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Tradition, Heritage, Value: The Changing Contexts of the Use of Tradition¹

In 2012, the Hungarian Parliament adopted an act² according to which the values of the Hungarians have to be collected in order to strengthen national consciousness; these values are to be nurtured, protected, promoted, and compiled in a comprehensive value repository. The documentation on which the protection of values is based has to be preserved according to the rules of rigorous record keeping and researchability. The two central categories/concepts of the act and the movement it started are *value* and (*value*) *repository*, which suggests that we are standing before a conceptual and perspective change – even if not on the level of paradigms, but certainly on the conceptual level – whose effects on local/popular tradition and on the use of popular tradition must be carefully considered.

This study represents an attempt – within the boundaries of ethnography – to survey those paradigms as well as social, cultural, and media contexts, which define the framework of collecting, interpreting, and using local cultures (or popular culture) and their products during the 20th century. In this sense, the findings of this study remain in a narrower circle than the one traced by the legislative act on Hungarian national values, and this fact also sets limits to their validity and relevance.

The apropos of this article is provided by the fact that the Hungarian Ministry of Agriculture entrusted the Kriza János Ethnographic Society with the task of initiating and professionally supervising this movement dedicated to the exploration and preservation of cultural values as well as with creating the Transylvanian Repository of Values.

Folk Culture and (Folk) Tradition

After its birth as an academic subject, ethnography confidently traced the limits of its field. The scientific discipline of ethnography took *folk culture* as its object of study, and limited it to peasant culture.³ This situation is made even more compli-

1 The present study is the English translation of my study entitled *Hagyomány, örökség, érték. A hagyomány használatának változó kontextusai* (Vajda 2016).

2 See Act XXX of 2012 on Hungarian national values and hungarikums, as well as its amendment, Act LXXX of 2015.

3 Ethnography is to this day characterised by a degree of terminological uncertainty. Besides the terminology used above, the terms “*peasant culture*” and “*popular culture*” are also employed. The former is, according to Tamás Hofer a “more strictly and clearly delimited version” of folk culture (Hofer 1994: 233). By contrast, the term “*popular culture*” indicates

cated by the fact that the demarcation of its field has prevailed not only on the social, but also on the chronological level. Ethnographic researches have focused on the ancestral and on the past.⁴ The contemporary phenomena of folk culture were left outside the scope of ethnographic studies. However, from the 1960s, this paradigm started to become increasingly problematic. On the one hand, researchers started to ask the question: *who is the folk?* Already in 1965, Alen Dundes argued that “folk” can refer to “any group of people whatsoever, who share at least one common factor” (Dundes 1956: 2). In other words, this term can be applied to many different groups (from factory workers to Internet users), which can be included within the scope of ethnographic research. On the other hand, ethnographers have also redefined the character of popular knowledge (*folklore*) and tradition (*traditio*), which should constitute the objects of their studies. As early as the 1930s, Alfred Schütz focused his interest on *everyday life* (Niedermüller 1981: 192), but ethnographic research continued to favour high days for a long time. Mihály Hoppál calls attention to the fact that, even in the 1970s, one of the most established representatives of Hungarian folkloristics, Vilmos Voigt “although [...] emphasising the collective character of folklore, considers its artful characteristics, the ‘aesthetics of folklore’, to be of primary interest for research” (Hoppál 1982: 330).

In his synthesis of the results of Hungarian ethnographic researches in Romania, Vilmos Keszeg concludes that it “turned folk culture into its object of study on the basis of a peculiar selection. The criteria for this selection were that the studied object should be *ancestral* (as opposed to generally known present-day phenomena), it should have a *peasant or rural* character (as opposed to being urban, official), and it should be *aesthetic* (as opposed to objects barely containing any aesthetic value), *festive*, and *spectacular* (as opposed to the everyday in appearance), *oral* (as opposed to the scriptural and recorded), text- and genre-centred (as opposed to the discursive habits of everyday communication, which follow more relaxed genre norms), as well as *national* (as opposed to that which does not have ethnic characteristics)” (Keszeg 1995: 110).⁵

a difference in perspective. On the mental map of the researchers, on the popular side, the clear demarcations are drawn between the levels of culture, and on the side of folk cultures, between the different groups of people and the various ethnicities (Hofer 1994: 240). However, their common element is that both concepts define “what they view as «folk», «popular», «non-elite» culture in contrast to the «high» or «learned» level of culture” (Hofer 1994: 134). Hofer concludes his meticulous analysis of the dichotomy between the two concepts with the statement: “the terminological flow between different scientific fields, also due to translations between languages, which in many cases change the original meanings to a lesser or larger degree, is increasingly accelerated”. Thus, “a major portion of the domain of meaning carried by the concept of *popular culture* developed within the Anglo-French tradition is somehow [...] integrated into our concepts of *peasant culture* and *folk culture* and contributes to their modernisation as if behind the scenes” (Hofer 1994: 246–247).

4 Vilmos Voigt stated the following about this phenomenon: “The uninterrupted presence of the phantasmagorical ‘search for the ancestors’ is also very characteristic for the Hungarian conception of tradition” (Voigt 2007: 11).

5 Emphases in the original.



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

We are dealing with similar difficulties when trying to specify the meaning of *tradition*, which is pervaded by contradictions both in the scientific and the everyday use of the term. According to Dorothy Noyes, tradition can be interpreted as communication (handing over and receiving), ideology, and a form of property (Noyes 2009: 234). In the interpretation of Edward Shils, it is *tradtum*, that is to say, it represents everything that is handed over by the past to the present (Shils 1981: 12). According to both of these views, the primary role of tradition consists in the preservation and transmission of knowledge.

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

In December 2012, Vilmos Keszeg organised an international scientific conference in Cluj-Napoca (Kolozsvár), Romania, under the title “Who owns the tradition? What is its use? Tradition between culture, user, and contractor”.⁶ In his invitation to the conference, he stated that three paradigms succeeded each other in 20th century Europe in the domain of the interpretation of tradition. The first paradigm approached the subject from the side of the cultural context (typology, range, morphology, structure, function, and the historical approach to tradition), the second interpreted tradition from a sociological perspective, focusing on the instruments of its application – or, in other words, on the attitudes toward tradition –, and the third paradigm, currently in the process of establishing itself, consists in the heritagisation of culture. According to the author, each of these paradigms stresses different aspects of tradition.

The researches lead by Vilmos Keszeg in Cluj-Napoca (Kolozsvár) use tradition as an operative concept. They “do not relate this concept to subsisting relics of an earlier developmental epoch of culture and society, but use it for the designation of objects, knowledge, practices, mentality, and attitudes received from the users of culture within our environment” (Keszeg 2014: 10). Consequently, tradition: 1.

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

establishes a community, 2. produces memory, and 3. serves a biographical function (Keszeg 2014: 10–12).⁷

In one of his studies, Vilmos Voigt expresses his opinion that, just as the concept of folk culture, tradition is also strongly ethnicised. In his own words, “as for the notorious Hungarian ‘conceptualisation of tradition’, the systematic use of the concept establishes itself in our culture in the Hungarian Reform Era, after some preliminary interpretations (such as, for instance, György Bessenyei’s conception of history). The study of Ferenc Kölcsey entitled *Nemzeti hagyományok* [National traditions] (1826) in fact maintains a still-valid approach, according to which Hungarian ‘folk traditions’ are simultaneously the traditions of the ‘Hungarian nation’” (Voigt 2007: 10). Attila Paládi-Kovács calls attention to the fact that in the works of the researchers devoted to the domain of folk culture, “the term ‘tradition’ [...] often appears as a synonym for the folk culture stemming from the age before the Hungarian Conquest of the Carpathian Basin, which survives according to its own laws, sometimes transforming and renewing itself within the process” (Paládi-Kovács 2004: 4). Hermann Bausinger writes about the nature of this tradition in the following way: “according to the conception that has become widespread also among the folk during the previous century and even reached into the present in some residual forms, that which is historically prior is also ahistorical and can be viewed as nature itself” (Bausinger 1995: 102–103). In one of her studies, Aleida Assmann also points to the fact that tradition is rediscovered and interpreted in the 18th century as *nature* (Assmann 1997: 608–625).

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

Theoretical Framework

1. According to Hermann Bausinger the revaluation of space and the rediscovery of places is the result of the *shift* (or decomposition) of *horizon*. This process brought about the spread of the current concept of the ‘homeland’ and the development of symbols that enriched it with content. The birth of the concept of homeland is

⁷ See also Vilmos Keszeg’s introduction in the present volume (editor’s note).

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



indicative of the fact that communities have become aware of the existence of others besides themselves. The tradition that they have viewed thus far as the organising force of the entire world lost its general validity outside the boundaries of their community. The author emphasises that the very existence of the innumerable local anniversaries celebrated nowadays refers back to local history (Bausinger 1995: 81–83).

Pierre Nora uses the term “*realms of memory*” to denote the procedures used for the anchoring of local history and traditions. He explains the development of these realms with the disappearance of the authentic contexts of memory (Nora 2010: 13). Besides the spatial and temporal constraints of memory, Jan Assmann also calls attention to its concrete character by stating that “ideas have to assume a perceptible form in order to gain entrance into memory”, and he uses the term “*figures of memory*” for this concreteness (Assmann 1999: 38–39). At the same time, this also means that memories are no longer preserved and transmitted by the communities but by institutions. *Collective memory* is substituted with *cultural memory*, which is aimed at the solid points of the past and transforms the factual past (history) into memorable past, or myth. Thus, the past is dissolved into symbolic formations (Assmann 1999: 53).

Arjun Appadurai uses the concept of *locality* for the description of the space that is delimited by horizons: “I view locality as primarily relational and contextual rather than as scalar or spatial. I see it as a complex phenomenological quality, constituted by a series of links between the sense of social immediacy, the technologies of interactivity, and the relativity of contexts.” (Appadurai 1996: 178).

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

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

As an answer to the narrowing of the playing field, the role of local registers significantly increased during the 20th century (Keszeg 2009: 124).

2. The different forms and media of the preservation and presentation of tradition can also be interpreted from the perspective of the archives. Michel Foucault extends the concept of the archive in his work entitled *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (Foucault 2001). He describes the archive primarily as a system that is responsible for regulating the appearance and functioning of statements. In this view, the archive is not a mere static deposit of a fixed medium, but one in which information continuously fluctuates, and whose functioning is also influenced by the dominant discourses of power (see Hermann 2010; Miklósvölgyi 2008).

In his text entitled *Das Rumoren der Archive* [Archive Rumbblings] (Wolfgang 2008), the German media theoretician Wolfgang Ernst deals with the cybernetics of the archives, attempting to rethink the archive from the point of view of technological innovations, digital technologies, and the changed habits of media consumption. His conclusion is that “in the 21st century, media archaeology [...] goes beyond the classic systems of archives and archiving. Its advantage can be sought in the specific character of the conveying medium: in the possibility of digital encoding and its continuity. The function fulfilled by the media archives of the present does not exhaust itself in mere transmission. This differentiation is similar to the one observed in the case of the archive and cultural memory or the archives and their media. One of the most important contributions of the digital world consists in incompleteness or, if you wish, in unsystematicity.” (Hermann 2010)

Methods and Contexts of the Use of Folk Traditions

In one of his studies, Hermann Bausinger describes how, at the 75th anniversary of the establishment of the choir of a south German town, Hayingen, the local women appeared in a costume about which, although it was defined by them as traditional, they admitted that they wore it that day for the first time. It has only become clear later to the author that the elements of this costume were ordered by them on the basis of the descriptions of a local pastor from a century ago about the then-current native costumes (Bausinger 1983: 434). A similar work was conducted in the 1960s in Voivodeni (Vajdaszentivány), a village that lies only 20 km from the town of Târgu Mureș (Marosvásárhely), by Pál Demeter. As a result, the local dance ensemble has presented the still popular local folk dances at the county and national stage of the competition *Cântarea României* [Singing Romania] dressed in the costume designed by him.⁹ In this case, too, the need for the design has arisen from necessity, since the village did not have at that date any living tradition for dressing, and only some elderly people still preserved in their wardrobe a couple of sets of native costumes for funerals. The women’s costume of the local dance ensemble, still in use today,

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



was designed by Demeter on the basis of the clothes of a 96-year-old woman. In Dumbrăvioara (Sáromberke), a village that lies halfway between Târgu Mureş (Marosvásárhely) and Reghin (Szászrégen), eight pairs of “native costumes” were bought for the folk dance ensemble of the elementary school for the occasion of celebrating the renovation and equipment upgrade of the local culture centre. Since neither the representatives of the local government nor the company commissioned for the acquisition had any documentation at its disposal regarding the local costume, they searched for models on the Internet. The decision makers reviewed the photos of Transylvanian native costumes and folk dance ensembles found on social media and file sharing websites as well as the “native costume catalogues” of Transylvanian craftsmen, also accessible through the Internet. Finally, the elements of the costume were ordered from folk craftsmen working in Odorheiu Secuiesc (Székelyudvarhely).

Folklorism, “Folk Traditions in a New Context”¹⁰

The above described phenomena related to the use of tradition were termed as *folklorism*¹¹ within the scholarly literature. The concept was used for the first time by sociologist Peter Heinz. In his encyclopaedia article written in 1958, he designated as “folklorism” the various nativistic movements and their unrealistic and romantic character, also citing as its main example the reintroduction of forgotten, “uncomfortable costumes” of the past. According to Hans Moser, a researcher of popular customs, folklorism is a form of appearance of certain elements of folk culture, which are forced into contexts where they do not originally belong. An example of this is the use of native costumes on the stage (see Bausinger 1983: 435). According to Vilmos Voigt the concept also encompasses the period of the early discovery of folk culture. He identifies the earliest forms of folklorism with the French Revolution, German Romanticism, and the Russian Narodnik movement, and differentiates between older and newer tendencies, introducing the concept of *neofolklorism* (Voigt 1970, 1979, 1987b). In addition to this, Gusev distinguishes two socio-cultural types of folklorism: *everyday folklorism* and *ideological folklorism* (Gusev 1983: 441). As for Bausinger he summarises the characteristics of folklorism in the following way: 1. The phenomena of folklorism are created artificially. They do not stem from tradition, but are its outgrowths. 2. Their incentive is external, and they are also directed externally in the form of spectacles and presentations that take into account the expectations of the viewer. 3. These phenomena are closely associated with the agencies of the cultural industry, including show business and tourism. 4. Folklorism can be viewed as a form of applied ethnography, in the case of which we are dealing with the feedback of the results of ethnographic research (Bausinger 1983: 435).

¹⁰ The title is an adaptation. For the original, see Bíró–Gagyi–Péntek eds. 1987.

¹¹ For the concept of folklorism see Voigt 1970, 1979, 1987a; Bausinger 1983; Gusev 1983; Karnouh 1983. Editor’s note: see also Vilmos Keszeg’s introduction in the present volume.

In 1987, in Transylvania, the Hungarian-language publishing house *Kriterion* issued a volume of studies (Bíró–Gagyi–Péntek eds. 1987) dealing with the question whether folk culture, as it enters new/changed contexts, “can still be regarded as a creation that transmits traditional meanings, or as one that now produces only dubious (?) values”. “How do the elements that are disseminated from the decomposing paradigm of traditional culture find their place within new syntagma?” – this was the question asked by the editors (Péntek 1987: 5). In his study that can be regarded as the theoretical introduction of the volume, Zoltán Bíró argues that we are dealing with folklorism when “an element or group of elements of folk culture enters a context that is alien and different from its original one [...], changes its meaning in this alien context and becomes different from what it represented within the system of folk culture” (Bíró 1987: 31–32). Then, the author distinguishes between four basic types of folklorism: scientific, representational, everyday, and artistic folklorism (Bíró 1987: 33–44).

According to him, scientific folklorism is the situation in which folk culture survives in the net of scholarly interpretations. “Thus, when we are speaking about saving and safekeeping, we are in fact dealing with a process of folklorism and a meaning shift that is associated with it. [...] The scientific approach always means that we are putting the elements of folk culture into an alien context.” (Bíró 1987: 35) At the same time, the material that is discovered and published by the researcher can come to a new life of its own and put to many different uses, some of which lie far from the original intentions of the scientific research.¹²

Bíró includes in the category of representational folklorism the book series on folk art placed on the bookshelf, the hanging of folk carpets and jugs on living room walls, the presentation of popular culture on the stage, the exhibitions of folk art, and the “houses of regional traditions”. These gestures and objects all express the idea that “folk culture belongs to us” (Bíró 1987: 36). Representational folklore has not only its craftsmen, but also its ideologues (scholarly specialists) who select the elements of folk culture that they place before us and teach us how to view them. This entire process can best be described as consumption (Bíró 1987: 38).

In the case of everyday folklorism, folk culture enters into an alien context by starting to function not as a system but as an instrument that, although serves the attempts of the individual to explain himself or herself, also creates an opposition: the individual is conscious of the fact that there are others besides him or her who do not believe in this culture, or even look down upon him or her because of it (Bíró 1987: 39–43).

As for artistic folklorism, it is, in fact, the classic form of folklorism, in the case of which we are dealing with the “entering of folk art and poetry into ‘high’ culture” (Bíró 1987: 43). The primary scene for this kind of use of folk traditions is the studio of the artist and the theatrical stage, and the context of its performance is the exhibition, the local, regional, or national festival, and the creative contest.

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



The Revitalisation of Folk Traditions. Invented Tradition

International scholarly literature uses the term “invented tradition”, as introduced by Eric Hobsbawm for the designation of the process of tradition-creation that revitalises or even invents “traditional” folk costumes (e.g. the Scottish kilt)¹³. In Hungarian scholarly literature, “tradition-creation” (*hagyományteremtés*) is also often used (see Hofer–Niedermüller 1987, Mohay 1997). According to its definition, the “invented tradition” is an answer to novel situations, which takes the form of a reference to past forms and situations (Hobsbawm 1983: 2), or a process of formalisation and ritualisation characterised by reference to the past (Hobsbawm 1983: 4). The author distinguishes between three types of invented traditions: the first category reinforces or symbolises social community; the second reinforces or legitimises institutions, status, and power relations; the third is primarily aimed at socialisation into a system of beliefs and values, or into a behavioural model (Hobsbawm 1983: 9).

In another study, Hobsbawm deals with the “mass production of traditions”. His starting point is the premise according to which, although the invention of traditions can be viewed as a universal phenomenon, from the 1870s we can see an accelerated emergence of novel traditions, both in official and unofficial settings, a process that lasted for half a century. The officially invented novel traditions were introduced by the state and used for its purposes as political traditions. The unofficially invented traditions can be viewed as social institutions created by formally organised groups without any political agenda, which nonetheless needed novel instruments to assure and express their unity and to regulate their internal system of relationships (Hobsbawm 1987: 127). Hobsbawm calls our attention in his analysis of the tradition-creation process of the French Third Republic to three main innovations: 1. it transformed education into a secular correspondent of the Church, and made it into an instrument for the propagation of republican principles; 2. it invented public ceremonies; 3. started the mass-production of memorial monuments (Hobsbawm 1987: 137–139). Although the author himself only mentions it later, in another context, we can also include here the creation of ritual spaces (Hobsbawm 1987: 179).

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

13 For its analysis see Trevor–Roper 1983: 15–41.

The primary context of invented tradition consists in the (national) celebration and the memorial ritual (see Connerton 1997: 7–75, Fejős 1996: 125–142).¹⁴

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

The Rehabilitation of Folk Tradition. Heritage

As Vilmos Keszeg writes in his introductory study to the conference volume of the abovementioned symposium, a new term is introduced in Europe in the 1960s, i.e. “heritage”, which is soon extended from architectural and natural to cultural goods and even introduces a new field of studies (Heritage Studies). But is it not merely the case – asks the author – that this term of “cultural heritage” only expresses a specifically western European cultural attitude that enacts the redistribution of cultural goods and their showcasing for strangers through heritagisation (Keszeg 2014: 12–13)?¹⁶ In another passage, he explains: “the concept of cultural heritage appeared in Europe in the 1970s. It was then that people became aware of the fact that they should attend to, secure, and musealise those elements of culture that are for some reason no longer preferred by the users. This is a turning point in the history of European mentality, because there is a difference between the concept of tradition and that of heritage. Tradition refers to the values used and voluntarily transmitted through the generations, while heritage is a legal concept emphasising that posterity has a right to access everything created and accumulated by the predecessors, but removed from everyday use. The preservation of heritage and the access to it have to be guaranteed by the law.” (Keszeg 2015) On her turn, Máiréad Nic Craith argues that the concept of heritage has enough plasticity for us to interpret it in several different ways, a fact that is also reflected by the variety of its translations into

14 See also Albert Zsolt Jakab’s study in the present volume (editor’s note).

15 An example of this is the Romanian dance performed with sticks, called the *Căluș*, that was included on the list of the UNESCO in 2005. For its analysis, see Știucă 2014: 42–52.

16 See also Vilmos Keszeg’s introduction in the present volume (editor’s note).



different European languages. Thus, it is difficult to imagine that we could speak of a common European heritage and a common conception of it (Craith 2012: 11–28). Regarding the usability of the Western concept of heritage, Gábor Sonkoly comes to the conclusion that “the concept of cultural heritage differs from one level of interpretation to another. It remains a question how these different interpretations can be linked together.” (Sonkoly 2000: 62) Attila Paládi-Kovács calls attention to the fact that a conceptual duality manifests itself in France. The French use the term *patrimoine ethnologique* for designating ethnographic heritage, or patrimony, and “they reserved the word heritage to refer to elite culture and to the protection of monuments” (Paládi-Kovács 2004: 7).

Today it almost seems like a commonplace to talk about the “heritage boom”. This does not only allude to the fact that different heritage forms and discourses have enjoyed an impenetrable proliferation, but also to the existence of a process in which heritage increasingly substitutes the concept of culture (Tschofen 2012: 29).¹⁷ Many authors even define heritage as a form of meta-culture (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 2004: 52–65, Tauschek 2011: 49–64) characteristic of the world of globalisation. The contributors of a collective volume even speak of *regimes of heritage*, thereby also alluding to its regulatory character expressed in everyday life (see Bendix–Eggert–Peselmann 2012).

In the interpretation of Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, heritage is: 1. the culture creating mode of the present, nourished by the past; 2. an industrial branch that produces surplus-value; 3. it transforms the local product into an export article; 4. it sheds light on the problematic character of the relationship between its own object and its instruments; and 5. the key for the understanding of heritage lies in its virtual nature (simulacrum character), the presence or, on the contrary, the complete lack of any actual relevance (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1995: 369).

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

17 See also Árpád Töhötöm Szabó’s study in the present volume (editor’s note).

of cultural heritage (heritagisation), its representation (or visualisation), scientific study, and everyday use (Falser–Juneja 2013, Ioannides–Quak 2014).

A specific use of traditions is increasingly often referred to with the concept of *heritage* (or heritage creation) in Eastern Europe, but primarily by historians and not ethnographers.¹⁸ The appearance of the heritage paradigm in East-Central-Europe can be related to the accession to the European Union. In any event, the concept has significantly gained in importance in the 1970s both within scientific and political discourses.¹⁹ This is also related to the fact that “as grand science started to become increasingly personal and communal in its character [...], a change of scale has also taken place with the spread of analytical categories situated on lower levels than the global or the national” (Sonkoly 2009: 199). The “small community” has become not only a legitimate research category, but these communities have also begun to work out their heritage “in their own right”, complementing regulation from above with local participation (Sonkoly 2000, 2009).

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

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

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

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

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



strongly present and play a decisive role. The characteristic context for the use (and consumption) of heritage is primarily tourism.

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

The Rewriting of Folk Tradition

Vilmos Keszeg approaches the use of folk tradition and the habits of use associated with it from another direction. Relying mainly on the results of the French historians of literacy and the anthropology of narration, the author searches for an answer to the question whether oral tradition can be recorded and transferred from orality to scripturality. What are the consequences of the recording of traditions in writing? And what happens to tradition when it is transferred into a foreign medium and processed with the instruments of a style that is alien to it (Keszeg 2004: 436–467, 2005: 315–339)? In his study, the author calls attention to the fact that tradition constructs itself upon 1. a collective life-world, 2. the local practices of discourse, 3. a genealogical structure (tradition is assumed by the descendants) and a local structure (the community speaks about the same thing), and 4. it has a biographical function, as it regulates biographical pathways. These are all certainties that authenticate and legitimise tradition, whose function, in its primary social context, is to handle conflicts, strengthen identity consciousness, and to continually produce and teach attitudes and habits. Tradition is simultaneously a part and a constructor of the lifeworld (see Keszeg 2004: 437). Recorded tradition is encountered in three possible statuses. These are: 1. representation is the only form in which tradition is given, 2. representation functions as a historical form of tradition, and 3. representation does not remind us of tradition anymore, it works against tradition, and its reception and assessment happens according to the rules pertaining to literary texts (Keszeg 2005: 316). If this tradition is removed from its original context, another kind of linguistic behaviour and attitude becomes characteristic. On the one hand, in this context, tradition loses its relation to the lifeworld, it does not organise the world anymore, but only speaks about it, or, in other cases, that which was reality in the original

context, becomes fiction during the process of rewriting (Keszeg 2004: 437).²⁰ On the other hand, the author comes to the conclusion that the rewriting of tradition produces prejudices on all levels of society, both within the local community and in the external world; notwithstanding the fact that the causes for this differ from one social group to another (see Keszeg 2005: 336).

Folk Traditions on the Internet?

Many people feel that the above two concepts are the products of two completely separate worlds, functioning according to rules that are so different that their juxtaposition is unthinkable, or that these concepts are mutually exclusive. Without going into the details of this topic, I would like to draw attention to the fact that, in my opinion, the interesting point is not that local popular traditions are spreading globally through the Internet, but rather that the popular tradition available through the Internet becomes a standardised content and a part of local interpretations simultaneously. Furthermore, the previously narrated and/or written popular tradition becomes a represented popular tradition (see Stanley 2003). It is also not difficult to figure out that, as a result of technological development, a generation has grown up acquiring information about popular traditions primarily not from their parents and grandparents, and neither from (text)books, but from the Internet.

In other words, different media are becoming the instrument of the organisation of everyday life, self-expression, and remembrance (as well as commemoration) not only for each social group and cultural level (see Keszeg 1999: 141), but also for each historical period. This thesis is clearly illustrated by the changes in this area from the second part of the 20th century's last decade, due to the development of technology. Namely, the websites of administrative units, local, regional, and traditionalist associations, thematic blogs and similar websites are given a role in keeping record of local history and popular traditions, communicating knowledge in this field and in archiving (not to mention the different local, regional, and national institutions dedicated to preserving and/or researching popular traditions).

In his monograph on the nature of the World Wide Web, László Ropolyi analyses the Internet as technology according to its material, as communication according to its dynamic, as culture according to its form, and as an organism according to its objectives (Ropolyi 2003). Deleuze uses the term "*assemblage*" for those particular multiplicities and conglomerates formed on the basis of joining different parts, which are always centreless, open in all directions, and whose every element relates to all the others. These are not systems based on hierarchy and regulatory forms of memory lacking central control. They lack any central automatism and are only determined by the flow of different states. Additionally, they also lack a beginning

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



and an end, and their countless links make it possible for the multiplicity to be governed not by a predetermined centre but to move in new directions always, to change and increase their dimensions (Deleuze–Guattari 2002).

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

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

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

Thus, this heritage as well as this kind of heritage formation significantly differs from the ones we have been accustomed to. As Zoltán Szűts points out in his book, it is not too difficult to recognise that, "with the spread of technology, artefacts and

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

objects do not appear anymore in contexts that barely change for centuries, as the role of museums and maps is taken over by augmented reality, and the collection is created by the community in a space in which the canons of social media are in effect. In this context, the role of the curator is fulfilled by the maker of the layer that is placed over reality” (Szűts 2013: 202). And this *maker* is neither a scholar (ethnographer, anthropologist, etc.), nor a state official or even a public educator or an enthusiastic amateur, but the user himself (herself).

At the same time, Internet forums and blogs make it possible for anyone to publicly speak about tradition, and, due to the democratic character of these contexts, specialists and laypeople can enjoy the same level of media representation (Szűts 2013: 111–112).

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

What kind of tradition appears on the World Wide Web and in what form? The contents associated with traditional culture appearing on the Internet and becoming largely available originate from four main directions. These are: scientific research, the public sphere, the entrepreneurial sphere, and the Internet users. Besides the homepages of ethnographic museums and other institutions dedicated to the research and conservation of folk traditions, such as local governments, regional associations, and touristic websites, various blogs, forums, news portals, Internet encyclopaedias (Wikipedia), and content sharing websites (YouTube), as well as social media websites and homepages dedicated to presenting the products of folk artists publish contents of this kind.

The Internet pages of museums, research centres, and scientific societies are aimed at presenting scientific discourse and their research results within a new medium, as well as at increasing the popularity of the institution. Besides these, digital databases (e.g. Magyar Értéktár – Hungarikumok gyűjteménye [Repository of Hungarian Values – Collection of Hungarikums] and the Adatbank. Erdélyi Magyar Elektronikus Könyvtár [Databank. Transylvanian Hungarian Electronic Library] or the Balladatár [Collection of Ballads] in Transylvania) and digital libraries also contribute to the fast and theoretically unlimited propagation of scientific results. However, in these cases, the controlling mechanisms elaborated in the previous epoch are still in effect, and the only innovation is in the instrument of the presentation, i.e. the new medium. At the same time, the vast majority of the users also consists of people interested in the information published on these websites due to their profession, or from a scholarly perspective.

The case is different, however, with the other websites. The discourse about folk traditions fulfils a completely different function on the websites of the various



settlements, administrative units, and subregions.²² They answer the question of “*who are we?*” not only by enumerating the local characteristics but also employ a vast array of photographs, short films, and maps, which is ultimately a method of self-definition and contributes to the creation of identity. Besides their mentioning of the first written records, folk traditions are presented in a prominent manner due to the importance of demonstrating the people’s “autochthony” and of the symbolic appropriation of the past (the more distant, the better).

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

The same technique and perspective on tradition can be observed in the case of the websites that popularise tourist destinations. In this case, folk traditions appear as “sights” and exotic elements, which strongly limits the thematic choice (or content) and the language use. These homepages limit themselves to the presentation of traditional food, built heritage, dramatic representations of folk customs in the public space, folk festivals, local ethnographic collections (museums), and some local legends, which have become known through the work of Balázs Orbán, Elek Benedek, and other authors. The main factor that determines the development of the concept of tradition consists here in economic interest. In this context, the importance is not placed upon precise, detailed and professional description, but primarily on a tone of voice and a view that is reminiscent of the great 19th century authors (e.g. Balázs Orbán), or relies on the works of the local specialists dedicated to the conservation of traditions, characterised by the above-mentioned claims of autochthony. Although, in most cases, the curator of the traditions that are popularised online (the publisher of the content and the administrator of the homepage) is not someone equipped with the necessary professional knowledge (an ethnographic researcher), the publishing of the content is controlled from above. In the case of the rural settlements, townships, and subregions, the deciding factor is the local elite. In the case of touristic homepages the marketing specialist of the business, with a view to specific goals and user types, decides about the traditions that should be uploaded to the Internet.

However, this type of regulation is lacking in the case of blogs, Internet forums, and content sharing websites. Since in these cases “the provider only furnishes

22 Subregions or microregions (Hungarian: *kistérség*) existed until 2013 in Hungary as administrative units. Their existence influenced to some extent the formation of Hungarian subregions in Transylvania (editor’s note).

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

Zoltán Szűts classifies Internet users into three categories on the basis of their behaviour. These are: 1. *wiki citizens*, whose objective is the creation of works; 2. *vandals*, who aim at defacing the contents uploaded by others and at provoking the users; 3. *hackers and spammers*, who try to popularise various products (see Szűts 2013: 103). Another categorisation is that of György Csepeli and Gergő Prazsák, who speak about *eternalists* (people who authenticate information), *network entrepreneurs* (who function as hubs for receiving and sending information), and *curators* (who mediate between the first two groups) (Csepeli–Prazsák 2010: 38). On the basis of the employment of the Internet for social relation purposes, we can speak of *contactocrats*, *correspondents*, *chatters*, and *contact proletarians* (Csepeli–Prazsák 2010: 54). Finally, according to their activity on the Internet, the authors distinguish *recluses*, *information seekers*, *learners*, *receptors*, and *extensive users* (Csepeli–Prazsák 2010: 79–81). The authors and users associated with the folk traditions accessible through the Internet also stem from these categories.

Hungarikum, National Value, and National Value Collection

A certain duality can be observed in the case of Eastern European heritage production and use: while on the level of scientific and political discourse, the importance of local initiatives is increasingly discussed, practice indicates that only the heritagisation procedures supervised and coordinated on the national level are really viable, and the number of cases in which the (touristic) rehabilitation and marketing of certain smaller settlements’ or regions’ heritage takes place as a result of specifically local initiatives is rather limited. Furthermore, the laws associated with the protection and use of heritage are mostly centrally adopted normative provisions, which apply at the national level and have the force of law.

We can experience something similar in the case of the hungarikum movement developed in Hungary and of the value preservation/collection movement strongly connected with it. There are three aspects to this: (1) the exploration and collection of national values into value repositories was started following a top-down, state-level



initiative; (2) the method and the steps of the exploration of values, the data sheet and the necessary annexes used for proposing certain values for inclusion in the collection as well as the types of value (collections) (hungarikum, outstanding national value, national, regional, local, or branch value) were regulated at the highest level of national legislation; (3) classification of values is supervised and coordinated by a central organ, the Hungarikum Committee, operating under the Ministry of Agriculture. In other words, although this law in question emphasises the principle of the bottom-up approach, the collection of the hungarikums and the repository of national values created as the final result of the work of value exploration develop according to central decisions. The principle of the bottom-up approach applies with greater force primarily in the case of the exploration and representation within the value repository of county-level, regional, and local values. This is manifested not only through the fact that the elements included in the value repositories are the results of the local decisions, but also through the variety and diversity of the contents and the representation of these repositories, among which one can find detailed descriptions complete with photographs and various accompanying documents as well as mere listings of values.²³

The statistical figures indicate that Hungarian society has come to accept and interiorise this new conceptual system and its underlying ideology quite quickly, since value collection committees²⁴ were established in all 19 counties of Hungary in just a few years, there are county-level value repository homepages online – functioning as part of the municipalities’ official websites or separately –, and local value repositories can also be found in almost 550 settlements. More recently, value repositories and value repository committees of Hungarian communities from abroad were established in rapid succession.²⁵ *Values* are increasingly often mentioned in political discourse and the media, too.

From this perspective, we can consider the law on hungarikums and the Hungarian movement for the exploration of values as a procedure aimed at translating the hyperregulated language of the heritage discourse, riddled with legal and technical terms, into the language of the masses, thus rendering the message of heritage regulation based on European norms and guidelines laid down in different international conventions universally comprehensible. It simplifies the characteristic discourse of the heritage industry and shapes it into an opinion commonly held and understood by the community.²⁶ At the same time, while heritage (including local heritage) is nowadays primarily interpreted as being universal (paying homage to human

23 It is Umberto Eco who calls our attention to the fact that we turn to the use of lists when we are unable to identify things otherwise, according to their essence (Eco 2011: 142); thus, we can view the list as a specific form of knowledge (or rather non-knowledge) (Eco 2011: 155), which is “shone through by the desire of a possible order and shaping” (Eco 2011: 144).

24 See: <http://www.hungaricum.hu/megyebizottsagok>

25 See: <http://www.hungaricum.hu/kulhonibizottsag>

26 This is also one of the basic messages of the law (*Minden közösségnek vannak értékei* – “Every community has its values”), since who could possibly disagree with the statement that there are numerous values in his or her immediate surroundings as well.

creativity and culture-creating power), the *hungarikum* or the outstanding national value primarily appears as national²⁷ – as it is also suggested by its name.²⁸

The *Hungarikum Act* (and the movement for the exploration and collection of values developed as its result) goes back to the heritage concept developed in the middle of the 20th century, functioning in a national framework at that time, raising its national rhetoric to a new level.

While heritage is a legal concept (see above), value represents a category of social theory, “expressing what is considered to be desirable and important, good or bad within that specific society. Values and their order can be different from one society to another and from one historical period to another” (Andorka 2003: 490). Elemér Hankiss distinguishes between objective and subjective values. In this classification, objective values are those which are indispensable for the specific society in order to function, and subjective values are the ones considered by the society necessary for its functioning and development (Hankiss 1977: 342–343). Thus, value is a criterion which moves the world, organises and determines our everyday decisions, structures our past, present, and future, and provides meaning to it. At the same time, value is considered here simultaneously an aesthetic quality and a property which, according to the *Thesaurus*, “expresses the importance of something for society and the individual” (Juhász et al. 1992: 333). Consequently, *national values* – and *hungarikums* – represent the sum total of those values which are important to Hungarians and were inherited from the past, but influence both our present decisions and our ideas about the future.

The title of the collective volume presenting the history of the *hungarikum* movement’s establishment, the legislative act, and the results achieved thus far (Horváth ed. 2014), also used as a motto for the entire movement (*Minden közösségnek vannak értékei* – “Every community has its values”), simultaneously alludes to two aspects in my reading: to the fact that there is no community without value, thus the protection of values is the duty of every community, and also to the idea that the traditions left to us from the previous historical epoch(s) and by previous generations do not only represent a heritage, but hold value on the symbolic and economic level, too. Thus, the movement pursues a two-fold objective: it draws the attention of the

27 According to the definition included in the law: “b) *hungarikum*: a blanket term indicating a value worthy of distinction and highlighting within a unified system of qualification, classification, and registry and which represents the high performance of the Hungarian people thanks to its typically Hungarian attribute, uniqueness, specialty and quality”, respectively: “*outstanding national values*: a national value with key significance from a national perspective, characteristic for Hungarians and commonly known, which substantially enhances our reputation and adds to our recognition in the European Union and throughout the world, furthermore contributing to the formation and strengthening of the sense of national belonging and Hungarian awareness of new generations.” Act XXX of 2012, paragraph (1), sections (b) and (d).

28 Of course, we should neither ignore the fact that Edouard Pommier, who first created the term “heritage” in the autumn of 1790 in France, used it as part of the expression “national heritage” and as a blanket term for the assets seized from the clergy (Sonkoly–Erdősi 2004: 9), while in the middle of the 20th century it filled the gap created within the process of nation building and set this process on a new course (Sonkoly–Erdősi 2004: 11).



communities to local traditions/values, while at the same time it restores the task of preserving and caring for tradition to the level of local communities. The legal act can be interpreted as an answer to the acculturation processes within Hungarian society, as an attempt at the recontextualisation and revitalisation of tradition.

The systematisation of the revealed values in a database available online (*Magyar Értéktár – Hungarikumok gyűjteménye*/Hungarian Repository of Values – Collection of Hungarikums) is central to the hungarikum movement, aimed simultaneously at storage, representation, and transmission.²⁹ The repository of values is – in the words of Jacques Derrida – a guarantee of repeatability, recordability, and of the remembrance of origins, while at the same time the principles of collecting, classifying, and regulating are also associated with it as the surveillance topos of legislation. Consequently, the technique of archiving must be seen as a power and institutional instrument (Derrida 2008).

Summary

We summarised above several characteristic modes of being and specific contexts of the use of tradition, where local tradition is transformed into national or even universal tradition (world heritage), and thus it can be used not only locally, but also in an alien environment.

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

The written recording of traditions and their depositing into archives and publications represents a modality of their preservation and of the externalisation and transmission of heritage (patrimony) (Keszeg 2011: 60). This places the Internet,

29 In the words of Zsolt Miklósvölgyi: “Present-day media archives do not so much store as transmit information. In the age of digital culture, we have to conceive the archive entropically: as part of an opaque, open-network, and process-centered system, in which we have to allow for the maximum level of disorder. Thus, liberating the bureaucratic archaism of the former archive concept, we can create the possibility for the free proliferation of various open-network architectures. Consequently, it becomes questionable whether we should term the storing medium as the ‘archive’, or rather the data contained in it.” (Miklósvölgyi 2008.)

which presents the values of local culture, into another context and shows it to be a driving force for the production of heritage. Thus, the World Wide Web becomes an active factor in the production and consumption process of heritage (see Falser–Juneja 2013, Ioannides–Quak 2014)³⁰, an instrument for the awareness of our living together with the past, but also one that is not characterised by the conservatism inherent in the attitudes based on the cultivation of folk tradition (see Nyíri 1994a: 77).

The heritagisation of folk traditions implies the necessity of the legal regulation of conservation and use. However, these rules prove themselves too weak when applied to the representations appearing within the new media. In this medium, too many people motivated by many different intentions undertake to present folk traditions, and the use of this information can also be all too varied. “The medium [...] often organises itself according to radically different values, presenting the totality of human culture in infinitely many personal, often mutually contradictory, variations.” (see Szűts 2013: 142). Due to this reason, the poor regulation of the content that appears on the Internet (in our case, folk tradition) does not only contain possibilities but also many paths that lead astray, which is the cause of the *weightlessness* of the digitally recorded tradition (see Szűts 2013: 143).³¹ The representation of tradition takes place in very different ways within the value repositories created as a result of the hungarikum movement, but due to the data sheet models stipulated by law and necessary for proposing certain values to be included in local, county-level or national value repositories, these are presented/represented according to uniform criteria.

In the case of the presentation of the folk traditions of specific settlements or regions it is difficult to decide if it is a still living tradition or one that exists only in memory, or even only within the archives and book volumes. In many cases, it is even questionable whether we are reading about a local tradition of the specific settlement or region, or about a mere adaptation, an “imported article”, or ultimately an invented tradition, described by the author just because “it was handy”, due to his or her lack of awareness about other traditions of the region or because of his or her lack of other source materials. Besides this, we can often encounter cases in which the representations of tradition found on the Internet are not related to any place, epoch, or social group. In contrast, the traditions found in local and county-level value repositories created because of the hungarikum movement are always represented as the traditions of a geographically well-defined local community – in fact, we could even say that these value repositories themselves are producing locality.

The media played an important role in the formation and popularisation of the *representative tradition* also in the past. New media only augmented this role and attracted new generations and social groups to its production and consumption. The hungarikums found in the national value repositories can be viewed as

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

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



being markedly representative, since the law also stipulates that they are meant to “enhance our reputation” and serve as cultural “ambassadors” of Hungarians. The values from the lower levels of the value pyramid can be interpreted in this manner, too.

However, we must be aware of the fact that, in the case of the traditions, heritages, and values represented on the Internet, there can be quite significant differences between the intentions of their creator and the practice of their user. This means that digitalised folk tradition (folk tradition appearing in digital media) is a part of the cultural, and not of the collective memory; it is not an organic tradition, and thus possesses only a commemorative function, lacking the normative one. Its sole role is to aid the formation and preservation of local identity, or to function as a pastime, but does not regulate everyday life anymore. Through digitalisation, folk traditions are not only removed from their primary context, but can also get far removed from their primary users.

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

At the same time, due to the nature of the Internet, subjective representations and interpretations become part of the cultural memory. The digitalisation of traditions can be viewed as a new form of the externalisation of memory (cf. Assmann 1999), and the individual homepages as virtual places of memory (Nora 2010) and virtual sites of heritage formation. If in the 1960s it was a problem for the local teacher to find out how the native costume of Voivodeni (Vajdaszentivány) looked like, answering this question has now become very simple. The native costume of Voivodeni (Vajdaszentivány) is the one in which the local folk dance ensemble dresses, the one that can also be seen on many pictures on the Internet, and the one that many other folk-dance ensembles from Mureş (Maros) County, who have learned the folk dances of Voivodeni (Vajdaszentivány), have also commissioned for themselves on the basis of these visual representations found on the Internet. Thus, digital memory substitutes collective memory in the transmission of traditions. The one who keeps alive and transmits tradition is no more the individual, respectively the community, but a network, the machine (cf. Szűts 2013: 50).

The relocation of folk tradition into this new medium does not only imply the formation of new meanings but also a change in the routines of use. The keywords of this new type of use are: *searching*, *saving*, *saving as* (i.e. in a different file format), *downloading*, *forwarding*, *liking*, *sharing*, and sometimes *deleting*. Thus, browsing on

the Internet can be interpreted, on the one hand, as a journey³² or a detective investigation (see Szűts 2013: 69), while, on the other hand, as a commemorative ritual. The Internet page (homepage) as public space creates an alternative publicity, memorial place, and formation of memory. However, it is also true that in a digital context the joy of discovery is realised without the absorption involved in reading (Szűts 2013: 69). Because of the integration of the computer into everyday life situations, the user becomes increasingly impatient and consumes the contents at an increasingly faster pace (Szűts 2013: 75, 143).

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

The representation of folk traditions on the World Wide Web is a form of the conservation and heritagisation of tradition. Consequently, the digitalisation of folk traditions and their representation on the Internet do not only have important *informative* (communicative) and *depositive* (conservation) functions, but a very significant *performative* function, too. Digitalisation and sharing represent an act of heritagisation.

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

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



Finally, two more questions should be asked. On the one hand, who is worthy of digitalising folk traditions and externalising them into the online medium? On the other hand, who vouches for the authenticity of the traditions? In the case of books and archives, the ethnographic researcher is the one who, due to his or her status, knowledge, and presence (one should think here of participatory observation), guarantees that everything that can be read in the volume or on the card of the archive is an authentic representation of peasant life. However, the authenticity of the folk traditions represented on the Internet is rarely guaranteed in a similar way by experts. Since the identity of the authors is mostly questionable, the “reader,” i.e. the user, is left unsure about the knowledge value of the contribution. Of course, “intruders” also appeared in the case of the traditions that are “enclosed in books” (see Vajda 2007: 9–32). They offered naive or even pseudo-scientific explanations regarding folk traditions, but the number of these “intruders” was relatively low, and their works were published by publishing houses and with a typographical appearance that immediately showed that these are not scholarly works. By contrast, in the democratic medium of the Internet there are no, or very few, clues for the reader for distinguishing relevant and irrelevant information, not to speak of the increase of irrelevant information.

The value repository types developed as a result of the hungarikum movement work simultaneously in two directions. The national and ethnic value collections transform the local tradition into a national one and move the traditions away from the communities, which have produced and are using them, while in the case of the local and county-level value repositories we witness an opposing trend, where an attempt is made at localising the tradition and associating it with a certain community. At the same time, the initiators of the movement are also trying to reduce the strength of the freedom and of the uncontrollability supplied by the Internet through legislative means as well as through the supervising committees working on different levels.

It would be difficult to say at this point what the effect of these processes will have on local traditions, but it is already obvious that, in this case, too, the supervision of the traditions will fall into the hands of local specialists (Keszeg ed. 2006) possessing knowledge of Internet use, computer skills, and proficient in the interpretation of laws.

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