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Migration and Digital Literacy: The Role of Digital Devices in Guest Workers' Communication with Home[1]

Approaches

In the course of the "ongoing digital media invasion" (see Szijártó 2015: 43), considerable attention has been paid to issues relating to the mastery, implementation, and home use of digital media, that is, to questions of what makes a given technology useful to a particular user and what usage habits, user attitudes, and life strategies are seen emerging as a result. In the words of Gábor Szécsi, "not only are new communications technologies (computers, mobile telephones, etc.) the sources for new forms of community, they also create previously unknown systems and relationship syntheses among various types of communities" (Szécsi 2013: 7), in doing so, giving birth to "mediatised communities... that allow the Internet or mobile phone user to plug into the global flow of information, while also linking more firmly and deliberately than ever to the local social groups he/she holds important" (Szécsi 2013: 7). Among the first to launch an ethnographically prompted/founded experiment in media research was Roger Silverstone, who examined how new media are inserted into residential spaces – how they are incorporated into daily routines to become tools for social action (see Szijártó 2015: 43).[2] In my own project, which proceeds down the same path, I study how the use of digital tools and technologies has spread in a Transylvanian rural community and, in partial relation to this, how the technological environment serving the purposes of contact and communication has changed as a result of transborder migration, and additionally, what impact this has had in three areas: relations between family members (young people living far from home and the older generation they have left behind), the routines and device usage habits used in communication, and modes of relating to the devices in question. The project accords particular attention to the use of digital devices (mobile

1 The study is a condensed version of a paper written for the Hungarian Academy of Sciences (MTA) Domus Szülőföldi Scholarship Program (ID: 10027008) entitled *Digital Media and Social Diversity: Digital Proficiency in Various Social Groups*.

2 For an introduction to the method, see, among others, Hine 2000, 2015; Pink et alii eds. 2016; Hjort et alii eds. 2017.

and touch-screen telephones, tablets, computers, etc.) by the non-migrating generation of individuals aged 55 and above, asking the question: "What role do these play in older people's lives?"

In my choice of starting points for the project, I was motivated by the realisation, as a member of the community under scrutiny, that the number of resident families where either one, or both active generation members worked in Western European countries, and where the individuals in question were maintaining contact with family members at home (children, spouses, and grandparents) via a range of new-media devices and programmes had, as a consequence of transborder labour migration (migration for guest work),[3] grown very rapidly. In other words, like it or not, the generation of people aged 55 and above had been forced to make smart devices a part of their everyday lives. In this context, the presence/spread of digital devices and technologies in the environment under scrutiny both helped/supported, and transformed the structure of communication between emigrants and their families at home in terms of both quality and quantity.

The Method

From a methodological standpoint, the project relied primarily on a peculiar version of participant observation,[4] one involving ethnographic observation conducted in the researcher's "own culture" (Fél 1991), or even own local community. Observing subjects in the society to which one belongs, in familiar surroundings (cf. Gagyi ed. 1999), affords numerous advantages, among them the continuous and active community presence; the access to local events and the resulting interpretations; the densely woven social relationships; the insider knowledge of institutions and their operations; and the interpretive capital[5] to be gained from one's own relationships with friends, relatives, neighbours, and peers. The above notwithstanding, I use

3 This tendency is typical not only of migration from this particular community. According to a UN report, in 2016, there were approximately 3.5 million Romanian citizens living outside the country's national borders. During the 1990s, the most popular destination country for Romanian migrants was Germany, which enjoyed a 68% share of related traffic (some 66 thousand people). This trend lasted until 1999, when in terms of both absolute numbers, and percent traffic (2400 people or 19%), first place was assumed by Hungary. In 2004, Germany returned to the top of the list, but was replaced in 2005 by Italy, which was targeted by 25% of Romanian emigrants that year. The year 2007 saw the resurgance of Germany, which, though surpassed temporarily in 2009 by Canada (20%), returned to top of the list in 2010 with a total of 18% of emigrants. In that same year, the United States rose significantly in popularity, as well (to a 14% share). After 2011, total foreign worker numbers, previously in decline, began to rise again, exceeding the previous year's figure by 131%, with Spain taking over as most favoured destination (18,3%). This trend lasted until 2016, when Spain topped the list at 23,5% of emigrant traffic, ahead of Germany and Italy, occupying the next two places.

4 The four levels of participation were first defined by Buford H. Junker, who held that a distinction must be drawn between the 1. full participant; 2. participant observer; 3. observing participant; and 4. simple observer (Junker 1960: 36). Here, it is the second type that is meant.

5 "Interpretive capital (Sz. Kristóf) is defined as the totality of experience and knowledge that permits the interpretation of facts and text." (Keszeg 2011: 27.)

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the term "participant observation" here as a collective term for a variety of observational techniques and solutions, where "participant" refers to a particular research style – to the fact that I conducted observations in a community or immediate environment to which I, myself, belonged. Thus, in planning the project and collecting and analysing data, I availed myself on numerous occasions of the opportunity of *retrospective observation*.[6]

The Setting

Sáromberke (Dumbrăvioara),[7] the village I studied, lies in the broad valley of the central Mureş River, surrounded by hills, at a distance of 14 km from Marosvásárhely (Târgu Mureş) to the south, and 18 km from Szászrégen (Reghin) to the north, along Highway 15. Railroad line 405, which was built in 1886 and connects Déda (Deda) to Székelykocsárd (Lunca Mureşului), also passes through the town. Whether by road or railway, the municipality is easy to reach and, in many ways, may even be regarded as something of a minor traffic hub. The highway intersects the village over a total of two kilometres, with County Road 153B branching off it to the west around the point where the municipal zone known as the "Upper Reach" (Felszeg) begins. County Road 153B connects upper Sáromberke (Dumbrăvioara) with Highway 16, which crosses the highland area known as Mezőség (Transylvanian Plain) to connect Szászrégen (Reghin) with Kolozsvár (Cluj-Napoca).

From the early 20th century until today, the proximity of the larger town has greatly influenced the frequency of periodic migration on the part of the local population, as well as the quality and intensity of relations with the outside world. Today, Sáromberke (Dumbrăvioara) forms part of both the Marosvásárhely (Târgu Mureş) Metropolitan Belt, created in 2006, and the "development microregion" known as the Mureş River Valley LEADER Partnership.[8] From a standpoint of regional administration, it belongs – along with six other villages – to the community of Nagyernye (Ernei); from that of population, it qualifies as a medium-sized village; in terms of physiognomy (form, internal structure, and texture), it describes as a branching linear municipality with agricultural parcels arranged in tightly packed parallel strips along either side of the north-south highway that divides it. In terms of national composition, Sáromberke (Dumbrăvioara) was originally largely Hungarian and, indeed, has preserved a distinctly Hungarian character up to the present day.

6 An observational situation in which the researcher, in time, analyses and interprets his or her own previous memories and experiences (Magyari 2005: 274).
7 Maros (Mureş) County, Romania.
8 In Romanian: *Asociația LEADER Parteneriat Mureșean*.

Table 1. The population of Sáromberke (Dumbrăvioara) by nationality

Year	total	Romanian	Hungarian	German	other, total	Jewish	Roma
1850	618	72	452	0	94	0	94
1880	933	16	752	6	159	0	0
1890	968	11	933	8	16	0	131
1900	1003	17	979	7	0	0	0
1910	1030	43	970	17	0	0	0
1920	1017	28	988	0	1	0	0
1930	1071	65	997	7	2	0	0
1941	1084	29	954	4	97	1	95
1956	1271	23	1248	0	0	0	0
1966	1949	166	1772	11	0	0	0
1977	1816	167	1626	5	18	0	18
1992	1692	159	1459	1	73	0	73
2002	1648	75	1539	0	34	0	33
2011	1712	84	1470	0		0	158

In terms of functional classification, based on the occupational structure of its population, Sáromberke (Dumbrăvioara) falls under the heading of a mixed-function (complex) community; from the 1960s onward, the number of commuting skilled labourers and service industry workers grew, while the number of people engaged in agriculture fell. According to the 1992 census, only 12% of inhabitants that year worked in the agricultural sector, though by that time even craftsmen and industrial workers "farmed and raised stock" (Szabó 1994: 20). During the second half of the 1990s, deindustrialisation spurred a near-simultaneous wave of regression into preindustrial activities, as one by one, the factories in surrounding cities all closed their gates, and many commuting workers necessarily returned to agricultural pursuits.

Where employment statistics are concerned, census data show that in 1992, only 27,54% of the population were active earners, while of the remaining inhabitants, 370 (21,86%) were students, 289 (17,08%) pensioners, 205 (12,11%) homemakers, and 234 (13,84%) dependents; an additional two individuals were on state support and twenty-eight were categorised as "other". Also appearing among statistics was a new social group, that of the unemployed, representing 98 individuals or 17,37% of the village's active population, a figure well above the national average. Of people falling into this category, 52 were looking for a new job, and 46 for their first employment opportunity.

By the time of the 2011 census, however, just under 10 years later, Sáromberke's active population had grown to 663 (37,73%), of which 619 (35,23%) were employed,

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44 without work, and 1094 (62,26%) inactive. Of the unemployed, 33 were seeking new employment, while 11 were hoping to enter their first job. The internal structure of the village's inactive population reflected the following breakdown: 266 of the 1094 were students, 343 pensioners, 129 homemakers, 176 dependents, 8 on state support, 96 on other forms of support (social aid or "community service" employment), and 16 falling under the heading of "other".[9]

Migrant Practices

From a standpoint of population, the other major factor to influence the economic and cultural structure of the village, as well as the changes in lifestyle that occurred during the years under scrutiny, was that of migration. Specifically affecting migrant practices and strategies (short-term or long-term) were changes in demographics, economy, and community mentality. Though a certain degree of migration involving locations both within Romania, and outside national borders had been ongoing since the 18th century,[10] it was only in the 1960s, as a result of the top-down industrialisation of the nearby larger town, that the phenomenon assumed larger proportions; that people began leaving the local environment temporarily for various periods of time,[11] a practice that necessarily altered not only people's general standards, but also their cultural-economic aspirations. The professional literature characterises one manifestation of this, occurring primarily among those who moved to or commuted to and from the city, as a "*cutting off from the umbilical of the world*" (see Gagyi 2009: 141).

During the 1990s, migration again picked up pace: this time primarily in the form of Hungarian guest work, in which members of the Romani community, most of them formerly employed by local farming cooperatives, along with a smaller number of unemployed industrial workers from plants in the nearby city and jobless, prospectless young people graduated in the wake of the 1989 political upheaval, sought employment as foreign guest workers. Those who succeeded tried to invest what they earned in their home community, chiefly through the purchase of automobiles and modernisation of their family homes and farms.

In 2007, Romania joined the European Union, an event that exerted a palpable effect on the country's transborder migration practices – including those favoured by the population of Sáromberke (Dumbrăvioara). Specifically, as a result of the 2007

9 For a detailed interpretation of the village's socio-economic structure, see Vajda 2016.

10 Eighteenth and nineteenth-century census data consistently put the number of absentee residents at between 10 and 15, indicating that a certain percentage of the population were already working elsewhere. During the early 1900s, a "migratory fever" swept the community, leading 15 families to emigrate to the United States. Of these, ten eventually returned to build homes and farm buildings with the money they had earned (cf. Mózes [s. a.] vol. I.: 122).

11 This is a concept used by Zoltán Bíró (Bíró 1994: 56–57), who points out that each such exit is a call to life, producing a deep-seated compulsion to interpretation aimed at the redefinition of one's sense of belonging to one's own world (Bíró 1994: 56–57).

relaxation of border controls and the inauguration of free movement, including for work, within the entire territory of the Union, an increasing number of people accepted (and still accept) work in Western European countries (with particular reference to France, the Netherlands, Germany, and the United Kingdom). At the same time, both the circle of destination countries, and the time spent away from home and family at a single stretch have changed. While previously, Romanian guest workers in Hungary spent periods of various lengths at home several times a year,[12] in recent decades, the number of occasions has fallen to just one or two per year, while the length of each visit has extended. This, in turn, has (had) a direct impact on communications between the communities affected by transborder migration: while previously, guest workers rarely had contact with the people they left behind, the past decade has been characterised by communications of a frequency of as much as once or twice a week. Influencing this outcome was not only the growth in time spent away from family at a single stretch, but also the development and spread of the communications devices that make contact possible. At the same time, it is worth noting that while during the 1990s, it was more typical to take on illegal work, after Romania's accession to the European Union, legal, contractual work became the norm. Additionally, during the 1990s, the majority of guest workers sought employment in the construction industry, as compared to the most recent decade, in which the larger shares of migrant work went to the meat packing industry, large-scale agriculture, parcel delivery services, cleaning firms, and the hospitality sector. Affecting the above-outlined practices are (were) not only the attractive power of wage conditions in urban and foreign work settings, but also, and at least as importantly, the repelling effect of both local infrastructure and economy, and the absence/disappearance of local resources and work opportunities. At the same time, these intermittent absences, which, over time, have grown increasingly regular, tend to occur along routes defined by personal friendships and connections: the acquaintances of those who ventured out earlier, encouraged by the successes – and relying upon the assistance – of the former, attach themselves to the labour pool in a system that most closely resembles the Rogers model of diffusion (see Rogers 1983). However, the type of mobility in question only partly fits the description of true social mobility and did not bring with it any radical change in "cultural and social embeddedness". Because the stepped-up pace of transborder migration (guest work) has caused a rapid increase in the number of families in which one or both members of the actively employed generation work in Western European countries, leaving their children in the care of grandparents or other remaining family members, communications habits within families have changed significantly: family members working abroad keep in touch with those remaining at home (children and the grandparents who raise them) primarily via digital means, that is, using a variety of communications technologies.

12 Part of the reason for this is that international regulations permit a Romanian citizen to remain a total of only 30 days at a time in a foreign country – in this case Hungary – without a visa or work permit.

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The Local Spread of (New) Communications Devices

Sáromberke (Dumbrăvioara) launched its first manual telephone switchboard in the 1930s. Prior to the change of political systems of 1989, this was operated by a total of six employees, who provided switchboard services even at night. During the 1990s, night-time services were suspended; in 2001, the system was automated. During the pre-1989 period, between 140 and 150 households had a landline telephone; following automation, however, this number rose to more than 200 households in the space of just a few years.

The first mobile telephones – primarily of the prepaid card type – began appearing in the village in the late 1990s, though at first in only limited numbers. In the second half of the 2000s, however, following drastic reductions in the cost of both the devices, and per-minute rates, the technology began to spread. It was also at this time that mobile subscriptions became more common.

In 2004, the majority state-owned telephone company, Romtelecom, launched a dial-up Internet service known as *clicknet*, used chiefly by the village's youth, but – due to the high rates involved – to only a very limited extent. In 2005, the telephone company began constructing its broad-band network, connecting its first 15 families as early as 2007. During the years to follow, the number of families subscribing to Internet service grew steadily. In the meantime, another market player appeared on the scene to construct its own broad-band Internet network. The rapid development of this infrastructure and remarkable decrease in Internet subscription prices were what led to the situation today, in which hardly any household lacks cable Internet service. At the same time, the use of mobile Internet service has also become common.

Computers and Smart Devices

Some researchers assume that in the rural setting, "the mastery of computer and digital competencies can be explained by municipalities' weak connections with the outside world" (cf. Láng–Letenyei–Siklós 2003: 12), with computers and smart devices flooding rural communities as a result of the acquisition of this knowledge. In the community I studied, however, the "innovators" were those who had already been forced to use the devices as a result of their occupations or studies. In fact, in community memory, the appearance of the first personal computer is linked to the names of those persons who, in the mid-1990s, earned their diplomas in computer science or attended programming classes. In the purchase of computers, these individuals became models to follow, and the community depended on their specialised knowledge when buying, setting up, and maintaining equipment of this type.

Even these early cases indicate that in the community, families were willing to invest in digital equipment primarily on behalf of the younger (school-aged)

generation, and indeed, throughout the first half of the 2000s, the purchase of computers and other smart devices (smart televisions, tablet computers, etc.) continued primarily to typify families with secondary school or university-aged children. During the pre-Internet period, on the part of parents, the purchase of computers was clearly motivated by a desire to support the studies of the younger generation. Indeed, computers were viewed largely as study aids, though frequently, computers were also used for playing games.

During the mid-2000s, the dissemination of computer equipment was also influenced by a governmental programme – implemented at both the local, and national levels – by which the state provided free computers to the school-aged children of disadvantaged families. The same period additionally witnessed the appearance in the village of broad-band Internet service (see above), in the wake of which even families that previously did not own a computer purchased Internet subscriptions. This, too, indicates that in the period following the introduction of the Internet, "the use of computers and Internet services in village households generally went hand in hand" (cf. Rab 2009: 50).

The purchase of digital devices for elderly adults, too, was influenced by the presence of the younger generation. My observations, for example, demonstrate that, beyond the need to keep contact with members of the family living far from home, grandparents were willing to purchase and/or learn to use computers (Internet, various smart devices, including primarily tablets) chiefly for their grandchildren's sake. All in all, it can be said that, in terms of digital device and Internet use in Săromberke (Dumbrăvioara), one finds no turning point to which radical change may be attributed. Instead, the development occurred at a pace that accelerated at times more slowly, and at times more rapidly, with the end result that computer and Internet use eventually rose from uncommonly low levels to proportions that, even as far as the elderly are concerned, might aptly be described as a mass phenomenon. In general, computer, smart phone, and smart device use today is characterised by intense emotional motivation and strong ritualisation, the habits that pertain to it developing within a force field defined by two opposing processes: the need to communicate, which tends to increase frequency of use, and fear of new media, which tends to weaken it. Just a few years ago, views on computers and smart devices in this rural environment were characterised primarily by aversion and uncertainty. Yet over the course of the past decade, these same anxiously protected, hesitantly used devices have found a place for themselves as standard equipment in the spaces where inhabitants conduct their lives, developing their own peculiar routines, prompting a degree of reflection, and creating a distinctive narrative base surrounding their use and nature. Once digital technology had been "tamed" in this way, these devices could be, and indeed were used to keep abreast of daily events, structure the home environment, occupy time, and develop social connections.

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The Relationship between Migration and Communications Technology

During the second half of the 2000s, transborder migration intensified, while the explosive development and spread of communications technology jointly and concurrently transformed the everyday routines associated with intrafamilial communication and contact throughout the village. This change can be observed primarily in that the individual members of families increasingly initiate interaction with one another in their day-to-day lives by means of some technological device. Walter J. Ong calls this phenomenon *secondary orality* (cf. Ong 2010: 119–121), though the term indirect/mediated communication is also used. In the early phase (the second half of the 20th century), the device used was a landline telephone, though rarely for the purpose of communication between immediate family members. In fact, telephone calls were not even daily routine in families with members who had moved to distant cities or emigrated to the West. Because of the limited spread of the technology, only a relatively small part of the community had one "at hand" (i.e. perpetually available), and even those that did used it only occasionally – on holidays or prior to family events. Limited availability did, however, produce peculiar modes of use: frequently, those who did not have a telephone in the home used the phones of relatives, neighbours, and/or acquaintances.

A turning point in the use of mediated communication came in the mid-to-late 2000s, when, following Romania's accession to the European Union, it became possible for the first time for Romanians to move freely in pursuit of work, resulting in an increased number of community members who travelled abroad as guest workers. Also, at roughly the same time, broad-band Internet and mobile devices were gaining popularity, which, combined with EU membership, resulted in the above-described transformation of communications routines.

In the 1990s and early 2000s, when the per-minute rates charged for international calls were high for both landline, and mobile telephones, family members living great geographical distances apart phoned each other relatively rarely (once or twice a week). Even as late as the mid-2000s, Skype and, later, Messenger were still the means of choice for daily contact. Calls via both telephone, and application (Skype, Messenger) were characterised by a high degree of ritualisation, manifested in both the choice of environment and time of day in which calls took place, and in the manner in which communication was conducted. Because of the difference between time zones and guest workers' work schedules, conversations usually occurred in the evening hours, with participants choosing one of the more intimate rooms in the house, where computers and mobile telephones were located, as the setting for calls. The reason for this was that, as Vilmos Benczik points out, "the majority of elderly mobile telephone users, having been socialised via landline phones, [did] not take full advantage of the freedom a mobile device affords, making calls while on the move only very rarely" (Benczik 2001: 20). Thus, in contrast to direct conversation, phone calls today are conducted according to a "sophisticated,

restrictive ritual" (Benczik 2001: 20). Of course, the same may be said of conversations orchestrated by Internet. In families where several generations live under the same roof, intense ritualisation can be observed even in the order of participation: usually, the spouse of the absent worker speaks first, leading the conversation, followed by an appearance on the part of the worker's children, and finally, a brief exchange with parents. Most of these conversations last for about thirty minutes to an hour. Subjects discussed include the happenings of the day, health, weather, the immediate family, and events pertaining to acquaintances, village life, and other guest workers known to the family: in other words, the topics stereotypically associated with the letter-writing practices typical of previous times of absence from the community (e.g. with soldiers and POWs during the First and Second World Wars; see Vajda 2013: 159–184). During the past few years, however, with reductions in international call rates, the frequency with which calls are made by landline or mobile telephone has grown, though not to the complete exclusion of Skype (and other, similar programs). In fact, part of the reason for the persistence of communications applications is that they offer a video, as well as an audio dimension and therefore better mimic the situation of direct, personal communication. As a result, mobile telephones tend to be used in response to unexpected situations/events, while the Internet remains the medium for ritualised evening talks; i.e. a sort of functional distribution of labour has developed among various means of communication.

Within this system, social media (Facebook) is usually only used for indirect contact: the sharing and following of important life events, photographs, videos, and remarks of family members, relatives, and acquaintances living far from home, with only infrequent use of the additional communicational opportunities – comments, private messages – the program affords. At the same time, the elderly often use social media for passive/indirect communications; that is, they view or follow with relative regularity the life events of family members abroad using the account – and assistance – of another family member.

From the Symbolic to the Increasingly Virtual Family

John R. Gillis, citing Donald Lowe, has pointed out the important role played by the "imagined family" not only in public life, but also in the everyday lives of real families. Not only, he notes, is the family one of the easiest products to sell today, to the point that virtually anything can be marketed with the word "family" attached; and not only is the concept of family co-opted by manufacturers, name brand distributors, and politicians toward their respective pursuits; but even families themselves work at developing images, a circumstance that renders the past a place for family imagination and dreams the family has built for itself, a process in which memory proves the most effective muse. The past, in other words, has come forward as the most secure storehouse for imaginations about the virtual family. (Gillis 2000: 2.)

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Ágnes Boreczky calls the family in this form the "symbolic family" and, pursuing Gillis' ideas, distinguishes between two different family types: the first, the one we all live with every day, plays an important role in the development of the second, our alternate identity (Boreczky 2004: 27). "The members [of this latter type] – be they distant relatives or immediate, living or deceased – primarily populate our memories and imaginations." This plays an important role in the development of our family identity, permitting us to be part of life situations (realities) of many different varieties, tour the sites of ages past, and, in this way, broaden the contours of our "narrowly styled geo-physical existence". The multitude of models and screenplays available to us through the life courses of our forebears (i.e. the stories we have about them) give us the opportunity of living the lives of dozens of such individuals without assuming any of the real risk stemming from the real decisions they made every day (cf. Boreczky 2004: 9). According to the author, "the symbolic family is a system, extended in a socio-geographic space and time, which expands our narrow geo-physical lives, while establishing the limits placed on and direction taken by our actions and choices" (Boreczky 2004: 9). In Boreczky's view, the symbolic family's operation and functions can be interpreted in several different ways and on several different levels. These are, specifically: 1. important persons, significant others; 2. family holidays, customs, rituals, vacations, albums, documents (e.g. correspondence, journals), etc.; 3. myths, origin stories, accounts and episodes; 4. the family system in its entirety (Boreczky 2004: 141).

So, would it be reasonable to ask why the virtual/symbolic family has shifted into the focus of family life – particularly given that – as Gillis demonstrates – prior to the 19th century, with the exception of aristocratic families, there was hardly a family anywhere that could trace its roots as far back as a century and a half? "When Ralph Josselin drew up his family tree," the author writes, "it had branches, but no roots". In the past, it would seem, anniversary celebrations were rare, and the concept of the family gathering, together with the commemorative practices that are seen today as natural, were wholly non-existent. Before, families assembled for practical purposes, where time spent in each other's company spelled work. Christenings, wedding feasts, and funerals were not family, but community events, to which the concepts of family time and space were yet unattached (Gillis 2000: 3). In any case, prior to the industrial revolution, the concepts of family and household were equivalent, with family connections, marriages, and the parent-child and other family relationships defined primarily in terms of the common interest of household maintenance and operation. Its operating principle was built on the concepts of exchangeability and substitutability. Since the household was defined by economic interests associated with the present, its reach extended neither far into the past, nor far into the future. Its concept of, and method of managing time were characterised by cyclicality and continuity, as opposed to fragmentedness of the nuclear family[13]

13 In the author's definition, the nuclear family begins with the birth of a child and ends when that child marries.

(cf. Gillis 2000: 3–4). Gillis also demonstrates Protestants to have been the first to treat themselves as a product of linear time, meaning that, in an approach Martin Kohli dubs "chronologisation," they normalised the timeline to dictate the proper times for birth, marriage, and even death (Gillis 2000: 5).

Family time, for its part, is a phenomenon whose construction began with the mid-19th-century middle class. Its birth coincides with the rise of the family as a "memory community," an entity formed when encounters and interactions between family members cease, or are at least drastically curtailed. Today, the family that lives and works together has been replaced by the family that celebrates together, a development that has led to a sort of qualitative revolution with regard to time usage. Indeed, it is this that Gillis refers to when he says that the time families live *by* is not the same as the time they live *with* (cf. Gillis 2000: 5–6). In addition, the home has become decreasingly physical, and increasingly mental territory, as the family, too, has become more a virtual, mental construction (Gillis 2000: 7). Since today's family can be present anywhere virtually (Gillis 2000: 8), families in general are motivated to create formations that display/anchor the symbolic family.

While in the age of orality, these were manifested in family myths and everyday stories about family members, in the age of literacy, they were made accessible most often via family archives, specially printed Bible inserts, or family chronicles taken down in various types of notebook,[14] or, in parallel with these, in family photograph albums (see Szalma 2014) – devices Vilmos Keszeg dubs *genealogical tableaux*. In Keszeg's definition, such things "nominalise, raise into the public sphere, or rearrange the relationships between individuals belonging to at least two sequential generations within the framework of some kind of ritual" (Keszeg 2002: 172). Keszeg also analyses such situations and forms of text as put in evidence how memories are constructed by writing, how the past is used socially, and how the shape of memory is constructed via written means. In his assessment, the family is defined as a memory community, within which both *genealogical memory*, i.e. knowledge of relationships in ascending and descending branches of the family, and the manner in which such knowledge is constructed and used to orient to situations and meet family needs, are examined (Keszeg 2002: 172–212, 2008: 310–328).

In today's world, both these virtual/symbolic families, and the genealogical tableaux that render them visible organise and are made accessible through social media. Facebook and other similar sites have become the configurations of memory that play a role in the construction and maintenance of family memory and mythology. It is here, too, that the older generation begin to create virtual family spaces and cast family time into a form that can be experienced, and within social media that the – primarily visual – symbols used to represent the symbolic family are born.

14 For more on the role of family archives and private documents in the construction and maintenance of family mythology, see Vajda 2013.

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According to Gillis, every family has its own myths and legends, as well as its own storytellers and archivists, who guard over family rites and memories (Gillis 1996: xvi). Here, myth refers to "that which has become origin, has organised itself into narrative, is the product of some form of consensus" (cf. Keszeg 2008: 292). In this sense, entries related to family events appearing on the walls of Facebook profiles and photographs of family members and gatherings arranged into Facebook albums give family myths their shape. The producers of these include, increasingly, older people, who now spend more time, and in greater numbers, in online spaces. At the same time, the use of social media impacts the way families view time. While in the time of literacy, it was the past that appreciated in value, and people strove to trace their histories as far back as possible, the effect of social media has been to grant appreciating value to the present. This manner of experiencing time is what Fançois Hartog terms "presentism" (cf. Hartog 2006): the construction of a family's past on Facebook is built of digital copies of old family documents and photographs from old albums, added to digital pictures and posts created in the present.

There is, however, another dimension to the virtualisation of families, one that can be linked primarily to the spatial diffusion caused by migration / foreign guest work. Since the families of persons engaging in guest work can spend less time together in the physical home, they strive to compensate using various devices/ practices. This explains why, in the village under scrutiny here, the elderly who had their own Facebook profiles and used tablets and computers for maintaining interpersonal communications were the ones whose immediate families included one or more members engaged in guest work. In fact, the creation of a Facebook profile itself was closely related to the undertaking of guest work. Thus, the virtual space created using social media becomes that which physically separated family members occupy on a daily basis to meet and – through their comments, likes, and shares – interact with one another. By doing so, the family is symbolically united, which is why actions like these conducted within the framework of social media can be primarily interpreted as techniques employed for the purposes of balance or compensation (see Marquard 2001).

Summary

Migration as practiced across Europe, together with the widespread use of communications and information technologies, are resulting in a transmission of Western cultural and lifestyle patterns to everyday village life to an extent never experienced before. These communications practices generate their own specialists, whose targeted knowledge is frequently employed by the community in the same way that the knowledge of specialists in writing or, previous to that, in storytelling or public speaking were used in the past. The new media are transforming and defining the physical spaces people use every day (cf. Szijártó 2015: 43) and, via their impact on daily schedules, contributing to the creation of the home, as "by the use

of media, various home routines are formed, interactions given structure, communicative practices made regular, and conversations expressed" (cf. Szijártó 2015: 44). The appearance, increasing recurrence, and adaptation of these new technologies at the level of people's day-to-day lives – the manner in which populations have adjusted to the culture and modes of action they create/sustain – have initiated a process of acculturation. In the age of new media, a new variety of mediatised communications practices are emerging alongside – or, often, at the expense of – traditional ones, and new customs, habits, ritualised modes of behaviour, and automatisms are gaining prevalence.

Translated by Rachel Maltese

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Migráció és digitális műveltség. A digitális eszközök szerepe a vendégmunkások kapcsolattartásában

Dolgozatában a szerző azt vizsgálja, hogy egy erdélyi, falusi közösségben hogyan terjedt el a digitális eszközök és technológiák használata, illetve részben ezzel összefüggésben – a transzfrontális migráció hatására – hogyan változott meg a kapcsolattartást szolgáló/kiszolgáló technológiai környezet, ennek milyen hatása volt a családtagok (távol levő fiatalok és otthon maradt idősek) közötti kapcsolattartásra, a kommunikáció során működő rutinokra és eszközhasználati habitusokra, valamint az új eszközökhöz való viszonyulásmódra. A kutatás kiemelten az otthonmaradt 55 év feletti idős generáció digitális eszközhasználatára (mobil- és érintőképernyős telefon, táblagép, számítógép stb.) irányul, és arra kérdez rá, hogy milyen szerepe van ezeknek az idős emberek életében? A digitális eszközök és technológiák akarva-akaratlanul is a mindennapi cselekvések részévé válnak; a technológia jelenléte/elterjedése ebben a környezetben egyrészt segíti/támogatja, másrészt viszont át is alakítja az elvándoroltak és az otthon maradottak közötti kapcsolattartás szerkezetét minőségi és mennyiségi szempontból egyaránt.

Migraţie şi cultură digitală. Rolul dispozitivelor digitale în comunicaţia celor care muncesc în străinătate

Lucrarea de faţă urmăreşte modul în care s-a răspândit utilizarea dispozitivelor şi tehnologiilor digitale într-o comunitate rurală transilvăneană, respectiv parţial în legătură cu acest fenomen, sub influenţa migraţiei transfrontaliere, cum s-a schimbat mediul tehnologic al comunicaţiei, care sunt efectele acestor schimbări asupra comunicaţiei, legăturii dintre membrii familiei (tinerii plecaţi departe, cei în vârstă rămaşi acasă), a rutinei şi obiceiurilor aferente, respectiv a atitudinilor faţă de noile dispozitive. Cercetarea focusează pe utilizarea dispozitivelor digitale (telefon mobil, telefon touch-screen, tabletă, calculator etc.) de către generaţia celor în vârstă, rămaşi acasă, adică cei cu vârste peste 55 de ani, şi formulează întrebarea: care este rolul acestor dispozitive în viaţa celor în vârstă? Dispozitivele și tehnologiile digitale – vrând nevrând – devin parte a activităților de fiecare zi, prezenţa/răspândirea tehnologiei în acest mediu pe de o parte ajută, pe de altă parte totodată transformă structura comunicaţiei dintre cei plecaţi şi cei rămaşi acasă, atât din vedere calitativ, cât și cantitativ.

András Vajda

Migration and Digital Literacy. The Role of Digital Devices in Guest Workers' Communication with Home

The present paper analyses the way how the use of digital tools and technologies has spread in a Transylvanian rural community and, in partial relation to this, how the technological environment serving the purposes of contact and communication has changed as a result of transborder migration, and additionally, what impact this has had in three areas: relations between family members (young people living far from home and the older generation they have left behind), the routines and device usage habits used in communication, and modes of relating to the devices in question. The paper pays particular attention to the use of digital devices (mobile and touch-screen telephones, tablets, computers, etc.) by the non-migrating generation of individuals aged 55 and above, asking the question: "What role do these play in older people's lives?" In this context the digital devices and technologies become part of everyday activities, the presence/spread of them in this environment under scrutiny both helps/supports and transforms the structure of communication between emigrants and their families at home, in terms of both quality and quantity.

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