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SOCIAL AND CULTURAL DETERMINANTS OF E-SPORTS

Let us introduce our readers to the topic of electronic sport by quoting Michał Jasny (2019), one of the editors of this issue:

Regardless of whether we acknowledge its status as sport or not, and regardless of whether we use the spelling *esports* or *e-sports*, competitive video gaming remains a dynamically developing, socially significant and scientifically inspiring cultural phenomenon. Social sciences will likely find it increasingly more difficult to omit e-sports as a factor in the post-modern perspectives and state of research on sport, and in the future, this may become one of the greatest challenges in this respect (pp. 68-69).

E-sports has been a part of the global scientific discourse for over a decade (Thiel, John 2018; Hindin et al. 2020; Reitman et al. 2020). In Poland, interest in e-sports has been growing systematically among the representatives of many different disciplines, from sports science (Stępnik 2009; Jasny 2020a, 2020b; Sahaj 2021), through sociology (Dąbrowski 2011; Nosal 2015; Nyćkowiak 2018; Nyćkowiak, Kołodziej 2018; Kołodziej 2019), to philosophy (Michaluk, Pezdek 2016), or even legal sciences (Klimczyk, Leciak 2020; Grzybczyk 2021). Of course, the above list is far from exhaustive, and there are many more publications in various scientific disciplines.

The focal point of this issue is the sociocultural dimension of e-sports. The authors represent various disciplines and address a broad spectrum of issues that help to better understand the scientific outlook on this phenomenon. Explaining its theoretical and empirical basis in an innovative and interesting manner the authors prove that interdisciplinarity, or even transdisciplinarity, contribute greatly to science development. This is particularly true for phenomena such as e-sports, which is not confined to any single discipline in terms of research potential, and instead occupies the border of many different disciplines, thus encouraging researchers to go beyond the methodological and theoretical frameworks they are accustomed to.

The topics of the articles published in this issue include the professionalisation of e-sports activity and its ethical considerations, gamification in the context of current issues surrounding the COVID-19 pandemic, and the development of the e-sports industry from the perspective of the creators and users of technology. Furthermore, the authors address multi-directional preparation for e-sports activity (mental and physical training), recognition of different e-sports activities as sport, emancipation of women and sexual minorities in e-sports, and the image of e-sports players in social media.

Tomasz Sahaaj reviews the significance of electronic games in social reality and the factors that contribute to it. He provides numerous examples to discuss the ongoing digitisation of society, including sport, which has been progressing even more intensely due to the COVID-19 pandemic; the educational and integrative function of games; the paradigmatic shift with respect to the ‘destereotypisation’ and ennoblement of games; the institutionalisation of e-sports and the continuously growing interest in e-sports among scientists.

Andrzej Stepnik reviews the basic categories of dysfunction in e-sports. He references Lawrence Kohlberg’s concept of moral development, pointing out its usefulness for investigation into e-sports. He also references the notion of fair play as a potential reservoir of norms and values that make up the ethics of competitive gaming. Stepnik proposes a model of a normative system, composed of several levels, that regulates the attitudes of e-sports players, referees and organisers.

In his article, Kamil Kleszczyński attempts to determine the extent to which digital technology, which plays a crucial role in many social processes, is developing to include playable media. He shows that our increasingly digitised environment benefits the introduction of gamification. Society begins to recognise it as participation in a game, even more so due to the COVID-19 pandemic, which has accelerated digitisation in many areas. While the negative impact of the pandemic should never be disregarded, one must agree with Kleszczyński that it has amplified the potential of gamification. Gamification simplifies complex processes and remodels them into ones that help relieve the discomfort caused by the restrictions related to COVID-19.

Bastian Kordyaka, Björn Kruse and Björn Niechaves analyse the relationship between brand identification and level of engagement in e-sports consumers, and suggest that designing technology with brand identification in mind should improve such engagement. They demonstrate that the chance that an e-sports consumer associates a brand with engagement in

e-sports decreases with age.

Mehmet Kartal and Cenk Temel also address the age of e-sports consumers. They analyse how university students conceptualise e-sports and what they associate it with. Kartal and Temel's results indicate a growing potential for the development of e-sports activities among a young population, which they believe may be a key factor in the development of the e-sports industry.

Natalia Koperska reviews studies on the applicability of video games in education, in particular, mental training. She provides a synthetic overview of the results concerning the areas that may benefit from the use of video games as an extension of mental and physical training. Koperska's overview encompasses such aspects as visual sensitivity, sensitivity to contrast, motor skills (including precision of movement), the ability to make quick decisions under changing circumstances, focus, and social competences (interpersonal, leadership, and communication skills). She also discusses the effect of games on aggressive behaviours in youth.

The next article, by Michał Jasny and Tomasz Sodomirski, goes back to the topic of e-sports activity. Specifically, the authors explain that although e-sports has not yet been recognised as sport, the training regime of e-sports players can be compared to that of traditional sports persons. Jasny and Sodomirski conclude that physical exercise, sleep, and pharmaceuticals do not play a significant role in the daily training routine of e-sports players, as opposed to traditional sport, in which they constitute key factors. Nevertheless, e-sports players are aware that a healthy lifestyle benefits performance in e-sports, which is why they take care to use an appropriate diet and sleep long directly before a tournament.

Michał Dąbrowski discusses the types of activity that may be considered e-sports and whether chess can be considered a sport or e-sports discipline. Dąbrowski analyses chess in the context of three definitions: sport, games (and entertainment) and e-sports, and shows that from a specific perspective, chess can be described with any of the three terms. In his study conducted among professional chess players, chess fans, e-sports players, and individuals completely unrelated to chess, Dąbrowski has reached interesting conclusions. He states that chess should be considered sport, whereas as e-sports, it is a new phenomenon that still requires investigation. At the same time, one should remember that chess is still simply a game and a form of entertainment under some circumstances.

Marek Kołodziej addresses the emancipation of women through sport, including e-sports. However, the scope of the article extends beyond the topic of emancipation. Kołodziej references Anthony Giddens to show

that sport, specifically e-sports, may become a tool for politics, including emancipatory politics. Based on historical examples of women participating in sport, Kołodziej demonstrates that emancipation through sport may apply to various social categories and minorities, such as sexual minorities. He also indicates two primary sources of such phenomena in e-sports. The first source are games in which developers have introduced elements supportive of tolerance and equality. The second source are the player communities, which contain an increasing share of women, as well as individuals who speak openly about their non-heterosexual orientation.

The e-sports thread ends with ArturKinal's article about the self-creation of one's image in social media among Polish e-sports players. The development of the Internet and the growing popularity of new media has made them one of the most important channels of communication for politicians, public figures, celebrities, and sports persons. The self-creation of one's image has become not only a means of expressing membership in a community, but also part of a marketing strategy. This is particularly significant for e-sports players, because their fans, firstly, come from specific environments and secondly, prefer this form of communication. Kinal compares the terms *player* and *nerd* based on the Facebook profiles of top Polish e-sports players in order to analyse their self-presentation strategy. He indicates profiles the content of which indicates a semi-professional, hobbyist approach to e-sports and the 'nerd' community and those that show a strong professionalisation of their owners' e-sports activity. He also considers whether it is possible for certain aspects related to the image of a nerd to be adopted by the increasingly professionalised e-sports industry.

The final part of this issue contains articles devoted to the perception of poverty in Ukraine and labour migration of Ukrainians. The last article addresses barriers to inter-sector cooperation between business and social economics.

Natalia Pohorila explains how state paternalism, materialism and xenophobia may affect the perception of poverty as the personal fault of poor individuals, and indicates the interregional differences in the evaluation of said personal fault of poor individuals.

Piotr Michalak believes that economic factors related to the situation on the Ukrainian labour market are a particularly significant contributor to Ukrainians deciding to migrate in search of better income. And while these factors obviously stimulate migration to the Polish labour market, Michalak rightly states that the low level of satisfaction of the Ukrainian labour migrants reduces the chance that they will stay in Poland. This is important for the assessment of long-term consequences of labour migration for the

Polish labour market and indicates a potential for future interventions aimed at improving the changes that a Ukrainian decides to stay in Poland permanently.

In the final article, Anna Mielczarek-Żejmo and Rafał Sikora investigate the determinants of relationships between social economics entities and the business sector. The authors point out that there are multiple barriers hampering the progress and effectiveness of cooperation between social economics and business. According to Mielczarek-Żejmo and Sikora, these institutional, mental and operational barriers are the key factors determining the chances for a successful inter-sector cooperation.

The editors of this issue hope that thereaders will find this selection of articles unique for at least a number of reasons. Firstly, this is the first time that the topic of electronic sport appears in *RocznikLubuski*. Secondly, as far as we are aware, this is also the first scientific publication of this kind in Poland. Thirdly, the authors of the articles published in this issue have risen up to the difficult challenge of creating an interdisciplinary compilation that provides a solid foundation for a discussion on the contemporary significance and perspectives for development of e-sports.

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