

Bartosz Mika<sup>1</sup>

## The Polish amateur fansubbing community as an example of online collaboration project

The availability of cultural content provided by modern means of communication is enormous. In developing countries, the internet becomes the main tool to bridge the gap in cultural transmission. Also, it facilitates active participation in the global cultural exchange, as today's customers increasingly act as prosumers. They not only receive the cultural content but also participate in its development and modification. However, for many consumers in Poland and other countries in the (semi-)periphery of world system, the language is the main barrier to cultural consumption. Most of the content of culture available on the internet – i.e., video content – is unintelligible for the Polish audience. Therefore, translation of dialogues becomes an essential aspect of cultural participation. This paper considers the internet community that responded to this need, i.e., amateur fansubbers. They create specific online mass collaboration projects whose characteristics will be analysed within the framework of Talcott Parsons's theory.

**Key words:** network society, internet, contributors, fansubbing, online collaboration, amateur subtitling, peer production

### Introduction

Modern means of communication, particularly the internet, are a field of study and reflection for intellectuals representing very diverse fields, from cultural studies (e.g. Manovich 2001) to economy and management (e.g. Battelle 2005). A large part of researchers' attention has been directed to the genesis and structure of the groups operating through the World Wide Web (e.g. Weber 2004). Without a doubt, communities of programmers, hackers and computer scientists working on open source projects are among the most fully described internet communities (e.g. Himanen 2001).

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<sup>1</sup> Uniwersytet Gdański; bartosz.mika@ug.edu.pl.

From the '70s onwards, hackers<sup>2</sup> seeking efficient and error-free communication developed organizational project rules that enable them to develop advanced products with minimal coordination (Benkler 2006). "Digital Artists" (Raymond 1997) have spontaneously united forces by building open source software such as Linux or Apache. The distinguishing features of community projects undertaken by computer scientists have been their openness, absence of hierarchy and voluntary participation, members taking upon themselves particular set responsibilities, mass scale, accepting various forms of spontaneous coordination, division of tasks into small parts (Granovetters 1973; 1983) and relatively weak ties<sup>3</sup>.

The model of cooperation developed by computer scientists and hackers at the dawn of the information age has subsequently been adopted by a wider community of programmers working on open source projects. It has proven that it is possible to create complex, highly qualified products outside hierarchical organizations and the open market (Benkler 2006), in the common meaning of this term. Referring to the classical study of Coase (1937) on markets and the cost of coordinating human action, we can say for Yochai Benkler, that hackers working on open source projects found a new, effective solution to the problem of transaction cost.

The popularization of personal computers and the internet stimulated the development of groups other than hackers that adopted similar rules. The authors of Wikipedia (Danielewicz 2010) or artists presenting their work on the internet (Benkler 2006) organized their own efforts in a similar manner. The catalyst for the formation processes of these communities has definitely become Web 2.0 – the second generation of web-technologies that enables users to co-create the media content available on the internet.

One of the communities that have adopted the hackers' cooperation model are fansubbers, who translate foreign – mainly American – movies and TV series (much less the videos of concerts, meetings with authors, speaking cabaret) and share their work on the internet. As in many other countries where English is not the first language, the input of fansubbers and the internet access is a widely available remedy for the slow pace of mainstream channels of cultural transmission. The population of recipients of this type of effort is counted in the hundreds of thousands (see page 10).

Researchers (e.g. Rheingold 2000; O'Hagan 2011) recognize that amateur fansubbing belongs to virtual communities whose wealth comes from the work

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<sup>2</sup> In common parlance and journalism, the term "hacker" is reserved for cyber-criminals, but among experts, a hacker is a programmer who is passionate about digital technologies. For outlaws, they reserve the term "cracker".

<sup>3</sup> Granovetter opposed weak ties to strong ties. The latter bind us with our relatives and closest friends, weak ties, on the other hand, connect us with wider social circles (e.g. colleagues from work, neighbours, acquaintances). Weak ties are important because of information flow. Our close friends tend to move in the same circles that we do, the information they receive overlaps considerably with what we already know. Acquaintances, by contrast, know people that we do not, and thus receive more novel information.

of many contributors, and is an offspring of Web 2.0. As is pointed out by Bold (2012), this type of activity leads to the creation of wealth for one's own satisfaction and for one's own use rather than for sale. Cintas and Sánchez (2006) point out that fansubbing gathered momentum in the mid-'90s with the spread of computer and network technology. According to Lessig (2008), we can say that amateur fansubbers form a sharing economy where the process of peer-production (Benkler 2006) appears. Treating amateur fansubbers as one example of the Web 2.0 community, we aim at a detailed analysis of this online community and how far they are similar to other communities of this type (such as Linux developers, Wikipedia editors, etc.). In the analysis we apply the Parsonian general value system theory (1951). This theoretical tool can offer empirical data, which accurately describes the fansubber community. Further, it permits to make more general conclusions regarding the specificity of the community formed through the internet.

In this study we present an analysis of a community which has been described mainly by linguists. Focusing on this fansubbers community from a sociological perspective offers not only insight into the development of the group, its hierarchy and means of cooperation, but also will stress their role in transmission of the cultural content (i.a. movies, TV series). As mentioned before this community will be treated as an example of a specific online society. A direct inspiration to undertake research of this type of community was the speed of fansubbing. At the beginning of the research the question was asked: how is it that just a few hours after the American premiere of a TV series subtitles in Polish are available? How many people are engaged in this process, what are their relationships, how do they contact one another, do they know one another personally, on what criteria do they derive the material for translation, etc.? How important is the fact that they cooperate through the internet?

## Data collection

The data was collected in two stages. First, we executed a detailed desk study by accessing the available resources on the internet, especially internet forums, press articles about fansubbing. As fansubbers groups (i.a. Hatak Group, DarckProject, Kinomania.org, napisy.info) operate on the web, lots of information could be retrieved from the sites of particular fansubber groups, their forums and from press comments about this community. Preliminary research results showed that the community of fansubbers have similar characteristics to those of typical online cooperation groups, as mentioned above (e.g. hackers), organized around a common purpose, distributed, non-hierarchical and coordinating its activities through the network and so on.

Secondly, we aimed at approaching group members themselves. As we aimed at assuring the accuracy and reliability of the data used, three techniques were ap-

plied; online surveys conducted among amateur fansubbers, in-depth interviews with “leaders”<sup>4</sup> of the society and categorized analysis of fansubber online forums.

“Leaders” were selected based on the activity of individual fansubbers online forums and on Facebook. The e-mails were also sent to various groups asking for an indication of their leaders. We planned to conduct five to ten interviews with leading Polish fansubbers of subtitles. Unfortunately, only the leaders of the Hatak Group and the owner of the website: [napisy.info](http://napisy.info) agreed to participate in the interview. Correspondence with representatives of the DarkProject SubGrup has failed to persuade the leader of community affiliated around the site [kinomania.org](http://kinomania.org) to participate in the study. The same attempts to contact the founder of the Hatak group did not result in any response. In general, direct contact with members of the fansubbers was not easy. Many leaders refused to participate in the interview or agreed only to exchange correspondence. Personal interviews usually were not available. Of the seven interviews that ultimately were carried out only two were held face to face, and that while allowing complete anonymity. Yet, a lot of valuable information was gathered via electronic mail, instant messaging and online phone-calls.

Cross-sections of interviewees provide comparable information. Two of them are leaders in their community, two of them are not attached to any subgroup of fansubbers, one of them was a fansubber – as he called himself – “retired”, one interviewee was a young translator.

A survey was carried out by means of a questionnaire on the page [www.ebadnia.pl](http://www.ebadnia.pl). The survey included 26 closed or semi-open questions. The questionnaire was distributed through a link referring directly to its content. A request to complete the questionnaire was sent to the fansubbers community into the top five sides, uniting this community and Facebook. Due to the low response rate the request was repeated in private messages. Finally, 23 complete questionnaires were collected, which is the satisfactory result considering the small number of the fansubber population (100–150 participants).

The third method used was to analyse the fansubbers online forums. They were analysed using a questionnaire containing the following ten criteria: 1) Key issues that appear on the forum, 2) Social diversity of users, 3) The appearance of the discussion on division of tasks (connected with subtitle production), 4) The appearance of the discussion on means of work (as well connected with subtitle production), 5) The presence of copyright issues, 6) The presence of personal topics, 7) Evaluation of translations, 8) Discussions on the group cohesion, 9) Discussing the motives of accession to the group, 10) Existence of social conflicts.

To provide inter-rater-reliability, a systematic analysis of the fansubbers internet forums was conducted by an outside investigator based on the above research

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<sup>4</sup> A quotation mark has been used, because, as we will see, they are not leaders in any traditional way.

questions. The analysis was primarily qualitative, therefore we do not provide quantitative indicators on specific topics<sup>5</sup>.

The data obtained from the sources described above attempt to achieve the following research objectives: 1) diagnosis of the organizational structure of the fansubbers community and its control mechanisms, 2) identification and description of the processes of recruitment and de-recruitment to a group of fansubbers, 3) explanation of the motives driving the hobby work of fansubbing, 4) knowledge of formal and informal competences of members of the group influencing the quality of their work.

The following analysis presents the conclusions from the comparison of all three data sources.

## Legal issues

Before we get into the analysis of empirical data we should consider legal issue. Two closely related problems play an important role in that matter: copyright relating to audio-visual material, and copyrights to the subtitles themselves. As Venuti put in: "Copyright is reserved for the author, the producer who originates the form of the underlying work [...]. The author's copyright encompasses not only reproductions, printed copies of the work, but also derivative works or adaptations, a category that explicitly includes translations" (Venuti 1995: 49). So, from this point of view, both the use of audio-visual material derived from illegal sources and translation without permission of the creator of the original work are prohibited. However, some also claim that much is left to personal interpretation (Phillips 2003) because of certain ambivalence inherent in copyright. We mean: on the one hand, present in the European (including Polish) and the American legal concept of *fair use* and on the other hand, legal protection of subtitles authorship. For example the Polish Supreme Court granted the status of work to translations so as the translation itself is protected by copyright (Case number II CKN 1399/00).

At the same time it can be argued that an amateur translation used for one's own purposes (fair use) is one thing and publishing and distributing amateur translations, which are also adapted to pirated versions of films, is quite another. So online publication of subtitles implies important consequences. The translation is simply no longer neutral under the law (it cannot be treated as fair use). Translation of work done only for one's own purposes is permitted by Polish (and European) law and is within fair use, so does not infringe on copyrights. Therefore, when issuing one's own amateur translation, a fansubber goes beyond the

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<sup>5</sup> Five fansubbers forums was analysed: [www.napisy.info](http://www.napisy.info), <http://www.szklarski.eu>, [forum.gwrota.com](http://forum.gwrota.com), <http://dark-project.nstrefa.pl/forum/index.php>, [www.kinomania.org](http://www.kinomania.org). All the statements found on these forums in the period from March to April 2012 were taken into consideration.

authorized use and distributes the works or a subsidiary work without the consent of the original copyright holder.

The topic is being discussed all over the world (Díaz Cintas, Sánchez 2006; Philips 2003; Venuti 1995) and “in Poland it has received particular attention due to a case of subtitlers being apprehended for indulging in their hobby” (Bogalecka 2011: 17). In December 2005, Gutek Film applied to the two largest sites with subtitles for the closure of its business and threatened them with lawsuits. Piotr Waglowski in the text entitled “Napisy do filmów na celowniku” [Subtitles for targeted films] reported a temporary suspension of the site [napisy.info](http://napisy.info) (Waglowski 2005). The result was the resignation of the activities of distributors of the site owners which was then taken over by a new owner. Eighteen months later, the Foundation for the Protection of Audiovisual Works supported by the same distributors inspired law enforcement agencies to take action against the site [www.napisy.org](http://www.napisy.org). As a result, a police action took place on May 17, 2007, and was the largest action against the fansubbing community (not only in Poland). According to a statement posted on the official website of the police, nine people were arrested, including administrators and fansubbers of this website. The property, equipment and server located in Germany were secured. In initial information on this subject, the police explained its actions: “Suspects are subject to a penalty of up to two years imprisonment. According to Polish law, a person translating the movie’s soundtrack must have permission from the copyright holder to distribute such translations. The detained person had no such consent” (Policja.pl 2007). Law enforcement authorities interpreted the law in force by recognizing that the making of translations itself (independently from its purpose) require the consent of the copyright holders of the original work. This position is inconsistent with the previously cited the Polish Supreme Court statement.

After [napisy.org](http://napisy.org) was shut down many comments among the fansubber community were devoted to the legal side of the activity. Fansubbers argued – according to the Supreme Court statement – that a translation is an original work and its distribution depends on the will of the author. This interpretation is in conflict with Article 2 of the Polish Law on Copyright and Related Rights, which says: “The distribution and use of a developed work depends on the approval granted by the author of the original work” (translation in: Bogalecka 2011). There remains the question of allowing the distribution of fair use copies of works among colleagues and friends. After closing the site [napisy.org](http://napisy.org) one of the fansubbers asked in an interview with the magazine “Tygodnik Powszechny”: “Are people who have logged on to our site our friends or not? Because we know each other better than others in the real world. And if not, when will they become our close friends: after one week, one month? How many of those friends may be: ten? A hundred? A thousand?” (quoted in: Piskała 2007). Who, therefore, and under what conditions can grant access to own a translation of a film and TV series? Fansubbers associated around [kinomania.org](http://kinomania.org) argued in an open letter disclosed after the clos-

ing of *napisy.org* that they have been victims of vague provisions<sup>6</sup> (List otwarty... 2007). The representatives of distributors came to more or less similar conclusion when it became clear that the fansubbers and administrators detained in May 2007 were not to be punished in any way. Three years after the famous action against fansubbers, the police decided to discontinue the investigation because of lack of evidence<sup>7</sup>. Jakub Duszyński from Gutek Film commented on the ending of this case: "Since there are no legal instruments, it makes no sense to care about this", stating earlier that the whole thing with the site *napisy.org* "would be useless. We see the internet now as a source of potential and do not want to fight with anybody" (cf. Pietraszewski 2010).

Failure of the case *napisy.org* discouraged defenders of copyright issues from the battle with fansubbers. It also left the fansubbers community in a state of suspension. It is clear that the use of audio-visual content from illegal sources is prohibited. It isn't however clear what the status of the subtitles is and under what conditions the amateur-translators should obtain the copyright owner's approval.

The fact is that the closing of the largest (at the time) website with subtitles caused unrest in the whole the Polish internet community, not only among fansubbers. There were many voices of protest, who called for a boycott of films distributed by Gutek Film, crackers attacked police sites etc. Reactions among the fansubber community varied. Most defended detained colleagues, while continuing their online activity, others withdrew from the work on subtitles. A relatively small number of fansubbers consisting of the Polish community in a large part of the fansubbers who had survived the storm around the site *napisy.org*.

### Amateur fansubbing community – basic socio-demographic information

The genesis of fansubbing, arising from the community interpreting (O'Hagan 2011) and fansubbing Anime (Cintas, Sánchez 2006) may be misleading to the reader. It is therefore important to point out that the current study will discuss Polish amateur fansubbers' efforts to allow millions of viewers not familiar with the English language to watch in real time, with understanding, the latest produc-

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<sup>6</sup> Fansubbers constantly call themselves hobbyists "and stress the fact that they have never received any remuneration for their work, which means they were not stealing from the producers and distributors of the movies they translated. They even go as far as to claim that they should actually be praised and appreciated for the almost charity-like work they were doing, as they were doing it to help the people whose command of a foreign language does not allow them to watch a movie without subtitles" (Bogalecka 2011: 22).

<sup>7</sup> The main reason was carelessness of the investigators who overlooked the fact that the operator responsible for the server has to store the data on the user's IP for two years. After three years of investigation, several thousand of amateur subtitles links were secured, however, they could not be linked to IP address from which they were sent. Thus, it was not possible to determine the author.

tions of American TV and cinema (see Stanislawski 2009). What is significant is this need for subsidization of official cultural content distribution channels has become a major engine for the creation of community of fansubbers in Poland<sup>8</sup>. Like anime fans unable to wait for the adaptation of the movie in their own country so too embittered Polish fansubbers, dissatisfied with commercial station TVN, which stopped the transmission of their favourite show, began seeking internet episodes not transmitted in Poland. Because they were only available in the original version, the first translators, the Hatak Group undertook amateur fansubbing. Today, trying to meet the expectations of viewers/surfers Polish amateur fansubbers often resort to English-language television and the show's production.

The core of the community of Polish fansubbers form formalized groups of fansubbers clustered around the sites such as: [napisy24.pl](http://napisy24.pl), [napisy.info](http://napisy.info), [kinomania.org](http://kinomania.org) and several smaller ones. They have internal guidelines concerning the quality of translations, the methods of their distribution<sup>9</sup>, the usage of the name and emblem of the group. Next, in social proximity, are non-attached fansubbers, who do not belong to any group, creating their own subtitles and sharing them with all through many different websites. The last group, least associated with the community, are people who do not translate themselves, but they support the fansubbers with the advice, comment on subtitles, point out mistakes, praise for good subtitles, sometimes synchronise and correct the content of the subtitles. Some of them originate from a group of translators who, for various reasons, stopped systematic work on translations.

The Polish community of amateur fansubbers is homogeneous in terms of the language from which the translation is made. An online survey conducted in this group shows that all respondents reported that they translate content from English into Polish. At the same time it must be noted that some of the amateur fansubbers know more than one language. One in five reaches out for translations from Russian and one in ten of the Spanish (13%). This also explains the small percentage of dialogues from French or Japanese (4.3%). The data obtained in the survey was confirmed during in-depth interviews. According to the leader of the Hatak Group, the overwhelming majority of the group members translate from English, but part translate also from other languages. This respondent stated that in their group s/he met one translator who knew French and one who knew German. In the group is also a fansubber who speaks Cantonese. Interlocutor sometimes uses dialogues in Czech, but it happens most often when they are not available in English.

The community is also dominated by men. The gender distribution of the survey presented as follows: 13% of women against 87% of men. According to the words of the members of the Hatak Group, currently (as of March 2012) three women cooperate with them (thus representing approximately 10% of the group).

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<sup>8</sup> However it legal status is – as we point out – unclear.

<sup>9</sup> As we already know, this subject is particularly important from a legal point of view.



Analysis of online forums can confirm this information. Among the 63 member users of <http://www.szklarski.eu>, [forum.gwrota.com](http://forum.gwrota.com), [dark-project.nstrefa.pl](http://dark-project.nstrefa.pl) and [www.kinomania.org](http://www.kinomania.org), whose contact details and gender could be identified, 13 women were found, representing slightly more than 20% of all users. It therefore seems reasonable to assume that no more than a fifth of members of the community are female.

With respect to sources of income, fansubbers represent a rather diverse group. In addition to the 26.1% who are dependent on relatives, 43.5% work full-time, 8.7% work part-time, 13% are self-employed and 4.3% run their own businesses (with employees) and live from accumulated savings. Similar differences can be observed by looking at respondents' age. The average age in the study communities is 32 years old. The oldest respondent of the survey was 51 and the youngest 20. Conducting an analysis of internet forums 60 years old members and even teenagers were also found. The fact that this activity does not bring material benefits was certified by all respondents. One hundred percent of amateur fansubbers explicitly declared that their sources of income do not include movie or TV series online translations, which are treated as a hobby. Furthermore, examination of the online forums and discussions with community representatives clearly indicate that all suggestions for the commercialization effort of free translations are consistently ignored or even heavily criticized by the community.

That effort made, free of charge, we can measure in the time devoted to work on translations. Respondents explained that they spend quite a lot of time on translations for their favourite TV series and movies. Table 1 shows the distribution of responses.

Table 1. Time spent on the preparation of translations (fansubbing)

|                             |       |
|-----------------------------|-------|
| Less than 3 hours per week  | 21.7% |
| From 3 to 8 hours per week  | 60.9% |
| From 9 to 16 hours per week | 13.0% |
| More than 24 hours per week | 4.3%  |

Source: (Own elaboration).

Over half of amateur fansubbers dedicated from 3 to 8 hours per week to their hobby and 17% more than 9 hours. With this in accordance with declarations, the majority of respondents have devoted their time to their hobby from many years.

Table 2. How long have you prepared amateur subtitling for films and TV series?

|                              |       |
|------------------------------|-------|
| Less than 6 months           | 4.3%  |
| From 6 months to one year    | 17.4% |
| From one year to three years | 21.7% |
| More than three years        | 56.5% |

Source: (Own elaboration).

During interviews with the representatives of the fansubbing community, questions were asked about how to join the group. The respondents were unanimous about the fact that many candidates quickly give up the activity, experiencing how much time and energy it consumes. Table 2 confirms the views of my respondents. It seems that most of the community consists of individuals with the experience of many months, often being members of the community for years.

The Polish community of amateur fansubbers is a relatively small group. It is difficult to pinpoint its size but based on the observations carried out during the whole process of research and the statements of respondents we estimate it at about 100–150 people. According to the data collected during in-depth interviews, Poland's largest community of fansubbers, the Hatak Group, consists of approximately 30 fansubbers. Several smaller groups also bring together a total of about 30 fansubbers. To this we add about 25 fansubbers who translate subtitles consistently but do not belong to any group, and dozens of community supporters who do translations occasionally, participate in substantive discussions on the forums and correct or synchronize subtitles. During reconnaissance surveys conducted at the outset, we met several members of such forums. One of them posted in response to an invitation to be interviewed: "I do not think I can help you, I do not translate subtitles or adjust timing or make corrections. My activities are limited to discussion of the quality of translations on the Internet forum SF series Stargate". For a more complete picture, we might add that some supporters of the community do not translate themselves, but they know the Polish language well and deal with stylistic corrections, grammar and spelling.

Adding to the social image of this community it's worth mentioning the closest environment of fansubbers, namely the recipients of the fansubbers efforts. To determine the size of this group is almost impossible. The only way to offer a rough estimate is to check the number of downloads of each subtitle. According to one of interlocutors, new subtitles on the page [www.napisy24.pl](http://www.napisy24.pl) are downloaded almost 14,000 times during the first 24 hours. This number may be a good estimate; a Facebook fan site of the group counts a similar number of fans, indicating the number of regular users of subtitles produced by this group. Other websites that provide fan-produced subtitles are less popular. During the two days preceding April 30, 2012, 3,000 different subtitles were downloaded from the site [www.kinomania.org](http://www.kinomania.org). According to the data from that day, in total the subtitles uploaded to this site have been downloaded 3,685,462 times. How does this influence the download of specific titles and fansubbers? The most popular subtitles on [kinomania.org](http://www.kinomania.org) were downloaded from 20,000 to 25,000 times. According to a statement posted on the forum <http://www.szklarski.eu>, one of the fansubbers added to the two sites 57 translations, which have been downloaded a total of 555,564 times. At the same time, this particular fansubber does not belong to the community members who usually translate.

In summary, the population using the work of fansubbers may be – without exaggeration – counted in tens of thousands of the most active users of subtitles.

People who have ever used these subtitles are in the hundreds of thousands. We are dealing with a situation in which the hobby efforts of about 150 people are used by hundreds of thousands. This situation is typical for the kinds of community that Lessig (2008) called sharing economies, which are characterized by a collective effort of a small group of enthusiasts and a wide reception of their effort by the vast numbers of internet users.

### Amateur fansubbing community – Parsons' structural variables

Having considered the socio-demographic structure of the community we can move on to a more theoretically rooted analysis. As we have mentioned in the introduction, in our study we apply the Parsonian (1951) general value system theory. Talcott Parsons used his model to compare different types of orientation in personality systems, patterns of values in national culture and regulatory requirements in social systems. Parsons proposed a general value system theory as a tool to compare different levels of analysis. These levels are: the activities of the individual and the requirements of social roles, and orientations to specific values in the whole culture. Parsons sought to combine systemic and individual levels of description of social structure. The reinterpreted Parsons's (1951) proposal below describes, and will help to analyse, the typical features of online cooperation.

#### Universalism – particularism

The tension between these variables can be described – as proposed by Tittenbrun (2011) – as an answer to the question about the most important criteria used in recruitment and de-recruitment for the group of fansubbers. It can be reduced to a question: does membership in this community decide the universal criteria (formal education, language certificates, documented knowledge of using software techniques etc.) or particularistic criteria (acquaintances, connections, recommended by another member of the community)?

As we have mentioned previously, the amateur fansubbing community cooperate via the internet so its existence is dependent on computer networks. This implies at least one important feature of the community, namely that its boundaries are relatively fluid and difficult to identify. Participants in fansubbing groups unanimously declare that they are open to all comers. Amateur-fansubbers affiliated around the website [kinomania.org](http://kinomania.org) point out in their program: "Our group changes all the time. Some people come, some people go, but it's like the most natural thing. We are not closed to new members and we do not constitute a group of mutual admiration". A similar position is taken by the Hatak Group, which emphasizes on their website that "We are very open to collaboration! What you need is just a very good knowledge of Polish, English and of course the desire to do it, which does not disappear after a few subtitles".

Therefore, as stated above, the members of this group can be divided into three main categories: fansubbers which are members of groups (according to the survey, about 43.5% of more prolific amateur fansubbers), as well as those who perform the translation outside groups, and supporters of the community who perform various activities (total 56.5%). The dilemma of universalism–particularism can be resolved only with respect to the first category. Anyone interested can carry out translations by themselves, be active on forums (within the limits of the forum's individual standards), change subtitle synchronization, make changes to the contents of subtitles, and thus becomes a member of the wider community of fansubbers. In such cases there is no direct adoption of new members into the community. We can see only attempts to remove or discourage unwanted participants in the community. For example, strongly condemned behaviour in this group includes: cutting the name of authors out of subtitle footers, correction without the knowledge of the author, pretending to be someone else and creating low quality subtitles. By the latter we should understand: subtitles which contain numerous inclusions outside the film frame, comments of the subtitles author, subtitles that display too quickly or too slowly, which contain too many lines at once, and of course, those which are linguistically or otherwise incorrect.

The community cares about the quality of translations appearing on the internet and often ostracises those members who violate the rules described above. The proof of this is in the frequent sharp responses on the forums to linguistic errors. Interestingly, the most frequent emotional reactions concern the Polish language rather than English, errors in translation are the most commonly discussed topic on forums and in private correspondence. One fansubber wrote about a member of their group: "If you translate subtitles as you write your posts and with such knowledge of Polish as you have, really, I am afraid to see what they are like, because I know in advance that they are not great for sure". On the forum <http://www.szklarski.eu>, which is considered by many amateur fansubbers to be the most heavily moderated, spelling errors in posts resulted in the penalty of disqualification, even on the forum.

Returning to the dilemma of universalism–particularism, we can conclude that although the broad community of fansubbers is definitely open to welcome new members and there were no pre-selection mechanisms, there are effective mechanisms to discourage and condemn those community members who violate the ethical rules of the group or those whose work is not of a high quality.

These facts may indicate that the wider community of fansubbers is guided by universal criteria when evaluating their own members, completely overlooking particular criteria. But this is not entirely true. If we assume that universalism is recruitment on the basis of formal education, certificates, etc., we cannot apply such a label in this situation. During one in-depth interview, the process of recruiting new members was widely discussed. All inquiries about the conditions of accession to the group involve production of sample subtitles. Upon receipt of such a sample, the most experienced members of the group rate the quality

of translation and decide if the author can become a member of the group. If the decision is favourable for the novice, they are invited and asked to familiarize themselves with the functioning of the group (for example, the requirements for editing subtitles). The new member also gets a first task, in which they mostly rely on the translation of subtitle fragments. In time, when a member of the group has gained enough experience they are allowed to autonomously decide on the translations they work on, acquiring acquaintances that allow them to ask for help and to collaborate on subtitles (correction or synchronization). This kind of recruitment differs from the image of an open community of fansubbers and is more like adopting the closed group model such as businesses employ.

It might be argued that if free amateur translations do not require anyone's consent, cooperating with the most famous Polish fansubbing groups is usually associated with some kind of preliminary procedure. However, this procedure may not always look the way described above. Conducting in-depth interviews with a fansubber named Mouse<sup>10</sup>, whose way into the fansubbing community was different. As a fan of *Games of Thrones*, a screen adaptation of "The Song of Ice and Fire" by G.R.R. Martin, Mouse wanted to share her passion with her mother who did not understand English. She prepared the subtitles for her mother, which proved to be so good that Mouse has become a regular author of the subtitles for this series already under the aegis of one fansubbing group.

This route is different from those most commonly used, but that is not important here. What is important is that in neither the prior nor in the latter case, is admission to the group determined by such characteristics as education or certifications. At no point during this research has the author met with questions about age, education, language documentation, etc. treated as a criteria for joining a group. Moreover, many amateur fansubbers do not have linguistic or related educations. According to research conducted by Maria Bogalecka (2011) for her MA thesis, only 6.5% of amateur fansubbers have a language-based education and only 2% as professional translators. Furthermore, this research showed that 26.1% of respondents use their education in the preparation of translations and the other 21.7% do other translations alongside amateur fansubbing.

We can conclude that every fifth amateur-fansubber deals with translations beyond their hobby. Again, an interview with the aforementioned leader confirmed these speculations, with only a small percentage of translators in their group having a university degree in language or work experience as a professional translator. Thus, the community referred to are, in the vast majority, a community of amateur film and foreign languages enthusiasts. What does this mean for the resolution of the dilemma of universalism-particularism? None of these features is crucial for recruitment and de-recruitment from the group. Most important are the achievements of a fansubber (if any), the quality of their work and behaviour consistent with the ethics of the group.

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<sup>10</sup> Nickname changed.

### Achievement–ascription

The next dilemma proposed by Parsons (1951) and used by Tittenbrun (2011) is that of achievement–ascription. In the latter, this is the question of whether the reward to the labour force is based more on features assigned to the unit (ascription-based salary), such as age, seniority, position, gender or rather based directly on the achievements of the employee (achievement-based wage). Refereed research (as well as Bogalecka 2011 research) has shown that fansubbers receive no salary. Amateur fansubbers are simply averse to earning for their – as they call it – hobby. So the dilemma of achievement – ascription can be understood as a question of determining the characteristics of a member’s position in the group. As mentioned above, the adoption of a new fansubber to the group depends primarily on the quality of their work, and willingness to obey the ethical rules of the community. So, if new members of the group must possess some achievements in the field of translation, this standard should also apply to more experienced members. Therefore it can be assumed that the translation achievements should be decisive for the position of a fansubber. Indeed, the characteristics attributed to such features as age, race, religion and education do not have significance in this community. As we said earlier, gender seems to be important, however, there were no signs of adverse privilege of women, ostracism, closures, etc. On the contrary, the group often favours women seeking entry into the group (for example we found evidence on [dark-project.nstrefa.pl](http://dark-project.nstrefa.pl) forum).

On the basis of the collected material it can certainly be said that the characteristics attributed do not play a role in determining the position of members within the community group. Among the most important characteristics achieved according to the respondents in the survey are: the quality of the translations (86% of responses), regularity of work on translations (39.1%), seniority in the group (26.1%) and contribution to the group (13%)<sup>11</sup>. The importance of this last factor is evident on online forums, where a pattern is common: less experienced users ask more experienced users for advice. Clearly, guidelines and recommendations formulated by users with greater experience are taken seriously, rarely subjected to doubt and even more rarely completely undermined.

The esteem enjoyed by individual fansubbers outside the group is a slightly different matter. Among the recipients of subtitles the fansubbers who are most recognizable are those who prepare subtitles for the most popular TV series and films. TV series fansubbers in particular have a chance to capture the memory of fans because their name is attached to the fruits of their labour and is supplied to the network with great regularity. Internet fame, even if pleasant, is not a goal in itself. None of the respondents indicated it as a valid reason for work on translations, while less than 70% declared that it is “very unimportant”.

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<sup>11</sup> Percentages do not total 100 because the questions allowed multiple replies.

Esteem on the outside and prestige within a group are for experienced, systematic, consistent fansubbers, whose work is characterized by high quality. The Parsonsian dilemma can be resolved clearly in favour of achievement.

### Hierarchy vs. equality

Another model pair of variables, not circulated in the original proposal of Parsons, but one which appears in the work of his followers (Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner 1993), is that of hierarchy vs. equality. The study referred to this dilemma as the question of horizontal and vertical organizations of fansubbers within the community (indicators were: access to power and decision making). When we discuss the hierarchy vs. equality dilemma it is important to show how the process of subtitling looks:

- Its starts from the assignment of tasks to individual group members. The choice of fansubbers as to what material is to be translated is up to the fansubber but, as in other countries is not a completely free (Bold 2012). The fansubber can choose what they want to translate, but there is a rule that the same translation not be carried out by two fansubbers. That means that one should not translate TV series or films, which already have a satisfactory translation. The procedure of allocation of translations as described above is valid only when we talk about the translation of new films and TV series. In these cases, the group knows the date of the international television and cinema premier, and can plan in advance what will be translated by individual members. If a film or TV series is interesting to a fansubber, they reports this on the group forum and somehow reserves the title for themselves. If this happens sufficiently in advance, there is no basis for conflict in this field. Voluntary translations is complete when we talk about the old films, which have never been translated before. For example, fansubbers gathered in the DarkProject SubGrup form such a small group (during the survey it consisted of 9 people) engaged in the translation of horror films. Most productions translated by members of the group never found a Polish distributor; they are often of a niche character, far beyond the mainstream (we must add that this does not mean that such translations are prepared with the consent of the copyright holder);
- When group members have to make the choice of what will be translated, they must obtain the video material which is the base of the translation. Almost always, in addition to the film or TV series, the original subtitles are looked for. The latter is relatively easy to find in the case of a TV series yet, it is much more difficult in the case of films – especially new ones<sup>12</sup>.

<sup>12</sup> In the Italian fansubbing community the situation is similar: “As a matter of fact, subbers employ readymade English subtitles originating from Chinese sources, rather than translating by ear, which they do more rarely. Sometimes, when these resources are not available, they may rely on transcripts obtained either via OCR or voice recognition software” (Massidda 2015).

Both the dialogue list (or subtitles for deaf people) in English and video materials used for translations are taken from the internet. The survey conducted among Polish fansubbers did not show where and how they acquire specific translations. In conversations with fansubbers or during the review of the forums we have not find a direct statement concerning the origin of the film, but it's hard not to notice that the synchronization of the translation for the film, which is often referred to on online forums, refers to copyright-infringing versions of films and TV series;

- Cintas and Sánchez (2006), writing about anima fansubbing, includes the category of “raw providers” to the process of creating subtitles. Raw providers are suppliers of raw versions of the film on the basis of which fan translations are done. In the case of the Polish fansubbing community, American and European pirate groups that record episodes of popular series and premieres, and shortly after their publication in the U.S have this function. Yet, this is by far not the only source of materials. The video materials constituting the object of amateur, fan translations can in fact be derived from different sources. These could be discs and/or cassettes bought abroad, without a Polish translation by the publisher, classic movies and series recorded by fans on VHS, niche productions with no chance of finding an official distributor in Poland (as the aforementioned horror films);
- The next step is the translation itself. Polish amateur fansubbers know the software available and have the skills to use it. Moreover they usually translate alone. The exceptions are extremely popular television series and series described as difficult. The former include the current *Game of Thrones*, which is translated by two or three fansubbers. As to the latter, *House M.D.* contains a very large number of medical terms. Similarly, most feature films are translated by several fansubbers. Cooperation is usually reduced to two fansubbers coming mostly from the same group. These findings differ from the results of Bianca Bold (2012), which gives the average number of fansubbers in Brazilian groups as four people. Respondents in this study clearly indicated that the entire process of creating subtitles (including correction) is usually the work of two people (74% of responses in survey);
- Correction is another work in the process of creating subtitles, which is mostly done by one person. Correction takes place after subtitles are sent from the fansubber to the proof-reader, so often the two co-workers know each other. Often it is an acquaintance-based trust. A forum member wrote on this subject: “The correction to the PB is being done by Padawan<sup>13</sup> for me and I trust him completely [...]. Subtitles after his correction I do not even check, but at once I upload what I get. I know that none of the unpleasant surprises is waiting for me. I would like to remain so”. It is a rule that the author of the translation should be consulted on the corrections if

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<sup>13</sup> Nickname changed.



they concern the essential content of the translation. The importance of the role of the proof-reader was proven during the survey and interviews. Most of fansubbers are willing to recognize that the author of set of subtitles is not only the translator, but also the proof-reader and synchronizer. Because synchronization is usually done at the stage of translation and improved, we can conclude that in the Polish we often deal with subtitles co-written by two or possibly three people;

- The last stage of the process of creating subtitles is their online publication. As mentioned above, fansubbers often publish their subtitles on the websites of the groups to which they belong. There, they are assessed and commented on by other group members and web users. Translators unattached to groups add their efforts in several different places. The reading of publications cited herein by Bold (2012) and Cintas and Sánchez (2006) suggests that the process of creating subtitles ends there. But according to observations made during the research we conclude this is not entirely true. Subtitles are widely commented upon, revised, corrected and re-synchronised to new versions of films. One of the fansubbers declared on a forum: “I personally always get a lot of emails on the subject of subtitles but these comments are valuable, which sometimes are corrections of the frames which jam a film on someone’s desktop video player, sometimes these are the comments on the spelling, naming, sometimes on some citations to which are linked by writers to the appropriate source”. Often the changes are made without the participation of the fansubber or the proof-reader and the comments received after releasing the subtitles help to improve the linguistic and technical quality of subsequent translations. This kind of feedback is especially important for new fansubbers, but experienced fansubbers can also learn something from them.

The scheme of cooperation between fansubbers gives grounds for considering this group as very – as compared to other such organizations in the world (Massidda 2015) – egalitarian. Although we observe in the community described the functioning of a small group (subgroup as they call themselves) of leaders, administrators and managers of websites but they do not perform managerial roles in the traditional sense. Cooperation takes place with a minimum of coordination on the part of leaders, problems are discussed within the group, allocations of responsibility and deadlines are accepted voluntarily. When asked who decides on the allocation of subtitles in a situation of tension between two or more fansubbers, only 4.3% of the respondents answered the survey: the leader. Our interviewees during in-depth interviews did not – either – confess leaders of significant items associated with power. So it appears that the leaders and administrators of the sites have the task above all to ensure the transparency of the content posted there, to run forums, to oversee fanpages and to comply with the standards of the group. They do not have, however, a unique voice in matters discussed by the group, they do not decide on the division of tasks, they cannot remove anyone from the

group; in other words, they do not have the traditional management power. Often the same fansubber imposes restrictions on the scheme of work and then communicates them to the group. Thus, analysing the task side of project we can say that the overwhelming majority of the divisions in the group are functional, not positional, and the same community does not create a hierarchical structure.

### Self-collectivity

Described above specification of the community of fansubbers also influences the outcome of the next pair of variables. Self-collectivity was recognized by Parsons as an orientation to self and the orientation to a group. We transform slightly the pair of variables describing it primarily through the prism of the community group boundaries. We know that the community is divided into a relatively well-organized group of fansubbers collaborating with each other, where the subjective boundary is therefore to the community as a whole? How do active members perceive the whole community? In the survey, two questions were asked to diagnose the issue. Respondents were asked whom they are willing to call a full member of the fansubbers community and who is responsible for the quality of work provided by members of the community. The following tables 3 and 4 show the distribution of answers to both questions.

Table 3. Who can we call a full member of the fansubbers community?

|   |       |
|---|-------|
| All those who from time to time translate subtitles                   | 43.5% |
| Everyone who has ever released their own subtitles.                   | 21.7% |
| Regular fansubbers of subtitles                                       | 17.4% |
| Those who regularly create subtitles and participate in the community | 8.7%  |
| Other   | 8.7%  |

Source: (Own elaboration).

Table 4. Who is responsible for the quality of translations provided by the community?

|  |       |
|--|-------|
| The entire community of fansubbers                   | 43.5% |
| Only the authors of the translations.                | 30.4% |
| The authors and the group from which they come from. | 26.1% |

Source: (Own elaboration).

Respondents participating in the survey used a broad definition of the community in which they participated, pointing to the shared responsibility of communities and individual groups for the quality of subtitling and when assigning membership within the community they even explain the occasionally active. Similar conclusions were reached based on analysis of the internet forums; we found many terms that recognize the community as a collective entity with shared interests. Despite the apparent division among various groups, the whole commu-

nity is defined as a group, that shares approximate values and has common goals. In many posts members use terms such as community of fansubbers, the world of subtitling, translators etc.; a rudimentary bond between amateur fansubbers are clearly discernible. The broad boundaries of the group relate to the fundamental values of the community. The most important of these include the right to make translations, hobby<sup>14</sup> work, which does not bring monetary benefits, respect for the authors of translations, and the respect of other fansubbers and users who provide high-quality subtitles. Rivalries can exist between groups, the fansubbers of the various groups review each other's work (usually quite harshly), the groups know their limits and often work in closed communities, but this does not rule out the ethics of the group as a whole.

This statement explains, to some extent, the paradox of the relatively strong group solidarity observed in the whole population coexisting with clear divisions into smaller groups (or subgroups). The same is true in other projects, based on mass-mediated collaboration over the internet. Programmers using different software may not know each other and can compete against each other on a commercial basis, but most share similar values with respect to the product that is created and the principles on which the product arises. All this indicates a shift in the direction of an orientation of collectivity while maintaining the individual character of each task. So again we are dealing with an interesting situation of classic categories that are not relevant to a new kind of group organization. Fansubbers are attached to the results of their work, the value for them is an authorship of subtitles, they govern for themselves how many subtitles and at what time they will do them, they autonomously choose the material they will work with and potential collaborators. At the same time, however, they are collectively oriented, broadly define the boundaries of the community, defend it in emergency situations, they feel responsible for not only the quality of their work, but also for the work of others, they are inclined to recognize proofreaders as co-authors.

#### Inner containment–outer containment

This pair of variables referred to the genesis of incentives for fansubbers to take such and no other online activity. The question allowing us to solve this dilemma can be defined as follows: whether to take the hobbyists effort to translate films/TV series results from a greater degree of external conditions or internal needs? In an online survey we asked respondents what motives are important to them when taking up amateur fansubbing duties. Distribution of answers to this question are illustrated in Table 5.

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<sup>14</sup> That means: unpaid job done in their spare time.

Table 5. The reasons for activity in the community of amateur fansubbers (%)

| Reason   | Mark on a scale |             |             |           |                |
|--|-----------------|-------------|-------------|-----------|----------------|
|  | Very important  | Unimportant | Hard to say | Important | Very important |
| Improving language skills                                    | 4.3             | 0.0         | 30.4        | 21.7      | 43.5           |
| Hobby  | 0.0             | 4.3         | 13.0        | 39.1      | 39.1           |
| Satisfaction   | 13.0            | 17.4        | 13.0        | 17.4      | 39.1           |
| Internet users need these subtitles                          | 8.7             | 26.1        | 13.0        | 30.4      | 21.7           |
| Amateur translations increase the level of access to culture | 8.7             | 4.3         | 21.7        | 21.7      | 39.1           |
| Personal prestige in the group                               | 60.9            | 17.4        | 4.3         | 4.3       | 13.0           |
| Internet fame  | 69.6            | 17.4        | 8.7         | 4.3       | 0.0            |
| Professional experience                                      | 56.5            | 8.7         | 13.0        | 21.7      | 0.0            |

Source: (Own elaboration).

This shows a clear shift in the direction of the internal motivation of fansubbers. The results of the correlation (rho-Spearman) show that seeking fame and personal prestige in the group occurs most often (0.56), and that the needs of the internet users correlate with satisfaction (0.48). The strongest negative correlation was found in hobby and internet fame (-0.4). It seems that the attitudes of fansubbers are consistent, or fansubbers are guided by the need for fame and prestige, or search for satisfaction and good execution of subtitles. What is important is that the attitude of the former is in the vast minority.

Looking for additional indicators allowing us to resolve the dilemma of inner containment–outer containment combined the first three statements listed in the table into a coherent position showing on inner containment. It was composed of hobby work, satisfaction and improving language skills. On the other hand, outer containment indicated group seeking prestige, internet fame and professional experience. Also a third altruistic approach was specified represented by motives related to the needs of the internet users and increase access to culture. Table 6 presents the indicator showing the approval of individual attitudes.

Table 6. Attitudes preferred by amateur fansubbers

| Altruistic attitude | Inner containment | Outer containment |
|---------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| 69.57%              | 76.81%            | 35.07%            |

Source: (Own elaboration).

Declarations of respondents leave no doubt that the motives in raising one's own status in the group are marginal in comparison to the altruistic and internal motivations. This conclusion is also confirmed by content analysis of online forums and in-depth interviews. Both on forums and in conversations with researchers, fansubbers willingly and often stress that their effort is a hobby done without compensation and for personal satisfaction. On the forum kinomania.org the following declaration was found: "In this world there are people who do everything for money and therefore you could have subtitles if you paid for them [...]. Someone who has translated this film asked to be paid for his work – people dealing with subtitles here (I am not only talking about kinomania.org) they do it for their own satisfaction and as a reward they expect only words of recognition".

### Affectivity–affective neutrality

The next pair of variables concerns affectivity–affective neutrality. In this study, this means the scale of emotional commitment. Emotional involvement was studied by observing the number and violence of interpersonal conflicts in the group. Study of the fansubbing communities, which take part in the forums and took part in in-depth interviews allow to conclude that the conflicts often occur in this community and are quite violent. The most observed common reasons for conflict are:

- Controversy related to the quality of subtitles. The subject most in doubt is the language skills of fansubbers, such as "go..., you should learn Polish first" (as mentioned before, they relate to the Polish language more than English);
- Concerns related to the function performed in the community: "Here is an example what happens when you choose randomly people to translate, I do not know who gave you Prison Break for correction. If you claim that you are new to all this and you are still learning, then your subtitles should probably be corrected by someone else, and you should not do a correction of subtitles of someone who has already done some subtitles";
- Controversy related to copyrights issues: "I hate when somebody justifies him/herself [...]. You trying to tell me that the fansubber is not aware that his/her work will be used only to increase the 'traffic' in the illegal activity? He/she is aware of that. Not only that. He/she fits him/herself for a pirated copy of the film. So do not tell me stories. This is the classic 'Kali's'<sup>15</sup> mentality'. Trials of justifying and cheating in this way irritate me";
- Differences of opinion concerning the organization of the whole community of its individual groups of fansubbers. The best known example of a broad discussion on this topic was the debate that took place after a failed

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<sup>15</sup> Kali is a character created by Henry Sienkiewicz, person who does not judge himself but judges everybody else.

attempt to sell the site [www.hatak.pl](http://www.hatak.pl) by its long-term charismatic leader (see Surmacz 2010);

- Conflicts over subtitles authorship. For example, one fansubber very emotionally reacted to the declaration: “I always delete footers before watching and recording a film and I have no claims to fansubbers”, he/she wrote: “I would say that deletion of footers from subtitles (there are some very censored words), but what there is simply a total lack of respect for one’s completely free work, moreover, the subject of deletion of footers was repeatedly commented by fansubbers on different sites with subtitles”.

Based on the indicated examples it should be noted that the intensity of emotional conflicts among interpreters is high. Most disputing parties do not disguise their words they ruthlessly attack one another, not paying attention to courtesy. The interpersonal conflict is not only an inherent part of the community, but often takes of a highly emotional form. Interestingly, perhaps due to the openness to conflict, the fansubbing community is able to improve the quality of their work and eliminate from among its members those who violate ethical standards. This is true even of distinguished leaders.

#### Diffuseness – specificity

Parsons understood this pair of variables as the question of participation in the group through social role or the entire personality. With regard to fansubbers the resolution of this dilemma poses some difficulties. The community is diverse in this respect. Small groups of fansubbers who share a common passion, such as the DarkProject SubGroup, are created by participants who have been working together for a long time. On the forum of this group free conversations can be clearly seen, fansubbers turn to each other, throwing jokes, referring to common experiences. On the forum, as a separate subject of conversations, is only this one on the greetings from various personal occasions. This is not even a participation in the group with the whole personality but as far as the Internet community is concerned it is still a considerable degree of commitment. Discussion that revolves around this type of community seems to undermine the very concept of social roles in relation to online community. Meanwhile, it seems that the fansubbing community is quite close. As said, there are clear differences even among well-integrated groups. Almost half (exactly 47.8%) of survey respondents said they did not know personally any fansubber, but also 30% know more than four. From two to three amateur fansubbers personally know 21% of the respondents. More than 34% of fansubbers claimed that they made friends with another fansubber while 30% of contacts with members of the community extend to more than the subject of subtitles.

The community is so very diverse in terms of personal and social contact with other fansubbers. About one-third of this group are people with whom we will say engage in relationships within the community completely. Another 30% are

translators who occasionally go beyond the role and the last third never does. It would be wrong, however, to consider the community of fansubbers as a group involving only one aspect of their social personality. No small part of the group are deeply committed to this hobby, which results in the appearance of close friendly relationships.

## Summary and conclusions

As we explained in the introduction, we treated fansubbers as a typical online cooperating community. This means that the features described here using a re-interpretation of Parsons's variables should be common to many communities operating online. But this doesn't mean that fansubbing communities and other online groups will be identical in every detail. When we compare the knowledge we have about the different fansubbing communities around the world we find that they might differ in many ways.

They all – as far as we know – started from Anime subbing (Cintas, Sánchez 2006; Massidda 2015) in '80s and today focus on American TV shows and movies (Bold 2012; Massidda 2015). At the same time, details of cooperation can be different. The Polish community is small, fansubbers are rather equal when we consider power and decision-making, and cooperation is limited to only two (rarely three) amateur-subbers. In Brazil the average number of fansubbers preparing a single translation is four (Bold 2012). In Italy – on the other hand – the “fansubbing factory” can be likened to a strategic pyramid-shaped structure, made of progressive hierarchical subdivisions in terms of tasks. Fansubbers – unofficial workers<sup>16</sup>, as the author calls them – are organised into teams committed to the translation of a specific TV show, and coordinated by an appointed reviser (Massidda 2015). Both communities – i.e. Brazilian and Italian – are also more hierarchical. Moreover the Italian fansubbing community is younger than the Polish; “the people who initiated this underground activity were young people between the ages of eighteen and thirty-five, belonging to a generation which had grown up in a globalised context” (especially the Italian group called: ItaSA) (Massidda 2015) and the Brazilian is much larger (Bold 2012). Also, the genesis of the Italian community is different, as it “supposedly emerged in opposition to dubbing, as a form of resistance against its supposed authenticity” (Massidda 2015).

Having in mind all these differences we can look at the social feature of fansubbers through the Parsons's standard set of variables and can identify several important characteristics that distinguish this community, acting through the Internet in task groups typical of late or post-industrial society: 1) The radically open nature of the group, 2) The inclusion of new members is based on the actual skills

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<sup>16</sup> We must emphasize that in our opinion fansubbers' effort should be called a hobby or quasi-work (Tittenbrun 2011) because it does not provide a means of livelihood.

and willingness to adhere to ethical principles specific to the group. They have no meaningful connections or education or formally validated certificates, 3) The exclusion of members of the community is a collective decision and gets by primarily by ostracism and avoidance of contact (as opposed to only a single decision by leaders or managers), 4) The status of the group is determined primarily by past performance, seniority and the activity of the group, 5) Ascribed characteristics have no meaning, 6) The group is characterized by a high level of egalitarianism (as we have seen does not apply to the Italian community of fansubbers). The members themselves accept their responsibilities and deadlines for their execution, 7) Severe demonstrated, interpersonal conflicts are often a regular part of the activity of the group, 8) Group members exhibit a strong commitment to the ethical principles in force in the community, broadly defining its borders, while clearly distinguishing members of their own group of fansubbers from other subtitling groups, 9) Solidarity with the community typically occurs with individualistic attitudes, 10) The main themes of activity in this community are internal or altruistic motivation. Material motivations are completely eliminated, 11) There are no rules when it comes to community involvement in all or only part of the personality. the full, personal commitment is unusual, but also action based solely on a narrow definition of the role is not dominant.

The two pairs of standard variables used here proved to be incompatible with the realities of associating groups in the network. Universalism vs. particularism and individualism (self) vs. collectivism do not quite fit into the processes observed in the group of amateur fansubbers. This community is strongly dominated by achievement, equality and inner containment. In this context, to some extent surprisingly, a strong shift in the direction of affectivity occurs. One of possible explanation is the strong commitment to the community. Such an interpretation is not confirmed, however, with respect to diffuseness – specificity, which dilemma was not resolved.

Problems of interpretation can be related to a new kind of solution to the problem of coordination of individual and collective objectives that occurred within groups and results in forming of a different kind of social structure than those previously observed. This type of structure requires different kinds of mechanisms of cooperation, other group standards, other orientations of individuals within the group and different forms of organization. Amateur fansubbers create such a structure.

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