

New Opportunities for Polish-Japanese Cooperation: Diagnosis and Prospects

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The New Media – the age of visual communication The turn of 20th/21st century

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1. Introduction – subject overview

In the following text I describe the situation of new media at the turn of the century, as well as the human condition in both cultural and economic contexts. These two aspects are important due to the conference – a symposium held at the University of Lodz in autumn 2014. My description regarding the role of media, as well as the topic presented at the conference in Lodz, inevitably focuses on the specific context of comparison between the Visegrad countries (also known as V-4) and Japan with respect to Euro-Asian relations. I will point out a few rather obvious facts that, in my opinion, are worth being recalled. However, they only provide a background to more relevant issues that are mentioned further.

Nowadays, the concept of new media is gaining ever more attention and significance, as it relates to both to modern communication technologies such as the internet, television, telephones, and older ones such as the press and radio. These are the most important inventions of the last century when it comes to social communication. They are increasingly ubiquitous tools of interaction among modern people. Our motto could be “one picture is worth a thousand words.” This adage, which has been circulating for a long time (both in the East and the West) accurately describes my lecture and presentation. This wisdom of the East, attributed to Lao-Tse, is already a few thousand years old. The Japanese have their own similar proverb: “to see once is like to hear a hundred times.”

One traveling to Japan or living there, especially in Tokyo, can experience a massive attack of ads and omnipresent audiovisual information. Imagery – photography, film, TV – is flooding the world. Americans were probably the first who called the twentieth century civilization a “pictorial century” – the creation of a civilization of images. Modern man,

regardless of whether he wished to or not – is flooded with streams of images encompassing all possible categories. No one can be protected from that. The ubiquity of moving images, photographic film or sophisticated and aggressive advertising, reduce the role of viewer to that of a receiving object. There is no way to escape from aggressive images in subways, buses, department stores, public spaces, restaurants etc. Today this is an obvious condition, especially for the younger generations. The aspect of the superiority of pictures over text and speech – especially in educational and learning contexts – has been repeatedly researched between the 1970s and 1990s.

Research has been carried out and repeated many times among students and scholars of the humanities and polytechnical sciences. There have been lectures and presentations composed of different proportions of text and images. They differ only in their way of presenting information. The first method consists exclusively of large amounts of text on each slide; the second one was similar, except that the written information had an attractive picture associated with the content attached to it. (G.A. Miller's law stresses the importance of an optimal stimuli number that can be processed by the short-term memory). Researchers' presumptions were confirmed – people whose presentations had matching images in them obtained better results than those who used only words. The researchers explain this result by reference to the theory which states that the more attractive a stimulus is, the longer a recipient will be interested in it [Maruszewski 2002].

This is a very significant factor in coaching, education, political persuasion, as well as the construction of narratives presented in film, advertising or social campaigns. The “world” of politics, business and electronic media, like television (and, most recently, internet social media, e.g. Facebook) has become the biggest beneficiary of this phenomenon. The growth of the business sector around the analysis of the media market, social engineering, psychology and propaganda (social, political, military, business) is the best example of this phenomenon.

Here I focus on what I consider as the most important aspects and most original thoughts. Firstly – the media as an integral component of visual culture; secondly – the impact of the new media on the economy and the generation of its growth, and thirdly – the political aspect, regarding the role of media in propaganda in the new hybrid wars (Ukraine, the Middle East, etc).

The emergence of the World Wide Web has revolutionized the media market. New technologies such as Google Earth, “augmented reality” (scanned reality), QR codes, smartphones, 4G mobile telephones and access to streamed online and film broadcasts has dramatically changed

the situation on the market. In the 21st century the most significant aspect of new social media is instant access to information – an access to data, regardless of localization, as well as widespread availability of content for every citizen-customer, regardless of his or her economic or social status. Another factor is that information and the media are interactive – the roles of message sender and recipient have become blurred. Everyone can be a content broadcaster, uploading news, a video or a report. Until now this was the privilege of the press or television, which belonged to big media corporations. Today commercial media have been rapidly losing their monopoly to social media and individual private broadcasters.



Fig. 1. Waldemar Czechowski
Author: Piotr Romanowski

Another important aspect of this phenomenon is the shortening of cultural distance between countries such as Poland and Japan. The second part of my speech and visual presentation, regarding websites and tools such as Facebook and YouTube, focuses on the image of Japan in Poland and the image of Poland in Japan (culture reception, economy, art). In this section of my writing I deal with one aspect: the rapprochement of Poland and Japan in context of mental and cultural history, despite their economic and cultural differences. Poland, just as Japan in the 1970s, has experienced a rapid economic growth. The Japanese to whom I have spoken during my visits in Japan between

2011 and 2013, as well as those who visited our country, are in wide agreement that Poland has had made an upswing in the economy. They are full of admiration for the Poles and for Poland, as a country with a “common enemy and threat – Russia”. The Japanese admire our history with its heroic pages (e.g. The Warsaw Uprising in 1944 and the battle on the Vistula in 1920), the Solidarity movement and the first worker-president. They also admire our culture: the music of Fryderyk Chopin or films by Andrzej Wajda. Moreover, they appreciate the recent “tiger jump” in the Polish economy. This is what Japanese ambassadors in Warsaw have been observing and stating throughout the last two decades. To sum up, we have a good political, historical and cultural “narrative” in Japan.

2. Presentation of my thesis in seven points

1. My diagnosis on artist, film-maker and new media artist focuses on the meaning of modern man and the role of media in contemporary culture. I try to sketch the trends that occur in the contact between the media, culture and economy.

I ask the question: What is the role of audio-visual arts in culture and social sciences?

It seems that the turn of 20th/21st centuries is developing the vision and concept of Mac Luhan’s “world as a global village” and also a strange transformation of Fukuyama’s end of history. In my opinion, the end of history means breaking the direct continuity between the past and the present. For example, when we talk about hybrid war, we do so not only in the meaning of conquest, but also as an expansion of one country’s potential into other territories, and here the role of media seems obvious. Formerly, expansions (including market expansions) had their linearity, and the cause and effect process were relatively easy to diagnose. Today the totality of mechanisms and ways of interaction are closely connected with the activities in the field of virtual media, propaganda, social media, etc. The enemy is not single – it’s spreading as the phenomenon of network spreads.

2. The outline of social, cultural and economic development in western countries, in the context of rapid media development. By “Western countries” I mean not only those stretching from Europe to the US, but also Japan, as we speak of this country and its contacts with Europe, especially the Visegrad Group.

Japan, as a model of success after the World War II, has until recently experienced development like Germany or the United States. There were similar mechanisms that made it a kind of Mecca of technology, not only among Asian countries: e-mail and online smartphones (pronounced so beautifully as “smaho”). It is the philosophy of a roar. The universality of games creates mass entertainment. Information spreads via email. SMSes – a quick message – has celebrated its triumph in Europe. Multimedia and video phones are far behind their prevalence in Japan.



Fig. 2. YouTube logo

Source: <http://www.youtube.com/yt/brand/downloads.html>

3. Influence of IT and media (understood as a means of mass communication: including the traditional, such as newspapers, television, and radio, as well as electronic methods and technologies of the internet) on the economy and culture is huge and increasingly intensifying. This visual culture/image culture is seizing a growing area of social and political life. The emergence of YouTube has changed the television market.

Culture is a new power, the power (influence on the market) on an equal footing as the economy. Can this thesis be defended? Looking at the influence of mass culture, computer games, and the incredible development of visual assault done by mass advertising, we can see how great the cultural context is in the GDP revenue. Because of these new and growing areas of influence on consumer behavior, we can see that visual arts have a very significant impact on the economy.

The market is increasingly associated with the influence of culture. Culture drives economic mechanisms and develops economies in the world. There is evidence that approximately 20% of GDP in the US involves culture, art markets and the film industry, creative industry, and cultural industries.

New fields for the world of culture creators and artists have developed. Four sectors: film, television and radio, newspapers and books, music [Purchla, Hausner, Karwińska 2013].



Fig. 3. Electronic media man

Source: <http://www.youtube.com>

4. In 1970s, the traditional media (TV, radio, press) was said to be the Fourth Estate. With the appearance of the internet, the balance of power has changed.

Electronic media, as a new partner in the market, means that the media has become in fact the Third Estate. Media act as tool of propaganda and pressure. Some futurists locate the media environment as the Second Estate at the beginning of 21st century (along with money, banks, and the economy). The internet has appeared as a totally player in the world. It is no more just a tool. I think the futurists and marketing experts in 2030 will have to change the economic paradigm. Probably a hybrid-process model of the future economy is waiting for us in terms of the globalization of these processes.



Fig. 4. QR code

Source: <https://www.the-qr-code-generator.com/>

5. Development technology in computer sciences and electronic media. According to me, in the 1970s new technology appeared once every 5–7 years, in the 1990s – once in about every four years, and in the last decade – once every two years. GG (Gadu-Gadu), Skype, Cloud,

YouTube and Facebook are integral parts of internet. There were eras of e-mail, Skype, Facebook and smartphone. Until recently, there was a notion of the “Skype generation.” A few years ago we had a “generation of Internet people”, now we have “the smartphone era” (the device in which applications are incorporated integrally: tele-audio-video communication, video-on-demand, radio, flashlight, compass, virtual shopping store, watch, alarm clock, pulse pressure gauge, road navigation, Google Earth map, video editing programs, film camera, camera, and god knows what else). Mobile phones repeatedly exceed computer functions.

This new rhythm of changes results in a change in the perception of the world. Media and mass participation of “the goods of information customers” changes the image of the world. A recipient on Facebook or Twitter becomes a (content) creator. Philosophy is changing the television. The interactivity of electronic media and modern communication tools has completely changed the balance of power. This rearrangement has been in favor of “consumers” rather than managers.

Mobile phones make up the virtual world. The change in social behavior occurring in e.g. a Japanese subway, is a proof of the rapid mental transformation among people who cannot easily make contacts and stay alienated (dozens of new social alienation phenomena in the latest generation of Japanese include people fleeing from family and relationships with other people, loneliness, etc.) [Tomański 2013].

6. Narrative – the role of an attractive story. Find your story, a political and economic one – that is the role of the “marketing narrative”. The visual narrative is as a kind of “to be or not to be” in business, culture and communication.

The narrative is no longer a screenplay or a vision – but a story itself, the task of which is to win in the market, among the masses of customers. This is not a new edition of a product, but a brand new quality program. Companies such as Toyota, Ford, Fox and also Lehman Brothers, as well as the consumers, have found out how important a factor suggestive image is. Further examples of different markets and civilizations, including Japanese, include: the profitability of violent companies, the maintenance of popularity of politicians (even during the great cataclysm in Japan in 2011, which included the failure of the Fukushima nuclear plant, tsunami and a great earthquake on March 11th, 2011) [Mistewicz 2011].

Another great example of the power of the internet and an “individual story” and socio-political narrative was the assumption of power by Barack Obama.



Fig. 5. “Tohoku 2011” – oil & acrylic paint by Waldemar Czechowski

Source: own collection

7. Risk. Today, in the 21st century, the role of media in politics is, since war in Iraq, developing the field of so-called “hybrid war” (see case of the Crimea, Ukraine). Threats include spying, loss of privacy, and “smart information theft”.

Today we are just spectators of new wars, a real one by Russia and the so-called Islamic state (ISIS). If we analyze this “theatre of struggle”, we can clearly observe at a glance how magnified the impact of propaganda is, especially in film and television programs. A hybrid machine, working on several fields at once, does not have a power supply focused in just one area. Let’s see what is being written about it on the internet. The word “hybrid” is used to express something that is: mixed, a compilation, a mosaic, patchy, disparate.

We can observe a multitude of content, which is probably the reason behind the concept’s versatility, capacity, and breadth of application.

“Fields – war theatres of our times” fits like a glove onto the phenomenon of images. The word “war” should be also treated as a metaphor. Modern civilization is powered by multiple fields all at once.

In the painting “Power” we can see a picture of what is close to us today, in the era of easy access to information. This is reflected in the new formulas that artists are looking for to build a new paradigm of our time. Witold Stypa, a painter from Berlin, a thinker in the area of nuclear physics and molecular forms, created the Museum of the Future (established in the internet). He is searching for a concept for his art with respect to its “multidimensionality”. He says: “We need freedom of imagination” by ex-

ploring the common field of science and art's disciplines. He formulates ideas and theses for his art in a field "beyond space time" [Stypa 2014].

The thesis concerning the "primacy of freedom of imagination" makes it worthwhile to recall the words of Polish thinker and writer Stanislaw Lem, who said that the world needs "crazy hypotheses".

Streszczenie

W artykule omawia się zagadnienia znaczenia nowych mediów na przełomie wieków. Media pokazywane są jako integralny komponent kultury wizualnej i podnoszony jest ich wpływ również na ekonomię. Zwraca się uwagę na rolę nowych mediów w propagandzie politycznej i procesach cywilizacyjnych. Ukazana jest też ich rola w skracaniu dystansu kulturowego między Polską a Japonią.

Autor diagnozuje zjawiska dotyczące artysty, rozwoju społecznego, kulturalnego i ekonomicznego w kontekście szybkiego rozwoju mediów w krajach zachodnich, często w kontekście Japonii. Wypowiada interesujący pogląd na temat znaczenia narracji wizualnej w biznesie, kulturze i komunikacji. Odkrywcze, choć może i kontrowersyjne, są jego wnioski dotyczące siły perswazyjnej i propagandowej mediów odnośnie do nowego zjawiska „wojny hybrydowej”.

W tezach tych, zaprezentowanych w kilku punktach, stwierdza się m.in.:

– Tendencje zachodzące na styku mediów–kultury–gospodarki są kluczowymi zagadnieniami do zrozumienia sukcesu wielu procesów cywilizacyjnych współczesnego świata. Komerccjalizacja obrazu elektronicznego, nowych mediów oraz tendencje w sektorze kultury traktowanej jako element gospodarki, przynoszący przychód i zysk (kultura masowa), to znane zjawiska, warte jednak przypomnienia.

– Dynamiczny rozwój mediów jest ważną determinantą rozwoju społecznego i gospodarczego krajów zachodnich. Jest to wyraźna tendencja obserwowana w Japonii, USA i Europie, a ostatnio również w Chinach, gdzie rok 2012 ustanowiono rokiem prymatu kultury nad gospodarką.

– Burzliwy rozwój technologii IT oraz mediów widoczny w zjawisku tzw. „cywilizacji obrazkowej” obserwowany od czasu rozwoju prasy, kina i telewizji – nazwa powstała w USA. Kultura obrazu zagarnia coraz większe obszary życia społecznego i politycznego oraz wyobraźni współczesnego człowieka. Interesujące tematy: przemysł kultury masowej i nowe pola dla twórców kultury i artystów.

– Pojawienie się masowo używanego Internetu stało się zjawiskiem kluczowym w stosunku do innych mediów tradycyjnych z połowy XX wieku (TV, radio, prasa) i zmieniło układ sił.

– Nowa „era Skype’a, Facebook’a i YouTube’a” końca XX wieku. Wynalazki technologiczne w IT, informatyce i środkach elektronicznej komunikacji dotarły pod strzechy (spełnione zostało marzenie Mac Luhana o tzw. „wiosce globalnej”), stając się dostępnym, „hiper-masowym” produktem.

– Autor przypomina (za Erykiem Mistewiczem) ważną rolę narracji, atrakcyjną „story”. Pole własnej narracji, politycznej, gospodarczej czy artystycznej, pełni tu rolę „marketingu narracyjnego”. Jednym z przykładów może być „casus Chopina” – wielka popularność Chopina w Japonii (poprzez konkursy chopinowskie).

– Autor mówi o zagrożeniach, jakie płyną ze strony mediów. Nowe zjawiska przełomu wieków to: złodziej informacji w funkcji „smart” (np. wymuszanie nieświadomego posiadania aplikacji w telefonach komórkowych, umożliwiających szpiegowanie, kradzież danych, utrata prywatności także poprzez masowe użytkowanie systemu „Cloud” – dane w chmurze). Powszechnym, nowym fenomenem jest handel personalnymi danymi osobowymi (wycieki danych, szantaż, „teatr wojny politycznej”, z użyciem mediów masowych, przez korporacje, np. zastraszanie, wymuszanie – wysoka skuteczność tego narzędzia).

Obserwuje się wpływ mediów na nowe scenariusze i formy prowadzenia wojny, tak zwanej „hybrydowej”, w czasie ostatnich dekad. Media w tym „teatrze wojennym” stanowią drugą (a czasem pierwszorzędną – propagandową) siłę, obok potencjału militarnego. Pojawia się nowy typ wojny, ze zwiększonym naciskiem na perswazję mediów, już od czasu Iraku/Kuwejtu (tzw. „pustynna burza”), aż po pole ostatniej, już spopularyzowanej nazwy „wojny hybrydowej” na Ukrainie (przypadek Krymu, czy strategię tzw. państwa islamskiego: np. nagłaśniane w mediach „wyroki śmierci”). Przekazy medialne mogą też we współczesnej wojnie pełnić funkcję odstraszającą.

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This monograph covers the output of the conference titled “2014 – New Opportunities for Japan and V-4 Cooperation” and contains Japanese and Polish contributions. It offers reflections on the *statu nascendi* of economic and cultural relations between the two nations. Viewpoints and research results mirror the various interests and arguments of the scholars (mainly economists, sociologists, and japanologists), businessmen, and representatives of administrative bodies (central and local governments) who participated in the conference, all of whom are searching for common solutions.

The presented papers are very much diversified with respect to their content and writing styles. The book itself reflects an eclectic approach. The multifaceted approach to the discussed issues facilitates the comparison of expectations against real life activities. The most important goal of the book is to identify the potential for collaboration and crucial fields in which there exist challenges and a need for changes, all in the interest of leading to a new stage of reciprocally profitable relations between Poland and Japan in today’s globalised world.



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