

Electronic sports (also known as e-sports) are nowadays one of the fastest growing branches of the digital entertainment. Rivalry on a professional level within competitive video games proves to be immensely popular both in terms of live events and their media coverage via digital streaming platforms. Even though South Korea remains the homeland of e-sports, a rapid and successful development of this phenomenon is noted in many other regions of the world. Poland and Hong Kong are nowadays two unique examples of proliferating e-sports hubs, involving large-scale events featuring professional gameplay.

This project encompasses the investigation of large-scale e-sports events in Poland and Hong Kong. Two aspects of e-sports events will be considered: ludic spectacle and mediated participation. The first one involves an analysis of publicly available large-scale e-sports events, such as tournaments and competitions of international rank. The goal of this part of the project is to describe, analyze and interpret the issues connected with ludic and social aspects of large e-sports events, focusing especially on audience participation and specific fans' practices. In the second part of the project, the e-sports events will be assessed in terms of mediated participation, that is the live-streamed broadcast via Twitch.tv, which in Poland and Hong Kong is the dominant digital streaming platform featuring large-scale e-sports events. The examples of investigated large-scale e-sports events include Intel Extreme Masters in Poland and the largest Asian e-sports Mong Kok hub, located in Hong Kong.

The project aims to build upon existing classic scholarship concerning the various forms of play (as described by Johan Huizinga or Roger Caillois) and move into the game studies and media studies-oriented platform analysis. The overarching goal of the study is to investigate the overlapping areas of technological and ludic affordances in the case of large-scale e-sports events. The key research topics include the influence of streaming medium (Twitch.tv) on the reception of e-sports events in Poland and Hong Kong, comparison of e-sports cultures in the aforementioned regions – especially in the context of fans' cultural production, and the assessment of factors influencing the content and form of a broadcast. The last element pertains the selection of broadcasted titles and specific fragments of gameplay, nature of e-sports commentary and the level of interaction afforded by the various on-site amenities, as well as digital interfaces of streaming media.

The methodological scaffolding of the project will be grounded theory, and among the auxiliary research techniques encompasses Goffmanian frame analysis (adapted specifically for Twitch.tv analysis by Finnish game studies scholars) and paratextual framework as conceptualized by Mia Consalvo.

The project aims to address the research gap in the current research of e-sports, covering topics which do not occur in the current research projects concerning this phenomenon. There is still shortage of studies concerning regional e-sports cultures in Poland and Hong Kong, and the existing research lacks comparative angle. The research outcomes of this project will contribute to the area of game studies, and also aim to broaden the perspective of media studies inquiries concerning the modern modes of media production and consumption.