

YOUNG PEOPLE ACTIVITY IN LOCAL MEDIA. LOCAL MEDIA PERCEPTION AND CREATING ITS CONTENT IN POLAND AND LATVIA (SURVEY REPORTS)

Agnieszka Roguska

Siedlce University of Natural Sciences and Humanities, Poland

Resume:

The following article is the result of over 2 year period of empirical, quantity and quality research carried out in Poland and Latvia in 2014 – 2015 based on a previous piloting study. The research work was done during 3 time visits to Latvia: twice during the scientific internship at Daugavpils University in 2014 and Riga Teacher Training and Educational Management Academy followed by Erasmus + visit to Riga Teacher Training and Educational Management Academy in 2015. Similar studies were conducted in Poland during the period. Analysis and data interpretation concerned perception of local media functioning by young people aged 20 – 26 and their personal participation in a widely understood image of the media. An interesting fact was also how young generation understood local democracy seen through the angle of local media. The research was carried out with the group of 160 Poles who live in one region – the neighborhood of Siedlce and Warsaw and 108 Latvian respondents of the neighborhood of Daugavpils and Riga. The research method was a diagnostic survey and the technique was a questionnaire with the use of a questionnaire form as the tool including cafeteria of close and open questions. The article is proceeded with a short introduction to media system functioning in Poland and Latvia.

Key words:

local media, mass media in Poland, mass media in Latvia, media education, youth in the media, local democracy.

Аннотация:

Рогуска Агнешка. Деятельность молодежи в местных СМИ. Восприятие местных средств массовой информации и создания их контента в Польше и Латвии (обзорные доклады)

Данная статья – результатом более чем двухлетнего периода эмпирических, количественных и качественных исследований, проведенных в Польше и Латвии в 2014 – 2015 годах на основе предварительного пилотного проекта. Научно-исследовательская работа выполнялась в течение трех визитов в Латвию: дважды во время научной стажировки в Университете Даугавпилса в 2014 году и Рижской Академии подготовки учителей и управления образованием с последующим визитом в Ригу в рамках программы Erasmus + в Академию подготовки учителей и управления образованием в 2015 году. Аналогичные исследования были проведены в Польше в течение этого периода. Анализ и обработка данных касались восприятия функционирования местных средств массовой информации молодыми людьми 20 – 26 лет и их непосредственного участия в этих СМИ в широком смысле этого слова. Интересным был тот факт, как молодое поколение понимает местную демократию, увиденную через призму восприятия местных средств массовой информации. Исследование проводилось среди группы из 160 поляков, которые живут в одном регионе, – окрестности Седльце и Варшавы, а также среди 108 латвийских респондентов окрестностей Даугавпилса и Риги. Методом исследования было диагностическое наблюдение, а приемом – анкета с использованием бланка анкеты в качестве инструмента, включая закрытые и открытые вопросы. Статья содержит краткое введение, который знакомит с функционированием системы средств массовой информации в Польше и Латвии.

Ключевые слова:

местные средства массовой информации; средства массовой информации в Польше; средства массовой информации в Латвии; медиа-образование; молодежь в средствах массовой информации; местная демократия.

Анотація:

Рогуська Агнешка. Діяльність молоді в місцевих ЗМІ. Сприйняття місцевих засобів масової інформації і створення їхнього контенту в Польщі та Латвії (оглядові доповіді)

Наступна стаття є результатом більш ніж дворічного періоду емпіричних, кількісних і якісних досліджень, проведених у Польщі та Латвії в 2014 – 2015 роках на основі попереднього пілотного проекту. Науково-дослідна робота виконувалася протягом трьох візитів до Латвії: двічі під час наукового стажування в Університеті Даугавпілса в 2014 році і Ризькій Академії підготовки вчителів і управління освітою з подальшим візитом до Риги у межах програми Erasmus + до Академії підготовки вчителів і управління освітою в 2015 році. Аналогічні дослідження були проведені в Польщі протягом цього періоду. Аналіз і обробка даних стосувалися сприйняття функціонування місцевих засобів масової інформації молодими людьми 20 – 26 років та їхньої особистої участі у цих ЗМІ в широкому розумінні цього слова. Цікавим був той факт, як молоде покоління розуміє місцеву демократію, побачену через призму сприйняття місцевих засобів масової інформації. Дослідження проводилося серед групи зі 160 поляків, які живуть в одному регіоні, – околиці Седльце і Варшави, а також серед 108 латвійських респондентів околиці Даугавпілса та Риги. Методом дослідження було діагностичне спостереження, а прийомом – анкета з використанням бланку анкети в якості інструменту, включаючи закриті й відкриті питання. Стаття містить короткий вступ, який ознайомлює з функціонуванням системи засобів масової інформації в Польщі та Латвії.

Ключові слова:

місцеві засоби масової інформації; засоби масової інформації в Польщі; засоби масової інформації в Латвії; медіа-освіта; молодь в засобах масової інформації; місцева демократія.

The fact that mass media nowadays becomes omnipresent does not surprise anyone so it is even a cliché to repeat such statement. Such condition is even a symbol of our times and permanent necessity to exist in a widely understood sphere of information and communication. It refers to people of a wide generation spectrum, however young people are most frequent recipients especially when it refers to electronic personal media such as MP3, MP4, smartphones, tablets and laptop computers. Functions of the media, its reception, perception and its influence on the listeners together with dangers have been precisely described in scientific publications.

The article undertakes the issue of perception such as the press, radio, television, local media, social networking sites but also traditional ones such as leaflets, announcements, posters, advertisements and young people participation in their activity mainly referred to a group age of 20-26.

Following there just a few premises outlined which made me focus on such topic issue.

- 1) Rarely undertaken subject of local media seen as an information source for young generation.

- 2) Local media create local social and cultural background perceived through young generation perspective towards the media.
- 3) Ways the local media are perceived and active participation of young respondents in creating their content.
- 4) Expectations towards local media referred to the content and the ways they are further passed.
- 5) Comparing young people's opinions of the two Baltic European countries: Poland and Latvia after their political system transformations. Both of these two countries have been the EU members since 2004.

The article is aimed to provide answers to the following questions:

- 1) Is there any need among such a wide media offer to exist for local medias in respondents' opinion?
- 2) Is the local media of the respondents' preference?
- 3) Which of the local media are among most frequently searched for?
- 4) What is the influence of the local media for the closest social and cultural background perceived by the respondents?
- 5) What is the influence of the local media towards building local democracy?
- 6) In what ways local media encourage towards active participation in social and cultural life?
- 7) Do local media users have influence on the shape and functioning of the close environment?
- 8) The studies were carried out during three period visits to Latvia: it was conducted twice while serving scientific internship at the Daugavpils University in 2014 and to Riga Teacher Training and Educational Management Academy in 2015, followed by Erasmus + visit at the same centre in 2015.

The survey was carried out based on a group of 160 Poles who come from one area – neighbouring to cities (Siedlce and Warsaw) and a group of 108 Latvians who live in the neighbourhood of Daugavpils and Riga. The chosen scientific method was a diagnostic survey and the technique was a survey supported by the tool of a questionnaire form. There were numerous talks based on the research theme. The article is focused on 3 major elements: local media in Poland and Latvia, young users of these media and their opinion on its functioning perceived in micro scale. The survey is extended by a contemporary outline of the media system functioning in Poland and Latvia.

Historical, political and social background of contemporary media functioning in Poland and Latvia

A rapid and violent growth of the media in Poland started after 1989 in times of huge political, economic, social and mental changes. Since 6th February until 4th April in 1989 the debate at the

Round Table was held with the presence of People Republic of Poland officials, the clergy representatives, Solidarity movement opposition, including Mr. Lech Wałęsa, as a result of former economic state crisis and earlier strike movements of factory workers in 1988. Within the debate works at the Round Table there was a Sub – group on Mass Media Matters which worked out on a strategy of Polish Mass Media development of state, regional and local range. The period of 1989-1990 was the time when state monopoly was abolished when referred to broadcasting and television censorship, but on the other hand there initiated a development of private enterprise and background towards a free market economy. There started a release of solid initiatives including printing. Building a citizenship society and creating authentic area governing bodies started to arise. In one of Newsweek edition of 1990, the year 1989 was proclaimed as *Annus mirabilis* - the year of miracles.

In Poland, otherwise like many European Countries (Great Britain, France, the Czech Republic, Italy) commercial broadcasts dominate over public broadcasting when it simply refers to radio broadcasts, taking into account listening statistics (Godzic, 2009, p. 8). (Pawel Kukiz – a musician and the candidate in the presidential elections in 2015 declared introduction of the limit of concentrating over 20% of the local media and the ban on concentrating over 20% of central market media. Nowadays over 90% of regional media is gathered within one group: Verlagsgruppe Pasau. The most widely recognized Polish press comprise following titles: *Polityka, Gazeta Wyborcza, Rzeczpospolita, Wprost, Fakt, W sieci, Newsweek Polska, Tygodnik Powszechny.*

Poland played a significant role in 1989 as one of the first countries which liberated itself from the political dependence of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. It proves a wide social protection and social capital which was stressed by Robert D. Putman and concluded that we must learn how to use it in daily life not only in crisis situations. It was Poland, dating back to the year of 1989, which gave a lesson to other European Countries of the eastern block how successful it can become to fight for social benefits, self liberty, including freedom of speech, which is so much linked with the media. Modern times have brought new problems and challenges. It appears that nowadays the Polish world of media copes with the problem of party reliant. At the same time new ideas evoke of promoting and strengthening man- profit media, especially when it refers to the so called 'third sector' social media, although its biggest obstacle is the source and regular financing of such enterprise. Wiesław Godzic claims that such kind of non- professional activity should be supported incorporating the one which exists on the Internet

and deserves to be treated within the meaning of culture. Such kind of activity may not only contribute to revitalization of culture circulation but also enrich its resources (Godzic, 2009, p. 51). Non-professional activity still possessing its natural value can be frequently found in local spheres where regional culture is cultivated, which on the other hand can be best presented with the use of local media. Following James Curran's (2009 nr 24, p. 5-26) opinion the media should still act as a *watchdog* which means a guide to protect democracy. Even though the concept can not be compared with the reality of contemporary world of media because it makes its citizens a passive audience. However, when it refers to local media meaning the author's view becomes truly justified. Curran states that if democracy is based on an element of public sphere, should be on participation and representing then the media acting as an element of a public sphere should be an active participant and exponent of its own opinions, including the opinion of close environment. Then he points out to the fact that the media not always should be objective and impartial. However, the shape of the media system should reflect social structure. It was on 2th April 2015 when the new law was passed on local development based on its citizens support which erects basic policy towards local development supported by the society. It is a new instrument of the local area development within the European Union which was already proclaimed as the EU directive enumerated as 1303/2013. In accordance with the act, it orders to activate local societies and include them in a decision making process referred to local area development, the development of enterprise, cultivating and popularization of the local area heritage, struggle with varied forms of social exclusion (Act on 20th February 2015). Social media are amongst the subjects which initiate varied social educational cultural, economic, political, entertainment, sports and recreational events, which are important both for the development of local society and the countryside (Kowalczyk, 2011 nr 1, p.167). They take an active part to prepare young generation towards debating, and creating their opinions on important local issues, even though the survey reveals lack of interest on politics among young generation. It turns out that hardly 14% of young Poles aged 18-24 closely follow political scene, whereas 40% of the local generation focus their political interests based on major events. Their reluctant attitude comes from their belief that politicians hold their prestigious posts because of personal pleasure, higher salaries and desire to extend the group of business contacts. Only 10% admitted that politicians represented their electors and their needs (Voter 2.0 Report... 2012, p. 11-12). Those young people were irritated by arguments raised in the parliament between political parties,

long-lasting demands to explain the Smolensk airbus tragedy and annoying imperialist link between politics and the media.

Contemporary youth have lower sense of civil duty compared to their peer from 70's and 80's in the 20th century. It is frightening as they are supposed to be the driving force for future reforms and state changes which means that they are creators of their own country's shape. There is a lack of practical citizenship education directed not only towards theoretical presentation but also suggesting proposals, social initiatives accomplishment and cooperate while organizing actions. Admittedly, there are about 200 Youth Commune Councils across Poland, including those supported by Civis Polonus Foundation but it is still too little to advertise citizenship towards building a democracy. The year 2013 was stated the European Year of Citizens. (Szafranec, 2012) Varied media, regardless their types and range, including local media create world perception, influence our judgment on our current reality and let confront with other individual or present groups' views.

Latvian media sphere is diverse and quite complicated. Even the media message is divided into Latvian and Russian which creates outlook towards political, historical and social diversities. Russian speaking media are used as a tool to strengthen Russian political and business elites and create a positive image. Latvia was one of the USSR republic, thus the presence of Russian propaganda is still deeply experienced and the vision of Russian expansion is still very likely to happen. A clear example is the aggression organized by brutal disperse of the protesting people gathered in Kiev which started on 30th Nov 2013 by Special Police Forces (Berkut). There began Ukrainian struggle for independence and territorial integral link. The riots were against postponing of association agreement with the European Union and aimed to lead to resigning of the Ukrainian president Wiktor Janukovich. The actions were labeled with Euromajdan slogan but there exist other terms such as: euro-revolution, revolution for dignity or the Ukrainian Spring. The situation was perfectly reflected by Michał Kacewicz- the journalist for Newsweek Poland, in one of his books. He has been deeply interested in Russian, Ukrainian and other former Russian republics. He was an observer during the revolution riots in Ukraine (Kacewicz, 2014). Based on the revolt in the east of Ukraine it turned out that other countries such as Moldavia, Lithuania, Estonia, Latvia and Poland cannot feel safe. As the proof we might refer to the initiative of Mr Jean Claude Juncker, the leader of the European Commission, to establish European army which was met both with support as well as disapproval.

All of these issues have been observed by the media both from the suffered countries and word

broadcasts. Since the riots in Ukraine the elements of hybrid war have occurred on Latvia territory. One of the possible ways for hybrid war, apart from a direct military conflict, without an officially declared war is just the so called information and propaganda war which can be emphasized with no limits as referred to its ways of transmitting data and all manipulating actions included.

In above 2 million of inhabitants Latvia there are 500 press publishers and around 300 electronic media which face varied problems. The economic situation both of the media and the citizens is hard because half of the society lives below social minimum. The media cope with frequent staff changes, which is reflected in quality of the press.

Positive changes in public Latvian media including public radio (LR) and television (LTV) were supposed to be initiated by the Latvian National Council on Electronic Mass Media (NEPL Padome) proclaiming new strategy for the media. Their actions including rebuilding position of the public broadcasts on the market, successful competition with Russian broadcasts when it referred to creating positive and reliable image of the country. Extremely precious is to attract young viewers' attention especially when there is no clear perspective for the future and a huge emigration flood to West European countries, mainly English-speaking. It was even before 2011 when a new media law was in use based on a new legislation act passed on Electronic Mass Media (Electronic Mass Media Law). The most important records concerned two major issues:

1) State budget subsidies stay/form the basis for public media financing and the financial expenditure cannot be lower than in proceeding year; 2) The content connected with public mission will be carried out by public electronic media with possibility to appoint non-public or either country wide, regional or local broadcasts. The year 2012 brought further positive changes in the media sector, proceeded with a solid, open public and expert debate. Latvian public media reform will have been improved until 2018. Its major demands are focused around ways of financing the media. The main stream to provide subsidies is their owners' subscription fare, people who are employed and legal persons supported by subsidies provided by the government and EU programmes (Fraszczyk, 2014 nr 2 (57), s. 67-68, 70, 75; A. Rožukalne, p. 18). There is a significant growth of the Internet in Latvia which is becoming more and more accessible and popular county's media. Among the most prominent Latvian journals are: *Latvijas Avīze, Diena, Dienas Bizness, Neatkarīgā Rīta Avīze, Baltija, Rigas Balss*.

Today's all media sphere has to cope with such phenomenon as: mass of information, its satiety, superficiality of the message, paparazzi, pseudo-

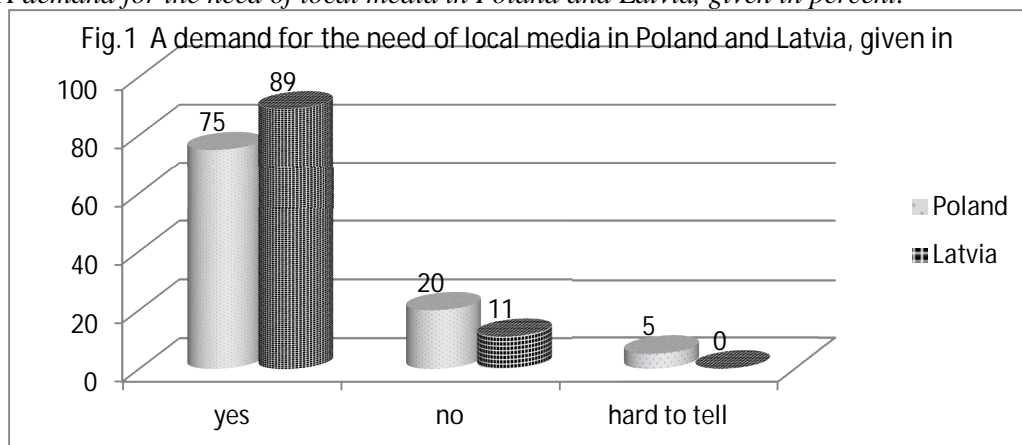
journalists who prey on media people privacy and meet their readers/ viewers anxiety, very popular and propagated pop culture with false authorities, promoting materialism, addiction to watching programmes, desire to be up-to-date and constructing false identity (Godzic, 2007; Żakowski, Godzic, 2007; Janczewski, 2011; Young, Nabuco de Abreu, 2010 nr 36(5)). "Following the author it can be said about media mentality. The media is so universal in contemporary man's life that living without it would be even impossible. If it is as that, it means that they influence our lives and perception of the world, they take part while formulating our opinions and judgements on varied topics. The media not only provide with information but also inspire towards further actions and what frequently is a drawback they enforce the way of perceiving a man in different aspects, starting from promoting a particular style of outfit, ways of looking after yourself to end up with the culture of speech and gestures" (Roguska, 2008, p. 41). On the background of global media transformations but first of all, in the face of changes in Polish and Latvian media system, the article is aimed to provide a closer look at the issue of perception of local media by young people, participating in creating the media, assessment of its functioning seen in perspective of two countries: Poland and Latvia.

Perception of local media by young people in Poland and Latvia

Local media is differently perceived and defined. All that depends on the examined area of the media range, functioning of the popular local media or simply geographical territory division. In the following article I approve the idea of Sylwester Dziki and Marian M. Gierula who define local media as those which cover a range over the area of a voivodship/ district, a big city or a group of towns with surrounding areas and they are shaped by subject matter comprising the issues important for particular group (Dziki, 1989; Gierula 2005, p. 32-33). I would enrich such meaning with the range of the local media which can obviously exceed the district limits so it may refer to a part of a county. I guess that the area of a particular media broadcasting is even more important, taking into account its activity rather than so called artificial geographical or administrative divisions of the area. Similarly local media can be shown when taking into account its owner. Thus we may enumerate varied types of media: local, public, local authority run, led by foundations and associations etc and as well as public ones perceived as commercial. Studying local media in the context of their perception by young people a very interesting fact revealed, was their opinion on functioning of the media over the area they live which denotes their close neighborhood and the region. They were asked

a question on the need of the local media. The table shown below illustrates the results.

Figure 1 A demand for the need of local media in Poland and Latvia, given in percent.



Source: Author's study.

The study revealed at the same time that young respondents were unanimous on the matter that there exists a big demand for local media functioning. The table above shows that 75% of Poles and 89% of Latvian approved local media as essential in the media market as a general. It is conforming especially in times of wide access to any kind of electronic media, including the ones of high tech standards, such as the Internet, smartphones, tablets, social media, which was proved during the research (Lincoln, 2014; Evans, 2014). Young people use these accessories very frequently or even overuse them which leads to disproportions in their daily chores or simply turns to addictions to the media which has been officially started as the 21st country epidemic.

Following there was a question on the kind of media they most frequently use. The survey showed that young people mostly use electronic mass media which meant local internet portals. Such answer was chosen among 36,2% of young Poles and 44,4% of Latvian which illustrates Fig 2. Their fascination of new information and communication technology enables not only to communicate around the globe but also allows for fast access to local information or even contribute to these websites. It is extremely helpful as the content fast become out of date in case of the press, where time is needed to prepare the text, print and finally distribute it. Here we have nearly immediate access to the Internet content. Second in order of preference was the local press and it was chosen by 25% of Poles whereas Latvian respondents chose local television and it ranged 18,5%. The least likely among the examined in order of preference were the leaflets, brochures, adverts or posters which mainly ranged about 7%. It usually happens that the same content can be found on the Internet local portals so it means that a traditional form of printing is already delayed which does not necessarily mean it is outdated but in large extend they are static and boring in reception.

There were also examined motifs why young people decided to choose local media. Both among Poles – 45% and Latvians – 46,3% citizens, they claimed that they used the media reluctantly. Only 7% of Polish and Latvian respondents admitted that they were dissatisfied with the local media which was rather low percent compared to far satisfied their peer willing to participate in local media tradition. The statistics is shown in table 3.

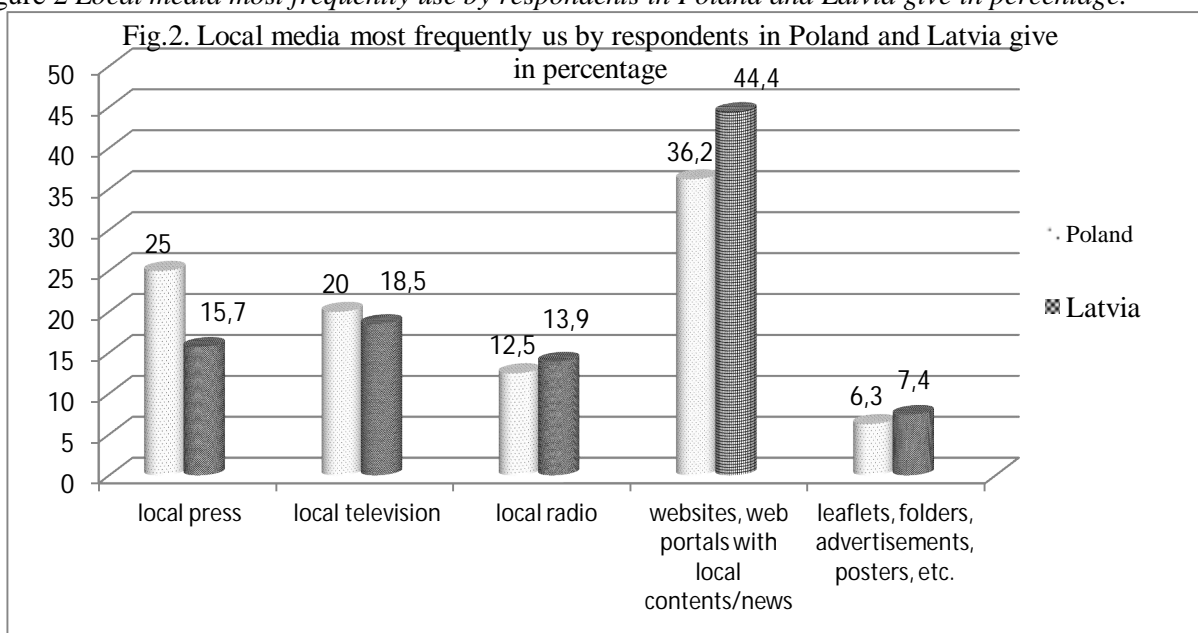
Most frequent answers which proved reluctant attitude towards local media usage among Poles and Latvian were alike. Following there a just a few quoted reasons given while doing the survey:

- I use it reluctantly because it is a source of information on the closest environment,
- the information is current.
- I use local information services and other local media because I've got used to them.
- because I can find out more interesting things;
- there is an opportunity to find a job.
- I learn what's happened in out local community
- it is an easier way to learn more about regional curiosities once heard about.
- I am very glad with the local media usage as they contain a lot of information about my school/university and I like to follow the local news.
- Only local media contrary to global ones provides with information directly referred to my area.

Another step during the study was the assessment of need of local media for the local social and cultural environment in Poland and Latvia. The question entailed a subjective view on the media in the above matter.

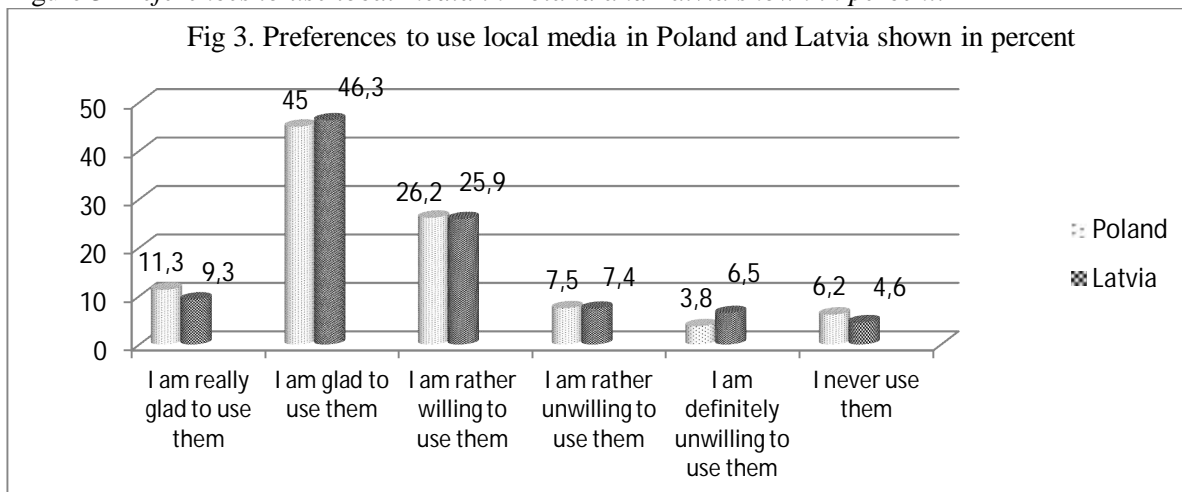
Young people in Poland – statistically it was 53,7% and Latvia 48,1% declared that their local media had significant impact on the area they had a circuit, which is presented in table 4.

Figure 2 Local media most frequently use by respondents in Poland and Latvia give in percentage.



Source: Author's study.

Figure 3 Preferences to use local media in Poland and Latvia shown in percent.



Source: Author's study.

The respondents were following asked to explain their opinion on that issue. Below are some of the responses given by some of the interviewees in Poland;

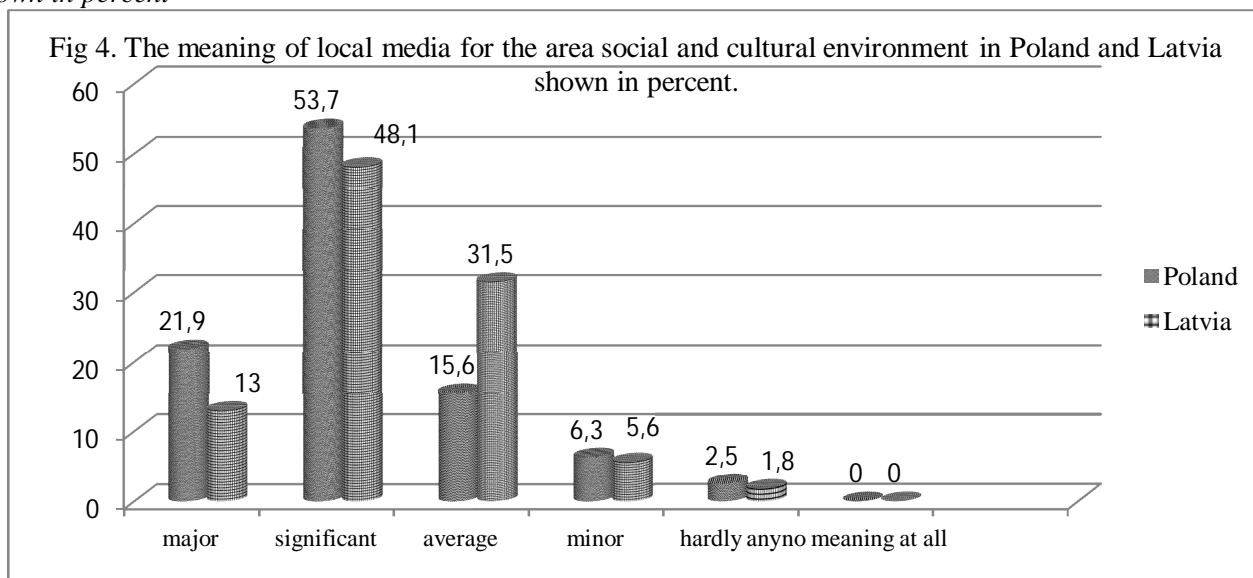
- because they develop imagination and stress the meaning of individual events or undergoing changes;
- because they can be a resource for varied knowledge on occurrences happening in the closest area;
- they stress the events, have informative character, include adverts, etc.
- the process of exchanging information is fast which enables social communication;
- they promote culture and tradition;
- they provide with accurate and detailed information for local society
- they present what is lacked in the country or global media;
- they share knowledge on culture issues;

- the media in a way create local community, support or negate institutions, companies or individuals when referred to their aims and actions;
- they promote interesting enterprises or initiatives;
- local media unite and integrate local community, e.g. charity events, cultural heritage
- Similarly Latvian respondents pointed out the fact that:
- we should know what is happening in our close neighborhood;
- everyone should be aware of what is happening around the world but also in "our small world". It is very important for everyone who is a conscious citizen of our little social and cultural sphere;
- local media is an integral part of the local landscape because the decisions made by

- local authorities directly influence our comfort or discomfort of existence;
- because a lot of people participate in varied events promoted by local media;
- I think that local media are important for all of us as they help us understand world-wide changes;

- there are local and cultural events I cannot participate and the media show them
- local media presents uniqueness of the place they function.

Figure 4. The meaning of local media for the area social and cultural environment in Poland and Latvia shown in percent



Source: based on own survey.

All these statements stress the importance of local media for people who live in the region to propagate and enrich regional culture and raise social awareness, pay attention to significant changes which happen locally. It is a very positive message underlying young people’s beliefs as to an importance and the need for local media functioning in the world of global and world media expansion, they are indulged – the so called immersion. One of the very first pioneers of a practice focused on a concept of ‘entering the painting’ was Morton Heilig who was fascinated by an opportunity to widen the scope of view, Frank Rose or Frances Dyson (Rose, 2012; Dyson, 2009). In a way we may also speak of the media local immersion. The immersion itself into the media locality is a dual-way process. On one hand, the recipients of the media in micro scale find a tiny part of social and cultural reality and its specificity. On the other hand, the user of these media mixes purely the facts referred to particular area of broadcasting. “Local mass media are much closer to its recipient rather than the state ones or even those of a larger scale as they broadcast over the area of those inhabitants who make a direct use of the message. Even for this fact and its reactivation, local media is subjected to much specific control by its recipients, where the news information or reports may more or less involve them. The local mass media founders are usually known, so their actions are judged as to their

perception accuracy of the closest environment, ways of presenting the topic or even accuracy of the facts. Many people who either use the press, radio or TV have their favorite journalists or even know them in person.” (Roguska, 2008, p. 47) Local media is the platform or a form of information exchange, local way of perceiving reality, building a trusted society, social bonds and communal awareness and they play an opinion-forming role.

Understanding democracy and creating local reality through the scope of local media in young people’s opinion

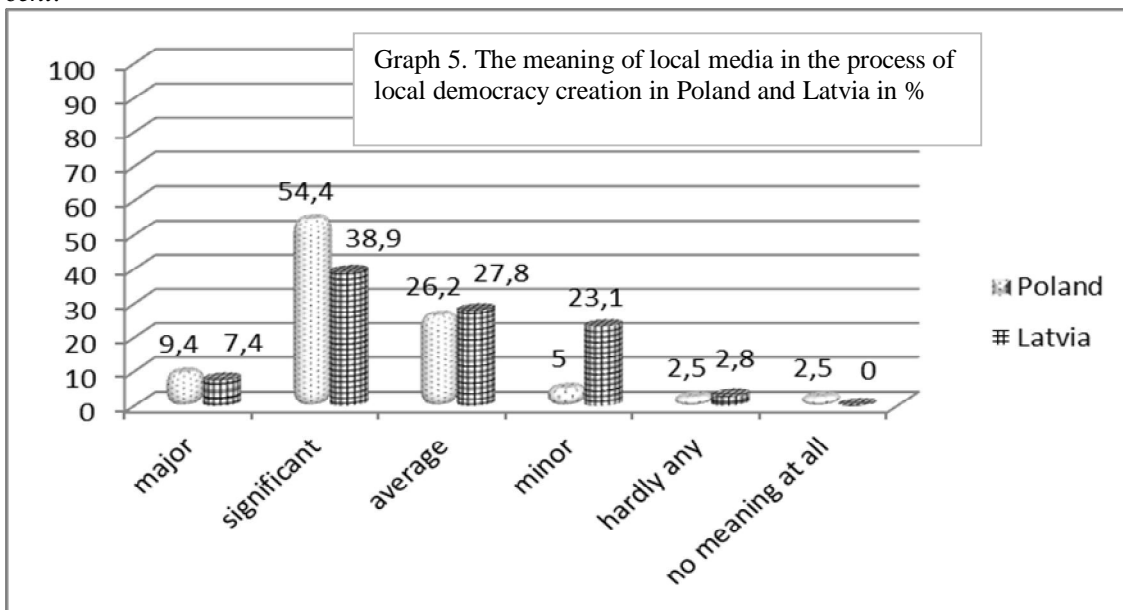
A democratic country with its citizenship society features varied kinds of institutions, mechanisms and bands in order to cooperate among individuals and groups towards common good within the existed law and particular commune habits. Important features of citizenship society are: engagement, innovation in undertaken actions, creativity in problems solving or mastering solutions in the issue of more comfortable man’s existence. These citizenship elements are even more valued when referred to local citizenship society and building local democracy. These are two inseparable and coherent elements which are to confirm that local citizens are needed for community, they take active part in creating the environment. However they feel accepted in particular social community and listened to when it comes to suggesting ideas, solutions or commenting on the reality matters.

Developing democracy means encouraging towards a direct participation in local community life and taking up grass-root initiatives in belief they will be conducted and feel as the co-host in their own hometown. Wiktor Osiatyński states that: “In democracy an important role is played by regional and local press. It mobilizes local societies and allows for permanent debate over priorities and ways to fulfill them” (Osiatyński, 2004, p. 171).

For a vast number of people life is led in local sphere. That is the place for social and political decisions to become reality, they are even touchable and directly transfer onto the shape and functioning of the region and the county. Thus, all things happening here and now are of individual or social importance. Local public sphere projects on the

shape and dynamics of democracy but also individuals, groups, subjects including local media, which influence democratic governments. (Aldridge, 2007, p. 2) Initiating new organizations, foundations, associations, the right for the society which allows to join movements are regarded as the best basis of contemporary democracy development. Information on these subjects is extremely needed and helpful as it provide orientation in the sphere of varied activities, including these of non-profit, an opportunity to join, making use of their offers or taking up a decision to initiate new subject proceeded by market analysis in particular issue. The respondents’ point of view on the importance of local media towards building local democracy is presented in chart 5.

Figure 5 The importance of local media towards building local democracy in Poland and Latvia, given in percent.



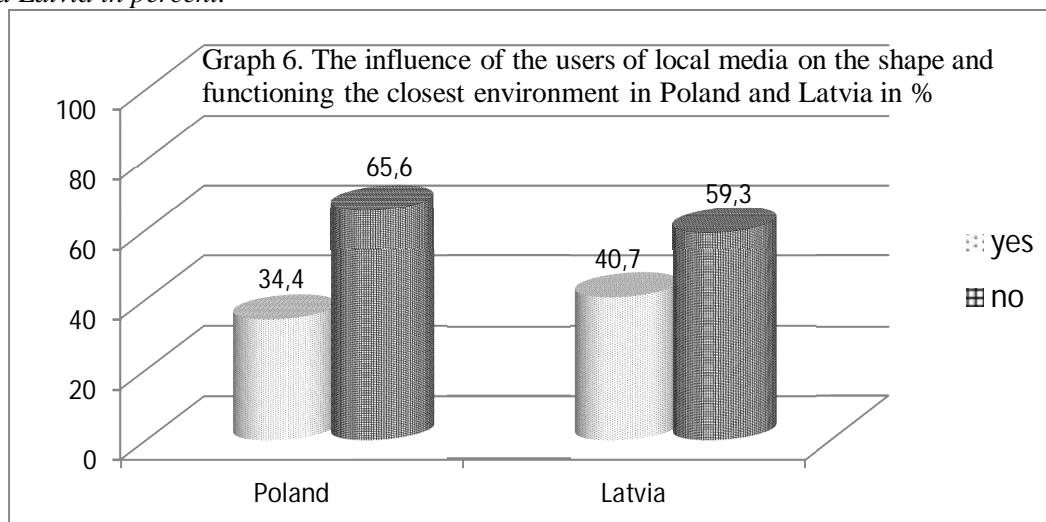
Source: based on own survey.

The respondents pointed out to large and moderate demand for local media in building local democracy. The earlier category supported by 54,4% among the examined Poles and 38,9% of Latvian citizens, whereas the latter was chosen by 26,2% of Poles and 27,8% of the Latvians. The issue of building democracy with the use of local media is closely linked with the question of the media users’ activity in creating media content and influence at the same time the shape of close environment. The study revealed interesting data which is presented in Fig.6. Young respondents feel persuaded that local media users do not influence shape and way of functioning of their close environment. Such attitude was shared among 65,6% of Poles and 59,3% of Latvian citizens.

Polish and Latvian young people admitted nearly agreeably. Following there are given some of the most characteristic responses reflecting the respondents’ attitudes:

- I’m a passive receiver of the local media and have no influence on the media content
- not every user wants to influence local environment he lives in;
- I don’t fully trust media output and its influence on the way of functioning close environment;
- by me local media news is dull and hardly addressed to young people;
- because an individual has no influence on any issue, there must be a larger group of active and determined people to make a change;
- we are not supposed to influence our close environment, these are the local and commune authorities to lead the role;
- our media, including local ones can be associated with hypocrisy. It is said what the authors would like we should know, whereas important issues are simply taken aback.

Figure 6 *The influence of the users of local media on the shape and functioning the closest environment in Poland and Latvia in percent.*



Source: based on own survey.

The above study supported by the respondents' comments on their attitude brings to conclude that the local media users do not have influence on the shape and way of functioning of the local media environment and the results are annoying. It seems that the local media are perceived as passive, having no ability to influence decisions as to initiating changes in the close environment. Similarly the users perceive themselves as those who have no forcing power to create close environment at varied spheres of man's activity supported by the local media.

As the observer of the local media reality I was also interested whether young people participated in creating the media content. It is even more interesting that they personally participate in creating global media content, especially when it referred to the Internet space, in social media such as Facebook, Twitter, Draugiem (the most popular social site in Latvia, also found in English). These people create numerous internet sites, comment on events, participate on the Internet forums, add photographs, reviews of events or frequent announcements, they boast about their artistic work, activity, promote interesting products and initiatives. Presence of young people is obvious and undeniable. I was personally interested in their activity found on the local media e.g. in creating previously offered topics, influence the framework and its shape, as well as specificity of the media, making comments on the local events. Based on the research 30% of the examined Poles and 18,5% of the Latvians admitted to having taken part in creating local media which is shown in Fig.7

It is not a high percent of participation in the theme content of the local media but it results from a number of factors. These may include firstly that young people rather choose global media as they are more attractive. Once they are already there when

they search for local themes. Moreover, local media still preserve its traditional layout based on the image, print, sound without crossing the area of its fixed limits. Thirdly, global media are more interactive and technically developed than the local media. What is more, the staff of local media does not welcome to cooperate while creating programmes and their content. Finally, there has been noticed a lack of media education towards local purposes. The respondents were asked how they participated in creating the content for the local media. Here are some of the chosen responses given by Polish youth:

- delivering materials on request;
- giving an interview e.g. on TPPR method in case of helping a child;
- creating the Internet site for a kindergarten and its presentation on local TV;
- making announcements;
- one of the paper in Bialski county asked to prepare leaflets and the content about local municipal elections;
- presentation of the circus group which was following broadcasted on local TV;
- taking part in a programme on autism made by independent Bielsat TV in Belarussia.

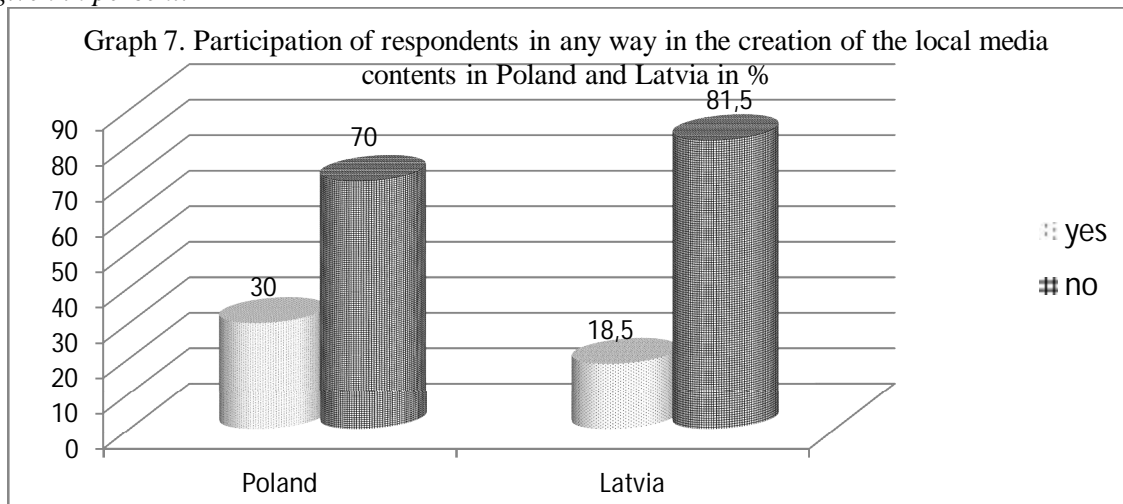
Below are some chosen responses by the Latvians:

- for few days I was working for the Latvian magazine 'Diena' and collecting materials about Riga;
- while walking to school I came across some people with a camera – they asked me about school life;
- because I'm a musician I'm frequently invited by the local media;
- I commented on the Internet forum a culture offer of my hometown;

I suggested in the local press to enclose information about some scruffy town areas and

buildings of historical importance, their history and possible ways to restore them.

Figure 7 Participation of respondents in any way in creation of the local media contents in Poland and Latvia given in percent.



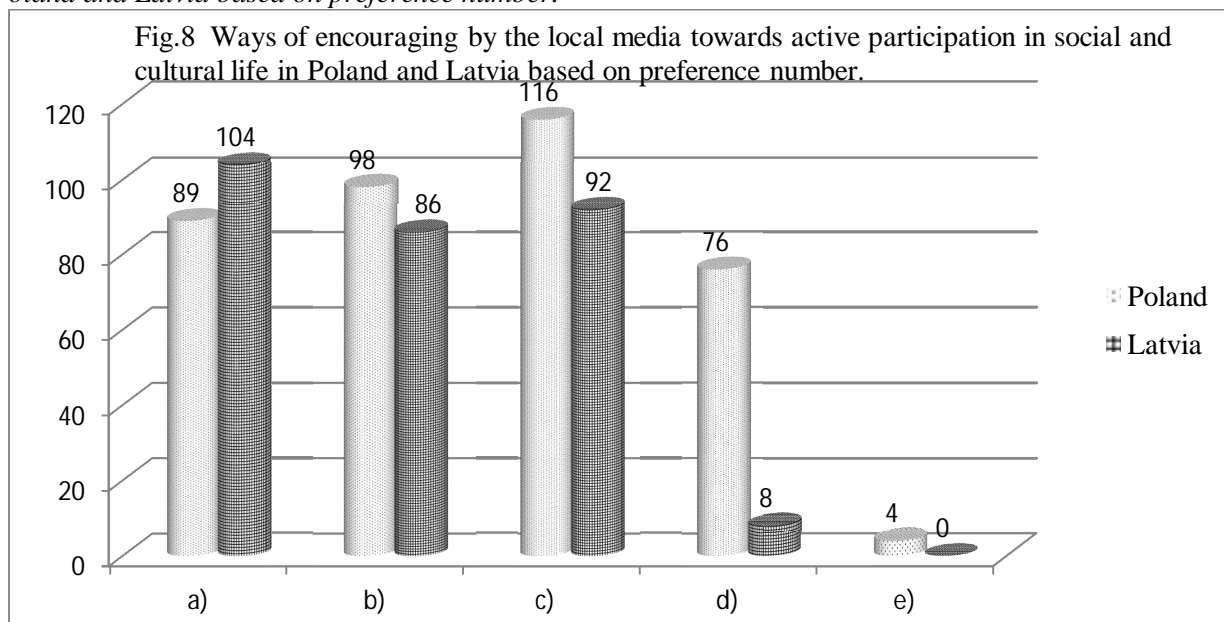
Source: based on own survey.

The above responses and questionnaire answers may suggest that young people participate in creating the content for the local media but it rather happens occasionally. It is not a permanent or a longer lasting activity. It may be an alarming signal for the media owners as they do not attract their potential viewers/ listeners or clients and they do not encourage towards cooperation. I think that this is a

neglected area of cooperation which has a huge influence on shape and power of the local media, including financial position.

I also decided to examine if local media itself and in what ways encourage towards active participation in social and cultural life of its users. The results are shown in table 8.

Figure 8 Ways of encouraging by the local media towards active participation in social and cultural life in Poland and Latvia based on preference number.



Source: based on own survey.

(The data do not sum up to 100% in total as the respondents could answer up to 3 questions).

Category of choice	Poland	Latvia
a) by presenting social and cultural activities	89	104
b) by introducing activities/ operations of individuals, institutions and entities	98	86
c) by informing about various social actions their place and time	116	92
d) they fail to encourage	76	8
e) Other	4	0

In case of Polish respondents, most frequently it was stressed that the best way of activating young people towards participation in social and cultural life in Poland is informing about social events, place and time which was confirmed by 116 respondents in this category. Following in order a category was chosen which referred to presenting activity of the people, institutions or subjects, confirmed by 98 examined, then 89 respondents pointed to presentation of social and cultural actions by the local media. Regretfully, 76 people confirmed that their local media could not attract towards an active involvement in activity focused on improving local community. Similar results were obtained while examining Latvian youth using the same criterion with slightly different order but in general they emphasized big importance of the local media in activating its users towards activities in local area. Following are the Latvian results. In the first place with the number of 104 choices was presentation of social and culture events, whereas 92 of them pointed to informing about social events, their venue and time. In the third place they enumerated introducing individuals and institutions and subjects which acted in local sphere. There were just 8 respondents who stressed that local media did not activate their viewers/ listeners towards actions directed at local society. In this respect young Latvians appreciated more local media activity towards encouraging to varied activities in the local area compared to their Polish partners.

SUMMARY

Local media among Polish and Latvian youth is within their interests. They reluctantly declare that they make a use of it and share similar views as to its functioning. However, with these coherent opinions there can be seen some divergences. It mainly refers to stressing by young respondents their need for the local media existence in their close neighbourhood. On the other hand, the research has revealed that young people of both examined countries in little measures take an active part in creating the content thus they change the local media image in little extent. Much more young people's involvement can be found in modern local media emitted in an electronic way and it mainly refers to the Internet portals. What is an advantage, is the fact that young respondents of both countries agreeably claim that the local media even though make an attempt to encourage towards active participation in social and culture life.

Polish and Latvian interviewees most frequently use local internet portals because the young generation was brought up in times of digital era of picture based, short and fast changing images. Of much lower interest were the local press and the TV regarded as static media which present news with a delay compared to real occurrence. The lowest number in the use of the local media were the so

called minor or small media such as leaflets, adverts, posters and brochures.

While doing the research it was revealed that young people most preferably stayed on the net where they looked for some information on the local environment. It is a clear signal for the local media that its activity in much extent could be forwarded into virtual space. Traditional media is no longer an interest for young generation because of its static, mono-dimensional message and its content in terms of staying up-to-date. Moreover, young people tend to fast react to reality faced by posting (inputting) comments, opinions or the so called likei, memos, photos etc. Even though local media is becoming more and more accessible on the net e.g. in the form of internet portals, the radio, it seems that a straightforward replacement from a traditional form into a virtual surface is not sufficient enough.

Local media face the challenge of searching and working on a new formula of the net existence by meeting expectations and requirements of its users. It does not only concern the message or way of presenting but also considering the elements of market competition, innovative solutions, to be attractive for young and becoming younger generation of the media recipients. I think that future local internet media – I just call it that way – should comprise a formula of co-creating the content with the help of young people. The direction should be as follows, to enable young generation feel like co-workers of the media and they were sure about their presence in creating these media and closest reality at the same time.

The respondents confirmed that local media is of big importance for the local and cultural society they live in. It may be said that they are conscious of real mission of these subjects its broad and successful way of informing and promoting different kind of actions which was confirmed by our respondents' statements. There was also confirmed a slight participation of young generation in creating local media content, especially those of traditional circuit.

The interviewees pointed to large and average involvement of the media in building local democracy. Independent local media is an indispensable pillar of democracy in Poland. There is no democracy without media pluralism and that can be guaranteed by local media because such kind of mass communication is different, specific – just like the region they live on. Local space together with its local media is a space one of its kind which derives its spirit – in Roman mythology it was called 'genius loci'. It is connected with many factors e.g. landform features and the sense of link, character of the region, scope of activity, building self-image, cooperation with other local subjects, involvement of the workers, deciding on priorities, openness towards positive changes etc. What can be

worrying is the fact that young people do not believe in their opportunities to shape and influence close community by personal involvement in creating content of the media in micro scale. Such opinions can be supported by their passive reception of the local media, lack of any trust when it comes to the media message but they also blame the media itself for such situation. In this respect they reproach the media with the lack of looking for contact with young people, trying to figure out their needs and expectations and in much extent persisting traditional and linear forms of the media message whereas young people spend more time online.

According to the research the best way to activate young Poles by local media in social and cultural life is to bring information about varied social events, their venue and time, introduce individuals, institutions and subjects as well as present social and cultural actions. Similar view was shared about young Latvians with different order of chosen priorities. Their major expected aim addressed to local media was to present social and cultural actions, followed by being informed about social and cultural events and finally introduce individuals and groups' activity who create in the local community.

Based on the study it may be felt that young local media users perceive and praise positive sides of media functioning in micro scale, however it is not

going parallel with their engagement in the process of building their potential and increase opportunities of development in varied spheres: technical, possessing factual knowledge, distributional, prestigious etc.

What is a remarkable drawback is the lack of education towards local media study, even though it can be heard the term of media education in general with the process of implementing or putting into life depending on the county or region which can be supported by rich resource base on that issue (Buckingham, 2003; Buckingham, 2013; Hobbs, 2011; Scheibe, Rogow, 2012; *Media education...*2015). It still seems that the subject of education focused on local environment in broad meaning and including local mass media is of rare study. Although the aim of the research was to receive young people's opinions on the issue of local media functioning and their involvement in the media content, still the data analysis gained positive value. It revealed the need for such kind of further studies directed towards local media, taking into account young generation of viewers who are just entering the age of abilities to create global reality but also the local one, including the media. The article reveals the need for local media education which was previously signaled by Meryl Aldridge commenting briefly "Local media: popular, important - and ignored" (Aldridge, 2007, p. 1).

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Рецензент: Лук'янова Л.Б. – д.пед.н., професор

Сведения об авторе:

Рогуска Агнешка
rogag@wp.pl

Естественно-гуманитарный университет,
Гуманитарный факультет
ул. Житня, 27, г. Седльце, Польша

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Information about the authors:

Roguska Agnieszka
rogag@wp.pl

University of Natural Sciences and Humanities, Poland
Faculty of Humanities, Department of Pedagogy

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