



Faculty of Social Sciences  
Charles University in Prague

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Transforming Audiences, Transforming Societies

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# Post-socialist Media Audiences: Book of Abstracts

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## **The place and role of the youth of 1980s in media consumption/creation within the socio-cultural transformations of post-communist Romania**

The paper explores the transformations characterizing the generation of Romanians that in the 1980s constituted the young workers and administrative personnel in Calarasi, a Communist city in south-east Romania, an archetype of the industrial urban areas during the Ceausescu regime. They were the typical Communist youth, the focus point of the ideological machine of the Party. This centrality offered, even if at a great price, a mediatic and cultural status and power that were gradually taken away after the 1989 revolution and the change of political and economic regimes.

The paper presents the current status regarding the perception of the cultural role and the relevance as mediatic audience of the *then* Romanian youth. It explores the relationship with education, television and a new generation (some their children, the youth of 2000-2010) within a social context redefined at political and ideological level. Using a theoretical framework that draws on the work of Pierre Bourdieu and Michel de Certeau, the analysis uses everyday representations and the notion of *habitus* to reveal (auto)perceptions regarding the influence of *now* senior citizens on media programming and the way they approach mediatic consumption. A final critical point of the paper is represented by different interpretations of *popular culture* as seen by the inhabitants of Calarasi, perspectives that define their position regarding their status as marginal or central audience, as well as that of their children.

The research needed in order to explore these transformations was carried out in 2011 and had a double approach; the qualitative method was that of the semi-structured interview, exploring the cultural production and consumption patterns of the inhabitants of Calarasi (40-60 years), and the quantitative was an online questionnaire drawing in the complementary responses of young people from Calarasi (some of them the children of the interview subjects).

## **Contemporary local public sphere – the role of new technologies in reborn democracies during the election time (case of Poland)**

As the digitalization process has diverse course in different cultures so it is worth to do some more detailed studies. The author of this paper is trying to analyse how the power of ICT is used by local communities. Due to the study we may look at some activities (media; ICT usage) being introduced by the countries of reborn democracies to improve the local partnership. The proposed paper is going to be an analysis local public sphere before the elections in 2002, 2006 and 2010. The choice of the 2002 elections as the starting date for the analysis was dictated by the following facts: first of all, those were the first direct local elections for mayors/municipality heads; secondly, the number of council members was reduced by law (both municipal and poviast) all of which heralded an interesting competition. The use of the media is starting to be the principal means by which candidates try to convey their message to the voters. The high turnover rate of candidates for councillors across different regions of Poland in 2002, 2006 and 2010 local government elections has been attributed in part to the volatility caused by greater media and public interest in council issues. Many see the media as the most effective way to get voters' attention. Voters also treats media information about candidates as very important source of knowledge about the candidate which helps them to vote. However, it is important to check which communication channel is the most popular and effective source of information for local public debate; what is the quality of information being published before and after the local election period etc. For the author of this paper it seems worth to check if the - politician activity and - society response is only clearly visible during the election time or maybe - local debate develops after the election time. The paper is based on the qualitative and quantitative research. Surveys were carried out in: 2002, 2006 and 2010. The paper is mainly based on the results from the last 2010 election campaign.

### Author

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## **User-generated hate: Racism and xenophobia in the space of social media**

The rise of the social media enables every person with internet access to share information and opinions with the global internet community in almost real-time. The immediacy and anonymity of the social media space slowly blurs the difference between the transmitter and recipient of the message. The role of audience members is shifting from passive acceptance to active categorization, review and sharing of the messages passed via social media services.

While this provides many benefits, it also creates some undesirable effects. One of these includes the fact that the social media are easily abused as a tool for promotion of racist and xenophobic concepts and spreading of hostilities and hate between different ethnic groups.

This paper will explore various forms and strategies adopted in this kind of abuse ranging from spontaneous hate-speech to coordinated defamation of certain ethnic group. It will also analyse the steps taken by the major social media operators (e.g. Facebook, Youtube) to counter this problem and discuss the boundaries between censorship and protection of groups harmed by such activities. Finally, it will explore how the tools of “flagging” and “reporting” transforms a community sharing social media experience into democratically self-regulating entity.

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## **The demise of “Panorāma”: generational and ethnic gaps in TV news consumption patterns in post-Communist Latvia**

Drawing on a case study of „Panorāma”, the long-running flagship news programme on public service television in Latvia, the paper explores changing patterns of television news consumption in post-Communist Latvia over the last two decades. The demise of “Panorāma” also reflects a current state of the public service media in the country.

For many families in Latvia watching prime-time newscast “Panorāma” that has its roots in the Soviet era has long been an evening ritual, not to be missed, but during the last few years the “Panorāma” audience share has dropped sharply and today evening news programmes on commercial channels attract significantly larger audiences. What has been once an undisputed market leader today plays a minor role in television news landscape in Latvia.

Investigation of the reasons standing behind the decline in “Panorāma” viewing figures reveals ethnic and generational divide in television uses in Latvia. Large Russian-speaking minority are alienated from news offerings on public service television and instead prefers watching Russian-language channels transmitting from Moscow. Unsurprisingly, Russian-speakers regard news on these channels as their main source of news, as well as the most reliable. Among the rejecters of news provision on public television are younger audiences, as well. Young people are more engaged with news programmes offered on commercial television channels, let alone booming online news platforms. While majority of youngsters regard the internet as their main source of news, television still plays a significant role in their everyday news media practices.

To explore the “Panorāma” audiences quantitative methodologies are combined with ethnographic approach. Analysis of television ratings and other survey research, as well as focus group discussions with television viewers and participant observations within every-day family environments serve as a methodological framework of the study. The study is part of my doctoral research project at the University of Westminster, CAMRI, investigating the relationship between public service broadcasters and their publics in post-Communist societies.

### Author

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## **Media audience studies: public opinion polls vs self-expression texts analysis**

Mass media audience studies since the times of George Gallup [Gallup, 1935] have been traditionally based on public opinion polls methodology and techniques. But there is another promising approach to mass consciousness studies, proposed in 1980-s by Soviet and Russian sociologist professor Grushin: "Text analysis will help answer the question of mass consciousness far more completely and reliably than this can be done using the traditional public opinion polls" - this is the essence of "Grushin hypothesis" [Grushin, 1989].

Reflections on previous studies and further development of Grushin's method let us suggest that if there is a content area well-studied with the help of representative polls and, at the same time, rich in mass self-expression texts generated on some concrete occasion, then, theoretically, it may be suitable for making comparisons in a particular case. The same audience attitude or perception could be reflected and explicitly fixed in two ways: in responses to the sociological questionnaire and in spontaneous mass consciousness texts.

We chose the content-oriented approach (or semantic study) to analyze mass consciousness texts since such an approach can best help to trace likenesses and differences of results obtained with the method of text analysis - on the one hand and with traditional sociological polls - on the other.

In our comparative study of collective memories about precise historic period (Brezhnev time) reflected in public opinion polls and gathered in mass texts, the hypothesis about compatibility of two research techniques is confirmed for the particular case. We consider the method of mass consciousness texts analysis to be effective and promising in audience studies.

Research conducted at the Journalism Faculty of MSU in 2007-2011 brought interesting results concerning the phenomenon of structural and substantive inconsistency of audience consciousness, various models of its manifestation etc. [Anikina, Khroul, 2010,2011].

### Author

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## **Audience reception of images of older people in the advertisement**

The paper is based on qualitative pilot research dealing with socially insensitive advertisements. As such we understand messages which work with stereotypes common in the Czech culture on the latent level of meaning. The socially weak and minorities are usually harmed by that because media are key factors in the process of the construction of the social reality in the society of late modernity and they can function as a tool of social exclusion or discrimination. Our key question was, how are such texts decoded by their audience, if they understand stereotypes used in advertising as a hyperbole, and whether such advertisements are trustworthy for them?

We analysed audience reception of the television advertisements (of the Česká pojišťovna) which present older people in stereotypical way. We compared approach of two different groups of recipients: students (5) and older people (13). Our data was gathered from the three focus groups conducted in spring 2011. The aim of the study was to determine how different age groups perceive selected spots in terms of the portrayal of old age and older people; if their reception varies and in what sense.

Conducted discussions show that students and seniors approach and reading of the selected adverts were different. Members of researched group were focused on different elements of the texts. Spots were interpreted as offensive more often by students than by seniors. While students found them stereotypical and socially insensitive older people interpreted them as a more fun. They did not identified themselves with presented stereotyped characters and evaluate them as the Others.

## Author

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## **Viewers and Patients in Waiting Rooms of Gynaecology Clinics**

Paper presented here is modified version of master thesis from June 2011, written at Department of Journalism (single major programme in Cultural Studies). Thesis is focused on centrally controlled commercial broadcast in gynaecology clinics waiting rooms, specifically on the manners in which this broadcast is received by viewers /patients in relation with their attitudes towards gynaecological practice and gynaecology in general. The objectives are being achieved by analysis of interviews with viewers /patients. The broadcast is seen as an intersection of advertising discourse and medical discourse that turns to a tool of its legitimization.

In consideration of medical discourse, Foucauldian theory of discourse and biopolitics was applied because of its power dimension which allowed for the reflection of gynaecology practice in the sense of its involuntariness that patients sometimes realize and sometimes not. Other concept used for theoretical foundation of the analysis was Gidden's reflexive appropriation of knowledge, which helps us understand the way patients consider their bodies in terms of gynaecology knowledge and experience them accordingly.

Broadcast itself, the advertising discourse, change the situation inside waiting rooms. Patients turn to viewers and consumers. This change was only possible due to privatization of public healthcare. The privatization had been made possible since political and economic transformation in our country have arrived.

The analysis is based on twelve semi-structured anonymous interviews and one focus-group (5 participants) that brought viewer's/patient's attitudes toward broadcast and gynaecology to light. Our analysis resulted in four categories of audienceship: reformist, resistant, involving and indiffering audienceship. These categories result from few factors, namely of viewer's/ patient's attitude towards gynaecology in general, towards television or specific media type and last but not least of spatial arrangement of waiting room.

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## **The change's footprint in a Hungarian soap opera**

In 1987 the Hungarian National Television started to broadcast a television series, called Neighbours. It followed the traditions of the British soap operas: using the social realism it showed the everyday life of the common people in a microdistrict of Budapest. The TV-show focused on three families, and it had the characters to talk about those people who would live in this kind of area (pensioners, teacher, doctor, printer, waitress, taxi-driver, etc.). The episodes took place in microdistrict, called Gazdagrét, and the show followed the characters to their workplaces. It showed many aspects of the regime's change starting from the privatization to the return of the emigrants.

During the political changes the Neighbours reflected to the events in every episode, it became an important phenomena, because most people had the opportunity to watch it.

In the final thesis of my BA-studies I had the opportunity to analyse a five-year term (1987-1992) of the Neighbours about the image of the average Hungarian citizen. With the presentation I would like to discuss that again. What did this television show tell about the good citizen (or comrade), what did you have to accomplish to be the useful part of the society? What happened after the democratic change, did this tv-program started to talk about the secrets of the socialism and the dictator's, Janos Kadar's image? How did it talk about the democratic changes?

This television series tried to talk to every part of the audience, so it often made the problems too simple. But somehow it managed to communicate with the society, creating topics which were need to be discussed.

## Author

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## **Media consumption patterns: watching TV in former Yugoslav states**

The period after the collapse of the communist Yugoslav state was marked with wars in several ex-Yugoslav states. Therefore the state-building period overlapped with the transition from communism to capitalism and processes of reconciliation between the disputed states. It reflected the audiences on the Western Balkans region as well.

The goal of this paper is to explore the transition in the media that brought new opportunities and challenges and how the audiences respond to them.

This research relates to the media consumption in several ex-Yugoslavian states: Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Montenegro and Serbia. The choice of countries was made based on shared history as well as possibilities and willingness of the audiences from one country to watch program broadcasted by another country. By choosing a comparative approach we also tried to make larger generalization for the territory of Western Balkans.

The survey done in these four states with the representative sample gave us the initial tendencies that were further discussed and explained through the interviews with selected participants. We wanted to see if and what kind of connection can be established between watching a certain program and socio-demographic characteristics, cultural and lifestyle values of the audiences.

The initial quantitative results showed us certain patterns in watching television in the aforementioned countries. These tendencies were further examined qualitatively that revealed common cultural values, based on collective memory, among audiences on Western Balkans.

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## **Audience behavior as a dynamic variable in media system modeling: southeastern Europe in a comparative perspective**

All the most important theoretical models developed for analyzing and comparing of media systems (Siebert et al, 1956, Blumler and Gurevitch, 1995, Hallin and Mancini, 2004, 2012) include four main media system dimension, as well as the non-media dimension of the political system. These dimensions function as a cluster of indicators, which are variables in their own right. Changes in the values of these (independent) variables shape the category and influence the character of the media system, placing it in the appropriate model.

All of these models stress the aspect of structure. We propose here to focus on audience behavior as the aspect of agency, understood in sociological terms as a process of social construction.

The existing models, especially that of Hallin and Mancini, include audience behavior in their model, but fail to stress the cross-cutting dynamic importance of audience activity for different dimensions/categories of media system development. Probably their most important utilization of audiences is in the dimension of the development of the mass press, where they recognize the importance of audience shapes and practices as an influencing variable in the ensuing cluster of the «media market» category. Audiences also appear in the category of political parallelism, where the political affiliations and preferences of the audiences figure in their media choices, especially in relation to news media.

While audience as an important variable in defining media systems has been recognized, it has not been analyzed in a systematic fashion. In this text we contribute to filling this lacuna in the media systems research by systematic analysis of the development of media audiences as markets and citizens in post-socialist southeastern Europe from the time of socialism to present day. Audience behavior is understood thus as one crucial agency in the formation and development of media systems.

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