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# ON THE VALUE OF VARIOUS CORRESPONDENCES IN THE RESEARCH PROCESS

**Mateja Habinc**
**Department of Ethnology and Cultural Anthropology, Faculty of Arts, University of Ljubljana**

**This article, which is informed by a study of secondhand clothing retail, aims to reflect methodologically on various correspondences surrounding sources and correspondences between sources and a researcher. The article discusses the influence such correspondences might have on interpreting, perceiving, and explaining the researched phenomenon of secondhand clothing retail. It reviews what authors of various sources focused upon while photographing, writing, or talking about mostly Slovene and Slovak commission shops. It also exposes a part of the author's research process, discusses public media's agenda, and questions what affected either researcher or media contributors to address the selected parts of the researched topic. The author claims that care and the possibility of changing perceptions result primarily from the emotional, moral, or political correspondence between, for example, the researcher's values or interests and those of various sources. Therefore, an individual's auto-reflectivity and sincerity are a crucial part of the research as well as a process of interpretation.**

**Keywords: methodology, sources, correspondence, reflectivity, secondhand clothing retail**

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In recent years, I have researched contemporary and past secondhand clothing retail (Habinc 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019, and 2019a).[1] My research has disproven a popular claim that suggests there is no historical background for secondhand clothing retail in Slovenia through a particular focus on marginal retail spaces such as commission shops.[2] I gained comparative insights and contributed to general historical knowledge and the explanation and understanding of the historical variety of socialist retail practices.

However, I remained frustrated at how various sources reported on or explained such retail in the past. I had to rely only on various representations of the past or representations related to it since, in the present, we can no longer interact with and

1 I was triggered by Slovene media, claiming contemporary negativity towards second-hand shops with clothing is a consequence of socialist attitudes towards used garments and a general lack of their retail. Consequently, I historically researched second-hand trade with clothing predominantly in Slovenia, former Yugoslavia, and (Czecho) Slovakia.

2 I researched their role in providing people with clothing, shoes, and accessories and tried to compare them with some other historically known types of secondhand retail. Therefore I haven't dealt with the modernizing aspects of socialist consumption (cf. Bren and Neuburger 2012: 5), which supposedly were supported also by the comparable type of such retail, with the hard-currency shops, selling luxury and desired goods (Crowley and Reid 2010: 23; cf. Merkel 2010: 55). On the contrary, I've tried to reconstruct some strategies and tactics (cf. de Certeau 1984: XIX) of managing socialist poverty and shortages (Crowley and Reid 2010: 15 and 22) – nevertheless I realize perceiving socialist consumption in the context of the economies of shortage at least for some researchers is one of a few dead ends of the anthropology of (post)socialism (e.g., Thelen 2011).

observe people in the past.[3] We can only make studies of their experiences, recollections, representations, etc., which, according to Ingold, isn't anthropology's aim: "Good ethnography is contextually nuanced, richly detailed, and above all faithful to what it depicts. These are all admirable qualities. But they are not the qualities to which anthropology aspires. This aspiration … is to study with people; not to make studies of them" (2018: 63).

Reflecting on my research and Ingold's perception of anthropology, I wondered about the benefits of studying recollections and representations of past experiences and contributing to historical knowledge, explanations, and understandings. Would more knowledge about the history of secondhand clothing retail decrease instances of false and simplified (media) interpretations? Would it contribute to a better understanding of contemporaneity? Can knowledge contribute to learning, including learning from the past, or is this only a naïve expectation that doesn't acknowledge the difference between learning and education, between more knowledge, explanations, and understandings on the one hand and care on the other?

> understanding depends on embedding things in their contexts, whether social, cultural or historical. It is like putting them to sleep. To the rebellious child, who refuses to lie down and go to sleep and keeps leaping out of bed, do we issue the command: "get back into your proper context and be understood?" Truly, what the child wants, and indeed demands, is attention. He or she has things to say, to tell us or to show us, and cries out to be noticed. And we should watch, listen and respond. That is what it means to care. (Ingold 2018: 27–28)

Anthropology and education, at least according to Ingold, are about caring for the world we live in.[4] They are not as much about transmitting knowledge, understanding, and explaining, for example, the past, and their aim is not so much to support learning. Learning leads to training, and training excludes participation and transformation, the qualities of an education (2018: 2, 4). Therefore, contributing knowledge differs from caring since caring is about watching, listening, and responding, possibly transforming one's attitudes and perceptions – of, for example, contemporary and past secondhand clothing retail.

As an ethnologist and cultural anthropologist, I, therefore, started to consider the relatedness between my research, learning, care, and education. I became interested in various correspondences between sources and my role as a researcher and in the influence of such correspondences on my interpretation, perception, and explanation of my research questions.

This article is, therefore, a reflection of my research. It addresses various methodological questions about the possibilities and limitations of one's interpretations and

3 The past is, therefore, always a foreign country (cf. Ingold 2003) and anthropology an interpretation. More especially on Othering of the past and limitations as well as benefits of the intertwinement of the historical data and anthropology cf. Silverman (1979) and Fabian (2014).

4 On the criticism of Ingold cf. Bajič (2016).

explanations. Firstly, I analyze what various sources from or about the past related to the case study offer to be seen, listened to, and responded to. I focus on the correspondences between those sources and topics, on the correspondences between information and perceptions it reveals. Furthermore, my research process is presented: among other things, I explain how the past re-entered and became active in my present,[5] to what I affectively reacted when listening to some of my interlocutors, while I present some of my impressions and feelings related to the research topic. Since "I can follow what you say only because it corresponds to my experience" (Ingold 2018: 11), the article aims to discuss the value, benefits, and limitations of caring (for and about the past) while researching. If anthropology is about care and education, does care affect one's interpretation, explanation, and perception? To discuss the question, I put forth bits of my emotional undercurrents that "accompanied the eternal struggle to make a-story-to-live-by out of a world" (van de Port 2016: 187).[6] The aim is not to contribute another standpoint or perspective but to openly reveal how the emotional correspondence between the researcher and sources appeared, what it depended on, and how it might influence my interpretative process. As Ingold suggests, standpoints, perspectives, and opinions might only be discarded by exposing ourselves:

> if the world can be known only by way of its explanations, or by the different ways in which it may be represented, and if reason teaches us to distrust all established representations and to seek a critical point of view of our own… how to… discard the shields or mirrors that seem to have locked us up increasingly into self-reflections and interpretations, into endless returns upon "standpoints", "perspectives", and "opinions"? (Ingold 2018: 30)

Exposing or illustrating my out-of-position is, therefore, also a part of this article. Nevertheless, toward its end, I distance myself from personal dispositions and address why the media also covered this research topic. Finally, I discuss the role and possible outcomes of caring while reporting or researching.

## Commission shop sources: presentation and discussion

Although their economic impact is marginal, contemporary secondhand shops with clothing have often been researched as an alternative consumption practice (Habinc 2018). However, this is not the case for their socialist predecessors. Socialist second-

5 According to Ingold: "To remember, in practice, is to re-enter as a correspondent in the processes of one's own and others' development. It is to pick up the threads of past lives and to join with them in finding a way forward" (2018: 28). Remembering namely presences the past while it does not make it into an object of memory, into heritable property as it happens when we put the past in its context.

6 I'm inclined towards an "alternative organisation of textual representations, one which arguably suffers less from the academic imperative to 'distort reality into clarity'" (cf. van de Port 2016: 170), to essayistic accounts which generate an alternative kind of transparency – one which enables the reader more to be witness to an argument in the making (cf. van de Port 2017: 296, 298).

hand retail is usually only briefly mentioned in discussions of socialist economies of shortage (cf. Thelen 2011).

Bartlett, for example, explains that Western luxury goods were sporadically acquired on Eastern markets – either on illegal black markets or in chains of various state-run commission shops.[7] She claims the existence of commission shops, which could not satisfy demands, proves that socialist states tried to control the inflow of Western goods and earn through their sale while at the same time regulating black markets selling domestic used goods (Bartlett 2010: 267).[8] Bryson writes that it was particularly common for people in the Soviet Union to sell goods they considered needless, simply didn't like, or were dissatisfied with. Soviet commission shops took a seven percent provision and mostly sold clothing, furniture, and books (Bryson 2015). When defining various types of Polish socialist markets (legal, semi-legal, illegal), Kochanowski also writes about the net of stately managed *komis* shops. They sold secondhand goods such as clothing, books, furniture, etc., redeemed from individuals (mostly Polish tourists), at equal or lower prices than conventional shops. Such shops, as he writes, represented one of the few traces of market behavior – there, it was, for example, still possible to negotiate a price while unsold garments were put on sale. However, *komis* shops mostly selling (legally) imported products and luxury goods (for example, clothing, videotapes, cars, etc.) were very rare and their effect on the whole Polish market was negligible (Kochanowski 2017: 17–18).

Turning to the Slovene and (Czecho)Slovak situation, I found no specific literature on the topic. But as a part of my research, I've extensively discussed the functioning of the commission shops with a former president of the Association of the Antique Stores of Slovenia and a former president of the Association of the Military War Invalids of Ljubljana who in the first post-Second-World-War years managed such stores (*Komisija*, *Potrošnik*). Informal discussions with other interlocutors more or less confirmed such shops existed, while my acquaintances mostly had no personal recollections of them. I've also checked Slovenian post-Second World War address books and various funds from the Historical Archive of Ljubljana and the Archives of the Republics of Slovenia. I've predominantly reviewed the funds of the (Main Board of the) Slovenian Association of Military War Invalids (1945–1962). I've also checked all the issues of *Invalidski vestnik* [The Gazette of War Invalids] published between 1946 and 1954, when commission shops operated, and all issues published in 1962. I've examined the photographic material on the topic in the Museum of Contemporary History in Ljubljana. Primarily due to the available mate-

7 Names of such stores (*Komis*, *Komisiona*, *Komok*) show they were connected to a historically known type of secondhand retail, to consignment stores selling goods for provision (Bartlett 2010: 299).

8 Hard-currency shops were a type of commission shop most often mentioned in the literature. Usually, they are defined as one of the forms of socialist consumption, as the internal, state-run black markets of the Eastern Bloc or stately governed ways of their monopolization. Desired, luxury, and also Western goods were sold in such shops while at first, only foreigners and citizens working abroad or their relatives were allowed to spend their foreign currency (or special coupons) there (see Bren 2012: 34; Guentcheva 2009; Ivanova 2013; Kerr 1977; Tomková 2015; Zatlin 2007, 2007a). Ideologically, but not economically, such resale was in conflict with socialism. Still, if states wanted to participate in foreign trade, they somehow had to (legally) obtain foreign currency (Bren and Neuberger 2012: 6).

rial, my research on the Slovene commission shops was limited to the first two post-Second-World War decades, while in the case of (Czecho)Slovakia, where *Klenoty* and *Bazar* commission shops were known, it concentrated on the following two decades.[9] The majority of the material related to Slovakia (primarily photographs and documents) is kept at Bratislava's Museum of Trade. At the same time, I also had a few brief informal chats with colleagues who shared their scattered memories and impressions about Slovak socialist commission shops. If I gathered only a few recollections from the individuals "who knew" about such shops in Slovenia, I received no in-depth personal accounts about Slovak commission shops. I was also unable to find any taped or written (concurrent) testimonies or impressions about the experiences and attitudes of consumers toward such shops from the time that commission shops still existed in both countries.

Most sources on Slovene and Slovak commission shops I've dealt with are, therefore, archival. Photographs mostly offered an impression of the exteriors and interiors of these shops, focusing on the display windows and shelves, their tidiness, assortments, and their variety. The advertisements published in *Invalidski vestnik* prove the management of the Slovene commission shops tried to spread information about such shops. At the same time, photo material from Slovakia also demonstrates the display windows of such shops were also used as notice boards. For example, they informed customers what garments shops searched for and wanted to buy, while at the same time, what items they were stocked with (e.g., photo no. 10-908). Display windows, therefore, functioned as multilateral information boards during (state) holidays also congratulating (e.g., photo no. 10-904, 790-84) or wishing citizens happy holidays (e.g., photo no. 10-905, 791-84). To my impression, at least in Slovakia (at least in the 80s), shopwindow designing was therefore quite important. At the same time, paper announcements and decoration of the shops' interiors were also widespread. For example, they presented the rules of the commission sale, instructing customers how to behave in commission shops (for example: "Keep cleanliness and order," see photo no. 10-900), informed about prices and services, and exposed cases with "the offer of a day" (see for example photo no. 10-905) sections of a shop – such as the one in Michalovce's "Orient shop": "A selection from the Orient decorates Slovak people" (see photo no. 12-975). From the detailed inspection of the photo material, I also wondered if at least some garments were new or of the same kind but in different sizes (see, for example, photo no. 10-903).

Written archival sources, on the other hand, supplemented visual images of the commission shops, and, more than anything else, they informed who established such shops, when and where they existed, how they were organized and managed, what they could sell, how their offer changed in time, as well as who their customers and suppliers were. Documents offer information related to legal issues, the functioning of such shops, employees, garments, and finances (for more, see Habinc, 2017, 2019 and 2019a) while straightforwardly or indirectly, they also expose some

9 Nevertheless I also gained some information about their predecessors *Chronor* and *Obchod klenoty, hodinami a starožitnostmi* (cf. Habinc 2019, 2019a).

problems and justify the existence of such shops in the first place. In Slovenia, for example, they were supported in order to prevent black markets. They were also supposed to consolidate the social status of one of the groups recognized as having credit for the gained liberation, the new state, and its socio-political order (see, for example, Archive source 1 and Newspaper source 1).

Written, archival sources of both countries confirm what scattered mentions in the literature suggested about the general role of commission shops in the former socialist states (cf. Bartlett 2010 and Bren and Neuberger 2012): at least in the first post-Second World War Years and in the (bigger) cities they contributed to a massive retail sector and to "people getting along." They were supposed to alleviate the consequences of shortages and, at the same time, they prove to be an example of states' systemic and ideologically governed interest for the used garments (cf. Gille 2007: 23, 322). For instance, in the (Czecho)Slovak *Klenoty* once elite items, e.g., jewelry and watches, could be repaired, making them affordable for a wider public.[10] In later socialist decades, so-called "Orient shops," like *Posredniki* in Slovenia, also provided exotic and luxury goods (audio appliances, computers, videos, cars, etc.) and accelerated socialist consumption and modernization. It is not negligible that already the Museum of Trade in Bratislava – according to its employees – was founded as an archive of the Czechoslovak ministry of industry to document the success of socialist retail and industry.[11] Its documents and photographs were supposed to prove economic improvement and benefits of the socialist system (Fieldwork diary 2018), which also explains why photographs of the *Bazar* shops primarily selling used merchandise were taken much rarer than photos of *Klenoty* or *Orient* shops. According to my overview, mostly technical ware and employees repairing watches and clocks were photographed since the system, as it seems, supported ordering and tidying the chaos (of waste), and rationality of its re-usage, which perhaps was even a part of a civilizing project of socialist societies (cf. Elias 2000). Normative sources and visual material about *Klenoty*, *Bazar,* and *Orient* shops, as well as about *Komisija* and *Posrednik,* also confirm this was also a part of the competition with a (seemingly wasteful, careless) capitalist socio-economic system (cf. Habinc 2017).

Employees of the commission shops and their public perception were, however, more often mentioned by a few interlocutors and in informal conversations. They emphasized the privileged position of commission shop employees. In times of scarcity, they had access to goods and, from the perspective of my interlocutors, perhaps even more importantly, they had information about the goods: "It was important to

10 As the excerpt from the leaflet celebrating the 40th anniversary of the *Klenoty* for example emphasizes: in the pre-socialist past only the richest used jewelry while watches were almost a relic handed down the generations. At first, the whole traffic of *Chronor* and the company *Obchod klenotami, hodinami a starožitnostami,* the predecessors of *Klenoty*, was around 100 million KČS. However, at the end of the '80s *Klenoty* bought off for more than 380 million KČS of jewelry each year. Jewelry was sold by grams, nevertheless the shops provided more than a few dozens of kilograms of it or half a million pieces of earrings, bracelets etc. each year. Each year *Klenoty* also sold more than 100,000 pieces of watches produced either in Czechoslovakia or outside the country (mostly in the Soviet Union) (Klenoty 40).

11 It mainly preserved local and regional funds while those considered as nationally important were kept in Prague.

know and to have information" (Oral source: 3). Vlasek for example also confirms this, emphasizing how in (Czecho)Slovakia the information about the supply was dispersed since it was possible to find goods at places or institutions where this was even hard to imagine – used cars for example in a company which in its name was implying a sale of jewelry (*Klenoty*) (1993: 214). Interlocutors stressed to whom and how much such shops and the information about them were supposedly important. At the same time, oral and written sources attest to employees' illegal practices. Employees bought or sold off merchandise for their own profit, sold their own goods, unjustly set prices, etc. (Habinc 2017). When looking back, commission shops, their customers and employees, and their alignment with the system were, therefore, commonly evaluated and judged. Nevertheless, my interlocutors rarely spoke about first-hand experiences. They mostly estimated: "everybody was doing it" and "it was about helping each other." However, they agreed that some profited or lost much more than others. Contemporary perceptions and evaluations of commission shops, which were at the forefront of the majority of the interactions I had with interlocutors, therefore undermine what the socialist system anticipated for such shops – to "protect from the speculative exploitation of one man to another" (Newspaper source 1).

Various sources, therefore, correspond to and complement each other: visual and oral sources supplement written documents, while only recollections provide some (first-hand) experiences, memories, and present-day evaluations of past practices. They explain the role such shops had in peoples' lives and how that corresponds with the systemically perceived role of such shops. But, as already mentioned – oral sources saying much more than "Yes, there were also such shops known" (in socialist Slovenia/Czechoslovakia) were rare. Since recollections about socialist secondhand shops with clothing were rare and imprecise and since such retail was and it still is at least economically very marginal, I wonder whether my research (over-)exposed an activity, which for the people as well as for the system, in fact, had only a negligible worth (cf. Kochanowski 2017: 17–18)? Was I paying attention to those facets of secondhand clothing retail relevant to its customers and concurrent system, or had I unjustly concentrated more on the aspects that corresponded to my interests, perceptions, and values? Similarly, I have wondered why media reporting about contemporary secondhand retail of clothing so often referred to secondhand retail's socialist past. Was it because of some non-economic but, for example, symbolic value of these shops? To answer these questions, let us observe how my positionality as a researcher and the social role of media (might) influence understanding, explaining, and putting secondhand shops in a (historical) context.

## From sources to voices

A personal starting point to my research of secondhand clothing retail sparked with my private "alternative consumerist experience" (cf. Gregson and Crewe 2003: 1; cf.

Fajt 2014: 147) intertwined with the "(un)lucky coincidence" (Sunier, Verkaaik and Blok 2006: 107) of a supposed lack of secondhand shops in Slovenia. Both thursts were met by my professional interest for the topic, which was based on something I lived and on hanging out as a research method (cf. Woodward 2007). However, what triggered me personally was the way media discourses othered the socialist past (cf. Habinc 2015). At the same time, media coverage existed far away from my contemporary consumerist experience of secondhand shops. I bought clothing in these shops for various reasons – it was cheap, but at the same time pieces found at that shops were scarce, and often their quality – at least to my criteria – was better than comparable new items. And most of all – one reason, as media often simplified, never prevailed; it was always a mixture of grounds on which I decided about my purchases. Therefore, I wanted to know more about present and past secondhand retail, to learn about it; however, I also wanted to contribute to accurate information about the past and curb unjust media coverage.

I cared about the topic and how the past entered my present. However, during my research, the aspects of secondhand retail that touched me varied. In the following lines, I reflect upon one such situation: I describe how a correspondence between my emotional attitudes and sources about the topic appeared and how that might influence my perceptions and interpretations of the topic.

Analyzing my field notes written after I returned from the Museum of Trade in Bratislava, I noticed not only my research focus but (consequently) also my interpretation was subordinated to an emotional correspondence between myself and the impressions of my interlocutors. This excerpt from my diary illustrates this tendency:

> I was sitting on a bus approaching my temporary home, carrying a USB key in my bag with the most precious material gathered during my stay in Bratislava. After conducting unsuccessful research in the libraries, I visited the Museum of Trade, located on the outskirts of the city with the offices, furnished in my impression, as socialistic ones had been decades ago. Young or a bit less young employees of the museum readily and for as long as I desired helped me search through the material, scanned it immediately, and explained it to me as much as they could. It was an "everything is manageable" approach while we haven't bothered to translate everything into English, "since Slovene and Slovak, after all, are not so different from one another. If we only want to, we can (as we did decades ago) understand each other." Equipped with my research treasure, I moved away from the outskirts and margins of the city and museums, where – at least in my impression – time passes differently, and this obviously has its substantial benefits. Approaching the city center, the uniqueness of the experience struck me while one remark about the material a museum's employee was scanning strongly echoed in my mind: nevertheless, how the concurrent politics and, therefore, the archived documents tried to present and justify these shops, how the personnel tried to arrange, decorate and tidy them, *Klenoty* and *Bazar* shops first and most of all were an expression of deep poverty. Regardless of all the ways, how discursively, ideologically, hygienically (…)

> this poverty was supposed to be at least less obvious, it was always there. Omnipresent. *Klenoty* or *Bazar* shops were experienced through people's basic and pure needs and limitations, through their basic and pure feelings, which were constructing people's own truths and world-makings.[12]
>
> But how come this particular employee's remark has such a strong effect on me? Exactly today when my deepest personal truth is that finding this research treasure, which is justifying my whole stay in Bratislava, is a kind of parallel universe. Nevertheless, how important this research experience and treasure are, today they are emotionally incomparable to an experience that exposed me to the bones and triggered my deepest emotions of fear, disgust, and, most of all, shame. This lifted all the carpets and caused all the explanations and rationalizations to lose their power, revealing feelings like a headstone of all my attitudes and relations. It seems my feelings overlapped with employees' impressions and images related to *Klenoty* and *Bazar* shops as signaling poverty, shame, disgust, marginality, and, from the standpoint of the lived experiences, a survival strategy.
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> These impressions and images mentioned by a museum employee are retrospective but strongly imbued with my contemporaneity. And I can only wonder if these impressions and images would correspond with the concurrent roles such shops had for the people, with contemporary attitudes toward them and concurrent emotions related to them. (Fieldwork diary 2018)

A comment from my interlocutor (a piece of material gathered) touched me since it corresponded with my emotions which marked my whole day or two. The correspondence was strengthened with information from the literature and sources (cf. Bartlett, 2010 and Merkel, 2010), and it, therefore, contributed to my professional curiosity. Identification and blending happen not only due to emotional correspondence between experiences. As van de Port and Meyer emphasize, this would be a comfortable delusion and a pre-reflexive imagination based in fantasy. It would overlook that our attitude toward things and toward what is real for us is not constructed only through senses but also through language and reason (van de Port and Meyer 2018: 14, 18–19).[13] However, suppose I try to detach a bit from the whole situation and analyze it. In that case, it is mostly because of the emotional correspondence between me and the comment of my interlocutor I could more easily accept one perspective and explanation the literature was also suggesting: that at least in later socialist decades, when the comparison with Western countries was stronger, commission shops were also perceived as a proof of poverty, which made people feel bad and ashamed (cf. Duda 2005, 2010; Merkel 2010). Since an interlocutor's impression was affective, it was therefore also effective – at first, it suggested me a clear-cut

12 I refer to the phenomenological concept of life-world as the subjectively experienced world, depending on the shared horizon of values, meanings and habitual practices, which through communication form individuals into community. It emphasizes that self-understood or given is predominantly culturally and socially experienced in a group (cf. Schütz 1951; Jackson 2013).

13 Nevertheless, as they explain, we hardly trust any representation we're surrounded with nowadays. Therefore the question of authenticity has never been as important as it is today (Port and Meyer 2018.)

interpretation of the phenomenon while from a bit of a (time as well as emotional) distance, it pushed me to reflect on it, to consider my response, to acknowledge it as well as the variety of knowledge and literature. Due to all that, a less emotionally-driven interpretation acknowledging historical, socio-geographical, and political differences among countries and individuals was possible. I needed to realize what my emotional (moral, political etc.) standpoint was since it enabled me to question how come one explanation and interpretation attracted so much of my attention. Without that orientation, the variety of such shops, their customers, and responses,[14] as well as the various historical, social, and political circumstances they all were subjected to, could easily be denied and the whole interpretation could be much more subjected to my personal situatedness.

As the example illustrates, it is due mainly to the emotional correspondence between me as a researcher and sources I was able to care about the selected topics related to the phenomenon. I cared about how the topics are explained and perceived. It is much more likely to care either about the past or present if each affectively corresponds with something from our present. As for example, Hafstein emphasizes that when the past affects us and we indirectly participate in it, a greater potential exists and we could also be educated by it (2018: 106). Surely this is the benefit of being affected, while at the same time – without reflecting upon one's emotional, moral, political and other standpoints – it might also cause more generalized and simplified interpretation.

## On the impersonal correspondence with the past

Turning to the media, a similar question might be asked: what affected the media in the past and what affects them today to write, for example, about secondhand retail of clothing? If its economic impact was and still is negligible, is there something about secondhand retail, in general or in its specific aspects, that touches the media? The value and limitations of media's coverage might become more apparent if its past and present socio-political and economical role were exposed (Ingold 2018: 30) alongside the extent to which its specific attitudes towards the past factor into its coverage.

It became evident that during socialism, as well as today, Slovene media exclusively presented the socially desired roles of secondhand clothing retail. They stressed their symbolic worth, which would contribute to what concurrently was perceived as a modernization, and they acquainted individuals with the (concurrently modern) ideas of social capital and a progressive identity. During socialism, the media supposed Slovene commission shops could contribute to decreasing ille-

14 Which was already emphasized also by some literature, cf. Vidmar Horvat (2021). Contrary to the vast majority of the literature she mentions, in the 80s of the previous century, at least some Slovenes were also critical towards massive shopping tourism (to Trieste) and towards (Western) consumerism (on the concept of conditional Yugoslav cosmopolitanism cf. also Spasić (2012)).

gal trafficking, and individual money-making. They were thought to consolidate the status of specific, socially recognized groups and contribute to the affordability of at least some luxury items. Media reports emphasized pre-socialist social injustice and strived to trigger ideologically desired affects (anger, envy, shame, pride, etc.) while promoting commission shops as supposedly preventing such pre-socialist injustices. Contemporary media similarly describe secondhand shops with clothing as progressive since they fit into sustainability and green economy aspirations. At the same time, their customers are portrayed as ecologically and environmentally conscious and responsible. They usually try to dissociate secondhand shops from the socialist past, which supposedly was marked by shortages and poverty. At the same time, they present contemporary customers of such shops not as poor but, on the contrary – as sophisticated, anti-consumeristic, and environmentally responsible individuals (cf. Habinc 2016, 2018).

In the past, like today, the media never really presented various knowledge related to the (pre-)socialist secondhand shops. They mostly simplified and generalized it. For example, they never acknowledged that a variety of such shops existed during socialism, while nowadays they fail to outline that such shops ever existed in the past or that, for example, in the past, such shops already secured the circulation of locally used garments, contributing to sustainability and reuse. They have only referred to the selected parts of the past that suited simultaneous, socially, and politically desired representations and roles of such retail. Therefore, contemporary and past media watched, listened to, and responded not so much to people's needs as they cared and were attentive to concurrent economic and socio-political needs and demands they are constantly subjected to. However, this should not be the limitation of the researcher who is supposed to contextualize, explain, and avoid simplifications.

## Exposing self-awareness

As the above example hopefully illustrates, the (emotional, moral etc.) correspondences between sources and between sources and a researcher are valuable. They enable a possibility of care for specific topics or perspectives or for their transformation. At the same time, they might also limit the research by influencing the interpretation. If according to Ingold, anthropology and education are about caring for the world we live (2018: 2), it is therefore important not to forget that a researcher is also a part of this world or that his or her positionality is methodologically crucial and might influence his or her interpretation of the researched phenomenon. Therefore, a researcher should care and reveal his or her situatedness during the research process. At the same time, a reflection on the sources he or she is researching is also necessary. What was or is their agenda regarding the research topic? How, according to that agenda, are they or were they "touched?" How were their moral or political claims addressed in ways which might similarly affect the perception and explanation of the phenomena?

Returning to my research motivation, I may ask myself once again: did I want my research to be effective or not? I found it unjust that the media coverage was insufficient and misleading. Therefore, I tried to offer correct and broader information about various topics related to secondhand retail, and I wanted to contribute to the explanations of why contemporary media coverage is as it is. But is that also a kind of effect Ingold discusses about? According to Ingold, social or personal transformation is only caused by an affect since sensorial education relies predominantly on the emotional correspondence between experiences (Ingold 2018: 54). Learning, on the other hand, demands that constant unreliabilities, partialities, and biases of the sources, of the writers, researchers, and journalist are revealed. Learning and education are, therefore, different kinds of experience related to various reasons and motivations, the first demanding not only more time and attention but also that language and reason are acknowledged. More knowledge and explanation I tried to provide could, therefore, not lead to an immediate or social affect and effect. More than anything else, knowledge and explanation affected and had an effect on me which is why I wrote this and some other texts. Therefore, they might still contribute more to learning than to education. They might, however, also be the sources for public doubt or any other form of affect, opening up even a space for effects.

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# O vrijednosti raznih korespondencija u istraživačkom procesu

**Rad proizlazi iz proučavanja trgovine rabljenom odjećom i njegov je cilj metodološki promisliti o različitim korespondencijama između izvora, kao i između izvora i istraživača. U članku se raspravlja o utjecaju koji takve korespondencije mogu imati na tumačenje, percepciju i objašnjenje istraživanog fenomena. Članak sadržava pregled tema na koje su se autori raznih izvora usredotočili u svojem fotografiranju, pisanju ili pričanju o uglavnom jednoj vrsti takvih maloprodajnih trgovina, u ovom slučaju slovenskih i slovačkih trgovina koje rade na proviziju. Izlaže se dio istraživačkog procesa, raspravlja o ciljevima javnih medija i propituje što je potaknulo istraživače ili medijske suradnike da obrade odabrane dijelove istraživane teme. U radu se tvrdi da je to uglavnom zbog emocionalne, moralne, političke ili korespondencije između, primjerice, vrijednosti ili interesa istraživača i raznih izvora kojima je stalo do teme te se pojavljuju mogućnosti promjene percepcije. Stoga su autorefleksivnost i iskrenost pojedinca ključni dio istraživanja, kao i procesa interpretacije.**

**Ključne riječi: metodologija, izvori, korespondencija, refleksija, trgovina na malo rabljenom odjećom**