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## Subcultural entrepreneurs, path dependencies and fan reactions: The case of *NARUTO* in Hungary

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Through examining the Hungarian introduction of the franchise *NARUTO* (En. & Hu.: *Naruto*) I wish to draw attention to the way subcultural producers can play an important part in the way subcultural and fan markets develop, and to highlight the often overlooked role these actors play in both the creation and reproduction of subcultures, and fandom and the mediation of cultural products.

### **1. Subcultural producers: career paths and entrepreneurship in subcultures and fan cultures**

Fan studies research tends to concentrate mostly on the interactions within the level of non-professional (in the sense of non-profit oriented) fandom and/or its relationship

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with the major companies producing and distributing the texts serving as the focus of fandom. The fact that there are actors emerging from within fan cultures, who might create careers or businesses building on their fannish interests and experiences, receives only passing mentions within the literature. The importance of these actors and their career paths for fandom has yet to be explored.

In *Textual Poachers*, for instance, Jenkins mentions both the case of fans becoming professional writers (1992: 48–49) and the appearance of semi-professionals within *filking* (fan folk music) (1992: 274–276), and in *Convergence Culture*, he alludes, for example, to the role fandom can play in entering careers in film making or promotion (2006: 132, 134, 143), but without discussing the characteristics and significance of these careers in detail. Similarly, Hills mentions the possibilities for converting *fan cultural capital* (the term taken from Fiske’s 1992 discussion of the topic; (Fiske 1992 cited in Hills, 2002) into potential employment opportunities within the cultural industries (2002: 52), and in a self-reflexive move also points out how fans can make a transition towards academia (2002: 18), which has become a common phenomenon both within fan studies and subculture research (cf. insider ethnography in the case of Hodkinson, 2002, Kahn-Harris, 2007, and Vályi, 2010).

It is to subculture studies that I would like to turn for a slightly more developed framework of addressing the role these actors coming from within fandom play in the creation and development of fan cultures. The term *subcultural entrepreneur* was coined by McRobbie drawing attention to the way small-scale entrepreneurship often coming from within the counter-culture and youth subcultures had always been important in the life of these cultures,<sup>1</sup> with both participants and researchers shying away from the idea that commercialism might not be wholly antithetical to the existence of these formations (1994 [1989]: 143–145). This line of thought was further elaborated by Hodkinson, who introduced the term *subcultural producers* to refer to not only entrepreneurs, but also volunteers, employees and freelance professionals coming from within the subculture, and also underlined the importance of their role in the creation of the relatively autonomous infrastructure necessary for subcultures to exist independently of the ebb and flow of mainstream interest (2002: 31–33, 114–127). While still a marginal topic the significance of DIY<sup>2</sup> and small-scale entrepreneurship as well as subcultural or scenic careers in the cultural and creative industries is addressed more and more within subcultural and popular music studies

<sup>1</sup> McRobbie explicitly uses both the term counter-culture and subculture when describing the hippie culture and its young entrepreneurs (1994 [1989]: 143–145).

<sup>2</sup> Do It Yourself. The DIY approach is often seen as characteristic for youth subcultures and fan cultures, especially since the arrival of the punk subculture (cf. McRobbie 1994 [1989]: 145).

(e.g. Peterson and Bennett 2004: 5–6) as well as cultural industries research (e.g. Hesmondhalgh 1997) with works focusing on, for example, the worlds of extreme metal music (Kahn-Harris 2007) and crate diggers (specialist record collectors; Vályi 2010) or the careers of young British fashion designers (McRobbie 1998).

The notion of working within fandom or building a career in bigger companies in the cultural industries sector based on the skills, knowledge and social capital accumulated within fan culture is referred to within discussions focusing on anime and manga as well. For example, Hatcher refers to the way fansub communities participate in the training and exposure of people with translating and subtitling talent, who might then move on to working for businesses, similar to the way *dōjinshi* [self-published fan works] act partly as a training ground and stage of publicity for would-be manga creators (2005: 536).<sup>3</sup> Regarding the history of anime fandom in the U.S., Cubbison mentions in passing that “[s]ome of the early fan clubs and groups developed into anime distributors such as Central Park Media, Media Blasters, AnimEigo, and ADV Films” (2005: 48). In a similar fashion both Condry (2010: 200) and Jenkins (2006: 159)—drawing on Leonard’s works (2005a, 2005b)—point out that specialist localizing distributors sprang from within the fan community.

Leonard’s often cited main argument is that fans and fan distribution networks paved the way for the mainstream success of anime in the U.S. (2005b: 298). He focused mainly on legal questions surrounding the development of U.S. fansubbing and its status of being a *proselytization commons*—a term inspired by Lawrence Lessig’s innovation commons—(2005b: 290). But Leonard also mentions that “fans started anime companies, becoming the industry leaders of today” (2005b: 282). Referring to A.D. Vision (later ADV Films), AnimEigo, Central Park Media, Pioneer LDC, Streamline Pictures and Viz Communications, he claims that:

Their stories are similar: they were started by fans and industrialists closely connected with the fandom; they adopted the fan-induced mantra to maintain true to the original anime while expanding their markets. (2005a: 221)<sup>4</sup>

This is not to imply that previous fandom, manga or anime studies works’ relative lack of a more focused examination of the role and significance of these subcultural producers in anyway subtracts from the veracity or the value of those analyses.

<sup>3</sup> Regarding the propensity for building careers within the cultural industries in relation to fanish involvement see also Lee (2009: 1013) and Schodt (1996: 332).

<sup>4</sup> Patten stresses that only AnimEigo and A.D. Vision (and from the later wave of companies Media Blasters) can be seen as having been really fan-founded and fan-oriented companies within the U.S. (2004b: 130).

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However, I would like to draw attention to the potential gain offered by a detailed examination of the role of employees, freelance professionals and entrepreneurs coming from within fan cultures, or *fantrepreneurs*, as I shall call them. Such an examination is important because in the life-cycle of successful subcultures and fan cultures there comes a point where these cultures emerge from the underground or the fringes and enter the mainstream, and it is at this point that fantrepreneurs can shape the way the given cultural products cross over into the mainstream. Using the word “successful” in this case is meant to draw attention to the way that subcultural and fan participants often want to see their tastes legitimated by mainstream approval, while at the same time fearing mainstream exposure as somehow compromising their objects of fandom/affection<sup>5</sup>. Apparently, U.S. anime fans were also slightly torn on this question (Leonard 2005a: 221, 2005b: 288, 291, 293), with fantrepreneurs and individuals who forged careers out of fannish interests, quite understandably more readily arguing in favor of opening towards increasingly larger audiences (Leonard 2005b: 288, 291).

The current anime-manga fandom<sup>6</sup> boom<sup>7</sup> in Hungary is in a similar fashion fueled by the work of a number of older participants of the “Dragon Ball—Sailor Moon generation” (explained below), who after finding each other on an online mailing list started the first Anime Meet<sup>8</sup> in the country in 1999. Later, as a response to misrepresentations of anime in the mainstream media, especially with the overtones of moral panic in relation to age-inappropriate sexual and violent content, they decided to establish the Hungarian Anime Association (Magyar Anime Társaság) in 2003

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<sup>5</sup> For a discussion see Thornton (1996 [1995]: 128).

<sup>6</sup> Throughout this paper I will refer to *anime-manga fandom* even though some participants of the fandom will tend to consume more of the products of one or the other medium, in certain cases to the point of only reading manga or watching anime. The reason I feel that addressing these fans and their practices under this hyphenated term was appropriate, is that Hungarian fan conventions, organizations and magazines address audiences of both manga and anime, which seems to signal a strong interrelation between manga and anime fandoms. The fact that anime precedes manga in the hyphenated term is only a result of following alphabetical order and in no way suggests that anime is more significant either as an entry point for the fandom—as it once used to be—or that it is consumed more widely or in greater quantities.

<sup>7</sup> Preceding 2006 there were only a couple of short lived attempts at manga publishing in Hungary (see later) and fan convention attendance could also be measured in the hundreds. 2006 saw both the entry of a number of publishers on the Hungarian manga market and an explosion in fan convention attendance with the 2006 autumn convention reaching attendance numbers above two thousand. This sudden expansion of interest and available publications has continued since, even despite the late-2000s global recession.

<sup>8</sup> The name of the informal weekly get-togethers initiated by members of the mailing list of the MAU (Magyar Anime Útmutató [Hungarian Anime Guide]) website. These were the first semi-formal, but also open anime-centered fan meetings in the country, with the focus later expanding to incorporate manga and even J-pop, they were usually held at fast-food restaurants.

with the aim of countering negative images and commentary and promoting anime-manga culture in Hungary. The work of the Hungarian Anime Association was central in bringing together different generations of fans and people coming from outside the initial core of Budapest Anime Meet participants, who would go on to participate in different roles in the production and development of a commercial anime-manga presence in the Hungarian entertainment market.

Drawing on my qualitative research on these subcultural producers of Hungarian anime-manga fandom—including extensive interviews with a significant number of defining actors—I would like to highlight in relation to the Hungarian reception of *NARUTO*, how fanpreneurs and professionals fluent in fan culture can have a positive impact—in relation to fan expectations (cf. Cubbison 2006: 47)—on the import and localization of anime and manga, while at the same time opening up the terrain of company vs. fans debates to the same type of authenticity and status claim laced positions found within the fandom itself.

The two key figures for the Hungarian translation of *NARUTO*, the head of MangaFan Publishing and the head of anime programming decisions at A+ and later Animax,<sup>9</sup> were both to a certain degree outsiders in relation to anime-manga fandom, although familiar with fan knowledge and fan expectations, not to mention their fan-like commitment to quality, that is product localization, which adheres to the original as much as possible.<sup>10</sup> Indeed it is in part their stance as non-fans and professionals, which has informed some of their decisions regarding the Hungarian translation of *NARUTO*, gaining them both support and criticism from fan circles in equal share. In order to understand the dynamics of this criticism—revolving to a large extent around the question of translation and transcription decisions—I shall now turn to the history of anime and manga in general and then *NARUTO* in particular in Hungary.

## **2. A brief overview of anime broadcasting and manga publishing in Hungarian**

Although a number of anime on Hungarian television such as *Nirusu no fushigi na tabi* (En.: *The Wonderful Adventures of Nils*, Hu.: *Nils Holgersson csodálatos utazása a vadludakkal* [The fantastic travels of Nils Holgersson with the wild geese]) airing in 1988—and re-aired in 1989 due to its success<sup>11</sup>—and even some obscure anime video releases had appeared in Hungary, the main reference point for most older fans of anime and manga when recounting how they became interested in this form

<sup>9</sup> Animax will be used to refer to Animax Eastern Europe throughout the text.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. Leonard (2005a: 221) cited earlier.

<sup>11</sup> [http://hu.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nils\\_Holgersson\\_%28rajzfilm%29](http://hu.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nils_Holgersson_%28rajzfilm%29) (last access January 2, 2011).

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of entertainment is the airing of *Bishōjo senshi sērā mūn* (En.: *Pretty Soldier Sailor Moon*, Hu.: *Varázslatos álmok* [Magical dreams]—but nevertheless referred to as *Sailor Moon* by Hungarian viewers) and *Doragon bōru* (En. & Hu.: *Dragon Ball*) starting in 1997 and broadcast by RTL Klub television channel.<sup>12</sup>

*Sailor Moon*, adapted from the French version, was broadcast between October 1997 and August 1999. The fifth season was not picked up by the French broadcast company and as a result it was not shown in Hungary either.<sup>13</sup> *Dragon Ball*, also adapted from the French version, started airing in December 1997, with the complete 153 episodes of the series reaching Hungarian television screens. Concerns were already raised about the first series, but during the airing of the *Doragon bōru zetto* (En. & Hu.: *Dragon Ball Z*) series, RTL Klub came under investigation by the National Radio and Television Commission for excessively violent content compared to the rating category *children's show* assigned to the series. The show was suspended in April 1999 (with the last episode aired being No. 122).<sup>14</sup> These two series, the moral panic surrounding the themes and violence in *Dragon Ball* and the ensuing legal dispute brought anime, as a specific form of entertainment imported from Japan, to the attention of a whole generation, some of whom would go on to explore this form beyond the scope of series available on Hungarian—or German and Italian satellite—television channels.

With more and more series like *Poketto monsutā* (En. & Hu.: *Pokémon*) and *Yūgiō* (En. & Hu.: *Yu-Gi-Oh!*) appearing on broadcast television channels and the central European anime cable channel Anime+ (A+) starting its daily evening and late-night programming (from 8 p.m. till 2 a.m.)<sup>15</sup> in December 2004, anime was becoming increasingly accessible for a wider audience in Hungary during the first half of the 2000s. In 2007 Sony Pictures Television International acquired A+ and integrated it into its international network of anime channels launching Animax Eastern Europe.<sup>16</sup>

With only a couple of previous short-lived attempts at manga publishing in Hungarian,<sup>17</sup> 2006 saw the start of the current manga publishing boom, with five major

12 RTL Klub is owned by the German Bertelsmann AG's RTL Group. It is worth noting that German (and Italian) satellite television broadcasts available in Hungary also played a role in providing anime series for the first fan generation.

13 [http://hu.wikipedia.org/Sailor\\_Moon](http://hu.wikipedia.org/Sailor_Moon) (last access January 2, 2011).

14 <http://www.origo.hu/teve/20040707pert.html?> and <http://futuretrunks.gportal.hu/gindex.php?pg=1351948> (both last accessed January 2, 2011).

15 Both A+ and later Animax share the channel with Minimax (occupying the daytime slots), a Central-European cartoon channel owned by Chellomedia (the European content division of Liberty Global international media company).

16 <http://hu.wikipedia.org/wiki/A%2B> (last access January 2, 2011)

17 SEMIC Interprint (later renamed ADOC SEMIC) the up till then most important Hungarian comics

publishers<sup>18</sup> now offering a total of fifty-three series titles with altogether 186 volumes<sup>19</sup> marketed under the umbrella category manga, which also includes *manhwa* (Korean manga) [ten series, thirty-eight volumes], original *English language manga* (OEL) [nine series, twenty-three volumes] and even *manhua* (Chinese manga) [two series, seven volumes] as well as *comics/manga* [two series, nine volumes], OEL/manga [five series, fourteen volumes], *manga/manhwa* [one series, sixteen volumes] crossovers,<sup>20</sup> with Japanese manga [twenty-four series, seventy-nine volumes] accounting for 42,5% of the market with respect to available volumes and 45,3% regarding the number of series titles (all numbers for September 2010 and compiled by the author based on the available data on the publishers' websites).<sup>21</sup>

Out of the five major Hungarian manga publishers the currently biggest and most successful company, MangaFan published the first volume of *Shin angyō onshi* (En.: *Blade of the Phantom Master*, Hu.: *Árnybíró* [Shadow Judge]) a lesser known

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publisher ventured into the field of manga publishing between 1999 and 2001. In January 1999 they launched their first *Sailor Moon* series under the title *Sailor Moon—Varázslatos álmok*, which was an anime comic (not the original manga series, but rather a comic created with stills from the anime), which appeared in a similar size and format as U.S. comics had been presented to the Hungarian public previously, with reading order from left to right and containing two episodes each. This first series ran until the end of 2000 with twenty-four issues, and was joined by a second *Sailor Moon* series from the end of 1999 under the title *Sailor Moon füzetek* [Sailor Moon booklets]. This second series only continued for seven issues serializing the anime comic version of the second season of the anime. While its length and reading order were similar to the first series its format was closer to pocket book size resulting in a new format resembling a cross between a double issue U.S. comic book and a *tankōbon* [paperback format edition of volumes of a manga series]. Two more series were launched January 2000, both adhering to this new *pocket-booklet* format, *Den'ei shōjo* (En.: *Video Girl Ai*, Hu.: *Ai, a videó lány*), running for four issues, and *Dragon Ball*, which terminated in 2001 after sixteen issues. While the former had a mirrored page layout, the latter was published according to the original page layout with Japanese reading order from right to left. See <http://db.kepregeny.net> (last access January 2, 2011)

18 In alphabetical order (company name in brackets if other than the comics and/or manga imprint): Delta Vision, FUMAX (Goodinvest), MangaFan, Mangattack (Athenaeum 2000), Vad Virágok Könyvműhely.

19 *Series title* refers to works such as *NARUTO*, and *volume* refers to the individual *tankōbon* being published.

20 Crossover here refers to a sense of foreclosing a clear-cut identification of the work with any of the established categories, such as manga, manhwa or comics, by for example having an artist and a writer from different traditions collaborating on a publication. These crossover works initially generated heated debates within the fandom regarding their position and value in relation to the original categories, with Japanese manga thought of as being more authentic and thus/or more valuable than manhwa, manhua and OEL works by a number of fans.

21 These are only the numbers for series titles and volumes, and they do not represent sales figures or market shares. Although the number of volumes sold is not made public by the publishers, based on the top selling children's books list of the biggest book retail chain, which is the most significant distribution channel in Hungary for all of these titles sold under the heading *manga*, leading Japanese manga titles such as *NARUTO* usually produce more outstanding sales results than other titles do.

*seinen*<sup>22</sup> manga/manhwa series in October 2006 (Korean creators working for a Japanese publisher, which not only means the series was first published in Japan, but also that it was produced with the help of Japanese editors). This very first volume produced by MangaFan already presented every trademark element—not necessarily essential to commercial concerns—which most likely contributed to enabling the securing of the rights to publish *NARUTO* in Hungarian, and which also won the company applause from fan circles. First of all, the format of the Hungarian edition matched the Japanese *tankōbon*, with a non-mirrored page layout and thus reading order from right to left, color page inserts and wrap around outer jacket. Furthermore the translation was done by bilingual semi-native and native speakers working from the Japanese original, with lettering, typesetting and editing by editors, who had significant amounts of fan experience and thus a familiarity with expected genre conventions.<sup>23</sup>

Whereas previously anime and manga had reached Hungarian audiences through a double translation and mediation process often subject to changes by and the broadcast or publication decisions of the respective French and U.S. companies, MangaFan and Animax were now mediating content directly from its Japanese sources, which is an important point I will return to again later.

### **3. *NARUTO* in Hungary: claims of authenticity and status within fan discourse**

*NARUTO* first reached the Hungarian fan community through English language manga scanlations and fansubbed anime. In February 2007, a much larger audience was reached when the widely available children's cable channel Jetix<sup>24</sup> started airing the first two seasons (fifty-two episodes) of the *NARUTO* anime series dubbed in Hungarian. The first volume of the official<sup>25</sup> Hungarian translation of the manga series followed in May 2007, published by MangaFan working from the original Japanese material.

From a fan perspective, the Jetix version of the anime could be seen to be riddled with shortcomings. It was an adaptation of the U.S. cut version of the anime, retaining its often debated translational choices,<sup>26</sup> and to aggravate things further, the

22 *Seinen manga* refers to manga aimed at a young adult male audience.

23 Cf. O'Hagan (2008: 177–179).

24 Owned by The Walt Disney Company, previously called Fox Kids and later renamed Disney Channel.

25 Hungarian scanlations did exist prior to this.

26 The (from a fan perspective often problematic) reworking of the original materials in certain U.S. versions have been mentioned and discussed in for instance Allison (2006: 21), Cubbison (2006: 52–54), Katsuno and Maret (2004: 80–106) and Leonard (2005: 285, 289). It is worth noting that the



voice actors in the Hungarian dub were not necessarily consistent between the two aired seasons.

Animax remedied the situation by starting to air the uncut and re-dubbed version of the series in December 2008. They also took on board some of the well received voice actors from the Jetix version, but replaced, for instance, the voice of *NARUTO*. Animax pays more attention to the dubbing of the anime, employing translators, who are fans of anime and manga,<sup>27</sup> working from both the English and the Japanese scripts, and also synchronizing its translations with those of the Hungarian manga version published by MangaFan. Jetix (now called Disney Channel) has since discontinued showing *NARUTO* in Hungary.

While some viewers only realized the potential shortcomings of the Jetix version by exposure to the Animax version, there were also a number of complaints regarding the new version of the anime. For instance the pronunciation of certain words did not match the previous (mis)pronunciations, and the—arguably more appropriate—translations would now be opposed on grounds of being different from the previous Jetix version or that found in fansubs. Similarly, MangaFan drew criticism for its translation working from the Japanese source and using Hungarian phonetic transcription rules, which resulted in a number of translated terms (like the names of the hidden villages),<sup>28</sup> which are commonly left untranslated in English-language scanlations and fansubs, and as a result are also incorporated in that form in Hungarian fan translations. This again met partial disapproval among Hungarian fans.

The Hungarian phonetic transcription and name order (surname preceding given name in Japanese), such as *Ucsiha Szaszuke* (*Uchiha Sasuke* in the original, but *Sasuke Uchiha* in English) was also ill received. Fans were used to the English

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U.S. practice isn't the only example of this phenomenon. Díaz Cintas and Muñoz Sánchez (2006: 43) note that Spain too was importing most of its anime from a mediating country, Italy, where translation was also subject to censorship. For further examples of how the Japanese original might get distorted through localization see Lee and Shaw on the self-censorship of manga translations in Chinese (2006: 45).

<sup>27</sup> For a discussion of the positive impact of genre familiarity in the work of fan translators see O'Hagan (2008: 177–179).

<sup>28</sup> For example *Konohagakure no sato* ["Village Hidden In The Leaves" ([http://en.wikipedia.org/World\\_of\\_Naruto](http://en.wikipedia.org/World_of_Naruto), last access January 2, 2011)], which is often simply left as *Konohagakure* in English version fansubs, became *Avarrejtekfalva* in the official Hungarian version, an almost literal translation (*village of hideaway in fallen leaves* – the word *fallen leaves* was chosen most likely in order to avoid confusion with *letters*, a homonym of the word *leaves* in Hungarian), which was later abbreviated to *Avarrejte* as a result of complaints about the way the ending *falva* (meaning *village of*) made the name too closely resemble the Hungarian name of the *Smurfs'* village, *Aprajafalva* (literally *village of the small ones*).

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written form, used even in Hungarian scanlations, which—as already stressed—are usually based on English fan translations, and thus retain numerous Anglicisms.<sup>29</sup> Fans would be thrown off by either the actual pronunciation, which might even differ from the Hungarian misreading of the English form (for example *Sasuke* would be occasionally mispronounced *Shashuke* in Hungarian), or just the unusual Hungarian written form of the same name. Furthermore, due to the exposure to English language materials on the web and to scanlations, fans often accept Hepburn romanization as a more *authentic* form of transcribing Japanese words and names, than the Hungarian official transcription system. As a result the non-English form of even those words, which exist as well established loan words in Hungarian with appropriate spelling (for example *nindzsa* as opposed to the English form *ninja*), were seen as compromising the *quality*, that is, in this case the atmosphere of the translation.

Another interesting critique within the debate around Hungarian vs. Hepburn romanization deals with the question of the implied lack of distance between the orthographic representation of the Hungarian transcribed version of names and expressions and their original Japanese pronunciation. On the one hand, some fans argue that the Hungarian form creates a comical effect by collapsing the distance between the spoken form of the original Japanese word and its often very characteristically Hungarian written representation.<sup>30</sup> On the other hand, fans also pointed out that the official Hungarian transcription rules for Japanese do not in fact provide an accurate phonetic representation of the original Japanese pronunciation, and therefore the Hungarian form encourages mispronunciations (for instance by retaining the silent *u* in the written form *Szaszuke*)—a recurring argument on all sides of the debate as we have seen—as it allegedly renders the distinction between script and pronunciation transparent.

Although this is far from an exhaustive list of the different reasons provided by fans for their dissatisfaction with the Hungarian transcription, these examples provide enough evidence to underline the points made by Condry (2010: 201–203) and Cubbison (2006: 46–47, 49) with regard to *authenticity* being a central issue within

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29 In a similar fashion for example Spanish (Díaz Cintas and Muñoz Sánchez 2006: 38–39) or Turkish (Hatcher 2005: 535) fansubs are also often created working from the English language fan translations. The way the reception of texts might be influenced by a mediating culture is also apparent in the Hong Kong versions of Japanese manga, which carry the imprint of having been localized first for a Chinese market in Taiwan (Lee and Shaw 2006: 49, 51).

30 The digraph *cs* (e.g. *nunchaku* is written *nuncsaku* in Hungarian) and the trigraph *dzs* (as already mentioned *ninja* for example is written *nindzsa* in Hungarian) for instance are both only used in the Hungarian language and as such immediately identify the words—or at least the orthographic representation—as being Hungarian.

anime-manga fandom, highlighting a strong investment —both in the form of invested labour and the heatedness of debates—on the part of fans, who all take part in creating the “globalized fantasy” (Allison 2006: 16) of “Japaneseness” (Condry 2010: 196, 202).

One of the explicit reasons why MangaFan initially chose to use the Hungarian mode of transcription is that the company ultimately aimed not only at serving the fans, but also at reaching an even larger market, with readers beyond the circle of scanlation savvy fans. In a similar fashion, Animax—aiming at a wider audience—airs dubbed episodes of the anime, as a result of the national expectation to consume films and television programs dubbed in Hungarian,<sup>31</sup> even though hardcore fans would prefer viewing the original Japanese episodes with subtitles (cf. Leonard 2005a: 223). Decision makers at MangaFan and Animax explained their respective choices, by referring to the necessity of balancing out both business considerations and fan preferences, without giving up quality standards (maintaining fidelity to the original) or succumbing to serving only hardcore<sup>32</sup> audiences. In both cases the chosen path regarding localization was attributed by the decision makers to a *professional* stance on their part versus a purely fan position. It is interesting to note, however, that the notion of what counts as *quality* (or *fidelity*) and what counts as being *too hardcore* is in a constant state of shifting, as indicated by, for example, the *tankōbon* format and Japanese reading order being taken for granted in Hungary today, whereas ten years ago these were not necessarily the norm as mentioned previously.

The conflict between reaching increasingly larger audiences and staying true to fan ideals had played out in a similar fashion in the U.S. during the 1990s, where Streamline Pictures focused on expanding towards more mainstream markets by taking into account the general U.S. audience’s need for dubbing; their strategy paid

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31 Different countries in the region have different expectations regarding the consumption of foreign programs: dub is also the accepted format in the Czech Republic and Slovakia, but subtitles are *de rigueur* for programs aimed at ages six and upwards in Romania (as a result the fact that anime is subtitled and not dubbed there sets it clearly apart from children’s shows), while in Poland voice-over is the dominant format with subtitles also present. Animax adheres to the national expectations regarding localization in each country.

32 As one of my interviewees explained, hardcore fans would like to be able to experience the anime or manga as it would be experienced by a Japanese audience without actually learning the language – to only mention the most obvious hurdle (which does not mean that some hardcore fans do not engage in learning Japanese for this very reason). Or more precisely in accordance with their idea of how it would be experienced, but not taking into account that Japanese audiences, for instance, actually understand Japanese expressions. Hence the paradoxical nature of their stance, which through the rejection of certain forms of localization, like the translation of certain expressions, exposes the relationship of these fans to a fantasy of *fidelity* and *Japaneseness* as has already been referred to (see Allison 2006: 16 and Condry 2010: 196, 202).

off even though dubbing was more expensive and initially met strong fan opposition (Leonard 2005a: 223, Patten 2004a: 63). The latter was countered by the application of the same *quality* standards that would be found in fansubs,<sup>33</sup> with for instance Fred Patten being hired to help ensure the accuracy of translations and the proper use of original names in anime (Leonard 2005a: 223). As cited earlier and mirroring the case of Streamline Pictures, Animax's careful strategy—in part due to the person in charge coming from a fan cultural background—has led to the dubbed productions closely approximating the quality expectations of fans (cf. Cubbison's list of fan expectations in relation to DVD releases, 2006: 47).<sup>34</sup>

Secondly, the inclination towards using Hungarian transcription and translations—although this has not been explicitly noted by the decision makers at either MangaFan or Animax—involves, I would like to argue, once again the issue of *authenticity*. The decision to use the Hungarian translation for certain terms and the Hungarian transcription of names and expressions signals, in my view, working from the original Japanese materials<sup>35</sup> and hence independence from both official English language editions and fan translations, which are sometimes regarded as being of lower fidelity as a result of the previously cited localization practices of the official versions and potential mistranslations in the case of scanlations and fansubbing. The direct mediation from the Japanese source materials signaled in this way allows the two companies to position their respective localized versions of the *NARUTO* franchise as being more *authentic* than, for instance, Hungarian scanlations or fansubs usually working from English fan translations.

However, it is the very same notion of authenticity (and the implied claims to subcultural or fan cultural capital involved)<sup>36</sup>, which provides a key to understanding some of the possible motives behind fans' reactions towards the official Hungarian versions of *NARUTO*. Certain fans opposed the official Hungarian version and demonstrated an attachment to the English transcriptions and expressions. This can be seen as a demonstration of a *mastery*—predating the official Hungarian

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33 Note how the reference points of *quality localization* can also differ from country to country and between different time periods.

34 There will, of course, always be fans who are dissatisfied with a dubbed version, preferring to watch the original with subtitles (for a discussion of the “dub vs. sub” debate within fandom see Cubbison (2006: 46).

35 The reason I highlight this again is that as we have seen in the case of Jetix and the *NARUTO* anime and as can be found in the case of other manga series being translated and published by other publishers in Hungary, working from the English version of a given product is not necessarily an uncommon practice.

36 For an excellent discussion of how claims to authenticity are the terrain of negotiating the distribution/attribution of subcultural capital and status see Hodkinson (2002: 65–83).

introduction of the franchise—of both the subject material (based on foreign versions and fan translations) in particular and *NARUTO* fandom in general, which, of course, for the overwhelming majority of Hungarian fans means a Hungarian and English language fandom, and not a Japanese one. Thus this can be interpreted as a possible way for certain fans to signal that their attachment to the *NARUTO* franchise predates its official Hungarian introduction and that therefore they can claim a higher level of authenticity—corresponding to a longer and therefore more durable fan relationship—with regard to their fan involvement.

In connection to the way Hungarian anime-manga fan culture has been dependent upon an English-language fandom, there is a pragmatic argument on the part of certain fans within the localization debate stating that abandoning Hepburn romanization in the official translation and using the Hungarian translations of certain expressions, makes it harder for fans to join in the international fan discourse surrounding *NARUTO*, which is more extensive and more up to date with the Japanese version of the franchise than the Hungarian fandom. But this dependence upon an English-language fandom for Hungarian fans also serves as the background for certain types of status claims within the fandom<sup>37</sup>. As Jenkins writes about the consumption of Asian popular culture “[t]hese works allow pop cosmopolitans to demonstrate their mastery” (2004: 132), and in a similar manner so too does the use of English-language fan resources as well as interactions with foreign fans.

In an interesting twist, although more rarely, it is possible to run into a reverse position arguing for the use of Hungarian transcriptions and the translation of expressions, mirroring both the logic of the arguments put forward by MangaFan and the structure of their claims to legitimacy. Fans taking this position will lay claim to *authenticity* and status based on a mastery of the Japanese language or culture or both—not mediated through English language fandom but rather Hungarian channels of reception (e.g. university courses, books etc.)—*preceding* their involvement with anime or manga and the surrounding fandom. In this fashion Hungarian transcription and translations become the markers of a more direct, unmediated relationship with the Japanese source material, just like in the case of MangaFan and Animax.

## Concluding remark

<sup>37</sup> For a discussion of how fan practices and rhetoric are implicated in status claims see for example Hills (2002: 46–64). Condry also points out, how the striving for status is a driving force behind the large amounts of work with which fansubbers go to extra lengths to provide the—in their view—most authentic experience possible (2010: 202–203). Although not explicitly discussed, this theme is also evident in Lee’s discussion of fansubbers (2009: 1016, 1018).

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As the above discussion of the structure of competing claims to authenticity and status indicates, fanpreneurs and fandom-versed professionals do not only play an important role in influencing the way fan markets and fandoms develop in a given country, but are also both more aware of and involved in the fan discourse on quality and authenticity.

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