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Media transnationalism in Ireland: an examination of Polish media practices**Gavan Titley**

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Abstract

A divergent range of Polish-language and Polish-oriented media has developed in Ireland since May 2004. These media, and the practices that produce and engage with them, cannot adequately be analysed within conventional categories such as ‘ethnic minority media’. Drawing on qualitative work conducted with Polish journalists and media workers, this article examines Polish media as an emerging transnational field, shaped by a reflexive awareness of the extent of transnational media flows within Polish social networks. It suggests that this field can be approached, and further research based, on concepts of immanent transnationalism, multi-modal address and multicultural reflexivity. Given the incipient condition of transnational media research in Ireland, the article draws on current debates in diasporic and transnational media research to argue that future research should transcend the reductive tendencies of ‘methodological multiculturalism’, and attend to the ways in which transnational practices negotiate situated political discourses concerning migration.

Keywords: transnationalism, multiculturalism, methodological multiculturalism, ‘minority media’, diaspora, Ireland, Poland

Introduction¹

In October 2007 *The Irish Times* reported that the editor of *Sofa* - a magazine aimed at young urban Poles in Ireland and the UK – had called for Polish to become the third official language of Ireland. Citing the comparative flexibility of consumer services’ language provision, no doubt apocryphal stories of monolingual paralysis in state bodies and the motivation such a momentous step would provide for (notoriously recalcitrant) majority group language acquisition, Wojciech Wrona argued that “...the Government should adapt to the new reality that Polish is now the most commonly spoken foreign language in the country” (Sally 2007). Ireland.com, *The Irish Times*’ website, subsequently made the story the subject of a ‘breaking news’ poll which resulted in 87% of respondents rejecting the ‘proposal’, and a discussion thread of over two hundred entries which predominantly discussed the (im)modest proposal in relation to variously posited limits of multiculturalism/integration.

¹ My thanks to the anonymous peer reviewers and to Krzysztof Nawratek for their helpful comments.

What merits attention in this short-lived story is not only the fact that a minority news source is making the news, but the nature of the news and the manner of its making. Minority media are conventionally regarded as at best tangential to the dominant public sphere, through self-segregation or the condensed particularities of linguistic and cultural difference (Cunningham 2003; Georgiou 2005). In this instance, *Sofa*, a monthly Polish-language urban lifestyle magazine aimed at the Irish and British markets, has made the headlines by making a claim on the supposedly settled cultural fabric of the national public sphere itself (Morley 2000). By arguing for an official change in the linguistic affairs of state it has offered a symbolic challenge calibrated to resonate with contemporary debates about integration as a meaningful 'two-way process', and perhaps more fundamentally, with sensitivities concerning migration and dwelling, and the politics of belonging and legitimacy (Watson 2000). *The Irish Times* coverage reveals that these sensitivities are far from limited to the outraged and predominantly diasporic Irish contributors to the 'Breaking News' message board; it proved equally controversial 'among the Polish community' and was subsequently reported in the Warsaw daily *Dziennik*.

An alternative reading, however, could suggest that this was primarily a reasonably successful public relations exercise by an astute title in an already crowded and competitive Polish language market. If this reading has any plausibility, it suggests both a different way of looking at the emerging forms of media developed by people who migrate to Ireland, and a different way of assessing the analytical perspectives which are conventionally brought to bear on 'ethnic media' or 'minority media'. This snapshot of *Sofa* in action suggests it is strategically aware of the dominant discursive frameworks through which migration and dwelling are discussed in Ireland; that it does not see itself, institutionally, as limited to addressing the 'Polish community'; that it does not have a straightforward or unproblematic relationship with or vision of 'the Polish community'; and that it is a competitive operation positioning itself in the reactive, transnational networks of what has been termed the 'European communicative space' (Schlesinger 2003). At the very least it is one among many new 'migrant media' projects emerging in a period of intense activity that elude conventional analysis, and that unsettle what Cunningham has called the 'inhibiting dualisms' of debates about migration, socio-cultural diversity and singular/plural public sphere(s) (2003). Thus analysing the emerging field of Polish-language and Polish-oriented media in Ireland - and perhaps the wider field of media produced by migration - requires approaches which can account for the different modalities and networks hinted at in the snapshot above.

Developing these approaches, particularly during a period of intensifying interest and research in Ireland, requires immediately transcending reductive categorisations of minority media production and practices. While hardly providing a robust indicator, it is nevertheless worth noting that it took time for a contributor to the Breaking News discussion to suggest that perhaps the story could be interpreted less as outrageous will to power and more as the kind of public relations stunt routinely associated with commercial media operations. Regardless of the intentions behind the statement, the shock at the temerity of the claim elides the apparently unthinkable temerity that 'minority' journalists might operate similarly to those in the 'mainstream'. In discussing conceptual and methodological challenges in researching transnational and diasporic media, Myria Georgiou has argued for the need to explore '...what is particular before assuming what is universal in media cultures' (2007: 26).

Researching the production and imbrication of media in and through transnational lives and practices, she contends, is frequently limited both by an unreflexive imposition of the dominant division of academic labour in media and communications studies (political economy, text, audience) and by a methodological nationalism which approaches 'minority media' as discrete, particularistic phenomena operating in the 'public sphericules' (Cunningham 2003) of the diversified nation-state (Georgiou 2007).

To this could be added the notion of *methodological multiculturalism*; the reductionist tendencies of analytical categories and trajectories that view minority media and their audiences as solely or primarily engaged in an hermetic consolidation of cultural identity (Aksoy and Robins 2000; Srebreny 2005). In contemporary Europe, such media practices are compelled to negotiate institutional and political discourses and policies that position and attempt to contain 'migrant' activity within varieties of multicultural and integrationist settlement (Husband 2005; Kosnich 2007; Srebreny 2005). These pressures have been intensified by the 'end of tolerance' (Kundnani 2007) which characterises the franchised 'war on terror' era, and the essentialist suspicions – drawn to the symbolism of transnational media activity - of the continental 'crisis of multiculturalism' (Fazal 2007; Hargreaves 2001; Georgiou 2007; Lentin and Titley 2008). Methodological multiculturalism, as the neologism suggests, reifies the contemporary politics of culture by imagining an 'ontological condition of the migrant subject' (Cunningham 2003) bounded by projections of snugly encompassing communities (Outhwaite 2005). 'Migrant media' undoubtedly play crucial communal roles, from the facilitation of informational networks to the circulation of countervailing representations of minority identities. Within an immensely diverse spectrum, however, these roles are rarely settled or uncontested, and the reflexive strategies which stem from negotiating the contemporary politics of legitimacy are crucial in understanding the development of media forms and modes of audience engagement.

This article conducts an initial exploration of the particularities of Polish language and Polish-oriented media, and a discussion of what these particularities imply for both further Polish research and a wider focus on the media of migration in Ireland. This discussion encompasses a critique of methodological multiculturalism in what is intended, given the embryonic state of research, as an intervention *avant la lettre*. The rapid development of Polish media since May 2004 presents a complex field of media of different scales and (cross) technologies, of varied entrepreneurial, political and biographical practices and goals, of local, regional, national and transnational networks and flows, and of diverse and divergent imaginaries of and relationships with their audiences. The article argues that these different forms and practices need to be understood as reflexive components of a *transnational field* of media engagement which employs multiple and shifting modalities of address and self-representation. The first section develops a situated theoretical framework of transnationalism in advance of a section which discusses qualitative research conducted with Polish journalists and media workers. The final section examines what the particularities of the Polish mediascape suggest for the further study of minority, diasporic and transnational media produced by migration to Ireland, and contends that as this area of research develops in the socio-political context of as yet inchoate 'integration' debates (Gray 2006), avoiding the reductive lens of methodological multiculturalism is a conceptual and political imperative.

The media of migration: an emerging transnational field?

While media studies in Ireland over the last ten years has engaged - to some extent - with the mediation of migration, it is now beginning to trace the complexities of the media of migration. If, as Nick Stevenson contends, integrity in unequal societies demands a confrontation with "...processes of cultural domination (being represented as inferior) non-recognition (being excluded from the dominant imagery of one's culture) and disrespect (being continually portrayed in a negative or stereotypical way)" (2003: 37) media research has been responsive in critiquing the predictable deployment of mythic visions of invasion and contamination through asylum-seeking and migration (Devereux, Breen and Haynes 2005, 2006a, 2006b; Ging *et al* 2002; Guerin 2002; Pollak 1999). As the more blatant stereotyping of first wave coverage has abated, recent studies have emphasised the positioning of imagined migrants in shifting discursive constructions of Ireland as a multicultural/intercultural/integrating/diversified site in fictional, journalistic and campaigning texts (Ging and Malcolm 2004; Sheehan 2007; Titley 2004, 2008a, 2008b). Comparatively less attention has been paid to the implications of migration for media policy and production beyond the possibilities of digitalisation for increased participation (Titley 2002), the development of particularistic programming in mainstream and community radio (Moylean 2005) and suggestions for professional codes of practice and increased cooperation between 'minority' and 'mainstream' media (EUMC 2002).

There has been far less work – despite the well-established importance in media studies of fine-grained, qualitative audience research in contexts of reception and everyday practice (see, for example, Ross and Nightingale 2003) – on majority audience engagement with representations of migration and migrants, and even less of a focus on the interpretative engagement and media practices of people who migrate. The important exceptions here are Devereux, Breen and Haynes' work on public opinion and migration (2006b) and Aphra Kerr's discussion of the National University of Ireland, Maynooth (NUIM) pilot study on Polish media use (2007). Some limited quantitative data on media use has been produced in the context of larger studies (Gilmartin 2008; O'Donnell and Ní Leathlobair 2002) Given the rapid development of media produced through migration, there has been surprisingly little concentration on the media forms and approaches developed within migrant networks, the ways in which they mediate dwelling and 'community' and the significances they are attributed by readers, viewers and listeners. Abel Ugba has provided an initial developmental overview (2002) of predominantly press and radio sources, and the Forum on Migration and Communications' (FOMACS) print syndication project is concentrating on forging links between mainstream channels and migrant journalists and channels.

This no doubt incomplete overview indicates that research in Ireland has primarily approached the media as "...layers of public space that extend and connect with geographical space" (Kundnani 1995:19 in Morley 2000) and in so doing, has raised important questions of representation and media's normative commitments to what could be summarised as the possibility of 'participatory belonging' (Hage 2003). Nevertheless, layers of media space traverse and transcend geographical space, and in so doing, link publics dispersed and extended in geopolitical time and space. Increased migration to Ireland is co-temporal with what John Ellis has described as

the transition from an 'age of availability' in media provision to a fragmented, globalised and digitised 'age of abundance' (2002) where, as Thomas Hylland Eriksen contends, the subject's attention has become the scarcest of commodities (2001). In theory at least, people who migrate to Ireland have access through internet and satellite to versions of terrestrial radio and television from significant elsewhere, as well as to crafted services for diasporic and transnational networks on dedicated satellite services such as TVBS-E (the Chinese Channel Ltd) and Cyfra+. Transnational channels such as Zee TV, BEN, The Africa Channel (CNN), Star Plus, TVEi and many others can be sourced through digital satellite and such platforms as Sky Digital. Satellite transmissions have the potential to synchronise audiences in time across space, and now do so as newer technologies expand access while desynchronising these dispersed publics and audiences.

In a 2007 *Irish Times* article, Ruadhán Mac Cormaic notes the dynamism and transience of the spectrum of newspapers and magazines currently on offer in Ireland's urban spaces², and in a glimpse of everyday transnationalism at work, describes how

Rolandas Augutis, editor of the fortnightly Lithuanian paper *Saloje*, explains how the paper's material is assembled in Dublin and then designed and subedited by a colleague at home in Lithuania. "We give him all the articles and pictures by e-mail, and it's designed over there. Then he sends it to Ennis, where it's printed and distributed around Ireland," says Augutis (2007).

Thus contemporary migrants – and those who dwell in Ireland are no exception – increasingly access and shape the decentralised networks of media flow famously characterised by Appadurai as a 'mediascape' (1991) and latterly by Chalaby as a new 'transnational media order' (2005). These global networks are distinguished by a density and diversity of media flows which have long unsettled the critical paradigms – cultural imperialism and homogenisation/heterogenisation – generated in opposition to celebratory narratives of modernisation and hegemonic globalisation (McMillin 2007), and which are instead increasingly approached as transnational economies of production and cultures of engagement. These transnational fields of media possibility encompass a wide variety of channels and services with varying missions, commercial approaches and imagined audiences/communities. This obvious diversity, visible to all in netcafes, digital spectrums and newspaper shelves, signifies the presence of lives lived transnationally, of those who 'dwell' (Urry 2000) in and between meaningful places through various forms and possibilities of mobility and attachment. Drawing on a more 'relaxed' (Cohen 1997: 26) and multi-accentual understanding of diaspora,³ Bailey *et al* emphasise how diasporic media – in all their diversity – have come to symbolise subaltern presence and "...destablise(s) the dominant hierarchies

² www.medialive.ie maintains an up to date database of functioning 'minority media titles'.

³ 'Diasporic' is used in this article without a concerted attempt to engage with the complex literature on diaspora and the controversies concerning its contemporary elasticity. The influence of cultural anthropology and cultural studies on transnationalism has arguable shifted the term 'diasporic' from a focus on shared consciousness, exile and homeland to a sense which encompasses the affective and imaginative connections of physical and virtual mobility (Cohen 1997). Nevertheless, there may be specific conceptual losses incurred when an expanded sense of the diasporic overlaps loosely with transnationalism in the context of specific formations. Kathy Burrell, for example, has analysed the emotional connections of forced migrants from Poland during the Communist period to Leicester, and argued that transnationalism does not adequately capture this experience (2003).

of control over cultural resources” existent in Western European societies. Moreover, they constitute a repertoire of cultural and political positions, images and juxtapositions which are often instrumental in personal negotiations of belonging between significant personal sites:

The symbolic presence and real availability of different media open up new possibilities for expression and representation and thus of imagining the self and belonging within and across space. In this way, diasporic media cultures become strategic positions for self-expression and representation, even if the intentions of their producers are not political. Diasporic media are not set points of difference; their role and their significance to audiences and users are conditional and shaped within wider societal and communication processes (2007: 2)

Not set points of difference, nor subject to set hermeneutics; the increased availability of diasporic media should not obscure the engagement of people who migrate with the media flux of the age of abundance, and to neglect this is to compound one of methodological multiculturalism’s cardinal myopias; “...the readiness to believe that migrant audiences are all behaving as the conventional and conforming members of ‘diasporic communities’” (Aksoy and Robins 1998: 7). Just as the diversity of diasporic media complicate the conventional and often romantic categorisation of ‘community’ or ‘ethnic minority’ media, situated studies of migrant audiences illustrate how everyday practices undercut assumptions of either/or (in affective belonging as well as media identification and engagement) and instead navigate the comparative uncertainties of ‘not only but also’ (Srebreny 2005) and ‘neither/nor’ (Georgiou 2007).

Thus the ready availability of a range of transnational media, their increased production in migrant networks in Ireland and the complexities of their imbrication in the everyday media routines and sense-making of situated users suggests that media research in Ireland must develop broader agendas and more multi-dimensional approaches. In turning to the situated development of Polish-language and Polish-oriented media, I wish to suggest that approaching it as a *transnational field* offers a starting point for analysing its particularities. A transnational field suggests not only that media channels are (obviously) shaped both by material and informational networks that extend beyond their geographical location, but that they are shaped both in relation to each other and through a keen reflexive awareness of differentiating themselves within the diasporic domain generally available to Polish people in Ireland.

Transnationalism can clearly describe many – and thus axiomatically few – activities and processes in an era of globalisation and migration characterised by interconnection and interdependence (Friedman 1994). Precisely for that reason, the contemporary salience of transnationalism as a theoretical framework for analysing the lives and economic, political, cultural, familial, spiritual and imaginative networks of people who migrate has led to a commendable desire to avoid the opacity of over-extension which accompanied the concentrated turn to such related concepts as globalisation (Bartelson 2000; Bauman 1998; Rosenberg 2002) and cosmopolitanism (Vertovec and Cohen 2002). Portes *et al* (1999), in an early intervention, emphasised the need to establish and delimit transnationalism as a phenomenon which cannot be

captured by existing sociological possibilities, and where types of transnationalism are distinguished through empirical investigation and theory generation. This subsequent process of establishment has generally agreed with their characterisation of transnationalism as involving dense and sustained linkages across borders, with the 'emergence of transnationalism on a mass scale' (Portes *et al* 1999: 223) seen as dependent on the tiered ubiquity, mobility and instantaneity of information and communications technology (Hannerz 1996; Karim 2003; Vertovec 1999).

Transnationalism's turn to a language of fluidity and mobility (Cottle 2000; Fiast 1999; Urry 2000; Sheller and Urry 2006) does not imply a concomitant disavowal of situated power structures and immobilising inequalities. As Yeoh *et al* contend, transnationalism does not swirl blithely free of the political spaces of nation-states, nor suggest equally airy juxtapositions of the 'local' and the 'global' (2003). The formation and life of what both Vertovec (1999) and Yeoh *et al* (2003) have called the social morphologies of transnationalism depend on both the individual and collective forging of sustained practices across space and boundaries, and the obstacles and possibilities of migratory regimes, 'host' state institutions and global political economy (see also Al-Ali *et al* 2001; Jordan and Duvel 2003; Pries 1999). With the necessity of maintaining a critical perspective on the interplay of mobilities and immobilities (Ahmed 2000) in focus, theorisation has clustered around a variety of ways of cutting into transnationalism (Al-Ali *et al* 2001; Yeoh *et al* 2003), with Vertovec proffering perhaps the most encompassing tableau; transnationalism as social morphology, as type of consciousness, as mode of cultural reproduction, as avenue of capital, as site of political engagement, as reconstruction of place and locality (1999).

Unlike globalisation theory's curious dependence on/disavowal of media and communications (Rantanen 2005), the scale, density and simultaneity of transnational networks has assured that the study of media and communications has been a core concern. Dedicated studies of diasporic and transnational media networks and practices are rarely limited to working within any one of the research trajectories delineated by Vertovec, as the often central focus on issues of consciousness, identity and forms of belonging require levels of engagement with processes of media development and transnational economy, technological proliferation, transnational political formations and affiliations, and transnational lives situated in urban multicultural (de Leeuw and Rydin 2007; Georgiou 2005; Gillespie 1995, 2000; Karim 2003; Srebreny 2000). It is timely to note that a developing focus on transnational media research in Ireland coincides with an evaluative overview of the international field that argues for advances in theoretical and methodological approaches adequate to "...the mobility and multipositionality of people, ideas, communications and cultures" (Georgiou 2007: 18). The specific challenges identified are discussed in what follows.

A focus on transnationalism is not intended to marginalise or obscure the fact that the media under discussion also play clear roles within situated community networks, but to facilitate a discussion of what I see as the key particularities of the field. These include *immanent transnationalism* (an ongoing positioning of a media channel's identity and offer in relation to the wider diasporic domain) *multi-modal address* (both within channels and reactively between them, and often involving a broad negotiation between addressing increasingly 'niche' audiences while maintaining at

least a symbolic connection to ‘the Polish community’) and *multicultural reflexivity* (both navigating the wider discursive framework within which migration is approached and attempting to benefit from particular positions within it). While the discussion which follows focuses primarily on the media themselves, it follows from these modes of reflexivity that the media routines, environments and experiences of Poles in Ireland need to be approached as involving the varied domain of transnational media activities that they engage with – and shape – in context.

Red, white (and blue about it): the transnational field of Polish media in Ireland

It is clear from other contexts with longer histories of transnationalism that the experience and exigencies of migration – and attendant forms of economic, social and linguistic marginalisation – stimulate innovative forms of media production and practice (Karim 2003). The rapid development of Polish media in Ireland – particularly in the immediate eighteen months following Polish accession to the EU in May 2004 – has produced a mediascape in which the relative mass of potential readers, listeners and viewers, and their socio-economic diversity, has stimulated an acceleration and blurring of what have been identified in other contexts as developmental stages of migrant media production (Trandafoiu 2006). Polish media have shifted rapidly from titles and services aimed at addressing a broad spectrum of the recently migrated and their informational needs to a differentiated field of niche forms. These forms negotiate between targeting audiences seen as possessing particular forms of economic, social and ‘lifestyle’ capital, on the one hand, and maintaining a symbolic relationship to the ‘Polish community’ on the other.

This section describes the field of Polish media in Ireland and draws on two of three strands of ongoing research in NUIM. I engage primarily with a series of in-depth interviews conducted with Polish editors and journalists working in new initiatives, as well as with Irish journalists involved in hybrid productions, between February and November 2006. These interviews were all conducted on-site and through English, and engaged with both the biographies of journalists working in – and often establishing – these new media initiatives, and their perspectives on Polish media’s roles, identities, context and relationship to their (imagined) audiences.⁴ An initial, orienting picture of differences in content, spectrum of issue coverage, modes of address and advertising fields was provided by a pilot content analysis and translation project conducted between September and December 2006 on *Gazeta Polska* and *Polski Express*.⁵ The third strand of research involves situated audiences, and the results of a pilot study involving Poles living in Dublin and Co. Laois is discussed by Kerr (2007).

Whether or not it is a corrective to the prevailing narrative of the death of the newspaper, the most striking field of development has been in – primarily weekly – print publications. *Gazeta Polska* was established in May 2005, and is funded both by a cover price and extensive and varied forms of advertising. Self-styled in its online

⁴ Primary and follow-up interviews were conducted with journalists in *Gazeta Polska*, *Polski Express*, *Polski Herald* (and *The Evening Herald*) *The Limerick Leader* (both editorial staff and writers involved in ‘The Polish Page’) Dublin City Channel and ‘Ota Polska Extra’.

⁵ The content analysis was conducted by Kris Man as part of a Leonardo placement on the project ‘Transnational media practices in Ireland’ which is conducted by Dr Rebecca King O Riain, Dr Aphra Kerr (both Sociology, NUIM) and the author.

banners as both ‘the first Polish weekly in Ireland’ and ‘the most significant Polish weekly in Ireland’, *Gazeta Polska* primarily comprises coverage of socio-economic issues of relevance to Poles, combining this with specific forms of advice, cultural features and an extensive classified section. Circulation figures for 2006 are generally reported as 6,000.⁶¹ It functions as a ‘soft-landing’ source of information and in interview is described both as attempting to ‘bring the Polish community together’ and to ‘accustom’ Ireland to the presence of Poles. It is also possible that the subsequent development of its web presence – which features a selection of its printed content – acts as a form of pre-migration orientation. The free circulation *Polski Express* was launched in March 2006 by a journalist once affiliated with *Gazeta Polska* and marked an immediate shift towards a more differentiated readership of ‘young urban professionals’, a shift visible in its core advertising and frequent featuring of high-end consumer goods. In contra-distinction to *Gazeta Polska*’s projection of a unifying apoliticality, it aimed to engage with political issues and specifically, though not in these terms, with the politics of migration and mobility in Ireland and Poland.

Two further weekly publications were launched during 2006; *Życie w Irlandii/Life in Ireland* is produced by Polish Express Ltd as a complementary publication to *Polski Express*. *Sofa* was simultaneously launched in Ireland and Britain in December 2006 as a ‘lifestyle magazine’ which, among other commitments, has consistently dealt with lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered (LGBT) issues. Other current titles include the free circulation *Anons*, and have included *Szpila* and *Nasz Głos*. The development of independent titles has been accompanied by the insertion of Polish language and Polish-oriented material into established Irish newspapers. Reflecting market opportunities and perhaps what Morley and Robins have described as a ‘critical regionalism’ that “...sees itself not introspectively but as an inflexion of global culture’ (1995: 2) local and regional Irish newspapers were quick to include columns and supplements in Polish and other languages. Beginning with *The Limerick Leader*’s dual-language columns in March 2005, a subsequent Polish column has been sustained in *The Kildare Post*. *Polski Herald*, a weekly ‘paper in a paper’ has been published – originally on Fridays and now on Wednesdays - by *The Evening Herald* since November 2005.

While a substantial spectrum of local and community radio stations produce Polish language programming, the development of television services and programmes is understandably far more difficult, and inherently shaped by the widespread availability of Polish channels on satellite. The City Channel has broadcast a weekly Polish news and current affairs magazine ‘Oto Polska’ - bundled from Polish state channels - in Dublin since 2005, and continues to do so after its expansion to Galway and Waterford. This is accompanied by ‘Oto Polska Extra’, a weekly show produced in Dublin and made about ‘metropolitan life’ and Polish cultural events. The future possibilities of convergence for transnational minority media are suggested by ‘Vaveeva TV’, an online channel hosted by the predominantly Polish migrant workers’ website Vaveeva, which adapts the global channel Current TV’s open source soliciting of short films and documentaries to include an emphasis on uploading videos for viewing by ‘loved ones back home’.

⁶ Circulation figures are difficult to calculate for newspapers not recorded by the Joint National Readership Survey and where free distribution is involved. The figure of 6000 given here is an average figure derived from different newspaper accounts.

At the time of writing, this overview of media development contains channels which are clearly transnational and others which do not, at first, seem usefully approached in these terms. In suggesting that the expansion of the past three years can be understood as an emerging transnational field, however, it is not useful to rank and order media channels in terms of their evident transnationalism. Instead, Polish-language and Polish-oriented media can be understood as a transnational field of activity, orientation and consciousness in relation to three contingent concepts:

Immanent transnationalism: the everyday work, content and present and future directions of these media channels are unimaginable without constant activity in a field of transnational networks, to an extent which does not necessarily surpass, but is qualitatively different, from the obvious transnationalism of much ‘mainstream’ media production;

Multi-modal address: in varying ways and on different scales, these media channels are conscious of addressing a variety of constituencies and audiences in Ireland, Poland and elsewhere. This is once again similar to but qualitatively different from the need for many media operations to seek breadth and depth in an era of media proliferation and audience fragmentation (Ellis 1998);

Multicultural reflexivity: a core dimension of the multi-positionality of transnationalism and the negotiations of multi-modal address is a keen sense of how channels present themselves in relation to wider political discourses of how migration and dwelling are to be ‘managed’. This sense is manifested in explicit, implicit and shifting forms of self-presentation.

Immanent transnationalism

The title of this section – red, white and blue about it – is inspired by a discussion recounted in interview concerning the marketing focus groups conducted during the initial launch phase of *Polski Herald*. The initial design of bold red and white bannering was apparently criticised by some participants, who asked why every paper and product aimed at them in Ireland had to be draped in Polish colours? While sidestepping the apparent indignities of rote multicultural branding, respondents gave other feedback – on the size of photographs and headlines, the impossibility of translating the syntax of traditional *Evening Herald* headlines – which shaped the unfolding design of the paper. This vignette illustrates a number of points. As Georgiou has pointed out in her critical appraisal of diasporic media research, the ‘ongoing dialectic of production and consumption’ visible in transnational media practices destabilises the predominant division of media research into spheres of production, textual analysis and audience reception (2007: 22-26). The engagement of Polish readers – and the receptiveness of the *Evening Herald* – shaped a paper which is at once ‘less Polish’ (less red and white), ‘more Polish’ (adapted to visual and affective expectations of the reader) and thoroughly syncretic. In fact doubly so; the nature of *Polski Herald* – and indeed Vaveeva TV, insert-columns, Oto Polska and City Channel itself – are all measured particularisations of media forms which have developed in urban multicultural elsewhere. Across the field – from the constant production of content by the situated public to the *Limerick Leader* column attracting ongoing correspondence and story suggestions from the Irish and Polish diasporas – the developing approaches and directions of Polish media are shaped by explicit and implicit influence from their audiences.

This reflexive shaping has as much to do with the exigencies of competition as it does with the imbrication of production in communal networks. Competition is both for market share, and for particularity and relevance within the known field of transnational media flow. This is most evident in news production; the instantaneity of satellite and online sources – not to mention the weekly routine of most publications – implies there is little to be gained by attempting standard news coverage of Poland. However in at least the case of *Polski Herald* and *Gazeta Polska*, their philosophies of general community address and mass market optimisation mitigate against becoming weekly commentaries, as this risks mediating political differences, particularly during the period of dual Kaczyński rule and its amplified moral politics. When these titles are not focusing on relevant issues for Polish people in Ireland - or in the case of *Polski Herald*, translated from *Evening Herald* stories – news is often sourced from regional newspapers, which can be harder for readers to access. It is possible to speculate that the need for such flows of information is shaping informational brokers in Poland that distribute stories and features to transnational media. The independent Polish titles are also themselves increasingly sourced within Poland, and were intensively sourced by German, Dutch and other European media in the period before Romania and Bulgaria's accession to the EU in 2007.

This wider sourcing in the 'European communicative space' - and by mainstream Irish media – indicates what Husband has noted as the frequently understated synergy between 'minority media activities' and 'the media systems of dominant ethnic communities' (2005: 462). It is a noted source of pride for many of the journalists interviewed, and the fluidity of this transnational field is inscribed on their experiences, biographies and intentions. Some journalists worked as such in Poland before coming to Ireland to work generally, or to self-start work in their chosen profession. Others became journalists as a 'tabula rasa' option while in Ireland - and thus learn on the job - others because of complementary technological, legal or linguistic skills. For some it is a temporary interest, for others a launch pad to potential careers in Polish media, or in Ireland and the UK, or to expanded Polish media operations in Ireland. Their trajectories suggest that there is much to consider in the ways that discourses of professionalism and professional identity develop in the entrepreneurial flux of the transnational media field, and how the role of journalist is related to that of (potential) informal community leader; to postionality and the fissures and differences within 'the Polish community'; and to the often open-ended and flexible personal projects of the transnational subject.

More research is required into how Polish media and their users mediate the experience of transnationalism's in-betweenness, and while some discussion can be conducted in relation to textual analysis, Cunningham's underscoring of Georgiou's methodological critique is important when he notes that the politics of minority media cannot be read off from textual evidence, but must be approached through their remediation in communal formations (2003: 153). These limitations notwithstanding, it is clear that Polish media very obviously mediate the varied politics of transnationalism. *Gazeta Polska's* fourth issue 'Nowy Patriotyzm' in 2006 – directly echoing Appadurai's notion of 'new patriotisms' (1993) - discussed 'seeing patriotism in new ways', and negotiating transnational lives with the sense in Poland of national failure in the wake of substantial emigration, compounded by the Kaczyński brothers' politicisation of emigration (Cibor 2007). *Sofa's* role as an LGBT channel has seen it work with Outhouse to highlight the widespread discrimination

and public demonisation of homosexuality in contemporary Poland, and elsewhere.⁷ These limited examples suggest a dynamic engagement with necessarily new ways of being and belonging that require far deeper analysis.

Multi-modal address

Beyond the homogenising control on display in such acclaimed operations as North Korean state television, Fox and Italia Uno, few media channels speak with one voice. The idea of multi-modal address is more than this inevitable diversity, rather it implies that Polish media are shaped by different relations to and knowledge of their audiences, and by consciousness of having a visible and symbolic presence in Ireland, Poland and elsewhere. The accelerated generation of media channels in relation to a relatively large Polish market illustrates that a reductive splicing of community and commercial media is redundant. For ‘unifying’ titles such as *Polska Gazeta* and *Polski Herald*, the market is the community and the community is the market, whereas *Polski Express* and *Sofa* have addressed a rapidly differentiated market of predominantly young, ‘educated professional’ urban Poles, a distinctive development stemming from the ‘revenue-generating capacity of the intended audience’ (Husband 2005: 467).

Nevertheless this niche address – at one with the formidable surveillance of a fragmented market among mainstream titles – co-exists with a desire to be seen to in some cases to speak for, or at least authoritatively speak about, ‘the Polish community’. At least since the widespread discussion in the Irish media of child welfare entitlements in the EU in late 2005, Polish channels and journalists have been increasingly sourced by mainstream Irish media. This involves not only a degree of professional competition but also tensions concerning often competing forms of credibility. Interviewees spoke of the danger of being perceived as a ‘professional Pole’, carrying the risk of over-extension of expertise, peer criticism and career definition, and the exigencies of media routines and networks in which refusing a contact involves presenting it to rivals. Further qualitative work with media producers and visibly active Poles from other areas should investigate the ways in which these tensions of representativeness are negotiated by people with divergent interests, competences and politics, particularly as this informal period of sourcing ‘community spokespersons’ is giving way to more structured forms of – potentially problematic – ‘community representation’.⁸

With the exception of Polish language programmes on community and local radio, all of the media channels in question employ ways of integrating Polish and English, an integration which suggests involved relations between their stated, intended and actual audiences. *Gazeta Polska* has carried a regular one-page ‘Get to Know Poland’ feature in English, and the *Polski Herald* inserts summary text boxes. *The Limerick Leader* column originally ran parallel translation of the Polish column, this became a separate ‘Polish perspective’ column in English primarily because the often informational nature of the Polish columns was deemed irrelevant to an English-speaking readership. What unites these approaches is a sensitivity to the symbolism of foreign languages in the affective familiarity of the newspaper; *The Evening Herald* explained this as a desire to signify that all parts of the paper were accessible to all

⁷ See <http://www.outlifestyles.com/Page.aspx?PageID=153> for a range of relevant posts (accessed 19/12/2007)

⁸ See McGarry (2007) for plans to establish an ‘immigrant led ministerial council for integration’.

readers. This primarily figurative access is reflected in the community symbolism of *The Limerick Leader* approach and the thoroughly phatic function of the *Gazeta's* page.

Multicultural reflexivity

The decisions that guide the multi-modality of language use also exemplify how media channels navigate the dominant political frameworks within which migration is constructed. Both in interview and in public presentation on websites and in editorials, the media under discussion sketch overlapping visions of 'multiculturalism' and 'integration' in Ireland and the role they see themselves as fulfilling. In part, the extent of this approach can be explained by the elective affinities between the discursive promiscuity of media language and the circulation of inchoate, blended vocabularies of multiculturalism/interculturalism/integration/diversity (Lentin and Titley 2008). More pertinently, it hints at a reflexivity forged by the precariousness of migrants' social status and the inescapable horizon of ethnicity and culture in definitions of activity and legitimacy. The post-2004 period in Ireland has been characterised by public discussions, pronouncements and initiatives focusing on modes of controlling – and being seen to control – the ambiguities of movement and dwelling. From the racialising placebo of the 2004 citizenship referendum (Lentin 2006; King O'Riain 2006) through to current high-profile initiatives on 'getting integration right' (McGarry 2007), Polish media have developed during a period when mediated deliberation on the preferred positioning of migrants has been inescapable. The newspapers mentioned above have responded with an easily sustained 'cultural exchange' approach themed from liberal recognition multiculturalism; other media rehearse different narratives. Common to them all is a desire not to appear too particularistic or insular – evading the projected tendency of migrants to 'ghettoise' themselves – nor the corollary of being too transnational: cultural 'ghettoes' transfixed across geographic space. These self-projections are influenced by other exigencies; an embrace of some form of multiculturalist logic also provides room for expansion and development and indicates just how elastic these themes can be. *The Immigrant* multicultural newspaper in Cork, for example, developed from a Russian language free sheet, 'The Polish Page' in *The Limerick Leader* has become 'Ethnic Limerick' through a combination of personnel changes and a desire for a wider appeal.⁹

It is perhaps only in one instance – the placing of 'Ota Polska Extra' on City Channel – that the emergence, at least rhetorically, of a politics that transcends these variations on reflexive self-legitimation can be discerned. In some ways it also corresponds to them; the combination of rejecting the charge of particularity and the possibilities for growth provided by multiculturalist production accounts for the foregrounding of a small English-speaking programming element and – at the time of interview – tentative plans to expand the programme's scope and remit. It also makes sense for a channel carried by NTL with an unclear sense of how many Polish-speakers access that platform. Yet City Channel most clearly articulates a sense of what Paul Gilroy (2004) has usefully termed *conviviality*; the everyday integration and unromantic mixedness which comes with representing life in urban spaces, and in addressing networks and groups for whom the concentrated and banal cosmopolitanism of the

⁹ There was an attempt from the beginning to publish in Russian and Mandarin that petered out due to personnel issues.

city is sustaining. The niche manoeuvring of a channel uninterested in and incapable of addressing the imagined community of the nation results in not unambiguous yet convivial encounters; for example Miss Pink Philippines 2006 being covered as ‘fun for the Filipinos and for the gay community’.

Conclusion: transnational media research and methodological multiculturalism

The particularities of Polish-language and Polish-oriented media practices suggest a complex field of activity that cannot adequately be approached through the conventional frameworks of ‘ethnic minority media’. This initial exploration argues that while functional aspects of minority media are crucially important, imagined (ethnic minority) audiences are malleable and shaped by a variety of pressures and reflexes, and the orientation and production of any one channel must ultimately be understood within a transnational field of informational flow, diasporic engagement and self-presentation. Furthermore, as Husband illustrates, the fact that some media may ‘...find themselves required to service generic audiences defined in broad ethnic terms’ is less a result of cultural predictability than a likely combination of topographical, demographic and economic factors (2005: 463). Contemporary Polish media – which will have changed by the time this is published – have emerged from a combination of precisely such factors, and the everyday transnationalism facilitated by the distinctive contours of Polish migration and dwelling.

A research commitment to the tangled significances of such a field is a primary bulwark against the risk of what I term methodological multiculturalism, pithily summarised by Srebreny as the assumption of “...a cultural fixity belied by social practices of diasporic ethnic groups” (2005: 445). This is not merely, or even primarily, a commitment to anti-essentialism; as the discussion of media multicultural strategies indicates, essentialism and anti-essentialism are mutually produced in practices of cultural reproduction (see, for example, Back 1996). Researching transnationalism demands an awareness of how transnational agents negotiate the prevailing socio-political conditions that impact upon them, and the modalities of engagement and self-presentation this engenders. Furthermore, returning to Kundnani’s observation regarding layers of media space and public space, transnational activities traverse geographical spaces but they are also interpreted and evaluated within them. The widespread Western European image of the ‘dish city’ signifies the perceived ambivalence of transnationalism and the real political dangers of calcified culturalism. In conclusion I sketch aspects of methodological multiculturalism that can be productively engaged by evolving research in Ireland.

The complexities of transnationalism require decentring the presumed subjects of a cultured ontology through a focus on “...meaning-making human beings who follow particular lifeways” (Rapport and Overing 2000). In other words, there is a crucial distinction between reifying ‘culture’ and (ethnic) ‘community’ in research foundations and examining how they are produced as situated, imaginative, affective and often disputed collectivities. The example of Polish media testifies to such reflexive productions, yet this may suggest little of comparative value for studies of other transnational fields – such as Chinese or Nigerian media – that are potentially shaped by very different network politics and racial positioning in society in Ireland. Transnationalism may invite analysis to transcend the dichotomy of origin-destination

in the study of migration and settlement, however media research is keenly positioned to examine both how minority social practices elude and work within the ascription of such limitations. Georgiou describes this as a cosmopolitanisation of research practice adequate to the cosmopolitanisation of diasporic experience (2007: 18); research that can engage the multi-positionality and mobility of people and communications – without enshrining this as a new ‘ontological condition’ – in the situated context of the politics of diversified nation-states.

Accounting for these situated political contexts necessitates recognising how contemporary minority media practices are shaped and evaluated within them. In contemporary Western Europe this includes the public discourses and policy shifts engendered by the confluence of ‘the war on terror’, ‘the crisis of multiculturalism’ and a general anxiety concerning migration, population demographics and the future cohesion and character of nation-states (Bailey *et al* 2007, Fazal 2007). In this context, the nuances of empirical studies which examine the complex transnationalism of audiences’ imaginations are negated by tenacious imaginaries of the audience; the ‘dishes of the banlieues’ signify a threat to national identity and a refusal to integrate (Hargreaves 2001), and anxiety concerning ‘cultural withdrawal’ and hypodermic flows of illiberalism and jihad (Milikowski 2001). These political dynamics influence media production in less incendiary if no less sharply ideological ways. O’Loughlin, for example, has tracked how British broadcasting policy’s engagement with multiculturalism since the 1970s has been profoundly shaped by wider policy frameworks and national political discussions, up to and including the current focus, post-Cantle report, on inclusion and cohesion (2006). Kosnich’s in-depth work on Turkish multicultural broadcasting in Berlin explores how public and editorial policies have responded to fears over ‘ethnicization’ and cohesion by obliging a diverse and conflictual diasporic field to “...legitimate their own productions within a framework of German multiculturalism that tends to reduce culture to a marker of ethnic group identity” (2007: 159).

These overt pressures are far less evident in Ireland, yet the current working through of demographic change within the reassuring framework of ‘integration’ suggests that transnational lives will be filtered through ideologies that rest upon softly insistent visions of either/or. As Portes identified, “...transnational communities represent a phenomenon at variance with conventional expectations of immigrant assimilation” (1999: 227), and are thus vulnerable to reductive politicization, particularly in a context where integration presents a consoling fiction of indeterminate texture (Gray 2006; Hage 2003). Research on transnationalism in such socio-political contexts must actively deconstruct culturalism’s sureties through the patient exposition of complexity.

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