



## Kálmán Gábor – Marianna Szemerszki Sziget Research 1997-2007

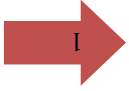
### 1. The history of Sziget Research

We have been making inquiries on the Sziget since 1997. At that time our research was based on interviews and participatory observation. We have been gathering data by means of questionnaire since 1999; and since 2000 we have asked 1000 young people each year with an average half-an-hour-lasting questionnaire. Foreigners were first involved in our research in 2001. Asking foreigners made it possible to compare the Hungarians with the foreigners, first and foremost the Germans and the Austrians with the trans-border Hungarians. By 2002 the entire system of the Sziget Festival's empirical study was formed. Besides the questionnaire, since 2002 - with the help of skilled pollsters - we have also had data forms filled, containing the most important (demographic, learning) data. Through this, our annual database comprises approximately 3000 Hungarian and foreign young people visiting the Sziget. The Hungarians and the foreigners were asked by the same, unified questionnaire for the first time in 2007. We can summarize the Sziget researches up till now in the following chart:

Year	Questionnaire - Hungarian	Time of filling the questionnaire	Contact - Hungarian	Contact - Foreigner	Questionnaire - Foreigner
1999	542	15	-	-	-
2000	972	27	test	test	100
2001	1050	30	test	test	295
2002	1005	30	1006	406	302
2003	972	42	1074	398	303
2004	1013	30	1293	847	-
2005	624	44	594	674	-
2006	1040	35	1033	820	-
2007	750	35	761	766	413

### 2. Theoretical and methodological questions of the Sziget researches

The Sziget researches raised a number of theoretical and methodological questions from the very beginning. Following Zinnecker we took the theory of youth epoch changing as a starting point, supposing that in the 90's it would accelerate in Hungary and the adolescent life period would be prolonged. The early independency of youth and the prolongation of the adolescent life period create the audience of the Sziget. As a consequence of the early independence more and more groups of the young go to the Sziget; and with the elongation of the learning period, with the postponement of entering work, marrying and having children, spare-time activity becomes more intensive for a longer period for a wider group of young people (Gábor 2000).



The other important proposition at the beginning of the Sziget researches was the will-be middle class hypothesis. This new stratum of youth - which, according to Veblen, is the leisure class and can be connected to higher education and conspicuous consumption – becomes the public of the Sziget (Veblen 1975). At the same time we maintained that the Sziget Festival embodies the youth epoch changing, thereby the Sziget research becomes decisively important in the studies about Hungarian young people.

The crucial point of the youth epoch changing is that the young are becoming parts of the market increasingly. This involves automatically that the growth of time spent in education goes together with the growth of young people's consumer status. As a consequence, the developing leisure market (represented by the Sziget) becomes the most important space for young people's spare-time activity. We claim that this new youth is embodied by the youth of festivals. We emphasized that the youth of the Sziget can be interpreted in the process of middle classification, and that the Sziget is an important place for socializing the youth into middle-class, too: it is the Sziget of middle-class. Our studies have convinced us that we can distinguish a traditional and a new kind of middle class (Gábor –Szemerszki 2005; Gábor – Gaul – Szemerszki 2006).

The basis of the forming of this new young middle-class in place of the old one is that the development of the capitalist society is also a transition from the society of want into the society of affluence. At the same time this is a new interpretation of the will-be middle class. The classical description of the society of want is attached to Bourdieu's *La Distinction*, while Schulze's *Elebnisgesellschaft* embodies the society of affluence (Bourdieu 1984; Bourdieu 1998; Schulze 1992; Schulze 1998). Scarcity is determined by need, limited opportunities, constraint, restriction, "given" relations and strong hierarchy. The characteristics of the society of affluence – in this context the festivals – are: search for experience, wide range of opportunities and optional relations, uneven hierarchy, the mixture of vertical and horizontal hierarchies. In Schulze's experience-society consumption is by no means simply just using up existential goods and services, but in a cultural context it also means the process of social presence and self-performance (Mary Douglas – Baron Isherwood 1998).

It can be seen in the Sziget Researches, that connecting cultural taste to music, clothing and youth cultural styles are optional for the individual. While making these choices, appears not only the endeavour to satisfy the consumptions, but also the fashion of consumer goods, which is increasingly expressed on the Sziget in the great variety of wines, spirits, music genres and clothing styles. This entails the diversity of interpreting the meanings of different styles, therefore the complexity of research methods, too. Thus, the youth of festivals embodies the youth of the second modernity, in which the individual assumes a certain personal style, while the festival, with Schulze's words, creates a kind of optional environment, which comes to life in the cultural-economical world of globalization. This is also supported by the fact that the Sziget is becoming more and more international, more precisely, becoming international will be its only chance to survive.

We can interpret the Sziget phenomenon also as a transition from modernity into post modernity. What happens on the Sziget is the same as in the postmodern world, namely, taking in the high culture to the everyday life, in other words the aesthetization of everyday life. Strictly speaking, modernism is attached to the artistic movements at the turn of the twentieth century, which gain new meanings in a postmodernist approach by the end of the twentieth century. Such artists represent that era like Joyce, Yeats, Gide, Proust, Kafka, Mann, Musil, Lawrence and Faulkner in prose writing; Rilke, Pound, Eliot, Lorca and Valery in poetry; Strindberg and Pirandello in drama; Matisse, Picasso, Braque, Cézanne and the futurists', dadaists', surrealists' movement in painting; Stravinsky, Schonberg and Berg in music (Mike Featherstone (1991) *Consumer Culture and Postmodernism*). Of course, all this goes back to the 1930's avant-garde, bohemian world of artists.

The Sziget is also a product of post-socialist societies, because in these societies the high culture and its representatives, the university students were sharply isolated from the consumer culture, thus from the majority of the young. This is supported by those data of the Sziget research, which say that its visitors' artistic and cultural activity is much more intensive than the young people's in general. At the same time, as the consequence of consumption's growing importance and with the blending of high culture and consumer culture, the Sziget embodies post-modernity, too.

Another reason which makes the Sziget significant is that in the post-modern era the "consumer knowledge" becomes remarkably important (what sort of social and cultural values belong to certain goods or a status), just as "learning" the consumer and cultural lifestyles with the help of new "cultural mediators" like the media, industrial design, fashion, advertisements, commercials etc. The young pick up this knowledge basically from magazines, catalogues, commercials, etc., that is how the type of housing, clothing, etc. becomes more important in shaping the future class-awareness, which is recognizable in television series like *Melrose Place*, *Desperate Housewives* etc. Of course the established models are deriving from the globalization, glocalization and localization, and at the same time they embody these phenomena (Beck 2005).

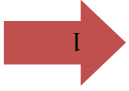
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The passage below from the report of Grass Love Parade, came up in 1999, describes the 2007 Sziget, too:

„Ja, liebe Zuhörer beiderlei Geschlechts, das ganz gewiß und zuallererst wollen diese so phantastisch herausgeputzten jungen Leute, die von überall her, sogar aus Australien angereist kommen, Frieden auf Erden! Aber zugleich wollen sie auch aller Welt zeigen: Seh, es gibt uns. Wir sind viele. Wir sind anders. Wir wollen Spaß. Nur noch Spaß. Und den bereiten sie sich hemmungslos, weil sie, wie gesagt, anders sind, keine Schlägertypen von links oder rechts, keine nachgeborenen Achtundsechziger, die immer nur gegen und nie richtig für etwas waren, aber auch keine Gutmenschen, die, wie wir es erlebt haben, mit Angstgeschrei oder mittels Lichterketten den Krieg bannen wollten. Nein, diese Jugend der Neunziger ist anders gestrickt, wie ihre Musik, die Ihnen, meine lieben Zuhörer und Zuhörerinnen, womöglich nur als das Trommelfell strapazierender Lärm vorkommen mag, denn selbst ich muß, wenn auch ungern, zugeben, daß dieses dröhnende, den Ku'damm erschütternde Wummern der Bässe, dieses erbarmungslose Bum Bum Bum – Tschaka Tschaka Tschaka, kurz Techno genannt, nicht jedermanns Geschmack entspricht, aber diese Jugend ist nun mal in sich und das Chaos vernarrt, will sich volldröhnen lassen und in Ekstase leben...

Warum hat es dich gelockt, in diese Stadt, nach Berlin zu kommen? - >>Weil das super ist, einfach zu erleben, wie viele hier sind...<< - Und Sie, mein Fräulein in Pink: - >>Na, weil ich hier auf der Love Parade endlich mal sein kann, wie ich wirklich bin...<< - Und Sie, junger Mann? - >>Klar, weil ich für Frieden bin, und wie das hier abläuft, so stell ich mir Frieden vor...<< - Und du, meine Schöne in durchsichtiger Plastikhülle? Was bringt dich hierher? - >>Mein Bauchnabel und ich, wir wollen gesehen werden...<< - Und ihr zwei beiden in glänzenden Lackröckchen? - >>Echt geil hier...<< - >>Supergeil...<< - >>Geht voll auf einen über die Stimmung...<< - >>Nur hier kommt mein Outfit voll an...<< ... Denn diese wie losgelassene Jugend, diese Raver tanzen nicht nur, als stecke der Veitstanz in ihnen, sie wollen gesehen werden, auffallen, ankommen, ich sein... Kein Wunder, daß sich jetzt schon namhafte Modedesigner von der Love Parade inspirieren lassen. Und wen verwundert es, wenn bereits jetzt die Tabakindustrie, allen voran Camel, die Techno-Tänzer als Werbeträger entdeckt hat. Und niemand hier nimmt an dem Werberummel Anstoß, denn diese Generation hat sich ganz unverkrampft mit dem Kapitalismus ausgesöhnt. Sie, die Neunziger, sind seine Kinder. Er ist ihnen auf den Leib geschrieben. Sie sind seiner Märkte Produkt. Immer das Neueste wollen sie sein und haben. Was manch einen dazu bringt, dem allerneuesten Hochgefühl mit Ecstasy, der allerneuesten Droge, nachzuhelfen. Sagte mir doch vorhin noch ein junger Mann bestgelaunt: >>Die Welt ist sowieso nicht zu retten, also laßt uns ne Party feiern...<<...“ (Günter Grass (1999) *Mein Jahrhundert*. Göttingen, Steidl Verlag)

The experience of Sziget research has fully supported Gadamer's idea that in essence, not a single productive researcher may dispute that even if the methodological pureness of science is indispensable, the essence of research is not a mere implementation of the usual methods



but rather the development of new methods – and this is based on a researcher’s creativity. (Gadamer 2003)

### 3. Topics and Questions in the Theories of Sziget Research

In the Sziget Researches we proceeded from the hypothesis that in the 90’s the middle classification would speed up and run its course also among the Hungarian youth, and they would get into the learning youth period from the transitional youth period. The learning youth period is connected to the prolonged period spent in school, with the expansion of public-, then of the higher education. It helped catching the changes that, beyond measuring the age and the time spent in education, we placed emphasis on mapping the actual and planned life events. We made some statements based on it: we established the theories of the early independency, the elongation of the adolescent life period and the spreading of leisure scenery.

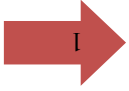
The middle classification was the other initial hypothesis of the Sziget Research. We thought that the precondition of the youth epoch changing, the early independency and the elongation of adolescent life period is to increase the consumer status of the young: since 1997 their consumer status has been increasing continuously, and it is higher at those young people who visit the Sziget than at the other Hungarian young people.

In the learning youth period the situation of youth has changed basically – their relation to the adult society and its institutions e.g. family, school, cultural and political institutions. They become independent earlier, but at the same time they acquire the different values and models with the mediation of the market, thus the role of the media and the consumer industry is increasing in their lives.

Due to the economical and technological development the learning youth period and the middle classification of the society are accompanied by the expansion of consumption (the spread of consumer goods, the boundless scope of the consumer and service industry).

On the basis of our studies we found that the consumer status of the young comes with their economical independence, it means first and foremost that they make their own decision when buying certain consumer goods. The spreading of festivals, commercial radio- and television channels among young people show that they are becoming active participants of the market. The growing importance of the market’s role also means that the possibilities on the field of education and training have been extended, such as on the field of lifestyles. This means that, getting rid of the traditional compulsion of parents, school or ensuring their living, many young people can consider different possibilities. It is more and more up to them e.g. how they manage their sexual or private life, or what kind of educational and training facilities they choose in a world where the range of possibilities is increasing day by day. The question of consumer status became undividable from the question of young people’s individualization and their change of values, and so it became undividable from the process called the evolvement of the informational society. Since the consumer status has become undividable from the communicational status, we had to take notice of Internet usage, its spreading and its quality. The consumer status drew our attention to the question of generation gap: the usage of the new entertainer and communicational devices (cell phone, digital camera, video camera) is different in each generation, and the youngest generation holds the leading post. At the same time the major public of the Sziget shifts toward young people around their thirties, which indicates that the generation gap is being eliminated in the post-modern world of “the youth as model”.

The young visiting the Sziget have more intensive leisure activity than the average of their contemporaries. Cultural and artistic activities play an important role in their lives. One third of them play musical instruments, paint or draw; more than a fifth go to library



regularly; a tenth experimenting with poetry or prose writing and watch art films at least once a week. They are more interested in politics, too. All these drew our attention to the fact that the increase of consumer status is at the same a prerequisite for the increase of civil and cultural status.

The growing materialism and the competitive market produce also its counterpart: those young people who rebel against these demands. They are not excluded by the society; rather they exclude themselves from certain opportunities and they follow the “post material values” in Ronald Inglehart’s words. Inglehart counts here those values, which concentrate on the fulfilment of the individual and on idealistic purposes and those, which advocate the joining to alternative communities (Inglehart 1990 1997). This tendency is observable among the visitors of the Sziget, for example those young people who are against globalization. The preference of alternative culture is noticeable in the media and is expressed in popular music genres, too.

We have been taking foreigners into the Sziget Research since 2001. The studies showed that they are becoming independent earlier, they are older and better educated; they are attached to their cultural style tighter, they have a higher consumer status and are more tolerant than the Hungarian young people.

The youth of the Fél-sziget<sup>1</sup> represents an earlier stage of the youth epoch changing. The challenges, the growing risks, the extending competition and the early independency increase significantly the vulnerability of the young (alcohol, smoking, drug usage, etc.). However, it is true for the Hungarian young aged 15-29, too, that the risk in fact is present not only among the lower educated ones, but also among the culturally privileged groups - although they have other strategies for the solution (Giddens 1992).

This change in the Sziget Researches called for a new theoretical and methodological concept. The basic question is that what trend of the youth epoch changing do we have to recon with. Based on our observations so far the key term is the elongated adolescent life period, which consist of the early independency (this goes with the increased usage of the tension loosening techniques), more time spent in education and postponed employment. This is closely connected with the increasingly important role of the civil status; and with the class-taste and style (music, clothing, housing) - chosen by the individual but influenced mainly by the consumer industry, the media and the world net – which is mediated and embodied by the Festival and the market. The problem of self-awareness can be embedded in the latter topic; one of its questions is that if identity is born with us, or in what form and how much it is “chosen”.

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<sup>1</sup>The organiser of the Fél-sziget studies is the Max Weber Foundation for Social Researches (Kolozsvár) in cooperation with the Sociology Department of the Babes Bolyai University and the EIKKA.

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