

TRANSNATIONAL FLOWS: MEDIA USE BY POLES IN IRELAND

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For Thompson (1995:149) globalisation means an intensification of ‘social relations’ and the ‘growing interconnection of different parts of the world, a process which gives rise to complex forms of interaction and interdependency.’ It is increasingly recognised that the media and communications play an important part in the globalisation process as people increasingly move from place to place, some prompted by necessity, others by curiosity, some for work, others for pleasure (Rantanen, 2005). Similarly Appadurai (1990:296) notes that today’s ‘mediascapes’ and ‘ethnoscapes’ are important dimensions of global cultural flows which contribute to the construction of ‘imagined worlds.’ Where once media and communications were for technological and legal reasons mostly coterminous with state boundaries and for business and social reasons coterminous with majority cultural and national practices, today deregulation of broadcasting and telecommunications structures and new technologies problematise traditional distinctions between local, national and global media and allow media to become, to some degree, ‘deterritorialised’. Satellite, cable and internet technologies allow companies to broadcast and audiences to receive television channels and programmes from different parts of the world while the internet also enables multiple forms of communication, information searching, media production and distribution for those who can access and use the technology.

Where once media scholars in international communications conceptualised media flows between countries in terms of media imperialism, Westernisation/Americanisation and cultural homogenisation, the growth of research on audience experiences in general and migrant communities in particular have called into question such assumptions. Such work has pointed to the multi-directionality of global flows, the growth of transnational, ethnic, diasporic and personal media and the complexity and in some cases the hybridity of identities. Further, audience researchers have found that the relationship between the global and the local is not necessarily a one way street and that in certain contexts homogenisation is countered by processes and practices leading to differentiation and pluralisation (Sreberny-Mohammadi, 1996, Gillespie, 1995, Georgiou, 2005, Robins and Aksoy, 2001). Indeed what is interesting here is the diversity of responses within ‘national’ audiences and the need to go beyond the national and the global as explanatory categories (Rantanen, 2005:95). Gillespie (1995:6) argues that the term ‘diaspora’ is a useful intermediary concept between the local and the global that helps to transcend national perspectives. While initially ‘diaspora’ connoted the Greek and Jewish diasporas, more recent work has highlighted its usefulness in terms of ‘the scattering of populations to places outside their homeland’ for a variety of reasons, from political to economic (Naficy, 2001:14). Certainly the recent rapid growth of the Polish community in Ireland points to the confluence of economic and political issues at home in Poland, the wider enlargement process of the EU and the need for Ireland in the current economic climate to encourage increasing inbound flows of labour. While diaspora highlights the movement of people and their collective consciousness the concept of ‘transnationalism’ attempts to map and describe a wide

¹ In Horgan, J., O’Connor, B., and Sheehan, H., (eds) (2007, forthcoming) *Mapping Irish Media: Critical Explorations*. Dublin: UCD Press.

array of interconnections and flows between and across boundaries. Some of this work has pointed to the varying degrees of connectivity that migrants can maintain with their homeland and the degree to which they may develop dual or collective identities (Khagram and Levitt, 2004, Vertovec, 2001). The media and telecommunications of course, facilitate these flows and processes of identity construction.

While there has been some work on the use of media by Irish emigrants in the United States (Corcoran, 1993), little has been written about migrant attitudes to and use of both Irish and ethnic media in Ireland and their access to and use of media from their homeland. Research from other countries however has indicated that for migrants limited representation of one's culture in the media in the new host country can lead to the use of more transnational media, both from the homeland and from other countries. Gillespie's work on television and Punjabi London teenagers found that they increasingly turned to global, cosmopolitan cultural resources and homeland media to overcome the lack of national representation or in some cases racist representations in the British media (Gillespie, 1995:110). Her work points to the continuing importance of class politics and the nation state in the construction of 'new ethnicities' (ibid: 208-9). Naficy's work on the Iranian cultures in Los Angeles meanwhile, differentiates between three types of minority television: exilic television, produced by exiles living in a host country in their own language, ethnic television, produced by the host country for its indigenous minorities in the majority language and transnational television, consisting primarily of products from the homeland in the home language (Naficy, 1993). For Naficy exilic media help to maintain links with the homeland while also helping to develop a new sense of self in relation to consumer capitalism and a new 'exilic economy' (1993, p.xvi). This work adds an important new dimension to audience research focussed on the mediating influence of context on the reception of media content and in particular the 'domestic economy' of the home (Ang, 1996, Silverstone and Hirsch, 1992). Much work has noted that the decoding, interpretation or negotiation of media texts is mediated by the consumption context as well as age, class, gender, ethnicity and race (Morley and Robins, 1995, Morley and Silverstone, 1990).

A focus on the agency of audiences and mediating social factors is not to ignore the political economic factors influencing the production, localisation and circulation of media texts. In the Irish context American, British and Australian programming dominate terrestrial audiovisual exhibition and programming channels. While global media corporations are adept at 'internationalising' or 'localising' their products, at least superficially, there is little need to do so for the Irish market given their common linguistic heritage. The circulation of these international media texts in the Irish context exists alongside the growth of an increasingly concentrated but vibrant local radio and newspaper scene, the launch of a niche Irish language television station and in the past five years the growth of media content aimed at new immigrant communities (Gibbons, 1996, Corcoran, 2004, Kirby et al., 2002, Watson, 2002). To this increasingly crowded mediascape one must add the internet. Often seen as the key transnational media technology, research has indicated that national, cultural and linguistic affiliations remained important barriers to the circulation of internet texts even as internet technology allows content to cross national boundaries with impunity (Kerr, 2000, Kerr, 2003, Preston and Kerr, 2001). Further, such research points to the economic issues faced by producers in small markets. For Irish new media producers the small size of the Irish

market was a strong disincentive to produce culturally specific content and tapping into the Irish 'diaspora' was more difficult than many expected and far from economically rewarding. More recent work on Irish new media users began to map the complex web of media resources that Irish audiences have access to while at the same time pointing to the continued pertinence of household structure, cost and local contextual issues in shaping that use (Kerr et al., 2006).

This chapter focuses attention on the sources, patterns of use and attitudes of Polish migrants in Ireland to the locally available mix of media and telecommunications. It also starts to explore the cultural implications of their media use. Does the available mix of media and communications help to preserve social relationships with friends and family elsewhere and a sense of Polish cultural identity or serve to pluralise and develop new identities? More specifically what role do transnational, international, national and local media play in the migration process to Ireland?

The Polish language mediascape in Ireland.

Irish people are no strangers to migration but inward migration from other countries to Ireland is a relatively new phenomenon. In 2002 just over 91 % of the population were ethnically Irish and white. Since then the population has increased by 8.1% due largely to higher rates of immigration from Europe and Africa and a smaller number of asylum seekers and refugees. Almost ten percent of the workforce was foreign nationals by 2006 and for the first time the 2006 census included a question on ethnic and cultural background (Watt, 2006).

Ireland imposed no restrictions on the number of workers from the new accession states to the European Union in May 2004 and anecdotal evidence would suggest that Polish workers have formed a large part of the growing number of European migrants in the last two years. With a home population of almost 40 million and unemployment running at up to 18 percent in certain regions this is perhaps not surprising. Their presence is felt and seen in Ireland in terms of the Polish food available in the supermarkets, the Polish drink available in certain pubs, the signage in the tax offices and last, but not least, the proliferation of Polish language media. Further, specialist agencies are placing Polish workers on farms and in the equine industry around the country and local print and radio (e.g. Roscommon Herald, Anna Livia fm) include Polish language content to attract this new audience demographic.

The range and number of media outlets catering to the Polish community in Ireland has grown quite rapidly in the past two years, encompassing not only Polish language programming and newspaper columns in the national and local Irish media, but also Polish owned and locally circulated media produced in Ireland. Colleagues in NUI Maynooth (NUIM) have started to map the evolving field of Polish owned media produced in Ireland and have found that it includes a rapidly changing mix of locally based Polish entrepreneurs. These entrepreneurs produce a range of Polish language newspapers/magazines which are overtly commercial in the main, often charging both a cover price and taking advertising, and they source content and support from mainstream media and businesses both in Poland and Ireland (Titley, 2006).

The growth of Polish media in Ireland contrasts with the relative lack of own language media for other migrant groups. Abel Ugba found few locally developed migrant media in Ireland in 2002 and he noted that many ethnic groups, like Africans from former French colonies, relied on transnational media produced by groups in France and Belgium. Ugba went on to develop *Metro Eireann*, one of the first multi-ethnic minority media newspapers in Ireland (Ugba, 2002). Ugba argued that the development of migrant media publications were 'a practical response of the immigrant communities to ineffective, imbalanced and inaccurate coverage of their affairs by the (Irish) national media.' To date, neither I nor my colleagues have conducted a systematic content analysis of Irish media coverage of the Polish in Ireland. However, interviewees in the current research project felt that while the Irish media focussed on 'sensational' news overall the national media were quite positive towards Polish immigrants.

In early summer 2006 there were three Polish owned, Polish language newspapers produced from Dublin, including the weekly *Polska Gazeta*, the fortnightly *Polski Express* and the monthly arts and culture publication *Szpila*. Over the summer of 2006 two new Polish publications emerged, the weekly *Zycie w Irlandii/Life in Ireland* and *Anons* while Autumn 2006 saw the launch of *Sofa*. *Szpila* meanwhile stopped publication in Autumn 2006. *Polski Express* is supported by advertising while *Polska Gazeta* and *Szpila* charge a cover price as well as taking advertising. Interviewees noted that the content of both *Polski Express* and *Polska Gazeta* is of interest mainly to newcomers to Ireland and they made extensive use of Polish symbolism like the Polish flag. *Polski Express* has a print run of 6,000 while *Polska Gazeta* has a print run of 5,000.

A range of Irish media outlets are also providing Polish language content. At present the *Evening Herald*, a national evening paper with sales of 90,000 approximately, includes an eight page Polish language supplement each Friday. Local Dublin radio stations are running shows aimed at the Polish community (e.g. *Anna Livia*, *N.E.A.R fm* and *Radio Sunrise*) and RTE at national level and Dublin City Channel at local level are following suit with Polish language television programmes. Not to be outdone local media around the country are also catering to the changing composition of their audience by including Polish language columns (e.g. *Limerick Leader*, *Kildare Post*). This attempt by Irish media producers to become more 'multicultural' is happening alongside the local Polish print entrepreneurship and they both must compete with mainstream Polish media print and radio offerings available over the Internet and Polish television available via satellite.

This mapping of the burgeoning Polish mediascape signals a diverse range of producers and media outlets but tells us little of the audience for such offerings, the meanings constructed by Poles in Ireland of these offerings or their impact in terms of acculturation or alienation. Interviewees from this research project indicated that both Polish and Irish local and national programmes and newspapers tend to treat the Polish audience as homogeneous regardless of their class, gender, age or length of time in Ireland. The answers to such questions demand a more qualitative and interpretative approach but also one which must overcome both linguistic and cultural barriers.

This chapter draws upon a pilot research project conducted over the summer of 2006 and funded by NUIM's Summer Programme for Undergraduate Researchers (SPUR). This project aimed to explore the source, diversity and meaning of transnational media practices by Polish migrants to Ireland. This work builds upon a previous project

funded by the NCCRI which explored transnational practices of the Polish and Chinese communities in Ireland and was conducted by Katarzyna Kropiwiec and Ying Wang under the supervision of Dr. Rebecca Chiyoko King-O'Riain from the Sociology department of NUIM (Kropiwiec and Chiyoko King-O'Riain, 2006, Wang and Chiyoko King-O'Riain, 2006).

This chapter draws upon four focus groups which were conducted in Polish by Katarzyna Kropiwiec and subsequently translated back into English. The focus group discussions concentrated on four areas: communication with friends and family abroad, keeping up to date with news from home, keeping up to date with Irish news and use of Polish media produced in Ireland. The four focus groups were conducted with 16 Polish people, 11 males and 5 females aged 27-58 years. Half the group were married but not all had their families with them in Ireland. (See Appendix 1). The profile of the group in terms of age and educational attainment corresponds to the profile of immigrants to Ireland more generally, although females were slightly under represented (Barrett et al., 2006).

Three of the focus groups took place in Dublin, including one in the Polish Social and Cultural Association on Fitzwilliam Square, and two in private rented accommodation. One took place in a family home in a rural area of Co. Laois. All but two of the interviewees were working and these jobs varied from carpentry and construction to office work, computer assembly and farming. Of those who were not working one was retired and one had recently arrived and was searching for work. One interviewee was a stay at home mother. The maximum any interviewee had been in Ireland was five years and the minimum was 3 months.

Polish use of the media in Ireland

Given the number of interviews conducted across the four focus groups we can not draw generalisations either to the entire Polish community in Ireland or to other migrant groups in Ireland. Nevertheless some interesting findings and patterns emerged. Overall we can say that for these interviewees the media, both old and new, have played and continue to play an important role in their migration to Ireland both in terms of maintaining links with their homeland and to a lesser extent in terms of learning about their hostland. Interviewees accessed a range of media content from local, national and transnational producers and both in Polish and in English. The use of particular media seemed to vary depending on age, occupation and language skills although it also evolved as the migrant's time in Ireland lengthened. Further, interviewees were outspoken in their critique of the quality of local and national media services and content. Locally produced Polish owned media, as well as national media from Ireland were constantly compared to each other and to media channels and content from elsewhere including the UK and the USA. It was clear that the frame of reference used for this unfavourable quality comparison was either Hollywood or BBC productions.

Interviewees used a wide range of media, not relying on one but rather changing to the cheapest and most convenient as their time in Ireland lengthened. For all but three of the interviewees the internet was the first port of call to try to find out about Ireland before they came, but once in Ireland they used Irish websites, newspapers, radio and television to acclimatise, source jobs and apartments and get

used to the Irish accent (See Appendix 2). Indeed use of local and national Irish newspapers (12) and radio (10) was relatively high for this group. When it came to television three quarters watched television although the programmes were from a variety of sources, including Irish, Polish, British and American. Less than half of those interviewed used locally produced Polish language newspapers and radio programmes and none of the group watched locally produced Polish language television programmes broadcast on local Dublin cable channels. Access and use of imported Polish newspapers (1) and Polish television accessed via satellite (4) was low although people had access to Polish newspapers via the Internet. The internet, mobile phones and international pre-paid call cards were used to communicate with home and friends in other countries

The most striking finding to emerge from this study is the central importance of the internet in the lives of these Polish immigrants to Ireland and the intricate relationship between this relatively new medium and the established mass media. When the interviewees initially arrived in Ireland they accessed the internet at public libraries and internet cafes. For some this was replaced by internet at home once accommodation was secured. All but three of the interviewees used the internet regularly (more than once a week). Those that did not were male and working in construction and farm labouring. One of these commented that he hoped to learn how to use a computer now he was in Ireland.

The primary use of the internet was for communication with friends and family from home or elsewhere via a range of applications including: e-mail, internet chat programmes, internet telephony and to send text messages to mobile phones. The second use was to obtain news and information from home via websites, streaming Polish radio or reading Polish newspapers on the internet. Some used the internet to view webcam images from their home towns. They also used the internet to source information on Ireland. The third use of the internet for these interviewees was e-commerce: buying airline tickets, betting, buying stocks and paying bills online.

I do a press review every day, even every hour when I'm bored at work. Usually it is onet, wirtualna polska, interia, gazeta, polskie radio. interviewee F, 27, female.

While intensity and extent of use varied by age, occupation, ease of access and length of time in Ireland all interviewees relied on the internet to both maintain social relationships at a distance but also to seek information and news from their homeland and about their hostland. Indeed what was interesting was the emergent use of local to local links over the internet as well as the link to their homeland. One interviewee noted that they had been in Ireland for ten months and had internet at home. When they wanted to find out something about Ireland they went either to friends or to the internet. The internet was used to help children look up information on Ireland for homework and to establish local networks with other Poles in Ireland.

Nevertheless, while interviewees relied on the internet for information on Ireland they were critical of the quality of information provided by some Irish websites. A few like rte.ie (news) and service providers like daft.ie (accommodation) and fas.ie (jobs) were popular. Other websites were considered 'very poor' or 'very general like a company card'. The internet was not seen as a very useful source of cultural or historical information on Ireland, particularly on local towns and cities. One interviewee

complained they could not find the rules of hurling anywhere. In the absence of such sites people went either to Polish or American websites.

For me the internet is information. I have a theme I'm interested in and I put it into a search engine, mostly in Polish, more often in English, when I don't find information in Polish. Mostly pages in English, not Irish, because the Irish internet is so poor. Most of the pages are American.

interviewee P, 30, male.

Interviewees also noted that while the cost of the internet in Ireland appears to be comparable to Poland, especially when differences in wages are taken into account, over half complained about the speed and quality of the connections, both at home and in internet cafes. They also felt that many internet cafes were of low quality in terms of the technology, support and environment.

The second striking fact to emerge in this study is the low level of transnational (i.e. via satellite) Polish language television viewing (3) and the relatively low level of English language television viewing, despite many having access to it (9). Only two of the interviewees had access to Polish language television from their homeland in their Irish homes. For these two men, aged 40 and 58 respectively, television helped to keep in touch with sports and news from home and they noted that they did not really want to learn about 'Irish' culture and they found the Irish accent difficult to understand. They had both been in the country for over two years and one was in fact retired. English language skills and age seemed to be at issue in these two cases but these were the exceptions in this study. The other interviewee who watched Polish language television went to Polish restaurants or the Polish centre in Dublin if he wanted to watch a particular event. None of the interviewees knew that Irish television channels were offering Polish language programming. Other interviewees had the equipment to access Polish television but did not necessarily use it. One family kept their satellite receiver in the wardrobe and watched English language television instead to improve their English.

Overall interviewees noted that they did not watch television very often and that they preferred to watch English language rather than Polish language television programmes. Low levels of television viewing in general related to a lack of leisure time. Most of the interviewees noted that they worked long hours and in their spare time they did housework, shopping and met friends. In their leisure time they read, listened to music on CD, went for walks, went to concerts or went to the pub but most agreed they had very little time for television. Where television is watched it is usually English language programming on Irish television stations and this is prompted by a desire to improve their language skills. They mainly watched American and British programmes including sport, cartoons, movies, news, *Panorama*, *Friends* and specialist channels like *Discovery*. The range of programmes viewed also related to whether they had children or not. Irish produced programmes were not specifically mentioned.

Now I am working normal working time and we are at home together we actually don't switch on the TV. It's just standing here and getting dusty. interviewee O, 28, female.

While the low levels of television viewing, particularly of Polish television may surprise, the high levels of radio listenership are equally interesting. Radio is almost

unavoidable in many settings and interviewees spoke of listening to the radio in the car, at work and in shops, whether they wanted to or not. Almost half had listened to Polish radio programmes on local Irish radio channels like *Anna Livia* and two listened to Polish radio streamed via the internet and digital television. For Poles living outside Dublin these programmes were difficult to receive. There were mixed opinions about the Polish programmes on Irish radio with some admitting they were ‘amateurish’ and others that they tried to satisfy all Poles and ended up playing a mixture of classical, songs and disco/pop all in the same programme. Nevertheless the older interviewees liked the phone-ins from Poles living in Ireland and the variety.

they talk in Polish and it’s a variety... very interesting, I like it very much.
interviewee B, 40, male.

I think they were very unprofessional. They just talked rubbish,. And there were greetings all the time. interviewee I, 27, female.

The younger interviewees preferred specialist music shows and late night Irish phone-in or ‘talk radio’ shows. They also liked when Irish radio shows did Polish specials, like when radio shows adopted the Polish soccer team during the World Cup and got Polish people to come on air and talk in English about their national soccer team. Finally, they liked radio to pass the time and get used to the Irish accent. The differences between older and younger interviewees in this regard is interesting and may signal a greater desire for recognition and integration by the younger interviewees.

When it came to newspapers interviewees were also unanimous in their criticism of the Polish owned Polish language print media in Ireland and these criticisms related to cost, the quality of the content and the underlying political agendas. Of the 16 interviewees, five read Polish language newspapers produced in Ireland and most felt the quality of writing was poor and noted that the stories were often taken from the internet, where they had already read them. Those who had been in the country for some time felt that the stories were not interesting and were only of use to Poles arriving in Ireland. *Spilza* however, the monthly arts and culture magazine, was singled out by some for its good articles and content and the *Herald* Friday supplement was also complimented ‘Its better than the other, typical Polish papers. More honest information’ interviewee A, 42, male. Other interviewees noted:

They are very orientated on sensation. *Gazeta Polska* is really like, what’s the name of it – *Super Express*, the Polish tabloid. Polish Express- 60 per cent of the articles is written by the editor and 10 percent of them is signed with a pseudonym. I don’t know if they don’t have enough people. and everything is in the same tone. I don’t like it at all.

interviewee F, 27, female.

Spilza is boring, there is nothing to read. *Polski express*, I think it is a communist lecture, they criticise everyone except of the communist option from the Polish politics. I think they are leftist.

interviewee G, 38, male.

I think they could also write a bit about news from Poland. And they only write about what is happening here... but when someone does not have access to the Internet, and not everyone has, or can use Internet, they would have the opportunity to buy a paper here with fresh news from Poland' interviewee I, 27, female.

Another interesting criticism expressed related to the commercial nature of the newspapers and some felt that the journalists and operators were not interested in good stories or the truth, only profits.

I think that Polish media, papers are interested only in profits from the commercials. And people who write for them are not experienced journalists, just people who happened to be here. Care for factual substance is on the last position, and the priority is how to make money on the commercial. interviewee F, 27, female.

Most interviewees would prefer to access newspapers from Poland and most do access them to some degree over the internet. The purchase of Irish newspapers tended to be higher for new arrivals when they were searching for a job or accommodation. Once settled the interviewees did not buy a daily newspaper, preferring instead to read the daily freesheets to help improve their language skills and rely on the radio, which always tended to be on in work, and the internet.

Nearly all the interviewees used 'top up' mobile phones and when they wanted to call long distance they either bought an international call card or phoned from a 'call shop' which are usually co-sited with internet cafes around Dublin. Interestingly the mobile operators are aware of the extent to which the Polish migrants are using their services and are competing in terms of call rates to Poland for this audience. Texting is highly popular as a means of keeping in touch with friends in Poland and friends in other countries while phoning is still the main means of keeping in contact with parents and spouses in Poland. Interviewees agreed that the quality and cost of telephoning in Ireland was cheaper than in Poland.

Migration, the media and identity – negotiating difference.

Most of the interviewees in these focus groups were enjoying their stay in Ireland and found the Irish friendly and helpful. Only one couple had experienced difficulties when their money had been stolen but Polish friends had helped out and they had decided to stay on and give things another go. It is interesting to note that over time these Poles were relying less on Polish centres and Polish friends and were more confident to ask Irish people for help and information. This may not be the case for all immigrant groups or indeed all Poles. Indeed it was obvious that within the Polish community itself interviewees made distinctions and the stereotype of a 'Franck' was often invoked. This stereotype applied to 'older men in jeans' who worked in construction and were frequent church goers.

General experiences in Ireland provoked much comment and comparison with home. Most interviewees were outspoken about the poor quality of public transport in Ireland, which they said was a 'tragedy' and a 'drama' compared to what they were used to in Poland. They noted that Irish food was generally of poor quality and they spoke of

the slowness of certain institutions, especially banks. For most interviewees their experiences in Ireland were contributing to a greater understanding of Irishness, or at least of Irish institutions. For these migrants comparison between homeland and hostland is constant and it is even more complicated when things are compared to perceptions and experiences of other countries, either mediated or direct. This growing multifaceted sensibility is reflected in an astute questioning of institutions and the politics of media producers. One interviewee for example noted that 'as a rule media are serving the power..they are always distorted. The communism was lying to us and now democracy is lying' interviewee A, 42, male. For another younger interviewee who was stopping going to Polish mass in Ireland because 'the priest is moralising that you should come to church on Sunday, not to work, although there is a double rate (to work on a Sunday)' interviewee I, 27, female.

The interviewees in this pilot research project kept up to date with news from home primarily via newspapers on the internet and telephone calls. While transnational media available via the internet from Poland and locally produced Polish newspapers and events in Ireland helped to reaffirm their Polish identity and maintain communal connections in the host and the homeland they were not consumed uncritically, and some interviewees were critical of what they saw as the traditional and conservative elements of their national culture and were keen to assert their difference from those elements. They were also critical of the undifferentiated approach to 'Polishness' adopted by some media producers in Ireland and the attempt by 'opportunistic' producers to make money by providing low quality productions and content.

What is striking when reading the focus group transcripts is that even in this relatively small group the degree to which interviewees used English language media or Polish language media varied. This variance can be linked to their desire for acculturation and/or their desire to maintain a sense of difference but is also linked to such things as occupation, length of time in the country, age, language skills and media quality. For some, Irish media were an important way to learn how to speak Hiberno-English and to understand Irish culture. This was particularly the case for those with children but also for young professionals whose jobs involved working or dealing with the Irish public. One interviewee noted that

the media are very important in the beginning. In the beginning of your stay you don't know the culture, the customs, you know very little. interviewee K, 33, male.

I listen to the radio to kill the silence and also to get used to the spoken language. When I came here I got the phone with radio to listen to the language a lot. And I switched from music to the spoken text all the time. And at home I listened to BBC. They were talking quite clearly. interviewee F, 27, female.

we insist on learning the language. We don't use the Polish TV, we don't use Polish radio, we don't use Polish papers. We use all that is Irish. interviewee J, 33, female.

However some of the older interviewees displayed a desire to watch and listen to Polish media from their homeland. For these interviewees the media served to highlight their difference and did not necessarily help in the acculturation process.

It's not interesting for me. They have their own culture, their music. We are Poles and we like our Polish songs. And to change over to the Irish music, folk, no, no. interviewee C, 58, male.

the Irish accent is awful, I can talk much better to a Brit, American, Australian or other foreigner speaking English than with an Irish person. It depends on with whom. I can see that educated people here speak with a better oxford accent. And the others speak awful and it's hard to understand them. And they pretend that they don't understand me or they don't want to understand me' interviewee A, 42, male.

Of course in many instances the English language media being used by Polish immigrants to Ireland are not Irish produced or speaking what is called Hiberno-English. This is particularly the case with television where interviewees were watching American comedy series and wildlife programmes as well as British current affairs programmes rebroadcast on Irish television channels. With the internet there are only a few Irish websites of use and otherwise they use Polish or American sites. Thus the interviewees were consuming both American and British international content and transnational media content from their homeland and in the main the predominant Irish media content accessed was via local and national radio and the two 'freesheets' *Herald AM* and *Metro*. The latter of course rely heavily on the international wire services for their news. It would appear that where the local and national media do not provide representation of sufficient quality, users will turn to other sources.

The media and transnationalism

We can identify four types of media used by the Polish community in Ireland which flow across and between local, national and international boundaries. Firstly, there are local Polish language newspapers provided by Poles for the Polish community in Ireland. These largely conform to notions of exilic, ethnic and/or diasporic media, in that they are contributing to the development of a sense of the Polish community in Ireland and are attempts by Poles to create media businesses and jobs for Poles in Ireland. Initial examination of the content provided by these outlets appears to suggest an implicit assumption by the producers that many Polish workers will return home and that there is a constant need for basic information on Ireland and information about communicating, travelling and sending money home to Poland. Interviewees noted that the publications often sourced their content from the internet or direct from Polish media companies and the overall quality of writing and content was very mixed. Initial examinations of the publications found that they take both Polish and Irish advertising. Thus the transnational and the national can be traced in the content provided by local Polish producers.

Secondly, we have local Irish media outlets specifically targeting the Polish minority in Ireland in the Polish language in certain regions, including Dublin and Limerick. These provide both information and entertainment but use is relatively low unless there is free access, as in radio. While the media producers are clearly attempting to become more multicultural and in many cases hire Polish immigrants to present and write for them, the reaction of interviewees in this study was mixed, particularly in terms of the quality of the content provided.

Thirdly, we have the mainstream Irish media outlets targeted at the majority of the population and published or broadcast in English. Interviewees suggested that there were useful in the initial stages when new arrivals are looking for an apartment or a job. Newspapers in particular, even when they include weekly columns in Polish, become less useful once one is established and over time interviewees moved to access free newspapers, motivated by language needs. In the case of television most spoke of watching Irish television to improve their language skills but then tended to prefer imported international programming where the English was easier to understand. Irish websites were also seen as generally of poor quality and lacking depth.

Interaction with the national media in Ireland is limited in some cases for reasons of cost, a lack of time, remoteness and a lack of language skills. Where interviewees were accessing national Irish television channels, negative representations of the Polish community did not appear to be an issue. Those who did view Irish national television stated that they were keen to try to understand Ireland and to improve their language skills. This was particularly the case for those living in remote areas and with families. Key of course here is that no distinction is made in some cases between content produced in Ireland and content imported and rebroadcast from elsewhere i.e. international content on national media channels, as long as it is in English. Interviewees preferred to watch international programming from America and Britain on Irish channels.

Fourthly, we have transnational media broadcast or distributed directly across borders without localisation including satellite television from Poland and internet content. Polish satellite television was not extensively used by these interviewees, while content on the internet from a variety of sources was. Interviewees spoke of doing regular news surveys of content from home and using internet technology to bypass more expensive national telecommunications and media costs in Ireland. Overall for these interviewees international and transnational media content accessed via the internet and television in Polish and English were key information and entertainment resources in the longer term while local and national media content in Polish and English were useful in the initial transition period.

Clearly delineating the local, the national, the international and the transnational is problematic in terms of the media in Ireland where national terrestrial television schedules are dominated by international programming and advertising while local media can carry both English language and Polish language programming or repackage content sourced over the internet. It fact it is useful to distinguish between international programming rebroadcast on national and local channels and transnational programming that is broadcast unchanged across borders. The distinction between international and transnational in terms of the media serves to highlight the economics and politics of cultural production in a small nation where economics of scale simply do not operate. It also highlights the differential flows of cultural products between countries which share a 'geo-linguistic' or indeed a 'geo-cultural' heritage (Hesmondhalgh 2002:179-180). When we are trying to understand the cultural implications of the changing mediascape in Ireland for Irish audiences it is useful to identify the source of the programming in addition to the location of the producer and the language used.

The literature reviewed at the start of this chapter would suggest that consumption of transnational media plays a role in 'constructing and defining, contesting and reconstituting national, 'ethnic' and other cultural identities' (Gillespie 1995:11). This

findings emerging from this pilot study would suggest that local and national, as well as transnational media, are involved in this process to some degree. Interestingly, the use of the different types of media and different genres of content by these interviewees varied over time but was influenced as much by quality concerns as cultural ones. In this study international and transnational media content, provided by a range of producers, were used to improve language skills for the new hostland, maintain contacts with the homeland and engage with programming from a range of other sources. International and transnational content provided high quality content, in terms of production values', as well as a range of Anglo-American and Polish identities. Meanwhile local, diasporic and national English and Polish language media provided useful transition material for new arrivals but were seen as less useful for longer term emigrants, less professional, less oppositional/critical of host or homeland politics and as operating with a very narrow sense of Polish identity. More work is needed before we can understand the implications of these media flows for Polish migrants in the Irish context.

Appendix 1

Table 1 Profile of interviewees					
	Age	Gender	Status	Time in Ire	Occupation
A	42	M	S	15 months	carpenter
B	40	M	M	5 ys	construction
C	58	M	M	2 yrs	pensioner
D	55	M	M	2 yrs	X
E	38	M	S	2 yrs	construction
F	27	F	S	10 months	recruitment
G	38	M	S	22 months	office
H	28	M	M	6 months	computer assembly computer
I	27	F	S	8 months	inspection
J	33	F	M	10 months	housewife
K	33	M	M	18 months	farmer
L	32	M	S	5 months	fixes lawnmowers
M	32	F	S	3 months	DTP
N	34	M	S	3 months	not working
O	28	F	M	10 months	engineer
P	30	M	M	10 months	sales assistant
n= 16					

Appendix 2 –

Table 2: Source and Use of Media

Source	Media, language & ownership	Yes	No	No answer
Ireland/Poland/USA/ UK	Internet, multiple	12	3	1
Poland	Polish TV	3	13	
Poland	Polish newspapers	1	15	
Poland	Polish radio	2	6	8
Local Ireland	Polish newspapers	6	4	5
Local Ireland	Polish radio	7	6	3
Local Ireland	Polish TV	0	14	2
Local & national Irish	Irish newspapers in Eng. & Pol.	12*	2	4
Local and national Irish	Irish radio in Eng. & Pol.	10	1	5
Irish/USA/UK	Irish Television in English	9	5	2

n= 16

*= includes free newspapers

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