MOTIVATIONS AND INCENTIVES OF COMMUNITY MEDIA CONTENT CREATORS: A CASE STUDY OF *SPODNÁS*

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ABSTRACT:
Community media are a natural extension of the various lives of communities within this world. They serve as a platform for sharing content, ideas and views which the communities deem important. They are equally important to the content creator himself and the information recipient. The uniqueness of community content creation begins with the process of creating as such; as the authors are usually the same people as the recipients, the situation in question is very unlike the production processes we know from mass media. This case study aims to map one of the communities situated in the city of Trnava that calls itself *SpodNás*. It analyses the whole process of creating a zine and related community activities via participant observation of the content creation related to this community's everyday life. The author also strives to define the boundaries which divide a passive and an active recipient, primarily through directly surveying the content creators themselves.

KEY WORDS:
audience, community, community media, media production, participatory culture, zine

Introduction to the Community Press

The regulatory system in Slovakia does not specifically recognise the existence of electronic community media. The reason is that Slovak media legislation and specific normative acts regulating Slovak media are designed to work within the dual media system, i.e. within an environment consisting solely of private media organisations and public media services. There is no easy way to insert a non-profit type of medium, which only serves its community and reflects their views, into the system of commercial media operating on basis of the necessary license issued by the state. Right now, the only possibility for the community media of making this work is to exist in forms of various Internet media and print magazines, the latter having little to no obligations towards the media legislation. This is because the vast majority of community magazines do not have a set periodicity of distribution and they therefore do not have to follow any regulations established by the *Act No. 167/2008 Coll. On Periodical Press and Agency News Service.*

These community magazines are called "zines", although some communities tend to call them "samizdats". Albeit there are many similarities between zines and these samizdats, i.e. the press which is not pro-

duced and distributed legally, but through alternative channels,[1] most zines nowadays tend to be completely apolitical in their concept and do not try to fight against the legislative system that is in force, which is a basic purpose of samizdat content. The primary reason is, obviously, that there is no real need for that anymore in the liberal democratic society of the 21st century. Moreover, the Internet currently offers much more anonymity than the print media ever have or ever will.

The terminology behind "zine" describes a whole range of amateur publications, each with a different focus. They are all created by individuals and by whole communities alike. Atton defines their inherent focus as follows: *"At the heart of zine culture is not the study of celebrity, cultural product, or activity, but the study of self, of personal expression, and of the building of community."*[2] The definition also refers to the usual misrepresentation of the words "zine" and "fanzine", the latter of which is always created by a group of fans of a certain media product, literary work, celebrity, fictional character, etc.

Mass Media Audience and Community Audience

The recipient is always the sole focus of any media outlet. Due to their willingness to be interested in media content and to pay attention to commercials, the media audiences are also the sole source of financial profits resulting from the processes of media production. This is the reason why media strive to create a balance between production costs and production value, which should always reflect the demands of the audience, mainly the ways they want to consume media content and the capabilities required to interpret its meaning(s). One of the most significant traits of media is that only a handful of people affiliated with them – i.e. of the media content creators – try to assess and create content that would satisfy the expectations and demands of virtually the whole population. One of the main reasons for the existence of community media is that there is simply no other way for everyone to be satisfied with what they watch, read or listen to. Every human being is at its very core different and thus it is impossible to fulfil niche tastes and preferences with the mainstream content which is unified for everyone to consume. That is why the community media, unlike the mass media, do not actively try to appeal to the biggest audience possible; on the contrary, they try to provide a platform for self-development and help, for people sharing similar worldviews and cultural preferences. According to Boler, the incentive to start creating content for a community medium can range from the frustration coming from practices of mass media to one's desire to make sense of all sorts of things in life.[3]

However, the audience of community media can be active or passive, similarly as in case of mass media audiences. Radošinská adds that this implication might not be as obvious at first, as there is a lack of a rigorous definition of what the term "active audiences" exactly means. Does it mean that the recipient is only able to categorise media contents and choose between various alternatives or is she or he also capable of fully creating and interpreting them?[4] As it turns out with most community media, it is indeed the latter. Some members of the audience are not only able to create media products, but they are also willing to sacrifice their spare time to raise awareness of specific community members' problems or of the possible solutions to them. Usually, these are called "DIY projects", i.e. the projects created from the sheer joy of creating content. These audience members often see a higher purpose in the content they create and do not require any form of praise from others. Pravdová also identifies parts of the audiences which tend to participate in media content creation. She takes participation in reality shows as a suitable example, further mentioning, among others, participation in live broadcasting and in broadcast discussion programmes.[5]

Community media take this process even further; by not having any layer of management that would separate the actively participating media content creators and the recipients. This, in turn, may create an ideal communication environment without any external influences or content creation process regulations.

Another way of looking at the media audience is offered by McQuail who characterises the allegiance of the audience. It is either defined by the channel or by the content.[6] In the context of community media, however, things are not so simple; the audience has a much bigger allegiance to the community than to the content and channels. For this kind of audience, choosing a channel and expressing allegiance towards content comes only after choosing the community. Even then it is not a sure thing to determine whether there even is a suitable community medium for this audience in existence right now. We focus only on the spectrum of the active audience, working with the premise that the community members participate actively on creating community content in their free time. As for the incentive for such participation, Duncombe claims that an individual does not usually possess control over most of his or her time, e.g. due to work, school and other related activities, and community media offer an unparalleled way of using up one's free time actively.[7] Furthermore, while some studies suggest that a producer per se is sometimes present in these types of media as well, this is not the case with *SpodNás*, the zine we intend to analyse below.

The difference between mass and community media from the perspective of reception therefore lies in the ways the audiences spend their free time. Despite the fact that the audience cannot be considered a homogenised mass of people acting without any advanced reasoning anymore, we suspect that the motivation of individuals to choose how they spend their spare time is not affected by their passive consumption practices. It is rather incentivised by actively developing media competences in the context of participating in the processes of media content creation.

This seems to be true especially in case of the community media audiences; however, the proactive behaviour of mass media audiences is relevant as well. Additionally, we cannot claim that a particular individual has to be either an audience member of a community medium or a consumer of a mass medium. One can be a member of many audiences, although she or he will – most probably – have a different opinion on community media and mainstream mass media and will approach both these types of communication differently and seek them for different reasons. This fact is closely related to the community media themselves and their features and purposes. We may presume that the individual builds a stronger relationship with the community medium. Either directly, through participating in content creation, or indirectly, through participating in the community life. On the other hand, one of the negative aspects of consuming community-created content is the possible lack of vital information of society-wide importance, which is not disseminated through these community channels. Volek believes that this phenomenon of so-called "fragmented audiences", this lack of basic information, might be a fundamental problem in order for modern democracies to work.[8]

Methodology and Outlines of the Analysis

This case study is based on two frequently used methods of qualitative research – participant observation and surveying via questionnaire. The method of participant observation has been applied on purpose as in Slovakia there is no academic precedent on observing and researching an active participatory group within a community. We have chosen this particular community due to its regional range and boundaries. Another fact outlining our decision is the time period during which the medium in question has existed; while generally the existence period of a print medium reaching 18 months is definitely marginal and not significant in any way, given the average time period during which community media in Slovakia usually

1   DOWNING, J. D. H.: Samizdat Underground Media (Soviet Bloc). In DOWNING, J. D. H. (ed.): *Encyclopedia of Social Movement Media*. London : Sage Publications, 2011, p. 451.
2   ATTON, CH.: Zines. In DOWNING, J. D. H. (ed.): *Encyclopedia of Social Movement Media*. London : Sage Publications, 2011, p. 566.
3   BOLER, M.: Motivations of Alternative Media Producers. Digital Dissent in Action. In ATTON, CH.: *The Routledge Companion to Alternative and Community Media*. London, New York : Routledge, 2015, p. 538.
4   RADOŠINSKÁ, J.: *Mediálna zábava v 21. storočí*. Trnava : FMK UCM in Trnava, 2016, p. 111.
5   PRAVDOVÁ, H.: *Determinanty kreovania mediálnej kultúry*. Trnava : FMK UCM in Trnava, 2009, p. 260-261.

6   McQUAIL, D.: *Úvod do teorie masové komunikace*. Praha : Portál, 2009, p. 422-423.
7   DUNCOMBE, S.: *Notes from Underground: Zines and the Politics of Alternative Culture*. Bloomington : Microcosm Publishing, 2008, p. 80.
8   VOLEK, J.: Proměny chování mediálních publik: Postkritická perspektiva. In FORET, M., LAPČÍK, M. (eds.): *Média dnes: Reflexe mediality, médií a mediálních obsahů*. Olomouc : Univerzita Palackého, 2008, p. 223.

exist, being '1.5 years old' is significantly more than most of other domestic community media are able to achieve. It also means that Slovak community media are largely underdeveloped, which makes this particular zine unique within the Slovak community media environment. The observation had a timeframe of a single calendar year, spanning from July 2016 to July 2017. While working on this case study, we attended community meet-ups, events and editorial meetings regularly. We also prepared unstructured interviews with content creators and community members, focusing on how the zine is structured and financed, how the editorial work is divided and how the content creation team sees the future of the zine. We managed to gather a great amount of information about this community of young people in Trnava who are interested in arts, culture, creative writing, etc.

The basic sample for the questionnaire survey, ergo for the second applied research method, consisted of 26 respondents, which was the total amount of all active community members at the time of writing this study. Due to the fact that the questionnaire was only sent out after the participant observation period came to an end, we already knew every community member personally, which enabled us to reformulate the survey questions in a more informal way that is a more natural, even preferred form of communication for the community's members. If the questions had been posed too formally, it would probably have discouraged some respondents from completing the questionnaire as they are not used to being questioned in this way.

The aim of the questionnaire was to specify the motivation of the community members to participate in community media content creation. The questionnaire consisted of 7 questions, 1 of which was a closed one, 1 was half-closed and the other questions were formulated as open. We carried out the survey during August 2017 and received 11 fully completed questionnaires in total, which is a rather low return rate of 42%. Each respondent had to answer all the questions, but the questions themselves were not recursive or in any way posed as prerequisites to one another. The percentages of the results were rounded to the nearest whole numbers.

Community in Trnava and Its Zine *SpodNás*

This study focuses on a single zine which is distributed under the name *SpodNás*. Its name is a reference to an underground and alternative culture fostered by ordinary people (in English 'FromBeneathUs'). Note that the word 'alternative' in this case does not refer to media presenting 'alternative' facts and disinformation; it merely means an alternative, non-elitist way of life. It encompasses the aesthetic value of art through the eyes of this community and their interest in creating it. One of the prime examples of this is the subtitle of the zine – "SpodNás sme my šeci!",[9] which is a very jargonised way of saying "SpodNás Is All of Us!". Other subtitles, which have appeared on the zine's cover, are "Culture Is a Mirror"[10] and "Culture Is an Approach to the World".[11] Especially the latter one is used very frequently and even appears on the merchandise related to the zine. The goal and philosophy of the medium is to motivate people to create and feel art and culture and to nurture their responsibility towards other people and the environment.

So far 3 issues of the zine have been released together with a few literary collections.[12] Additionally, the community makes an effort to organise regular community meetings where less-known and amateur artists get a chance to present their work. Usually, their goal is not to monetise these creations, but simply to express themselves. The same principle applies to the team of the authors who contribute to the zine itself. The editorial team is not stable; it is under constant flux of new authors coming in and others leaving. This reflects the life of the community, which is also not stagnant in time; the community adapts and changes according to its ever-changing environment and surroundings.

9   See: *SpodNás*, 2017, Vol. 2, No. 1, p. xi.
10   For more information, see: *SpodNás*, 2017, Vol. 2, No. 1, p. xi.
11   See also: *SpodNás*, 2016, Vol. 1, No. 1, p. 1.
12   Note : This study was written in August 2017 (remark by the author).

Figure 1: SpodNás and its title pages
Sources: SpodNás, 2016, Vol. 1, No. 1; SpodNás, 2016, Vol. 1, No. 2; SpodNás, 2017, Vol. 2, No. 1.

SpodNás is a non-profit zine, which means – among other things – that each content creator is participating voluntarily and they are not eligible to earn any financial reward. The production costs for printing and distribution are kept to a minimum; the community members use their personal computers and printers to create the preliminary title page design, page breaks and print design of the whole issue. The zine is printed via a professional printer though, and the printing is financed completely by proceeds of the previous issue. The print runs are between 100-200 copies. Additional financial resources are acquired from the community's own merchandise which went into sale at the same time as the most recent issue of the zine.

The merchandise includes bags, T-shirts, stickers, patches, all with a unified design. They are sold not only during community events, but also through other amicable communication channels such as *Radio Bunker* or *Soul Dinner*.[13] As the zine is mostly distributed in its town of origin – Trnava – most of the community events also take place in this city. The release events accompanying the distribution of the first two issues, along with other community events, took place in the community centre Mladá Archa, and the release event for the most recent issue was then moved to a bar called Ten!Podnik. This is also the place where the first meetings of the community, even those before the zine's first issue release, had taken place.

The first issue also pays homage to the bar on its title page. The red and green ornaments as a form of visual communication do not directly refer to Ten!Podnik and they are not even supposed to do so. This graphic element is only supposed to be understood by specific community members who visit the place very frequently. In this way they can not only deepen their connection to this specific place, but also identify with the specific people participating in creation of the zine. Using such hidden references based on unique symbols is not rare within community media at all; on the contrary, it is quite commonplace nowadays. It can go as far as towards referencing to certain character traits of specific community members or towards outlining the community's rituals and fashion choices; this allows the community members to communicate with each other without the need of uttering a single word.

Countries with established community media legislation recognise and even support institutions which help with the financing of community media through donations, grants, etc. Given the aforementioned lack of appropriate community media legislation in Slovakia, Slovak community media have to rely only on their own resourcefulness to survive financially. *SpodNás* has recently applied for a grant for the first time; it would partially help them obtain financial resources. The grant is a part of a project spon-

13   Soul Dinner provides vegan catering during similar community events (remark by the author).

sored by the Slovak commercial bank institution Tatra Banka called "More Art". The grant's receivers can get a donation of up to 3.000 euros. This support is supposed to encourage active groups of students and pedagogues who create art and it also aims to provide such artistic creations with more public exposure and finances to help them cover their production and promotion costs.[14] Unfortunately, successful applicants have not been revealed so far, so it is not yet known whether the zine will get the grant.

As we have mentioned above, irregularly published zines do not have to regulate their production processes in accordance with the Slovak media legislation concerning the periodical press and agency news services, as they are not registered in the regulatory system. This, on the other hand, means that while these media are not bound by normative regulations, they are also not permitted to spread via the common distribution channels.

Again, in countries with established community media (e.g. in the Great Britain) there are even specialised stores and kiosks which sell zines. Slovak community media have to find a different path, though. In our case, as *SpodNás* is bound to a certain location, it is sold mainly during the community events, at the community meeting places and also directly through the community members and their efforts and acquaintances. There is also a second-hand bookshop in Trnava that has started to sell the zine quite recently.

Cooperation and helping others are at the forefront of community media creation. In order to unify the community, *SpodNás* has also started to cooperate with Godot Project, a local civic group focusing on DIY projects (such as the aforementioned Soul Dinner). Their main project, however, is *Radio Bunker* which is, as far as the definition goes, a full-fledged community radio. Again, due to the limitations set by the Slovak legislation, it can only broadcast on the Internet – via its own website. The radio, similarly as other projects of this group, aims to create a space for solidarity and build a natural alternative culture in the city of Trnava.

The project is based upon personal connections and is absolutely independent of the state, third party sponsorships or ideologies. The similarities between *SpodNás* and other like-minded groups are not surprising either; some of them have been created in a similar manner and also by similar people; only sooner or later than the community we focus on. *Radio Bunker* is also located in the same building as the aforementioned centre Mladá Archa. Although the specific community members are interested in different projects and some of them are active across various communities and groups, they form a cohesive community as a whole.

The content of *SpodNás* can be divided into a few categories; the zine does not have any consistently appearing sections. As for the categories themselves – we can observe a visual one (photographs, illustrations, graphics), an artistic one (creative writing of both poems and prose) and a journalistic one (interviews, reports, comments). As the individual writing styles are very open-minded and loose, the articles cannot be divided rigidly in accordance with Slovak typology of journalistic genres. Most articles result from hybrid combinations of various genres of journalism. Probably the biggest and most obvious difference between 'typical' (mainstream) print magazines and the analysed zine lies in the graphic design.

However, it is necessary to note that this does not have to apply to all similar zines; choosing the details of graphic layout is up to all editorial teams of specific zines around the world. Some zines may look almost as well as their commercial counterparts (if not even better). This fact sometimes results in deepening the problems related to the exact determination of the boundaries of what still is considered a zine and what is not. *SpodNás* has one of the most professionally processed graphic layouts out of all similar zines existing in Slovakia, despite its rather short existence. The uniqueness comes from the fact that each page has a different graphic design and page break. The text is broken either into one or two columns, depending on how much text there is.

Figure 2: Graphic layout of the analysed zine SpodNás
Sources: SpodNás, 2017, Vol. 2, No. 1, p. 13; SpodNás, 2017, Vol. 2, No. 1, p. 6; SpodNás, 2017, Vol. 2, No. 1, p. xi.

The content itself focuses on topics associated with culture and art. However, every piece in the zine touches the subject of culture in a different way, ranging from deep philosophical musings and artistic performances to a report from a concert of a punk band. If we would divide the zine's content in accordance with the amount of pages related to each type of content based on the above-mentioned content categories (visual elements, literary works, reports, profiles and interviews), we could easily point out the changes to the content produced within the three issues we are able to analyse. While the amount of pages filled with visual content is on the constant decrease, the amount of pages presenting interesting projects of common people and artists rises. More specifically, the first issue featured 6 pages of reports, 6 pages of profiles and 8 pages of interviews, but the third issue featured 8 pages of reports, 11 pages of profiles and 9 pages of interviews. The zine is slowly profiling itself as a project which aims to present characters, events and activities that, albeit being narrow in their focus, have a higher purpose. For example, there are reports about making environmentally safe 'green' bags, about the importance of knowing the connotations of various architectonic works, about the reasons why individual persons need to work systematically and the importance of such systematic work for both societal and self-development.

Although the zine offers quite deep and philosophical topics and tries to agitate the reader and inspire her/him to be more active, it does so subtly. The authenticity of the works and texts is supported by the unique graphic design and illustrative photographs. Profiles are also important; the zine focuses on introducing various works of the profiled authors. The range of topics covered by the zine is rather wide; some of the given themes may be covered (slightly or marginally) by local and/or regional media, but these are completely ignored by all nationwide mainstream media outlets. This makes reading the zine's content a unique experience; the reader is able to encounter many new views on culture, art and cultural production.

One of our most important aims is to define the boundaries between the zine's audience and editorial team. There are strictly defined boundaries in case of other types of print media; the difference is therefore very obvious. The audience, whether active or passive, does not affect the content of mass media, at least not directly. The only ways to influence the mainstream media agenda is to participate in surveys or to provide feedback, i.e. to communicate with these media by sending letters, making phone calls or posting commentaries on social networks and websites. A direct, straightforward influence of the audience over the process of media content creation does not – and should not – exist here. This possibility should be fulfilled by community media, which would, in turn, create a more balanced media landscape. This would also offer a steady, uninterrupted way of consuming mainstream media content the way we are already used to, leaving us with a possibility to express ourselves by creating media content and influencing community media operating within the subculture or community we identify ourselves with.

We may claim that civic journalism is a good example of finding a balance between these two extremes. However, civic forms of journalism are not too popular in Slovakia, although multiple media did provide various communication platforms for it to flourish in the past. Nowadays, the role of civic journalism is limited to simply feeding information to the editors who then review it and publish it themselves to make profit. The reasons why this happened are far beyond the focus and range of this study, but we suspect that the main reason behind it was the lack of media literacy and critical thinking in the society.

The editorial office of *SpodNás* is not stable. It involves community members who come and go as time goes by. However, the loose structure of the editorial team always includes a coordinator (acting as an 'editor-in-chief' of the zine), a graphic artist, a head photographer and a merchandise sales manager. The latter role has come up only recently; the aforementioned merchandise has been for sale since the most recent issue. We estimate that roughly 30 people and a few groups and organisations contribute to each issue. Note that the term "coordinator" is used on purpose as the current coordinator herself characterises the position as such. Taking into account the knowledge related to the theory of community media – that the organisational hierarchy within a community medium is very rarely vertical and thus all participating community members tend to have a right to voice their opinions on how to proceed further and create media content –, *SpodNás* definitely follows this model of cooperation. The aforementioned deliberate use of the word "coordinator" is one of the possible examples. She even does not wish to give her name to the zine's imprint as she believes that zines should be "for someone, and not about someone".

As we have mentioned briefly in the theory earlier, the biggest differences between the audiences of mass and community media are the different ways they interact with media content and the amount of participation they invest into their own content creation. In the case of the audience of *SpodNás*, the amount of participation is very high, with every member of the community being allowed to publish their own works of art and participate in the whole process of media creation and production. This freedom of creativity is also reflected in the fact that no content has ever been rejected or deemed inappropriate for the zine. The only editorial work which affects the zine's content and its final version is related to grammatical corrections and very light stylistic adjustments, trying to fully preserve the meaning and style of the original text. For example, if a text utilizes somehow peculiar morphologic and stylistic aspects that are specifically associated with the dialect used in the Trnava Region, the editorial office keeps them unchanged in order to make the text as authentic as possible. After all, this is one of the most unique traits of *SpodNás* – staying true to its regional roots, even in terms of style of writing.

The editorial (or rather creative?) team keeps the readers informed about the option of participating via online social media. As the average age of the community members is hard to specify – it lies somewhere between 18-30 years of age –, it is only natural to communicate via social media, specifically via their *Facebook* fan page and their *Instagram* account (the latter was established in July 2017). *SpodNás* uses these channels for promoting community events, unknown artists and authors who publish their works in the zine or simply identify themselves with the philosophy of the zine. Social media accounts of *SpodNás* also frequently post illustrative materials, photographs of aforementioned places where the readers can buy the zine and even authentic photographs documenting preparations for community events and the events themselves.

Active Participation of Community Members

The members of the editorial team of *SpodNás* participate in the process of creating the zine voluntarily. This is quite frequent in the community media landscape where the content creators engage in these activities because they simply enjoy spending their time actively, by creating works of art or journalistic contents. According to the theoretical outlines mentioned above, this general rule should apply to all community media. However, certain problems arise when we try to interconnect this theoretical notion with the practice. Obviously, most of the community media creators do not study academic literature, and in the case of *SpodNás* the editorial team members do not even have any knowledge about how the community media should function; neither in theory nor in practice. We can therefore describe their activities as purely instinctive, not based on

any professional training or related education. That is why it is so interesting to study the motivations of the community members who actively participate in the community medium, i.e. to try to see where the boundaries between the readers and the editorial team are in such a real-world setting.

Processing the results of the questionnaire, we discovered some interesting implications regarding both the community members and the medium they create. The first four questions were used to acquire various data specifying the community's sociodemographic characteristics, such as the average age (26). 7 out of 11 surveyed community members work while 4 of them are still students. This information is not so surprising due to the average age of the community members; most of them are in their mid-twenties and thus they have graduated either from secondary schools or from universities. This question was open so the respondents could write more details about their current (or previous) jobs and studies. We obtained a wide range of answers varying from quite expected artistic study programmes to completely unrelated work affiliations. 2 respondents study at the Academy of Fine Arts and Design in Bratislava, other respondent works at the Gallery of Ján Koniarek in Trnava, another surveyed participant works as a graphic designer. The other respondents are from completely different spheres of interest which have nothing to do with culture or art.

Rather surprising answers were acquired in relation to the third question; we were interested to find out whether the respondents had had previous experience with working for any kind of media organisation. To our surprise, none of the respondents has ever worked in the media sphere before. This is odd because the quality standard of the zine is quite high; an unrelated observer would probably think that most of the authors and creators indeed do work in the field of professional media production. However, as the return rate was quite low, it is possible that at least one of the community members (someone not included in the survey) has worked in media before and now shares her/his knowledge with the others.

The fourth question inquired about how long the respondents had worked on the zine. The goal was to find out how often the editorial team changed its staffing. As the respondents were only comprised of the contemporary editorial staff members, we could see the rough flux of new members. 27% of the contemporary members say they have been in the team since the first issue and even before, i.e. for roughly one and a quarter of a year. 18% of them claim they joined the editorial team between the first and the second issue and 36% specify that they decided to participate in these activities between the second and the third issue. This is not surprising either – a significant increase in the zine's activity on social media and in other types of community events dates back to this time period precisely. Only two respondents have joined the zine recently, i.e. after the third issue went to print in June 2017.

The most important parts of the questionnaire were the last three questions which concerned the personal motivations of the surveyed community members (their initial motivation to join the zine, their personal relationships with other community members, their current motivation to keep working on the zine). We wanted to see whether their motivations had changed over time and if so, in what ways.

Q5: Why did you decide to take part in *SpodNás*?

36% of the respondents wanted to take part in *SpodNás* simply because they thought that the project was unique and wanted to take part in this experience. The members mostly mention the words "uniqueness", "authenticity" and "idea". 55% of the research participants wanted to join because they thought it would help their self-development. We can define self-development as literally anything that improves the respondents' personal value. The important thing is that they wanted to do it because of their own personal reasons, and not because they thought that the project was unique. The respondents mostly wanted to finally create and present their art, to broaden their horizons concerning art. Just a single respondent (so roughly 9%) joined because of what we would describe as a form of altruism towards the community. He wanted to create a broader awareness of his ideas within the community. This is quite surprising as the theory of community media claims that the most common motivation for participating in community media creation is, in fact, one's inner need to help other community members.

Q6: Did you, at the time of joining, know any member of the editorial team personally?

This question was left open on purpose; we worked with an assumption that if the respondent had not known anyone in the team before, he would also have written more about starting to work for the zine. Indeed, 36% of the respondents joined without previously knowing anyone – all their answers tell us more about their initial motivations related to creating content for *SpodNás*. This leaves us with the 64% who have already known somebody on the editorial team. Albeit the surveyed community is rather small in comparison to other similar communities, we can definitely claim that when talking about motivations of the editorial team members to create content, we have to consider the context of their personal relations. On the other hand, we would probably get a vastly different set of results in case of surveying a bigger community.

Q7: Why do you keep doing all this work?

One of the reasons why studying community media is so troublesome is the fact that it is very hard to identify the specific emotions associated with creating content for the community. This is also apparent if we look at the responses we received. 72% of the respondents claim that they feel in their hearts that what they do has a purpose. Despite the fact that we can hardly generalise such abstract responses, we do know that in terms of community media this is not a unique case. It proves that the motivations of the individuals and the community do not have to be related to any personal gain, especially when doing creative work like this. 28% of the respondents' replies could be categorised as 'mixed', balancing between the need for self-realisation and the need to spend one's time productively. In the context of Q5, we can see a clear shift in motivations of most of the surveyed community members – their initial reasons to join the community and editorial team are generally different than their current attitudes towards the community and its meaning.

Figure 3: Subtitle of SpodNás: "Kultúra je prístup k svetu", i.e. "Culture Is an Approach to the World"
Source: SpodNás, 2016, Vol. 1, No. 1, p. 1.

Conclusion

Our study has provided interesting results. We can clearly see that the motivations for creating content for *SpodNás* have changed over time for most of the community members. While they once were incentivised by their own need for self-development, most of them now want to be a part of something that they perceive as bigger than themselves. To be able to see a deeper reason in one's work, especially in case of creative activities that might not bring any personal or financial benefits, is probably the most glaring difference between mass media professionals and community media content creators. Community media simply do not need to raise their profits and public exposure to the absolute maximum, which gives their content creators more freedom as they can pursue almost any artistic goal they want to fulfil, any creative idea they need to express. It should be also noted that these two types of media production are very different in terms of their contents; they will never be in a direct competition.

Community media create a completely new sphere of media landscape and their audiences, while they might consume various types of media production from countercultural messages to blockbuster media

products, will never see them in some sort of opposition to each other. *SpodNás* is not the oldest or the most extreme zine in Slovakia; it is not Slovak zine of the highest quality. Nevertheless, *SpodNás* and its faithful community, like any other similar community anywhere in the world, are trying to bring changes in human perception, in the environment we are living in. Their 'weapon of choice' is showcasing culture in an attractive manner. Their openness towards new people, new community members and their environment is a unique trait which is absent in case of most individuals living in the Western society of the new millennium. This is why we can only hope that zines like *SpodNás* will bring us towards the moment when we will recognise community media and their specific status and irreplaceable purpose in the Slovak media legislation.

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