NEW ISSUES, NEW PROJECTS

STUDIES OF MEDIA AUDIENCE:
AN ETHNOGRAPHIC APPROACH[1]

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This article summarizes the project *Ethnography of Media Audience and Local Common Sense*, implemented 2012–2014. The introductory part briefly presents previous ethnographic fieldwork undertaken in Poland and other countries concerning the reception of media, as well as basic theoretical assumptions, which are explained in relation to the literature of the subject. The results presented in this paper pertain to the specifics of conversations in the rural areas of Podhale and their subjects in relations to the media: the influence of movies, TV series, local means of Internet usage, and associated dangers and opportunities. The concluding summary concerns: local ways of verifying media coverage through confrontation with everyday life experience; transformation of media coverage through previously acquired common knowledge; reinforcement of regional stereotypes by the media; and strengthening of the Internet as a technology that creates new means of earning money and heavily divides the already existing age groups.

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Artykuł podsumowuje projekt *Etnografia odbioru przekazu medialnego a wiedza potoczna*, realizowany w latach 2012–2014. W części wprowadzającej krótko zaprezentowano dotychczasowe badania etnograficzne dotyczące odbioru mediów, przeprowadzone w Polsce i na świecie, oraz nakreślono podstawowe założenia teoretyczne, sformułowane w odniesieniu do literatury przedmiotu. Część główna referuje wyniki badań terenowych przeprowadzonych w ramach projektu w wioskach podhalańskich, zogniskowanych na odbiorze przekazu telewizyjnego, radiowego i na lokalnych sposobach korzystania z Internetu. Prezentowane są lokalnie stosowane sposoby sprawdzania prawdziwości przekazu medialnego, procesy włączania treści z przekazu medialnego w korpus zastanej wiedzy potocznej, procesy konstruowania tożsamości regionalnych, a także nowe sposoby zarobkowania oraz realizowania relacji społecznych umożliwione dzięki upowszechnieniu się na wsi Internetu.

K e y w o r d s: Poland, rural areas, Podhale, media audience, common sense, local knowledge, regional identity

"The youngsters nowadays are interested in the Internet, not sheep!" – said, with a hint of nostalgia, an elderly breeder in the market place of Nowy Targ [New Market] in 2013, located in the mountainous Podhale region in the South of Poland. The picture of the relationships that connect people and media, painted by the inhabitants of Podhalan villages, is created using binary oppositions, such as the aforementioned sheep versus Internet. Classic ethnologists (Levi-Strauss, Mietelinski, Eliade) tie such oppositions to the mythical way of observing and relating reality. This 'presence of the myth' (Kołakowski 2005) remains visible in contemporary common thinking. However, when the researcher ventures beyond the level of common truths, he or she immediately realises that they are not dealing with simple binary oppositions such as tradition-modernity, old-young, city-village, online-offline; but instead – with a Gordian knot of mutual interconnections. The researcher also aptly realises that the youth can actually be interested in sheep – on the Internet!

THE RESEARCH PROJECT

As rightfully noted by Mirosław Filiciak (2013), each study related to the perception and the functioning of the media is inevitably sentenced to becoming an incomplete, unfinished 'beta-version'. Technologies, together with media, change so fast that the papers written on them become outdated even before they come to be published. Thus, presenting the results of the *Ethnography of the perception of media and the common knowledge* research, conducted between 2012–2014, I am fully aware of the temporal limitations of its conclusions.

The research project, financed by the Polish National Science Centre, was realised using ethnographic fieldwork methods, understood as research conducted "under conditions of social intimacy with real informants" (Herzfeld 2001, 296). I chose this research method, although rather obvious for an ethnologist, as I was led by the conviction that it is ethnography that:

> "provides an ideal access to the point of conjuncture between local perceptions and practices on the one hand and mass-produced forms of representation on the other" (Herzfeld 2001, 299).

The fieldwork was conducted in the villages of the Nowy Targ district, Podhale Region, such as Pyzówka, Morawczyna, Lasek, Trute, and others. Although romantically associated with highlanderness, it is rather a "modern location of disenchanted villageness" (Herzfeld 2001), as can be found in my previous research project, summarized in the book *Social Imaginaries of the State and Central Authority in Polish Highland Villages, 1999–2005* (Malewska-Szałygin 2017). The fieldwork was conducted together with the group of students of the Institute of Ethnology and Cultural Anthropology of the University of Warsaw: Nina Abboudi, Stanisław Grzywalski, Sarian Jarosz, Dominika Nizińska, Maria Popielewicz, Marta Sałyga, Katarzyna Talewicz,

Paula Wolińska, and Żaneta Żebrowska. The students, led by their research aims, conducted open and in-depth interviews, transcribed them, and prepared their own topic assessments that are currently kept in the archive of the Institute.

The theoretical framework of the project can be summarised by yet another quotation from Michael Herzfeld: "the force that media representations carry in the construction of contemporary imaginations, identities, and power relations" (Herzfeld 2001, 294). The main research question was: How are the media used to create those imagination and identity constructs? How do people use the media to create individualised "modern social imaginaries"[2] (Taylor 2004)?

THE STATE OF RESEARCH

The presentation of the outcome of the research should be preceded by a short historical introduction, depicting the way in which anthropological discourse on the perception of media in the post-war period has changed and continues to evolve. In the 1950s, during the subsequent media revolution tied to the mass dissemination of television, Marshall McLuhan predicted that the process of global homogenisation of culture will run parallel with the development of media. In the subsequent decades, however, it became clear that this is not happening. The reasons for this are varied, for example, it was noticed that the recipients of media are not a passive audience that thoughtlessly accepts the transmitted content, but instead they 'decode' them through the prior cultural codes that they possess (Hall 1980). The research, continued into the late 1970s and early 80s, revealed that this process of coding and encoding is not only a matter of inscribing and deciphering meaning, but also a type of activity which ties together elements of dominance and resistance – thus, the 'strategies' of the media producer are confronted by the perception 'tactics' of the consumer (de Certeau 2008, XXIV, 34). What is more, the spectators/listeners do not merely encode, but instead they utilise the media messages, using them for their own means. Thus, the term 'uses of media' (de Certeau 2008, XXII) seems entirely obvious in the age of the Internet; however, during the times when audience studies were concerned mainly with television, cinema and the radio, this term served to highlight the creativity of the spectator, whose activity is insidious and dispersed, omnipresent, silent and somewhat invisible, as 'it does not manifest itself through its own products but through its *ways*

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[2] "The social imaginary is not a set of ideas; rather, it is what enables, through making sense of, the practices of a society" (Taylor 2004, 2); they are "ways in which the people imagine their social existence (...) and also the expectations which are normally met, and the deeper normative notions and images which underlie these expectations". "The social imaginary is that common understanding which makes possible common practices, and a widely shared sense of legitimacy" (Taylor 2004, 23); it is "that largely unstructured and inarticulate understanding of our whole situation, within which particular features of our world show up for us in the sense they have" (Taylor 2004, 25).

of using of the products imposed by a dominant economic order' (de Certeau 2008, XXII–XXIII). Already in the 1990s, it became obvious that the audience "can interpret the contents transmitted by the television in ways diametrically different from the ones intended by the makers of these contents". It stems from the fact that "people come to media from the perspectives of their many subjectivities, which have been influenced by a whole 'multitude of discursive practices' encountered during their lifetimes" (Herzfeld 2001, 301). It was also noticed that media "are largely continuous with everyday experience, which they also help to shape and through which they are interpreted" (Herzfeld 2001, 297). Thus, "the media (...) become part of their consumers' constructions of reality" (Herzfeld 2001, 304).

The 1990s were a time of ethnographic research of the perception of the media realised in many exotic places and summarised by many fieldwork monographs and a collection titled *Media Worlds* (2002). The most interesting ones include the research projects of Brian Larkin – focused, among others, on the perception of Bollywood motion pictures by the Muslim Hausa living in Nigeria (1997); Richard Wilk – about the cultural changes caused by the widespread popularity of satellite TV in Belize (2002); Lila Abu-Lughod – on the diversity of strategies of Egyptian series makers and the tactics of perception thereof by the village women in Upper Egypt and female cleaners in Cairo (2005); Purnima Mankekar – about the political consequences of the screen adaptations of the Mahabharata and Ramayana epics and their impact on the escalation of nationalism in India (1999); Faye Ginsburg – on the ways in which the local television creates new identity constructs (2002); and the research project of David Miller and Don Slater (2000) describing the use of the Internet in Trinidad, which shows how this seemingly socially-alienating and individualising medium has perfectly assimilated itself with the local family and community life.

The publications from the first decade of the 21st century show that in the "culture of convergence" (Jenkins 2006), the consumers participate in the creation of media productions.

> "Convergence should be understood primarily as a technological process bringing together multiple media functions within the same devices", however, "convergence occurs within the brains of individual consumers and through their social interactions with others" (Jenkins 2006, 3).

This concatenation of various media forms – films, series, computer games – also encompasses the 'mediation of things' (Lash and Lurry 2007), and the "culturification of industry" (Lash and Lurry 2007, 9); moreover, it initiates a global flow in which "image has become matter, matter has become image: media-things and thing-media" (Lash and Lurry 2007, 9), demanding from the audience not to interpret the media contents, but rather to 'navigate' between them (Lash and Lurry 2007, 8).

In Poland, ethnographic fieldwork research on the perception of media has been undertaken, among others, by Anna Woźniak (2006), Bogumiła Mateja (2010), and Łukasz Sokołowski (2011). Moreover, the project of Mateusz Halawa discussing the

use of television was published in a book *Życie codzienne z telewizorem* [Everyday life with the TV set] (2006). Its author also participated in the interdisciplinary research project summarised in the report *Młodzi i Media* [The Youth and the Media] (Filiciak *et all* 2010), which shows how contemporary Polish youth use digital media.

LOCAL WAYS OF SCRUTINISING MEDIA

I would like to start a presentation of results of my research project from the demonstration of the villages' tactics of verification of media messages. Before doing this, a few theoretical models need to be presented beforehand. The media, which in theory relate the current affairs objectively, in fact create 'mediascapes', namely, "image-centric, narrative relations of the fragments of reality, produced by private or public companies" (Appadurai 1996, 34). Mediascapes are constructed by producers who realise particular agendas, which are carefully concealed in order to make "an impression of objectivity" or "the illusion of bedrock factuality" (Herzfeld 2001, 295). The titles of news programmes: *Wydarzenia* [News], *Fakty* [Facts] only summarise the process of creating the illusion of thorough reference. Thus, in the process of these attempts made by the media producers, the perceived reality becomes 'hyperreality' (Baurdillard 1994, 1). Facts are replaced by 'simulacra' (Baurdillard 1994, 1), and these, in turn, 'obscure the events' and subsequently turn them into 'our legends' (de Certeau 2008), which have the incredible capacity to create realities through appearances.

The efforts of producers to construct a, or indeed the, picture of reality, whilst at the same time realising their own agendas, consequently encounter strategies of the audience, which are no less clever as they are grounded in their local knowledge and tap into what we can refer to, after James Scott (1988) and Michael de Certeau (2008), using the Greek word *métis,* a term which they use to describe the specific cleverness of Odysseus (Detienne and Vernant 1978). *Métis* is a form of intelligence, which is always steeped in some kind of practice, "which merges together intelligence, scrutiny, foresight, flexibility of thought, cunning, resourcefulness, careful attention, intuition, various skills and the continually accumulated experience" (de Certeau 2008, XIX).

In the interviews collected as a part of the Nowy Targ research programme, *métis* takes the shape of deliberations about 'how much they lied' and becomes the local method of assessing the probability of media messages. The TV relations of events are verified by the interlocutors by contrasting them with their own experiences and with the stories of their relatives, neighbours and acquaintances. This method of confronting the media portrayals with a knowledge that stems from one's own experience is described by Mateusz Halawa in his book (2006, 106, 130–131). What is interesting is that the spectators verify the probability primarily on the emotional level. The media message which seems emotionally probable in light of one's own, neighbourly, or

family experiences might be therefore accepted as factual. This approach can be thus called 'emotional realism' if we use the term coined by Ien Ang, who research audience reception of the *Dallas* television series (1985).

The local methods of verification of media messages are best visible during conversations about health and illness. Nowadays, the Internet has become one of the main 'expertise systems' (Giddens 1991) in this regard, to which its users declare a significant, albeit not uncritical trust. Other media authorities in this regard include the medical television series. The portrayals of advanced medical technologies, and the standards of hospital interiors and medical care shown on the television are favourite topics for comparisons with one's own, neighbourly, and family experiences. These comparisons are frequently concluded by bitter jokes.

The method of verifying media messages observed in the villages of the Podhale Region adopts the 'mediated experience' versus 'lived experience' opposition as a tool. The problem lies in the fact that researchers of media perception write about the 'conjugation' of both types of experience (Halawa 2006, 106) and about how the media provides their audience with a "language that objectifies their own experiences" (Halawa 2006, 107), which in turn "helps the audience to organise their experiences" (Sokołowski 2011, 198), and finally, about the dissolving of television in everyday life and the dissolving of everyday life in television to such an extent, that an 'indiscernible chemical solution' is created, which marks the disappearance of all binary and polar structures (Baurdillard 1994, 30). In this way, by deconstructing simplificatory binary oppositions, the researchers distance themselves from the cognitive-verificatory tools used by people who are less educated.

The users of common knowledge, however, do not know and ignore those research discussions and employ a sharp contrast between both types of experience. This black-and-white differentiation allows for the confrontation of what was perceived with what was watched, thus becoming a significantly useful apparatus; a cognitive tool that allows reducing the uncertainty and the threat stemming from the numerously emerging sources of knowledge that are significantly different from the well-known village authorities. Having a mechanism that allows verifying the messages arriving from *orbis exterior* functions to overcome the feeling of hopelessness and gives the impression of controlling the information, which, after verification, can in turn serve to reinforce the arsenal of prior categories that form what Geertz (1983, 77) refers to as 'common sense'.

THE ALTERNATIVE WORLDS OF THE DRAMA SERIES

A classic example of what David Morley (2000) calls 'armchair tourism' is watching travel programs, such as Wojciech Cejrowski's *Boso przez świat* [Barefoot through the world], Martyna Wojciechowska's *Kobieta na krańcach świata* [The woman on the edge

of the world], or travel-culinary ones, such as *Makłowicz w podróży* [Makłowicz on the road]. These TV shows were eagerly watched in the villages of Nowy Targ, however, the contents and portrayals shown in them seeped significantly less into the everyday conversations as opposed to the messages shown in TV series. The real journeys for the spectators are the ones that they are launched into by pressing the control button on the remote – the alternative worlds of people shown in the movies and TV series. The escape from everyday reality into the alternative reality of the drama series can provide them with emotional experiences and knowledge about other ways of looking at the world and at people. Lila Abu-Lughod (2005) analysed the statements of women villagers and cleaners from Cairo that related to the TV series they watched. She noticed that the different lifestyles, flats, clothes, attitudes to love, friendship and other interpersonal relationships are fascinating to the feminine audience, but also can be incredibly frustrating. The portrayals of other ways of experiencing reality thus become a cognitive challenge. They widened the current thought horizon and proposed new assessment criteria, both aesthetic and moral ones. The value system proposed by the media producers thus does not match the *habitus* that is known since childhood. According to Lila Abu-Lughod, the life of Egyptian women villagers, contrasted with the adventures from the TV series, often seems improper, neither beautiful nor good enough to them. Following David Morley, letting the outside world to one's home through the television set constitutes a threat of destabilising his intimate world – the one which the spectator has grown accustomed and in which they have been brought up (2000).

How was this threat dealt with by the inhabitants of the villages of the Podhale Region? A number of women spectators, particularly the lovers of TV series, did not escalate the otherness of the drama-series worlds, instead engaging emotionally in the stories of their favourite characters, sharing their happy and sad moments, discussing their adventures shown in consecutive episodes and treating them as friends or cousins. The alternative realities that surrounded the actors (prettier interiors, better cars, more elegant clothes) seemed irrelevant in situations when the relations and emotions that they experienced were perceived as familiar. The emotional realism led to a situation in which the media messages were accepted with an intense engagement. This attitude of trust, connected to recognising emotions, caused a kind of blindness; a disregard for the otherness in the media transmission. In these types of situations, the outside world seeped into the inside one without instigating resistance.

Some viewers, particularly men[3], distanced themselves from watching the series, saying that they only watch them to laugh at the stupid ideas of their directors, the poor dialogues and mediocre acting. Such a phenomenon of the creation of a conscious, critical consumer of media that keeps distance to the watched contents and

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[3] On the gendered difference in the perception of TV programmes and the power relationships tied to them, see: Halawa 2006, 65.

portrayals is described by Bogumiła Mateja (2010). She argues that the attempts to distance oneself from the watched series are most often a guise. Even the most critical viewer inevitably becomes caught in the web set by the producers of series, and the only method of keeping a critical approach to series is… not to watch them. I have to agree with this conclusion. The innovative declarations of being distant from the TV series usually go together with detailed knowledge of their characters' recent adventures, and a comprehensive awareness of the conditions of their life and work. The sarcasm and irony connected to talking about the series thus did not constitute a barrier that would prevent the contents of the media transmission from seeping in. Even when, in the conversation, the lifestyles presented on screen were criticised, these differences were perceived directly by the interlocutors, thus forcing them to formulate opinions and taking stances. A good example of that is the situation in which a homosexual motif was shown in the TV series watched by a team of construction workers during their lunch break, provoking a number of explicit comments and jokes. The media transmission, thus, even though it is filtered by local categories of thinking and value systems, affects the audience, and brings new contents and pictures into their thought horizon, in doing so affecting their prior knowledge. This frequently occurs unnoticed by the viewers and thus usually does not satisfy the producers.

MEDIA AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF IDENTITY

A stroll through the market in Nowy Targ, a visit to the clothes shops, a glance at a photo album with family celebrations or interior decorations of the rented accommodation shows that 'highlanderness' is currently very fashionable in Podhale. The interlocutors from the villages surrounding Nowy Targ told the researchers:

> "this tradition is coming back nowadays (…) it became profitable, and fashionable, yes! Highlander dialect is the newest craze!"

The researcher approaches this declaration of 'returning tradition' with a pinch of salt, seeing a thoroughly modern and new phenomenon in this popularity, tied to the current shape of economy and culture (Sennett 2006).

A visit to the extracurricular classes organised by the village school in Pyzówka prove that there is a significant interest in learning the highlander dialect, dances, and songs amongst the youth. The classes are conducted by a professionally trained instructor. Parents, asked about the reasons they had signed their children up for the highlander dialect classes, said: 'it is good if they learn it. They live in this culture, so it will be useful!' The owners of the agritourism farm assumed that the knowledge of this dialect would prove useful for marketing purposes, as the tourists prefer to rent rooms from 'real' highlanders. Thus, highlander dialect, in the same way as English

(which is learned by most school children in the village), increases the cultural capital and provides a chance for a better future.

When talking about the 'fashion for highlanderness', the local government officials, activists from the local associations such as '*Czas na Pyzówkę!*' [Now is time for Pyzówka!], animators of village community centres, and the school directors did not consider it as 'inventing traditions' (1983). The idea that the tradition used by them for promotional reasons is invented or constructed in fact seemed outrageous and threatening to them – questioning the authenticity of the heritage of Podhale was not in their interest. On the contrary, the local entrepreneurs, activists and government officials need a tradition whose authenticity is certain and indisputable. Moreover, it is best if this authenticity is confirmed by ethnographers, who will assess which *zbójnicki* [robbery] dance is the most traditional and which traditional youth song ensemble sings it most authentically – with expert scrutiny. Such a role of the expert-ethnographer in constructing local folk culture is described by Antoni Kroh in the book *Sklep potrzeb kulturalnych* [The shop with cultural needs] (1999). He illustrated his argument with the example of the process of codification of the *zbójnicki* dance. The pattern for this dance, constructed by ethnographers, has served as an assessment tool for many decades during numerous regional competitions.

The tradition and the identity built on it, which can be exposed in the 'supermarket of culture' (Mathews 2000), are necessary not only by activists and politicians, but by all the inhabitants of Podhale who want to attract tourists, compete with other regions, and show a highlanderness that is attractive, colourful and authentic. Such an attitude can be termed, after Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, 'practical essentialism' (1990). It is also worth noting that the locally constructed images of the region are made using a heavily aestheticised tradition. The poverty, hunger, and heavy physical toil of the inhabitants of Podhale are thus not appropriate components used in creating the media showcase of the region. Many older interlocutors pointed to this selective treatment of the regional heritage: 'they do not show at all how hard people worked with those hoes, how one had to toil in Podhale!' In the highlander identity narratives, the reminiscence of the hardships that had been experienced by the previous generations is thus replaced by the 'internalised narrative of colonisers', namely, the large-city intelligentsia, mainly from Kraków. This narrative, following Maria Małanicz-Przybylska (2013, 176), 'seems quite comfortable to the modern highlanders' and is becoming an important element of the performances, during which the 'highlanderness' is played out to 'one's own' (Małanicz-Przybylska 2013, 176).

The use of highlanderness by the television and the Internet is generally received well by the interlocutors from Nowy Targ, especially TV series such as the *Szpilki na Giewoncie* [Heels on Mount Giewont] (2012) or the regularly repeated *Janosik* (1973) series about a Polish/Slovak highwayman who robbed nobles and gave the loot to the poor. The fact that those portrayals are far from the truth about the experiences

of ancestors remains a local secret, partially revealed by half-smiles, sarcasm, irony and jokes. It is not easy to lift the regional mask and reach the level of 'cultural familiarity', which is 'the recognition of those aspects of cultural identity that are considered a source of external embarrassment, but that nevertheless provide insiders with assurance of common sociality' (Herzfeld 2005, 3). For it is not perceived well if the ethnographer abandons the role of competition-expert and peeks under the intricately designed Podhalan mask. It is perceived even worse if the media do this, for example, when in 2011 Magda Gessler, presenting the culinary program *Kuchenne Rewolucje* [Kitchen revolutions], pointed out the 'Highlander's vices' in her celebrity cooking shows, among which drunkenness and unequal relationships in marriage were mentioned. The programme, when aired, caused a particularly lively and critical reaction from the viewers in Podhale. Many interlocutors said that the media producers, driven by jealousy, were trying to slander the region, seeing how the highlanders prosper thanks to the development of tourism. Thus, when we consider the inter-relationship between regional identity and media, it is worth highlighting that this relation is too complicated to be described with a simple vector of the influence of media on highlanderness. In the search of the language which would be sufficient to express the specifics of their mutual enmeshment, it is worth employing the concept of 'structural coupling' (Lash and Lurry 2007), which is based on the fact that the modern media audience is comprised of participants rather than passive consumers and not only interprets the message, but 'navigates' through media content and images (Lash and Lurry 2007, 7). Additionally, the researcher also becomes a participant in this connection and navigation as they follow the contents and images that leave their original media context and modify the common knowledge through common conversations and everyday actions.

THE INTERNET IN THE VILLAGE COMMUNITY

According to the older interlocutors, the Internet breaks down the village community because, among other reasons, 'the children and the youth do not meet together, they do not chase after one another like they used to. In the winter, there are even fewer of them outside than in the summer. It is the age of the computer – the child comes, it has its game, it has its laptop, and he plays it.' Halawa (2006, 63) recalls the categories of James Lull (1990) that differentiated between two functions of television – affiliation and avoidance. The older people, used to watching TV together with the whole family and before that, with neighbours too, see the isolating factor of the Internet. For the youth who have access to the Internet, it is primarily a tool that includes them in a community, however, it is a community that the older generation neither notices nor understands. It thus does not seem real to the older interlocutors.

The middle-aged interlocutors perceive the computer as a threat in the process of bringing up children. The necessity of parental control in terms of media is obvious for them and sets the standards of being a 'good parent' (Halawa wrote about this, 2006, 67). The computer thus poses a more significant educational challenge, as its middle-aged and older users are less familiar with the computerised worlds of their children than with the temptations of television. A family father describes this situation as follows:

> "I sleep in the room where the computer is, naked! The TV is downstairs and over there, the kids can sit, watch, and after that, in the evening, go to sleep upstairs. If I gave them the computer – if I slept elsewhere – f**k knows when they would go to sleep. I sleep where the computer is, and they are forbidden to use it at night! Go to sleep, shoo! (…) No computer – go study! Books and notebooks! I don't want them sitting on the computer. There is no chance, no way! (…) They are supposed to study, not look at the computer! And they are always on about some games and other rubbish, they don't think about learning at all. That's the truth!"

This statement shows that by properly arranging the 'spatial geography of the home' (Morley 2000, 193), the father manages to keep his function as 'the selector' (Halawa 2006, 67). Judging from his statement, the television set no longer poses as great a threat as the computer with Internet access, hence the fatherly disciplinary operations concentrate on this new medium that is harder to control. Therefore, as we can see, one has to guard access to the home PC with his own bare chest.

The anxieties of the older generations that stem from the lack of computer skills make this medium seem particularly dangerous to them. For example, the librarian in the village library oversees the time spent while using the computers as well as checks the history of the virtual spaces visited by the pupils, limiting access to games and videos containing violence and nudity. The control at home is, however, much weaker. The parents that perform manual labour can trace and select the Internet browsing choices of their children to a much lesser extent. Most commonly, they limit the time spent at the computer to 2–3 hours per day, after the homework is done. In crisis situations, they can turn off Internet access entirely; for example, one of my interlocutors decided to do this when her 20-year-old sons lost their jobs on a construction site because they had spent their whole nights in front of the computer screen. We also encountered situations when children aged 8–12 had unrestrained access to the computer and could endlessly play games or watch violent or disturbing movies. The opposite side of this spectrum of parental control were the families of educated people, in which the access of the children to the Internet content and media there was strictly and meticulously traced, similarly to the television. Nevertheless, a conversation with 14 and 15-year old boys of the village school showed that they are able to find different ways to access the Internet pages forbidden by their parents. In school – but of course, outside the control sphere of teachers – there is an exchange network of CDs with games and films that would cause outrage amongst parents and educators.

The fears of the generation of grandparents about breaking the village community, together with the fears of the parents connected with the education of children mark the consequences of the Internet's advent. Many interlocutors, however, highlight the positive changes that were brought together with it. The Internet, for instance, has proven to be an immense convenience for everyone who was running their own business. The availability of quick bank transactions and social security benefit transfers were frequently mentioned by my middle-aged interlocutors. Many small producers also mentioned the ease in which they could order the parts needed for the production online. Many also stressed that the Internet expanded their customer base and improved their sales. The examples related to the online distribution of electronic equipment, but also the distribution of cakes, dumplings and other home-made products. It was also highlighted that the Internet introduces new possibilities to promote products without having to spend large sums on advertising. Many interlocutors also declared that the Internet provides them with inspirations and ideas for making cakes, jewellery, and tailored clothes. Some of them mentioned Internet searches for subsidies that are available for small-scale entrepreneurs.

The inhabitants of the village that are forced to stay at home because of their situation in life have been granted new possibilities with the Internet. The mothers of small children and people with disabilities have gained new chances to earn money. A situation in which such extra form of income becomes the basis of sustaining the family fundamentally changes the distribution of roles in the family. The women, whose earnings had only complemented the family budgets, have suddenly obtained stronger positions in the family groupings. One example of this is the mother of small children who obtained extra income through selling home-made cakes and dumplings. In the winter, when the snow prevented her husband from working on the construction site, her earnings provided for the entire family. The Internet played a significant role in promoting and distributing her products. Furthermore, Internet portals such as allegro.pl or ceneo.pl allow quick checks of the prices on the market. Examination of the prices and negotiating them on Internet auctions were compared to the marketplace which had always served the purpose of becoming familiar with the prices of products. Some of the businesses typical for Nowy Targ, for example trading clothes imported from the US, mostly moved online, 'on Allegro' or 'on Facebook', thus confirming the observation that 'constructing the border between what happens between people on the Internet and the "real", offline reality is an unjustified process' (Cichocki 2012, 23). In the usage of the Internet, we can also see a visible age barrier. The elderly – the makers of the woollen products, cakes, regional slippers – rarely use this medium to reach customers. On the other hand, the middle-aged people, low-scale producers, and the owners of rooms for rent do so often. For the youth, it is the basic method of communication. The research of the use of the Internet in Nowy Targ confirms many findings of David Miller and Don Slater (2000), who speak of the new medium that

initially caused anxiety by threatening to alienate and break social bonds, but in the end perfectly fitted itself into the family, neighbourly, and regional relations (however still causing anxieties amongst the elderly). The conversations on Skype with the family members that work seasonally abroad, and searching for information and sharing it online and offline prove, that the border between the 'real' and the virtual sphere is increasingly indistinct in the local discourses and practices.

CONCLUSIONS

Concluding the results of the research realised in the project *Ethnography of the perception of media and the common knowledge*, it is worth to stress the clever local tactics (*métis*) that verify the media transmission through juxtaposing the contents and images from the media and one's own/relatives' experiences. This contrast is treated as a cognitive tool to assess the authenticity of the transmission, which is verified mainly on the emotional level. Employment of the scientifically deconstructed discourse opposition: mediated experience versus lived experience, thus becomes a locally useful tool to select the contents that leach from the media transmission into everyday conversations, local discourses and imaginaries.

The use of media is tied to opening oneself to new ways of perceiving and understanding the world. New lifestyles, different value systems, distinct linguistic styles, unorthodox behaviours and activities bring about a situation in which the media users face an otherness, which sometimes entirely transforms their grounded view of the world. However, the consumers filter the media transmission through their prior knowledge. Nevertheless, in a confrontation with the new contents and pictures, these prior categories also become modified themselves. Thus, their mutual relation has a character of a feedback loop: the local common knowledge causes distortions in the transmission, and the transmission modifies the common knowledge. The process of mutual interrelation is therefore a complicated one and is not possible to be described through recourse to a simple explanation focused around the category of 'media influence'.

The media allows for an expansion of the reachable audience by popularising the image of the region. Films, TV series, advertisements, through spreading the regional stereotypes, actually reinforce them by showing selected, aestheticised elements of cultural heritage. Deconstructing this image-mask, questioning the authenticity of its counterparts is neither in the interest of the local government nor of the local (e.g. agritourist) business owners'. Many of the counterparts of this regional identity construction, exhibited on the shelves of the supermarket of culture, prompts a sarcastic, ironic smirk from the people that share cultural familiarity, but who will, however, continue to loyally protect this 'traditional' image of the region due to its practical benefits.

The Internet has been shown to be a medium which is significantly less alienating that is had seemed, and it has fitted perfectly into the family and working life; it gave new possibilities of money earning and job hunting. It has also brought new educational challenges, as it has become significantly harder for parents to trace their children's online peregrinations. It is also a technology which sets clear borders between age groups, hence, the youth communities tied together via Internet bonds are considered to be supportive by the youth themselves and to be socially destructive by the older generations. The observed practices and recorded conversations prove that the division of reality to 'real' and 'virtual' is therefore not an adequate way of describing this, and that this is borne out in the villages of Podhale.

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