

# Media as a Mediator of Games and the Source of New Ones

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## INTRODUCTION

The Estonians became acquainted with media a long time ago. The first Estonian magazine was published in 1766 and the first newspaper in 1806. In the middle of the 19th century the Estonians became regular readers of newspapers. The Estonian language radio began broadcasting programs in 1926, the Estonian television in 1955. After reemerging from the closed Soviet regime media underwent major changes, bringing about the emergence of numerous competitive channels and publications. Besides public television and radio, programs (news, advertisements, entertainment) are transmitted also by numerous commercial channels,<sup>1</sup> as well as foreign satellite channels. No wonder then that a media critic mentions as a matter of course that the Estonians watch television as ardently as the ancient Finno-Ugrians used to stare at their fires (Laasik 1998). Reading newspapers, listening to the radio, but most importantly, watching television has become a daily ritual, a habit that today's people cannot do without.

In recent years success in professional life is measured by computer skills. We can hardly think of a field where computers are not used. Since 1996 Estonian schools have been computerised in the course of the "tiger leap" project: so that by now today 200 schools have access to Internet (Runnel 1998a). According to a survey conducted by *Eesti Meediauuring Ltd.* in the Balti Media Information Service as of February 1997 33% of the

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<sup>1</sup>) At the end of 1998, there were 4 active television stations in Estonia (together with cable television and several local transmitters), nearly ten times more radio stations: state, regional and local stations (Mihkelson 1998).

population had used computer, by September the figure was 37%, and by October 1998 40% of the population.<sup>2</sup> The increase in computer usage was most intense in 1997, when by autumn the number of daily computer users had doubled.

Media brings the world to people's homes, reshaping their cultural conceptions and by that people themselves. At the end of the 20th century we might conclude: the main force sustaining (our) country and the whole western community is media (Peets 1998). Lately, media's impact on people and culture has come into focus. It has been studied by journalists, sociologists, educators, etc. Even folklorists have made reference to media influence in their research, or have touched on the matter to a certain extent (Rüütel 1999; Hiimäe 1998: 225; Kõiva 1998: 17; Peebo 1995; Vissel 1996, and others). What might be the proportions of traditional culture and the sc. media culture; to what extent is the symbiosis of traditional and media culture possible; will media obliterate traditional culture: these issues will hopefully be sorted out in future research.

In this article I will observe media games through the somewhat empirical, rather randomly collected and accumulated material. I intend to focus on game-shows, which have captured the Estonian viewers for the last five years. They will be observed against the trends and changes in society and media. I will discuss the impact of media on the worldview of adults and children, outline the game types transmitted over the Estonian television networks during the last 30 years, and their folkloric sources, point out the changes in values and behavioural standards imported by foreign game-shows.

## **INDIVIDUAL CONCEPTIONS AND THOSE IMPOSED ON US BY MEDIA**

Mass communication succeeded in crossing the spatial and temporal boundaries where earlier forms of communication failed (De Fleur & Ball-Rokeach 1975: 4). Transmitting messages became easier as direct communication between the sender and receiver of information or the use of long linear and diverging

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<sup>2</sup>) Baltic Media Facts survey "Usage of computers and internet among population of Estonia" (BMF).

chains was no longer necessary. Due to the retail data transmittance, information from a communication source reaches a variety of individuals who are remotely located more directly (Lauristin & Vihalemm 1977: 14). Thanks to various means for preserving and recording we can return to past events again and again. Mass media today is a powerful system that offers operative and versatile information on what is happening in society. Media conveys daily news from home and abroad, educates us on societal matters outside our daily working and living environment. Ostensibly, media functions in the least stable layer of the communication field of today's person, i.e. on the operative communication field, which reflects changes, events, random situations, etc. in the surrounding world, personal situations and emotions (Lauristin & Vihalemm 1977: 21). Even though media cannot be considered responsible for establishing social constructions, it actively takes part in the establishment processes by transmitting, circulating, confirming or refuting information (Annist 1997: 11). Due to the specific means for transmitting information characteristic only to mass communication (the centralised nature of information, the speed and extent of circulation, simultaneous participation of different societal groups in the receiving process of information, its periodic and cumulative effect), it is able to affect and change the knowledge, values and standards of people. Media affects the formation of the values that members of a community attach to the topical events or processes in society, the change in taste, attitude towards cultural phenomena, etc. As a result of its lasting influence, mass communication affects the elementary basis of an individual worldview, i.e. the convictions and conceptions about oneself, other people and the surrounding world formed during the process of socialisation. It can alter and reshape them (Lauristin & Vihalemm 1977: 22–32).

Nowadays, media has become the subject of frequent discussions and debates. Because of its authority several institutions, structures and scientific branches are involved in exploring and analysing the impact of mass media. Originally the study was inspired by political and economic concerns (e.g. how could mass media promote the achievement of political goals, how to make effective advertisements, etc.). Much later people became concerned about the cultural and educational influence of media.

They realised that along with the intended purposes it brought along rather unexpected consequences. Media has been accused of disparaging the cultural level of the audience, increasing crime, promoting moral degradation, numbing the political interest of masses, suppressing creativity, etc. (De Fleur & Ball-Rokeach 1975: 11). Such accusations have been pronounced in different countries, and should not be ignored in the situation of commercial media policy. Also, each country has its own specific weak areas that media, as today's fourth power, has magnified. Estonian media has been accused of being oriented to valuing and adopting western mass culture (Hiimäe 1998: 225).

## **MEDIA AND CHILDREN**

The people of today are connected to media since early childhood. Radio and television are a part of their natural daily surroundings. Impersonal voices over the radio as well as television images, which are in opposition to the physical existence of parents (appearing to be from a different reality), capture the child's world as soon as it is able to perceive them. In recent years educators have drawn public attention on the fact that young people live in a constant information field whose consequences are unpredictable. They have warned that as long as the influence of mass communication on children and young people is considered neutral, it can serve as an anonymous clandestine educator, but the real extent of its impact will be revealed only after several decades (Kraav & Uring 1975: 3–4). Media, but TV in particular, has become both a great friend but also a (liberal) absent-minded bohemian governess. On the one hand television complements the knowledge that the child acquires at home, school or community: all about children, grown-ups, life itself, or moral values (Kurg 1997: 51). On the other hand, TV as such (as well as the rest of the industry of entertainment) leaves "the door to the adult world wide open for the children" with no consideration to their age (Viilup 1997: 39). Children's programs, which supposedly intend to help the child with studies, discipline them and make them caring and affectionate (Viilup 1997: 46), cannot compensate for the harm done. For a child television is an inexhaustible source of information, but also an unlimited means for spending one's spare time. Some



*One of the many radio appearances of Jüri Randviir. Courtesy of Epp Saarmann.*

surveys even claim that young people acquire but 10% of their knowledge at school, the remaining 90% they get from media (Vassiltšenko 1997: 47). People have always tried to raise their children by traditions established in society, commonly accepted standards and ideals (Saarits 1998: 55). In earlier times children from farmsteads were raised under the care and scrutiny of several generations (parents and grandparents). The learning period was relatively short, whereas the period of parental control was long, since children stayed in their parents home even after they had grown up and married. Such family structure ensured the preservation of traditions through the scrutiny of different generations. In today's society the socialisation process is considerably longer (home-school-occupational training-job), while the family scrutiny and influence lasts for a shorter period as the young people do not stay in their parent's home. In principle, the extended chain is becoming obsolete, too, and is being substituted with an open infinite system of learning and acquiring information all through one's life (Võhandu 1997: 15 ff.). For children media is an effective source of information already at the first two links of the chain (home-school). For years people have debated with perhaps undue emphasis the rhetorical question which affects the moral values of today's children more: is it the parents or the media? The role of grandparents in today's society, where the number of extended families has decreased

considerably, is gradually weakening. The changed family structure has caused confusion in the techniques of raising children related to the parent's own approaches to humanity and values, bringing along uncertainty in what should and should not be allowed to children (Kraav 1998: 18–24). In many families parents have lost control over their children's media consumption. The domestic lives of parents are also scattered: an average marriage lasts for four and a half years in Estonia (Peets 1998). As suggested above, children's programs might complement a child's learning when they consider the needs of different age groups and advocate lasting values (caring, ethics, etc.), but the subsequent films for grown-ups, etc. question the very same truths. Children are not content with only watching programs intended for their age group: the mysterious world of grown-ups has always enticed the younger generation. And the chances to choose one's course in the flood of information by oneself or under the parents' guidance are becoming virtually unlimited.

The educational techniques of media differ considerably from the ones formerly used in the family. Television has been accused of mediating the hidden aspects of adult life to children too prematurely for normal development (Kraav & Uring 1997: 76). TV has always been considered the instigator of sex and violence, sometimes also of material values and the power of money. It has been assumed that children might adopt all they see without further thought. While ten years ago sex was considered a problem among young people, by now it has become the problem of children. Experts argue that the Estonian community would be better off if sexual liberation had not invaded us to its full extent (Hint 1997: 12). Children will no longer grow up through playing, as the human and creative standpoint might suggest: instead, they are brutally forced participate by direct involvement (Veidemann 1997: 24).

Television changes the worldview and daily activities of children and young people.<sup>3</sup> By following the programs intended for grown-up viewers and observing the behaviour of adults, children adopt an adult-like attitude towards television. Watching TV helps them relax, rest, escape to the pseudo-world of the rich and famous. A wish to entertain oneself passively becomes gradu-

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<sup>3</sup> In 1970s people began to talk about the sc. DTT (*diivan-tuhvlid-televiisor*) [couch-slippers-TV]-phenomenon as typical for the Estonians.

ally stronger, while people's creative activities are slowly dying out.

## **RADIO, THE COFFEE BUDDY, TELEVISION, THE YEAR-ROUND SANTA. MEDIA AND GAMES**

In recent years the proportion of game-shows<sup>4</sup> as a genre in the Estonian entertainment industry has grown considerably. Radio and television, Internet chatrooms and lists offer unlimited opportunities for their followers, interest groups to follow or participate in the games, or comment on them. The follower is no longer passive. Thus argues one media critic that any game induces activity on the part of people, by forcing them to think and participate more than any other television program (Sisask 1995).

Of course, every one of us has heard of game shows. Different games have been played over radio and television channels for decades. The program *Children's radio* broadcast student chess tournaments with Jüri Randviir, a professional chessplayer, for over thirty years. Also, various radio and television quiz-shows were popular already in the late 1960s.

The content and orientation of Estonian television programs underwent major changes only in 1993. In August the first commercial channels with independent programs emerged next to the Estonian Public Television channel (ETV): RTV and TV1 managed by Mart Siimann,<sup>5</sup> and Kanal 2 (Channel 2) managed by I. Taska. Nationalistic euphoria and programs concerning nationalism and independent statehood had lost its appeal. So, Estonian media began to shape the Estonians into cosmopolites. The limited perspective open to the Soviet cultural space became wider and seemed to open up the cultural space of the rest of the world. At the same time the proportion of original Estonian-language programming decreased considerably and imported films and entertainment programs paved the way for western mass culture. The endless heroic sagas of Soviet sol-

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<sup>4</sup> Hereby I have discarded the specific fields generally associated with games, such as sports, theatre, cinema, arts.

<sup>5</sup> Journalist, CEO of ETV (1989–1992), executive director of the first Estonian commercial television channel *Reklaamitelevision* 1992–1995, politician and Estonian prime minister during 1997–1999

diers and the metaphysical brotherhood of happy nations were replaced by neurotic Cinderella-stories from Latin America, the powerful industrial and monetary dynasties of America, good old Australian family sagas and a plethora of action and thriller series from all over the world. In November 1993 a Mexican soap opera<sup>6</sup> *The Wild Rose* and an American-like dating show *Tripping with You* (*Reisile Sinuga*) began to run on ETV. Both got the highest ratings in Estonia.<sup>7</sup> It was the beginning of the era of game-shows.

While the Soviet period could be characterised as a period of a desperate clinging to intellectual, respectable and ethical pastimes, this was now substituted with an easygoing superficial entertainment which required no particular sophistication. It aims for the crème of society, but is oriented to the “man in the street”. The fact that the influx of information is set in opposition to the short (limited) memory of an individual person, is at the same time both the defence an individual possesses in the age of information as well as a paradox. People live in a single moment, and the whole entertainment industry is based on this (Koppel 1996). In order to get on the screen or become a panelist, people do not have to pass quizzes or competitions: all they need is some courage or good luck in a lottery. Program formats which have proved successful in different parts of the world and are broadcast in different countries with slight modifications, in local language and with local panelists, serve to unify cultures. It seems that people would do anything if they are convinced that what they do is “normal” (Floren 1997). Most media critics agree with the viewers in that the imported game-shows outmatch the former home-made ones considerably, as they suggest comfortable western intimacy and closeness to the viewers (Sisask 1995), as well as open behaviour. Some critics, however, have appreciated the uniqueness of local programs (the very “home-made” quality of them) (Soiver 1995a). Game-shows that follow the older format are now referred to as archaisms.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>6</sup>) Before that Estonian television audience could follow the television series *Lihtsalt Maria* [Simply Maria] and *Ka rikkad nutavad* [And the Rich Cry Too] over the Soviet monopolistic central television channel.

<sup>7</sup>) Already in December 1993 the highest ratings were given to the series *The Wild Rose* (1), news program *Aktuaalne kaamera* (2.), and game-show *Reisile sinuga* (3.). *Televiioon*, 1994, 17.–23. I., p. 17.



During the last five years several game-shows have lost their appeal and have been replaced. The duration of airtime might vary,<sup>9</sup> but they are still eagerly played both in radio as well as television. At the beginning of 1999 the programming of all radio and TV stations in Estonia contained a game-show.

Compared to the figures of last year the number of give-aways in radio programs has decreased slightly, nevertheless, the weekly programming still contains 8 game-shows:<sup>10</sup> mostly short phone-in quizzes on weekends or weekday mornings (the sc. coffee-quizzes), where the program's listener can call the station and answer 3–5 questions on the air and win a small prize (packet of coffee, CD, videotape, concert tickets, etc.). Usually the programs are broadcast for a short period of time, and then replaced or renamed. The only exception here is *Mnemoturniir* [Mnemonic tournament] which has been broadcast since 1967. It is a radio quiz-show that pits the listeners against the "Wise Men's Club" (a small group of people competent in encyclopaedic knowledge and experts in different scientific fields). At the end of the game the listener whose question remains unanswered and is voted most interesting wins a prize (most recently, a bank share).

13 different game-shows<sup>11</sup> run on three out of the four TV channels, which take about 10 hours of airtime in a week. While the games used to run on TV on Sunday and Monday nights, by now they are spread over almost all weekdays (the number of

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<sup>9</sup> The new structure of the program excludes the older one "All this [game-show *Kuldaju* on TV 3] was reminiscent of Soviet quiz tournaments to the extent that it left the impression as if a TV viewer was watching a quiz-show broadcast over 25 years ago."

<sup>9</sup> In 1996 the majority of game-shows ran on TV 3 (4.5 hrs per week) (Veldre 1996).

<sup>10</sup> *Vikerraadio* – 2 radio games (on Sunday at 9.10 'Coffee-game', at 11.10 *Mnemoturniir*); *Raadio 2* – 3 games (on Monday 6.00–10.00 MAA, the morning program hosted by Romi Erlach and Urmas Leinfeld (incl. some game; on Saturday 11.00 *Kull või kiri* [Heads or Tails], on Saturday 16.00 *Timbulimbu Show*); *Klassikaraadio* – 1 game per month (On Sunday 10.00 *Teame ja Tunne*) Russian-language *Raadio 4* – 1 game (on Saturday at 22.10 musical quiz-show *Favoriit*); *Raadio Elmar* – a morning game-show at 8.45 weekday mornings.

<sup>11</sup> 6 games on ETV (on Saturday at 20.00 *Tähed muusikas*; on Sunday 17.30 children's game-show *Memoriin* (every other week), at 20.30 *Reisile Sinuga*; on Monday at 20.30 *Kuulus ja kummaline*, at 21.30 lottery game *Topelttosin* and on Thursday 20.30 *Klaver põõsas*); *Kanal 2* – 2 games (Mon-Fri at 16.30 *100%*, Saturday at 19.00 *Uudistekütid* etc.); *TV 3* – 5 games (Saturday 19.50 *Õnneratas*, on Sunday 21.10 *Kuum hind*, on Monday 20.00 *Kuldvillak* [original title: Jeopardy!], on Wednesday 21.50 *Ice Dog M Show*, on Thursday 21.30 *Bingo Loto*).

game-shows is the smallest on Fridays). Most of the game-shows run on the public television station ETV and the commercial station TV 3. The game-shows on ETV are mostly easygoing entertaining dating and guessing games, on TV 3 lotteries with sterling prizes, and on *Kanal 2*, which is new at this, quiz shows. From time to time ETV and TV 3 have extended their programming with games of different orientation: TV 3, for instance, has shown different dating-shows (*Ainus ja õige* [Singled Out], *Ice Dog M Show*<sup>12</sup>). TV 3 has stopped broadcasting quizzes only recently (*Kuldaju*, jt.), but has complemented its programming with an easy guessing show (*Õnneratas* [Wheel of Fortune]) and ETV has begun showing a lottery-game (*Topelttosin*).

The characteristic features of the new television shows are the following:

1. Contestants are either celebrities, or celebrities and a regular TV viewer. Tabloid press mentality has taken over game-shows. In several games (*Klaver põõsas*, *Tähed muusikas*, *Kuulus ja kummaline*) participate celebrities. The show is hosted by a well-known media reporter. And the ordinary player is chosen by his/her weird (resp. unusual) occupation or hobby. Celebrities often promote new game-shows; also, the scenarios of the sc. demo-versions of newer game-shows are played through with different celebrities attending. But the commercial and dating games are open to almost anyone.

2. Inciting the audience. Game-shows like many other public programs strive to bring the viewers and television personalities closer together by offering the former a chance to participate actively in the show. Recently, the number of such game-shows has grown (*Tähed muusikas*, *Klaver põõsas*). Next to the “tried and true” question for the viewers (*Kuulus ja kummaline*), the viewers can actively participate the show either in the studio (lottery-games, various quiz-shows, dating shows) or by phone. The interactive game-shows on TV 3 allow their viewers to affect the course of the show (e.g. in a dating game *Ice Dog M Show*) or enter into competition with the show’s host (e.g. the former *Pildimäng*).

3. The dominance of personalised game-shows. Team games have been replaced by contests for individual persons. The So-

<sup>12</sup>) Radio programs aiming to bring lonely people together are also *Üksildaste südame te klubi* [The Lonely Hearts’ Club] and *The Timbulimbu Show on Raadio 2*.

viet media stressed collectivism as one of the fundamental principles of its ideology. Thus, it is logical that today's individual-oriented society centres around successful individuals. The role of a strong individual is prevalent even in the few team games (e.g. celebrities against the few "weird" guests in the game-show *Kuulus ja kummaline*, which ends with a duel between the celebrities and the mystery guest). Another possibility is the attendance of passive lottery players who cannot affect the course of the show but have to follow the host's instructions (*Bingo Loto, Topelttosin*). Games for couples, for example, suggest a change in family structure. *Uudistekütid* [News Hunters] is a quiz for couples, not necessarily married couples. *Memoriin*, a game show for children, requires the attendance of the child and one of its parents. In contrast, earlier the family had to be represented by at least three members.

4. Commercial scores and prizes. The degree of difficulty in the questions of a quiz show are matched with monetary value, and the smartest contestant leaves the television studio with a comfortable sum on his or her bank account; not to mention the lottery games with luxurious prizes, which according to an expert TV-viewers, glue the viewers in front of their TV screens with an urge to possess (Remsu 1997). Similar to the lottery-games, which lure with fabulous sums of money and prizes, the quizzes and dating games have quite respectable prizes. The only exception here are the participants in the guessing game *Kuulus ja kummaline*, who take home a humorous prize. Similarly to children's games, the contestants have to retain symbolic "lives". The scores of sports games are counted in the children's game *Memoriin* and the two musical quiz-shows mentioned above. The rest of the games reward the contestants with good results money.<sup>13</sup>

TV game-shows have shaped the public perception of television stations. According to popular opinion in 1996, for example, TV 3 was characterised as "food for lucre", ETV as "food for spirit", and *Kanal 2* for "illusions" (Veldre 1996). The evaluation of the first two is largely based on the trends of game-shows, programs

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<sup>13</sup> There is grain of truth in O. Remsu's satirical comment that if in former (Soviet) times they had propagated the Komsomol [communist youth organisation] as eagerly as they propagate glossy products today, we'd be all communists (Remsu 1997).

with the highest ratings. The present day in television game-shows is said to be symbolised by a frantic giveaway of odds and ends and the opinion that if formerly television was influenced by ideology and ideologists, then now it is ruled by money and plutocrats (Remsu 1997).

### **PROVINCIAL GIRL VERSUS THE RICH AND THE BEAUTIFUL. TRADITIONAL AND TELEVISION GAMES**

Even though old folk games have never been much favoured by television, which is traditionally oriented to the contemporary world, sometimes, however, old popular games have been used to make a game-show more exciting or playful, to vary its structure. In this case media acts to use or revive some well-known games, to create and propagate a new version of it. For example, *Entel-tentel*, an extremely popular children's song contest from 1969–1970, began with a famous adaptation of a counting-out verse. The child or program's host who was "it" had to make an opening remark. The deeper non-semantic text of the counting-out formula was substituted with a thematic rhymed verse *tāna laulavad kōik meil, / sina alustad, juhei!* [everybody sings today/ you will start, hurrah!]. Recent research reveals that the adapted counting-out verse has now become a part of children's lore. And instead of taking its place beside the original verse, it ousted the latter almost completely. Even today, 30 years later, the version of the counting-out verse *Entel-tentel* is better known than the folkloric version (Vissel 1993, 1997), although in the case of tag, hide-and-seek, and other games, television text is bound to a real game situation.

Imitation of everything that surrounds us, grownups and other children's behaviour is a part of the process of discovering the world and accommodating oneself to it. Media has changed the essence of simple imitation-games or role-play.

The characters and ideals of imitation games are drawn from universal entertainment culture via printed press, literature, and, particularly, through television (Korkiakangas 1996: 75). If formerly children usually imitated life at home, school, a visit to the doctor's or shopping in their games, then in the recent decades they imitate famous newscasters, pop-artists, actors, or other celebrities on television or movie screen. Children and

young people impersonate popular celebrities earnestly (aiming to behave, sing, act like the person they pretend to be) or humorously (emphasising and magnifying certain prominent features of the person, i.e. parodying). Although people impersonate others all through their lives to some extent, the role-players are usually the youngest ones, while the teenagers and young people prefer parody. Jovial parodies of well-known people can set the mood at teen parties or social gatherings. At school parties, for example, some children entertain themselves by parodying teachers, while others guess whose imitation it was. Professional actors give parodies at parties, concerts, in radio and television shows. In 1990s, lampoons of L. Brezhnev and M. Gorbachev were very popular; an imported show “Royal Canadian Air Farce” entertains TV viewers by parodying Queen Elizabeth II, Bill Clinton, Boris Jeltsin, etc. Children and young people prefer to imitate the style of performance, vocabulary and pronunciation of pop-musicians and television newscasters, who are more popular than politicians.<sup>14</sup> And often the role-play develops into a guessing game, where the viewers have to guess, who was being imitated.

The trend of recent decades is to imitate the music videos of pop-artists. The popularity of domestic and foreign stars changes fast. The indisputable favourite of 1998 was the pop-group “Spice Girls”. Young girls imitated the artists both among themselves as well as at social events and gatherings. And already in 1996 a program series on ETV called *Kooli TV* [School TV], a television contest between schools, required an imitation of a popular music video by the contestants. Other tasks included taking part in a quiz, sports and singing competition and forming a computer crossword.

Media also exerts its influence on tests of strength and skill, providing people with role-models to measure up to. Young boys imitate the heroes of action movies, and for some time already the tests of strength among the boys also contain in addition to rough fighting and wrestling elements of karate, judo and other oriental martial arts. This is not so much due to the introduction of these sports in Estonia as it is to action films that propagate them.

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<sup>14</sup>) Collecting of school lore in Võrumaa schools. Antsla. M. Patte. See archival reference.



*The Estonian team (Hardi Tiidus, Valdo Pant and Voldemar Panso) at "Naapurivisa" in 1966. KM EKLA B-183:86.*

Tests of strength and skill are closely connected to role-play. In the 1930s-1940s young boys fanatically imitated Tarzan from the movie, or their wish was to become an airplane pilot; in the 1960s boys wanted to become astronauts, etc. In different periods people have yearned for their thrills; every era has had its noble knights, be they Rinaldini, the robber, the Estonian Jüri Rumm, the immortal Scottish romantic highlander Duncan MacLeod, the invincible Rambo, etc. Today's musclemen look like Arnold Schwarzenegger, Jannie Chang, the A-Team, and other such actors. The film industry of today creates such grandiose visual effects around its heroes, that it is physically impossible to imitate them. And like the stunt master of a film studio, the child imitates what he has seen with the technical tools available to him, i.e. toys (Lego-bits, cars and model toys).

Guessing and solving puzzles has always been and still is an engaging way of entertaining. During the recent 20–30 years quizzes have been extremely popular in Estonia, and in a wider context in the former Soviet Union as well. The popularity of radio and television quizzes began in 1966 with a quiz-show between Finland and Estonia entitled *Naapurivisa*, which was broadcast over the radio and television in both countries. Under

the Soviet regime a joint entertainment show with a capitalist country was truly exceptional. The contest between the two neighbouring countries lasted for five years and, finally, ended with the Estonians' victory. The Estonian team of three (Hardi Tiidus, Valdo Pant and Voldemar Panso) were very popular both in Finland as well as Estonia. The same team expanded and continued under the name of the "Wise Men's Club" in a radio program *Mnemoturniir*. The team or its separate members were often asked to participate in various game-shows.

But media-quizzes were only the tip of the iceberg. Quizzes acquired an indispensable role at school, class and college parties. In decades various forms of quiz-games were put to the test: contests of several rounds between institutions/schools and other teams, contests between the teams of institutions and the "Wise Men's Club". In 1977 *Mnemoturniir* expanded into state quiz championships.

Television has always nurtured the quiz tradition, although the names of the quiz-shows have constantly changed and new cycles of quizzes are introduced nearly every season. Quizzes are still popular in schools and different companies, the contests are held at the reunions of various organisations and societies, as well as at various entertainment events. Even the Internet



*Naapurivisa in Helsinki 1969. KM EKLA C-68:32.*



*"Naapurivisa" judges professor Paul Ariste and professor Lauri Posti.  
Helsinki 1969. KM EKLA C-68:29.*

home pages of today's young people mention quizzes as a rewarding and interesting hobby.

Television quiz-shows also employ the 'game within a game'. In *Trips-traps-trull* [Tick-tack-toe], a program which ran some couple of decades ago, teams of contestants had to choose the subject of questions by playing tick-tack-toe. Years later a quiz-show made use of *Kriegspiel*. It is almost impossible to determine the degree to which television programs have influenced one game or another, but my guess is that it might have affected them to the extent of keeping them alive or reviving them among those who knew the game before, as well as among those who learned the game from a TV show. Recent research has shown that tick-tack-toe and *Kriegspiel* are still very popular pastimes (Vissel 1885: 261) during long drives or boring school classes.

Media can invigorate almost forgotten game traditions and bring a particular game into circulation again. Syncretism is relatively common here in that only a part of the game is retained in the secondary tradition. For example, the rich tradition of round-game from the late 19th and early 20th century was revived by folk-singing groups (*Kukerpillid*, *Untsakad*, etc.). In the secondary tradition the function of the round-games has



slightly changed: the former round-games circulate as social songs, whereas the intermediary song that was danced to has turned into a refrain.

## TELEVISION AS A MEDIATOR AND SOURCE OF NEW GAMES

**“And there he comes!”<sup>15</sup>**

At the same time media can also mediate new games. Television channels can introduce new games fast and spread them widely over the whole country, both in towns as well as in the countryside, in larger centres as well as in the periphery. On the basis of the few known examples we have reason to claim that new games have remained relatively unaffected by the media, and demonstrating a new sport or a game does not necessarily result in its becoming popular. Elastic skipping, for example, was first shown in 1974 in a children’s program over ETV called *Kel lusti, lööb kaasa* [Who wants to have a good time, can come along], but the single presentation did not bring along a growth in its popularity. Rather the game spread among the girls in Tallinn, and then travelled slowly to smaller towns and countryside, and to the remotest corners of Estonia. In the 1980s the game became extremely popular through natural chain of circulation, i.e. it was passed on from child to child without the medium of television or books (Vissel 1997: 108).

During the last five years children have adopted two new games into their pastimes under the influence of television: the imitations of the international game-shows *Reisile sinuga* and *Kuulus ja kummaline*. Originally, both game-shows were produced in the United States. *Reisile sinuga* (the original title *Blind Date*<sup>16</sup>) has run on ETV channel since November 1993. *Kuulus ja kummaline* (the original title *What’s My Line*<sup>17</sup>) has been shown on the same channel since autumn 1995. The game-shows rapidly gathered the highest ratings and are the most popular entertainment shows up to the present day.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>15</sup>) The hostess’s customary exclamation to greet the entering guest in game-show *Kuulus ja kummaline* has become a characteristic saying.

<sup>16</sup>) Under the name of *Napakymppi* on the Finnish TV.

<sup>17</sup>) Originates in the 1950s United States.

## Competitive game-shows in the Estonian media field

The game-show *Reisile sinuga* turned into a remarkable media hit. During the five years a huge number of people have registered for the show. They have chosen travel companions from so many different places in Estonia, that there cannot be very many places left. Not only single contestants but fellowships of three friends, colleagues and fellow students, servicemen, etc. have participated in the show. Surprise guests have been three secretaries of ministers, the members of Estonian pop-group *Ummamuudu*; bold single contestants have been local celebrities, businessmen and the “confirmed bachelor” Carl Danhammer. Once, on the eve of September 1st [September 1st is the first day of school in Estonian schools], the contestants were all children entering the first grade. All these facts indicate that the game-show has attracted tremendous appeal in Estonia, being the most popular show as well as the dullest show ever broadcast (Jahilo 1998). *Reisile sinuga* is a talked-about show (it has been discussed even more often than the weather), it has been the object of criticism, and comparison with other popular programs. People write about it,<sup>19</sup> do parodies of it,<sup>20</sup> and have done everything that can be done to it, but first and foremost – they have watched the show (*Eesti Päevaleht* 1998).

The game where a young man or woman makes his or her choice of travel companion on the basis of answers he or she receives (Haavikko 1989: 293), was a novel and fresh one for the

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<sup>18)</sup> Baltic Media Facts survey “Usage of computers and internet among population of Estonia” (BMF).

<sup>19)</sup> Some 50–60 articles concerning the game-show have been published in newspapers such as *Eesti Päevaleht* and *Postimees*. While in the first couple of years, media critics tried ironically to unravel reasons for its popularity, later the articles focused around Maire Aunaste’s person. Before M. Aunaste quit the show, the papers concentrated on the issue of the new game-show host, Vahur Kersna, who unanimously approved of this. Another media event was when the young reporters of two larger papers *Eesti Päevaleht* and *Postimees* participated in the show, and published their comments on the game-show and the ensuing trip (Tali 1995, Tali 1996). The high ratings of the show have set a standard for other popular or significant broadcasts (the Eurovision song contest, Olympic Games, coverages of events significant to Estonians, debates between the members of *Riigikogu* and presidential candidates, etc.).

<sup>20)</sup> A feuilleton by A. Kivirähk *Staarid osalesid telemängudes*, vaudeville by E. Baskin *Raadio Null* in Vanalinna Stuudio etc.

Estonian television viewers. Its lasting international success proves that its authors have come up with a truly witty and marketable idea, based on establishing contacts between different sexes. The wish to help young people find each other goes back to antiquity, and is found in different countries and at different times alike. The subject is intriguing to both those who are looking for love as well as bystanders, it feeds into both the higher arts and the tabloid press, as well as local rumours.

In traditional societies young people of marriageable age were allowed to go out more often, young men could even go to the parties in neighbouring villages, and roam around the village at nights. Nubile daughters were often taken to visit faraway relatives for longer holidays. This social function is now, either consciously or unconsciously, performed by television.

People like what they see on television, because of its resemblance to actual life, and they are excited about the possibility of seeing or hearing themselves in the media, which has been flattering their egos since the beginning of the printed press. Those who go on television to seek a boyfriend or a girlfriend are not required to possess any particular skills or to do anybody any favours. The game-show participant has to make a choice, much like in real life, and might end up with a rather slow-witted egoist or a nice trip to Cyprus or Egypt. If the contestant is lucky, both the chosen companion and the trip are good, if not, they can end up with the wrong partner and a short trip somewhere within Estonia (Remsu 1997). *Reisile sinuga* is all about human relationships across the spectrum of infinite variations uttered over and over again by the oncoming contestants. The players determine whether the game-show includes brilliantly witty dialogues, smart shyness, lavish self-praise, innocent foolishness, mature sophistication or a nonrecurrent combination of all thinkable possibilities. Whether the impression left is stupid, but delicate (Remsu 1997), illusory and unnatural (Bakhovski 1997a) or more pornographic than x-rated movies, which make soap operas look like some creation of Shakespeare (Floren 1997), depends on the audience's principles, taste, attitudes, evaluation criteria, moods. Some viewers enjoy the easy-going atmosphere in the studio, others consider the bigger picture (Remsu 1997). The main reasons for entering to contes might be a desire to be

seen, go behind the scenes of the show, win an exciting trip. When the show was hosted by Maire Aunaste, a witty and slightly ironic hostess who became the star in the mating game, the overall opinion was that several participants had a vain desire to outmatch the hostess in dialogue (Remsu 1997).

Estonian viewers have been concerned with the question of personal privacy in the media. The same problem, although not to the same intensity, was also posed in Finland. A.-L. Haavikko pointed out that while appearing on TV the players lose their social immunity, at the same time the audience is offered a chance to share it without any contribution on their part (Haavikko 1989: 302). The issue of the line between private and social life shocked the world with the tragic death of Diana, Princess of Wales, the famous media-heroine. The interest of society is never the same for all people. The degree of socialising private life depends on the person's position in society. While public figures are concerned with concealing the boundaries of their private lives, then people who do not worry about it (and rather hope for it) try to create the illusion of belonging to the circles of celebrities by bringing their private life out in the open. A television viewer makes an effort to make his personal relationships public in a dating-show, hoping to appear as a member of a circle of celebrities (Stolovitš 1997). What people reveal of themselves and how they do it is purely up to them, and, as a rule, they are in control of the situation. The consumption of global mass culture has a levelling effect on different cultures. They give up uniqueness for the sake of novelty, and the models of behaviour of different nations and countries get evened out because the first requirement of a media character is to appear unusual, then even the man on the street tries to look or display himself as unusual. Game-shows, incl. *Reisile sinuga* are a unique way of "putting the viewer to the test". A player who wishes to be seen has to appear as modern as possible to the other contestant and the TV viewer; so he or she starts repeating the lines dictated by media itself. J. Kaus notes that the presentations of players manifest a mentality typically propagated by mass media.<sup>21</sup> Among the young, the words 'people' and 'ordinary' have become synonyms for the inactive conglomeration of 'the masses'. The only thinkable target group for even the most ordinary young-

ster is 'the middle-class' as opposed to 'the common people' and 'the masses'. This hunger for unconventionality is satisfied by media, incl. the commercials, the 'basic art form' of today, which inspires even housewives to be unconventional, by using extraordinary laundry detergents, tooth paste, etc. (Kaus 1998).

The Finnish learned from their *Napakymppi* experience that society was full of single people. The easy entertainment and matchmaking show *Reisile sinuga* reflects the disappearance of former strict moral standards and the equal opportunities for both sexes.

The other favourite game-show *Kuulus ja kummaline* is an amusing guessing game. The studio panelists have to guess the unusual occupation or hobby that the studio guest tries to act in mime. During the third round the panelists cover their eyes and try to guess the identity of the famous guest by asking questions. The famous guest can answer the questions either affirmatively or negatively, and if the guest happens to be known by his or her voice, then he or she can choose an alternative way to answer the questions. If the panelists fail to guess the identity of the guest under ten 'lives', they have lost the round.

Once again, the role of the host is of great importance. As the game-show does not directly focus on people's private lives, the hostess Reet Linna has not quite become the media star Maire Aunaste or her successor Vahur Kersna were. Nevertheless, there is no doubt that it has contributed to her great popularity and renown. And in this game the viewers are again better informed than the players: they have the answers from the very start. The panel of players is formed of cheerful and easy-going people (actors, artists, musicians, other public figures), who make the show enjoyable and gain popularity in their turn.

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<sup>21)</sup> In the game-show "Reisile sinuga" people often characterise themselves as: "My friends tell me I'm a little/absolutely crazy." And also "I love to sleep in the mornings." The idea is that ordinary people work: and they always get up at 8 in the morning to go to work. But original, somewhat crazy people are usually students, even if they are .. awfully lazy. [---] The lazy, but still enthusiastically studying student is taken as the future leader and boss of the "ordinary" people. [---] Or, in other words, a master (Kaus 1998).

## From television show to children's pastime

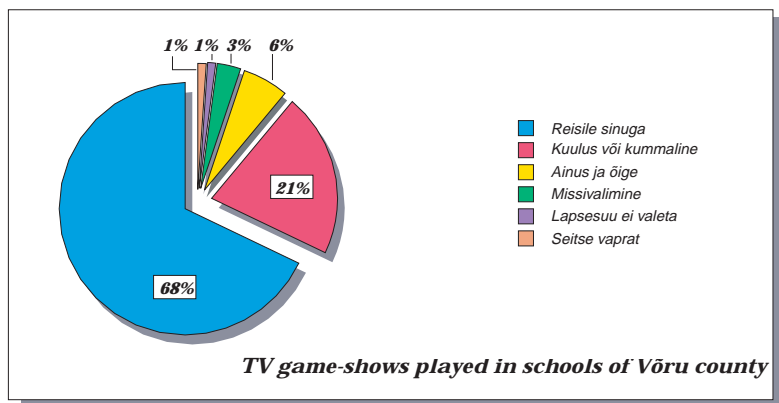
A weekly TV game-show often attracts the younger generations and becomes their favourite show. While the preferences of adult TV viewers are revealed in yearly ratings, best programs and best host awards,<sup>22</sup> then children's interest towards the game-show *Reisile sinuga* is revealed in the results of a 1995 survey published in *Eesti Päevaleht*.<sup>23</sup> The top five television programs according to children between ages 4–13 who were questioned in the survey were *Seitse vaprat* [Top 7 of most popular songs], game-shows *Reisile sinuga*, *Lapsesuu*, *Pildimäng* and *Kuraditosin*. They were followed by the children's favourite character – a dinosaur child *Otto-Triin*. Media influence was also felt in children's selection of the most popular persons. In this interesting list Lennart Meri, President of Estonia was followed by the hostess of game-show *Reisile sinuga*, who was followed by Nancy, a pop-artist known from the program *Seitse vaprat*, and then by the United States President Bill Clinton. The TOP 10 included Maarja, a pop-artist who represented Estonia at the Eurovision song contest, Mart Laar, prime minister; Mihkel Raud, the host of the program *Seitse vaprat*, the German Formula-1 pilot Michael Schumacher, and then, surprisingly, a mother, who appeared to have gotten lost among the “true media celebrities”, followed by Teet Margna, the host of *Pildimäng* on TV 3.

The exciting weekly game-show inspires children and youngsters to imitate it. The first video-recordings and reports of the imitations of *Reisile sinuga* were submitted to the folklore archives in 1995. The increasing popularity of both games is confirmed in recent random surveys, the 1997 Internet project “Break”, the collection of school lore in Võrumaa schools in spring 1998, various articles published in printed press as well as on the Internet. Of the 13 Võrumaa schools questioned in the course

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<sup>22</sup>) The game-show *Reisile sinuga* has been the indisputable favourite of TV viewers since 1995, only on single occasions (in Autumn 1997 and Summer 1998, when the game had a substitute host) was it exceeded by *Kuulus või kummaline*. The show regained popularity in August 1998, with the new host Vahur Kersna. The game-show has been awarded the title of the best entertainment program in ETV in 1995, 1996 and 1997, during 1996–1997 Maire Aunaste received awards as the second best show-host. Reet Linna, the hostess of *Kuulus või kummaline*, took the third prize.

<sup>23</sup>) *Eesti Päevaleht* 1995, 11 November.



of collecting the school lore 10 schools confirmed of playing the very same TV game-shows. *Reisile sinuga* was mentioned most often: it was also considered the most popular game played at grade parties over the last few years. Sometimes they played the imitations of *Kuulus või kummaline*, on rare occasions also the dating game *Ainus ja õige*, other games mentioned were *Lapsesuu ei valeta* and the lottery game *Kuum hind*. School beauty pageants, as another phenomena introduced to us through the media, were most popular some ten years ago, when the first Miss Estonia after WW2 was crowned. The tradition is still followed in many schools<sup>24</sup> (see the chart). Next to the television game-shows school children also play the conventional class party games, such as Eye-Winking, Long Nose, Odd-Man-Out, Spinning the Bottle, etc.

Television game-shows are played during birthday parties, class parties, school gatherings, on Valentine's Day. In several schools they have been performed by teachers on Teacher's Day, when the roles of students and teachers have been switched. *Reisile sinuga* is a game for strangers. It cannot be played in a small circle of children very well, as people are bound to recognise each other too soon. Still, it is interesting to observe what one's class-mate might want to know, how and which answer he or she is given, and who is finally chosen. Matchmaking also attracts children to play another game called Long Nose, where

<sup>24</sup>) In fact, beauty pageants were organised by school children already during the Soviet times, since the late 1960s.

the players' own preferences are disregarded,<sup>25</sup> although it is naturally more interesting to observe class-mates' choices and preferences. Many children have emphasised that such games are not to be taken too seriously, and they are often played just for fun, as an attempt to parody the game. Sometimes children imitate some unusual incidents that have taken place in real game-show: e.g. an attempt to chose the right girl with the help of a laptop computer. The winners are presented with either a mock trip,<sup>26</sup> or an actual trip in the local area, or a walk.<sup>27</sup>

Children also try to retain the original structure of the game, the number of participants (1+1+3), imitate the studio setting (the players who answer the questions are separated from the one who asks them with a barrier). For them it is important that the game take place according to the same rules as on the TV screen. The role of the game's host is of course the most desirable one.

So we'll play it the same way: one player is Maire Aunaste and there are three girls and a boy, or the other way around. (Lüllemäe school, Grade 5A, 1998).

*Reisile sinuga.*

We play it at class parties. And it goes like this: If there is nothing in the classroom where to hide yourself from the boy, so that he wouldn't see your face or where are you sitting, then just draw the table closer and stay behind it. So that no one can see you. The guy has to turn his back towards you. You can ask really anything. You can make them up during the game or write them down on a piece of paper. The same thing goes for the trips. Trips can be, for example: eating a cake in the cafeteria, patting a reindeer, and the best trip is Africa. You write them down and fold the slips of paper together. Then you number the papers and they must draw the card with numbers 1,2,3,4. And 'Maire Aunaste' distributes them. When the guy has asked his question, he can

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<sup>25</sup>) The host matches the couples, while contestants remain fully unaware of this.

<sup>26</sup>) America, patting the reindeer, trip to the hen hous, sewage, etc.

<sup>27</sup>) A walk around the school house, hand in hand around the schoolhouse, drive to a local shop to buy ice-cream, a date at the school cafeteria, etc.



name a number. And if he guesses correctly, they might get a prize for that. So they don't have to go on the trip. Chocolate is certainly a good prize. And the same goes for the boys. Have fun. (Antsla Secondary School 1995).

After decades of fanatic quiz-playing it is only natural that the endless quizzes have become less popular among young people than, say, the fresh guessing game *Kuulus vői kummaline*. By playing this game children have discovered that it is possible to find people with unusual occupations or hobbies even among themselves or people they know. People save and collect the strangest things.<sup>28</sup> Depending on the players, the game focuses on finding out the 'unusual' or imitating the television show, as in the next account:

*Kuulus vői kummaline?* This is how we play it at our class parties. We drag a classroom table near the blackboard. We sit down facing the audience. If you don't have room for sitting at the table, you can also sit on the sides. And, of course, you must have four chairs. And sit on them. When the person, who is supposed to imitate his or her occupation, enters, he or she might choose a name for himself or herself. Say, some pop-singer's name such as Maarja, Pearu Paulus; or actor's, author's name. But only when you are the mystery guest. And then you also have to change your voice: you can talk on a high or low pitch. So others won't recognise you. If you want others [the audience] to know your name, you could write it down on the blackboard. The four players have to put masks on. They can be made of paper, but I wouldn't advise you to use paper, as it falls apart very easily. Better use cardboard or fabric. And the masks have to cover the eyes, so that no one could see through them. You can make the eyes of paper and glue them on. Or if you make it of cardboard, then just draw the eyes on the mask. The masks must be large enough to cover the player's head. It can be flower-shaped, or Mickey Mouse or another animal face. This is how you can make the masks. First you have to draw the face on

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<sup>28</sup>) The most peculiar hobby was collecting cut nails: someone had collected over 3 litres of them (Põlgaste School, 5th Grade 1998).

a piece of cloth. On its inside. And then cut out the face. And then you tie some elastic tape in there. You do it like this. You cut two holes on each side. Right from the middle. You can also make a hairdo, if you want to look more interesting at the class party. If you have some soft and lustrous yarn, you could use it for the hair. Or if you have some old cassette tapes, you can use the tape for hair. This is how you can do it: you cut out a strip of stiff paper and glue it together at the ends. The strip must fit onto your head. [The players] in the show are Katrin, Jüri, Tarvo, Hins. Katrin has blond hair. So you can make them yellow. Well, you do the hair like this: you have to take some yellow yarn or whatever the hair colour. Then you take a large needle. You thread the needle and start sewing. You have to start from the upper edge. But before that, you leave a loop of 3 cm. The yarn or whatever has to cover the edges of the paper strip. And if you're done, then just cut the yarn and the hair is ready. And you look much more fun than usual. (Antsla Secondary School 1995).

The game-show follows a quite traditional game pattern. Guessing someone's identity (occupation) by using mime is traditionally used in various European games (Opie 1969: 283). The popular Estonian game *Mooramaa kuningas* must be a German loan.<sup>29</sup> In the third part of the game-show, *the Mystery Guest*, the players try to guess the identity of the counter-player blindfolded. In traditional games the player's identity is guessed at by hearing,<sup>30</sup> movements,<sup>31</sup> touching.<sup>32</sup> (Kalamees 1960: 71 ff.)

*Reisile sinuga* is not so directly connected to traditional games. The earlier matchmaking games paid no attention to verbal communication and selection based on that. In the old singing-games (e.g. *Nukumäng*) with their tripartite structure (song, dialogue and final solution) the partner was attired primarily through

<sup>29</sup>) Under the names *Meister*, *Meister*, *gib uns Arbeit* or *Wir kommen aus dem Morgenland*.

<sup>30</sup>) Kalamees 1960, game no. 127 – *pimekull* [Blind Tag], no.136 – *linnavahetamine*.

<sup>31</sup>) Kalamees 1960, game no. 125 – *pime arvab* [Blind Guess].

<sup>32</sup>) Kalamees 1960, game no. 120 – *pimesiku nimi* [Blindman's Name], no. 130 – *kelle süles sa istud* [In Whose Lap are You Sitting?]; no. 133 – *arvamine kehaosade järgi* [Guessing by Body Parts]; no. 135 – *kuldasi* [the Golden Thing]; no. 138 – *palav käsi* [Hot Palms].



*The TV-show  
"Kuulus või  
kummaline" with  
Reet Linna. Cour-  
tesy of Reet Linna .*



*The election of the Miss and Mister in Nõo Reaalgümnaasium in 1999.  
Arhive of the Nõo Reaalgümnaasium.*

*Pictures of a game of  
"Reisile Sinuga".  
Valga Gymnasium,  
November 16. 1995.  
Photo converted from  
video by  
A. Kuperjanov.*



*... and the winners are ...*



physical activity (running, chasing, catching), rather than by means of intellectual tests. These might then reflect the remnants of ancient initiation rites or “woman snatching”. Similarly, in more recent games the partner is found first and foremost through running. Naturally, the decision is based on what he sees and what he likes, but he does not make an effort to find out what the partner’s opinions of one issue or another, or of herself might be. Posing riddles while redeeming the pledge is a test of a keen mind; and although it is not directly connected with choosing a partner, it helps in forming an opinion of him or her. Choosing a partner by intellectual qualities is characteristic of some *Märchen*-types, where the suitor might be asked to solve some complex problems or riddles, in addition to fulfilling the physically demanding tasks. The game-show shares similar features with the games which are played in the dark, where a person or an object is chosen without seeing it.<sup>33</sup> There is no doubt that the erotic allusions on the television show are much more tangible and intense than in most of the older folk games, where they were rather secret and allegorical.

## CONCLUSION

The interrelation of media and games have been somewhat one-sided: television promotes newer imported entertainment specifically for showing on TV, while the old traditional games never make it to the screen or a radio program. In addition to several fields of life and phenomena, media also seems to influence games, as certain game-shows appear to be adopted into children’s and youth lore. Nevertheless, adopting games from the radio or television show is only one way of introducing and spreading new games in the field, and does not disrupt the life of other games. During the last five years traditional Estonian games have become even more ‘endangered’ by computer games, however.

Children complete their game-repertoire with game-shows, which seem fresh and novel, which can be imitated in real life, which provide new opportunities and roles for the players, create gripping game situations.

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<sup>33</sup>) Cf. in earlier tradition *Pime rätsep* [Blind Taylor] (Kalamees 1960, game no. 139) or in recent tradition *Auhinnanöör* [Prize-Fishing], where the player receives the prize s/he had managed to cut blindfolded from the string.

Games reflect our cultural surroundings and changed cultural patterns. Though the new games appear to be focused on easy-going entertainment, they manifest the changed values of society (preference of material wealth, individualism, certain superficiality). And as society becomes oriented toward a strong individual, it is only logical that individual games are beginning to replace collective games. Older popular games have undergone transformation. The former serious quiz-shows have been substituted by those, which focus on playfulness and tossing random answers (*Topelttosin, Önneratas, 100%*). Never before has knowledge been equalled with money the way it is now, thus leaving people without illusions as to the position of intellectual values, which was formerly reflected in moral standards and values. Television game-shows seem to promote the idea that success leads to wealth, wealth, in its turn, leads to decent life, decent life offers freedom of choice and pleasures. Media propaganda is gradually turning into ideology, which is too tolerant of everything foreign, unusual, and aggressive. Today's media educates and guides children more than the educational system or the home ever can. Part of this education is shared by television games, which pave the way for global mass culture.

We cannot stop renewal and changes, the same way we cannot stop media's increasing influence in society. Today's media should on the other hand take all possible steps to help members of society integrate into society. And in addition to circulating information it must also be able to bring lonely individuals together.

The children of today grow up in totally different surroundings than their parents did. A conflict between the generations of grandmothers who grew up on a farm under the conditions of some natural economy, and the environment of tamagoochi-feeding (great)grandchild is inevitable. Young people adjust to the new faster than the older generation. Advanced technology constantly produces new toys, game equipment and games for the children (ActiMate Barney, interactive Teletubbies, or Wise Man). Beside these, traditional games are still played, while media serves as a vast source of new games.

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Translated by Kait Realo

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