is lost, a more profound insight takes its place and man starts living in a different world. Time itself changes as man is no longer distracted by common events and he can concentrate on his own inner vision. He discovers the true visionthat corresponds to a more genuine understanding of the world. In the case of Odin time is suspended and even annihilated because he lives in his

own universe, which no longer depends on the duration of common existence. Thus, a spiritual dimension is reached, which allows for a deeper communion with the universe. The reward for Odin's sacrifice is the wisdom that he receives from the Norns.

Another instance of sacred time in Germanic mythology is linked to the search for the Rhine gold and the ring of the Nibelungs. Sacred time confronts with profane duration and the threat of death. The gods ask two giants, Fafnir and Fasolt, to build a hall in Asgard where they can dwell. The pact which the two parties decide upon stipulates that the giants have to finish their work in a certain number of days and request what they want as a reward. The payment they ask for is the goddess Iduna, the keeper of the golden apples that provide the gods with eternal youth. In their absence they grow old and die. It is a dangerous bargain as the giants succeed in building the hall, later called Walhalla, and claim their prize. Once they leave with Iduna, the gods start getting old and they feel the threat of death. Sacred time vanishes since its basic aspects disappear. In order to save themselves from death, the gods suggest a compromise. They will give the giants the Rhine gold with the ring of the Nibelungs and they will receive Iduna back. The giants agree as the treasure was famous. The gods however do not intend to fulfil their part of the bargain, as they want to keep Iduna and the gold for themselves. It is another instance of a sinful behaviour in the realm of the sacred, which will bring the final fall.

Sacred time transforms into a time of cheating as it is based on the wish to destroy and not to create. It is a worse instance of profane duration, a sort of time that cannot be redeemed because it consists of falsity and lies. Profane duration can be changed into sacred time by using appropriate rituals. Cheating, destructive time can never transcend the limits of a lie. By trying to play with destiny the gods attract the existential curse that will lead to their death in Ragnarök. Sacred time becomes the time of punishment and due retribution for their deeds. Time itself turns against them as they can no longer control it. It is like an entity more powerful than they ever imagined. Cheating on time is one of the greatest mistakes as rules must always be respected in the sacred dimension.

In order to retrieve Iduna and become young again the gods send Loki to obtain the treasure of the Nibelungs. He catches one of its keepers while he was enjoying a swim in the river. The three beings guarding the hoard are shape-shifters, the captured one having transformed into an otter. His name is Andvari. Loki fishes him out and threatens to kill him if he does not give him the treasure. Angry because they lost it, Andvari throws a terrible curse on the gold, saying that whoever possesses it will die of a violent death. The most precious object in the treasure is the ring which has the capacity to recreate the trove if it is used. The giant builders receive the gold and release Iduna. Yet, the curse

begins to function because Fafnir kills Fasolt and by transforming into a dragon he takes the treasure and the ring to a cave where he guards them. The hoard is called the Rhine gold since in the beginning it belonged to the daughters of the Rhine. It will return to them at the end of the world when all is destroyed in the apocalyptic fire.

Loki is a very complex god, as he is the god of fire, but also the god of mysteries and of imagination. Loki decides to steal the treasure as the owners do not want to surrender it. Negotiating with time is the means the god chooses to use in order to accomplish his mission. Time becomes part of the decisions of the gods as it depends on how they use it that they can obtain what they want. The mistake which the gods make is that they cannot distinguish between sacred time and profane duration. Their existence is no longer under their control as time turns into an enemy ready to destroy them. Eliade considers that "Sacred, mythical time also originates and supports existential, historical time, for it is the latter's paradigmatic model" (Eliade, 1987, p. 89). Sacred time becomes a devouring time, symbolically annihilating the cosmic creation. The gods grow old and lose their powers, facing the end. It is as if they have fallen in their own trap and are unable to escape from it. Time closes down on them creating parallel dimensions and posing impossible challenges. The temporal duration has no mercy as it punishes anyone who dares to defy it. Sacred time acquires negative connotations and no redemption is possible. It is like a fall in the abyss of a primordial guilt. Time destroys and no longer creates.

A version of sacred time that can be linked to the previous one is found in the episode of Balder's death. He is one of the sons of Odin, the god of light and of beauty. He dies as a consequence of Loki's thirst for revenge. The god of fire feels betrayed because he is not given a proper place among the gods. He is envious of Balder and in order to avenge himself he tricks the blind god Hönir into killing Balder. Sacred time loses again its regenerating value and transforms into a threat for the gods. After Balder is killed, time precipitates, darkness falls and the end gets near. The death of Balder is an anticipation of the last day when the gods and the whole universe will perish. The punishment for Loki is to be tied up to a slate with chains and to suffer there until Ragnarök. Time is no longer sanctified, it loses its regenerating powers, an instance that actually stands for the end of time altogether. No return to the primordial beautiful time is possible since sacred time no longer exists.

Balder's death is a violent one and it brings pain and suffering to the other gods. It can be seen as a reversed version of the entrance of the sacred in the world. In his book The *Violence and the Sacred* René Girard analyses the concept of the sacred in relation to culture and ritual gestures (1996). He believes that mankind is intimately connected

to rituals and it is impossible to say which ritual is more important than the others. It is necessary for man to understand which type of ritual he wants to perform and for which particular purpose he needs to act. Using a wrong magic has as result more destruction and subsequently the impossibility of redemption. Girard considers that evil must be properly exorcised in order for the ritual to succeed. All rituals and magical practices have their origin in the ritual murder. The first act of violence brings moral disequilibrium in the world and the necessity of sacrifices. Girard concludes by saying that cultural order is a result of the manner in which man knows how to deal with evil and how to turn it into potential good.

He also considers that the sacred can be reached and included in the common world if there are certain gates through which it can penetrate. According to Girard, the sacred is not part of human existence. It can be assimilated into it if man proves that he deserves to be part of the sacred. Eliade mentions that man can live in the sacred time if he has faith (Eliade, 1957/1987). Girard thinks that the sacred can be reached if appropriate sacrifices are made. Such gestures have the value of a ritual by which man gets in communion with the gods. They are meant to improve human existence and to bring spiritual fulfilment. In the Germanic myth the situation is reversed. Instead of bringing the sacred dimension closer to the gods and thus reassuring them that redemption is possible, the killing of Balder annihilates all hope. The sacred is replaced by the profane because what happens is not a sacrifice proper. It is a murder bringing the end. Thus, one can say that the death of Balder is the opposite of the killing of Ymir, which helped with the creation of the new cosmos. Germanic mythology is made of parallel structures and episodes that are meant to better unveil its essence.

Loki is the instrument by which destructive time enters the world. He fulfils the role of a trickster by cheating on Hönir and making him kill his brother. Once a positive cosmic function, the trickster becomes an evil character whose mission is to bring to light the weaknesses and limitations of human nature. It is also an observer as he remains in the shadows and speculates on the mistakes of his opponents. Loki is a trickster because he changes identities and masks, cheating on the others in order to reach his own purposes. According to Victor Kernbach, the trickster is "a civilizing hero, usually a deity or an archetypal ancestor who has a negative double" (1989, p. 599). A trickster is capable to undergo metamorphoses by which he changes identities and cheats more easily on others. In his turn, Claude Lévi-Strauss believes that

> Not only can we account for the ambiguous character of the trickster, but we can also
> understand another property of mythical figures the world over, namely, that the same

god is endowed with contradictory attributes—for instance, he may be good and bad at the same time." (Lévi-Strauss, 1958/1963, p. 227)

Hönir kills Balder with an arrow made from mistletoe. Durand considers that any weapon made of mistletoe or of any substance related to wood belongs to the nocturnal characteristics of the image (1969/1999). They imply destruction and death. The mistletoe is a parasite of the oak tree and it symbolizes the negative counterpart of the divine connotations of the oak. This pair has one element (the oak) standing for immortality, while the other one (the mistletoe) represents the destiny trying to take advantage of the first. They both coexist as there can never be good without evil. Such complementary pairs keep the world in balance, but the right measure must be found. In Germanic mythology good and evil are found in all the gods in equal shares, but eventually evil will triumph. Given the mortal nature of the gods, there is no hope for salvation.

One of the ways in which the gods try to gain more time is by gathering an army of warriors in Walhalla. They are meant to fight and protect the gods during Ragnarök. The *einherjar*, as they are called, are heroes who died on the battlefield and are brought to Walhalla by the Walkiries. Being aware that time is against them, Odin attempts to postpone the end by choosing these warriors. They spend their time in Walhalla, preparing for the last day. The warriors are messengers of a time which is external as they exist outside any temporal dimension. They belong to a semi-sacred time because they used to live a common life, while after death they enjoy the presence of the gods. The sacred can be reached also through messengers, not only in a direct personal manner. Sacredness is conditioned by the behaviour man has towards it. Eliade considers that sacred time can be recreated if man understands that it is a primordial time, a mythical time, "an original time, in the sense that it came into existence all at once, that it was not preceded by another time, because no time could exist before the appearance of the reality narrated in the myth" (1957/1987, p. 72). In Germanic mythology the gods are unable to have an appropriate relation with time and thus its sacredness vanishes.

The last version of sacred time is eschatological time, corresponding to the end of the world. Sacredness is abolished as the forces of evil will attack Walhalla and destroy the universe. Giants and monsters plunge the cosmos into the nothingness of the beginnings, thus closing the circle that has started with the primordial murder. The main element characterizing this event is fire. It is not the cosmic fire of creation, bringing light and hope, it rather is the apocalyptical fire which reduces all the universe to ashes. As a primordial element fire is the flame that is purifying and innate in the dialectics of fire and light, thus, the real sublimating virtue of fire is formed (Durand, 1969/1999, p. 168).

In the book *Rites and Symbols of Initiation* Eliade states that

> access to sacrality is manifested, among other things, by a prodigious increase in heat. … The respective initiations,…, pursue the same end—to make the novice die to the human condition and to resuscitate him to a new, a transhuman existence. (1958/1975, pp. 86-87).

Such connotations apply to the positive characteristics of fire which imply purification and regeneration. This kind of fire brings joy and confidence in a more luminous future. Due to its presence man can hope that his existence will be sanctified and he will be able to partake in the divine creation again. In Germanic mythology fire loses its regenerating value. It is a devouring fire, destroying all the places inhabited by life. Eschatological fire corresponds to eschatological time. During Ragnarök time is compressed as if it lost its very essence. It becomes immobile, events happen simultaneously since the temporal line itself is abolished. Time itself disappears as there are no temporal references to connect to. Sacred time and profane duration mingle in the same undifferentiated temporal dimension. The end of time represents the end of all known aspects of the world. The gods die and their creation is destroyed. The immobility of the void will rule again. The circle of guilt and retribution is complete.

Eliade considers that "when it is desacralized, cyclic time becomes terrifying; it is seen as a circle forever turning on itself, repeating itself to infinity" (1957/1987, p. 107). It is a dissolution of all temporal and spatial links with the surroundings which once formed the known world. On the last day the gods are killed by the monsters which they tried to subject. These creatures become messengers of destructive time as death acts also by intermediaries and not only directly. Ragnarök is a period of utter dissolution since no redemption is possible.

In the book *The Well and the Tree* (1982) Paul C. Bauschatz discusses the concept of time, relating it to the existential experiences found in Germanic mythology. He underlines the quality of time as perceived at the beginning of the world and at its end. He considers that time is binary, being divided into past and non-past in which the latter can be equated to the present. There is no future in Germanic mythology mainly because time is limited and it does not regenerate itself. Temporal duration is important if it bears upon essential events which may change the destiny of gods and humans alike. "Duration reckons with horizontal relations that lack significant moment. Significance is built through association with the power of the past and ultimately leads to a spatial and temporal unification of action" (Bauschatz, 1982, p. 139). The past deeds of the gods condition their present destiny and the manner in which they respond to such challenges is rendered in what happens to them during Ragnarök.

Though Germanic mythology is definitely marked by the concepts of guilt, violence and murder, sacredness can still be found in some of its aspects. Cosmic time is cyclical and even if there is no future dimension events seem to occur in a present which constantly mingles with the past. Such identification explains the fact that the fire of Ragnarök can be interpreted as a purifying fire as well. Out of the ashes of the old world may rise the new one. The former sacred time changes into an improved version which, although is not certain to happen, may at least be hoped for. "Cosmic myths, at least to the extent that they deal with matters of time, always attempt to reconcile what seems to be a universal, temporal paradox" (Bauschatz, 1982, p. 143).

Sacred time in Germanic mythology emerges out of fragmentary places in which it is preserved as a reminder of past achievements. It can be brought back to life through rituals and magical gestures. Time and space dissolute during Ragnarök, yet they can still be invoked as part of memories that tell of heroic past events. A full cosmic cycle is achieved due to the expiation of sins. Much of the destiny of the gods is shaped according to the way they understand the challenges set before them. Initiation can be reached only if one is able to acknowledge his limits and see beyond the veil of illusions. Thus, Germanic mythology transforms into an exemplary story about the creation, fall and regeneration of the universe.

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Backward Time of Genocide

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Abstract

In the article the notion of time in the context of the phenomenon of a genocide will be analyzed. Genocide is almost never perceived by public consciousness as it progresses The present time of genocide, as it is experienced by its participants and witnesses, displays features similar to taboos. Much too hard to accept for consciousness, it is forced out of the conscious memory of its surviving actors. Consequently, it seems to be a taboo for social memory too. As a result, the very recognition of the fact of genocide usually takes place many decades or even generations after the genocide itself. Przemysław Czapliński coined a term "backward catastrophe" (Katastrofa wsteczna), as to describe Holocaust of Jews in Poland during World War II. The point of this term is intended to describe an event that occurred mostly unnoticed and unrecognized in its importance. This was the case of Jews' pogroms in Poland, happening during World War II, and shortly after. The public discussion on this topic started in 2000, after Jan Tomasz Gross' publication. National Museum of the Holodomor Genocide in Kiev was founded in 2010, even though it is devoted to memorialize the events from 1932–33. The analysis of the specificity of the time of genocide will be based on a few chosen examples.

Keywords: time, genocide, Holocaust, Holodomor, Congo

Introduction

At its origins in Africa and after its spreading over Asia and Europe Homo sapiens belonged to the whole family of homo erectus species. They coexisted for thousands of years. The last of Homo sapiens companion was Homo neanderthalensis. Homo neanderthalensis and Homo sapiens had been living next to each other for sixty thousand years, both having their own cultures, languages, customs, and sometimes even interbreeding. Quite suddenly, Neanderthals disappeared about forty thousand years ago (Leakey, 1994).

It is possible that the time of genocide starts already in prehistory and has been inscribed into our cultural collective consciousness in the form of the mythical figures of Cain and Abel. The first couple of siblings became the actors of the first murder. Until now police statistics note that majority of murders occur between family members.

Although mankind has been possibly tormented by the plague of genocide from its beginnings, and continues to be until now, it is surprisingly difficult to determine what exactly genocide is, and what we mean by this term. On the one hand, a scientific approach to the issue of genocide brings many problems due to the drastic nature of the research material that a researcher has to deal with. She/he gets acquainted with countless testimonies of various types of genocide on many scales. On the other hand, the literature on the subject is full of attempts to define the phenomenon, therefore it is not an easy task to deepen the literature on the topic.

Genocide

The history of the concept is broadly known. The creator of the term is considered to be Rafael Lemkin, a Polish Jew born in 1900 in Bezwodne, currently Belarus, and educated in Kraków and Lviv, where he earned a PhD in law. In his book *Axis Rule in Occupied Europe* (1944) Lemkin proposed a designation that quickly earned universal recognition. "Genocide" was coined by him to refer to "the destruction of a nation or of an ethnic group" (1944, p. 79). The term, as he explains in the famous chapter IX of his book was "made from the ancient Greek word genos (race, tribe) and the Latin cide (killing), thus corresponding in its formation to such words as tyrannicide, homicide, infanticide, etc." (Lemkin, 1944, p. 79). He remarks that genocide in 20th century is "an old practice in its modern development" (1944, p. 79). However, his understanding of genocide is fairly broad, and includes also "cultural genocide":

> genocide does not necessarily mean the immediate destruction of a nation, except when accomplished by mass killings of all members of a nation. It is intended rather to signify a coordinated plan of different actions aiming at the destruction of essential foundations of the life of national groups, with the aim of annihilating the groups themselves. The objectives of such a plan would be disintegration of the political and social institutions, of culture, language, national feelings, religion, and the economic existence of national groups, and the destruction of the personal security, liberty, health, dignity, and even the lives of the individuals belonging to such groups. Genocide is directed against the national group as an entity, and the actions involved are directed against individuals, not in their individual capacity, but as members of the national group. (Lemkin, 1944, p. 79)

Lemkin's description would include cases of annihilation of the group in its integrity, even though it does not necessarily entail extermination of all the members of the group, or even any of them. The main point of the definition is rather coordination and systematic character of the action of disintegration of national institutions, what would lead to the loss of national identity as a group. Lemkin's approach seems to be inspired by some events from Polish history, namely Prussian politics of germanisation, and Russian—of russification. They both were intended not to physical extinction, but to undermine the national identity of the group, a "cultural genocide" as researchers sometimes call it.

Lemkin's findings gained big notoriety and were broadly accepted, even though in recent times one can notice arising discussions over his definitions. The main doubt arises around the national criteria of genocide, even if in the footnote Lemkin allows using the word "ethnocide" with the same function. Only annihilation of groups based on national or ethnic criteria would be classified as genocide, whereas mass murders committed in reference to religious or political criteria would be perceived as less severe and damaging. Lemkin distinguishes two phases of genocide:

> one, destruction of the national pattern of the oppressed group; the other, the imposition of the national pattern of the oppressor. This imposition, in turn, may be made upon the oppressed population which is allowed to remain, or upon the territory alone, after removal of the population and the colonization by the oppressor's own nationals. (1944, p. 79)

Here again, the author refers to imposition of "the national pattern," which not necessarily means murdering. Also, what is interesting to note here is that Lemkin explicitly evokes a term of colonisation. It seems a bit paradoxical, since, as we see later, the definitions proposed by Lemkin were not going to be easily applicable for cases of European colonisation and mass murders to follow. As researchers indicate, one of the historical events inspiring him to create the concept of genocide was the pogrom of Armenians by Turks (Bieńczyk-Missala, 2020, p. 5).

Before proposing the term of genocide in 1944, Lemkin had already tried to introduce to the law of nations two new crimes: the crime of barbarity (massacres, pogroms, exterminations) and the crime of vandalism—destruction of material objects of artistic or cultural value (Jones, 2006, p. 9). The concept of genocide was successfully employed in the *Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide* declared in 1948 in Paris. It was, although, understood there in a slightly modified manner:

> Genocide means any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, as such:
>
> - Killing members of the group;
>
> - Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group;
>
> - Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part;
>
> - Imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group;
>
> - Forcibly transferring children of the group to another group. (United Nations Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, 1948)

The Convention's definition is narrower, since it does not include "cultural genocide," i.e. the destruction of national culture without physical extermination of its representatives. On the other hand, it is broader, because it also includes racial and religious groups. Still, political groups are not taken into consideration. As Anthony Dirk Moses remarks, the depoliticisation of genocide is convenient for actors of world politics as it helps them to distinguish "genocide from civil war and insurgency, as from warfare proper" (Moses, 2021, p. 25). Genocide becomes "the crime of crime," which means that any other crimes, no matter what, are of less weight. Granting special legal protection to certain groups means at the same time excluding from it any other groups that do not meet the definition contained in the Convention. Mass killings based on other than nation, ethnic, racial, or religious criteria would be trivialized, perceived as less drastic, and interpreted as a normal element of warfare, even though they often bring more victims than actual genocides, qualified as such. In the 1950–1953 period, in numerous heavy city bombings US air force killed over 20% of North Korean population (a few hundred thousands, the correct number is not determined yet; Moses, 2021, p. 19). Neither this, nor the aerial bombings of Dresden, nor Hiroshima and Nagasaki nuclear bombings have never been recognized as genocide. As Moses puts it "depoliticizing effect of the genocide concept enables states to legally kill civilians in the name of raison d'état" (Moses, 2021, p. 26).

Moses is not the only scholar to complain on lack of clarity of the concept of genocide. It is hardly possible to find an example of genocide that would be not questioned by someone. Mutual accusations of genocide became one of crucial arguments in international relations in discussion between competing actors. The problem arises from the difficulty of discerning between genocide and war (Moses, 2021, p. 7).

In war both actors play symmetrical, active roles, whereas a genocide is asymmetric, since it is directed towards "passive ethnic group"—blameless and lacking agency (Moses, 2021, p. 19). This clear distinction, however, lost its clarity when applied to particular cases, especially when synoptically perceived from both opposite points of view. Turks have never granted that the extermination of Armenians was a genocide. They utter it was a defence, necessary to ensure safe conditions of living for Turks. During the genocide of Tutsi in Rwanda the Hutus were convinced they were fighting for their lives and their children's lives. Also, American aerial bombings of German (300,000 civilian victims) and Japan (900,000 civilian victims) cities are not usually qualified as genocide, but as a defence, necessary to protect lives of Allied soldiers (Jones, 2006, pp. 24–25). In such cases an argument is sometimes raised that in contemporary war it is hardly possible to tell apart between soldiers and civilians, because some civilians produce arms, uniforms, cars, and food for army, therefore they constitute a part of the army and can be a justifiable aim of direct, armed attack.

From his part Moses proposes some terminological innovation. He introduces the term "permanent security" to replace "genocide":

> Genocide, like war crimes and crimes against humanity, obscures a deeper source of transgression better covered by the notion of permanent security. Despite its possibly anodyne connotations, permanent security is a deeply utopian and sinister imperative that has not been satisfactorily examined by the extensive security studies literature. (Moses, 2021, p. 34)

As a source of this term Moses indicates SS-Führer Otto Ohlendorf, who commanded troops undertaking a mass murder of Jews in Ukraine, Moldova, and Caucasus. Asked by a judge why he and his troops killed Jewish children, he gave the answer that the children could have grown up and resisted the occupation in the future, especially if they had learned that Germans had murdered their parents. He was seeking permanent security for Germans, he continued. In the very same vein many genocides were justified and interpreted as elements of necessary defence. Not only the Holocaust by Germans, Polish, and many other nations, but also Tutsi genocide by Hutu in Rwanda in 1994 and Bosnian Muslim genocide by Serbs in Srebrenica, Bosnia in 1995, concentrated on men in "fighting age" (Jones, 2006, p. 216). In all of these cases perpetrators often motivated their atrocities by seeking a permanent security from possible aggression from the part of victims or their offspring.

Moses indicates two models of permanent security: an illiberal one and a liberal. Illiberal permanent security applies to possible threat against such actors as an ethnos, a nation, or a religion situated on a certain territory (Moses, 2021, p. 37). Moses evokes an example of prosecutions of communists in Latin America and Indonesia and of national minorities. The emblematic example is the Holocaust, undertaken in the name of the protection of the state of the 3rd Reich. In a natural way every empire tends to permanent security. Adolf Hitler revealed his being inspired by the British Empire. According to him "no nation has more carefully prepared its economic conquest with the sword with greater brutality and defended it later on more ruthlessly than the British" (*Mein Kampf*, after Moses, 2021, p. 295). This observation has been confirmed by historians. Sven Lindqvist sees the source of the Holocaust in the racism of European colonialism. He complains that some genocides occurred before the Holocaust have not found their way to social consciousness and social debate:

> But in this debate no one mentions the German extermination of the Herero people in Southwest Africa during Hitler's childhood. No one mentions the corresponding genocide by the French, the British, or the Americans. No one points out that during Hitler's childhood, a major element in the European view of mankind was the conviction that 'inferior races' were by nature condemned to extinction: the true compassion of the superior races consisted in helping them on the way. (Lindqvist, 1996, p. 13)

While illiberal permanent security relates to a state, an empire, liberal permanent security has as its subject the whole "humanity" that is in danger. The enemy in this case is usually "barbarian," "savage," or "enemy of humanity" (Moses, 2021, p. 40). As it was mentioned before, Lemkin proposed once the terms "barbarity" and "vandalism" as legal qualification. Here we can see some relations between his proposal and the concept of liberal permanent security.

Examples of this kind of motivation are innumerable both in human history, as in our present. It is common to dehumanize an opponent, to declare myself as a defender of humanity. While illiberal permanent security was based on territoriality, its liberal version perceives the whole world as its domain. In the name of liberal permanent security America and Africa was conquered and occupied by Europeans during the last four centuries. The colonisation was conducted in the name of "civilizing missions." As it was expressed by Juan Ginés de Sepúlveda in his theological discussion with Bartolomé de Las Casas on justifiability of colonisation, Spanish colonisers wanted to "prevent the Amerindians' scandalous violations of natural law: idolatry, sodomy, human sacrifice, cannibalism, and internecine warfare" (Moses, 2020, p. 54).

The result was the genocide of native people of America, described by Bartolomé de Las Casas in his *Short Account of the Destruction of the Indies* (1552). The Arab Caliphate, the Ottoman Empire, the Chinese Empire, the Russian Empire, USA—all were and are expanding with their deep conviction in their own "civilizing missions."

Moses describes his approach as an analysis of the language of transgression of different epochs and times. The term of genocide is one of the words of this language, emblematical especially for 20th century. Even though these terminological proposals are worth deepening and applying, Moses' conclusions are nothing new. Jean-Paul Sartre in 1968 had already written about a new form of total war making 'everybody mobilised' and justifiable aim of a military attack. He remarks that French military forces massacred forty five thousand civilians in Sétif, Algeria, just after Nuremberg trials, yet the French government had not been judged. Also, Sartre reminds that Americans fight in Vietnam 'to avoid a Third World War' (Sartre, 1968).

Genocide and Time

The Holocaust is a backward catastrophe in Polish culture, Przemysław Czapliński states (2015, p. 37). By "backward catastrophe" he means "a catastrophe which occurs unseen until it becomes recognized and which broadens its destructive activity until it has been recognized" (Czapliński, 2015, p. 66). Czapliński points to the oxymoronic character of the term. How is a backward catastrophe possible? How is possible a fire that started long ago, but only now begins to destroy buildings?—Czapliński asks. "The witnesses did not see when it lasted, they didn't recognize its essence, they didn't invent remedy for the future" (Czapliński, 2015, p. 37). The Holocaust was accompanied by series of Polish pogroms on Jews. The last pogrom occurred after the end of the World War II, in Kielce in 1946 (Tokarska-Bakir, 2018). Yet, since then, the Holocaust became a taboo topic in Poland and remained almost unspoken and unexpressed until the middle of the 1980s. The turning point is Claude Lanzmann's documentary film *Shoah*, broadcasted on Polish TV in 1985. It gained negative reception in the Polish press (Czapliński, 2015, p. 37). Nevertheless, it also started a long list of literary works, essays, novels, and movies that elaborated on the topic of the Holocaust. This great narrative had a triangle model: the Jews were victims, the Germans—perpetrators, and Polish—bystanders and witnesses. Not necessarily innocent bystanders, though. Czesław Miłosz in his poem "Campo di Fiori" (1943) describes young people riding carousel in a sunny, spring day in Warsaw, next to the wall of Jewish ghetto, where the Jewish people were being killed and the ghetto set on fire fire after the fall of the Ghetto Uprising in May 1943.

A similar perspective was presented by Jan Błoński in his essay "Poor Poles Look at the Ghetto" (1987). Polish people are represented as "innocent by-standers." Their guilt, if it exists, would consist mostly in the lack of empathy and compassion with the Jews, what actually covers strong and almost universal anti-Semitism in Poland. This is what Błoński means when he writes that the Holocaust "marked" Poland and that to remind about this genocide is an obligation for our poetry and literature. But the worst that the Poles can be accountable for is anti-Semitism. This was the common perspective of the 1980s and the 1990s in Poland. Therefore many of the Polish people were quite unpleasantly surprised in 2001 that in Art Spiegelman's comic book *Maus* the Poles were represented by pigs; Jews by mice, Germans by cats (Spiegelman, 1980–1991/1996, 2001).

One year earlier, though, in 2000, Jan Tomasz Gross' *Neighbors: The Destruction of the Jewish Community in Jedwabne* was published in Poland. The book described a pogrom with 1600 Jewish victims (in a subsequent investigation this figure has been reduced to 360) undertaken by local Polish community, under German supervision. Since 25 June 1941, the day Germans entered Jedwabne, acts of rapes, plunder, torturing and killing Jews by Poles were numerous. On 10 July 1941 Gestapo soldiers along with local Polish authorities decided to finally murder all the Jews. They were taken out of their home to the cemetery, forced to dig graves and killed. Escape was impossible, since the village was surrounded by inhabitants of three neighbour villages. The rest of the Jews were locked in a barn and set on fire.

The book of Jan T. Gross caused numerous repercussions. On the one hand, it gave a stimulus to research on Polish participation in the Holocaust, leading to further similar discoveries. Also, many artistic works have been created on this topic, as novels (Józef Hen, *Pingpongista, 2008*), before-mentioned comics (2001 Polish edition of 1980 *Maus* by Art Spiegelman), theatre pieces (Tadeusz Słobodzianek, *Our class, 2009*), and movies (Agnieszka Holland, *In Darkness*, 2011, launched in 2012; Władysław Pasikowski, *Aftermath*, 2012; Paweł Pawlikowski, *Ida*, 2013). Furthermore, it aroused a violent critical reaction from the conservative side of the political scene. It led to a governmental project of legal prohibition of research on the Polish participation in the Holocaust. The project has not been finally accepted, but the topic still lasts half taboo. After its opening in 2013 in Warsaw, the POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews has gained a great notoriety at once and played a role of a public education institution on the topic of Jewish culture and the Polish chapter of the Holocaust.

The Present Time of Genocide

How was the Holocaust even possible? At first we are inclined to think that people who did it were not sane humans, but monsters, psychopaths, deprived of moral sense. Hannah Arendt, in *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil* (1963), denied this thesis, though. In her analysis, Adolf Eichmann, one of the main managers of the Holocaust, was a conscientious clerk who strictly followed the orders of his supervisors and tried to perform his tasks as effectively as possible. He was not a psychopathic murderer, but a hardworking person, devoted to his work, appreciating the sense of belonging (Arendt, 1963).

Stanley Milgram originated from a Jewish family in Romania and Hungary. His family was severely hit by the Holocaust. Part of it, survivors of concentration camps, fled to the USA. Milgram imagined that there must be something special with the German nation, this famous "Ordnung," which contributed to the effective execution of the Holocaust. Inspired by Eichmann trial, he proposed an experiment on obedience. He intended to start with a trial series in US and then to go to Germany to carry out the proper experiment. However, the results of the first trial series shocked him to such an extent that it seemed obvious to him that there was no need to carry out a special series of experiments in Germany.

In the introductory part of his book *Obedience to Authority*, he evokes the concept of the banality of evil and affirms its empiric reality. The experiment on obedience shows that an ordinary person is able to kill out of the sense of obligation (Milgram, 1974, p. 6). Under the pretext of testing a new memory leaning method he ordered a participant of the experiment (a "teacher") to shock a "learner" with electricity, applying higher voltage each time. He and his team predicted that only little percentage of "teachers" would apply the highest shock of 450 V. In the actual experiment 2/3 of participants have done it. Nobody forced them to follow the rules, they were able to get up and leave any time. The salary for the experiment was $4. "The Nazi extermination of European Jews is the most extreme instance of abhorrent immoral acts carried out by thousands of people in the name of obedience" (Milgram, 1974, p. 9). Obedience, the value we teach our children as one of the most important, happens to be a perfect help in genocide.

There is, however, an important difference between the situation of the Jews in the Holocaust and the actual experiment. Milgram indicates it in the introduction of his book:

> At least one essential feature of the situation in Germany was not studied here—namely, the intense devaluation of the victim prior to action against him. For a decade and more, vehement anti-Jewish propaganda systematically prepared the German population

to accept the destruction of the Jews. Step by step the Jews were excluded from the category of citizen and national, and finally were denied the status of human beings. Systematic devaluation of the victim provides a measure of psychological justification for brutal treatment of the victim and has been the constant accompaniment of massacres, pogroms, and wars. In all likelihood, our subjects would have experienced greater ease in shocking the victim had he been convincingly portrayed as a brutal criminal or a pervert. (Milgram, 1973, p. 9)

Prior devaluation, dehumanisation, or even reification of victims is a typical part of most genocides and it was the case in the Holocaust. Indeed, in spite of the lack of prior preparation in the Milgram experiment, the whole genocidal mechanism was functioning surprisingly smoothly, even though afterwards most of the "teachers" recalled the whole experiment as one of most horrible events of their lives. Some of them needed the help of specialists. This kind of experiment would not be possible to conduct today, given our contemporary ethical standards in sciences and research.

Philip Zimbardo's Prison Stanford Experiment led to similar conclusions. In his later research on studies on "how good people turn evil" this author created the concept of the Lucifer Effect. One of the inspirations for this book were tortures at the Abu Ghraib prison by Americans in 2003 (Zimbardo, 2008). Zimbardo bases his research also on a detailed analysis of this case.

One could presume that helping a victim of genocide is our obligation, even if our own life is in danger. However, in the situation of crisis and terror most of us would rather save our own lives than risk it for another. To the higher extent we should appreciate and honour genocide rescuers. Moral philosophers talk in this case about supererogation (Heyd, 2019). This feature characterises deeds that are morally good, but that are not obligatory. An example of a good, non-obligatory deed would be a jump to the river during winter to rescue a drowning person. It is morally glorious, but one cannot expect anyone to do it. The biblical prototype of a supererogatory deed would be the New Testament parable of the Good Samaritan, who took care of an injured man. He took him to an inn, and paid to the owner to take care of the victim of oppression. James Opie Urmson illustrates this idea with the help of the figures of the saint and of the hero. The saint follows his duty in the context where most of the people would give up, because of inclination, desire, or self-interest. The hero does his duty in the situation in which most of the people would not do it, because of their instinct of self-preservation (Urmson, 1958, p. 200).

The Backward Time of Genocide

Joanna Tokarska-Bakir, in her monumental work based on official documents, but also on testimonies of witnesses, is trying to describe at length, minute after minute, the 4th of July 1946 in Kielce. During that day Polish military, militia, industry workers, and a big part of the population of Kielce committed the pogrom against a temporarily located small group of Jews, killing 37 of them. In the pogrom three Poles were also killed, mistaken for Jews (Tokarska-Bakir, 2018).

The Holocaust was a backward catastrophe for Polish culture, Czapliński says. During the Holocaust and directly after it there were no protests against it. Witnesses had not been asked for their reports. Nobody was interested or capable in recalling back traumatic memories, both victims, oppressors, and witnesses. There were few artistic elaborations of the topic of the Holocaust, but they were stopped by censorship (a movie of *Przy torze kolejowym*, Andrzej Brzozowski, 1963), or passed unnoticed (Bogdan Wojdowski, *Chleb rzucony umarłym*, 1973). As Czapliński puts it, a backward catastrophe "broadens its destructive activity until it has been recognized" (Czapliński, 2015, p. 66). Such was and is the case of the Holocaust.

A similar case would be from this perspective the Holodomor in Ukraine in 1932–1933. Its first memorial was founded by Ukrainian emigrants in Edmonton, Canada, in 1983 (Temertey). In Ukraine, the Holodomor Memorial Day was established in 1998 and the National Museum of the Holodomor-Genocide in 2008. The Ukrainian great famine in 1932–33 was the result of dekulakization and collectivisation of farm lands by Soviets, the dramatic decline of productivity of grain, because of the drought. It started in the winter of 1932 and reached its peak in the spring of 1933. "Starving peasants consumed domestic animals, including dogs and cats, together with various food surrogates like tree buds, weeds, and herbs. Some resorted to cannibalism, and dug up human corpses and the carcasses of dead animals" (Serbyn, 2005, p. 1059).

Finally, Holodomor had been officially recognized as genocide, but the debate did not finish. The question is to which extent was the famine planned by Soviet authorities and to which extent can it be interpreted as a by-product of economic and social transformation (Moses, 2020, p. 270). The question remains not fully answered, until the Soviet archives are disclosed for research. The author of the entry in *Encyclopedia of Genocide and Crimes Against Humanity* enumerates four approaches in current historical research on the topic:

> Some scholars flatly rejected the notion that the famine was genocide, others avoided the problem of classification by using descriptive terms such as "great famine," "artificial famine," or "man-made famine." Still others accepted the idea of genocide, but saw its victims primarily as the kulaks, or peasants; and, finally, some scholars recognized the famine as a genocide that was specifically directed against the Ukrainian nation. (Serbyn, 2005, p. 1059)

Was the great famine 1932–33 the result of actions of Soviet authorities? According to the poll conducted by the Ilko Kucheriv Democratic Initiatives Foundation and the Ukrainian Sociology Service in October 2013 (Interfax-Ukraine, 2013) 64% of Ukrainians agree. 23% of the respondents believe fully or partially in natural reasons of famine.

A backward catastrophe broadens its activity until it is recognized. The prototype of genocide, the extermination of Armenians by Turks, a historical example that was one of the inspirations for Raphael Lemkin to reflect on the question of genocide, has not been recognized in Turkey neither. These dramatic events seen from the point of view of historians sympathising with Ottoman Empire during World War I look quite different. Michael Gwynne Dyer, a Canadian historian, who conducted research in Turkish archives in Ankara, sees the leaders of Armenian genocide not as cruel monsters, but

> as desperate, frightened, unsophisticated men struggling to keep their nation afloat in a crisis far graver than they had anticipated when they first entered the war (the Armenian decisions were taken at the height of the crisis of the Dardanelles) reacting to events rather than creating them, and not fully realizing the extent of the horrors they had set in motion in 'Turkish Armenia' until they were too deeply committed to withdraw. (Lewy, 2007, p. 211)

Still not fully recognized is the genocide in Congo by Leopold II, the king of Belgium. Congo, one of the latest non-occupied by Europeans parts of Africa, was acquired to him by Henry Morton Stanley. Stanley floated down the Congo River with steamboats transporting soldiers, persuading illiterate leaders of local communities to "sign" a contract of their submission to the king Leopold II. The king introduced forced labour aimed at collecting ivory, and, subsequently, after J. B. Dunlop invented inflatable bicycle tyre in 1887, rubber. Refusal to work resulted in cutting hands, killing, burning the whole villages by a 19,000 military force of black soldiers under supervision of white officers. Many of these atrocities were documented by photos of Alice Seeley Harris. During the twenty years of Leopold's reign the population of Congo declined as much as between 5 million to even 16 million people, as victims of murder, starvation, disease and a plummeting birth rate (Hochschild, 1998, p. 226).

Yet, even this case is not, precisely speaking, a genocide, since Leopold didn't have, as much as we know, the intention to exterminate the population of Congo. Neither did he want to gain the status quo of permanent security. As one sees, the conceptual tool that we are dealing with are still far from getting to the point. There is no doubt that the genocide of people of Congo should be officially recognized by Europe. An increasing number of vandalisms of numerous statues of Leopold II in Belgium suggests that maybe the time is coming. Also now, in the present day, there are numerous genocides, which are currently not being talked about, and which will be the subject of research by historians of the future.

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Care in Hard Times
From the Perspective of Elderly Care Workers

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Abstract

The SARS-CoV-2 pandemic has deepened and reshaped the care crisis both on personal and organizational levels. The study aims at answering how and in what form the symptoms of the care crisis appear in elderly care, which is one of the most important but undervalued fields of professional care. The focus of the study lies on what additional burdens the primarily female employees bear due to performing both paid and reproductive labor at the same time. The primary focus of the qualitative case study, conducted in the summer of 2020 and the spring of 2021, was to explore the effects of the coronavirus pandemic. The preliminary assumption is that the measures to curb the pandemic exacerbated the pre-existing organizational crisis and made it even more visible. Ten semi-structured interviews were conducted in a mid-sized town located in the Southern Great Plain in Hungary with the key stakeholders of care management: heads of institutions and mostly middle managers in coordinating roles. In the second phase of the study, focus group interviews were conducted with non-executive carer workers. The purpose of the interviews was to explore their personal perceptions and narratives of care.

Keywords: care crisis, elderly care system, gender inequalities, construction of care, recognition of care works

Introduction

The paper discusses the contemporary, particularly the Hungarian socio-political relevance of the care crisis. Sevenhuijsen (2003, 2004) already warned nearly two decades ago that care is a concept that is present and absent at the same time. Care-related tasks become policy agendas—in various areas of policy-making, from health and welfare system reforms to regulations of maternity benefits—through a variety of channels;

however, there is little room left for the ethics of care[1] in dominant policy approaches. In addition to demographic tendencies, public spending allocated to elderly care is on the decline, market-driven solutions are becoming prevalent, and competition for services is intensifying; as a result, by now, care has become "in need" (Melegh & Katona, 2020). In a narrow sense, the care crisis is understood as the growing gap between care needs and the resources available to meet them (Rottenberg, 2021). The concept of care crisis, however, does not only refer to the lack of available care, but it also incorporates the phenomenon that the low prestige and undervalued care tasks become the burden of families and, in particular, women, especially those working in health and social care. In a broader or even global interpretation, the crisis has rendered it visible that care regimes based on gender, regional, and class inequalities are unsustainable (Gregor & Kováts, 2020).

In Hungary—almost three decades after care work became professionalized—politicians question the professional nature of the tasks and responsibilities of social workers painfully often, which is reflected not only in the undervaluation of the profession but also in the chronic and severe underfunding of public social care. The wages in the social sector are the lowest in the national economy (Gyarmati, 2021, 2022). The care deficits are constantly growing: waiting lists for places in nursery homes are getting longer, and unfilled job vacancies are also increasing (Milankovics 2020). The present study was motivated by the phenomenon that elderly care in Hungary has been in a peripheral position for quite some time (Szabó, 2013), not only in comparison to other sectors—especially the health sector—but also within the similarly undervalued social care system. On the other hand, although social workers played a crucial role in the battle against the pandemic, government communication did not acknowledge their work, even at the level of symbolic gestures. At the beginning of the pandemic, at the time of curfews and lockdowns, essential workers (healthcare workers, shop assistants, etc.) were applauded all over the world. In Hungary, however, this kind of appreciation did not seem to be expressed toward social care workers (Csoba, 2020).

The Situation of Workers in Elderly Care

The number and proportion of care workers in the labor force have been steadily increasing in all 27 member states of the European Union: rising by about 30% in a decade (Eurofound, 2020). Examining comparative data across countries, it becomes apparent that the proportion of workers depends primarily on access to services; namely, the wider the access,

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[1] According to the ethics of care, care and the need for care are both integral parts of our moral nature and human existence, so we experience both roles—albeit not at the same time—in the course of our life (Tronto, 1993; Bányai, 2008).

the higher the proportion of workers. The demographic composition of workers in elderly care is characterized by significant gender imbalance. According to the 2019 data, 81% of workers in the sector were female. Another apparent phenomenon is aging, the pace of which has accelerated over the past decade. Nurses and care workers immigrate to Hungary as well, however, in much smaller numbers than to Western European countries, where the proportion of migrant workers is rather high (Gyarmati, 2022).

In most EU countries, carers' wages are well below the average gross national wage for the whole economy. In Hungary—at a rate of 71%—workers in elderly care are among the lowest paid. Wages are typically higher in the public sector and in nursing homes, and, considering settlement size, in bigger cities. In elderly care, non-standard (atypical) working hours, such as part-time and shift work, are much more prevalent. Meanwhile, part-time employment in Hungary—due to the extremely low wages—is rather rare (Gyarmati, 2022). Furthermore, working in the sector carries significant physical risks, as it often involves lifting or moving clients. Nevertheless, the majority of workers in elderly care (71%) feel that their work is useful, while only around 20% are satisfied with their working conditions (Eurofound, 2020).

Background to the Case Study, Venue and Methods

The venue of the qualitative case study was a mid-sized town in the Southern Great Plain in Hungary. According to the latest census data from 2011, the permanent population of the town is close to 30,000. The geographic position, location, and accessibility of the town are favorable. It is not afflicted by high unemployment rates, or is it a settlement with socio-economic and infrastructural disadvantages. The care institutes in the town also work as methodological centers in several segments of the social care system, with many good practices and professional innovations. It was my definite intention not to choose an institution in a deprived municipality when investigating the interference of the care crisis and the pandemic. Another reason for choosing this venue was the size and functions of the settlement: the town is big enough to accommodate all the types of services available within the social care system, while it is small enough to be explored in a relatively short period. This way, I had the opportunity to interview almost all the care workers in institutional elderly care.

The fieldwork and interviews started at the end of the first wave of the epidemic[2] (June 2020) and were completed during the upsurge of the third wave (March–April 2021). In the first phase of the study, I conducted ten semi-structured expert interviews with key actors

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[2] The fieldwork started the same day the day-care institutions reopened, having been closed for three months.

of care management in the town: the managers of two residential elderly care homes (one controlled by the local municipality and one church-run), the head of the Care Centre, the head of the Family Support Centre, the heads of the day clubs for the elderly (three people), the heads of the day centers for psychiatric patients and people with disabilities, and the head of the home help service. The head of the Care Centre assisted me in contacting the interviewees and provided the necessary background for the interviews. The interviews conducted with social workers in leadership positions revolved around three main topics:

- career profile, personal and professional mobility

- institutional framework—the impact of the coronavirus on the care system

- personal perceptions of the care crisis

In the second phase of the study, in the spring of 2021, I conducted three focus group interviews with direct care workers, altogether 18 people. There was some overlap between the respondents in the two phases using the different methods (4 people). The focus groups were professionally homogeneous: only full-time home care workers participated in the first focus group interview (7 people). In the second interview the heads of day clubs (4 people) participated, while in the third one with the direct workers of the same clubs: carers, community carers, occupational therapy and therapy workers (7 people).

The individual expert interviews lasted 60 minutes on average; however, I met some managers in key roles several times. The focus group interviews lasted longer: one and a half hours per session. Before submitting the manuscript in April 2022, I contacted some social workers in leadership positions to conduct a summative and evaluative discussion. All the participants agreed to be audio-recorded. The recordings were transcribed verbatim, with the circumstances of the interview and the most important nonverbal signs and events also documented. To preserve the anonymity of the research subjects, I only indicate the job title, gender, and age of the professionals referred to. As a first step when processing the individual and group interviews, I sought to understand the general meaning of the interviews by reading the transcripts several times. Afterwards, I organized content of the discussions into the main thematic units of the interview thread, then I prepared a list[3] of emerging topics that were not closely related to the questions of the interview outline and my preliminary assumptions. When identifying and summarizing meaning, my primary focus was to present the symptoms of the care crisis (blending family care and paid care jobs, work overload and the low prestige of the profession).

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[3] I tagged the transcript manually without content analysis software.

Characteristics of the Sample

The nature of the investigation did not require the collection of socio-demographic data on the interviewees, just an inquiry into their professional experience and present job title. A characteristic of the aforementioned care crises is the horizontal segregation of care-related sectors and the feminization of the profession (Acsády, 2014; Gregor & Kováts, 2020; Gyarmati, 2021, 2022). Thus it is not surprising that women are overrepresented in my study as well (22 women and two men); what is more, both of the male interviewees work in leadership positions in the field of care. The vast majority of care workers in the sample belong to the 45–59-year-old age group, which matches the typical employer profile in the sector (Gyarmati, 2022). One in five respondents is younger than 35 years old, which broadly corresponds to the national data.[4] One in three respondents in the sample has been working at their present workplace for at least 25 years; however, it is difficult to determine whether this linear career path is due to care workers' commitment or their vulnerability resulting from lack of opportunities. The majority of care workers in leadership positions (eight out of ten) have tertiary-level vocational qualifications. Almost all of them are first-generation graduates and were already working part-time when studying for their diploma in distance education, which corroborates earlier research findings (Fónai et al., 2001; Vida, 2015). For them, joining the helping profession entailed a remarkable rise in status and significant social mobility. The home care workers' level of qualifications is slightly lower than that of the therapy and care workers employed in the day clubs. They usually work in the care field with a vocational training certificate for a "typical female job" (such as seamstress, shop assistant or nursing assistant), and they normally have a social carer and nurse qualification. However, it is noteworthy that continuous professional development and self-training are an important element of the organizational culture of the institute in the study, which is clearly linked personally to the head of the institute, who is a widely acknowledged professional not only in the town but also at county and national level. Her connections and social capital are matched with assertiveness and her ability to provide resources, which also creates opportunities for her staff to participate in professional training.

The Impact of the Coronavirus on the Local Social Care System

Day centers for the elderly, psychiatric patients and people with disabilities were closed down by executive order on March 18, 2020. The head of the family support center signed his first director's order on the same day it was announced in Budapest that two infected persons had been identified. During the first wave, in this institution alone, 18 orders were issued,

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[4] In the survey cited earlier, 20% of the sample was younger than 40 (Gyarmati, 2021).

which were "molded into" a unified regulation, covering wide-ranging topics from the activities of work groups to how the daycare of employees' children could be arranged. A recent nationwide survey (Gyarmati, 2022) confirms the experiences of the respondents: the procedures were not well wrought out, contradicted each other, and did not accord with either the existing regulations and the way institutes functioned or the state and condition of those in care. In both residential elderly care homes, curfews and visiting restrictions had already been imposed before the national state of emergency was declared. The institutes tried to prepare residents for the changes as fully as possible: they held resident meetings, informed relatives through Facebook groups, and put up a poster in the wards. In the elderly care home controlled by the local municipality, a so-called "lock system" was introduced at the very beginning of the pandemic, which regulated how the care workers enter the wards disinfected and in protective gear. The necessary protocol and procedure were established at the local level.

Within the local social care system, closing down the clubs providing daycare (for the elderly, psychiatric patients, and people with disabilities) brought about drastic changes in the lives of care workers and those in care as well. Losing their function and becoming empty, the clubs—in response to the abolition of serving lunch on the premises—had to set up a new structure that could manage the tasks of food delivery. It still has not been clarified why relatives were not allowed to pick up lunch in the yard of the institutes, nor whether this was an executive order or an independent decision made by the controlling authority. In the end, it was the local civil guard that was involved in delivering around 60 meals per day. In addition to the many volunteers, the staff of the sports hall also offered their help and delivered daily meals by bicycle. As half of the central kitchen staff was also sent home, the care workers of the day clubs did not only participate in food delivery but were also required to assist in portioning the meals. Switching to central lunch distribution created a new, unexpected task for the social workers (including those with several tertiary level diplomas and in leadership positions): they were given the extra task of washing up and disinfecting all the food containers that were used in daily deliveries, as the kitchen was already understaffed.

In the family support center, switching to home office brought about the most substantial structural change. The objective was to have carers spend half of their working hours in the institute and the other half at home. They kept in contact with their clients primarily through the online platform of the institute, and they also visited families whenever necessary, as they were allowed to enter the institute at previously agreed-upon times.

It was the sense of responsibility in the face of the emergency that contributed to the care workers' flexible adaptability and unquestioning acceptance of orders from above. It is indicative of the vulnerable position of helpers, working with the most vulnerable social groups themselves, that—according to the interviewed institute heads—the workers were more afraid of losing their jobs than of the pandemic. Therefore, it was extremely reassuring for them that the controlling local municipality promised that there would be no layoffs and nobody would be required to take compulsory unpaid leave, either. It was in residential care facilities that the pandemic was accompanied by the fewest operative structural changes; however, the months of lockdown and visitation restrictions required considerable efforts from them as well. These exertions included providing mental support and reassurance for residents with mood swings, informing relatives and establishing alternative ways of keeping in contact. Confinement took its toll mentally on the residents; in addition, keeping in contact by phone with elderly, demented patients is already rather difficult. The constant cleaning and disinfecting diverted the resources from caregiving, furthermore, military presence for the sake of performing disinfection meant extra work for the heads of the institutes. Overall, it can be concluded that all the actors of the institutional system operating at the venue of the study reacted proactively to the pandemic and successfully compensated for the shortcomings and dysfunctions of governmental pandemic management.

Working Time? Family Time?

A pivotal presupposition of feminist care ethics is that caregiving tasks should be viewed as independent of gender—seen as both male and female—and location—not limited to the private sphere). My own research findings show the opposite: the majority of the respondents regard it self-evident that providing care is the task of women. There were responses that follow the well-known argumentation of the conservative/traditional narrative: "We are genetically coded like this" (club leader, female, 51), "This is how we have been socialised for decades or even centuries, since the time when there was no social safety net" (home care worker, female, 52), "It was nuns that used to do these tasks" (community care worker, female, 41). The interviewed care workers all accepted the traditional and asymmetrical share of housework as self-evident. Responses linked to the pragmatic narrative, such as "men are needed" especially for tasks requiring physical strength (bathing and lifting), were also frequent. However, as those in care are predominantly female, it would probably be more difficult for male care workers to build trust with them. At the same time, a number of counter-examples were also given, for example, that there are more and more male nurses in residential care homes and hospitals as well.

A so-called alternative narrative of care tasks, which is free from gender stereotypes, appeared only in the responses of care workers with tertiary-level diplomas and in leading positions, and its appearance showed no correlation with the respondents' age. Of the respondents in this group (3 people), two professionals have husbands who are also helpers by profession, and in their cases, it seems quite natural and self-evident to share household and childcare tasks. "My husband is also a social worker. And this is how he turns to people. At home, we don't do it like this is my job because I'm the woman because he does these jobs just like me" (club leader, female, 31).

The responses to the question of what care/caregiving means to them were fairly homogeneous. For the majority of care workers, the concept means an asymmetrical relationship, in which it is addressing emerging needs and demands and paying close attention to those in care that play a significant role. In this narrow interpretation, their everyday work experience and perceived professional norms mix with the roles they fulfil in the family, and for many of them, the two types of caregiving naturally blend. "We help them in their everyday life. Just like you care for your children or your father or mother when they are ill" (home care worker, female, 56). There was a care worker who considered maternal care as a primary model; thus, it was this role that she had incorporated into her paid work.

Maintaining boundaries is one of the most important professional competencies required of professional helpers. The majority of respondents in the focus group openly admitted that they "overcare" and do not even make attempts to follow the professional norms in this respect. "There are no rules, everything for those in care" (day carer, female, 48). One of the "without limits" narratives considers emotional involvement unavoidable. "I don't think it's possible in elderly care. We do get to love them, and I don't think there are boundaries" (day carer, female, 51). In the narratives of carers working with disabled people and in elderly day care, a common motif that can be identified is that they know their clients better than their close relatives do. As a result, they consider the physical proximity and touch of the people they care for to be natural. Professionals with tertiary-level diplomas make a conscious effort to keep their drive for "overcaring" under control. However, it is not only the lack of professional awareness that can be detected behind over-identification with the carer role but also the particular psychological needs of the helper.

> Me, for example, and this is my personal opinion, I forget about my own troubles when I'm helping others. I'm concentrating on the other and not on myself. And really, this is true in the family too, and also at my workplace. (home carer, female, 46)

Leisure Time—Which Is Non-Existent

The blending of the roles that carers need to take and the excessive penetration of care-giving tasks into helpers' personal life is not only due to the above-mentioned "overcaring" attitude of carers but also to the pressure exerted by work and life circumstances and helpers' self-exploitation. In the narratives, the expression "me time," which the interviewees heard at an internal training, emerges regularly, but only one care worker has managed to realize its practical application, who does not "have her meal while riding the bicycle" anymore. During the focus group interviews, several home care workers mentioned that they have no other choice but to work also when they are ill, otherwise, they could not provide the needed care for their clients. The head of the institute revealed that several of the care workers (13–15 people) could only lift certain weight limits, but they nevertheless accept the job. The vulnerability of those in care (elderly, psychiatric patients, or people with disabilities) is self-evident in the profession, but so is the vulnerability of care workers. Being constantly on the road, exposed to all kinds of weather, and being in poor health conditions, while physically and psychologically overloaded, all increase this vulnerability. Contrary to my preliminary assumptions, in none of the institutes did the care workers consider it a serious burden that they had to perform paid and unpaid care work at the same time. One of the reasons for this may be the higher average age of the workers in elderly care, while the other may be their low social status and extremely low self-advocacy skills. "If they had an older kid, the bigger child was looking after the smaller one. There was nobody who would go on unpaid holiday" (institute head, female, 47). In addition, most of the professionals in the sample find it natural that providing care at home, and in the family, is a female task, just as it is in the world of paid work. The principle they follow is that "we need to get it done." Therefore, it is not surprising that most of them—in that stage of their life when their children were small—could only rely on their mothers' help. Their relative contentment—or the lack of discontentment, to be precise—can be ascribed to the predictable working hours of daycare (compared to carers working in three shifts), which enables them to manage their tasks both at home and at work.

"It's as if We Didn't Even Exist"

Even though the town where the field research was conducted is in a privileged position in many respects—the municipal leaders have always been supportive of the social sector, and the town has an institutional system that goes beyond its functional role and manifests professional innovation—all the interviewees expressed negative feelings about the lack of social recognition of the care profession. This resentment was especially palpable during the individual interviews following the first wave of the pandemic,

after the government had been expressing its official gratitude to everybody but professional helpers. The lack of thank-you gestures caused indignation even in those who were otherwise used to the invisibility of the social profession. "When there's a paid advertisement thanking the bus driver, but there is none to thank the social worker, well, that hurts" (club leader, female, 59).

In the second phase of the study, indignation was considerably less intense, as by that time, the healthcare system that had come under so much pressure that extra rewards and recognition for healthcare workers seemed justifiable even retrospectively. Another typical attitude appearing in addition to resentment was apathy, that is, accepting it with resignation that the situation cannot be changed. "I simply can't believe anymore that it will be any different ever; I just rather accept it. I know that it's not a good attitude, but I just don't know how to get out of it" (club leader, female, 44). It is probably this apathy that fuels the almost complete lack of collective representation in the sector. Furthermore, it is important to note that not only workers' indifference and lack of time contributes to the rejection of union membership but also, in many cases, pressure from the controlling authority (Gyarmati, 2022).

Summary

When starting the study, I assumed that the current pandemic situation would magnify the symptoms of the care crisis and make them visible to the wider public. My presuppositions were only partially confirmed, as all actors of the institutional system in the field responded proactively to the pandemic, in many cases making up for the shortcomings and inconsistencies of governmental epidemic management. They established local protocols, purchased protective gear, equipment, and disinfectants from the institutional budget, involved civilians, and developed partnerships at the local level. Each care worker expressed how much it meant for them that the local community, the controlling authority, their direct supervisor, and colleagues supported and recognized them. The lack of state-level gestures expressing gratitude was, however, a reason for resentment, and/or triggered apathy among the respondents. The findings suggest that even a symbolic gesture would have made a significant difference for social care workers.

The results obtained through exploratory research cannot be generalized for all the professionals working in institutional care. However, they reveal that even the otherwise customarily undervalued field of social care is significantly segmented. An important finding of the study is that it is workers in direct, elderly care, especially those performing their tasks in home care, that experience the most disadvantaged

circumstances (concerning working conditions, psychological and physical overload, and prestige within the profession). Nevertheless, the present situation will become unsustainable in a few years due to the aging of workers, the lack of replacement, poor working conditions, low wages, and a general lack of respect for social work. The consequence will not only be a violation of the rights of both clients and workers, but also the further deepening of the care crisis.

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Changes in the Time Spent on Physical Activities of University Students Before and During the COVID-19 Outbreak

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Abstract

In Spring 2020 in many countries various restrictions were implemented to try to prevent the spread of the coronavirus disease. Among these Covid-19 measures lockdowns had a big impact on people's lives. The opportunities for physical activities have been reduced since people had to manage working or learning from their homes. This research paper focuses on the changes of the time spent on physical activities of university students. Our intention is to reveal the enhancing factors for a positive and negative change in the frequency of physical activity. The analyses are based on the data for the University of Szeged of the *COVID-19 International Student Well-Being Study* elaborated and conducted by the University of Antwerp in Spring 2020. The online questionnaire, filled out by 1808 students from the University of Szeged, included two questions concerning the frequency of doing moderate and vigorous physical activity before and during the COVID-19 outbreak. The analyses of the changes in the time spent on physical activities focuses on the associations with socio-demographic factors and health status. Results indicate that increase in physical activity was typical for women, students in a relationship, and those who moved from their place of residence. A decline in physical activity has been found to be characteristic for younger students. Having a health risk condition turned out to have no effect on changes in physical activity, but satisfaction with health is associated with the increase or decline in physical activity.

Keywords: physical activity, COVID-19, lockdown, university students, health status

Introduction

During the COVID-19 pandemic, especially in the beginning, time became an important dimension from various perspectives. In December 2019 the whole world learned that the severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus (SARS-Covid-2) infection developed in China,

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spreading rapidly and causing a serious disease. At that moment the rest of the world was concerned about the time the disease would reach other countries and continents. The expansion of and the destruction by the virus was unexpectedly fast, so on 11 March the World Health Organization declared the coronavirus disease a global pandemic (COVID-19).[1] Governments implemented various measures to try to stop the rapid spread of the virus, like social distancing, lockdowns, travel restrictions etc. Among these, lockdowns had a big impact on people's lives, their perception of time and their time management. During the curfew people had to schedule their time differently than before. The daily routine necessarily changed as most people were working and learning from their homes. The time spent on work, necessities and leisure somewhat mixed up as they were carried out at the same place. The time spent on physical activity has also been affected by the COVID-19 measures. Both moderate and vigorous physical activities were discouraged by the limitation of training and sport facilities, social distancing and the lockdown.

The World Health Organization claims that for adults regular physical activity implicates among others the following health benefits: improved all-cause mortality, cardiovascular disease mortality, cognitive and mental health (WHO, 2020). Among the medical explanations of the positive relationship between physical activity and health status one is the boosting effect on the immune system. This relationship has been investigated from different perspectives for more than a decade by now (Nieman & Wentz, 2019). During the coronavirus pandemic physical activity was considered a means to reduce the susceptibility to the infection (Halabchi et al., 2020; Nigro et al., 2020). Studies confirmed that in first case moderate physical activity lowers the risk of getting infected (Forte et al., 2022; Seidu et al., 2021; Wimalawansa, 2020). Therefore mostly virtual sport events were organized to keep the population fit even during the times of lockdown when outdoor physical activity was limited (Elmagd, 2020). The positive outcomes of doing physical activity are not limited to the health of the body but also of the mind. Mental health is also kept fit by regularly exercise (Stanton et al., 2014; Paluska & Schwenk, 2000). During the coronavirus pandemic the possibilities to carry out regular physical activity were reduced. Gyms, sport halls and training facilities were closed down, even the use of parks, or outdoor sport facilities was unfavourable.

Especially the population of students was found to have reduced their physical activity due to the lockdown and the forced e-learning (Castaneda-Babarro et al., 2020). There were a few investigations on the changes of physical activity habits of higher education students.

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[1] WHO Director Media Briefing on COVID-19 available at https://www.who.int/director-general/speeches/detail/who-director-general-s-opening-remarks-at-the-media-briefing-on-covid-19---11-march-2020

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An investigation of the physical activity habits of Spanish students revealed that there was a considerable decline in both moderate and vigorous physical activity. However women managed to keep doing exercises better, by using social media, and they enjoyed it also more than men (Rodríguez-Larrad et al., 2021). The results of the *COVID-19 International Student Well-Being Study* also confirmed the changes of physical activity in higher education students' lives after the COVID-19 outbreak, during the lockdowns. The main findings for the university students from the Greek sample showed that there was an increase in the daily performance of vigorous physical activity, however frequent moderate physical activity was reduced (Stathopoulou et al., 2020). For students from the University of Bern no significant change was detectable for vigorous physical activities, however again moderate physical activities declined (Rüegg & Eggli, 2020). The pattern of changes in physical activity was similar for students from the University of Birmingham, as a reduction of vigorous physical activity was prevalent for students exercising less than once a week, but the frequency of doing moderate physical activities declined for almost half of the students (Rabbie-Khan & Biernat, 2020). For Hungarian students also a significant decrease in physical activity has been observed for moderate physical activity, which has been associated with a negative effect on psychological well-being (Lukács, 2021).

In this paper we aim to investigate the changes in the time spent with physical activities, both vigorous and moderate. We intend on the one hand to find socio-demographic characteristics for those who increased or reduced the frequency of doing physical activity and on the other hand to explore one possible driver for the changes, namely health status.

Materials and Methods

The analyses are based on the data for the University of Szeged of the *COVID-19 International Student Well-Being Study* elaborated and conducted by the University of Antwerp in Spring 2020.[2] Thus results reflect the situation during the first wave of the COVID-19 pandemic. The aim of the study was to reveal the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on higher education students' lives from various perspectives. Research objectives included the examination of the changes in living conditions, workload, well-being and mental health and the associations with various factors like stress, social support,

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[2] Reports on the first results of the study are available for some countries or universities, e.g.: Stathopoulou et al. (2020): Student Well-Being during the COVID-19 pandemic in Greece. Results from the C19 ISWS Survey. https://zenodo.org/record/4038321#.Y3dzDMeZPIU; Rüegg & Eggli (2020): COVID-19 Studierenbefragung. Bericht der Berner Fachhochschule zur "International COVID-19 Student Well-Being Study." https://zenodo.org/record/4422660#.Y3d0OseZPIU; Rabbie-Khan & Biernat: Student Well-Being During The First Wave of COVID-19 Pandemic in Birmingham, UK. Results from the C19 ISWS Survey. https://zenodo.org/record/4572408#.Y3d0_MeZPIU. For more available reports see: https://zenodo.org/communities/c19-isws/search?page=1&size=20&access_right=open

COVID-19 knowledge, etc. (Van de Velde et al., 2021). In the study 27 countries were involved. From Hungary four universities joined the research: Corvinus University of Budapest, University of Debrecen, University of Miskolc and the University of Szeged.[3]

This paper investigates the data on the students from the University of Szeged where the response rate was the highest[4] (9.71%) among the four universities. The online questionnaire, filled out by 1808 students from the University of Szeged, included two single item questions concerning the frequency of doing physical activity before and during the COVID-19 outbreak. Two forms of physical activity were investigated: vigorous and moderate physical activity. The questions were the following:

1. "On average, how often did you perform vigorous physical activities like lifting heavy things, running, aerobics, or fast cycling for at least 30 minutes?"

2. "On average, how often did you perform moderate physical activities like easy cycling or walking for at least 30 minutes?"

Respondents indicated their answer by picking one of the categories: "(almost) never," "less than once a week," "once a week," "more than once a week" and "(almost) daily" prior to and during the COVID-19 outbreak. To analyze the changes in the frequency of doing physical activity two new variables have been computed, one for the changes in doing vigorous physical activity and one for the changes in doing moderate physical activity.[5]

The new variables were recoded into three categories, which indicated whether the (vigorous or moderate) physical activity increased, reduced or remained unchanged during the COVID-19 outbreak in comparison to before the pandemic. The analyses focused on the following research questions:

1. What is the socio-demographic profile of those who increased or reduced their physical activity?

For the description of these groups we investigated the associations with gender, age, relationship status, parents' education and the change in living conditions.[6]

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[3] Methodological details on the Hungarian data collection at the different universities can be found in Arnold et al. (2021).

[4] The average response rate of web surveys is approximately 10% (Fan & Yan 2010), which is almost met by the response rate from the University of Szeged. The response rates from other universities in Hungary were even lower (see Arnold et al. 2020).

[5] The computational method was the same for both variables: frequency of doing physical activity during COVID-19 minus frequency of doing physical activity before COVID-19.

[6] The association with economic status was not possible as the questionnaire didn't include any question about the income level.

2. What is the relationship between health status and the changes in the frequency of physical activity?

We assume that as physical activity is enhancing health by boosting the immune system, students with health risks or a lower satisfaction with their health will increase their physical activity to make themselves more resistant to the COVID infection.

We explored the relationships of the variables by applying Chi-square tests and ANOVA-tests. The significance level for the analyses is p = 0.05.

Results

Descriptive Statistics for Doing Vigorous and Moderate Physical Activity Before and During the COVID-19 Outbreak

The frequency of both vigorous and moderate physical activity shows a different pattern before and during the COVID-19 pandemic (see Figure 1). Only a small part of the students (15.3%) admitted (almost) never doing vigorous physical activity. Most of the respondents (30.6%) spent time on lifting heavy things, running, fast cycling or other vigorous physical activities for at least 30 minutes more than once a week. A significant part (24.1%) was involved in vigorous physical activities once a week, another 20% less than once a week. The (almost) daily practicing of vigorous physical activities was typical for a smaller part of the students (9.7%) before the lockdown. The percentages of the different categories somewhat changed during the confinement. There was a decline in the percentage of students doing vigorous physical acti-vity once a week (17.2%) and more than once a week (23.6%). However, the proportion of the students (almost) never practicing vigorous physical activity (23.5%) and of those who (almost) daily dedicated time to it (16.8%) increased during the lockdown due to COVID-19.

Figure 1

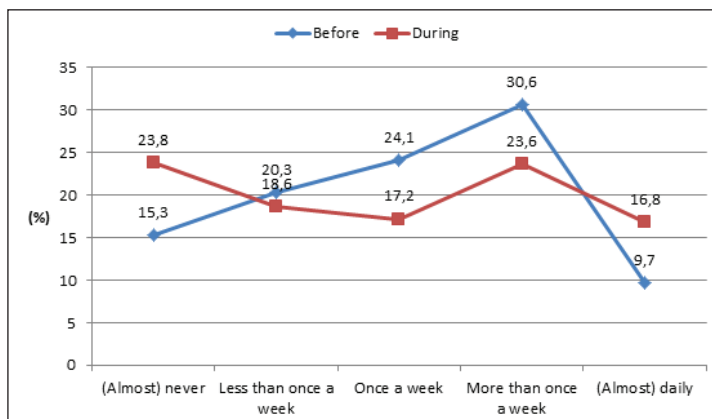*Percent (%) of Students Doing Vigorous Physical Activity Before and During the COVID-19 Outbreak*

Note. N = 1397

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Investigating the changes of the time spent on vigorous physical activity at the group level we have found that mostly there was a decline, since the proportion of those never doing vigorous physical activity rose and of those doing it once a week or more than once a week shrank. However, at the same time there was a growth in the proportion of students practicing vigorous physical activity daily. To study the changes properly we have to look at the individual level.

The categories regarding the changes in doing vigorous physical activity (Table 1) among the students of the University of Szeged show an almost even distribution. One third of the respondents (33.1%) reduced their vigorous physical activity during the COVID-19 outbreak. Another 30%, however, increased the frequency of doing vigorous physical activity. More than one third of the students (36.6%) did vigorous physical activity at the same frequency during the COVID-19 outbreak as before.

Table 1

Changes in Vigorous Physical Activity

	Frequency (N)	Percent (%)
reduced	462	33.1
unchanged	511	36.6
increased	424	30.4
Total	1397	100

Note. N = 1397

As for the changes in doing moderate physical activity we found different trends both at the group level (see Figure 2) and at the individual level (see Table 2). Easy cycling or walking for at least 30 minutes was quite frequent among the students before the COVID-19 outbreak, almost 33% reported doing it more than once a week and another 33% (almost) daily. A quite small part of the students (6.4%) (almost) never did moderate physical activity by their own admission. The proportion of students doing moderate physical activity less than once a week and once a week both were also relatively modest (12.3% and 15.5%). Nevertheless, during the COVID-19 outbreak—not surprisingly—the proportion of those (almost) never doing moderate physical activity or practicing it less than once a week or once a week somewhat increased. A little decline is detectable in the ratio of those who were practicing moderate physical activity more than once a week

during the lockdown (28.3%) in comparison to before. There is a significant decrease in the proportion of students doing moderate physical activity (almost) daily (16.1%) during the COVID-19 outbreak in comparison to before.
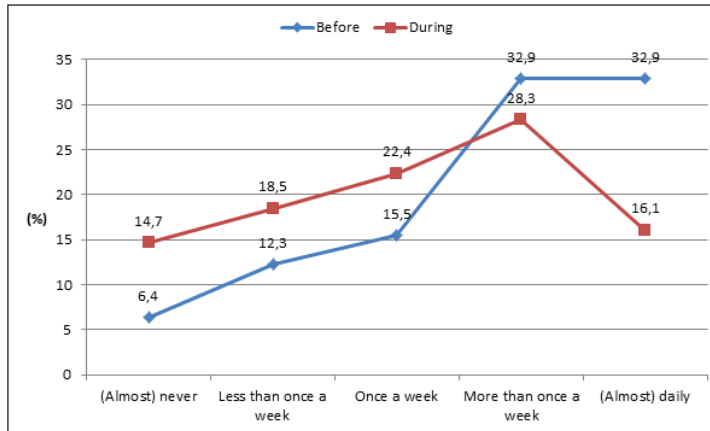

Figure 2

Percent (%) of Students Doing Moderate Physical Activity Before and During the COVID-19 Outbreak

Note. N = 1397

At the individual level the patterns of changes in the time spent on doing moderate physical activity (Table 2) reflect the trends at the group level. Almost half of the students (47.8%) reduced doing moderate physical activities and only 17.7% increased their moderate physical activities during the COVID-19 outbreak. For one third of the respondents the frequency of moderate physical activity remained unchanged.

Table 2

Changes in Moderate Physical Activity

	Frequency (N)	Percent (%)
reduced	668	47.8
unchanged	482	34.5
increased	247	17.7
Total	1397	100

Note. N = 1397

Socio-demographic Characteristics

In this section the socio-demoghraphic characteristics of those reducing, unchanging and increasing their vigorous or moderate physical activity is being explored.

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Gender

As for gender it seems that women tend to rather increase their physical activity—both vigorous and moderate—during the COVID-19 outbreak than men (see Figure 3 and Figure 4). Especially for vigorous physical activity we found a considerable drop in the proportion of men increasing it when compared to women. The percentage of those whose physical activity remained unchanged is higher among men than among women.
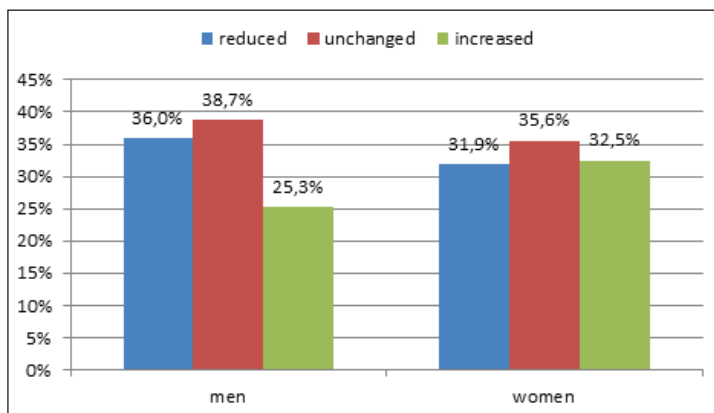

Figure 3

Changes in Vigorous Physical Activity by Gender

Note. Pearson Chi-Square = 7.191   p = 0.027

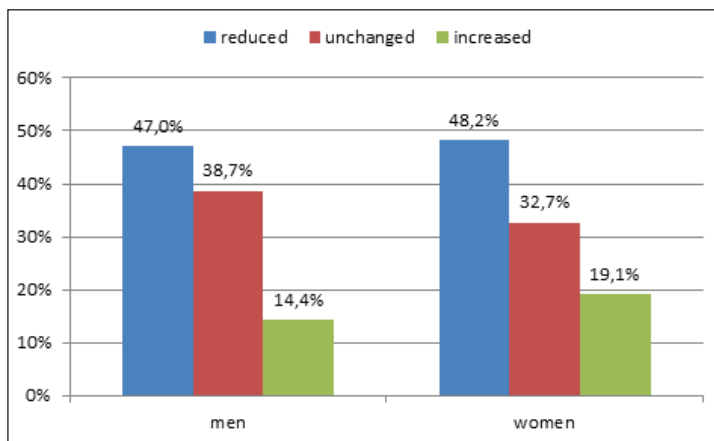**Figure 4**

Changes in Moderate Physical Activity by Gender

Note. Pearson Chi-Square = 6.785   p = 0.034

Can these trends be explained by the differences in the frequency of physical activity before the COVID-19 of men and women? One explanation for the above trends could be that men are generally more physically active, therefore a part of them was not able to increase

their physical activity during the pandemic. The data, however, just partly support this suggestion. Among the students who reduced their vigorous physical activity the categories of "once a week," "more than a week" and "daily" altogether give 91.9% of men and just 83.3% of women. This trend might have been influenced by the reduced training facilities. However, among those who increased their vigorous physical activity the proportion of those being physically active before the COVID-19 pandemic altogether is 76.8% for men and 83.1% for women. Only the proportion of those who shifted their frequency of doing vigorous physical activity from more times a week to daily among men is higher (24%) than among women (18.9%). At the same time the proportion of those daily or more times a week performing vigorous exercises among those who didn't change their physical activity habits is very close to each other among men (16.4%; 25.2%) and women (13.2%; 24.4%). Therefore we cannot claim that men were generally more physically active than women. Other factors, like consciousness about the importance of physical activity in health might be important; however, this couldn't be explored through the data at hand, and it needs further investigation.

Age
The relationship between age and changes in physical activity has been explored in three age groups (see Table 3): 17–20 years, 21–24 years and above 25 years.

Table 3
Descriptive Statistics on Age Groups

	Frequency (N)	Percent (%)
17–20 years	509	28.2
21–24 years	862	47.7
above 25 years	437	24.2
Total	1808	100

For changes in vigorous physical activity (Figure 5) we found that the decline was highest among the younger students (36.9%) and the increase among the 21–24 year old (34.3%). A big part of the students 25 years and above didn't change their vigorous physical activity (47.9%) due to the COVID-19 outbreak.
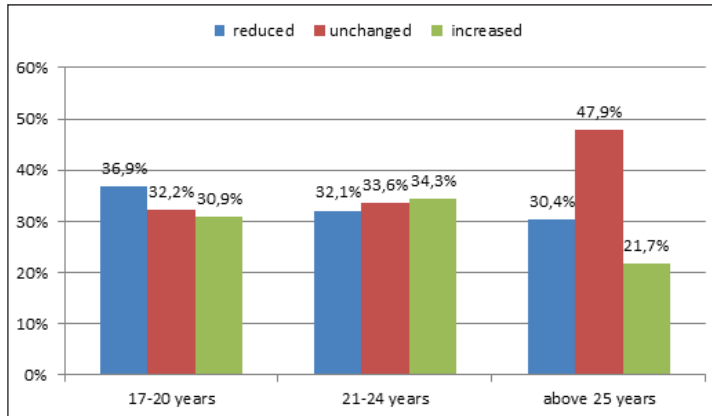
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Figure 5

*Changes in Vigorous
Physical Activity
by Age Groups*

Note. Pearson Chi-Square = 29.778   p = 0.000

In case of moderate physical activity, again the students aged 17–20 years reduced their activities mostly (54.5%) (see Figure 6). The proportion of the "unchanged" category is again the highest (46.4%) among the 25 year and above old students.
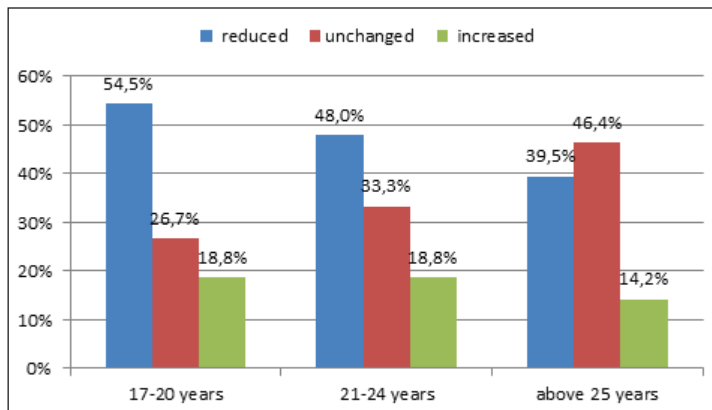

Figure 6

*Changes in Moderate
Physical Activity
by Age Groups*

Note. Pearson Chi-Square = 32.579   p = 0.000

The associations with age might be affected by the changes of the living circumstances of the students. It is possible that for the younger students there were more changes in the living circumstances, i.e. they had to move to their parents from a student hall or an apartment while for the "elder" students the place of living mostly remained unchanged. This will be investigated when exploring the relationship between the changes in the place of residence and changes in physical activity.

Relationship Status

In the survey students were asked whether they were single or had a partner at the time of the investigation. They could also indicate that the situation was "complicated" (see Table 4). The category of having a partner and a complicated relationship status has been merged[7] for the analysis.

Table 4

Descriptive Statistics on Relationship Status

	Frequency (N)	Percent (%)
single	825	45.6
partner or complicated	983	54.4
Total	1808	100

A significant correlation between relationship status and changes in physical activity was only detectable in the case of moderate physical activity (Figure 7). A reduction was more typical for single students (51.7%) while an increase was more prevalent for students in a relationship (or complicated) (20.9%). Thus being in a relationship enhances moderate physical activity. The motivation to go for a walk or an easy cycling might be stronger with the partner or to see the partner than alone.
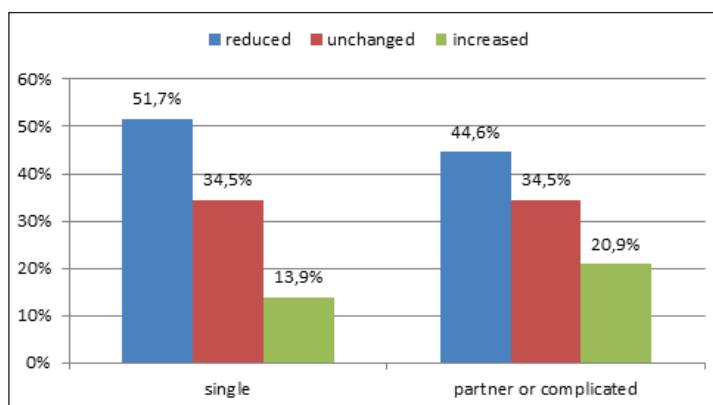

Figure 7

Changes in Moderate Physical Activity by Relationship Status

Note. Pearson Chi-Square = 13.205   p = 0.001

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[7] The frequency for the category "complicated" was N = 89, 4.9% of the whole sample.

Changes in the Place of Residence

Due to the COVID-19 outbreak the place of residence has changed for many students. Student halls, dormitories closed, rental agreements were quitted, therefore many had to move to their original homes, to their parents. The survey investigated the place of living of the students before and during the COVID-19 outbreak. Based upon the answers we created a new variable, which indicates whether the residence of a student has changed or not due to the COVID-19 outbreak. Almost half of the students had to move from their place of living (48.6%) and the other half stayed at the place where they were living before the COVID-19 outbreak (Table 5).

Table 5

Descriptive Statistics on the Change of Residence

	Frequency (N)	Percent (%)
place of residence did not change	724	51.4
place of residence changed	685	48.6
Total	1409	100

The change in the place of living is significantly associated with both vigorous and moderate physical activity. Those students who didn't move from their place of stay mostly practiced vigorous physical activity at the same frequency as before (40.8%). A relatively higher proportion of the students who had to change their residence increased their vigorous physical activity (34.4%). The percentage of those who reduced their vigorous physical activity is almost the same in the two categories (Figure 8).
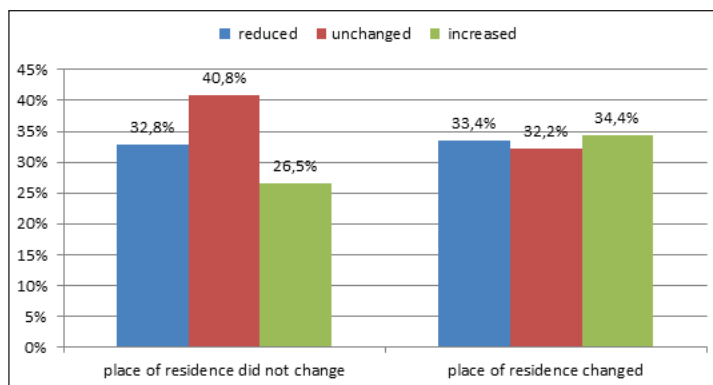

Figure 8

Changes in Vigorous Physical Activity by the Change in Place of Residence

Note. Pearson Chi-Square = 14.253 $p = 0.001$

As for the changes in moderate physical activity we found that more students who moved from their place of living (52.6%) reduced the frequency of walking or easy cycling than those who didn't (43.3%). Again the moderate physical activity habits remained unchanged for a relatively higher proportion of the students who didn't move from their place of living (Figure 9).

Figure 9

Changes in Moderate Physical Activity by the Changes in Place of Residence

Note. Pearson Chi-Square = 14.145   p = 0.001

The data support the suggestion that the habits in the frequency of physical activity both vigorous and moderate could be kept mostly for those who didn't have to change their place of living. The change in residence is associated with different changes in vigorous and moderate physical activity. Vigorous physical activity rather increased and moderate physical activity rather declined for those who moved from their place of living. This difference might be influenced by the type of residence, whether it's in a big city or a smaller town. Also the constitution/structure of the household they were moving to could have an impact on the direction of change of physical activity, whether they moved to their parents or were living alone etc. These assumptions need further investigation.

Health Status as Driver of Changes in Physical Activity

In the next section we are exploring the role of one possible factor, namely health status, in influencing the trends of changes in both vigorous and moderate physical activity. Our assumption is that health status had an impact on physical activity habits for students during the COVID-19 outbreak by enhancing it if the health status was not satisfying. Health status of the students has been explored by the online survey from two perspectives.

First students have been asked to rate on a scale from zero to ten how satisfied they were with their health before and during the COVID-19 outbreak.[8] Another question that investigated health status focused on possible health risk conditions. Students were able to pick any of the health risk conditions listed that applied to them.[9] Thus the analyses explored the relationship between health status and physical activity at two levels: the objective health status and the satisfaction with health status. Students with a poor health status are more at risk to get infected, therefore we hypothesize that having one or more health risk condition or a low satisfaction with health is enhancing doing physical activity to minimalize the risk of getting infected by the coronavirus and of becoming severely ill.

Results on Health Status and Changes in Physical Activity

Most of the respondents were free from health risk conditions (84.1%). A small part (15.9%) had one or more risk conditions. Among those with at least one health issue obesity is the most common health problem (56.7%), followed by lung disease (16.9%) and high-blood pressure (14.1%).[10] When exploring the relationship between having any risk condition and the changes in doing physical activity during the COVID-19 outbreak we found no significant correlation. Thus there is no significant difference in the proportion of those reducing, unchanging or increasing their physical activity between the students without any health risk condition and those who suffer from one (or more) health issue.

However, there might be differences due to the type of health issue. Therefore we selected the three most prevalent health problems in the sample—obesity, lung disease and high blood pressure—to find out about the correlation with changes in physical activity.[11] The data show that the pattern is somewhat different for moderate and for vigorous physical activity. The increase in vigorous physical activity is typical for students with lung disease (39.6%). Obesity, however, rather contributes to the reduction of vigorous physical activity (39.1%). At the same time the proportion of those who increased their vigorous physicalactivity is relatively the highest (23.6%) among students struggling with obesity compared to the other health issues (Figure 10).

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[8] The wording in the questionnaire was: "During the last week."

[9] The health risk conditions listed were: a recent cancer diagnosis, diabetes, heart disease, high blood pressure, immunocompromised conditions, kidney disease, lung disease, obesity.

[10] The percentages for the whole sample (N = 1808) are: obesity (8.9%), lung disease (2.7%), high blood pressure (2.2%).

[11] As the subsamples were too small statistical tests were not relevant to apply. However, the trends can be a starting point for further investigation.

In what regards moderate physical activity we found that changes are typical for the students with obesity, altogether 68.1% increased or reduced their physical activity. For obese students the proportion of those who decreased their physical activity is the highest (44.7%) out of the three groups. However, the increase of physical activity is also relatively the highest among students with obesity (23.6%) (Figure 11). It seems that the type of health issue is indicative for the changes in physical activity; however, since the subsamples are quite small, these trends need further investigation.
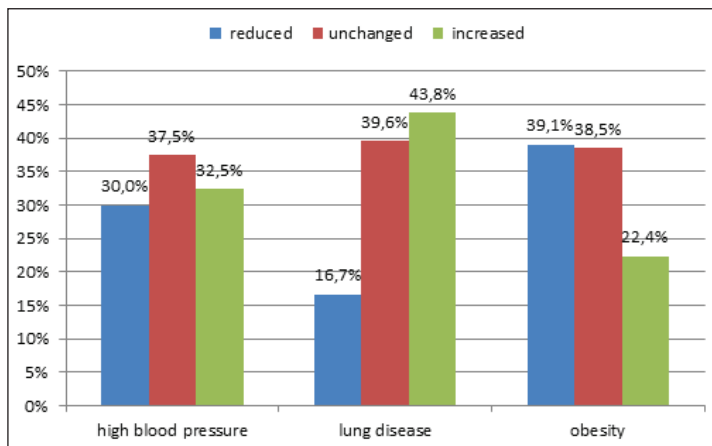
Figure 10

Changes in Vigorous Physical Activity by the Type of Health Risk Condition
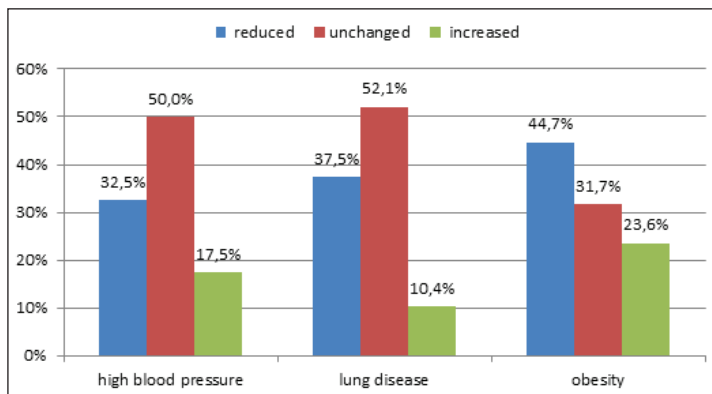
Figure 11

Changes in Moderate Physical Activity by the Type of Health Risk Condition

All in all, having a risk condition doesn't seem to have an influence on the change of doing physical activity during the COVID-19 disease but differences by the type of health issue can be detected. Our previous investigation (Vincze, 2021) revealed that worries about getting infected or severely ill from the coronavirus disease is significantly higher in the group of students who suffer from one or more health risk condition.

Therefore, the lack of correlation between having any health risk condition and the change in physical activity habits suggests that students who have any kind of health issue might not consider physical activity an effective means to fight against the virus.

The ratings of satisfaction with health status show differences between the categories of physical activity change. In case of both moderate and vigorous physical activity the mean of the ratings on satisfaction with health grows from the category "reduced" to "increased" (see Table 6 and Table 7). That is, those who reduced their physical activity (both moderate or vigorous) were less satisfied with their health "during the last week" than those who unchanged or who increased their physical activity. Nevertheless, this result might refer to an inverse association: the changes in physical activity influence the satisfaction with health and not the other way round. Therefore, this outcome needs further exploration to find out the causal relationship between satisfaction with health and the changes in the frequency of physical activity.

Table 6

Mean Values of Satisfaction With Health "During the Last Week" by Changes in Vigorous Physical Activity

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
reduced	371	7.26	2.22
unchanged	424	7.67	2.11
increased	356	7.85	1.95
Total	1151	7.59	2.11

Note: F = 7.636   p = 0.001

Table 7

Mean Values of Satisfaction With Health "During the Last Week" by Changes in Moderate Physical Activity

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
reduced	550	7.39	2.21
unchanged	404	7.75	2.03
increased	197	7.84	1.95
Total	1151	7.59	2.11

Note: F = 5.043   p = 0.007

Conclusions

Our investigation focusing on the changes in the time spent on vigorous and moderate physical activities, among university students during the COVID-19 outbreak, revealed some interesting patterns regarding the socio-demographic associations and the relationship with health status. We found that women, rather than men, tended to increase their both vigorous and moderate physical activity. To explain this trend the frequency of doing exercise before the COVID-19 outbreak has been explored among men and women who increased their physical activity. It turned out that men and women in this group were almost equally physically active before the COVID-19 outbreak. Therefore, we suppose that the gendered differences of other factors, like the type of motivations for doing physical activity, could influence this trend. There are studies which revealed that women of that age-group tend to be more motivated by extrinsic factors to do exercise, like the avoidance of ill-health (Egli et al., 2011). This motivation could have had an effect on the increase of physical activity for women during the COVID-19 outbreak. A tendency of the reduction of physical activity has been revealed for younger students, aged 17–20.

Relationship status of the students also affected changes but only for moderate physical activity. Having a partner enhanced doing moderate physical activity. To go for a walk or an easy cycling could have been more motivated with a partner than alone. The changes of the place of residence influenced changes in moderate and vigorous physical activity differently. Those students who moved from their place of stay due to the COVID-19 outbreak rather increased their vigorous physical activity, but reduced their moderate physical activity. This difference might have been influenced by the type of residence, whether it was in a big city or a smaller town. Also the constitution/structure of the household they moved to could have had an impact on the direction of change of physical activity, whether they moved to their parents or were living alone. However, due to lack of information these assumptions could not be tested on the present data.

We assumed that health status is an important driver for changes in physical activity. Having any health risk condition didn't have an influence on the changes of physical activity. Nevertheless, when focusing on the groups with the most common health problems among the respondents, some interesting patterns outline. Although the subsamples are too small to draw a conclusion for the entire population, we found that students struggling with obesity rather reduced their vigorous physical activity and increased their moderate physical activity during the COVID-19 outbreak. At the same time respondents who were having a lung disease seem to have increased their vigorous physical activity.

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The satisfaction with health status was also associated with the changes in physical activity, however the causal relationship might be inverse: changes in physical activity influencing the rate of satisfaction with health status and not the other way round.

When interpreting the results we need to consider that the data are limited to the students from the University of Szeged. However, the trends found can be an appropriate starting point for further, deeper investigation on the topic.

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The Impact of Oral Health Education Difficulties in Disadvantaged Primary Schools

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Abstract

The inadequate social integration of young people from disadvantaged regions is compounded by poor health and lifestyle, which manifests itself as mechanisms of educational disadvantage. Pupils have less access to the resources they need to develop their skills in their home environment, which should be adapted to their specific educational needs with specialized teachers. In this segment of the population, the time spent on health was inadequate even before online education was introduced due to the pandemic. The segregation has worsened their situation, and the lack of digital tools has not reduced the gap. We aimed to explore the lifestyles of primary school pupils in disadvantaged regions to extend the research to pupils with special educational needs and to understand their health behavior through dental status and time spent on oral health, which determines their life chances. The study was conducted in three primary schools in disadvantaged regions in the Abaúj region, Hungary, and 318 pupils (mean age: 10.5±2.5 years) underwent dental screening and survey examinations. The questionnaire focused on nutrition, physical activity, family microenvironment, health behavior, and educational processes during the pandemic. The majority of the students live in large families.

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Most students visit the dentist only when they have a toothache; 21.6% do not exercise outside school; 19.1% have already consumed alcohol. Their DMFT average is 5.6±3.5. Also, 32.7% of the students had a device for online education. A firm increase in the level of preventive activities in minority schools, with the involvement of special education teachers, is crucial for social inclusion and health.

Keywords: prevention, oral health, online lifestyle, disadvantage, special educational needs

Introduction

Health and its preservation have long been of concern to humanity. The World Health Organization has defined the concept of health, and over time it has become increasingly sophisticated, taking into account more and more factors. Nowadays, it includes not only objective measures but also the impact of physical and mental balance on our perception of health and our ability to work. It has come to the point where health behavior patterns are considered when defining the health of a society. We include the lifestyle habits of the given socioculture, which are best observed in the micro-environment of family, school, and workplace.

Simon (2006) states that the development of good health behavior habits is a pedagogical task, which is significantly influenced by the context and the family, sometimes making the work of the teachers difficult or even impossible. It has been made more difficult by the pandemic situation of recent years; thus, the separation of families and the already little time devoted to developing correct health behavior decreased even more. This state of affairs is particularly valid in disadvantaged regions, families, and schools, where the inaccessibility of the online world has worsened the situation (Kende & Messing, 2020). Thus, indirectly, the study of the disadvantages of online education in these regions can be strongly linked to the deficiencies in oral health education.

Preventive services are underutilized in dental practice in Hungary, both in adult and pediatric dentistry (Pinke et al., 2011), and this has not improved in the last decade. The data of the international research called *Health Behavior of School-aged Children*, carried out every four years with the participation of 45 countries, provides information on the physical health, health-affecting habits (including brushing habits), mental well-being and social relationships of more than two hundred thousand 11, 13 and 15-year-old schoolchildren. According to the latest HBSC research data for Hungary, regarding eating and brushing habits, 24% of boys and 27% of girls eat sweets daily, only 41% eat fruits and vegetables daily, and only 60% of adolescents brush their teeth twice a day (Inchley et al., 2020).

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On the utilization of preventive care, Bershell's (2017) study also reports on deficiencies in the US, particularly in low-income, vulnerable populations. Interdisciplinary collaboration, access to dental care, the development of dental education, and the cooperation of dental hygienists are considered essential. Access to dental services and treatments has become even more limited during the pandemic.

Dental caries and periodontal disease are major dental health problems due to their high prevalence and incidence in the world, including Indonesia, and the high cost of treatment also creates a heavy burden on individuals and society (WHO 2003, Nuratni et al., 2010).

Research has shown that children with poor oral health are twelve times more likely to be missing school than those with good oral health (Haque et al., 2010; Kwan et al., 2005). This can be prevented through good oral hygiene education. Prevention is the most significant factor in improving oral health among children with special educational needs, children from low-income families, as well as people with disabilities. Early preventive intervention is paramount for lifelong healthy oral hygiene for children with special educational needs (Shenkin, 2001). Appropriate intervention requires clear, well-developed professional training.

It would be important to include inpatient care and the professional support of children with various mental disorders by specially trained psychopedagogist or special-education teachers. In their case, a preventive, psychosomatic approach is of crucial importance, which can be part of the work of special education, increasing the interdisciplinary nature of preventive and curative work. Time spent on proper health behavior is also valued in these populations through the preventive activities of appropriately trained special educators.

The number of children, adolescents, and young adults with behavioral and performance disorders due to psychological damage to their neuro-emotional and personality development caused by various biological, environmental, social, and psychological impairments is gradually increasing. The numbers were only exacerbated by isolation and confinement during the pandemic.

Health education is any combination of teaching and learning activities that aims to promote the development of positive behaviors and habits to maintain health. In other words, it is essentially behavioral shaping (WHO, 2003). Health education covers several disciplines: medicine, pedagogy, psychology, education, and sociology.

> The scope (content) of health education thus expands significantly: it takes into account a person's biological condition (physical health) as well as their mental (mental, emotional,

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aspirational) characteristics and social status resulting from social coexistence (socio-economic situation, family harmony, social integration disorders) and it judges what needs to be done in their combined system of impact. (Gritz, 2007, p. 4)[1]

In Hungary, there is a serious shortage of health education, especially in schools and health services in disadvantaged communities. Instead of a holistic understanding of health in health education programs in schools, most schools focus only on the physical dimension and not include other dimensions of health, such as social, psychological, hygienic, mental, or emotional areas (Deutsch, 2011). Cintia Horváth (2021) research of school programs revealed that all included an objective focusing on physical activity and avoiding harmful addictions. However, only a few activities focused on mental hygiene, other hygiene, and social relationships, but none mentioned oral hygiene (Horváth, 2021).

The concept of disadvantage includes individuals—and the groups and communities they form—who differ from the average and do not integrate into the given society to various extents. The reasons are multifold, not only low income and poor education or inadequate housing conditions but also the resulting disadvantage in the biological–somatic and mental–spiritual development. These include, for example, educational disadvantages, health reasons, lack of access to health services, inadequate family structure, and functioning.

Currently, the definition of disadvantaged status is based on Article 45 of Amendment 23 of 2013. The criteria for assessing disadvantage include unemployment and poor (inadequate) housing conditions. The cumulative disadvantage situation has changed in the following way:

> Seriously disadvantaged (a) a child entitled to regular child protection and a child who has reached the age of majority and for whom at least two of the circumstances set out in paragraph 1(a) to (c) apply, (b) a child in care, c) a young adult in receipt of aftercare who have either a student or pupil status (Child Protection Act, Chapter VIII, § 67(2) a),b),c).[2] (2013/23 törvény, 67/A § (2))

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[1] „Az egészségnevelés feladatköre (tartalma) így lényegesen kitágul: figyelembe veszi az ember biológiai állapotát (testi, szervezeti egészségét) csakúgy, mint a lelki (szellemi, 5 érzelmi, törekvéses) tulajdonságait és a társadalmi együttélésből adódó szociális státuszát (anyagi–gazdasági helyzetét, családi harmóniáját, társadalmi beilleszkedési zavarait) és ezek együttes hatás-rendszerében ítéli meg tennivalóit" (Gritz, 2007, p. 4).

[2] Halmozottan hátrányos helyzetű a) az a rendszeres gyermekvédelmi kedvezményre jogosult gyermek és nagykorúvá vált gyermek, aki esetében az (1) bekezdés a)-c) pontjaiban meghatározott körülmények közül legalább kettő fennáll, b) a nevelésbe vett gyermek, c)az utógondozói ellátásban részesülő és tanulói vagy hallgatói jogviszonyban álló fiatal felnőtt.

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The situation of the Roma population is even more difficult, as they also have to deal with the problems of being a minority and living in extreme poverty. According to the European Union's Roma strategy, Roma and poverty are part of the same set of issues, i.e. the problems of Roma listed in the preamble are in fact problems of poverty[3] (Forray, 2011, p. 62).

In Hungary, Roma children are over-represented among disadvantaged pupils, and there is a clear overlap between the spatial location of the Roma population and areas with high proportions of disadvantaged pupils. Two-thirds of the disadvantaged population are registered as vulnerable by child welfare services, with the highest proportions in Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén and Hajdú-Bihar counties in terms of geographical distribution (Híves, 2015).

In the present study, we investigated the health status, health behavior, and access to health services, including preventive care, of almost 100% of Roma children in primary schools in three little settlements in the underdeveloped region of northeastern Hungary. The data of the KSH in 2016 indicates that the unemployment rate in the settlements covered by the study is far above the national average. The proportion of the child population is 24.8% of the total population, almost twice the national average (Kőrösi & Kiss-Tóth, 2020). In light of these, we may derive that the people living in the region under study are disadvantaged in several respects and that improving their health and preventing their illnesses is a priority socio-public health task.

Objective

In the challenging period of the last two years, curtailing health inequalities has become even more essential, and special education teachers can play a decisive role in this. In the present research, we draw attention to a new way of solving a widespread public health problem, such as access to good oral hygiene. The latter is crucial because social inequalities are also manifested in the oral cavity. Oral health education is recommended for all social groups, and it bears weight in the case of disadvantaged people (Taani, 2002).

A public health approach is necessarily a preventive approach that involves identifying risk factors for various diseases in a social context; therefore, our research is of great importance from a public health perspective. We are determined to raise awareness of the deficiencies in this area among public health professionals. In the research,

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[3] „A programban a cigányság és a szegénység egyazon kérdéscsoportban jelenik meg, azaz a cigányságnak a preambulumban felsorolt problémái valójában a szegénység problémái" (Forray, 2011, p. 62).

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we aim to draw attention to the poor oral health indicators of the most deprived groups by identifying the causes and suggesting possible solutions. As a solution, the possibility of specialized further training courses for teachers, special education teachers, and psychoeducation specialists in preventive oral hygiene is considered. In addition to these, the research also aimed to explore the disadvantages of online education and the digital world for this population, as this may exacerbate health inequalities in health education.

Material and Method

We started the health survey and the screening program by contacting the leaders of the concerned municipalities, health professionals, and educational institutions after obtaining the approval of the ethics committee to do the research (IG-102-298/2018). A declaration of parental consent preceded the examinations. In three disadvantaged settlements in Abaúj county in Hungary, we examined 318 pupils (mean age: 10.5±2.5); the ratio of gender was 47.6/52.4 (female/male) at the elementary school (Szemere, Karsznokvajda, Baktakék) in 2019, 2021. Then a full dental screening of pupils was carried out, complemented by a survey. In the case of smaller age groups, a focus group interview was also completed. After registering their DMFT[4] and dmft[5] data (WHO, 1997) and gingival status, the pupils filled in a questionnaire on their oral hygiene, nutritional habits, lifestyle, and online education.

Throughout our observations, we identified the number of decayed (D), missing (M), and filled (F) teeth, and, using this information, we calculated the DMFT index. All participants were examined by the same dental examiner (dr. Ildikó Faragó), and the dental screening examinations were performed in good lighting conditions, with disposable instruments in protective equipment. The clinical diagnostic criteria for dental caries were visually apparent cavitation, discoloration showing through enamel, or visual evidence of recurrent caries. Radiographs were not used in this study.

After data collection, data were recorded and analyzed using SPSS statistical software. In addition to the descriptive statistical analysis (mean, standard deviation, frequency distribution (frequencies), we used T-test, correlation test, and chi-square test.

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[4] The value calculated from the sum of the number of Decayed and Missing and Filled Teeth in permanent teeth in the studied population

[5] The value calculated from the sum of the number of decayed, missing, filled teeth in primary teeth in the studied population

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Results

Socio-economic Background

In our study, 37.04% of the students' families had no piped water in the household (Figure 1), and 73.11% of the participants lived in large families with three or more siblings (Figure 2). The living conditions of children living in large families are modest, often with no running water in the household.
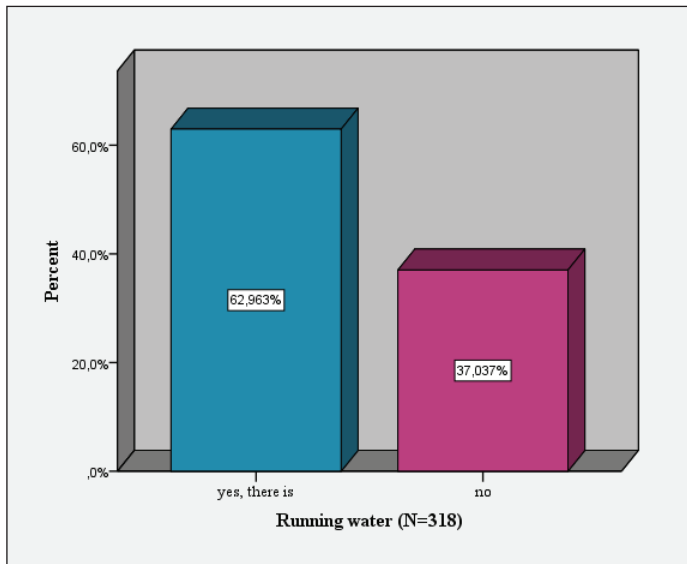

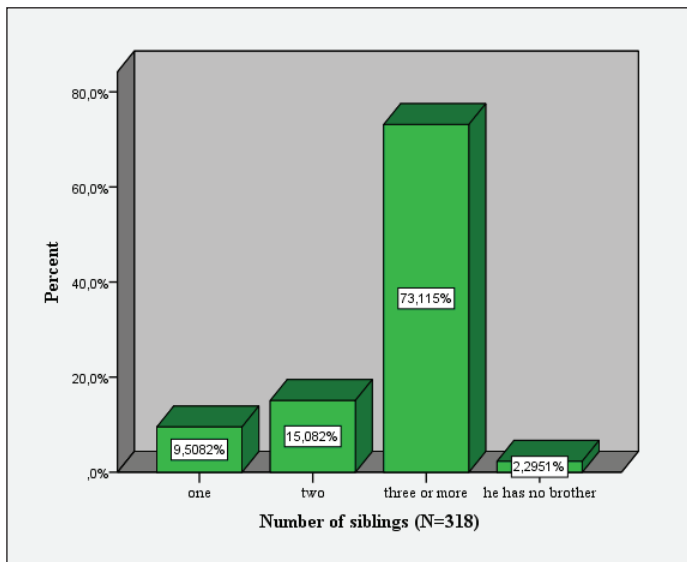### Figure 1

Presence of Piped Water in Pupils' Family (%)

Figure 2

Number of Siblings Among the Pupils

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Health Behavior Habits

In terms of habits affecting health, a high percentage of school children do not participate in sports outside school (30.68%), but a high rate of school children drinks alcohol (19.32%) (Kopkáné et al., 2020). The parents of the pupils—neither the mothers nor the fathers—do not typically play sports, so there is no positive role model for the children.

We also looked into their eating habits. About 10% of pupils report having breakfast at home, and 86.5% have a hot meal at home every day. 4.3% of students eat hot meals at home only on weekends, and 9.1% rarely eat hot meals at home.

In terms of alcohol consumption and smoking habits, the numbers are high. In the studied population, 8.5% of pupils smoke, and the average amount is 3.1 cigarettes per day. When asked about alcohol consumption in the study population of Baktakék, 10% of the students answered that they consumed alcohol daily, 11.43% regularly, and 32.86% every time the family got together.

Oral Hygiene and Dentist Visiting Habits

In the total population studied, 48.14% of the students clean their teeth in the morning and evening, while 16.7% only every morning and 10.1% only every evening. However, 13.13% of students clean their teeth occasionally, and 7.07% brush their teeth only when they remember to do that (Figure 3).
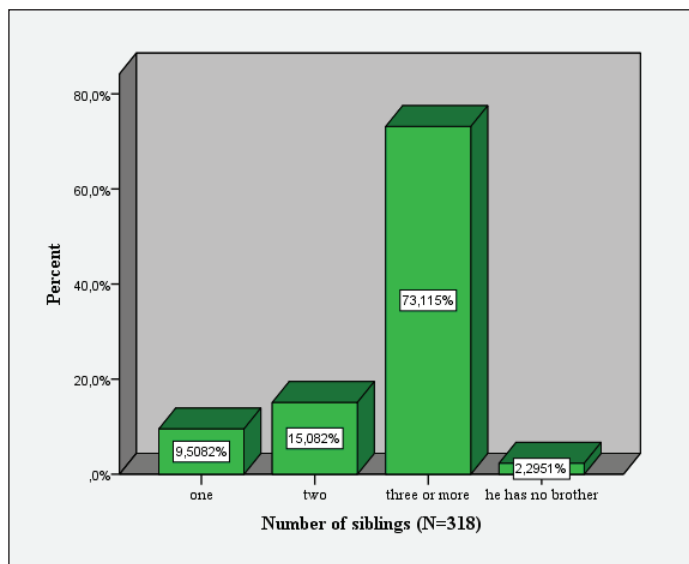

Figure 3

Brushing Habits Among Studied Pupils (%)

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When we asked about owning a toothbrush, 83.6% of the pupils answered they had their own toothbrush, and 6.9% claimed that they did not use it at home alone but shared it with other family members. 9.4% of students do not have a toothbrush (Figure 6). Furthermore, 37.8% of students buy a new toothbrush more than once a school year, 34.6% when their hair starts to fall out, and 20.2% when financially dependent. Toothbrush usage by age is shown in Figure 4. According to our data, 18.4% of pupils have never seen their parents brush their teeth (Figure 5).
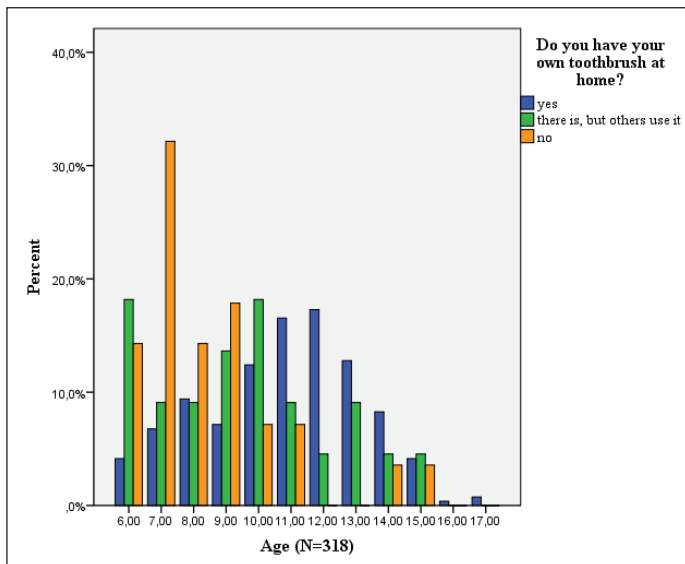

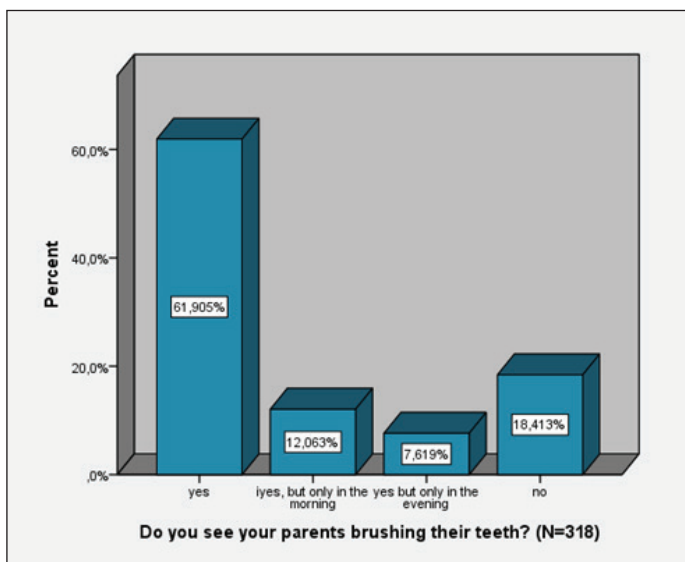
Figure 4

Toothbrush Use by Age in the Studied Population

Figure 5

Whether Pupils Have Seen Their Parents Brushing Their Teeth (%)

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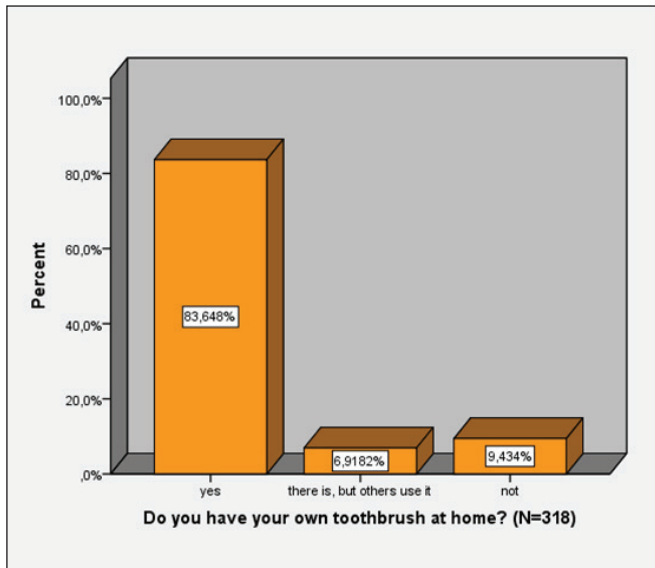
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Figure 6

Toothbrush Ownership Among Pupils (%)

There is a weak correlation between the lack of toothbrushes and age (r = 0.3), with younger children (6–10 years) being more likely to lack their own toothbrush and sharing toothbrushes being more common in this age group. Children who do not have their personal toothbrushes also tend not to see their parents brushing their teeth (r = 0.24; p<0.0003), and they also tend not to have running water in their homes (r = 0.24). Regarding their habits of going to the dentist, the highest percentage (78.9%) use the dental service only when they have a toothache, regardless of whether there is a dental clinic in the municipality.
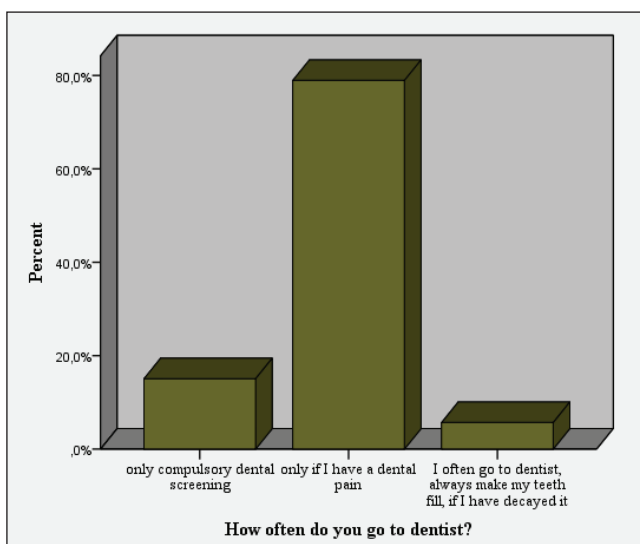
Parents do not take their children back for fillings at all, and only 15.1% of them went to screenings (Figure 7).

Figure 7

Frequency of Visits to the Dentist Among Pupils (%)

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Importantly for oral health and prevention, only one of the three settlements in the study has a dental service establishment.

33.1% of students often and 41.8% sometimes eat or drink various candied soft drinks and snacks after brushing their teeth in the evening. Only 25% of students do not consume anything after brushing their teeth in the evening. A significant relationship (p = 0.05) was observed between dental health (DMFT) and eating after brushing, which explains the high prevalence of caries in the students (Figure 8).
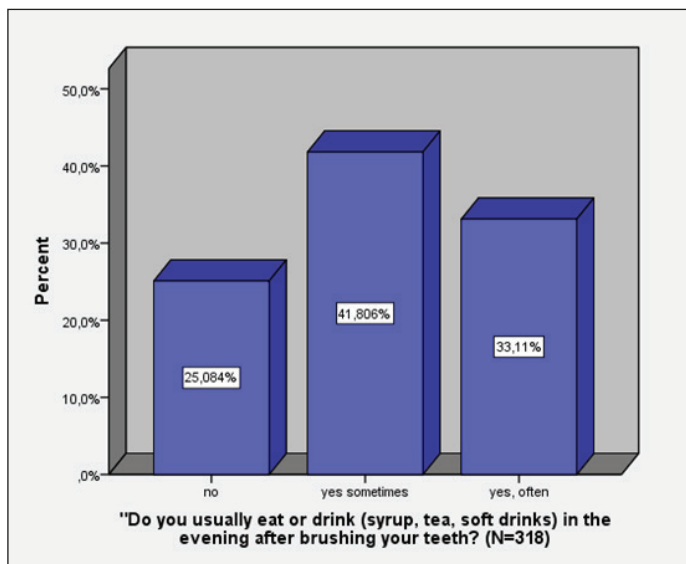

Figure 8

Frequency of Sugary Drinks and Food Consumption After the Evening Brushing Procedure (%)

Dental Health, DMFT/dmft Values

Given that the study population is of primary school age (6–14 years), we examined the condition of permanent and primary dentition separately. The majority of the pupils in the study (192 respondents) still have primary teeth. The mean dmft of primary teeth is 4.07 ± 3.1 (mean ± S.D.). The minimum index is 1, and the maximum is 13. Several young people reported that all their primary teeth were carious. This data also implies that the oral cavity of these children is already present in preschool-age cariogenic bacterial flora, which also determines the fate of the permanent teeth that will later erupt into this milieu. No filled primary teeth were found in the age group studied. A weak correlation was found between the dmft index and gender (r = 0.206), with boys having worse teeth than girls. 61.9% of students had seen their parents brush their teeth, but students with a high dmft index had not seen their parents brush their teeth (r = 0.472).

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The mean DMFT of permanent teeth was 5.65 ± 3.5 (mean ± S.D.), with a minimum index of 0 and a maximum of 16. Many students were reported to have a majority of caries in their teeth. A total of 4 filled teeth were found in the study population.

A weak correlation between the DMFT index and gender can be detected (r = 0.206), with boys having worse teeth than girls. 61.9% of students saw their parents brushing their teeth regularly (Figure 5), but students with a high DMFT index did not see their parents brushing their teeth (p<0.05). 63.3% of students have acute gingivitis and 36.3% have chronic gingivitis.[6]

Online Education

67% of students did not have digital tools for online education (Figure 9). During the pandemic period, students mainly used pencils, erasers, and books. In connection with how they received the assignments they declared "I was given assignments at lunch on Monday, and had to return them at lunch on Friday," "we prepared assignments on assignment sheets," "assignments were sent out, and had to return them every Friday."
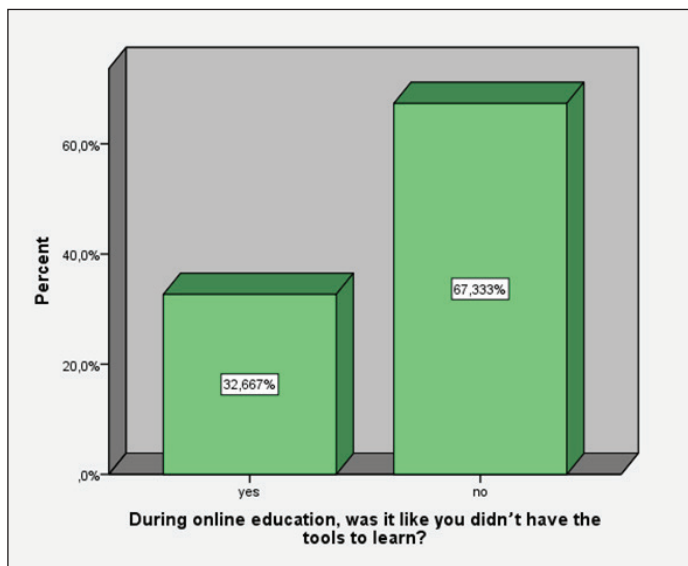

Figure 9

Did Students Have a Digital Tool for Online Education? (%) (yes/no)

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[6] Acute gingivitis: acute, reversible inflammation of the gums without resorption of the underlying alveolar bone, which usually develops as a result of improper brushing.
Chronic gingivitis: prolonged, persistent inflammation of the gums, in which the epithelium of the gum is irreversibly damaged, and the rest of the periodontium becomes diseased.

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Students preferred face-to-face teaching to digital (Figure 10), and they rated online education worse than personal teaching (Figure 11).

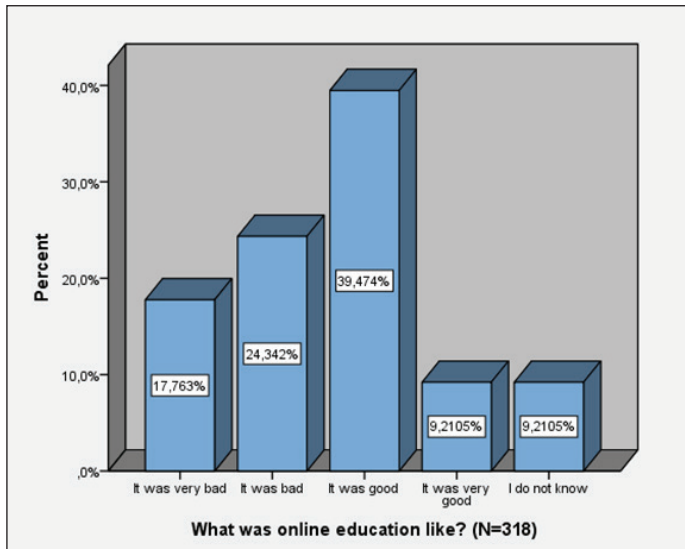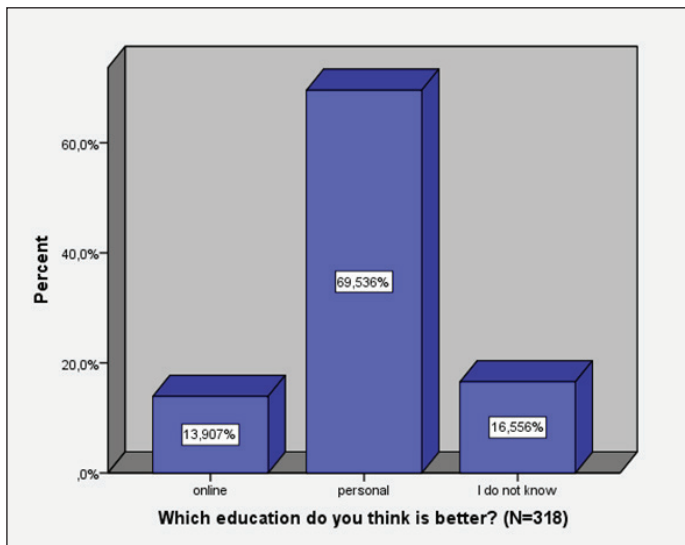**Figure 10**

Rating of Online Education by Students (%)

Figure 11

Preference for Types of Education (%)

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Discussion

The results clearly show that, in disadvantaged settlements, digital education has widened the gap, expanding the already existing ones. In the area of health education, the lack of digital tools has reduced opportunities to below the minimum due to a further decline in student availability.

The Rosa Parks Foundation, the Motivation Association, and the Partners Hungary Foundation, as part of their joint research in 2020, also concluded that the higher the proportion of disadvantaged and Roma students, the lower the proportion of digital education participants (Kende & Messing, 2020). In a short period, the pandemic's online education imperative has "produced" a high percentage of students who have dropped out of education and health education in these populations. Based on the social situation of the family, there is a very clear gap in the transition to digital education: half of the pupils are "lost" in disadvantaged and Roma classes (Kende & Messing, 2020).

The data mentioned above is in line with our present research, in which 32.7% of pupils had the tools to learn online, and more than 40% had problems and were left behind. This gap is even more striking for health education, especially oral health.

The pathological processes in the oral cavity can take several years to develop into a manifest problem felt by the patient, such as caries with cavities or chronic gingivitis. In school age, the time factor is even more pronounced: the dentin layer of the tooth is thinner, the carious cavity that develops reaches the dental pulp[7] sooner, and pulpitis develops, which—if left untreated—can lead to tooth loss. In addition, nutritional anomalies are also manifested in the oral cavity, as the initial stage of the alimentary canal. Internal stress and anxiety also cause visible changes in the oral cavity (Faragó, 2013). Therefore, it would be extremely important to increase the level of dental education in these lower-educated families in order to reduce the disadvantages of the rising generation.

Northridge et al. (2020) found in their study that low-income, ethnic minority, immigrant, and rural families in the United States also have suboptimal access to good quality dental care, including preventive care. Disparities in dental health care reflect unequal chances for health, which further marginalizes disadvantaged groups. "As a result, poor oral health serves as the national symbol of social inequality," emphasize the authors (Northridge et al., 2020, p. 513). In addition, they carry common risk factors (e.g., smoking, excessive sugar consumption) and can be the cause of the development of consequential diseases (diabetes, obesity).

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[7] The gelatinous mass that fills the canal located in the innermost part of the tooth; it contains blood vessels, nerves, and connective tissue elements.

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Based on our research, we had similar findings (DMFT values in the study population are almost double the national value, high sugar consumption). Teachers (special education teachers) often witness unsolved dental problems in these schools. The pandemic has made these disparities even more pronounced, as in this period, oral health problems have worsened, and the gap has widened. With digital education, the chances of disadvantaged children have further deteriorated, and health education has been pushed into the background. However, health behavior needs to be drastically improved (considering the high proportion of children who smoke and drink alcohol).

The results are strongly influenced by faulty eating habits, snacking after brushing teeth in the evening, not brushing teeth in the evening, and inadequate dental education of pupils.

There may be many pupils in this population who would be special educational needs (SNI), although we did not investigate this. However, we had the opportunity to talk to teachers when filling in the questionnaires, who all agreed that the majority are difficult to manage, maladjusted, with a lot of aggression and behavioral problems, anxiety. Apart from inadequate parenting patterns, this is another possible reason they do not go to the dentist. Special educators and psychoeducation specialists could help a lot by being present in the education of children with SNI. Therefore, our research has been extended to include the study of emotional, intellectual, adjustment, or behavioral developmental disorders (SNI) in child populations, the results of which are currently being processed.

Furthermore, it would be worth comparing the fitness and oral health and "fitness" of children with special educational needs and children with different disabilities. According to Kalbli's study, these populations have poorer test scores for fitness in children (Kalbli, 2019).

Conclusion

The main factors contributing to the negative results are lack of dental care (total absence of filled teeth), disadvantaged socio-economic status of parents, lack of parental role models, and total lack of motivation of children. Health education professionals and a complex program are needed to improve the current situation to raise the current dental indicators, which are well below the European average, and to rectify harmful health behavior. Furthermore, a major increase in the level of prevention and time spent on prevention is also crucial for social inclusion and health, which can be bridged by the cooperation of specially trained educators with the health care system and families. Raising the level of digital background could also increase the opportunities for online dental education for these groups. Considering the lack of oral health data in disadvantaged

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populations in Hungary, the processing, documentation, and publication of the data collected in this study becomes an important and inevitable task for public health professionals, and thus its solution at the national level.

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Theoretical Aspects of Social Enterprises

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Abstract

Social enterprises are given special attention from a scientific and public policy point of view. In everyday life, we see them as organizations that can provide solutions to various social problems. From an academic perspective, they represent a new research topic with its own interdisciplinary nature. They have been examined mainly from the point of view of management and organizational culture. In terms of scientific analysis, the newly developed research area of social economy and social enterprises is still in the conceptualization phase. The theoretical and methodological framework for research measurements need to be finalized. In this study, we seek to answer the question of how social economy—in particular, the perception of social enterprises in international and Romanian literature—is changing as a result of economic and social changes in space and time. We examine the factors along which definitions of the social enterprise within social economy are attempted, and the indicators that facilitate the investigation of the social impact of social enterprises.

Keywords: social economy, third sector, social enterprise, social enterprise of integration, social brand, conceptual changes in time

Introduction

As an international cultural phenomenon, social enterprises are given particular attention from both a scientific and public policy point of view. Often in public discourse, they are considered organizations that provide solutions that directly address social issues; thus,

social entrepreneurs are actually heroes who are changing the world. This is a common approach—we can find numerous heroes in social media or on popular video-sharing platforms (Dacin et al., 2011; Stevens et al., 2015). From an academic point of view, it is a new research topic with its own interdisciplinary nature. Researchers have focused mainly on investigating aspects, such as management and organizational culture (Mair & Marti, 2009; Townsend & Hart, 2008; Sud et al., 2008; Stevens et al., 2015). It is also an important fact that social enterprises combine profit-making and non-profit organizational culture. In this context, scientists unanimously agree that those investigating the subject are facing a serious lack of definitions, conceptualizations, and measurements dimensions (Csoba 2007, 2020; Defourny, 2001; Dacin et al., 2011; Di Domenico et al., 2010; Frey, 2007; Matei & Sandu, 2011).

Social enterprise entities are "in vogue" in Romania given that after the EU accession, these types of organizations had access to significant resources as early as the period between 2007 and 2013, before the emergence of a legal framework governing the creation and operation of social enterprises. We hold that many aspects related to social enterprises are still unclear, especially from the perspective of scientific research (Pásztor & Gál, 2022). Reflecting on this, our study aims to present a theoretical synthesis that seeks to focus on conceptualizing social entrepreneurship and the development of a theoretical framework for the new researchable area. In what follows, we will first provide a comprehensive discussion of the concept related to social economy and social enterprises. Following that, we shift our focus to the epistemological framework of social enterprises. The study concludes with an overview of the situation in Romania.

Methodological Aspects

Our study aims to synthesize the theoretical−conceptual framework of social enterprises based on the international literature. It also aims to explore and contextualize the Romanian aspects, connecting them with European changes and regulations.

Our research questions are as follows:

1. How does the legal framework regulating and operating social enterprises in Romania fit with European practice?

2. Where can the Romanian situation be integrated into the explored theoretical−conceptual framework?

From a methodological point of view, the study includes a literature review and document analysis. To answer our research questions, we chose a critical analysis of international and domestic literature documenting social enterprises. The framework of our analysis focused primarily on economic and social characteristics, as well as on legal changes. The course of the analysis follows the logic presented here: the examination of international literature on the conceptualization and measurement of social enterprises, the Romanian legal framework, the exploration of domestic conditions, and then the integration of the revealed Romanian reality into the international framework. At the same time, we also provide a short synthesis of the results of our previous research,[1] along which we can gain an insight into the Romanian reality regarding social enterprises (Pásztor & Gál, 2022).

Literature Review on the Social Economy and Social Enterprises

The Social Economy—Conceptual Background

Social economy is positioned between the market and the state. It plays a role in both the economic system and society. In everyday discourse, the terms non-profit sector, third sector, solidarity economy, and social enterprise are often used synonymously with social economy. It is a difficult, but important, task to navigate this conceptual diversity so that each concept is assigned the same meaning in each case. In terms of social economy, some concepts inevitably have to be defined, such as civil society, third sector, and non-profit sector/organization.

Civil society, a concept that has existed since ancient times, was defined in the 1980s as referring to voluntary and non-governmental organizations in which civic volunteering constitutes a valuable asset. They can take the form of voluntary and non-governmental organizations, informal organizations, various movements, and individual actions (Frey, 2007).

The concept of the third sector was coined by Amitai Etzioni (1973). It refers to a non-governmental organization that combines the entrepreneurial mindset with a commitment to the state and the common good. It serves three functions: to provide services through the market economy, to play an advocacy role, and to seek to strengthen community solidarity and cohesion through volunteering and donation. This sector includes non-profit and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) involved in the development and humanitarian action (G. Fekete et al., 2017).

The non-profit sector is a charitable, philanthropic sector that performs socioeconomic activity based on the principle of solidarity. It is positioned between the public and the market sector, and aims to support community interests through the redistribution of profits. The use of the term is attributable to The Johns Hopkins Comparative Nonprofit Sector Project, which began in the early 1990s. This concept combines the ideas of the third sector, non-governmentalism, and the civil society (G. Fekete et al., 2017). It entails civil, bottom-up strategies serving the public interest.

The concept of social economy entered public consciousness via the European Commission White Paper entitled *Growth, Competitiveness, Employment*, published in 1993. The social economy views potential beneficiaries not as passive and needy but as active initiators. This brings an important change of attitude in the third sector (European Commission, 1993). Pearce (2003) uses the concept of social economy as a synonym for social enterprise. He considers that a social enterprise includes social and community enterprises, community insurance, fair trade enterprises as well as institutions based on volunteering and/or charity.

The concept of the social economy is used by international organizations (International Labour Office, World Bank) and European Union institutions as a generic term that encompasses social enterprises as well. Some definitions focus on employment (Csoba, 2007; Frey, 2007), while others emphasize economic impacts (Csoba, 2020; Defourny, 2001). According to European Economic and Social Committee (2012) report definition, the most important aspects of the social economy are: freedom of membership, the autonomy of decision, operation according to market needs, meeting non-market needs, specific rule-governed surplus management which does not follow classical market logic. The following table provides an overview of how the definition of the social economy has evolved.

Table 1

Changes in the Social Economy Over the Last Three Decades in Europe

	1990–2000	2001–2008	2009–present
Main dimensions	Creating a framework for employment	Strengthening the framework for self-sufficiency	Economic sustainability, market efficiency, revenue-generating potential
Defining organizational framework	Non-market organizations (third sector)	"Half-market" organizations positioned between non-market and market organizations	Add market organizations to non-market organizations
Predominant form	Non-profit organizations, associations, foundations	Cooperatives, social cooperatives	Social enterprises
Main resources for operation	State aid and community funding for non-profit organizations	Limited (in terms of time and money) (state, community) aid and own economic result	Primacy of economic results and the complementary nature of the state and community forms of aid
Approach to capitalism	Correcting	Complementary	Inclusive
Target group	Unemployed, the disadvantaged from a labor market perspective	Marginal social groups	Individual and community enterprises (unemployed and marginal social groups)
Social policy background	Social rights, social responsibility	Welfare benefits subject to conditions: "no rights without responsibilities"	Social investment theory, social investment welfare state

Source: Csoba, 2020, p. 86.

Despite changes in the content of the social economy, some elements can be considered constant. According to Csoba (2020), these are the frame, the focus, and the forms. The frame is the market economy in which the third sector operates alongside the market and state. The focus is on the local economy in a global context—it is characterized by innovative solutions and the dominance of horizontal organizational structures. Another focus is on partnership in decision-making. Finally, the most popular organizational forms are non-profit organizations, cooperatives, and mutual aid societies (p. 75).

Social economy encourages local development and is an economic approach adapted to the market and the public sector. As a result of economic, social, and political changes, the content of the model was renewed, which led to the emergence of the solidarity economy.

There is an overlap between the social economy and the solidarity economy. Over the past decades, solidarity economy has emerged alongside/instead of social economy. The aim of this is to promote political engagement and economic and social transformation. The solidarity economy "seeks solidarity-based solutions for social coexistence and the operation of the economy" (Csoba, 2020, p. 89). The solidarity economy does not have a complementary or corrective nature. It becomes an economic component by building on ecological, equal opportunities, and cultural aspects. Trends are constantly changing, trying to adapt to social needs. Recent papers present the theory of the social and solidarity economy. The social and solidarity economy encompasses organizations and enterprises that:

- have specifically economic and social (and often environmental) objectives,

- contain different degrees and forms of cooperation, associativity, and solidarity in the relationship between workers, producers, and consumers,

- are characterized by democracy and self-governance in the workplace.

This category includes cooperatives, mutual help societies, women self-help groups, forestry groups, social security organizations, trade organizations, cooperatives in the informal sector, social enterprises and the community currency, and alternative financing schemes (Bouchard & Salathé-Beaulieu, 2021).

From those listed above, the four main forms of organization we encountered during our analysis are the cooperative, the foundation and association, public welfare organizations, and social enterprise. A cooperative is an organizational unit created for a dual purpose: to achieve economic results and to achieve social or cultural objectives (Barna, 2014; Nicolăescu et al., 2011). Social cooperatives promote the employment of disadvantaged people, and, without state aid, they could function only for a short period (Petheő et al., 2010). Foundations and associations[2] are private, formal organizations, and their operation is characterized by voluntary participation (Barna, 2014;

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[2] In Romania, these operate based on the Government Decision No.26/2000 and Law No. 246/2005.

Petheő et al., 2010). The main objective of public welfare organizations[3] is to set up a fund with the contribution of the members, and to provide loans to the members at reduced interest rates (Barna, 2014).

In 2011, the European Commission defined social entrepreneurship in the context of the social economy as a response to the challenges posed by the 2008 crisis—unemployment, poverty, and social exclusion. Social enterprises emerge as an economic alternative, having self-sufficiency as a basic principle (Csoba, 2020). In this context, there is already a noticeable separation between the European and the overseas approach: while in the European approach, community, democratic principles of operation, and limited profit distribution are paramount, in the American approach, the focus shifts to market income and social innovation (G. Fekete et al., 2017, European Commission, 2011).

In the literature of the field, the concepts of social enterprise and community enterprise are sometimes used synonymously. Following the latest trends (Csoba, 2020), the current paper mostly uses the concept of *social enterprise*. In what follows, the study provides a brief presentation of the most important structural characteristics of the main component of the social economy, i.e., the social enterprise, and its areas of activity.

Social Enterprises

As discussed above, the social economy is created and shaped by organizations that do not have profit-making as a top priority but focus on generating social benefits and supporting communities and the disadvantaged. Thus, the fulfillment of their social mission can be measured in profit reinvestment. Social enterprises, however, are entities that no longer follow the traditional forms of generating income (e.g., obtaining aid and donations) but use the forms present in the business sector. L'Emergence de l'Enterprise Sociale en Europe (EMES) researchers developed the first standard definition in Europe, in the 1990s, according to which social enterprises are market-oriented non-profit organizations (Defourny & Nyssens, 2008).

They also developed a system of nine indicators helping to analyze social enterprises. The system enabling the analysis of the economic and social characteristics of social enterprises includes three dimensions: economic and entrepreneurial, social, and governance. Each dimension has three indicators. Central and Eastern European countries used a simplified, six-indicator system (see Table 2).

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[3] In Romania, these operate based on Law No. 122/1996 and Law No. 540/2002 (CAR).

Table 2

EMES Dimensions and Indicators

Dimensions	Western Europe	Central and Eastern Europe
Economic and entrepreneurial dimension	Continuous activity producing goods and/or selling services	Economic activity producing goods and/or selling services
	Significant level of economic risk	—
	Minimum amount of paid work	Trends applied among employees
Social dimension	Explicit aim to benefit the community	Explicit aim to benefit the community or a specific target group
	Initiative launched by a group of citizens or civil society organizations	—
	Limited profit distribution	Exclusion of profit-seeking organizations
Governance dimension	High degree of autonomy	Certain degree of autonomy
	Decision-making power not based on capital ownership	Decision-making power not based on capital ownership
	Participatory nature, which involves various parties affected by the activity	—

Source: Kiss, 2015, p. 14.

The European Commission's definition is based on the principles presented above. It states that social enterprises form an integral part of the social economy, as its main component (European Commission, 2011). From the ideas presented above, it can be concluded that social enterprises are innovative forms of entrepreneurship that combine social and economic objectives (Nicolăescu et al., 2011). Thus, profit-making, social objectives and redistribution emerge as expectations. Social enterprises make use of the available entrepreneurial tools and, at the same time, have well-defined social objectives. As regards their legal form, they can be foundations, cooperatives, and associations, but they can also have a hybrid status, that is, they can take legal forms found in the business sector—the most important mission of the entities is to simultaneously achieve social and economic goals (Lambru, 2021). In this context, we consider it

important to address the most challenging issues in the field of science, namely how to measure the economic and social mission of a social enterprise. Therefore, when presenting the epistemological framework, we strive to describe the phenomenon highlighting the significant aspects that form the basis of methodological approaches applied in researching this special form of economic and social entrepreneurship.

Epistemological Framework of Social Enterprises

Researchers from a wide variety of fields have addressed the issue of the social economy and social enterprises. There are studies ranging from the fields of business (Certo & Miller, 2008; Chell, 2007), organizational development, and organizational culture (e.g., Dacin et al., 2011) to fields investigating theoretical and practical issues related to enterprises (Austin et al., 2006; Di Domenico et al., 2010; Stevens et al., 2015). These studies focus on questions such as what makes organizational culture different in a social enterprise, how this form of enterprise fits into classical business models and theories, and how the social benefits of a social enterprise can be measured. Also, numerous reviews of the literature (e.g., Johnson, 2000; Matei & Sandu, 2011), through meta-analysis, follow the development of the research field synthesizing scientific approaches to conceptualization and measurability.

In their study, Dacin et al. (2011) raise critical questions about what social enterprise is, why it is worth addressing the issue, and what critical points and promising areas of research can be considered through research. In their brief overview, introducing the issue of social enterprises, they state that social enterprises are an unavoidable research topic along the lines of responding to existing social problems and social value creation, all the more so as these entities are an integral part of the market economy. They point out that the discourse on social enterprises—at the level of the media, politics, public policy, and celebrities—has also changed a lot in the recent period, and one of the highlights is the contextualization and keeping on the agenda of the ethical, more socially inclusive concept of capitalism. In this respect, the role of networks in the operation of social enterprises, knowledge sharing, and promoting popularity is of paramount importance. Nevertheless, the debate on—which does not advance the development of theories related to this topic—the definition of social enterprises is a key issue and the need for the academic sphere to formulate theories that apply to social enterprises is also articulated. The authors highlight four key elements of the attempts to define social enterprises: the characteristics of the individual as a social entrepreneur, the scope of social enterprises, the resources, and the mission of social enterprises. The mission of social value creation can be identified as a common element as it is an integral part of all

proposed definitions (and of the legislative framework used in some countries). Generally, the problem with the definitions reviewed is that they ignore the additional economic outcomes for social enterprises or consider them to be part of the mission. This might lead to the misconception that economic value creation is not a priority for social enterprise.

In an earlier analysis, Dacin et al. (2011) highlighted the fact that social enterprises are characterized by both economic and social value creation. Although there is a hierarchical order within the organization in this respect, and social entrepreneurs also consider this aspect, the social mission does not exclude/cannot exclude the economic mission—the latter being essential for sustainability. For this reason, the authors propose a contextualized approach in which the primary aspect is the mission of the social enterprise. Results (losses, profit) should also be examined, which means that one should investigate the process of social entrepreneurship itself, the entity under scrutiny constituting the research context (Dacin et al., 2011).

The authors discuss methodological dilemmas in the context described above. They identify two defining theoretical trends: the institutional and the network approach. The representatives of the institutional trend apply the theoretical framework to social enterprises (Mair & Marti, 2009). They either focus on the role of institutional forms and the choice of the organizational form of social enterprises (Townsend & Hart, 2008), or they examine the institutional context of risks (Sud et al., 2009). The network approach focuses on the role of networks in the creation of social enterprises (Shaw & Carter, 2007) or on understanding narratives related to social enterprises (e.g., Parkinson & Howorth, 2008). The authors note that, in both approaches, studies are mostly based on case studies, with a negligible number of studies investigating a larger numbers of cases, mainly to understand the nature of social enterprises. A systematic comparison based on quantitative analysis is basically missing from the researches carried out in the area of social enterprises. The authors also conclude that there is no need for an entirely new theoretical framework, but the existing ones need to be enriched with new elements (e.g., identity, network, institution) and instead of or in addition to research trends focusing on the individual one must highlight the social dynamics and the social processes related to social enterprises. Five possible approaches are suggested. These are synthesized briefly in the ensuing paragraphs (Dacin et al., 2011).

In the context of organizations, social movements, and social enterprises, they highlight the social structural factors that affect social enterprises as these, like all entrepreneurs, sometimes have to face competitors, cope with the profit-oriented and non-profit approach being connected to numerous stakeholders in both directions. All this can generate operational tensions at the organizational level, requiring both social and economic

competencies on the part of the entrepreneur. From the perspective of research opportunities, it would be important in this approach to examine entrepreneurial skills and tools as well as to identify those strategies that help social entrepreneurs to build and sustain their businesses amid different institutional and structural problems and challenges related to legitimacy (Mair & Marti, 2009; Dacin et al., 2011).

With regard to networks, the authors claim that the main focus would be on duality and understanding the activities of social enterprises. Duality is to be found in the social mission and knowledge sharing. However, it would be critical to learn about the ways in which social enterprises build and operate their networks. The analysis of social capital is valid in the case of conventional forms of enterprise, but this should also be applied in the case of social enterprises. It would be necessary to understand the operational logic of the network effect (De Carolis & Saparito, 2006, and Greve & Salaff, 2003, as cited in Dacin et al., 2011).

Organizational culture as a conceptual and interpretive framework related to social enterprises is represented in the entities under scrutiny in the form of rituals, the narratives associated with these, and how their social meaning surfaces and is mediated in the creation of social value. By studying rituals—which are important not only within the organization but also in the public sphere—one can explore the socialization practices of social enterprises, while interpreting narratives can serve as a basis for learning about media representations. The stories of social enterprises encode a set of attitudes and beliefs, a value system that maintains our idea of such entities (Dacin et al., 2011).

Stories about social enterprises highlight the importance of identity and self-image as another possible direction for research and interpretation. The stories create and reinforce stereotypes about social enterprises and entrepreneurs, the expectations and identities related to success, and they connect the social economy to brand building. Understanding the identity building of social enterprises and entrepreneurs, of how the social entrepreneur identifies himself and with others in the community, may serve as a new direction for research (Dacin et al., 2011).

The latest interpretive framework and research direction proposed by Dacin et al. (2011) focuses on social enterprises and entrepreneurial cognition, which refers to knowledge structures that an individual uses in decision-making, situation assessment, opportunity assessment, and setting up and expanding a business. In this context, the essential question would be whether there is a difference between classical and social enterprises in terms of knowledge structures and information processing, as well as capacity and weighing options.

The study by Stevens et al. (2015) on the theoretical overview of the dimension and measurability of social enterprises and the validation of measurements holds that social enterprises are originally related to the non-profit sector. However, regardless of their organizational form, they have some features that are found everywhere. These are social value creation, sustainability through economic activities, and ensuring continuity through the sale of goods and services. The difference between the world of business and that of social enterprises is identified in the importance of social value creation and the evolving nature of the pursuit of economic value creation. According to Stevens et al., the most important characteristic of social enterprises is the combination of social and economic missions (Austin et al., 2006; Certo & Miller, 2008; Stevens et al., 2015). The presence of a social mission is self-evident, while the economic mission is a crucial framework condition. In light of this, their research aims to examine the tension between the social and economic objectives, which is reflected in the purpose, values, and mission of the organization. The researchers sought to understand the social and economic mission of social enterprises. Consequently, it was not done through case studies but in the context of quantitative research. They define the social enterprise as an entrepreneurial entity with a social purpose sustainable through trade. It is not limited to a single organizational form—it is within this organizational framework that the change-maker social entrepreneur operates. In this approach, social entrepreneurship is an umbrella term that includes the social entrepreneur and the social enterprise itself. The authors agree with the consensus that social enterprises have a social mission and are interested in creating social value (Chell, 2007).

They draw attention to a tautology related to the concept of social value: how could a social enterprise be conceptualized if we do not know what social and economic value is? The answer to this question is to be found in research, which faces several challenges. First, we come across the definition of social value creation, which can be interpreted as a response to societal challenges or social problems—but these definitions can only be used in specific research, not as a general conceptual framework. In this context, defining 'social' would be necessary: researchers claim that its meaning varies from context to context and is not precise and measurable. The common denominator of the proposed definitions is the common good and social well-being; however, economic value creation is not the common good. Following this train of thought, they defined social enterprises as entities created to achieve social return rather than economic return. Social value is not the individual interest of the social entrepreneur. Which category a company is more likely to fall into depends on whether the mission of the organization gives priority to the economic or the social dimension. It is the combination of these two factors that makes

a social enterprise unique. The authors point out that mission-focused conceptualization is needed for social enterprises; therefore, it is important to understand both the economic and the social mission. In the study, they use a multi-dimensional construction, the values also reflect the social and economic missions, which are very important for social enterprises. According to the authors, the economic and social missions are more resilient than their components. The value system, in this context, refers to the fact that in a social enterprise self-regarding values and other-regarding values communicate the social and economic missions of the enterprise (Foreman & Whetten, 2002, as cited in Stevens et al., 2015).

In social enterprises, the intersection of the normative identity (tradition, symbols, a certain ideological basis, altruism, charismatic leader) and the utilitarian identity (economic rationality, profit maximization, self-interest, economic production, cost reduction, return) reflects the economic and social mission. Paying attention to social and economic objectives means that the social entrepreneur understands a social need and achieves social goals in addition to/through commercial activities, which is reflected in the mission (both dimensions). This should not be confused with corporate social responsibility (CSR), that refers to the extent to which companies address social goals subsequently to business goals (Stevens et al., 2015).

The authors adopt the view that social and economic missions in social enterprises are a set of distinct, conspicuous, or latent constructs that incorporate the dimensions of organizational identity, values, and goals. In light of this, they build a theoretical model for social enterprises and validate it through quantitative research (Stevens et al., 2015).

Figure 1

The Theoretical Framework of Social Enterprises
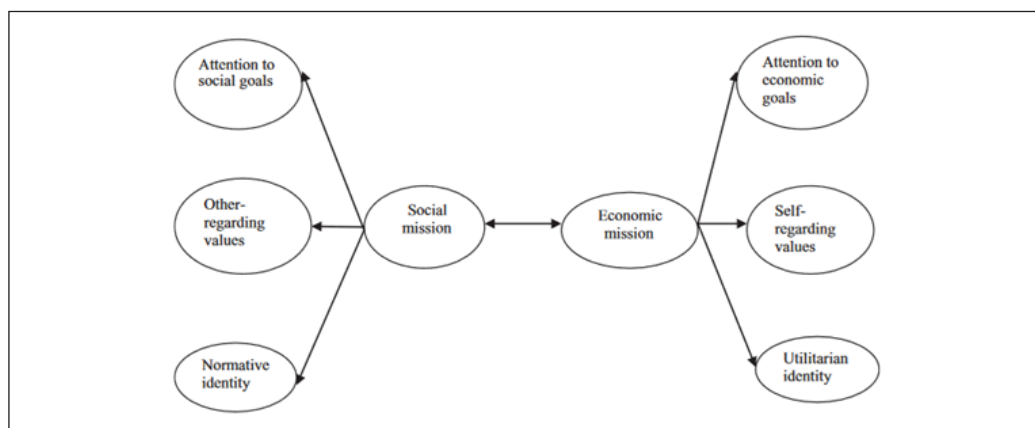
Source: Stevens et al., 2015, p. 11.

Following the research, in which all components of the model were assessed and validated utilizing a questionnaire, the authors concluded that the social and economic missions of social enterprises are determined by normative/utilitarian identity driven by others/self-interest and by attention to social/economic purposes, though there is no set boundary to whether or not an entity is called a social enterprise (Stevens et al., 2015). We consider this study very important in the process of building up a valid conceptual and measurable framework for social enterprises. It helps researchers and public policy experts to bring scientific research results closer to reality, that is, the results can make the legislation that determines the operation of social enterprises more realistic. The next chapter focuses on Romania, during which we present the legal context and reflect on the theoretical–conceptual framework presented above.

The Social Economy and Social Enterprises in Romania
The Legal Framework of the Social Economy in Romania

In Romania, social enterprises are part of the social economy. Provisions relating to the social economy and its components are mainly laid down by Law 219/2015 (Parliament of Romania, 2015), followed by Government Decision no. 585/2016, which presents the methodological norms for the implementation of the law. The legal framework was subsequently expanded by a number of ministerial decrees, resulting in the creation of a Single Register for Social Enterprises in Romania.

Despite the fact that, prior to the 2015 law, there was no legal framework for the social economy and the operation of social enterprises in Romania, strategy documents[4] and sources of financing[5] used the concept of the social economy—even allocating specific funding frameworks to these entities. Conceptually, the notion of the social economy and social enterprise in Romania has actually entered or returned to the public consciousness through European Union funds, in the 2007–2013 programming period—in contrast to other European countries, which had a much greater advantage in this respect, for example, by means of the Social Economy Charter, which was published in 1980 and has gradually become incorporated into the way of thinking about social economy (Pásztor & Gál, 2022).

There are several historical antecedents in Romania indicating the existence of the social economy: e.g., the savings, credit, and mutual aid associations that appeared in the 1800s (Bistrița–1851, Brăila–1855, Bucharest–1870), which were followed by the publication of legal documents (e.g., documents regulating the operation of cooperatives,

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[4] For example, National Strategic Report concerning Social Protection and Social Inclusion 2008–2010—this document defines the social economy for the first time in Romania.

[5] For example, Human Resource Development Sectoral Operational Programme 2007–2013.

associations and foundations). Specific mention shall be made of the emergence of advocacy organizations belonging to certain professions in the middle of the 19th century such as the Romanian National Association of Handicraft and Production Cooperatives (UCECOM) or the Central Union of Consumer Cooperatives (CENTROCOOP)—both members of European Trade Union Confederation (Stănescu & Nemțanu, 2015).

Taking into consideration the history of social organizations in Romania, one might think that the "re-nationalization" of the concept did not pose any challenges as a tradition of this form of organization existed in the country. The legacy of the pre-1989 socio-economic system seems to have left its mark on this term and on the way it is perceived: we associate volunteering, community involvement, and the cooperative way of life with patriotic work, nationalization, and forced cooperativization (Stefănescu & Nemțanu, 2015).

As defined by law, the social economy is based on private, voluntary, and solidarity initiatives, it is characterized by autonomy, responsibility, and limited profit distribution. At the same time, it is an innovative solution in the context of social exclusion. It encompasses activities independent of the public sector, is conducive to the common good, and aim towards increasing the employment of the vulnerable and/or providing goods and services or carrying out fitting-out work. Its operation is private, voluntary, and based on the principle of solidarity, it is distinguished by a high degree of autonomy and responsibility, as well as the limited distribution of profit (Parliament of Romania, 2015).

When discussing the law, in addition to the definition of the social economy, we need to cover three important concepts used in legal documents and sources of financing in Romania. These are the following: social enterprise, work integration, social enterprise, and social brand.

 The social enterprise status is attested by a certificate valid for five years. The certificate is granted for enterprises meeting several criteria, two of which are: serving social and community purposes and reinvesting 90% of the profit in social purposes. Organizations holding such a certificate are subject to several reporting requirements. The second category, the work integration social enterprise, is a label used by organizations whose employees, 30% at least, come from vulnerable social groups, and their total work time represents at least 30% of the work time of all employees. This status is attested by a mark and these types of organizations are also subject to a number of reporting requirements. For all categories, implementation and inspection tasks are carried out by a dedicated subdivision of the county employment agency[6] (Pásztor & Gál, 2022).

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[6] Agenția Județeană de Ocuparea Forței de Muncă (AJOFM)—National Employment Agency

Overall, Romania has a legislative framework that ensures and guarantees the existence and functioning of the social economy. In this respect, the legal framework has somewhat caught up with the reality and the financing options. At the same time, the text of the law reveals that this document has not been developed along a well-thought-out, coherent public policy philosophy and vision, as it does not cover the aspects of the social economy and social enterprises presented earlier in this study, but strongly emphasizes the labor market integration of vulnerable social groups. In this context, the law can be considered incomplete, as in its wording, at the level of definitions, the social economy is not reduced to this aspect alone. Stănescu and Nemțanu (2015) mention the absence of important public policy documents and highlight the strengthening of the role of social economy entities in contrast to the current reality, in which the legal framework is, in fact, limited to the employment of vulnerable groups. In this regard, we can refer back to Csoba's (2020) synthesis on the development of social enterprises in Europe. He claims that the concept of social economy employed in Romania has made no progress since the 1990–2000 trends, as a more modern approach to the social economy and social enterprise has still not been introduced into public consciousness, public policy and funding documents. This progress would be necessary in order to step away from the aiding/assisting/vulnerable meaning of the term, to solidify the social character and emphasize the economic dimension. In the section that follows, we will present the situation in Romania in the light of a research we did in 2021 (Pásztor & Gál, 2022).

Overview of Romania—Lessons From a Previous Research

In Romania, social enterprises can operate under various legal forms such as foundations, associations, non-profit organizations, social cooperatives, or small and medium-sized enterprises. Social enterprises are created at the intersection of the non-profit sector and the economic sector. Social enterprises are social economic actors who, based on special criteria, obtain a certificate of operation from the county Department of Labor (Parliament of Romania, 2015). In our previous research aimed at social enterprises, we examined the entities operating in Romania classified as social enterprises based on the criteria provided by the law. We briefly review the results of this analysis (Pásztor & Gál, 2022). Data show that the number of social enterprises is growing steadily, increasing to 2,595 by March 2022 (ANOFM, 2022). EU calls for proposals and funding opportunities for the newly set up social enterprises have led to a major increase in the number of these entities (Figure 2.).

Figure 2

The Distribution by Counties of Social Enterprises (March 2022)
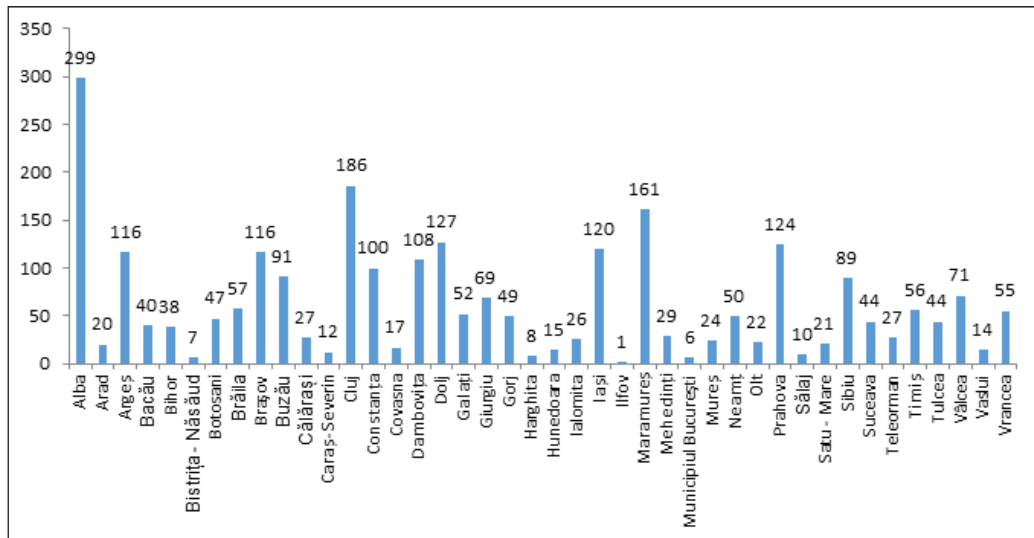
Source: ANOFM, 2022, data aggregation was made by the authors[7]

At a national level, Alba County occupies the leading position, Cluj County is in second place, while the third place is occupied by Maramureș County. The phenomenon of a very unequal distribution of social enterprises is due to the fact that counseling related to financing might be much more intensive in the leading counties.

The social economy sector falls under the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection. It is also the responsibility of this institution to update the register and the data it contains. The data is incomplete mainly in terms of the number of employees, the number of disadvantaged employees, disadvantages in general, as well as the financial situation. Despite the fact that the law prescribes these criteria, the legislative institution itself does not register them, or very superficially.

Financial sustainability is a prerequisite for the viability of social enterprises; however, research suggests that this is the cover operating costs from only one source, namely the awarded budget. Thus, the long-term sustainability of these entities is strongly questioned.

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[7] The number of social enterprises was examined in the context of previous research; the figure reflects the situation at that time (March 2022). We must note that there was no significant change in the number of social enterprises, as the date of the previous investigation coincided with the end of a funding call. In the future, it will be interesting to examine to what extent these entities will remain and maintain their social enterprise status after the end of the funding sustainability period.

Other social enterprises sustain themselves from multiple sources. The most common sources are own income, payment of membership fees, sponsorship and 2% or 3.5% tax redirection (Vameșu, 2021). Having in mind the theoretical–conceptual framework described in the literature, it can be seen that in the case of social enterprises in Romania, the strengthening of the economic dimension and its measurability are not in focus. The social economy and social enterprises in Romania represent an immature sector, which at the same time includes many possibilities in the future. The increase in their number is clearly due to favorable financing conditions; however, this situation also raises serious sustainability issues. Furthermore, the proportion of registered social enterprises that will continue to operate as social enterprises in the long run can be answered by means of an analysis carried out a few years from now. Our earlier interview materials also support what has been described (Pásztor & Gál, 2022). This sector, the entire social enterprise environment itself in Romania, with all the implied actors, is in its infancy because legal framework, funding sources, and operating conditions are given. Despite this, we cannot speak of an environment that would support the operation of social enterprises in Romania that, in addition to the social mission, are based on business models that can ensure long-term economic sustainability in a measurable way.

The national social entrepreneurship sector seems to be completely dependent on funding and taking shape along the social dimension. The disadvantaged background is indeed the main consideration; however, neither the law nor the procedures of law enforcement institutions provide concrete tools to measure the social mission declared at the time of establishment, as these criteria are met by the presence of disadvantaged employees (Pásztor & Gál, 2022).

Conclusions

Social enterprises contribute to the local budget and, at the same time, solve social situations. They achieve what the socio-economic approach represents, that is, to create a business profit that satisfies community interests.

In the process of identifying problems and threats, achieving sustainability was the most prominently displayed factor. The economic and social mission is a characteristic of social enterprises that must be taken into account when analyzing this sector. The Romanian legal framework includes both factors in the criteria, but rather in a hybrid form, not clearly defined, that is, not properly defining the components, which makes it very difficult to measure.

We can speak of a multifactorial environment: on the one hand, the legal framework does measure social impact but by few—not necessarily professionally justified—means (profit reinvestment and disadvantaged employees), and it fails to consider the economic mission and economic sustainability. The legal framework causes social enterprises to be heavily dependent on external financing. In this respect, we cannot speak of "real" social enterprises in Romania which are able to consider the value creation they undertake in their economic and social mission in such a way as to be economically sustainable and, at the same time, achieve social goals.

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Book Review. Székedi Levente's *Limitele supraviețuirii: Sociologia maghiară din Transilvania după 1945*

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Abstract

The recent publication of the volume *Limitele supraviețuirii. Sociologia maghiară din Transilvania după 1945* [The Limits of Survival: Hungarian Sociology in Transylvania After 1945], signed by Székedi Levente, is a notable contribution to the study of the Transylvanian Hungarian sociology, the author's playground being, for the time being, little frequented by other researchers. The analysis of the post-1945 period, made "on the grassroots," from the perspective of survival, focusing on sociologists such as József Venczel or Lajos Jordáky, as well as other intellectuals, makes the reader part of a stage of adaptation and transformation of the Transylvanian Hungarian sociology in the context of an austere regime. After 1948, when sociology was eliminated as a science, we are the spectators of a long process of sociologists' resistance and disguise of sociological research, under the umbrella of institutions other than sociological ones. The "escape directions" covered areas such as: political economy, folklore, history, social history, linguistics. The reappearance of *Korunk* magazine in 1957 led "cautiously" to the rehabilitation of sociology in the Hungarian culture in Romania. The author of the volume emphasizes the importance of the magazine's editor-in-chief, Professor Ernő Gáll, in this whole process of re-establishing sociology and the Gusti School, analyzing the first articles, true professions of faith that stage the new action plans and research. The volume *Limitele supraviețuirii. Sociologia maghiară din Transilvania după 1945* is about the Hungarian sociology of Transylvania in the complicated historical chapters of the period after August 23rd, 1944, for two decades, while at the same time frankly addressing the situation of the Hungarian minority in Transylvania. In this sense, it is worth mentioning the multidisciplinary and dynamic character of the work, necessary for any effort of political, historical, and sociological understanding of that era.

Keywords: The Gusti School, survival, escape directions, Hungarian sociology, Ernő Gáll

In the volume *Limitele supravieţuirii. Sociologia maghiară din Transilvania după 1945* published at the publishing house of the Romanian Institute for Research on National Minorities, in Cluj-Napoca in 2021, Székedi Levente proposes a novel approach to the history of the Hungarian sociology in Romania, a constituent part of the Romanian sociology, in the period after the end of the World War II. From the very beginning, the author informs us that he intended to prove "the existence of the Hungarian sociology or the Hungarian sociological thinking in Romania as a kind of subset of the Romanian sociology, attributing a certain coherence and continuity to a semi-institutionalized presence" (p. 19). In literature, there are "relatively few references to the Hungarian authors in Romania or to their texts published in Hungarian" (p. 17), a fact that gives the author the opportunity to cover this shortcoming, his book offering us very useful data and information about the evolution of the Hungarian sociology after 1945.

The research hypotheses are clearly defined, emphasizing that the scope of the Hungarian sociology in Romania is similar to the scope of the Romanian sociology and the role played by the cohabiting nationalities. Also, a special research direction is represented by the village, which is a current research topic and represents the umbrella for putting forth the ideas of the Gusti School, through publishing the texts in the Hungarian language. The volume was built on the basis of articles and essays from the *Világosság* Daily Newspaper, the *Utunk* Magazine, the *Korunk* Magazine, the *Művelődési Útmutató* Magazine, the *Lupta de clasă* Magazine, the *Probleme economice* Journal, the *Valóság* Magazine, analyzed from two points of view: as social documents containing reports on certain scientific research and events, and as constitutive elements of the rehabilitation speech of the Hungarian sociology in Romania.

From the chapter "Sociologia maghiară din România după cel de-al Doilea Război Mondial—Tranziţia spre comunism (1945–1947)" [The Hungarian Sociology in Romania after World War II—The Transition to Communism (1945–1947)] we note the important moments of the Hungarian sociology after the end of World War II. The establishment of a new Hungarian University, which bore the name of János Bolyai since 1946, the activity of the two research institutes—the Transylvanian Museum Society and the Transylvanian Scientific Institute, permanently disbanded at the beginning of 1950—the practice of social sciences by the specialists working within the "Bolyai" University or affiliated to the Transylvanian Scientific Institute and, last but not least, the Romanian–Hungarian scientific collaboration as a leitmotif of that time, represent some points that the author pursues in this part of his book. It is emphasized the role that the *Utunk* magazine from Cluj had in this "grace period," which launched a special column for the promotion of rapprochement between peoples,

named "We live together," and for the promotion of the idea of establishing a Romanian–Hungarian research institute with the help of the Ministry of Minority Nationalities, led by a former member of the Gusti School, Gheorghe Vlădescu-Răcoasa; and for the organization of the "Apáczai Csere János" Academy, which organized conferences on ideological themes (cohabitation of the peoples of Transylvania, the relationship between the proletariat and the intellectuals, Lenin's teachings). The Academy "also organized some conferences with less ideological themes, such as the tasks of public education or the legacy of the humanist scholar János Apáczai Csere" (p. 38).

Regarding the redefinition of the role of sociology, Székedi Levente mentioned authors who advocated the introduction of sociology in school curriculum, one of them being Lajos Jordáky, who founded the Institute of Social Sciences of the "Bolyai" University and coordinated the two series of the University's social sciences journal, and who, in an article from the fall of 1946, "presents himself as an ardent promoter for the teaching of social sciences" (p. 39). In this part of the book, some sociological surveys are listed, whereby the Hungarian researchers focused on the urban environment (mini questionnaire from the State Gymnasium for Girls in Cluj, with questions that had political overtones or sociological research carried out among graduate students, the questionnaire being filled in by 1229 students from the final years, with subjects selected from 48 secondary schools, with teaching in Hungarian language).

Obviously, all social research during the transition to communism was directed at the proletariat, the new ruling class. Many sociological texts published between 1945 and 1947 processed the data gathered in previous years, an example being the monographic research in Unguraș, coordinated by József Venczel, whose data were partially processed. Sociologist József Venczel was arrested in early 1947 and,

> even though he was released after a few months—he never returned to the chair. His chair was also abolished in the autumn of 1947, just as it had happened in the case of the other promoter of sociology at the "Bolyai" University, Lajos Jordáky. (p. 48)

A rather difficult period for researchers and teachers followed, who had to find survival options both personally and professionally.

The author doesn't focus on all members of the Gusti School, this is not a desideratum of the present volume. However, it should be emphasized that everywhere the situation of the sociologist was increasingly problematic. The author's exposition must be understood in the broader context of repressive administrative measures, arrests, suspension of some publications, and abolition of sociology departments. It should be mentioned

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that an important part of Gusti's collaborators suffered. Dimitrie Gusti had his pension withdrawn and was banished from his home. After 1948, the fate of the Gusti School worsened even more. Mircea Vulcănescu, Victor Rădulescu-Pogoneanu, Anton Golopenția, Traian Herseni, Ernest Bernea, Octavian Neamțu, Harry Brauner, Lena Constante, George Reteganu were detained. The first three of them died in detention. The others served sentences of different duration, and most were rehabilitated only in the 60s.

At all university levels and specializations, Marxist–Leninist disciplines are introduced, as well as the Russian language that "helps to assimilate 'the cultural and ideological aid' coming from the Soviet Union" (p. 53), the scientific journals must conform to ideological guidelines, such as the case of *Utunk* magazine, which was indicated to fight combatively and persistently against cosmopolitanism, separatism, nationalism (p. 54). Either we wanted or not, we witnessed a historical process of disintegration of a discipline; in order to prove that the sociological vision and thinking resisted despite the massive purges, Székedi turns to the analysis of some Hungarian scientific publications in Romania from 1948–1955 and finds that the sociology escaped in so-called "escape" directions (branches), on areas such as: political economy (economic monographs, regional development research, substantiation of industrialization decisions, cooperativization process), folkloristics (campaigns for selection of folk art, research for documentation of folk art and music, selection of songs and melodies), history (history in terms of coexistence of peoples, workers' movements, history of communism, peasant struggle, peasant revolts and wars, revolutions and other liberation struggles, life of revolutionaries, of leaders of the nation, life of "progressive" personalities, economic history (especially for documenting the class struggle in capitalism), social history (customs from Szekler villages, etc.), linguistics (dialectology, intercultural influences in spoken language) (p. 61).

The chapter entitled "From 'Marxist sociology' to 'concrete sociological research' (1955–1964)" describes the attempts to reconstruct sociology starting from the events in the Soviet Union, where an "engineering sociology" is proposed (p. 83) and the participation in the World Congress of Sociology in Amsterdam is prepared. In Poland, J. Chalasinsk publishes studies condemning dogmatism, and in Hungary, discussion of a possible re-institutionalization of sociology took places in 1956, postponed because of the Hungarian Revolution. In the case of Romania, the author points out the appearance of the *Korunk* magazine in Cluj in 1957, which held a key role in the rehabilitation of Hungarian sociology in our country. In that context, it's worth noting the ways in which *Korunk* succeeded in this aspect: the editors were consistent in publishing the writings of Romanian personalities—important Romanian sociologists, such as Henri Stahl, Traian Herseni, Ion Aluaș—

and there were presentations of social problems including the theme of the Romanian village and the presentation of the results of Dimitrie Gusti's monographic sociology.

> The magazine played an important role in the rehabilitation of the Romanian sociology and in the import of theoretical concepts and methodological solutions from "bourgeois sociology" and it was one of the first publications in Romania to advocate for the (critical) re-valorization of the Gusti School's heritage. (Ernő Gáll in 1957, as qtd by Székedi, p. 87)

The year 1955 brings positive changes for the academic community of Cluj: in the process of pre-institutionalization of sociology, we point out the organization of public events and lectures, on the occasion of the 10th anniversary of the establishment of universities, as well as the release of a group of intellectuals and academics purged in 1949–1952: university professors Lajos Jordáky, János Demeter and Edgár Balogh and Lajos Csőgör, former rector of the Institute of Medicine and Pharmacy of Târgu-Mureș (p. 96).

In the chapter on the relaunch of the *Korunk* magazine, Székedi Levente reviews several articles, among which the following are worth mentioning: "Társadalmi valóság és társadalomkutatás" [Social reality and social research], by Ernő Gáll and the editorial of Edgár Balogh, a programmatic essay "including the function of reconnecting the magazine to the tradition created by Gábor Gaál, the last editor-in-chief of the magazine in the interwar period" (p. 127). Given the scale of the description of the Gusti School activity, the author notes that "the text is an important milestone in the rehabilitation process of the Romanian sociological tradition" (p. 131). In the same note, of rehabilitation of the Romanian interwar sociology, the author of the volume speaks about "saving the Gusti School heritage ... in an extensive critical volume on the history of Romanian sociology, a book published in Hungarian and Romanian languages" (p. 133).

The way which the members of the Gusti School survived, their projects and actions after the end of the World War II, are not in this case an innovation in itself, this being characteristic of other volumes such as *Condamnare, marginalizare și supraviețuire în regimul comunist. Școala gustiană după 23 august 1944* [Condemnation, marginalization and survival in the communist regime. Gustian school after August 23, 1944], a book published in 2021 under the coordination of Zoltán Rostás. In fact, in this volume, Székedi Levente also signs an important article about how the so-called "escapes of sociology" were carried out, what methods were used, bringing arguments regarding the sociological research in *Utunk* or in other Hungarian-language publications—real survival strategies of a forbidden discipline.

On the other hand, the analysis of the Hungarian sociology in Romania in the first post-war decades, carried out at the grassroots, based on the discursive analysis of the texts published in the Hungarian-language periodicals and in other sources of social history (archives, memoirs, oral history interviews), as a place for the development of survival strategies, represents a notable intention that Székedi Levente takes advantage of from the perspective of the Hungarian sociology identity in Romania as an integral part of the "Romanian scientific world." *Limitele supraviețuirii. Sociologia maghiară din Transilvania după 1945* is a book through which we understand once more the indissoluble connection between the Hungarian sociology in the country and the Romanian sociology, materialized in joint plans and actions, in collaborations that got stucked due to political constraints.

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Book Review. "Seldom in the Nick of Time"–Emil Sîrbulescu's *Literatura americană şi provocarea etnicităţii: Romanul afro-american*

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Abstract

In 2020, the distinguished professor and scholar from the University of Craiova, Emil Sîrbulescu published the above mentioned book with a view to consolidating the academic research in Romania pertaining to race and ethnicity in the context of American culture and literature. If in the title the readers are threatened with the perspective of a *magnum opus*—"the challenge of ethnicity"—in the subtitle items seem to be subdued and thus confined to the still complex and complicated space of the African-American novel. Following the introduction, "About cultural diversity," a first part of the book is dedicated to that particular challenge, as implying the "construction of a multicultural model." The second part details "the maturing of the African-American novel," whereas the third provides the readers with a case-study, i.e. Toni Morrison's works. And last, but not least, the section devoted to conclusions addresses a question that might prove emblematic—whether "the African-American literature still exists." Our purpose was to highlight both the issues discussed by the author and his solid contribution to the field.

Keywords: ethnicity, race, African-American novel, multiculturalism

The major debate in the introduction of the book focuses on clarifying the most significant differences between the concepts of *ethnicity* and *race*. Neither exists in a pure form, and nor are they less affected by social and political circumstances. The author is aware of the peculiar way Americans have treated the question of border closing and of the immigrants. The latter's psychology is analyzed through the process of collision between the maternal tongue and English, which highlights the fact that "ethnic literature" is a misleading notion, as it only partly covers American realities. Multiculturalism is seen as both

an accomplishment and a failure, and is contrasted with pluriculturalism and interculturalism. Marking diversity and difference, multiculturalism should be reconsidered by the Western society, as some of its leaders admitted the futility of their attempts. In what regards the adjectives describing the process, even the *sardonic* "multi-culti" can be a choice.

The first chapter aims at shaping the American ethnic landscape, and resorts to texts by Stephen Spencer, Robert J. Young, Kenan Malik, Pierre Van den Berghe, Stuart Hall, Charles Taylor and others. The author notices the preference for the term *ethnicity* in the contexts of the Western multicultural societies, as being more indicative of the constant negotiations of limits. *Americanness* (and assimilation) is seen not through the eyes of the dominant group, but in relation to the marginal ones. "Identity and representation" becomes the next hot issue to be approached via texts by Claude Dubar, Anne Crany Francis or Judit Butler, and the references go back as far as Carl Von Linné is concerned, as well as one of his American counterparts, Samuel Stanhope Smith.

Racial theories are mentioned, i.e those belonging to Samuel George Morton, Louis Agassiz, John Bachman, and Josiah Clark Nott, all of them supporting, more or less, the institution of slavery. Still, works such as Franz Boas's are brought to the front in order to point to the fracture in hierarchies meant to assert the superiority of the WASP culture. Names such as Hector John de Crevecoeur and Israel Zangwill are underlined when America's generous *melting pot* is counted for its processes of internalizing American values and establishing an American tradition.

"Slavery—the grotesque image in the mirror" is the chapter dealing with "Black Atlantic and slavery," "Colonialism, postcolonialism, grotesque," and "Racial and ethnic discrimination: literary and extraliterary answers." The so-called "Atlantic spaces," especially the English one, are held responsible, once created, for the development of slavery along the infamous *Middle Passage*. However, the author remarks the overlooking, in European schoolbooks, of racism as a major (unfortunately) force in modern history. Franz Fanon, Jean-Paul Sartre, Paul Gilroy, Leonard Cassuto, Claude Levi-Strauss, Henri Bergson and Tzvetan Todorov are the theorists whose voices are claimed to have expressed valid statements on the human condition and its particular instances on the American continent. The propension to *grotesque* is thus something natural against the background of slavery. The works of 18th Century scientists and explorers, which served as bases for racist theories, are referred to together with contemporary reactions, like Anthony Appiah's, actually showing fact that "the body is just a trap, an empty space, a fictional space" that can be filled with projections of many kinds (Sîrbulescu, 2020, p. 74). The range of references expands, going from Léopold-Sédar Senghor to Harlem Renaissance, or from Theodor Adorno to the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s.

A very thorough analysis of the notions of race and racism is undertaken in the third chapter, which goes to the origins and lists a number of racisms: conscious and obvious, conscious yet hidden, unconscious and unintentional, external and internal, etc. The author pleads in favor of a more elaborate, i.e. critical theory of race. William Du Bois is considered with his emphasis on *the problem of the color line*. In this regard, the extreme has been reached by the American *one-drop rule* ideology of race. Other sections of the chapter engage the "ideology of modernity," the "resistance to slavery," the "enlightened racism" and the "autobiographical answer." Names of philosophers, theorists and writers are employed—from John Locke to Alexis de Tocqueville, from David Hume or Immanuel Kant to Henry Louis Gates Jr. and Zora Neale Hurston—together with fragments from official documents or earlier manuscripts/texts.

"The historical and social roots of the black protest" are chronicled in the fourth chapter and not without ignoring the voodoo practices of African-American religions or the romantic vision of the "happy slave." The section dedicated to "segregation and abolitionism" points to the contributions of Frederick Douglas and Harriet Beecher Stowe and their impact on American society before the Civil War. The spirit of the post-Civil War age is captured through featuring a series of events involving black activism and changes in legislation up to the 1960s. The detailed account may appear as fastidious at times; however, it proves a solid basis for any future scholarship. In fact, some of the author's sources, and this is worth mentioning, are his former PhD students, we assume, whom he quotes—and at the same time promotes—via this rich study.

"Crossing the color line" is the first section in the fifth chapter, "The cultural heritage of the South." The author explores the problematic issue of *passing* and its implications regarding racial, class, gender or sexual identity. The ambiguous authority of autobiographical & slave narratives is approached, given their relation to models provided by the sentimental novel or the picaresque. As for other types of discourse, *passing* could be traced in poetry as well or even in the shows performed by Eddie Murphy and Ice Cube. Narrative texts belonging to both white and black authors—Carl Van Vechten, Gertrude Stein and Claude McKay—are discussed in order to show the vulnerability of their protagonists' condition.

An entire chapter serves the interests of a single novel. In "Ralph Ellison and the visibility of invisibility" the author speaks about the romantic challenge of representing an invisible man. In the beginning, the novel rejects conventional strategies, only to resume the traditional form of autobiographical narrative. Also rejected is the naturalist aesthetics, the *high visibility* of the black person, and even the stereotype of the physical body. Dostoyevski and Richard Wright are quoted as having influenced the novelist;

however, in Ellison's case, "the ultimate source of perception" is "the body buried in a pocket of the urban texture." (2020, p. 157) In "Invisibility and the reign of ambivalence," the last section, the author underlines Ellison's placing into perspective the illusion of representation by creating the counter-illusion of presence.

The emergence of black feminism is discussed in the next chapter, in the context of the 1960s and their aftermath, when the process of restructuring black families followed a patriarchal model, culminating with the *Million Man March* organized in 1995 by the Nation of Islam. Emil Sîrbulescu accurately presents the choices black feminists had to made in order to either preserve their racial identity or assert their gender and specific problems. Official documents are again invoked, such as *The Moynihan Report*, together with opinions expressed in texts by Cynthia Washington, Barbara Smith, Frances Beal and others. African-American writers and their works/discourse is under scrutiny and Emil Sîrbulescu believes that the best way to approach them is a thematic one as it will lead to a better understanding of their message.

Another chapter serves the interests of a single author, this time. In "Alice Walker: resilience, becoming, sublimation" the author analyzes Walker's fiction and non-fiction as expressing, among other issues, the South as a Bakhtinian chronotope. Her novels are not only about the search for identity, they are "literary works partaking in a stylistic, narrative experiment" (Sîrbulescu, 2020, p. 189), and as a result art becomes therapy and survival. The novel *Meridian* is alloted a section, as it treats history as a series of successive layers to be dug up by the critic/archeologist. "Resistance to patriarchal order" presents the weakened position of the father figure and of the black men in *Color Purple*. Humour, understood like in Gates' *signifying monkey*, gives the protagonist the status of a subject, especially when her sufferings are read against classic narratives like *Clarissa* and *Jane Eyre*. Freudian analysis is engaged as a maternity complex is referred to, as well as the narration of the subliminal subject through fragmentation or *patchwork*. The last section, "Making sense in Walker's epistolary," deals with further controversies raised by the novel, while masterfully crafted analysis of some text fragments point to the *bird* symbol.

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The third part of the book, the case-study, opens with the chapter "Tony Morrison and the force of human nature," in which the author sheds light on the most significant aspects in the works of the first African-American writer awarded the Nobel Prize. "Beyond language" section presents the way Morrison understands race and gender as strong points in the process of building, both in form and content, a political literature. It underlines

the writer's delimitation from old masters, Faulkner included, and the propension to exploiting the jazz sound on page. Her "Thematic concerns" are not new, yet she rehabilitates African-American myths and folk-tales in order to prevent their erasure.

The tenth chapter, "Slavery narrative," begins with "Blue eyes and tar puppets," a section pointing to Morrison's assumed mission of "taking over the lost/loose threads of the complicated plot of the black adventure on American land" (Sîrbulescu, 2020, p. 228). "Fugitive slaves and *abiku*" takes us closer to the roots of the main character in *Beloved*, a novel in which the reader is "placed immediately (even on a subliminal level) in a twilight transitional territory" (p. 231), making room for the Freudian *Unheimlich.* "Beloved, she my daughter, she mine" furthers the analysis, with ample quotes from the novel, showing the contrast between the law of the state and the law of the maternal body. "Mourning and melancholy" are major features of the narratives, as racial order tends to be preserved even in times of war and confusion. The last three sections deal with *A Mercy* and *Beloved* as expressions of the "suffering of vulnerable layers" (p. 245).

"Narrative time and the voice(s) in *Beloved*" is a chapter entirely devoted to Morrison's masterpiece. The author speaks about the intermittent changes of perspective, the incredible range of vocabulary and that Morrison "wrote a terrifying novel" (p. 251). References are made to other novels: to *Sula* and *Song of Solomon* in relation to women and their survival without men; and to *Tar Baby* with regard to the fugitive from an unjust system. "Identity and memory" is a section about how "the space-time discontinuity, combined with the hegemony of the dominant culture" (p. 262) affects/alters memory. However, more dangerous seems to be what Morrison calls "national amnesia," therefore she refuses to have her writing compared with the dominant one.

The last chapter, "Narrative space and historic awareness," begins with "The solution of magical realism" and its particular implementation by Morrison, as time and space are difficult to handle by African-Americans. "Conquerors write history" is the second section, dealing with real vs. fictional locations, geographical as well as spiritual. "Memory as writing reservoir" emphasizes Morrison's re-reading of American origins as transcending contradictions. "The recurrent burden of the colour" rounds up this case-study and third part of the volume, which may be a booklet in itself.

A dense and complex book, *American Literature & the Challenge of Ethnicity: The African-American Novel* ends with a quasi-rhetorical question, to which the answer can be but positive. Indeed, an African-American literature will continue to exist, tracing its trajectory from *melting pot* to multiculturalism, from *slave narratives* to *neo-slave narratives*, from *pulp fiction* towards the age of post-multiculturalism.

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