'There is No Future Here': Digital Trauma Processing in Hungarian Migrants' Blogs

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Abstract: This paper analyses blogs and Facebook communities of Hungarian migrants, focusing on their traumatic relationship to their home country. Eastern-Europeans in Western Europe are mostly considered economic migrants, as opposed both to expats and refugees. The term 'economic migrant' is frequently used in a derogatory way in a political context (see the Brexit terminology). My research sheds light on the fact that the reasons for migrating are much more complex than simply looking for a better job or livelihood in another EU country. Hungary used to be a low mobility country traditionally. The unprecedented increase in migration rates in the 2010s is clearly linked to recent political and societal changes according to the blogs: most Hungarian migrants name the 'loss of future' as their reason for relocation. The paper links the lack of perspective of migrants to the impact of illiberal democracy on people's everyday lives, including the growing level of anxiety connected to the hurting of the basic psychological needs of competence, autonomy and relatedness, as defined by self-determination theory. Furthermore, I argue that even though digitally connected migrants are able to keep ties to their homeland and build transnational networks, these processes do not provide means for coping with a specific pre-migratory trauma which derives from a deep disillusionment with the home country and involves transnational re-negotiations of identities; and I show how digital migrant communities develop coping strategies on social media platforms, including the emergence of new digital genres such as social poetry.

Keywords: Digital trauma, migrant blogs, economic migrants, connected migrants, self-determination theory, illiberal democracy, Hungary, social poetry

'Go, baby, because there is no future here' (H. A. 2017)

A *social worker* with a degree in sociology moves from Hungary to London, to do a slow paid job in the building industry, a characteristic step for educated Eastern Europeans moving to Western Europe. To pursue both his research interests and his profes-

sional and personal inclination to help people he sets up a Facebook group for others like him who would like to relocate to London. He assists them in finding jobs and studies them in the field as an ethnographer. He wants to know why Hungarians move to London, to the – jokingly – so called 'second largest Hungarian city in Europe.' He writes a blog post for 'Határátkelő', the 'Bordercrossing' online community of Hungarians living abroad. He comes to the conclusion that Hungarian migrants in London are in fact refugees (Sámán 2013).

Two academics, a married couple, formerly in politically linked cultural policy positions in Hungary, relocate to Vienna for a career restart. They write an article for an online journal. In a confessional style they describe their personal reasons for moving, explaining their political background and transition-related identity issues. They think that they are 'refugees of sorts' (Braun and Rozgonyi 2016).

Digital trauma processing

This paper was written as part of my larger project titled 'Trauma Studies in the Digital Age: The Impact of Social Media on Trauma Processing in Life Narratives and in Trauma Literature: The Case of Hungary'[1]. In the framework of the TRAPRODIG project I have introduced and been developing the field of digital trauma studies. Using a digital ethnography approach of Facebook groups, in particular digital participant observation, combined with rhetorical analysis and blogs and comments, I theorise the paradigmatic shift in the nature of trauma processing in the novel digital environment in connection with silence (Menyhért 2017). Sharing traumatic experiences on social media via posts and comments helps overcome the barrier of silence surrounding the trauma on all three levels: the victim not being able to speak about it as a consequence of initial traumatisation; others not being able to listen to the victim out of fear of being traumatised themselves via the transmission of trauma (secondary traumatisation); and silencing as an official oppressive practice by a totalitarian regime (tertiary, collective traumatisation). Social media provides an environment even for processing collective historical trauma that was a taboo for decades, in Facebook groups such as 'The Holocaust and My Family' (Menyhért 2017). The case of Hungary is an example of how unprocessed historical traumas have an impact on recent political and socio-cultural developments, in this case, the shift towards illiberal democracy. One of the themes of the project is transcultural trauma related to migration and transnational online writing. This paper analyses 1) Hungarian migrants' blogs in relation to a specific trauma that derives from a deep disillusionment with the home country, 2) focusing on the connection with the impact of illiberal democracy on people's everyday lives, while 3) showing how digital migrant communities develop coping strategies on social media platforms.

'Double absence' vs 'connected migrants'

In our (post)digital age the figure of the 'connected migrant' (Diminescu 2008) seems to have replaced the previous paradigmatic image of the 'uprooted' (Kristeva 1977) and 'displaced' (im)migrant (Sayad 2004). In the 1980s Abdelmayek Sayad described the immigrant as a persona non grata, a 'doubly displaced' 'permanent foreigner' who is 'always in the wrong place', constituting a 'source of embarrassment' (Sayad 2004; Bourdieu 2004: xiv) for the host society. Today's 'connected migrants' are considered to be able to maintain ties with their home country as well as to build a connection with the host country, i. e. to establish transnational networks and 'digital diasporas' (Brinkerhoff 2009) that prevent them from feeling uprooted (Diminescu 2008), or enable them to recognise and utilise the new character of the absence-presence dynamics in the era of the new media (Veikou and Siapera 2015).

Sayad and others described the 'suffering' and the trauma of 'double absence' as a combination of physical absence from the home country and symbolic absence: not being noticed, appreciated and being discriminated in the host country in the pre-digital age. Yet we can ask: will the 'double absence' cease to be the basic experience for (im)migrants in the contemporary milieu, due to the fact that transnational migrants are able to keep ties to their home country via digital means? Speaking about the novel, accessible, non-expensive means of communication available for the 'connected' migrants (2008: 567), Diminescu stated in her ground-breaking manifesto that the 'double absence' of the immigrant, as it was described by Sayad, is no longer meaningful, because the notion of presence is no longer (exclusively) physical in the digital era, and because virtual bonds with one's family and the remaining online network in the home country are sufficient to overcome the trauma of migration. Yet some questions are still left unanswered: What happens when 'belonging' and 'absence' are problematic on the symbolic level not so much in terms of the relationship with the host country, as with the home country? How will the new modes of digital presence have an impact on a trauma of migration that is the result of a deep disappointment in the home country, as it can be observed in Hungarian migrants' blogs in the 2010s?

The answers to such questions depend on the many factors that can cause trauma and pain in connection with migration (Perez and Foster 2001; Schouler-Ocak 2015), and it is not yet known how these are affected by the potential trauma processing possibilities provided by the digital environment (Menyhért 2017). Researchers of migration and refugee trauma have drawn attention to 'cultural bereavement' (Eisenbruch 1991; Bhugra and Becker 2005), extreme homesickness, transition shock characterised by symptoms similar to PTSD or adjustment disorder, including anxiety, depression, a higher risk of mental illness (Hron 2010: xii). Among the symptoms are irritability, easily triggered aggression outbursts over seemingly trivial issues, extreme tiredness, withdrawal etc. The symptoms are all the more difficult to navigate because of cultural differences in coping skills, the lack of cross-cultural communication skills of both the migrants and the people in the host country (Bäärnhielm and Mösko 2015) and, on the practical as well as the symbolic level, because of discrimination, bias, and racism. Interiorising the downgrading viewpoint projected upon them, 'adopting a depreciatory image' (Fangen and Hammerén 2012: 7) of themselves can lead to the lowering of self-esteem and inferiority complex in migrants (Romani, Feixa and Latone 2012), causing new problems, a kind of secondary traumatisation (Menyhért 2017), resulting in learned helpless-

ness (Seligman 1972). The latter prevents migrants from being able to act confidently in the host society even when opportunities arise (Küey 2015: 65).

The traumatic migratory experience has been described as a permanent state that will not come to an end when the migrant arrives and settles in the host country, as it is 'not a mere interval between fixed points of departure and arrival, but a mode of being in the world – "migrancy"', that is, living 'on the frontier', being 'the other' (King, Connell and White 1995: XV). In Sayad's case studies the Algerian migrant workers describe their state as a permanent exile, and themselves as 'someone who always arrives late: you get there, you know nothing, you have to find out everything, learn everything […] you are behind the rest, behind the French, always catching up' (2004: 59). When they go home to visit, they don't talk about their lives in France, they keep silent about their traumatic experiences (18). The don't share the 'loneliness and the sadness' (16) with those who don't yet know 'how France gets under your skin' (11), how 'France is inside you' 'as though we were possessed' (12), neither do they share the experience of discrimination, French people being 'immediately suspicious' (45) of them, the knowledge that 'there is always a frontier, you are not the same as them' (48). And they don't ask questions from those who return to their villages, unsuccessful, as they know these are the men 'France has beaten up' (13).

Salman Rushdie describes how writers, 'exiles, emigrants or expatriates are haunted by some sense of loss, some urge to reclaim, to look back', adding that the 'physical alienation' from the homeland, not being 'capable of reclaiming precisely the thing that was lost', leads to 'creating fictions', about 'imaginary homelands' (1982: 10, 15, 19). He defines migrant identity as 'at once plural and partial;' (15) and migrant perspective as 'double', as migrants are 'at one and the same time insiders and outsiders' (19). Exiled writers are also considered 'mediators' between cultures and at the same time 'detached from both cultures' (Mardossian 2002: 16).

Researchers have found that social media networks facilitate migration, via, for example, making it easier for people planning to migrate to be connected to those who have already migrated and get information and help (Dekker and Engbersen 2012; McGregor and Siegel 2013). Some researchers are of the opinion that keeping strong ties – online or not – to the home country lengthens/prevents the integration process in the host country (Komito 2011). Others have found that just as the level of sociocultural homeland engagement and integration correlate (Bilgili 2014), the level of social media activity of certain individuals will not be different pre- and post-migration, it will be the same in the home country and the host country; further the processes of 'ethnic encapsulation', and 'cosmopolitanisation' do not exclude each other, they can run in tandem (Leurs and Ponzanesi 2018).

In this paper I study how Hungarian migrant blogs deal with culture shock (Oberg 1960) and with their traumatic relationship to the home country. I also look at the shared activities that their digital communities engage in to process this trauma. Contrary to what earlier literature suggests, I argue that keeping ties and building networks online in itself is not enough to process the migration trauma. I propose that special means are needed in the particular case when the trauma is mainly pre-migratory (Perez and Foster 2001), deriving from a deep disappointment in the home country. I also show some ways which online communities have spontaneously created in order to deal with this disillusionment and to boost their resiliency via community action.

(Im)migrants, economic migrants, expatriates, asylum seekers and refugees

The distinctions between the terms migrant, economic migrant, expat(riate), immigrant, refugee and asylum seeker are not clear-cut in common usage. 'Migrant' is supposed to be the neutral/legal term, referring to a person who relocates to another country. An 'economic migrant', as defined, for example by Wikipedia, is 'someone who emigrates from one region to another to seek an improvement in living standards because the living conditions or job opportunities in the migrant's own region are not sufficient' ('Economic migrant' 2018)[2]. An 'expatriate' (expat) nowadays is considered to be a professional/skilled migrant residing/working in a country different from their citizenship, moving because of their jobs, and often thought to be living in a 'bubble', not integrating in the host country. 'Refugees' leave their home country due to life threatening circumstances, and have subsequently been granted asylum in another country, whereas, according to the legal distinction, 'asylum-seekers' also fled their country, but yet await the decision about their legal status. Commonly the latter two are referred to as refugees.

In several countries, globally, among them in the United Kingdom, in the Brexit terminology, 'economic migrant' has become a derogatory term as opposed to 'true' refugees towards whom the host country has the moral responsibility to offer shelter (Hamilakis 2015). British tabloids have been perpetuating the negative representation via constant repetition for five years, since Theresa May (at the time home secretary) announced the new UK policy of creating a 'hostile environment' for illegal immigrants in 2013 (Travis 2013; Kirkup and Winnet 2012). The immigration bill in principle targeted illegal/undocumented immigrants, but in fact it has raised the general level of suspicion towards all migrants, as the proposed-by-May program of hostility revived and legitimised the deep-rooted resentment toward the symbolic 'other', 'the foreigner' as a threat for the in-group (Papastergiadis 2004), disturbing the local order (Clifford 1994). Research results indicate that representations of all groups of 'outsiders' (refugees, asylum seekers, immigrants) were painted in negative light in the British press between 1996–2006, and that the 'degree of associated negativity' was the highest in connection with (im)migrants, whereas the most sympathy was shown towards refugees (Khosravinik, Krzyanowski and Wodak 2012: 287). The pre-programmed hostility spread over the 'social image' (Bigo 2002: 71) of all migrants; except perhaps for expats who are confined to their bubble, to their 'bounded space' (Fechter 2007: 45) and thus do not serve as a cause of disruption and a source of anxieties (Fortier 2012: 32) and projections in the host society.

Populist political forces have been utilising the abovementioned negative contexts as well as the diffuse use of the terms for the purpose of mixing refugees with migrants, especially 'economic migrants'. The following is a characteristic example from the tabloid press:

> Mr Farage said "difficulties" in a country did not necessarily make citizens leaving refugees. He said: "Just because somebody comes from a country that's got difficulties does not make them a refugee (Nair 2017).

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[2] I am aware that Wikipedia is considered an unreliable source, but I have chosen it for reference here, because it represents public opinion, in its changeability, and intangibility, and that is exactly what I discuss in connection with the usage of the terms 'economic migrant', 'refugee'.

A similar rhetoric can be observed in a speech made by Kevin Rudd, Prime Minister of Australia in 2013: "Let's just face some facts here. A whole bunch of people who seek to come to this country are economic migrants, who are seeking to comport themselves as refugees." The piece of news reporting on the speech by Rudd even used the expression 'economic refugees' (Hawley 2013), further juxtaposing the terms and emphasising the negative message.

Somewhat differently with regards to purpose, but similarly in terms of methods, 'migrant' in Hungary has become a derogatory term of political propaganda as it is constantly in use instead of 'refugee'; referring to asylum seekers and refugees as 'illegal immigrants'. As the discourse analysis of Dutch and German media rhetoric by Pohl and Wodak showed, 'refugees are indirectly depicted as being dirty people, not civilized, thus not welcome' (2012: 209). In the Hungarian case their image is supplemented by the element of illegality which in turn brings the image of the immigrant stealing jobs of locals into the picture.

Such ideologically burdened complex discursive practices have a negative impact on how average people relate to foreigners, and on how people who relocate define their own identities. In a recent (December 2017) Facebook poll posted in the public group 'Expats in the Hague (Den Haag)' members were asked how they 'regard themselves as non-nationals living in the Netherlands', and what term they use when referring to themselves. The options were: expat (129 votes); immigrant (52 votes, used later by many commenters as a synonym of migrant); foreigner (49 votes), international student (18 votes). As for the use of the terms the general agreement was that expats are usually higher educated and wealthy, they reside in a country for a certain period, whereas (im)migrants often have the intention to settle for an indefinite time or permanently, and they are not wealthy; and, 'if you come without a job, you are an immigrant, if you come because your job brought you, you are an expat'; 'expats don't like being called immigrants because in their mind they are poor people'. Another commenter thought that immigrants can be 'relational (love)' and 'economical' [sic], and equated the latter group with the 'so called refugies [sic] and poor non westerners'. We can thus see that the common usage of terms is varied, sometimes confused, and burdened with negative overtones and discriminatory contexts, as a consequence of which, at least in this sample, foreign people living in the Netherlands seem to prefer being considered an 'expat' over '(im)migrant.' Another contributor, responding to the previously cited comment, linked that statement to the influence of right-wing political propaganda: 'do you generalize that so called 'westerners' are expats and the opposite, let's say 'the easterners' are immigrants? Also, do you mean that the so called 'westerners' (expats) are 'higher educated' and 'higher' than who? Than the 'poor non westerners'?? M? Maybe Geert Wilders had brainwashed you pretty well'.

Although the last comment assumes that the distinction it describes is only characteristic of right-wing political views, it seems that in everyday usage this is the most commonly associated context. In a blog written by a Hungarian couple living in Thailand it also becomes evident that the direction of the relocation in terms of the financial status concerns not only the individuals, but also the power dynamics between countries:

> You see if you are from a country that is richer than this, you are an expat, and if you are
> from a country that is poorer, you are a migrant. [...] We are expats here, because we are
> from Europe after all, and luckily no one in Thailand knows that Hungary is a poor coun-

try, because if they knew we would become migrants straight away. Not only would we lose our undeserved privileges, but would end up with a pile of disadvantages (Baranyai and Schmidt 2015)[3].

This ironic comment nevertheless reveals the complexity of the issue at the level of identity, which is further enlightened in the blog, with reference to the East-West relationship within Europe:

> Of course this is all very different if you are a migrant, and you started out in the hope of finding a better life, and if, despite being white, you were poorer at home than here. You hardly dare to spend any money in order to save up for the time when you go home, or go somewhere else, and you think of the future and a secure life all the time, when you will not need to worry about weekdays any more, when your future will be secure, and you'll be an expat routinely, not as someone on a unique, long holiday. The migrant is insecure about the future, is scared that the past will pull him/her back, and is only sure about the fact that nothing can be taken for granted, and that all this is about luck. Or at least it has been about luck. Here comes the moment when all can change. Who are we? This and that. […] We are far from being sure about our lives like Westerners, from being self-confident, from believing that we can stay our ground anywhere, from getting rid of our Hungarian defeatism. But we believe again in work enabling us to really make money and that *it is possible to build a future*. […] and we know that it is not because of luck, but because of ourselves (Baranyai and Schmidt 2015, emphasis A.M.).

Eastern Europeans in Western Europe are mostly considered and consequently identify as economic migrants. According to Bourdieu and Wacquant, writing about the work of Sayad, due to historically rooted intercultural power dynamics of superiority-inferiority in the hierarchy of countries, 'every migrant carries this repressed relation of power between states within himself and herself and unwittingly recapitulates and re-enacts it in their personal strategies and experiences' (2000: 175). As to the specifics of the East-West relationship within Europe, impacting the situation and identity relations of Hungarian migrants in Western European countries, 'looking up to' the West has historical roots. The wish to follow the West has been prevalent since the era of the Austro-Hungarian Empire in the area that is Eastern Europe today, with Austria taking the lead, the rest of the nations counting as followers. In the early 20th century Hungarians – members of the urban intelligentsia and gentry – were especially prone to wishing to integrate in the West. Rabikowska argues that

> Eastern Europe has been living with an inferiority complex towards the West throughout the whole post-War period: what was 'normal' in the West was forbidden in the East, what was lacking in the East was available in abundance in the West. […] Having been exposed to the discourse of the transition from Communism to Capitalism for the last two decades, post-Soviet societies must always feel "behind" and never able to catch up (Rabikowska 2010).

Thus it is not surprising that Hungarians, disillusioned with their own country (as we will see in their blog posts), seek a better life in Western Europe. However, as a consequence of

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[3] Translations of citations from the blogs and posts from the Hungarian to English are mine. A. M.

both the historically grounded transnational power dynamics and the present political influence and media coverage surrounding migrants, as individuals they might experience feelings of inferiority, exclusion, and consequent identity problems. In several of the Facebook groups of Hungarians abroad (in the Netherlands, UK, Austria etc.) this topic often comes up and cumulates in long threads of comments. Little sympathy or help is offered in the host societies to navigate the often traumatising mental consequences of their move: they are not supposed to be traumatised as they are not refuges: they are economic migrants who moved to seek a better livelihood. In the following analysis of Hungarian migrants' blogs I will show that their situation is complex, and in a way unique, because many times their trauma derives from their relationship to the home country, Hungary.

Hungarian migration patterns in the 2010s

Hungary has traditionally been a low mobility country. Hungarians, as compared to citizens of other European countries, rarely move even within the country, from one region to another (Molodikova 2013: 195). Statistics show that, in contrast to most other Eastern European succession countries, outward migration to Western Europe from Hungary did not begin to increase straight after the EU enlargement in 2004, but only after 2010 (GKI 2013). The main economical reason for the increase probably was that Germany and Austria, the countries easily reachable for Hungarians, opened their labour market for the accession countries in 2011. The global economic crisis and political changes in Hungary also played a significant part in the increase of migration potential (Gödri 2015; Moreh 2014). According to statistics, migration figures reached up to 80-85.000 in 2011 and 2012, and up to a yearly 100.000 since 2013 (Blaskó and Gödri 2014; Hárs 2013, 2016), with another 370.000 planning to leave (Adam 2017) – from a country with a total population of 10 million.

As these changes are relatively recent, research on post-EU enlargement migration from Hungary is scarce (Moreh 2014; Hárs 2016), as opposed to, for example, numerous studies on Polish migration to Western Europe, especially to the UK (Botterril 2014; Rabikowska 2010; Galasinska 2010). A recent comprehensive analysis of the economic impact of emigration from Eastern European countries over the past 25 years comes to the conclusion that 'while emigration has likely benefited migrants themselves, the receiving countries and the EU as a whole, its impact on sending countries' economies has been largely negative' (Atoyan et al. 2016). The significant level of brain drain that accompanies the increasing migration from Hungary to Western Europe has also invited scholarly interest. (Blaskó and Gödri 2014).

During the past several years the Hungarian press and cultural media platforms have started to pay more attention to outward migration. For example, the research-based map made by Marian (2016) titled 'Number of people born in a given country currently living abroad, as a percentage of current population' was circulated and commented on several platforms. According to one of the articles there is no need to worry about the 600 000 people who left, because in regional comparison the Hungarian migration rate of 6% is significantly less than the Polish 11,5%, Romanian 17,5%, Ukrainian 13 % or Bulgarian 16,5 % (*'Sok vagy…'* 2017).

What, however, is most significant from the point of my research is the fact that the 2010-2011 change in Hungarian migration habits was unexpected and uncharacteristic compared to previous patterns. Based on the migration figures from the period before 2011 Molodikova had assumed that given 'the mobility behaviour of the previous generations and on the demographic situation it is unlikely that there will be a rise in mobility in Hungary' (2013: 195). We can link the change to the worsening of economic conditions, but a study by Boneva and Frieze (2001) shows that there is no direct link between the desire to emigrate and the economic conditions of a given country. Boneva and Frieze link the level of emigration rates to personality types. According their model, the 'migration personality' is characterised by high achievement motivation and high power motivation. Those with a disposition to migrate are more work oriented and less affiliation oriented. That is why a significant level of outward migration is accompanied by brain drain: 'frustration of the aspiration to work up to one's true abilities and the desire that one's work allow for higher levels of achievement can drive individuals to leave their country of origin' (2001: 486).

Judging from the examples discussed in the following section it seems that the Hungarians who emigrated in the 2010s do not belong to the migrant personality type. Rather, what we can observe is that they repeatedly underline that their move is connected to the loss of a calculable, predictable, secure future in the home country. I will show a collection of samples and attempt to interpret what is meant by the phrases such as 'there is no future here'; how this feeling has gained such urgency that compelled people who otherwise would not have moved to emigrate.

Image 1. 'I am standing in the same place, and my homeland is leaving from behind me'.
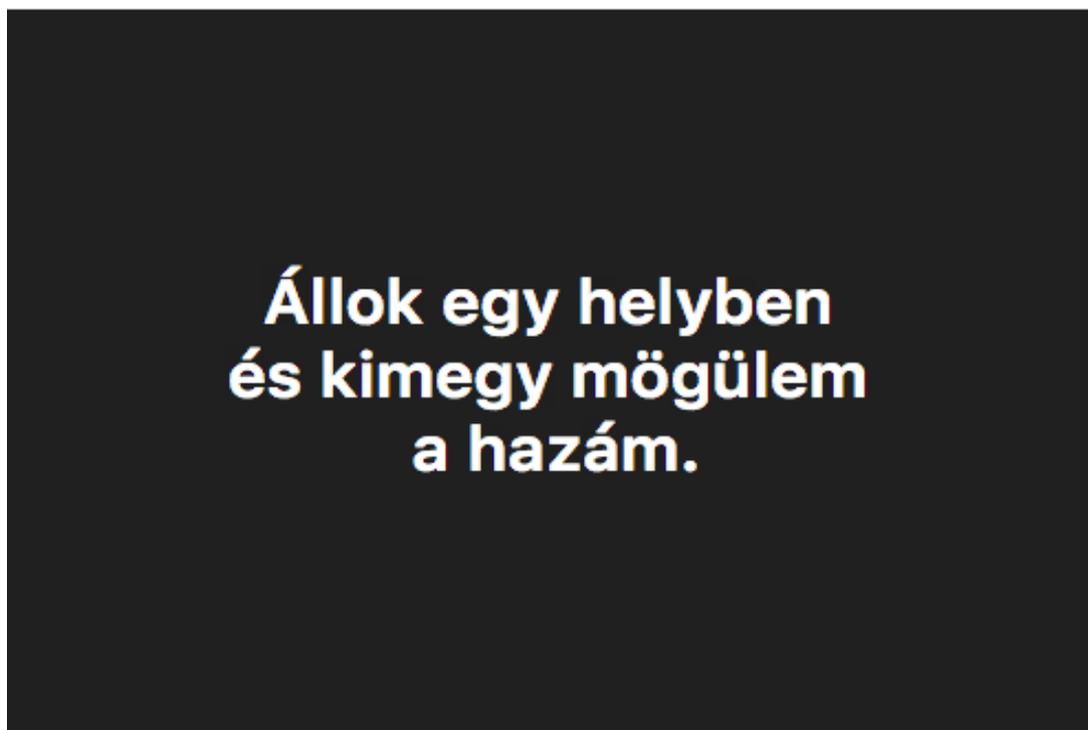
Source: Facebook (published with the consent of the poster)

The image of the 'future' in Hungarian migrants' blogs

I have been following and researching individual blogs, social media communities and Facebook groups of Hungarian migrants living mainly in Western European countries since 2012. At that time, parallel to what statistics show about the increase in outward migration, an increase was noticeable in how many people who moved abroad write blogs. There was a significant increase in the membership of Facebook groups of Hungarians living in different foreign countries, reaching to thousands or even tens of thousands members.

Most blogs are first person accounts recounting the migration experience, in varying genres and frequency, including diaries, confessions, contemplations, personal guidebooks. They share practical advice with newcomers on finding accommodation, employment, healthcare, childcare etc. They offer help in dealing with culture shock, negative experiences in the new country. People also discuss the serious themes of having and losing a home and a homeland, their motivation for leaving, and their relationship to Hungary as a homeland.

The public blog and Facebook page called 'Bordercrossing' (Határátkelő) is an online platform dedicated to the theme of emigration. The Facebook page has almost 54 000 followers. The blog.hu website has a section per continent, and volunteer editors are responsible for each country. People write pieces directly for the Bordercrossing site, connected to themes discussed on the blog. The site also reviews or re-publishes practically everything that becomes available online related to the topic of Hungarian migration, including personal blogs, research articles, opinion pieces. Thus it serves as a valuable resource and archive. There is significant commenting activity in the blog community. The site has a critical attitude towards today's Hungary. Its logo, containing a single sentence pun from the Facebook page 'About' section, refers to being fed up with what is happening in the country: 'The country crossed a border, so we will cross it, too'.

Image 2. 'The country crossed a border, so we will cross it, too', the logo of the Bordercrossing community.

Source: Határátkelő

The individual blog of Diggerdriver was one of the first I read in 2013. It has since become famous (for example, a play in Budapest's Örkény Theatre was based on it). This again shows how much attention migration receives as a cultural theme in Hungary today. The blog introduces all the main threads that appear in many others: the lack of future, the inability to plan, and the disappointment with the homeland:

> At 47 it is difficult to learn a language. I didn't move here to try my luck. I wanted to provide a future for my 8-year-old son, and to earn a decent salary. […] The biggest fault in Hungary is that *the future is being taken away from the young*. One cannot plan for a day ahead, let alone for life. [...] I want to find a homeland for my kid because the present one is not a homeland (Diggerdriver 2013, emphasis A.M.).

The issues of choices, homeland and future is further elaborated in an article by the author pen named Swan Edgar on an outspoken liberal website, 'Kolozsvári Szalonna':

> There is no other way out. […] Those who left, simply had no other choice. It is not about not having the same living standards as in more developed countries. The fact is that *the future does not exist here*. […] One's homeland is where one's home is. One's home is where one's family, loved ones are. Where one is accepted, where one can live a dignified life as a human being, where one can feel free. *Where one has a future*. Hungary – in itself it is only a word. We fill it with content. Or we will empty it. It is up to us whether we can feel at home and whether others will have a place to come home to. It's up to us. Up to all of us. No one else (Swan and Edgar 2016, emphasis A.M.).

The issue of the non-existent future appears in a number of blog posts, Facebook threads, and articles, the contexts ranging from simple to complex: jobs, children, schooling, mortgages, life's opportunities, chances and choices, political interpretations, as seen in the following samples:

> This is my only chance for a better future (Andrea 2016).

> I did not have a mortgage in Hungary, I was not bankrupt. But it was impossible to plan the future. […] So I set off, aged 45 years 11 months. I could not see my future, the future of my child. I could not plan for one week, let alone with a perspective of 5-10 years (Little Pearl 2016).

> We simply wanted a liveable life and future, and we have found this in our new homeland, and thanks a lot, but we don't want any more of Hungary, where when I had pneumonia my boss said I either come to work or I don't need to come ever again. We still miss our friends at home, but we have grown used to being here, we have new friends, and I could not wish for a better boss or a better job. There is a future here, we have even started to think about having kids, at home this was out of the question (Nóra 2007).

> You can have a vision about your future there. At home you don't have that any more (Krisztina 2017).

I am forced to choose between my brain and heart, because I cannot have both in one place, because at home the future was taken from me (Andrea 2016).

– Young people are completely right. There is no future here. They can see that, they feel it. And technology is wonderful. We can see and hear our grandchildren, and we know that they have a job, good living standards. This is comforting for all parents and grandparents. The parents can follow the kids. And they do. Petrol and public transport is not cheap in Hungary either. Our children can visit us, they can afford to. One should not complain. They will never return. It has to be accepted.
– That's it! Parents are in contact with their kids only on chat and we should be happy to at least have that! It is insane, but still it is superb this way, in spite of the fact that the country has lost what is most important: Families!
– And the future (Facebook thread).

A couple with children, after several years abroad, followed by an unsuccessful attempt to return to Hungary, write about relocating abroad again. The phrasing yet again centres around the future:

In the beginning of April we flew again, only this time it was a return flight. Back to the future! Because we knew that there is no future at home, sadly, no matter how strong we had wished for it (Vicky 2016).

The next excerpt was written by a man, who works in Austria, and lives in Hungary, close to the border, but he is contemplating relocation. This is one of the few posts that analyse political context, relating the current problems to the reappearance of out-dated social and political practices that were characteristic of the communist era. The impact of the past hinders the unfolding of a predictable future:

The long-term future has become even more unpredictable and confused over the last two years. [...] I don't currently see a positive future for Hungary. [...] But this unpredictable future, in which there is space for the establishment of a dictatorship and for a renewed shift towards the East, that is what gives me the creeps to move from time to time (Nyúl of the World 2014).

The next blog yet again applies a special perspective when talking about a future in conditional tense; a future that the author could have had if they had stayed in Hungary, compared to the future she 'has' now:

We are still occupied with the same issues, whether we had made the right decision to relocate out here, what kind of future we would have had at home, would we have a home there by now, would our daughter have been born, and what will we have accomplished out here (Klárikiwi 2016).

It is interesting how most bloggers wonder about the future. Normally we do not talk about the future in terms of it existing or not, being there for us, or not, having it, or not. Because the future, in general terms, is 'not there', precisely because it is unknown. People can imagine it, wait for it, plan it, but sudden events change the course of lives, often cruelly. The

following blog – written by Sámán, the social worker who considers Hungarians in London refugees, expresses this clearly and analytically, in the context of the East-West relationship:

> When I was young, I saw the West as my future. It meant how we will live. What we might be able to do in Hungary as well. The chances of this happening have been decreasing. This country turns her face to the past, gazing. You cannot interpret what is happening at home as modernisation. If I was a sociologist, I would call it decay (Sámán 2013).

Thus, it seems, that, according to several bloggers, the country lost direction, lost interest in the future, relying on past practices. The people are under pressure to adapt to this. Those who chose not to adapt, go abroad. The process is painful, as it is closely connected to losing one's homeland. Those who leave have to break ties, because of their deep disappointment. These could be the reasons why – as cited in the beginning of the paper – some people identify as refugees even though legally they are (economic) migrants within the European Union. A number of blogs talk about the trauma-related feelings experienced in connection with losing their home: grief, survival, shame, guilt, experiencing betrayal, lives falling apart:

> You realise that there is nowhere to go home (Swan Edgar 2016).

> Even those having a well-functioning standing feel that their lives are falling apart (Sámán 2013).

> [I left] not because of a desire for adventure, or politics, or studying, just simply to survive (Péter 2013).

> As if you were watching from a hilltop how your home village, your birthplace was being burnt to dust. […] In fact I found a home, as I was suddenly able to breathe again. There was more air (Pálos 2016).

> I feel now that it does not depend on the map where my home is (Gaál 2015).

> I am ashamed because of my own country (Zoltán 2017).

> B. B. feels that Hungary betrayed him (Balek 2017).

The last one is a third person singular account from a victim of the infamous forex (foreign currency) loans that many people in Hungary and Poland have since 2005-2006 taken in Swiss francs and euros to finance purchasing real estate and mortgages, and, post-crisis, fell prey to the subsequent floating in exchange rates, which meant that many are still in debt and at the same time lost both their mortgage and their homes (Buszko and Krupa 2015; Buckley 2013). Petra Gaál, in a Facebook post of 2015 that went viral talked about being abused by the homeland:

> At home I began to feel as if I was living in an abusive relationship with the country. Where they exploit me, rob me, blindfold me so that I can't see it could be better, where they tell me what I can say and what I cannot, where I am encouraged to be afraid, and to

hate. […] I've had enough. I was trusting for years. I love my country. I love Hungary. I am delighted when I can tell people here, out of Hungary, how beautiful it is. But I am lovesick. She does not love me, does not value me. That is why I need to let her hand go. Otherwise I will be sick (Gaál 2015).

We can compare Gaál's text to that of an Irish woman living in Australia. In Ireland emigration is also an important topic, Irish Times 'Generation Emigration' is a 'forum by and for Irish citizens living overseas', where the following piece was published. The Hungarian woman writes a victim narrative, breaking free from an abusive relationship as a last resort. The Irish woman pictures herself as a cheater, filled with guilt, yet she can stay in control, because she is not traumatised:

> Although being at home filled me with a very specific sort of sadness, leaving Ireland left me just as broken hearted, in a very different way. It is as if I am having a tempestuous love affair with my country. I cannot, and do not want to, break away from her. Yet, she leaves me broken hearted each time I visit, and each time I must leave. She is my home. My quiet, my strength and my blood. She is my sense of longing when I am away, and my sense of belonging upon my return. It pains me deeply to see such waves of our young folk flocking to other nations, for the opportunities they cannot find in Ireland (O'Sullivan 2015).

Feelings of migrants towards their home country, belonging and identity is a well-researched topic. Results show that the homeland in most cases, although ambivalently, in the framework of a 'here-and-there' emotional and practical management dynamics, remains a loved place for the emigrant, an object of return fantasies (Birvand and Erdal 2014). Most migrants define their country of origin as homeland, even if they move elsewhere, just like in the following example: 'Ireland will always be home, but Canada is where we will live for the foreseeable future' (Kenny 2017). Hungarians, on the other hand, break up with the country. In their blog posts the lack of future is related to disappointment, as if the country did not keep a promise, changed it attitude, in some cases even broke a contract, as a careless caregiver, or a bad parent.

Breaking ties, social poetry, illiberal democracy and digital homes

The strong, in a way old-fashioned ties of Hungarians to their homeland can be linked to the message of the nineteenth-century poem by Mihály Vörösmarty, Appeal [Szózat], which functions as a second anthem in Hungary. Generations of Hungarians know it by heart, became used to its ethnicity-based, 19th century, nationalist concept of homeland. Schoolchildren sing the first two stanzas at the end of celebrations at schools. The poem talks about being tied to Hungary for life. The commanding, tragic tone and the bounding force are very problematic for a country that is part of 21st century Europe. 'There is no other place / for you upon the Earth / let fortune bless or fortune curse / You must live and die here.'[4] Migra-

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[4] My word by word translation. The translation of Theresa Pulszky and John Edward Taylor is the following: 'Oh, Magyar, keep immovably / your native country's trust, / for it has borne you, and at death / will consecrate your dust! // No other spot in all the world / can touch your heart as home— / let fortune bless or fortune curse, /

tion researchers Sík and Szeitl mention this poem in the context of whether it is possible to remain part of a nation if someone leaves their country, or, according to the 19th century logic, they become traitors, dissidents (2016). The poem, in any case, makes it clearer why leaving their country is such a painful process for Hungarians, and why they need to justify their move. They have to break a command, and an implicit pledge to stay. They thus repeatedly stress that the country is at fault, because it does not function as a homeland any longer.

Elsewhere I have written about the impact of this poem in relation of the Trianon-trauma that after a hundred years still defines collective identity in Hungary, and in the context of my concept of 'frozen currents', referring to the series of unprocessed twentieth-century historical traumas that hinder modernisation (Menyhért 2016). I believe that the last period of recent history in Hungary has produced yet another layer of collective traumatisation.

There is no space in this paper to discuss in depth how my findings about Hungarian migrants' blogs are related to the recent political-societal changes in Hungary. The topic of the Hungarian political scene has been in the focus of growing research interest recently. In political science the changes have been described as the development of 'illiberal democracy' (Krasztev and van Til 2015; Szente 2017; Buzogány 2017; Pap 2018), a 'hybrid regime' (Krasztev 2015; Bozóki and Hegedűs 2017), or as a 'post-communist mafia state' (Magyar 2016). The systematic macro-level moves that made the shift to illiberal democracy possible including: the new Fundamental Law (2012); limiting the power of the Constitutional Court; reshaping and centralising the media; changing the electoral system, putting pressure on civil society (Bíró-Nagy 2017); and centralising the system of regional governments (Szente 2017).

In the framework of this paper I would like to draw attention to the fact that the unprecedented level of increase in outward migration can be a reaction to the impact of the new system on people's everyday lives. The changes people have been experiencing are accompanied by feelings of increasing unpredictability and insecurity. I am drawing on my personal experience when I add that the first noticeable change was the change in 'city-text': the renaming of several important public spaces in Budapest in 2011 (Moore 2013), including Budapest's airport, which in itself caused some confusion in orientation and on the level of identity, too. The previous large-scale ideology-driven renaming of public spaces happened after 1991, as part of the post-1989 transition from communism to post-communism and that time it seemed justified in the eyes of the citizens (Palonen 2006). The unexpected 2011 city-text alterations primarily evoked bewilderment and signalled that they were part of a larger scheme of change. The renaming of streets is noticeable, it impacts citizens in the everyday lives. Legislation after 2010 has also brought many similarly tangible changes that reshaped everyday practices. The National Education Bill of 2011 modified public education in many aspects, including altering almost all the textbooks used in schools, and changing examination requirements on short notice, thus disrupting plans people had for their children. Protests were organised by civilians but subdued after NGOs became targeted, and the media was reshaped, thus news of the protests could only reach a limited audience on digital media. Rapid changes in the legal environment and state administration have led to unpredictability, insecurity and demotivation in the corporate field. Due to changes in the social care system many

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from hence you shall not roam!' The original: „Hazádnak rendületlenűl / Légy híve, oh magyar; / Bölcsőd az s majdan sírod is, / Mely ápol s eltakar. / A nagy világon e kivűl / Nincsen számodra hely; / Áldjon vagy verjen sors keze; / Itt élned, halnod kell.'

different groups got to be at a disadvantage. The growing level of poverty parallel to the worsening conditions in the social and health network has been the cause of increasing anxiety in the lower middle classes. To sum up: according to a 2017 survey about the 'Percentage of EU citizens happy living in their country' (Darin 2018) Hungary was the least happy country in Europe with its 62 percent.

Living as part of a social system that changes rapidly and unpredictably can lead to feelings of loss of security and control, which are among the largest stressors, and can result in anxiety, traumatisation, learned helplessness, depression. According to the self-determination theory (STD) of human motivation developed by Ryan and Deci (1985; 2000), the three basic human needs are those of competence, autonomy and relatedness. Hungarian migrants report in their blogs the experience of losing a future, which forced them to move. If we analyse the blogs drawing on STD as interpretative framework, with an outlook on what happened in Hungary in the 2010s in the political-social sphere, we can view the process as a deprivation of people of competence and autonomy, and hurting their relatedness within society. That is what they experience as 'having no future'. Thus, the deprivation in turn results in a break-up, in the elimination of the links to the home country. The process is accompanied by grief. Migrants go through this process in the hope of gaining a future, that is, a life perspective with the promise of fulfilling the needs of competence, autonomy and relatedness.

Thus, both those who are about to, and those who have already left Hungary need to renegotiate their identities (Rabikowska 2010). This renegotiation has to happen on the one hand in terms of the emigrants' relationship to Hungary, and on the other hand in terms of the migratory experience, their place in the host country. Migrants will encounter the meanings attached to the different migrant types in the media and in common usage. They will renegotiate and reshape their identities, trying to bring their feelings and the outside norms into harmony. It thus can happen that people leave their home country with a refugee/exile identity and arrive in the host country as an economic migrant or an expatriate, according to the norms prevalent in that country.

In the pre-digital age writing was one of the main means of identity-reshaping and processing the migration trauma/experience: 'For those who come from elsewhere, and cannot go back, perhaps writing becomes a place to live' (King, Connell and White 1995: xv). In the (post)digital age social media seems to have become more important in that respect. Social media facilitates online writing and reader response, consequently the migratory experience can reach and be shared with significantly more readers. Social media platforms provide a kind of digital homeland for transnational migrants.

The Facebook groups of Hungarians living abroad, the individual blogs and the Border-crossing community have significant achievements in connecting people, building networks, and sharing their migratory experience. These digital activities improve the resilience levels of migrants, and prevent the migration experience from becoming a trauma on the collective level, not allowing a traumatic silence to encompass the topic.

Moreover, a new digital genre has emerged in connection with Hungarian migration: 'social poetry' (as in social media). Several people make selfies when reciting a few lines of the same poem, and the recordings are combined into a video that is shared online. The first project was titled the 'I can't tell'-selfie. According to the authors, who are Hungarian emi-

grants, this was a specific gesture and attempt to say good-bye to Hungary (Hídvégi 2016). Some 63 Hungarians living in 28 countries on four continents contributed. The cultic poem 'I can't tell' [Nem tudhatom] talks about the meaning of a homeland to its people as opposed to how people from other countries see that land. The poem was written by Miklós Radnóti in 1944, ten months before the poet was killed on a death march in Bor. In the project the recordings were made against backgrounds in outside locations characteristic of the countries where the emigrants live. According to the information on the 'Wedopoetry' website, over 300 000 viewers watched the video. A bilingual crowd-funding website provides information on the project. The English and the Hungarian version differ in one significant detail: the English only mentions 'the complicated relationship [of the contributors] to Hungary', whereas the Hungarian version includes the mention of 'broken hearts'.[5] The website thus addresses different groups of readers differently.

It is a telling gesture to make such a distinction between Hungarian- and English-speaking readers: it is as if the full weight of the loss of the homeland belonged to private sphere of a Hungarian community, not to be disclosed in front of others. As if they kept their traumatic refugee identity within their own group, sharing only their migrant identity with others.

Migration researchers have been talking about the need to rethink the distinction between migrants and refugees; as well as about the need to reconceptualise 'homeland' in the global world of transnational migration even before the refugee crisis in 2015. According to Al-Ali and Koser 'socially homogenous, communal, peaceful, safe and secure homes […] belong to the past (2002: 7). Nevertheless, they note that 'despite the unsettling of previously rooted and fixed notions of home, people engaged in transnational practices might express an uneasiness, a sense of fragmentation, tension and even pain' (2002: 7). Delanty, Wodak and Jones argued that the concept of homeland based on the idea of nation-state and national identities would not necessarily work in the 21st century. They called for a new concept of a 'social Europe', based on solidarity with 'the new others', refugees and migrants, as opposed to the fear of and hostility towards them. The 'social Europe' was to strengthen social ties beyond the borders of the isolated subcultures of multiculturalism (2008: 26, 30). More recently, after the refugee crisis, Hamilakis argued that 'it is debatable whether the distinction between refugee and migrant is still valid and appropriate', the main reason being that the distinction between refugees 'who are forced to migrate in order to find safe haven' and migrants 'who are assumed to have left for economic reasons' 'promotes racist and xenophobic agendas' (2016: 122). My analysis of Hungarian migrants' blogs has added a new aspect to these discussions. It has shown how the traumatic pre-migratory experience impacted by recent political changes towards illiberal democracy develops as a transcultural trauma during migration, and how social media provides the platform and the means to overcome the silence, to share, to establish connections and thus process this trauma in the digital homes of migrant communities.

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[5] The Hungarian version (translated into English for this paper): 'We have a complicated relationship to Hungary. Almost all of us were born in Hungary, but we haven't been feeling at home there for some time. Some of us have already found new homelands. Others will do so later. Some will stay. Regardless of the decision we made/will make, we want to do something about our broken hearts.' The English version: „Hungary is their birthplace but they don't feel at home there anymore. (…) NEM TUDHATOM SELFIE is a farewell gift to their Hungarian roots. Many people feel the same. They have already left to find a new home. Or they will. Or stay in Hungary. This video may help them all find peace while trying to work on their complicated relationship with their birthplace'(Online 2016).

Image 3. Contributors of the 'I can't tell'-selfie
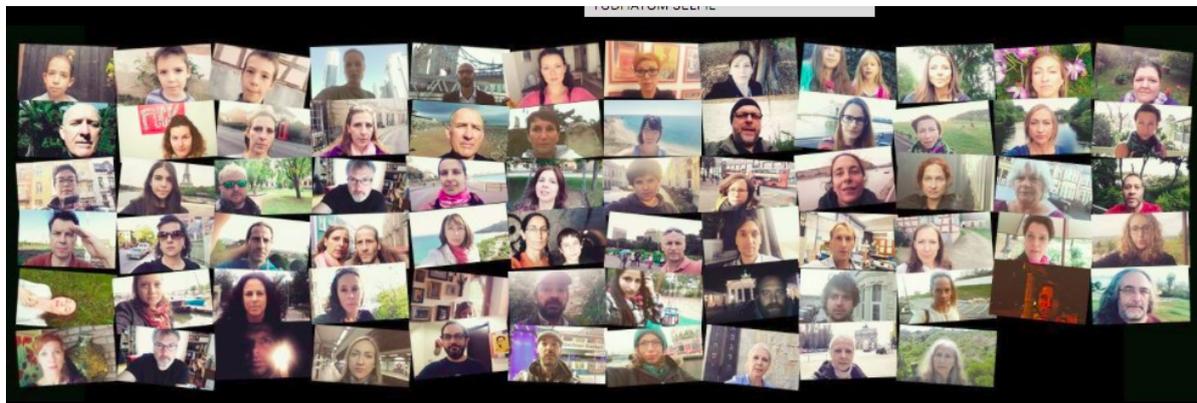
Source: András Hídvégi

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