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The fascination of filmmakers with children is constant ever since the first home movies from the 1900’s to the user generated videos of the new media age. This study unfolds the amateur filmmaking practices of a family’s two generations while, in fact, inquiring into how the filmmaking technologies of a given period (1945-1989) were built into a community’s living space (both in a physical and metaphorical sense) and how they structured it. Through the history of the Haáz family living in Târgu-Mureș and the history of the local Film Club (and its leader, Ervin Schnedarek), we can explore the periods in the symbiosis of moving image and everyday life, the changing domestication process of the medium of film, and the shifting visual construction of childhood. In the meantime attention will be paid to the impact of state regulation of amateur film collectives and equipment, on the fact that these domestication stories occurred in the socialist Romania. The starting point of this analysis is that private films are not only embedded in the life of the individual, but also in the time of everyday life, in the history of representational forms and in macro contexts.

The history of the moving image as a history of social life

The contemporary discourses of media history and theory emphasize that, contrary to technical determinism, media history and theory have been shaped by social needs. In this premise the history of technology and media cannot be separated from social history. Researchers tackling historical and theoretical questions, are in fact social historians, and at the same time anthropologists of media practices who also explore the specific knowledge

2) Anthropologist Richard Challen, raises similar questions: starting from Sol Worth’s concept of symbolic environment and Nelson Goodman’s constructivist philosophy, he understands the family collections of photos and movies as a constructed world comprehensible by the analysis of the symbolic system underlying the content, form, and use of the pictures. The author is less interested in the pictures themselves, much rather in the communication achieved by them, namely the “home mode pictorial communication” (Challen 1987: 6–9).

The French theoretician of home movies, Roger Odin, also applies Dell Hymes’s communicative theory, but he is not so much interested in communication forms within a family. In his semi-pragmatic approach he interprets the construction of a text not starting from its pragmatics: he studies the modalities of film texts as they change in relation to context (Odin 2003).

3) James Moran’s 2002 book is a theoretical approach to home video, but his statements can be applied to celluloid film or other media as well. While the practice of home movies was first theorised in the age of the celluloid film and nuclear family, the refinement of these approaches occurred at the beginning of the 1990s, with the emergence of video technology. See my overview of these media theories discussing home visual media (Blos-Jáni 2012).

connected to media history and theory. In this paper I wish to follow this line of inquiry and examine what kind of media histories are outlined and what kind of media theories are revealed by everyday practices as compared to the big media histories and theories.

It is challenging to examine what can be deciphered from home movies or private films, namely from the practice of mediation of everyday life, about those life-worlds that become observable in these films and through these films. Many generations have grown up with camera lenses pointed at them, and, from time to time, various amounts of photographs and films got accumulated throughout their lives. These private photographs and films have both reflected and influenced lifestyles, relationships, modalities of paying-attention-to-each-other, the culture of remembrance, identity, and culture of visual and material objects. As Heather Norris Nicholson puts it: “only with changes in parental attitudes and camera technologies have children begun to picture themselves. […] When family films depict the spaces and places occupied by children, they expose aspects of current thinking about parenting, play and childhood experience. Since children cannot be insulated from the cultural politics of everyday life, their cinematic representation is part of the wider circulation of meaning, even if only shown to family and friends” (Norris Nicholson 2001: 130).

The practice of home filmmaking is also structured by individual motivations, while at the same time the family community filters and integrates, in accordance with its own value preferences, the history of the conventions of home filmmaking. Thus they subordinate their practices to functions which belong to other family communities as well, regardless of environment and class (Moran 2002: 56). Filmmaking is not merely a technological means used in a private context in communicative situations by the members of a ‘speech community’ (Hymes 1967); instead, this practice must be rethought as a mutual effect of technological, social, and cultural determinations, as a “liminal space in which practitioners may explore and negotiate the competing demands of their public, communal and private, personal identities” (Moran 2002: 60). Therefore, if one understands the practice of home filmmaking as a habitus, then the question of how and what is worth presenting in a home movie must be given multiple solutions: the dominant ideologies influencing the practice of home filmmaking, the changing family institutions and life-worlds, and the history of amateur recording must be analysed together. James Moran lends an entire chapter for theorising conventions and technologies the latter in which he treats home movie-making as a separate habitus within amateur filmmaking. He describes the habitus (and not the films) by its cultural functions: representation of daily life; place of creation of public, community, and individual identities; manifestation of the continuity of generations, which outlines the home as an affective and cognitive space, and which yields a narrative framework for family and personal histories (2002: 59–63).

Ethnologists and anthropologists know that one cannot study a single segment of a culture without being familiar with the whole system of relationships within that culture. In the case of home movies, the way to represent these relationships is through a medium-concept, which does not make a hierarchical distinction between the history of the medium and its socio-cultural analysis. Through this medium-concept we can unfold a complex system of relationships. This is because family movies represent not only life’s easily recognisable scenes, but from the right angle we may
see these as parts of a complex and intricate system of relationships, the offshoots of which lead us to the discovery of new life-worlds. Paraphrasing Susan Sontag’s well known phrase about photography: “to collect photographs is to collect the world” (Sontag 1977: 3).

Moving Images as Part of Reality

How does the medium shape the life of the individual or the society? When posing this question one has to consider that the medium does not convey only images but it can also convey as part of reality certain norms and decisions recorded and written by other people. At the same time, mediums are objects and solidified human relationships as well, that is, they convey human relationships, as sociologists of knowledge suggest. The study of family movies may uncover histories of human relationships.

Home movies by definition are as distinct from the use of moving images in institutions such as the cinema, as they are parts and shapers of family home space. If we want to find out the meaning of moving images that has developed in family home space and reality, we will find the domestication of objects and technologies relevant, too. The researchers of media domestication study the process in which information and communication technologies become part of the intimate space of the home and household: what the reasons are behind the purchase of certain technologies and what ways they tuned in to the home environment and woven into the fabric of everyday life. What kind of power relations do they create? As Roger Silverstone puts it, the interaction of humans and technologies has consequences for both sides: “wild animals then, wild technologies now, what’s the difference? In both cases, unconstrained, they pose threats and challenges. In both cases, brought within the fold, they become sources of power and sustenance. Domestication is practice. It involves human agency. It requires effort and culture, and it leaves nothing as it is” (Silverstone 2006: 231).

Domestication, therefore, is a process where man and technology meet, thus, making many ‘things’ part of the home life: appliances, ideas, values, and information. Similar to the theory of social representations that investigates the ways in which formalized knowledge becomes informal, the theory of domestication links up the macro- and micro-levels of society. We can distinguish between two tactics of domestication: in a household, technology undergoes a process of objectification, becoming a part of the group of objects and creating a space for itself. At the same time, it is incorporated into the network of human relationships and the temporal dimension of family life (Silverstone 2006: 234–235). Therefore, upon acquisition, the meaning of technology is transformed, it becomes part of the material and the symbolic sphere of our homes.

In the case of communication technologies, these transformations are multiplied, as the act of mediation – which can again create contact between the private and public spheres – also needs to be considered.

The starting point of the theory of domestication is that ‘taming’ technologies implies a series of synchronizations: technical, cultural,
outside is problematic ([Silverstone 2006: 241–243]). In this context the basis of the concept of domestication needs to be adjusted to the contemporary experience and practice. Although it would be interesting to make statements about the ideas of family and domesticity under communism, as I have studied a singular family, not a typical one, this fact prevents me from doing so. Still, because the family in discussion is a classically structured nuclear family (which becomes geographically dispersed by the end of the era), it is justifiable to use the concept of domestication in the analysis.

8) Although the examples analysed in this literature range from radio and computer to the world of mobile technology, these considerations focus on the equipment: they refuse the deterministic effects of technology, but they are not adequate to interpret the contents and the product. This is why this paper cannot make statements about the context and the changing visual language of home films, although this could be an important dimension as well.

9) Media genealogy has elaborated an interpretative model for grasping the processes of media history (see the genealogical model formulated by André Gaudreault és Philippe Marion in 2000 exemplified with the case of the cinema in a study published in 2002). The genealogy of the increasingly familiar (home) movie can be analysed in parallel with the genealogy of families, as suggested by James Moran: “[media] are themselves mediated by, notions of family: while we use these media audiovisually to represent family relations to ourselves, we also use family relations discursively to represent these media to each other” (Moran 2002: 97).

The Normal 8 and Super 8 movie cameras used by Sándor Haláz Jun.

economic, and social. Relevant references also claim that the handling of these technologies has its own genealogy: new devices are embedded into the already existing family or professional practices and routines (Rieffel 2008: 215). What type of realities and media practices is moving image technology shaped to? How is a technology discovered, and what is curiosity driven by? What are their stories of accessibility and acquisition? How does a certain device become personal and familiar? How have the changing technologies of moving images shaped the private use and the concept of media? It is the concept of domestication that may help us get closer to the context of home movies, and enter into a conversation about its use, the everyday routines, and its embedded nature at the level of the family micro-communities (without discussing the content or the style of the films).

Context of technology history

While a review of the history of amateur film technology is not the objective of this paper, we need to know what technologies appeared and became accessible for the masses at different times to be able to place individual cases into a larger context. The appearance of new technologies is inseparable from the history of the constitution of media: we may investigate the way in which moving images became a medium of family communication or a part of the participative culture (the process of democratisation).

The private use of photographic image technology can be traced back to the beginnings of film history: the first examples are those one-minute long early films, the subject of was family life and which had as protagonists members of the Lumière family. Nevertheless, the large-scale spread of amateur technologies is due to the Kodak camera (Cine Kodak) and projector (Kodascope Projector) launched in 1923 by George Eastman. As this format was in reality a modification of 35 mm films, the procedure of developing was identical with that of the larger format, and this is why the end-product was very expensive. In order to reduce filming costs, in 1932 the Cine Kodak Eight technology was developed which only filmed on one side of the 16 mm film strip, thus allowing for recording on a reel (which was later cut in two) two times as many images. In 1965 the Super 8 technology was developed; it still allowed only 3 minutes of recording with a speed of 24 frames/second, but its use was easier and it allowed for images of better quality (later the replacement and development of the film strip was simplified through a cassettes; the perforations became smaller, as well, leaving a larger surface for images and, later on, for sound). For sound recording even more expensive technology and materials had to be procured, this is why mediums with both image and sound strips did not gain much popularity. The recording of sound was carried out by a separate instrument on a magnetic strip, therefore synchronized playback was difficult, and this is why silent recordings were more typical.

The first video equipment and the various versions of magnetic tapes appeared in the
1960s but they only gained popularity later, when the cheaper VHS (video home system) tapes appeared and when VHS players were domesticated on a large scale. The first video technology destined for amateurs, Betamovie BMC-100, was developed in 1983 by Sony. It weighed 2.5 kg. Later on lighter and smaller cameras were developed with the appearance of Video8 and Hi8 cassettes. The era of digital formats was the next level of technical development; however, I do not intend to touch upon this matter as it falls outside the relevant period of the scope of this study.

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**What do the home movies of the Haáz-family reveal?**

Ethnographic research can approach a factual story and the long-term structures from the perspective of event- and individual-oriented stories (suggest: from the perspective of individual stories and events. Relying on the interviews and films, we have an overall perception of how the ‘big’ processes ‘come alive’. Reconstructed from the various practices, this moving-image-history comes near the view of micro-historiography. This is a media history plan, the structure of which is determined not only by the pace of technological changes but also by its habituses and its social and cultural embeddedness11 as well. After all, the ebb and flow in the history of the habitus might take different turns: family events, everyday life, local happenings, social expectations, and other media can also act as formative powers. Therefore, periodization should start with data collection, specifically, the description of the context surrounding the collections that come from the era of the people’s power: the socialism. This method of separating the periods does not strive after drawing the outlines but instead, it may be compared to an operation of hatching.

Gábor Gyáni theorizes the sphere of validity concerning the research of micro-worlds: he considers the linking of micro- and macrostructures within the various narrative disciplines a fundamental problem of investigating everyday life. Given the topic and methodology of the paper, we need to reflect on the constantly recurring epistemological question of ‘what does the local and the particular viewed in its diversity stand for?’ (Gyáni 1997: 152). Carrying out discourse analyses as well as showing the power structures would result in a sort of a critique of the 20th century visual system, on the one part, and it would open the door to the periodization of scopic regimes, on the other. Notwithstanding, the ethnographic method of interviewing implies our belief in the subjectively constructed world, and after all, this exploration of sources fits into a kind of a tradition connected to phenomenology and to the sociology of knowledge12. Therefore, I will view the research material made up of interviews and home movies (collected between 2007-2011), first of all, as the exploration of the local and the individual that is capable of mediation towards life-worlds, the everyday life, and ‘bigger processes’. Upon investigating the context of the individual events, I could mostly identify with the cognitive activity that Gábor Gyáni described as follows: ‘in fact, historians try to repeat a journey by train – taking all the points and exploring all of its side-tracks – they never experienced in person’ (1997: 154).

The present study is an attempt at unfolding the amateur filmmaking practices of a family’s two generations while, in fact inquiring into how the filmmaking technologies of

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10) There are several summaries of the history of image mediums and technologies. Here I will only highlight a few technical turning-points, and organize them in chronological order, based on the following studies: Dékány 2000; Buckingham 2011.

11) Embeddedness can be understood in Mark Granovetter’s terms as well: he coined this term on the establishment of connections between people during economic activities. Vilmos Keszeg, anthropologist of writing and storytelling applies this concept to storytelling activities. According to his recent publications, stories may construct and initiate the embeddedness of the individual as he/she creates stories about himself/herself and others, recounting stories for a selected group of people (Keszeg 2012: 204).

12) Bourdieu’s concept of habitus defined as the dialectic of objective and subjective structures also carries phenomenological-sociological elements (see Hadás 2009:33).
a given period (1945-1989) were built into a community’s living space both physically and metaphorically and how they structured this space. What kind of identities did they invest their media with and what media practices characterized the daily life of the families in a given period of social history? How did home movies bring individuals closer together in the moments of making, watching, and storing films?

This example may give us a worm’s-eye view of the everyday (media) history of socialist Romania. Through the history of the Haáz family, we can peel back the curtains of ‘mystery’ to explore the periods in the symbiosis of moving images and everyday life. Home movies and their vision about childhood offer “a unique perspective on the nature of prevailing social order and the geographical processes and experiences shaped by family, home and culture” – as Heather Norris Nicholson concludes (2001: 129).

At the same time, I do not consider the micro-world of this family a typical example of the era. This was confirmed by the interviews I carried out with other home movie makers to contextualize the Haáz family’s collection. As I am writing about the stories behind their home movies, I intend to respect the individuality of the cases and the specificity of their practices. First and foremost, I look on the example as the metaphor for other contemporary practices, rather than their prototypes, which were also shaped by the individual tactics required in particular situations, the private lives embedded into a historical period (from 1945 to 1989), the scenes of the events, as well as the stories and the everyday life of a town (Târgu-Mureș).

The history of the Haáz Family

The home movie collection represents a connection between three generations of the family. Although the films made by the different generations do not make up a single collection – I linked them together myself during the research – the media practices of the different generations can be connected to one another.

Although the first generation under examination had a short-term contact with filmmaking, their story might still be of considerable importance. Rezső Ferenc Haáz’s son, Sándor Haáz Sen (b. 1912) was born in Odorheiu Secuiesc where he attended the Roman Catholic School. Upon graduating, he went on to study fine arts in Cluj-Napoca and Budapest where he obtained a degree as an art teacher. While still a student, he engaged in village research and through the intervention of the Hungarian National Bouquet Association [Országos Magyar Bokréta Szövetség], he became acquainted with the folk dance movement. After the outbreak of World War II, he returned to Transylvania and became a teacher (in Odorheiu Secuiesc where he attended the Roman Catholic School. Upon graduating, he went on to study fine arts in Cluj-Napoca and Budapest where he obtained a degree as an art teacher. While still a student, he engaged in village research and through the intervention of the Hungarian National Bouquet Association [Országos Magyar Bokréta Szövetség], he became acquainted with the folk dance movement. After the outbreak of World War II, he returned to Transylvania and became a teacher (in Odorheiu Secuiesc, Corund, and Cristuru Secuiesc). Following the Second World War, he married Judit Benczédi (b. 1924), the sister of one of his friend’s, Sándor Benczédi; they had four children: Ferenc (b. 1951), Sándor Jr. (b. 1955), Katalin (b. 1957), and Judit (b. 1961).

Besides working as a teacher, Sándor Haáz Sr. engaged in recruiting and directing folk dance groups in the surrounding areas of Odorhei; he founded a dance ensemble in Păltiniș. He arrived in Târgu Mureș as a successful organizer of folk dance movements: at first, he worked as a folk dance choreographer and then, in 1956, he was entrusted with forming the troupe of dancers of the National Szek-
ler Folk Ensemble [Állami Székely Népi Együttes], then under formation. In 1957, the ensemble had already appeared on stage under his guidance. As a dance instructor and choreographer, he also took part in expeditions, where he used the ensemble's film camera to record the different dances. He worked until 1962 as an activist in the dance movement, but in 1964, due to cartilage problems in his knee, he went on to work as a drawing-teacher in different schools in Târgu Mureș. After his retirement in 1975, he published a number of studies on folk art and dance movement (see Balogh 1991), and he was presented with several lifetime achievement awards. As a public employee, he could barely make ends meet, but he always tried to maintain his bourgeois heritage. A fine example would be the bourgeois home culture combined with rustic elements, which also had a great influence on his successors. He died at the age of 95, in 2007.

The members of the second generation were born at the dawn of the socialist regime: they had different careers as demonstrated mostly by their attitudes towards the government in power. Two of them chose to live within the confines of the regime: while Sándor Jr. became a music teacher and a children’s choir organizer (Children’s Philharmonic Orchestra of Vlăhița) and has been living in Odorheiu Secuiesc. Judit remained in Târgu Mureș with her family and has been working as an engineer. Ferenc is an engineer with a degree in applied arts, who emigrated to Hungary in 1979; Katalin became an architect, who fled abroad in 1987, and after living in several countries, she finally settled down in Germany. Three of the four siblings came into contact with filmmaking throughout their career: Sándor Jr., Ferenc, and Katalin. (My study focuses mostly on Sándor Jr., who became an amateur filmmaker in socialist Romania.)

The twelve children of the third generation were born and socialized in the country chosen as a residence by the members of the second generation. They also got into touch with amateur filmmaking in the 1990s; nevertheless, this study does not include their presentation since they belong to another era of social and media history.

As for the family, they still function as one large entity despite the dispersal of the second generation. The relatives play the role of the significant other who confirms the reality and events of everyday life. This brings about the strengthening of the 'large family's' structure whose primary function is to make private life public within the boundaries of intimacy (Habermas 1999: 43–51). This sense of belonging to each other is maintained through family reunions and the communicative use of new media platforms.

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The history of the media practices in the Haáz Family

The tradition of drawing is stronger than filmmaking in the Haáz family. Sándor Haáz Sr.’s father, Rezső Haáz (1883–1958) was not merely professionally motivated in drawing his pictures (as a drawing-teacher; ethnographic illustrations) but he also favoured this medium whenever it came to recording his family; the family photographs were taken by his friend, István Kováts Sr. However, the drawings and paintings were made from photographs as we can also learn from the exhibition catalogue about the Kováts photography...
Studio (Fogarasi 2007: 47–48). Sándor Haáz Sen. preferred to use the photographic medium in documenting his private life. He sorted his photographs into albums, adding dates and captions. He was capable of recalling all the pictures in his album up to the smallest details. Even when he was elderly and had poor vision, he would still ask his family members to look up some pages in the photo album and then, based on their description, he would recall the given picture and the story behind it. After his retirement in 1975, he kept a diary until 2002: he filled a whole copybook with his writings each year. At the beginning, his sole purpose was to keep a record of his expenses, but over time, his entries also included notes about his grandchildren, family members, and certain events.

He started to delve into photography as a dance researcher in the 1960s when the film camera also became his working tool, which he borrowed to use as a choreographer of the national dance ensemble until 1962. Based on the memoirs of his son, he used several types of movie cameras: ‘We knew what cine camera stood for; we had already seen such a Russian type, spring-driven, wind-up 16mm cine camera. Then he was given a 2x8 camera, too. As far as I can remember, the first apparatus was a normal 8mm camera, made in Russia, of course, just like the films, and this is what he used for shooting at the beginning of the sixties while he was with the dance ensemble’ (Sándor Haáz Jr.). For the purpose of a slow-motion playback and an easier studying of the dance moves, the films for the dance ensemble were taken at a speed of 64 frames/second. The former dance choreographer could not really have been well-versed in the field of movie camera technology as the films of his children were not shot with the standard speed settings: instead of 16-24 frames/second, he used the dance-recording’s speed of 64 frames/second. He took so-called slow-motion pictures, thus wasting a lot of raw material for an everyday scene from the daily game sessions of his children\(^{16}\). Presumably, he recorded the family scene on normal 8mm footage (left over from a dance shooting) during the summer holidays while the institution did not make use of the equipment. He must have kept his filming of the family secret from the institution as the film was not developed until many years later – they could not let it get into a state laboratory together with the dance-related recordings.

Filmmaking, as such, gained more ground in the life of the next generation. The story of the four siblings, who all settled down in different places, is all the more interesting because it gives us a picture not only of their voluntary filmmaking which later became embedded in their realities, but they also inform us of the social and ideological contexts that influenced the habitus of filmmaking, as well as, the media landscape that the personal living spaces become part of. In other words, as cinematic technologies and the media become part of the reality, so the individual’s reality changes. Deliberately or not, we all become part of the media landscape and are implicitly faced with certain ideologies which structure our reality, that either make it accessible or simply exclude us from the institutions of representations. It so happened that while Sándor Jr. (1955) was getting acquainted with 8mm and super-8mm filmmaking in Târgu Mureş during the seventies, Ferenc (1951), following in his father’s and brother’s footsteps, undertook filmmaking using the same technologies in the Budapest of the eighties, and Katalin (1957) obtained a video camera, first, in Sweden during the

\(^{16}\) This home movie is not in a projectable condition and it hasn’t been transposed to a digital format yet. According to Sándor Haáz Jr. the home movie consists of the following scene: ‘we are sitting in our grandmother’s garden, my mother is feeding my six-month-old sister, Jutka with bread and honey. I am sitting with my brother under a tree holding a stick and looking into the camera. Afterwards we run and jump over a cess pit. Then we are sitting on a long ladder, that is pulled around by our cousin, and we wave into the camera’.

[Image: Worker building a firewood shed to the family house in the winter of 1983. Still from a home movie.]
nineties, and then in Germany. While video technology was easily accessible in the western countries, in the Târgu Mureş of the seventies and the Budapest of the eighties, the chances of filmmaking were also a matter of people's social capital and tactics (namely: the ability to acquire one on the black market).

Sándor Haáz Jr. mentioned photography as an experience preceding his filmmaking: 'I think taking photographs came before making films in everyone's life, and so it was in my case.' He was on a trip abroad in 1968 when he got his first camera from his Canadian aunt, but he was also allowed to take photos with his father's Smena camera. Thanks to his hobby and his parents' acquaintances, the fourteen-year-old amateur photographer finally got into the cartoonist group – announced by the art school for its drawing students – led by Ervin Schnedarek in the (Young) Pioneers' Palace. In the period between 1969 and 1974, he was a member of the cartoonist section where he made animated films compiled from action sequences, and he would soon go on to take part in a number of contests, winning several prizes.

Nevertheless, it was not the activities carried on in the pioneers' club that kept him busy with amateur filmmaking, but an event much more important that took place in 1971: helped by Ervin Schnedarek, he developed the film his father had made ten years earlier: 'In 1971, a miracle happened that made me commit myself to motion picture film by the side of Mr. Ervin. After all, without him and his sympathy for our childish fantasies, this film might have been gone, or thrown away during the moves' (Sándor Haáz Jr.). Encouraged by the success of the family screening, he purchased his own cine-projector. He bought his first film camera from his savings at the age of sixteen in May 1971. It was a Russian-made Sport1 camera which used 8mm film, which he used until 1975. At Ervin Schnedarek's suggestion, he replaced the film cameras with more efficient and better-equipped apparatus: by 1987, he had already purchased three cameras in total and received one as a gift.

Buying film stock was a complicated process at the beginning of the 1970s: he was given some reels as a gift from his Canadian relative (1971). He also purchased some himself during his travels abroad (Hungary, Slovakia) in 1973 and 1977, respectively. He screened his homemade films and the cartoons he had purchased during his trips (e.g. The Genesis by Jean Effel, 1958) at home and in the classroom. Thus, amateur technology made the cartoon genre accessible; communal film-watching and screening occasions replaced television: 'we barely had any televised programmes then, and there was no other option' (Sándor Haáz Jr.). His amateur films, consisting mostly of home movies, documentaries about trips with his class and his mates' birthplace (mostly villages and families), but farcical trick films as well, were developed with the assistance of Ervin Schnedarek.

Sándor Haáz Jr. was appointed music teacher in Vlăhiţa, Harghita County, in 1978. For a while he commuted between Târgu Mureş and Vlăhiţa. Sándor did not stop making films: he recorded the customs and the festivities he encountered in Vlăhiţa, the children's choir he conducted, and his growing family (two of his sons were born during this period). In order to do this he acquired his own developing equipment. Besides filmmaking, he continued taking photographs. His sister, who settled abroad, passed down a video player to him in 1987, which in his community of friends proved to be even more popular than the film camera and projector, as it
formed a true community of late-night VHS-watchers. In the early nineties, he stopped making moving pictures and ever since, he has become the collector and archivist of the footage connected to his work (mostly with the Children’s Philharmonic Orchestra). His attitude toward filmmaking shifted, the attraction of the communal screenings faded, and the devoted cine-amateur of the seventies gave up filmmaking: ‘Nowadays it would be ridiculous, or pathetic to show up in a community with a cine projector. And it’s not worthwhile anymore to carry a film camera with me. No. Nowadays I don’t even take photos anymore. Everybody takes photographs, everybody makes films, I don’t want to take photos, just to be there, pushing my way in the crowd, just to find a good place to stand. Video killed moving pictures’ (Sándor Haáz Jr.).

To conclude: the filmmaking habitus of Sándor Haáz Jr. of the second generation was not shaped by the institution of family alone; the contemporary semi-professional film clubs and amateur film forums also had a great impact on him. However, his filmmaking habitus was not limited to the club activities; his use of technology permeated his everyday living space: his family, classmates, and later on, his work, too. Prior to December 1989, his media domestication, his media practices were mostly determined by the film club and his friendship with Ervin Schnedarek. Sándor Haáz Jr.’s attitude towards the medium of moving images also includes these contexts and human relationships, which, through his films, he relayed to his family and the classroom community. In what follows, I will try to present the pioneers’ club and the trade union film club led by Ervin Schnedarek in Târgu-Mureș, as well as their role in the life of the people keen on filmmaking.

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Ervin Schnedarek, the one-man institution of amateur filmmaking in Târgu-Mureș

Ervin Schnedarek’s career represents the story of the self-educated filmmaker on the road towards becoming a professional. He was born into a family of eight children in 1920. His brothers influenced his predilection for photographic technique, mechanics, and electronics. During the Second World War, the five brothers were drafted – all of them made it back home. After the war, he set about constructing a cine-projector together with one of his elder brothers, Vilmos, who was skilled in mechanics. He even managed to take out a patent on it, but then the mass production failed. Projection rooms and cinemas were equipped with machines made in Russia. Consequently, there was such an increasing demand for projectionists and cameramen that they started a school where Ervin Schnedarek was invited to teach (see Buglya 2004: 6). This vocational school functioned from 1950 to 1958 and, in the meantime, Ervin Schnedarek earned his diploma in education at the Babeş-Bolyai University. After the vocational school had stopped functioning, he went on to teach Physics at the Arts High School in Târgu Mureș. Soon afterwards, he was transferred to the Pioneers’ Palace where he was charged with leading a film study group for schoolchildren. “His idea was to recruit talented art school pupils for the Pioneers’ Palace and start his first animation studio. This was in 1969 and, even though I
was not in the drawing group. So, he was looking for painters and graphic artists who had the time and disposition for such matters (Sándor Haáz Jr.). In the Pioneers’ Palace, they produced both animated films and feature films, whose scriptwriter was Ervin Schnedarek. However, the actors and the cameramen came from the ranks of children. While the cartoonist group was more attended by the Arts High School students, film-club goers were mostly made up of those from the science division. Together with a few of his acquaintances interested in filmmaking, László Török (sub-editor of the Új Élet journal, film critic) and Popescu Páun (retired teacher), they founded a film club (Cineclub) in 1958, and they were offered a home in The Cultural Centre of the Syndicates. In the beginning, the club members’ activities were limited to watching films and organizing further education courses: they invited famous film critics from Bucharest and borrowed the twelve top-listed films of the time from the National Film Archives. Later on, the community of filmgoers retrained itself to become a self-taught filmmaker community, working their way up to the front line of the national amateur filmmakers.

However, The Cultural Centre of the Syndicates did not provide full-scale support for the film club; the acquisition of the necessary materials was either due to their skilful benefactor, Ferenc Szélyes, or it was part of the duties assigned by the president of the syndicate. Making propaganda films (The Woman of Our Times) and documentary films (Stop Pollution!) was their reason for maintaining the club. On the club members’ initiative, they produced documentaries (The Two Bolyai’s, or a film on the events related to the floods in the seventies entitled Dramatic Developments), other documentary films, ethnographic films (The Burial of Winter in Sârățeni) as well as artistic and experimental creations. From 1969, the Romanian Television launched its Hungarian-language broadcast in which the club was allowed to screen their films and also cooperate with them as professional animators. By 1983, they had organized ten editions of a national amateur film festival named Mureş Screen [Ecranul de Mureş] (Buglya 2004: 8).

Some additional opportunities were offered for the amateur filmmakers creating and cooperating under the club’s wings: they could enter their films for national competitions and screen them in other towns for greater audiences. According to the interviews, the amateur filmmakers of Târgu Mureş won their way to the following annual or biannual film festivals: Hercules (Bâile Herculane), Man and Production (Hunedoara), Foto-son (Timişoara), Environment Protection (Galaţi), and Autumn at Voroneţ. In addition, they also took part in the arts festival called Song to Romania, organized under the aegis of the Council of Socialist Culture and Education. The festival was held a total of seven times between 1976 and 1989 and aimed at legitimizing popular culture compared to elite culture. Club members were presented with several awards over the years. The members of the cartoonist study group participated in the First National Cartoon Festival of Romanian filmmakers held in September 1975 (Bacău). Among others, Sándor Haáz Jr.’s cartoons also made their way onto the big screen (The Fox and the Hedgehog, The Two Rascals).

The activities of the club were closed down due to the events in December 1989; club members also documented the local events of the revolution. From 1990 the Cultural Centre of the Syndicates ceased to function as a home for the club: the executive committee dismissed the employees of the former regime and refused the club manager access to their own film library. Ervin Schnedarek had already secured some of the stock in his home, but all of the materials stored in The Cultural Centre of the Syndicates were thrown away at the time of the building’s renovation in 2005. Alongside his former students, Ervin Schnedarek launched a private enterprise named Studio 7, whose scope of activities included wedding cine-
matography and documentaries. He was presented with two lifetime achievement awards at the Film Festival of Lakitelek (1995) and the AlterNative International Film Festival in Târgu Mureș (2002), respectively. Several of his students have become professionals over the years and have been making films up to this day.

Ervin Schnedarek and his club mates spoke about the film club as something that, apart from providing a professional-technical environment, could serve as a framework for creativity and community experience in those times, regardless of age, ethnic, or social affiliation: ‘Beginning with the very fact that we were living in a constant psychological oppression, one way or another, we had to break through the wall and find an occupation that would help us counterbalance the situation. This is what the film club activities were a perfect match for, and where we could set our imaginations free. There were a lot of things we could accomplish and, to my mind, it was quite an exciting game to play for an adult. Countless grown-ups and elite companies visited the film club. The film club was the remedy for communism. Now, what do I mean by this? My point is that I offered them an all-out recreation where everyone could forget about all the ideological study groups and turn to this wonderful thing, what cinematography is. So, they went there to relax, be invigorated, and be reborn’ (Ervin Schnedarek).

When trying to explain their commitment to filmmaking and the reasons behind the will to become professionals, the interviewees always cited Ervin Schnedarek’s pedagogical skills. The club leader’s professional expertise and calling was the principal cohesive force that held film enthusiasts together. Adopting and mastering filmmaking practices took place within the formal context of the club. Nevertheless, it was not so much the institution that kept the community together, but the leader’s charismatic personality. According to Sándor Haáz Jr., Ervin Schnedarek’s intelligence, humour, and love of the cause made it possible for the film club in Târgu Mureș to enjoy a nation-wide reputation in the 1970s – the three clubs running in Sibiu and Câmpulung, and Târgu Mureș were on the firmest ground.

The interviews lead us to the conclusion that Ervin Schnedarek was a key figure of the amateur filmmaking in Târgu Mureș not solely as a club leader; his personality was looked upon as an institution that was ready to give good advice and provide everyone with technical equipment. Regarding the description of the era, his attitude towards technology and his access to the laboratory equipment may both be relevant. After World War II, while he was fulfilling his duty as the instructor of the projectionist and cameraman training, Ervin Schnedarek, in a peculiar way, had access to the movie camera and called into play his ingenuity to procure the necessary film stock: ‘by means of the film school, I managed to get a 16 mm camera, which was detached from an airfighter brought down during the war. It did not even have a viewfinder, but I could not wish for more. It went with a 15 meter long film strip, but there was no film stock at all to find after the war. After shooting, I would adopt a reversal technique and transform it into a positive picture fit for screening purposes. Someone heard about what I was doing and paid me a visit. This is how I made a great friend in Mr. Popescu, who got so enthusiastic about my first results that he put together all his money and left for Bucharest to buy a 2x8 Zeiss-Movikon movie camera. This made it all much easier’ (Schnedarek to Buglya 2004: 5).

The former story of the film camera does not stand as a single case but is also symptomatic of those times: it speaks of the opportunities that presented themselves in the 1950s and 1960s. The wider context, that is to say, the functioning of the regime may be caught on the hop through these tactics adopted to get hold of a camera that people eager about filmmaking could build for themselves in the 1950s. It appears that people who could lay their hands on a camera could do so partly because of the nature of their profession. Gaining access to technology was first and foremost dependent on mobilizing, nurturing their relationships.
since the availability and the market of the technical apparatus necessary for shooting, developing, and screening a film was highly centralized: certain institutions controlled them, even if they did not know how to use them. The following report on the conditions present in Cluj-Napoca at that time speaks of similar situations: ‘There were film cameras at the police station, the secret police headquarters, the museum, the court, the technological university, the students’ cultural centre, the pioneers’ palace, perhaps even at the public library; there were also 16mm movie cameras, not just 8mm ones, as well as projectors. However, technology itself did not spread. So, they did not use it at the interior ministry, and the television studio was the only one to use the 16mm technology, partly, for news reporting’ (Márton Imecs).

The centralization of technology did not affect the institutional framework alone but also resulted in setting up a hierarchy of localities: filmmaking and technological infrastructure was mostly centralized in Bucharest while people living in provincial areas had to carry out the acquisitions through their personal connections/social network. I did not encounter this system of procurement through Ervin Schnedarek alone, as the story of the camera of István Barabás (another amateur) reaffirmed this state of affairs: as a painter, he often travelled to Bucharest where he purchased a second-hand film camera and a projector in order to record his family’s events and trips.

According to Sándor Haáz Jr., in the seventies, the fact remained that one could buy only second-hand cameras and the transaction had to be kept secret: Mr. Schnedarek functioned as a sort of central commission shop for selling these used cameras on commission. Upon returning from an overseas delegation, people (for example, doctors or diplomats) would often sell their movie cameras to Mr. Schnedarek so that possessing a recording device at home would not call any unwanted attention to themselves on the part of the regime. Actually, those who could manage to keep possession of a camera were mostly those in the service of the power, and so they were the ones who were allowed to go abroad.

Ordinary people’s possession of film cameras – just like of any other type of communication technologies – was considered a subversive act and as such, suspicious in the eyes of those in power: Sándor Haáz Jr. related other examples of suspected subversion: ‘Well, back then, anyone making a film was suspicious. Only spies made films. Flying on a plane, for example, was also forbidden. They believed that only spies looking for the opportunity to overthrow the regime would fly. This is such a typical, stupid, and mindless communist doctrine.’ Mr Haáz continues on a different topic: ‘The cine camera and the typewriter! We had a hell of a campaign going on here. They went crazy about typewriters. If someone had a typewriter at home, house searches were carried out, teeth were knocked out, and who knows what else. So, words such as passport, typewriter, and cine camera were just as dangerous as video would come to be later on. Video (players), colour TVs, etc. were confiscated between 1985 and 1990.’ Sándor Haáz Jr finished by admitting: ‘These are some communist stupidities that give people a nervous stomach even nowadays’. It was again Ervin Schnedarek who would assist the acquisition of materials and film processing, and who mobilized his acquaintances in order to obtain chemicals – because he operated a sort of private laboratory.

By the end of the seventies, film cameras
had become a commodity as they became available in the shops: mostly Soviet-made cameras were brought in bearing the brand name Quarz. Until the beginning of the 1980s, raw materials were available although developing films was still a problem: there were no commercial places to take film. Instead, processing was done by certain state institutions equipped with laboratories and developing chemicals. Private individuals could only get into these facilities through the help of personal contacts: Ervin Schnedarek would fulfil such a role later on as a club leader in Târgu Mureș until 1989.27

Summary

The films of the Haáz family’s first generation (just as Ervin Schnedarek’s and István Barabás’s stories that belong to the same generation) represent a script for media domestication that was possible in Târgu Mureș in the two decades following the Second World War. The camera got into the family home through the intervention of the head of the family, and it worked its way into the lives of the next two generations. The point of interest that speaks the most eloquently of the period was how they had access to a movie camera through their occupational obligations and different professions (ethnographer, projectionist, instructor, and painter), as well as the assistance of certain relationships. Simultaneously, we can also assume what other areas of life film could enter in the cities of Cluj-Napoca and Târgu Mureș, which had been marginalised. My research revealed the non-theatrical filmmaking situations that were considered proper at the time: ethnographic filming, studying dance choreographies, documenting museum collections, making instructional films, and transforming filmmaking into a creative device of the professional artist-painter.

Although the dance instructor’s act of recording his children in 1962 was an isolated incidence, it is still representative of the media users’ stories that speak of actions taken despite the supervision of the public institutions. Sándor Haáz Sr.’s and his contemporaries’ filmmaking habitus is inseparable from the stories of centralization and supervision that accompany the representational devices / communication technologies in the 1950s and 1960s of Romania. The stories of the film cameras his son acquired give us a further insight into the 1970s as a sequel to its previous episodes. Behind the vicissitudes of obtaining the second-hand cameras and hard-to-get film stock, we can recognize the story of an even more intensive supervision exerted over the representational devices / communication technologies, which must have compelled individuals to an increased use of manoeuvring/tactics. His attitude is not that of a consumption-oriented individual: he did not acquire technology by purchasing it shops but through the support of his acquaintances and connections. The socialist trade-union film club did not merely stand for a creative workshop but it was a means of gaining access to the representational devices, at the same time.

Through Sándor Haáz Jr.’s and Ervin Schnedarek’s stories, we are introduced to a further chapter in the era of the Romanian socialist regime while its internal division also gets into the limelight. The cartoonist study

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27) Márton Imecs, as the employee of the Museum, fulfilled a similar role as a laboratory technician in Cluj-Napoca.
group organized in the Pioneers’ Palace in Târgu Mureș, as well as the film club in The Cultural Centre of the Syndicates provided a formal framework for filmmaking until 1990, one that could meet the promotional objectives of the regime’s community education and popular art in the same way as the amateur film festivals organized nation-wide. However, the club members’ commitment and gradual professionalization were shaped by the informal relationships and not the production of knowledge imposed from above.

Making home movies did not become a widespread practice because direct control and the absence of technology from the market (and the concomitant circumstances involving the formerly mentioned tactics) was holding back this kind of activity. Therefore, we cannot consider the middle-class amateur filmmakers’ work characteristic of the period; instead, the relevant cultural patterns were rather made up of those motivations that urged people to be engaged in filmmaking despite the highly supervised conditions: ‘It was specifically the maternal and paternal instincts that led the way towards amateur filmmaking. In addition, among the young people, the ones who were inclined to do it alone were those who were so dazzled by the magic of film that they started to attend various trade-union study groups of this kind and learn about filmmaking. But even those pictures bear the trade-marks of amateurism’ (Márton Imecs).

Recording family life and travelling, as well as using the medium of moving images for creative purposes are all modalities whose existence is not specific to the period under investigation but follow up pre-existing media practices.

However, media use amidst the strict supervisory conditions and the domestication of film may be considered a specificity of the age.

After all, the stories about the troublesome ways of acquiring movie cameras and film stock give us an insight into the identity and prestige attached to the medium. In addition, the prestige of the medium was also amplified by the prevailing system of power as well as the semi-professional activities of those committed to creating the right conditions for filmmaking. Thus in this case the medium of film constitutes a part of reality: practising it and gaining access to being worth every risk and effort. ‘It is a force that can create and sustain communities, shape people’s relationships, and influence individual careers and the process of professionalization.


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