

CONSTRUCTION OF A TRAUMATIC NATIONAL IDENTITY
THE COLLECTIVE MEMORY OF TRIANON AS NATIONAL TRAUMA IN
THE NATIONAL IDENTITY OF STUDENTS IN SECONDARY EDUCATION

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Abstract

The thesis aims to study the construction of national identity through the collective memory of Trianon as a national trauma in the context of the formal education system. Trianon constitutes an important part of the Hungarian national past and has become more relevant in public history as well as in the right-wing narrative in political discourse. The thesis examines how students in secondary education relate to Trianon and how the collective memory of Trianon as a national trauma shapes their national identity. Further, the author analyzes education policy documents and textbooks to understand the interrelation of the levels of discourse, policy and the members of formal education, the students. On the basis of group discussions with students from six different schools in Budapest, the author concludes that Trianon as a historical event is not significant for the students' identity, however, the themes through which they talk about Trianon are central to their nation-concept. The most important themes of relating to Trianon were trauma of the trans-border Hungarians; contrasting rational and emotional thinking; the destructive character of dwelling on the past instead of turning towards the future; and considering time as well as being affected personally crucial in understanding Trianon in the frame of national identity.

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1. Introduction

National history and identity are intertwined concepts: national identity is essentially based on the shared past of the nation, while the memory of the past is constructed upon the nation-narrative of the present¹. The glorious and the traumatic past can equally create bonding of a nation evoking collective pride or shared grievance. The association between national identity and the history of a nation is relevant for all levels of public education in Hungary. Within educational policy (National Core Curriculum²) the development of national identity has become a distinctive educational aim among the principles of public education. According to a recent study, almost two thirds of history teachers³ hold that creation of national identity is a principal task of history-teaching⁴, and though it is not a general observation but even some students designate the important role of strengthening Hungarian identity to the education system⁵. Consequently, studying national identity within the context of formal education is relevant, especially in the current Hungarian political context of increased attention to the national past.

A particular characteristic of Hungarian history that the two seemingly contrasting elements of national identity – national pride and grievance – are compatible and embodied primarily through the trauma of the peace treaty of Trianon⁶. The widespread significance of

¹ See: Coser, “Introduction: Maurice Halbwachs 1877-1945”; Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*; Csepeli and Vági, “Trianon, 1956, Holokauszt: Történelmi Kudarok, Nemzeti Tragédiák [Trianon, 1956, Holocaust: Historical Failures, National Tragedies]”; Mock, *Symbols of Defeat in the Construction of National Identity*.

² “Nemzeti Alaptanterv [National Core Curriculum],” 2012.

³ The sample consisted of 137 history teachers from seven different cities in Hungary.

⁴ “A TSZE „tavaszi Turnéjának” Keretében Végzett Felmérés Eredményei és Tanulságai [The Results of the Study Conducted during the 'Spring Tour' of TSZE].”

⁵ In one of the group discussions (School1) I conducted throughout my research, the students disputed the issue of how education should create or maintain Hungarian national identity to an extensive manner, however this was the only discussion where this relation of national identity and education was considered.

⁶ Kovács, “Trianon, Avagy a „traumatikus Fordulat” a Magyar Történetírásban [Trianon, or the 'Traumatic Turning Point' in Hungarian History Writing].”

Trianon as national trauma is supported by the research on what people consider to be the greatest trauma of Hungary⁷. The results consistently showed that Trianon “hurts the most”⁸, regardless of the extent of one’s fact-based knowledge. The authors of this study concluded that our opinions and the perceptions of history are rather shaped by current political orientation, false myths, irrational fears and prejudice than historical facts. The language of trauma is simultaneously part of popular culture, public and political discourse, as well as academic literature and debates⁹.

This thesis aims to contribute to the existing literature by connecting the process of national identity construction through the traumatic past with formal education as an agent of national socialization. Exploring how students place Trianon as a Hungarian national trauma within their national identity, in a setting that considers the construction or reinforcement of national identity as an essential principle provides an approach to the study of the collective memory of Trianon that has not been researched before.

In this thesis I look at the role of Trianon as a national trauma in the construction of the national identity of students in secondary education, in addition, its reflections on the policy and institutional changes in education and on the political discourse. The question I aim to answer is how students relate to Trianon and how the collective memory of Trianon as a national trauma shapes their national identity. The research is placed in the context of education therefore in order to answer my questions, I examine the institutional documents (National Core Curriculum and textbooks) in a comparative framework using qualitative content analysis as

⁷ The research consisted of a list of events (defeats in battles and crushed revolutions) that are considered to be the traumas of Hungarian history, and the respondent was asked to give preferential answers: which is the greatest trauma of Hungary, the second greatest and so on.

⁸ Csepli and Vági, “Trianon, 1956, Holokauszt: Történelmi Kudarok, Nemzeti Tragédiák [Trianon, 1956, Holocaust: Historical Failures, National Tragedies].”

⁹ See: Kovács, “Trianon, Avagy a „traumatikus Fordulat“ a Magyar Történetírásban [Trianon, or the 'Traumatic Turning Point' in Hungarian History Writing]”; Gyáni, “Nemzet, Kollektív Emlékezet és Public History [Nation, Collective Memory and Public History]”; Laczó, “The ‘Trianon’ - Debate in the Hungarian Left-Liberal Weekly *Élet és Irodalom*.”

well as analyzing group discussions I conducted with students in their senior year of secondary education. According to my primary hypotheses Trianon is generally not a determining issue for the students and the elevated attention in political discourse of the issue of Trianon is not reflected in the national identity of the students. This expectation was generally supported by the interviews and I further found that students talk about Trianon through themes of trans-border Hungarians, rational and emotional thinking, the contrast of past and future, and being directly or indirectly affected. Even though all students interviewed interpreted Trianon relying on the notions of loss and grievance, most students distanced themselves from Trianon and thus its traumatic character while describing the event as the trauma of those who have been affected, personally or through their family.

In the following chapter I review the theoretical framework of collective trauma, collective memory and national identity construction from a macro-, as well as from a micro-perspective. In Chapter 3 the context – in which the research is embedded – is depicted through themes of general political discourse, the narratives of the Trianon-discourse, public history and collective memory and the concept of competing memories. In Chapter 4 the methodology of the research, specific research questions, expectations and the aspects of the analysis of both the institutional and the individual levels are introduced. Chapter 5 presents the analysis of the institutional documents (National Core Curricula and textbooks) in reflection to the political discourse described in the preceding chapter. Chapter 6 encompasses the most central section regarding my research question, the analysis of the group discussions with students in secondary education. Lastly, in Chapter 7, I draw conclusions and implications of both levels of analysis and discuss their interrelation and I elaborate on possible extensions and further directions of my research.

2. Theoretical framework

In order to understand the processes regarding the construction of the collective memory of a national trauma, I review in this section the relevant literature on the concept of trauma – personal and collective –, collective memory, the role of trauma in nation-building and national identity construction from a micro-perspective.

2.1 The concept of trauma

When talking about memory and remembering the main issues are what we remember or aim to remember and how we do it. An important debates in the psychology of remembering is between the questions of what happened (objective interpretation) and how the individual interprets or reacts to that event (subjective interpretation)¹⁰. This is equally relevant for the memory of the collective. The main psychological approach is diagnosis-based¹¹, while other strategies consider the psychological and social consequences of a trauma. The attention in the latter case shifts to the disruption of the activity in progress by the unexpected, shocking event, which is potentially extraordinary and painful at the same time¹². The effects of the personal trauma on social relations is a novel aspect, which essentially leads towards the comprehension of trauma as a process experienced by a collective.

From the discipline of psychology, the concept of trauma has become a relevant concept for a more extensive scale of social sciences. In many cases traumas are interpreted and studied from a social-psychological approach, while some scholars argue for social concept of trauma detached from the psychological characteristics¹³.

¹⁰ McNally, “What Is Psychological Trauma?”

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Neal, *National Trauma and Collective Memory*.

¹³ See: Alexander, “Cultural Trauma: A Social Theory”; Kovács, “Trianon, Avagy a „traumatikus Fordulat‘ a Magyar Történetírásban [Trianon, or the 'Traumatic Turning Point' in Hungarian History Writing].”

2.2 Collective memory and collective trauma

Erikson differentiated between individual and collective trauma, marking an important theoretical and conceptual step towards the study of collective traumas, although his work has been highly criticized¹⁴. The different conceptualizations of collective trauma have several common features¹⁵: First, in order to a collective trauma to happen, some sort of collectivity is necessary, that has common beliefs, shared past and memory which among other elements constitute a collective identity. Second, the definitions interpret the traumatic status as created by social processes and reactions that arise either simultaneously or subsequently to the event. Third, a disruptive incident – or process that could be tied to one point – is essential which inherently shakes the social life of the collective and “threaten[s] or seriously invalidate[s] our usual assessment of social reality”¹⁶. Halbwachs differentiates between the memory of personal experience – autobiographical memory –, and historical memory, which represents the memory transmitted through written and visual records and kept alive by collective rituals such as commemorations¹⁷ as well as public history and popular culture¹⁸. Moreover, collective memory is understood in its social context – by a particular group maintaining collective remembering¹⁹. This approach considers collective memory a social construct, “stored and interpreted by social institutions”²⁰, pointing towards the concepts of construction and agency discussed in the next sections.

¹⁴ Dynes, Billings, and Maggard, “Two Views of an Award Winning Book.”

¹⁵ Based on Alexander et al., *Cultural Trauma and Collective Identity*; Alexander, “Cultural Trauma: A Social Theory”; Neal, *National Trauma and Collective Memory*.

¹⁶ Neal, *National Trauma and Collective Memory*, 7.

¹⁷ Coser, “Introduction: Maurice Halbwachs 1877-1945,” 23–24.

¹⁸ Feischmidt et al., *Nemzet a Mindennapokban: Az újnacionalizmus Populáris Kultúrája [Nation in Everyday Life: The Popular Culture of New-Nationalism]*.

¹⁹ Coser, “Introduction: Maurice Halbwachs 1877-1945,” 22.

²⁰ Coser quotes Halbwachs in: *Ibid.*, 24.

2.2.1 Trauma as a social construct

The constructivist approach argues that traumas are determined by social processes rather than the event itself²¹ – which is in line with the concept of trauma as a dynamic construct²². Kovács, criticizing the social-psychological approach, argues for understanding collective trauma outside its psychological context, since many considering themselves (or the collective) the victim of tragedies have not experienced the trauma personally²³. I understand Trianon as a trauma in this manner, through the construction of its collective memory. The socially constructed trauma is long-lasting, nevertheless, the social disruption mentioned above is a crucial part of trauma creation. Especially in enduring traumas the role of social structures are essential, and the dynamics defining the social processes can be either constructive or deconstructive²⁴. Social processes of the construction of collective trauma include the claim of the violation of the essential values of the collective and creating a “narrative about a horribly destructive social process, and a demand for emotional, institutional, and symbolic reparation and reconstitution”²⁵. As Halbwachs argues, collective memory – as a social construct itself – bridges the event of the past and its representation in the present²⁶. Accordingly the role of those actors who create the aspects of such representation is crucial in constructing the memory of collective grievance²⁷.

2.2.2 Agencies and power structures

Alexander argues that trauma is arising from not social but cultural crisis and cultural processes are deeply affected by power structures and by the contingent skill of reflexive social

²¹ Alexander et al., *Cultural Trauma and Collective Identity*.; Contrary to the lay theories, the enlightenment thinking and the psychoanalytic understanding of collective trauma (see: Ibid.)

²² Mithander, Sundholm, and Homgren Troy, *Collective Traumas*.

²³ Kovács, “Trianon, Avagy a „traumatikus Fordulat‘ a Magyar Történetírásban [Trianon, or the 'Traumatic Turning Point' in Hungarian History Writing],” 94., Kovács emphasizes Alexander’s concept of ‘cultural trauma drama’ (Alexander, 2012)

²⁴ Alexander et al., *Cultural Trauma and Collective Identity*.

²⁵ Alexander, “Cultural Trauma: A Social Theory,” 16.

²⁶ Coser, “Introduction: Maurice Halbwachs 1877-1945.”

²⁷ Alexander, “Cultural Trauma: A Social Theory,” 15.

agents²⁸. Drawing on Weber's theory of sociology of religion, 'carrier groups' are "the collective agents of the trauma process"²⁹. These agents can be both elites or marginalized groups; – in the case of Trianon both these groups might have played (and are playing) a role in the development of Trianon as a collective and determining trauma in the past of the Hungarian nation as well as in its present. Alexander articulates the importance of public speeches and the power of language in the trauma process, just as much as the institutional setting in which these speeches take place. In addition to institutional aspects, he emphasized the crucial role of hierarchical structures and "local, provincial, and national governments [who] deploy significant power over the trauma process"³⁰. The institutional setting constitutes of six main areas: religious, aesthetic, scientific and legal institutions, state bureaucracy and mass media³¹. For my research presented the important agencies are legal institutions (laws and policies), media and religion, both used primarily by the political actors.

2.2.3 The collective memory of trauma

Collective trauma shatters the collective identity of a group³² and disrupts its social reality evoking feelings of sadness, anger and fear shared and reinforced by the group members³³. In case of a shock to collective identity, according to Alexander's theory of cultural trauma, its construction and representation leads to the revision of that shared identity, which essentially realizes in the searching and remembering of the collective past³⁴.

What happens if the event that is considered to be traumatic has happened in the past of the collective and no individual experienced the disruption personally? How and why does the

²⁸ Alexander et al., *Cultural Trauma and Collective Identity*; Alexander, "Cultural Trauma: A Social Theory."

²⁹ Alexander et al., *Cultural Trauma and Collective Identity*, 4.

³⁰ Alexander, "Cultural Trauma: A Social Theory," 25.

³¹ Alexander et al., *Cultural Trauma and Collective Identity*.

³² Ibid.

³³ Neal, *National Trauma and Collective Memory*.

³⁴ Alexander et al., *Cultural Trauma and Collective Identity*.

community maintain active emotions and cognitions of the trauma, instead of repressing them? Collective identities are shaped by the past experiences of the collective and reconstruction of the previous life of the community³⁵. Thus “traumas of the past become ingrained in collective memories and provide reference points to draw upon when the need arises. [... As] part of social heritage, events from the past become selectively embedded in collective memories”³⁶. This embeddedness is, I believe, what is able to keep the trauma alive – in contrast to what Alexander calls the “period of calming down” of the heated emotional attachments to the trauma³⁷. I further argue that the embeddedness is possible due to the mediation of the agencies of the social processes of trauma.

2.3 Trauma and national identity construction

Nations as imagined communities³⁸ necessitate a sense of belonging, a shared identity that can be characterized in various ways, however, shared beliefs, myths – even if invented ones³⁹, – and the ancestry of the nation are common characteristics. The concept of collective forgetfulness is noteworthy, designating a similar bond and belonging to a community – according to Renan shared amnesia is the fundamental characteristic of nation-building⁴⁰. Gellner further argues that the “vail of forgetfulness” is important regarding the creation of nations, through covering the internal differences within the culturally defined community⁴¹. Nevertheless, my focus remains collective remembering and placing a nation’s ‘essence’ on the myth of a trauma – which is not a unique phenomenon, as Mock shows⁴². Alexander argues that nations as imagined communities have imagined shared beliefs which “assert the existence

³⁵ Ibid., 22.

³⁶ Neal, *National Trauma and Collective Memory*, 7.

³⁷ Alexander et al., *Cultural Trauma and Collective Identity*, 22.

³⁸ Anderson, *Imagined Communities*.

³⁹ Hobsbawm, “Introduction: Inventing Traditions.”

⁴⁰ Renan in: Gellner, *Culture, Identity, and Politics*, 6.

⁴¹ Ibid., 10.

⁴² *Symbols of Defeat in the Construction of National Identity*.

of some national trauma”⁴³. As argued previously trauma is a social construction through “collective memory [which] is essentially a reconstruction of the past in the light of the present”⁴⁴.

Mock examines the questions why various nations need to construct national or historical narratives around the defeat and humiliation and why these symbols have such power in these nations⁴⁵. He argues that this focus on the symbols of defeat enables national identity to compete with other forms of identities of the collective. Another function provides a specific relation to the concept of the nation: “under certain conditions, such myths can serve as the very signifiers that give the system its structure and meaning and, therefore, the principal test distinguishing insiders from outsiders – the foundation myths of the nation.”⁴⁶.

So what is the defeat that can serve these functions? These are “myths or symbols that serve to commemorate a moment at which the nation [...] suffered or perceived to have suffered a military conquest represented as a historical turning point leading directly to a period of subjugation or domination, the effects of which are seen as enduring to at least some degree up to the present day”⁴⁷. It is important to note that lost battles or other military sacrifices, genocides and victimization are excluded from this definition although their commemoration serve a similar function. The way I use the concept of trauma fits the definition of a ‘historical turning point’ with long-lasting effects in social life, and national identity⁴⁸, however my understanding is more inclusive focusing on the social processes and agencies constructing the traumatic historical event.

⁴³ Alexander et al., *Cultural Trauma and Collective Identity*, 8.

⁴⁴ Halbwachs quoted in: Coser, “Introduction: Maurice Halbwachs 1877-1945,” 34.

⁴⁵ Mock, *Symbols of Defeat in the Construction of National Identity*.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 7.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 9.

⁴⁸ Mock, *Symbols of Defeat in the Construction of National Identity*.

2.4 National identity construction from a micro-perspective

National identity is a concept just as ambiguous and characterized with numerous interpretations and definitions as most terms regarding the study of nationalism – I intend to give here a brief overview of what the concept of national identity means according to the relevant literature, the more precise conceptualization of the term in the way I aim to use in the research is explained in Chapter 4. National identity is considered a social identity, therefore an attachment deriving from identification with social groups⁴⁹. The individual is not limited to one identity, multiple social identities can exist within the self and the different situational contexts makes different identities salient, evoking different meanings⁵⁰. National identity is analyzed and interpreted among different dimensions and characteristics, different theories identify different levels of attachment and meaning of what national identity is and consists of. A significant amount of research has dealt with the content of national identity, its structure and development. Both of these elements are at the focus of this thesis, looking at how – or whether – Trianon as a constructed collective memory of a national trauma plays a role in the national identity of students in secondary education and understanding the processes and the role of agencies contributing to the process of national identity construction.

Different theories and empirical researches examine different dimensions of this concept. Smith considers national identity as an attachment to a political community – the nation – which has a specific territory (the historical ‘homeland’), common law and institutions as well as rights and duties of the legally equal members presupposing common values and traditions⁵¹. He differentiates between internal and external functions of national identity regarding its consequences⁵². Political, economic and territorial functions are considered

⁴⁹ Dougherty, Eisenhart, and Webley, “The Role of Social Representations and National Identities in the Development of Territorial Knowledge.”

⁵⁰ Tajfel, “Social Categorization, Social Identity and Social Comparison.”

⁵¹ “National and Other Identities.”

⁵² *Ibid.*, 16.

external, while the internal functions serve the individual within the community, first and foremost it means the “socialization of members as ‘nationals’ and ‘citizens’”⁵³. This is very similar to what I call national socialization later on, and as I argue as well, Smith points out that education is the main agent of the internal functions of national identity – beside mass media⁵⁴. Guibernau develops a different conception of national identity: he identifies five different dimensions that constitutes national identity: historical, political, psychological, cultural and territorial⁵⁵. He further emphasizes the importance of shared beliefs, especially regarding common ancestry.

Understanding the development of national identity is essential to grasp the concept and its meanings. According to Dekker et al.⁵⁶, there are three processes that are present in the development of national attitudes: the first is processing of the individual’s own affective observations and previous experience; the second is processing affective messages from others – which the authors call national socialization –, and the third is the process of the creation of the attitude from the individual’s orientations acquired earlier and early behavior. In addition the authors defined four determinants of the development of national identity: first, they argue that “what is learned first influences what is learned later”⁵⁷, thus national emotions experienced previously affects the later development of national attachment; second, they call those characteristics and stereotypes that are common and easily acquired, salient national beliefs that also define how the self relates to the nation; the third determinant states that the attachment to the nation could be a justification of previously performed behavior – such as defending the country against criticism or being in the national army; the fourth aspect determining national identity is specific attitudes toward outgroups (inside or outside the country), arguing already

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Guibernau, “Anthony D. Smith on Nations and National Identity,” 135.

⁵⁶ Dekker, Malová, and Hoogendoorn, “Nationalism and Its Explanations.”

⁵⁷ Ibid., 349.

existing attitudes in the self can influence national identity. I believe that these learning stages and social-psychological aspects of how national identity is determined provide a – not exhaustive – but detailed overview of those processes that are of the center of this thesis: national or political socialization, more precisely education as socialization agency having a crucial role in the construction of national identity. These determinants defined by Dekker and his colleagues lean towards my argument of the importance of education in national socialization, in the sense that all emphasize the early experiences, behaviors, and earlier acquired attitude toward others in the development of national identity⁵⁸.

I see the difference between national identity development and construction in processing messages from others, that the authors called national socialization. The process of development is a frame that includes several processes and development stages while construction refers to an outside developer with – in my perception – a conscious objective. Therefore, I understand processing affective messages from others – thus national socialization – as how the individual interprets and gives meaning to the mechanism of national identity construction.

2.4.1 National socialization

The concept of national socialization is based on socialization theory which argues that “first national emotions and rudimentary beliefs that one acquires result from early socialization rather than from early perceptions, inferences, and experiences”⁵⁹. Csepeli defines national socialization as essentially a process of attitude formation – the development of cognitive and affective elements towards the national in-group and out-group⁶⁰. In Piaget’s theory of national socialization, the nation, nationality receives meaning when the child is 8-9 years old by acquiring knowledge and understanding national symbols, own and the parent’s nationality

⁵⁸ Dekker, Malová, and Hoogendoorn, “Nationalism and Its Explanations.”

⁵⁹ Ibid., 349.

⁶⁰ Csepeli, “National Identification as a Function of Socialization,” 21.

even language (mother tongue) can be a cognitive factor in giving meaning to the nation and develop national feelings⁶¹. By the age of 10-11, the cognitive and affective elements regarding one's nation is connected and "fully activated"⁶².

Even though that the family is the primary socialization agent, thus this is where the children can meet any national socialization for the first time⁶³, education is the first institutionalized socialization agent that every child encounters. According to Csepeli there are three elements of why school is an efficient agent of national socialization: the curriculum, the teachers and the national rituals that are present within the frame of the school itself⁶⁴. Among these my analysis deals with the first element, the curriculum (and textbooks which can be considered to be a part of the curriculum in this classification), however, before I turn to the hypotheses and the analysis itself, I introduce the context in which my analysis is embedded.

⁶¹ In: Csepeli, "National Identification as a Function of Socialization."

⁶² Piaget in Ibid., 21.

⁶³ Csepeli, "National Identification as a Function of Socialization."

⁶⁴ Ibid., 27.

3. Political discourse in Hungary

I look at Trianon as a trauma from today's perspective: as a collective memory of a trauma that is constructed and embedded in the political and social structures of Hungary. Trianon as a social or cultural trauma is a taken-for granted concept in the sense that it is seldom questioned whether it is really a national tragedy or not – independent of political or cultural orientation. However, the term trauma has only been extensively used since the 2000s, first in public history then in scholarly works⁶⁵. Throughout this chapter I argue that the discourse of Trianon is embedded in a broader nationalist discourse of the government and that despite the different existing narratives the government's is the dominant in all social context. In addition, Trianon 'competes for the position of being the greatest national trauma and a determinant component of public history. I further argue that considering the institutional changes in the public education system and the role of education in the public discourse it is relevant to study the interrelation of the trauma of Trianon and formal education.

3.1 The Treaty of Trianon

On the 4th of June, 1920, the Treaty of Trianon was signed and dismantling the historical territory of the Hungarian Kingdom, securing the new borders, and marking a new era in Hungarian history. By doing so, two-thirds of the former territory and one-third of the ethnic Hungarian population has been officially handed over to the neighboring countries⁶⁶, creating significant Hungarian minorities in⁶⁷. Even though almost two years led up to the day of the signing of the treaty, the 4th of June had been a day of grief in the whole country in 1920, as

⁶⁵ Kovács, "Trianon, Avagy a „traumatikus Fordulat“ a Magyar Történetírásban [Trianon, or the 'Traumatic Turning Point' in Hungarian History Writing]."

⁶⁶In the time period between the end of World War I and the signing of the Treaty, most of these territories were annexed by those countries that secured their territorial position with the Treaty of Trianon. See: Romsics, *Dismantling of Historic Hungary*.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

Romsics describes⁶⁸. There is no doubt that it had been a shock to both the economy and the society of Hungary and that it has been a determinant element of the proceeding international and internal events and processes regarding Hungary – such as entering World War II on the side of the Nazi Germany based on the revisionist claims of the country.

3.2 Parallel narratives?

After the democratic transition the responsibility towards trans-border Hungarians and the diaspora politics regarding the territory of the historical Hungary, as well as the cultural conception of the nation – not revisionist – became an essential theme both in discourse and politics⁶⁹. However the focus of these politics has shifted between the international relations with neighboring and other European countries – thus approaching the “re-union” of the nation from the perspective of the European integration (joining the EU primarily) –, and the “Hungarian-Hungarian” relations – re-uniting the nation through the institutionalization of the relations with trans-border Hungarian communities⁷⁰ (such as the Status Law in 2001). Zombory further argues that the division within the nation (Hungarians within and across the existing borders) “are used by party politics to represent the boundaries of political powers as national boundaries”⁷¹. This process can also be seen as the appropriation of being national by the right and was present during the campaign of the 2004 referendum on dual citizenship as well as in today’s political discourse – especially significant regarding Trianon. Romsics identifies a dual discourse in the parliamentary speeches and remarks regarding Trianon on the time period of 1990-2002. The mainstream discourse – a characteristic of the left-wing parties – emphasizes the harmful effects of Trianon and interpret integration as resolution to the trauma, while the radical discourse gives the historical grievance a central role in their

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

⁶⁹ Zombory, *Az Emlékezés Térképei: Magyarország és a Nemzeti Azonosság 1989 Után [The Maps of Remembrance: Hungary and National Identity after 1989]*.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 217–219.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 224.

rhetoric⁷². Furthermore, Romsics describes the convergence of opinions to a norm in the decade following the transition, however I assume that the opinions in political discourse have rather been divergent in the last decade, especially since 2010.

Drawing on this process of boundary-making between what is considered to be the left and the right in Hungarian political life is a decisive dichotomy in both public and political discourse. The national character of Fidesz was apparent already in its discourse at the end of the 1990s – even if their perspective on the nation (and European integration) had not been the same as it is today –, not only appropriating the national politics and symbols, but even raising doubt about the opposition’s belonging to the nation⁷³. Lakner argues that the nation-concept created by Fidesz had been constructed in a way that made it impossible for the left (primarily for MSZP) to correspond with it⁷⁴. Thus the domination of the national politics by Fidesz (by the right) originated from processes prior to 2010 and it makes the identification of the nation-discourse of the left rather difficult mostly based on the ‘crisis’ of the European integration a few years after Hungary became a member of the EU that caused disappointment in the expectations. Thus European integration constitutes part of the discourse of Fidesz (and KDNP⁷⁵) in this manner and the argument of the left emphasizing the resolution of the constraints of Trianon by European integration is dismissed by the dissatisfaction of the right⁷⁶.

⁷² Romsics, “Trianon a Házban. A Trianon-Fogalom Megjelenése és Funkciói a Pártok Diskurzusaiban Az Első Három Parlamenti Ciklus Idején (1990-2002) [Trianon in the House. The Presence and Functions of the Trianon-Concept in the Discourse of Parties during the First Three Parliamentary Terms (1990-2002)],” 60.

⁷³ Lakner, *Utak és útvesztők: Az MSZP Húsz éve [Paths and Labyrinths: Twenty Years of MSZP]*, 79.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 87.

⁷⁵ KDNP (Keresztény Demokrata Néppárt – Christian Democratic People’s Party) is the party in coalition with Fidesz in the government.

⁷⁶ Simicskó, “Országgyűlési Felszólalás - Általános Vita Lefolytatása T/39 A Nemzeti Összetartozás Melletti Tanúságtételről”; L. Simon, “Országgyűlési Felszólalás - Általános Vita Lefolytatása T/39 A Nemzeti Összetartozás Melletti Tanúságtételről.”

This dichotomy and the focus of the left-wing on the themes of European integration and their intention to shift from the past to the future is further supported by the statements of representatives of the parties in the parliamentary discussion about the Act on the Testimony of National Unity⁷⁷.

3.3 Nationalist political discourse

The Trianon-narratives are embedded in a more general nationalist discourse which has manifested in policies, legal documents as well as in regulations and actions that remain in the symbolic sphere. This affected most parts of both political and public life – considering renaming streets⁷⁸, government institutions, even the official name of Hungary – emphasizing the terms nation or national. Using public spaces, street names and memorials their politics of memory has also become the focus of political and public discourse⁷⁹ (see more about public history in Chapter 3.5).

This symbolism which is essential to the politics of Fidesz⁸⁰ has several references to the discursive attributes of the interwar period. The re-application of the ‘Christian-national idea’ by the government which has been the “dominant state ideology of the Horthy era”⁸¹, further progresses the nationalist idea by complementing it with a strong Christian morality and value system. In accordance with the Cristian-national idea, the construction of national identity in the political discourse can be traced in the public speeches and statements of the prime

⁷⁷ Mile, “Országgyűlési Felszólalás - Általános Vita Lefolytatása T/39 A Nemzeti Összetartozás Melletti Tanúságtételről”; Hiller, “Országgyűlési Felszólalás - Általános Vita Lefolytatása T/39 A Nemzeti Összetartozás Melletti Tanúságtételről.”

⁷⁸ Joób, “II. János Pál Pápa Lett a Köztársaság Térből [The Republic Square Became Pope John Paul II Square].”

⁷⁹ Hvg.hu, “Orbán: Csak Keresztény Hagyományokra Lehet Sikeres Országot építeni”; Joób, “II. János Pál Pápa Lett a Köztársaság Térből [The Republic Square Became Pope John Paul II Square]”; kdnf.hu, “Orbán Viktor: Magyarország Erősödik és Növekvő Presztízst Vív Ki Magának [+videó].”

⁸⁰ They explicitly consider symbolic politics an important part of their role as decision-makers. See: L. Simon, “Országgyűlési Felszólalás - Általános Vita Lefolytatása T/39 A Nemzeti Összetartozás Melletti Tanúságtételről.”

⁸¹ Fekete, “Hungary: Power, Punishment and the ‘Christian-National Idea,’” 6.

minister and other members of the government⁸². The emphasis on national sovereignty in the political discourse which is also related to the ideas of the Horthy-era: the Fidesz government claims that Hungary lost its sovereignty in 1944 at the time of the German occupation and gained it back only in 1989⁸³. The sovereignty and independence of Hungary is further emphasized and instrumentalized in the the rhetoric of Fidesz emphasizing the strength of the Hungarian nation⁸⁴ – which is also relevant regarding the discourse and political attitude towards the EU, that the Hungarian nation do not require help to successfully function.

These topics are entangled within memory politics and symbolic politics. Focusing on the Horthy-era and its ideas, as well as the glorious national past that has been disrupted by the results of the peace treaty of Trianon shapes the overall discourse of the government. The topics that formed the public discourse over the past few years are the trans-border Hungarian communities in the neighboring countries⁸⁵, immigration and terrorism (‘National Consultation’ and a sequence of billboard campaigns sending anti-immigration messages⁸⁶). There has also been a greater emphasis on traditional Hungarian folk culture⁸⁷, and the religious aspect of Hungary⁸⁸ – especially in relation to the non-European refugee influx (e.g: “Hungary is the protector of Christian Europe”⁸⁹).

⁸² Balogh, “Viktor Orbán and the ‘Christian-National Idea’”; Szabolcs, “Orbán”; kormány.hu, “A Politika Feladata a Független, Keresztény, Nemzeti Magyarország Megteremtése.”

⁸³ By the inclusion of this statement in the preamble of the constitution introduced by Fidesz in 2011, positioned this idea to the legal level. See: Magyarország Alaptörvénye - (2011. április 25.) [The Fundamental Law of Hungary].

⁸⁴ kdnf.hu, “Orbán Viktor: Magyarország Erősödik és Növekvő Presztízst Vív Ki Magának [+videó].”; fidesz.hu, “Magyarország Az Elmúlt Négy évben a Saját Lábára állt.”

⁸⁵ Orbán, “Orbán Viktor Beszéde a Magyar Állandó Értekezlet XIV. ülésén.”

⁸⁶ Herczeg, “2 Plakát, Amivel a Kormány Megint Nekifutásból Rúgta Magát Tökön.”

⁸⁷ Magyar Idők, “Közös Versmondás, Előadások, ünnepek Határainkon Innen és Túl.”

⁸⁸ Hvg.hu, “Orbán: Csak Keresztény Hagyományokra Lehet Sikeres Országot építeni.”

⁸⁹ Népszava, “A Kereszténység Védőbástyája.”

3.4 A shift in the Trianon-discourse

The increased attention of the governing party to the issue of Trianon demarcates a change in the discourse of Trianon. However, the Trianon-cult is not a new phenomenon, it has developed prior to 2010: it has been a symbol of the nationalist and far-right parties after the transition, nevertheless Fidesz has been using it as a tool in their political discourse. According to Feischmidt⁹⁰ this was a way the center-right government could handle the rising extreme sentiments in relation to the symbol of Trianon and ‘Great Hungary’⁹¹. As explained above the emphasis of national official remembrance has shifted since 2010 to the interwar period and there has also been a significant focus on the trauma of the Treaty of Trianon as the ‘end of Hungary’s glorious time’ and ‘ripping apart the nation’, creating significant external kin populations in the neighboring countries – the relation to these communities is also inherent in the politics of Fidesz.

Feischmidt argues – in reviewing the political discourse and remembrance politics of Fidesz regarding Trianon – that the memory of Trianon cannot only re-evoke the feelings and symbols of defeat and grief but also the notion of glory and national identity originating from the 19th century as well as the nationalism of the interwar period Hungary⁹². Feischmidt focuses on three main aspects of Trianon: the system of symbols and the meanings these symbols provide today; the political utilization of Trianon as a symbol, with the right-wing in the focus; and the public discourses that provide this system of symbols social meaning. It is important to

⁹⁰ “Populáris emlékezetpolitikák és az újnacionalizmus: a Trianon-kultusz társadalmi alapjai [Popular memory politics and new-nationalism: social foundations of the Trianon-cult].”

⁹¹ During the parliamentary debate about the introduction of the Day of National Unity (on the day of the signing of the Treaty of Trianon), the leader of Jobbik, Gábor Vona also referred to the initiative of the Fidesz as trying to weaken them, nevertheless he (and his party) welcomed the proposal. (Vona, “Országgyűlési Felszólalás - Általános Vita Lefolytatása T/39 A Nemzeti Összetartozás Melletti Tanúságtételről.”)

⁹² Feischmidt, “Populáris emlékezetpolitikák és az újnacionalizmus: a Trianon-kultusz társadalmi alapjai [Popular memory politics and new-nationalism: social foundations of the Trianon-cult],” 58.

highlight that the enforcement of the Act on the Testimony for National Unity⁹³ placed the political discourse on an institutionalized, legal level and as one of the first order to introduce, it signified the position of FIDESZ in the coming years – and they prepared the political arena for granting citizenship to the non-resident – primarily to the trans-border – ethnic Hungarians.

There are no revisionist political actions – even though there are far-right, extreme nationalist movements that would wish to act on their territorial claims –, and the main arena for Trianon has been the symbolic realm for a longer period of time. However, the political discourse of FIDESZ and the implementation of the trauma in a legal sense, but also regarding public spaces calls the attention to the topic. I argue that this trauma is displayed in a solely symbolic field despite the legal, institutional or discursive actions.

3.5 Public history and the collective memory of Trianon

Public history is crucial agent in maintaining the memory of the past, and it provides a notion of the past according to apparent need of the public⁹⁴, decreasing the monopoly of historians and history as a science regarding the narrative of the past⁹⁵. Public history provides ready-made answers about the past and it aims to use the past for contemporary objectives. According to Gyáni the collective memory of Trianon has infused both political and everyday life as cult, “the most developed public history has developed around Trianon, which today constitutes a complete institutional universe”⁹⁶. An important part of this universe is the Act on the Testimony for National Unity which marks a significant milestone in the institutional

⁹³ 2010. évi XLV. törvény - a Nemzeti Összetartozás melletti tanúságtételről [Act XLV of 2010 on the Testimony on National Unity].

⁹⁴ Gyáni, “Nemzet, Kollektív Emlékezet és Public History [Nation, Collective Memory and Public History],” 361–362.

⁹⁵ Gyáni, “Nemzet, Kollektív Emlékezet és Public History [Nation, Collective Memory and Public History]”; Feischmidt et al., *Nemzet a Mindennapokban: Az újnacionalizmus Populáris Kultúrája* [Nation in Everyday Life: The Popular Culture of New-Nationalism].

⁹⁶ Gyáni, “Nemzet, Kollektív Emlékezet és Public History [Nation, Collective Memory and Public History],” 363.; The original Hungarian quote: „Trianon körül alakult ki a legfejlettebb nyilvános történelem, amely ma szinte már egy teljes intézményes univerzumot képez.” (the translation of the author)

remembrance of Trianon. Further elements are the Trianon memorial days (organized exclusively by extreme-right movements – mostly by Jobbik – before 2010), the erection of statues and monuments⁹⁷ as well as the establishment of the Trianon Museum⁹⁸, the Trianon Research Institute and the two quasi-scholarly journals initiated by the aforementioned institute, the ‘Trianon Review’ and ‘Great-Hungary’ – all of them created before 2010. This is the process to which Fidesz reacts by importing Trianon as a main component to their discourse and by which the memory of Trianon becomes a “social or cultural trauma”⁹⁹ in common knowledge and public discourse.

Kovács characterizes the collective memory of Trianon as emotional, narrative and cultural¹⁰⁰. Its emotional feature manifests in the feeling of sadness that the memory of Trianon encompasses, while it is narrative due to its ethnocentric feature. She argues that in public discourse the interpretation of the memory of Trianon is one-sided, determined by a single narrative. The cultural attribute emerges from the cultural rituals, symbols and discourse adopted from the interwar period – which reflects on how decisive this component of the political discourse is for the collective memory of Trianon.

3.5.1 The victim narrative and competing memories

The victim narrative is the social and collective interpretation of personal or collective suffering and the victim status in public and political discourse. The representation of Hungary as victim regarding the consequences of the Treaty of Trianon was common as part of the revisionist ideology in the interwar period. As mentioned before the discourse of the current government extensively applies symbols from that period therefore similar symbols and their meanings are

⁹⁷ Feischmidt, “Populáris emlékezetpolitikák és az újnacionalizmus: a Trianon-kultusz társadalmi alapjai [Popular memory politics and new-nationalism: social foundations of the Trianon-cult].”

⁹⁸ “Trianon Múzeum.”

⁹⁹ Kovács, “Trianon, Avagy a „traumatikus Fordulat” a Magyar Történetírásban [Trianon, or the ‘Traumatic Turning Point’ in Hungarian History Writing],” 93.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 89.

reused today in relation to Trianon as well. The instrumentalization of religious and political symbols in the interwar period resulted in the conservation of loss and grievance of Trianon for extensive segments of society¹⁰¹. Balogh further argues that this conservation was based on the duality that those in control of the discourse were (and still are) not the affected Hungarian minorities across the border but the the politicians of the ‘small’ Hungary, whose interest is not necessarily to resolve the social conflicts and strong emotional reactions but the instrumentalization of those emotions for their political goals¹⁰². The shift toward the strong maintenance of the memory of past shows a similar process of conservation today.

Trianon is part of a narrative in which it is presented as a clear victim of the Western powers that benefited from the Hungarian loss and suffering¹⁰³. Within this victim narrative of Trianon – which is a characteristic of the (extreme) right –, Hungary can be considered to be opposed to the west and to Europe while primarily the left-wing parties emphasize the European (or EU) integration in the resolution of the Trianon-trauma. Moreover, an important aspect of the victim narrative is the competition of traumas for the victim status. This competition is interpreted as a zero-sum game, thus the recognition of the trauma of one group, the sufferings of the other group is not recognized, in addition the recognition of the victim status of the second group decreased the status of the first. The zero-sum game interpretation of the victim status leads in the Hungarian context to the competition of the Holocaust and Trianon as traumas in the

¹⁰¹ Sinkó, “A Megsértett Hungária [The Wounded Hungaria]”; Balogh, “A Magyar Nemzeti áldozatnarratíva Változásai [Shifts in the Hungarian Victim-Narrative].”

¹⁰² Balogh, “A Magyar Nemzeti áldozatnarratíva Változásai [Shifts in the Hungarian Victim-Narrative],” 49.

¹⁰³ Gyáni, “Nemzet, Kollektív Emlékezet és Public History [Nation, Collective Memory and Public History],” 371.

collective memory¹⁰⁴ – in addition Gerner identifies the trauma-narrative of the communist era as a third competing memory in the post-1989 Hungarian political culture¹⁰⁵.

The cause of the competing memories of Trianon and the Holocaust is interpreted in the process of excluding the Jews from the community of the nation¹⁰⁶. According to Gyáni the labelling of the Jews as ‘others’ prevents the Holocaust to become a national “site of memory” (*lieux de mémoire*¹⁰⁷), and prevents resolution of the trauma¹⁰⁸ and the Holocaust remains the trauma of the Jews and not the nation’s. György and Romsics party agrees with the argument of Gyáni however they consider these traumas as parallel instead of conflicting ones (though from a different, a contemporary and a historical, perspectives) and they see these traumas as compatible in today’s collective memory through the creation of an integrative nation-concept¹⁰⁹. Furthermore, György argues that acknowledging responsibility would need to precede the resolution of the “Trianon-syndrome” at the same time it would put an end to the “dreadful tradition of the everlasting victim-role”¹¹⁰.

3.6 Trianon in the formal education system

Public education has been in the focus of public and political discourses, since 2010, mostly due to the major changes implemented by the government. In order to place the analysis in the context of the education system in Hungary, the most significant changes have to be addressed.

¹⁰⁴ Gyáni, “Nemzet, Kollektív Emlékezet és Public History [Nation, Collective Memory and Public History].”

¹⁰⁵ Gerner, “Between the Holocaust and Trianon – Historical Culture in Hungary.”

¹⁰⁶ Gyáni, “Nemzet, Kollektív Emlékezet és Public History [Nation, Collective Memory and Public History]”; György, “Trianon és Holokauszt - a Múlt Jövője [Trianon and Holocaust - the Future of the Past]”; Romsics, “Romsics Ignác.”

¹⁰⁷ Nora, “Between Memory and History.”

¹⁰⁸ Gyáni, “Nemzet, Kollektív Emlékezet és Public History [Nation, Collective Memory and Public History].”

¹⁰⁹ György, “Trianon és Holokauszt - a Múlt Jövője [Trianon and Holocaust - the Future of the Past]”; Romsics, “Romsics Ignác.”; Both articles reflect on the rather pessimistic view of Gyáni is his article (Gyáni, “Trianon versus Holokauszt [Trianon versus Holocaust].”) as part of a larger public debate among (social) historians.

¹¹⁰ György, “Trianon és Holokauszt - a Múlt Jövője [Trianon and Holocaust - the Future of the Past].”

The first major change of the new government, in 2011 is to centralize the whole public education system of Hungary¹¹¹. Part of the centralization process was the new National Core Curriculum as well as new Framework Curricula which were much more restrictive, in the sense that these documents on the national level essentially work as syllabi for the local schools¹¹² that limits the opportunities of local institutions, teachers therefore students as well. The new curricula and the centralization also meant that the government took legal steps and introduced a new Act on National Public Education¹¹³. Together with the more restricted curricula, the government also restricted the market of the textbooks, they set a very short list of the textbooks that can be used in public educational institutions. The government further introduced compulsory ethics (or studying religion) classes¹¹⁴ – which is in line with the ‘Christian-national idea’ –, and reorganized the structure of education of vocational and secondary vocational schools placing more focus on the vocational subject, and decreasing the relevance of the general subjects – such as history, literature of foreign languages.

The relation between education and the topic of Trianon can be identified in different levels of the education sphere: First of all, in education policy and related institutional documents. Second, in relevant classes discussing related issues (e.g.: talking about the historical, literary aspects of the peace treaty and its consequences, about national traumas, trans-border Hungarians). Third, in the relevant parts of the textbooks, which essentially define what the students should learn about the topic. Finally, the memorial day of the Treaty of Trianon – the Day of National Unity –, which was introduced as a mandatory memorial day for

¹¹¹ Hvg.hu, “Hoffmann Rózsa Elégedett.”; Regarding the complete centralization there has been rearrangements considering the degree of centralization, although the general approach remained the same.

¹¹² Magyar Közlöny, “A Nemzeti Alaptanterv Kiadásáról, Bevezetéséről és Alkalmazásáról [On the Issue, Introduction and Application of the National Core Curriculum].”

¹¹³ 2011. évi CXCV. törvény a nemzeti köznevelésről [Act CXCV of 2011 on National Public Education].

¹¹⁴ Index.hu, “Kiadják Ukázza, Hogy Erkölcsi Válság van.”

public educational institutions in 2010¹¹⁵. This collective and formal ritual within the schools indicates how this politicized topic is placed within the formal education system.

¹¹⁵ 101/2010. (X. 21.) OGY határozat az iskolai Nemzeti Összetartozás Napja bevezetéséről, a magyarországi és a külföldi magyar fiatalok közti kapcsolatok kialakításáról és erősítéséről a közoktatásban, valamint a Magyarország határain kívül élő magyarság bemutatásáról.

4. Methodology

4.1 Conceptual considerations

The concept of identity is a widely controversial concept and it is full of ambiguities concerning its definition¹¹⁶. Therefore, throughout my research and the analysis presented below, I understand national identity as cognitive and possibly emotional attachments of individuals to the nation. The importance in making this differentiation lies in the fact that these attitudes I aim to discover and understand are not expected to be inherently part of these students' personal or collective identity. Accordingly, I cannot avoid to use of the term identity despite its ambiguity – seeing that the literature refers to all types of identitarian dynamics by this concept – even though giving it my own definition.

4.2 Research questions

Throughout the research I seek the answer to the question of how Trianon, as a constructed national trauma, is placed in the national identity of students in secondary education and how that reflects on the changes created on the institutional level as well as on the narratives of political discourse. I want to explore those elements that are significant in the way students in secondary education think about Trianon and the nation as well as how the elevated emphasis on Trianon and the general nationalist political or public discourse shapes that conception, or whether it shapes it at all. I want to look at specifically how the different stages of the institutional level – curricula and textbooks – shape their thinking of the nation and how (or whether) these are placed within the frame of the nation. To be able to understand the complexity of the topic I first examine the institutional level and its relation to the political discourse on Trianon, then the micro-level in relation to both the institutional level and the political discourse. The primary aim of this research is to discover the ways students think about and understand the Treaty of Trianon and the different aspects regarding its significance today

¹¹⁶ See: Brubaker and Cooper, “Beyond ‘Identity.’”

as well as the way the role of this event in their national identity, nevertheless the interrelations among the different levels are also of my interest throughout the thesis.

4.3 The institutional level

Formal education is a crucial agent in the (national) socialization of students¹¹⁷ – as discussed above – and it is defined on the institutional level by the National Core Curriculum (as educational policy) and further documents created on the basis of principles established by it. Moreover, the textbooks are the agents of the institutional level of formal education that are directly related to the studies of the students. Therefore, these are the documents I study in order to examine the question of national identity construction through formal education with the specific focus on the topic of Trianon. Accordingly, the main question I aim to answer by the analysis of the institutional documents is how national identity is constructed through institutional agents of formal education and how the conception of Trianon is constructed. I also seek to answer further sub-questions: How is the ‘Christian-national idea’ represented – if at all – in educational policy documents and textbooks? How are the ‘national theme’ and national identity conceptualized and comprehended based on the different documents and what has been the relevant changes in the documents introduced by Fidesz since 2010?

In order to reflect on the above questions, I use a qualitative content analysis in a comparative framework, with reflection to the relevant political discourse in addition, to look at the latest version of the National Core Curriculum (NCC2012)¹¹⁸ introduced by FIDESZ in 2012 and the National Core Curriculum used prior to these changes (NCC2007)¹¹⁹ – which was

¹¹⁷ The significant extent of these changes further encourage studying the role of the formal, institutional elements in order to gain a comprehensive picture of the research question.

¹¹⁸ “Nemzeti Alaptanterv [National Core Curriculum],” 2012.

¹¹⁹ “Nemzeti Alaptanterv [National Core Curriculum],” 2007.

implemented by the MSZP¹²⁰ government originally in 2003¹²¹. This analysis provides a more general notion of national identity construction through educational policy. Similarly, I compare two history textbooks – the one published by the Hungarian Institute for Educational Research and Development¹²² after the government’s limitation of the textbook market¹²³, and the history textbook of Száray and Kaposi¹²⁴ which had been used extensively prior to 2012.

I analyze the NCCs based on the thematic parts of the documents – the roles and values of education, key competences and development areas – by the aspects of the ‘the national theme’ – with specific attention to the ‘Christian-national’ idea – and identity construction, focusing on the relevant differences and similarities of the documents. For the analysis of the textbooks one section focuses on the structure and the description of the event with particular attention to the main message of the relevant chapters. The second section focuses on the presence and the application of primary sources focusing on the symbolic use of visual images¹²⁵.

I expect a divergence between the institutional level and the political discourse in the significance of the national theme and despite the significant instrumentalization of Trianon as a national trauma by FIDESZ since 2010, however I assume relevant difference in this aspect between the documents introduced by the different governments. Furthermore, I expect that the use of symbolic elements are more frequent in the newest documents, especially in the

¹²⁰ Hungarian Socialist Party (Magyar Szocialista Párt)

¹²¹ NCC2007 had been introduced in 2003, however there was a modification made in 2007, therefore I use the version published in 2007 in comparison to the latest NCC that was enacted in 2012.

¹²² Borhegyi, *Történelem 11 [History 11]*.

¹²³ The recommended – and state-supported – list of textbooks in all school subjects had been reduced to the newly published government-funded textbooks by Fidesz after introducing the modified Act on National Public Education and the new National Core Curriculum.

¹²⁴ *Történelem IV. [History IV.]*.

¹²⁵ Based on Suh and Grant, “Assessing Ways of Seeing the Past: Analysis of the Use of Historical Images and Student Performance in the NAEP U.S. History Assessment.”

textbooks, regarding the use of emotionally charged expressions¹²⁶ and the application of the visual primary sources.

4.4 Individual level

The subjects of the micro-level in this case are the students in secondary education, therefore I conducted group interviews in six different schools in Budapest, with twenty-eight students in total¹²⁷. In addition to the group discussions, I interviewed the history teachers of the students (except for School6). The sample of the schools were selected in a non-random way, partly through personal connections with the help of the colleagues of the Zachor Foundation¹²⁸. At the same time, I tried to avoid the selective nature of those teachers who participated in the programs of the Zachor Foundation, therefore, I asked them to recommend a history teacher in their school who teaches in a senior class. Then I interviewed 4-6 students from that teacher's class who were either selected by the teacher or they volunteered (the characteristics of the schools and the students as well as the teachers can be found in the Appendix). Moreover, I also aimed to have a broad picture of the different schools: there are public secondary grammar schools (*gimnázium*), public secondary vocational schools (*szakgimnázium*) and one church-run secondary grammar school in the sample. The sample is biased in all three levels of selection (the school, the teacher and the students), however the qualitative character of this research allows such bias to take place and it does not endanger the

¹²⁶ The NCC introduced by Fidesz, states that education should also affect the emotions of the students, therefore I assume the creation of the textbook is in accordance with this aim.

¹²⁷ The students I chose were seniors due to the fact that close to the end of their secondary education they have had a more comprehensive picture of history from their studies and this way I ensured that they have learnt about the Treaty of Trianon in schools. Furthermore, regarding ethical considerations, all student were at least 18 years old and all of them (including the teachers) gave consent to use the interview in the thesis.

¹²⁸ The Zachor Foundation has personal connections to hundreds of teachers in Hungary through their teacher trainings, and they were able to help me to reach teachers from their network. During the field work, personal connections meant possible insurance that my request to conduct my research in their school would be welcome.

conclusions of the research, nevertheless it is important that the conclusions are not generalizable.

The method of group discussions was beneficial regarding the research question, because it creates an informal setting, I could observe the interaction of the students regarding both verbal and the non-verbal communication. Furthermore, I intended to avoid social desirability by creating an everyday situation of a conversation among themselves – guided by my questions. The interviews of the teachers were conducted as expert interviews therefore I chose individual discussion in order to learn about how Trianon is taught in class, about their students and the educational system in a more general sense. These interviews are intended to complement the group discussions and help me understand and interpret the students.

The question I aim to answer with the analysis concerns the role of Trianon in the national identity of the students. I want to look at how the students understand Trianon as a social phenomenon and the processes related to it and what are the frameworks they use to talk about this complex issue. Furthermore, I want to look at how – or whether the shift of the political discourse (elevated emphasis on Trianon and the concept of the nation) and the changes on the institutional level are reflected in the discussions. My general expectation is that there is a disruption between both the individual–institutional and the individual–discursive levels, meaning that I assume there is no relevant reflection of these in the way the students think about Trianon. I hypothesize that the students are not especially interested in this topic, thus it does not play an important part within their national identity.

The guideline of the discussions consisted of four main topics: 1) Hungarian historical events determinant for them (introducing the topic of Trianon) and exploring the cognitive attachments to Trianon; 2) the emotional reactions towards Trianon, including arguments and debates in class; 3) the political aspects of Trianon and 4) national identity. I determined the aspects of the analysis partly based on my initial topics of the guideline (aspects 1 and 4) and

partly based on the themes the students used to talk about Trianon answering my questions covering rather broad topics: 1) Trianon in formal education; 2) Relating to Trianon in both a cognitive and emotional sense, 3) Thematizing Trianon – Trans-border Hungarians, Rational versus emotional thinking, Past versus future,–, 4) Hungarian national identity and 5) the role of Trianon in national identity.

5. Institutional level – comparative analysis¹²⁹

5.1 National Core Curriculum

In this section I compare the National Core Curriculum introduced by the previous government in 2007 (NCC2007)¹³⁰ and the newest National Core Curriculum (NCC2012)¹³¹ introduced by Fidesz focusing on the similarities and differences regarding the ‘national theme’ and the importance of national identity. I focus on three aspects of the documents, with regard to the hypotheses described above: 1) the main role, tasks of public education and the values attributed to it; 2) the defined key competences to achieve in education; and 3) the development areas set out by the documents. There are a few general observations and impressions regarding the formulation of the texts which I believe are important to mention before the thematic analysis. One of the most salient difference is that while NCC2007 uses first person (plural) throughout most parts of the document, NCC2012 takes a more formal approach using third person (plural) – this can also be seen the shift from the term ‘individual’ to ‘person’. Another shift occurs regarding words of foreign origin: the new curriculum generally favours Hungarian expressions which have extensively replaced words of foreign origin from NCC2007. The final general observation considers the general impression of the texts which I classified as NCC2007 being more interactive and NCC2012 being more one-sided or normative. Despite the fact that

¹²⁹ All of the quotes in this chapter are the translation of the author from the original Hungarian sources.

¹³⁰ “Nemzeti Alaptanterv [National Core Curriculum],” 2007.

¹³¹ “Nemzeti Alaptanterv [National Core Curriculum],” 2012.

this interpretation is not sufficient for making generalizations, it is typical for the 2007 version to use more informal words and it is interactive in the sense that its texts – in most cases – engages the students, that they should understand and interpret certain topics, while NCC2012 is more instructive – stating what the student should learn certain topics, thus takes a more normative form.

5.1.1 The task and values of public education

The two curricula are structured differently nevertheless both start with generally describing the role and principles of public education as well as the essential values attached to the education system and the pedagogical-educational processes. A very important difference is that NCC2007 sets forth the values the NCC represents within the education system and how the local documents should relate to it¹³², NCC2012 states in a more straightforward manner the explicit goals of education itself. This difference cannot only originate from conceptual differences of the two governments but also due to the centralization of the education system, the local documents play a less significant role in the case of NCC2012 accordingly the NCC itself takes up many of the functions that are attributed to the local documents in NCC2007. Both documents state that they are based on the Hungarian legal system with respect to the international treaties, however there is a greater emphasis on the different aspects of the latter in the earlier version.

In NCC2007 there are three main themes that can be identified in the description of the values of public education: First, the application and utilization of the knowledge and competences acquired through the education system in the labour market, in an ethical manner that contributes to the economical growth of Hungary¹³³. The second theme emphasizes the national character of the NCC – “it serves the common national values”¹³⁴ – as well as

¹³² “Nemzeti Alaptanterv [National Core Curriculum],” 2007, 7643–7644.

¹³³ Ibid., 7643.

¹³⁴ Ibid.

developing national identification, preserving the identity of minorities and strengthening belonging to Europe. It is important to note that in contrast to the newest version, NCC2007 interprets civic education not only within the frame of being Hungarian, but also being European and EU citizens. The third theme is the placement of the values of education in a wider global context focusing on comprehensive global problems and issues, the opportunities of globalization and the tasks and responsibilities attached to these opportunities¹³⁵. The 2007 version frequently reflects on the knowledge-based society and life-long learning as well as the importance of effective learning for the successful adult life. One element of this effectiveness is determined as “the regulations that help learning-management processes, methods, pedagogical culture based on modern individualistic, interactive and experience-based learning to become mainstream”¹³⁶.

NCC2012 designates the fundamental task of public education as “transmitting and preserving the national cultivation and the culture of nationalities in Hungary as well as the universal culture, moral sense and deepening the cognitive-affective sensibility”¹³⁷. Moreover, the creation and reinforcement of the sense of patriotism and belonging to the nation are also among the main tasks and goals of public education. Later on the topic of national traditions and the development of national identity is considered – similarly to NCC2007 – with regard to the preservation of the identities of the national minorities living in Hungary. However, the importance of kin-Hungarians in the neighboring countries to Hungary and the history of the Carpathian-basin as highlighted values in NCC2012, mark a difference between the two documents. In addition, belonging to Europe and those elements helping to strengthen that

¹³⁵ “Nemzeti Alaptanterv [National Core Curriculum],” 2007, 7644.

¹³⁶ Ibid.

¹³⁷ “Nemzeti Alaptanterv [National Core Curriculum],” 2012, 10639.

belonging are also treated as an important value of public education – even if it is not as salient as in NCC2007.

5.1.2 Key competences

There are nine identical key competences listed in both curricula, the differences lie in several – rather small but nonetheless relevant – changes in the phrasing and formulation of the description of the knowledge, skills and attitude that is necessary to acquire each competence. The identified two general differences: the new NCC emphasizes ethics and ethical behavior for several competences while it is rarely present in the 2007 version; and the self and the different aspects related to the key competences are more frequently discussed in a wider global context in NCC2007 than in the new curriculum.

There are four key competences where the national theme is explicitly present, however contrary to my expectations, the relevant changes identified in these sections are rather minor. The main difference regarding the competence of *Communication in the mother tongue* is that the national culture is evoked regarding the necessity to understand the complexity of its connection to the mother tongue in NCC2012¹³⁸, while this approach to the Hungarian language is absent from NCC2007. Regarding the key competence *Communication in foreign languages*, the value of respecting and understanding other cultures is emphasized and the positive attitude and curiosity toward other languages and cultures are set as essential in both curricula, however the 2012 version highlights the relation of the foreign language to the mother tongue and the importance of social- and intercultural skills¹³⁹, while NCC2007 places the focus on gaining “knowledge on the social traditions and the cultural aspects and diversity of languages”¹⁴⁰.

¹³⁸ Ibid., 10653.

¹³⁹ Ibid.

¹⁴⁰ “Nemzeti Alaptanterv [National Core Curriculum],” 2007., 7646.

In the section of *Social and civic competence* in both versions, the emphasis is on mutual understanding, positive attitudes toward others based on the knowledge about international agreements and human rights, democratic values and the principles of non-discrimination and gender-equality, and their application on European, national and local levels. Both documents emphasize the importance of the comprehension of the relations between European and national identity¹⁴¹. The fourth competence, *Aesthetic and artistic awareness and expression* calls attention to the nation in the frame of being able to place “local, national, European, and global cultural heritage as well as the place of the individual and its communities in the global context”¹⁴² in NCC2007, NCC2012 uses the same approach to cultural heritage however the placement of the individual in a broader context is missing¹⁴³.

5.1.3 Development areas

The development areas in NCC2007 function as a ground for the more detailed topics that the document discusses¹⁴⁴. NCC2012 describes the role of the development areas in more details, nevertheless it explains it as a further expression of the common values of public education¹⁴⁵. Among the development areas¹⁴⁶, according to the presence of the ‘national theme’, there are two in NCC2007 – *National traditions and ethnography* and *European identification – global culture* –, and two in NCC2012 – *Sense of national identity, patriotic education* and *Education for democratic citizenship* – that are particularly relevant, however the importance of ethics and family life are essential part of the ‘Christian-national idea’ in the

¹⁴¹ Despite the minor change of „national-cultural identity” to national identity. (NCC2007, 7649; NCC2012, 10656)

¹⁴² “Nemzeti Alaptanterv [National Core Curriculum],” 2007, 7650.

¹⁴³ “Nemzeti Alaptanterv [National Core Curriculum],” 2012., 10657.

¹⁴⁴ “Nemzeti Alaptanterv [National Core Curriculum],” 2007., 7651.

¹⁴⁵ “Nemzeti Alaptanterv [National Core Curriculum],” 2012., 10640.

¹⁴⁶ There are nine development areas in NCC2007 and twelve NCC2012 – with significantly shorter descriptions.

discourse of Fidesz, therefore I include two further development areas in the analysis – *Ethics* and *Family life education*.

The common features of the development areas *National traditions and ethnography* (NCC2007) and *Sense of national identity, patriotic education* (NCC2012) are the emphasis on the national cultural heritage and the value of national culture as well as the significance of the education system in the process of creating and deepening the sense of belonging to and pride and love for the nation. There are two themes that are only present in NCC2007 but missing in the new curriculum. First, when it discusses the importance of maintaining and nurturing national culture and tradition, the national minorities within Hungary are included as well, while there is no mention of the different nationalities living in Hungary and their culture in NCC2012. Second, an important feature of this development area is that the NCC “encourages [the students to] familiarize with and maintain the immediate and general milieu’s historical, cultural and religious memories and traditions”¹⁴⁷ – at this point we can see as before the importance of the broader context in the 2007 version.

There is one aspect that is stressed in the new curriculum, while it is not present in the previous version: NCC2012 states that it is the goal of public education to have the students realize that “the protection of Hungary in case of necessity is the duty of all citizens”¹⁴⁸. Furthermore in this section NCC2012 touches upon the topic of Hungary being part of Europe and that the students should gather knowledge on the “history and diverse culture [of Europe] while maintaining their sense of being Hungarian”¹⁴⁹. In NCC2007 a separate development area deals with the topic of European belonging and culture in a more extensive way. It focuses on the growing opportunities and familiarizing not only with the cultural and historical aspect of Europe but the institutions and regulations of the European Union as well. It considers

¹⁴⁷ “Nemzeti Alaptanterv [National Core Curriculum],” 2007., 7651.

¹⁴⁸ “Nemzeti Alaptanterv [National Core Curriculum],” 2012., 10641.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

becoming a European citizen – while maintaining the sense of Hungarianness – and strengthening European identity important goals of formal education¹⁵⁰.

Within the development area *Education for democratic citizenship* – while the two texts do not differ immensely – NCC2012 considers active participation of the citizens as an action “strengthening national identity, cohesion and a mediator the individual and collective goals”¹⁵¹ – an aspect not present in the 2007 version. The development areas *Ethics* and *Education for family life* are relevant and significant because these are sections that have not been part of NCC2007 and are in line with the discourse of Fidesz, emphasizing conservative values of Christian ethics and the focus on family as well as the institutional changes, such as mandatory ethics (or religious studies) classes. These themes are important not only in these sections but throughout the previously analyzed sections as well.

5.1.4 Conclusion

Both documents organize the main values and tasks of public education among similar themes however the emphasis of these values shows significant difference. The emphasis of NCC2007 lies in placing the values of education and the nation, national identity within a broader European or global context while the preservation of national values and the reinforcement of patriotic sentiments and national identity is more essential to NCC2012 using the national theme in a more salient and explicit manner throughout the analyzed parts of the document. Regarding the key competences, in contrast to my assumptions there was very little difference between the two curricula, the salience of nation and the importance of maintaining national identity were not more recurrent themes in the 2012 version. The message these documents convey are based in the same principles and the differences seen in the other two sections cannot be found in this segment of the documents. In the section of the development

¹⁵⁰ “Nemzeti Alaptanterv [National Core Curriculum],” 2007., 7651-7652.

¹⁵¹ “Nemzeti Alaptanterv [National Core Curriculum],” 2012., 10641.

areas the most significant changes in the new curriculum are the explicit focus on the development and reinforcement of national identity and patriotic education, the exclusion of the ‘European theme’ as a separate development area and the introduction of two development areas dealing with the values of family and ethics which are central in the discourse of Fidesz. Therefore, this section considerably reflects the political discourse, more specifically the ‘Christian-national’ idea.

With regard to my expectations, I see the significance of the ‘national theme’ in NCC2012 in relation to the earlier version by changes that could be seen as minor and not relevant however I believe that despite the size of the changes these define the approach of the creators of the curriculum. Furthermore, NCC2012 is in line with the ‘Christian-national’ idea, however this concept is much less robust in the curricula than in the political discourse. The two curricula are based on similar educational principles however they display different narratives of the nation. There is a general nationalization of the new curriculum shifting the attention from a more integrative European or global context to the nation – even though the wider context is not entirely excluded. This narrative reflects on the narrative of the right-wing (described in the previous chapter): the NCC as educational policy is part of the the nation-concept which is realized through discourse and symbolic politics, while marginalizing the role of Europe. At the same time NCC2007 is in line with the European-narrative that characterized the Hungarian left-wing since the 1990s. This differentiation is important however not surprising since the earlier document had been introduced by a left-wing government, in the years of Hungary becoming a member of the European Union, therefore the integrationist approach within education policy correspond both the particular political setting, both the orientation of the left-wing government. Similarly, the new curriculum has been implemented by a government who appropriated the national-narrative to the right deconstructing and disabling any narrative of the left.

5.2 History Textbooks

In the following, I compare the chapters about the Treaty of Trianon of two different history textbooks – one used expansively before 2011 (referred to as textbook1¹⁵²) and the newest government supported and funded textbook (referred to as textbook2¹⁵³). First I look at the structure and the overall picture of the chapters, then I analyze the content in two aspects, the focus of the description of the event and the formulation of the text – specific phrases and their implicit meaning. Following, I study the primary sources and the related questions separately.

5.2.1 Structure and content

Both textbooks are based on the principle of competence-based education therefore primary sources are similarly present and important in both cases. The ratio of text and sources are roughly the same – a little over one page of text out of five and out of seven pages in the newer and the earlier book, respectively. The arrangement of the two chapters are quite different: textbook1 has a clear structure of first describing the events – in specific sub-sections –, and then presenting the primary sources linking them to the relevant section of the text. In textbook2 the text and the sources – quotes from documents and pictures, maps as well – are scattered in between parts of the text and throughout the chapter. Textbook1 generally has a focus on the processes that the consequences of Trianon created – such as ethnic tensions in the region and economic difficulties after the dissolution of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy –, while textbook2 concentrates on a more detailed description of very specific economic consequences and the circumstances of the negotiations and signing of the treaty as well as the international relations regarding the Treaty of Trianon.

¹⁵² Száray and Kaposi, *Történelem IV. [History IV.]*.

¹⁵³ Borhegyi, *Történelem 11 [History 11]*.

The textual description of textbook1 is divided into five parts: *The signing of the Treaty*; *Ethnic concerns*; *The economic consequences of the Treaty*; *Military regulations* and *Revision*. These short sections describe the circumstances of the signing in 1920, the ethnic, social, economic and military aspects of the creation of the new borders of Hungary and its consequences and finally the different movements of revision of the Trianon decision¹⁵⁴. Textbook2 has two designated sub-chapters. The first is called *The Hungarian case at the peace conference* and presents the circumstances of the peace conference preceding the signing of the treaty. The second section, *The regulations of the Treaty of Trianon*, explains the instructions of the Treaty and its consequences as well, pointing out very specific details. This is an important difference between the two materials, while textbook1 emphasizes the more general social and economic processes as a result of what happened, textbook2 gives a more detailed introduction to the topic, which makes it easier to understand one specific aspect, however, in my interpretation, the lack of the stress on the explanation of social processes neglects the aspect that allows the student to understand the general picture.

Regarding the territorial changes, textbook1 uses both the number of square kilometers and the ratio of these territories compared to ‘Great Hungary’ as well as presenting the geographical regions that Hungary lost as a result of the Treaty, while textbook2 only displays the percentage of lost territories. The Hungarian population, that became part of the new nation-states in the region, are only described as a proportion in textbook1, however the text emphasizes that it created a predominantly homogeneous Hungary¹⁵⁵. In textbook2 the percentage format is used to describe the total population that Hungary had lost, and specific numbers are used particularly to describe the altered number of ethnic Hungarian population.

¹⁵⁴ Száray and Kaposi, “A Trianoni Békeszerződés [The Peace Treaty of Trianon],” 40–41.

¹⁵⁵ In contrast to the prior state of ethnic heterogeneity. Száray and Kaposi, “A Trianoni Békeszerződés,” 40.

The words used by textbook1 in relation to the territory are “detached”, “were taken”¹⁵⁶ while textbook2 referred to these territories as “lost”¹⁵⁷. The ethnic aspect was more normative in textbook1 – drawing a more distinct boundary between the in-group (Hungarians) and the out-group (the neighboring nations) –, the Hungarians living in the detached territories were described as “constrained under foreign authority”¹⁵⁸, while in textbook2 the expressions were more neutral: “ended up in the neighboring states”¹⁵⁹.

The most emotionally charged description in the texts was that the ‘ethnic principle’ had been disregarded by the peace treaty and the majority of ethnic Hungarians who became part of another state were right on the other side of the border, in a region where they constituted the ethnic majority – these were (according to textbook1) “exclusively Hungarian”¹⁶⁰ territories. The textbooks use the expressions “especially painful and difficult to explain”¹⁶¹ (textbook1) “especially hurtful”¹⁶² (textbook2). In addition, in textbook1 the military regulations were attributed with terms such as “making Hungary unfit”¹⁶³, in contrast to the “vigorous armament of the neighbors”¹⁶⁴, and Trianon was labelled as “obvious injustice”¹⁶⁵ in regard to the revision. In the new textbook the phrasing had less emotionally charged expressions, nonetheless it talks more extensively about the war reparations and its unfairness, pointing out specific issues such as the “occupying Romanian troupes”¹⁶⁶ who were able to keep the possessions – Hungarian territories – they took as reparation. I believe this

¹⁵⁶ Száray and Kaposi, “A Trianoni Békeszerződés [The Peace Treaty of Trianon],” 40.

¹⁵⁷ Borhegyi, “A Trianoni Békeszerződés [The Peace Treaty of Trianon],” 123.

¹⁵⁸ Száray and Kaposi, “A Trianoni Békeszerződés [The Peace Treaty of Trianon],” 40.

¹⁵⁹ Borhegyi, “A Trianoni Békeszerződés [The Peace Treaty of Trianon],” 124.

¹⁶⁰ Száray and Kaposi, “A Trianoni Békeszerződés [The Peace Treaty of Trianon],” 40.

¹⁶¹ Ibid.

¹⁶² Borhegyi, “A Trianoni Békeszerződés [The Peace Treaty of Trianon],” 124.

¹⁶³ Száray and Kaposi, “A Trianoni Békeszerződés [The Peace Treaty of Trianon],” 40.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶⁶ Borhegyi, “A Trianoni Békeszerződés [The Peace Treaty of Trianon],” 124.

differentiation (highlighting the benefits and the advantageous situation of the neighboring states) is a way of demarcating the in-group and the out-group.

5.2.2 Primary sources

There are five types of primary sources in both texts: documents or quotes from speeches, pictures or posters, maps, diagrams and tables. Textbook1 presents 14 sources for corresponding to the sub-sections of the description: 6 quotes of documents and speeches, 1 diagram, 3 maps, 3 pictures and 1 table. Textbook2 offers 11 sources, 2 quotes (one is a collection of 3 different quotes), 2 maps, 5 pictures, and 2 tables. In addition, there are 2 separate sections that contain primary sources (2 pictures, a table and descriptions): the first is about the referendum in the region of Sopron, which resulted in the re-annexation of that area to Hungary (and the city was granted the ‘most loyal city’ status as a result); the second is a short description of the myths around the Treaty of Trianon and gives the task of information gathering on the topic to the students¹⁶⁷.

An important difference is that while in textbook1 questions and assignments are assigned to all sources, in textbook2 there are sources (mainly pictures) that are merely illustrations. The number of pictures and their illustrative function demonstrates their symbolic application and also the fact that there are pictures with statements in the caption but no question for the student to work with, which in my interpretation suggests one narrative only.

To illustrate my argument, I compare the caption of two posters of the interwar revisionist propaganda from the two textbooks. In textbook1, under the picture of the poster the caption says “Justice for Hungary! Irredentist poster”¹⁶⁸, and next to it there is a task for the students: “Gather the motifs present on the poster! Determine the meaning of the symbols!”¹⁶⁹.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid., 125.

¹⁶⁸ Száray and Kaposi, “A Trianoni Békeszerződés [The Peace Treaty of Trianon],” 44.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid.

The other poster in textbook2 shows the teared apart ‘Great Hungary’ and the slogan: “No! No! Never!”¹⁷⁰, with no question or task for the students. The caption around it mentions that protests were organized already since 1918, expressing the desperation and bitterness of the society, which were “accompanied by the countless impressive products of the irredentist propaganda, to maintain the emotions of the Hungarian population”¹⁷¹. The first one aims to encourage the students to analyze and understand what is the meaning of the symbols (a cross, the Hungarian holy crown, the map of Great Hungary, and the crown of thorns) on the poster, while the second one merely gives information about the protests and presents the poster as an example of the revisionist propaganda. This is problematic, based on the literature on the application of visual images and the role of questions in textbooks¹⁷², since textbook2 lacks the intention to develop the analytic and critical skills, independent thinking of the student – which are designated key competences –, but presents a primary source without reflecting on it or urging the student to reflect and therefore providing a one-sided narrative.

There are leading questions in both textbooks, through which the possible answers lean towards the objective of the author (or editor). Most of these questions are emphasizing the extent of the loss of Hungary, both in the ethnic and the economic sense, directing the attention of student to the extent of the loss and the unjust way of determining the new borders.

5.2.3 Conclusion

The analysis of and the specific examples from these textbook chapters are not sufficient to draw general conclusion, nonetheless we can see patterns in the differences between the two. Regarding the content and the structure textbook1 gives a more comprehensive picture of the social and economic processes in relation to the event of the Treaty of Trianon, while textbook2

¹⁷⁰ Borhegyi, “A Trianoni Békeszerződés [The Peace Treaty of Trianon],” 122.

¹⁷¹ Ibid.

¹⁷² Suh and Grant, “Assessing Ways of Seeing the Past: Analysis of the Use of Historical Images and Student Performance in the NAEP U.S. History Assessment.”

is more detailed regarding certain aspects, such as the negotiations leading to the Treaty and specific economic consequences. With respect to the application of primary sources in the chapters – first and foremost visual images –, textbook2 can be considered more symbolic – in accordance with my expectation – both for the placement, the number of the images and for providing one narrative by the occasional absence of questions or tasks related to the primary sources.

The Trianon-narrative in the textbooks correspond with the description of the Trianon-phenomenon by Kovács¹⁷³: the texts are determined by a one-sided narrative portraying Trianon as grievance without question and both descriptions include emotional expressions – differentiating between the in-group and the out-group and emphasizing the loss of Hungary – , although the content or the application of primary sources cannot be considered ethnocentric. In addition, the term trauma is not used in either of the textbooks, their descriptions reflect on how the literature identifies trauma¹⁷⁴. The implications of Trianon on the present is not part of the textbook itself, however several teachers discussed the relevance of Trianon today in the class (regarding Trans-border Hungarians and not the political aspects) which further proves the significant role of the teachers in the student's concept of Trianon.

¹⁷³ Kovács, "Trianon, Avagy a „traumatikus Fordulat“ a Magyar Történetírásban [Trianon, or the 'Traumatic Turning Point' in Hungarian History Writing]."

¹⁷⁴ Alexander, "Cultural Trauma: A Social Theory"; Neal, *National Trauma and Collective Memory*.

6. Trianon in national identity – analysis of group interviews

In this chapter I present the analysis of the six group interviews with students, furthermore I use the interviews of their teachers to complement and interpret the student-interviews at certain points. After reviewing general features of the interviews and the students, I look at the presence of Trianon in the school. Based on the interviews I identified four main sections for the analysis: First, I look at the relation of the students to Trianon in a more general sense; second, I present the main themes through which the students frame the topic of Trianon; third, I analyze what being Hungarian means for the students; and finally I look at the role of Trianon in their national identity.

There are some general characteristics of the schools and the students that I discovered during my research that help to understand and interpret the interviews. First of all, I identified differences in the way the students speak and think in the different type of schools. Generally, the students in secondary grammar schools were more interested in history and specific historical events, in a way that exceeds the boundaries of the history classes in schools. I want to point out that there are numerous components that can influence this observation, but according to the institutional changes in the educational system and what the teachers have told me, one important element to keep in mind is the fact that in secondary vocational schools the ratio of the vocational subjects has been increased thereof the general subjects have less significance in their educational structure¹⁷⁵. A somewhat relating difference between the school-types is that in the secondary grammar schools, students seemed more informed of historical and political issues and they seemed more analytic of every question and issue that was a subject of the discussion.

¹⁷⁵ According to Teacher5, decreasing the relevance of the general subjects, such as science, affects the thinking of the students greatly – they become generally less interested in anything as well as it reduces their opportunities at the end of their secondary education.

All the five teachers I had the opportunity to interview stressed that in their complete history studies in school, students are most interested in the events of the 20th century, partly because this era is close enough in time so the students can grasp it, but also because they are more mature when they learn about it and are mostly able to understand the complexity of the political, social and current relevance of the different events. Moreover, all of the history teachers pointed out that the visual elements and either independent research-work (e.g.: for a presentation) or group-work are the best methods and materials to engage the students, however only two of the six schools (Schools 2 and 3) have the sufficient technical equipment to use those pedagogical methods in classes that raises the attention of the students.

Another difference concerns rather the social background of the schools. In the more elite schools¹⁷⁶ (School 1, 2 and 6), students expressed themselves in full sentences and complete chain of ideas as well as in a more specific manner. This means for me that they have either a more specific knowledge about what they are saying or that they have a more extensive verbal ‘tool kit’ to express what they want to say. In contrast in Schools 3, 4 and 5, students used pronouns, linking words, pre-determiners and demonstratives often, suggesting something but not saying it out loud, such as: “In my opinion everyone is roughly aware of what is going on and why. It is just that, really there is no sense in why or what” (School5). In addition, I found important differences in the expressions they used generally which can be the reason of numerous factors, nevertheless it is important to keep in mind that school environment and the different social background of the students could play an important role. Despite these differences the language code¹⁷⁷ they used was not significantly determinant in the discussions¹⁷⁸.

¹⁷⁶ I categorized the schools based on the interviews with teachers and the some comments of the students.

¹⁷⁷ Bernstein, *Class, Codes and Control: Theoretical Studies towards a Sociology of Language*.

¹⁷⁸ The notion of social desirability is important to keep in mind, the students could have also tried to use the most sophisticated language they know in a situation where they could have felt

Furthermore the students were generally quite critical towards politics, the political actors – often the governing party – and how people think and behave, at the same time ‘discussing politics’¹⁷⁹ was seen in secondary vocational schools as negative while it was not the case in secondary grammar schools. In addition, students maintained a general interest toward political issues that personally concern them, first and foremost topics related to education - even if they were not interested in either history or politics.

6.1 Trianon in the school

There are two levels in the education system where Trianon is relevant: history classes and the Day of National Unity, the memorial day of Trianon¹⁸⁰ therefore in this section of the analysis I look at how students learn about Trianon and how they relate to the memorial day introduced in 2010.

In most cases students emphasized that they learned about Trianon just like about any other topic, except that the “historical significance” of the event is highlighted – this perspective also appeared in one of teacher-interviews. Most teachers highlighted visual sources when teaching about Trianon (and generally as well) because students understand it better through maps, pictures or videos¹⁸¹, in addition one of the teachers mentioned personal experiences as well and including the relevance of Trianon today talking about the Hungarian areas in neighboring countries. Both teachers and students emphasized that current political issues are absent in the school environment however from little signs (a joke, a comment, a smile or even not saying something) the students can deduce the opinion of the teachers about certain

that they need to meet certain expectation – however, my impression was that it was not the case.

¹⁷⁹ In Hungarian: ‘politizálás’

¹⁸⁰ The topic of Trianon can be relevant in other subjects such as literature or ethics however I focus on history class since that is the forum where they learn about the event in details, and also because I interviewed the students’ history teachers therefore I have insights to the subject of history in relation of Trianon in the schools.

¹⁸¹ It is important to note that there is a great difference between the schools in having the adequate technical equipment for using such sources in classes.

questions – most teachers were also aware of this. Some of the teachers do not use the textbook for varying reasons, nevertheless, one teacher and several students were either critical towards the book or even described it as useless (School5). There were no heated debates regarding Trianon in classes, where there was any sort of debates, the students rather described it as “thinking together” (School2), while in School3 students emphasized that “these are facts we cannot argue about” and that “we need to learn it and that’s it”.

Regarding the Day of National Unity, I was very curious about how the schools manage another memorial day and how students relate to it. Surprisingly the answers were the same in every group discussion: there is no commemoration in schools – at least the students do not know about it. Some students have not even heard about that the Day of National Unity or that there is a memorial day for Trianon (Schools 3 and 5), although they said that there might have been some posters and decorations in the school but they do not remember (School3). A few students mentioned memorials in their primary schools (mostly ‘radio-memorials’), but essentially they have not experienced the Day of National Unity within the walls of the school. Three out of the five teachers highlighted that there are not many opportunities for a commemoration in June, there is barely anyone in the schools then. The teacher in School3 described a memorial program she organized in the library of the school about the experiences of trans-border Hungarians and listening to Hungarian folk songs from the trans-border territories – and she further mentioned that the school was decorated on that day¹⁸². In School2 there was a decorated wall and flyers in the school on the Day of National Unity¹⁸³.

¹⁸² She highlighted that they (the teachers) struggle with the decoration to avoid displaying symbols that are connected to radical ideas.

¹⁸³ The absence of a school-commemoration is due to the school’s customs of only having commemorations on the national holidays. The teacher of School2 further expressed that he disagrees with this approach because the students can go in and leave the school without noticing the sings of the memorial day.

Reflecting on the institutional changes it is apparent that the school memorial day of Trianon is not determinant in the schools of my sample and many students do not even know about it. Even if there are initiatives for organizing memorials it is not salient for students.

6.2 “We have to approach this Trianon-issue very cautiously”

In this section I want to explore in a general manner how students talk about Trianon, how they personally seem to relate to it. In most of the cases Trianon was not explicitly determinant historical event for the students, either in the cognitive or the emotional sense. There was one person in four of the discussions who mentioned it as a decisive event for them throughout their studies, or for Hungarian history in general, in other cases Trianon only became a topic as something that a lot of people would choose as the most significant historical event of Hungary. Strong emotional reactions were not typical of the discussions, there were only a few participants for whom this topic was clearly very important. Thus through these discussions my experience is that for these students personally, Trianon is not of primary importance and relevance, however national identity and the meanings of being Hungarian naturally evolved to be one of the central topics in almost all of the group discussions, which shows how the history of a nation and national identity are intertwined (this aspect is detailed later in Chapter 6.4). Regardless of Trianon not being the most important part of the Hungarian history for most students, the way they approached the topic shows the relevance of Trianon in their thoughts and emotions towards the event, its effects or more general social processes.

The only consensual fundamental feature of thinking about Trianon was its unjust characteristic. Even in those groups where students were quite critical towards the perception of Trianon and the public opinions about it, said that “it was unjust, we also learnt that” (School3) or “obviously it was not justified” (School2) and some emphasized the sensitive nature of the topic: “We have to approach this Trianon-issue very cautiously” (School2). There were students – for whom Trianon was the most important among the participants of the

discussion –, who felt that the consequences of Trianon is hurtful for them, however other students who seemed more neutral emotionally also had comments like: “obviously it hurts me too” (School5) or “maybe that [Trianon] is the greatest tragedy that happened in the country” (School4). For many students Trianon simply means the loss of the country, regarding both territory and population. Thus the general framing of Trianon appeared as injustice and loss even for those who are not interested or does not feel affected by this issue.

Hungary was also seen as a victim in many cases regarding the event of Trianon. First of all, the extensively used symbol of the wound-metaphor¹⁸⁴ was applied in the discussions – although far less often than remarks about injustice or loss. At the same time the references to Trianon today as a wound, had given me the impression of being a rather conscious choice of talking about this issue, contrary to the previously described phrases and expressions that seemed to be natural and inherent in the way the students used them. Another aspect of the victim position is seeing Trianon as Hungary being punished and losing its position as a great power of Europe: Hungary “became a small, mediocre country” (School6) and thus less important, being “at the wrong time on the wrong side” (School4) which assumes no control of what happened to the country. Some students emphasized the “failure of getting back” what was taken from us (School5) and they talked about the borders determined by the treaty, as they were drawn in a way so that Hungary (we) would be worse off and that they (the Allies) distributed the territories at will, without taking the ethnic lines into consideration. Beside Trianon being a punishment, the aspect of the decision being legitimate as well, also came up in one of the discussions (School3).

Despite the rather critical and analytical approach of the students to the topic, they also expressed emotional attachments to the issue of Trianon. The treaty causing sadness or

¹⁸⁴ Both verbally and visually. See: Balogh, “A Magyar Nemzeti áldozatnarratíva Változásai [Shifts in the Hungarian Victim-Narrative]”; Sinkó, “A Megsértett Hungária [The Wounded Hungaria].”

bitterness for the students arose in all the discussions in various degrees: on the one hand some said that themselves and others are justly angry even after a hundred years, on the other hand some just incidentally mentioned that it is a sad event – distancing themselves from both the event and the emotions. There were some who felt emotional connections to the Hungarian territories or generally the whole region of the Carpathian basin, based on cultural connections. Other emotions were more distanced from the event itself – “we have to accept it, everyone knows it” (School1) – or reflecting on its social effects – “I find it a dividing issue” (School1) – while some found the topic generally not significant and not worth dwelling on it, or even disliked it (Schools 1, 2 and 4).

Another general topic of the discussions was how people think about the issue of Trianon, and what the students think of them and their behavior. The identification of certain symbols (such as ‘Great Hungary’ stickers on cars, or certain way of clothing) and football fandom in relation to the more radical (right-wing) way of thinking about Trianon were recurring themes. Regarding the radical thinking football fans were also mentioned as “they just shout it [‘get back Trianon!’] then and they don’t mean it” (School5). It is not the association of football fans with radical ideas what is important in this case, rather the belief that those saying it do not mean it or do not even know what it means. This aspect of those people who wants the lost territories back, being narrow-minded, guided by their emotions and might not being aware of what they are saying “because it is nurtured into people” and it is “fixed” (School5) in people’s thinking, constituted an important part of only one of the discussions, nonetheless I find it important for two reasons: First, the projection of describing a certain way of thinking and behavior of people while excluding oneself from this description shows in my interpretation that they think they are not fully part of society yet, they are not influenced by the stimuli around them, the way other people are and they also do not have an effect on society by their behavior as much as others. Second, their thinking process evaluates

others as non-rational, limited people who act and say according to their emotions and what is told them, even though education (and nurture) is considered to be part of this view, these students' picture of the society can be highly influenced by this belief.

In relation to Trianon today, the students were talking extensively about different sides and opposing opinions, however, identifying these 'sides' or the different people or groups in society who have these different opinions regarding Trianon seemed generally a difficult task, and evoked various aspects for this differentiation. In School2, one of the students explicitly said that "it is hard to pinpoint who are the opposing sides, it is rather a question of national consciousness" – thus making a direct connection between the discourse of Trianon and national identity.

Moreover, theorizing how could a social conflict, like the one Trianon means today, be processed on the level of the society, the resolution of the effects that this tragedy has today became an important aspect of talking about Trianon in almost all of the discussions. Harmonizing the polarized opinions (School1), the lack of the public dialogue as means of resolution (School2) as well as European integration (School6) were the main approaches of the students. The aspect of the EU as a way to resolve the disruption of the nation – which is a relevant part of the Trianon-discourse of the (left) opposition parties (see Chapter x.x) – became, surprisingly part of the discussion only in one case. Another opinion in the same group reflected more on the Trianon-discourse of the government and even the extreme right, emphasizing the inner or emotional border which is still present even if we can pass the borders easily. Reflecting on the rivalry for the victim position of different groups and traumas, the parallel of Trianon and the Holocaust was absent from the discussions apart from one reference regarding the lack of processing of both tragedies and how both are traumatic experiences for generations in families who were victims of these events which further emphasized the memory of the trauma is only relevant for the families affected by them.

The way students discussed the topic of Trianon reflected on the political discourse in a significant manner, they almost exclusively used the schemes and expressions offered by the dominant Trianon-narrative of the right even if they were critical towards politics in general or the government specifically. I argue, based on my observations and what the students said, that many of them would be receptive to the left-wing discourse of European integration and the absence of this narrative¹⁸⁵ can be explained with the peripheral character of the nation-discourse of the left. Cognitive and affective messages from others – thus how people think and what they say – in relation to Trianon was processed in a rather critical manner, and considered to be socially destructive. I believe that the “others” described by the students referred to people outside their immediate communities therefore I argue that these messages do not play a significant role in the development¹⁸⁶ of their national attitudes rather their view of the society in general. In addition, the aspects of boundary-making between the national in-group and the out-group was relevant in the way students talked about the effects of Trianon both from a historical and a comparative perspective.

Through the topic of Trianon, students expressed mainly cultural and territorial connections to the nation and to the trans-border Hungarian areas, even though many of them distanced themselves emotionally from the event. The traumatic Hungarian history is determinant in their nation-concept at the same time they the issue of the resolution of historical traumas as well as emphasizing the proud moments of history were essential for many students.

6.3 Thematizing Trianon

During the discussions the students talked about Trianon through various themes, I aim to highlight in this section those that were either recurring themes or proved to be significant

¹⁸⁵ It was mentioned briefly by one student in School6, and this argument was then dismissed by the argument of the emotional borders of Trianon.

¹⁸⁶ Dekker and his colleagues disregard the aspect of agency in processing messages from others. Dekker, Malová, and Hoogendoorn, “Nationalism and Its Explanations.”

for the way students think about Trianon – even if it was not present in all the six groups. These themes were formulated by the students as answers to my rather general questions or in reaction to one another.

6.3.1 “They tried to erase Hungarian identity and assimilate them”

It is not entirely surprising that discussing an event that created substantive Hungarian minorities in the neighboring countries is thematized by the students through talking about these minorities. Nevertheless, the salience of this theme in the discussions and its relevance for the students was unexpected for me¹⁸⁷. I divided the students’ comments about trans-border Hungarians into two categories: one that considers this group in relation to national identity and in relation to the majority of their country and a second category where students consider the Hungarian minorities in the neighboring countries as a reason why Trianon is still significant today.

The Hungarians across the border are seen as holding on to their Hungarian identity and traditions even stronger than those living within the Hungarian borders. As one of the students said: “all of the traditions remained in the heart and the soul of the trans-border Hungarians, they hold on to it even more because the surrounding countries want to suppress it, they want to suppress the Hungarianness” (School6) and they are also “part of the glorious Hungarian past and they hold on to it” (School6). Accordingly, the importance of trans-border Hungarians for the students, lies not only in maintaining their Hungarian identity in another country, but doing so under circumstances of strong assimilation. This is the other element the students emphasized extensively: the “aggressive assimilation”, “oppression” of not only identity but culture, Hungarians “being defenseless”, and being in a “disadvantaged position” in the

¹⁸⁷ This theme came up in four of the six group discussions and became a significant determinant of the discussion in two of them – in both these groups there was at least one person who had ancestry from the territories that were detached from Hungary as a consequence of the Treaty.

neighboring countries. There were examples emphasizing that it is not only difficult but dangerous to be Hungarian in these areas, they are victims of violence in numerous cases, which was a central element of the emotional reactions to the Trianon issue. Nevertheless, there were voices, still emphasizing their difficult situation, who took a different standpoint: “the circumstances of the trans-border Hungarians today are not as bad as it was then” (School3) or “they basically got used to a norm there, they have jobs and apartments and everything” (School5). One of the students in School6 even said that “in my opinion, someone who wants to be Hungarian in Romania, can be” and interestingly added that this is only “a perception from Budapest” which points at an important duality of talking and evaluating the life of people while not being there or really knowing their life.

The second characteristic of talking about trans-border Hungarians was in the frame of why Trianon is still an important and determinant phenomenon today. Most of the students who talked about this emphasized that Trianon is a trauma even today because Hungarians across the border are discriminated against and are victims of violence just for being Hungarian (School1). Others emphasized that the reason is that “there are people still today, who have close relatives being in a disadvantaged position because of it” (School1). There was one student, who identified and emotionally reacted to this topic, who positioned himself to a rather extreme point of view, saying that “in my opinion most Hungarians will not consider Trianon to have closure until there is no autonomy for the Hungarians on the detached territories” or until they have the very same rights as the majority in their country (School1).

To conclude this section, the students depicted a rather negative picture of those areas where Hungarians live in the neighboring countries. Everyone considered trans-border Hungarians to be part of the Hungarian nation as well as an important pillar of Hungarian national identity, at the same time they were discussed as a consequence of Trianon and only occasionally as a matter of today’s Hungary. In this sense their thinking reflected on the

elevated emphasis on trans-border Hungarians in political discourse since 2010, although they were more distanced from this group, considering them less part of their life or generally Hungary today. Those, whose opinions reflected more closely the discourse of Fidesz, were personally affected by having either parents or grandparents from today's Romania or Slovakia.

6.3.2 “We can't change it anyways”

In practically all discussions the aspects of rational and emotional thinking were contrasted, though not explicitly. In School3 they considered the traumatic feature of Trianon at that time when it happened through both a rational and an emotional element: the economic effects and ripping apart families, respectively. In another school they said, claiming and taking back those territories would have been logical in the past, however “today it would mean too much work” (School5), because the trans-border territories are rather underdeveloped and “it would be a disadvantage, since we can barely maintain ourselves” (School5). This way of thinking was present in other groups as well, that “today it would be a catastrophe, because [...] we would not be able to control those large territories” (School3).

In many cases the arguments highlighting that there is no chance we could gain back the lost territories were central reasons when talking about why we should let go of the Trianon-topic today. Even those who did not seem to care about this issue mentioned on the side that “obviously it would be nice to have them [the territories] back” (School5), however we would not be able to control and manage it either economically or socially – referring to the issues of multiple ethnicities living on these territories and the possible ethnic conflicts. Most of the opposing opinions were rather based on emotions such as “if there is even one person in Hungary who is a patriot and there is even one Hungarian in the territories across the border who is being discriminated then, arising from national solidarity, there will always be someone who sees it as a grievance” (School1). Nevertheless, it is important to note that those expressing the strongest emotional connection to the topic used mixed emotional and rational arguments.

The extent of how much of these territories the students wanted to see as part of Hungary again varied from all of them, through only the ‘truly Hungarian’ territories along the border, until none of it.

The students talked extensively about their perceptions of those who see Trianon as a painful tragedy and how they see the people on the two sides of the debate around this topic. These people are generally depicted as basing their opinions and behavior on emotions, because they do not think about the possible consequences of what they want (School5). A student in School2 described that a lot of people are illegitimate to feel hurt about Trianon, because “this is a huge trend now, that I am a ‘great-Hungarian’ and we will restore Hungary, this is extreme nationalism”, while the old lady who had come from Transylvania, who was personally affected, does not talk about Trianon as much (School2). We can see here the element of having a personal connection is also important in the thoughts of the students, as well as temporal considerations. Many students see this group of people as dwelling on the past and not dealing with the problems of the present and the future. One of the students in School1 considers Trianon a closed issue: “Trianon has passed, so why talk about it”. This leads to the next theme that considers turning to the past and the contrast of the past and the future in relation to Trianon.

Thematizing Trianon and the polarized opinions through contrasting rational and emotional thinking has two important implications. First, the emotional attachment of the students to the Trianon-issue is rather weak and seem to be overwritten by rational arguments of the amount of work, control and economic considerations. Second, some of the students – from the secondary grammar schools – had more complex views and opinions of social processes, but generally they saw society – or at least a significant part of it – as not thinking rationally, therefore in a way that society should not operate, according to them. Consequently, by this theme the students reflect on the people and society around them – though I cannot state the symbolic nature of political discourse have had a definite effect on their way of thinking.

6.3.3 “They are hiding in history”

In two groups, students framed the sides of the Trianon debate (in School3) and the reason for the topic of Trianon taking a central role today (in School4) as the contrast of the past and the future. In the first case students considered those talking about Trianon substantively to be whimpering on the past and in contrast “they are not able or not willing to take action for a better future”. The students further described them as racists, pessimists, characterized by resignation and negligence and they blame everyone while not doing anything (School3). Thus in their interpretation, those concerned with the past lack the ability or the will to work on their own and the country’s future – which was considered to be destructive for the society. In the second case, the thinking-process of the participants of School4 is essentially the same, though they used the past–future contrast in an even more explicit way. According to the students dwelling on the past (concerning Trianon) “distracts people from the problems of the present”, “they are hiding in history”. They said that the past is important but “we should rather deal with the future” (School4).

Thinking through the theme of the contrast of past and future, in relation to the general criticism of the political life – even the government – and the way people think, especially those dwelling on the topic of Trianon can also be a reflection to the elevated attention to commemorations, public memory and public visual culture through the extent of statue-erectations as well as memorial years in the last decade, although a causal connection cannot be drawn due to the qualitative character of the research. Nevertheless, being occupied with the resolution of the conflicts arising from historical events and not lingering over these events shows a shift from the discourse of the government. I find this theme of thinking about Trianon in the present, and history in general, especially interesting in relation to significant scholars of remembrance politics who have written about the institutionalization of collective memory and the increasing focus on the past and one of its dangers that it turns people towards the past

instead of the future¹⁸⁸. Therefore, people become preoccupied with keeping the memory of the past alive by all means necessary while they do not pay attention to the future – this logic is analogous to the students’ thoughts.

These three themes which the students used as a frame to talk about Trianon indicates how it is placed within their perception of society and social processes. Trianon is only relevant for the students through the situation of the trans-border Hungarians, thus in their consideration if Hungarians were discriminated in the neighboring countries then Trianon would not be trauma or a wound within Hungary anymore. Their remarks contradicts Balogh’s notion of duality¹⁸⁹ – as well as my argument –, that the Trianon-narrative is determined within the border of Hungary. The rational elements prevailed on the emotional arguments in the way students reflected on Trianon as an issue today. This reflects on the construction of the collective memory of the national past as emotional, based on that students who emphasized a rational approach to Trianon were also the ones considering Trianon not worth dwelling on. This is in correspondence with contrasting the past and the future. The students consider those preoccupied with the Trianon and thus with the past, emotional and irrational therefore incapable of dealing with the present and the future – which they consider logical. This contrast is further interesting in the light of the substantial literature placing the shared national past at the essence of nation-building processes¹⁹⁰. Could this negative perception of the national past – especially a traumatic one – shift towards a collective forgetfulness instead of collective remembering? Is it possible to base national belonging on the the idea of collective future instead of the memory of the collective past? These questions cannot be answered based on the

¹⁸⁸ Todorov, *Az Emlékezet Hasznáról és Káráról [The Uses and Abuses of Memory]*.

¹⁸⁹ Balogh, “A Magyar Nemzeti áldozatnarratíva Változásai [Shifts in the Hungarian Victim-Narrative].”

¹⁹⁰ Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*; Mock, *Symbols of Defeat in the Construction of National Identity*.

conceptions of society of a small number of students, however they raise relevant questions about how the nation-narrative is understood.

6.4 Magyarország: Hungarian national identity

The topic of national identity and being Hungarian proved to be an important concern in most groups – even though the focus of these discussions shifted towards different directions according to the students’ interests¹⁹¹. Therefore, I could easily bring up this topic in the discussions since they have already included this theme in their own comments. Seeing how naturally they relate and link historical events – not even specifically Trianon – to national identity show the interrelation of the two and that learning about national history does shape – even if on different levels – what the students think about their nation. In this part of the analysis I look at what Hungarian national identity, being Hungarian means for the students.

The way students expressed what being Hungarian meant for them was quite diverse, nonetheless there were reoccurring elements that the students considered to be components of ‘Hungarianness’. The language, cultural and historical knowledge and background (including the national holidays as well) were the most common characteristics that constitute the concept of ‘Hungarian’. Further elements mentioned were citizenship, self-declaration and being proud of the nation. The importance of ancestry was also brought up, however, only one student (in School1) highlighted it as an essential prerequisite of being Hungarian, arguing against that someone can become part of the nation by self-identification.

Among the diverse answers there were some that reflected on the idea of the nation in a more abstract way. One student characterized the nation as a big family, “bounded by blood although it is rather distant since it is a family of ten million” (School1), while another student understood the nation as an active process of the self, “national identity is something everyone

¹⁹¹ Regarding the whole conversation national identity as a subject was the most significant in the three secondary grammar schools.

has to create within themselves” (School2). In addition, someone from the same school rejected the entire concept of the nation – “I’ve seen too much of the history classes for the idea of the nation to be appealing” (School2) –, and he identified himself as European or human instead.

In several cases the students started to talk about national identity in relation to other nations reflecting on the question how a person can be or stay Hungarian abroad. It seemed that the automatic process of thinking was that talking about Hungarian national identity or ‘Hungarianness’ makes only sense in a foreign setting¹⁹², and not within Hungary and when asked about being Hungarian within Hungary, in many cases the students thought of rather extreme examples. Some examples of the former were longing for a home when being in abroad, the difficulties of maintaining ‘Hungarianness’ alone – thus when one is not in a Hungarian community –, and in contrast to self-identification one of the students said that it is rather those around us determine if our belonging rather than our belief¹⁹³, nevertheless, the main aspects in relation of being Hungarian abroad were partly the same as the ones mentioned the most often (preserving the language and teaching one’s child Hungarian, being proud of the nation, maintaining the memory of the national holidays and history).

As mentioned before distancing certain topics from themselves was not uncommon in the discussions. When talking about national identity not everyone was talking about themselves, but the type of people they have encountered. In School1 students were discussing national identity extensively both in a more historical sense and through their experiences. Regarding the historical approach, they made sense of the current lack of devotion to the nation that they identified as an obstacle in society and explained that as a result of the historical events the identification with the nation as a community has been broken and people do not care about

¹⁹² This reflects on the theories of multiple identities and the social-psychological concept of the salience of an identity varies according to the social context. See: Tajfel, “Social Categorization, Social Identity and Social Comparison.”

¹⁹³ In the same discussion, one of the students gave this example by rejecting the self-categorization of Roma people in Transylvania as Hungarians (School6).

each other anymore (School1). In relation to the remarks of their personal experiences, they are concerned with understanding the connections and reasons of the behavior of people, however they see social processes in a different way. The following excerpt illustrates this interpretation:

Student1: In my experience, people not necessarily have Hungarian identity. So, I heard from my peers, things from which I concluded, let's say that they are not proud of being Hungarian [...] There are people who have no attachment to Hungary or its culture or nation...

Student2: This is a very radical contra-reaction to the big national, these chest-thumping people who are three-times more Hungarian than the average Hungarian, they react to people like this by saying if being Hungarian is like that then I won't be one.

Student3: I think it's the opposite. I think those Hungarians who see the complete alienation they thump their chest three times as strong so maybe they would raise more attention... (School1)

Students further see a contrast between the "true Hungarian" (School3) and those who are Hungarians according to their legal documents but they do not keep any of the traditions (the student making this distinction in School3 considered herself in the second category). In addition, possessing Hungarian citizenship became relevant in relation to trans-border Hungarians and beside considering them part of the nation, in School4 students emphasized that some of the Hungarians across the border are dual citizens because they identify as Hungarians, thus highlighting the identitarian aspect of holding Hungarian citizenship.

The students considered the knowledge of national history as an integral part of being Hungarian, however implicitly their nation-concept was affected by their perception of either the traumatic or the proud past. In some cases, students even connected these notions by being proud of the nation standing up after being defeated. This emphasis on the past is ambiguous regarding their focus on the future in other parts of the discussions. The various ideas of the nation reflected in some cases the nation-concept of the extreme right, understanding it as a blood-bounded community¹⁹⁴, in other cases took a more individualistic approach characterizing national identity as active process within the self. Either of these approaches

¹⁹⁴ Vona talks about trans-border Hungarians as our siblings. See: Vona, "Országgyűlési Felszólalás - Általános Vita Lefolytatása T/39 A Nemzeti Összetartozás Melletti Tanúságtételről."

consider the process of national identity development influenced by contextual or social aspects¹⁹⁵.

6.5 Trianon in the national identity

In a general sense, Trianon cannot be considered as an important or decisive part of the national identity of the students. In some of the discussions I could not identify how the cognitive or emotional attachments to Trianon would fit within the picture of national identity of the students, if there were such attachments at all. In other discussions the students explicitly said that Trianon is not a determinant issue for them and throughout the interview I did not find anything contradicting their statement. Several students however were interested in the topic of Trianon and related issues, talking about these essentially through the themes and processes described above. Based on this observation and the aspects explained in the analysis I construe that the role of the Trianon in the national identity of the students is inherent in its symbolic character and its complexity. This means that the topics that had become salient in the discussions while talking about Trianon – independent of the topic was brought up by the students or by my questions – varied on such a broad scale that showed the students understand this event from very different perspectives, thus they interpret Trianon in a way that is salient for their view of society, for their (national) identity.

What were the aspects that became salient in their national identity through Trianon? First of all, the notion of loss. For some students it meant the territories, for others that the nation as a community had been ripped apart, or even considering the loss as one of the many Hungary had gone through. It further corresponds with a more comprehensive defeat-narrative regarding the Hungarian nation, that we have always been worse off over history, we have been oppressed and punished over and over again. This idea was significant for several students and

¹⁹⁵ The social context is considered to be essential by the literature (see Chapter 2.4).

is analogous to the narrative of the Fidesz discourse – not specifically regarding Trianon but the emphasis put on the sovereignty and independence of Hungary.

Contrastingly, some interpreted the very same event in a more positive way, that this further proves that Hungary can stand up from yet another defeat and ‘we’ can be proud of that. For others, Trianon symbolized the strength and political power of Great-Hungary (which was significant on a European level), and the glorious past of the nation. This latter thought can easily be connected to the discourse of the right – even the extreme right – though I have not found sign of such a connection or identification with radical ideas. Thus concepts such as independence, solidarity and the refusal of the enmity in society were important parts of the students’ identity, however Trianon proved to be important for some of the students – as mentioned previously –, one student even considered Trianon as a weighted (thus important) component of national identity.

Throughout the interviews the notion of (not) being personally affected by Trianon was a recurring way to either explain why it is a wound for people even today or justifying their indifference towards the event. The references to Trianon being the trauma of those personally involved – and their family – is a clear differentiation of themselves and those whom Trianon happened to and this thinking process brings up the question of whose trauma is Trianon? On the political level, in the discourse of the right-wing (both the government and Jobbik) Trianon is considered to be a national trauma, the concern of all the nation. This is also reflected in the work of Gyáni who said that Trianon is canonized as a national ‘site of memory’ and he further contrasted the issue to the Holocaust which is considered to be the trauma of the Jews and not the Hungarian nation thus it cannot achieve the same status of a national place of memory and consequently Jews are excluded from the conception of the Hungarian nation¹⁹⁶. This parallel

¹⁹⁶ Gyáni, “Nemzet, Kollektív Emlékezet és Public History [Nation, Collective Memory and Public History].”

– as mentioned – was present in one of the discussion explaining that Trianon is a ‘wound’ for families affected by Trianon the same way as Holocaust is an unprocessed trauma in the families of even the third and fourth generation of survivors of the Holocaust (School2). This conscious or unconscious distance made by many students between themselves and those who have been personally affected by Trianon reflects on not considering it their own or generally the nation’s trauma, thus the parallel to the Holocaust that many seem as the trauma of the Jews, they see the Trianon as the trauma of trans-border Hungarians and their families (who have might been separated because of the new borders). Consequently, the national character of Trianon as a trauma is understood and interpreted differently by the students than by the narrative of the political discourse.

7. Conclusion

This thesis aimed to place the topic national identity construction through the collective memory of Trianon as a national trauma within the setting of the education system as an agency of national socialization. In order to understand this construction process, I examined the role of Trianon in the national identity of students connecting collective memory of the trauma to members of formal education. I studied the level of education policy and the national identity of the students in relation to Trianon within the context of the current political discourse.

The analysis of the new National Core Curriculum and the new textbook in comparison to earlier versions showed a general nationalizing process and the dominance of the right-wing narrative, however the changes in these documents are rather symbolic. I assumed that the political discourse would not reflect the ideas of the political discourse, but the findings of the analysis are contradictory.

Relating the institutional documents to the national identity of the students, I found no correspondence between the two. The changes that seemed significant for the students were the ones that affected their everyday school-life, thereby I believe that the changes based on the nation-narrative of the government were not relevant for the students due to their symbolic nature as well as the essential role of the teacher as the mediator between the students and the institutional level.

The students' conception of Trianon reflected on the narrative of the political discourse by describing Trianon as a loss regardless of how significant Trianon was for them, consciously or – through my interpretations – unconsciously. They reflected on its effects for today's society, however it was considered an issue of the Trans-border Hungarians and not for the Hungarian society. For most of the students who participated in my research Trianon was not a determining historical event. However, the themes they used to frame the Trianon-topic and the way they talked about it indicates relevant implications for national identity construction,

especially in light of the existing Trianon-narrative and the literature on the collective memory. The way students perceived the trauma of Trianon was explained through personal involvement and the consideration of the time-gap between 1920 and today. Most of them distanced themselves from the traumatic characteristics of the event, appointing the trauma to those affected by the consequences of Trianon: trans-border Hungarians and their families. This draws a similar parallel of what scholars have noted regarding the remembrance of the Holocaust.

The students' reflections questioned whether they consider Trianon as a national trauma or rather the grievance of a specific group. Can this imply that Trianon as a central element of the national past will become disassociated from the identity of succeeding generations? Can time resolve the trauma-narrative and the social conflicts of today associated with it? Based on my research and its limited scope, regarding the number of students in the sample and the constraints of conducting the research in Budapest exclusively, does not allow such generalizations. Nevertheless, students rejecting emotional thinking and dwelling on the past could lead towards new claims for changing narratives.

The complexity of this topic entails extensive possibilities for further research regarding both the implications on national identity of students in secondary education and formal education as an agent of socialization. In order to have a more general picture of the students' perception of Trianon and its role in their national identity research should be expanded from Budapest to other areas of the country – especially because the radical nationalist ideas (along with the extreme-right Trianon-narrative) are more popular and – I believe – narrative in the countryside. Furthermore, drawing on the qualitative character of the research, which is its greatest advantage and disadvantage at the same time, another possible direction is conducting a quantitative research using the dimensions through which the students in the group discussions thematized Trianon. A country-wide representative survey would have the

opportunity to examine causal correlations and provide generalizable results. The role of the teachers was not considered in depth in this thesis, even though they could be (I assume that they are) more determinant than the textbooks or rituals in the schools. Therefore, another direction based on the conclusions of this research could be to examine how the teachers influence the students and what are the dimensions through teachers affect the way students think. Regarding educational policy and textbooks I would propose a more detailed analysis of both documents, in addition, including more specific documents, such as the framework curricula or the requirements for the final exams of secondary education. Furthermore the pedagogical analysis of the textbooks would provide a more comprehensive picture of its meanings and the impact it can have on the students.

Consequently, this thesis explored the dimensions and themes through which students in secondary education think about Trianon and its rather insignificant role in their national identity. This implies that the construction of the collective memory of Trianon as a national trauma in Budapest might lose its relevance for the following generations and might be deprived of its position as a national ‘site of memory’.

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9. Appendix

Table 1 – Characteristics of the schools and student in the sample

School Code	School type	Class specification	Number of students	Gender of the students	Selection of the students	Length of the interview
School1	Public, secondary grammar school	History	6	Male: 5 Female: 1	unknown	1:06:53
School2	Public, secondary grammar school	Humanities	4	Male: 2 Female: 2	Teacher selected them (right before the interview)	44:57
School3	Public, secondary vocational school	Economics	4	Female: 4	Students volunteered (right before the interview)	42:15
School4	Public, secondary vocational school	Information technology	5	Male: 5	Students volunteered (right before the interview)	39:47
School5	Public, secondary vocational school	Health care	4	Male: 1 Female: 3	Students volunteered (right before the interview)	1:03:10
School6	Church-run, secondary grammar school	None	5	Male: 5	Students volunteered (in advance)	59:14

Table 2 – Characteristics of the history teachers (expert interviews)

Teacher code	School Code	Gender	Age (approx.)
Teacher1	School1	Female	35-40
Teacher2	School2	Male	30-35
Teacher3	School3	Female	55-60
Teacher4	School4	Male	40-45
Teacher5	School5	Male	50-55