

## Interrupted Dialogue (“Friend”/”Foe” Conflict in New New Media)

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### Abstract

*New media, Internet and especially media Web. 2.0 are seen as the place of information exchange, creating dialogue, opening to the Other, Different, they are becoming a meeting place (Ryszard Kapuscinski). However, if we examine the space of the blogosphere, Facebook, Twitter, it can be seen as something quite different, the opposite. The network society becomes on the one hand, the community, connecting all users on the network, on the other hand, we can observe alienation from this society, people became more excluded and alone. In the new media we often meet up with closed space for “Ours” and to reject the “Others”. This kind of media became the birth place of “democracy 2.0” and “outraged network” (Manuell Castells). The Democracy 2.0. is being born in front of our eyes and its character is determined by the biggest Internet players, politics and also - the one that stays in “contra” - regular Internet users.*

**Keywords:** media, Web. 2.0,outraged network, democracy, identity.

In contemporary communication space the changes which take place in political communication, and which are caused by the Internet and new information and communication technologies (ICT), are more and more visible. The issues we are interested in achieve special dimension in the context of new new media, if we use the notion proposed by Paul Levinson [Levinson 2010]. Other researchers call these phenomena social media, Web 2.0, they are also called art on film. Levinson states that new new media have social character. We can find examples of such behaviours which are characteristic for Internet communities in commenting posts on blogs, Wikipedia editors' activities, exchanging of opinion on Facebook, commenting events in the real time on Twitter. Levinson defines categories of new new media and indicates the categories which are particularly typical for them: writing, sound, audiovisuality, photography. He also emphasizes the role of information, which is not a form of transfer but the target itself. They are characterized by new types of activities typical for the new new media: blogs, podcasts, videocasts, comments. The fact that these media are on one hand connected with the sphere of politics and on the other with entertainment is vital. It results in an attempt to take control over the media and to censor them. An emphasis should be put upon development of new technologies, hardware and software (for example applications). New new media seem to meet the expectations which were formulated by Habermas and concerned the process of communication. He claimed that communication activities allow to achieve agreement in the situation that activity between participants of this interactive process refers to [Habermas].

Behaviours typical for social media users can be treated as a proof of these changes. We move political and educational dialog into the space of new new media. In those media we shape our identity (or identities, to be more precise) and we meet another man and their culture. Those media become the place where we can very clearly distinguish the world of “Ourselves” and “Others” [Zeler, 2015, p.309].

Not so long ago, when we were asked about our identity we were able to give quite decisive answer. We could easily name our sex, age, nationality, education. When we were asked about our convictions we also did not have any problems to choose a system of values which was important for us, to choose some ideological options. Today this “hard” “constant” identity has been replaced by perceiving the world in the categories of “liquidity” and changeability. As Tonino Cantelmi says the weakness of today co-existence is visible in extremely fragile emotional ties. They are highly unsustainable and conflictive. Liquid identity means also liquid, unstable and fragile interpersonal relation [Cantelmo 2013, p. 210].

Communicational revolutions caused the situation when dozens of cultures, as meaningful as their own native national culture, appeared in the circle of contemporary man. The way categories establishing intercultural discourse were understood has to be profoundly reshaped and reevaluated. Network society which is created in the epoch of the Internet on one hand becomes a community which connects all network users, but on the other there is the phenomenon of alienation in this society. As Manuel Castells says [Castells 2007], together with the changes in participation in the world of communication, anthropological space is changed as well, and communication replaces space and time

coordination. Space of flows replaces space of place.

In the last few years we could have observed an increasing level of discussion concerning the notion of democracy in the Network. This discussion is obviously connected with such events as publication of top secret materials by Julian Assange and so called WikiLeaks affair, and then following network events such as publishing confident information concerning network invigilation (PRISM). This affair includes a great campaign concerning ACTA controversies, defending freedom of access to information on the Internet, prohibition of censoring the Network and free exchange of network resources.

Although those positive phenomena connected with the appearance of social media are noticed and accepted we cannot forget about quite the opposite experience. In those media things which are "ours" clash with things which are "others" or to use border-like terminology "strange". These media contain many elements connected with openness to the Other, but they can also suggest endangerment of the Other and their exclusion. It all depends on intentions of their users, we should add, these intentions are not always exposed and sometimes they are hidden on purpose. They can be an instrument of peace or a dangerous weapon. The choice depends on their users.

We observe the phenomena of exclusion, alienation, xenophobic attitude or the phenomenon of loneliness in the Network. This problem should be discussed on many levels, because there are various spaces in which we reject another man, we lock them out, we treat wrongly both them as a person and their opinions. This reaction to "the other" can also take various forms.

The first level is probably the easiest to notice and it is connected with such behaviours as insulting other Network users, Internet hate, spamming or banning network society participants. Their aim is to discourage one of the sides of network dialog, excluding them out of network community. Fake internet identities have similar character (for example on Facebook) they present a particular person (or an idea) in consciously created hostile context. Attempts to fight with those ways of exclusion are very difficult and unfortunately often they result in a failure. It refers not only to anonymous forums, it also concerns Facebook and other social portals where, at least in theory, commenting user's identity is known and they have to sign the comment with their own name and surname. Still majority of the haters come from profiles which only seem to be authentic. Actually they are fakes which are made believable because several dozens of profiles are added as friends. They also steal other users' pictures. Another phenomenon can be observed recently. For a long time Internet hate seemed to be mainly caused by anonymity, but more and more often people do not really care about the anonymity. Some of them just like feeling 'strong' on the Internet. Some of them are careless and think that they can do much more in the network. And some of them simply do not care and they insult people using their own names. The network seems to provide them security.

Lucyna Kopciwicz emphasizes that everything that happens on the Internet just reflects our reality. [...] We haven't learned to perceive ourselves as community and it is always 'we' against 'them'. Young haters know only the language which expresses divisions and identifies some imaginary enemy for example gay, immigrant. Older generation also knows very well the language but in a different context - in the conditions of a real system of oppression. The system disappeared but the language stayed, it even became more brutal.

Mechanisms of social control stopped working, while they are very important in the process of preventing people from behaviour crossing the borders of good tradition or decency. It includes respect for another man.

Such behaviour causes the situation when when we defend against them we often even multiply the feeling of isolation. Inviting or accepting invitation of so called "friends" in social portals is also some kind of limitation.

The second level connected with rejecting other members of social media is creating closed communities that one cannot join or stay in without knowing someone who invites, some of these groups even use their own hermetic language. Creating such groups for example on Facebook on one hand can have integrating character, getting together people with the same interests, but on the other it encourages creation of spaces where dark faces of the Network are articulated: delinquency, deviation or even terrorism. For terrorism social networks became a very useful tool.

The third level in connected with the phenomenon of attitudes of closure and rejecting of the idea of network democracy, activities aiming at hiding or limiting access to this information, which are observed on the Internet. There are also cyberpunk movement activities attracting activists promoting mass usage of strong cryptography as a way to make elementary freedom safe and protect it from political circles, which want to change the Internet into environment for totalitarian behaviours. Supporters of the latter attitude emphasize the fact that the Network is the place particularly encouraging authoritarian systems which tend to decide what people can find out and who they can communicate with. Those systems try to create in the Network the atmosphere of fear and anxiety caused by many different dangers. In this way many obstacles are created as far as access to information is concerned and Internet users personally accept them. Attempts to take over data to state-owned servers have such character but also activities of big fish like Google or

Facebook have similar character. We allow them to decide which information gets to us and what happens to information we produce, as Julian Assange says, "we have completely centralized Facebook, Twitter as well. Google as well. Everything in the USA, everything is controlled by the one who controls coercive means" [Assange 2013, p.87].

The issue of freedom of speech becomes a problem when editors of serious newspapers do not allow to comment events controversial for the international society, as it is now in the case of reports concerning the flood of refugees coming to Europe.

Marek Golka [Golka 2008, p.45] enumerates three groups of interferences in widely understood intercultural communication. Aforementioned phenomena and attitudes seem to prove that symptoms of exclusion of the Other form the space of network discourse in new new media have similar character. The author divides interferences into:

- Social and cultural interferences, which derive from the difference between cultures that participants of the communication come from, especially the differences between languages they use.
- personality interferences, the lack of empathy, different 'culture memory', different understanding of intercommunication etc.
- formal interferences, they are included in the very message when the addressee cannot understand the message sent to them (because the message was formulated in a hermetic language which is known only to members of a particular community).

Social media introduce great possibilities for interpersonal communication, spreading attitudes of tolerance and opening to another man. But there are also spaces where these values are constantly denied, these are spaces to spread hatred, rejection, closure to the other. In other words in new new media a fight between two worlds takes place, between good and bad, ours and others. Our common hopes concerning these media may be vain. For example it may happen to democracy 2.0.

How should we behave in this new situation? How should we deal with existing dangers? How should we oppose to the attempts to stop the process of meeting with the Other in network? Can the problem be solved with still controversial legal measures? Will the attempts to control the Internet, which are undertaken, become the source of next attempts to limit network freedom? Jerzy Jastrzębski wrote: "the Internet promised us freedom but it is built to allow bigger and bigger control. Today there is a decreasing group of people who control much more than ever before. [...] Many sided and often accurate supervision of mass media is carried out by more numerous and efficient technologies and legal tools. It is an inevitable consequence of commercialized and politicized media. Social media, civil media so far have not been able to stop this trend". [Jarzębski, s. 188-189]. It all provokes further questions: "will network become for us the reason to desert a binding model of life and society? [...] Will the Internet, like building biblical Babel tower, result in social dispersion and our being lost in life [...] will we disperse even more in virtual space and will we lose the most important elements – our dignity and identity [...], are we in this way getting addicted to our image in other people's eyes?". [Stępnik, 2013, p.81].

The result is that we have to determine new tasks for participants of intercultural dialog and to determine new fields of media education, which must be understood as education "towards the media" on one hand and "towards another man" on the other. It is necessary to create attitudes of openness to other cultures, some kind of intercultural pedagogy. It should prepare societies to analyze complex phenomena characteristic for contemporary civilization, bringing up man who is spiritually rich, finally integrating man with the world of widely understood human community, searching for the elements we have in common with another man and understanding the elements that divide us.

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