

KONTEKSTY

S P O Ł E C Z N E

**REDISCOVERING SOCIETY
IN THE AGE OF SOCIAL MEDIA**

Przeciagnij ekran, aby odblokow

GUEST EDITOR

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KONTEKSTY SPOŁECZNE

<http://kontekstyspoleczne.umcs.lublin.pl>

HALF-YEARLY

ISSN 2300-6277

Publisher

Maria Curie-Skłodowska University

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Special Issue

**REDISCOVERING SOCIETY
IN THE AGE OF SOCIAL MEDIA**

INTRODUCTION: REDISCOVERING SOCIETY IN THE AGE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

Not very long ago, Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) announced that “Today, everything is about Social Media”. The meaning of this statement is straightforward – if you do not have an account on social media platform, you are out of online domain. Nowadays, this claim appears to be soft or even out of date. It is more likely that if you do not have an account on social media, you are absent both online and offline. Whether we like it or not, the explosive growth of social media has changed the ways modern society is conceptualized, diagnosed, and examined. By sharing, liking, commenting, tweeting, rating, following up etc. users have established new communicational practices spreading beyond social media into a wider social context. Television viewers use Twitter to express live their emotions evoked by presidential candidates debating on controversial issues. Tourists take ‘selfies’ and put them on Instagram to share a wonderful holiday they have. Headhunters use LinkedIn to find candidates with relevant work experience and professional skills. Newspapers adopt Facebook to present latest news, and consequently, to engage users into dialogue with journalists. Last but not least, politicians use social media to connect with voters in order to sway them to cast their ballot for a given partisan option.

In the age of social media the boundaries between online and offline domains have become blurred. Despite desperate attempts to defend privacy, it is difficult to recognize what is private and what is public, what could be shared online and what is supposed to be kept offline. Social actions started offline end up online, and vice versa. Individuals continually switch between virtual and real worlds through mobile devices such as smart phones, tablets, or WiFi kiosks (e.g. LinkNYC). In such a context, social media are communication platforms enhancing fluidity between online and offline domains. They form a new communication space in which people connect and exchange diverse resources. Consequently, the ubiquity of social media has encouraged users to move many of their private and public activities to the online world they intensively live in.

Social media has become a "natural" component of the current social world. Hence the old distinction between real and virtual, or between online and offline is no longer valid. The current world is a hybrid, with the intertwined activities in virtual and real space (Castells, 2015, p. 260). The collective action is manifested in the hybrid organization of social movements, interest groups or political parties. The characteristic features of contemporary political mobilizations are fast repertoire switches, both in the spatial dimension between the online and offline, as well as temporary - within and between campaigns (Chadwick, 2007, p. 283).

THE QUESTION OF SOCIAL MEDIA

But what is social media really like? What is so ‘social’ in social media that makes it different from media we are already familiar with? The term ‘social media’ is often referred to a variety of online services e.g. social networking sites (e.g. Facebook, NK), blogs, collaborative projects (e.g. Wikipedia), content communities (e.g. YouTube, Slideshare), or virtual worlds (e.g. Minecraft, Second Life), social bookmarking sites (Digg, Reddit) (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010) (Margetts, John, Hale, & Yasseri, 2016). These services are founded on the Web 2.0 philosophy that could be boiled down to the following principles: user-generated content, interactivity, sharing and convergence (O’Reilly, 2007). In recently published work, Humphreys (2016) argues that social media cannot be reduced to any particular medium. Accord to her “It is a practice, or set of practices, for using media socially” (2016, p. 1). This set is made of collaborative, participatory and sharing practices e.g. citizen journalism, fan fictions, mashups, remixes or gifts. The Web 2.0 philosophy matters, but what makes social media really distinct from other media, is a set of practices related to its usage.

For Meikle (2016), the part of what is social in social media is sharing. Without sharing of ideas, images, information, trust, reputation, and emotions social media platforms would not achieve a global success of this scale. Sharing practices are as old as humanity, but Kramer (2015) suggests that in the age of social media we do not share to survive but rather to thrive. Social media has turned sharing into a daily routine, or wider, into a cultural trait of modern society. Peer-to-peer networks, the social infrastructure of sharing on social media, enable users access to diverse resources: material and symbolic, scarce and renewable, free and paid. In peer-to-peer networks, sharing is enhanced by new socio-technological mechanisms enhancing trust, reputation and reciprocity (Tang & Liu, 2015). As a consequence, everyday millions of social media users engage into sharing of everything what is suitable for online exchange.

However, sharing considered as a specific social practice encouraged by social media, is the beginning of the complex process leading to capital accumulation and labor exploitation in the 21st century. Fuchs (2015), in a critical manner, distinguished social media from other media based on its ability to mobilize diffused labor resources. He argues that “in the social media economy the basic strategy is to <crowdsource> value production to unpaid users”. (Fuchs, 2015, p. 155) For critical analysts, social media is a recent way of making money from resources previously assessed as valueless or little valued goods. In this view, sharing is a new mode of production satisfying social media owners and exploiting social media users. Thus, sharing as a specific social practice that blossomed in the age of social media have multiple effects on contemporary society and should be examined with no delight or prejudice sometimes exposed by emotionally engaged scholars.

A number of scholars argue that social media redefine the contemporary society by catalyzing new practices exposed by politicians and citizens. Loader, Vromen and Xenos (2014) give evidence on political involvement of networked young citizens. Their results contradict some prior findings accusing young social media users of political apathy. Networked young citizens appear to be politically involved, however their engagement cannot be examined through models of political involvement we know from the past. They are less likely to become members of established organizations such as trade unions, political parties or local clubs. They are no longer interested in elections, personal contacts with politicians or street marches. Instead, they prefer participation in horizontal networks, online protests, political parody, mashups or remixes of cur-

rent public issues. Simultaneously, politicians adjust their strategies to practices of networked citizens and become active on social media sites. Political campaigns, public announcements, party comments or political statements can be easily found on platforms such as Twitter or Facebook. Unfortunately, this new communicational environment is not free of barriers and threats. Scholars found that social media, like any other media, generate negative effects having impact on political communication such as selective exposures, echo chambers, polarization or filter bubbles. Building on that it is evident that social media has become a source of new practices shaping contemporary politics.

Social media symbolize "participatory culture" (Jenkins, 2006) of the contemporary media. People are no longer only recipients in communication processes. Users are also creators of communicative interactions at large extent. In this way social media express the paradigm of 'mass self-communication' in which individuals and groups can transmit their messages to large groups of the public. This in turn facilitates greater scope of grassroots political and social involvement (Gerbaudo, 2012).

THEORIZING SOCIAL MEDIA AND SOCIETY

The impact of ICTs on politics, culture and economy has challenged the existing theories of contemporary society. Scholars acknowledged the role of networks in community building process, distribution of symbolic and material resources, (re)production of individual and social identities, creation and/or transformation of social ties, communication between individuals, groups, organizations or governments. Two decades ago Castells (1996) proposed a brave vision of modern society immersed into network space of flows and organized around different forms of networks. He claimed that "Networks constitute the new social morphology of our societies, and the diffusion of networking logic substantially modifies the operation and outcomes in processes of production, experience, power, and culture" (Castells, 2009, p. 500). Although, Castells updated the vision of the network society by recognizing social media as significant factor of new social movements (2015), his theory is not specifically focused on social media and rather burdened by technological determinism (Fuchs, 2012). Still, the range of concepts, theoretical models and empirical evidence, makes the theory of network society extremely popular among scholars examining social networking platforms.

Wellman and Rainie (2012) proposed the theory of networked individualism referring to the increasing importance of personal networks. This theory complies with the transition from a society organized around large, hierarchical organizations (e.g. bureaucracy) or social entities based on strong ties (e.g. family, friends), to communities organized around specific issues, connected by weak ties (e.g. online protesters). According to the authors, the three revolutions: networked revolution, Internet revolution, and mobile revolution, co-produced a 'networked operating system' rich of social practices afforded by ICTs. The social operating system is made by people connecting, communicating and exchanging information (Wellman & Rainie, 2012, p. 7). Social media are key technology contributing to the emerging operating system as they empower users with tools helping them to manage their personal networks. Networked individuals use social media to share stories and ideas, mobilize around common issues, or consume news. At the same time, social media may be used as means of surveillance by governments and organizations. Thus, in the age of social media networked individuals are both managers of their personal networks and victims of a double-edge sword provided by digital technology.

In a similar vein, Bennett and Segerberg (2012) developed the idea of ‘connective action’ denying the logic of ‘collective action’. They claim that in a new networked reality individual actions are increasingly mediated by digital technologies “taking the role of established political organizations” (2012, p. 742). Connective action, unlike collective one, is based on loose organizational linkages, ICT use, and personal engagement of actors. The course of the connective action is not coordinated by formal organizations. In this scheme, network technologies encourage weak involvement that contradicts the face-to-face participation known from the past. “Networks in this hybrid model engage individuals in causes that might not be of such interest if stronger demands for membership or subscribing to collective demands accompanied the organizational offerings” (Bennett & Segerberg, 2012, p. 757). Social media enable to reduce the coordination and outreach costs limiting the collective actions. By enhancing the connective actions, social media has become a technology shaping the practices and outcomes of contemporary protests or mobilizations.

A technological shift enhanced by the spread of social media produced the culture of connectivity profiled by van Dijck (2013). The core argument of van Dijck’s study is that social media enabled the transition from connectedness among people to media-driven connectivity. ‘Sociality’ in her proposal becomes a technical process managed by automated systems coded by engineers paid by corporate media. Connectivity is a precondition of sociality that finally is transformed into a commodity of social media. Individual social media platforms constitute a new ecosystem of connective media. To explore relations between human and technological actors, van Dijck applies actor-network theory. “Platforms, in this view, would not be considered artifacts but rather a set of relations that constantly need to be performed; actors of all kinds attribute meanings to platforms” (2013, p. 26). More recently, Van Dijck’s suggested that after the connectivity phase we are entering into the era of connectication (2015). “Connectication” refers to the global expansion of California-based social media platforms. In the new era, connectedness of humans is being replaced by connectivity of platforms. The ambitious goal is to hook up people from around the world with no current access to the Internet.

One of the social practices which is being transformed under the influence of new media are mass mobilizations in the form of protest and revolutionary movements. Most of them prefer mass gathering in public places - on main squares or streets of large cities.

Manuell Castells, based on his earlier arguments (1996, 2004, 2009) focused in his book *Networks of Outrage and Hope: Social Movements in The Internet Age* (2015) on „networked social movements”, which in the years 2008-2014 challenged authoritarian as well as democratic governments in different parts of the world, from Iceland through Tunisia, Egypt, Spain, USA, USA, Turkey, Brazil, Mexico. All these movements, despite local differences, emerge in a network form and rely on their opportunities on the internet. They are based on autonomous communication networks, mediated by the ICTs and wireless communication. Simultaneously, networked social movements engage themselves in the occupation of urban space, creating a new spatial form - hybrid autonomous space (Castells, 2015).

Jeffrey Juris distinguished in this context „logic of networking” - cultural structure, which facilitates initiation of a complex communication and coordination of collective action and „logic of aggregation” - based on the interaction in social media, which refers to a massive accumulation of individuals from different social backgrounds within specific physical spaces (2012, p. 260). The logic of aggregation is based on the interaction in social media, which not only facilitates the formation of smart mobs aggregated in a specific physical location, but also makes them

visible. According to Jeffrey Juris, social media are probably particularly useful in gathering a large number of protesters in a specific location. They link interpersonal networks, and through viral communications flows they are facilitating the fast and mass aggregation of persons (Juris, 2012, pp. 266-269).

Paolo Gerbaudo argues that social media are tools to create new forms of closeness and interaction face to face in the physical space. Entries on Facebook and Twitter can help to create a sense of the centre in occupied squares. But the process is not entirely spontaneous, requires choreographers. Therefore Gerbaudo uses the term "choreography of assembly". It is a process of „symbolic construction of public space which facilitates and guides the physical assembling of a highly dispersed and individualised constituency” (Gerbaudo, 2012, p. 5). The key is the emotional „scene-setting” and creating a scenario for the participants gathering in a public space. Social media make this type of practice visible, directing people's attention at specific protest events. They mediate in providing suggestions and instructions of operation and construction of emotional narrative, which facilitates gathering in public space (Gerbaudo, 2012).

REDISCOVERING SOCIETY

The theoretical frames presented above do not resolve all the questions and dilemmas emerging in social media research. However, they offer a useful set of models and terms designed to understand diverse phenomena related to social media platforms, or more generally, to information and communication technology.

This special issue of *Konteksty Społeczne* (Social Contexts) offers four articles focused on different aspects of social media sites and an interview with prof. Anabel Quan-Haase, a world-recognized scholar in the field of social media research. Although, all texts could be read separately, a complete reading gives a reader a broader scope of ideas and problems related to a relationship between contemporary social science and social media.

In the interview, which is an introduction to the issue, Anabel Quan-Haase points on diverse issues e.g. big data, social theory and ethics related to social media research. She explains on how sociologists contribute to the emerging field of research and give an outline of methods designed to social media studies.

In the first article, Ilona Grzywińska and Dominik Batorski analyse how emergence of social networking sites challenges agenda-setting theory. They argue that basic assumptions of that theory are being challenged in its five stages.

Bartosz Pietrzyk focuses on the content published by YouTube users (youtubers, vloggers) that was creatively designed (remixed) in correlation to well know pop-culture publications and tries to estimate the importance of content mixing via a YouTube platform.

Kamil Filipek examines sharing of resources among Polish immigrants in Germany, Norway and United Kingdom who belong to the public Facebook groups. The analysis reveals some sharing strategies related to sharing economy paradigm, developed by Polish migrants active on Facebook.

Jaroslaw Chodak examines the role of social media in initiating and organizing protests and revolutions. He also tries to answer the question why the occupation of public space has become the dominant tactic in the protest and revolutionary movements in the era of social media.

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Acknowledgments

Kamil Filipek thanks the National Science Centre [NCN, Poland] for support through Grant No. 2014/12/S/HS6/00390.

Jarosław Chodak thanks the Faculty of Philosophy and Sociology [Maria Curie-Skłodowska University in Lublin, Poland] for financial support of the special issue.

INTERVIEW

SOCIAL DECODING OF SOCIAL MEDIA: AN INTERVIEW WITH ANABEL QUAN-HAASE

In this interview Professor Anabel Quan-Haase, one of the world's leading researchers of new media and technology, explains why sociological theory and sociological imagination matter in social media research. Prof. Quan-Haase raises a number of ethical questions that are often ignored but need to be addressed to make social media research more transparent, legally established, and socially acceptable. She also spells out how Big Data may contribute to understandings of online and offline social phenomena.

Anabel Quan-Haase is a Professor at the Faculty of Information and Media Studies and the Department of Sociology at the University of Western Ontario, in London, Canada. Her research and teaching focuses on the impact of technology on society, computer-mediated communication, social capital, and social networks. She is the director of the Sociodigital Lab, a research center that explores a wide range of interactions between ICTs and society, and she is past president of the Canadian Association for Information Science (CAIS). Prof. Quan-Haase is an author of several books e.g., *Information Brokering in the High-Tech Industry: Online Social Networks at Work* published by Lambert Academic Publishing in 2009, *Technology and Society: Inequality, Power, and Social Networks* published by Oxford University Press in 2012, 2016, and co-editor (with Luke Sloan) of *The SAGE Handbook of Social Media Research Methods*, published in 2017.

This interview with Professor Anabel Quan-Haase was conducted by Kamil Filipek from the Interdisciplinary Centre for Mathematical and Computational Modelling, University of Warsaw, Poland.

* * *

KF: To start off, is there anything interesting in the study of social media for sociologists?

AQ-H: That is a really good question. And it is not easy to answer because there are so many different kinds of social media, and I think that sociologists are attracted to different platforms and questions on different platforms for different reasons. Just to give you a few examples, I think that, for instance, when you look at something like Facebook, Facebook often represents our personal connections, so friends and family. Facebook would be of a lot of interest to sociologists because we would be, we have a glimpse, a picture of what people's social connections look like, the dynamics of those connections, to whom people are connected to, and what types of information do they exchange via any additional communication. Other platforms like Twitter, for instance, they provide a glimpse into political life, which is also an important subject of sociological

inquiry. But more generally maybe, not looking just at a specific platform and the kinds of social questions we can ask, I would say that, on the one hand, most of our social world now goes into the digital, so our social world does not only stay offline, but rather a lot of who we are, our identity, how we present ourselves, issues of symbolic interactionism, some presentations of efficacy, even things like building networks, all of those things go beyond the physical environment, so sociologists can't ignore, really, the big part that digital phenomena play in most people's everyday lives. And such, I think, it is really important for sociologist to examine these new phenomena that we have not seen before and are emerging online. Just think of the diffusion of information. Again, an important question that sociologists have grappled with for a long time. Robert K. Merton's classic work of cosmopolitanism, looks at the diffusion of information with regards to opinion leaders and gatekeepers, so, again, when you look at how information diffuses on networks like Twitter, Reddit, and Facebook a lot of those sociological theories become relevant for understanding new phenomena that we haven't seen on such scale and speed before.

KF: I know that you are examining social media from a variety of angles. What is your major area of interest in social media?

AQ-H: My work actually looks at the sociodigital, so I am really interested in both how existing social phenomena move online, but also how the digital creates new phenomena. A really good example of this is our recent study on the public sphere. Again, Habermas has discussed the public sphere and the relevance of the public sphere for democracy and for citizen engagement, for mobilization of resources, and for activism. So, we now, for instance, study how the public sphere has emerged online, so in one of the studies we did, we followed the right to be forgotten, which is a ruling by the European Court of Justice (ECoJ) and we were really interested in how the discussion about the law – the right to be forgotten – unfolded on Twitter; who are the key players, what are they discussing and our central question was how does the public sphere change when it becomes a digital public sphere. So, a lot of the research that we do is really about trying to understand how the digital has influenced phenomena that perhaps we -- as sociologists -- have already studied for a long time. How we can re-conceptualize or revisit some of those sociological theories. For instance, in the case of the study on the public sphere, we found that there was a lot of resemblance between the traditional public sphere as Habermas described it and the new public sphere. There are some changes, but overall, we still see the elites really playing the critical role in the diffusion of information, still controlling the message, so we didn't see as large engagement of the public as we would had expected to see, so I find that doing empirical work that really looks up the data itself is critical because a lot of the rhetoric that exists around social media is very utopian and positive. The way we look at the data, often the data will give you a completely different story in terms of what is really happening online. So this kind of sociology, I would refer to as real life sociology because it takes a look at what happens on these networks.

KF: It has been found in a prior research that the digital public sphere is very polarized. Did you find such polarizing effect in your research?

AQ-H: We found with regards to the right to be forgotten that the overall sentiment was very positive. There were a few negative voices within it that were critical of the implementation of the law and how the law would be actually reinforced because in this environment Google is the key, the central player, when it comes to implementing laws that are abstract, they have to be implemented at the algorithm level. So, I think that a lot of the debate that unfolded online had to

do with how do you make a law like that happen? And what are the consequences for everyday users? Because when you look for information, this information can be online, but you cannot find it, and on top of that you don't know that this information is online, but that you cannot locate it because the central entry point into the information world is filtering that out. It has a lot of implications for how we experience the digital world and what information we can find and who controls what information we can find and how we find it.

KF: The history of social theory is long and rich. Some theories have lost their attractiveness, while others remain widely accepted and applied. Do you think sociological theory remains useful in the context of social media research?

AQ-H: I think that sociological theory is at heart of any study of social media. I think that, for instance, conflict theory based on neo-Marxist approaches would be critical. A lot of the work that I do looks at the digital divide, so I try to understand which social groups are connected and which are not connected, and I think that it goes to the heart of issues of inequality. So, if a lot of information today is online and there is a group of people who either is not online, or doesn't have the digital skills to use digital technology, it doesn't have the digital literacy to engage critically with digital content, then there will be a problem because it will create new inequalities. So, to me, conflict theory is a relevant approach to understanding what are those social groups that are disconnected, for example: seniors, people in low-income brackets, people at the fringes of society. For instance, a central sociological theory is symbolic interactionism. And a lot of what happens in social media is about either dyadic or small group interaction, so symbolic interactionism has a lot to contribute in terms of understanding interactions digitally, both on a small scale and also on a large scale. The methods that I use rely on social network analysis, which of course developed from Simmel's work on the web of affiliations. So, I feel that this theory has really influenced even how we see the web, how we see the Internet as an interconnection of nodes – that is a part of sociological work that we do. We want to understand how people are connected and how the position they occupy within larger social structures influences their ability to access specific resources. Something that I know is really critical to my own work, so symbolic interactionism has a lot to contribute. Yet another theory is feminism. I mean, feminism is not only about differences between men and women and how they create inequalities, but feminism is really about looking at intersectionality, so how is it that different groups like black women or myself – I am a Latino woman – how is it that online again those inequalities play out? How do they influence what we post and how we interact? How are our voices heard? So sociology has a lot to contribute to how we understand both how people interact with others, but also the larger structures that are forming online and the power imbalances they create.

KF: Critical analysts claim that social media are profit-driven commercial models. Thus, shall we put so much attention to social media, if we know that they are driven by money and profit?

AQ-H: Well, I think that you're right. Absolutely. Even analyzing that, like Christian Fuchs's work on Google, for instance, on the political economy of information is critical sociological work that looks at issues of inequality, power imbalances, uncovering how information flows, how resources flow, where capital is today – to me, it is really important to understanding the web itself, but also society at large.

KF: In January of 2017 SAGE Publishing announced a new book, the *Handbook of Social Media Research Methods*, you co-edited this with Luke Sloan. Could you tell us more about this book?

AQ-H: In the *Handbook of Social Media Research Methods* we've tried to cover a wide range of methods, so we include quantitative approaches as well as qualitative approaches and mixed methods approaches, bringing together over 50 authors from a wide range of disciplines and scholarly traditions. The *Handbook* is an important step toward sharing novel methodologies, tools and techniques specifically geared toward taking full advantage of the unique characteristics of social media data. The amount, scale and scope of social media data have created a need for methodological innovations that are uniquely suited to examine social media data. The *Handbook* aids in navigating what tools are available to researchers for the purpose of social media data collection, analysis, and representation. Clearly different tools are best suited for sound, video, textual, and visual. One of our most central arguments in the book is that central to any social media project is the formulation of a sound research design, this will allow a scholar to produce meaningful insights. And a part of it is, of course, the method has to be tailored to the research question, something we all learn in our methods classes. So I think the kind of question that social media researchers can ask are very diverse, as we saw they can come from different sociological approaches; from conflict theory, symbolic interactionism, feminism, structuralism, so I think that different kinds of methods are appropriate for different kinds of questions. But what we saw in the book was that sometimes traditional methods can be used in novel ways to study new media, for instance, you can do interviews with users of Twitter or Facebook, if you want to know about their experiences, attitudes, opinions, or you can also gather larger amounts of data through quantitative methodology. If you want to look more at the structure of the networks as they develop online over time. Mixed methods are effective if you are not only interested in the larger picture of mobile networks and their structural features, but also in what are people thinking about their interactions, what does it mean when they post a message. So I think that there are different kinds of methods that are appropriate for different kinds of questions. But we saw throughout the book that similar concerns were being raised by authors; things related to ethics, how do we manage social media projects, what kind of data can we collect, how can we store the data, how do we treat people that have generated content? Can you use that content? Do we need permission first to use that content? Do we anonymize the data? So, as you can see, any social media project happens at a wide range of dimensions – from the conception to ethical considerations, to data management issues, to methods of analysis that are open to interpretation.

KF: Some scholars suggest that Big Data will profoundly change our understanding of society. Indeed, the big data revolution is ongoing, it is very loud, and I think a little overblown. How could sociologists benefit from the big data revolution?

AQ-H: Not all of my studies are big data studies, we often interview people to learn about their experiences with social media. For me, there is a space for big data analytics because there are some questions that can only be answered through collecting a lot of real-time data, but context is often also really critical to gain understandings. So we can't have only studies that draw on Big Data. All data is created in a social space, and that social space has meaning. In the *Handbook of Social Media Research Methods*, Luke and I saw many innovative approaches that were based on qualitative work, such as narrative analysis, visual analysis, and data thickening. Every tweet

comes out of a social context, so I think that as sociologists we not only embrace big data analytics blindly, but consider its possibilities and limitations to provide answers to key research questions. So, for me there is no single approach, rather it depends on the study and context of the research. It is about choosing a research carefully, one that can provide meaningful insights and is relevant to society, rather than letting the data drive the project. It is about formulating questions that have social relevance, that's what we do as sociologists best, we study things that are critical to society, like inequality, like social groups, which others ignore, they are invisible. So I think that if we move to big data with those sensibilities in mind, as a sociologist we can contribute to understanding social phenomena that happens online as well as the intersection of the issues that are critical to society and how they can be represented and linked to social media data.

KF: Thank you very much for your time.

AQ-H: Thank you. It has been a real pleasure.

* * *

Acknowledgments

Kamil Filipek thanks the National Science Centre [NCN, Poland] for support through Grant No. 2014/12/S/HS6/00390.

ARTICLES

HOW THE EMERGENCE OF SOCIAL NETWORKING SITES CHALLENGES AGENDA-SETTING THEORY

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Abstract: With the emergence of social networking sites (SNS), the way that information is being processed by media consumers has changed drastically. This has had a direct impact on one of the most established media theories: agenda-setting theory. Applying the framework presented in 2005 by McCombs, the authors of the article show how the main assumptions of the theory are being challenged in its five stages. SNS users decide what news is important by choosing what to share within their networks (basic agenda-setting effects); attributes regarding events are issued by SNS users under particular limitations (attribute agenda-setting); in conditions of high uncertainty and relevance, SNS users can directly impact public opinion (psychological effects of agenda-setting theory); SNS are becoming the source of traditional media agendas (sources of media agendas); SNS users are reaffirming their opinions as a result of SNS homophily (consequences of agenda-setting effects); and users influence public figures within SNS (reverse agenda-setting effects).

Keywords: agenda-setting theory, social networking sites, homophily, network effect, active audience.

In January 2014, Facebook announced its new feature called “trending”. It will be a part of every user’s news feed and present the top stories of the day based on individual preferences and Facebook-wide trends. This is a part of Facebook’s attempt to become “the best personalized newspaper” (Kim, 2014), according to Mark Zuckerberg. The change made by the biggest social networking site in the world came for a reason – with the emergence of social media, the way that information is being processed has changed drastically. According to the Pew Research Journalism Project (Holcomb, Gottfried, & Mitchell, 2013), 30% of Americans obtain their news from Facebook, 10% from YouTube, and 8% from Twitter. Stelter (2008) described this practice in *The New York Times*, stating that news consumers rely on friends and online connections for news to come to them, replacing the *professional filter* of institutionalized news media outlets

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with a *social* one. Another study conducted by the Pew Research Center (Mitchell, Kiley, Gottfried, & Guskin, 2013) confirmed this trend, with the caveat that the social filter might not be conscious, as 78% of users who received their news on Facebook did so while using the social networking site for different reasons.

Regardless of the consciousness associated with the choice of the social filter over a professional one, the consumption of news in the digital age has changed dramatically. As Clay Shirky said, “the audience is now being assembled not by the paper, but by other members of the audience” (Benton, 2009). This shift, reflected in academic studies and analysis, has had an impact on traditional media theories such as the agenda-setting concept developed by McCombs and Shaw in 1972. In his 2005 article entitled “A Look at Agenda-Setting: Past, Present and the Future”, McCombs, the author of agenda-setting theory, revisited the research on agenda setting from the 1970s to 2005. According to the scholar, agenda-setting theory has evolved along with an increasingly Internet-based media landscape. In order to review agenda-setting theory, McCombs used a theoretical framework based on five stages: basic agenda-setting effects, attribute agenda-setting, psychology of agenda-setting effects, sources of media agendas, and consequences of agenda-setting effects.

However, the Internet has changed radically during the last 10 years. Above all, social networking sites (SNS) have emerged and have become popular. Moreover, for many users, SNS have become the primary way to access the content on the web. Therefore, the main goal of this paper is to analyse how one of the most significant theories in media studies has evolved and is being challenged by the implications of the development of SNS. That kind of analysis could not have been conducted by McCombs 10 years ago, as it was before the emergence of SNS. However, the framework offered by the scholar as well as other claims made by agenda-setting theory authors will be subjected to analysis to challenge its assumptions answering the following research questions:

RQ1: How does the emergence of SNS challenge the assumptions of agenda-setting theory?

RQ2: What are the main challenges for future research on agenda setting in the digital age defined by SNS?

In the first part of the article, we briefly review the existing agenda-setting theory since its foundation in 1972 by McCombs and Shaw. In the second part, we present the main characteristics of SNS that are relevant for news production and distribution. In the last part, we present the main challenges that SNS pose for agenda-setting theory and associated concepts determined most fully by McCombs in his article “A Look at Agenda-Setting: Past, Present and the Future”.

TRADITIONAL AGENDA-SETTING THEORY AND RESEARCH

In his influential book from 1922, *Public Opinion*, Walter Lippmann set the stage for agenda-setting research by making a statement that news media affect the way people perceive the world (as cited in Wahl-Jorgensen & Hanitzsch, 2009, p. 147). However, it was not until 1972 that Lippmann’s hypothesis was tested by McCombs and Shaw – two scholars who later coined the term “agenda setting”. The initial study conducted by these academics found that there is a strong correlation between the issues considered important by the public and those ranked high by news media in their coverage (McCombs & Shaw, 1972). This finding oriented agenda-setting theory and research around “issue salience,” also known as first-level agenda setting (Wanta, 2012). Two other scholars, James Dearing and Everett M. Rogers, reviewed in 1996 over 350

empirical studies on first-level agenda setting, which itself shows the impossibility of examining even a representative sample of these studies. It is, however, possible to refer to two main conclusions coming from the extensive review made by Dearing and Rogers. Research based on statistical evaluations of the agenda-setting effect shows a causality focused on correlation between media and audience agendas (Scheufele, 2000). However, few studies address the issue of the explanation or temporal order of the first-level agenda-setting effect. Hypotheses like issue obtrusiveness or that the influence of real-world events rather than their description by media drive the public agendas are not sufficiently supported empirically.

Another important conclusion of McCombs and Shaw's (1972) research was the idea of inter-media agenda-setting. This refers to the high level of correspondence between news ranking and coverage in different media outlets that would point to conclusions that media are elite organizations and influence the "contagion effect" (Norris, Kern, & Just, 2003). Boczkowski (2010) pointed to the fact that in the digital era, news websites copy the news from each other, in a practice he called "news imitation", which results in their publishing the same stories at the same time. The media homogeneity hypothesis arose as the result of the phenomenon of different media outlets sharing the same news stories and considering them equally important. Scholars have found strong inter-media agenda-setting effects between traditional media outlets – for instance, newspaper coverage and TV broadcasts (Lopez-Escobar, Llamas, McCombs, & Lennon, 1998; Roberts & McCombs, 1994) or news transmitted by wire services and newspaper coverage (Lim, 2006). Such agendas are described as "convergent agendas" (Meraz, 2009).

Whereas early agenda-setting research was focused on priming, in the 90s the problem of second-level agenda setting was introduced. It proposes that media not only affect what the public thinks, but also how it thinks (McCombs, Llamas, Lopez-Escobar, & Rey, 1997). The process of influencing how people perceive certain issues takes place through attributes that media assign to certain events that can be either affective or cognitive (Ghanem, 1996). Second-level agenda setting is very often associated with the notion of framing. There are two types of frames that can be applied to agenda-setting research: the media frame set up on a particular issue by journalists and the audience frame seen as individual attitudes and stereotypes of people perceiving the issue (Scheufele, 2000). With regards to agenda-setting theory, Robert Entman argued that "to frame is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation and/or treatment recommendation" for the presented issue (1993, p. 52). The common hypothesis on second-level agenda research is that the transmission of attribute salience comes from the media to the public. It was confirmed by empirical research conducted in various countries, such as Japan (Takeshita & Mikami, 1993), Spain (King, 1997) or the United States (Craft & Wanta, 2004; Ghanem & Evatt, 1995; Golan & Wanta, 2001). However, as Weaver (2007) points out, the focus of studies on second-level agenda setting depends on how scholars define framing in their studies – whether a scholar understands it more as a set of attributes or a broader argument on the issue.

For both first-level and second-level agenda setting, the idea of "time lag" is crucial. This indispensable component of agenda-setting theory can be operationalized as "the optimal time that the issue must be covered in the media before the public considers it as important" (Wahl-Jorgensen & Hanitzsch, 2009, p. 155). In terms of research, scholars would ask a question on how long a particular issue or its attributes will stay salient, which leads to describing the time frame used in a study (Wanta & Hu, 1994). Depending on the study, the "optimal effect span" varied from 4–6 weeks (Winter & Eyal, 1981) to 3–4 months (Shoemaker, Wanta, & Leggett, 1989) to a time lag of 3 weeks (Wanta & Hu, 1994). The proposed time lag in the studies was

dramatically reduced once scholars embarked on analysing online news media. For instance, Roberts, Wanta, and Dzwo (2002) demonstrated a time lag for online discussion groups from 1 day to 1 week.

SOCIAL NETWORKING SITES AND THEIR CHARACTERISTICS

The phenomenon of the rapid growth and increasing influence of SNS such as Facebook has become an important focus of academic research. As boyd (2010) points out, SNS are similar to many other genres of online communities that support computer-mediated communication, but they are differentiated by a set of specific features. They allow individuals to “(1) construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, (2) articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and (3) view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system” (boyd & Ellison, 2007).

According to the data collected by We Are Social, in 2014 the three most used world social media platforms were SNS: Facebook and two Chinese social networking sites, QQ and Qzone (2014). In the United States, as reported by the Pew Research Internet Project, 72% of adults use social media and 64% of adults use Facebook. At the end of 2013, Facebook exceeded 1.23 billion monthly active users, adding 170 million in one year. Data released by the company show that 757 million users log on to Facebook daily (Sedghi, 2014). According to the Pew Research Center, SNS also have the biggest potential in terms of news consumption and distribution (Holcomb, Gottfried, & Mitchell, 2013).

Based on the reviewed literature, the following key characteristics of SNS can be identified: creation of semi-public profiles; tools for public communication such as a commenting feature that displays the conversation on the person’s profile, both with SNS and outside (Facebook comments); status updates streamed to friends through a Wall; Likes – a tool of positive emotion and expression of accordance; and Shares – a tool for copying and distributing the information published by someone else (boyd, 2010).

Batorski (2011) adds that the users’ Facebook Walls are personalized – everyone receives different messages depending on what his or her personal network is posting. What also affects the Wall’s personalization is the algorithm that a particular SNS is using. It usually presents the user the content that he or she is most likely to click on based on his or her previous actions (Pariser, 2011).

Van Dijk (2012) noted that high interactivity that is 1) free from limitations of time and space (introducing the possibility of establishing bilateral and multilateral communication), 2) is defined by immediate synchronization – the possibility of immediate reaction, verbal or nonverbal; 3) the possibility of the creator of the message and its receiver switching roles at any moment as well as controlling the form and content of the message; and 4) the possibility of reaction within the whole context of the message. Almost like in a direct interaction, SNS provides the opportunity to know the author of the message, the way he or she is connected, what he or she does for a living, etc. Jenkins (2006) described new media as multimedia and convergent – where the world of the old and new media penetrate each other. This relationship applies to SNS as well.

An understanding of these characteristics of SNSs is essential to examining the main challenges that are being posed. We will now discuss the particular challenges based on the five stages of agenda-setting research presented by McCombs (2005).

NEW MEDIA ENVIRONMENT: AGENDA-SETTING THEORY REVISITED

The emergence of the Internet and the growing amount of research on new media and communication forced scholars investigating and developing agenda-setting theory to revisit McCombs' framework, first proposed during the 70s. In a 2005 article, McCombs presented the five stages of its development: basic agenda-setting effects, attribute agenda-setting, psychology of agenda-setting effects, sources of media agendas, and consequences of agenda-setting effects (2005). McCombs acknowledged that the Internet "dramatically changed the communication landscape with the introduction of myriad new channels" (2005, p. 543). Introducing five stages of agenda-setting research, McCombs posed questions and formulated hypotheses that corresponded to the new communication landscape. Given the time when the analysis was conducted, it did not include the challenges caused by the dynamic growth of SNS. We will now discuss each stage and apply each stage to the existing body of literature on SNS and their characteristics in order to point to new directions in agenda-setting research that have been precipitated by the emergence of this new type of media.

Basic agenda-setting effects

The first level of agenda-setting is dictated by the paradigm that news media set the agenda for the public, pointing to a small number of issues that people should consider important. In the age of SNS, the news and information that people receive are those that are posted or shared by their friends or the institutions that they follow.

Therefore, SNS users set the agenda for other users by becoming their primal sources of information (Holcomb, Gottfried, & Mitchell, 2013). News filtering and distribution are the most common interactions with news undertaken by SNS users – 50% of them share or repost news stories, images, and videos. In other words, they set the issues' salience by deciding what to share with other users. The impact on level-one agenda setting is caused by each user's personal network and SNS algorithm. These two factors impact the choice of messages users receive.

Data also show that SNS like Facebook are the biggest source of traffic on the web. They generate more clicks on links to other websites than does, for instance, Google, the biggest search engine (Dash, 2010). Another source of data, comScore, shows a similar relationship: 25% of visits on websites come from SNS, and the number of visits between 2008 and 2009 increased by 83%. For that reason, traditional media news outlets, including online ones, use SNS to distribute their content and attract users. Therefore, traditional media still remain the main providers of content, but their consumers can increasingly decide what is more and less important through possibilities of sharing the links on their walls (Batorski, 2015).

The second premise of the basic agenda-setting effect is that the division between news producers and consumers is clear, which helps to differentiate who sets the agenda in what channels (McCombs, 2005). However due, to SNS being tools for public communication and lowering the barrier to access for users, the role of traditional gatekeepers has changed. Users sometimes become producers of information, but more importantly information producers lose the monopoly on their information. As pointed out by Bruns (2005), the news audience is changing from passive to active, with new abilities to filter information received from traditional and non-traditional media outlets ("gate watching").

The emergence of new gatekeepers has introduced a need for new theories. Therefore, Barzilai-Nahon (2008) proposed a theory of networked gatekeeping. The redistribution of online news via SNS such as Twitter or Facebook was also theorized by Shoemaker and Vos (2009), who called it "audience gatekeeping". The users use the tools for public communication to choose the news that is important to them and pass it to their audiences within their networks.

That phenomenon challenges as well the two-step flow communication theory (Katz & Lazarsfeld, 1955). Opinion leaders not only interpret the media messages but also select them due to increasing information overload.

The last basic agenda-setting effect is connected to the assumption that there is a given time length for the agenda to be transferred from the media to the public (Hanitzsch, 2009). It seems, however, that in the era of increasing social media usage the notion of time lag¹ is nearly nonexistent. Gane and Beer claimed that it is caused by the development of new form of interactive culture in which “users act at the same time as producers, for they participate in the construction of online spaces while at the same time consuming the content generated by others” (2008, p.6). Studies have found that agenda-setting effects can decline even during the course of a single day (Weeks & Southwell, 2010). More importantly, the importance of the message can be influenced by the number of shares and likes. The bigger number of shares and likes under the story, the bigger probability that its sharing will be continued, according to the mechanism of “cybercascades” or the “information cascades” (Sunstein, 2009).

The network effect in terms of information sharing is also connected to “information cascades” or the “information contagion” phenomenon, which refers to a situation when information spreads in the network from one connected user (fan or a friend) to another (Lerman & Ghosh, 2010). The information cascade effect challenges one of the primal assumptions of agenda-setting theory: that the news media set the agenda for the public and that the issues considered important by the media (issue salience) are also important for the public (McCombs & Shaw, 1972).

However, the information that spreads through the network might be completely different from what is considered important by traditional news outlets. What is more, different SNS may have different agendas. For instance, the Pew Research Center releases a weekly new media index with trending stories in different social media platforms in the United States, but the stories are different for Twitter and Facebook (Guskin & Tan, 2012), supporting the hypothesis of media fragmentation.

Attribute agenda-setting

Attribute agenda-setting refers to the premise that the media salience of attributes connected to the issues affect the way in which the public perceives a certain problem (Kim et al., 2002).

The tools for public communion offered by SNS give users the possibility of not only sharing the information but also commenting on it to give it a “frame” – dominant attributes connected to an issue (Entman, 1993). The users reshape the media agenda by commenting or adding information to the news served by traditional outlets (Shoemaker & Vos, 2011). Data provided by the Pew Research Center show that 46% of SNS users discuss news issues or events (2014). However, whether the frames applied by users via SNS are different than the ones attributed by traditional media requires further empirical research. The current evidence shows that attribute agenda-setting via SNS can be challenged by important limitations.

One limitation is that the power of issuing the attributes on SNS depends on several factors. The first one is the author’s reliability; research shows that his or her level of expertise in the field determines the level of impact (Vantomme, 2014). The second one is the type of recipient. It has been shown that younger users aged 18-24 are more likely to consider news received

¹ Time lag refers to how long an issue will remain salient in people’s minds (Roberts et al., 2002). Depending on the study, the proposed time lag varies between 4-6 weeks (Winter & Eyal, 1981), 2-6 months (Stone & McCombs, 1981), or, in the case of the news media, 3 weeks (Wanta & Hu, 1994). For online media, the time lag was established as 1-7 days (Roberts et al., 2002).

on SNS reliable than are older ones who would rather trust traditional media like newspapers (Kohut, Doherty, Dimock, & Keeter, 2011).

Furthermore, evidence shows that SNS are causing a more significant spiral of silence effect than are other communication environments. Users are much less likely to share their views publicly via SNS tools than at gatherings of friends, at work, or during a community meeting if they feel that their social audience might not agree with their statements (Holcomb, Gottfried, & Mitchell, 2013). That may lead to strengthening pre-existing frames – in particular, online issue communities that are also connected to the phenomenon of “echo chambers” on SNS (Sunstein, 2009). Research shows that users online would rather interact with people sharing their views, which results in online “chambers” of like-minded people (Himmelboim, McCreery, & Smith, 2013; Yardi & boyd, 2010).

Psychological effects of agenda-setting: need for orientation

Need for orientation is a theoretical assumption in agenda-setting research that relates to different individual responses to media agendas (McCombs, 2005). It is connected theoretically to two concepts: relevance and uncertainty. Low relevance defines a low need for orientation; high relevance and low uncertainty, a moderate need for orientation; and high relevance and uncertainty, a high need for orientation (McCombs & Shaw, 1972; Weaver 1977). This concept was recently enriched by a third component: effort required to attend to the message (Lee, 2005). More importantly, Lee (2005) added this variable as a necessary one to analyse the new media environment and increasing role of the Internet in news distribution. According to his research, those exerting more effort to get the message show greater agenda-setting effects.

These assumptions need to be investigated in the new media environment defined by SNS. The case studies of such events as the Boston Marathon bombing or Occupy Wall Street show that SNS might have a better capacity to meet the need for orientation in difficult, crisis situations such as catastrophes or large protests. With the possibility for every user with access to phone or computer to report on such events, the speed of the information flow exceeds the capacity of traditional media (Grzywinska & Borden, 2012). During crises, SNS like Twitter often become primary sources of information (Cassa, Chunara, Mantl, & Brownstein, 2013). This leads to a hypothesis that during extreme moments, when there is a high relevance and high uncertainty, SNS can directly impact public opinion, causing strong agenda-setting effects.

Previous studies conducted on online newspapers show strong agenda-setting effects connected to the effort that a user had to undertake to access the information (Lee, 2005) which was related to the interactive interfaces of such papers. The high interactivity of SNS might lead to a conclusion that accessing news online does involve a certain degree of an effort. However, studies show that users access news on SNS while using the websites for other reasons (Holcomb, Gottfried, & Mitchell, 2013). That might mean that even though people do access news on Facebook, it has weak agenda-setting effects due to the low effort of news acquisition. This hypothesis, however, requires empirical research.

Sources of the media agendas

This part of agenda-setting research focuses on who or what influences traditional media agendas. Some of the most common sources are other media, which is called “intermediary agenda-setting”; in this area, the impact of different media sources on each other’s agendas is being investigated (McCombs, 2005). What was proven by scholars was that intermediary agenda-setting effects lead to the homogeneity of media agendas and, therefore, public agendas.

The emergence of Internet-enhanced studies demonstrated how different online platforms could become the source of media agendas. The scholars were mostly analysing the relationships between blogs and traditional media agendas. Studies showed that bloggers have an impact on what journalists choose to write about (Messner & Distaso, 2008; Wallsten, 2007). However, some point to the fact that bloggers are part of the same elite group as journalists, and therefore the discovered effect is similar to the previously existing intermediary agenda-setting in traditional media (Meraz, 2009; Hindman, 2008).

Proving that SNS are becoming the source of media agendas would show a more significant twist in agenda-setting research – it would signify that the audience is telling the media what to write about instead of the other way around. The first empirical studies conducted in this field show that SNS can indeed become the source for media agendas (Jacobson, 2013; Maier, 2010). Some research also points to strong agenda-setting effects in traditional media that keep their online communities within SNS – one study shows the correlation between stories discussed by users on a journalist's Facebook page and the subsequent airing of similar stories on TV (Jacobson, 2013).

Consequences of agenda-setting effects

McCombs (2005) established three main consequences of agenda-setting effects: forming an opinion, priming opinions about public figures, and stressing particular issues and shaping an opinion through an emphasis on particular attributes.

This is a new area of research that has been partially investigated for SNS. For all of these three consequences, we can speak about the possibility for reverse agenda-setting effects, where through SNS the public is telling the press what to think and where users are taking the role of media in communicating the salience and the attributes of an issue to the public.

The first effect – forming an opinion – is challenged by SNS in several ways. Firstly, as users increasingly find out about the news on SNS, it will be less possible for them to form an opinion rather than strengthen the ones they already have. This is connected to the homophily effect existing in SNS. The principle of homophily assumes that similarity implies connection. It results in homogenous networks of connections with regard to various sociodemographic, intrapersonal, or behavioural characteristics. What is more important is that “homophily limits people's social worlds in a way that has powerful implications for the information they receive, the attitudes they form and the interactions they experience” (McPherson et al., 2001, p. 415). Homophily causes the users of SNS to create likeminded communities. Scholars discovered that people who interact with each other more often are more likely to be similar to each other in some regards and therefore are more likely to have increasingly similar information sources (Bakshy et al., 2012). The architecture of SNS allows people to quickly find other users and communities that have similar views and opinions. By joining groups, these users join agendas, which allow them to remove social dissonance (agenda-melding) but also strengthen pre-existing opinions and form group identity. Further empirical research is required, however, to determine whether particular opinions of social media users are affected by the online versions of established traditional media to which people within their network link.

The second effect refers to priming opinions about public figures such as politicians. First of all, SNS allow for politicians to engage in direct dialogue with citizens and omit the traditional media as a mean of communication (Cogburn & Espinoza-Vasquez, 2011). Secondly, again we can differentiate the reverse agenda-setting effect where users use SNS to influence public figures about the issues. This problem is analysed in the vast body of literature on digital activism (Castells, 2013; Harlow, 2012; Lim, 2012; Tufekci & Wilson, 2012). However, the exact role of SNS in this regard still requires further empirical investigation.

The third effect refers to shaping public opinion through emphasis on particular attributes. As discussed before, SNS do have the potential to influence the public on how to think about the issues, especially in crisis situations like catastrophes or political protests. What is more, SNS might increase the effect of fragmented and individualized agenda-setting due to its homophily. It may even lead to polarization of the public agenda and partisan information exposure among social media users.

CONCLUSION

This paper has been constructed upon the assumption that the growing usage of SNS among media consumers worldwide changes the patterns in news acquisition and distribution and therefore questions the theory of agenda-setting that was developed in the mass media environment of the 1970s to the 1990s. It shows that certain characteristics of SNS such as the possibility of publishing and sharing content with a network of friends, content personalization, or high interactivity cause different phenomena like homophily, the network effect, or the speed of information diffusion that challenge the main ideas of agenda-setting theory in the five stages of its research proposed by McCombs (2005).

Perhaps the emergence of SNS could mark a sixth stage in agenda-setting research and theory. As McCombs argued, “these are not stages in the historical sense that the opening of a new stage marks the closing of an earlier one. All five stages remain active arenas for research and offer rich opportunities” (2005, p. 544). Continuing this line of reasoning, SNS did not shake the agenda-setting theory but modified the nature of traditional media’s central role in it rather than eliminating it entirely. And traditional media setting the agenda for blogs, social networking sites and other social media platforms which than transmits the news to the public is nothing else than a version of the well-established communication theory of the two-step flow developed by Katz and Lazarsfeld in 1955. As Sayre et al. point out, “if new media are following the cues of traditional media, than agenda-setting power has not diminished but has instead gained another channel” (2010, p.13).

At the same time, we call for more empirical research that would verify the proposed hypothesis and identify the actual influence and role of SNS compared to traditional media, in all five stages of agenda-setting research. The main areas of research, connected to applied theoretical framework, are:

- To what extent do traditional online media influence what is being shared by SNS users within their networks? Is there a correlation between the exposition of the news, its category, or the way the headline is prepared and the number of shares?
- Do SNS users set the frame on how to discuss certain issues (level-two agenda-setting), or, due to an increased phenomenon of the spiral of silence in SNS and homophily, is this influence insignificant?
- What is the relationship between the effort of news acquisition in SNS and the agenda-setting effects?
- To what extent is the power to directly influence public opinion and build the agenda by unnamed users circumstantial - for example, when there is high relevance and high uncertainty? Is it enforced by the level of digitization of society, such as access to smartphones?
- How will the increasing penetration of markets by smartphones change the role of grassroots agenda-setting?

With the call for more empirical research, it is important to remember that the emergence of SNS challenges not only the theory of agenda setting but also its research methods. The typical methods used by scholars to examine agenda-setting effects were interviews, questionnaires, and content analysis. The SNS environment introduces new methods and tools that can be helpful for agenda-setting research such as social network analysis (Guo, 2012), discourse analysis, or qualitative content analysis (Firdaus, 2012).

Funding

This work was supported by the Narodowe Centrum Nauki [grant number 2012/05/B/HS6/03802].

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MIX UP THE CULTURE: CREATIVE TRANSFORMATION OF CULTURAL AND POP-CULTURAL CONTEXT ON THE YOUTUBE PLATFORM

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Abstract: In the era of participation culture and sharing, the most important value is communication. Every aspect of information and idea exchange is valuable, but there is one type of communication that is precious above all of the others. Taking into consideration all the aspects of the culture of participation such as: creativity, innovation, being up-to-date with pop culture trends, we can say that essential for this type of culture sharing is the idea of new content, created in the process of transforming available culture creations (mashup/remix). In other words, it is based on creating something new with new meaning and new context, using the resources of pop and mass culture. One of the possible channels of distribution for this new content is a YouTube platform. This communication medium is part of Google inc. and as a web page is representing Web 2.0 idea. This research is focused on the content published by YouTube users (youtubers, vloggers) that was creatively designed (remixed) in correlation to well know pop-culture publications. This research will try to estimate the importance of content mixing via YouTube platform and answer the following questions: What message is this kind of content sharing sending? What types of vlog formats are the most popular at the moment? How does a creative transformation of cultural and pop-cultural context work? Is there something like a community between the youtubers?

Keywords: communication, participation, content, YouTube, community, remix.

THE DIFFERENTIATION OF COMMUNICATION

The term communication is one of the most difficult to define. It is one of those terms that is very often used in different contexts, but, on the other hand, it is uncommonly hard to explain. Communication is far beyond definitions (Pleszczyński, 2013, p.15). With proper understanding of the mentioned term, most of the interactions between participants of the process (human or object in various configurations) can be called as a communication.

The process of communication can be seen as a social event that is able to modify itself, depending on the surroundings and the direction of the changes in the process (Luhmann, 2008, pp. 9-10). In this axis, the process of communication is a matter of choices. Which communicate is important? What types of information are worth exchanging? The value of content is set by the configuration and shape that we intend to grant to our communication.

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The process of communication is able to create new tools and channels for itself. There are new practices of cognizance developed every day, and new media and Web 2.0 project is only a small part of wholeness of the modern communication process. For Warren Weaver communication is every process/possibility that helps one mind to affect the other. By that we can understand various forms of rhetoric, manipulation or interaction that is set to expand the knowledge and so on. This is the way to create opinions, points of view, facts and to share artistic and esthetic impressions.

Communication can be also defined as a social connection between people that aims for coordinated action in specified case in order to create the best possible conditions for survival (Awdiejew, Habrajska, 2010, p. 7). The survival in this point of view is not only the biological one but also cultural one, action for culture that can help to expand and create new meaning in the environment of known ideas.

There are plenty of different definitions of the communication process. Every of them is focusing on a chosen aspect of this phenomenon. Thus all of them are exploring the problem only fragmentary. The key for solving the problem is to find or create definition that shows our problem in the best all-encompassing way.

In this research communication will be composed of a few different parts: code (understood as the language and also visual code, and everything in between), channel of communication (the main channel of broadcast here is a YouTube platform, but in the matter of communication there are several other ways which complement the process as a whole), content as a remixed value and reinterpretation of accessible sources, context (the way of publication, technical requirements and the environment of the publication). Last but not least, the most vital part of communication will be its *user*, who can create or receive communicate and content (he is the recipient and broadcaster/sender in different situations).

Communication can be seen as a force that is able to change the reality, it is able to imprint a lasting impact on the world. It is a type of an active relation between people, in a way that it is able to input changes in participants knowledge or attitude. It can determine the reality and every aspect of it including the sides of the process. The valorization of the world is deeply connected to the process of communication. It is the prime mover when it comes to making things happen. The most fertile ground for this *active* communication is cyberspace with social media, Web 2.0 project and platform such as YouTube. This is the place where words and communication are the most important of the forces.

THE CHANGING WORLD OF THE MEDIA

We live the mediamorphosis era, the time when every way of communication is changing and evolving into something better, faster and more accurate (Gackowski, 2015). Mediamorphosis led to the process of mediatization (political life, communication and so on). As a result of the mediatization process, the media convergence started. One medium is changing the other, or becoming a substitute for the older version (the relation between standard television broadcast and a on-line version). New media and technologies that are attached to them are pushing out the traditional media (press, radio, television).

Thanks to the digitization, new media are always in motion of changes, they are trying to become something better or more advanced in technological sense. New media are non-linear, inter and hypertextual, transcoded and evolutionary. This is the view of content, information and idea sharing.

In the new media family the most influential is the internet with all of its secondary aspects. The internet is the main source of entertainment, knowledge and information (knowledge and information are two separate categories because of difference in epistemic sense). Internet is something more than just a tool, it is a vital part of everyday routine, with connection to most of the important spheres of life. It can be described as a lifestyle (Gackowski, 2015). It can be perceived as an axis of reality (online reality) with specified style of cooperation and understanding of surrounding world. It is the environment that is changing its users. In order to use the power of the internet, one needs to gain certain abilities and is obliged to reject outdated and useless ones.

The internet changed the communication and created a quasi-communication (communication with assistance of different new media). It helped to create an illusion of face to face communication (various apps and programs like Skype or FaceTime) which also is close to the idea of YouTube platform thanks to such formats as *vlogs* or *live stream transmission*. This has created an extraordinary opportunity to establish new types of sociological relation (e-friendship). Hence the conclusion that information exchange and communication on the internet is a very specific type of interaction. At the same time it is important to acknowledge that the internet is a fidgety reality, where changes are applied literally in every minute.

The creation of a new content or the quest to get connected with a selected pop-cultural phenomenon is an operation that can be performed on different platforms such as: quasi-comment, the change of the context, reinterpretation and so on. The set of tools that is needed for this (the publication of remixed content), is widely available thanks to multiple tutorial, and on-line guidance. Everybody can participate in this type of culture and exclusion is very rare.

THE YOUTUBE PLATFORM

The YouTube platform is a communication and broadcast tool. It is a very diversified community created in 2005. It was brought to life by Chad Hurley, Steve Chen and Jawed Karim (Majorek, 2015, p. 19). The main idea was to create a space, where uploading videos was possible, just to share moments of life with people who were far away. In 2006 Google inc. bought the platform and this was the main event that helped to fully develop the idea of video sharing community.

YouTube web page is available in 76 different languages, which is the sign of the global spectrum of the platform. In every minute there is 72 hours of material uploaded to the YouTube. One month of this kind of transmission of data generates more multimedia data than any television broadcaster can produce.

There are a few rules that the creators of the YouTube are trying to incorporate to the embodiment of the platform community. First of them and probably the most important is about mutual respect between users and inside the YouTube community (Majorek, 2015, p. 28). There cannot be any creativity or growth without cooperation and understanding inside the society (in this case *youtubers* community). There are certain types of movies that are banned from the platform for their illegality or because of moral issues. There is no tolerance policy for any manifestation of bullying, discrimination (racial, gender, religion), or for the hate speech.

One of the advantages of the YouTube is the simplicity, that can help even new users to fasten get the grip on the basic and primary functions of the web page. The main YouTube page is very intuitive and perspicuous, and this is one of the things that helped with gaining popularity

by the portal in the Web 2.0 environment. The idea behind this type of design was to help people to make searching for the content that they are interested in as easy as possible.

One of the creators of YouTube Jawed Karim has identified four main sources of the success and popularity of the project site on which to share audio-visual. These sources include:

- A system of recommending the publications available through the portal (related videos);
- The combination of platform with e-mail;
- Providing the function of comments, internal messages and other elements specific to social networking sites;
- The ability to use the html code by which specific content from YouTube is available on other sites (Gannes, 2006).

YouTube as a part of Web 2.0 project is connected in every sense of this term: there is possibility to send videos via e-mail, dedicated web site, blog or other social media (Facebook, Twitter, Tumblr etc.). YouTube is a versatile tool of development with plenty room for improvements. From the space where people shared moments and memories from their lives, it evolved into a place where almost everything can be found from a new form of blogging (video-blogs in form of personal diaries or professional formats focused on one topic) to music videos, and, what is most important for this research, remixed culture texts.

YouTube as a company dealing with the media is not a content creator, it only creates an environment to share products of specific senders; users create its essence and content thus attracting more users. The platform creates a network of contacts and provides wide coverage to the audience. At the same time its activity is based on aspects of communication and exchange of information relating to the generated content as well as contact information and media exposure of individual messages (Burges, Green, 2011).

MIX UP THE CULTURE: REMIX

Media culture is a crucial part of globalization processes. Everything is accessible at every moment and almost at every place. The exchange of ideas, images, information and creations is not bound to specified geographical region. This is a natural way of culture mixing itself. The force that is driving this process is communication between representatives of different cultures. Culture formats are being distributed from many countries (movie industry from USA, technological devices from Japan and so on). Identity of individual is being built in a hybrid way in part by local and in part in global influences (Kraidy, 2003).

This type of connection provides us with a variety of storytelling, role models, information and data, lifestyles from other cultural environments, pop and mass cultural productions. Thanks to media, there is a place to discuss every received information in all of above mentioned forms (Radosinska, 2015, p. 17). Media culture is processual, it is a process of production, distribution in different media channels, perception process and content exchange and recreation (remix). This connection with circulation of information and points of view different from our native culture creates many situations in which cultural order undergoes verification. That access to various cultures is precious for globalization process, culture of participation and remix movement (Radosinska, 2015, pp. 22).

Hard information carriers and new technologies changed the basic form of the culture (Lesing, 2006, pp. 5-6). Culture was no longer trapped in one form forever but it was open to

changes and redistribution. Digital technologies introduced culture to new era of recoded and remixed information. Together with changes in culture, a different change in the recipients of the culture occurred. Everything that has changed culture, has changed the people and the way of cultural participation. Nowadays those new technologies are something natural and very much needed, they are becoming essential parts of our lives (Lessing, 2009, pp. 53-55).

Lessing in his book *Remix: Making Art and Commerce Thrive in the Hybrid Economy* connected the term with copyrights issues. This understanding of the topic is too shallow. Nowadays remix is focused on digital media and the circulation of culture and its products between the recipients. It can be used to describe the viewers/receivers tactics for cultural participation and reception of remixed content (Gulik, Kaucz, Onaka, 2011). Our participation in culture is closely connected to remix logic and theory.

Remix can be used to describe different manifestations of practical aspect of participatory culture. The urge to act and perform is inscribed into remix or mash-up that is often interchangeably used as a substitution for remix in nowadays understanding (new media remix/digital remix). Definition of mash-up as presented by Stefan Sonvill-Weiss explains that mash-up is a combination of data from two different sources that is inducted in order to create new service/possibility. In the case of YouTube it could mean the different formats of publications or the functionality of the platform itself. It means that materials published on YouTube can be rooted in different localizations in the digital world (Sonvill-Weiss, 2010, pp. 8-10). The main difference between the two (remix/mash-up) is the issue of copyright that is included in the remix contemplation and is not included in mash-up theory.

Remix can be seen as a looking glass for participatory and visual culture in different aspects, also for publications distributed through the YouTube platform.

To create a remixed content is to create a text composed of different quotations, paragraphs and parts in order to compose something new with new content, context, and, in most of the cases, meaning. Remix can be compared to collage but instead parts of different materials, parts of culture are being used. With spread access to digital technologies and with all the free digital and internet space, almost everybody can create a remixed content and in the next step share it with the world. Those works can be really simple or very complex, depending on the skill of the creator.

Remix is a powerful tool that can affect culture more than original picture/movie/music (Lessing, 2009). It has the power to represent our point of view, our thoughts with greater precision than words (especially in the visual culture aspect). The main idea behind the remix process is reference, its connection to the original source or sources. This is the part that holds emotional attachment for people. Everything is important and everything matters but by combining different parts, we can create something new, a new quality. That new quality is created by the references to the culture.

If there is a pop cultural phenomenon, it is destined to be remixed. There are a few things that are important in that case: up-to-date material, well known, recognizable and with emotional value attached. That was the case for one of hit songs *Hello* (the promotion single of the CD album entitled *25*) performed by international star Adele. The renewed song was recreated using scenes of movies to perform the lyrics of the song. Every important movie picture of the last decade was included. The remixed video was uploaded (01.12.2015) by youtuber *Matthijs Vlot* and was played over 3,5 mln times.

The cultural remix phenomenon is a part of process that creates a sense of continuity and novelty of certain texts of culture. In this case (digital art) recurrence and regularity are even more important for digital remix as an art than uniqueness and innovation (Bolz, 1997, p. 352). Using the example of YouTube platform remix can be used to re-invent some visual art into videoblogs as a general concept or as a part of the broadcast. The more "fresh" and up-to-date content, the better it is for the broadcaster and the recipient.

For many people the most important year for digital remix is 2005 with the growing popularity of social media (and creation of YouTube platform). Social media created equality in distribution of created content and remixed culture and YouTube constructed a place for broadcast of video-related remix (Manovich, 2006, pp. 105-110).

YouTube is a space for culture media participation. One of the manifestations of this culture can be discussed here the phenomenon of remix culture content. Culture participation refers largely to the competence of users distributing digital new media content and to change the balance of power between the media industry and its customers, at least in certain aspects (Jenkins, 2006). YouTube platform can be considered as a place of self-expression, a symbolic struggle for meaning and the reference of popular and mass culture (Hall, 1981). For Hall, popular culture was important because of its creative space of struggle for culture, currently the mainstream struggle for culture (and meaning) is part of the movement of digital remix presented through the YouTube platform.

One more important thing about the remix culture is that it is able to create communities of creators and recipients of its products (Lessing, 2009, p. 84). Those groups are global, and can have various sizes. They are presenting their work to each other in order to exchange experience and produce feedback. This is very fruitful cooperation even if the content itself is not very valuable. The learning process is important in those types of communities, but the community itself with connection to people with similar interests is something special. Every user has a different agenda (one mentioned - learning), but they can create in order to present their talent, to gain popularity or fame (attention in different forms) or simply to bring to life a beautiful idea.

Remix cannot be seen as simply a copying practice. It is an important way of cultural participation, learning, giving a way to express one's creativity. Doing something with our surroundings (culture included), can help to create new meanings and new values and what is most important it can help to educate and to learn about oneself and the world. The one thing that needs to be remembered is that remix needs to be something new in the content, context, idea or form.

REMIX ON YOUTUBE PLATFORM

YouTube is a storyteller of digital age (Kavoori, 2011, p. 5), the main problem is to read those stories in the right way with proper key in order to fully understand them. YouTube videos can be at times heartwarming or aggravating, even provoking. Remixed content can be presented as:

- dialogue with the source material;
- reinterpretation of the given material;
- change of context;
- commentary and quasi-commentary;
- smash of different material in order to highlight similarities or differences;

All of above mentioned types of remix (the most popular forms), can be performed jointly or in optional configuration. There are new forms of remix that are created every day. This creativity and vibrant process of making something out of culture is the core of the remix culture.

Bad-lip reading

One of the creators of remixed content is YouTube channel called *Bad-lip reading*. The channel published 64 short remixed movies and it has over 5 million subscribers (5 235 017 - data collected on 15.06.2016). The author of the channel describes his work in one sentence: *I put words into other people's mouths*. The main idea behind this work is based on dubbing or redubbing process of well know movie productions, TV series, cultural and political phenomena. In some of the works, additional graphic remix was used in order to amplify the intended purpose. This channel is trying to create content with comic tinge, clever humor and with references to the most recognizable text of culture. Some of the remixed titles included: The Star Wars Saga, Hunger Games, The Walking Dead, The Game of Thrones, Twilight Saga, Spider-Man Saga, NFL, Hillary Clinton speeches, Barack Obama speeches, Coldplay, Gotye and Beyonce songs, Joe Biden sound bites and so on. The most successful one is a bad-lip reading from National Football league published 15.01.2013 with over 66 million view (66 567 059 - data collected on 15.06.2016).

The work of this broadcaster is highly creative, he does not only create new dubbing layer, but he creates new music pieces, songs and so on. He is constant with his work which is performed on high level. This channel has a strong fan base and is capable of good communication habits (commentary section communication), and is in touch with needs and request of the fans. Those are the main reasons behind the popularity of the channel.

Miranda Sings

Miranda Sings is a fictional comedian character created by musician and an actress Colleen Ballinger. She started her broadcasting carrier in 2006 and now her channel is subscribed by 6 591 581 people. Since 2006 she uploaded 527 movie productions. Her work is connected to video blogs experience, musical remix, music videos remix. Outside the YouTube platform Miranda Sings is using other social media channels like Twitter, Facebook, Google +, Tumblr, Spreadshirt.

As a character she is remixing well know social stereotypes in order to create amusing effect. She is involved in public matters like animal rights, minority rights, charity work. As a remix content creator she is focused on music and music videos remix.

She created parodies of Tylor Swift, Adele, Nicki Minaj, One Direction, Lady Gaga, Justin Timberlake, Ariana Grande, P!ink, Miley Cyrus, Michael Jackson, Katy Perry and so on. She created 111 remixed music videos (covers and creative redistributions works).

She is recreating music videos by using the most simple tools, simply she is putting her person in original picture, and she performs the song lyrics in her manner and style. Sometimes she is changing the surroundings/ the place of the video in order to create new context to well know picture (*Nicki Minaj Starships*- remixed video shot at Los Angeles beach). The pastiche style of the YouTube star is helping her comedian status and gives her remixed videos individual aspect.

This is an example of one of the broadcasters that are able to create a stronghold of fans, and even started a community centered around their work. The Miranda Sings YouTube community is composed of fans, collaboration partners, other YouTube stars, and also real life celebrities

like Ariana Grande (personal connection to the comedian Colleen Ballinger). The content that she is creating (remix included) has its own receivers base (community form), so it can be personalized and customized following the generated feedback. The main difference between this channel and the other ones mentioned is that Miranda Sings is using remix tools in specified fields of her work, it is not her main broadcasting profile to create that type of publications.

The HillyWood Show

The Hillywood Show is a YouTube channel created by sisters Hannah and Hilly Hindi in 2006. They have uploaded 169 remixed parodies (data collected 28.06.2016), as their slogan tells they are creating *epic parodies of your favorite movies, TV shows and more*. Each parody features songs & dance parodies of blockbuster films and TV series or celebrity profiles, their work is highly professional in the matter of camera shoots, postproductions, sound, acting and location choice. They performed remixed parodies of such titles as: Harry Potter Series, Hunger Games Series, Twilight Series, The Vampire Diaries Series, The Lord of The Rings Series, Hocus Pocus The Film, Supernatural, Doctor Who and Lady Gaga music videos and more. In the analysis of their work this spectrum was widened by format like Got to Dance and other popular TV talent reality shows.

They are performing a brand or remix production called mash-up. They are mixing blockbusters movies or TV shows with hit songs (pop cultural based) like The Twilight movie and *Hot N Cold* song by Katy Perry. This way every one of their productions is a unique representation of the most popular pop or mass cultural phenomenon of specified time or is an attempt of creating new context for well know movie picture. Other examples of this type of work: The Vampire Diaries series mashed-up with *Show me Your Teeth* by Lady Gaga, The Lord of The Ring series and *Let it go* song from Disney original picture *Frozen*. In the last case to the music of Disney song a new text was created in order to give the narration to the publication.

Some of the parodies are focused on generating new context for the movie picture that they are remixing. That was the case for The Hunger Games Parody, the hit movie was mashed-up with the original song *Fashionista* by Jimmy James (lyrics were recreated in order to create more references to the Hunger Games original movie). *Whether you're a Capitol fashionista seeking an entertaining chuckle or a District citizen yearning for a smile, The Hillywood Show's® Hunger Games Parody delivers!* That was part of the message that was published in the describe box.

CONCLUSION

Creative transformation of cultural and pop-cultural context on the YouTube platform is a vital part of YouTube community that is the main force of communication. Remix in different form can be a way to participate in the culture alongside with expressing personal opinion and thoughts.

There are many different forms of remix that are published via the YouTube platform and most of them are using sound and video alterations. Different levels of advance and different styles make this community very diverse in the sense of broadcasted materials.

In the aspect of sound alterations there are dubbing changes, music rewrites, additional effects and so on. When it comes to the visual part, the possibilities are even more diverse with every studio effect, location changes, editing manipulations and mash-up.

The remix is just the outcome, the effect of the participation and remix culture. The main component is all about the people, community and communication inside of the community.

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SHARING RESOURCES ON FACEBOOK GROUPS: POLISH IMMIGRANTS IN GERMANY, NORWAY AND UK

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Abstract: Facebook groups enable their members access to diverse resources symbolic and material, scarce and free, exhaustible or renewable. Depending on the group's objective, resources are co-used, gifted, bartered, swapped, freecycled or sold (bought) by users responding to the needs of others or satisfying their own needs. Based on posts collected through the Facebook's Application Programming Interface (API), this study examines sharing of resources among Polish immigrants in Germany, Norway and United Kingdom, belonging to the public Facebook groups. Findings suggest that the most important resource shared by members of Polish immigrant groups on Facebook is job-related information. Moreover, Facebook groups appear to be a popular selling tool and less effective sharing space for Polish immigrants in Germany, Norway and UK. However, some sharing economy models such as freecycling, swapping and bartering are identified based on Facebook posts.

Keywords: sharing, Facebook groups, resources, social media.

Social media platforms that have sprung up worldwide in the last decade are referred to a variety of services e.g. social networking sites, blogs, wikis, content communities and virtual worlds (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). There is no one universally accepted definition of what social media are, however some characteristics appeared to be particularly important. Firstly, social media platforms are founded on Web 2.0 philosophy (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Secondly, its lifespan and development depend on user-generated content (Fuchs, 2015). Thirdly, the communication infrastructure is based on social networks that are denser, wider and richer in weak ties (Obar & Wildman, 2015). Last, but not least, the core activity that contributes to the global success of social technologies is sharing (Kramer, 2015; Meikle, 2016). Scholars emphasize that without sharing social media would not be able to survive on the highly competitive market of advanced communication technologies. For this reason the biggest social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, or LinkedIn are pressured to constantly work on affordances encouraging sharing. Although sharing is both opportunity and threat for users, everyday they bring in enormous amount of resources that are skilfully turned into commodities providing profits to the social media shareholders and owners (Fuchs, 2015). In this view, users are only the "raw material" for the products and services offered by social media developers (Meikle, 2016, p. 33). The opposing view emphasizes opportunities and advantages provided by social

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media for individuals engaged in sharing economy (Botsman & Rogers, 2010), voluntary participation (Gil de Zúñiga, Jung, & Valenzuela, 2012), or ordinary sales activities (Agnihotri, Kothandaraman, Kashyap, & Singh, 2012). In this sense, sharing in social media may generate positive, non-commercial or socially-oriented consequences that exist along with the official strategies of the “sharing industry”.

This study examines sharing activities among Polish immigrants in Germany, Norway and UK belonging to Facebook groups. The following research questions are pursued: Is sharing a new metaphor of selling on Facebook groups connecting Polish immigrants? What resources are shared by Polish immigrants in Norway, Germany and UK? What sharing economy models could be identified on Facebook groups maintained by Polish immigrants?

SHARING 2.0 AND SHARING ECONOMY

Kramer (2015, p. 5) argues that humans have been sharing resources to survive, but they “continue to share knowledge even though survival is no longer at stake”. For Kietzmann and colleagues (Kietzmann, Hermkens, McCarthy, & Silvestre, 2011) sharing is “a way of interacting in social media”. They emphasize that sharing leads to new connections between users, but also establishes (sets up) connections between users and resources. In the similar vein, Meikle (2016, p. 24) claims that “sharing is part of what’s social about social media”. For John (2013) “sharing is the fundamental and constitutive activity of Web 2.0 in general, and social network sites in particular”. Indeed, the expansion of social media infused a new energy into the debate on sharing among people in modern societies. But what features, forces, or changes have made the concept of sharing so popular in the age of social media?

The essay of John (2013) “The Social Logics of Sharing” could be an interesting answer to this question. He discusses three changes that affected the sharing in the context of Web 2.0. First, he refers to the fuzzier nature of objects that are shared in social media. Nowadays, social media users share hardly quantifiable resources such as photos, videos, information, knowledge or thoughts, which makes the whole activity more complicated and unintelligible. The second shift is associated with sharing standing alone without the object. For example, Facebook’s mission is “to give people the power to share and make the world more open and connected”. The use of share without object(s) in the context of Facebook’s mission, leaves users with unlimited options what resources share on this platform (what a brilliant strategy!). And finally third change, is portrayed by sharing of activities or resources that were not considered as shareable objects in the past. Users are encouraged to share their “life”, “world”, emotions, health, and spicy details from private life. The more details individuals provide, the easier for social media developers to build the data products that are offered to third party companies.

However, there are more features making sharing in social media distinct from prior sharing activities. Meikle (2016) focuses on fusion between the public time that users have for a paid work with the private time reserved for unpaid activities. As a consequence, the borderline between work and leisure becomes blurred. The same process has been reconstructed earlier by Fuchs (2015), for whom this is a basic strategy in the social media economy. Unpaid labor, primarily referred to sharing, has become a source of value for owners and shareholders of social technologies. In this view, sharing in social media is a new metaphor for the exploitation of unpaid users engaged in fashionable practices such as crowdsourcing, swapping, bartering, freecycling, couchsurfing, or carpooling. The critical perspective of sharing discloses some hidden interests and mechanism that are unseen through lens of other theoretical perspectives applied in the study of social media.

Thus, sharing may serve different purposes depending on whose interests are considered – owners or users. When owners perspective is applied, sharing appears to be a commercially tuned activity driven by hidden business goals. At the users' level, sharing seems to be rather spontaneous, grassroots set of actions, with commercial motives hidden among non-commercial goals and rationales. Based on that, sharing may be interpreted as the exemplification of “clash between user tactics and platform strategies” (van Dijck, 2013, p. 20). In this essay the scope of analysis is limited to the sharing practices of users belonging to the Facebook groups. Moreover, sharing is narrowed to certain practices derived from the sharing economy paradigm (Benkler, 2004; Botsman & Rogers, 2010). Based on definitions available in the subject literature, sharing economy (collaborative consumption, mesh economy) is understood as a set of actions (a) enabled by social technologies, (b) motivated by needs of others, (c) enhanced by ecological concerns.

There is no agreement among scholars whether transactions where money is involved should be included to the sharing economy paradigm. For example, John emphasized that “Sharing economies are economies that operate without money changing hands and whose goal, by and large, is not to make their participants richer” (2012, p. 179). On the other hand, Belk allows currency mediation in sharing economy. For him sharing economy, or more precisely, collaborative consumption is “people coordinating the acquisition and distribution of a resource for a fee or other compensation” (2014, p. 1598). Thus, the money mediation remains problematic feature. In the context of the Facebook groups it becomes even more complicated as data scraped through API does not allow to recognize whether users share or sell different resources. Posts are often too short or incomplete to find out whether selling represents traditional or rather sharing economy models. In order to avoid misconceptions, this research focuses on sharing practices without money mediation. These practices include: swapping, bartering, and freecycling. Swapping is operationalized as exchange of similar items, for example books or clothes. Bartering is a more capacious concept and it refers to exchange of different goods, for example books for clothes, or food for furnitures. Finally, freecycling is the act of giving away used, unneeded, or disliked items to others in need (Norton, 2007). Although, such conceptualization narrows the idea of sharing, it is a necessary step in reaching the goals of this research.

SHARING IN FACEBOOK GROUPS

Facebook, the world's most popular social networking site, attracts more than 1,7 billion active users monthly (Statista, 2016). This is more than the population of China (1.3bln), and tree times more than the population of the European Union made of twenty eight countries. As a consequence, demography of Facebook's users is closest to the offline demographic structure of many societies (Duggan, 2015).¹ Pew Research suggests that Facebook has very engaged users in U.S. with 70% admitting they visit site daily, and 43% logging there more than once a day (Duggan, 2015). Moreover, comparing with other social media platforms, Facebook is the best example of site built upon affordances stimulating a variety of sharing forms (Meikle, 2016, pp. 45-46). The commercial success of Facebook depends on socio-technical innovations encouraging users to bring in, exchange, sell (or buy) both material and symbolic resources.

Among different tools available to Facebook's users, “groups” offer its members unique functionalities designed to promote and enhance sharing. When Facebook was launching

¹ This pattern is characteristic for societies where Facebook is the most popular (or one of the most popular) social media platform.

“groups” in 2010, Mark Zuckerberg optimistically suggested that “This is going to be a pretty fundamental shift for how people use Facebook (...) The amount of sharing will go up massively and will be completely addictive” (Charles, 2010). Indeed, groups gather individuals around common interests and invite them to share information, knowledge, photos, videos, links etc. under preferred settings of privacy. There are three privacy settings available to administrators of the group: public, closed, and secret. The public group has the most inclusive character. Anyone can find a group, see who is in the group and what they share. The closed status allows only current members to access the posts, but anyone can see who’s in the group. The secret groups are the most exclusive communities on Facebook. Only current or former members can find the group on site, current members can check who is the member, and only current members decide who can join. It seems that privacy settings matter for users sharing scarce, secret or unique resources. What is really important, administrators of the groups are allowed to change the privacy status.

It is impossible to make a systematic review of groups on Facebook, as there are plenty of them gathering from one to millions of members. For example, “Facebook for Every Phone” group has more than 500 millions of members. This is a highly inclusive group attracting users thinking of improving their experience in using Facebook. But there are many smaller, more exclusive groups connecting individuals from all over the world interested in movies, books, fishing, football, traveling etc. Facebook groups could be compared to offline clubs gathering individuals around common goals and interests. Such groupings organized horizontally around common goal or idea embody the transition from collective to connective action proposed by Bennet and Segerberg (2012). Moreover, Facebook groups overcome the limitations of space and time. Presumably, that feature may have positive impact on sharing diverse resources among users.

This study is limited to Facebook groups made by Polish immigrants in the United Kingdom (England and Scotland), Germany and Norway. It is expected that specific personal situations (or prior experience of such situations) e.g. unemployment, ignorance of the law, language barriers, cultural differences, may encourage immigrants to search for or bring resources into the Facebook groups. It also assumed here that Polish immigrants use Facebook groups for more trivial reasons such as general networking, news consumption, spare time, or just for fun. The analysis is further limited to the public groups enabling third party to acquire data through Facebook API.

HYPOTHESES

A commercial success of sharing economy giants such as Uber, Airbnb, or BlaBlaCar undermines the foundations of a new economic paradigm. Critics announced the failure of sharing economy (Kessler, 2015) or even the decline of social media platforms (Wilson, 2014). Some scholars (Fuchs, 2015; Meikle, 2016; van Dijck, 2013) claim that Facebook shapes the sharing practices of users in order to commodify them into salable products. Shall we therefore conceptualize users practices on Facebook in terms of sharing? Agnihotri and colleagues (Agnihotri et al., 2012) demonstrate how salespeople may use social media for their sales strategies. They suggest that social media are effective tools in maintaining closer relations with customers. Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn etc. offer salespeople opportunities to “engage customers one-on-one through attention to their personal events and shared media” (Agnihotri et al., 2012). Building on this proposal it could be argued that salespeople penetrate the Facebook groups connecting Polish immigrants in Norway, Germany and UK. They use various affordances to build trust and attention of Facebook users. Moreover, individuals with non-sales jobs may also use online groups for occasional sale of new or used products and services. At the same time, research suggests that

sharing economy, especially the forms of exchange with no money involved, are rather poorly recognized activities (Smith & Page, 2016). Considering the arguments of critical theorists and the social media selling framework, it is hypothesized here that (H1) selling proposals are dominating in the Facebook groups made by Polish immigrants in UK, Germany and Norway.

Findings of different research show that Poles leave their country primarily for economic reasons. (Work Service, 2014) The looking for a (better paid) job and better place to live. Economic migrations are inherent element of Polish winding history and, what is less optimistic, recent research suggests relatively large fraction of Poles think about leaving their country (Czapiński & Panek, 2015, pp. 146-150). Job and employment are important values for Poles, along with family and health (CBOS, 2014). But these findings are hardly surprising if we consider that since 1989 Poland has had one of the highest unemployment rates in Europe. It is therefore expected that work and work-related topics frequently appear in posts of Polish immigrants in Facebook groups. Some of them may try to use Facebook groups to find a job, while others may try to offer job positions (temporarily or permanent) or help in job search. Building on that it is expected that (H2) job-related information is the most important resource shared by Polish immigrants belonging to Facebook groups.

It was mentioned above that sharing economy is a loosely defined concept labeling variety of shares including monetary and non-monetary actions. However, the research shows that people are highly positive about sharing economy, still they have little knowledge about sharing models (Smith & Page, 2016). It would be therefore naive to expect that Polish immigrants involved in Facebook groups are knowingly exercising variety of sharing models. They are rather unconsciously involved in different sharing practices with no (or little) intention to contribute to sharing economy. There is no research showing which sharing models Poles prefer in general, and it is even more difficult to find such research for social media environment in particular. However, it is assumed that members of large Facebook groups rather do not know each other, which may constrain them from gifting and giving different resources for free – freecycling. It is therefore expected that social distances, distrust and little possibilities (or limited time) to recognize true needs of others, make (H3) freecycling little or not practiced method of sharing among Polish immigrants belonging to Facebook groups.

DATA AND METHODS

Data

This study uses posts accessed through the Facebook API via R programming language (The R Core Team, 2016). In total 13 869 posts from seven groups have been collected and 10 186 were analyzed after data cleaning. The stratified sampling was applied to reach approximately similar number of posts for UK, Germany, and Norway Facebook groups. Groups with relatively high number of members (usually around 10k), were considered for analysis in order to get posts from alive and vivid Facebook communities. Due to Facebook API limit, it was impossible to collect expected number of posts from large groups in Germany and Norway. Thus, posts from smaller Facebook groups were added. The strategy was to get as many posts as possible with quite equal proportion for all countries. However, there were more limitations associated with the number of posts that could be downloaded by third party. Details could be found at official website “developers.facebook.com”, and documentation provided by authors of R package “Rfacebook”. (Barbera, Piccirilli, & Geisler, 2016). Table 1. consists more details on groups that have been analyzed in this research.

Table 1
Features of Facebook groups

Name of the group	Status	Country	No. of posts downloaded	No. of posts analyzed	No. of members	No. of the group
Polacy w Niemczech (Poles in Germany)	Public	Germany	1 820	1 054	10 014	531242030295057
Polacy w Niemczech (Poles in Germany)	Public	Germany	817	663	4 204	26524038688
Polacy w Berlinie (Poles in Berlin)	Public	Germany	2 000	1 886	19 763	26524038688
Polacy w Norwegii (Poles in Norway)	Public	Norway	2 627	2 234	14 081	2377118572
Polacy w Oslo (Poles in Oslo)	Public	Norway	2 048	1 386	4 373	1421031461484026
Polacy w Szkocji (Poles in Scotland)	Public	UK	2 094	1 642	12 348	636718073026883
Polacy w Anglii (Poles in England)	Public	UK	2 463	1 321	16 321	472154286233346
	Sums		13 869	10 186	81 104	

Method

The aim of this study is to understand how Polish immigrants from Norway, Germany and UK belonging to Facebook groups share diverse resources in a social media environment. In doing so, the content analysis method has been applied to test hypotheses presented above. The unit of analysis is a Facebook post. Facebook post may include text (string of characters), graphic file, video, or web-link. For the purpose of research only the textual layer of each post has been analyzed. Posts made only by graphic file, video, or link, have been removed from analysis in this research.

The grammar complexity of Polish language (gender system, seven cases, inflection, conjugation) has been partially overcome by usage of ‘Morfologik’ library, that allowed to distinguish cores of the words used in the studied posts. The constraint was related to a character encoding of the Polish signs. In order to improve the quality of the analyzed content, all files were manually controlled and corrected if necessary. Then, frequency of words reflecting searched variables has been counted to verify expected patterns. Due to a large number of posts this study primarily focuses (but not only) on the manifested content (Babbie, 2012, pp. 301-302).

Coding

The following rules of coding have been applied to the Facebook posts collected in this research:

1. Posts with words sell or price are coded as indicators of the traditional economy models present on Facebook groups – initial step.
2. Posts with words swap and exchange indicate the existence of sharing economy on Facebook (swapping and bartering models).
3. Posts with words give away are also coded as indicators of sharing economy (freecycling model).

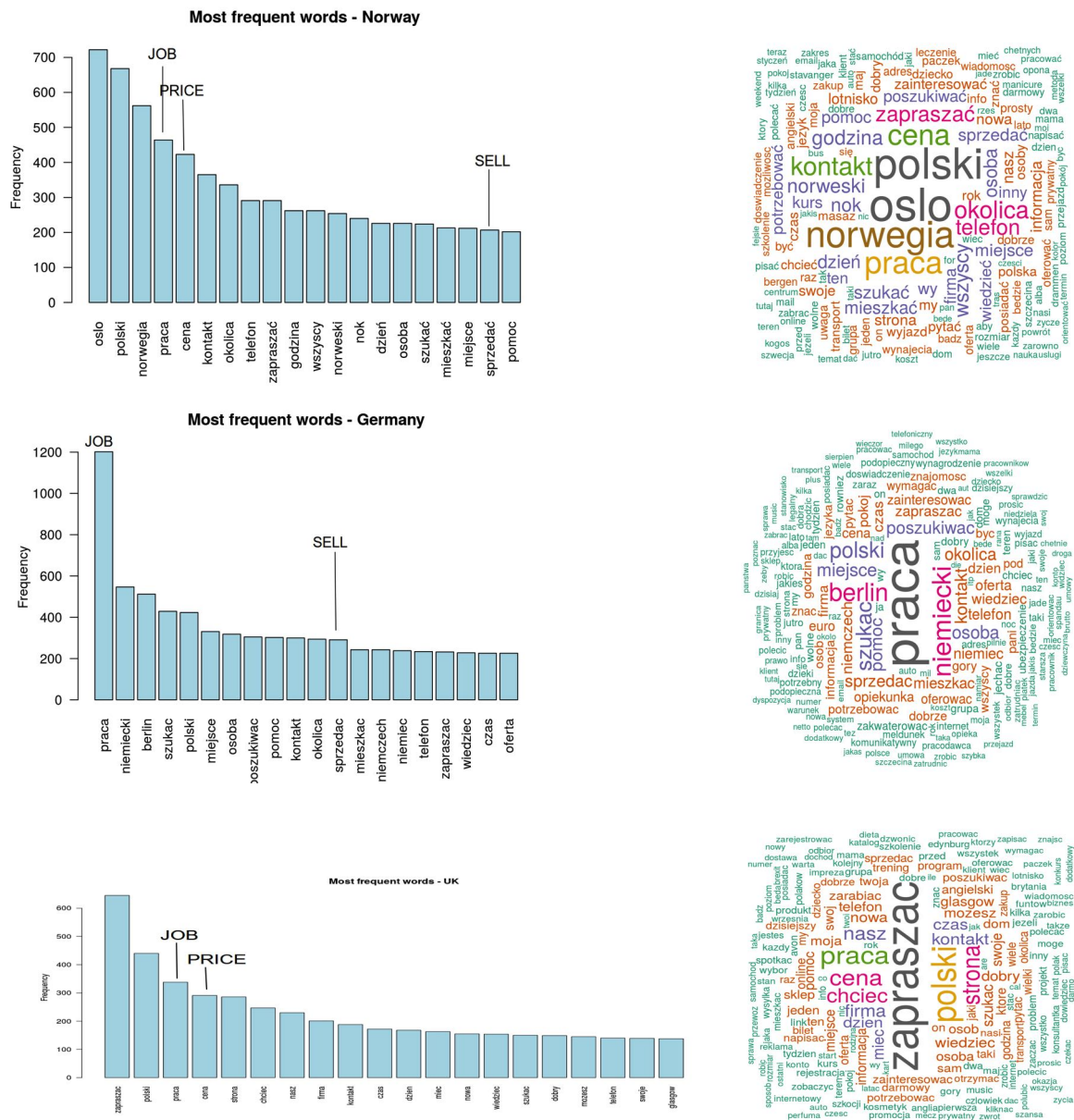
Moreover, posts with key-words indicating the existence of the sharing economy models were wholly (manually) analyzed to confirm that single words are referred to the research problem and help to identify resources shared between Polish immigrants, members of the Facebook groups. Ten main categories of resources emerged from frequency analysis of words included in

posts: (1) kids accessories (with clothes), (2) clothes, (3) books, (4) pets & accessories, (5) cars & accessories, (6) electronics, (7) transportation, (8) housing, (9) hobby & entertainment, (10) job. Moreover, the analysis of posts related to the freecycling model revealed that some users offer resources while others rather purposely search for them on Facebook groups (see: Table 2).

Results

The content analysis revealed that selling is popular method of exchange among Polish immigrants. ‘Price’ and ‘sell’ are frequently used words in analyzed Facebook posts. Words related to sharing economy models: bartering, swapping and freecycling are rare and the analysis of whole posts with these words further narrowed the number of items related to sharing economy models. The most popular words used in analyzed posts are presented in the Figure 1.

Figure 1
The most frequent words in posts



However, there were many commercial advertisements addressed to immigrants in all three countries. Ads have been posted by private companies and individual users, members of those groups. Some posts included simultaneously selling (price, sell) and exchange offer (swap, barter). In other words, users were trying to sell different goods but they were also considering an exchange for a specific resource.

The analysis further revealed that job-related information is the most popular resource offered and searched by Polish immigrants belonging to Facebook groups (Figure 1). This resource has also appeared in the sharing economy models presented in the Table 2. Polish immigrants use Facebook groups to find temporary replacement, recruit new employees, offer or get an extra job.

Table 2
Sharing economy models

Freecycling	Norway		Germany		UK	
	Offer	Search	Offer	Search	Offer	Search
Animals	6		4		2	
Housing				4 (check-in)		
Furnitures	4		3	1		
Clothes			2	1		
Books		2		3		
Baby & acces.			1		3	
Transport	4		3			
Electronics	1		1			
Hobby / ent.	2		2		1	
Job			2			
Barter / swap						
Housing			1			
Baby & acces.					1	
Transport			1			
Electronics			2		1	
Hobby / ent.	1		1			
Job					2	
Cars & parts			2		1	

Moreover, it was also found that Polish immigrants are involved in two general models of sharing economy: bartering and freecycling. There are number of goods freecycled in Germany, Norway and UK, e.g. furnitures, clothes, books, electronics, baby accessories, or tickets. Polish immigrants use Facebook groups also to give away animals and job offers. Among bartered or swapped resources there are baby accessories, tickets, free seats in cars (usually trips to Poland), car parts, jobs and electronics. Surprisingly, one user from Germany was trying to exchange a house for flat in a specific location.

DISCUSSION

This study was aimed to identify sharing patterns on Facebook groups among Polish immigrants in Germany, Norway and UK. Sharing was narrowly conceptualized as bartering, swapping and freecycling. Results suggest that Facebook groups for Polish immigrants are the extension of traditional economy models. The H1 assuming that selling proposals are dominating

in the Facebook groups was confirmed. A large number of posts with words “selling” and “price” may suggest that Polish immigrants use Facebook groups primarily to sell diverse resources. The use of Facebook groups for commercial purposes may suggest that sharing has become a new metaphor for selling (Meikle, 2016). However, this claim seems to be little far-fetched, as there are posts in all analyzed groups with the distinct sharing economy offers. In reference to Wilson’s critique (Wilson, 2014), who claimed that sharing economy on social media is a myth, the question is whether Facebook is more selling or sharing platform? Undoubtedly, there are many resources shared everyday on Facebook. But are Facebook’s affordances encouraging the sharing economy models? Facebook groups appear to be a good place to sell different goods for Polish immigrants in Norway and Germany. However, there are many posts with word “price” shared by immigrants from UK. This may suggest that Polish immigrants from all analyzed countries use Facebook groups for selling purposes and there are no specific, country-based commercial practices differentiating them.

Considering that Polish immigration in 21st century is primarily motivated by economic factors, it is hardly surprising that “job offers” and “job searches”, or more widely, information about employment, is the most commonly shared resource on Facebook groups set up by Polish immigrants in Germany, Norway and UK. This results confirm the H2 – Facebook groups may act as an effective “job agency” maintained from below, with no agents searching for profits. The word ‘job’ appears to be particularly popular in posts of Polish immigrants in Germany. This result is compatible with prior research emphasizing “the strength of weak ties” (Granovetter, 1973) on the labor market (Batorski, Bojanowski, & Filipek, 2015). Weak ties with acquaintances give individuals better access to diverse resources e.g. information, knowledge, trust (Burt, 2000) that could be mobilized when individuals start searching for a job. On Facebook, users are enabled to maintain a number of “friendships” with acquaintances considered here as a weak ties. A large number of posts with job offers and searches may confirm that Facebook groups are important tool increasing Polish immigrants’ chances on the labor market in Germany, Norway and UK.

It is however interesting that posts with job-related information are most frequent among Polish immigrants in Germany. This may suggest that Poles in Germany prefer to offer or take a job from countrymen. Considering that a new wave of Polish immigration (since 2004) to European countries is rather little organized and many Poles hold prejudice against other Poles abroad, the job-mediating role of Facebook groups appears to be surprising somehow.

Though sharing economy is little supported by Polish immigrants belonging to Facebook groups, freecycling appears to be more popular than bartering and swapping. This pattern is characteristic for all analyzed countries. It means that H3 assuming that freecycling is not practiced method of sharing among Polish immigrants in UK, Germany and Norway, needs to be rejected. On the one hand, this result may suggest that Polish immigrants are conscious consumers with pro-environmental and communal-oriented attitudes. They care about common future and try to reduce the waste. On the other hand, freecycling is the easiest way of recycling. If traditional recycling generates certain expenditures, freecycling allows Polish immigrants to save some money and time. Moreover, freecycling should be also considered as the effect of growing consumption expenditures (Eurostat, 2010). Pervasive marketing and advertisement encourage individuals to purchase new goods and services, to consume more and faster even if there are no real needs behind it (Botsman & Rogers, 2010). ‘Old’ but still working, valuable goods, are replaced by new products and services. Consequently, some individuals may decide to give the ‘old’ goods for free, rather than throw them away to a bin.

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

This study has a number of limitations that directly or indirectly affected the final results. First of all, the analysis of Facebook posts have qualitative character as there is no possibility to subset a random sample of posts from Facebook groups set up by Polish immigrants. The total population of groups set up by Polish immigrants is unknown because some of them cannot be recognized as strictly immigrants' groups. At the same time, Facebook API puts a number of restrictions on researchers.² There is a limit in downloading (size and time) and only posts from public groups are available for analysis. Due to Facebook policy, private and hidden groups are not available for academic examination.

Moreover, sharing was narrowly conceptualized in order to recognize explicit sharing economy models. Unfortunately, the idea of sharing economy remains ambiguous and it is even more difficult to recognize all sharing activities from the textual layer of the Facebook posts. In order to get more reliable and complete results, future research should apply methods using both textual and graphical layers of posts. Many users use photos and videos to present resources they are willing to share with others. Even in the database used for the purpose of this research, there were many posts with no text, consisting only visual elements. Therefore it seems that methods combining textual and graphical analysis may bring more complex picture of sharing in social media.

As it was mentioned above, to avoid some theoretical misconceptions, this study was focused on sharing without money mediation. However, some posts revealed that Facebook groups' members offer car seats or other collaborative transportation for money. Thus, future research should also focus on sharing economy models such as car-pooling or car-sharing where money exchange is involved.

Moreover, this study does not specifically focus on sharing of information and knowledge among Polish immigrants belonging to Facebook groups. Job-related information is derived from posts consisting words such as *swap*, *exchange* and *give away*. However, it needs to be emphasized that users exchange high volume of information and knowledge on Facebook groups. Undoubtedly, some of these resources may contribute to sharing economy emerging in a digital environment. Therefore, future research explicitly focused on resources instead of sharing economy models, is likely to bring results enriching our understanding of sharing economy on social media.

Acknowledgments

Kamil Filipek thanks the National Science Centre [NCN, Poland] for support through Grant No. 2014/12/S/HS6/00390.

Author thanks two anonymous reviewers for their suggestions leading to an improved article. Author takes responsibility for remaining errors.

² For more details check: <https://developers.facebook.com/policy/>

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NEW PATTERNS OF PROTEST AND REVOLUTION IN THE AGE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

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Abstract: The article aims to analyse the role of social media in initiating and organising protest and revolutionary movements. Social media, particularly Facebook and Twitter, are widely believed to have been used by activists involved in the global wave of protests and revolutions after 2009. However, the assessment of their role wavers between technological determinism and minimising the impact of new technologies. Considering the current state of research, the author offers his answers to a number of questions: (1) To what extent and how are social media used in the processes of political communication, mobilisation and organisation of protest and revolutionary movements? (2) What is the relation between the old and the new media? (3) What is the relation between the online and offline dimension of collective action? (4) Why has the occupation of public space become the dominant tactic of protest and revolutionary movements in the age of social media?

Keywords: social media; protest movements; revolutions; ICTs; mobilization.

The discussion about the role of information and communication technologies in the mobilisation, organisation and activity of social movements is not a new one. Indeed, the issue was broadly considered in the context of the Zapatista movement in 1994 (Knudson, 1998; Martinez-Torres, 2001). Also, the role of the Internet in the anti-globalist movement at the turn of the century stimulated analysis of new technologies in the organisation of protests, their coordination on the supra-national scale, building information strategy, etc. In this way, global activism became the subject of interest to scholars of globalisation, the media and social movements (see e.g. Ayres, 2004; De Jong, Shaw, & Stammers, 2005; Della Porta & Mosca, 2005; Kahn & Kellner, 2004; Langman, 2005).

The development of the blogosphere and the emergence and expansion of social media platforms in the 2000s stemmed from the move from Web 1.0 to Web 2.0 (Jurgenson & Ritzer, 2012). To an increasingly greater extent, Internet users became co-authors rather than mere receivers of content, which meant a significant change in the potential of the new media for collective action. This had not been observed in the case of the anti-globalist movement, which operated in the Web 1.0 paradigm and lost its momentum in the second half of the 2010s.

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What proved to be a turning point in generating interest in relations between collective action and social media was the mass protests in Moldova (2009) and Iran (2009), known as 'Twitter revolutions'. Another impulse came with the protests in the Middle East and North Africa (2011), which came to be referred to as the 'Arab Spring'. While the role of Twitter was stressed in the case of Tunisia (Tremayne, 2014, pp. 111-112), the uprising in Egypt was explicitly called a 'Twitter revolution' or 'Facebook revolt' (DuPont, 2011).

The 'Twitter revolutions' of the period between 2009 and 2011 stirred a journalistic debate on the role of social media in initiating and organising social protests. Both cyboptimists (Shirky, 2010; Shirky, 2011) and cybo pessimists (Gladwell, 2010; Morozov, 2009) based their arguments on superficial observations, intuition and preconceptions rather than the results of empirical studies. As remarked by Clay Shirky, without an adequate theoretical framework developed on the basis of empirical evidence, attempts to outline the impact of social media on political action were reduced to 'duelling anecdotes' (Shirky, 2011).

This discussion, however, was a point of departure for an increasing number of empirical studies and theoretical reflection on the role of social media in initiating and coordinating collective action. What attracted particular interest was the Arab Spring in general, and the 'successful' revolutions in Tunisia and Egypt in particular. The Egyptian uprising was an important point of inspiration for mass social mobilisation in Portugal and Spain in the spring of 2011. The same year saw the rise of the Occupy Wall Street movement in the United States, and the following years brought mass protests and revolutions in such countries as Slovenia (2012–2013), Bosnia and Hercegovina, Bulgaria, Turkey (2013), and Ukraine (2013–2014). In all cases the protesters used social media. A particularly considerable number of empirical studies were devoted to the Indignados movement in Spain, the Occupy Wall Street in the US and the Gezi Park protests in Turkey. On the one hand, theoretical reflection on the issue adapted 'old' theories and conceptual categories; on the other, it also involved the emergence of entirely new ideas relating to digital activism and online–offline relations in the activity of social movements.

The present article aims to analyse the role of social media in initiating and organising protests and revolutions. The discussion takes as a point of departure the characteristics of social media as Internet platforms which significantly transform the patterns of communication and creation of content in the Web 2.0 paradigm. Social media are explored as part of the media system rather than considered in isolation. This approach is supported by the results of empirical studies and theoretical reflection. The role of social media in the processes of mobilisation and coordination of, as well as generating involvement in, collective action closely corresponds to their 'revolutionary' communicative potential.

The mobilising nature of the new media is analysed with reference to selected theoretical approaches and illustrated by a number of examples. This aspect is closely related to the hybrid nature of contemporary social movements, in which transition from online to offline involvement in collective action becomes natural and 'intuitive'. The discussion is focused on new trends in the activity of protest and revolutionary movements: the domination of 'weak ties' and 'connective action' rather than developed organisational structures, and preference for the occupation of public space as the key tactic of the 'age of social media'.

SOCIAL MEDIA AND COLLECTIVE ACTION

Social media are defined as 'Internet-based platforms that allow the creation and exchange of user-generated content, usually using either mobile or web-based technologies' (Margetts, John, Hale, & Yasseri, 2016, p. 5). They enable their users to join the existing communities or

form new social networks (Tucker et al., 2014, p. 10), and they can take a number of different forms, including blogs and micro-blogs (e.g. Twitter, Weibo), social networking sites (e.g. Facebook, Twitter, Tumblr, Tuenti, Instagram, Snapchat, Orkut), content-sharing sites (e.g. YouTube, Flickr, Vine), social bookmarking sites (e.g. Digg, Reddit), and virtual worlds for gaming or socialising (e.g. Minecraft, Second Life) (Margetts, John, Hale, & Yasseri, 2016, pp. 5-6).

A profound change of the Internet which occurred in the 2000s involved the emergence of social networks developed and controlled by their users. This was enabled by such developments as the spread of broadband Internet access and wireless communication, and the advent of more advanced social software (Castells, 2012, p. 231).

Social media are characterised by a high degree of interactivity and by user-generated content. Consequently, in practical terms their users are, to a greater or lesser extent, producers in communicative interactions (Gerbaudo, 2012, p. 22). This means that the ethos of Web 2.0 blurs the distinction between authors and readers, as evidenced by the concepts of collective production and reproduction (Kaldor & Selchow, 2012).

Jon B. Alterman observes that the early analytical comments on the Arab Spring did not give sufficient credit to this new dimension of the Internet, as they focused on the role of social media in enabling their users to receive content rather than send it. However, it was in fact the latter that transformed people from observers to activists (or sometimes even leaders) and not just followers of the events (Alterman, 2011, p. 104).

The change in the pattern of collective action brought by the Web 2.0 paradigm and by social media is not limited to the new means of communication. Indeed, it runs deeper. W. Lance Bennett and Alexandra Segerberg (2012; 2013) discuss a new 'logic of connective action based on personalised content sharing across media networks', as distinct from the classic collective action described by Mancur Olson (1965). Individuals reinterpret their grievances and create new meanings in their social media networks; they also share their cognitive resources across trusted social networks. The process operates without formal ties, commitment to organisations or other forms of group membership, which are all substituted by fluid connective action networks capable of self-organisation using technology and thus replacing organisational leaders or minimising their role (Anduiza, Cristancho, & Sabucedo, 2014; Sloam, 2014, p. 162).

In the new logic of connective action, the organisation of a social movement – which in classic theories was recognised as the key factor of its success (Caniglia & Carmin, 2005; McCarthy & Zald, 1977) – has lost a lot of its former significance. Connective action networks enable the development of alternative modes of political participation more suited to young people's preferences for non-institutionalised, horizontal involvement. For example, it is much easier to sign an online petition received from a friend than to support an organisation which would strive to resolve the issue (Sloam, 2014, p. 162).

According to the logic of connective action, social media can be perceived in terms of tools which facilitate looser and more personalised forms of collective action. As such, they play the role of organising agents in the place of formal organisations. This questions not only traditional concepts relating to the organisational dimension of collective action, but also the value of conventional understanding of social movements, including such concepts as collective identity, for explaining the current patterns of collective action (Kavada, 2015, p. 883).¹

¹ Megan Boler and Christina Nitsou suggest that the understanding of social movements in the digital media environment requires radical redefinition: 'The blurring of public and private, social and political, requires rethinking the binaristic vocabulary, discourses and assumptions' (Boler & Nitsou, 2014, pp. 249-250).

However, even if we accept that today's protest and revolutionary movements are more loosely structured than those of the past, they still have to develop their self-understanding as distinct collectives (Kavada, 2015, p. 883). We can thus make an initial assumption that the logic of connective action does not rule out creating a collective identity. The effectiveness of contentious action requires forming ties between those involved, sharing their outrage and developing a sense of togetherness. Since all these processes are dependent on interactive networks of communication, digital communication networks based on the Internet and on wireless platforms make the task easier, and collective identity can be consolidated as a result of supplementary face-to-face communication and the occupation of urban space (Castells, 2012, p. 229).

SOCIAL MEDIA IN THE MEDIA COMMUNICATION SYSTEM

An analysis of the role of social media in contemporary collective action should not overlook the role of television, radio and print newspapers. Indeed, what needs to be considered is a broader ecosystem of communication which includes the traditional and the new media. Henry Jenkins (2006) argues that a 'convergence culture' that has emerged in today's societies involves a collision and intersection of different forms and types of the media: the old and the new media, as well grassroots and corporate media. The ensuing result is the emergence of a complex media matrix, in which different forms of media interact (DeLuca, Lawson, & Sun, 2012, p. 487).

Although for analytical purposes social media can be discussed in isolation from other platforms, what needs to be borne in mind is that people switch between different media platforms, and that the impact of grassroots media can be amplified by the mass media (Comunello & Anzera 2012, p. 459). Hence, a proposed departure from a narrow platform-focused approach in favour of analysis of 'social movement media cultures', defined as 'the set of tools, skills, social practices and norms that movement participants deploy to create, circulate, curate and amplify movement media across all available platforms' (Costanza-Chock, 2012, p. 375). Indeed, the connectivity infrastructure should be approached as a complex ecology rather than limited to any particular platform or device (Tufekci & Wilson, 2012, p. 365).

Social media were only one component of a new system of political communication which had evolved in the period preceding the so-called Arab Spring. The system involved three interrelated components: (1) satellite TV channels (such as Al-Jazeera); (2) the Internet and social media platforms (such as Facebook and Twitter); (3) increased accessibility and expanding capability of mobile phones (smartphones with photo, video and Internet functions). As a result, information infrastructure in Arab societies underwent a rapid transformation whose consequences were difficult to predict (Tufekci & Wilson, 2012, p. 365).

According to some analysts, in spite of such catch phrases as 'Twitter revolutions', the political movements of 2011 revealed not so much the power of the new media, as the power of twentieth-century media. Although the talk of the impact of television did not sound attractive, it was in fact television that was crucial to the development of events. Even in cases where social media played an important role, they were closely related to traditional media (Alterman, 2011, pp. 103-104).

Al-Jazeera played a particularly important role in the Arab world. Launched in 1996 in Qatar, it was the first TV channel available to Arab receivers which provided them with a point of view alternative to that presented in official channels controlled by the state authorities of different countries in the region (Salem, 2015, p. 176). In addition, its news coverage was integrated with social media. At the time of the Arab Spring, Al-Jazeera and other media (e.g. France-24, Al-Hiwar, the BBC, *The Guardian*) largely used content created both by professional and grassroots journalists, as well as by political bloggers and protesters. This material was made available

on the Internet and broadcast on television. Coverage of current events also made use of information posted on social media in general, and Twitter in particular (Flesher Fominaya, 2014, p. 164; Tufekci & Wilson, 2012, p. 367).

When Egyptian authorities banned journalists from Tahrir Square, citizens took over their role and provided international public with information. In a sense, this amounted to the function of civil watchdogs, as new information and communication technologies radically increased the people's capacity to provide and share information, and thus made it far more likely that misconduct by authorities would be revealed and made widely known (Flesher Fominaya, 2014, p. 165; Tufekci & Wilson, 2012, p. 367).

The pursuit of media attention by protest movements indicates the importance of 'media spectacle', a concept referring to 'media constructs that present events which disrupt ordinary and habitual flows of information, and that become popular stories which capture the attention of the media and the public' (Kellner, 2012, p. vii, 2013 pp. 252-253). Thanks to new technologies, media spectacles can be instantly diffused using television, Internet and social networks, mobile phones, etc., focusing public attention on particular events (Kellner, 2012, p. vii, 2013, p. 253).

What is more, in a global networked society, media spectacles proliferate through the matrix of old and new media and become viral. While in some cases they can become an instrument of political control, in others they may function as tools of political opposition, as well as empty media hype in pursuit of sensation. The wave of protests and revolutions in the Middle East and North Africa can be interpreted as a series of interrelated media spectacles, which in turn generated similar developments in other parts of the world (Kellner, 2012, p. vii-viii, 2013, pp. 253-254).

A general view of media practices needs to include some estimates of the level of use of particular social media in collective action. For example, there was a correlation between the extent to which protesters used Twitter and the spread of this medium in different countries. It was more popular among participants of protest movements in Spain and the United States rather than Greece (Theocharis, Lowe, van Deth, & García-Albacete, 2015, pp. 215-216).

In addition, it is hardly surprising that, depending on the country, Twitter users were engaged in debating different issues. While discussions in Greece made frequent references to austerity measures imposed by the so-called Troika,² those in the United States focused on inequality, and in Spain – on police violence. Tweeter users in Greece expressed their distrust of, or even hostility towards, mainstream media, perceived as an instrument of government-sponsored propaganda, which explains the proliferation of political blogs and alternative media websites. On the other hand, American and Spanish protesters often spread links leading to the mass media (Theocharis, Lowe, van Deth, & García-Albacete, 2015, p. 216).

THE MOBILISING POWER OF SOCIAL MEDIA

The Internet has radically changed two elements related to the mobilisation of protest: the costs of participation and the need of co-presence. In the new model, the costs of participation have become practically negligible, which enables more individuals to quickly join in collective action at a very little time and content investment on their part (flash mobilisation). The ensuing result involves a 'surplus of participation' and a greater extent of mobilisation than was previously possible (Theocharis, Lowe, van Deth, & García-Albacete, 2015, p. 204).

² The European Commission, the European Central Bank and the International Monetary Fund.

The falling costs of communication have also enabled a faster and easier circulation of information important for social movements and made it possible for activists to stay in touch with more people. This was conducive to the development of ‘weak ties’ (Granovetter, 1973, 1983) which allow activists to expand and manage social networks and join them with other groups and individuals. Unlike electronic mailing lists and media platforms (such as Indymedia) that were used by the anti-globalist movement (also known as the Global Justice Movement) in the past, social media are more egalitarian, as they are characterised by lower barriers of access and participation. Indeed, since they enable many-to-many communication, they enable joining-up and cooperation of different social environments: not only activists, but also those groups and individuals which have been unrepresented and remained politically inactive. To a considerable extent, this explains the phenomenon of mass participation in the Occupy-type movements (Bohdanova, 2014, p. 135; Juris, 2012, p. 267; Theocharis, Lowe, van Deth, & García-Albacete, 2015, p. 204).

According to Manuel Castells, contemporary social movements are mostly formed spontaneously, since they are sparked by an outburst of indignation related to a particular event or a climax of disgust with the decisions of the rulers. A call to create an instant rebellious community in the physical ‘space of places’ comes from the virtual ‘space of flows’ (Castells, 2012, p. 224).

A perfect example illustrating this mechanism is the case of protests in Kiev in the autumn of 2013. Following the decision of Ukrainian government to suspend the negotiations of the European Union Association Agreement, the investigative journalist Mustafa Nayyem issued a Facebook post calling for a demonstration on 21 November 2013. The response took the form of mass protests in Independence Square (Bohdanova, 2014, pp. 133–134; Diuk, 2014, p. 85). This shows that a large number of citizens responded to a call which had come from virtual space and urged them to create a community of resistance in physical space.

However, just like in the case of the Egyptian revolution in 2011, the mobilising power of social media and other social networking services in the course of the Revolution of Dignity in Ukraine should not be overestimated. Although they played a significant role in diffusing information and mobilised some of the early joiners, citizens were generally more inclined to join the protest if they were accompanied by a family member or a friend. The strength of offline ties provided potential protesters with a sense of security when making a decision to join in (Onuch, 2015, p. 233).

In addition, the mobilising role of social media varied in different categories of protesters, as did their use of this form of communication. For example, early joiners more often relied on social media for information about where and how to protest (Onuch, 2015, p. 233). Neither is it surprising that the extent of use of particular types of media differed, e.g. the use of Twitter, which was relatively low at an early stage, considerably increased with each wave of protests. This would seem to indicate that some protesters discovered that Twitter was more useful than Facebook when it came to discussing the unfolding events as they happened. A massive increase in the use of Twitter following the outbreak of violence on 18 February 2014 could suggest that the ‘monitoring’ function of this medium became even more apparent (Tucker et al., 2014, p. 14).

Similar observations can be made with reference to protests in Turkey in 2013, in the course of which both the number of tweets and Twitter users greatly increased (the latter from 1.8 million on 29 May 2013 to 9.5 million on 10 June of the same year). When the protests and clashes with the police intensified, the protesters used Twitter to disseminate information about incidents of police violence, including their place and time, as well as instructions how they can be documented. There was also information on the availability of medical and legal aid (Yesil, 2016, p. 109).

Twitter enables different subjects to engage in horizontal communication practices and organise them around particular leading themes or key words (Theocharis, Lowe, van Deth, & García-Albacete, 2015, p. 205). During the protests in Turkey in 2013 and the Revolution of Dignity in Ukraine (2013–2014), Twitter helped the protesters to keep in contact and inform a broader public about the unfolding events. In Turkey, these aims were served by such hashtags as #occupygezi and #resistgezi (Yesil, 2016, p. 108); in the case of Ukraine, it was, for example, the #Euromaidan hashtag and @EuroMaydan_eng, the ‘official’ protest Twitter account in English (Bohdanova, 2014, p. 136).

It follows that Facebook and Twitter can have a significant impact on the dynamics of protest actions through continuous networked communication which is important for the process of recruiting participants (Bastos, Mercea, & Charpentier, 2015, p. 334). However, the impact of social media on activity of today’s protest movements is not limited to the mobilising function, as they are used in a far broader range of activity of organisational nature, particularly if the movement continues over weeks or months, sometimes losing momentum in the process.

In the case of movements which switch between the phases of ‘street’ mobilisation (protest marches and demonstrations, short-term occupation of public space) and grassroots work, Cris­tiana Olcese uses the term ‘micro-abeyance’, which refers to the stage in-between mobilisations. Although invisible to the general public, it involves processes important for the survival of a protest network, such as consolidation of group identity and evaluation of goals and tactics. In the past, micro-abeyance processes used to be carried out offline by way of more or less efficient organisational effort (regular meetings, letters, etc.). Today, on the other hand, some movements tend to perform them mostly online, using, for example, social media for the purpose (Olcese, 2014, p. 273).

HYBRID NATURE OF PROTEST AND REVOLUTIONARY MOVEMENTS

New social movements of the Internet age combine cyberactivism with activity in physical public space and the relationship between online and offline activism is not a simple one. Although some forms of cyberactivism are only limited to the online environment, in the case of protest and revolutionary movements the ultimate aim of online activism is to produce effects in the offline world (Flesher Fominaya, 2014, p. 166). In other words, the use of the Internet does not lead to the domination of cyberactivism over mobilisation in physical space. What is more, the fate of particular protest movements was in fact decided in the streets, with the occupation of public space as the key factor in their success. This observation does not downplay the impact of new technologies and social networks on initiating, organising and developing such protests. Rather, it suggests that the complexity of interplay between the online and offline activism of today’s protest movements requires careful attention (Flesher Fominaya, 2014, p. 166; Pleyers, 2014).

In order to understand the role of the Internet in contemporary protest and revolutionary movements, we need to go beyond the binary oppositions between the virtual world (with its cyberactivism) and the real world (with its mobilisation on the streets and squares). Online activism and occupation of public space, global connections and national frameworks, the use of alternative media and the appeal to mass media are complementary rather than opposing forms of activity (Pleyers, 2014).

According to Manuel Castells, ‘[t]here is a close connection between virtual networks and networks in life at large’, which means that the real world as it is today is a hybrid: neither an entirely virtual world, nor a segregated world separating online from offline interaction. And it is

in this hybrid world that networked social movements come to life (Castells, 2012, p. 232). The combination of online and offline activism generates a hybrid autonomous space for mass contentious action (Flesher Fominaya, 2014, p. 186).

The Internet is conducive to 'organisational hybridity' not only in the case of social movements, but also political parties and interest groups. 'Hybrid mobilisation movements' blend repertoires which are typical of these three organisational patterns. Contemporary political mobilisation is also characterised by fast 'repertoire switches', both spatial (between the online and offline environment) and temporal (within and between campaigns) (Chadwick, 2007, p. 283).

Analysing MoveOn as an example of a hybrid mobilisation movement, Andrew Chadwick observes that sometimes it acts like a social movement, sometimes like an interest group, and sometimes like the wing of a traditional political party during an election campaign. This organisational type would not be possible without the Internet. Indeed, it is the new media that enable complex interactions between the online and offline worlds, and the organisational flexibility which is vital for fast repertoire switching, both within one campaign and between different campaigns (Chadwick, 2007).

The hybridity of contemporary protest and revolutionary movements is evidenced by combining their activity in physical public space (which is often subject to long-term occupation) and the use of social media platforms for the purposes of sharing information, as well as communication, organisation, mobilisation and documentation. The key element is the ability to broadcast offline events (such as marches, protests in occupied main squares, incidents of police brutality, inspiring speeches) by means of personalised digital mobile devices and Internet platforms (Boler & Nitsou, 2014, p. 241). In this way, hybrid social movements aim to maintain their visibility both in physical space (e.g. by setting up protest camps) and the virtual space of the Internet (mainly by using social media platforms and live streaming).

The protest movements which emerged in 2011 in Portugal (12 March Movement, M12M) and Spain (Indignados, also known as the 15 March Movement, M15M) used both media systems (including the new media) and physical public spaces. The movements were initiated online and new technologies enabled the exchange of information and mobilisation of supporters. However, what became the key participatory focus was the occupation of actual physical spaces. In both cases, online and offline activity mutually reinforced each other: the online initiative had an offline participatory focus (protest camps), which, in turn, was sustained by social media (Sloam, 2014, p. 166).

It follows that hybrid movements combine web-based and more traditional face-to-face interactions (rallies, protest camps, crowds in the streets) (Boler & Nitsou, 2014, p. 238). Although Castells's 'networks of outrage' can be initiated and developed online, they 'materialise themselves' in the form of an offline participatory focus, as both of these dimensions are closely connected. Indeed, such is the nature of protest movements of the age of the Internet.

The Internet is then more than just another medium of communication. It provides conditions for a form of collective practice which enables a movement without clear leadership to coordinate its action and expand. In addition, social media and other ICT-enabled communication tools protect the movement against the repression in the occupied physical spaces by informing about the actions of official authorities as they happen (live streaming, tweets). It is possible to maintain communication not only within the movement, but also between the movement and society, and even the international community (Castells, 2012, p. 229).

Discussing the case of the UK Uncut movement, Cristiana Olcese analyses how the use of social media and the lack of clear preferences for online or offline activism blurs the distinction between them. Social media are used to inform the followers about the movement's actions both

in the offline and online environment (particularly Facebook). The author observes that sometimes ideas are born in physical space, become the subject of online discussion (Facebook and Twitter) and materialise themselves in the form of offline actions, which are successful if they are filmed, described, shared, retweeted in social media and covered in the mass media. Another possibility is that actions are first debated and decided online, carried out in physical space, and acquire significance as a result of their online visibility. What is involved in this case is a debate which is consciously started in virtual space by posting most initiatives (mostly on Facebook) and exchanging views about them (mostly on Twitter) (Olcese, 2014, p. 279).

However, hybrid protest movements are not free from tensions between online and offline activism, and divergences between online activists and those protesting in physical space are not an unknown occurrence. The latter often condemn 'clicktivism' as a form online activism which is out of touch with reality and only creates an impression of participation. In some movements, protesters occupying the squares tried to keep their distance from those who posted their comments and gave 'likes' on Facebook (Pleyers, 2014).

These tensions mostly stem from the different nature of the two spaces. Social media, such as Twitter and Facebook, facilitate communication between people regardless of physical distance involved and enable forming shallow relations without fully engaging in them. On the other hand, the experience of protest camps, with their density of bodies in close physical proximity, seems to be the exact opposite of online contacts (Gerbaudo, 2012, p. 12).

OCCUPATION OF PUBLIC SPACE

Charles Tilly observes that different socio-historical contexts are characterised by particular repertoires of collective action (Tilly, 1979, p. 131). In other words, social actors in a particular place and time have a rather limited and predictable repertoire of contentious action at their disposal (McAdam & Sewell, 2001, p. 113). Although protest and revolutionary movements of the past sometimes resorted to the occupation of public space, this form of action never became part of the 'master template' (McAdam & Sewell, 2001) or the 'revolutionary script' (Baker & Edelstein, 2015).

Why is it, then, that in the age of social media most protest movements favour mass assemblies in public space, in the main squares or streets of large urban centres? Is this type of collective action particularly linked with the above outlined hybrid nature of contemporary social movements? Do social media generate or supplement this type of practice (which has been frequently applied in recent years) in any particular way?

Social media facilitate the diffusion of information at the stage of mobilisation for collective action and can be effectively used to coordinate it in physical space. Jeffrey S. Juris argues that they are probably most effective at assembling large numbers of protesters in particular locations, since they link interpersonal networks and enable the fast and large-scale aggregation of individuals by means of viral communication flows. In other words, such tools as Twitter and Facebook can generate 'crowds of individuals'. (Juris, 2012, p. 267).

In this context, the author makes a distinction between two cultural frameworks: (1) a 'logic of networking', which fosters complex practices of communication and coordination, and (2) a 'logic of aggregation', which is conducive to the assembling of masses of individuals from different social backgrounds in physical spaces (Juris, 2012, p. 260). The latter is shaped by interactions in social media, which both enables generating temporary 'smart mobs' in particular locations and makes them visible. In this approach, physical occupation not only amounts to a tactic, but also embodies a virtual crowd of individuals who aggregated through the viral flows of social media (Juris, 2012, pp. 266–269).

Although the role of social media in communication processes is crucial, they do not guarantee the emergence of lasting organisational networks. A collective subjectivity of protesters remains under constant pressure of disaggregation and fragmentation, which is why it is important for them to create a sustained community in physical space. This purpose can be served by indefinitely extending smart mob protests, which is conducive to building collective identity and affective solidarity (Juris, 2012, pp. 266-268).

The emergence of a sense of emotional community among spatially dispersed online protesters is the key factor for their aggregation in physical space. Castells suggests that the impulse to move from virtual space to the occupation of physical public space came from an emotional mobilisation triggered by outrage against injustice and by hope for change, often stimulated by successful uprisings in other parts of the world (Castells, 2012, p. 220-221). This emotional community was subsequently developed and consolidated in the occupied squares of the cities.

Zizi Papacharissi (2014), in turn, argues that crowds are mobilised via online networks generating 'affective publics' in the process. Drawing on the concept of 'networked publics' proposed by danah boyd, Papacharissi defines affective publics as 'networked public formations that are mobilized and connected or disconnected through expressions of sentiment' (Papacharissi, 2014, p. 125; cf. boyd, 2014, p. 80). Affective publics are transformed by networked technologies which create space for the interaction of people, technology and practices, and for the imagined emotional community evolving as a result of such interactions (Papacharissi, 2014, pp. 125-126).

The above approaches proposed by Juris, Castells and Papacharissi correspond with the suggestions put forward by Paolo Gerbaudo (2012). According to the author, social media play the key role in creating a sense of emotional community, which is required to mobilise spatially dispersed and socially diverse individuals. Facebook posts, tweets and blog entries are channels of sharing not only information, but also emotions. As a result, individual sentiments of indignation, anger, pride and a sense of victimisation can be condensed and transformed into a common political spirit driving the process of mobilisation (Gerbaudo, 2012, p. 21).

In his analysis of the symbolic construction of a sense of community and emotional tension which 'extend[s] from distant mediated connections to the "effervescence" of physical proximity' (Gerbaudo, 2012, p. 14), Gerbaudo uses the concept of a 'choreography of assembly'. It is a process of a symbolic construction of public space, focused on emotional scene-setting and scripting the participants' roles in their gathering in public space. This practice is apparent in the use of social media, which focus people's attention on particular protest events, provide suggestions and instructions about how to act, and construct an 'emotional narration' conducive to assembling in public space (Gerbaudo, 2012, p. 12).

In this way, Gerbaudo argues that social media are tools which serve the purpose of creating new forms of proximity and face-to-face interaction in physical space. Tweets and Facebook posts contribute to generating a sense of 'social centrality' of the occupied squares, which thus become 'trending places' and 'venues of magnetic gatherings' characterised by a considerable power of emotional attraction. Like Juris, Gerbaudo notes the risk of isolation and disaggregation if the use of social media does not go hand in hand with street-work and interaction also with those who do not have a Facebook account (Gerbaudo, 2012, pp. 12-13).

Social media are instrumental in aggregating individuals in a particular physical space. In addition, they stimulate participation of not only activists but also general public. By gathering large numbers of dispersed individuals around the same actions, social media facilitate 'focal practices', i.e. concentrate people's attention on particular places and events (Gerbaudo, 2012, p. 136). As mentioned above, the politics of visibility consciously pursued by activists is reinforced by traditional media, which ensures presence on the world's public screens (DeLuca, Lawson, & Sun, 2012, p. 488).

Protest camps set up in central locations of a large cities provide a public space which enables a debate about important political issues between people from different social environments (particularly considering that some of these camps continued over weeks or months) (Bastos, Mercea, & Charpentier, 2015, p. 333; Flesher Fominaya, 2014, p. 180). Apart from long-term occupation of particular public spaces, the protest movements continued to function in the free space of the Internet (Castells, 2012, p. 221). In other words, although protesters assembled in a particular physical space, their continued activity in social media, blogs, etc. meant that their occupation extended beyond it (Flesher Fominaya, 2014, p. 180).

In line with the logic of networked publics (cf. boyd, 2014), protesters gathered in the camps operated in a horizontal, consensus-based decision-making mode. In the physical environment, which relied on face-to-face interaction as the key form of communication, this involved experimenting with different forms of participatory democracy (Bastos, Mercea, & Charpentier, 2015, p. 333). The hybrid, networked nature of these movements enabled debates and interaction between multiple nodes, which made an impact on the decision-making process in physical space. It follows that hybrid protest movements do not need a vertical structure, a command centre or a formal leadership to transfer information or instructions (Castells, 2012, p. 221).

CONCLUSION

Change in collective action which has been brought by the development of new information and communication technologies, including social media, is not limited to its communication aspect. In a model where collective action is initiated and coordinated by means of the new media, the organisational dimension of social movements has lost much of its former significance, as social media foster looser and more personalised forms of collective involvement, as well as fast mobilisation and coordination.

Analysts of political significance of social media rightly consider them in a broader ecosystem of communication, which includes also the old media, such as television, radio and print newspapers. Indeed, today's world is marked by interaction between the old and the new media, with their users naturally switching between them. From the point of view of social movement activists, the traditional media not only improve the visibility of their action in public space, but are also instrumental in generating the 'media spectacle' effect. In the case of digitally excluded or passive citizens, they can be the key source of information. In recent years, both the old and the new media played an important role in the regional or global diffusion of repertoires of contention, including the slogans and symbols of protest.

The move to Web 2.0 radically reduced the costs of communication, which enabled a faster and easier circulation of information important for social movements among more people. Characterised by lower barriers of access and participation, social media penetrate wider social networks and foster contact and cooperation across different social environments, not only activists, but also those who have been politically inactive. The development of 'weak ties' between people suffering from similar problems and sharing their grievances is conducive to fast mobilisation in case of triggering events (e.g. indignation over a particular decision of the government). Such mobilisation is possible in spite of the weakness of political opposition, leaders or organisational structures.

Contemporary social movements combine activity in social media with that in physical public space, which are complementary rather than opposing forms of involvement. In addition, the new media enable fast repertoire switching between the online and offline environment. Consequently, these movements can be approached as hybrid phenomena, characterised by organisational flexibility, amorphous structure and the strength of 'weak ties'. Their hybrid nature involves a

combination of activity in public space with the use of social media for communication, recruitment and organisational purposes, as well as for the purpose of ensuring the visibility of the movement in the offline world. This is achieved by means of personalised digital mobile devices and social media platforms.

Protest and revolutionary movements of the recent period have displayed a preference for the tactic of occupation of public space. Indeed, protest camps became the symbol of revolutions in Egypt (2011) and Ukraine (2013–2014), as well as the Indignados movement in Spain and Occupy Wall Street in the United States. This type of collective action is clearly related to the increasing use of the new media by social movements. A gathering in physical public space can be interpreted as the physical embodiment of a virtual crowd of individuals generated by communication in social media.

Facebook and Twitter are not only instrumental in assembling people in particular physical locations, but also make gatherings of this kind visible to broader audiences. Such aggregation of a virtual collective in the offline environment is a point of departure for transforming a 'loose' emotional community established online into a more lasting community of action with its 'natural' physical proximity and face-to-face interaction.

Translated from Polish by Piotr Styk

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